



RICHARD EYRE: WEAPONS OF UNDERSTANDING

Notes on a Scandal

Notes on a Scandal

Directed by: Richard Eyre

©: DNA Films Ltd

Presented by: Fox Searchlight Pictures,
DNA Films Ltd, UK Film Council

In association with: BBC Films,
Ingenious Film Partners 2 LLP

Made with the support of:

National Lottery through UK Film Council,
Fox Searchlight Pictures

Executive Producer: Redmond Morris

Produced by: Scott Rudin, Robert Fox

Unit Production Manager: Rachel Neale

Production Co-ordinator: Francesca Castellano

Production Accountant: Shruti Shah

Location Manager: Amanda Stevens

Post-production Supervisor: Polly Duval

1st Assistant Directors: Martin Harrison,
Chris Stoaling

2nd 2nd Assistant Director: Charlie Waller

3rd Assistant Director: Heidi Gower

Script Supervisors: Diana Dill,
Keziah Barton-White

Casting by: Maggie Lunn, Shaheen Baig,
Howard Halsall

Screenplay by: Patrick Marber

Based on the book by: Zoë Heller

Director of Photography: Chris Menges

2nd Unit Lighting Cameraman: Paul Bond

2nd Unit Camera Operator: Paul Bond

Focus Puller: Ben Wilson

Clapper Loaders: Sam Barnes, Urszula Pontikos,
Ashley Bond

2nd Camera Assistant: Mark Milsome

Gaffer: Lee Walters

Grip: Gary Hymns

Video Playback: Alex Hobbs

Still Photographer: Clive Coote

Special Effects Co-ordinators: Stuart Brisdon,
Mark Haddenham

Graphics: Kem White

Film Editors: John Bloom,
Antonia Van Drimmelen

Assistant Editor: Martin Corbett

Production Designer: Tim Hatley

Supervising Art Director: Mark Raggett

Art Director: Hannah Moseley

Standby Art Director: Grant Armstrong

Set Decorator: Caroline Smith

Property Master: Maxie McDonald

Construction Manager: Robin Thistlethwaite

Costume Designer: Tim Hatley

Costume Supervisor: Allison Wyldeck

Chief Hair/Make-up: Lisa Westcott,
Rebecca Lafford

Make-up/Hair Artists: Jayne Buxton,
Helen Johnson

Hairdresser for Ms Blanchett: Eamonn Hughes

Titles Design: Randy Balsmeyer, Big Film Design

Opticals: Cineimage

Negative Cutter: Cutting Edge

Lab Colour Timers: Martin Scoones,
Joe Dunton Cameras

Laboratory Liaison: John Ensbey

Music by: Philip Glass

Orchestra Leader: John Bradbury

Music Conducted by: Michael Riesman

Music Supervisor: Hothouse Music

Orchestra Contractor: Isobel Griffiths

Music Production Co-ordinator: Christian Rutledge

Supervising Music Editor: Joseph S. Debeasi

Music Editors: Graham Sutton, Missy Coen

'People have always trusted me with their secrets. But who do I trust with mine?' (Barbara Covett, *Notes on a Scandal*)

Two women caught up in a drama of need and betrayal are at the heart of this psychological thriller, *Notes on a Scandal*. The twists and turns of the story are noted in the acerbic diary of Barbara Covett (Dame Judi Dench), a domineering and solitary teacher who rules with an iron fist over her classroom at a decaying state-run secondary school in London. Save for her cat, Portia, Barbara lives alone, without friends or confidantes – but her world changes when she meets the school's new art teacher, Sheba Hart (Cate Blanchett).

Sheba appears to be the kindred spirit and loyal friend Barbara has always been seeking. But when she discovers that Sheba is having an incendiary affair with one of her young students (Andrew Simpson), their budding relationship takes an ominous turn. Now, as Barbara threatens to expose Sheba's terrible secret to both her husband (Bill Nighy) and the world, Barbara's own secrets and dark obsessions come tumbling to the fore, exposing the deceptions at the core of each of the women's lives.

In this age of loneliness, isolation and disconnect, we live in cities that house millions of people yet everyone at one time or another yearns for companionship, for someone to reach out and connect with us on some level... any level. This is the universal feeling that comes through in Zoë Heller's 2001 page-turner of a novel, *What Was She Thinking: Notes on a Scandal*, a suspenseful story of loneliness and obsession that cuts, with equal parts dark humour and realism, right to the shadowy centre of the human yearning for connection. Readers were drawn in by Barbara Covett's blisteringly funny, yet ultimately deceptive, revelations about her so-called friendship with fellow teacher, Sheba Hart.

Between Sheba's dangerously ill-conceived affair with a student and Barbara's own 'spin' and hidden agenda, what might have been merely a character study unfolded more like a thriller. Eventually, the book would garner not only widespread acclaim but numerous awards, including being short-listed for the coveted Man Booker Prize for English literature. The rights were quickly acquired by leading producers Scott Rudin and Robert Fox. Rudin had already contracted with leading playwright and screenwriter Patrick Marber to tackle the adaptation.

When Richard Eyre was approached by Rudin and Fox about directing the film version of *Notes on a Scandal* he, like so many others, had already read the book. Eyre had found it at once funny, touching and beautifully observed – precisely the kind of material that intrigues him. Eyre and Rudin had previously collaborated with great success, along with Judi Dench, on the acclaimed *Iris*, the film about the extraordinary life-long love affair between the brilliant author Iris Murdoch and her devoted husband, John Bayley as well as the critically lauded stage production *Amy's View*. Eyre next directed the critically praised *Stage Beauty*, a comedy-drama set on the 17th Century London stage, but had since returned to the theatre, directing two highly successful and utterly opposite productions: the new musical stage version of *Mary Poppins* in

Music Engineer: Chris Dibble
Music Mixed by: Michael Riesman
Sound Supervisor (London Sound Crew):
James Mather
Production Sound Mixer: Jim Greenhorn
Boom Operator: Kate Morath
Re-recording Mixers (NY Sound Crew):
Lee Dichter, Martin Czembor
Re-recording Mixer (London Sound Crew):
Mike Prestwood Smith
Supervising Sound Editors (NY Sound Crew):
Jacob Ribikoff, Stuart Stanley
Dialogue Editor (London Sound Crew): Tim Owens
FX Editor (London Sound Crew):
Joseph Park Stracey
ADR Recording Engineer (London Sound Crew):
Andy Thompson
ADR Editor (London Sound Crew): Nigel Stone
Foley Artists (London Sound Crew): Andi Derrick,
Peter Burgis
Foley Engineers (London Sound Crew):
Edward Colyer, Nigel Heath
Foley Editor (London Sound Crew): Derek Trigg
Stunt Co-ordinator: Nrinder Dhudwar
Stunts: Peter Pedrero, Tina Maskell, Rob Hunt,
John Street
Research Consultant: Ruth Halliday
Voice Coach: Joan Washington
Unit Publicist: Linda Gamble, McDonald & Rutter
Filmed on location and at: Elstree Studios
Cast:
Judi Dench (Barbara Covett)
Cate Blanchett (Sheba Hart)
Bill Nighy (Richard Hart)
Andrew Simpson (Steven Connolly)
Phil Davis (Brian Bangs)
Michael Maloney (Sandy Pabblem)
Juno Temple (Polly Hart)
Max Lewis (Ben Hart)
Joanna Scanlan (Sue Hodge)
Julia McKenzie (Marjorie)
Shaun Parkes (Bill Rumer)
Tom Georgeson (Ted Mawson)
Emma Kennedy (Linda)
Syreeta Kumar (Gita)
Wendy Nottingham (Elaine Clifford)
Tameka Empson (Antonia Robinson)
Leon Skinner (Davis)
Debra Gillett (Lorraine)
Barry McCarthy (Dave)
Adrian Scarborough (Martin)
Jill Baker (Sheba's mother)
Diana Berriman (Marcia)
Alice Bird (Saskia)
Benedict Taylor (Eddie)
Miranda Pleasence (Eddie's wife)
Jonathan Speer (vet)
Stephen Kennedy (Mr Connolly)
Derbhle Crotty (Mrs Connolly)
Catherine Drew (newsreader)
Anne-Marie Duff (Annabel)
UK-USA 2006©
92 mins
35mm

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London and on Broadway, and his fresh adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's classic drama *Hedda Gabler* in London's West End.

Marber's adaptation would be challenging, as Heller's novel was written as a series of highly subjective journal entries in the pen of Barbara Covett which he masterfully crafted as diary entries, slowly revealing through her unreliable words the depths of her delusions and manipulations when it came to Sheba Hart. But based on Marber's previous body of work, there was no doubt that he was up to the task. He recently came to the fore as the author of the play *Closer*, a darkly funny look into the realities of love and desire.

Marber had to come up with a way to turn Zoë Heller's distinctly literary approach to the story of Barbara and Sheba into something far more dynamic, immediate and cinematic. Marber carved the story around the book's most relevant and pressing theme: the overwhelming isolation that wrecks so much havoc in modern lives, which is the ultimate undoing of Barbara Covett.

Marber began by exploring the story's two main characters, starting with Barbara, the unforgettable narrator who comes to harbour corrosive secrets about her new 'best friend,' Sheba Hart. Marber felt a similarly invigorating conflict towards the character of Sheba. 'I gave Sheba a slightly more offbeat, bohemian background than she has in the book, but her vulnerabilities and complicated feelings remain the same,' he comments.

Upon reading the completed screenplay, Richard Eyre was impressed with Marber's skill at shifting the story from the subtlety of the page to the grander scale of the big screen, turning Barbara's journal entries into palpably realistic scenes. Also important to Eyre was the screenplay's honest handling of the highly topical but definitely controversial notion of a middle-aged, married teacher carrying on a torrid affair with her underage student. Ultimately, Eyre was most pleased by how the screenplay seemed to capture the irresistible speed and fearless verve of Heller's novel, while retaining its rich emotions of laughter, horror and grief – which he knew would be heightened further via the film's visual style and performances.

'I really hope people find this film funny, as well as occasionally frightening, shocking and sad,' Eyre says. 'There is something at once comical, ghastly and terribly human about this delusion that Barbara has that she will have a passionate, lifelong friendship with Sheba. And Barbara's feelings for Sheba are analogous to Sheba's feelings for Steven, the schoolboy. These two women are not in control – any more than any of us are in control when it comes to love.'

Production notes