



NEW RELEASES

Timestalker

Timestalker

Directed by: Alice Lowe
©: Timestalker Ltd, The British Film Institute, Ffilm Cymru Wales CBC
A Popcorn Group, Western Edge Pictures
co-production
Production Company: The National Lottery through The Arts Council of Wales
Supported by: Ffilm Cymru Wales
Produced with the support of: Welsh Government via Creative Wales
Made with the support of the: BFI's Filmmaking Fund
Presented by: BFI, Ffilm Cymru Wales
In association with: Head Gear Films, Creative Wales, HanWay Films
Worldwide Sales and Distribution: HanWay Films Ltd
Executive Producers: Ty Francis, Franki Goodwin, Mike Rattenbury, Vaughan Sivell, Natan Stoessel, Marie-Gabrielle Stewart, Peter Watson, Natascha Wharton, Bizzy Day, Kiah Simpson, Laura Brook, Charlotte Colbert, Philip Colbert, Phil Hunt, Compton Ross
Produced by: Vaughan Sivell, Mark Hopkins, Natan Stoessel, Tom Wood
Line Producer: Jack Cornelius Knott
Location Manager: Baljinder Sidhu
1st Assistant Director: Mark Hopkins
Script Supervisor: Roxy Cuenca
Casting Director: Dan Jackson
Written by: Alice Lowe
Director of Photography: Ryan Eddleston
Editors: Chris Dickens, Mátyás Fekete
Production Designer: Felicity Hickson
Standby Art Director: George Knowles
Costume Designer: Rebecca Gore
Make Up, Hair & Prosthetics Designer: Nik Buck
Key Hair and Make Up Supervisor: Julie Kendrick
Music by: Toydrum
Sound Design: Martin Pavey
Production Sound Mixer: Nick Davies
Re-recording Mixer: Martin Pavey
Stunt Co-ordinators: Gary Kane, Marcus Shakesheff
Cast:
Alice Lowe (*Agnes*)
Jacob Anderson (*Scipio*)
Aneurin Barnard
Tanya Reynolds (*Meg*)
Nick Frost
Eleanor Barrett (*Jennifer*)
Boyd Clack (*Lester/farmer*)
Kate Dickie (*Marion*)
Holly-Jane Shears (*Val Hallah*)
Dan Skinner (*officer/priest*)
Flik Swan (*aerobics instructor*)
Gerald Tyler (*wigmaker/Kreshnik*)
Mike Wozniak (*Dan Covy*)
Zach Wyatt (*quack doctor/tarot reader*)
UK 2024
96 mins
Digital

A Vertigo release

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Alice Lowe on 'Timestalker'

When and how did you come up with the story?

Seven years ago. It was a slow percolation. It started off as a sketch that had a fucked-up *Doctor Who* thing – what if there was a woman travelling through time and was obsessive about an ex? Just when you think you've got rid of someone, they pop up again, because they're reincarnated. I've written a lot of films where I'm killing people. I think it's about time I killed myself [on screen] – to make it fair.

I wanted to write something that was more lighthearted. Actually, it is still a really dark film, because that's just what comes out. I wanted something that was colourful, bright and fantastical. I thought if I get a budget to make something, I really want to enjoy it – make all my fantasies of filmmaking in one.

Every independent film you make, you are aware it might be the last film you get to make, because it's quite a troubled industry. It's very difficult to get anything made. So, if I got to make this one, I want to have a ball with it.

What made you chose this concept? The only thing I could think of that was near it is Darren Aronofsky's The Fountain (2006).

I love that film. I really love philosophical stuff. When you're mentioning Aronofsky, I'm there for his stuff. But I always believe you can mix comedy with deeper ideas. I was like, 'I want to make a Powell and Pressburger film.' Because I love *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946). [*The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943) was a big inspiration.

Why don't we make more fantastical things in the UK? We don't make stuff that's theatrical anymore or bright or symbolic. Because we have budget restrictions, we've got to film it like a kitchen sink drama, and it's going to be grey. I thought, 'I want to see if I can actually try and do my own version of a Powell and Pressburger, which is more ambitious and a bit more pretentious.'

I love the vulnerability of that. I always like characters who are flawed. I love female characters who are probably mad, deeply flawed, possibly unlikeable. I love to challenge the audience to put yourself in her shoes, even though she's doing stuff that's socially unacceptable. I love this character who you can see in two ways. She's a dangerous psychotic stalker or she's a dreamer, a fantasist and a romantic. You can be sympathetic or find her annoying. I don't mind which. I love that. I'm not into saccharine movies where you've got to love the lead character. You can hate her if you like.

She's a fool as well. I don't think women get to play fools any more. You've got to be the most intelligent character in the film. Even people when they're selling it to you as an actor, they'll tell you that. 'She's the most intelligent character in this thing.' And I'm like, 'Then I'm not going to get to be funny.' Because foolishness is hilarious, and I love to watch fools. It's an archetype that I wanted to try, this character that doesn't know. The audience knows so much more about what's going on than she does, watching her make mistakes over and over again, which I think is quite true to life.

Do you actually believe in reincarnation?

No. I do in a sense that I think you've got these billionaires that are searching for the secret of immortality. That's just about the ego. There's a oneness in the universe that we're all the same and we're all part of this consciousness, which is incredible. That is almost immortality.

When a tree drops a seed and it grows, that's incredible. The fact that goes on forever. [We should] put more energy into just saving species and shit like that rather than, 'I've got to preserve my consciousness,' as if it's so special.

NEW RELEASES

Timestalker

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From Mon 21 Oct

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From Fri 25 Oct

Layla

From Fri 25 Oct

Anora

From Fri 1 Nov

Bird

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All We Imagine as Light

From Fri 29 Nov

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I did look into quite a lot of religions when I was researching this, because there are so many religions that believe in reincarnation. There's a lot about wheels and things returning back to what they are and things coming back. In a way, the film is a cycle that the beginning is the end and the end is the beginning. I'm more of that Buddhist sort of mindset where no one is that special but everybody is special.

It's a good philosophy to take into filmmaking, because anyone's story is normal and is part of human experience, but everyone's story is extraordinary as well. You take that philosophy and apply it to a character. Do I think people pop into a dog or something? No, not really. But all cells are recycled, so you never know.

Was there any particular period you would have liked to investigate more?

I would've loved to do more in the Victorian era because I love that era. It's really striking for an audience because you've seen those big dresses with the hoops and how austere it is as an era, how repressed it is.

A lot of it was budgetary that I had to focus more on two eras, in terms of locations. But in theory you can make a film about any one of those. I want to keep the audience wanting more because, you know, you're just getting a glimpse. You could do it as a TV show. I'd love to do it like *Quantum Leap* where it's a different world each week and you do a different story.

You're wandering around in someone's head; none of it is real. That was quite a liberating thing about it – there was never any pressure to go, 'this doesn't look realistic'. None of us know what that actual era was like to be in. We only know through films that we've watched that we have an idea of what the Victorian era is. You may see paintings, but all of it is a fantasy.

It was really fun to mess around with these eras and pull the rug out of people's expectations. In the 18th century – let's just light this bit brightly with electric light because why not? It'll look really weird and spooky.

When you see an era that you've seen before on a film, it feels familiar to you like you've been there before. It was about playing on that, then putting a little twist on each thing so that it feels new. That's what I wanted to do with period drama as well. I always wanted to do a period thing. You don't get to with comedies so much. Monty Python used to do it. *The Inside No. 9* guys do it really well when they have a go at it. But there's not a lot out there. *Horrible Histories* opened a door to that kind of thing.

I think we've lost our connections to fantasy. If you look at art in different periods, we explore more romance and fantasy. Now it's like romanticism is a bit old-fashioned, so I wanted to update it. Romcoms have gone out of fashion. I could see why they are a bit creaky. They're very patriarchal, quite heteronormative, quite boring. We were just a bit sick of romcoms. I'm sure you can shake it up.

I always want to say to people, 'This isn't reality. None of these films are reality.' They're all someone's fantasy. When you watch a Christopher Nolan film and he's like, 'I've done a bit that's like James Bond.' That's just Christopher Nolan having a laugh, doing whatever he wants on screen. A lot of female directors don't get to do that. We've got more burden on us – you've got to tell us what it's like to be a woman, to investigate and show us some issues. It's so boring, that responsibility.

It starts to mean that the output women are allowed to do, the stories they're allowed to tell start to get a bit the same because you've got to tell about the female experience. I am a female, so it's going to be my experience, my perspective, but some of it is bonkers. My ideas are crazy and I don't want to feel a responsibility of telling the truth or showing it like it is. I just want to have fun with it.

Interview by Lou Thomas, bfi.org.uk, 22 March 2024