



PRESENTS

45 YEARS

A FILM BY ANDREW HAIGH

FILM FESTIVALS

2015 BERLIN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL – Silver Bear Winner: Best Actor & Actress

2015 TELLURIDE FILM FESTIVAL

2015 TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

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SYNOPSIS

While preparing for their 45th anniversary, Kate and Geoff's marriage is shaken with a discovery that calls into question the life they've built together. Screen legends Charlotte Rampling and Tom Courtenay won Best Actress & Best Actor at the Berlinale for this emotional tour-de-force from acclaimed director Andrew Haigh (*Weekend*).

THE STORY

Married for 45 years, without children, Kate and Geoff Mercer are poised to celebrate their wedding anniversary with a party, when Geoff receives a letter that shakes both of them. The letter, from Switzerland, lets him know that a body has been found: that of Katya, his girlfriend before Kate, who died falling into a fissure in a glacier when the couple were on a walking holiday in 1962. Geoff tells Kate that he was regarded as Katya's next-of-kin, since they had been pretending to be married. Though Kate continues to prepare for the party, and the couple shares some romantic excitement about it, she becomes increasingly disturbed by Geoff's preoccupation with Katya. Geoff begins smoking again; reminisces at length about his carefree time with his previous love; seeks out photographs of her in the attic; and complains bitterly about the way his contemporaries and ex-colleagues have aged. Under Kate's questioning, he states that he would have married Katya had she lived. While Geoff is at a work lunch, Kate searches the attic and finds slides of Katya, which reveal that she was pregnant at the time of her death. As the celebrations grow closer, they delve further into their past, leaving their future in question.

NOTES ON THE FILM

45 Years presents a new take on relationships, old age, forgiveness and jealousy, from a writer/director with a unique insight into relationships. It also presents two performances from treasured stars of British cinema, Charlotte Rampling and Tom Courtenay. Andrew Haigh's screenplay is adapted from David Constantine's short story "In Another Country."

In the sphere of romantic love, longevity tends to be praised as an achievement in itself. Cheery news items circulate periodically about unions that have endured over many decades, and attract gushing comments about how sweet, how adorable, how inspiring it is for love to last so long. But did these happy couples make a better choice to begin with, or love better all along, than those who part sooner? Could it be, rather, that they buried their issues deeper; or were fortunate or skillful in dodging the emotional landmines that can unexpectedly explode the strongest-seeming bond? Does intimacy inevitably increase as the years wear on – or might it suddenly rupture, or slowly erode?

The couple at the center of *45 Years* are not yet in decrepitude, adorable or otherwise. Kate and Geoff Mercer remain intellectually vital and - Geoff's recent heart bypass apart – physically well. But having married as young as was customary in the 60s, when they met, they have already been together longer than many couples of a younger, more commitment-averse generation ever will. Theirs seems a sturdy union. But Haigh's film captures, with haunting acuity, just how vulnerable their marriage becomes when past pain surfaces and past jealousy is reawakened.

If Haigh's previous feature film, 2011's highly-acclaimed *Weekend*, depicted a barely-begun relationship that may or may not go on to flourish beyond the titular two-day span, this follow-up feature takes the opposite narrative tack. The concerns of *45 Years*, however, are unexpectedly similar to those of Haigh's memorable breakout film. How does trust establish itself, and love express itself? How close can we get to another, and how much should we expect to always operate alone?

In many ways, Kate and Geoff are as one. She knows what books he's started and not finished; he's forever engaged in trying to fix their broken toilet; gossip about friends and local people is referenced between them in easy verbal shorthand. But a macabre reminder of Geoff's life before Kate – the discovery of the body of his previous girlfriend, Katya, killed in a walking accident in Switzerland fifty years before – makes him seem suddenly a stranger to his wife, and emphasizes remorselessly the emotional differences between them. "A fissure, I suppose you'd call it – like a narrow crack in the rock," says Geoff of the fault that claimed Katya's life, little suspecting that he's naming exactly what's happening to his marriage in the moment. Geoff, a tactless, too-open naif who, as Kate puts it, "gets over-passionate about things", will continue to blunder over the feelings of his contained but sensitive wife, confounding the truism that honesty is the best policy. Kate, meanwhile, will marinate in the most hopeless sort of jealousy: the sort that refers to people and relationships long since gone. "I can hardly be cross with something that

happened before we existed, can I?" she reasonably states. But she is... and the full range of reasons that she is will soon be discreetly unveiled, to the viewer if not to Geoff.

Films about older age that don't sentimentalize, or patronize are few and far between. *45 Years* treats its characters as people still in the thick of life and still vulnerable to its emotional slings and arrows. Piquancy is added with the casting of two erstwhile icons of British youth culture, Charlotte Rampling and Tom Courtenay, in the roles. When Geoff tells Kate, "You were a bloody knockout", we can picture Rampling as the Swinging London model and starlet who became known as 'The Look'; and when she rejoins, "You were so cool," we see Courtenay as the scrawny handsome ne'er-do-well of *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* and *Billy Liar*. Meanwhile, the 60s pop music that seems to be stalking Kate as she grapples with her husband's undead past – *I Only Want To Be With You*; *Young Girl*; *Happy Together* – cruelly contrasts the wide-eyed fantasies of youth with the testing realities of making love last.

Compassionate, sharply observed and subtly funny, *45 Years* looks in-depth at a phase of life often minimized, caricatured or excluded altogether from film narratives, and at a side of love – retrospective jealousy – as hard to talk about as it is to endure. It also offers two of our finest performers their best roles in years, and confirms Haigh – most recently feted for the HBO television drama series *Looking* – as a writer/director of uncommon insight.

The film also marks an evolution in the work of its dynamic British production company, The Bureau. Having established itself as an exciting launchpad for bold directors at the start of their career –, Asif Kapadia, Alexis Dos Santos and Andrew Haigh among them – the company is now building its profile through ongoing relationships with those directors, new associations with other directors-to-watch, and higher-profile films with prime roles for established stars. Most recently the company worked with Alan Rickman on his directorial project *A Little Chaos* (2014), starring Kate Winslet.

ANDREW HAIGH Q&A

What appealed to you about the short story and how did you go about the process of adapting it?

There was something heart-breaking to me about the story of a relationship faltering at its final hurdle. It was as if this reminder of the past, this preserved body in the ice, had been waiting for its moment to throw everything into chaos, into a very quiet internal chaos. Through the cracks in the earth come all of those doubts and fears, all of those things unsaid over the years, emotions repressed and kept hidden. It's as if Kate and Geoff's whole relationship, from the foundation up, is suddenly called into question by a woman who no longer exists.

The original short story was beautifully clear and concise but for the adaptation it needed some expansion. Apart from adding the anniversary party, the biggest change was to lower characters' ages from mid-80s to late 60/early 70s. The original time frame meant the story was set in the 1990s and the backstory was during the Second World War. I wanted the story of Kate and Geoff to feel very present-tense. I didn't want it to be about the choices of an older generation now gone, but a story about the choices we all have to make. I also decided to tell the story solely from Kate's perspective, which was different from the original story. There are many films and works of fiction that deal with the male existential crisis and I wanted to take a different perspective on the story.

Can you say something about the relationship between this film and WEEKEND?

There is certainly a correlation between the two. Both films are interested in the complexities of intimacy between two people; the risks involved in exposing yourself emotionally to someone else; the difficulty of being truly honest about your fears. I am very interested in how our romantic relationships speak a bigger truth about who we are and how we want the world to see us.

The inability to communicate emotionally sensitive things is often regarded as particularly British – do you think there's anything in that, especially since you've been working in the States?

I do think there is something culturally and politically conservative about the British which encourages many to bury their feelings for the sake of keeping the status quo. This is certainly the case with the English middle classes. Saying that, I think it's very hard for anyone to be truly open about their feelings because for most of the time they make no sense to us. We can experience them but it is hard for us to articulate what they are. It is also a risk - sharing you inner most feelings is always going to feel like a risk.

What did Charlotte bring to the role, and what is special to you about her as an actress?

Charlotte is a fiercely intelligent actress. She knows what feels truthful and what does not. When I watch her on screen I see a hurricane of emotion under the surface, behind

those eyes. You are invited to observe but also warned to keep your distance. That feels incredibly true to me. They are things all of us should keep to ourselves.

And Tom Courtenay?

There is vulnerability to Tom and to his performance. The last thing I wanted for this film was an angry man raging at the world; I've seen that on screen too many times before. I wanted something more complex, something more sensitive. Here is a character struggling with his own sense of self, not the villain of the piece. Hopefully in *45 Years* there are no villains, just people trying to figure things out.

Their histories as 60s icons haunted their performances, with the snatches of 60s pop music serving as little reminders. Was that something you wanted the audience to pick up on?

I always hoped that their histories would be felt in small, subtle ways. The film is partly about the hopefulness of the past, the potential of our younger selves and knowing these actors as younger people helped enormously. There is a certain melancholy to that and I'm very interested in that as a feeling. I often think that the melancholy we feel about the past is more about the failures and disappointments of the present than the past itself.

There is something about their onscreen relationship that feels very real but at the same time quite unconventional for a portrayal of older people. They seem to be still in the midst of developing as people. Do you have a sense of how much of that was in the script, how much came through as you filmed and how much was from the performances?

This was certainly an intention. I don't believe people stop looking for the answers simply because they get older. There is this belief that by the time we get to our 30s we should have figured everything out, worked out who we are. I'm pretty sure for most of us life does not work like that. We are constantly changing, our identities always evolving and so always asking questions. If we are not, then we should be.

What is your perspective on the rationality or otherwise of Kate's feelings of jealousy and rejection?

I feel great sympathy for Kate. There is certainly an irrational nature to her feelings, which I think she is aware of, but at the same time they speak to something deeper and more disconcerting. It's as if focusing on their relationship has forced a nausea that Kate cannot overcome. It is about feeling rejected and jealous but it's also about the very meaning of her life. It is as if under the weight of inspection all that she has built over the years has started to lose its meaning. It has fallen apart and she is not sure that she knows how to piece back together again.

The references to nature add a really poetic layer – the earth concealing secrets, things that have become invisible but not gone away... is there anything you want to add about that?

It seems pretty clear to me that what happens in our past, what becomes buried under the surface always remains. And I don't mean just the big things, the dramatic events of our lives, I mean all the small mundane details that make up our existence. And we often ignore this, we try to live in the present but it's not easy; the attic gets fuller and fuller and if we're not careful the rafters can break and leave a very big mess all over the bedroom floor.

The presentation of the film is very peaceful and quiet, despite the intensity of the feelings. Can you talk about some of those aesthetic decisions?

It was very important to me that the film started quiet and remained that way. This is not about trauma rearing its head, it's about smaller things; choices and decisions, locked-away feelings and emotions, the things we cannot articulate. All of those fears and doubts that live in those tiny fissures and cracks. Sometimes I think our lives become about not trying to put too much pressure on those fault-lines, hoping the ground doesn't open up and swallow us whole.

Press notes by Hannah McGill

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

Charlotte Rampling

Charlotte Rampling began her career in films in 1964 with Richard Lester in *The Knack*. In 1966 she appeared as Meredith in the film *Georgy Girl* and after this her acting career blossomed in both English, French and Italian cinema. Rampling has often performed controversial roles. In 1969, in Luchino Visconti's *The Damned* (La Caduta degli dei) and in Liliana Cavani's 1974 film *The Night Porter*, playing alongside Dirk Bogarde.

She gained recognition from American audiences in a remake of Raymond Chandler's detective story *Farewell, My Lovely* (1975) and later with Woody Allen's *Stardust Memories* (1980) and particularly in *The Verdict* (1982), an acclaimed drama directed by Sidney Lumet that starred Paul Newman. Her long list of films also includes Alan Parker's *Angel Heart*, Ian Softly's *The Wings of the Dove*, Michael Cacoyannis' *The Cherry Orchard*, Julio Medem's *Caotica Ana*, Domink Moll's *Lemming*, Laurent Cantet's *Heading South* (*Vers le Sud*), Jonathan Nossiter's *Signs* and Nagisa Oshima's *Max My Love*.

Charlotte has collaborated extensively with the director Francois Ozon appearing in the *Under the Sand* (2001), *Swimming Pool* (2003) *Angel* (2006) and most recently *Jeune et Jolie* (Young and Pretty). Recent work includes the second series of *Broadchurch*, *Dexter*, *Restless*, *Night Train to Lisbon*, *I, Anna*, *Melancholia*, *The Eye of the Storm*, *Clean Skin*, *Streetdance 3D*, *Never Let Me Go*, *Babylon AD*, *Life During Wartime*, *Boogie Woogie & The Duchess*.

Tom Courtenay

Tom Courtenay studied at London's Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts making his professional debut in 1960 in *The Seagull* at the Old Vic to much critical acclaim. He followed this up with appearances in *Henry IV* and *Twelfth Night* at the Old Vic before assuming the role of Billy in *Billy Liar* at the Cambridge Theatre in 1961.

Tom enjoyed huge success as the libidinous Norman in *The Norman Conquests* in London, which led to his Broadway debut with *Otherwise Engaged* in 1977 which earned him a Tony nomination and Drama League Award in the process. He received a further Tony nomination with *The Dresser*.

It was *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* that really launched his film career, winning him the award for the Most Promising Newcomer at the BAFTAs. Throughout his career, Tom has received five British Film Academy nominations and earned his first Oscar nomination for *Doctor Zhivago* in 1965. Theatre ranges from *Uncle Vanya* to *King Lear*.

Since the 1980's Tom has appeared in various film and TV roles including *Billy Liar*, *King and Country* (best actor Venice film festival), *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, *The Dresser* (Oscar nomination), Dustin Hoffman's *Quartet*, *Let Him Have It*, *Nicholas*

Nickleby, *Little Dorrit* and the TV show *A Rather English Marriage* for which he won a British Television Award.

In 2000 Tom published his memoir *Dear Tom: Letters From Home* and a year later he was awarded with a knighthood. His upcoming film roles include *Dad's Army* and *The Legend of Barney Thomson*.

Geraldine James

Geraldine's forthcoming film work includes: *Alice in Wonderland: Through The Looking Glass*, directed by James Bobin for Disney and *Our Robot Overlords*, directed by Jon Wright for Tempo Productions.

Other recent film includes: *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, directed by David Fincher for Columbia/SPE; *Sherlock Holmes* and *Sherlock Holmes: Game of Shadows*, both directed by Guy Ritchie for Warner Bros. and Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland* for Disney. Other film work includes: *Made in Dagenham*, *Gandhi*, *The Tall Guy*, *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase*, *The Bridge*, *Prince of Shadows*, *Words Upon The Window Pane*, *The Testimony of Taliesin Jones*, *The Luzhin Defense* and *Calendar Girls*.

Geraldine won the Coppa Volpi Award for Best Actress at the Venice Film Festival for her performance in Sir Peter Hall's *She's Been Away*.

Geraldine has been BAFTA-nominated four times for her television work; for *Dummy*, *The Jewel in The Crown*, *Band of Gold* and *Sins*. Forthcoming television includes *Black Work*, directed by Michael Samuels for ITV. Most recently she starred in Channel Four's hit series *Utopia (Series 1 & 2)*, and her other TV credits include: *Legacy*, *13 Steps Down*, *Little Britain*, *City of Vice*, *The Last Enemy*, *Rapunzel*, *The Time of Your Life*, *Heist*, *The Amazing Mrs Pritchard*, *Jane Hall*, *He Knew He Was Right*, *State of Play*, *Hound of the Baskervilles*, *Crime and Punishment*, *White Teeth*, *Drovers Gold*, *Kavanagh QC*, *A Doll's House*, *Blott on the Landscape* and *The History Man*.

On stage, Geraldine played Gertrude in Michael Grandage's Donmar & Broadway production of *Hamlet* opposite Jude Law. Other theatre credits include *13* (National Theatre), *The Seagull* (Arcola Theatre), *Victory* (Arcola Theatre), *The UN Inspector* (National Theatre), *The Cherry Orchard* (Oxford Stage Co), *The Faith Healer* (Almeida Theatre), *Death and the Maiden* (Duke of York's), *Hedda Gabler* (Royal Exchange Theatre), and Sir Peter Hall's productions of *Lysistrata* (Old Vic and West End), *Cymbeline* (National Theatre) and *The Merchant of Venice* (Phoenix Theatre and Broadway) for which she won the Drama Desk Award, and was nominated for a Tony Award.

Geraldine trained at The Drama Centre and was awarded an OBE in 2003.

FILMMAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Andrew Haigh

Andrew Haigh worked as an assistant editor on films such as *Gladiator* and *Black Hawk Down* before debuting as a writer/director with the short film *Oil*. In 2009 he directed his first feature length film, *Greek Pete* which debuted at the London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival and won the Artistic Achievement Award at Outfest.

His break-out film, *Weekend*, premiered at the SXSW Film Festival winning the Emerging Visions Audience Award before being released worldwide. It went on to win numerous awards including 2 British Independent Film Awards and an Evening Standard Award for Best Screenplay. Andrew also won the London Film Critics Award for Best Breakthrough Filmmaker. The film appeared on many 'best of year' lists including the New York Times and the film has since received a prestigious Criterion Collection release.

Haigh is currently the Executive Producer on the HBO show *Looking*, currently in it's second season, for which he also writes and direct multiple episodes.

Tristan Goligher

Tristan Goligher has produced, co-produced, and exec produced 9 feature films. He graduated in Law and Politics, and has a broad range of experience in the industry. From runner, through to assistant director, script editor and producer.

In 2010 he co-produced *Late Bloomers* by Julie Gavras, starring William Hurt and Isabella Rossellini (Berlinale 2011). In the same year he produced Andrew Haigh's *Weekend*, (SXSW 2011 and winner of The Emerging Visions Audience Award). *Weekend* has won numerous awards including Best Achievement in Production at the BIFAs 2011. In 2012 he co-produced *Costa Gavras' Le Capital* (TIFF 2012). Through iFeatures Tristan has exec produced three films. The first of which is *The Goob* (Venice Days 2014), which won the Grand Jury Prize in Dinard 2014, the second is *Norfolk*, which will premiere at Rotterdam 2015.

CREDITS

CAST

Kate Mercer
Geoff Mercer
Lena
Charlotte
George

Charlotte Rampling
Tom Courtenay
Geraldine James
Dolly Wells
David Sibley

Chris the Postman
Mr Watkins
Travel Agent
Café Waitress
Jake

Sam Alexander
Richard Cunningham
Hannah Chambers
Camille Ucan
Rufus Wright

CREW

Director/Writer
Producer
Director of Photography
Editor
Production Designer
Sound Design
Costume Designer
Make Up Designer
Casting Director
Line Producer
1st Assistant Director
Location Manager
Script Supervisor
Production Accountant
Executive Producer
Executive Producer
Executive Producer
Executive Producer
Executive Producer
Executive Producer
Executive Producer

Andrew Haigh
Tristan Goligher
Lol Crawley
Jonathan Alberts
Sarah Finlay
Joakim Sundstorm
Suzie Harman
Nicole Stafford
Kahleen Crawford
Rachel Dargavel
Gareth Tandy
Tom Hamilton
Julia Chiavetta
Jackie Smith
Christopher Collins
Lizzie Francke
Sam Lavender
Tessa Ross
Richard Holmes
Louisa Dent
Philip Knatchbull

Technical Details
Duration: 95 min
Format:
Aspect Ratio: 1.85 : 1
Sound:
Original language: English

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