

EASY VIRTUE

A SONY PICTURES CLASSICS RELEASE

Directed by
Stephan Elliott

Producers
Barnaby Thompson
Joe Abrams
James D. Stern

Based on the play by
Noel Coward

Screenplay by
Stephan Elliott and Sheridan Jobbins

Starring
Jessica Biel
Colin Firth
Kristin Scott Thomas
Ben Barnes
Kris Marshall
Kimberley Nixon
Katherine Parkinson
Pip Torrens
Christian Brassington
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Synopsis

The twenties have roared... the thirties have yet to swing. John Whittaker, a young Englishman, falls madly in love with Larita, a sexy and glamorous American woman, and they marry impetuously. However when the couple returns to the family home, his mother Mrs. Whittaker has an instant allergic reaction to her new daughter-in-law. Larita tries her best to fit in but fails to tiptoe through the minefield laid by her mother-in-law. Larita quickly realizes Mrs. Whittaker's game and sees that she must fight back if she's not going to lose John. A battle of wits ensues and sparks soon fly. Mrs. Whittaker manipulates every situation to undermine her, while Larita remains frustratingly calm and engineers sassy counter attacks. Before long, Mrs. Whittaker's manipulation starts to work on John and Larita feels their love is in danger of slipping away. In a grand finale, where the secrets from Larita's past are revealed, she finally makes a break for freedom from the suffocating house.....

The Production

EASY VIRTUE, the lavish adaptation of Noel Coward's play, was completed in seven weeks of principal photography at the end of February 2008, and was shot entirely on location in the UK in magnificent stately homes which include Flintham Hall in Nottingham, Englefield House, near Reading in Berkshire, and Wimpole Hall in Cambridgeshire.

EASY VIRTUE stars American actress **Jessica Biel** (*The Illusionist, I Now Pronounce You Chuck and Larry*) playing Larita, the avant-garde young woman who takes the Whittaker family by storm; **Colin Firth** (*Bridget Jones' Diary, Love Actually, The Girl with the Pearl Earring*) as the war-weary head of the household Mr. Whittaker; **Kristin Scott Thomas** (*The Other Boleyn Girl, The English Patient, Gosford Park, Four Weddings and a Funeral*), as the stoic but neurotic wife Mrs. Whittaker, and **Ben Barnes** (*Stardust, The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian*) as Larita's new husband John Whittaker.

The film also features **Kris Marshall** (*Death At a Funeral, Love Actually*) as Furber, the Whittaker's butler; **Katherine Parkinson** (*The Boat That Rocked, The IT Crowd*) as eldest daughter Marion and **Kimberley Nixon** (*Angus Thongs and Perfect Snogging, Wild Child, Cranford*) playing the youngest of the family, the impressionable Hilda.

EASY VIRTUE is directed by Australian **Stephan Elliott**, famous for movies such as *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* and *Eye of the*

Beholder, and is produced by **Barnaby Thompson, Joe Abrams** and **James D. Stern**.

The producers gathered an award-winning production team, including costume designer **Charlotte Walter** (*A Mighty Heart, The Bourne Supremacy*); Oscar® and BAFTA winning make up and hair designer **Jeremy Woodhead** (*Pirates of the Caribbean, The Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Ring*); production designer **John Beard** (*The History Boys, Enigma, Brazil*), cinematographer **Martin Kenzie** who worked on *St. Trinian's; Phantom of the Opera; Wimbledon* and BAFTA-winning composer **Marius de Vries** (*Moulin Rouge, William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet*).

EASY VIRTUE is written by Elliott and Sheridan Jobbins, based on the Noel Coward play of the same name.

Background

....."It's discouraging to think how many people are shocked by honesty and how few by deceit." (Noel Coward)

Noel Coward wrote '**Easy Virtue**' in 1924 when he was just 23 and, while it was one of his least known works, it played to considerable success. A young Alfred Hitchcock produced a silent film version of the play in 1928.

As a well-known theatre critic once wrote of the production when staged at the Chichester Coward Centenary Festival, "*'Easy Virtue' is a marvellous reminder of Coward's ability to dynamite from within the high society he is generally assumed to have been celebrating.*

This is a savage attack on the hypocrisy of the early 1920s and the way in which it used Victorian standards, already outdated by war, to destroy the lives of those it could not control. The result is a psychological study of sexual repression and guilt and revenge, as the old certainties crumble at the advance of the jazz age."

"I have loved Coward's work ever since having the good fortune to see Maggie Smith in the 1974 production of PRIVATE LIVES, directed by John Gielgud;" begins producer Joe Abrams, " and while Coward is best known for the sophisticated wit and style of his comedies such as PRIVATE LIVES, DESIGN FOR LIVING, and HAY FEVER, it is his dramatic writing that has been the basis of such award winning films as CAVALCADE,

IN WHICH WE SERVE, and BRIEF ENCOUNTER. So, EASY VIRTUE was particularly attractive to me, and I was thrilled to be able to acquire the rights."

"Obviously none of the wit of Coward's dialogue could come through in the silent version," Abrams adds, "so Hitchcock had to emphasize the drama of the social conflict between the new and the old worlds of 1920's England. For EASY VIRTUE today, the challenges and opportunities were not just to keep the conflict, but in the spirit of Coward, to build on it with comedy. I approached Barnaby Thompson because of his terrific work on two Oscar Wilde films, and was delighted that he shared my enthusiasm for what EASY VIRTUE could be to a modern audience."

Producer Barnaby Thompson says "There is something very appealing about this story, which I believe is universal. It's a story about a guy who meets a beautiful woman, they fall in love and marry and he brings her home to meet the family. So far so good you think, but the mother-in-law takes an instant dislike to the girl, and then it is about the sparks that fly thereafter... and we all have mothers-in-law,".

Dealing with the challenge of adapting Coward for modern audiences, Thompson credits co-writers Stephan Elliott and Sheridan Jobbins. "Coward tends to play it very hard and cold, that's the nature of his comedy, and so the process of the adaptation was to make sure we care about the characters and give it a thoroughly contemporary feel. The significance of the work that was done on the script was to really build up the emotional landscape of the piece, so you realize that at the beginning it's all fun and there are wonderfully barbed comments being thrown about, but actually it's about a group of people who are fighting for their lives and it really matters what the outcome is. If the film succeeds, it will be a combination of Noel Coward's wit and the ability of Stephan and Sheridan to make us care about the people themselves."

Thompson discusses his choice of director: "Stephan is an experienced director, but had been away from the camera for quite a while, and so in a way he brought the kind of enthusiasm of a first-timer, combined with the fact that he has made several successful movies before. I always liked his sense of anarchy, and when I was looking around for someone to do this I just had a yen to have a director who could inject some irreverence, and Stephan came to mind. He brings an interesting and infectious spirit, and that was obvious on set by the way he drove things along, and everyone seemed to have a very good time during the shoot. That speaks well for him."

"After famously skiing into a mountain in France in 2004 and breaking my back, pelvis and legs, which kept me off my feet for the best part of three years" begins Elliott, "I had a lot of time to think. I had previously decided I had had enough of the film

industry. The accident experience gave me the kick-on I needed, and I was trying to think of ideas when Barnaby presented me with Noel Coward. My first thought was 'why on earth are you bringing *me* Noel Coward?' Period films really weren't for me; I don't think I have ever sat through an entire period film in my life! But Barnaby said that was exactly the reason he was bringing it to me, and so I read it and thought, OK what's in this? And that little sense of rebellion that's in the piece, specifically with a modern girl like Larita being dragged into a period film and slowly going mad... is where I found myself as a writer. I thought, aha, I can actually have some fun with this. Of course I wasn't allowed to do my standard farting jokes or put men in dresses, they had to restrain me a little," he says laughing.

"We didn't want to make a period film," continues Elliott, "we wanted to make a modern film for modern audiences so we tried to give it a really contemporary voice, then the actors came along and immediately went into Coward mode. And I had to ask them to talk to me as they would normally, so we did eventually find a common voice. Also we have gone completely mad on the music, and we are doing some really extraordinary special effects which we are not used to seeing in a period film. ."

Talking about working with Stephan on the script, co-writer Sheridan Jobbins says: "Stephan is a very funny man. Mischievous. Devious. Mocking and self-deprecating. While Coward is synonymous with wit – he has a reputation for something a little broader! I pointed this out during our initial script conversation (while rolling around laughing and saying things like, 'What? You? Write Noel Coward?'). It turns out I inadvertently laid down the gauntlet to a man who respects Coward as one of the great 20th century observers. The original stage play is a melodrama, not one of Coward's signature comedies. When we were first talking about how to find a way into the comedy without being too heavy handed, Stephan paraphrased Coward by saying, 'Wit is a spice, not a sauce...' and that lead to the defining style for our screenplay: Never try and out Coward Coward."

The Cast

Describing the casting process, producer Barnaby Thompson says: “We met Jessica in LA before she came over here. She had never really been to England, she was by herself and it was December in cold and rainy, miserable England - and here was this girl from Colorado and I think she got a real sense of what Larita’s life might be. But she is a fantastic person and there was a very sweet moment when Jessica and Ben met for the first time, and he walked in with a huge bunch of flowers for his *wife*! And it’s moments like that when you think, yes, this is going to be OK.”

“I think Larita represents everything that is modern and new, particularly as she is American and at that particular time America was really being felt to be a force in the old world,” adds director Stephan Elliott. “I think the Whittaker family, Mrs Whittaker especially, is desperately clinging on to a world that doesn’t really exist anymore. They have this house which is falling into disrepair because they don’t have the money to look after it, or keep the staff that they should; she has a husband who hasn’t really come back from the war, so she has lost him; and she pins all her hopes on the son coming back to help her run the estate and maintain the status quo. Then this bold, gorgeous American girl walks in the room and Mrs. Whittaker sees immediately that this girl is going to take her boy away from her, and he is the one shining light in her life.”

American actress Jessica Biel describes the appeal of working on her first British film: “When I read the script what I liked most was the Noel Coward repartee. There is a very sardonic, witty, sharp dialogue that is fired back and forth and there is so much *not* being said, with everything bubbling under the surface. All these niceties are coming out, and really they all want to rip each other’s head off,” she laughs. “I found it very exciting as an actress because I really understood Larita and I *became* that fiery woman. I am not like that as a person: I am a bit more mellow, so it seemed like a really good challenge. Also, I loved the idea of playing an American amidst this whole world I didn’t really understand, like the English traditions and customs; trying to get my head around the English ‘rhyming slang’; doing certain things at certain times and places - and how proper it should all be. It is really funny and helped with that slight feeling of alienation.”

Stephan goes on, “The best thing about Jessica, as per the character, she was a complete fish out of water. She had never done anything like this before, and it must have been pretty terrifying walking into a room and there’s Colin Firth and Kristin Scott Thomas and everyone, and she was so quiet at first I did wonder what I had done, but Colin pulled me aside and said ‘she is going to steal the picture’!

“Jessica is incredibly unaffected and therefore she is a completely blank canvas and I have never had an actress walk up to me before and say ‘I haven’t a sense of bitterness or cynicism in me’, she said ‘so you have to teach me how to do this’. She genuinely can’t say anything bad about anybody, and believe me I have worked with actors and actresses who can!

Jessica goes on to describe her character: “Basically she is so different from anything the family has ever seen before or ever expected, who has married the golden boy of the family. They are fascinated with her at first, but they don’t understand her and they don’t like her very much. Mrs. Whittaker is very frosty towards her when they first meet and I think she is probably slightly intimidated by her. So from the get-go there are major tensions between the two women. Larita tries very hard to make the tension dissipate and to befriend her mother-in-law, but she is not having it at all.”

As the story unfolds, Larita finds an unlikely ally in Mr. Whittaker: a man who we sense has suffered deeply and withdrawn from his family and apparently, life itself. Whittaker is played by Colin Firth. “The great thing about Colin is that he plays it incredibly real,” producer Thompson says. “You always believe him in whatever part he is playing, and in this film he gives the story real backbone, because he is a man who is still dealing with an enormous amount of pain from the First World War. Similarly he throws out the one-liners with a lovely glint in his eye but there is something about him where he carries his heart on his sleeve and I think that makes him enormously attractive and always gives the piece real muscle, whatever it might be.”

“If I had to describe this family,” begins Firth, “I would have to say it is a dysfunctional aristocratic family when society was still feeling the effects of WWI, and it is probably fair to say that Whittaker is a direct casualty of that; a psychological casualty having been at the front. But everyone else suffered as well and an enormous number of that generation was wiped out and I think you feel it particularly keenly in a rural community. As Whittaker says at one point ‘I am the only man of my age in this village’. So he has isolated himself within the family. He has gone slightly feral; he doesn’t shave; he doesn’t do what he is told or observe the proper protocol. All this is great for me, I don’t have to worry about what I look like in the mornings, I just bowl in importing the bags under the eyes from the night before,” he laughs.

“Whittaker and Larita are both marginalized in the same family,” continues Firth. “She has married into something she doesn’t understand and is shocked to find that suddenly she has no meaningful place in the regime as dictated by Mrs. Whittaker. Whittaker has opted out in a sense and they are both complete misfits in the society.

They are both harbouring very different secrets, but they are both enormous burdens to them.”

Colin Firth admits this is not the first role of this kind he has played: “I have had to conform to a mould more than once; public perception doesn’t let you off the hook once they have you pegged. But when Stephan said he couldn’t eat or sleep until I agreed to take the role I was very flattered and just rolled over! But seriously, when I read the script the nuances started to intrigue me, and it all just got the better of me. It was far more interesting and had a lot more meat to it than first met the eye. And when the cast started to come together – a cast this good – I wanted to be in good company and the older I get that becomes more and more the priority,” he laughs.

“Whittaker, as written by Coward, had a scotch and a cigar in his hand and was very ‘rah rah’ and really didn’t go anywhere,” explains Stephan Elliott. “Once we began to think about the characters and really flesh them out, we realized that this man had been through WWI and here he was behaving like he’s at a permanent drinks party! The bottom line is that no one came back from WWI, so we began to adapt that into the character, and he is a pretty broken man and we dealt with that by silence. Which is tough for Colin sometimes, he has a lot of energy, and so for the first time in many, many years, Colin is silent. He brings a stillness, and when he speaks, every word matters. For the first time on camera he lets himself fall apart and of course as the story progresses Jessica’s character brings him back to life. And that is really the arc of the film; it’s about this dead man who meets this girl who slowly brings him back to life.”

Thompson discusses his choice of actress to play the formidable Mrs. Whittaker, a woman desperate to hang on to her family and her values. “I have been ‘in love’ with Kristin Scott Thomas for 20 years now, so any excuse to be in the same room as her, frankly. I wanted her for this ever since I read the play,” reveals Thompson. “We wanted to create a feeling that if things had worked out differently for Mrs. Whittaker - if her husband had come back intact from the war - she could have been Larita. So when Larita walks through the door, she isn’t just seeing an adversary who is going to steal her son, she is seeing someone who has the life she could have had. Kristin is very beautiful and glamorous but was prepared to play against that in this role, so she is much more than just the mother-in-law.”

“Mrs. Whittaker is a very old-fashioned woman,” observes British actress Kristin Scott Thomas. “But she is also very brave, and determined to carry on despite having this massive house that is falling to bits around her. She is horrified that her only son has come home with a very unsuitable, older wife who is threatening to take him away to London thus forcing him to ignore his responsibilities of taking over the running of the

house. She feels usurped by this woman and reacts violently towards her. Poor Mrs. Whittaker, I can't help but sympathise with her but I am not sure anyone else will. She is very bristly and really quite wicked sometimes!"

"Kristin initially resisted this role thinking she had done it all before, and I argued that she had never done this kind of role actually, and worse than that I told her I was going to do to her what I did to Colin. I said 'I am going to ugly you up,'" continues Elliott. "You forget sometimes how incredibly beautiful Kristin is, she really is a stunning beauty, and she would come out of the trailer in her grey wig and these terrible clothes and she would look miserable. So she had a tough time in that first week or so. And then she said 'you know what, I am going for this' and then she started having some real fun with it. I think my most favorite piece of direction was screaming at her 'more Disney witch' and she burst out laughing and said 'did he just say that?'"

"Ben Barnes had just completed his role as Prince Caspian when he came to audition and having been extremely impressed with his performance in *Stardust* last year, I found there was just something about him that shone and sparkled, which is what I think film stars have to do," says producer Barnaby Thomson. "Obviously he is still young and finding his way, but I do think he has that special ingredient that will make him a big star. We tested him, and he just radiated charm and youthfulness, and he seemed to have a great understanding of the character."

"When I first read the script," says Ben, "I really liked the farcical comedy. But it is only there to begin with. Soon it descends into something much darker, so it has very subtle tones to it. I thought the combination of those things would work wonderfully and to have this mad Australian helming the entire thing could only bring an exciting flavour to it," he laughs.

"The sheer joy of Ben is that he's a kid at heart," adds Stephan. "He is an absolute baby and he is not affected, but he's a kid and has the ability to let that kid go and that was really charming. And up against Jessica playing a 30 year-old there is a lot of sensuality about their scenes together."

Jessica describes working with Ben: "Working with Ben has been fantastic and we have become really good friends. I think in a way we are both similar in that we are both fairly new to this kind of movie, so we are always trying to find the right tonal balance. We have had some very difficult and emotional scenes, and then by turn some wild comedy moments, and Ben has been a really great ally to bounce ideas around with."

The family home might be crumbling but they still retain the services of a rather dubious butler named Furber, played by Kris Marshall. Best known for his comedy roles, Marshall embraced the role with gusto. "Furber is quite an odd character to play," he explains. "There is a bit of mystery about him despite his apparent subservience. As head of the staff he is probably the one who knows more than anyone else what dire straits the family are in and he doesn't really care. You just know that he is going to 'do one' when it all goes pear-shaped, he's going to get the first train out of there," he laughs.

While Larita is confronted by the coldness of Mrs. Whittaker, she is initially warmed by the enthusiastic welcome from her youngest sister-in-law Hilda, played by Kimberley Nixon. "Hilda is probably the most annoying little sister you could ever have," exclaims Kimberley. "She is very childish and completely obsessed with newspaper clippings. So she knows exactly who Larita is having seen pictures of her winning the Grand Prix in Monaco, so her arrival is very exciting! Hilda thinks Larita is the epitome of glamour and beauty, so different from the women she is used to, like her mother and older sister. Larita is a breath of fresh air to this child, but it's funny how quickly that admiration and sort of infatuation becomes a bit twisted later on in the story," she laughs.

The other member of the family who appears to accept Larita's arrival is John's sister Marion, played by Katherine Parkinson. "I play the eldest daughter," Katherine begins, "and when I read the script she was described as 'thick set, with a small crucifix around her neck'. I like to think we have lost the thick set, but she does wear a crucifix," she laughs. "Actually she is an interesting character because she is 'religious' and a total hypocrite. Larita is this wonderful, liberated, emancipated woman, who reads all this saucy literature, like *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, then introduces Marion to them, which she takes to voraciously. That kind of hypocrisy is wonderful as she is being pulled in two directions, but I don't think she thinks for a second that she is being hypocritical as long as she says her prayers!"

The Look of the Period

This period of history saw Amelia Earhart attempt to become the first woman to pilot an aircraft across the Atlantic; Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin; Mickey Mouse appeared in *Steamboat Willie*, and Flapper dresses and bobbed haircuts were de rigueur.

According to award-winning costume designer Charlotte Walter, dressing the characters in **EASY VIRTUE** was 'a gift'. A long-time collector of vintage clothing, she

explains: "I was very fortunate having such a fantastic cast. Stephan wanted all the costumes in the film to look real and attractive, but not without humour. Kristin was very gratifying to dress and completely understands clothes and style. I based her clothes on the two women in my life who were the most influential, my grandmother and my aunt.

"Colin's character was 'shabby chic', and he too grasped the idea and wore the clothes with just the right attitude. Jessica was the alien arriving in the English countryside from America and Europe, and Steph wanted her to stand out as such. I decided her palette would be black and white, silver, cream and grey - straight angles and no frills or fuss like the art deco of the time - a complete contrast to the greens and browns of the English countryside. She looked so elegant in the clothes and embraced the period feel by bravely wearing 1930s underwear every day even when it was freezing, to get the correct feel and shape of her clothes," adds Charlotte.

Jessica Biel agrees that the clothing is particularly relevant to the era and was more than delighted with the designs. "My wardrobe on this film has just been amazing. I literally wanted to walk away with every piece! Because Larita is such a modern woman, she is almost ahead of her time. Everything is very streamlined but all of her outfits have a little cheek to them somehow, so for me, wearing the clothes every day really brought her alive."

"Katherine was my joker card," continues Charlotte, "she was a delight. All her costumes made me laugh, and they all subtly made her a bit oblivious to her clothes and her mother's influence. Kimberley Nixon who plays Marion the little sister was also fun to dress. She wanted to look like Larita and break out! Her costumes were pretty but practical and probably hand-me-downs, and then she started to borrow scarves and brooches from Larita."

When asked to describe the 'look' of the film, director of photography Martin Kenzie, says that he and director Stephan Elliott agreed they were going for a very classical look with a modern edge. "We shot it in winter," explains Kenzie, "and we had some really bright frosty days, which really worked well for us. We also felt that a modern audience wouldn't necessarily be attracted to this story if we made it as an ordinary romantic comedy, as it were. So we have tried to give it a modern feel with some energetic camera moves while trying to maintain some kind of period look and glossing it to bring it up to date a bit.

Describing Elliott's directing style, producer Thompson says: "He is very stylish just in terms of the way he moves the camera around, and I think he is quite daring, or cavalier

in terms of how he feels something should be caught on film, which immediately liberates you.”

Award-winning hair and make-up supervisor, Jeremy Woodhead talks about the look he tried to create for the characters: “The script was all about contrast and we wanted to heighten the differences between them,” he continues. “For example for someone like Mrs. Whittaker who would never dye her hair, Larita sweeping in with this very fair hair would be such shock to an upper class lady in the shires! Jessica’s hair is naturally brown but we decided collectively that she should be a very obvious blonde with Carole Lombard and Jean Harlow as the reference points. We wanted her to glitter each time she walked into a room,” he says.

Production designer John Beard takes up the story: “Right from the start I was aware that Stephan wanted something slightly quirky in terms of visuals. Both houses, Flintham and Englefield, had real character, and somehow we had to make you believe that all the scenes were taking place in the same house. It was a very good experience for the art department and Stephan was very enthusiastic and great to work with.”

“The one thing about period films is they bore the hell of me,” explains Stephan. “In my head I was thinking I don’t want a museum piece, I want a serious house that looks like it’s in trouble. So I talked to Giles our location manager, and I said I need a house that is falling apart, where every corner is frayed as it is written in the script. As part of the look we took a really ‘30s style to Larita, and when she is in silver and white she looks like the classic ‘30s movie star, stuck on Mars, in this frayed dying old world. And lucky old Jess, she looks a million dollars in every single shot because of what’s around her, and we went to great lengths. Any bright colour that was around her, we got rid of it, so that was the tonal thing...Jessica is an alien arriving from Mars in a silver spaceship and that became a very interesting thing about the colour palette.”

The Locations

EASY VIRTUE was filmed in three magnificent stately homes in the UK which all uniquely reflected aspects of upper middle class life at the time. Flintham Hall in Nottinghamshire acted as the Whittaker house including the fabulous and rare conservatory, described as ‘the finest structure in England still attached to a private house.’ Englefield Hall in Berkshire provided some of the interior shots of the Whittaker family home; and finally, Wimpole Hall in Cambridgeshire was used during the last days of filming as the neighbouring estate, the home of the Hurst family and where they shot the Hunt scenes.

“When I first read the script”, begins location manager Giles Edleston, “I immediately thought of Flintham for the family house. I had known about it for ages, and had been holding back just waiting for the right film; and here it was; it just leapt off the page at me as I was reading the script.” The red brick Grade 1 listed house fitted the story perfectly in that, among its very many unusual and grand features, it boasts a magnificent conservatory, which also served the story perfectly.

The Music

“Musically we are taking a gamble,” says Stephan. “I have never done this before; I am used to scoring a film, and when something sad happens you put some sad music on, for a happy scene you put happy music on... We have recorded all these songs, and sometimes they will come from an old gramophone, and then they will explode into big 5.1 stereo. Finally I decided we had to take one or two gambles, so we are going to record a handful of very contemporary tracks, and re-record them as period. Marius de Vries is our composer, and he did *Moulin Rouge* so there is a taste of that, but we are taking it one step further.”

“The gamble I think is getting the balance right, between it being of the period of the film and having various cheeky references to more modern cultural things that are anachronistic and doing it in a way that hopefully doesn’t ruffle the surface of the movie too much,” says award-winning de Vries.

“Between Stephan and me, we made a fairly early decision to avoid almost entirely conventional underscore techniques so there isn’t a pretty period piece score underneath it. Almost without exception it’s all scored with songs of the period, or songs that sound as if they come from the period, so to build the musical narrative entirely out of songs is a fresh approach. And allowing the natural liveliness and exuberance of the jazz of the 20s to speak through, and to translate that energy into something that is palpable for a modern audience, without pandering to what might be a superficial need for more contemporary musical signposts,” he explains.

...The Cast Can Sing

Stephan discusses the cast’s musical talents further: “After a few glasses of Ealing’s cheekiest chardonnay, Ben Barnes began to serenade a lovely waitress and accidentally let out his dirty little secret. He’s got one hell of a set of lungs on him. Once I started

digging - it just got better n' better. Seems he (almost) represented the UK in the Eurovision Song Contest headlining a boy band called HYRISE (all on You Tube). He quit after one hilarious performance in front of Sir Terry Wogan. That planted a seed in my brain.

During shoot - in a sequence (since cut) I asked Jessica to sing as she dresses for Mrs. Whittaker's party finale. And out flew another dirty little secret - this one voiced by an angel.

Thought I should try my luck with the rest of the cast. See if I could put a little band together. I started with Colin who nearly tore my head off. Seems little old ladies are stalking him in supermarkets singing MAMMA MIA. So I left it at that.

As I had now talked Ben into singing ROOM WITH A VIEW as John and Larita approach the house for the first time, it seemed criminal not get Jessica in on the act. Having already flown back home end of shoot, I rang her to see how she'd feel about having a crack at the main title track MAD ABOUT THE BOY. And she jumped at it. Seems she wanted to sing all her life - and never been given the opportunity. So she cleared a very busy schedule and flew back just for us to lay the vocal.

And we were not disappointed.

Getting right into the spirit - I decided to sing the final reprisal of ROOM WITH A VIEW myself. I'm the second last vocal on the film for those with keen to torture their ears.

When Ben found out - he wanted to sing more! How about a duet with his 'wife'?

Why ever not? The result is a hands-in-the air end title, WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH, and I defy anybody to leave a screening of EASY VIRTUE without their feet tapping."

The Players

Jessica Biel

Larita

Jessica Biel has become one of Hollywood's most coveted leading women. Biel was most recently noted for her critically acclaimed performance in *The Illusionist* alongside

Oscar nominated actors Edward Norton and Paul Giamatti. Entertainment Weekly magazine was quoted saying “Jessica Biel pulls off her most impressive trick yet: transforming herself into a turn-of-the-century Austrian duchess – and a serious art house actress.”

Biel has just completed filming *Nailed*, starring Jake Gyllenhaal, James Marsden and Catherine Keener. This comedy is directed by David O. Russell and follows a waitress who gets a nail accidentally lodged in her head causing unpredictable behaviour.

Biel will next be seen in the film *Powder Blue*, in which she stars opposite Oscar winner Forrest Whitaker, Patrick Swayze and Ray Liotta. This dramatic film follows the lives of several Los Angeles strangers who meet by chance on Christmas Eve through a shared tragedy.

Biel was last seen in the Universal comedy *I Now Pronounce You Chuck And Larry* opposite Adam Sandler and Kevin James. The film follows two straight, New York firefighters, played by Sandler and James, as they pretend to be a married gay couple. Biel plays their lawyer as they battle the city to receive domestic partner benefits. *I Now Pronounce You Chuck And Larry* opened #1 at the box office and grossed well over \$100 million dollars domestically.

For her work in *The Illusionist*, Biel received many awards including Hollywood Life’s Annual “Breakthrough Award”, the “Shining Star Award” at both the Giffoni Film Festival and the Maui Film Festival, as well as the “Breakthrough Performance Award” at the 18th Annual Palm Springs International Film Festival.

Biel also starred in the return-from-war drama *Home Of The Brave* opposite Samuel L. Jackson and Christina Ricci. In addition she starred in the sci-fi thriller *Next* with Nicolas Cage and Julianne Moore for Revolution Studios.

As a child, Biel initially pursued a career as a vocalist, performing in musical theatre. Starting at age nine, she starred in productions such as *Annie*, *The Sound of Music* and *Beauty and the Beast*. A natural beauty, she soon turned to modelling and commercial work by competing in The International Modelling and Talent Association’s Annual Conference in 1994.

In her feature film debut at age fourteen, Biel garnered raves for her portrayal as the rebellious daughter in Victor Nunez’s acclaimed film *Ulee’s Gold*, starring Oscar nominee Peter Fonda. She then went on to appear in such films as Disney’s *I’ll Be Home For Christmas* with Jonathan Taylor Thomas; Warner Bros.’ romantic comedy *Summer*

Catch co-starring Freddie Prinze Jr.; Lions Gate Films' *The Rules Of Attraction* for director Roger Avary; New Line's hit remake of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*; New Line's *Cellular* co-starring Kim Basinger and Chris Evans; and New Line's *Blade: Trinity* with Wesley Snipes, Kris Kristofferson and Ryan Reynolds; Cameron Crowe's *Elizabethtown*, with Orlando Bloom, Kirsten Dunst and Susan Sarandon; and *STEALTH*, starring alongside Josh Lucas and Jamie Foxx.

In her spare time, Biel is active with the *Make the Difference Network*, an online organization that she started with her father, Jon Biel. MTDN is a "national wish list" where people can search, find and fund specific "wishes" that have been listed by non-profit organizations. Through MDTN, Biel has become involved in such charities as *Serving Those Who Serve*, *Best Friends Animal Sanctuary* and *PETA*. She was honoured with the "Young Philanthropist of the Year" Award at the 2006 Golden Karma Awards for her charitable work. Biel's hobbies include ballet, soccer, running, yoga and hiking with her dog, Tina.

Colin Firth *Mr. Whittaker*

A classically trained British theatre actor, Colin Firth is a veteran of film, television and stage. His recent productions include Robert Zemeckis' *A Christmas Carol*; Universal Pictures' *Mamma Mia*, the film adaptation of the ABBA musical, and *Genova* directed by Michael Winterbottom. Firth is currently shooting *Dorian Gray* for Ealing Studios.

In 2007 he made *And When Did You Last See Your Father?*, an independent film also starring Jim Broadbent, and he has also completed production on *Then She Found Me*, directed by and starring Helen Hunt. The cast includes Bette Midler and Matthew Broderick.

In 2005, Firth appeared in the film *Nanny McPhee*, written by and starring Emma Thompson. He also appeared in Atom Egoyan's controversial film *Where the Truth Lies* opposite Kevin Bacon. Adapted from the acclaimed novel by the same name, the story is a dark thriller about the break-up of a celebrated comedy duo, a mysterious murder and the journalist (Alison Lohman) who seeks to uncover the mystery. In 2004, Firth starred in the Universal/Working Title hit *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*. Firth reprised his role as 'Mark Darcy' opposite Renee Zellweger and Hugh Grant in the film, which is based on Helen Fielding's best-selling novel. The film broke numerous box office records internationally and grossed over 250 million dollars worldwide.

Also in 2004, Firth appeared in the critically-acclaimed film *Girl With a Pearl Earring* opposite Scarlett Johansson. The film won both the L'Hitchcock D'Or and L'Hitchcock d'Argent at the Dinard Festival of British Films. Firth was nominated for a European Film Award for his performance.

In 2003, Firth appeared in the Universal film *Love Actually* written and directed by Richard Curtis (*Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *Notting Hill*). He appeared in the film with an outstanding ensemble cast including Hugh Grant, Emma Thompson, Liam Neeson, Laura Linney and Keira Knightly. At the time of its release, *Love Actually* broke box office records as the highest grossing British romantic comedy opening of all time in the UK and Ireland and is the largest opening in the history of Working Title Films to date.

Among his many film performances, Firth has also starred in Ealing Studios' *The Importance of Being Earnest* opposite Rupert Everett and Reese Witherspoon; the Academy Award® nominated *Shakespeare In Love*; and the multi-Oscar® nominated film, *The English Patient*, opposite Kristin Scott Thomas and Ralph Fiennes.

On the small screen, Firth is infamous for his breakout role in 1995, when he played "Mr. Darcy" in the BBC adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* for which he received a BAFTA nomination for Best Actor. His other notable television appearances include *Born Equal*; *Tumbledown*; *Donovan Quick*, *The Widowing of Mrs. Holroyd*; *Deep Blue Sea*; *Hostages* and the mini series *Nostromo*.

Firth is an active supporter of Oxfam International, an organization dedicated to fighting poverty and related injustice around the world. He is a co-director of Oxfam's *Café Progreso*, a chain of coffee bars founded with the intention of creating fair trade opportunities for coffee cooperatives in Ethiopia, Honduras and Indonesia.

Kristin Scott Thomas *Mrs. Whittaker*

Kristin Scott Thomas has become internationally renowned for her talent, elegance and commitment to her craft. Never shying away from challenging roles and determined not to repeat herself, Scott Thomas' body of work is an extraordinary collection of acclaimed film, television and theatre performances.

This autumn, Scott Thomas will star in several highly-anticipated projects for the stage and screen. She will make her Broadway debut in *The Seagull* in a performance for which she won the Olivier Award for "Best Actress" during the play's recent run at London's Royal Court Theatre. Scott Thomas also will soon star in Phillippe Claudel's

French language film, *I've Loved You So Long*, a story of redemption following a woman who has committed a terrible crime and returns to live with her young sister after being banished from her family. The film is slated for an October release from Sony Classics. Scott Thomas is part of a stellar cast, including Isla Fisher, John Goodman, Joan Cusack, and John Lithgow, for the upcoming film *Confessions of a Shopaholic*, based on the novel by Sophie Kinsella. The Touchstone Pictures film is set to hit theatres in February 2009.

Scott Thomas won over audiences and critics alike with her Academy-award nominated performance in the late Anthony Minghella's *The English Patient*, where she starred opposite Ralph Fiennes and Juliette Binoche. Of her performance, Kenneth Turan wrote, Scott Thomas "gives a gorgeous and magnetic performance that adds unanticipated new dimensions to an already formidable talent." For her performance she was honoured by the National Board of Review, and was nominated for the Golden Globe, BAFTA and the Screen Actors Guild Award.

Making her U.S. film debut in Prince's *Under a Cherry Moon*, Scott Thomas went on to great acclaim in Mike Newell's *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, opposite Hugh Grant and Andie McDowell, where she won a BAFTA award for Best Supporting Actress. Other notable credits include: Philip Haas' *Angels and Insects*, Richard Loncraine's *Richard III*, Brian DePalma's *Mission Impossible*, Robert Redford's *The Horse Whisperer*, Sydney Pollack's *Random Hearts*,; Irwin Winkler's *Life as a House*,; Roman Polanski's *Bitter Moon*,; Paul Schrader's *The Walker* and Justin Chadwick's recent film, *The Other Boleyn Girl*, where Scott Thomas starred opposite Natalie Portman and Scarlett Johansson.

In 2001, Scott Thomas was part of the ensemble for Robert Altman's acclaimed, Oscar®-winning film, *Gosford Park*. The cast, which also included Maggie Smith, Helen Mirren, Michael Gambon, Ryan Phillippe, Derek Jacobi, Alan Bates, Emily Watson and Bob Balaban, went on to garner numerous awards and nomination including The SAG Award for Outstanding Performance by the Cast of a Theatrical Motion Picture and the Broadcast Film Critics Award for Best Ensemble.

Fluent in French and having been a resident of Paris since she was 19, Scott Thomas has appeared in numerous French films, including Guillaume Canet's *Ne le Dis à Personne* (*Tell No One*), Francis Veber's *Le Doublure* (*The Valet*) and Pascal Bonitzer's *Petites Coupures* (*Small Cuts*). In television, Kristin Scott Thomas has starred in a number of admired mini-series and made-for-TV movies including *Gulliver's Travels*, *Belle Époque*, *Body and Soul*, *Weep No More*, *My Lady* and *The Secret Life of Ian Fleming*.

Ben Barnes
John Whittaker

London-born Ben Barnes trained at The National Youth Music Theatre and Kingston University. His film credits include the title role in Disney's *The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian*, *Bigga than Ben*, *Stardust* for Paramount and *Hustle* for the NFTS. Ben is currently playing the lead in the new film adaptation of *Dorian Gray* for Ealing Studios.

His theatre credits include *The History Boys* No.1 Tour & West End, "Sex, Chips and Rock 'n' Roll at the Manchester Royal Exchange, *Blag*, *Loving Ophelia*, *The Ballad of Saloman Pavey*, *The Ragged Child*, *Bugsy Malone* and *The Dreaming*.

Ben starred in the TV programme *Split Decisions* for Paramount USA. Radio includes *David Copperfield* for BBC Radio 4.

Kris Marshall

Furber

Kris Marshall has become one of the most popular actors in British TV and film and is now set to show his versatility and talent as an actor in a variety of new roles. Already a household name from his award-winning performances in *My Family*, *Love Actually* and *Murder City*, he received plaudits in 2006 on stage opposite Billie Piper in the high-profile West End production of *Treats*, for which he received some of the best reviews of his career.

Kris was next seen in the dark US comedy, *Death at a Funeral*. The movie won two film festival awards and was directed by Frank Oz. His co-stars include Mathew Macfadyen and Peter Dinklage. Kris was also seen on television screens in the one off ITV comedy drama, *Catwalk Dogs*, and then as the lead in ITV's flagship series, *Sold*, which aired in November 2007.

Kris is currently on stage at Trafalgar Studios playing one of the lead roles in *Fat Pig*, written and directed by Neil La Bute, which opened at the beginning of June and has also just been seen as the lead in a new film called *Heist* for the BBC, which formed the centrepiece of their Medieval Season.

Kimberley Nixon

Hilda

Kimberley graduated from the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in 2007. Since that time she has appeared in Paramount Pictures' *Angus, Thongs and Perfect Snogging* and Working Title's *Wild Child*.

She played Sophie in the hugely successful BBC television series *Cranford* and played Alice in Caradog Wolfe-James' *Plastic Wolves*.

At drama school she appeared in *Quadrophenia*; *The Seagull*; *The Crucible*; an RSC production of *A Comedy of Errors*; *The Tempest* and *Hedda Gabler*.

Katherine Parkinson

Marion

Katherine studied Classics at Oxford University before training at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art.

She is best known to British audiences for playing co-lead Jen in the Channel 4 comedy *The IT Crowd*, and for her portrayal of Pauline in ITV's *Doc Martin*. Other television credits include guest roles in *Ahead of the Class* (starring Julie Walters), *Christmas at the Riviera* and regular sketch character contributions to *Katy Brand's Big Ass Show* for ITV2, having been friends with Brand since Oxford.

Stage credits include Masha in *The Seagull* at the Royal Court Theatre opposite Kristin Scott Thomas, *The Lightning Play* at the Almeida Theatre, *Other Hands* at the Soho Theatre, *The Unthinkable* at the Sheffield Crucible Studio, *Cigarettes & Chocolate* at the Kings Head Theatre, *Flush* at the Soho Theatre, *The Riot Act* and *The Increased Difficulty of Concentration* at the Gate Theatre, and *The Age of Consent* at the Edinburgh Festival and Bush Theatre, to name a few.

After filming **Easy Virtue**, Katherine went straight on to co-star in Richard Curtis' *The Boat that Rocked*, alongside Philip Seymour Hoffman, Bill Nighy and Tom Sturridge.

Pip Torrens

Lord Hurst

British actor Pip Torrens has appeared in a great number of stage, television and film productions. His theatre credits include *Another Country*, *Shylock*, *Absolute Hell* and *Stanley*.

As one of British television's most prolific actors, Torrens' vast body of work includes *Poirot*, *Kavanagh QC*, *The Brittias Empire*, *Soldier Soldier*, *Pure Wickedness*, *The Whistle Blower*, *Ted & Alice*, *At Home with the Braithwaites*, *Trial & Retribution*, *Wire in the Blood*,

Charles II, Red Cap, Gifted, Rosemary & Thyme, The Government Inspector, No Angels, Broken News, The Chatterley Affair, Spooks, The Rise and Fall of Rome, Waking the Dead, Lewis, Dr. Who, Silent Witness, The Chanse, Wolfenden, Miss Austen Regret and Queen Victoria's Men.

As a film actor Torrens' work includes *Lady Jane, A Handful of Dust, How to Get Ahead in Advertising, Object of Beauty, Patriot games, The Remains of the Day, Incognito, Tomorrow Never Dies, Rogue Trader, To End All Wars, All the Queen's Men, Revelation, Pride & Prejudice* and *Valiant* as the voice of Lofty.

Christian Brassington

Philip

Christian trained at the Webber Douglas Academy of Dramatic Art. Straight after graduation he shot a lead role in the horror feature film *Incubus* directed by Anya Camilleri. He has appeared in *A Brief History of Helen of Troy* at the Soho Theatre and *King of Hearts* at the Hampstead Theatre directed by Gordon Anderson and Max Stafford Clark respectively. On screen Christian played a young Tony Blair in the spoof documentary *Tony Blair: Rock Star* for Channel 4. His recent film credits include *Mrs. Ratcliffe's Revolution* directed by Bille Eltringham and *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* opposite Cate Blanchett directed by Shekhar Kapur.

Charlotte Riley

Sarah

Dark-haired Charlotte Riley plays Sarah in Stephan Elliott's **Easy Virtue**. After winning an honours degree at LAMDA (London Academy for Music and Dramatic Art) she went on to appear in many television productions including *Wuthering Heights, George Gently, Holby City, Dis/Connected*.

At LAMDA she appeared in *Grace; Otto Klump; The Cherry Orchard; The Provoked Wife; The Duchess of Malfi; Much Ado About Nothing*.

Easy Virtue is Charlotte's first film.

The Production Team

Stephan Elliott (in his own words....!)

Director and Co-Writer

It's been a strange few years of silence from Stephan Elliott. Having vowed to give up the film industry almost a decade ago, he retired to the French Alps and promptly skied off a cliff – breaking his back, pelvis and legs.

Having been told he wasn't going to live – he defied the odds and took to his computer from a hospital bed. In that time he had his first crack at EASY VIRTUE and an adaptation of his 1994 hit film PRISCILLA for the stage.

Priscilla The Musical – produced by London Backrow Productions (Matthew Bourne's Swan Lake) - has since gone on to break all box office records in his native Australia. Now in pre-production for the UK in partnership with Andrew Lloyd Webbers's Really Useful Group, Priscilla will open to great fanfair in the Palace Theatre early next year.

Easy Virtue marks his comeback to the film director's chair.

Stephan Elliott was born in Sydney, Australia, and spent most of his childhood behind a Super 8 camera. He was a pioneer of the video wedding industry when the Betacam was invented. At the time, it meant a 3-man crew as the recorder element (which was separate from the camera) was the size/weight of Pavarotti and took 2 people to carry it.

He shot over 900 weddings from 13 to 18 years old, at a time when people were so in awe of the concept they did not mind being asked to walk down the aisle 4 times for different angles. Sometimes they'd re-ice the cake for multiple cuttings.

He left school in 1981 and joined North Sydney Tech for a prestige editing course. There were 2000 applications for 12 positions. Although he had plenty of examples of fine wedding work to prove he knew what he was doing, the course demanded Maths and English exams. Knowing full well that his dyslexia would never see him to the finish line, he talked his best friend (who had just graduated top of the state in both subjects) to join the course with him. During the exam, they simply swapped names. Stephan got 95%. His friend got 27%.

Stephan was accepted to the prestigious course.

It did not take them long to work out he had cheated.

Whilst studying – he kept looking for work in the field, most famously threatening to chain himself to the door of Kennedy Miller to get a job on *Mad Mad Max 2*.

Another production fell for his cheap tricks. He was given the job of ‘dishwasher’ on the film *Silver City*. When the 3rd AD fell sick (some suspect poison) Elliott filled the position with gusto and spent the next decade working on scores of dubious Australian films as an assistant director. These were his informative years. He learned HOW NOT TO MAKE MOVIES.

Stephan duly burned out, and went to New Zealand on an extended holiday, where he returned with his first feature film script *Frauds*. He would have started writing much earlier if ‘Spell Check’ had been invented. The project was spotted by wine maker Rebel Penfold Russell who had just started a film company, Latent Image. They have since become inseparable and spend most days arguing over who is going to pick up the dog dirt on the lawn.

The project was a nightmare to shoot as the financiers had just gone into liquidation. That said *Frauds* – starring Phil Collins, Hugo Weaving, Jo Burns, was selected for Competition in The Cannes Film Festival - 1991.

It was a trial by fire.

At that time, Latent Producer Andrena Finlay (wife of producer Al Clark) asked Stephan if he had any low budget ideas floating around in his head that she could flog to death out of desperation whilst they were in Cannes. Stephan had just seen a drag queen’s feather breaking off her head dress in a Mardi Gras parade and was pondering the concept of an Australian Sergio Leone western – with female impersonators.

In 14 days, he wrote *The Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert*. It is a shame the word *Adventures* is always overlooked nowadays – as the ‘A’ was deliberate in getting the first listings in all film magazine, newspapers and books.

Al Clark took over as producer and the film stormed Cannes two years later, winning the Prix De Public, soon followed by AFI®, BAFTA® and ACADEMY® awards.

So, bamboozled by all the attention, Stephan spent the next decade trying to distance himself from *Priscilla*. When originally quizzed about a stage adaptation earlier on – he responded “How the **** are you going to put a film set in the ****ING desert on a ****ING stage”? He spent a good few years avoiding such an idea.

He is (still) so naive.

Two more sporadic films followed – the black comedy *Welcome to Woop Woop* – starring Rod Taylor, Barry Humphries, Rachael Griffith and the thriller *Eye of the Beholder* - starring Ewan McGregor, Ashley Judd, KD Lang and Jason Priestley.

Both were incredibly disastrous shoots. The first because the Sam Goldwyn Company making *Woop Woop* was bought by MGM half way through, giving what should have been a small, nasty little movie to a studio who did not know what to do with it.

In the second – *Eye*, the financiers declared bankruptcy mid shoot and took off with all the money. A documentary – *Killing Priscilla* was shot during the debacle by Stephan's life long friend and costume designer Lizzy Gardiner. The doco has become more notorious than the film.

Yet, strangely – both projects were invited to Cannes and Venice consecutively.

Stephan then went into retirement, vowing never to direct again.

The rest is history.

Stephan still skis three months a year.

Barnaby Thompson **Producer**

Barnaby is Head of Studio at Ealing Studios. He has made 4 of the top 12 British Independent movies, of all time.

His production credits include:

EASY VIRTUE, an adaptation of the classic Noel Coward play. Directed by Stephan Elliott (PRISCILLA QUEEN OF THE DESERT), starring Jessica Biel, Colin Firth, Kristin Scott Thomas and Ben Barnes. Shot on location January 2008 and will be released in the UK in November 2008 by Pathe

ST TRINIAN'S, a contemporary reworking of the classic 50s and 60s movies about the eponymous school for young ladies. Co-directed by Barnaby and Oliver Parker (THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST, AN IDEAL HUSBAND), it stars Rupert Everett,

Colin Firth, Lena Headey, Caterina Murino, Toby Jones, Celia Imrie, Jodie Whittaker, Gemma Arterton, Russell Brand & Mischa Barton. Released by Entertainment Film Distributors Christmas 2007, it took £12.25M at the box office in the UK.

FADE TO BLACK, a thriller set in 1940s Italy, directed by Oliver Parker and starring Danny Huston as Orson Welles, Paz Vega, Diego Luna and Christopher Walken. Released by Lionsgate March 2008.

I WANT CANDY, a broad comedy about realising your dreams in unexpected ways. Starring Carmen Electra, Tom Riley, Tom Burke, McKenzie Crook and Jimmy Carr. Directed by Steve Surjik (WAYNE'S WORLD 2). Released nationwide in Spring 2007 by BVI and will be released in America in September 2008 by Magnolia.

ALIEN AUTOPSY, a British comedy starring television stars Ant and Dec, directed by Jonny Campbell and written by Will Davies (JONNY ENGLISH, TWINS), was released in the UK by Warner Bros on April 7th 2006

IMAGINE ME & YOU was released in the US on February 10th 2006 by Fox Searchlight and in the UK in June 2006 by Universal. A romantic comedy with a twist, it stars Piper Perabo, Lena Headey, Matthew Goode and Celia Imrie.

Barnaby executive produced VALIANT with John Williams (SHREK); a \$40 million CGI feature and the first of its kind in the UK. It features the voices of Ewan McGregor, Ricky Gervais, Tim Curry, Jim Broadbent, Hugh Laurie, John Cleese, John Hurt and Olivia Williams. Released by Entertainment Film Distributors in the UK over the Easter weekend, Valiant went on to gross over US \$16m making it the highest grossing non-studio picture of the year. The film was released in North America on 19 August by Disney where it grossed \$20m.

In 2002 Thompson produced Oscar Wilde's THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST. Directed by Oliver Parker, it stars Rupert Everett, Colin Firth, Frances O'Connor, Reese Witherspoon and Judi Dench and was released in the US by Miramax. HOPE SPRINGS, a romantic comedy directed by Mark Herman (LITTLE VOICE, BRASSED OFF), starring Colin Firth, Heather Graham and Minnie Driver was released by Disney in May 2003.

In 2000 he produced HIGH HEELS & LOW LIVES for Disney, directed by Mel Smith and starring Minnie Driver, Mary McCormack and Michael Gambon. The same year Thompson also produced LUCKY BREAK, directed by Peter Cattaneo (THE FULL MONTY), starring James Nesbitt, Olivia Williams, Christopher Plummer, Timothy

Spall, Bill Nighy and Lennie James. Distributed here by Film Four, it was released in North America by Paramount and Miramax.

Barnaby also produced the Golden Globe and BAFTA nominated AN IDEAL HUSBAND (1998), directed by Oliver Parker, starring Cate Blanchett, Minnie Driver, Rupert Everett, Julianne Moore and Jeremy Northam. And he was executive producer on the UK hit comedy KEVIN & PERRY GO LARGE starring Harry Enfield and Kathy Burke. Fragile's first film was the international box office hit SPICEWORLD (1997) starring the Spice Girls, Richard E Grant, Alan Cummings and featuring cameos from Roger Moore and George Wendt. It was an international box office hit, grossing \$90 million worldwide.

Barnaby spent six years working with Lorne Michaels at Broadway Pictures in New York and Los Angeles, during which time he co-produced WAYNE'S WORLD 1 and 2 with Mike Myers and Dana Carvey, CONEHEADS starring Dan Ackroyd and Jane Curtin and LASSIE, directed by Dan Petrie, TOMMY BOY, starring Chris Farley and David Spade, and KIDS IN THE HALL: BRAIN CANDY, which was nominated for four Canadian Genies.

In 1990 Barnaby was nominated for an Oscar for the short film DEAR ROSIE, directed by Peter Cattaneo and written by Peter Morgan.

Thompson is part of a consortium which bought Ealing Studios in 2000. The famous studio is undergoing redevelopment and acquired Fragile Films, the successful production company Thompson set up in 1996 with Uri Fruchtmann.

JOE ABRAMS

Producer

Joe Abrams is President and CEO of Brilliant Films (www.brilliant-films.com), a new company established in association with the UK's leading talent agency, Independent (formerly ICM London), which serves as Brilliant's advisor. A stand-alone venture with its own development fund, Brilliant Films fully finances the development of director, writer and talent-packaged projects.

Before setting up Brilliant Films, Abrams acquired the motion picture and television rights to a number of the key works of Noel Coward, Agatha Christie, and W. Somerset Maugham.

After starting his career with CBS, Abrams joined Columbia Pictures Television in 1985 where he served as Vice President Cable, Pay Television and Home Video. In 1987 Abrams moved to MGM/UA, where as Senior Vice President of Worldwide Pay Television he was responsible for licensing all MGM and UA features and television product to the pay and basic cable networks, including such titles as *Rain Man*, *Moonstruck*, and the *James Bond* films.

In 1990, following the sale of MGM/UA to Pathé, Abrams joined Capital Cities/ABC to head their international sales. As President of ABC Distribution Company, he had direct responsibility for the worldwide licensing of all ABC-owned entertainment and sports programming, ABC News, as well as such event programs as *The Academy Awards* and *The Beatles Anthology*. Abrams also served for ABC on the Board of Directors of both Lifetime and the Arts & Entertainment Network

In 1998, after the sale of Capital Cities/ABC to The Walt Disney Company, Abrams joined Pearson PLC. As President of Pearson Television International, Abrams led the worldwide sales organization, with primary responsibility for the distribution of over 15,000 hours of Pearson Television programming in every genre, to over 150 countries--including such titles as *Neighbors*, *Homicide*, *The Bill*, *The World at War*, *Baywatch*, and *Mr. Bean*.

In 2001, with the sale of Pearson Television (renamed FremantleMedia) to the RTL Group, Abrams established his consulting business to provide strategy, marketing and sales consulting to the media and entertainment industry, with a mix of clients that have included Sony/Columbia Pictures Television, BMG, the Sundance Channel, and Elvis Presley Enterprises - as well as a number of private equity firms involved with media transactions

James D Stern **Producer**

James D. Stern is a long time entertainment producer and director, having produced over 50 plays and shows and dozens of feature films. Prior to founding Endgame Entertainment, Stern directed a darkly comic psychological thriller for HBO entitled *It's the Rage* which garnered Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Screenplay awards at the Milan Film Festival, as well as directed the IMAX hit *Michael Jordan to the MAX*.

Since then he has directed *The Year of the Yao* and *So Goes the Nation*, as well as produced *Proof*, *I'm Not There*, and *The Brothers Bloom*." In theater, Stern's credits include the

critically acclaimed Broadway productions such as *The Producers*, *Hairspray*, *The Diary of Anne Frank* as well as the runaway, international hit *Stomp*.

Sheridan Jobbins

Co-Writer

Sheridan Jobbins is a third generation Australian film maker, who has been working in film and television all her life - "When other kids were playing in sand pits, I was playing in editing rooms and on set. I've now done so many different things on both sides of the camera - I'm either a film polymath or a poly-moth. Either way, I bring a lot of experience to the page... You know, in a Mrs Robinson kinda way."

Sheridan was a director of Latent Image between 1993 and 2000, where she was in charge of film and development for their on-going production slate. It was during this time she met Stephan Elliott when Latent Image produced *The Adventures of Pricilla Queen of the Desert; Frauds; Paws and Willfull*. She and Elliott have continued their partnership, writing titles such as *Madams, Venetian Wedding, Dog and Ghosts*.

She has also co-written television series including *House of Fun, Capital Hill* and *The Planet News* - an original concept sitcom for The Disney Channel in the US.

Between 1984 and 1993, Sheridan acted as writer/presenter for various lifestyle programmes including: *Simon Townsend's Wonder World!* (Network10) which won the 1984 Logie for "Best Children's Series", *Good Morning Australia* (Network 10), *State of the Arts* (ABC) (later called *Billboard*).

Sheridan was also a Guinness Book of Record holder as the Youngest Host of her Own TV Show. For three years, starting at just 9 years old she presented the series *Cooking with Sheri*, which she claims, is "A completely useless credit, but something fun to mention at parties."

Her hobbies include rocking the boat and pole dancing.

Martin Kenzie

Director of Photography

Martin Kenzie was born in Cambridge, England, and began his career as a production runner for Picture Palace Productions: a London based TV Commercials Company. A

year later he transferred to the camera department at Samuelson Film Services preparing motion picture cameras for hire.

In 1979, Kenzie worked on his first feature film, Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* photographed by John Alcott, and over the following five years worked as 2nd Assistant Camera on a number of high profile and award-winning productions such as *Star Wars Episode VI-Return of the Jedi* and *A Passage to India* directed by David Lean.

Kenzie continued as 1st Assistant Camera working on successful European based movies such as Robert Zemeckis' *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, *Willow* directed by Ron Howard, Steven Spielberg's *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, *White Hunter, Black Heart* directed by Clint Eastwood, Francis Coppola's *Godfather III* with photography by Gordon Willis and *Alien III*.

He has made considerable 2nd unit contributions for *Wimbledon*, *Syriana*, *Stormbreaker*, *Amazing Grace* *Babylon AD*, *St. Trinian's*, *Wild Child*, *Mamma Mia* and recently *The Boat That Rocked* for Richard Curtis. Recently, Kenzie has completed main unit cinematography on feature films such as *Back In Business* directed by Chris Munro.

Sue Blainey **Editor**

Sue Blainey started as an assistant editor in Australia on features such as *Dead Calm*, *Witches of Eastwick* and *BMX Bandits*, starring a young Nicole Kidman.

Some of Sue's memorable feature credits as an editor include *Adventures of Priscilla*, *Queen of the Desert*, and *Eye of the Beholder*.

Sue has also put her stamp on creative and highly acclaimed television shows such as *Oz*, *Six Feet Under* and *Lost*. She was rewarded when she received Emmy and A.C.E award nominations for her work on the second season finale of *Lost* in 2006.

Her latest endeavor pairs her for a third collaboration with director Stephan Elliot on the film, *Easy Virtue* starring Kristin Scott Thomas.

John Beard **Production Designer**

John Beard began his career in 1979 as an Assistant Art Director working on films such as *The Life of Brian*, Nic Roeg's *Bad Timing* and *Priest of Love*.

He went on to become Art Director in 1980 when he worked on titles that include *The Wildcats of St. Trinians*, *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman*, *Eureka* and Terry Gilliam's *Brazil*.

In 1986 he became a Production Designer and worked on the following titles: *Absolute Beginners*, *Siesta*, *The Last Temptation of Christ*, *Erik the Viking*, *Map of the Human Heart*, *Splitting Heirs*, *Franz Kafka's It's a Wonderful Life.*, *The Browning Version*, *Hackers*, *Wings of the Dove*, *The Lost Son*, *Enigma*, *Thunderbirds*, *Skeleton Key*, *Stoned*, *The History Boys*, *Inkheart*, *How to Lose Friends and Alienate People* and *Easy Virtue*. John is currently in pre-production with Ealing Studios' forthcoming production *Dorian Gray*.

Charlotte Walter Costume Designer

Charlotte Walter is a highly acclaimed Costume Designer with an enviable list of credits. Her career has enabled her to work with some of the most talented and inspiring actors of our time, such as Peter O' Toole, Angelina Jolie, Romala Garai and Kristin Scott Thomas.

Having always had a passion for creating costumes across the ages, her chosen projects have spanned many periods. Most recently she worked on the television adaptation of Sarah Water's novel *Affinity*. Directed by Tim Fywell, and set in the 1870s, the project highlights Charlotte's ability to wholly recapture the sense of an era. Furthermore Charlotte's love of the 1930s has seen her design such productions as *Just William*, *I Capture the Castle* and *Lassie*. Charlotte also acted as associate costume designer on *The Bourne Supremacy*.

In terms of film, Charlotte has worked on some truly original projects, both contemporary and period: *A Cock and Bull Story* directed by Michael Winterbottom, was literally that, as it bounced between an adaptation of the 'Tristram Shandy' story and the making of a film. Last year, she completed work on *A Mighty Heart* also directed by Winterbottom; a fantastic challenge, as although relatively contemporary it was set in 2002 in Pakistan.

Charlotte also worked on television productions that include *Demob*, *Remember Me*, *Mosley*, *Touch and Go*, *The Dark Room*, *Seeing Ref*, *North Square*, *Murder Rooms*, *Cambridge Spies*, *Hear the Silence* and *Beneath the Skin*.

Marius Di Vries

Original Music

Four-time Grammy award nominee Marius de Vries has contributed to some of the most culture-defining recordings of the past fifteen years, and has won two BAFTAs and an Ivor Novello award for his film composition work.

Beginning his career playing keyboards for the English eighties pop-soul band THE BLOW MONKEYS, he spent the late eighties as one of the UK's top session keyboard-players/programmers and up-and-coming producers, working with artists as diverse as ANNIE LENNOX, THE SUGARCUBES, D-MOB, COLDCUT, CATHY DENNIS, THE SOUP DRAGONS, JUNIOR REID, BRIAN ENO/U2, and LISA STANSFIELD.

His work with THE SUGARCUBES led to a key role on BJORK's "Debut", which marked the beginning of a long and productive collaborative relationship with ex Soul-2-Soul mainman NELLE HOOPER. After BJORK's LP, this became the foundation of a hit-making team responsible for landmark recordings with MASSIVE ATTACK, BJORK, MADONNA, U2, The SNEAKER PIMPS, TINA TURNER, and ultimately the soundtrack and score for Baz Luhrmann's ROMEO + JULIET, which won Marius the first of his two BAFTAs.

Following the success of ROMEO + JULIET Marius embarked upon a varied series of productions for ROBBIE ROBERTSON, NEIL FINN, Norwegian singer ANJA GARBAREK, P J HARVEY, MELANIE C, and DAVID GRAY. He also worked as Music Supervisor and Soundtrack Producer for the Warner Bros. movie THE AVENGERS, and was reunited with MADONNA to co-produce three tracks on the Grammy-winning RAY OF LIGHT LP.

During this time Marius also composed the score for Australian director Stephan Elliott's US number-one movie THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER. He was then approached again by Baz Luhrmann to music-direct the groundbreaking MOULIN ROUGE, starring Nicole Kidman and Ewan McGregor, resulting in another Grammy nomination, a second BAFTA, and numerous other awards.

Returning to the UK, Marius contributed several tracks to BJORK's fourth LP "Vespertine", PERRY FARRELL's debut solo LP "Song yet to be Sung", and ex-SKUNK ANANSIE frontperson SKIN's "Fleshwounds", as well as a foray into Musical Theatre with his production of the cast album for A.R RAHMAN's "Bombay Dreams" (in collaboration with ANDREW LLOYD-WEBBER), and another cast LP for Richard Thomas' hugely successful

(and equally controversial) West End comedy hit "Jerry Springer: The Opera".

Next came a pivotal meeting with RUFUS WAINWRIGHT which led to the critically-lauded LPs "Want One" and "Want Two", and then a period in Rio co-writing and producing BEBEL GILBERTO's eponymous second LP, which picked up a nomination for the 2005 GRAMMY awards.

2005 saw Marius produce DAVID GRAY's number one LP "Life in Slow Motion", as well as work with Icelandic band THE LEAVES and this year's Mercury winners ELBOW.

More recent projects have included JOSH GROBAN's multiplatinum release "Awake", MARC ALMOND's "Stardust Road" LP, RUFUS WAINWRIGHT's "Release the Stars", and TEDDY THOMPSON's recent top ten album "A Piece of What you Need".

In 2008 Marius created an hour-long contemporary dance piece, "Squaremap of Q4" for the award-winning Spanish choreographer RAFAEL BONACHELA; this premiered at the South Bank in London in January 2008.

Marius has just completed the score for STEPHAN ELLIOTT's film *Easy Virtue*, opening in the USA in May, and he is currently overseeing projects for acclaimed violinist SOPHIE SOLOMON and Costa Rican singer-songwriter DEBI NOVA, as well as developing new material with ANDREW LLOYD-WEBBER for the forthcoming sequel to *The Phantom of the Opera*.

He has also recently completed work on an LP with Chinese singer SA DING DING for Universal Records, recorded in Beijing and mixed in London.

Cast and Crew

Larita..... Jessica Biel
Mr. Whittaker..... Colin Firth
Mrs. Whittaker.....Kristin Scott Thomas
John..... Ben Barnes
Furber..... Kris Marshall
HildaKimberley Nixon

MarionKatharine Parkinson
Lord Hurst..... Pip Torrens
PhilipChristian Brassington
Sarah.....Charlotte Riley

Director

Stephan Elliott

Producers

Barnaby Thompson

Joe Abrams

James D Stern

Written by

Stephan Elliott & Sheridan Jobbins

Based on the Play by Noel Coward

Executive Producers

James Spring

Douglas E. Hansen

Cindy Wilkinson Kirven

George McGhee

Ralph Kamp

Louise Goodsill

Paul Brett

Peter Nichols

Tim Smith

Co-Producer

Alexandra Ferguson

Director of Photography

Martin Kenzie

Production Designer

John Beard

Editor

Sue Blainey ACE

Costume Designer

Charlotte Walter

Hair and Makeup Designer

Jeremy Woodhead

Music by

Marius de Vries

Music Supervisors

Tris Penna and Michelle de Vries

Casting by

Celestia Fox