



## Big Screen Classics

# Shame

### Shame

*Directed by:* Steve McQueen

©: New Amsterdam Film Limited, Channel Four

Television Corporation, The British Film Institute

A Film 4 and UK Film Council presentation

In association with Alliance Films, LipSync

Productions, Hanway Films

A See-Saw Films production

*Filmed with the support of:* The New York State Governor's Office for Motion Picture & Television Development

*Executive Producer:* Tessa Ross, Robert Walak, Peter Hampden, Tim Haslam

*Produced by:* Iain Canning, Emile Sherman

*Co-producer:* Bergen Swanson

*For See-Saw Films: Head of Business Affairs:* Alice

Clough; *Production and Development Executive:*

Katherine Bridle; *Production Executive:* Simone

Nicholson; *Development Executive:* Charles

Dorfman; *Accountant:* Helen Wong

*For Film4: Head of Development:* Sam Lavender;

*Head of Business Affairs:* Harry Dixon; *Head of*

*Commercial Development:* Susie Bruce-Smith;

*Business Affairs Executive:* Tracey Josephs

*For UK Film Council: Head of the Film Fund:* Tanya

Seghatchian; *Senior Production and Development*

*Executive:* Lizzie Francke; *Head of Production:*

Fiona Morham; *Head of Business Affairs:* Will

Evans; *Head of Production Finance:* Vince Holden

*For LipSync: Production Executives:* Norman Merry,

Robin Guise, Peter Raven

*Unit Production Manager:* Danielle Blumstein

*Production Co-ordinator:* Charlie Dibe

*Production Accountant:* Tara Andrus

*Post-production Accountant:* Neil Cairns

*Location Manager:* David Velasco

*Post-production Supervisor:* Emma Zee

*Post-production Co-ordinator:* Siobhan Boyes

*1st Assistant Director:* Atilla Salih Yucer

*2nd Assistant Director:* Julian Blevins

*Script Supervisor:* Eva Z. Cabrera

*Casting Director:* Avy Kaufman

*Written by:* Steve McQueen, Abi Morgan

*Director of Photography:* Sean Bobbitt

*Camera Operator:* Timothy Naylor

*Steadicam Operator:* Dave Chameides

*1st Assistant Camera:* Ludovic Littee

*2nd Assistant Camera:* Spencer Gillis

*Camera Loaders:* Manny Siverio, Nicole Cosgrove

*Gaffer:* Bill Newell

*Key Grip:* Rob Harlow

*Stills Photographer:* Abbot Genser

*Digital Grading, Sound and Visual Effects by:*

LipSync Post

*Editor:* Joe Walker

*Production Designer:* Judy Becker

*Art Director:* Charles Kulszski

*Set Decorator:* Heather Loeffler

*Property Master:* Matthew Amenta

*Costume Designer:* David Robinson

*Wardrobe Supervisor:* Barbara Hause

*Make-up Department Head:* Ma Kalaadevi Ananda

*SPFX Make-up Artist:* Craig Lindberg

*Key Make-up Artist:* Nick London

*Hair Department Head:* Erin Hicks

*Key Hair Stylist:* Juanita Townsend

*Titles by:* LipSync Post

*Composer:* Harry Escott

*Music Supervisor:* Ian Neil

*Sound Design Editor:* Niv Adiri

*Sound Supervisor:* Glenn Freemantle

*Boom Operator:* Anguibe Guindo

*Re-recording Mixer:* Paul Cotterell, Niv Adiri

### Steve McQueen on 'Shame'

*Where do you think the tipping point is between someone who is merely sexually promiscuous and somebody who is sexually addicted?*

When I first heard about the idea of sex addiction, I laughed. It's like being at a Christmas party when Mary or Jonathan is drunk and everyone says, 'Oh, he's a fantastic drunk, isn't he?' But when you realise that for Mary or Jonathan to get through a day they have to drink two bottles of vodka, it ceases to be funny. It's a similar thing with sexual addiction. When you find out that in order to get through a day, someone is on the internet for 20 hours a day or more looking at pornography or having to have a sexual activity at least ten times a day, it's incredible.

*There's been criticism in the US about the film's attitude to women. The critic Jonathan Rosenbaum refers to the film's 'sexist complacencies and brutalities'.*

He really did? Woah. OK, Brandon is a sex addict. He has problems with intimacy. So he has a view on what he wants from certain women, because he doesn't want what certain other women want to offer him which is a sense of intimacy, of love. For Brandon, to be intimate means he's lost control. That's classic sex-addict behaviour. Sex for them is having control. There are things that can facilitate that: pornography, prostitutes or women out for a one-night stand. But intimacy threatens Brandon, and his is a very sad existence.

He attempts intimacy with Marianne [the co-worker played by Nicole Beharie, with whom Brandon tries to go on a date]. I wanted people to see him trying to engage, to open up, but he's really incapable of it. He can't put a sexual act with Marianne into a relationship. Therefore, what we do is cut to [Brandon having sex with] this [hired] woman on the glass. Saying this movie is about sexism is like saying *Taxi Driver* is a racist movie. And I'm surprised people haven't said *Taxi Driver* is a racist movie.

*The BFI Classics book on Taxi Driver goes into that issue in detail.*

But why did they make the Harvey Keitel character a white guy? People understand that, just as they have to understand that Brandon has this affliction. Of course people don't really accept sexual addiction, because they think that it's just people being promiscuous. It's a similar situation with Billy Wilder when he was making *The Lost Weekend*. Back then, people were not looking at alcoholism, they were just thinking drunks were stupid. Alcohol addiction wasn't seen as a real disease.

You see the situation with Brandon in the nightclub and Sissy's singing 'New York, New York' to him, and he's heartbroken. He's forced to sit down and listen. She's performing and she can directly tell him how she feels. And she's telling him where they've come from, and where they would like to go. So in that huge room, with so many people, they have an intimacy which is absolutely amazing, where he actually opens up. This is not a monster, this is not a person who is sexist. This is person who has a problem and in the film we look at that problem.

*How did you decide on the song? 'New York, New York' is so well-known.*

Brandon is imploding and Sissy has reacted her past in an explosive way. So I liked the idea of her being a soul jazz singer, because then she can express herself through her art. I didn't know the original song actually came from Scorsese's *New York, New York*. I thought it was a classic. Of course I saw it with Liza Minnelli performing it, but I never knew it was written for that movie. But you read the lyrics of 'New York, New York', it's a blues. It's not up-tempo – it's not Sinatra swinging the microphone around. 'These vagabond shoes are

Sound Mixer: Ken Ishii  
Sound Effects Editor: Ben Barker  
Stunt Co-ordinator: Roy Farfel  
Cast:  
Michael Fassbender (*Brandon*)  
Carey Mulligan (*Sissy*)  
James Badge Dale (*David*)  
Nicole Beharie (*Marianne*)  
Lucy Walters (*woman on subway train*)  
Mari-Ange Ramirez (*Alexa*)  
Alex Manette (*Steven*)  
Hannah Ware (*Samantha*)  
Elizabeth Masucci (*Elizabeth*)  
Rachel Farrar (*Rachel*)  
Lauren Omer (*Loren*)  
Lauren Tyrrell (*hostess*)  
Marta Milans (*cocktail waitress*)  
Jake Siciliano (*Skype son*)  
Robert Montano (*waiter*)  
Charisse Merman (*live chat woman*)  
Amy Hargreaves (*hotel lover*)  
Anna Rose Hopkins (*Carly*)  
Chazz Menedez (*muscular boyfriend*)  
Carl Low (*bouncer*)  
Calamity Chang (*late night lover 1*)  
Deedee Luxe (*late night lover 2*)  
Stanley Mathis (*conductor*)  
Wenne Alton Davis (*police officer*)  
UK-Canada 2011©  
101 mins  
Digital

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longing to stray': the person is homeless and he sees the bright lights in the distance. What's interesting about 'New York, New York' is that everyone has a relationship to that song. It's extraordinarily familiar. But when you turn it into something which is intimate, it makes it even stronger.

*You like to work with long takes and scenes that play out sometimes in a single shot with the actors moving around in a choreographic way. How did that style develop?*

I don't know. It's just finding things out. It's like walking into a room and all the lights have been switched off and I have to feel my way around and get the geography right. I'm tripping over, I'm bumping into things, but I'm finding out through touch, smell, other senses, what the layout of the room is.

*You initially thought about making Shame in the UK, but it was difficult to find research examples.*

I wanted to do it here, but we couldn't get anyone to speak about sex addiction. The two experts in the field that myself and [screenwriter] Abi Morgan wanted to see were in New York. They introduced us to sex addicts. So I thought, 'Why don't I just make the film in New York?' That was it. The wind carried us there. I never wanted to make a New York movie.

I just want to get back to this sexism thing. Of the two women that Brandon is more intimate with, Sissy's damaged, but she's willing to talk – she's strong enough to talk about things, and of course Marianne is willing to take a chance. I would say that Marianne is the most healthy person in the film. Sissy of course is damaged, but she would desperately love to get better and she's doing it in the way that she's expressing herself. He's the one who's just closed.

*To turn your earlier point about Taxi Driver back on you, this film is nearly all about white folks.*

Yes, it's all about white folks, but that's not a turning back. I'm not making a racist movie, or a sexist movie. The majority of my art films have Black protagonists. So I'm free to do anything I can do. Rock 'n' roll, blues, classical, whatever. My next picture is going to be predominantly Black people, and the one after. I grew up in a society where – fortunately, in Britain – I didn't live in a segregated area. So I make movies about whatever I want to make movies about.

This whole idea of sex addiction in New York, the people I was introduced to in the research were mainly... well, one was maybe half Spanish, half-white American. My work is not deliberately made for white people. It's just about the research and the way it presented itself. People didn't want me to put Nicole Beharie (who is African American) in the movie. You go to a lot of offices in New York and the majority of people will be white and that's it – that's the environment. The people I've been introduced to as sex addicts are 99.9 per cent white – let's just go with that. They didn't want me to work with Nicole Beharie and I said 'Why?' And they said, 'Because that wouldn't happen – that wouldn't exist.' And I said, 'What, I don't exist?'

*Shame* was the best thing I could do right now – I can't do any better right now. As an actor or as an artist, you know tomorrow you could get hit by a bus. When I'm working with an actor, it's as if it's the last performance they will ever do, and it's got to be there. If we're lucky enough to record that, then that's it. It's going to be the best thing that person can actually do.

You think of James Dean – what a legacy. Three movies – that's it. It's gotta be as if it's the last movie you're ever going to make.

Interview by Nick James, *Sight and Sound*, February 2012