



RICHARD EYRE: WEAPONS OF UNDERSTANDING

Iris

Iris

Director: Richard Eyre

©: Fox Iris Productions, InterMedia Film Equities

©/Presented by: BBC Films

Presented by: InterMedia Films, Miramax Films

Production Companies: Mirage Enterprises, Robert Fox, Scott Rudin Productions

Executive Producers: Anthony Minghella, Sydney Pollack, Guy East, David M. Thompson, Tom Hedley, Harvey Weinstein

Producers: Robert Fox, Scott Rudin

Line Producer: Michael Dreyer

Production Executives for BBC Films:

Joanie Blaikie, Jane Hawley

For Intermedia Films: Paul Davis, Nick Drake,

Will Evans, Jere Hausfater

Production Manager: Tim Porter

Production Co-ordinator: Mel Claus

Location Manager: Tom Elgood

Location Finder: Adam Richards

Post-production Supervisor: Stephen Barker

Post-production Co-ordinator: Louise Seymour

1st Assistant Director: Martin Harrison

2nd Assistant Director: Finn McGrath

3rd Assistant Director: Chris Stoaling

Script Supervisor: Cathy Doubleday

Casting Director: Celestia Fox

Casting (ADR Voice): Louis Elman

Script Executives for BBC Films: Tracey Scoffield, Jamie Laurenson

Screenplay: Richard Eyre, Charles Wood

Based on 'Iris: A Memoir'/'Elegy for Iris' by:

John Bayley

Director of Photography: Roger Pratt

2nd Unit Director of Photography: Nick Schlesinger

Underwater Cameraman: Mark Silk

Camera Operator: Paul Bond

Special Effects Supervisor: Peter Notley

Special Effects: The Mill

Editor: Martin Walsh

Production Designer: Gemma Jackson

Art Director: David Warren

Set Decorator: Trisha Edwards

Scenic Artist: Howard Weaver

Storyboard Artists: Jane Clark, Pippa Marks

Costume Designer: Ruth Myers

Costume Supervisor: Michael Mooney

Hair/Make-up Designer: Lisa Westcott

Make-up/Hair Artist: Lesley Smith

Opticals/Titles: Cineimage

Music Composed and Conducted by:

James Horner

Solo Violin: Joshua Bell

Synthesizer Programming: Ian Underwood,

Randy Kerber

Concertmistress: Marcia Crayford

Orchestrations: James Horner, Randy Kerber,

J.A.C. Redford

Music Supervisor: Julyce Monbleaux

Executive in Charge of Music: Randy Spendlove

Music Preparation: Vic Fraser

Supervising Music Editor: Jim Henrikson

Music Editor: Andy Glen

Music Recorded/Mixed by: Simon Rhodes

Music Recorded/Mixed at: London Air Lyndhurst

Choreography: Jane Gibson

Production Sound Mixer: Jim Greenhorn

Re-recording Mixers: Nic Lemessurier,

Anthony Cleal, Mark Sheffield

Supervising Sound Editor: Glenn Freemantle

Sound Editor: Tom Sayers

Dialogue Editor: Gillian Didders

ADR Mixer: Kevin Tayler

+ extended intro by Sir Richard Eyre and Dame Judi Dench

'Essentially, *Iris* is about forms of love and the way in which love changes and love endures,' explains director Richard Eyre, who co-wrote the screenplay with Charles Wood. '*Iris* is first and foremost a love story and I make no bones about that. It is a story of enduring love, a story about love and old age which covers Iris's whole life. In a sense it reflects on everyone, because in every relationship you have to accommodate the otherness of the other person and that's very much what it's about. It also explores how you can be separate beings in a marriage and yet the sum of the marriage is greater than the parts.'

The author and philosopher Iris Murdoch died on 8 February 1999. Shortly before her death her husband, author and academic John Bayley, wrote *Iris: A Memoir* (published as *Elegy for Iris* in the United States). It is a frank, moving and sometimes humorous account of his life with the woman who was frequently described as 'the most brilliant woman in England'. The latter part of the book dealt poignantly with the effect of Alzheimer's on Iris as well as John's selfless devotion to his wife of 43 years. He subsequently wrote a further book about their life, *Iris and Her Friends*. Both books were critically acclaimed on their publication and were at the top of the bestseller lists.

'There's no doubt in my mind that what John Bayley did in looking after Iris was an act of heroism,' continues Eyre, 'Precisely because he was obviously not terribly good at looking after himself. It was an act of love to continue to look after her and I found that tremendously moving. There was a major shift in their relationship – from Iris being the dominant partner, the person that John very much looked up to and deferred to – to her being completely dependent on him. One of the characteristics of the illness is that it peels away what is extraneous to reveal the essence of their relationship. That's a fascinating journey, and it's a journey that spans her whole life.'

Richard Eyre's mother suffered from Alzheimer's – an experience which he described in his autobiography, *Utopia and Other Places*. 'The particular agony of Alzheimer's is that it robs a person of their being and of their personality,' explains Eyre. 'Although in some ways they remain who they are, somehow they are constantly diminished and you just see the person they once were gradually disappear. It's agonising. One of the things that I've tried to show in the film is that even though the person is disappearing in front of you, in some way there is a sense in which they remain. You can still love the person because their soul is still there until the end.'

Judi Dench was attached to star as Iris Murdoch from the very beginning – as far back as spring 1999. At that time, Richard Eyre was directing her in David Hare's National Theatre production of *Amy's View* in London's West End (an acclaimed production which subsequently transferred to Broadway). 'I've known Judi for 35 years and she's a very good friend and simply the best,' he says. 'She is very, very subtle in the way she takes on a character's physical attributes. Put on one side her skill as an actress, which is matchless. She has this humanity – her gift is to imagine other people's lives and to not put herself in the way between the character she's playing and the audience. So she is an absolutely transparent being who allows the character she is playing to breathe through her. And she has tremendous modesty about her, which is very attractive because you feel invited into the character's world.'

ADR Editor: Gillian Dodders
Foley Artists: Paula Boram, Felicity Cottrell
Foley Mixer: Kevin Tayler
Foley Editor: Matt Grime
Post-production Sound by: Reelsound Limited
Stunt Supervisor: Gary Powell
Stunts: Carly Harrop, Lee Millhan, David Ware
Special thanks to: John Bayley
Animal Handler: A1 Animals
Studio: Pinewood Studios

Cast:

Judi Dench (*Iris Murdoch*)
Jim Broadbent (*John Bayley*)
Kate Winslet (*young Iris Murdoch*)
Hugh Bonneville (*young John Bayley*)
Penelope Wilton (*Janet Stone*)
Juliet Aubrey (*young Janet Stone*)
Eleanor Bron (*principal*)
Angela Morant (*hostess*)
Siobhan Hayes (*checkout girl*)
Joan Bakewell (*BBC presenter*)
Nancy Carroll (*BBC PA*)
Kris Marshall (*Doctor Gudgeon*)
Tom Mannion (*neurologist*)
Derek Hutchinson (*postman*)
Samuel West (*young Maurice*)
Saira Todd (*Phillida Stone*)
Juliet Howland (*Emma Stone*)
Charlotte Arkwright (*young Phillida Stone*)
Harriet Arkwright (*young Emma Stone*)
Matilda Allsopp (*little Stone*)
Steve Edis (*pianist*)
Emma Handy (*policewoman*)
Timothy West (*older Maurice*)
Stephen Marcus (*taxi driver*)
Pauline McLynn (*Maureen*)
Gabrielle Reidy (*Tricia*)
UK-USA 2001
91 mins
35mm

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'Jim Broadbent was an absolutely unanimous choice for the part of John Bayley. Once we'd thought of Jim it was impossible to think of anyone else playing the part. He is so idiosyncratic – there is no actor anywhere who is anything like him. He's brilliant at observing behaviour and he has entered into the spirit of John Bayley in quite a remarkable way. And he's managed to play someone who is actually 20 years his senior with an ease that alarms him.'

Eyre describes the casting of the young Iris and young John as essentially a young Judi Dench and a young Jim Broadbent. 'It was an astonishing piece of good luck that Kate turned out to be free at the time that we were filming and was willing and enthusiastic to play the part,' he says. 'Judi in the film does have an extraordinary youth about her. The miracle was that Kate was in some way like a clone and an alter ego of Judi, and they have an identical spirit which harmonises perfectly. Kate's a very mature and thoughtful woman and her greatest strength is similar to Judi Dench's – her humanity.'

'There's a historical Iris Murdoch and there's an Iris Murdoch as embodied by Kate Winslet. I don't think there's a huge difference between them. Iris Murdoch was extraordinarily vigorous. She had a physical energy and an intellectual energy that was really charismatic. She was a star.'

'What Kate and Judi brought to the film is this incandescent goodness and decency. They are both very warm-hearted people who don't dissemble and in some ways that is terribly important to the film. Although Kate's features are unlike Judi's, there's a correspondence of spirit between them, they kind of rhyme.'

Eyre sees similarities between Jim Broadbent and Hugh Bonneville, who plays young John. 'Like Jim, Hugh is a slightly offbeat actor in the sense that he isn't an absolutely straight-down-the-middle romantic young lead, he's a character actor,' says Eyre. 'Hugh is physically very similar to Jim and he has a remarkable ability to observe people's behaviour and become a character without being a superficial mimic. In some way, a combination of Jim and the real John Bayley went into his characterisation. He has real wit and like Jim, he's a very accessible and open person on screen.'

When it came to writing the screenplay Eyre turned to Charles Wood, with whom he had collaborated on the BBC television drama *Tumbledown*, about the 1982 Falklands War. 'We started with the premise that it had to be a double narrative,' explains Eyre. 'The idea of someone losing their memory and losing the faculty of language was a very potent theme, and that was the spine of the story. The tension throughout the film was always to be driven by the youth of the young couple and the decay of the old couple – the young couple falling in love, and the old couple staying in love – and the two stories converging.'

Deciding on a structure for the film was an early source of difficulty. 'One of the most difficult things about the writing was how to make a film that didn't immediately plunge you into the misery of Iris's illness,' says Eyre. 'In the final film, you don't see the illness for quite a long time. That's because we use the device of seeing John and Iris as young people, gloriously unaware of their fate. The strategy is to ambush the audience and to surprise the audience when you're in one reality and you go back to another reality. It's quite a simple structure. You're not dealing with more tenses than past and present.'

Production notes