

THE MAURITANIAN

The motion picture *THE MAURITANIAN*, based on Mohamedou Ould Slahi's inspiring New York Times best-selling memoir, 'Guantánamo Diary', is helmed by Kevin Macdonald, the Academy Award® winning director of *One Day in September* (Best Documentary, Features), *Whitney*, *How I Live Now* and *The Last King of Scotland* which garnered multiple awards including a Best Actor Academy Award® for Forest Whitaker.

The cast is led by Tahar Rahim (*The Looming Tower*, *A Prophet/Un Prophète*) as Mohamedou Ould Slahi; Academy Award® winner Jodie Foster (*The Silence of the Lambs*, *Contact*, *Taxi Driver*) in the role of Slahi's defense lawyer Nancy Hollander; Independent Spirit Awards winner Shailene Woodley (*Divergent*, *The Descendants*, *The Fault in Our Stars*) in the role of Attorney Teri Duncan; BAFTA®, Golden Globe® and Academy Award® 'Best Actor' nominee, Benedict Cumberbatch (*The Imitation Game*, *Doctor Strange*, *Star Trek Into Darkness*) in the role of Marine Corps Lawyer, Lieutenant Colonel Stuart Couch; and Zachary Levi (*Shazam!*, *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*) in the role of Federal Agent, Neil Buckland.

THE MAURITANIAN follows the remarkable true story of Mohamedou Ould Slahi (Tahar Rahim) who was captured by the U.S. government and imprisoned for years without trial at Guantanamo Bay (GTMO). It is an inspiring account of survival against all odds as Slahi, in his fight for freedom, finds allies in defense attorney Nancy Hollander (Jodie Foster) and her associate Teri Duncan (Shailene Woodley). Through Nancy and Teri's controversial advocacy and evidence uncovered by formidable military prosecutor Lieutenant Colonel Stuart Couch (Benedict Cumberbatch), a shocking and far-reaching conspiracy is revealed. *THE MAURITANIAN* is a commentary on the importance of the Rule of Law and extremism of all kinds, but is also a tender, funny, uplifting film about Mohamedou, an extraordinary man whose humanity triumphed, leaving those around him profoundly changed.

The screenplay is penned by M.B. Traven, and Rory Haines & Sohrab Noshirvani (*The Informer*). The Screen Story is written by M.B. Traven.

Benedict Cumberbatch is producing with Adam Ackland and Leah Clarke for their company SunnyMarch, alongside Lloyd Levin and Beatriz Levin for Shadowplay Features, Mark Holder and Christine Holder through their newly formed venture Wonder Street, and Michael Bronner for Curlyhead Films, and Branwen Prestwood-Smith.

The creative team includes Director of Photography, Alwin Küchler (*Steve Jobs, Sunshine*); Production Designer, and Oscar® nominee, Michael Carlin (*Enola Holmes, The Duchess*); and Oscar® winning Costume Designer, Alexandra Byrne (*Mary Queen of Scots, The Avengers*).

The film is funded by Divergent Media, Great Point Media, 30WEST and Topic Studios in partnership with BBC Film, which also developed the project. Executive Producers are 30WEST principals Micah Green, Dan Steinman and Dan Friedkin, Topic Studios' Michael Bloom, Maria Zuckerman and Ryan Heller, BBC Film's Rose Garnett, Great Point Media's Jim Reeve and Robert Halmi, Convergent Media's Zak Kilberg and Russell Smith, STX's Robert Simonds, Adam Fogelson, and John Friedberg. Larry Siems, Donald Sabourin and Mohamedou Ould Slahi serve as co-producers.

STXinternational, a division of STX Entertainment, holds the international rights and will be directly distributing in the UK and Ireland.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

DEVELOPMENT

The genesis of the production began in 2015 while Mohamedou Ould Slahi was still incarcerated in Guantanamo Bay (GTMO), when producers Lloyd and Beatriz Levin and Michael Bronner traveled to Albuquerque to meet with Slahi's lawyers, Nancy Hollander and Teri Duncan. Slahi's memoir 'Guantánamo Diary' was optioned by producers Lloyd Levin and Beatriz Levin, and Mark Holder and Christine Holder of Wonder Street.

Lloyd recalls, "When we read 'Guantanamo Diary' we were surprised by the wit, poetry and wisdom of Mohamedou's writing and moved by his story, and felt Mohamedou's innate humanity and impulse to see that what we all have in common is greater than what divides us,

despite his brutal and unjust experience, was inspiring, timely and would make for an important movie."

'Guantánamo Diary' went on to be published in the U.K. in 2015 by Jamie Byng from Canongate. Producer Adam Ackland recalls, "Jamie, who is a dear friend of ours, asked Benedict to participate in the launch of 'Guantánamo Diary'. After Benedict read a passage from this brilliant book, he fell in love with it and said 'we've got to make this movie, we've got to find out who has the rights'."

Benedict himself remembers the moment he discovered Mohamedou's book "I picked the book up and read it from beginning to end and was just blown away by Mohamedou, by his humanity and his humor, his extraordinary endurance, the fact that he came through all of this and emerged to teach us all something about the indefatigable joy of the human spirit. I was utterly charmed by him and his story was heart-breaking and troubling."

Nancy Hollander, an International Criminal Defense Attorney, who for years had relentlessly fought for Mohamedou Ould Slahi's release, recalls, "Lloyd and Bea Levin and Michael Bronner came to my office and we signed the contract for the film rights while Mohamedou was still in prison." Upon Slahi's release on October 17, 2016, Bronner travelled to Mauritania, beginning a period of intense work together on the story.

Already working with SunnyMarch on another project, and aware of Adam and Benedict's passionate interest in Mohamedou and his memoir, Shadowplay brought the project to

SunnyMarch to see if they wanted to join forces in getting the movie made. Producer Leah Clarke, explains, “the company was set up partly to find roles that interested Benedict, but more to take risks: to work with up and coming directors, and adapt material that feels cinematic, but tricky and difficult. So, a lot of our projects have that DNA and *THE MAURITANIAN* was a perfect example.”

Producer Adam Ackland recalls that early on this was a project that would see Benedict strictly staying put as a producer on the film “he was producing it actively with us, and when one of the drafts came in he read it and realized he’d love to play Couch.”

Now the filmmakers embarked on the challenge of raising financing, Clarke reflects, “when we were trying to raise the financing a lot of people didn’t want to go near it because it’s Guantanamo and too political, and too complicated. I think people felt that it would also be a downer. So, our main job was trying to convince them that this was an uplifting movie, like *Shawshank Redemption* or *Life is Beautiful*.⁷”

In Divergent Media, 30WEST, Topic Studios, BBC Films and STX International, the producers found partners who were willing to support the production.

With the project slowly starting to come together, the search began to find the filmmaker who would be responsible for shepherding Mohamedou’s story, a role that Ackland knew could only be filled by a very particular director. “We didn’t actually go to that many filmmakers because it’s so important to get the right one and so we sat on it for a while.”

The producers soon realized that multiple award-winning director, Kevin Macdonald, would be the best filmmaker to bring Mohamedou's story to the screen. The Scottish filmmaker has carved a formidable reputation in the entertainment industry for his skill in documentary and drama filmmaking, born out by *The Last King of Scotland*, which received widespread acclaim and garnered multiple awards including a 'Best Actor' Academy Award® for Forest Whitaker. "Kevin is brilliant at real life stories, he's a very urgent, passionate filmmaker with a skill for thrillers, and we felt that his taste for stories from far flung places and interest in the lives of real people would be good for the project and would honor Mohamedou's story" affirms Clarke.

Kevin was going to need some convincing. A first draft of the script existed, credited to M.B. Traven and based on extensive interviews with Mohamedou, beginning at his home in Mauritania just three weeks after his release. Macdonald worked with the writer, and the new draft went to Cumberbatch and Tahar Rahim, both of whom enthusiastically embraced playing roles in the film. At that point, Macdonald made contact with Mohamedou via Skype. Macdonald thought "oh that will be interesting and I did a Skype call with him. And the man is so charming and so funny and so not what you expect, from an internationally wanted, excused, terrorist, criminal who was accused of recruiting people for 9/11 and financing terror. He's so the opposite of what you imagine, he's so in love with American culture, he can quote every line of *The Big Lebowski*, he knows it by heart because he watched it 110 times while he was in prison."

With Kevin now on board, Benedict recalls the challenges they faced and how Macdonald instantly proved he was the right man for the role. “It’s a difficult subject matter to get financed and we constantly had to strategize and talk about how we would bring this story into reality. He met it all with such good grace. He fought for things that he cared passionately for which is incredibly important for a project that has this kind of integrity attached to it. He’s the best spokesman for this film, as well as the best director for it. He so thoroughly believes in the importance of making films like this, the difficulty of them is worth overcoming at every level to get the results.”

With a strong background in creating thought provoking, hard hitting, politically charged thrillers Kevin knew he had the opportunity to tell a vital story that leans towards his particular cinematic skillset. “I knew from the beginning that it was this combination of politics and an outrageous crime against humanity that got my blood boiling but also, I could see that it could be a real thriller, and could entertain people. And so, there needs to be a lot of sugar in with the medicine and I saw the opportunity in this film to make something that is a thriller and which hopefully has that edge-of-the-seat quality but also a film in which it is about really wonderful characters, who you fall in love with.”

Two-time Academy Award® winning actress Jodie Foster who is herself an acclaimed film director (*Little Man Tate* and *Money Monster*), was cast in the role of Mohamedou’s criminal defense attorney, Nancy Hollander. Foster said “I just love how Kevin’s mind works; he’s really curious and inquisitive and I’ve been really amazed by this shoot to see how the documentary spirit really works, that it really does work by instinct. Kevin really believes that the way you

approach making films is that you don't try to control it or shape it. You spend your time noticing, you're in the space, you see the characters and then you notice what's happening, and then you make sure that you capture that. I think that really works for this film."

(Real) Mohamedou says, "I love that Kevin says 'no matter how dramatic this scene is, the reality was more dramatic than this', because this is beyond anything you could imagine. I know that some actors did not feel comfortable to do certain scenes and I completely understand because the same thing happened to me. I did not want to go through this, believe me, but I had no choice."

ADAPTING THE BOOK

Clarke explains, "our movie isn't a direct adaptation of the book, the book is Mohamedou's autobiography so he can't tell the story from the other perspectives. We cover the first two thirds of the story, until his appeal."

The key challenge for the filmmakers was making a true-life story. "They are always difficult, especially if they're near history because you have a responsibility to everybody and it's a hot button subject" explains Clarke. "We didn't want a grim, liberal telling off. It had to be a human drama where the audience could have an experience that changes them and is a talking point. The story is driven by Mohamedou who is a transcendent person, a philosopher, he's so witty and so compassionate and that's really the reason we wanted to make this film, because his message and his spirit will change all our lives for the better."

Ackland added “I think you have got to be careful in telling true stories because you want it to be factually correct but you also want it to be interesting and sometimes those two don’t go together very well. It was all about finding the filmmaker who could properly pump the heart and personality of Mohamedou and make it his story.”

Macdonald was more than aware of what a huge challenge the team would have when adapting such a thought provoking story: “how do we tell this incredibly complex story, which has geopolitics, which has legal terminology, which has all these different countries involved? How do we tell that in a way that’s simple enough for an audience to grasp and also operate in a way that’s good storytelling, kind of like a thriller? I wanted this to be an exciting story, you are on the edge of your seat wanting to know what is going to happen next. So, that was the challenge of writing the script; how do we pack as much of this in, as much of this complex material in as possible and still make it an enjoyable experience, still make it an entertaining film? I think what we all wanted to do was make an entertaining piece of cinema about an important true story.”

Foster weighs in, “the most difficult part I think is just wanting to get it right, we want to be fair to all of the parties because I really believe that the truest stories are the ones where there just aren’t any bad guys. Where it’s just human beings that come together, trying to do the best that they can, but they’re guided by fear and I think there is a lesson in this story; is that impulse, that fear impulse is so strong and unfortunately it was in the era of Guantanamo, and in the era of 9/11, which took over the American psyche. We were making decisions, we were making

international foreign policy decisions by fear instead of using the laws and the rules that we knew.”

Slahi, who is the first detainee to publish a memoir while imprisoned, was prohibited from receiving a copy of his published book while he was incarcerated. (Real) Nancy Hollander, says that although many Guantanamo former prisoners have written books, Mohamedou is the only one who's authored his own book: “I think that's what makes it so unique because it's him, and it's what he went through that we can now portray in a film.”

Hollander was involved in the screenplay from the start and recalls, “I provided the filmmakers with the transcripts of hearings, I explained the law to them and the case, and I said ‘I know you can't include everything but I want you to know what really happened and then you can decide how you're going to put this into a movie’.”

Clarke adds that the filmmakers ensured they had input from all of the *real* people whom they were representing, and Mohamedou - also wearing a co-producer hat - Nancy Hollander, Lieutenant Colonel Stuart Couch and Teri Duncan all fact-checked everything.

The producer notes, “this has its production challenges because you can't have everything a hundred percent for real. It doesn't work dramatically or practically. We're not making a documentary but I feel like the two have come as close as is physically possible.”

With several drafts of the script taking shape it fell to writers Rory Haines & Sohrab Noshirvani to come on board and deliver the final draft for filming, with Noshirvani recalling “We started doing our research, speaking to Nancy, Mohamedou. Learning the intricate ways of Guantanamo which is a very confusing and confounding place and we spoke to some military JAG lawyers so we could come to grips with how military law works, which is completely different to the regular judicial system.

Haines adds “It was really about staying as true as we could to the material, talking to Mohamedou to go deeper than necessarily he put in the book sometimes, the same with Nancy, and digging into the history and trying to craft a story that felt true to everyone who was involved in it but also for an audience that is watching it. It’s a movie, it’s not just a series of events that happened you know?”

CASTING

For the character who would play Mohamedou, Clarke recalls the filmmakers wanted to cast someone North African if possible, who could speak French and Arabic and English. Macdonald, who knew Tahar Rahim from working with him on *The Eagle*, sent it straight to the actor. Tahar immediately said ‘sign me up’!

Macdonald recalls “I worked with Tahar before and we remained friendly and so, when I started to think about this film, who is an actor with a North African origin, who is incredibly charming and likeable and who has enormous range to be able to capture all the emotions that this role

requires. You know there was only one answer. It was obvious right from the beginning. The casting director and I sort of looked at each other - well it's got to be Tahar."

Rahim recalls his first reaction when he saw the title of the script, "I was like 'no man', it was 'Guantánamo Diary' and I thought it would be the same type of Hollywood story with terrorist roles that I refuse to play. When I first read the script I cried, I couldn't believe that this guy has been through hell like this and at the end didn't hold any grudge against anyone. It's an amazing story, he's a hero, an innocent man imprisoned and tortured, and as an actor – and as a human being – I think it's a story that has to be told."

(Real) Mohamedou says, "it's a very difficult role for Tahar, he spoke to me about it. Of course it's all difficult, our experience – whether it was pain or distress – was up there and then down there and then sideways. He's got to do all of that in the scene and be aware of where the cameras are. It's an even bigger challenge to portray a real life, living human being."

Benedict was thrilled with landing Tahar in the role adding "he's very cool and just very easy to spend time with and there's a searing intelligence behind all of that. It really did marry well with what comes off the page and how Mohamedou had sounded when we talked to Mohamedou himself. And so it seemed like the obvious choice from the very beginning."

Kevin Macdonald had talked about Jodie Foster for the role of Mohamedou's defense lawyer, Nancy Hollander, six months before sending her the script. "Jodie is an actress who is known for doing a lot of entertaining films, very Hollywood kind of films. And so, I think it was very

exciting for her to do something so different than what she has done before. So when I took her the script, she said, ‘Oh I really like this, but I need it to be tougher, the character needs to be tougher’. And her instinct was to take out all the sentiment, take [...] all of the kind of Hollywood out of it in a way I suppose. And I think that was a brilliant instinct and you know we made some alterations because of that. And you know it’s the genius of a great actor, who’s been doing it their whole life.”

Ackland remembers how originally the thought of landing Foster seemed like a too good to be true scenario “We thought about Jodie really early on but it was a bit of a pipe dream. You don’t actually think that someone like that is going to engage with you but she was very open to it and she and Kevin connected really well. She was amazing.”

Jodie Foster recollects, “I was so excited to hear about Kevin Macdonald, somebody whose work I’ve loved and somebody that I felt was so well suited to the material, somebody who would approach it with that kind of truthful documentary tone that it needed to have.”

Clarke comments, “we had to do quite a lot of work on Nancy’s character because she is unrelenting, she is not sentimental, and she is a career fighter. We also felt that it was really important, for the real Nancy Hollander, to represent her accurately as this rock that essentially, over fifteen years, helps Mohamedou, and still does today. It was a really tricky character to get right.”

Foster shares that she knew about Mohamedou's book, and story, and had lots of questions about Guantanamo and what had happened in that time, "interestingly, even though I lived through that time, I didn't have any of the answers. It was amazing to me that I knew nothing about it. I think we were all so shaken up by the events of 9/11 that there was such fear in America, but we didn't think very much about who was being interned."

Benedict himself found it hard to contain his enthusiasm and excitement at not only working with Foster but sharing such exhilarating scenes with her too "She's just so unbelievably lovely, she's whip smart, funny, easy to work with, helpful, collaborative and just a joy. And yeah, of course the fanboy in me is going 'I'm in a scene with Jodie Foster,' I can't not have those moments. I've grown up watching her films, to have the opportunity to work with someone like that is always a learning experience and a joyful one at that. And we both said we just wish we had more to do and that's always a good sign you want to work more with a person."

Nancy works alongside Teri Duncan, played by Shailene Woodley, who is an amalgamation of two attorneys, Teri Duncan and Sylvia Royce. Clarke reflects, "the moment Shailene read the script she said she was in, and she's been a constant support over the last nine months, asking, 'how can I make it work, what can I do?'"

Woodley elucidates, "any type of injustice, any type of tragedy when it comes to our failure as human beings to fully see another human being and put them through fair trial and properly practiced democracy, really gets my blood boiling."

Woodley adds, “to have the opportunity to be part of this story that is so real and so true for a few individuals, specifically Mohamedou, and to get it out into the consciousness of so many Americans and people around the world, I felt like it was part of my responsibility as an actor. I think some movies you do from an artistic place of just wanting to create a character out of nothing and sort of see what happens, and then other films you do, or I choose to do, not only because artistically they stimulate me, but because socially you feel like maybe they could make a profound difference in the world. I think that’s the power of storytelling and so this one felt just like an honor to be a part of.”

Clarke describes Shailene as a warm and effervescent person with a strong sense of social justice, which is why she “works so well alongside Jodie’s more serious ‘Nancy’.” Mohamedou was thrilled when he heard that Shailene was going to play Teri, “that’s just what she’s like; that warm energy we need from that character.”

Zachary Levi, who plays the role of Neil Buckland, a Federal agent and old friend of Lt. Colonel Stuart Couch, weighs in, “even if I’m perhaps not the most savoury character in the story, I wanted to be part of bringing this project to light and allow people to see that this really did happen; that this is a real person. I think the incredible grace of forgiveness that Mohamedou practices through all of that, everyone can hopefully learn through what was a very difficult time in the world.”

“My character Neil is an old school buddy of Stuart’s who happens to also be very entrenched in this specific case and these things that went down at Guantanamo. He works for one of the

intelligence agencies or branches within the U.S. Government and so therefore is a bit of a gatekeeper when it comes to certain information that Benedict's Lieutenant Colonel Stuart Couch needs in order to run a fair trial in prosecuting Mohamedou." explains Zachary.

"Neil proves to be a little less than helpful in that regard because of his own traumas he felt through 9/11. It was causing him a lot of fear and unfortunate anger and hate that I think a lot of people were possessed with in that time. When something as tragic as that happens, trauma can really screw people up. So, I think that's where Neil's at and then ultimately also has this redemptive moment towards the end of the film which shows you that people are more than what meets the eye, we are all 360 degree of people. Every character in the film is not all that they're cracked up to be, and there's depth and complexity in all of us. That was a very big part of what attracted me to the role."

After reading the script, Benedict Cumberbatch added to his hat as producer. Benedict told the filmmakers, 'this is a great character, I've never done anything like this before. Can I play Lieutenant Colonel Stuart Couch?'

Cumberbatch adds "his buddy from flight training school was one of the co-pilots on one of the planes that flew into the South Tower, so he starts from there, as well as being a military lawyer. He's also a Christian man that wants to do justice and wants to bring people to justice. It's an extraordinary position to be in at the beginning of this film because you go 'well, okay I can understand why he just wants to see this guy punished'. So what happens to him in the journey of this film is he discovers through pushing and pushing and knocking on closed doors that

eventually these confessions have been extracted and they include accounts of torture, of waterboarding and various other contraventions of the Geneva human rights accord, so he then takes a stand against his superiors and says I refuse to prosecute this case, this is wrong, it is unlawful, it is undemocratic, un-American and un-Christian. And I guess it's kind of where my sympathies lie most in the film, with someone who has every reason to want to find and persecute the perpetrator of that kind of an atrocity, that unforgivable act of terrorism, but in the process of looking at the supposed rock-solid confessions realizes they were all extracted under torture... that's not the way to get evidence. That's not the way to behave in the rule of law."

Macdonald adds that though in a relatively smaller part Benedict faced a huge challenge "He's got the hardest role in this film because he has to play a man who a lot of the audience will think is deeply unsympathetic to begin with but right from the beginning you feel like 'ok this guy, is part of the group, part of the military machine but there is something about him which is more thoughtful, more humorous – he has a great sense of humor."

Ackland was quick to point out how well Benedict wears both his producer and acting cap at the same time "When Benedict steps on set he is not the producer anymore, he is the actor and he is in the filmmakers hands and he is very strict about that. He's very passionate about making sure that when he is on set he is an actor, but when he is not and he's got his producer hat on he's great with script and I think it's another feather to his bow that he just really enjoys doing."

Mohamedou shares that he couldn't have hoped for a better cast, "even the personalities, the beauty of those people are so beyond me."

RESEARCH

Macdonald was keen for the film to be every bit as authentic and truthful as humanly possible, but some challenges proved to be a step too far: “Obviously I wanted to go to Guantanamo but it’s very hard to get permission and I couldn’t get permission to go. So that ruled out that whole side of it. But there has been a lot written about Guantanamo, a lot of journalists, a lot of investigative journalists have done a lot of things and we also did have access to both Mohamedou, his defense lawyers and on the prosecution’s side we had access to Lt. Colonel Stuart Couch and they were all incredibly helpful.”

Writers Sohrab Noshirvani & Rory Haines were quick to point out just how invaluable having access to Mohamedou was, with Noshirvani saying “it’s his story and just speaking on the phone to him or on Skype, you can get a sense of what a man he is and who he is. But more than that he knows the process – he lived it – so we could not have done it without him and his input. If this was based on a newspaper article you would not have been able to do it because his book is so insightful and I don’t just mean in the way he talks about what Guantanamo looked like but the emotions; ‘Hey this is what it’s like to be ripped apart and ripped from your family and taken to some place you have no idea where you are and the kind of horrors that he lived through.’”

Haines adds, “I think it was important for us to be able to talk to the real person who lived it because not only do you get the accuracy, but you get this kind of amazing character in terms of what he’s survived and what he’s been through and how he still maintains himself. But it helps to know when you’re actually talking to him that you’re not trying to invent optimism and spirit

when it's not there. You always worry when you are writing about these sorts of things and you think: am I just doing the tacky movie thing or am I just making this easier for the audience because I want to make it easier for the audience? We really tried to avoid doing that but Mohamedou really is a weirdly human person in that way and that was really fun from a craft point of view to get to grips with."

(Real) Nancy Hollander, who lent her vast experience and intimate knowledge of the case to the filmmakers throughout the making of the film, says, "I spent hours and hours on the phone with them talking about little details; like how I got to Guantanamo each time; what I did while there; how I'd step on the plane; what were the guards like; and how I felt when I said goodbye and left Mohamedou. The truth is that I always cried after Teri and I left him, and needed a night by myself just to recover from being there. I hated leaving him there, over and over," says Hollander, adding that she filled them in on "all of the emotional, physical and psychological background, so that they would have it to work with, to create what they were going to create."

Hollander also met with Jodie Foster, who shares her personal passion for the role, "it's one of my favorite things, to be able to immerse myself in something that really fascinates me. The law is something I'm really interested in, how it works and the intricacies of it, and you know, how our country is shaped by that. How the world is shaped by that. If there's anything that made me believe in democracy and the rule of law, it's been making this film. I think this film really drives that home. It's the most important thing that we have and it's our humanity."

(Real) Nancy Hollander shares that Foster's performance is so powerful she recognizes herself in many of the scenes, "the way Jodie uses her hands, the way she relates to Shailene, the way she relates to Mohamedou. There's calm times, there's screaming times, there's funny times and she really just makes me feel like she kind of got inside me, although Jodie warned me that this is not an impersonation. She brings what she brings to it, and I recognize that, but she's really captured that moment in time that happened."

"Obviously there's a lot of research to be done on a movie like this," says Foster, "the history of the day, not just from our perspective but from an international perspective but at the end of the day, the most important research I did was meeting Nancy Hollander."

Shailene Woodley reflects, "Teri Duncan shared a lot, she was very open – I don't want to speak for her – but what I took away from her interviews online, was, 'you know it's scary to go up against the government; it's scary to walk into something without knowing all angles and all sides of the equation,' but I think more than anything, Teri's heart lies in justice and her heart lies in the simple truths of like compassionate and neighborly humanity. I think that overrode any fear that maybe she had."

Levi shares that he didn't have to do much to research, "almost all the information that I needed was at the fingertips of Kevin, who knew exactly what my purpose was in the film. To be able to do that, and opposite Benedict is just an incredible treat."

PRODUCTION DESIGN & LOCATIONS

Academy Award® nominated Production Designer Michael Carlin was tasked with re-creating the authentic environments of four worlds and two stories. Clarke comments, “the greatest challenge as a producer is making sure that we have enough money to make the film that we all want. We needed a healthy budget so we could capture the physical journey - Mauritania, Guantanamo, Afghanistan, Germany, Washington, Albuquerque – it’s huge. It’s not a chamber piece where you can get a house and shoot it all there. You have to have scale and that was very challenging.”

Having frequently worked together over the past fifteen years, starting with *The Last King of Scotland*, Carlin and Macdonald have a strong understanding of how the other works.

To locate the backdrop of four, very distinct worlds the filmmakers scouted a few international countries which could offer the full basket of their location and production requirements. Carlin explains, “we scouted in Morocco and in Serbia. In the end, Cape Town ticked most of the boxes. There is a lot of architecture that we could use and adapt to suburban America; an excellent construction and art department crew to build big sets; and many people with military training and extras with the right look for a number of characters, such as the guards; and in addition we were able to shoot a big part of Afghanistan.”

The only scenes the filmmakers chose not to shoot in Cape Town were those set in Mohamedou's country, Mauritania in West Africa. "We want to honor Mohamedou, his heritage, his family and his environment -properly," acknowledges Clarke.

Carlin stresses that one of the most important things to know about Macdonald is that his introduction into making cinema was documentary filmmaking, "even if it's a made-up story, you want to find the truth of that and recreate that. For a designer it makes things quite easy in a way, or at least it gives you a framework in which to work."

Macdonald's creative vision for the adaptation was to treat the story with integrity, and to ensure critical authenticity the filmmakers had the benefit of consultation with Mohamedou by visiting him in Mauritania.

Ackland recalls "one of the things that Kevin said from the outset was that we have to shoot this in Mauritania, which is where Mohamedou is from, and we said 'well we can look into it. But nobody shoots in Mauritania, it's not film friendly, it's in the middle of the Sahara desert...' So it was a real challenge, but he wanted the authenticity and when you see the film and the scenes in Mauritania it was worth it."

Carlin says that while GTMO (Guantanamo Bay), one of the world's most notorious detention camps, is still officially a secret and the plans of the environment aren't available anywhere "a lot of imagery has got out, but it's not very well labeled. When I showed Mohamedou the load of research I had gathered, he went, 'I was in that one; and this photo that you've got is from a

movie and it's not from Guantanamo Bay'. He has a very good memory and had a lot of time to observe his surroundings, so we got absolutely factual information about where he was within the camp. It was wonderful to have access to Mohamedou."

Carlin, however, still faced and took on the challenge of being faithful to the reality of Mohamedou's story within the 'constraints of making a movie', while having to redact information that may implicate the filmmakers' interpretation of GTMO, "we are not focusing on torture elements. The detail is in the mechanics of his incarceration and the indignity you suffer when you're in a place like this. We try to describe those the things that horrified us, that weren't specifically the torture."

Due to its vastness the GTMO set was built in three locations; the main composites of Camp Delta and Camp Echo were constructed in Paarl, an hour outside of Cape Town, with other sections of the same composite set on the beach at Strandfontein, which closely resembles the location of the real bay, and the real camp in Guantanamo. Other set elements were constructed at the Cape Town Film Studios.

The filmmakers aimed to use the real colors in Guantanamo as much as possible, "we edited out a lot of orange and red so when we see those colors they are more powerful. All the dark parts of the film are cool, grey and concrete. We slightly desaturated and darkened a lot of the Guantanamo interior colors just so that photographically, it would work better and be a bit more sombre and depressing. Those parts of the film were all a continuous color, whereas Nancy's world in New Mexico has warmer colors, plants, natural fabrics and wood."

REVISITING THE PAINFUL PAST

From the get-go the filmmakers were happy to welcome the genuine individuals, Mohamedou and Nancy, to visit the set. However, Mohamedou, had no authority to travel outside his country, Mauritania in West Africa. The government declined to issue him a passport from the time of his release from GITMO. He recalls, “the trip was never a sure thing because of my history of incarceration. My lawyer and all the team worked very hard to get me down here.”

For Mohamedou, the punishment seemingly never goes away, and he reveals that he was apprehensive when he applied for his visa, but muses about his experience at the South African Embassy. “They asked me many questions and I just looked at them, saying ‘do you know who I am?’ The commissioner said ‘no Sir, I don’t know who you are’, and I asked him to look me up on Google.’ Then everything, including the procedure, changed. It usually takes days to process a visa but he fast-tracked and granted mine in one day. I feel this is characteristic of South Africa, because of their history. I am so happy and so proud to be from this continent.”

The former prisoner surprised the actors when he arrived at a table reading at Kevin Macdonald’s house in Cape Town. It was the first time the cast met the ‘real’ Mohamedou.

He reflects, “when I got to the table reading, I was very overwhelmed. I was just like saying anything, because I was overwhelmed with happiness, with meeting those great people.”

All the talent was astounded and profoundly moved by Mohamedou's humility and lack of anger. Tahar says, "I hugged him, and when he was talking about a lot of different things I just looked and listened. What can you say? This guy in front of you is talking about what he's been through, with a big smile. I mean, you're just listening. His forgiveness is what makes him so special and what saves him to not fall into madness. He's not angry at all, it's impressive, he has the right to be angry, but he's not."

Foster says that Nancy Hollander is an extraordinarily brilliant woman who is just a ball of contradictions, "I think that's what I love about her the most. She's this very structured thinker, very smart, and very measured. She's careful about everything she says, and yet she loves her red lipstick and nail polish. She loves fast cars, she likes sports-cars, she likes digital equipment and yet she was this public defender with this long road as an activist. So many parts of her are conflicting, and that's what's beautiful about real characters, real people. Real people are not all just one thing. Nancy is really a combination of so many things."

Shailene Woodley's first meeting with Mohamedou was over Skype, "I feel like before you even meet this man, if you read the book or one article online, you feel the essence of his spirit so strongly. So before I even Skyped with him, I just knew how lovely he was. I knew how special and unique and radiant his spirit was, because you feel that; you feel that even in the air that exists around his name."

Woodley continues, "the first time I Skyped with him and his big smile came up, he said thank you for doing this movie and it just moved me so deeply because all I wanted to say to him was

thank *you* for trusting us to breathe life into this in a cinematic way. It's his courage and ability to forgive, love, be unconditional and remain patient and calm in what would drive, I would think, probably 99% of humanity to a place that's very different from the place that he's in emotionally and spiritually and psychologically."

The authentic recreation of the GTMO set was a chilling reminder for the visitors. Hollander says, "the green mesh that they had put up is exactly how it was in GTMO. Mohamedou had poked a little hole through it so he could watch me arrive because he knew I would be coming for a visit. As I walked by this little detail, I just felt like I was back at GTMO."

Carlin shares, "when Mohamedou came to set, I was terrified. It was worse than opening a set to a director. We had made lots of little changes to the reality of the situation to accommodate cameras and differentiate one space from another; One thing about GTMO was that it was all the same, most of the cells are built on the same configuration."

"Most of Mohamedou's contact with Nancy happened in a room identical to the cell that he occupied when he entered the torture program," Carlin explains, "and after that, when he became a 'cooperating prisoner' he was in the same kind of cell, but with less restrictions. We wanted to stay truthful to the story but you can't portray thirteen years of time effectively in environments that are almost identical, so we made changes. I was really nervous that he'd be upset about them, but he wasn't."

(Real) Mohamedou shares his reaction to the raw essence and character of the set, “there isn’t anyone else I know of that has been to the same place, except me and Nancy. I kept asking her, ‘do you have the same feeling, this is real?’, and she said ‘yes’. In South Africa, they did a very good job. On set, Kevin and his ADs kept asking me very detailed questions like, ‘how did you wear this, how did you wear that?’”

Foster adds, “it’s such a special thing when you see Mohamedou and Nancy together as I’ve been able to do this week, while we’ve been shooting. Nancy feels very maternal towards him, and you can just see the twinkle in both of their eyes. It’s so obvious they really care about one another.”

Mohamedou is frank about his experience, “the scenes I watched being filmed were so realistic I felt very uncomfortable, and after ten or twenty seconds I couldn’t watch any more. I remembered the same thing again.”

Foster says, “I think it’s been very surreal for everybody, for Mohamedou and certainly for Nancy to see the recreation of GTMO; to see the camp set up, to see the barbed wire, and fencing and the concrete walkways, the kind of sad air conditioners; and all of the military men in their various regalia. It’s hard not to feel like you’re back in that environment. I think that was difficult for Mohamedou on his first day there, it was like his heart was pounding a bit.”

Carlin recalls, “it was interesting when Nancy and Mohamedou visited the set because he is a really humorous guy. You can’t imagine how someone could have his temperament having lived

through what he has; he's not bitter and he can see the humour in just about anything, but when he came to set he was very quiet for a day, it wasn't the normal Mohamedou."

WHAT THE WORLD SHOULD KNOW

Shailene Woodley says, "whatever his life brings him for the rest of his life, he's here to move mountains, and he already is. The fact that he is able to be the man and show up as the man that he is today, he's changing the world. I think his effect will go on for centuries simply by the energy that he carries into every moment of his life. He's just a great human being and we don't have enough of them. He's the man I wish kids could study when they grow up in school. He is the man I think people should research and read about and listen to. The wisdom that pours out of his smile, the wisdom that pours out of his words, it's a wisdom that's a lost art in today's world. It's a wisdom that says everything that every single ancient religious, biblical or institutional text has ever said, which is 'just be kind to one another', 'love your neighbor', 'take care of one another', 'forgive', 'show up.' He kind of strips back all the distraction and chaos of consumerism and materialism and plants you right back down into the true seat of your soul. There's a lot of light in this world."

Foster says, "what Mohamedou has lived I think so many of us couldn't even imagine that we could ever survive it. Maybe the hardest thing has been that he has not been allowed to see his child, I think his boy is almost two years old now and he hasn't been able to see him." Foster continues, "the bureaucracy of various governments has done everything possible to continue to punish him and make sure he can't resume a real life, which seems counterintuitive. Mohamedou

has a lot to teach us about our system, the Western system of democracy that he respects so much.”

Ackland comments “the most extraordinary thing about our story is Mohamedou: what he endured, the person he is and was and how he touched people throughout. I mean it is extraordinary. I think where 99% of us would be crippled, he wasn’t. I think Kevin has represented this quite superbly and with the blessings of everyone all along the way. [...] It’s such an extraordinary, true story and the biggest challenge by far was trying to get Mohamedou and his character into this film. The way that Tahar and Kevin have done that is inspiring.”

Macdonald notes “these things can be set in a brutal world but actually what you take away from it is the decency of human beings and the capability of people to forgive and change their minds. If ever there was a time we need to learn to see the humanity in the other sides of arguments it’s right now, when everything is so divided. So, I think that’s a really positive message and obviously I am keen for people not to feel like this is a punishing movie. I think this is a movie which has got great warmth and humanity at its core.”

Cumberbatch adds “one of the most heart-breaking moments in the film is when you feel that they have broken his spirit, where there is no hope... at the end of the day this is a celebration of the human spirit, this film, that’s really what it’s about. It’s about a human point of view, of what we can endure, what we shouldn’t have to endure and how to take solace from that. We realize the human spirit is a pretty extraordinarily robust entity and Mohamedou is literally living proof of that. I want audiences to be enthralled, I want them to completely fall under Mohamedou’s

spell and care about his predicament. There's elements of it that are thrilling and elements of it that are shocking, elements of it that are deeply moving and profound and funny and joyful, and I think at the end of the day you're watching a man who is the personification of the human condition and the human spirit, triumphing over all that he endures, so it's really a tale of hope."

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

JODIE FOSTER – NANCY HOLLANDER

Jodie Foster's stunning performances as a rape survivor in *The Accused* and as Special Agent Clarice Starling in the hit thriller *The Silence of the Lambs* earned her two Academy Awards® for Best Actress and a reputation as one of the most critically acclaimed actresses of her generation.

Foster began her career at age three, appearing as "The Coppertone Girl" in the television commercial. She then went on to become a regular on several television series, including *Mayberry RFD*; *The Courtship of Eddie's Father*; *My Three Sons*; and *Paper Moon*. She made her feature debut in *Napoleon and Samantha* when she was eight years old.

But it was her role in *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* (1975), which brought her to the audience's attention, and her powerful portrayal of a streetwise teenager in Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* (1976) that won her widespread critical praise and international attention. Foster appeared in a total of four films in 1976, *Bugsy Malone*, *Echoes of Summer*, *Little Girl Who Lives Down the Lane* and *Taxi Driver*, which were all presented at the Cannes Film Festival. Alan Parker's *Bugsy Malone*, earned her an Italian Comedy Award.

In total, Foster has appeared in more than 40 films. Most recently she starred in Drew Pearce's action-thriller *Hotel Artemis*. Prior to that her films include *Elysium* opposite Matt Damon for director Neil Blomkamp; *Carnage* for which she received a Golden Globe Award nomination; *Nim's Island* with Gerard Butler; *The Brave One* for director Neil Jordan, for which she received

a Golden Globe Award nomination; *Inside Man* with Denzel Washington and Clive Owen; the box-office hit *Flightplan*; Jean Pierre Jeunet's French language film, *A Very Long Engagement*; David Fincher's box-office success, *Panic Room*; *Anna and the King* for director Andy Tenant, *Contact* for director Robert Zemeckis; *Nell* opposite Liam Neeson; the comedy *Maverick* opposite Mel Gibson and James Garner; and the romantic drama *Sommersby* opposite Richard Gere.

Other select motion picture credits include Woody Allen's stylized black and white comedy *Shadows and Fog*; *Siesta*; *Stealing Home*; *Five Corners*; as well as earlier films *Tom Sawyer*; *Freaky Friday*; Adrian Lyne's *Foxes*; Tony Richardson's *The Hotel New Hampshire* and Claude Chabrol's *The Blood of Others*, for which the multi-lingual Foster looped all of her own dialogue in French.

For her role in *The Silence of the Lambs*, Foster was also awarded a Golden Globe® Award, a British Academy Award, a New York Film Critics Award and a Chicago Film Critics Award. Foster received her first Oscar® nomination and awards from the National Society of Film Critics and the Los Angeles Film Critics for her role in *Taxi Driver*. She also became the only American actress to win two separate awards in the same year from the British Academy of Film and Television Arts – Best Supporting Actress and Best Newcomer honoring her performances in both *Taxi Driver* and *Bugsy Malone*.

In 2013 Foster was presented with the Cecil B. DeMille Award from the Hollywood Foreign Press Association for Lifetime Achievement. Additionally, in 2016 she was awarded with the Stanley Kubrick Britannia Award for Excellence in Film from BAFTA Los Angeles.

In addition to her acting, Foster has always had a keen interest in the art of filmmaking. Foster made her motion picture directorial debut in 1991 with the highly acclaimed *Little Man Tate*, in which she also starred. In 1995, Foster directed her second film, *Home for the Holidays*, which she also produced. The film starred Holly Hunter, Anne Bancroft and Robert Downey Jr. In 2011 she directed *The Beaver*, which starred Mel Gibson, Jennifer Lawrence and Anton Yelchin and Foster. In 2016 Foster directed the thriller *Money Monster* which starred George Clooney, Julia Roberts and Jack O'Connell.

Foster made her television directorial debut helming episodes of three highly acclaimed Netflix series – *Orange is the New Black*, *House of Cards* and *Black Mirror*. Foster received an Emmy Award Nomination and a Director's Guild Award Nomination for "Best Directing in a Comedy Series" for *Orange is the New Black* and a Director's Guild Award Nomination for "Best Directing in a Drama Series" for *House of Cards*.

Foster founded Egg Pictures in 1992 and the company produced *Nell* (1994), for which Foster earned an Academy Award® nomination for Best Actress; *Home for the Holidays* (1995); the Showtime telefilm *The Baby Dance* (1998) which received a Peabody Award, four Emmy® Award nominations and three Golden Globe® Award nominations; as well as USA Films' *Waking the Dead*, directed by Keith Gordon starring Billy Crudup and Jennifer Connelly.

In 1996, Egg presented the award-winning French film *Hate (L'Haine)* in the United States. Foster and Egg Pictures also produced *The Dangerous Lives of Altar Boys* (2001).

Foster graduated with honors from Yale University in 1985, earning a B.A. in literature.

TAHAR RAHIM – MOHAMEDOU OULD SHLAHI

Tahar Rahim's career took off when Jacques Audiard offered him the main role in *A Prophet (Un Prophète)* in 2009. The picture won the Grand Prix at the Cannes Film Festival as well as 9 César, including the 'Most Promising Actor Award' and the 'Best Actor Award' at the same time for Tahar, who gave an acclaimed performance.

Now considered an international actor, Tahar is contacted by worldwide filmmakers. In 2011, he played an Arab prince in Kevin Macdonald's *The Eagle (L'Aigle de la neuvième légion)* alongside Channing Tatum, which was followed by his role as a young French man in love with a Chinese woman in Lou Ye's *Love and Bruises*, before starring in Jean-Jacques Annaud's blockbuster *Black Gold*.

Rahim returned to the Cannes red carpet in 2013 with two powerful pieces : Asghar Farhadi's fully rewarded movie *The Past (Le Passé)*, and Rebecca Zlotowski's tragedy *Grand Central*. Both receiving positive press and audience reviews, which procured for the actor impressive international roles such as the lead role in Fatih Akin's *The Cut*.

Tahar went on to land main roles all around the world, from Elie Wajeman's *Les Anarchistes* to Katell Quillévéré's *Heal the Living* (*Réparer les Vivants*), and Kiroshi Kurosawa's *Daguerrotype* (*Le Secret de la Chambre Noire*).

In 2018, his virtuosity saw him playing Judas opposite Rooney Mara and Joaquin Phoenix in Garth Davis' *Mary Magdalene* (*Marie-Madeleine*). He is also paired with Jeff Daniels for the series *The Looming Tower*, and Stacy Martin in the French romance *Treat Me Like Fire* (*Joueurs*).

In the coming year, Tahar will continue his international career in an episode of Damien Chazelles' Netflix series *The Eddy*, and then in the main role in the ambitious series *The Serpent*, produced by the BBC and Netflix.

SHAILENE WOODLEY– TERI DUNCAN

Shailene Woodley is one of the most multi-faceted and talented actors of her generation across film and television and seamlessly transitions between genres, from drama, to action, to comedy and has made her mark across big budget and indie films.

Upcoming, Woodley joins Benedict Cumberbatch, Jodie Foster, and Tahar Rahim in Kevin Macdonald's *THE MAURITANIAN*, which tells the true story of Mohamedou Ould Slahi (Rahim), who is captured by the U.S. government and languishes in prison for years without charge or trial. Losing all hope, Slahi finds allies in defense attorney Nancy Hollander (Foster)

and her associate Teri Duncan (Woodley). The film will be released by STX Entertainment on February 12, 2021 and on demand in early March.

This Spring, Woodley stars in and also serves as an executive producer in the romantic drama “*The Last Letter from Your Lover*,” directed by Augustine Frizzell. The film is a dual-narrative love story set between London and the Riviera in 2003 and the 1960s, based on the best-selling novel of the same name by Jojo Moyes. Felicity Jones co-stars in the film alongside Callum Turner, and Joe Alwyn. Netflix will release the film in the US with StudioCanal distributing throughout Europe and Australia/New Zealand just prior.

Woodley is currently in Canada on the thriller *Misanthrope*, which she is also producing, that centers on a talented, but troubled cop who is recruited by the FBI to help profile and track down a serial killer. She will then segue immediately into production on the political satire *The Fence* alongside Miles Teller and William Hurt. The film's premise sees two liberal newlyweds increasingly at odds with their ultra-conservative, ex-marine neighbor over a nine-foot-tall fence that he insists on building to keep his home safe from potential terrorists.

Woodley was most recently seen starring opposite Jamie Dornan and Sebastian Stan in director Drake Doremus’ new indie film *Endings, Beginnings*. She plays an artist who breaks up with her longtime boyfriend, but her attempt to take a break from dating ends when she quickly finds herself in two passionate romances. The film premiered at the 2019 Toronto International Film Festival and was released in the United States on May 1, 2020.

In television, Woodley recently starred in HBO's critically acclaimed, limited series *Big Little Lies* for director David E. Kelly and Jean Marc Vallee. The series was adapted from Liane Moriarty's 2014 novel of the same name about three women who meet as parents at a local school and become entangled in each other's secrets. Woodley portrays 'Jane', a single mom whose troubled son is accused of bullying. Woodley received an Emmy nomination for Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Limited Series or Movie and a Golden Globe nomination for Best Supporting Actress – Series, Miniseries or Television Film. The show received critical praise and accolades and won the Emmy Award for Outstanding Limited Series and the Golden Globe Award for Best Miniseries or Television Film. Season 2 of the series premiered on HBO in June 2019.

In 2018, Woodley served as producer and starred with Sam Claflin in *Adrift* released by STX in the U.S. and various distributors worldwide. Directed by Baltasar Kormákur, the film was based on the true survival story of a loving couple who set out on a journey to sail across the ocean. Tami Oldham (Woodley) and Richard Sharp (Claflin) couldn't anticipate they would be sailing directly into one of the most catastrophic hurricanes in recorded history.

In 2016, Woodley starred opposite Joseph Gordon-Levitt in Oliver Stone's *Snowden*, an acclaimed dramatic film about the infamous NSA whistle blower, Edward Snowden. Woodley portrayed Snowden's real-life love interest, Lindsey Mills. The film was released in the U.S. by Open Road on September 16, 2016 and premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival and had international premieres at the San Sebastian and Zurich Film Festivals.

Woodley solidified her status as a star in the big screen version of *Divergent* for Lionsgate, based on the popular YA series of the same name from best-selling author Veronica Roth. Woodley reprised her role as ‘Tris Prior’ in the second and third installments of the franchise. The third and final film *Allegiant* released in 2016.

Woodley seamlessly shifted from her role as the indomitable ‘Tris’ to star in the critically acclaimed film, *The Fault in Our Stars*, the big screen adaption of John Green’s hugely popular novel. Woodley earned glowing reviews from the most respected critics in the country and it dominated the box office on opening weekend.

Just prior to the “*Divergent*” series, Woodley starred in *The Spectacular Now* opposite Miles Teller. The co-stars shared the Special Jury Prize for Dramatic Acting at the Sundance Film Festival in January 2013; and Woodley was nominated for a Gotham Award, and an Independent Spirit Award® for Best Actress.

Woodley also starred in the dramatic film *White Bird in a Blizzard* for director Gregg Araki, which premiered at Sundance in January 2014.

Woodley began her career at the age of 5 where she began working in commercials and then earned her first TV role in the 1999 MOW *Replacing Dad*, which starred two time Oscar® nominee Mary McDonnell.

Other roles include playing the lead character in the hit ABC Family series, *The Secret Life of the American Teenager*, for five years; the lead in the popular WB movie *Felicity: An American Girl Adventure*, which was produced by Elaine Goldsmith-Thomas and Julia Roberts; and recurring roles on *Crossing Jordan*; *The O.C.*; and *Jack & Bobby*. She also had a lead role opposite Ann Margaret and Matthew Settle in the TV movie *A Place Called Home*.

Woodley is committed to bettering the world and shining a light on the intersectionality between social justice, environmentalism and mental health. In 2016 she was honored alongside her mother by Global Green for their work with their nonprofit All It Takes, and Shailene has received honors from the Environmental Media Association and InStyle Magazine for her advocacy work.

BENEDICT CUMBERBATCH – LT. COL STUART COUCH

Academy Award® nominee, Benedict Cumberbatch is known for playing the title role of ‘Sherlock Holmes’, a role that has earned him international acclaim and several awards including The Primetime Emmy®.

In 2015 Benedict portrayed Alan Turing in the multi-award winning film *The Imitation Game*, which earned him a BAFTA, Golden Globe and Academy Award nomination as Best Actor. Other big screen performances include the role of the dragon Smaug and the Necromancer in Peter Jackson’s *The Hobbit*, Khan in J.J Abrams’ blockbuster *Star Trek: Into Darkness*, Julian Assange in *The Fifth Estate*; Little’ Charles Aiiken in *August: Osage County*, Ford in Steve McQueen’s Oscar winning *12 Years A Slave*; and Billy Bulger in *Black Mass*.

Early TV roles included Benedict's incredibly powerful performance as Stephen Hawking, in the BBC's highly acclaimed drama *Hawking* which earned him his first BAFTA nomination. A second BAFTA nomination came in 2010 for his portrayal of Bernard in the BBC adaptation of *Small Island*. Benedict also starred as Christopher Stejens in the Tom Stoppard BBC/HBO drama *Parades End* based on the acclaimed novels, also earning him an Emmy nomination.

In 2016 his depiction of Richard III in the BBC's *Hollow Crown* series cemented his place as one of the finest actors of his generation earning him another BAFTA nomination. Benedict joined the Marvel Universe as the titular character in 2016's *Doctor Strange*, reprising his role as Dr. Strange in *Avengers: Infinity War*; and *Avengers: Endgame*. More recently, Benedict's performance in David Nicholls' adaptation of Edward St. Aubyn's beloved *Patrick Melrose* has earned him a BAFTA for Best Actor and Emmy and Golden Globe Best Actor nominations. Earlier this year, he appeared in the HBO/Channel 4 political drama *Brexit: The Uncivil War* and has just finished filming the Cold War spy-drama *Ironbark*, and a film about the English artist *Louis Wain*. Benedict is currently in New Zealand filming the Jane Campion film *The Power Of The Dog*.

ZACHARY LEVI – NEIL BUCKLAND

Zachary Levi has proven himself to be a triple threat- he is an accomplished actor, singer, and dancer which was displayed with his Tony- nominated performance for “Best Leading Actor in a Musical” in the critically-praised Broadway production, *She Loves Me*.

Levi top lined David F. Sandberg's fan favorite film, *Shazam!* for Warner Bros./New Line Cinema that held the #1 spot at the box office for two consecutive weeks.

Zac recently took home a SAG Award for “Best Ensemble in a Comedy Series” for his recurring role for season two of Amazon Studios’ Emmy winning series, *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*. The first season of the show won six Primetime Emmys, two Golden Globes, as well as a Peabody Award and two Critics’ Choice Awards. The second season won one Golden Globe, three Screen Actor Guild Awards, one PGA Award, two Broadcast Film Critics Association Awards, one Critics Choice TV Award, and TV Program of the Year at the AFI Awards. Levi will next be seen starring in the Richard Linklater directed Netflix feature *Apollo 10 ½: A Space Age Adventure*, as well Jon Gunn’s *Unbreakable Boy* for Lionsgate, and portraying NFL football legend Kurt Warner in *American Underdog: The Kurt Warner Story* also for Lionsgate. Levi is also attached to star opposite Cole Sprouse in Steve Pink’s *Undercover* and reprising his role as “Shazam” in the sequel to the Warner Bros./DC feature *Shazam!*.

Levi’s additional previous film credits include *Thor: The Dark World*; *Alvin & The Chipmunks: The Squeakquel*; and *Tangled*. The song “I See the Light,” written for Tangled (performed by Levi & Mandy Moore) was nominated that year for an Oscar and Golden Globe for Best Original Song. The pair performed the duet at the 83rd Annual Academy Awards ceremony. “I See the Light” also won the Grammy Award for “Best Song Written for Visual Media” at the 54th Grammy Awards. Levi is best known for his fan favorite performance as Chuck Bartowski in the hit NBC series, *Chuck*, and other previous TV credits include the Netflix mini-series *Alias Grace & Heroes Reborn*.

SAAMER USMANI – ARJUN

Saamer just landed the recurring role of ‘Chase’ on Shonda Rhimes’s Netflix show *Inventing Anna* and the Kevin MacDonald feature film *THE MAURITANIAN* opposite Benedict Cumberbatch. He recently completed a guest star role on the new HBO 1/2 hr. series *Run* (for exec prod. Phoebe Waller Bridge) as well as a recurring role on HBO’s critically acclaimed series *Succession*. He is currently recurring on the CW’s new series *Katy Keene*. Previously, he finished the 10-episode limited series *What/If* for Netflix and creator Mike Kelly. Saamer starred opposite Jane Levy and Renée Zellweger.

He trained at LAMDA in the UK, earning a MA in Classical Acting. Upon graduating, Saamer landed 2 great plays at Canada’s renowned Stratford Festival while at the same time recurring on the hit series *Reign*. After an extensive casting search last pilot season, Saamer landed the coveted lead role in the ABC/Marc Cherry pilot opposite Reba McEntire.

PRODUCTION BIOGRAPHIES

KEVIN MACDONALD – DIRECTOR

Born in Glasgow, Scotland, Kevin Macdonald has made numerous award winning documentaries, including *One Day in September* (Oscar® for Best Documentary in 1999); *Touching the Void* (BAFTA for Best British Film of the Year, 2003); *Life in a Day* (2011); *Marley* (BAFTA nominated in 2013); and *Whitney* (Official Selection, Cannes Film Festival 2018).

Kevin's feature films include *The Last King of Scotland* (BAFTA winner for Best British Film of the Year and Oscar for Best Actor, *Forrest Whittaker*, 2006); *State of Play* (2009); *How I Live Now* (2014); and *Black Sea* (2016). Macdonald lives in London with his wife, Tatiana, and 3 children.

M.B. TRAVEN – CO-WRITER

RORY HAINES & SOHRAB NOSHIRVANI – CO-WRITERS

Rory Haines and Sohrab Noshirvani met in their first Screenwriting class at Columbia University's MFA program in New York. They soon bonded over a shared creative vision that was informed by their international backgrounds - Sohrab was born in Iran, and Rory hails from the UK. Their original TV series, *INFORMER* was broadcast on Amazon and BBC 1 and nominated for best drama series at the 2019 BAFTAs.

ADAM ACKLAND – PRODUCER

Adam Ackland is the Managing Director of SunnyMarch, the independent Film & TV production company he founded with partner Benedict Cumberbatch in 2013. Since launching the banner, SunnyMarch has co-produced the Golden Globe® and Emmy® nominated limited series *Patrick Melrose* for Showtime and Sky, and an adaptation of Ian McEwan's *Child in Time* for BBC One.

On the film side, SunnyMarch has three projects slated for release in the upcoming year. In addition to *THE MAURITANIAN*, they co-produced *The Courier*, (a cold-war espionage drama directed by Dominic Cooke, starring Cumberbatch, Rachel Brosnahan and Jessie Buckley, which premiered at Sundance in 2019) and *The Electrical Life of Louis Wain* (a period piece directed by Will Sharpe, starring Cumberbatch, Claire Foy, Andrea Riseborough & Toby Jones).

LEAH CLARKE – PRODUCER

Leah Clarke joined SunnyMarch in 2018 from DNA, where she worked on a range of high-profile feature films including *Annihilation*; *T2: Trainspotting*; *Far from the Madding Crowd*; and *Ex Machina*.

At SunnyMarch, Leah runs the film department alongside Adam Ackland & Benedict Cumberbatch who founded the company in 2013. In addition to *THE MAURITANIAN*, SunnyMarch has two other projects slated for release in the upcoming year: *The Courier*, (a cold-war espionage drama directed by Dominic Cooke, starring Cumberbatch, Rachel Brosnahan and Jessie Buckley, which premiered at Sundance in 2019); and *The Electrical Life of Louis*

Wain (a period piece directed by Will Sharpe, starring Cumberbatch, Claire Foy, Andrea Riseborough & Toby Jones).

MARK HOLDER – PRODUCER

Mark Holder is a producer, manager, and a founding partner of Wonder Street Entertainment. He produces feature and television content, and represents talent in the literary and acting worlds. He has produced Netflix's critically acclaimed *Beasts of No Nation*, directed by Cary Fukunaga, which starred the award-winning Idris Elba; Anna Mastro's *Walter*; Mark Edwin Robinson's *I Will Follow You into the Dark*; as well as the Netflix series *Self Made: Inspired by the Life of Madam CJ Walker*, starring Octavia Spencer.

Together with his wife and producing partner Christine Holder, they have projects in various stages of development at Netflix, Warner Bros. and Paramount.

CHRISTINE HOLDER – PRODUCER

Christine Holder is a producer, manager, and a founding partner of Wonder Street Entertainment. She currently produces both feature and television content as well as representing creative forces in both the talent and literary world. She has produced such projects as Netflix's critically acclaimed *Beasts of No Nation*, which starred the award-winning Idris Elba and directed by Cary Fukunaga; and the Octavia Spencer-starring Netflix series *Self Made: Inspired by the Life of Madam CJ Walker*.

Christine currently has projects in various stages of development at Netflix, Warners and Warner Horizon and Paramount among others. In addition to producing, she also manages a full roster of talent and literary clients specializing in underrepresented storytellers with diversely unique voices.

LLOYD LEVIN & BEATRIZ LEVIN – PRODUCERS

Lloyd has had an eclectic career as a movie producer for over 30 years. Among the movies he's produced are *Die Hard*; *Boogie Nights*; *Tomb Raider*; *United 93*, *Hellboy*; and *Watchmen*.

For their newly formed production company Shadowplay Features, husband-and-wife team Lloyd Levin and Beatriz Levin produced Spike Lee's acclaimed movie, DA 5 Bloods, Delroy Lindo, Clarke Peters, Chadwick Boseman and Jonathan Majors. Producing again with Spike Lee, their next film is director Stefon Bristol's second feature, *Gordon Hemingway and The Realm of Cthulhu*.

BRANWEN PRESTWOOD SMITH – PRODUCER

Branwen Prestwood Smith is an independent producer who has worked in the film industry for nearly 20 years across production and post-production. Branwen was one of the co-founders of a post-production studio at Realworld, the legendary music studios owned by Peter Gabriel.

Branwen then moved into producing, optioning projects such as *Rogue Male* and *Mr. Benn* which are now in development, an animated Christmas film with writer Hamish McColl and several TV projects including an adaption of *Treachery Of Spies*.

Prestwood Smith has recently teamed up with Dame Heather Rabbatts (Time's Up UK Chair) to launch 48 Films, a production company which will focus on the development and production of varied projects of all shapes and sizes.

MICHAEL BRONNER – PRODUCER

Michael Bronner is currently based between Nairobi and Storrs, Connecticut. His new film, *Chasing Agent Freegard*, is set to begin production this Spring.

ALWIN KÜCHLER – DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Multiple award-winning Alwin Küchler’s early films after graduating from the NFTS in the UK were the award winning *Ratcatcher* and *Morvern Callar* with director Lynne Ramsay. He went on to shoot *The Claim* with director, Michael Winterbottom.

His first collaboration with Kevin Macdonald was on the Academy Award® winning documentary *One Day in September*, and then later on *Marley*.

Alwin’s other credits include: *The Mother*, and *Morning Glory*; directed by Roger Michell; *Code 46*, directed by Michael Winterbottom; *The Deal*, directed by Stephen Frears, *Danny Boyle’s Sunshine*; and *Steve Jobs*; *Hanna*, directed by Joe Wright; and Neil Burger’s *Divergent*.

Küchler also worked on *One More Time with Feeling*, the moving Nick Cave documentary, directed by Andrew Dominik.

MICHAEL CARLIN – PRODUCTION DESIGNER

Oscar® nominee, Michael Carlin studied sculpture in Perth and Sydney and practiced as a fine artist before moving to London to pursue a career in film. He worked in various capacities on independent films such as Peter Greenaway's *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*; Richard Stanley's *Dust Devil*; and Iain Softley's *Backbeat*, as well as designing music videos and commercials.

Carlin's first film as production designer was David Evans' *Fever Pitch*, adapted by Nick Hornby from his own novel, starring Colin Firth. His production design credits since then include, Kevin Macdonald's *The Last King of Scotland*; *In Bruges* directed by Martin McDonagh and starring Colin Farrell and Ralph Fiennes; and *The Duchess* starring Keira Knightley and Ralph Fiennes, for which Carlin received an Oscar® Nomination for Best Achievement in Art Direction. He later designed another of Knightley's films, *Colette*, and enjoyed three further collaborations with director Kevin Macdonald on *The Eagle*; Amazon Studios' feature *Oasis*; and an upcoming adaptation of *THE MAURITANIAN*, directed by Kevin Macdonald and starring Tahar Rahim, Benedict Cumberbatch and Jodie Foster.

In 2019 Michael Designed *Enola* for Director Harry Bradbeer starring Millie Molly Brown and Henry Caville, and is currently preparing an adaptation of the hit play *Oslo* for HBO/Amblin.

Other recent credits include Marjane Satrapi's *Radioactive* starring Rosamund Pike as Marie Curie; Lasse Hallstrom's *A Dogs Purpose*; *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen* starring Emily Blunt and Ewan McGregor; *Dirt Music* directed by Gregor Jordan, Mira Nair's *The Reluctant*

Fundamentalist; The Two Faces of January for director Hossein Amini; and *The Suite Francaise* with Director Saul Dibb.

JUSTINE WRIGHT – EDITOR

Justine Wright has been collaborating with director Kevin Macdonald for the past 20 years, including the Academy Award-winning documentary *One Day In September* (for which she was awarded a British Independent Films Awards technical achievement), BAFTA-winning *Touching The Void*, *The Last King Of Scotland*, *State Of Play*, *The Eagle* and *Black Sea* and now *THE MAURITANIAN*.

Justine trained in, and cut commercials, music videos, and short films, before branching out into editing documentary and narrative features. She has since worked with internationally acclaimed directors on award winning films, including Phyllida Lloyd (*The Iron Lady*), Steven Knight (*Locke*), Park Chan Wook (*The Little Drummer Girl*), Idris Elba (*Yardie*), and Mick Jackson (*Denial*). Justine was awarded *European Editor of the Year* in 2014 for her work on *Locke* (starring Tom Hardy).

She has worked on numerous other award winning documentaries and feature films. She also regularly enjoys working as a supervising editor on documentaries.

ALEXANDRA BYRNE – COSTUME DESIGNER

Academy Award® winner, Alexandra Byrne trained as an architect at Bristol University before studying Theatre Design on the Motley Course at the English National Opera under the

legendary Margaret Harris. She has worked extensively in television and theater, both as a set and costume designer.

Byrne's television credits include Roger Michell's *Persuasion*, for which she received the BAFTA Award for Best Costume Design, and *The Buddha of Suburbia*, for which she received a BAFTA nomination and RTS award. In theater, Alexandra received a Tony nomination for Best Set Design for *Some Americans Abroad*, which transferred from the Royal Shakespeare Company to the Lincoln Center in New York. Following on from her work in theater, Alexandra designed the costumes for Kenneth Branagh's *Hamlet*, for which she gained her first Oscar nomination.

Her other credits include *Phantom of the Opera*; *Sleuth*; and *The Garden of Eden*. She received two further Oscar nominations for her costumes in *Elizabeth* and *Finding Neverland*. *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* finally won her the Oscar.

Alexandra worked with Kenneth Branagh again on *Thor*, her first production with Marvel, and won the Saturn Award. She then followed on to work with Joss Whedon on Marvel's *The Avengers*. After designing costumes for Warner's *300: Rise of an Empire*, Byrne returned to Marvel for James Gunn's *Guardians of the Galaxy*, and to work again with Joss Whedon on *Avengers: Age of Ultron* (Saturn Award), followed by *Doctor Strange*, directed by Scott Derrickson, for which she won the CDG Award. She then reunited with Kenneth Branagh for *Murder on the Orient Express*.

Alexandra has recently designed the costumes for *Mary Queen of Scots* (Oscar nominated) and *Emma*, directed by Autumn de Wilde, both with Working Title Films. She has most recently completed work with Kevin Macdonald on *THE MAURITANIAN* and is currently designing the costumes for Frederick Ashton's *Cinderella* for the Royal ballet, and *The Flash*, directed by Andy Muschietti for Warner Bros.

Alexandra is married to the actor Simon Shepherd, and they have four children.

TOM HODGE – COMPOSER

Tom is an Ivor Novello nominated composer, pianist, and clarinetist. He is known for pushing the boundaries of experimental contemporary classical through his collaborations with artists including Floex, Max Cooper and Eivør, which blend electronic production and jazz aesthetics with his emotive and familiar song structures and melodies.

His most recent work is the score for Kevin Macdonald's forthcoming feature film *THE MAURITANIAN*, starring Tahar Rahim, Jodie Foster and Benedict Cumberbatch. Previous credits include the acclaimed BBC/AMC crime drama series *McMafia*, starring James Norton and David Strathairn, which he wrote and produced the score for all eight episodes with his frequent collaborator Franz Kirmann, the feature-length documentary *The Man Behind The Microphone*, directed by Claire Belhassine, and the docu-drama series *Rise of the Nazis* for 72 Films / BBC Studios.

Tom has created original score for feature films, documentaries, TV drama, ballet and multiple award-winning advertising campaigns.

NINA GOLD – CASTING

Nina Gold is a casting director working in film, television and occasionally theatre.

Nina has cast over 100 feature films including: *The Two Popes* (nominated for a BAFTA for Casting); *1917*; *Star Wars: Episodes VII, VIII and IX*; *Mamma Mia 2- Here We Go Again*; *Bridget Jones' Baby*; *The Danish Girl*; *Far from the Madding Crowd*; *High-Rise*; *The Martian*; *Paddington* and *Paddington 2*; *The Iron Lady*; *The Theory of Everything*; *The Imitation Game*; *The King's Speech* and *Les Misérables*. She has cast eight films with Mike Leigh including *Peterloo*, *Mr. Turner*, *Topsy-Turvy*, *Vera Drake* and *Another Year*. Other films include *Sightseers*; *Before I Go to Sleep*; *The Sense of an Ending*; *How I Live Now*; *Rush*; *Prometheus*; *Attack the Block*; *Jane Eyre*; *Hot Fuzz*; *Brothers of the Head*; *The Illusionist*; *Wild Bill*; *The World's End*; *Shadow Dancer*; *My Week with Marilyn*; *Nowhere Boy*; *Bright Star* and *Eastern Promises*.

Television credits include eight seasons of *Game of Thrones*; three seasons of *The Crown*; *Chernobyl*(nominated for a BAFTA for Casting); *Brexit*; *Patrick Melrose*; *King Lear*; *The State*; *Wolf Hall*; *The Dresser*; *Marco Polo*; *London Spy*; *Restless*; *Any Human Heart* and *The Crimson Petal* and *The White*. Other television credits include two seasons of *Rome*; *The Red Riding Trilogy*; *Longford*; *The Devil's Whore*; *John Adams* and *The Life and Death of Peter Sellers*.

Nina has won five Primetime Emmys for Outstanding Casting for her work on *John Adams*, *Game of Thrones* and *The Crown*. Nina has won ten Artios awards for outstanding casting, including *The King's Speech*, *My Week with Marilyn* and most recently *Game of Thrones* and *The Crown*. In April 2016 she was honoured with a BAFTA Special Award for her outstanding contribution to casting over 100 television and film productions – the first time BAFTA has recognised a casting director with a special award.

CREDITS

DIRECTED BY

KEVIN MACDONALD

SCREENPLAY BYM.B. TRAVEN AND RORY HAINES
& SOHRAB NOSHIRVANI**SCREEN STORY BY**

M.B. TRAVEN

PRODUCED BYADAM ACKLAND
LEAH CLARKE
BENEDICT CUMBERBATCH
LLOYD LEVIN
BEATRIZ LEVIN
MARK HOLDER
CHRISTINE HOLDER
BRANWEN PRESTWOOD SMITH
MICHAEL BRONNER**EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS**MICAH GREEN
DANIEL STEINMAN
DAN FRIEDKIN
MICHAEL BLOOM
MARIA ZUCKERMAN
RYAN HELLER
ZAK KILBERG
RUSSELL SMITH
ROBERT HALMI
JIM REEVE
ROSE GARNETT
ROBERT SIMONDS
ADAM FOGELSON
JOHN FRIEDBERG

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

ALWIN H. KÜCHLER

PRODUCTION DESIGNER

MICHAEL CARLIN

EDITOR

JUSTINE WRIGHT

COSTUME DESIGNER

ALEXANDRA BYRNE

COMPOSER

TOM HODGE

CASTING BY

NINA GOLD

NANCY HOLLANDER

JODIE FOSTER

MOHAMEDOU OULD SLAHI

TAHAR RAHIM

NEIL BUCKLAND

ZACHARY LEVI

ARJUN

SAAMER USMANI

TERI DUNCAN

with SHAILENE WOODLEY

LT. COL STUART COUCH

and BENEDICT CUMBERBATCH

STXfilms 30WEST AND TOPIC STUDIOS PRESENT
IN ASSOCIATION WITH BBC FILM / GREAT POINT MEDIA A SHADOWPLAY FEATURES / SUNNYMARCH / WONDER STREET PRODUCTION A FILM BY KEVIN MACDONALD JODIE FOSTER
TAHAR RAHM "THE MAURITANIAN" ZACHARY LEVI SAAMER USMANI WITH SHAILENE WOODLEY AND BENEDICT CUMBERBATCH CASTING NINA GOLD ORIGINAL MUSIC TOM HODGE
COSTUME ALEXANDRA BYRNE EDITOR JUSTINE WRIGHT PROPS MICHAEL CARLIN DESIGN ALWIN H. KÖCHLER, BSC CO-PRODUCERS DONALD SABOURIN MOHAMEDOU OULD SLAHI LARRY SIEMS
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS MICAH GREEN DANIEL STEINMAN DAN FRIEDKIN MICHAEL BLOOM MARIA ZUCKERMAN RYAN HELLER ZAK KILBERG RUSSELL SMITH ROBERT HALMI JIM REEVE ROSE GARNETT
ROBERT SIMONDS ADAM FOGEISON JOHN FRIEDBERG PRODUCED BY ADAM ACKLAND LEAH CLARKE BENEDICT CUMBERBATCH LLOYD LEVIN BEATRIZ LEVIN MARK HOLDER CHRISTINE HOLDER
BRANWEN PRESTWOOD SMITH MICHAEL BRONNER BASED UPON THE BOOK "GUANTÁNAMO DIARY" BY MOHAMEDOU OULD SLAHI AND EDITED BY LARRY SIEMS DIRECTED BY KEVIN MACDONALD WRITTEN BY M. B. TRAVEN
PRODUCED BY M. B. TRAVEN SCREENPLAY BY M. B. TRAVEN

30WEST

topic
studios

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