

A FAMILY'S LIKE A CONSTELLATION OF STARS -
ALL CONNECTED, EVEN IF THEY'RE LIGHT YEARS APART

light years



30. VENICE
INTERNATIONAL
FILM CRITICS WEEK

BELFAST
FILM FESTIVAL
NEW CINEMA 2016

BFI LONDON
FILM FESTIVAL
IN COMPETITION 2016

EEN FILM VAN ESTHER MAY CAMPBELL

Sophie
BURTON

Beth
ORTON

James
STUCKEY

BFI AND CREATIVE ENGLAND PRESENT IN ASSOCIATION WITH FINITE FILMS, FILMS AT 59 AND WOUNDED BUFFALO A THIRD FILMS PRODUCTION "LIGHT YEARS" IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE MATCH FACTORY AND ILLUMINATIONS FILMS STARRING BETH ORTON, MUHAMMET UZUNER, ZAHIRA FULLER, SOPHIE BURTON AND JAMES STUCKEY
PRODUCTION DESIGNER JANE MORTON ORIGINAL MUSIC ERIC CHENAUX MUSIC SUPERVISOR CHIZ WILLIAMS RERECORDING MIXER BEN PEACE SUPERVISING SOUND EDITOR JOAKIM SUNDSTRÖM EDITOR CHRIS BARWELL DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY ZAC NICHOLSON AND WILL PUGH EXECUTIVE
PRODUCERS CHRISTOPHER COLLINS, CHRISTOPHER MOLL, AMY GARDNER, RICHARD HOLMES AND KEITH GRIFFITHS PRODUCED BY SAWAN HAILLAL, WENDY BEVAN MOGG, DUANE HOPKINS AND ANDREW MCVICAR WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY ESTHER MAY CAMPBELL



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light years

Groot Britannië | 2015 | 86 minuten | Engels gesproken | Nederlandse ondertiteling

EEN FILM VAN ESTHER MAY CAMPBELL

VANAF 22 SEPTEMBER IN DE FILMTHEATERS

DISTRIBUTIE

De film wordt in de Benelux uitgebracht door

CINEMIEN
Amstelijk 10
1074 HP Amsterdam
Nederland
www.cinemien.nl
info@cinemien.nl
+31(0)20-5776010

**C I N E
M I E N**

PUBLICITEIT

Voor meer informatie over de film kunt u contact opnemen met:

FILM INCOMPANY
Anne Kervers
e: anne.kervers@filminc.nl
t: 06-16274537
Petra van Horssen
e: petra.vanhorssen@filminc.nl
t: 06-55574720

SYNOPSIS

Zoals sterren lichtjaren van elkaar verwijderd zijn, zo lijkt het ook voor het gezin van de achtjarige Rose. Rose wil haar zieke moeder bezoeken, maar niemand wil haar brengen. Haar vader, zus en broer hebben andere dingen aan hun hoofd. Ze besluit toch op pad te gaan, waarna haar broer en zus al snel volgen. Tijdens hun kleine avontuur worden ze echter allemaal geconfronteerd met de gevolgen van een mogelijk verwoestende erfelijkheid. Light Years toont een dag in het leven van het gezin; een dag waarop ieder een eigen pad volgt, maar die de familie toch dichterbij elkaar brengt. Sterren maken deel uit van een sterrenstelsel en zo ook zijn Rose en haar familie onlosmakelijk met elkaar verbonden.

Light Years ging in première op het filmfestival van Venetië en is de debuutfilm van de veelbelovende Britse regisseur Esther May Campbell, die eerder een BAFTA won met haar korte film September. Gezien vanuit de verbeeldingskracht van de achtjarige Rose vertelt de film een intiem, maar universeel verhaal over liefde, familie en volwassen worden.



CAST

Sophie Burton	Ramona
Zamira Fuller	Rose
James Stuckey	Ewan
Beth Orton	Moira
Muhammet	Uzuner Dee
Mickey Morris	Levi
Ewan Cooke	Nathan
Graeme Hogg	Roderick
Mike Wright	Spirit
Fouad Cilmi	Abdi

CREW

Directed by
Written by
Produced by

Executive Producers

Director of Photography

Editor
Production Designer
Music
Music and Sound Supervisor
Post Production Supervisor
Casting Director
Costume Design
Makeup and Hair Design

Esther May Campbell
Esther May Campbell
Samm Haillay
Wendy Bevan-Mogg
Duane Hopkins
Andrew McVicar
Keith Griffiths
Amy Gardner
Christopher Collins
Christopher Moll
Richard Holmes
Zac Nicholson
Will Pugh
Chris Barwell
Jane Morton
Eric Chenaux
Chiz Williams
Edd Maggs
Shaheen Baig
Maggie Chappelhow
Jillian Conway

INTERVIEW WITH ESTHER MAY CAMPBELL

There are five central characters in *Light Years*, orbiting one another, and they each have a story. Cinematically the film puts us very close to them. I was interested in how you constructed that, and whether it was always the plan?

I enjoy the photography of Joel Sternfeld and Hin Chua. Their in-between places. I considered capturing our characters in landscapes, photographing them with a similar depth of field, so we might know and scan their environment; the natural and the industrial world. A lot of my recent photographs reflected this. They are grappling with an unfolding, dark knowledge - which anchors the plot. And so their internal storytelling was paramount. We had to feel them, not look at them.

Ultimately the film moves between these central perspectives. Internal and external. And a third...

So you have characters and landscapes, both very unique and distinctive, but there's also something that happens as you move between them.

Yes. The third element, which is hard to explain. An omnipresent eye and ear, which is not the filmmaker, but a greater force that pulls together the stories. It manifests in the way that characters hear each other, connections made in the cut, a wind that moves through the locations, light changing over images. Or how the natural world infiltrates the story. With whatever cinematic tools we could develop, the aim was to remind the audience that there's a bigger life force that keeps ticking and keeps these relationships alive.

When I approached a scene I was thinking, of course, about how this moment relates to the needs of a character, but also I thought more broadly about this feeling, this spirit point of view. I'd look for it always in what was happening in the room at the time, or in the edit later.



Thematically it's about a family that are interconnected to each other and there's this Big Bang inside that connection. So my aim was to keep those elements in play all the time using whatever directorial tools I could.

From the outset I wanted to ensure the process of making this film was just that; a real creative process. One that might challenge the sometimes brutal conventions of film production. One that is tender and spacious and would allow soulful work to come out.

I went out on walks with sound artist Chris Watson, months before we shot a frame of film. We went to record sounds of wires, roads, care homes, doors, engines. These were not only a palette to be used in the edit - but it informed more. Chris and I talked a lot about sounds and ghosts. How sounds shift into music. What music sounds like recorded in different places (what he calls worldising). And how real listening stops our thoughts. We shot the film over a fair period of time. We shot the bulk of the drama with a large crew on 16mm. I also had shot some 16mm a year before, of starlings and sunsets and floods. I set up that some folk go out and source additional photography working to a theme. After the main shoot, I worked with a six person crew and we shot more of the film with more time to play, improvise and discover. Somehow this mix of digital, 16mm, times, multiple formats and stocks belonged together as they came from one source - me.

How did the script develop in the writing process? You worked on it for a while.

Ideas come in fragments for me. At first, I had a bit of plot. No more than a girl following a bus route to get to her mum. Then I had images. Floods and seasons in the edgelands. A place of limbo. A place between places. I wanted to investigate this landscape where the natural world and the modern industrial meet. This seemed important.

I also lived through a series of personal losses while gestating *Light Years*. I wanted to look at how to (keep) living when birth and death came so close. I wanted to make sense of the cruelty and joys of inevitable death. To know it, to feel one's ghosts but become alive to the present.





I wrote and I directed other things and I brought up my family and I wrote and I walked and listened. The film became a vessel that held some of the things we were journeying through.

Finally I stopped other work and sat still. The impossible heartbreak and exuberance of this is enough to sit with. The story just became more and more soulful and simple. I needed to be with the story idea long enough to nurture it, go beyond surface plotting and access that deep well of emotion running underneath the story.

The narrative begins with the family disparate. In their own worlds, orbiting each other, but not connecting. Then the constellation forms and they are together at last. We long for this, and I tried to make it palpable in the film.

We should talk about the actors. I had no idea that Moira was played by (singer-songwriter) Beth Orton.

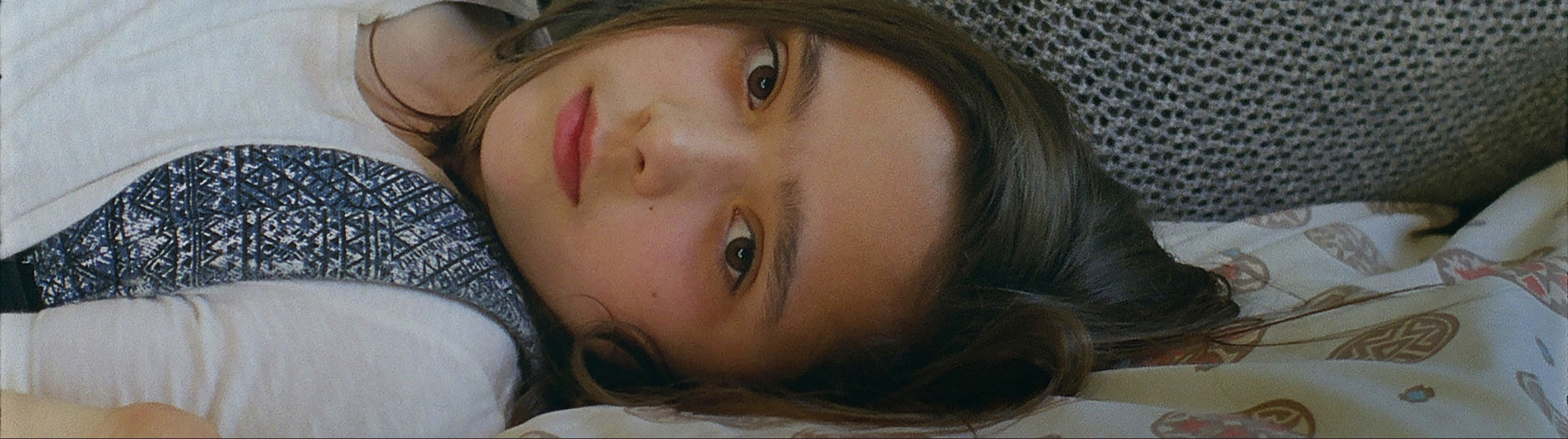
I like to be surprised and so I like working with actors and non-actors alike. I knew I wanted the woman who plays Moira to be in her body. Use it as a tool. I was always thinking of a dancer or singer. Someone who could bring emotion through her.

Sometime ago I watched Tarkovsky's *SACRIFICE*. Years later I was given a cassette compilation. On this was a recording of a kulning. A call made by Swedish cow callers. Somewhere in the distance, I heard it in *SACRIFICE* and I knew this feeling that comes from a female calling into the wilds, calling her flock in, also belonged to our film. And so Moira (alive, yes - but dying too, yes - and dead in her family's thoughts) calls her family.

I liked the image of Beth and Muhammet (Uzuner, who plays Dee, the father). I thought putting these two people together created a story. What happened in the past plays so heavily into the one day over which this story takes place.

We did long distance calls, and filmed workshops. She had a strong sense of maternal relationships, and their complexities due to ill health. But I didn't meet with Beth until she was in my bedroom trying on headscarves. It was a risk. But she was so willing to access her vulnerable self.

One of my favourite moments in the film is a shot of Beth in the forest and the colours of the forest are reflected in her eyes and she's been talking



to Rose and there's this moment of hesitation and pain in her face and it doesn't last for more than two or three seconds, but every time I feel myself catching my breath.

We saw a few thousand children between us. We went to schools around the edge of the city. We were looking a year before we shot, and I was simultaneously writing and checking the authenticity of the ideas (I write as I walk, looking at locations and people - there's a great deal of cross over in development for me). Each young actor came to us in a different way. Each person needed a very different directing style to get the best out of them. Sophie (Burton, who plays Ramona) was spotted chatting to her mate in the queue for auditions and she didn't want to do any acting. I was drawn to her immediately. With Sophie you don't know what she's going to do next, there isn't an acting style. I love that.

James (Stuckey, who plays Ewan) had big feet, gangly arms and thought things through very hard. I could use him being in his head. I'd get him to do a lot of physical things, because the conflict between mind and body in the character of Ewan was the most paramount thing.

Zamira (Fuller, who plays Rose) was a surprise, because Sophie and James were both deeply complicated and curious in their adolescence and then there came Zamira who was earthed as an actor and a human being. This was a superb counterpoint to what the other two were doing which was so unpredictable – in a really good way. Each young actor came to us in a different way. Each person needed a very different directing style to get the best out of them.

From the very start of the film, there's a sense of something unknown, something mysterious that pervades the whole experience.

Artists I enjoy allow the mysterious to be just that. It is part of an emotional landscape and is to not to be resolved. Moments that seem coincidental, un-real and magical make up everyday life. I want to offer that to an audience by creating mysteries to get their pulses racing, their unconscious interpreting and owning the film's images and sounds because the viewer is processing what they mean exclusively to their own experience. If, in story terms, the result is that we must be with the unresolvable and that it is just this journey that opens our hearts - I'm good with that.

Interview by Ben Slater.

ESTHER MAY CAMPBELL

Esther May Campbell. 27th May 1972, London, Kings Cross St Pancras. Self-taught photographer and filmmaker, Esther has directed low fi music vids, sex education films, corporates for and about randy sailors as well as Channel 4 dramas and the BBC's 'Wallander' starring Kenneth Branagh. Her captivating cinema stories tell of lost souls, tragic lovers, limbo lives and daydreamers, all found in her self-penned short, the multi awarded and BAFTA winning 'September'. Working with the Cube Cinema collective in her adopted home of Bristol, Esther mobilises a community cinema for children affected by the aftermath of the Haiti and Nepal earthquakes.

2015

LIGHT YEARS

'UNTITLED DRAMA' FUTURISTIC LOVE STORY (FEATURE)

'UNTITLED DOCUMENTARY' (FEATURE R&D)

2014

'THE FILM THAT BUYS THE CINEMA'

Cube Cinema Collective (Producer/Coordinator)

2012

WALLANDER 3 – 'DOGS OF RIGA' (Leftbank Films)

BASS CLEF: 'GHOST KICKS IN THE SPIRAL'

JAMES BLACKSHAW: 'WE WHO STOLE THE DREAM'

2010

SCRIPT, 'TRAVELLING LIGHT' (Zentropa/Sigma films)

2009

SKINS: 'FREDDIE'S EPISODE' & 'JJ's EPISODE' (Company Films)

NANCY ELIZABETH 'FEET OF COURAGE' (Company Films)

2008

SEPTEMBER. Short Film.

Winner: Best Short Film, BAFTA 2009

Winner: Best of British Award, Encounters Short Film Festival

Winner: Best Film of the Festival, London Short Film Festival 2009

Winner: Paris XII Award, Festival International de Films de Femmes 2009

Winner: Best British Short, Wood Green Film Festival 2009

Winner: Best Short Film, A Corto di Donne 2009

Winner: Best Short Film, East End Film Festival 2009

Winner: Mix Video Prize, Nice Short Film Festival 2009

Winner: Best Short Film, Buxton Film Festival 2009

