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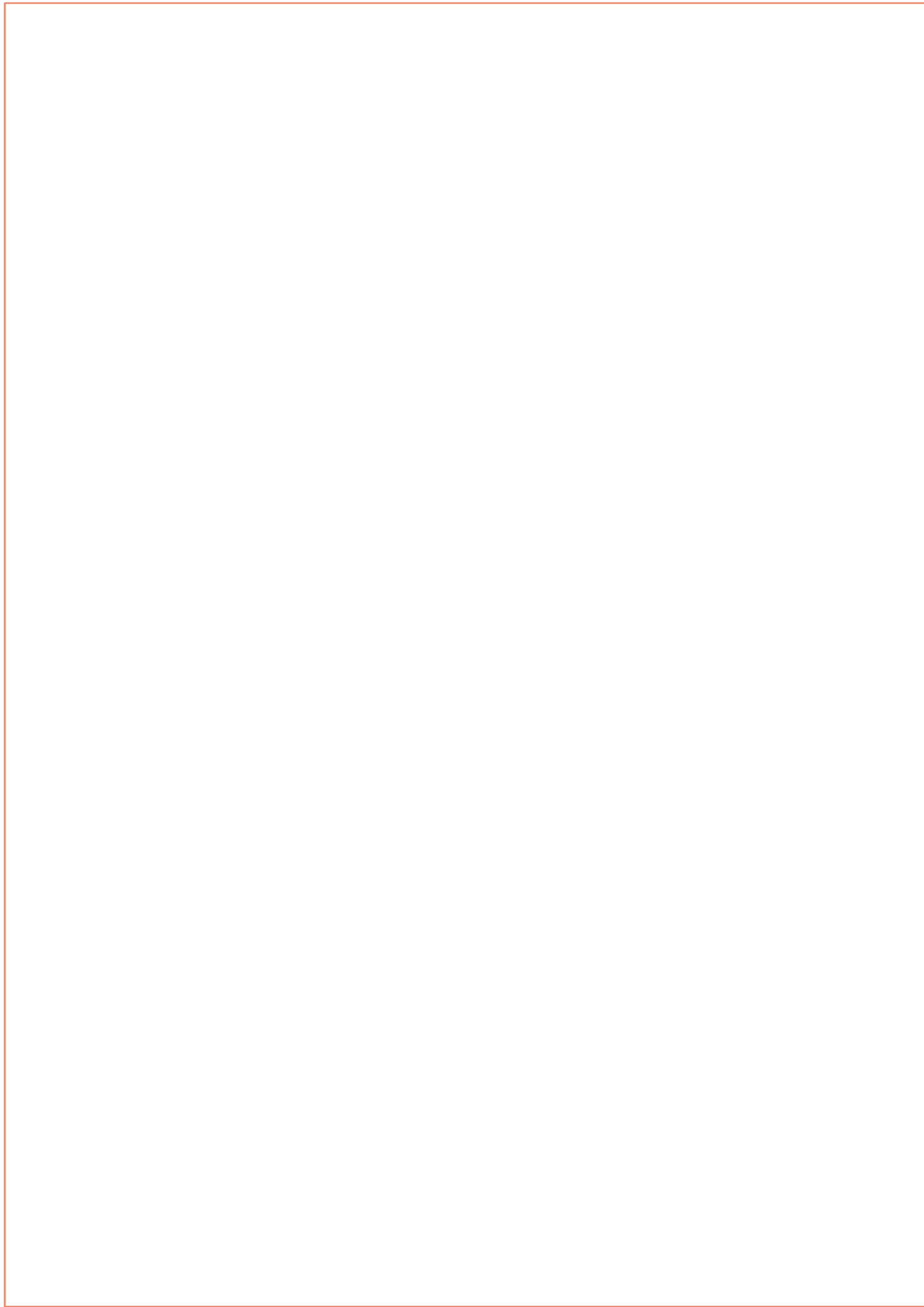
## **LIGHT YEARS**



**release : 10/08/2016**

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### **LIGHT YEARS – synopsis nl/fr**

Debuutfilm van regisseur Esther May Campbell over een dag in het leven van de jonge Rose (8) en haar familie. Op de verjaardag van haar zieke moeder wil Rose haar bezoeken maar niemand wil mee. Zij besluit toch op pad te gaan en begint de tocht alleen...

duur 1u26 Engels

Le premier long métrage de la réalisatrice Esther May Campbell nous raconte l'histoire d'un jour dans la vie de la jeune Rose (8) et sa famille. Le jour de l'anniversaire de sa mère malade, Rose veut la rendre une visite mais personne veut l'accompagner. Elle décide de faire la voyage en solitaire...

durée 1h26 – dialogues en anglais



### **LIGHT YEARS – cast**

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

## LIGHT YEARS – crew

regie / réalisation ..... Esther May Campbell  
scénario ..... Esther May Campbell  
producenten / producteurs..... Samm Hailay  
..... Wendy Bevan-Mogg  
..... Duane Hopkins  
..... Andrew McVicar  
uitvoerend producenten / producteurs executifs ..... Keith Griffiths  
..... Amy Gardner  
..... Christopher Collins  
..... Christopher Moll  
..... Richard Holmes  
photography ..... Zac Nicholson  
..... Will Pugh  
montage ..... Chris Barwell  
production designer ..... Jane Morton  
muziek / musique ..... Eric Chenaux  
kostuums / costumes ..... Maggie Chappelhow  
make up + coiffures ..... Jillian Conway



## **LIGHT YEARS – director Esther May Campbell**

Esther May Campbell. 27th May 1972, London, Kings Cross St Pancras. Self-taught photographer and film maker, 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 effected by the aftermath of the Haiti and Nepal earthquakes.





## LIGHT YEARS – review



Guy Lodge

Film Critic

October 20, 2015

*Esther May Campbell's promising debut feature is elusive as family drama, but rich in dreamily suggestive imagery.*

There is much talk of dream worlds and celestial travel in “Light Years,” an intimate, opalescent debut feature from British writer-director Esther May Campbell, yet it’s supposedly everyday life that its anguished characters find hardest to grasp. Tracing the brief reunion of an unraveled family over the course of one sun-soaked summer day in the English countryside, Campbell’s enticingly sensuous, heat-hazed drama demonstrates the meticulous command of composition and romantically desolate atmosphere that won her a short-film BAFTA in 2009. As storytelling, however, it feels elusive and incomplete: Abstract philosophizing takes precedence in a tale of domestic dysfunction that might otherwise make for a modestly conventional indie heart-tugger. Following fest berths in Venice and Toronto, the sprocket-opera circuit reps this promising pic’s natural home; even U.K. arthouse auds are likely to find “Light Years” an imposing distance to cover.

Aficionados of British independent cinema should note that “Light Years” has been shepherded by Third Films, the production company of “Better Things” director Duane Hopkins. (His most recent feature, “Bypass,” premiered in Venice last year, receiving a minute domestic release the following spring; Campbell’s film looks to follow a similar path.) It’s unsurprising that Hopkins and Campbell should have collaborated: She shares something of his affinity for ornately stylized social realism, with a light-flooded mise-en-scene that subverts standard expectations of Brit miserablism. Also a practicing stills photographer, Campbell may actually have a keener eye than her patron: Shooting predominantly in 16mm with digital interludes, she and lensers Zac Nicholson and Will Pugh conjure a wealth of suggestive, surprising images, whether capturing a teenage kiss between the blurred, rushing carriages of a freight train or a tangle of blood-related bodies sharing a cathartic underwater swim.

Viewers are required to read much between the woozy lines of this splendid imagery; often, the focus and positioning of characters within the frame implies more about their relationships and inner lives than Campbell’s poetically opaque script is willing to disclose. The most lucid member of the ensemble (thanks largely to her ruminative narration) is the youngest: Bright pre-adolescent Rose (Zamira Fuller) observes with melancholic bewilderment the detached, unresponsive behavior of her older siblings Ewan (James Stuckey) and Ramona (Sophie Burton), as well as her seemingly grieving Turkish father Dee (“Once Upon a Time in Anatolia” star Muhammet Uzuner, lending some world-cinema cachet to a very British affair). All four appear locked in private pockets of psychological paralysis as the day dawns; later, a title-prompting spoken metaphor likens them to remote stars in orbit, far apart from each other yet still fundamentally connected.

Gradually, the reason for their silently shared depression emerges: The children’s mother, Moira (folk-pop singer Beth Orton, in her first acting role since the 2001 U.S. independent “Southland”), has been confined to a care home for an unspecified illness that appears to be ravaging both her physical and mental health. As Rose, exasperated by her family’s listlessness, sets off to see Moira on her own, the film’s bare-boned story is bleakly, belatedly set in motion. However, it’s only when a harsh additional facet of Moira’s disease is made known — recalling a key plot point of the recent “Still Alice,” even as Campbell otherwise avoids either medical or melodramatic detail — that the tough emotional stakes of the piece are made concrete. “I want to know how it feels to be normal,” says Ewan with resigned sadness, and he’s not speaking with standard teenage exasperation;

“normality” is evidently an unattainable privilege for him and his siblings, but “Light Years” steps back just as their collective sorrow comes to the surface.

Performances are sincerely felt, if occasionally as guarded in expression as the script. Campbell gets particularly intuitive, inquisitive work from Fuller (an acting novice, as is her onscreen sister Burton), while young Mickey Morris proves a drive-by (or, given his preferred mode of transport, cycle-by) scene-stealer in an abruptly sidelined part as a raggedy neighboring lad with an unrequited crush on Rose. The film’s adult performers are given comparatively little room to flex, though Orton cuts a strikingly hollowed, bereft figure as the ailing, absent parent. Sadly, she never gets to sing, though the pic’s stark, guitar-brushed score and soundscape — as delicately textured as its visual finish — get by without her.



### ***Light Years*: A family constellation anchored by mental illness**

by Sabine Kues

11/09/2015 - VENICE 2015: Esther May Campbell takes on the serious subject of mental illness with a dash of British humour in her new feature, starring singer Beth Orton.

In *Light Years*, screened during the Critics’ Week at the Venice Film Festival, British director **Esther May Campbell** tackles the topic of a mental illness that has an effect on an entire family. Rose (**Zamira Fuller**) is the youngest of three siblings, and the film opens with her narrative voice as she poetically introduces her family ties. She is eventually the one who sets out to find her mother (played by singer **Beth Orton**), who lives in a care home, due to her health condition. In the span of one day, each of the family members sets out on a journey to find Rose and also to reconnect as a family.

The film accomplishes its goal: to tell another story of an incurable illness, not from the perspective of the patient, but rather through the eyes of the people closest to them. The title *Light Years*, as explained in a scene in the film, draws on nature, the evolution of things, and their constellations – most importantly those of stars, which are much like the setup of a family. Over the course of the movie, it poses the question: how do things, such as mental illness, evolve?

At the heart of the story also lies the worry of inheriting this disease as the children face their fear of possibly suffering the same fate as their mother. This anxiety reoccurs several times through the children’s game of copying each other. Early on in the story, we see Rose and her brother Ewan (**James Stuckey**) engaging in a sort of mirroring game, in which he asks his little sister to imitate him. They sit opposite each other and move around two glasses. Ewan takes a sip of water, waits, and as he then spits the liquid back into his glass, Rose loses irrevocably, as she has already swallowed her water. Scenes like these, with an added sprinkling of British humour, continuously loosen up the seriousness of the burden the family faces. And the audience ultimately grasps the gravity of the mirroring game when we learn that the first signs of the mother’s illness had originally surfaced during one of these games.

Every member of the family handles their immanent fear in a different way: the father, Dee (**Muhammet Uzuner**), chooses to disappear as he wishes; the older sister, Ramona (**Sophie Burton**), loses herself in her imaginary boyfriend; and the brother, Ewan, seems to almost never leave the house, crushed by the fear of a man who appears to be following him.

The images by self-taught photographer and filmmaker Campbell remain at times mysterious and nightmarish, as the protagonists wander through the landscapes of roads, woods and fields – also representing an “emotional landscape”, according to the director.