

# MIRACLE FILM DISTRIBUTION

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Pressevisning: Mandag den 11. september kl. 09.30 i Vester Vov Vov

Vinder: Juryens Specialpris - Bedste Instruktion  
Sundance Film Festival

## GOD'S OWN COUNTRY

En film af Francis Lee



DANMARKSPREMIERE TORSDAG DEN 14. SEPTEMBER 2017

Empire, Grand, Park Bio, Vester Vov Vov, Øst for Paradis, Cafebiografen Odense, Nicolai Bio Kolding, Biffen Aalborg, Biografen Kanten Faxe, Gentofte Kino, Cafe Slotsbio Hillerød, Klovborg Kino, Kulturbio grafen Frysehuset Holbæk, Apollon Struer, Valby Kino, Biografcafeen Vordingborg

Johnny er en ung fårefarmer fra Yorkshire, der er følelsesmæssigt ude af balance. Hans viljestærke bedstemor Deirdre på 70 er for gammel til det hårde arbejde, mens faderen Martin kun langsomt er ved at komme sig, delvist lammet efter et hjerteanfald. Johnny er frustreret over at være overladt et så stort ansvar. Han dyrker tilfældig sex med en fyr fra landsbyen og drikker sig helt bogstaveligt i hegnet om natten. Når dagen gryr, må han mande sig op og tage vare på familiens gård. Da læmmeperioden nærmer sig, er de mod Johnnys vilje nødt til at hyre hjælp udefra og ansætter derfor den unge rumæner Gheorghe (Georgie). Den nye mands ankomst får Johnny til at se sig selv dybt i spejlet, men han bebrejder i første omgang Gheorghe det, han ser. Følelserne sidder helt ude på tøjet, men langsomt tvinges kilen indad og begge de unge mænd, især Johnny, må betragte sig selv i et ganske anderledes lys.

### **Josh O'Connor, Johnny Saxby**

Josh er britisk skuespiller, oprindeligt fra Cheltenham, England. Han debuterede på film i 2014 i Lone Scherfigs *The Riot Club*. Siden har han to gange arbejdet sammen med Stephen Frears i *The Program* og *Florence*. Han medvirkede desuden i *Hide and Seek* og var i 2015 med i Jeppe Rønnes *Bridge End*, ligesom han medvirkede i Kenneth Branaghs *Eventyret om Askepot*. I England er hans bedst kendt for sin rolle som James i tv-serien *Peaky Blinders* med Cillian Murphy og senest også som Lawrence Durrell i BBC's succesfulde *The Durrells*. Han blev sidste år kåret "2016 Screen International Star of Tomorrow".

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Miracle Film Distribution v/ Jes Graversen

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## **Alec Secareanu, Gheorghe Ionescu**

Alexandru ("Alec") Secareanu har taget eksamen på Romanian University for Theatre and Film og medvirkede i en del succesfulde rumænske tv-programmer og serier samt teaterproduktioner. Fra 2011 har han endvidere medvirket i flere rumænske film. Hans rolle som Gheorghe i *God's Own Country* blev Alecs første engelsksprogede film og flere følger.

## **Ian Hart, Martin Saxby**

Ian Hart er engelsk teater, tv- og filmskuespiller, der fik sit gennembrud i Ken Loachs *Land and Freedom*. Han medvirkede herefter i Neil Jordans *Michael Collins* og Stephen Frears' *Liam*. Hans måske bedst kendte rolle er som professor Quirrell i *Harry Potter og de vises sten*. Hart har spillet John Lennon ikke mindre end tre gange, bl.a. i *Backbeat* og Sir Arthur Conan Doyle i *Finding Neverland*. Senest har han medvirket i tv-serierne *Boardwalk Empire* og *The Last Kingdom*.

## **Gemma Jones, Deirdre Saxby**

Gemma Jones er kendt fra både teatret og film. Hendes filmroller tæller Oscar-vinderen *Fornuft og følelse* foruden alle tre *Bridget Jones*-film, Woody Allens *You Will Meet a Tall Dark Stranger* og rollen som Madam Pomfrey i *Harry Potter*-filmene samt mange flere.

## **Francis Lee, manuskript & instruktion**

Francis voksede op på forældres gård i Pennine Hills in Yorkshire i England. Efter at have gået på Rose Bruford College arbejdede han ihærdigt som skuespiller på teatret, tv og film, bl.a. Mike Leighs *Topsy-Turvy*, *Me without You* og *The Young Americans*. På tv var han med i et par episoder af *Kriminalkommissær Barnaby*.

Francis skrev sin første kortfilm *Bantam* i 2010. Kortfilmen *The Farmer's Wife* blev i 2012 Francis' debut som instruktør. Den fik premiere på Palm Springs International Film Festival og herefter inviteret til en lang række flere og vandt adskillige priser for bedste film og bedste manuskript. Hans næste film *Bradford-Halifax-London* fra 2013 fik lige så intens festivaldistribution, bl.a. Slamdance Film Festival og BFI London Film Festival som afstedkom stribevis af priser for bedste film, bedste manuskript og bedste skuespiller.

Hans tredje film *The Last Smallholder*, optaget i 2014, er en meditativ dokumentar om hans egen far, den sidste bonde på en bjergskrånning ved Yorkshire fik ligeledes mange festivalvisninger.

Francis arbejder for tiden på sin næste spillefilm *The Last Bus*, ligesom han har en tv-serie under udvikling. *God's Own Country* er hans spillefilmsdebut.

## **Joshua James Richards, fotograf**

Joshua James Richards er oprindeligt fra Cornwall i det sydvestlige England men arbejder nu primært i USA. I 2016 blev han nomineret for bedste fotografering ved Independent Spirit Awards og han vandt prisen *Best Cinematography Debut* ved Camerimage International Film Festival 2015 for sit arbejde på Chloé Zhao's kritikerroste *Songs My Brothers Taught Me* (Sundance, Cannes Directors' Fortnight, AFI). Hans kameraarbejde har været vist ved festivaler verden over, bl.a. Berlin International Film Festival, SXSW, New Directors New Films, Telluride Film Festival og LA Film Festival.

## **Chris Wyatt, klipper**

Chris Wyatt har arbejdet med en lang række instruktører fra Peter Greenaway på *The Baby of Macon* og *The Pillow Book* til Shane Meadows' *This Is England*. Blandt hans seneste film tæller Yann Demanges *Bag fjendens linjer ('71)*.

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## Production Story

### Writer-Director Francis Lee's background, inspirations and aspirations

"Having grown up on the remote Pennine hills in West Yorkshire I have long been obsessed with this barren landscape of my ancestry, as well as by the people who cling to it, extracting a livelihood from a few unyielding acres. Throughout my childhood what I didn't realize was the unique emotional pull land has on people who live and work on it.

"This only became apparent when I left Yorkshire to study acting in London. My experience of growing up in isolated, rural Yorkshire made me wonder what else the rest of the world had to offer me. Therefore the springboard for this project was wanting to explore what might have happened if I'd have stayed in my local community, if I had worked on the land, if I had met someone there I liked.

"At the heart of *God's Own Country* is Johnny, who has had to shut down emotionally to ensure the family farm's survival. His world is turned upside down by the arrival of Gheorghe, a Romanian migrant worker, drafted in to help with the lambing season.

"I wanted to tell a heartfelt but stark love story. I wanted to capture those feelings of both trepidation and joy that come from the possibilities of something beginning. I want to see Johnny and Gheorghe start to fall for each other, investigating how they will deal with each other's differences. I wanted to explore those moments that two people share when they truly start to engage with one another, subtly pinpointing the struggles at the centre of their characters. Whether gay or straight, we all know what it feels like to fall in love – how difficult this can be – particularly if the circumstances are unyielding.

"I wanted to explore what this encounter might mean to someone who has not only been socially and geographically isolated but who has had to close off to any emotional life, within a traditional working class community, where you're too physically tired at the end of a gruelling day to 'investigate' yourself; where family and duty come before anything else and no one cares who you're sleeping with as long as the beasts are fed and the land tended. Given this world, would Johnny be able to access how he feels for Gheorghe? Would Gheorghe have the patience and ability to facilitate Johnny's emotional journey? Would they be able to live and love in the harsh reality of contemporary farming life? Would Johnny finally find happiness?

"Through *God's Own Country* I wanted to explore these themes of first love, isolation, relationships, family, duty, landscape and ultimately the sense of belonging to this very specific place."

### Working authentically with the actors...

"Given the film is set and entirely shot in the landscape where I grew up and where my family still work and live, it was critically important for me to tell this story in the most authentic way possible.

"I rehearsed extensively with the actors, not just on their characters and the emotional journey they each embark on, but also the daily physical work they encounter. Both the lead actors worked solidly on farms for weeks in preparation - dealing with all aspects of livestock and land management. Everything they had to physically do as part of the story, they learned to do from farmers in the landscape where the film is shot - the lambing, the animal medicating, the skinning of lambs, the dry stone walling, the cheese making, the fencing - everything was investigated fully until it became second nature to the actors. I wanted them to move and feel as part of the landscape their characters live and work on. Therefore everything in the film is done for real by the actors, no substitute was ever used (and this included the piss!). Alec Secareanu (Gheorghe) was personally very affected by working with the livestock, in particular birthing lambs, and it was incredible how he managed his own perceptions whilst brilliantly playing a pragmatic farm labourer.

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“As a result of this work the actors developed very strong bonds with the farmer whose farm we used for the main location. This bond was very important in a number of ways and it enabled the actors to get a very personal perspective and understanding of the physical, emotional and logistic issues within this community.

“On top of the emotional and psychological transformation, the two lead actors also went through a big physical transformation. It was important to me that Johnny (Josh O’Connor) was very much the embodiment of an under resourced Yorkshire hill farmer, someone who physically works every day in the cold, rain and wind and burns every calorie he consumes. Josh dropped a considerable amount of weight to achieve this idea.

“I was also aware of the challenges of building a big emotional story. To help facilitate this I shot the film in a linear, chronological way. Allowing each scene to impact on the next emotionally, like building blocks within the story. This was particularly challenging but ultimately I believe it has paid off, given the strong, emotional arc that is depicted at the heart of the film.”

## **...and with the production team**

“I was insistent that the ‘set’ and costumes were as authentic as possible. Anything we used on location had to be part of the farm and environment - ‘found props’ - in fact a good number of the props came from my Dad’s farm 10 minutes away. The costumes could only be bought in shops that the characters would geographically have access to, so Sian Jenkins, our costume designer, was tasked with buying the principles’ clothes from within Keighley town centre.

“The visual impact of the film came from an intensive collaboration with DP Joshua James Richards. We worked out that the camera should ‘sit’ with the characters, not allowing them to hide from our gaze. The camera movement should reflect not just the landscape but also the emotional state of the characters - we developed an intense, unrelenting style which I believe fits this story perfectly.

Through lighting, we wanted to depict the ‘change’ Gheorghe brings with him into this world - how he ‘alters’ the environment, bringing his own sense of ‘light’ into this dark, unemotional world.

“From the very initial stages of this film, I knew sound was critical for me. I knew I wanted to work with the sound and picture at the same time during the editing process. For me, sound is utterly as, if not sometimes more important than picture. I built a soundscape of the natural sounds - winds were carefully orchestrated, specific bird song strategically placed, sheep noises individually selected, fire sounds were to be reflective - everything was done sonically to underpin this stark and brutal world. I worked with the idea of texturing and building the atmosphere - almost like using the wind sounds as a chorus - to contrast with the deep, emotional story set in this unrelenting location.

“Making this film in an unforgiving landscape with the constant battle of unpredictable weather (snow, rain, bright sun all in a day), animals and a huge emotional thrust was a challenge, but I hope that my ingrained experience of this world as well as my insistence on precision has produced a unique, heartfelt and authentic film.”

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## Credits

Produced by Manon Ardisson, Jack Tarling  
Director of Photography: Joshua James Richards  
Production Designer: Stéphane Collonge  
Film Editor: Chris Wyatt  
Sound Designer: Anna Bertmark  
Costume Designer: Sian Jenkins  
Hair and Make-up Designer: Bean Ellis  
Production Sound Mixer: Phil Cape  
Casting: Shaheen Baig, Layla Merrick-Wolf  
Music: A Winged Victory for The Sullen  
Written and Directed by Francis Lee

## Cast

Johnny Saxby	Josh O'Connor
Deirdre Saxby	Gemma Jones
Trainee Auctioneer	Harry Lister Smith
Martin Saxby	Ian Hart
Gheorghe Ionescu	Alec Secareanu
Gloria	Melanie Kilburn
Glen	Liam Thomas
Robyn	Patsy Ferran
Taxi Driver	Moey Hassan
Male Nurse	Naveed Choudhry
Joy	Sarah White
University Boy	John McCrea
Young Farm Worker	Alexander Suvandjiev
Bearded Farm Worker	Stefan Dermendjiev

Filmed on location in Keighley, England

Whilst making this film animal welfare was paramount and animals involved were not harmed

UK / 2017

Længde: 104 min.

Medierådets vurdering: Tilladt over 15 år

Filmen er støttet af Det Danske Filminstitut

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