



BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

Hunger

Hunger

Directed by: Steve McQueen

©: Blast! Films, Hunger Ltd.

Production Company: Blast! Films

Presented by: Film4, Northern Ireland Screen, Broadcasting Commission of Ireland, Wales Creative IP Fund

Developed with the support of: Film4, Channel Four

Filmed with the assistance of:

Northern Ireland Screen

Made with the support of: Sound & Vision

Broadcasting Funding Scheme

Produced with the participation of:

Wales Creative IP Fund

Worldwide Sales Agent:

Icon Entertainment International

Executive Producers: Jan Younghusband,

Peter Carlton, Linda James, Edmund Coulthard,

Iain Canning

Produced by: Laura Hastings-Smith, Robin Gutch

Line Producer: Andrew Litvin

For Blast! Films (Head of Production):

Claire Bosworth

For Blast! Films (Researcher): Faye Hamilton

For Channel 4/Film4 (Production):

Rebecca O'Connor, Hilary Stewart, Tracey Josephs

For Channel 4/Film4 (Commercial Devent):

Sue Bruce-smith

For NI Screen (Chief Executive): Richard Williams

For NI Screen (Head of Production): Andrew Reid

For NI Screen (Head of Finance): Linda Martin

For NI Screen (Production Co-ordinator):

Anne Quinn

Production Supervisor: Cathy Mooney

Production Accountants: Mark Edwards,

Nigel Wood

Location Manager: Catherine Geary

Location Scout: Damien Glenholmes

Post-production Supervisor: Alistair Hopkins

1st Assistant Director: Mark Fenn

Script Supervisor: Kirstie Edgar

Casting Director: Gary Davy

Extras Casting: Extras NI

Written by: Enda Walsh, Steve McQueen

Director of Photography: Sean Bobbitt

Steadicam Operator: Stephen Murphy

Focus Puller: Conor Hammond

Camera Loaders: Natasha Back,

Louise Ben Nathan

Gaffer: Brian Beaumont

Key Grip: Steve Pugh

Stills Photographers: Steffan Hill, Jill Jennings

Visual Effects: Dragon Digital

Special Effects: Bob Smoke Special Effects

Graphics: Antony Buonomo

Film Editor: Joe Walker

Production Designer: Tom McCullagh

Art Director: Brendan Rankin

Scenic Artist: Neville Gaynor

Props Buyer: Sarah Speers

Props Master: Steve Wheeler

Construction Managers: Jim Reid, Cole Doherty

Costume Designer: Anushia Nieradzik

Chief Make-up/Hair Designer: Jacqueline Fowler

Titles: Antony Buonomo

Digital Intermediate: Dragon Digital Intermediate Ltd

Colourist: Geoffrey Case

Original Music by: David Holmes

With: Leo Abrahams

Sound Design by: Paul Davies Sound Design

Sound Mixer: Ronan Hill, Mervyn Moore

Re-recording Mixer: Richard Davey

Re-recording: Clarity Post Sound

Steve McQueen on 'Hunger'

Why did you want to tell the story of Bobby Sands and the republican hunger strike?

It happened in 1981 when I was 11 years old, and it had a big effect on me. It was a turning point in my life. From then on, when I looked out of the window, things were not as they seemed. I started to see the cracks. The hunger strike was about ideas and ideals, what one will live and die for. I was interested in that level of passion and commitment.

What did your research involve?

It started five years ago. The first thing was reading. I had this idea in my head, a memory, and the more I researched it the more fascinating it got. Going to Belfast for the first time we met lots of people and also Sands' relatives. Both loyalists and republicans were extraordinarily generous, but at the same time there was this undercurrent of idealism. Ultimately that's what stuck with me – the people. They could have been my mum, my dad, my sister – they weren't aliens, they weren't exotic.

How did your co-screenwriter, the playwright Enda Walsh, get involved?

Sometimes it's good to vibe with someone else, to hit the ball against the wall. I knew I wanted to work with an Irish writer so we interviewed quite a few. A lot of them were afraid of the subject matter. Enda was much more out there, a bit odd. Prior to making this film I'd never even read a screenplay. Before Enda came on board I wanted it to be totally silent, no words at all.

What kind of brief did you give him?

All I said to Enda was, I want the beginning of the film to be like a stream. So you're floating along the stream, very much aware of your environment. And all of a sudden there's a rapid, your reality is being disturbed, disrupted. Then in the third part there's a waterfall, a loss of gravity, a fall. That's how I saw the film.

How did it develop from there?

Enda wrote the first draft after we'd spent an intense and heavy week in Ireland talking to prison officers. Then it became like hacking through marble: you know what you don't want, but you need something, even if it's a piece of crap on the table, something to drill through. Then I thought of the funny walk in *Monty Python*, which in turn made me think of the idea of ritual – I realised this whole thing is about ritual. When the prison officer leaves his house at the beginning, it's so normal. The ritual in *Hunger* is more severe, absurd than those in, say, Hou Hsiao-Hsien's films because it's tailored around violence, which itself is ritualistic.

How did visiting H-Block in the Maze prison where the hunger strike took place affect your thinking?

It was brilliant – even though they wouldn't allow us to film there – because the form of the prison formalises your camera; the form gives you the form. In fact narrative filmmaking sometimes felt easy because you've got a template. The form is already there, it's already set and it's how you change and subvert it, disrupt it that makes it interesting. What I'm trying to do in the art context is different, it's to make new language, new form.

Sound Editing: Paul Davies Sound Design
Additional Sound Effects Editor: Chu-Li Shewring
Foley (Recorded by): Clarity Post Sound
Stunt Co-ordinator: Paul Herbert
Armourer: Robert Gyle

Cast:

Michael Fassbender (*Bobby Sands*)
Liam Cunningham (*Father Dominic Moran*)
Stuart Graham (*Raymond Lohan*)
Laine Megaw (*Raymond's wife*)
Brian Milligan (*Davey Gillen*)
Liam McMahan (*Gerry Campbell*)
Karen Hassan (*Gerry's girlfriend*)
Frank McCusker (*the governor*)
Lalor Roddy (*William*)
Helen Madden (*Mrs Sands*)
Des McAleer (*Mr Sands*)
Geoff Gatt (*bearded man*)
Rory Mullen (*priest*)
Ben Peel (*riot prison officer, Stephen Graves*)
Helena Bereen (*Raymond's mother*)
Paddy Jenkins (*hitman*)
Billy Clarke (*chief medical officer*)
Ciaran Flynn (*twelve year old Bobby*)
B.J. Hogg (*loyalist orderly*)
Ireland-UK 2008
96 mins
Digital

BECOME A BFI MEMBER

Enjoy a great package of film benefits including priority booking at BFI Southbank and BFI Festivals. Join today at bfi.org.uk/join

SIGHT AND SOUND

Never miss an issue with **Sight and Sound**, the BFI's internationally renowned film magazine. Subscribe from just £25*
* Price based on a 6-month print subscription (UK only). More info: sightandsoundsubs.bfi.org.uk



BFI PLAYER

We are always open online on BFI Player where you can watch the best new, cult & classic cinema on demand. Showcasing hand-picked landmark British and independent titles, films are available to watch in three distinct ways: Subscription, Rentals & Free to view.

See something different today on player.bfi.org.uk

BFI SOUTHBANK

Welcome to the home of great film and TV, with three cinemas and a studio, a world-class library, regular exhibitions and a pioneering Mediatheque with 1000s of free titles for you to explore. Browse special-edition merchandise in the BFI Shop. We're also pleased to offer you a unique new space, the BFI Riverfront – with unrivalled riverside views of Waterloo Bridge and beyond, a delicious seasonal menu, plus a stylish balcony bar for cocktails or special events. Come and enjoy a pre-cinema dinner or a drink on the balcony as the sun goes down.

Join the **BFI mailing list** for regular programme updates. Not yet registered? Create a new account at www.bfi.org.uk/signup

And you hadn't ever worked with actors before?

I did one class working with actors at the film school in Amsterdam, and that was helpful – I discovered I love actors. What you've got to do is risk as much as they're risking. In my naivety I said, 'Look, I'm risking everything here.' Once they know that, they'll match you, they'll even try to go beyond you. I just tried to get them lost, like whirling dervishes – in order to get closer to God, sometimes you've got to get out of control, and that's what I wanted them to do, to get closer to a reality.

There is a nearly 20-minute scene between Sands and a priest, most of which is shot side-on with a static camera – was that risky?

I don't go along with that. All these people around me were scared, the producer was scared. You know what, that's why they make so many crap films here, when they should just go away and do it. Once we'd got it in the can, they said we need some reverse shots. In the middle of shooting one I said, 'You know what, I'm bored. We've got it, let's go.' Big row, big confrontation with Channel 4, all that business. We broke up at 4.30 that day and went home. Fucking brilliant. We had it, I knew we had it.

That was one take?

In total we did four takes using doubled-up 20-minute rolls. For me this scene is better than Steiger and Brando, because it's life and death at stake – reason to live, reason to die. It wasn't improvised, it was all scripted, but they just spat it out and it felt like jazz, inspired. The atmosphere was tense but as an actor when are you ever going to get a situation like that, to talk about the ultimate?

Why did you want to shoot the film in Belfast?

What is happening behind the camera is just as important as what's going in front of it, because all of those people behind it were involved somehow in those events. There's a force of memory, a physicality of working on those events, a sense of the past in the present. There was an actress whose mother was taking stuff into the Maze, an actor whose father was in there, an actor whose uncle was a prison officer – everyone had something invested in that story. It was wonderful what was going on on the set.

It's striking how many different points of view there are in the film.

I see myself as a prison officer, I see myself as a blanket man. When you put yourself into that person's shoes, it's obvious that they're all human beings. It's the situation that's fucked up, not the people. You have to do what you have to do. We're human beings, every day we do shit. We're not innocent. You totally understand because you do it, you're part of that game.

You give the viewer plenty of space to enter the film.

The images only go so far, they never go all the way, it's impossible. What has to happen is you trigger something in people's imaginations or in their psyche that completes the picture, and I don't know what that is.

The film's picked up further political resonances since you first had the idea five years ago.

The weird thing is that this story keeps on happening. It has a life in the present as well as the past. Most people seeing the film will think this sort of thing happens in far-off countries, not realising it happened in their own backyard. It's a story which has been brushed under the carpet in the last 27 years, and therefore one should take the lid off it: there it is.

Steve McQueen interviewed by Kieron Corless, *Sight and Sound*, November 2008