



presents

STILL LIFE



**MOSTRA INTERNAZIONALE
D'ARTE CINEMATOGRAFICA
la Biennale di Venezia 2013**

Orizzonti – Competition



A
REDWAVE / EMBARGO FILMS
Production

In association with
CINECITTÀ STUDIOS, EXPONENTIAL MEDIA, BETA CINEMA
and **RAI CINEMA**

EDDIE MARSAN

STILL LIFE

with
JOANNE FROGGATT
KAREN DRURY, ANDREW BUCHAN, CIARAN MCINTYRE, NEIL D'SOUZA,
PAUL ANDERSON, TIM POTTER

Produced by
FELIX VOSSEN, CHRISTOPHER SIMON

Written, produced and directed by
UBERTO PASOLINI

A RED WAVE/EMBARGO FILMS PRODUCTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH CINECITTÀ STUDIOS EXPONENTIAL MEDIA BETA CINEMA AND RAI CINEMA

EDDIE MARSAN STILL LIFE JOANNE FROGGATT ANDREW BUCHAN CASTING BY SUSIE FIGGIS MUSIC BY RACHEL PORTMAN

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY STEFANO FALIVENE EDITORS TRACY GRANGER GAVIN BUCKLEY PRODUCTION DESIGNER LISA MARIE HALL

COSTUME DESIGNER PAM DOWNE LINE PRODUCER MICHAEL CONSTABLE CO-PRODUCER CERI HUGHES ASSOCIATE PRODUCER MARCO VALERIO PUGINI

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER BARNABY SOUTHCOMBE PRODUCED BY FELIX VOSSEN AND CHRISTOPHER SIMON

WRITTEN, PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY UBERTO PASOLINI

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REDWAVE FILMS



Rai Cinema



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CAST

Eddie Marsan	John May
Joanne Froggatt	Kelly
Karen Drury	Mary
Andrew Buchan	Mr Pratchett
Ciaran McIntyre	Jumbo
Neil D'Souza	Shakthi
Paul Anderson	Homeless Man
Tim Potter	Homeless Man

CREW

Written produced and directed by	Uberto Pasolini
Produced by	Felix Vossen and Christopher Simon
Director of Photography	Stefano Falivene
Editors	Tracy Granger/Gavin Buckley
Music By	Rachel Portman
Production Designer	Lisa Marie Hall
Costume Designer	Pam Downe
Casting by	Susie Figgis
Make-up and Hair Design	Emma Slater
Production	A Redwave / Embargo Films Production
In Association with	Cinecittà Studios, Exponential Media, Beta Cinema and Rai Cinema
International Distribution	Beta Cinema

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TECHNICAL DETAILS

Year of Production	2012
Running Time	87 mins
Format	35mm, 1:185, Dolby Surround
Language	English
Location	London and surrounding areas

SHORT SYNOPSIS

STILL LIFE is a poignant tale of life, love and the afterlife. Meticulous and organized to the point of obsession, John May (Eddie Marsan) is a council worker charged with finding the next of kin of those who have died alone. When his department is downsized, John must up his efforts on his final case, taking him on a liberating journey that allows him to start living life at last.

LONG SYNOPSIS

South London, the present. John May (Eddie Marsan) is a council official whose job is to find the next of kin of those who have died alone. Highly meticulous and obsessively organized, John May goes beyond the call of duty to see a job through. Only when all leads have been checked and all doors shut will he concede to closing the case and organise the funeral of his forgotten "clients", for whom he chooses the appropriate music and writes special eulogies, which no one but him will hear. He is rigorous in ensuring that these souls are laid to rest in a dignified manner, whether it's the elderly woman who sent her cat birthday cards every year or the Australian gentleman whose ashes have been sent back to his homeland for burial.

John May takes great satisfaction in his work to the point where it has become his whole life: he has no family, no friends.. His life is neat, calm and ordered with everything as it's always been - he wears the same clothes every day, walks the same way to work every day, has the same lunch every day and comes home to the same dinner every day.

One day he gets a new case: an elderly alcoholic called Billy Stoke has been found dead in the flat directly opposite John May's. When John visits the flat to search for clues to his neighbour's life, he sees the mirror image of his own - where John May's kitchen has clean cupboards, orderly shelves and fastidiously tidy furniture, this flat is full of rubbish bags, dirty dishes and tatty armchairs.

As John starts to research Billy Stoke's life his boss brings devastating news: the department is being downsized, job cuts are being enforced to save money and John May is being made redundant. What will he do without his job, without his routine?

For the moment though, John May's most pressing concern is his last case and he begs his boss for a few extra days to finish it. Even more assiduous than ever, John gradually puts together the pieces of Billy Stoke's fractured life. He ended his days an alcoholic loner but Billy Stoke had a rich history. From a former workmate at the pie factory who recalls his appetite for living and loving, to the Falkland's veteran who owes him his life, the people John May meets paint the picture of a larger-than-life personality who inspired love and exasperation in equal measure but whose personal demons left him broken and destitute. Most significantly, his investigations lead him to Billy Stoke's estranged daughter, Kelly (Joanne Froggatt), who Billy had abandoned when still a child; the two lonely souls are naturally drawn to each other.

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While he is travelling the country meeting the people from Billy Stoke's past and inviting them to his funeral, John May begins to liberate himself from the routines that have ruled his life so far, he begins to start living life at last. He tries new food, orders hot chocolate instead of tea, puts on a different jumper, goes to the pub, meets Kelly in a cafe. And a few days before Billy Stoke's funeral, John May does something else he has never done that has shocking and tragic consequences.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

STILL LIFE is the second feature film directed by Uberto Pasolini. The successful producer of such films as *The Full Monty* and *Palookaville*, Pasolini's first foray into directing was the critically-lauded *Machan*. A feel good comedy about a group of Sri Lankans who masquerade as a handball team to gain entry to Germany when their visa applications are rejected, *Machan* enjoyed a long international festival life, garnering both jury and audience awards.

STILL LIFE was also inspired by real people and events. When he read about the men and women whose job it is to organise funerals for people who leave no one behind when they die, Pasolini recognised something both profound and universal.

"I was struck by the thought of all those lonely graves and empty funeral services" he explains. "It's a very powerful image. I began to think about loneliness and death and about what it means to be part of a community, and how neighbourliness has disappeared for many people. Writing the script I felt guilt at not knowing my neighbours and local community. For the first time I went to the local street party, wishing to participate in that small attempt to create a connection between neighbours.

This sense of lack of engagement with the community brought on deeper reflections of contemporary society. "What are we saying about the value society places on individual lives? How can so many people be forgotten and die alone?" continues the film-maker. "The quality of our society is judged by the value it puts on its weakest members and who is weaker than the dead? The way we treat the dead is a reflection on how our society treats the living. And it seems to be very easy to forget how to honour the dead in western society. I feel very strongly that the acknowledgement of past lives is fundamental for a society that wants to call itself civilised."

Pasolini wove these ideas into a film about a middle-aged local council officer, John May, whose final task before he's made redundant is to organise the funeral of a man who has died a lonely death in a flat opposite his own. Determined to make his last job a success, John May travels around the country searching for the man's surviving family and friends. On the way, he meets the man's estranged daughter who offers the possibility of a future of love and companionship.

The strength of his passion for the story and its themes made it impossible for him to hand over the creative reins to another. So, like with *Machan*, he decided to direct the film as well as write it.

"With STILL LIFE, I knew I wanted a film that was as still as the title suggests. My main visual references were Ozu's late films, with their quiet but immensely powerful images of everyday life."

Directing an English cast was a new experience. "When I made *Machan*, I had an incredibly cast group of Sri Lankan actors who I directed through an interpreter, so I was largely working through tonality rather than language. With STILL LIFE, not only did I have considerably less time with the actors to rehearse and a much shorter production schedule, but we were speaking the same language so I was more emotionally invested in the individual words. Thankfully, because of the brilliance of the actors I was working with, I managed to get out of the actors the same tones, inflections, emphases that I had in my head when I wrote the script."

His cast is headed up by Eddie Marsan, unarguably one of the UK's finest actors and one whose talent has been recognised by internationally acclaimed directors as diverse as Martin Scorsese,

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Steven Spielberg, Mike Leigh and JJ Abrams. Pasolini wrote John May, the meticulously conscientious council funeral officer who organises the funerals of the lonely dead, with Marsan in mind, absolutely convinced that he could bring out the character's complexities within the stillness of his work.

"John May's solitude is intrinsic to the film but he doesn't register loneliness, he doesn't see that there is another way of living" says Pasolini. "We have a tendency to assume that if we think one way, then everyone thinks the same way and with loneliness and solitude, we project our own fears on those around us. There are people whose personal lives appear empty but who are emotionally self-sufficient and find fulfillment in other areas of their lives, for example their jobs. John May's life is in itself full, full of the forgotten lives he is dedicated to. And although we might not want to live ourselves a life of "stillness", it is important that we don't feel alienated from him. And of course we still get a deal of enjoyment when he begins to open up in the film - he tries new food, travels to places he has never visited, shares a bottle with two homeless men. Eddie's skill and humanity managed to bring truth in the actions and small changes that mark John May's life."

For Marsan, it was the sensitivity of the screenplay that proved such a draw.

"This is such a fascinating and beautiful study of mortality and loneliness and importance of sharing your life," he says, "Uberto's screenplay is so heartfelt and poignant. It is based on honest themes of living and dying and of family and community; it's not a calculated or manipulating story. It's really from the heart which makes it unique. That's why I wanted to do it."

The character of John May presented unique challenges for Marsan as an actor. "I had an idea funeral officers existed but I didn't know how isolated or eccentric they can be," continues the actor. "They work alone so it's quite an odd kind of work. But I felt that although John May is isolated, he is not lonely. John May is quite unusual, he doesn't express much, so it was more important that I show what he's thinking. It's very internal with him and that can be hard to play because you have to work out what he's feeling and then not express it. But that makes a good character - he's complex and real rather than someone who wears his heart on his sleeve. He is very conscientious - he feels reassurance and pleasure in being in charge of these dead people's affairs. He has a very structured life and when he loses his job, the refuge he takes in his work is removed and he is forced to experience life head on. And when he begins to research the life of the dead man who lived opposite him in his last job for the council, he begins to open up. Because the dead man is so close - he lived opposite him and his disordered flat is a mirror image of John May's flat just as his chaotic life is a mirror image of John's ordered existence - he becomes aware of his own mortality. His investigation into the dead man's life takes John May on a psychological as well as a geographical journey. And life gives him a slap in the face."

Playing opposite Marsan in the role of Kelly is Joanne Froggatt. Most famous now for her role as Anna in the smash television series *Downton Abbey*, Froggatt caught Pasolini's eye with her award-winning performance in the TV film "In Our Name" in which she plays a soldier struggling to return to civilian life.

"For the character of Kelly, the daughter of the dead man, I was looking for an actress who could combine a wounded vulnerability with a sense of optimism and hope," says Pasolini. "With her brilliant performance in "In Our Name", Joanne managed to show strength and weakness in a completely believable character."

Froggatt saw Kelly as a nice, normal woman. She's been quite hurt in the past and has suffered from being abandoned by her father so she's built her life around dogs. She's a bit of a loner and then she meets John May and they start the beginnings of a friendship."

It was the originality of Pasolini's screenplay that grabbed Froggatt. "It struck me as a very unusual story and those always attract me because they don't come along very often. It's a very sweet story

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with an interesting subject matter that I'd never thought about or read about. And when I knew Eddie was playing the lead, I was even more keen because I'm a big fan of his.

The film touches on a multitude of themes but in essence it's really about life and how we relate to other people and the sadness of a lonely life," continues Froggatt. "There's sadness in it but there's also real warmth - how strangers can connect with each other through mutual understandings and circumstances. You suspect Kelly and John would really support each other and that there is the start of a really good relationship there."

Froggatt is also a keen supporter of independent cinema. "I'm very passionate that films like this are still being made," she explains. "Uberto wrote, directed and produced the film and he had the overall artistic vision and it was wonderful to work on a project with someone like that because they have such excitement and passion and that's infectious. Uberto has a great sense of the emotional story of the characters and great eye for design. These are the nicest jobs in some ways; it's a real labour of love."

Working with Marsan lived up to all Froggatt's expectations. "Eddie is always brilliant," she says. "He's one of the best British actors working today. He always brings something different to the project; he's got a real quirkiness and a real sense of the authentic. He's so interesting to watch; you're completely drawn into what he is doing. So I was very pleased to be working with him."

Pasolini found working with both Marsan and Froggatt a pleasure: "There was a lot of fine-tuning on the set and that was possible because Eddie and Joanne are such fine actors. And enormously patient!"

Having spent several months researching the background to the character of John May, which included visiting houses of the recently deceased with real council officers, Pasolini began shooting in May 2012 on locations throughout London and South East England. His team of behind the scenes collaborators comprised cinematographer Stefano Falivene, production designer Lisa Marie Hall, costume designer Pam Downe and editors Tracy Granger and Gavin Buckley.

"Shooting was very smooth," says Pasolini. "I never had to compromise. For a relatively low budget film, it's quite complex - there are a lot of locations in different parts of the country. But the scale was achievable because we weren't asking for huge things. I had a great line producer and all my collaborators knew exactly how to make a film on a small budget."

His brief to cinematographer Stefano Falivene was clear - the camera would be still, the world ordered, and the world seen and felt from John May's point of view. "I was keen not to have over the shoulder shots onto John May from any of the characters he interacts with because I wanted the audience to have as personal as possible a relationship with his character. So we would always be with him and never with someone else. We're only with someone else once he meets Kelly. In the scenes with Kelly we for the first time have complimentary over the shoulder shots and after Kelly you have a three shot with the two drunks outside the church. At that point he is linked photographically to other people in a way he has never been in the film before. These are just subtle things but they helped me make a decision on where to place the camera."

With production designer Lisa Marie Hall and costume designer Pam Downe, Pasolini decided on the film's colour palette. "The film is in part a journey of the awakening of the senses so we talked about the film being desaturated at the beginning and introducing the colours gradually. So at the beginning of the film there is very little colour - it's mostly pastel greys and blues and browns and monotonous - and more colour comes in as the film progresses. And with the sets, there is a lot of symmetry in some of the houses he visits and his own - for example, the orderly lines of underwear and bottles in the house of the woman with the cat at the beginning of the film are similar to the straight lines and neatness of his own flat."

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The film wrapped filming in late June. It was a tribute to the talents of both his creative collaborators and his cast that Pasolini was able to fulfill his creative ambitions. “I am proudest of Eddie Marsan’s performance,” he says. “Everyone knows he’s an extraordinary actor but he hasn’t really been used as a lead in a feature film. It makes me happy that I was able to do that.”

CAST

EDDIE MARSAN (John May)

Multi-award winning Eddie Marsan is one of the most respected actors of his generation and has worked with many of the industry’s top directors including Martin Scorsese, Steven Spielberg, Mike Leigh and Bryan Singer.

He shots Jack the Giant Slayer, alongside Nicholas Hoult, Stanley Tucci, Bill Nighy and Ewan McGregor, US TV series Ray Donovan with Liev Schreiber, Jon Voight and Elliott Gould, The World’s End, the latest Edgar Wright film starring Simon Pegg and Nick Frost, Filth starring James McAvoy, Jim Broadbent and Joanne Froggatt and I, Anna alongside Gabriel Byrne and Charlotte Rampling.

Marsan’s recent film and television credits include SNOW WHITE AND THE HUNTSMEN, Mike Leigh’s “A Running Jump”, “Walking the Dogs” with Emma Thompson and “The Best of Men”. He also starred in Steven Spielberg’s WAR HORSE, the award-winning TYRANNOSAUR, JUNKHEARTS, Guy Ritchie’s SHERLOCK HOLMES: A GAME OF SHADOWS as well as GANGS OF NEW YORK, V FOR VENDETTA, MISSION IMPOSSIBLE III, 21 GRAMS, THE DISAPPEARANCE OF ALICE CREED and two further collaborations with Mike Leigh – VERA DRAKE and HAPPY GO LUCKY, which both won him the British Independent Film Award for Best Supporting Actor.

Eddie’s television credits include “Criminal Justice”, “Little Dorritt” and “Red Riding: In the Year of Our Lord 1974/1980”.

JOANNE FROGGATT (Kelly)

British Independent Film Award winner and Emmy nominee Joanne Froggatt is one of the UK’s brightest young female stars working across television, film and theatre. She is perhaps best known for her performance as head housemaid Anna in the multi-award winning and critically acclaimed ITV drama series Downton Abbey from Academy Award-winning scriptwriter Julian Fellowes.

Froggatt will soon be seen alongside Eddie Marsan again in FILTH, starring James McAvoy, Jim Broadbent and Jamie Bell, and the thriller UWANTME2KILLHIM? from director Andrew Douglas.

Her film and television work includes “In Our Name” for which she won the Best Newcomer award at the British Independent Film Awards in 2010, Dominic Savage’s drama series “True Love” opposite David Tennant and Vicky McClure, and the 2010 Christmas special of the award winning comedy “The Royle Family”.

Her credits also include Danielle Cable: “Eye Witness”, for which she was nominated for a Royal Television Society Best Actress Award, “See No Evil”, “The Moors Murders”, and “Murder in the Outback” as well as “Life on Mars”, “Island At War”, “Spooks”, “The Street”, “Nature Boy”, “Other People’s Children” and “Lorna Doone”.

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Froggatt's stage credits include *The Knowledge* and *Little Platoons* at the Bush and *All About My Mother* at The Old Vic.

CREW

UBERTO PASOLINI - Writer, Director, Producer

STILL LIFE is Uberto Pasolini's second feature as a director, following the critically acclaimed *MACHAN* which was released in 2008 and won awards at numerous international festivals including the Venice Film Festival, Brussels Film Festival and Palm Beach Film Festival.

Pasolini has worked in films since 1983, starting as a runner in Thailand on *The Killing Fields*, and became an independent producer in 1994, when he founded Redwave Films. Its first produced feature film was *PALOOKAVILLE* starring Vincent Gallo and directed by Alan Taylor.

Subsequently Pasolini produced *THE FULL MONTY*, which grossed over \$250 million internationally and remains to date the most successful UK picture at the UK box office of all those based on original material. Amongst its many international awards, the film was named Best Film of 1997 by BAFTA and was nominated for an Academy Award in 1998.

Pasolini also produced *BEL AMI*, starring Robert Pattinson, Uma Thurman, Christina Ricci and Kristin Scott Thomas, "The Closer You Get", written by acclaimed television writer William Ivory, and "The Emperor's New Clothes", starring Ian Holm.

STEFANO FALIVENE – Director of Photography

Italian born cinematographer Stefano Falivene's films include Amos Gitai's *Carmel*; Uberto Pasolini's award-winning film *MACHAN*; Kim Rossi Stuart's *ANCHE LIBERO VA BENE*, for which Falivene received a Golden Swan for Best Cinematography at the Copenhagen International Film Festival; Abel Ferrara's *MARY*, Wes Anderson's *THE LIFE AQUATIC* and Declan Donnellan and Nick Ormerod's *BEL AMI* starring Robert Pattinson.

He has also worked as a camera operator on films including: Gary Grey's *ITALIAN JOB*, Brian Helgeland's *THE ORDER*, Martin Scorsese's *GANGS OF NEW YORK* and Ridley Scott's *HANNIBAL*.

WORLD SALES - BETA CINEMA

Beta Cinema has established itself as a "boutique-operation" for independent feature films with strong theatrical potential. Beta Cinema's philosophy is to keep its selective acquisition policy of 10 to 12 titles per year in order to fully develop the theatrical potential of each title according to its individual character.

Beta Cinema's portfolio includes outstanding productions like Berlin 2013 Golden Bear-winning *CHILD'S POSE*, Academy Award 2011-nominated *IN DARKNESS*, Cannes 2008 Jury Prize-winning and Academy Award-nominated *IL DIVO*, Academy Award 2007-winning *THE COUNTERFEITERS*, Academy Award 2007 nominated *MONGOL*, Academy Award 2006-winning *THE LIVES OF OTHERS* and the Academy Award 2004-nominated *DOWNFALL*.

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