



Ridley Scott: Building Cinematic Worlds

A Good Year

A Good Year

Directed by: Ridley Scott
©: Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation,
Dune Entertainment LLC, TCF Hungary Film Rights
Exploitation Limited Liability Company
Production Company: Scott Free
Made in association with: Dune Entertainment LLC,
Major Studio Partners
Presented by: Fox 2000 Pictures
Presented in association with:
Ingenious Film Partners
Executive Producers: Branko Lustig, Julie Payne,
Lisa Ellzey
Produced by: Ridley Scott
Co-producer: Erin Upson
French Line Producer: Mark Allan
Unit Production Managers: Mark Allan,
Branko Lustig
Unit Production Manager (London Unit):
Emily Stillman
Unit Manager: Rémi Bergman
Production Co-ordinator:
Laurence Coutaud-Garnier
Production Co-ordinator (London Unit):
Fiona Garland
Financial Controller: Gary Gillingham
Key Production Accountant:
Maureen 'Mo' Crutchfield
Location Managers: Thierry Zemmour, Jeremy Bau
Location Supervisor: Marco Giacalone
Post-production Supervisor: Teresa Kelly
1st Assistant Director: Darin Rivetti
2nd Assistant Director: Emilie Cherpitel
Script Supervisor: Nikki Clapp
Casting (UK): Jina Jay
Casting (France): Antoinette Boulart
Screenplay: Marc Klein
Based on the book by: Peter Mayle
Director of Photography: Philippe Le Sourd
B Camera/Steadicam Operator: Jörg Widmer
Additional Operator: Roger McDonald
Gaffer: Franck Barrault
Key Grip: Françoise Bert
Video Technician: Robert Hamilton
Still Photographer: Ricardo Torres
Visual Effects Supervisor: Wesley Sewell
Visual Effects by: Invisible Effects
Special Effects Supervisor: Steven Warner
Graphic Designer (London Unit): Coralie Lew
Film Editor: Dody Dorn
Co-editor: Robb Sullivan
Production Designer: Sonja Klaus
Art Director: Frederic Evard
Art Director (London Unit): Robert Cowper
Art Department Co-ordinator: Amy Simons
Set Decorator: Bárbara Pérez-Solero
Production Buyer: Krissi Williamson
Prop Master: Matt Foster
Construction Manager: Daniel Hoffmann
Costume Designer: Catherine Leterrier
Assistant Costume Designer: Camille Janbon
Costume Supervisor (London Unit): Lee Croucher
Key Make-up Artist: Fabrizio Sforza
Hair Designer: Giancarlo De Leonardi
Key Hair: Hayat Oulet Dahhou
Main/End Title Sequence by: yU+co.
End Title Crawl by: Scarlet Letters
Colour Timer: Jim Passon
Music: Marc Streitenfeld
Orchestra Leader: Tom Bowes
Music Conducted by: Nick Ingman
Music Orchestrated by: Bruce Fowler
Music Supervisor: Marc Streitenfeld

Peter Mayle is a native Brit who abandoned a successful advertising career and reinvented himself as a best-selling author and novelist. He has been writing about the good life in the South of France for over 15 years. Critics have praised his books, both fiction and nonfiction, calling the writer 'the world's foremost literary escape artist' because of his knack for setting his colourful yarns in a locale one magazine called 'the most enticing place this side of paradise.' Mayle's first book, a memoir called *A Year in Provence*, has sold over five million copies (in 28 languages) since its publication in 1991.

It was over a bottle of Provençal wine that Mayle (who lives full-time in the Luberon area of Provence) and filmmaker Ridley Scott (who has maintained a vacation home and vineyard there for 15 years) came up with the idea for Mayle's breezy 2004 novel *A Good Year*. 'Ridley used to work in the commercials business and I used to work in the advertising agency business in London,' Mayle recounts about his early history with the filmmaker; their friendship stretches back to London's advertising world of the 1970s. 'He was about the best there was, so we would always use his company for shooting commercials if we could afford him. We worked together intermittently in London, and then he went off and did movies and I went off and (wrote) books.'

Almost three decades later, Scott and Mayle had a memorable lunch. 'Ridley arrived with a newspaper clipping which reported on new wines in Bordeaux – "garage" wines – which commanded huge prices without a chateau or pedigree. Yet, people paid a fortune for them.'

'I saw this piece in the newspaper business section of the *Times* about a vineyard in France that was selling garage wine for over £30,000 a case,' Scott recounts about the 1996 clipping, which he still keeps in his files in London. 'I was looking for an excuse to come back to France to shoot a film, and this story idea offered the perfect opportunity.'

'I bounced this idea off Peter Mayle and he said, "That would make a good novel,"' Scott remembers. 'And I said, "You write the book, then I'll get the film rights." So, he wrote the book, which was successful.'

Mayle labored at his laptop for nine months in 2003, researching the subject in both in his adopted Provence and in one of the world's renowned wine regions, Bordeaux, on France's Atlantic coast. Le Pin, located in the appellation called Pomerol, cultivates what many believe to be the best Merlot on the planet.

In the meantime, Scott went off to Morocco and Spain to film his epic saga, *Kingdom of Heaven*. A month after the author turned in his manuscript, a deal was finalised for the film rights – and Scott and Mayle were back in business together.

Scott also suggested the book's (and film's) title. 'A winemaker has a difficult life. But if he gets it right, he's had a good year,' says the filmmaker. 'That's what a French winemaker will say: "It's been a good year."'

Scott chose New York native Marc Klein (*Serendipity*) to adapt Mayle's novel for the screen. Klein admits that when he accepted Scott's offer, he knew nothing about wine or Provence. Scott advised Klein to visit the South of France to

Music Editors: Del Spiva, Chris Benstead
Production Sound Mixer: Jean-Paul Mugel
Sound Mixing: Paul Massey, D.M. Hemphill
Supervising Sound Editors: Per Hallberg, Karen Baker Landers
Dialogue Editors: Patrick J. Foley, John C. Stuver
Sound Effects Editors: Christopher Assells, Dino R. Dimuro, Daniel Hegeman, Peter Staubli, Kerry Carmean-Williams
Stunt Co-ordinator: Philippe Guégan
Special Adviser to Ridley Scott: Neville Shulman
Research Consultant: Geraldine Serafini
Dialogue Coach for Russell Crowe: Judi Dickerson
Cast:

Russell Crowe (*Max Skinner*)
 Albert Finney (*Uncle Henry*)
 Marion Cotillard (*Fanny Chenal*)
 Abbie Cornish (*Christie Roberts*)
 Didier Bourdon (*Francis Dufflot*)
 Tom Hollander (*Charlie Willis*)
 Freddie Highmore (*young Max*)
 Isabelle Candelier (*Ludivine Dufflot*)
 Kenneth Cranham (*Sir Nigel*)
 Archie Panjabi (*Gemma*)
 Rafe Spall (*Kenny*)
 Richard Coyle (*Arms*)
 Ben Righton (*trader 1*)
 Patrick Kennedy (*trader 2*)
 Ali Rhodes (*20-something beauty*)
 Daniel Mays (*Bert the doorman*)
 Nila Aalia (*newscaster 1*)
 Stephen Hudson (*newscaster 2*)
 Giannina Facio (*maitre d'*)
 Lionel Briand (*rental car employee*)
 Maria Papas (*Gemma's friend*)
 Igor Panich (*Russian couple 1*)
 Oleg Sosnovikov (*Russian couple 2*)
 Magali Woch (*secretary*)
 Valéria Bruni-Tedeschi (*Nathalie Auzet*)
 Jacques Herlin (*Papa Dufflot*)
 Catriona MacColl (*English couple 1*)
 Patrick Payet (*English couple 2*)
 Félicité du Jeu (*hostess*)
 Mitchell Mullen (*American customer 1*)
 Judi Dickerson (*American customer 2*)
 Gilles Gaston-Dreyfus (*oenologue*)
 Philippe Mery, Dominique Laurent (*château buyers*)
 Stewart Wright (*broker 1*)
 Tom Stuart (*broker 2*)
 Catherine Vinatier (*Fanny's mother*)
 Marine Casto (*young Fanny*)
 Gregg Chillin (*hip hopper 1*)
 Toney Tutini (*hip hopper 2*)
 UK-USA 2006©
 117 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

**SIGHT
AND
SOUND**

conduct research and get a flavour of the area. Klein visited Provence in 2004, met with Peter Mayle, and spent almost a year researching the region and the wines.

Adapting Mayle's novel provided Klein with some formidable challenges. 'Peter writes books that are like travelogues,' says the screenwriter. 'They're more about atmosphere – the kind of book one likes to read on vacation, where you want to be swept away to a certain place. We needed to provide additional narrative structure on it. At the same time, we wanted to give moviegoers the same experience they would have reading the book.'

'Peter's book is a jolly romp,' Scott adds. 'It's very much embedded in the lifestyle of Provence. For the movie, I found that the mechanism for the story needed to be adjusted a little bit, to turn up the volume on the character of Max, who needed to learn an important life lesson. The philosophy that Uncle Henry was trying to instil into this young Max really didn't take.'

A key change from the novel was the screenplay's depiction of Uncle Henry, who is only referred to in the novel. After toying with the idea of making Henry a ghostly figure, Scott and Klein decided to depict the character in flashbacks, which, says Scott, 'allows us to see the grooming of Max as a child, which pays off as the story unfolds.'

According to Russell Crowe, these flashback scenes accent one of the film's principal themes: 'That as long as people are in your heart, they never die.'

'I thought that was a wonderful metaphor,' Crowe continues. 'When Ridley and I worked on *Gladiator*, the metaphor was death. But on *A Good Year*, we discussed the themes in terms of reincarnation – not necessarily from the dead to the living, but having the "living dead", like Max, become revitalised from his experiences in Provence. Every character in this story has a situation that changes his or her life for the better.'

Says legendary actor Albert Finney, who portrays Henry: 'Max has these memories of his uncle when he had his summer holidays here as a child. He remembers them favourably, which suggests he had a good time with Henry. Young Max enjoyed his company. The philosophy Henry imparts on the boy has mostly to do with wine in particular, but around that is a philosophy of enjoying life. I think he's a good influence on the boy.'

Max isn't the only character that undergoes transformation. Says Crowe: 'For every character, something happens within the story that elevates, changes or revitalises his or her life. I've had the same thing happen in my own life, when I married and we had a baby. So it is possible to get yourself out of a rut and change things. That's what the title refers to – Max's life. He comes to Provence, reconnects with the memory of his uncle and the things that his uncle taught him, which opens his heart. And his life changes.'

'I think audiences will come out with memories of their childhood after seeing this film,' says 14-year-old Freddie Highmore, who portrays the young Max. 'The film will make you look back on the things that have happened in your own life. Young Max didn't know at the time how important the lessons were that Uncle Henry was giving him. But, as he got older and comes back to visit this place, he realises how important they have been in making him grow up.'

Production notes