

**Shot on location in Belfast**

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Harriet Pennington Legh - Prasanna Puwanarajah - Mandy Horton - Shelly Love - Brian Falconer - Chris Myers - Emily Taffe  
Kerri Quinn - Françoise Von Roy - Deborah Pearson - Benny Karimyar - Wren Hodges - Sam Hodges –  
Edzard van der Wyck

### **THANKS**

Paul Ashton - Jude Lister - Hope Moon - Katy Jackson - Tim Dennison - Nathan Coetzee - Ann Quinn - Giles Smart  
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HW Riggers - Procam

### **ROOKS NEST ENTERTAINMENT**

**Developed with the assistance of BBC FILMS**

**Developed with the support of CREATIVE ENGLAND via the BFI NET.WORK**

### **NORTHERN IRELAND SCREEN**

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**"Tremulant"**

Is composed, performed and produced by Toke Brorson Odin

**"Love You"**

Performed by The Free Design

Written by Sandra Dedrick and Joseph Zynczak

Courtesy of Light in the Attic Records & Distribution, LLC

**"re: Intro - Audiotree Live Version"**

Written and Performed by Madison McFerrin

Licensed courtesy of Madison McFerrin under licence to Audiotree, LLC

Published by Mad McFerrin Music

**"Givin' Up On Love"**

Written by Craig William Poole and Robert Thomas Wannamaker

Courtesy of Audio Monkey Production Music

Under license from Amphibious Zoo Music

**"Woke Up Dead"**

Performed by Kyla La Grange

Licensed courtesy of Kyla La Grange under exclusive licence to Sony Music Entertainment UK Limited

Published by Spirit Two Music, Inc. o/b/o itself and Ioki Music

**"Historic Hauntings"**

Footage courtesy of The Duke Video Archive

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Dialogue Editor **Ian Wilkinson**  
Effects Editor **Pietro Dalmasso**  
Foley Artist **Rowena Wilkinson**

Data Manager **Rob Wright**

Dailies Coordinator **Rory Caldwell**  
Dailies Assistant **Lee Kinnier**

Visual Effects Supervisors **Darren R. Nash**  
**Colin McCusker**

Visual Effects Compositors **Ryan P. Yates**  
**David McCabe**  
**Aaron Hegarty**  
**Connor Cain**

**"Pyramid Party 2"**

**Written by Barrie Gledden and Peter Shand**  
**Under license from Audio Network Limited**

**"Road Trip"**

**Written by Sam Cardon and Yoni Gileadi**  
**Courtesy of Darwin Music International**  
**Under license from Amphibious Zoo Music**

**"Stand Up"**

**Written by Stuart Barry Maxfield**  
**Courtesy of Darwin Music International**  
**Under license from Amphibious Zoo Music**

**"Destinations"**

**Written by Scott Reinwand**  
**Courtesy of Amphibious Zoo Music**  
**Under license from Amphibious Zoo Music**

Head Chef **Alan Delaney**

Unit Driver **Michael Miskimmin**

Mini Bus Drivers **Dermott McKee**  
**Steven Heron**

Action Vehicles **Stanley Chambers**

Action Vehicles Coordinator **David Kinghan**

Low Loader Driver **Gary Greenberg**

Facilities Manager **Tom Bryans**

Facilities Driver **Sam Taggart**

Camera Truck **Andy Tinsley**

Medic **Sarah Kirkland**

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**Ellen Steers**

Unit Photographer **Chris Martin**

EPK **Martin Stalker**

Title Design **Julian House**

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Managing Director **Greg Darby**

Facility Manager **Clare Campbell**

Post Production Supervisor **Sophia McKeever**

Online Editor **Jonny Fetherston**

Colourist **Scott Ferguson**

Gaffer	<b>Carlo McDonnell</b>
Electricians	<b>Martin Cattigan</b>
	<b>Aileen Doyle</b>
Daily Electricians	<b>John Noble</b>
	<b>Lee Lovett</b>
Art Director	<b>Noel Aherne</b>
Set Decorator	<b>Áine Mc Guinness</b>
Production Buyer	<b>Vicki Mohan</b>
Prop Master	<b>Duncan Griffiths</b>
Senior Prop Hand	<b>Steve Collins</b>
Set Dresser	<b>James Rea</b>
Standby Props	<b>Ollie McDonald</b>
Graphics	<b>Jarlath Houston</b>
Daily Set Dresser	<b>Mark Shiels</b>
Animal Handler	<b>Kenny Gracey</b>
SFX Technician	<b>Terry Palmer</b>
Costume Supervisor	<b>Malachy Casement</b>
Costume Standby	<b>Jessica Burton</b>
Costume Trainee	<b>Fionnghuala Mohan</b>
Make Up and Hair Artist	<b>Cat Coogan</b>
Junior Make Up Assistant	<b>Corinne Clery</b>
Sound Recordist	<b>Mervyn Moore</b>
Sound Maintenance	<b>Robert Johnston</b>
Location Manager	<b>David McKee</b>
Unit Manager	<b>Robbie Huffam</b>
Location Assistant	<b>Declan McMullan</b>
Catering	<b>Chad Falls</b>

Extras Casting	<b>Extras NI</b>
Head Chaperone	<b>Lisa Curry</b>
Key Cast Chaperone	<b>Claire Kinning</b>
Cast Tutor	<b>Paddy O'Hagen</b>
Script Supervisor	<b>Jane Simon</b>
Production Manager	<b>Darren Chesney</b>
Production Coordinator	<b>Lisa Service</b>
	<b>Lucretia Devlin</b>
Production Runner	<b>Sophie Donnelly</b>
Production Accountant	<b>Liam O'Connor</b>
Assistant Accountant	<b>Clare Tolan</b>
Reporting Accountant	<b>Allen Fleming</b>
A Cam 1st Assistant Camera	<b>Sam Donaghy-Bell</b>
A Cam 2nd Assistant Camera	<b>Scott Mitchell</b>
A Cam Camera Trainee / B Cam 2nd AC	<b>Gerard Donnelly</b>
Daily B Cam 1st AC	<b>Noah Davis</b>
Daily Camera Trainee	<b>Jack Gourley</b>
Drone Shoot	<b>CineCopters</b>
2nd Unit / Additional Photography	<b>CineMedia</b>
Additional Photography 1st AC	<b>Emil Davidov</b>
Additional Photography DIT	<b>Korsshan Schlauer</b>
Digital Imaging Technician	<b>Declan McVey</b>
Key Grip	<b>Donavan Gallagher</b>
Assistant Grip	<b>Jacob Pescott</b>
Daily Rigger	<b>Damien Donnelly</b>
	<b>Sean McKeown</b>
	<b>Martin Saunders</b>

She followed this success by shooting Dawn Shadforth's *Adult Material* for Channel 4; Nia DaCosta's episodes of the first Netflix-produced season of TOP BOY in 2019, and the upcoming feature HERE BEFORE, directed by Stacey Gregg with Rooks Nest, BFI and BBC Film.

## **CREDITS**

### **CAST**

#### **in order of appearance**

Brendan	<b>Jonjo O'Neill</b>
Josie	<b>Grace O'Dwyer</b>
Laura	<b>Andrea Riseborough</b>
Megan	<b>Niamh Dornan</b>
Marie	<b>Eileen O'Higgins</b>
Chris	<b>Martin McCann</b>
Tadhg	<b>Lewis McAskie</b>
Paula	<b>Gina Moxley</b>
Roxanne	<b>Chrissy Hindley</b>
Ian	<b>Jesse Frazer</b>
Mr O'Riordan	<b>Terence Keeley</b>
Secretary	<b>Tony Flynn</b>
Police Officer 1	<b>Louise Matthews</b>
Police Officer 2	<b>Remi Shore</b>

1st Assistant Director	<b>Ciaran Colton</b>
2nd Assistant Director	<b>Jamie Hegarty</b>
3rd Assistant Director	<b>Edel McCormick</b>
Floor Runner	<b>Chloe Finlay</b> <b>Robert Getty</b>

Stunt Coordinator	<b>Lemuel Black</b>
Precision Stunt Driver	<b>Orlaith Doherty</b>

Movement Coach	<b>Paula O'Reilly</b>
Intimacy Coordinator	<b>Bronagh McAuley</b>
Dialogue Coach	<b>Brendan Gunn</b>

Casting Associate	<b>Mike Hooley</b>
Casting Assistant	<b>Hayley Russell</b>

Joanna Hogg's *Exhibition*. Most recently, Julia produced Aneil Karia's BBC Films, BFI and Protagonist-backed feature film *Surge* starring Ben Whishaw which premiered in competition at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival and Berlinale. Currently in post is Stacey Gregg's feature *HERE BEFORE* for BBC Films, starring Andrea Riseborough, and Patrick Forbes' death row documentary *The Phantom* with 30 West. Julia is now gearing up for production on a documentary about *Gloria Leonard* with Archer's Mark.

Prior to *ROOKS NEST*, Julia was an assistant producer for James Wilson and worked on Joe Cornish' *Attack The Block* and Jonathan Glazer's *Under The Skin*. Julia started her career at the William Morris Endeavor Agency in LA as a trainee agent in the Motion Picture Literary Department. In 2013, she was named as one of Screen International's Future Leaders.

#### **SOPHIE VICKERS - Producer**

Sophie joined *ROOKS NEST* in 2012 to grow the company's slate of original projects, and has since executive produced Gillian Robespierre's *Obvious Child*, EL Katz's *Small Crimes*, and Adam Leon's *Tramps*, as well as working on Robert Eggers' *The Witch*. Most recently, Sophie produced Aneil Karia's debut *Surge* starring Ben Whishaw which premiered in competition at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival and Berlinale. Currently in post is Stacey Gregg's feature *HERE BEFORE* for BBC Films, starring Andrea Riseborough, and Patrick Forbes' death row documentary *The Phantom* with 30West. Sophie is currently in pre-production on feature doc *Gloria Leonard* with Archers Mark. Prior to *ROOKS NEST*, Sophie worked at Ruby Films where her credits as production executive include Cary Fukunaga's *JANE EYRE*, Stephen Frears' *Lay The Favourite*, S.J. Clarkson's *Toast*, John Lee Hancock's *Saving Mr Banks* for Disney as well as *Case Histories* and *Dancing on the Edge* for BBC2.

#### **CHLOË THOMSON - Director of Photography**

A graduate of the National Film and Television School, Chloë Thomson is a London-based cinematographer whose works spans across genres from fiction and documentary film work, to music promos, commercials and stop-motion animation. Her animation graduate film, *Head Over Heals*, received awards from several international film festivals, and a nomination for "Best Animated Short" at the 85th Academy Awards.

She then worked on several acclaimed short films, including *Volume*, directed by Mahalia Belo, which won the British Independent Film Award for "Best Short Film" in 2012; *Jonah* for Film4, which received a "Best Short Film" nomination at the 2013 BIFA Awards, and *I Do*, directed by singer-songwriter Natasha Khan, which premiered at the 2016 Tribeca Film Festival.

Chloë followed this with her first feature-length television drama *Ellen*, directed by Mahalia Belo for Channel 4 in 2016, which received a Broadcast Award for Best Single Drama. Chloë was then listed as a Breakthrough Brit at the 2017 BAFTA Awards. She collaborated with Belo again on mini-series *The Long Song*, which won Best Mini-Series at the RTS Awards and earned Chloë a nomination for Best Cinematography at the RTS Craft Awards in 2019. Chloë was named one of Screen International's 'Stars of Tomorrow' in 2019.

### **MARTIN MCCANN - Chris**

McCann won the 2011 Irish Film and Television Academy Award (IFTA) for lead actor in a feature film for his stand-out role in *Swansong: Story of Occi Byrne*. He has been nominated twice since, for *The Survivalist* and *Jump*. In recent years, Martin was nominated for a Scottish BAFTA (Best Actor, 2018) for his leading role in the feature film *Calibre*.

Some of Martin's other notable credits include the Oscar-nominated short film *Boogaloo and Graham, '71* directed by Yann Demange, *Killing Bono* directed by Nick Hamm, Louise Leterrier's *Clash of the Titans*, Richard Attenborough's *Closing the Ring* and the critically acclaimed BBC series, *The Fall*.

Other credits include the Spielberg-produced series *The Pacific* alongside Tom Hanks and Rami Malek, Woody Harrelson's directorial debut, *Lost In London*, which was the first feature film 'live streamed' direct to cinemas, the Rainmark Films series *The Frankenstein Chronicles*, the ITV/Netflix series *Marcella* and recent feature films *The Informer* and *Wildfire*.

## **CREW BIOGRAPHIES**

### **STACEY GREGG - Writer & Director**

Stacey Gregg is a Belfast and London based writer, director and performer working across film, TV and theatre. She is currently developing several original television drama series including *Superbabe* (Sunnymarch/BBC) and *Dark Gene* (Warp Films).

Stacey has just delivered her directorial debut feature film *HERE BEFORE* (Rooks Nest/BBC Films) and is due to start development on her second feature *Bukolia* later this year. She is attached to direct a block of *The Baby* (Sister/HBO/Sky) this summer.

Stacey has written episodes of several recent hit TV series including *Riviera* (Archery Pictures/Sky Atlantic); *The Innocents* (New Pictures/Netflix); *The Letter for the King* (FilmWave/Netflix); and has co-written an episode of Sophia Al-Maria's *Little Birds* (Warp Films/Sky Atlantic). Most recently she has written on Charlie Covell's upcoming Netflix series *Kaos*.

Stacey's many plays include *Inside Bitch* (Royal Court); *Shibboleth* (Abbey Theatre); *Perve* (Abbey Theatre); and *Scorch* (Prime Cut Productions) which won a Fringe First Award at the Edinburgh Festival in 2016.

### **JULIA GODZINSKAYA - Producer**

Julia co-founded ROOKS NEST in 2010 and went on to produce Sally El Hosaini's award-winning debut *My Brother the Devil*, which premiered in competition at the Sundance Film Festival in 2012. She then went on to executive produce Gillian Robespierre's Sundance hit *Obvious Child* followed by Robert Eggers' acclaimed horror *The Witch*; both films were distributed by A24. Under the Rooks Nest banner, Julia executive produced Adam Leon's sophomore feature *Tramps* which premiered at TIFF and E.L. Katz's SXSW competition title *Small Crimes*; both films sold to Netflix and were released as Netflix Originals. She also executive produced Sophie Fiennes' documentary *A Pervert's Guide to Ideology* and

She starred for six months at the National Theatre, in Deborah Gearing's *Burn*, Enda Walsh's *Chatroom* and Mark Ravenhill's *Citizenship*, all directed by Anna Mackmin. She was honored with the Ian Charleson Award for her performance in Peter Hall's Royal Shakespeare Company staging of *Measure For Measure*.

Mike Leigh offered her a place in the company of his film *Happy-Go-Lucky* She made the movie and then starred at the Royal Court Theatre in Bruce Norris' *The Pain and the Itch*, for which she was nominated as Best Supporting Actress at the 2007 Theatre Goers' Choice Awards. Later, she starred in Dorota Maslowska's *A Couple of Poor, Polish-Speaking Romanians*, at The Soho Theatre; and in the Donmar Warehouse production of *Ivanov*, opposite Kenneth Branagh and Tom Hiddleston. She made her U.S. stage debut in Alexi Kaye Campbell's *The Pride*, directed by Joe Mantello.

Following, Riseborough starred as Margaret Thatcher in the telefilm *Margaret Thatcher– The Long Walk To Finchley*, directed by Niall McCormick, for which she received a BAFTA Award nomination; starred in the short film *Love You More*, directed by Sam Taylor-Johnson and written by Patrick Marber; starred in Avie Luthra's independent feature *Mad, Sad & Bad*; and played the lead role in the miniseries *The Devil's Whore*, about the 17th-Century English Civil War, directed by Marc Munden.

#### **JONJO O'NEILL - Brendan**

Jonjo can currently be seen in the critically acclaimed limited series *The Queen's Gambit* for Netflix and most recently wrapped shoot on *Pennyworth* series 2 (Warner Bros TV). In 2021 Jonjo will appear in *The Irregulars* (Netflix); John Madden's *Operation Mincemeat* and Janus Metz's *All The Old Knives* (Amazon Studios) with Chris Pine, Thandie Newton and Jonathan Pryce. Other film credits include: The Coen Brothers' *The Ballad of Buster Scruggs*; *Defiance* (Paramount) and *On Chesil Beach* (BBC Films).

Recent television credits include: *Patrick Melrose* (Sky/Showtime), *Strange New Things* (Amazon Studios), *Vera* (ITV), *Fortitude* (Sky Atlantic) and *The Fall* (BBC). Despite his screen credits Jonjo is an experienced stage actor, currently serving as a Royal Shakespeare Company Associate Artist. His theatre credits include: *Pinter At The Pinter* (Pinter Theatre), *The Prudes*, *Victory Condition*, *The Unreachable* (Royal Court), *Romeo and Juliet* (RSC) and *Cymbaline* (Shakespeare's Globe) to name a few.

Jonjo stars alongside Andrea Riseborough in Stacey Gregg's upcoming debut feature film, *HERE BEFORE*; an unsettling psychological thriller about a bereaved mother who begins to question her reality, after new neighbours move in next door.

#### **EILEEN O'HIGGINS - Marie**

One of Variety's 10 Brits to Watch, Eileen has just wrapped on upcoming Netflix series *The Irregulars*. Eileen can currently be seen in feature films *Misbehaviour*, alongside Kiera Knightley and Keeley Hawes, *Nowhere Special* opposite James Norton and in Stacey Gregg's upcoming independent feature *HERE BEFORE*, opposite Andrea Riseborough. Eileen can be seen starring opposite Saoirse Ronan and Margot Robbie in Focus Features' *Mary Queen of Scots* directed by Josie Rourke, and opposite Antonio Banderas in National Geographic's *Genius: Picasso*. Eileen also starred in the BAFTA-winning and Academy Award nominated *Brooklyn*, directed by John Crowley. Other television credits include *My Mother and Other Strangers* (PBS/BBC) and *Emma* (BBC), directed by Jim O'Hanlon.

praise for her performance in the title role opposite Steve Buscemi, Ann Dowd and John Leguizamo in the film, which she also produced under her production banner, Mother Sucker.

Prior, she starred in Armando Iannucci's *The Death of Stalin*, which premiered to rave reviews at the 2017 Toronto International Film Festival and the 2018 Sundance Film Festival. Riseborough's performance garnered a 2017 British Independent Film Award nomination and, more recently, the film was ranked as one of the Top Ten Independent Films of 2018 by the National Board of Review. Additionally, she starred in *Mandy* and *Burden*, both of which premiered at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival, with the latter winning the Audience Award. *Mandy* previously appeared in the Director's Fortnight at the 2017 Cannes Film Festival.

Previously, Riseborough starred in Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris' *Battle of the Sexes* alongside Emma Stone and Steve Carell, which tells the true story of the 1973 tennis match between Billie Jean King and Bobby Riggs. Earlier, she starred in Alejandro González Iñárritu's *Birdman or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)*, which won four Academy Awards, including Best Picture, and the Screen Actors Guild Award for Outstanding Performance by a Cast in a Motion Picture.

Riseborough's additional film credits include Nicolas Pesce's reboot of *The Grudge*; Andrew Heckler's; Lone Scherfig's *The Kindness of Strangers*, which opened the 2019 Berlin Film Festival and was nominated for the Golden Berlin Bear Awards; Tom Ford's *Nocturnal Animals*; Mark Romanek's *Never Let Me Go*; Nigel Cole's *Made in Dagenham*; Rowan Joffe's *Brighton Rock*; Madonna's *W.E.*, as Wallis Simpson; Amit Gupta's *Resistance*; Henry Alex Rubin's *Disconnect*; Joseph Kosinski's *Oblivion* opposite Tom Cruise; Eran Creevy's *Welcome to the Punch*; Corinna McFarlane's *The Silent Storm*; the Duffer Brothers' *Hidden* and James Marsh's *Shadow Dancer*, opposite Clive Owen, for which Riseborough won the British Independent Film Award (BIFA), the Evening Standard British Film Award, and the London Critics' Circle Film Award for Best Actress.

On the small screen, she appeared in Paramount Network's six-part limited series *Waco* alongside Taylor Kitsch, Michael Shannon and John Leguizamo. Prior, she starred in an episode of the fourth season on Netflix's critically-acclaimed drama *Black-Mirror*, and Hulu's four-part mini-series *National Treasure* alongside Robbie Coltrane and Julie Waters and written by BAFTA®-winning writer Jack Thorne, Netflix's drama *Bloodline*, Julian Jarrold's TV movie, *The Witness for the Prosecution*, based on Agatha Christie's play of the same name and *Party Animals*, which marked Riseborough's first leading role in a television series.

Growing up in the U.K. seaside resort of Whitley Bay, she wrote and created her own worlds. At the age of nine, her drama teacher recommended her for an audition at the People's Theatre (home of the Royal Shakespeare Company in Newcastle), and she appeared in her first public production there. While still attending the Royal Academy of the Dramatic Arts (RADA), she began taking external acting roles in telefilms and theatre productions. After leaving RADA, she starred the Oppenheimer Award-winning play *A Brief History of Helen of Troy* (Soho Theatre), directed by Gordon Anderson, and was nominated as Best Newcomer at the 2005 Theatre Goers' Choice Awards. Riseborough's first feature film role was in Roger Michell's *Venus* (2006), starring her good friend Jodie Whittaker and Peter O'Toole.

further and further into the film. Rather than getting more clarity you get more lost in the film because it is so difficult for my character, Laura, to hold on to what's reality as opposed to what is her grief, or to what is her fantasy. She also has a clear sense that there is something 'not right'. It is a tense thriller, but it is very pedestrian in the sense that Stacey finds beauty in what is perceived to be the normal. She has created a story in an ordinary world through which the audience will experience a level of bewilderment, and anxiety.

### ***How was the process of acting with the young cast?***

The younger cast members are amazing. Lewis and Niamh have not done a feature film before. What is lovely about them not having worked a lot is that they completely believe the story and it is so easy for them to engage in what we were doing. Stacey was protective of us being able to talk to each other, and that being captured on camera. The connection between my character and the two children is very strong and Stacey really preserved that.

## **CAST BIOGRAPHIES**

### **ANDREA RISEBOROUGH - Laura**

An immensely talented actress with a true gift for transformation, Andrea Riseborough continues to captivate audiences and earn critical acclaim with each role.

Riseborough is currently in production on David O. Russell's untitled film project opposite an all-star cast including Margot Robbie, Robert De Niro, Christian Bale and Rami Malek. Upcoming, she will be seen in Amazon's *Louis Wain* opposite Benedict Cumberbatch and Claire Foy as well as Pratibha Parmar's documentary *My Name is Andrea*. Riseborough is also set to star in Amanda Kramer and Noel David Taylor's *Please Baby Please*, Michael Morris's *To Leslie* and David and Nathan Zellner's *Alpha Gang*.

Most recently, Riseborough starred in Zeina Durra's *Luxor*, which premiered at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival, where it was nominated for the Grand Jury Prize. She also recently starred in Brandon Cronenberg's critically-acclaimed thriller *Possessor* opposite Christopher Abbott. The film first premiered at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival, where it was nominated for the Grand Jury Prize – World Cinema (Dramatic).

Last year, Riseborough led Stefano Sollima's *ZeroZeroZero*, Amazon's true-crime series focusing on the cocaine drug trade. The show, which co-stars Gabriel Byrne and Dane DeHaan, premiered two episodes at the 2019 Venice Film Festival and premiered on Amazon on March 6, 2020. The series was recently released in the UK on SkyTV.

In 2018, Riseborough starred in *Nancy*, which premiered in competition at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival and was awarded the prestigious Waldo Salt Screenwriting Award. The film was also nominated for two Film Independent Spirit Awards in the categories of Best Supporting Female (J. Smith Cameron) and Best First Screenplay (Christina Choe). Riseborough earned momentous critical

It is challenging, but also totally thrilling. Having a great cast and especially with the kids, always being up for it, always game. That's the stuff that makes or breaks a piece.

## **ANDREA RISEBOROUGH - Laura**

### ***How did you first come to the project?***

Stacey had sent me the script and from the first reading, something stayed with me. I kept thinking about it, so soon after reading it, we met. She's a theatre director, and is able to create an intricate emotional story, which she had already done on the page. It was clear to her what she wanted, what she thinks is beautiful and what her taste is. She loves the imperfect, and every imperfection, which is rare and wonderful. Following that first conversation, it felt right to work with her.

### ***What did you talk about to prepare for the role?***

Stacey and I spoke about a lot that inspired us both. There are things that I have read in life, either in research for other characters or personally, which I have thought of since, that have been useful in relation to Laura. One is C.S. Lewis' *A Study in Grief* about his wife dying and how even though he could enjoy a sunrise, he still sees it with her, even though she is not still with him. Stacey mentioned an open letter Nick Cave wrote to a woman who had contacted him asking how he was dealing with the loss of his son. It was a beautiful and generous letter to a person he did not know who had also lost someone. He talked about the beauty of being able to love, but also the acceptance that if you do it there will also be loss, and there is no avoiding that.

### ***And Stacey's script, it is reflective of that?***

I think so. What is wonderful about the way she approaches this film is that it shows there is a commonality we all have in relation to grief and experiencing it. It is often taboo to talk about, getting into the mind of a mother that has lost her child, and seeing where that takes you. It is a unique thing to experience what Stacey has written. It is not only engaging and sometimes fantastical, as it's hard for Laura to stay rooted, but really valuable.

### ***Can you tell us about your character, Laura?***

Laura is a very buoyant character, full of joy and positivity and she has one child, Tadhg who is still with her. She sees it as her responsibility to allow her son to have a wonderful life, and she is trying so desperately to be present, and to not die with her daughter that passed away. That is not always possible because grief is such a strange beast. While it was difficult for Laura to accept that it was a reality for such a long time, she was able to make the decision to carry on.

### ***And where does the film go with Laura?***

It's a study in grief, and Stacey broached the story as a psychological, or supernatural thriller. There is some simple and smart aesthetics that are almost real and true, but they seem deceiving as you watch

The characters of Laura and Megan had always been central and technicolour and complex. It is such a treat and an alchemy working with actors, so I was already excited by the prospect of casting young people. In terms of Laura, I was concerned with authenticity and truthfulness. I saw Andrea Risborough on stage in London and she did a great Northern Irish in *Shadow Dancer*. She is clearly a chameleon and a fascinating artist. I wrote her a letter and she responded. Before I knew it, we were lucky enough to have her as part of the team. We talked about who Laura is and how she moves through the film, she said she would disappear and deep dive into this character, she emerged as Laura and stayed as her throughout the shoot. The kids really responded to that.

We were looking for young people who are open, that had not picked up some of the habits that come with certain experiences or training. Megan is such a mercurial combination of energy. What we found in Niamh is a total joy and she is a consummate professional having not had much, if any, experience. The day we brought Niamh in with Lewis; it was one of those days where the chemistry was there immediately.

In addition to Andrea, we had Jonjo O'Neil as Brandon. Another surprising, gorgeous, committed performer. Eileen O'Higgins and Martin McCann are both actors who I absolutely adore; I felt like a kid in a sweetshop. One of the things I am proudest of with this piece is that the cast is cracking.

***Tell us about working with the young performers?***

One of the things that is key for a truthful performance is that you are inviting elements of these humans to ooze through the character. That's what we often respond to as an audience. With the kids, I was looking for them to find the most accessible and truthful way to execute a scene. Niamh and Lewis were so available and enthusiastic. They are emotionally intelligent and knew what was required of them and were responsive to notes and direction. I would do several takes close to the script and then a few where they could let it breathe and allow them to play and improvise. Once we had done the groundwork, it was about allowing these young actors to show themselves. There is an unpredictability to Niamh. She is so direct. With Lewis, there is an honesty that is very apparent.

***How was the experience of shooting in your native Northern Ireland?***

I started writing stories that were set in Northern Ireland and never stopped writing them, to finally get here and make a story here is really special. There is lots of great stuff that deals with the troubles, this something that is not of that world. A fresh story to tell with a specificity to it. There is a suburban fabric to the film, the social mores, and the etiquette; the line where that spirituality sits. To be able to come home and tell that story right down to the houses I knew and when the wheelie bins are taken out; the detail gives it an authenticity that audiences across the world can recognise and enjoy.

***And tell us about the shoot itself?***

We had a tight schedule and shooting in December with limited daylight hours. We were economic and lean with our schedule. In a way that was fortunate because it plays into the way I like to work which is when I see it, I've got it. I want things to feel fresh and spontaneous. As a director, I roll with it and work out on my feet what the richest thing we can get right now from these circumstances is.

There is a cognitive dissonance to the experience of grief. One cannot be told how to grieve and how to live with the souls of those we have lost. The film is interested in trying to get under some of those questions and that experience and is also concerned with courage and strength and resilience. We go to some crazy places with our characters, yet we are with them the whole time, we want them to push through and save each other.

***The film is about two families, can you tell us about the character of Laura?***

The film is set in a small suburban neighbourhood outside of Belfast, and a family with a little girl move in next door to a family that we discover, lost a little girl several years ago; they also have a teenage son. The two kids go to school in the same area and the rhythm of suburbia is such that lives run very closely together. They shop in the same supermarket, they drive the same streets. Over time, the bereaved mother, Laura, strikes up a friendship with the little girl and a tension arises between the two families because of this.

Laura is someone who has a lifeforce, someone with great warmth who has worked hard to hold a family together in the aftermath of great loss. The family are quite robust and close. Laura is a real straight shooter. When things start to take a strange turn, no one's more surprised than she. Laura is a rational person, but she has a porousness to her, there is a membrane which is thin because of that loss.

Laura leans on her husband, Brendan, and her 14-year-old son Tadhg. Tadhg is close to his mum and one of the few people who says it like it is, he is a truth seer and a truth speaker, he sees what is happening and that his mum is starting to come apart.

***And the little girl, Megan, and her family?***

Megan, the little girl next door, is this funny, charismatic kid and Laura wants to be friendly, but one person's generosity can be conceived as overreach. The film plays on those micro dramas between, not just neighbours, but parents that can feel so seismic. The dynamic between Laura and Megan's mother Marie becomes something of a misfire of a dance. Through a series of small events, it starts to feel like the lid is being blown off.

Ultimately, it is Laura's strength to address things head-on that collides with all the bubbling energies. The maternal instinct of two mothers comes head-to-head for the protection of and the love of kids and to what extent they go to is what we witness.

Megan is a smart kid. There is a lens through which you can see her at the top of the film and think she's a tricky kid. We see adults getting impatient with her. Ultimately, she's just a kid; you forget that sometimes and that's key to the film. When you look back on everything that happens, at the centre of it all is this kid. You want to scoop her up and give her a squeeze.

***Can you speak about the casting of Andrea, Niamh, and the other cast?***

## INTERVIEWS

### STACEY GREGG - Director

#### ***What were the creative origins of the script?***

I had a relationship with Julia and Sophie at Rooks Nest as a writer. I started the script in 2014 with ideas around spirituality and the paranormal that I had had as a kid. I have often written strange kids, and this started with the idea of a Megan character. The kernel of an idea had been with me for ages and I instinctively wrote the story and it arrived fully formed.

I put it away for some years and coming back to it now, interestingly as a parent – I realise some of the things that I was exploring, like grief, room for metaphysics and spiritually, how flawed adults can be people we understand and love but who make huge mistakes and terrible decisions, how the psychic energy and dynamics of people that live so closely to each other can escalate and influence kids. There are certain questions that one finds you are always trying to answer in different ways, and a lot of them have gone into the film, even if not explicitly.

#### ***Where there themes or references you drew on?***

I want to create work that can be received in different ways, that has a polyphony about it. The film explores feelings and situations that could feel quite everyday, that are made strange and therefore visible. The presence of absence. The eeriness and uncanniness. These are all ways of getting under things that we find difficult to talk about. The genre element is the engine that drives us through this story, but it is a Trojan horse for the layers of the psychic energy at work between two families.

There were two quotes that I had in mind throughout the process. Elizabeth Brown would write about how homes are not haunted by ghosts; they are haunted by people. The semidetached houses our characters live in, this mirror image is its own entity throughout the piece. Alongside that, there is an incredible Nick Cave response to a woman who asked about his experience of loss. He says that ghosts are ideas that will lead us out of the darkness. He says more than that, but it is profoundly moving. Both those ideas laid the track through this process and were constantly with us in the back of my mind.

#### ***The story deals with grief – how did you explore that?***

I want to tell stories that get under your skin, that have a certain complexity and density. How we deal with grief and more existentially, in a time when we are so preoccupied with technology and science, where is the room for mythos?

There is an aspect about the film being set in Northern Ireland that draws on how we deal differently with grief culturally. The sensibility in Northern Ireland, a place that has experienced a lot of loss and trauma and grief. This is a film that interrogates how things may co-exist, including in some ways, ghosts. I am interested in the resurgence in the ghost story and the appetite for things we cannot explain and truths that we decide to live with even if we are told they cannot possibly be so.

## NOTES ABOUT PRODUCTION

Rooks Nest producers Julia Godzinskaya and Sophie Vickers first read Stacey Gregg's spec script, *HERE BEFORE*, in 2014 and were really taken by her distinct voice and the world that she had created.

The script was at an early draft stage when Rooks Nest set it up for development with Northern Ireland Screen. Being from Northern Ireland, Stacey had always wanted to make a film set there, but throughout much of the development process had no intention of directing.

During the course of development, Stacey had started directing successfully for the stage, and went on to direct her first short film *Mercy* with Northern Ireland Screen. After being impressed by what she did with *Mercy*, it was collectively decided that *HERE BEFORE* was the perfect first feature for Stacey to direct.

Stacey's decision to direct gave the project the momentum it needed. The producers applied to iFeatures which became, in effect, Stacey's film school, giving her time to interrogate and work up her directors' vision for *HERE BEFORE*. That time and space proved invaluable, and together with NIS, BBC Films and Creative England, Rooks Nest put the project on a path to production.

Stacey's first choice to play Laura was Andrea Riseborough, who signed up almost immediately - to have such a fantastic and committed actor to embody Laura was a dream come true. Four weeks later, the team was prepping the film on location in Belfast.

The end of 2019 was fast approaching so the producers had to move quickly to complete production before Christmas. This meant finding the rest of the cast and crew within a few weeks. Stacey cast Jonjo O'Neil as Laura's husband Brandon, and Eileen O'Higgins and Martin McCann as the new couple next door. For Megan and Tadhg, Stacey found two fantastic young performers, Niamh Dornan and Lewis McAskie whose chemistry was immediate.

The majority of the team we assembled, being native Northern or Southern Irish, had worked together before, so there was a shorthand between them which brought a fantastic atmosphere to the shoot. With many having worked on *Game of Thrones* and other large productions, the team felt privileged to work with an incredibly experienced crew.

Stacey's experience directing for stage meant that she was immediately able to establish a creative dialogue and ease with both our experienced actors and our younger performers, resulting in performances that power the film and imbue it with a crucial sense of authenticity.

With *HERE BEFORE* she has created a film grounded in reality, but which also explores themes such as spirituality and the supernatural. A lurking sense of discomfort and unease persists throughout, meaning that the film's genre elements feel truly embedded its fabric.

## SYNOPSIS

### Logline:

After new neighbours move in next door, a bereaved mother begins to question her reality in this unsettling psychological thriller.

### Synopsis:

When a new family moves in next door to Laura and her family, their young daughter, Megan, quickly captivates her, stirring up painful memories of her own daughter, Josie, who died several years previously. Before long, Laura's memories turn to obsession as Megan's unsettling behaviour begins to convince her of something supernatural. As Laura's determination to get to the bottom of it becomes all consuming, her family begins to fracture and the line between the extraordinary and the real becomes ever more obscured in this haunting story about a mother's love.

## DIRECTORS STATEMENT

HERE BEFORE started many years ago as the inkling of an idea about a new family who move into an ordinary rural-urban street like the one I grew up on. As the newcomers drive past an unfamiliar graveyard, the kid in the backseat says something like "that's where they put me in the ground."

As a kid I was fascinated by the supernatural. I have a soft spot for precocious kids, kids who get into trouble because they pick up on the half-hidden energies of the adult world. That inkling evolved into a study of grief and maternal love, providing the landscape into which Andrea Riseborough would eventually fill in the light and shade, delivering a Laura with all the tenderness and ice a woman in her situation might contain.

I grew up around strong, complicated women. Around trauma. What struck me was how often extreme energies are kept pushed down, carrying on as normal until the lid blows off. In Here Before the familiar is defamiliarized, the mundane made uncanny, a ghost story in broad daylight. Families pushed up against each other in the edgelands between the school run and the big shop, the negative space and encroached boundaries of a Willie Doherty mise-en-scène.

There is no one interpretation of events. Like the elliptical event in the cave of A Passage to India we are never in possession of all the facts; multiple readings co-exist. Nick Cave, in responding to an enquiry about the death of his son, wrote that we will our spirits into existence, and they lead us out of the darkness. Who can tell the grieving how to grieve? In HERE BEFORE, perhaps the universe gives each of us what we need from it.

BBC FILMS, PIA PRESSURE and NORTHERN IRELAND SCREEN present  
a ROOKS NEST production

# HERE BEFORE

## PRODUCTION NOTES

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**STARRING**

**ANDREA RISEBOROUGH, NIAMH DORNAN, JONJO O'NEILL, EILEEN O'HIGGINS,  
MARTIN McCANN, LEWIS McASKIE**

Written and Directed by **STACEY GREGG**

Produced by **JULIA GODZINSKAYA and SOPHIE VICKERS**

Co-Producer **CHRIS MARTIN**

Executive Producer **EVA YATES**

Executive Producers **PIA GETTY and JAMES DURRANT**

Executive Producer **WILL NORTON**

Director of Photography **CHLOË THOMSON B.S.C**

Editor **BRIAN PHILIP DAVIS**

Editor **NICK EMERSON**

Casting Director **CARLA STRONGE CSA**

Production Designer **PATRICK CREIGHTON**

Costume Designer **TIMMY WHITE**

Make Up and Hair Designer **NATALIE REID**

Original Music by **ADAM JANOTA BZOWSKI**

Running time: 82 minutes