



# SCAM

*Who's playing who?*

**PRESS KIT**

# SCAM

*Who's playing who?*

*After her ambitious mother's hustle fails to secure the mortgage on their theatre home, exploited singer Ella is compelled to join her con-artist sister's social media scam. But when the truth about their father's death emerges, family loyalty only goes so far...*

'Scam' is a neo-noir crime thriller about a family of scammers. It explores interdependence and abuse via a claustrophobic mother-daughter relationship and illustrates how social media platforms provide an easily-accessible global reach for scam artists. A desire for an easy buck may challenge our morality and brutalise our sensibilities, but how malicious must someone become to escape exploitation?

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'Scam' is **alnico productions**'s first feature film. It was shot on zero budget over 16 days with a Welsh cast in June 2021 in Fishguard and other locations in Pembrokeshire, Wales, while the country was at Covid-19 Alert Level 3.

It was directed, shot, edited and co-produced by **Nick Swannell**, an award-winning filmmaker and music producer based in Pembrokeshire. Nick wrote and directed his first short film 'Eating Jesus' in 2016. He co-directed, shot and edited veteran TV writer Jane Marlow's 'Dancing Alone' which won Best British Drama and Best Actress at the Discover Film Awards in 2017. They worked together again on 'Take Me Back' which won Best Editing at the London Independent Film Awards in 2018 and Best Cinematography at Catfish Shorts in 2019. In 2020, Nick teamed up with screenwriter Alison Rayner to shoot alnico productions's first short film, 'CC Junkie'.

**Alison Rayner** wrote and co-produced 'Scam'. She has written several full-length plays, spec feature scripts and TV pilots, and, in 2020, she wrote 14 episodes of a 'Car City' TV animation series for pre-schoolers. Her first short film 'Pastry' (Dir. Eduardo Barreto) premiered at Cannes 2016 (Court Métrage), screened at 31 festivals and was televised internationally by Eurochannel. Several of her spec screenplays have placed highly in international competitions, including psycho-drama 'A Shallow Drowning' which was awarded Top-3 in Final Draft's Big Break Screenwriting Contest 2020 (Diversity category). Alison has worked as a short film producer, graphic designer and sculptor, and she has an MA in Fine Art.

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# STORY

Rising star Ella, racked with guilt over her father's fatal accident four years earlier, is trapped in a routine of rehearsals and make-shift maintenance in her run-down theatre home. Her narcissistic, stage-struck mother Diane's latest hustle fails to secure a new show and the bank is impatient to foreclose. But things quickly turn around when Ella's con-artist sister Evie breezes back into town sporting stolen diamonds, paid work for Ella in a lucrative business scam, and the promise of a new mortgage. It's only after Ella overhears a conversation about the truth behind her father's so-called accident, and her new concerns so readily dismissed, that she determines to avenge her beloved dad's death and finally set herself free by devising the greatest swindle of them all.

# SYNOPSIS

Ella Evans is a star in the making, at least, according to her narcissistic, stage-struck mother, Diane, who relies on her youngest daughter's dulcet tones to pull in potential investors for theatre shows that are never staged. But with no shows and a dwindling audience for their hustle, the bank is set to foreclose on their beloved but run-down theatre home. Ella's desire to travel the world fades into the ether as she's consumed by her loyalty to her desperate mother and her misplaced sense of guilt over her father's accidental death four years earlier.

It's only when Ella's con-artist sister Evie speeds back into town - on the run from thug Roy who's been sent to retrieve his boss's stolen diamonds - that Ella imagines another life might be possible; Evie's on the hunt for a ready-made social media influencer to front her elaborate business scam and Ella fits the bill perfectly! Savvy Evie soon convinces a desperate Diane that she can get them a new mortgage but it's purely Evie's ruse to sell it to the local property developer and pocket the proceeds herself. Though meek Ella suspects something's afoot, it's only when she overhears a conversation about her father's death that she determines to seek the truth.

When both Evie and Diane dismiss her concerns, Ella kicks into action. Everything she's ever learnt about the theatre and the hustle come into play as she plans her escape and, in a shocking and unexpected twist, she cunningly avenges her father's murder by setting up the biggest scam of them all.

# THEMES

'Scam' is a dark neo-noir crime thriller with a women-centred narrative that explores themes of interdependence and abuse, and touches on other issues such as ageing, grief, loyalty, entitlement, greed and ego. The film dramatises the challenge of living alongside someone with an undiagnosed mental health condition; in this case, Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NCP). Through its depiction of the exponential growth and pervasive reach of social media scams, it also poses the question of how much criminals are victims and vice versa.

# CAST



**DIANE**  
Cate Lovett

Cate has performed in film, television and theatre; most notably as Mrs. Linde in *A Doll's House* (Dir. Brian Timoney). She will soon be starting rehearsals on a new play in London.



**EVIE**  
Bibi MacDougall

Bibi has performed with the National Youth Theatre (2018), NSFW, Santa Fe Playhouse, (2018) and in *The Day We Forgot What Day It Was* at the Young Actors Studio (2020).



**ELLA**  
Megan Lote-Williams

Singer Megan studied at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama from 2014-2020 and was the recipient of the James Westaway Award for Young Actors Studio Acting Student of the Year 2018.



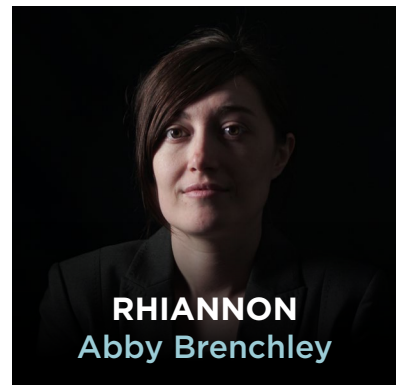
**BILL**  
Richard Elis

Richard trained at the Welsh College of Music and Drama and is known for his roles in television series *The Pact* (2021), *Doctors* (2006-2020), *Tourist Trap* (2018-2019), *Hinterland* (2013) and *EastEnders* (1996-1999), and films *Wild Honey Pie!* (2018), *Songbird* (2018) and *Bittersweet Symphony* (2019).



**ROY**  
Adam Edgerley

Adam performs regularly in Pembrokeshire's own *Pint-Sized Plays* (2017-2021).



**RHIANNON**  
Abby Brenchley

Abby has performed on stage in *The Vagina Monologues* and *Maryland* (2021) and starred in several short films including *CC Junkie* (2020), *The Butcher's Arms* (2019) and *Selfie* (2018).

## OTHER CAST

**BANK MANAGER**  
Rhydian Watkins

**DETECTIVES**  
Ceri Ashe, Mark Evans

**INVESTORS**  
Carol Mackintosh, Trisha Biffen, Brenda Worger, Penny George, Kevin Shales, Brian Phillips

**DAVE (film insert)**  
Jim Dwyer

# SCAM AT A GLANCE

## FILM SPECIFICATIONS

Aspect Ratio:  
Cinemascope (21:9)

Shot on:  
Sony A6300 and A6000

Premiere: 7 May 2022  
Theatr Gwaun, Fishguard, Pembrokeshire, Wales

Shot on location in Pembrokeshire  
(Fishguard, Goodwick, Trecwm, Amroth, Tenby)  
and Cardiff in April and June 2021

Production Company: alnico productions

Producers: Alison Rayner & Nick Swannell

Director: Nick Swannell

Screenwriter: Alison Rayner

Cinematographer: Nick Swannell

Editor: Nick Swannell

Music: Louis O'Hara & Nick Swannell

## DIGITAL PHOTO KIT

[https://www.dropbox.com/sh/pb5lnpfgsa194iz/AAB7zrQZkKSeOLZFsqIST\\_dOa?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/pb5lnpfgsa194iz/AAB7zrQZkKSeOLZFsqIST_dOa?dl=0)

## TRAILER

<https://vimeo.com/690865927>

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Instagram: [www.instagram.com/scamfilm](http://www.instagram.com/scamfilm)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/skamthefilm](http://www.facebook.com/skamthefilm)

Twitter: [twitter.com/scamfilm2022](http://twitter.com/scamfilm2022)

## REVIEWS

<http://pembrokeshire.online/2022/04/wham-bam-thank-you-scam/>



## Q & A

### AN INTERVIEW WITH... **SCAM'S DIRECTOR - NICK SWANNELL**

#### **Please tell us a little about your background and previous filmmaking experience.**

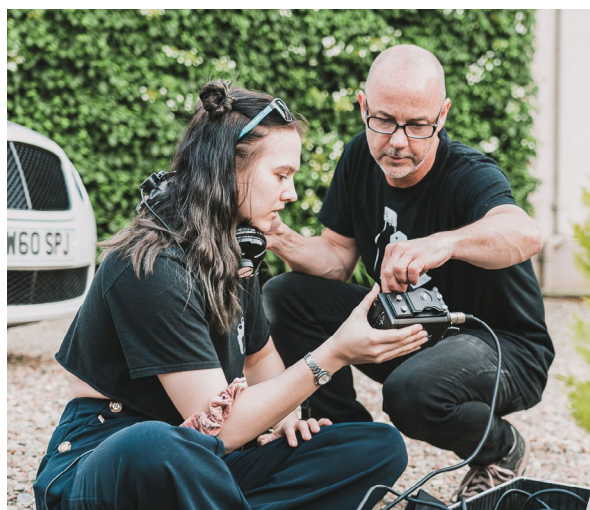
My friends and I made films on Super 8 as kids so it's always been in my blood. As DSLR cameras made digital filmmaking affordable I realised that I could get back into it; I started a business doing commercial video work but I really wanted to do something more creative so, in 2016, I made my first short film, a black comedy called 'Eating Jesus'. TV writer Jane Marlow, who's an old friend, saw it and suggested we collaborate on another short; our film 'Dancing Alone' won Best British Drama and Best Actor at the Discover Film Awards in 2017. I've made 4 more shorts since then and was also Director of Photography on a half-hour TV pilot directed by Jane. In 2020, Ali (Rayner, Scam's screenwriter) and I made our first short together, 'CC Junkie', completing our last day of shooting on the first day of the first UK lockdown.

#### **What were the biggest challenges you faced when shooting a no-budget feature?**

The biggest thing was lack of personnel; when you can't afford crew everyone has to do multiple jobs and it can get pretty hectic. We bought props and costume from charity shops, built sets, blagged locations, borrowed vehicles and lighting equipment. Our motto was "Do what you can with what you've got" and that's really the secret of no-budget filmmaking - write your script around the actors, locations and props you have access to. Yes, it limits the scope of your story and constrains what you can show on-screen, but that forces you to think more creatively. My favourite example of this is a through-the-windscreen shot of a character driving across the Severn bridge, which we filmed in a windy Fishguard car park with two of us holding a black cloth over the van to block the reflections. It looked pretty funny at the time, but the result is very convincing.

#### **This is your first feature film. What do you wish you'd known before you began the project and what advice would you give to other first-time directors?**

I wish I'd known how long pre-production really needs! We started writing at the beginning of February and shot it in June, which is a ridiculously compressed timescale, especially for



Director Nick Swannell checks the monitor and advises camera assistant/runner Annie Latham on location while filming SCAM. ©Sue Niggemann/Tegan Foley Photography

the kind of film we chose to make. I did a shot-list for every scene so we at least knew we'd get the shots we needed to tell the story but, ideally, I would've storyboarded the whole thing. It sounds obvious but film is a visual medium; choice of lens, camera movement and lighting are as important as dialogue and action, and need to be carefully considered. So my advice to first-time directors is to pre-visualise every scene as vividly as you can; be bold, and really try to show the audience what's in your mind's eye.

### **What films or stories have inspired you and how has your background influenced you as a filmmaker?**

Like millions of other people, I was a huge fan of Steven King, who is just a brilliant storyteller, although oddly very few of his books have been successfully adapted into films. I was lucky enough to grow up in the era of Spielberg, Scorsese, David Cronenberg, John Carpenter – all absolute monsters of cinema. Cronenberg's 'The Fly' is an all-time favourite of mine. Currently, I love the Safdie brothers, whose films 'Good Time' and 'Uncut Gems' are wonderfully immersive. Another recent favourite is Lynne Ramsay's 'You Were Never Really Here'; it's propulsive, visually gorgeous and her use of music and sound to create atmosphere is incredibly powerful.

### **You also have experience as a music producer. Please tell us a little more about the music in the film.**

The story revolves around a fading actress trying to save her theatre by persuading gullible investors to put money into a production of 'Funny Girl'; as such it features two songs from that show, both performed by the actor Megan Lote-Williams who just happens to be a superb singer. In fact, that part of the story evolved from two things: Meg's vocal abilities, which we wanted to make use of, and the fact that the songs from 'Funny Girl' are out of copyright so we could use them for free! Meg suggested Barbra Streisand's 'My Man' for the opening number since she already knew it, and she delivered an absolute powerhouse performance for us. The film also features music from local artists The Rivers and Lydia Crockford, both of whom I've had the pleasure of recording in my day job as a music producer and who were kind enough to allow us to use their work. The film's original score is written by myself and our sound recordist Louis O'Hara who's also a talented musician.

### **Two of your leads are fresh out of drama school. How did you help prepare them for their roles?**

I'd worked with Meg once before on my short 'The Butcher's Arms' so I knew she was good, and I'd seen – and loved – Bibi's showreel, so we were confident they could deliver. We didn't have much time for rehearsal but Ali gave everyone comprehensive character notes. We did a couple of Zoom table reads (thanks, lockdown!) plus one day of on-set rehearsal at Theatr Gwaun – it was hectic but very valuable. Meg and Bibi also spent some time discussing their characters' relationship and, as a result, they make very convincing on-screen sisters.

### **What are you working on next?**

Good question! I'm working with noted Welsh writer Meredydd Barker to develop a film version of his play 'The Rabbit', which we're hoping to shoot towards the end of 2022, but of course that's contingent on many factors, not least how the pandemic plays out. I'd love to shoot something else in the meantime but it would have to be very different stylistically in order to be achievable. I've got lots of ideas and so has Ali, so there may well be another collaboration in store from us. The main thing for me is to keep doing stuff, keep learning and hopefully improving. I came late to directing but I'm absolutely loving it.

## Q & A

### AN INTERVIEW WITH... **SCAM'S WRITER - ALISON RAYNER**

#### **Please tell us a little about your background and previous filmmaking or writing experience. How has your background influenced you as a storyteller?**

I always wanted to be a writer and was very creative in my teens but I've spent most of my working life as a graphic designer and a decade as a sculptor in stone (part-time). I produced a few short films for other writer/directors in London in my 20s but I returned to writing when 'Pastry', one of my early scripts, was shot in 2015. It premiered at Cannes (Court M trage) in 2016, screened at over 30 festivals and was televised internationally. Since then, my second short film was produced and my screenplays have placed highly in competition. I'm originally from New Zealand and I love the gung-ho, can-do attitude of independent Kiwi filmmakers such as Taika Waititi, Jane Campion, Lee Tamahori, Peter Jackson, and Niki Caro, and how our stories are often an eclectic mix of quirky comedy, hard truths and heartfelt compassion.

#### **How did the story of SCAM come about?**

Nick directed my second short film, 'CC Junkie', in 2020 and he asked me at the end of January 2021 to produce his feature. Producing is an intensive occupation – and not my favourite task – but I saw it as a brilliant opportunity for me as a writer so I offered to co-produce the film if it was MY screenplay. I think Nick was happy that it saved him having to write the script, though he's a good writer. Nick had secured the use of an empty theatre in Fishguard – an hour away from where I live – and four actresses of varying ages agreed to perform in it so the story evolved from that. If you're using a particular location, the story needs to relate somehow to that location, so having a fantastic singer like Meg being on board meant I could at least create a character built around her skills that also made use of the stage itself. I utilised most of the spaces within the theatre (to keep the film visually interesting) but I also needed the story to feel modern and relevant; scams and the use of social media gave the narrative extra layers of intrigue. Some of the story evolved from adding specific locations later on, ie. there wasn't a 'dead father' until Nick discovered a cemetery with wonderful views while out location hunting.



Screenwriter Alison Rayner also worked as SCAM's script supervisor (and fill-in clapper loader).  
©Tegan Foley Photography



### **Once you had the story, how long did the screenwriting process take?**

Because we had no budget, the filming was limited to 16 days and Nick calculated that he could only shoot about 70 scenes in that time. Although I came up with a basic story within a few days, it took a couple of weeks to flesh it out and the scene-by-scene outline took about four weeks, however, it was 80 scenes long so it was rejected. Sad face. I shuffled the story about and drastically reduced one of the roles, and then it took me another couple of weeks to come up with the new outline. Outlining – fleshing out character arcs, act beats, sequences and scenes, etc – was the only way we could prep a film story quickly. I wrote the script in about two weeks and, after director and reader feedback, there were several weeks of subsequent drafts. In total, it took just over 3 months from Nick's original call to sending the script to the actors. It was so important that the script was honed as much as possible as there's no time on such a tight shoot to be flexible with the story on set.

### **Based on this experience, is there any advice you could give to other screenwriters who are writing low- or no-budget stories/scripts?**

I've only a little experience to date. I've never needed to write this fast before but it's beneficial to know that I can do it. My main advice is to make sure the story is really solid before writing the actual script. If the story falls below the mark, a director and cast can't lift it unless they're used to improvisation which is a specialised skill in itself. I repeat the usual advice for no- or low-budget filmmaking: set the story in a single location and write for a small cast with no special effects. Use every part of that location if you can, even if you have to build a simple set within it (as we did for Ella's bedroom). Be flexible with your thinking and be open to cutting or changing locations and/or characters; we couldn't source the car I had in mind for my 'thug' but the camper van for character Roy was a late inspiration. Mostly, think about what you want your audience to feel; try to have some great payoffs in your script, especially emotional ones. An audience might forgive a few (tiny) holes in a story if it's entertaining and the characters are believable but it's still important, I think, to avoid writing over-used tropes and tired clichés... for me, I found this one of the hardest things to avoid while on such a tight deadline.

### **What type of stories do you like to tell and why?**

I love watching serial crime drama on television and aspire to write exciting, nail-biting stories in that genre and format. However, it turns out that I'm more of a psycho-drama feature writer who pens existential domestic tragedies and quirky, subversive comedy-dramas! I tend to write from the perspective of defiant women around themes of abuse (any and all forms), misjustice, love and loss, and I like to explore character views that are different to mine, perhaps in an effort to understand the vast kaleidoscope of change in the world around me. For me, writing is an escapist activity and fun psychotherapy but, mostly, I'm just an impassioned woman that wants women's voices to be heard, loud and clear.

### **What are you working on next?**

I'm writing a couple of feature scripts, redrafting a play inspired by an emotional event in my own life, and I'm now past 50K words on a novel adaptation of one of my award-winning screenplays, although the story is pretty dark and unpleasant. I'm writing pitches for original future television and film stories, at the same time as looking for opportunities to collaborate with other writers or producers on their ideas. Nick is keen to shoot something else soon so I'm brainstorming for that as well, though we do have a powerful, claustrophobic performance piece that's set almost entirely in a house, so if any producers are interested in backing us on our next low-budget feature, you know where to find us. Oh, and I'm seeking agent representation, too!

## Q & A

### AN INTERVIEW WITH SCAM'S CO-PRODUCERS... **ALISON RAYNER & NICK SWANNELL** of **ALNICO PRODUCTIONS**

#### How did you meet and can you tell us a bit more about your experience and process as co-producers?

**Ali:** Both of us had experience writing and producing short films and in late 2019 Nick hosted a 'Thriller Night' of his short films in Narberth, Pembrokeshire. I'd been on the lookout for a local director to help me tell my stories and Nick was the only filmmaker I could find in Pembrokeshire (and his films were impressive)! In early 2020, he directed and shot my monologue 'CC Junkie'. We worked well together and we had another short film scheduled to shoot later that year but, unfortunately, Covid came along.

We were able to negotiate any differences of opinion in our collaboration as, ultimately, we respected the skills and experience that each other brought to the project. Our roles were well-delineated on set and we've continued to maintain a positive 'can-do' attitude during post-production and into release. I don't know if it's age or desperation but I think, certainly after going through this whole process, we trust and support each other's creative intent and we know to leave our egos at home.

#### What was SCAM's production timeline and what were the challenges in producing a feature length film so quickly and with no budget?

Written in just over 3 months, we then had a couple of rehearsals while we developed the shooting schedule, built and decorated the set, created the artwork, purchased props and wardrobe, etc. Principle photography began on 5th June 2021 with a 16-day shoot – four days on and one day off. Both Nick and Ali work as self-employed creatives for other clients so SCAM was always going to be a part-time project. After a rest from filming, the assembly began in August with the first rough cut delivered in late October and the third in early December. The sound mix began in January 2022 and both Nick and Louis O'Hara, our sound recordist, composed on the music part-time from November 2021 through to March 2022. The total time from initial idea through to completion was approximately fourteen months, with SCAM's release scheduled in May 2022.



SCAM's co-producers, Ali and Nick, shooting on location in Pembrokeshire.  
©Tegan Foley Photography/Anna Warchus

There were many challenges but some of the main ones were the lack of time for in-depth feedback (between each other and from others) and to consider the consequences of every single decision... and there were so many decisions! Ali lived an hour away from the theatre location and, after long days shooting, she sometimes slept overnight in the set we built for Ella's bedroom at the top of the theatre. We don't think the theatre ever knew and, yes, it was a little bit spooky!

Getting the free use of a closed theatre was a real gift but we struggled to find crew – partly because there was no budget to pay people but mostly because there's a real lack of local filmmaking talent in Pembrokeshire. Fortunately, we found two real stars in camera assistant/runner, Annie Latham, and sound recordist, Louis O'Hara. Having only four crew was safer with regard to Covid but it meant we had to quadruple our roles. Nick was director and DOP, doing the lighting with his own and borrowed equipment. He was also prop buyer and set builder while Ali was set decorator and graphic designer. On set, Alison was 1st assistant director, script supervisor/continuity, wardrobe master, and a host of other roles. Most of the time, Nick and Ali ran around like headless chickens, especially on the days when Annie couldn't make it. Fortunately, everyone gelled really well and it was a safe and fun set with a lot of laughs.

### **Finally, when and where can audiences view Scam?**

SCAM will premiere at Theatr Gwaun in Fishguard on 7 May 2022. From there, we plan to make SCAM available for a limited period online via our Vimeo channel while we send it out to independent film festivals. We'll be streaming on several sites from summer 2022 and we hope to host select, in-person screenings at independent cinemas in Pembrokeshire and throughout Wales in the latter half of the year. Audiences can check out our social media channels to keep up with our latest news and festival screenings.

#### **Instagram**

[www.instagram.com/scamfilm](http://www.instagram.com/scamfilm)

#### **Facebook**

[www.facebook.com/skamthefilm](http://www.facebook.com/skamthefilm)

#### **Twitter**

[twitter.com/scamfilm2022](https://twitter.com/scamfilm2022)

## Q & A

### AN INTERVIEW WITH... **ACTOR - CATE LOVETT (DIANE)**

**Hi Cate. Could you please tell us a little about your creative background, professional experience and how you came to be cast in SCAM.**

I grew up in the South Wales Valleys where performance and singing were and still are woven into the fabric of everyday life and I loved it. I was part of a few community theatre groups and choirs; they were where I felt happiest.

I wanted to study Drama and Performance at the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama on leaving school but my choice wasn't supported at the time. As I could paint fairly well, I went on to study painting, sculpture and restoration at Carmarthen School of Art. I loved it there, but performance was what I really wanted to study.

Soon after, an opportunity arose to study dance and performing arts at Rubicon Dance in Cardiff - I jumped at the chance. After my initial training, I was offered an apprenticeship in Dance in the Community and Dance Ed and those were some of the happiest days of my life.

After moving to Pembrokeshire, I went freelance then later worked as Dance Development Officer for another established dance company. It was a fantastic career and I loved every minute but I still harboured the desire to be an actor so, eventually, I bit the bullet and retrained. I carried on teaching where possible, took on a second job and studied part-time between London and my home in Wales. It was tough, but I really loved it!

I met Nick, our director, in 2017 when I was cast in Reunion City's film 'Take Me Back'. Nick was co-directing with Jane Marlow and I'd had such a positive experience on that shoot that when Nick called to ask me if I'd be interested in playing Diane I couldn't resist. I hadn't read the script at that point but Nick assured me I would love it, and I did.

Having lost film and theatre work due to the pandemic, and with no assurances as to when the industry would fully return, Nick's offer was just what I needed to keep my focus. For Nick and our writer Ali to have made their first feature film during a pandemic on a challenging budget is no mean feat; all kudos to them.



Wales- and London-based actor Cate Lovett plays Diane in SCAM. ©alnicoproductions

### **Who has been the biggest influence on your work to date and what draws you to performance?**

My first influences as a very young child were the comedians and actors that I watched on TV; I was drawn particularly to comedians. The ones I loved the most at that time were the then current stars of the day, plus those from much earlier decades: Ryan and Ronnie, Max Boyce, Billy Connolly, Laurel and Hardy, The Two Ronnies, Morecambe and Wise, and Dave Allen to name but a few!

Today there are so many actors whom I look up to. Here are just a few: Viola Davis, Denzel Washington, Lynn Hunter, Jo Hartley, Anna Maxwell-Martin, Anne Reid, Lesley Manville, Sarah Lancashire, Julie Walters, Anthony Hopkins, Stephen Graham, Daniel Mays, Russell Tovey, Daniel Day Lewis, Mark Rylance and James Norton – again, a long list!

Performance, and the Arts in general, have always appealed. Art in all its forms has the ability to make us think beyond ourselves. It challenges, soothes and uplifts us; a gift that keeps on giving.

### **Do you have a specific approach to playing a new character? What were the challenges in preparing for the role of Diane, a woman with a mental health condition like Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD)?**

Well, Diane is a real piece of work! Complicated and challenging, but fun to unpick. When taking on a new character, I begin firstly to look for any parallels within my own life – crossovers in personality or shared experiences – then I explore them further. I write a back story for every character, focusing particularly on their childhood and the environment in which they grew up in. I'll then research the fixed givens and personality traits; NPD on this occasion. Aside from the line learning there's an awful lot of work that's done to inform the playing of a role, and rightly so.

### **What was your favourite aspect of the shoot and why?**

Like on all my acting jobs, it's getting to meet and work with new people – from make-up, sound, wardrobe, etc right up to working with the director. It's always a privilege to be part of a team and this shoot was no exception; there was lots of laughter! To be able to work in my current adopted county of Pembrokeshire was a real treat, too. To work with great talent such as Richard Elis, Bibi MacDougall and Megan Lote-Williams was wonderful and I look forward to following their careers further.

### **What are you working on next?**

Just before the pandemic hit, I was due to work on a dark comedy film – fingers crossed that it will go ahead in early 2022. Also, depending on Covid, rehearsals start on a new play in London; again, everything is firmly crossed!

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### **Professional Biography**

Cate is a Welsh actor based in Wales and London. As well as acting, Cate is also trained in Fine Art, Dance and Choreography. She is a highly creative actor with a particular interest in Comedy, Period Film, Drama and Theatre.

Cate can be contacted via her agent:

**International Actors London**

ialagents@gmail.com • 020 7125 0539



## Q & A

### AN INTERVIEW WITH... **ACTOR - BIBI MacDOUGALL (EVIE)**

#### **Hi Bibi. Please tell us a little about your creative background, training or professional experience and how you came to be cast in SCAM?**

I was kind of just drawn towards acting. I joined the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama (RWCMD) Young Actors Studio (YAS) programme at age 13 and continued weekend classes until the age of 16. I became a member of the National Youth Theatre (NYT) at 15 and performed in the 2017 Youth Music Theatre all-female show First Ladies. I lived in the USA for about 2 years where I was cast as Charlotte in the Santa Fe Playhouse's 2019 professional production of Lucy Kirkwood's 'NSFW' and performed in Wise Fool's 2019 'Circus Luminous' at the Lensic Theatre, Santa Fe. More recently, I've continued my training with the NYT, alongside other youth programs in London and I've performed as Aladdin in the 2021 touring pantomime 'Aladdin' by Eva Long Productions.

#### **Who has been the biggest influence on your work to date and what draws you to performance?**

That's tricky... I mean there are so many actors I look up to and admire... actors I dream of one day getting to their level: Olivia Coleman, Tamsin Grieg, Jodie Comer, Michaela Cole, David Tennant, Andrew Scott, to name a few. I think what initially drew me to performance was my love of reading and film. Like many people my age, I became rather obsessed with Harry Potter when I was about 11; the feelings of being transported by those incredible characters through those magical worlds when watching the films was unbeatable. I was never particularly popular in school and so I think it was also a great escape. And I loved performing! People telling me I was good at it helped me believe that I could do this; when I realised I could go and be a part of those worlds, it felt like a no-brainer. I wanted to be involved in filmmaking at first but I caught the acting bug. The YAS classes were the first place where we were treated like professionals and shown that acting could be a valid career. I was encouraged to pursue it as a profession rather than a hobby; I wouldn't be acting right now without the incredible support and encouragement I gained and still have from the tutors at YAS - I really owe a lot to them. The more work I do the more I realise how vital their training was; I feel very lucky to have been given that training at such a young age.



Bibi MacDougall plays con-artist Evie in SCAM. ©alnicoproductions

**Do you have a specific approach to playing a new character? Were there any additional influences or advice that you drew upon for the role of Evie? What did you enjoy the most about playing her?**

My approach to character, or my 'process', is something I'm still trying to find and grow. I'm at the start of my acting journey and SCAM showed me just how much there is still to learn and improve upon – it's exciting. As well as drawing on things that people have taught me, I delve quite deeply into the script and create really long lists of facts and questions as I analyse a script and character – it feels almost academic. Ultimately, I try to find where my similarities lie with the character I'm playing; I tune into that and layer on the differences afterwards. Using celebrities or people I know as a point of reference for character doesn't work for me, personally, but something I tried to hold onto with Evie was her sheer confidence. I mean, Evie couldn't really be any more different from me in the way she relies upon her looks and charm to talk her way into getting what she wants. She's pretty manipulative and self-involved so I hope I'm not too similar to her! But she's got such an incredible sense of self-confidence and ability – you have to respect her for that – and, to be honest, it was empowering to channel that sort of energy. I think each of us could do with some of Evie's confidence – just a bit though!!

**What was your favourite aspect of the shoot and why?**

As with any project I've done, my favourite aspect of the shoot, without a doubt, was the people. We had such a small team it really felt that we were a little unit by the end. Everyone was so lovely and I feel lucky to have been able to work alongside everybody and learn from them. Getting the chance to work with professionals like Cate and Richard Elis was so incredible and I was really happy that Meg and I got to work together again; we trained together at YAS and she was just as brilliant then as she is now. I can't wait to see what everyone does next and I feel very lucky to have worked with everyone involved on this project – it was a real laugh! Oh, and it was SO interesting to see how things are made and to watch it all come together.

**What were the biggest lessons you took away from working on your first feature film?**

So many things!!! Looking back, I think the biggest thing I learnt is the importance of just being present when you're working on something as hectic as a feature film. I underestimated the challenge of not getting too 'heady' about everything. I tend to overthink everything anyway but by the end of the shoot I had relaxed more into things – and into being Evie – and I would love to have had a bit more trust in things taking their course from the start. Another massive lesson was understanding that everything can be SO much smaller than I think it can; I'm mainly trained in theatre so it's the form that I know best to date and figuring out how to pitch things was definitely a big learning curve for me.

**What are you working on next?**

I'm back to London and mainly focusing on continuing my training. I've been lucky enough to gain a place with the Royal Stratford East Young Company with Toby Clarke, which I'm loving. We're working on a new piece of writing this year and performing it on the main stage at Stratford in mid-July. I've also been admitted to the National Youth Theatre's *Playing Up* acting course and the Orange Tree Young Company – both will culminate in shows in July/August 2022. Finally, I'll be performing in this year's National Theatre Connections Festival with the Arts Extra program at the Lyric Hammersmith in April 2022.

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## Q & A

### AN INTERVIEW WITH... **ACTOR/SINGER – MEGAN LOTE-WILLIAMS (ELLA)**

**Hi Meg. Could you please tell us a little about your creative background, professional experience and how you came to be cast in SCAM.**

From a young age I've always had a passion for performance, from making shows for my parents and dancing around my room! Throughout my teenage years, I took every opportunity to be on stage; the buzz from the school show would spur me on to the next and nearest production I could find. A significant place to nurture my skills was the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama's Young Actors Studio. It opened up my eyes to how broad acting can be, but also the importance of specificity in every choice. The people who I met on that course gave me the confidence to put myself out there and really go for it. Through that course I met the director of this film! One of the lecturers introduced me to Nick after a performance and he said he was writing a short film. I was instantly excited to get involved and, after the joy I had on that production, it was my pleasure to be involved in SCAM.

**Who has been the biggest influence on your work to date and what draws you to performance?**

The moment I wanted to pursue acting was watching Tom Hanks in 'Captain Phillips'. I distinctly remember looking around at all my family squished up on the sofa on Christmas Day, all completely entranced by his performance, and I thought, I'd love to do that, to affect someone in that way. I think generally actors who make brave choices completely inspire me, those who are able to capture the complexity of us as humans at our most vulnerable.

**Do you have a specific approach to playing a new character? Where there any additional influences or advice that you drew upon for the role of Ella? What did you enjoy the most about playing her?**

One of the best pieces of advice I've had for developing a new character was to not only look for how the character perceives herself, but look for how others describe her. This can lead to some really important questions like, why do they think that, and why does that contradict her interpretation of herself? I found myself looking at older female characters as influences. I believe Ella shares a lot of trials and tribulations similar to women in films



Singer, songwriter and actor Megan Lote-Williams plays Ella in SCAM. ©alnicoproductions

such as 'Little Women', etc. The control and the beliefs forced upon her mean she has no real power over her life. Therefore, the transition into a strong, independent woman, particularly in scenes with her mother, was extremely fun to film.

### **What was your favourite aspect of the shoot and why?**

Without a doubt the best part of the process was spending time with cast mates who I genuinely adore, and learning and laughing together. These ladies will be forever a part of my heart and I can't wait to see where they find themselves next. Being able to incorporate my singing into this project was also very exciting as I hadn't done that on screen before and music is such an integral part of me as a person. There was always such a positive and uplifting atmosphere, which was so crucial in feeling confident about making bold choices whilst filming. Of course, the scene with the champagne was also fun to film... for obvious reasons!

### **What were the biggest lessons you took away from working on your first feature film?**

I think the biggest lesson I took from this project was always to be open-minded and ready to be flexible at any moment. Filming the script out of order is always going to be difficult but I've learnt that taking a couple minutes to read the scene or moments prior to it really helps me jump back into a certain feeling. I think also in the future, I will be more confident to ask questions as it made the process 100 times easier as I didn't have to worry about anything besides Ella and hitting the occasional mark!

### **What are you working on next?**

Well! Things are extremely busy right now! I'm in my second year studying Music Production and I'm close to releasing a couple of songs of my own; something to sum up this chapter of my life. I'm also looking forward to playing the lead character in a student feature film in Cardiff which starts filming in February 2022. I'm excited for 2022; let's see what it's got to throw at me!

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