



NEW RELEASES

The Apprentice

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Directed by: Ali Abbasi

©: Apprentice Productions Ontario Inc., Profile Productions 2 ApS, Tailored Films Ltd

Production Companies: Scythia Films, Profile Pictures, Tailored Films

In co-production with: Film Institute, Film i Väst

Supported by: Danish Film Institute

In collaboration with:

DR - Danish Broadcasting Corporation

In association with: AC Films Inc., Rich Spirit, LB Entertainment LLC, Wild 7 Films

International Sales by: Rocket Science

Executive Producers: Amy Baer, James Shani, Fred Benenson, Phil Hunt, Compton Ross, Thorsten Schumacher, Levi Woodward

Executive Producer for Fis Éireann/Screen Ireland: Niamh Fagan

Executive Producers: Gabriel Sherman, Greg Denny, Noor Alfallah, Andy Cohen, Andrew Frank, Neil Mathieson, Brian Tyler Cohen, Lee Broda, Blair Ward, Anders Erdén

Produced by: Daniel Bekerman, Jacob Jarek, Ruth Treacy, Julianne Forde, Louis Tisné, Ali Abbasi

Co-producers: Ditte Milsted, Kristina Börjeson, Anthony Muir, Nima Yousefi, Matthew Whelan

Archive Producer: Beatrice Read

Line Producer - Ireland: Mairtin de Barra

Associate Producer: Ashley Renders

Production Manager: Ainslee Kennedy

Production Co-ordinator: Michelle Kanyo

Production Coordinator - Ireland: Caitriona McCormack

Production Accountant: Dawn Taylor

Location Manager: Richard Hughes

Post-production Supervisors: Aoife Delany, Christina Jæger

Archive Consultants: Deb Ricketts, Peter Scott

1st Assistant Director: Joel Hay

2nd Assistant Director: Will Roberts

Script Supervisor: Samantha McMeekin

Canadian Casting by: Stephanie Gorin

US Casting by: Carmen Cuba

Casting Director - Ireland: Maureen Hughes

Written by: Gabriel Sherman

Director of Photography: Kasper Tuxen

A Camera Operator/Steadicam: Sasha Moric

Visual Effects Supervisor: Matthew Whelan

Visual Effects Producer: Julianne Forde

Visual Effects by: Egg VFX Ireland, Dupp VFX Sweden, Piranha Bar, Filmgate AB

Special Effects Supervisor: Conor Craig

Motion Graphics Designer: John O'Riordan

Edited by: Olivia Neergaard-Holm, Olivier Bugge Coutté

On-line Editor: Sinéad Cronin

Additional Editing by: Lukas Westtoft, Thor Ochsner

Visual Effects Editor: Shane Woods

Production Designer: Aleks Marinkovich

Design Consultant: Matthew Davies

Art Director: Michaela Cheyne

Set Designers: Dan Norton, Gordon Peterson

Costume Designer: Laura Montgomery

Assistant Costume Designer: Conor Craig

Costume Supervisor: Suzanne Aplin

Make-up Department Head: Colin Penman

Key Make-up Artists: Indiana Allemang, Thomas McInerney

Special Make-up Effects Department Head, Co-designer, and Artist to Trump & Cohn: Sean Sansom

Special Make-up Effects & Make-up Artist to Trump: Brandi Boulet

Screenwriter Gabriel Sherman on 'The Apprentice'

When did you first come across Donald Trump as a public figure, and what was your impression of him?

I've been thinking and writing about him for the better part of 20 years. My first job was as a journalist covering real estate in New York City when I was just out of college. One of the things that always struck me is that I could get him on the phone any time I needed a quote for an article. Later, we see in the film how Roy Cohn taught him how to use the media to keep his name in the papers. But my first exposure to him was somebody who loved to see his name in print.

Fast-forward to 2016, I was covering his presidential campaign as a political journalist at New York. I had interviewed him, visited Mar-a-Lago [the Florida resort/club he owns and has used as his primary residence since 2019]. It struck me that one of the things I heard on the campaign trail was that Trump was using the lessons Roy had taught him. That was the spark of the idea of a film that explored how Roy moulded Trump's personality.

This film is about Trump in the 70s and 80s. How did you research it?

I interviewed people who worked with Trump and Cohn in that period. I read every single book and article written about them, especially the ones that were written in the 70s and 80s in real time. I was able to piece together this portrait of these two characters and then dramatise it. This is my interpretation of them as characters. Obviously, it's based on real events, but it's a work of fiction.

There is an onscreen note at the start suggesting that. How much of it is fictionalised?

The vast majority of the [events in the movie] are real. It's happened. There's a clear historical record that validates everything in it. The main thing you have to do when you're dramatising real events is obviously the dialogue between them in private. There are no audio recordings of them together. That's my imagination, and I had to compress some events for time. The note's not trying to suggest that the movie is completely made up. It's just that, for dramatic purposes, some of the events had to be compressed for time.

Why go the fiction route rather than making a straight documentary?

There's so much information about Trump in the world, but you don't feel anything when you read Wikipedia. When I wrote the film, I wanted audiences to feel they were with a human being, a real character, rather than just absorbing information. Because that's what's new about this film. Yes, people say, 'Oh, we already know a lot about Trump,' but we don't have the feeling of what it's like to see him doing the things that are portrayed in the film. It's much more an emotional, visceral experience.

Ivana Trump alleged Donald Trump raped her in a divorce deposition in 1990. Then, in a 1993 book, she said that although she 'felt violated' and 'referred to this as a "rape", I do not want my words to be interpreted in a literal or criminal sense'. Many years later, in 2015, she made another statement, part of which said, 'The story is totally without merit. Donald and I are the best of friends.' Why did you include the alleged rape in the film?

As a writer, my job is to try to express what is the most emotionally true portrayal of the characters. Ivana made the allegations originally under oath by penalty of perjury. If she made up those allegations, and Trump could prove it, she would be committing a crime. Her subsequent statements clarified that she didn't mean it was a criminal act. That was under pressure from Trump's lawyers prior to the publication of a book [*Lost Tycoon: The Many Lives of Donald J. Trump*, 1993]. And

Special Make-up Effects Artist: Michael Walsh
Hair Designer and Head of Hair Department: Michelle Cote
Key Hair Stylists: Charlotte Delaet, Sandra Kelly
Colourist: Donal O'Kane
Original Music by: David Holmes, Brian Irvine, Martin Dirkov
Music Supervisors: Rory McPartland, Dina Coughlan
Music Consultant: Hans-Erik Philip
Production Sound Mixer: Thomas Hayek
Re-recording Mixers: Per Boström, Colm Mullally
Supervising Sound Editor: Joakim Sundström
Sound Effects Editor: Christer Melén
Stunt Co-ordinator: Joel Labelle
Cast:
Sebastian Stan (*Donald Trump*)
Jeremy Strong (*Roy Cohn*)
Martin Donovan (*Fred Trump*)
Maria Bakalova (*Ivana Trump*)
Catherine McNally (*Mary Anne Trump*)
Charlie Carrick (*Freddy Trump*)
Ben Sullivan (*Russell Eldridge*)
Mark Rendall (*Roger Stone*)
Joe Pingue (*Tony Salerno*)
Ron Lea (*Victor Palmieri*)
Eddie Inksetter (*Barbara Katz*)
Matt Baram (*Doctor Stephen Hoefflin*)
Moni Ogunsuyi (*Sandra*)
Brad Austin (*Dick Morgan*)
Stuart Hughes (*Mike Wallace*)
Jim Monaco (*Al Formicola*)
Clare Coulter (*Ms Nathanson, tenant*)
Hume Baugh (*Mr Granger, tenant*)
Tammy Boundy (*tenant*)
Jaclyn Vogl (*Donald's date*)
James Downing (*Walter, Department of Justice*)
Jai Jai Jones (*Theodore Green*)
Bruce Beaton (*Andy Warhol*)
Frank Moore (*Judge Edward Neaher*)
James Madge (*Tom Bolan*)
Ian D. Clark (*Ed Koch*)
Mishka Thebaud (*aggressive pimp*)
Taylor Brunatti, Addyson Douglas,
Emma Elle Paterson (*Ivana's girlfriends*)
Valerie O'Connor (*Rona Barrett*)
Chris Owens (*Jay Pritzker*)
Rick Hughes (*business guy*)
Erik Snider (*board member*)
Jason Blicher (*George Steinbrenner*)
Sam Rosenthal (*Michael Rubin*)
Daniel Goldenberg (*lawyer*)
Eoin Duffy (*Tony Schwartz*)
Craig Warnock (*cabbie*)
Tom Barnett (*Rupert Murdoch*)
Ben Ball (*Robert Trump*)
Iona MacKay (*Mary Trump*)
Samantha Espie (*Elizabeth Trump*)
Fiona Mongillo (*Donald Trump's secretary*)
Canada-Denmark-Ireland-USA-UK 2024©
122 mins
Digital

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then in 2015, he's running for president. She's the mother of his children, and her children have the opportunity to have their father in the White House.

If you're a writer, and you're thinking about all these things, what feels the most emotionally true to you? What is just your common sense tells you is the most true version? I would say the first version, which she said under oath. And so, I felt that was actually the most clearest, truest expression of what Trump was like at that point in their marriage, and I felt it was my duty to not shy away from that.

Also, this is a man who has been credibly accused of sexual assault by multiple women over his life. So, if this is a movie that's trying to establish his character, where his character came from, it wouldn't be a fully honest portrayal if we didn't at least touch on that part of his character. That's the reason I thought it was so important to include in the film.

The film's key relationship, that between Trump and Cohn, has a familiar feel: one of mentee eventually overshadowing mentor. Were there any other stories you looked to for inspiration?

In some ways, it's a little bit like *The Godfather Part II* [1974]. Michael Corleone becoming the true gangster that he was born to be. Another really influential movie is Elia Kazan's *A Face in the Crowd* [1957]. It was a movie about what power does to somebody. In another way, it's also a similar arc to *A Star is Born* [1954] because Donald's star goes up, Roy's star comes down. There's so much rich opportunity for drama in those films.

How much of Trump's latter-day behaviour do you think can be attributed to his early days in business, as depicted in the film?

A lot of it. The end of the movie is really supposed to show that Trump, by the late 1980s, really was the person we think of who's the politician today. Cohn says, 'Always attack.' Trump always attacks his opponents. Cohn taught him to admit nothing, deny everything. Trump always denies any responsibility and then never admits defeat. What did he do after the 2020 election? He refused to say that he lost. I think we just see so much of Roy Cohn's influence playing out in the present day.

In May, Steven Cheung, Trump's campaign spokesman, threatened the film with legal action. Then Trump's attorney sent a cease-and-desist letter trying to block it from being released. Has anything else happened on that front?

No, nothing. I've not heard anything since the Cannes premiere.

What sort of feedback are you expecting in general?

Based on how much media attention it's gotten already, I'm hopeful that there's a big audience for the film. I remember last year, when *Barbie* came out, the filmmaker [Greta Gerwig] said, 'If you hate Barbie, this movie's for you. And if you love Barbie, this movie's for you.' And that's something Ali has been talking about. No matter what your politics are, we want you to see this movie. There's so much you can either agree or disagree with. That's why we're hoping it plays nationwide in a lot of places where Trump's very popular. That people go see the film, not just in New York or Los Angeles.

It comes out about a month before the election. What impact are you hoping the film has on American voters?

It would be self-serving to imagine that a movie can have any impact on an election. I wouldn't even begin to predict. I just want as many people to see it [as possible] and come to their own conclusions. I'm fascinated to see how the world actually engages with the movie, because it wasn't written as a form of politics. We had no idea that this movie would come out while Trump was still running for president. It was complete luck that it just timed this way.

Interview by Lou Thomas, *Sight and Sound*, November 2024