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WILD COUNTRY

Production Notes

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WILD COUNTRY

Starring

Samantha Shields

Martin Compston

Peter Capaldi

Alan McHugh

Kevin Quinn

Nicola Muldoon

Jamie Quinn

Karen Fraser

Tracey Robertson

Jordan Young

Writer and Director Craig Strachan

Producer Ros Borland

Associate Producer Catherine Aitken

Line Producer Angela Murray

Director of Photography Jan Pester

SFX Designer Bob Keen

Film Editor Colin Monie

Sound Recordist Becky Thomson

Production Designer Max Berman

Costume Designer Ali Mitchell

Make-Up Designer Jacqui Mallet

SHORT SYNOPSIS

16 year-old Kelly Ann gives birth to a baby boy, which is immediately given up for adoption. Six weeks later, trying to get over the emotional upset, she goes on an overnight hike with her church youth group. The group is joined by 18-year-old Lee, the father of Kelly Ann's baby. Kelly Ann isn't pleased to see him. The rest of the group get worried when Kelly Ann starts thinking she hears a baby crying on the moors. But they do find a baby abandoned in a ruined castle. As they hike back to take the baby to safety, the group is stalked by a wild beast that picks them off one by one. Lee sacrifices himself to give Kelly Ann a chance to escape, and she begins a new life as mother to the baby. But with a weird twist.

LONG SYNOPSIS

16 year-old Glasgow girl KELLY ANN has to give up her baby as soon as it is born. There is no sign of the father, her erstwhile boyfriend LEE who hasn't appeared since she became pregnant, and the local priest (FATHER STEVE) tells her that it is for the best. She does not see her child again, although maintains a small link by pumping her breast milk for the infant.

Six weeks later she is ready to face the world again. Kelly Ann joins an overnight hike with her friend LOUISE, Louise's boyfriend DAVID and his younger brother MARK (the butt of all their jokes). The outward bound mission is run by Father Steve, who tries to chill the young group with the legend of "Sawney Bean" – a local cannibal whose ancestors are said to still roam the woods. The young hikers are left in the woods with a map and a compass. Father Steve arranges to meet them the next day at a specified small hotel.

The first surprise of the hike is the appearance of Lee, who has been given the details by David. Lee wants to talk to Kelly Ann, and perhaps restart their relationship. Kelly Ann does not want to know. But later she finds she needs her ex-boyfriend when a strange and rather perverted local shepherd surprises her in the woods. Lee jumps to her aid. Although he scares the man off they decide that the boys should take it in turns to keep watch through the night.

On Lee's watch Kelly Ann joins him. It is a surprise to her to discover that Father Steve had told Lee that she didn't want him to see her or have anything to do with the baby. Kelly Ann thinks she hears a noise – the noise of a baby crying. Before Lee can stop her she runs towards a deserted tower. Lee has no option but to follow. There they do find a baby. They also find the severed head of the shepherd!

They bring the child back to camp and Kelly Ann stops it crying by breast feeding (even if she does get a wee bite for her efforts). They decide to immediately hike to the nearest police station to report the child and the severed shepherd. But not long into their walk young Mark disappears. They finally find him with his intestines ripped out. The shadow of a beast seems to be lurking in the trees.

They are quite spooked, even if they don't know what they're running from. Louise panics, loses her footing and falls into a gorge. The beast goes to get the injured young girl, but David and Lee get there first and think they have scared it off. However this has left Kelly Ann by herself, and the beast sets his sights on her. She uses the camping stove as a torch to scare it off. By this time David and Lee are struggling back up to save Kelly Ann. It is not needed, but now they are too far away from Louise, who becomes easy prey for the monster. She screams just before it rips her throat out.

The trio decides they will never get out of the woods unless they go on the offensive. They return to the tower, sharpen sticks, and lie in wait for the beast. At dawn it arrives back. Kelly Ann lures it into a corner where the two boys bombard it with heavy rocks. While dazed David and Lee go in for the kill with their spears. They cannot believe that it is a wolf, but are happy their ordeal is over. That is until the she-wolf's huge mate, at least half as big again, returns. He instantly ravages David like a cloth doll.

The beast then chases Lee and Kelly Ann. They find safety up a tree but realise they cannot stay there forever. Lee climbs down and makes a diversion so that Kelly Ann and the baby can escape. Lee knows that this is certain death, and he is devoured in seconds – but long enough for Kelly Ann to make her escape. She finally gets back to the hotel, to interrupt Father Steve apparently caring for the female hotelier's every need - spiritual and physical. They find her story improbably, and suspect her of kidnapping the young child. But the truth becomes apparent when the hotelier is attacked in the courtyard. Father Steve bolts the door, much more worried about his own safety. But too late. Kelly Ann has turned into a werewolf: a result of the nick the baby/kid gave her earlier. The priest is mauled to death by a monster that was really of his own making, and a bovine Kelly Ann marches back to the woods with her new family.

CRAIG STRACHAN

Writer and Director

Craig is an LA based Scot and has written feature scripts for producers in the UK and in LA. Craig also worked in development at HBO before branching out as a writer in his own right. Craig wrote and directed the short film *Hidden* that Gabriel Films produced. WILD COUNTRY is Craig's first feature film.

"I came up with the idea for WILD COUNTRY in the months immediately after the birth of my first child, Lindsay, in July 2001. A lot of my friends and relatives have already had kids, and a lot said 'it will change your life and you probably won't like the things you used to', i.e. horror films. So I was ready for this transformative event that would make me touchy-feely and eschew horror. But the outcome was not what I experienced. In fact I liked horror more. My parental feelings were intensively protective – I found the 'protect and defend' instincts were definitely more to the fore. I think I channelled a lot of that into the script for WILD COUNTRY, which is essentially how parenthood transforms you.

"I wrote the first draft of the script during Lindsay's nap times over nights. I had known Ros Borland and Gabriel Films for a long while; we'd done a short film a couple of years previously. She optioned it straight away. We spent the next two years plus trying to raise the money. At one point we were very close to go, but then – as things do in the film business – it fell apart at the last second. But then in 2004, much the same time, we got the green light again. I have to say I was expecting for us to be shut down at each stage of the production, even during editing! I really don't know how Ros kept going for those two and a half years to get the movie made, but she did – and that's what makes her a good producer.

"This is the first time I've worked in horror, which is probably the genre closest to my heart. In the late 1990s I had a couple of scripts that got caught in 'development hell' in Hollywood, so this experience has been a breath of fresh air. I'd definitely like to go on and do another Scottish horror at the same kind of budget level, it was a great experience.

"I'd been trying to work in the American idiom for quite a while, writing for American characters. I was reasonably successful at it – things certainly got commissioned, if not made. But I wasn't entirely sure about the rhythms of speech these people have. So I decided the best thing for me, an antidote almost, would be to write in a different genre and for speech patterns that I'm comfortable in. And that is the west of Scotland. I also thought that writing a film set here, with people speaking like they actually come from here, would be a form of cathartic process. It never occurred to me that it would be made at all. It just goes to show that sometimes if you try something close to you, you get results that don't come when you try to be more schematic.

"What's different about WILD COUNTRY, although it is a teen horror, is that it is set in and rooted in the west of Scotland. We cast very authentic Glasgow area teens, some of them younger than you usually see in Hollywood when the high school

students are about 27. We went for authenticity. So this will be the first Scottish teen horror. I've also tried to use the Scottish naturalistic style of film making as well. We've got the naturalistic feel of something like *Sweet Sixteen*, but with a horror twist – so we're doing a little bit of genre bending.

“That particular movie was put out, even in English speaking territories, with subtitles. Ideally I'd like to get away without subtitles in England, let alone the North American market. I think that the actors seems quite clear to me. The only problem with the language is the rhythm that they would use. The actors are very natural, and there's no stiltedness. We did kind of hum and haw about this, but then I regained my sense of purpose and told the actors not to worry about how they were sounding – that's the last thing we needed. I never wanted it to interfere with the performances.

“I think that Scotland has got this literary tradition in horror that has not been translated into film. It's bizarre, as we've got all the natural kind of equipment like the scenery and the weather. I'd like to continue working in Scotland in this genre.

“I'm not trying to ape *American Werewolf in London*. I do think it's the best werewolf movie yet, without a doubt. I seriously doubt if we'll top that, if indeed anyone could. Apart from anything else we just don't have the resources. But we will do our own thing well.

“The casting process was relatively interesting. Samantha Shields plays Kelly Ann. We first saw her about two years ago when we thought we had the money. Then she was very young, about 16, and was the very first person that we saw. She was very very shy. And then she read for us – and seemed to just expand in front of our eyes. At that time we were very interested, but obviously the casting process ended when the money didn't materialise. When we came around to casting this time we saw a lot of new people, but Sami had stayed with us. She was older, but remained the real standout.

“Martin Compston plays Lee, the father of Kelly Ann's baby. He's now about 20, and quite established in the business. Again he was always our first choice – anyone who saw *Sweet Sixteen* will understand why. He also stayed with us for the two years that we tried to get the money back up again. Martin remained committed to the project, and we certainly appreciated that. He's just a wonderfully natural and talented actor. He has never had an acting lesson in his life, and will never need one. He wants to direct, and I think he'll be really successful in that too.

“We have Kevin and Jamie Quinn, two brothers, playing brothers in the film. We saw Jamie in the first round of auditions all that time ago, and he was really young – so the hiatus probably suited him. He plays Mark, the youngest of the group and the first to go. Kevin plays David, who is around 17. Previously the Quinns had done a very famous advertisement together here in Scotland. They get recognised all the time in Glasgow; according to the paper it is the third most popular advert in Scotland ever.

“The final teen member is Nicola Muldoon, who plays Louise. Again, first time professional engagement – but came on set and picked things up immediately. It was amazing to see how all the young actors learned their trades on set. They absolutely got the whole idea of shooting out of sequence without a problem.

“The younger actors in Scotland today are probably the ones who are most cinema literate – and so their acting styles instinctively work for the camera rather than the theatre because that is what they know.

“Peter Capaldi has always been the actor I wanted for Father Steve. Two years ago he said he would do it, and two years later he did it for us. No one else was offered that role, because I knew he was exactly right. He has an eccentric screen presence, and can make the most ordinary things funny in a subversive way that is not obvious. He does that really well, especially in the early minibus scene. This scene shows how much of a professional he is. The Sawney Bean speech is a long one, and he is supposed to be driving the minibus too. We didn’t really want to get a low-loader on this single track road, so Peter offered to say the speech while actually driving the bus. And he did this for six or seven takes. Then we turned the camera round to do the reverse shots on the kids, and Peter again drove the bus and spoke his lines to make it easier for the young actors. It was a typically generous gesture from him, and I think his experience and generosity especially helped Sammy on her first movie.

“We were working on a low budget – lower even than we first imagined we could do the film for. We knew at the start that there was no point in trying to emulate the expensive Hollywood fare such as *Scream* and *I Know What You Did Last Summer*. It would have been a fruitless exercise. We went more for the Scottish social realist horror niche! Which I think is an extremely narrow one. But we basically used a very straightforward and natural shooting style without utilising bags of tricks – we avoided any steadycam or dolly shots. Our only tracking shots are handheld – the monopod (the pole the camera sits on for tracking shots) was the most sophisticated piece of equipment we used for most of the shoot. I think that handheld digital look works for us. People associate that with documentary and news, so it gave us a realistic feel.

“The beast is a werewolf, but it’s not a cinema werewolf. It’s not governed by the cycles of the moon; it cannot only be killed by silver bullets, we don’t use garlic or eyebrows that meet in the middle. The humans don’t even start with hairs on their palms. One shot that was banned very early on was of a full moon with howls underneath it. I thought we’d got back to the pre-cinema European myths about werewolves.

“That’s not to knock the traditional cinematic werewolf movie. The British film *Dog Soldiers* uses these conventions really well recently. But I wanted to do something a little bit different, and the things that intrigued me about the beasts were the myths and folklore from North America and Europe. I liked the creatures in *Dog Soldiers*, but I wanted ours’ to be a quadruped – to stand on all four legs and look like a wolf, although massive.

“I like to think the effects in the movie have a kind of 1980s retro feel about them. This is pre-CGI gimmickry. We use a lot of puppetry and animatronics in the picture. I always like to have something there to act against rather than putting it in later.

“My best hope for *WILD COUNTRY* is that it should be a horror film in the tradition of *Night of the Living Dead*, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *Halloween* and *The Evil*

Dead. The critic and author Kim Newman has described these films as ‘headlong rush’ horrors, because of their single-minded intensity and pace. Their plots, like that of *WILD COUNTRY*, are simple, rooted in primal storytelling forms – the campfire tale, and especially the fairy tale.

“Although I cite American antecedents, and *WILD COUNTRY* is a horror film featuring teenage characters, I had no interest in making an ersatz American teen horror flick. I wanted to make something distinctive, and distinctly Scottish – the first Scottish horror film since *The Wicker Man*. The set-up of *WILD COUNTRY* suggests a social-realist drama about teen pregnancy, and the film *looks* like a social-realist drama – photographed digitally, entirely on location, in a documentary style, eschewing thriller techniques. The soundtrack, as far as possible, is location sound and there is very little score or incidental music. These techniques signal ‘reality’ to the audience, which should make the turn into full-blown horror all the scarier!

You’ve been there – in a spirited group of teenagers, youthful and invincible, walking together at night in an unfamiliar place. You’ve heard that rustling sound, caught that fleeting glimpse of *something* out there in the darkness. You’ve screamed, clung together for comfort, frightened and exhilarated in equal measure. You’ve bolted headlong through the night, terrified you’ll be separated from the group and left behind to be picked off by the thing you are *sure* is right behind you, clamouring for your blood!

You’ve been there. *WILD COUNTRY* will take you back.”

SAMANTHA SHIELDS

Kelly Ann

This is Samantha's first film.

"I started out as a dancer when I was a wee kid, and always wanted to perform since then. I did my first musical (*Annie*) at 11. After that I was definitely bitten and joined a theatre school a couple of years ago. I got an agent through the school, who have then been putting me up for auditions. I've done some work as an extra in ads and whatnot, as well as a couple of documentaries. At the same time I kept my studying up and got six Highers (including Drama, of course). University is out for the while now though as I'd like to make a go of it as an actress.

"I first auditioned for WILD COUNTRY nearly two and a half years before we started production. I thought even then that the part was meant for me. I felt in the audition that I just became the character straightaway. I'm not trying to be immodest, but I did get a feeling that this was right for me.

"Kelly Ann is a lot more of a leader than I am – I'm quite quiet really. I think she's quite deep and mature though, which I like to think I am too.

"I was so nervous even watching films of women having babies. I knew that it would be so hard to portray the pain that women in labour are in, basically because I've never felt that. I ended up watching the videos again and again to see what they did. I had to wait until everyone else was out of the house – or a couple of times I covered up the screams with some loud music! The whole thing looked horrible. I also relied on one of my best friends for the early scenes. She had just had a baby herself, so I quizzed her on how it felt – emotionally as well as physically – and how she would feel if she had to give up her baby for adoption. Funnily enough we ended up using her baby as the child in the movie.

"I love horror movies, but I'm a real scaredy-cat. I love the idea of watching them, but in the middle I'm screaming 'I shouldn't have done this!' I'm scared to go to bed after some – I keep the bedroom open. *Gothika* is the scariest movie that I've ever seen, it was so intense. But the scariest thing I think I've ever been through is at the Chamber of Horrors attraction in Blackpool. I was being chased by what looked like the little girl in *The Exorcist*, and it really got to me.

"The important thing in the horror scenes, I think, is to ignore the blood and gore and concentrate much more on how you would feel.

"I like to know what the director is thinking the whole time, rather than trying to figure it out. That's why I loved working with Craig. He's really calm and will also be very constructive. He'd never actually say 'that was rubbish', it's more 'try it this way' and will usually let me do it my way first.

“Peter’s (Capaldi) cracking, he’s so funny. I was expecting him to be detached because he’s done so much, especially with me being a novice. But he’s not at all. His facial expressions crack me up all the time.

“My family and friends are so excited because they know that this is what I’ve always wanted to do. My mum and dad love film, so they’re really chuffed.

“The nudity in the film did worry me a little. But it’s got to be done and it’s part of the job. I was nervous about having everyone around, and even more nervous about people watching it on the big screen!

Before we started auditions we all met up together on occasions to talk about our characters and the story. Ros and Craig used to take us up to the park for walks. It was great preparation, because we able to bond and so look realistically like a group of pals. Nicola and I especially have become close friends out of it.”

MARTIN COMPSTON

Lee

Martin Compston burst onto the big screen in Ken Loach's acclaimed *Sweet Sixteen*. He has since worked with Loach again in the recent *Tickets* as well as appearing in *A Guide to Recognising Your Saints* and *Naesland*. Martin is also a recurring character in the popular BBC television series *Monarch of the Glen*.

"From the moment I got the script I thought WILD COUNTRY was a cracking proposition. It was on and off for a while, but I always maintained that I wanted to be involved. It's a low budget horror movie filming in Scotland, and it just really appealed to me. I'm a fan of films, although not a real horror geek, but I could recognise this as top-notch horror. I loved working on the scary scenes.

"What I really liked about the story is that it is a realistic story about five Glasgow youngsters. It's not some American overacting nonsense with a good-looking leading man. It's a proper believable situation that then just goes mental, and the characters react like real people would react to the events.

"Lee is the oldest of the gang, and he's probably the one with a little bit of money as he's left school. He's a bit of a rogue I suppose. But I think he's a nice guy, I think he's quite decent. His main reason for being there is that he's trying to get back with Kelly Ann. People might think that he ran off and left his girlfriend, but although he wasn't a great father I think he was tricked into thinking that Kelly Ann didn't want to see him. To be fair he's gone to the forest to try to get back with her.

"The character is quite a nice wee guy. In fact all five are actually really nice. But I think the content may shock some people used to seeing me in *Monarch of the Glen* and what have you. However they've both been set up in a way, but he's trying to do the right thing. It's a hell of a burden for someone so young, but you do get the feeling that he does care for Kelly Ann.

"To be a father at any age is hard, but to be a teen father is really difficult. I don't think Lee is a bad guy, he was just put into a horrible situation and he dealt with it differently, but the best he could. And throughout the film he tries to put that right.

"My life has been quite exciting for a teenager. I've done lots of different jobs and seen lots of things being a footballer and then going into the acting game. I just try to get into the role as best I can. I always try to bring part of myself into the acting. Acting is a great job to have. It really is the best job in the world – I couldn't face doing a nine-to-five now.

"There are similarities between the way I came into acting and the way Samantha (Shields) has now got her break. The good thing is that I don't think she realises the amount of pressure that should be on her, and I didn't either when I got my break. She's a smashing lass and so talented that no one else on set seemed concerned that it was her first movie either. She's a natural. If there was some way I could have helped her on set I would have done, but she didn't really need it to be honest. The

best way is to find out for yourself. She's real, she's doing it for the first time – and it really comes together for the character.

“When I first got involved I knew the audience had to care about these characters, especially the relationship between Lee and Kelly Ann. So it was important that Samantha and me got on – mind you, it's impossible not to get on with her. We didn't have as much time as I would have liked in advance due to my having a hectic schedule, but everything is there in the script.

“Craig the director is smashing, and he really trusts his cast to deliver. If the audience doesn't care about these characters when they're being killed then there's no point to the whole film. I do think that Samantha and I have got that believable emotional bond. Because Craig wrote the script you'd think he'd be very protective of it, but he gives you a lot of freedom to explore the character and develop that – including changing the dialogue to suit our own ways. He says that no one knows the character as well as the actor playing him. He knows what he wants, and sticks to the story, but he's always willing to talk over any ideas you have. He really lets you go with your instincts. Shooting on high definition also allows you greater shooting time, and so you can experiment a wee bit here or there.

“Working on a horror movie you hope it's going to look scary and terrifying, but you never really know. The beast is a cracking feat of special effects, but it's very slow and cumbersome to move which makes it hard to be actually afraid of it. I'm not scared of wolves anyway, because I've got two at home basically! I'm a big animal lover and own two huge German Shepherd dogs. But it's been a lot of fun, and the cast and crew all muck in together.

“I am quite athletic still, which was lucky as this is quite a physical role. I love football although I can't play as much as I used to because of insurance. But I haven't started to pile on the pounds just yet, and I keep myself in fairly good shape. I did have to do a wee bit of extra training for the shoot though just because there's so much running (and, funnily enough, my next job involves running too). But a lot of acting is just sitting on your arse mouthing lines, so it's good to have a bit of action.

“It's strange on this one, because I'm usually the baby on a set whereas here I'm one of the more experienced screen actors. So I'm the one saying 'don't be nervous' for a change! I've also never died on screen before, so WILD COUNTRY gives me the opportunity of a heroic death scene.

“I'm a city boy, but I do live up in the highlands now seven months a year for *Monarch of the Glen*. I've got a house up there and I love it. It can be a little bit quiet now and again, but that's great for work; it just helps the concentration. Also, I come from Greenock – which is hardly Vegas. You can get to the countryside in minutes.

“The social realism starts the movie. We've all seen kitchen sink movies set in Glasgow before, and many of them are really depressing – set in the slums. So this is great that they escape the glumness of the city for the apparent security of the country, and then things start to happen.”

PETER CAPALDI

Father Steve

Peter Capaldi got his first major break working on Bill Forsyth's classic *Local Hero*. He has gone on to star, write and direct in film and television for over 30 years. He won an Oscar in 1993 for his short film *Franz Kafka's It's a Wonderful Life*. Peter has also written and directed *Simply Sinatra* and well as writing and starring in *Soft Top, Hard Shoulder*. Currently to be seen on BBC Television in *The Thick of It*, he is also preparing to direct *The Great Pretender* from his own script.

"I love horror movies. So to be offered this role was delightful. Obviously it's not a major role, but I loved Craig and Ros as soon as I met them so was excited to be part of it (even if Craig insisted I get naked for a scene!). When they pitched it to me I just thought it all sounded like a good laugh really. I also like to support Scottish talent. Obviously, if it was going to be rubbish and I was going to be miserable, I would have turned it down. But this script was fun and an interesting idea.

"I'm quite old fashioned about my horror – I love the old Hammer movies. The first X film I ever went to see was *Dracula AD1972!* It was a terrible movie, but I loved it. I got to meet the star Christopher Neame in a play I was appearing in. He lives in LA now, and is really really lovely. Of course, like a lot of actors, he didn't think those films were very significant. But for me it was a landmark, it took about a week for me to summon up the courage to say 'I thought you were great'. Martin Jarvis was in the same stage show, and he appeared in a series of *Dr Who* that I loved. They both probably thought the roles were side-steps in their career, but for me they were really important.

"For some reason the priests that ran my school used to organise film nights. And because it was a private club they could show X movies to this junior audience. So the screenings used to pack them in for kids who were too young to see *Bride of Dracula* at the local Roxy. We cheered when the blood came out, and shouted at the bats – it was wonderful.

"I've never played a priest before – so just to put the costume on makes you stand in a certain way and gives you some insight into the character. Putting the collar on especially is quite creepy. Then you realise that you're a priest in a horror film – and as soon as a priest shows up in a horror film you know that it's not going to be that straightforward. And you always know that the priest is going to get it before the end – take it for granted that I won't be there for the final bow! I can't say I've based the character on anyone though. I've never had anything but good experiences with priests.

"Father Steve takes underprivileged kids to the wilds and leaves them there – not a very wise thing to do, especially in this case. I think Father Steve believes that he is a trendy priest – he thinks he's rather smart and can talk to them in their own language and what have you. But underneath he's a complete prat, and not a very pleasant man. He has this superficial concern for their welfare, but underneath he's not really fussed.

“I think Craig is a very smart guy. He’s very thorough and prepared, and the great thing is that he’s prepared to bend with the wind; which you have to do to get through these tough days on a low budget set. Craig has a very precise vision of what he wants. Obviously under the conditions we were shooting in it becomes very difficult to eek that vision out. But if anyone could pull it off it is Craig. He is so focussed.

“I think the technology of film making has changed so much that this way of film making is the way of the future. Not everyone can make three or four million pound movies, and there’s no reason to now. I’m delighted to be part of this new explosion. It’s also a way for me to see how this new technology works – especially working on high definition. I’m delighted with the enthusiasm of the people involved in this project. I’m always happiest on a set when I feel I’m with people who want to be there – it’s not just a job. I have to pay the mortgage the same as everyone else, but the older I get the more I want to be surrounded by enthusiasm, by people who don’t think it’s just a job.

“Having directed the little bits like I have does help me as an actor. It gives me a greater understanding of the problems faced by a director, and a production in general. It makes me try to help as much as possible now, without taking away the truth in my own performance. I just feel like a filmmaker anyway – so when I’m acting I’m just contributing to the process in another way. Directing is a very useful experience for any actor – they can see just how difficult it is, and how horrible you can be!

“It’s always interesting working with young actors, and this year I’ve done it a lot. It was delightful to see the energy the WILD COUNTRY kids were. They haven’t yet got the neurosis of actors. I felt I had to raise my game to match what the young guys were doing – they were just working on their instincts. I was very lucky that the first movie I did was with Burt Lancaster. He was very generous with his time, and would offer gentle advice. He was fantastic, it was a fabulous introduction. He was also such a Hollywood superstar and would talk about working with Marilyn Monroe and the like. But these guys have not needed to ask me for advice – they know more than me already!

“Working in horror films is quite an underestimated art form. Peter Cushing in particular was a tremendous actor. You can’t knock any Cushing performance in any film. No matter how tatty the direction or script was, you would always believe in his character. And that’s the key to acting in horror; the audience have to believe in you. You have to seriously discuss werewolves and whatever, and play it completely straight. You don’t get to have nervous breakdowns or comic interludes, but it still takes a great degree of acting skill to get it right.”

ROS BORLAND

Producer

Ros Borland spent six years as a Business Development Manager raising international finance for TV drama, documentaries and children's programmes for the BBC in Scotland and London. Before joining the BBC Ros produced documentaries. Ros was chair of Pact Scotland, the Producers' Association, for two years. Recently she was Production Executive on a Canadian comedy/horror *The French Guy* and is presently co-producing *The Last King of Scotland*, directed by Kevin MacDonal.

“Craig Strachan delivered the script about three and a half years ago to me and the other producer, Catherine Aitken. It was just after his first child was born and the whole primal instinct of parenthood really came out in the writing. We both loved it immediately and got really excited about it. We produced Craig's first short film, *Hidden*, and that had been a great experience. So we knew we really wanted to do this.

“I love horror – I've always loved horror from the age of five when I saw *The Birds*. I've always wanted to do a horror movie set in Scotland. I wanted to do something really quite different to the fare that we're normally served, and I thought WILD COUNTRY did that. Horror movies have always been popular, but especially in the UK they are more looked upon as 'B-movies', which I totally disagree with. Because of this we didn't raise any public money from Britain at all for the project – it was all private finance (and my mortgage!). I'm not sure why, but there does seem to be quite a lot of snobbery about horror as a genre. People would tell me that they didn't like the script. But I kept telling them that it's not for them, it's for 16-year-old boys.

“Scotland is a very spooky place – you just look out onto the moors and it gives you shivers. It just feels that there's something out there. So to set a horror movie in that environment is an exciting prospect. In literature Scotland has got lots of really spooky stories; look at the work of Robert Louis Stevenson. Really frightening stories. But there's not been a horror film since *The Wicker Man* really set here. So this was an opportunity to do something really fresh in a genre that both Craig and I really love.

“WILD COUNTRY is different because as it starts out you think you're in a Ken Loach movie – almost a documentary. It's got social realism. Then all of a sudden it takes off in a completely different direction and these young adults are being chased by something very scary. In that respect the teenagers are very down to earth and are people that we recognise from next door. They're not the sophisticated young adults in American horror movies.

“We sent the script out to over 150 potential financiers over the last couple of years – I've got a huge pile of rejection letters. But we decided to keep going, and really wanted to do this. I eventually went to the States and showed them our previous film *Afterlife*. This showed them that we could tell a story in an interesting way on a very low budget. So they trusted us to come up with something that was believable, and could work with a low budget to deliver them a financial return.

“In the casting process we knew that we wanted a young girl from Glasgow. The whole rhythm of the language wasn’t middle-class or could be from anywhere else. We saw Samantha Shields at the very beginning. She was very nervous, but there was something about her that we really liked. Through all the casting she was the one that stuck in our minds. Luckily she hadn’t changed that much in the years. We saw Martin Compston at the same time, just after he’d done *Sweet Sixteen*, and again we knew instantly that this was our Lee. Peter Capaldi was always on our list for Father Steve – we could just see him being the self-righteous priest!

“The brothers (Jamie and Kevin Quinn) are just so good. We saw hundreds of kids from schools, youth clubs from around the country. Jamie and Kevin first auditioned three years ago and initially we saw Kevin as a possible Lee. This time when we looked at them we thought ‘these guys are just too good together, maybe we should write them in as brothers’. And it makes sense why Mark is there, because he is so young. We asked them to improvise a brotherly fight at the audition and nearly died laughing at the pair; they were just naturals. So then Craig wrote them in as brothers. It also served a purpose as it gives more of an emotional beat when Mark is killed. David now breaks down and almost cracks because he’s lost his brother, which instils a sense of fear into the whole group.

“We’ve got four babies – two of them real. One of the infants is the child of Samantha Shields’ best friend, which is great. Because of the babies’ presence we had to build sets whether we wanted to or not – we just had to have somewhere temperature controlled.

“But we also needed some outdoor shots of the child, so we made little animatronics babies. One can move arms, legs and head for close scenes while another can then be thrown around. You can order them on the internet from the States, they look just like real babies – then we put the animatronics into them.

“When we were thinking about how the film would look we thought long and hard about what we would shoot it on. We had various options, but needed something that would see in the dark and give us that definition so that if there was a dark shadow we would see something. High definition came up as top of the bill every time, and it’s also very cost effective. I wanted Craig to have as much flexibility as possible, especially the number of takes per scene. But it was the look that HD gave us that was most important. The DoP, Jan Pester, had shot Craig’s short film. We liked him personally and knew that we could trust him to interpret Craig’s vision. I think that he has a good sensibility about shooting outdoors – he’s an outdoors sort of person anyway. He framed the shots beautifully and the scenes were beautifully lit – especially the campfire and the tower parts.

“It was really really good fun. The crews in Scotland are so accommodating – and they weren’t being paid the usual rate for this one. They were doing us a big favour, so we tried to make it as comfortable for them as possible. We made it a fun place to be around - we shot five-day weeks rather than the normal six so they got to see their families. Nearly everyone was staying at home, which makes it a lot easier and nicer for them.

“One of the biggest expenses on a low budget movie is petrol. I know it sounds really petty, but if you can keep the production base, the sets and the locations all in the same area then you save money that you can put into actual production values.

“We shot most of the exteriors in Mugdock Country Park just outside Glasgow. Craig actually wrote the script with Mugdock Castle, a fourth century castle in these grounds, in mind. He used to play there when he was a wee boy. So he wrote the script around this location. We approached the park to see if we could use the actual site, and they were very accommodating.

“Everyone asks about the cow scene. We sent the special effects designer Bob Keen some shots of a real highland cow, and then made a plaster cast mould of one. Obviously they had to have the animatronics inside because the rib cage bursts open. But they just viewed the job as they would any other exploding beast. They put tubes underneath the cow and simply made an explosion. The whole crew had to be in protective clothes and protective glasses as it really did just go WHOOSH! I think it’s the first time ever in a horror movie that a highland cow appears.

“The odd thing about the real cows is that we never realised just how dangerous these creatures are (even when they don’t explode!). We knew that we only had one chance at the shot because once the cows saw the crew they would be off. The wrangler rehearsed with cows using a bucket of feed, which obviously attracts them. So she came over the hill with the bucket, the cows came to her, she runs out of frame and we grabbed the shot before the cows ran away.

“We just filmed through all the crappy weather. Shooting in Scotland you have to expect that really – it could be lovely sunshine in the morning and then lashing rain in the afternoon. But overall we were lucky with the elements. It was actually unseasonably warm during the day shoots. It’s a nightmare for continuity because it changes so rapidly here, and of course we have restrictions on how long we could use the younger actors. If you’re very good you might spot a wide shot where I was actually Mark and the sound trainee was Nicola!

“It’s not a conventional movie werewolf. Actually Craig and I always referred to it as the ‘shadow beast’ on set. This is almost more than a mythological creature, sometimes you see things running across the Scottish moors and you’re not too sure what it is; that’s what we wanted to try to evoke. That sort of spooky, terrifying ‘I have no idea what’s out there’ type of creature. The whole idea of this huge dog-like creature was something quite appealing to us. He could easily tear someone’s head off, and that’s what you want in horror – you want some great blood and guts.

“We’re not doing full moons and silver bullets – which belongs to the cinema myth of werewolves really. Even when there were beautiful full moons we forbade Jan from shooting them. While we loved *American Werewolf in London* we wanted to move away from that, going back to the pre-cinema mythology where the creatures can change back and forth at will.”

CAST IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

Kelly Ann	Samantha Shields
Nurses	Kirsty Millar
	Karen Coleman
Elaine	Tracey Robertson
Father Steve	Peter Capaldi
Louise	Nicola Muldoon
Mark	Jamie Quinn
David	Kevin Quinn
Lee	Martin Compston
Missy	Karen Fraser
Shepherd	Alan McHugh
Shadow Beast	Peter Hawkins
Puppeteers	Justin Pitkethley
	Kieran Reed
	David Bonneywell
Baby	Josh Irwin
Farmer	Jordan Young
Newsreader	Sarah Heaney

CREW

Writer and Director	Craig Strachan
Producer	Ros Borland
Associate Producer	Catherine Aitken
Line Producer	Angela Murray
DoP	Jan Pester
SFX Designer	Bob Keen
Film Editor	Colin Monie
Sound Recordist	Becky Thomson
Production Designer	Max Berman
Costume Designer	Ali Mitchell
Make-Up Designer	Jacqui Mallet
First Assistant Director	Gus Maclean
Second Assistant Director	Derek Ritchie
Third Assistant Director	Joanne Gibson
Floor Runner	Barry Laird
Scottish Screen	
Assistant Director Trainee	Neil Murray
Runner/Drivers	Paul Shearer
	Eamon Gallagher
	Gerrard Connelly
Production Co-ordinator	Samantha Sheridan
Production Secretary	Anna McPherson
Location Manager	David Taylor
Unit Manager	Matt Jones

Assistant Location Manager	Scott Dunlop
Location Scouts	Kennedy Forsyth Michael Campbell Derek Henderson
Locations Assistants	Gerrard Connelly Chris Thompson Neil McLauchlan
Producer's Assistant	Craig Walker
Production Trainees	Clare McGarry Michael Doyle Mark Melville David McNally
Production Accountant	Neil Cairns
Accounts Assistant	Paul Zieleniec
Scottish Screen Accounts Trainee	Jacqui McBride
Script Supervisor	Karen Wood
Focus Puller	Jaime Feliu-Torres
Camera Assistant	Mits M'itwamwari
Camera Trainees	Peter O'Rourke David Hutton
Grip	Robert Etherson
Gaffer	Stephen Arthur
Electricians	Alan Fraser Ross Granger Graeme Walker George Thomson Frank McConalogue
Rigger	Billy Wilson
Jimmy Jib	Ken Moulson
Cherry Picker Drivers	James McMonagle Paul McAleavy
Boom Operator	Tristan Anika
Sound Trainee	Joanna Lee
Art Director	John Knight
Production Buyer	John Gorman
Standby Props	Paul McNamara
Dressing Props	Ed Gibson
Art Department Assistant	Dan Roberts
Construction Manager	Gordon Rogers
Assistant Construction Manager	John Sloroch
Set Builders	James McLardie Colin McFarlane Nick Warrilow
Head Scenic Artist	Jean Jacques Chaboissier
Assistant Scenic Artist	Shirley Sweeney
Trainee Scenic Artist	Steven Daniels
Art Department Trainees	Iain McLeod Grant Connell Chris Millar John Gallagher

	Aoife McKim
	Martin McLeod
	Alan Ballany
	Liam McBride
Costume Supervisor	Linda Mellin
Costume Assistant	Korinna Roeding
Costume Dyer	Janis Hart
Costume Trainee	Catherine Havas
Make-up Assistant	Nicole Tulloch
Special Effects Designer	Bob Keen
Special Effects Supervisor	David Bonneywell
Chief Prosthetic Technician	Justin Pitkethley
Chief Mechanical Technician	Peter Hawkins
Visual Effects Co-ordinator	Kieran Reed
Image FX Workshop Crew	
Chief Fabricator	Lisa Crawley
Fabricators	Maria Swindell
	Lotta Haggkvist
	Birgitta Fredlund
Prosthetics	Matt O'Toole
	Ian Morse
	Andre Gilbert
Artwork	Ant Parker
Moulds	Richard Skelly
Mechanics	Andy Colquhoun
Foams	Jess Moore
Workshop Assistants	Hannah Bettell
	Louise Hill
	Jen Latour
Workshop Co-ordinator	Kevin Nelson
Fight Director	Carter Ferguson
Assistant Fight Director	Jim Fleming
Animal Handlers	Alasdair Bain
	Joyce Miller
	Joan Alexander
	Ronnie Alexander
	Joyce Brewster
Chaperones	Anne Rankin
	Laura Davidson
	Samantha Reck
	Liz Reck
Assistant Film Editor	Anna Mehta
Post Production Supervisor	Kieran Parker
Supervising Sound	
Designer/Editor	Douglas MacDougall
Sound Designer	Giles Lamb
Foley Artist	Micheal Mackinnon
Foley Editor	Michael Mackinnon
Dialogue Editor	Kahl Henderson

Re-recording Mixer
Re-recording Mixer
FX Editor

Kahl Henderson
Chris Sinclair
Iain Anderson

SECOND UNIT

First assistant Director
Stedicam Operator
Focus Puller
Camera Assistant
Grip
Sound Recordist
Boom Operator
Physiotherapist
Masseur
Stills Photographer
Publicist
EPK Director

Mercedes McGurn
Kevin O'Brien
Julie Bills
Mark Sneddon
Dave Morrison
Stuart Bruce
Simon Tomlinson
Karen Glass
Gavin Brown
Sue Osmond
Pete Daly
Jim Leishman,
Elysium Productions
Greenlight Creative

Title Design
Post Production Facilities

Jim Allison Editing
S2S Post
Mac Million Ltd
Colour Film Services Ltd

Music

Title
Performed by
Written by
Copyright
Publishing

'Lil Red Riding Hood'
Sam the Sham and the Pharaohs
Ronald Blackwell
Universal Music
Sony ATV

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Mikael Shields
Elisabeth Wilson

The Story, all names, characters and incidents portrayed in this production are fictitious. No identification with actual persons, places or products is intended or should be inferred.

No animals were hurt in any way during the making of this film.

- END -

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