

DRIVING LESSONS

Starring
Julie Walters, Rupert Grint, & Laura Linney

Written & directed by Jeremy Brock

Produced by Julia Chasman

A SONY PICTURES CLASSICS RELEASE

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THE CAST

Evie	Julie Walters
Ben	Rupert Grint
Laura	Laura Linney
Robert	Nicholas
Peter	Oliver Milburn
Bryony	Michelle Duncan
Mr Fincham	Jim Norton
Sarah	Tamsin Egerton
Trendy Mum	Annabelle
Emma Pagent	Rosé Keegan
Store	Rupert Holliday
Chandra	Chandra Ruegg
Manager	John Yule
Receptionist	Jordan Young
Mrs Robottom	Rita Davies
Driving	Surinder Duhra
Policeman	Iain McColl

THE CREW

Producer	Julia Chasman
Executive producers	Edward R Pressman
Co-producer	Alexandra Ferguson
Director/screenplay	Jeremy Brock
Production manager	Tim Wellspring
Assistant director	Konrad Jay
Director of	David Katznelson
Editor	Trevor Waite
Production designer	Amanda McArthur
Art director	John Reid
Set decorator	Bridget Menzies
Location manager	Algy Sloane
Location manager:	Cindy Thomson
Costume designer	Robin Fraser-Paye
Sound mixer	Colin Nicolson
Make-up designer	Chrissie Baker
Casting director	Priscilla John
Dialogue coach	Sandra Frieze
Stills photographer	Jay Maidment
Publicist	Susan d'Arcy

SYNOPSIS

We first meet Ben (RUPERT GRINT), a shy, bookish 17-year-old, as he begins a very unpromising summer vacation. While the other kids are out having fun, Ben spends these precious few weeks attending bible classes, having driving lessons with his overbearing and overly religious mother (Laura Linney) and helping out at a local old people's home. It's certainly not his ideal summer but, with a demanding, vigilant mother and a passive vicar for a father, Ben is anything but in control of his own destiny.

Ben's absurdly straitlaced world is turned upside down when he gets a job assisting Evie (JULIE WALTERS), an eccentric retired actress. Vulgar, dignified and childish all at once, Evie enters Ben's life with a cataclysmic force. Suddenly caught between two worlds, Ben starts to gravitate towards his employer's unconventional and often bizarre ways, even though it continually gets him into trouble with his mother.

Evie drafts Ben as her partner in a series of adventures, culminating in a camping trip that turns into a road trip when she cajoles unlicensed Ben into driving her to the Edinburgh Festival. Ben reluctantly ignores his conservative instincts and jumps behind the wheel.

What follows is a journey in which Ben and Evie help each other move forward in their radically different lives, as Ben is forced to confront how he was brought up and who he wants to be.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

With "Driving Lessons," writer/director Jeremy Brock finally realized a long-held dream. The writer of successful screenplays "Mrs. Brown" and "Charlotte Gray", and the co-creator of British television's most successful medical drama, "Casualty", had started the screenplay of "Driving Lessons" some five years earlier. The subject is intensely personal, a rites of passage story about the influence that an older actress has on an awkward young teenager, the son of a vicar, when he goes to work as her assistant.

This story is loosely based on a vignette from Brock's own adolescence when he, also the son of a vicar, worked for legendary actress Dame Peggy Ashcroft.

It was only when Brock showed the screenplay to producer Julia Chasman that making "Driving Lessons" became real.

Julia Chasman wanted a debut project for her new production company, RubberTreePlant and "Driving Lessons" was it. The involvement of the UK Film Council's Premiere Fund changed the dream to a reality.

Chasman and Brock worked closely together refining the script. They hired Alexandra Ferguson as co-producer and together began interviewing crew for the project. As casting director they enlisted the help of Priscilla John, doyenne of casting directors, whose considerable experience includes "Quills," "Aragon," "Pirates of the Caribbean," "Van Helsing," "Little Voice," "Seven Years in Tibet," "Frankenstein," "Little Buddha," "City of Joy," "A Passage to India," and "Jewel in the Crown."

Brock's script, also worked its magic on actors: Julie Walters talked about the truth of the screenplay. "It's been five years in the writing, it's really textured and real and the people are completely layered and whole, all of them, no matter how small." She was keen to play eccentric, exasperating, hilarious actress Eve Walton.

A trip to America and a meeting with Laura Linney gave Brock a second committed player. "There's something very satisfying about working with first time directors," said Linney. "I've worked with a lot of them. They have complete understanding of the material, particularly if they are directing their own screenplays. They understand how actors work and they have a decency of character about how to treat a crew."

The third piece of absolutely vital casting was the adolescent who would play Ben, Linney's screen son who goes

to work for Evie and finds the whole world opens up to him. Rupert Grint of the phenomenally successful "Harry Potter" films, in which he plays Ron Weasley, was keen to play a rites-of-passage role that would acknowledge that fact.

Grint was signed to play Ben.

While casting continued, other principal crew were hired - director of photography David Katznelson worked tirelessly with Brock before shooting started, poring over Brock's storyboards, traveling with him to potential locations.

The appointment of production designer went to Amanda McArthur. "We saw a lot of designers but I thought Amanda's work was fantastic," said Brock. "The moment I met her I knew she was the right combination of being highly organised and very confident of the graphic look I wanted the film to have.

Trevor Waite was hired as editor. Waite has a wealth of experience with directors spanning three decades. Kevin Spacey's "Beyond the Sea", Tim Roth's "The War Zone" and Michael Winterbottom's "Welcome to Sarajevo" are only a few.

Location manager Algy Sloane found location options to entice. Looking back on the film, Brock singled out three locations for special praise: the salsa club in west London, where young Ben is initiated into a frenzy of salsa dancing by the sparky young Scot called Bryony, the loch filmed in a haze of typically Scottish weather during three days on location in and around Edinburgh, and the extraordinary Georgian house in Greenwich which served as the set for Evie's home. The house boasts one of the biggest private gardens in London. It was a major location for the film, and the unit spent a full week there filming interiors and exteriors.

Jeremy discovered that the actors, once cast, the sometimes developed their characters beyond the point that he had envisaged. "Nicholas Farrell as Robert interpreted the role in a much bolder way, and suddenly he became a more significant player. I'd seen him as transitory and peripheral, but he became a real fighter - so much so that I re-wrote a couple of scenes for him."

Once filming started, it was a kaleidoscope of six-day weeks that crisscrossed London, and ended with three days filming in Scotland. The shooting schedule coincided with the shocking events of quadruple bombings in the capital on July 7, 2005 and the aborted bombing attempts on July 21. A day's shooting was lost as the producers could not risk the safety of cast and crew during a terrorist attack, but the show did go on, with the film now safely in the can.

As filming ended, the filmmakers paused to reflect on the experience. Julia Chasman said her biggest surprise was how emotionally touching the story was. "When you develop a script over a number of years, you do fall in love with it and have your favorite characters, and lines, and so much of that was about the comedy. That was all there, of course, but I hadn't realized until we shot it, how moving the story was."

"Driving Lessons", was produced by Julia Chasman and written and directed by Jeremy Brock, with Alexandra Ferguson as co-producer. David Katznelson was the director of photography and Amanda McArthur the production designer. The film was edited by Trevor Waite. Starring Julie Walters, Rupert Grint and Laura Linney. "Driving Lessons" is a RubberTreePlant production.

ABOUT THE CAST

Julie Walters (Evie):

In "Driving Lessons" Julie Walters plays eccentric actress Evie Walton who helps young Ben (Rupert Grint) find himself, and in the process saves herself. "It's a great rite of passage story. There's a lot of mutual healing that goes on between this young man and this eccentric older actress. Evie was just heaven to play."

Born in Birmingham, Julie Walters trained as a nurse. It is hard to imagine how British television, theatre and cinema could have coped had she stayed in her first profession.

Fortunately, she changed her mind, joined the Liverpool Everyman and met playwrights Alan Bleasdale, Alan Bennett and Willy Russell. And, soon after, Victoria Wood. These four, and others, keep her supplied with wonderful roles. Making the move to films, Julie received her first Oscar nomination for "Educating Rita" for which she also won a Golden Globe. Julie received her second Oscar nomination for her portrayal of as the stern but encouraging dance instructor in "Billy Elliot." And continuing to the present day, Julie plays Ron Weasley's mother in the "Harry Potter" movies. Most recently, she has appeared in a sell-out six months in the West End of London in "Acorn Antiques" by Victoria Wood and directed by Trevor Nunn.

Filmography:

2007 *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*
2006 *Becoming Jane*
2005 *Wah-Wah*
2004 *Mickybo and Me*
2004 *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*
2003 *Calendar Girls*
2002 *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*
2002 *Before You Go*
2001 *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*
2000 *Billy Elliot*
2000 *All Forgotten*
1998 *Titanic Town*
1998 *Girls' Night*
1997 *Bathtime*
1996 *Intimate Relations*
1994 *Sister My Sister*
1992 *Just Like a Woman*
1991 *Stepping Out*
1990 *Mack the Knife*
1989 *Killing Dad or How to Love Your Mother*

1988 *Buster*
1987 *Prick Up Your Ears*
1987 *Personal Services*
1985 *Dreamchild*
1985 *Car Trouble*
1984 *She'll Be Wearing Pink Pyjamas*
1983 *Educating Rita*

Rupert Grint (Ben):

Perhaps the most famous young redhead in the world thanks to four "Harry Potter" movies as Ron Weasley, Harry's chum, Rupert Grint now plays his first 'almost adult' role in "Driving Lessons" as Ben, the quintessentially awkward teenager.

Born in Hertfordshire, where he lives with his parents and four siblings (one brother and three sisters), Rupert had appeared in one school play when he heard that auditions were being held for the first "Harry Potter" movie. A huge fan of the books, Grint prepared a rap (his favorite music) promoting the character of Ron Weasley and his suitability to play him. A few days later the part was his.

Since then he's made four "Harry Potter" movies - a fifth starts shooting early in 2006; he's completed his education, decided he wants to be an adult actor, not just a child star. And he's started to notch up credits in between the "Potter" pictures - "Thunderpants" and now "Driving Lessons".

Filmography:

2007 *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*
2005 *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*
2004 *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*
2002 *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*
2002 *Thunderpants*
2001 *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (2001)

Laura Linney (Laura):

In "Driving Lessons" Linney plays Laura, over protective mother of Ben (Rupert Grint) and wife of downtrodden vicar Robert (Nicholas Farrell).

Born in New York City, Laura Linney is the daughter of playwright Romulus Linney. A graduate of Brown University, Linney studied acting at Juilliard and the Arts Theatre in Moscow. She made an impact on Broadway in plays like "Hedda Gabler", "Six Degrees of Separation" and more

recently in Richard Eyre's revival of Arthur Miller's "The Crucible", opposite Liam Neeson.

Adept at moving between theatre, film and television, Linney has considerable film experience both as a champion of the independent sector, and in big studio pictures.

Her first major role was in Paramount's "Congo", while her performance in "Primal Fear" opposite Richard Gere brought her to the attention of director Clint Eastwood, who cast her in "Absolute Power" and later in "Mystic River". Director Peter Weir cast her with Jim Carrey in "The Truman Show". She starred in the much admired "You Can Count on Me", winning her first Oscar nomination. Recently Linney starred in "Kinsey" with Liam Neeson.

Her work in television includes "Tales from the City" based on Armistead Maupin's delightful books about life in San Francisco and several episodes of "Frasier" as Dr Crane's love interest, Charlotte.

Filmography:

2007 *The Nanny Diaries*
2007 *The Savages*
2007 *Breach*
2007 *The Hottest State*
2006 *Man of the Year*
2006 *Jindabyne*
2005 *The Exorcism of Emily Rose*
2005 *The Squid and the Whale*
2004 *Kinsey*
2004 *P.S.*
2003 *Love Actually*
2003 *Mystic River*
2003 *The Life of David Gale*
2002 *The Mothman Prophecies*
2002 *The Laramie Project*
2000 *Maze*
2000 *The House of Mirth*
2000 *You Can Count on Me*
1999 *Lush*
1998 *The Truman Show*
1997 *Absolute Power*
1996 *Primal Fear*
1995 *Congo*
1994 *A Simple Twist of Fate*
1993 *Searching for Bobby Fischer*

Nicholas Farrell (Robert):

Playing the put upon vicar in "Driving Lessons", husband of the awful Laura (played by Laura Linney), father of Ben (Rupert Grint), Nicholas Farrell brings a wealth of experience playing plucky losers. "I do like him," Farrell said. "He's a good man but he's weak and that's his least attractive characteristic. He doesn't have the strength to either move on from his domestic entanglements, or confront and resolve them."

One of the most prolific British actors, Nicholas Farrell has been a valuable addition to the best television productions and movies since the late 1970s.

Filmography:

2006 *Amazing Grace*
2002 *Bloody Sunday*
2001 *Charlotte Gray*
2001 *Arthur's Dyke*
2001 *The Discovery of Heaven*
2001 *Pearl Harbor*
1999 *Beautiful People*
1999 *Plunkett & Macleane*
1998 *Legionnaire*
1996 *Hamlet*
1996 *Twelfth Night: Or What You Will*
1995 *Othello*
1995 *In the Bleak Midwinter*

Oliver Milburn (Peter):

In "Driving Lessons" he plays the charismatic curate, Peter, who is something of an idol for the young - and not so young - in the parish.

Born in Dorset, Oliver Milburn was educated at Eton College and was a member of the drama group, Double Edge Drama. Without formal acting training, he received on the job experience in the television series "Families" (also the launch for Jude Law). In 1994 he attracted attention in "Loaded" and was cast the same year as one of the more crucial sixth form boys in "The Browning Version" starring Albert Finney and Greta Scaachi.

In the decade since, he has gained considerable television and theatre experience, notably in "The Choir" from the Joanna Trollope 'Aga saga', a triumvirate of classic series: "Tess of the D'Urbervilles", "David Copperfield", "The Forsyte Saga" and a regular role as Dr Nick Logan in "Born and Bred".

Michelle Duncan (Bryony):

In "Driving Lessons" Duncan plays Bryony, a warm and funny Scottish lass who helps Ben lose some of his inhibitions on a whirlwind trip to Edinburgh with Evie. "I'm still at the stage of finding everything slightly overwhelming," she said endearingly, "I've loved working with Julie Walters - I wanted to tell her she is very like my mum, and she has lovely feet! And Rupert reminded me of my brother..."

Born in Perth, Michelle Duncan has known she wanted to be an actress since she was about three years old! A graduate of St Andrew's University, Duncan was a fellow student with Prince William - and this year played his mother, the late Diana, Princess of Wales, in the television drama "Whatever Love Means" (Laurence Fox played Prince Charles).

In 2005 Duncan moved from Scotland to London ("Even Scottish plays audition in London - I had to make the move") - and she's had some momentous events since. She toured with Penelope Keith in "Time and the Conways", played a 16 year old possessed by a poltergeist in "Sea of Souls", received her first screen kiss in "Whatever Love Means", then a role in "Sugar Rush" and now salsa dancing in "Driving Lessons".

Jim Norton (Mr Fincham):

In "Driving Lessons," Jim Norton plays the confused lodger Mr Fincham, whom Laura brings into the household, to the impotent annoyance of her vicar husband, Robert, and her teenage son, Ben - a Christian gesture she may ultimately regret.

Born in Dublin, Jim Norton has made valuable contributions to film, stage and television since the 1960s. He was nominated for a Laurence Olivier Theatre Award for best actor in the 1998 season with the acclaimed play "The Weir". In 2003 he won the Village Voice Obie award for "A Dublin Carol".

Among Norton's credits are movies like "Alfred the Great", "Straw Dogs", "Hidden Agenda", "Into the West" and "Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets". Television credits include "Fall of Eagles", "Sakharov", "Rebus: Black and Blue" and episodes of much serial television both in Britain and America including "Colditz", "The Sweeney", "Rumpole of the Bailey", "Tales of the Unexpected", "L A Law", "Poirot", "Cheers", "Star Trek: The Next Generation" and "Frasier".

Tamsin Egerton (Sarah):

In "Driving Lessons," Tamsin Egerton plays Sarah, "the kind of girl who is incredibly popular. She's also got a bit of

teenage bitchiness and thinks she can do no wrong. She's a bit infatuated with the curate, Peter, and she talks about him a lot. She doesn't mean to be unkind to Ben, but she does find him a bit weird."

2005 has been a busy, exciting year for Tamsin Egerton. She made her feature film debut in "Keeping Mum" filmed in Cornwall with Rowan Atkinson and Kristen Scott Thomas playing her parents, and Maggie Smith as her grandmother. Then she was cast in the big special effects movie "Eragon" filming in Hungary. Now she has been cast as Sarah, the most popular girl in the class and the dream girl of Ben, played by Rupert Grint, in "Driving Lessons".

Born in Hampshire in 1988, Tamsin has been featuring in commercials since the mid '90s. She always wanted to become an actress - and is living proof that dreams do come true. Having parents who have nothing to do with show business helps keep her firmly grounded in reality, at the same time providing all the support in the world.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Julia Chasman (Producer) :

A graduate of the UCLA film school, Chasman began her career as a reader at Fox before becoming a development executive at Rollins-Joffe Productions where she developed the comedy "Arthur."

In 1989 she produced "Shag" with Bridget Fonda, Annabeth Gish, Phoebe Cates and Page Hannah.

As VP at Universal Pictures she supervised east coast production, in particular working closely with producer/director Martin Scorsese. She supervised production of "Mad Dog and Glory", developed "Clockers" for Scorsese and Spike Lee, and was executive producer on "The Perez Family" with Marisa Tomeo and Anjelica Huston.

At Industry Entertainment, Chasman supervised development and production.

She executive produced Theodore Witcher's "Love Jones", produced "Polish Wedding" starring Lena Olin and Gabriel Byrne, produced "Invisible Circus" starring Cameron Diaz and Mel Smith's "The Laird of Tomintoul" starring Gabriel Byrne and Elizabeth Hurley.

"Driving Lessons" is the first picture under her new production banner, RubberTreePlant.

Jeremy Brock (Writer/Director) :

A graduate of the BBC's directors' course, Brock has enjoyed a successful screenwriting career since 1985. He wrote "Times Like These" starring Greta Scaachi and Tim Woodward. He adapted Dickens' "Oliver Twist" directed by Phyllida Lloyd at the Bristol Old Vic in 1990. He co-created (with Paul Unwin), the UK's most successful hospital soap, "Casualty", which has recently sired the spin-off "Holby City".

"The Widowmaker" for Central Films was directed by John Madden, and "The Life and Death of Philip Knight" was directed by Peter Kosminsky for Yorkshire Television.

Brock's first feature film was the acclaimed "Mrs Brown", directed by John Madden, starring Judi Dench as Queen Victoria and Billy Connolly as John Brown. Brock won the Evening Standard Award for Best Screenplay and the film went

on to be nominated for two Oscars and eight BAFTA awards, including Best Original Screenplay.

"Charlotte Gray", based on Sebastian Faulkes' novel, was directed by Gillian Armstrong and starred Cate Blanchett, Billy Crudup and Michael Gambon.

Brock's next project was "Faith", set in the English Civil War. "Edgardo Mortara," the true story of a Jewish boy kidnapped by the Pope in 1858 hit financing problems just as it was due to go into production with Anthony Hopkins in the lead. Other screenplays in development include "The Last King of Scotland" and a new version of "Brideshead Revisited."

"Driving Lessons" is Brock's directing debut.

Alexandra Ferguson (Co-Producer) :

During the 1990s Ferguson worked as a production co-ordinator in television on productions including "At the Max," "Fires of Kuwait," and "The Secret of Life on Earth." In 2001 she produced "The Legend of Loch Lomond." Other credits as producer and line-producer include "Pulse: A Stomp Odyssey," "Starlight Express 3D," "Bugs," "Sons of the Wind," and "Creep."

David Katznelson (Director of Photography) :

David Katznelson has had considerable experience in television in the past five years as director of photography and camera operator on many productions most recently "Belonging," "Sherlock Holmes and the case of the Silk Stockings," and "Mr Harvey Lights a Candle."

Trevor Waite (Editor) :

Chosen by Kevin Spacey to edit his directing debut, "Beyond the Sea" in which the actor also played Bobby Darin, Waite also eased the directing debut of actor Tim Roth, "The War Zone." Other key credits include "Jude," "Welcome to Sarajevo," and "Wonderland." Waite is equally at home in television with credits including "A Question of Guilt," "Cracker," "Hawking" and "Bloodlines."

Amanda McArthur (Production Designer) :

After experience in television on productions including the long running soap, "Coronation Street," Amanda McArthur's films as production designer include "The Candy Show,"

"Passion in the Desert," "Crush," "Piccadilly Jim," and "Suzie Gold."

Robin Fraser-Paye (Costume Designer) :

Through the 1990s Fraser-Paye spent several years deeply involved in the Napoleonic Wars thanks to the long-running success of Wellington's swashbuckling soldier Richard Sharpe (as played by Sean Bean) - starting with "Sharpe's Company" in 1994 and continuing through "Sharpe's Mission" in 1996 with seven other Sharpe productions between these two. In addition he worked on various series of Agatha Christie's "Poirot" with David Suchet. More recently films include "A Room for Romeo Brass," "Once Upon a Time in the Midlands," and two television series, "Love Again" and "Lie with Me."