



SENIORS

Loving

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Directed by: Jeff Nichols

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A Raindog Films/Big Beach production

In association with: Augusta Films Production, Tri-State Pictures

A Focus Features presentation

Executive Producers: Brian Kavanaugh-Jones, Jack Turner, Jared Ian Goldman

Produced by: Ged Doherty, Colin Firth, Nancy Buirski, Sarah Green, Marc Turtletaub, Peter Saraf
Co-producer: William Greenfield

For Raindog Films: Partner: Claudia Bluemhuber,

Head of Business Affairs: Lucy Wainwright;

Associate Producer: Oge Egbuonu; Finance

Executive: Celine Medley; Development

Co-ordinator: Teresa Raeburn; Development

Support: Mark Pinder, Amelie Klingspor

Executive in Charge of Production: Mike Phillips

Unit Production Managers: William Greenfield, Sarah Green

Production Co-ordinator: Emily Kacere

Production Accountant: Theresa L. Marsh

Location Manager: Colleen Gibbons

Post-production Supervisor: Susan E. Novick

1st Assistant Director: Cas Donovan

Script Supervisor: Jean-Paul Chreky

Casting by: Francine Maisler, Erica Arnold, Anne Chapman

Voice Casting by: Barbara Harris

Written by: Jeff Nichols

Based in part on the documentary *The Loving Story* by: Nancy Buirski

Director of Photography: Adam Stone

2nd Unit Director of Photography: Neil Moore

B Camera Operator: Neil Moore

Loader: John David 'JD' Devirgiliis

Gaffer: Michael Roy

Key Grip: Rocky Ford

Video Assist: James Sheppard

Stills Photography: Ben Rothstein

Visual Effects by: The Mill, Phil Crowe, Chris Harlowe

Special Effects Co-ordinator: Gary Pilkinton

Edited by: Julie Monroe

Production Designer: Chad Keith

Art Director: Jonathan Guggenheim

Art Department Co-ordinator: Susan Sutphin

Prop Master: Patrick Storey

Costume Designer: Erin Benach

Costume Supervisor: Jonny Pray

Key Make-up Artist: Katie Middleton

Head Hair Stylist: Kenneth Walker

Dental Prosthetics by: Gary Archer

Titles by: Scarlet Letters

Digital Optical: Pat Clancey

Music: David Wingo

Conductor: Jay Weigel

Production Sound Mixer: Pud Cusack

Boom Operator: Richard Bullock

Re-recording Mixers: Will Files, Brandon Proctor

Supervising Sound Editor: Will Files

Sound Effects Editors: David Grimaldi,

Robert Kellough, Joel Dougherty, P.K. Hooker

Stunt Co-ordinator: Chad M. Hessler

Consultant: Peggy Loving

Cast:

Joel Edgerton (*Richard Loving*)

Ruth Negga (*Mildred Loving*)

Marton Csokas (*Sheriff Brooks*)

Nick Kroll (*Bernie Cohen*)

Terri Abney (*Garnet Jeter*)

Alano Miller (*Raymond Green*)

Mildred and Richard Loving didn't begin their married life as outspoken civil rights activists and their story didn't unfold on the frontlines of any marches, but their relationship would ultimately lead to the landmark ruling that ended the prohibition of interracial marriage in America. Forced to fight to reside freely in their home state of Virginia, Richard, a white man, and Mildred, a Black woman, travelled to Washington DC to marry in 1958, when Mildred became pregnant. At the time, miscegenation was a felony in Virginia, punishable by up to five years in prison. Shortly after they married, an anonymous tip led police in the middle of the night to their house where they arrested the couple. They were sentenced to one year in prison, which was suspended on the condition that they not return to Virginia together for 25 years. Although initially they accepted the verdict, life in Washington did not suit Mildred. Stifled in the city, isolated from her family and friends, she wrote to Attorney General Robert Kennedy, who referred her case to the American Civil Liberties Union. What began as a quiet love story between two quiet people quickly became a historic, upending journey to the United States Supreme Court.

In 2012, almost half a century after the ruling, Colin Firth and Ged Doherty of Raindog Films approached Jeff Nichols about turning the story into a narrative film. Firth and Doherty had seen Nancy Buirski's documentary about the couple's life *The Loving Story* (2011), but Nichols was stunned that he had never heard of the case. 'It didn't make sense to me,' Nichols says. 'A story that seemed so relevant in terms of racial complexity and marriage equality: how are people not talking about this?' When Nichols watched the documentary, he too was struck by the simplicity of the Lovings' tale. 'Even though [the documentary] touches upon all these very crucial issues, it doesn't have anything to do with them. It kind of walks through the raindrops in terms of its social relevance,' says Nichols. 'Since they were so apolitical, since they didn't have an agenda, all you're left with at the end of the day, after thinking about all these complexities, is just two people who love each other. And it seemed like a great way to have a conversation about all these things.'

By the time he came on board to direct *Loving*, Nichols had three critically acclaimed films under his belt: *Shotgun Stories* (2007), *Take Shelter* (2011) and *Mud* (2012), all original stories and all centred around white men or boys. As he sat down to write *Loving*, he faced a challenge he hadn't encountered before. 'The outlining part of the process was very similar to the way I typically do things,' Nichols says. 'But then this other part came. I have the story laid out. I knew it would open with "I'm pregnant" and I knew it would end with a photo of them. I typed Mildred into the computer and there's this blinking line, and now I'm supposed to put words in her mouth. It was a bit paralysing because who the hell am I to do this?' Between films, the 'year-long meditation' the director usually spent creating scenes was replaced this time with meticulous research. Buirski, who is also a producer on the film, sent him a hard drive full of outtakes, interviews, and archival footage. He went to Virginia, where he met Peggy, the last surviving child of the Lovings, and visited the jail where the pair were held, the court where they were tried, the house where they lived in exile and the home Richard built for Mildred, all of which make it into the film. 'At some point you have to accept the fact that I've done the work,' says Nichols. 'I understand the essence of these people in a specific way. And this is important, because all movies are fake: this is an interpretation – my interpretation – of who they were. And people are just going to have to understand that. And I'm going to have to understand that. I did all the work and now this is my understanding of them, as limited as that maybe.'

Jon Bass (*Phil Hirschkop*)
 Michael Shannon (*Grey Villet*)
 Will Dalton (*Virgil*)
 Dean Mumford (*drag race driver*)
 Chris R. Greene (*Percy*)
 Benjamin Booker (*shotgun shack musician 1*)
 Justin Robinson (*shotgun shack musician 2*)
 Dennis Williams (*shotgun shack musician 3*)
 Keith Tyree (*bricklayer*)
 Sharon Blackwood (*Lola*)
 Rebecca Turner (*pregnant girl*)
 Christopher Mann (*Theoliver*)
 Mike Shifflett (*magistrate*)
 Winter Lee Holland (*Musiel*)
 Karen Vicks (*Clara the cashier*)
 Lance Lemon (*cousin Davis*)
 Marquis Adonis Hazelwood (*cousin Gerald*)
 Marton Csokas (*Sheriff Brooks*)
 Greg Cooper (*county jailer*)
 Michael Abbott Jr (*deputy*)
 Robert Haulbrook (*county clerk*)
 Bill Camp (*Frank Beazley*)
 Bridget Gethins (*court secretary*)
 David Jensen (*Judge Bazile*)
 Andrene Ward-Hammond (*Laura*)
 Jevin Crochrell (*middle Sidney*)
 Jordan Williams Jr (*middle Donald*)
 Georgia Crawford (*middle Peggy*)
 Coley Company (*secretary*)
 Brenan Young (*older Sidney*)
 Dalyn M. Cleckley (*older Donald*)
 Quinn McPherson (*older Peggy*)
 DL Hopkins (*Alex*)
 Terry Menefee Gau (*Antieau's secretary*)
 Matt Malloy (*Chet Antieau*)
 A. Smith Harrison (*reporter supreme court*)
 Coby Batty (*telephone man*)
 Jennifer Joyner (*documentarian*)
 Scott Wichmann (*press conference reporter 1*)
 Keith Flippen (*press conference reporter 2*)
 USA-UK 2016©
 123 mins
 Digital

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Another director might have eagerly circumvented these problems by turning *Loving* into a courtroom drama, given that the Lovings' fight, so to speak, is entirely domestic. Outside courtroom proceedings, they protested against their circumstances simply by living, and the film largely follows Richard and Mildred as they raise and provide for their children. Nichols's films often concern the domestic, and here he shied away from the easy choice of drama at the expense of nuance. 'When the producers first came to me, one said, "So who's our bad guy?" That's a great question to ask when you're making a movie. I said, "I don't see one",' says Nichols. Marton Csokas appears briefly as the cruel, bigoted sheriff, but he is not the primary antagonist. Instead, Nichols implicates institutional forces in the tragedy of Mildred and Richard, for in 1975, just eight years after legal restrictions on interracial marriage were declared unconstitutional, Richard would be killed when his car was struck by a drunk driver. 'I started to think about time,' says Nichols, 'which is the cruellest part of their punishment. Time is robbed from them, especially when you realise how little time Richard Loving had left on this planet.'

The film derives much of its tension from the apparent omniscience of law enforcement and the institutions that seek to control the Lovings. The danger they face is made clear from the moment the police burst in on the sleeping couple and drag them to jail in their nightclothes. Later, when they return to Virginia for Mildred to have their first child, the police arrest them again, hauling them to court just after Mildred has given birth. 'It's really the social structure of Jim Crow that's the villain,' says Nichols. 'It lays this blanket over people and it says: "We can come and get you anytime we want, for any reason we want, and you have to live under that." You have to live under that constant threat. And that's the insidious part of what these laws did and what they continue to do.'

For all the danger that awaits them there, Mildred and Richard desperately seek to return to the South, specifically to the land Richard purchases for Mildred at the beginning of the film. Mildred, in particular, feels out of place in Washington and hankers for the South. 'That was her home. Home meant something very integral to her being,' says the director. Nichols, born and raised in Little Rock, Arkansas – when he was not spending summers in Altheimer, Arkansas, with his grandparents – thoroughly understands Mildred's Southern pride. 'So many people, when they look at the American South, judge it as inferior and stupid and sometimes grotesque. And that's not true,' says Nichols. 'We have a legacy of pain and violence and brutality, but we also have a legacy of beauty and art and culture and rhythm that is unparalleled in the United States. When I think about American literature I think about Southern literature. And these aren't things to be looked down on, these are things to be understood. And there's a complexity there that if you dismiss too easily you're really doing yourself a disservice.'

Nichols concerned himself with securing the emotional impact of the film. 'I always work on two tracks when I'm telling stories,' says the director. 'I work on a plot genre track on one hand and I work on a feeling, emotional track on another. And there are inspirations for each. My life is really the biggest inspiration. My relationship with my wife, my relationship with my son, my relationship with my friends or my brothers or my parents. This is what life's really made of. And if I'm going to make these films resonate with people, they have to be really specific to me. I don't think you get to people by thinking about what they might be thinking about or what they want. You get to people by thinking about who you are as a human.'

Kelli Weston, *Sight and Sound*, February 2017