

# Persmap



**WINNAAR**  
BESTE EUROPESE FILM  
FESTIVAL DE CANNES



**WINNAAR**  
BESTE FILM - BRITISH FILM  
FESTIVAL OF DINARD



**WINNAAR**  
GROTE PRIJS BESTE FILM  
FILM FEST GENT



**WINNAAR**  
BRONZEN PAARD BESTE FILM  
STOCKHOLM FILM FESTIVAL



**INTERNATIONAL  
FILM FESTIVAL  
ROTTERDAM**

# THE SELFISH GIANT



**'BRILLIANT... ASTONISHINGLY  
STRONG PERFORMANCES'**

- THE TELEGRAPH



**'A HEART-WRENCHING  
MOVIE'**

- THE GUARDIAN



**'STRONG, BEAUTIFUL AND  
HONEST FILM-MAKING'**

- METRO



**'STUNNING'**

- THE DAILY MAIL



**'BRITAIN HAS FOUND A NEW  
DIRECTOR TO BE PROUD OF'**

- THE TIMES

**WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY CLIO BARNARD**

BF and FILM presents a MADONSPON FILMS production "THE SELFISH GIANT"  
CONNOR CHAPMAN SHAWN THOMAS SEAN GILDER LORRAINE ASHBURNE IAN BURFIELD STEVE EVETS  
SIOBHAN FENNERIAN RALPH INESON BECCA MANLEY RHYS MCCOY ELLIOTT TOTTENSON  
A story by CLIO BARNARD with LILA RAYLINGS MUSIC BY AMELIAH A YOR ALLEN  
EDITED BY MATTHEW PRICE PRODUCTION DESIGNER JAMES WYBURN COSTUME DESIGNER BARBY SCOTT  
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS TINA BARKER JUDY AMY HUBBARD PRODUCED BY HELEN SCOTT EDITED BY NICK FENTON  
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS ANDREW MARE EILEY PRODUCED BY KATHARINE BUTLER LIZIE FRANCIS PRODUCED BY TRACY O'BRIEN AND CLIO BARNARD  
WWW.CINEART.NL



# THE SELFISH GIANT

Een film van Clio Barnard

*De 13-jarige Arbor en zijn beste vriend Swifty zijn beiden geschorst van school en wonen in een arme wijk. Ze ontmoeten Kitten, een cynische en hebzuchtige ijzerhandelaar, voor wie ze metaal gaan verzamelen met behulp van paard en wagen. Arbor wil vooral Kitten imponeren en geld verdienen. Swifty blijkt goed met paarden om te kunnen gaan. Wanneer Kitten het talent van Swifty ontdekt, biedt hij hem een baantje als jockey aan bij illegale paardenraces. Arbor voelt zich hierdoor gekwetst en buitengesloten, waardoor de spanningen tussen de twee vrienden oplopen. Tot een tragisch voorval iedereen voorgoed verandert.*

Winnaar Beste Europese Film - Filmfestival Cannes 2013

Beste film - Filmfestival van Gent 2013



Land: UK – Jaar: 2013 – Genre: Drama – Speelduur: 95 min.

Releasedatum: 30 januari 2014

Distributie: Cinéart

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Persrubriek - inlog: [cinéart](http://www.cinéart.nl) / wachtwoord: *film**

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## Cast

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Arbor	Conner Chapman
Swift	Shaun Thomas
Kitten	Sean Gilder
Shelly Fenton	Rebecca Manley
Mrs Swift	Siobhan Finneran
Mary	Lorraine Ashbourne
Price Drop	Steve Evets
Daniel	Rhys McCoy
Martin Fenton	Elliott Tittensor
Mick Brazil	Ian Burfield
Johnny Jones	Ralph Ineson
Railway Man	Everal A. Walsh
School Nurse	John Wall
Mo	Mohammed Ali
Teacher	Jamie Michie
Swift Children	Bailey Clapham
	Jake Gibson,
	Sofina-Rose Hussain
	Peter-Lee Lowther
	Aron Ryan
	Macy Shackleton
Neighbour	Patrick Mccann
Josh	Joshua Foulds
Blake	Blake Atkinson
Jay	James Booth
Deputy Headteacher	Dougie Rooks
Headteacher	Reece Andrews
Passerby	William Fox
Chip 'N' Pin Sulky Rider	Kayle Stephens
'Smart Price Drop' Man	Michael Cahill
Caretaker	Paul Chapman
School Secretary	Beverly Higgins
Scrap Yard Worker	Harry Calvert
Power Station Workers	Robert Hudson
	Rob Snell
	Max Smith
	Chris Yates
Policeman	Ken Christiansen
Wpc Hayward	Vicki Hackett
Kevin	Matty Bailey
Wizz	Steven 'Peanut' Walker
Phil The Barman	Robert Emms
Garry	Garry Page
Driver	Tim Paley
Huddersfield Scrapyard Man	David J. Peel
Policemen	Joshua Haase
	Simon Hearn
	Mark Pitts

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## Cast

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### **Conner Chapman** *Arbor Fenton*

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Conner, aged 12, was discovered on the first day of open casting at Buttershaw Business and Enterprise College in Bradford. He was cast at that time for a short film *Charlie Says*, a fiction film from the National Film and Television School directed by Lewis Arnold - his first professional work as an actor. His casting as Arbor was confirmed shortly afterwards. *The Selfish Giant* is his first feature. Recently Conner has played George Catterall in 'The Mill' a new TV series for Channel 4 produced by Darlow Smithson Productions.

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### **Shaun Thomas** *Swiftly*

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Shaun was discovered after a second round of auditions at Tong High School on Holmewood where he was a student. He hadn't been to the initial casting there but, once seen, he was cast as Swiftly. He was already a good rider and had a natural rapport with horses. *The Selfish Giant* is his first feature and his first experience as a professional actor.

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### **Sean Gilder** *Kitten (The Selfish Giant)*

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In an extensive career which has ranged over theatre, film and television, Sean Gilder has played a wide variety of major roles in each medium. He was in 'Enemies' and 'The Earthly Paradise' at The Almeida Theatre as well as numerous West End productions and two world tours with The English Shakespeare Company. His most recent film role was as Walt Purdy in Tarsem Singh's, *The Fall* but he is perhaps best known for his part as Irishman, Paddy Maguire, in the 4 year run of Channel 4's award-winning series, 'Shameless' and his role of Styles in the 'Hornblower' series. He had a major role in last year's critically acclaimed and award winning serial 'The Shadowline' on BBC2.

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### **Rebecca Manley** *Shelly Fenton*

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Rebecca Manley has a range of stage, television and radio credits. Her television credits include the role of Babs in Shane Meadows' TV series 'This is England '86 and '88'. Rebecca has also played in 'Casualty', 'EastEnders', 'Emmerdale' and 'Coronation Street'. Her stage work includes 'Ghost Ward' at The Almeida, Abi Morgan's debut play 'Skinned' at the Nuffield Southampton and 'Raw' with Theatre Absolute. *The Selfish Giant* is Rebecca's first feature role.

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### **Siobhan Finneran** *Mrs Swift*

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Siobhan Finneran began her film career as Rita in the iconic 1980s film, *Rita, Sue and Bob Too*, written by Andrea Dunbar from her stage play of the same name. Siobhan has worked extensively in the theatre as well as a wide range of television and film including 'The Street', 'Unforgiven', 'Wire in the Blood' and 'Clocking Off'. Siobhan is probably best known for her role as Sarah O'Brien in 'Downton Abbey' and Janice in 'Benidorm'. Siobhan is currently to be seen playing Mandy in the series 'The Syndicate' for BBC1.

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**Lorraine Ashbourne** *Mary*

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Lorraine Ashbourne has done an extensive range of theatre including four productions at The Royal Court, most recently playing the title role of Aunt Dan in Dominic Cooke's production of 'Aunt Dan and Lemon'. Lorraine has done a significant variety of television work, playing across genres from 'Lark Rise to Candleford' to 'Murderland'. Her most recent film role was in *Oranges and Sunshine*.

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**Steve Evets** *Price Drop*

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Born in Salford, Lancashire, Steve's film credits include *Brighton Rock*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Anna Karenina* and *Spike Island*. He is perhaps best known for his film role as Eric Bishop in Ken Loach's *Looking for Eric* (2009). He has a wide range of television credits, playing two different roles in 'Shameless' (in 2005 and 2012) and starring as Colin Lambert in several episodes of the TV series 'Rev' (2010-2011). He also starred as Pat Dowling in the TV series 'Five Days' (2010).

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**Rhys McCoy** *Daniel*

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Rhys was finishing as a student at Tong High School when he auditioned for the film. *The Selfish Giant* is his first acting role. He is currently training to be a jockey in Bradford.

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**Elliott Tittensor** *Martin Fenton*

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Elliott Tittensor was born in Manchester and began his acting career in television shows 'Brookside' and then 'Shameless', in which he became a series regular. He went on to play the leading role of 'Tits' in Mat Whitecross' feature film *Spike Island*, a coming of age story about the rise of the Stone Roses in Manchester in 1990. His performance led to his being recognised as a Screen International Star of

Tomorrow 2012 and also his being nominated for a BIFA for Most Promising Newcomer. Elliott recently finished shooting the final ever episode of 'Shameless'.

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**Ian Burfield** *Mick Brazil*

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Having trained at Mountview Theatre School and the Actor's Studio, Ian has gone on to become one of our most recognisable television actors. He played regular characters in 'The Knock' and 'City Central' as well as a recurring role in 'EastEnders'. Other notable credits include 'Lewis', 'Midsomer Murders', 'New Tricks' and 'Merlin' as well as comedies 'My Family', 'Grass' and a regular in 'Him 'N' Her'. His film credits include *The Krays*, *V For Vendetta* and *The International*. Ian has also had a successful stage career, recently working for the National Theatre productions of 'The Kitchen' and 'Comedy of Errors'. He can currently be seen in the West End in The National's award winning 'One Man, Two Guvnors'.

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**Ralph Ineson** *Johnny Jones*

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Ralph Ineson has an extensive range of television credits including the role of Dagmar in 'Game of Thrones', Paul in 'The IT Crowd' and Finchy in 'The Office'. He has worked on a variety of features including Ridley Scott's *Robin Hood* and Mike Newell's *Great Expectations*. His theatre credits include the role of Herod in the 'York Mystery Plays'. He was nominated for outstanding actor in the comedy series 'Suburban Shootout' at the Monte Carlo TV Festival in 2007.

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## Crew

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Director/writer	Clio Barnard
Producer	Tracy O’Riordan
Executive Producers	Katherine Butler & Lizzie Francke
Director of Photography	Mike Eley BSC
Editor	Nick Fenton
Casting Director	Amy Hubbard CDG
Production Designer	Helen Scott
Sound Designer	Tim Barker
Composer	Harry Escott
Make-up & Hair Designer	Sue Wyburgh
Costume Designer	Matthew Price
Production Manager	Ameenah Ayub Allen
1st Assistant Director	Tony Aherne
Post Production Supervisor	Meg Clark
Location Manager	Jonathan Davies
Production Accountant	David Jones
Grip	Mark Jones
Gaffer	Paul Murphy
Script Supervisor	Sylvia Parker

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## Crew

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### **Clio Barnard** *Writer/Director*

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*The Selfish Giant* is Clio Barnard's second feature, her first was *The Arbor*, an experimental documentary about Bradford playwright Andrea Dunbar. It achieved huge critical success on its release in 2010 and received numerous awards including The Douglas Hickox Award at the British Independent Film Awards (BIFAs), Best Screenplay at the Evening Standard British Film Awards, Best British Newcomer at the BFI London Film Festival, Best New Documentary Filmmaker at Tribeca and The Grierson Award for Best Cinema Documentary.

Barnard is an artist filmmaker whose previous work includes *Plotlands* (Whitstable Biennale), *Dark Glass* (Film and Video Umbrella), *Road Race* (Film London), *Random Acts of Intimacy* (BFI/Channel 4), *Flood* (BFI/Film Four). She is also one of the winners of the Paul Hamlyn Award for Artists.

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### **Tracy O'Riordan** *Producer*

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Tracy O'Riordan is a BAFTA nominated UK based Producer. In 2009 Tracy produced *The Arbor*, directed by Clio Barnard for Artangel, which garnered several national and international awards including the Sutherland Award at the BFI London Film Festival; the Douglas Hickox Award (BIFAs) and the Grierson Award for Best Cinema Documentary. Tracy has again worked with Clio Barnard on her second feature, *The Selfish Giant*. Tracy previously worked as a drama development executive and story editor before moving into physical production in 2002, when she most notably worked as part of the production team on the multi-award winning *The Queen* directed by Stephen Frears. Tracy worked as a Production Executive on Digital Departures, overseeing the development and production of a slate of micro-budget feature films as part of Liverpool Capital of Culture 2008. Three features were produced: which included the acclaimed Terence Davies' *Of Time and the City*, selected for the Cannes Film Festival 2008. Moonspun Films was established in 2008 by Tracy and is currently building a varied slate of film projects.

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### **Katherine Butler** *Executive Producer*

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Katherine joined Film4 as Head of Development in 2005 and was promoted to Senior Commissioning Executive in 2009. Her credits as an Executive Producer include Paddy Considine's BAFTA and BIFA winning first feature *Tyrannosaur*; Ben Wheatley's award-winner *Kill List*; Terence Davies' *The Deep Blue Sea*; Carol Morley's critically acclaimed drama-doc *Dreams of A Life*; Bart Layton's BAFTA and BIFA award-winner *The Imposter*; Peter Strickland's critically acclaimed multi-award winner *Berberian Sound Studio* and Ben Wheatley's third film *Sightseers*. Upcoming releases include Shane Meadow's doc *The Stone Roses: Made of Stone*; Michael Winterbottom's *The Look of Love* and first-timer Paul Wright's *For Those in Peril*. Features going into production in 2013 include Lenny Abrahamson's *Frank* starring Michael Fassbender, Maggie Gyllenhaal and Domhnall Gleeson; David Mackenzie's *Starred Up* and Daniel Wolfe's *Catch Me Daddy*.

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**Lizzie Francke** *Executive Producer*

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Lizzie Francke is a Senior Production and Development Executive at the BFI's Film Fund. Over the last couple of years she has overseen films as diverse as Andrew Kotting's *Swan Down*, Terence Davies' *The Deep Blue Sea* and Ben Wheatley's *Sightseers*. She was formerly a Development Producer for the UK Film Council's Development Fund where she oversaw the First Feature programme, out of which was developed such projects as Clio Barnard's *The Arbor* and Gillian Wearing's *Self Made*. She started her career as a film critic contributing to the Guardian and The Observer amongst others. During this period she also wrote 'Script Girls: The History of Women Screenwriters in Hollywood' (1994, BFI Publishing). In 1997 she was appointed Artistic Director of the Edinburgh International Film Festival, and after 5 years, moved into production in 2001, first for Little Bird, then as Executive Producer for EM Media.

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**Mike Eley** *BSC Director of Photography*

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Mike started his career in documentaries for Channel 4 and the BBC. Following a move into drama his credits include Ken Loach's *The Navigators*, Kevin MacDonalld's impressive documentary feature *Touching The Void*, which earned Mike a BIFA for Best Technical Achievement and *Grey Gardens* for which Mike was Emmy nominated. He has collaborated many times with director Susanna White: 'Jane Eyre' for the BBC (EMMY nomination and RTS Award for Best Cinematography); *Nanny McPhee* and *The Big Bang* for Working Title; 'Generation Kill' for HBO and most recently 'Parade's End' for BBC/HBO. His latest projects include Kevin Macdonald's BAFTA nominated feature-doc *Marley* and Anthony Wonke's documentary *Fire in the Night*.

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**Nick Fenton** *Editor*

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Nick Fenton began his career editing short films for experimental, conceptual & installation artists such as Turner Prize winner Jeremy Deller. He collaborated with Sigur Rós on their films *Heima*, a documentary following the band's 2007 tour and *Inni*, a live performance film. Documentary and television credits include 'The Boy Whose Skin Fell Off' (which earned Nick a BAFTA for Best Factual Editing), 'Bollocks to Cancer' with director Patrick Collerton and the critically acclaimed comedy 'Nighty Night' starring Julia Davis. Throughout his career, Nick has worked closely with a number of highly respected directors, including Richard Ayoade on *Arctic Monkeys at The Apollo* for Warp Films; the critically acclaimed *Submarine* and more recently *The Double*. Nick also worked with director Chris Morris on 'Nathan Barley' and recently edited Jerusha Hess's romantic comedy *Austenland*, which premiered at Sundance. Nick has worked with Clio Barnard on numerous occasions including the short film *Random Acts of Intimacy* and most recently *The Arbor*.

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**Amy Hubbard** *CDG Casting Director*

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Amy Hubbard is a Casting Director whose recent film credits include: *The Hobbit* (Peter Jackson), *Mama* (Andres Muschietti, Exec produced by Guillermo Del Toro), *Albert Nobbs* (Rodrigo Garcia) and *The Devil's Double* (Lee Tamahori). Casting credits for television include 'Hatfields & McCoys' (for which Amy was Emmy-nominated in 2012). Whereas she has been lucky enough to spend the majority of her casting life in Middle Earth (she also cast *The Lord of The Rings* trilogy), some of her proudest memories come from casting in Bradford for Clio Barnard on multi-award winning *The Arbor* and *The Selfish Giant*.



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**Helen Scott** *Production Designer*

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Helen Scott has worked extensively with director Andrea Arnold designing her debut short film, *Dog*; followed by the Oscar-winning short *Wasp* and multi-award-winning feature films *Wuthering Heights* (2011) *Fish Tank* (2009) and *Red Road* (2006). As Art Director, Scott's feature credits include Mike Leigh's *Topsy-Turvy* and *Career Girls*. For television drama she has designed 'Some Dogs Bite', for director Marc Munden, 'Public Enemies' for director Dearbhla Walsh, 'The Politician's Husband' for director Simon Cellan-Jones and currently 'The Great Train Robbery' for directors Julian Jarrold and James Strong.

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**Tim Barker** *Sound Designer*

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For the past 15 years Tim has been working as a Sound Recordist and Sound Designer on a wide range of British independent films and television drama. Recent feature credits include Terrence Davies' *The Deep Blue Sea*; Jerusha Hess' *Austenland* and Dan Mazer's directorial debut *I Give It a Year* for Working Title. He often collaborates with director Marc Munden, most notably the BAFTA winning *The Mark of Cain*; *The Crimson And The White* and has just completed 'Utopia' for Channel4. Tim has had the pleasure of working with Clio Barnard over the last thirteen years and in 2010 he was nominated for a BIFA (Best Technical Achievement) for his sound design on *The Arbor*.

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**Harry Escott** *Composer*

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Harry Escott is best known for his scores to films such as *Shame*, *Hard Candy*, *A Mighty Heart* and *Shifty*. His collaborations with directors such as Michael Winterbottom, Nick Broomfield, David Slade and Steve McQueen have greatly influenced his approach to composition. He has also composed scores for Michael Winterbottom's *The Road To Guantanamo* (Berlin Silver Bear) and BAFTA winner *Poppy Shakespeare*. He received a coveted BIFA nomination for his scoring of *Shifty* and has received nominations for his scores to *Shame* and Clio Barnard's *The Arbor*. Harry recently completed the score for *Welcome To The Punch*, Eran Creevy's second feature, starring James McAvoy and Mark Strong.

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**Sue Wyburgh** *Make-up & Hair Designer*

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Sue Wyburgh started her career in fashion, music and commercials before moving into film. Her design credits include *Babymother*, *This Filthy Earth*, *Tomorrow La Scala!*, *Kiss Of Life*, *The Lives of Saints* and Julian Fellows' 'Titanic', which Sue designed for television. Her Key Make-up credits include *The Other Man*, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *The Bourne Legacy*, while her make-up team work includes Tomas Alfredson's *Tinker, Tailor Soldier Spy* and Lars Von Trier's *Manderlay*. Sue was delighted to work with Clio Barnard and Tracy O'Riordan again after *The Arbor* - one of her favourite designing experiences.

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**Matthew Price** *Costume Designer*

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A graduate of Central St Martins, Matthew Price has designed costumes for features including Dexter Fletcher's critically acclaimed and BAFTA nominated *Wild Bill*, Matthew Hoene's *Cockneys vs Zombies* and most recently Farren Blackburn's Viking period epic *Hammer of The Gods*. Matthew worked previously with Clio Barnard on *The Arbor* and has also designed for Rankin.

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## Long synopsis

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The sound of trickling water. Horses are grazing across scrubland against a starlit sky.

It's night time and ARBOR (13), slim and wiry, pounds the wooden slats beneath his bed with his fists, grunting, shouting, lashing out. A boy's voice is trying to calm him. The boy's hand reaches out for him and then we see the boy, SWIFTY (15) strong and solid, on the floor beside the bed. He reassures Arbor, coaxing him to come out.

Swiftly's riding a cob horse across the scrubland, silhouetted against a dark sky. Arbor's running ahead. Then Swiftly's riding and Arbor's holding on behind him. They reach a railway bridge and look down on two men with torches (JOHNNY JONES and MICK BRAZIL) edging along the track below. The boys are intrigued and go down to the railway siding to take a closer look. They watch unnoticed as the men pull out cable from under the line, loop it across the track and stand back as an oncoming train cuts the cable into short lengths. When the train has passed they throw the pieces on a pile. A railwayman approaches inspecting the track with his torch. Johnny and Mick hide in the undergrowth, but the railway man finds their tools and while phoning for backup spots Johnny and a fight ensues. Arbor, seeing an opportunity, runs out of hiding and grabs a pile of cable. Arbor and Swiftly gallop off with it. Mick is running, shouting after them.

First light and Arbor bangs on the grilled gates of a scrapyard. The owner, Chris Kane - KITTEN (tall, broad, mid-40s) - approaches with swinging axe and two ferocious dogs. Chaos as he opens the gates. Kitten grabs Arbor and threatens him – what the hell are they doing with his horse? He pulls Swiftly off the animal but Swiftly shows him the cable and Kitten shoves them into the scrapyard. His wife, MARY, tells Kitten to put down the axe as Arbor's eyes clock the piles of scrap. Arbor tells Kitten that they found the horse tethered in the field – they didn't know it was his. Inside the shed, Kitten shows the boys how the cable stripper removes the rubber casing from the copper cable until it is gleaming brightwire. Kitten then shines a blue lamp on the cable the boys have brought and spots the luminous dye on the plastic coating, the boys' hands and faces are also covered with the dye. Kitten tells them it's called Smartwater, used by the police to trace stolen cable. He aggressively turns them out of his yard, telling them they need to burn the rubber off to get rid of the Smartwater - every twat knows that. Arbor says next time they'll do that. Kitten says there won't be a next time, he peels two £20 notes from a wad – Arbor stares at the cash mesmerized, before Kitten kicks the boys out of his yard.

Swiftly wakes up beside Arbor on the floor of Arbor's house. MARTIN, Arbor's step-brother, is dissing him but SHELLY, Arbor's Mum, defends Swiftly. She's fed up though when she opens a letter to discover that Arbor's clocked up another truancy fine. She's suspicious when he gives her a £20 note toward the cost and when she sees Arbor and Swiftly putting their clothes in the washing machine, she wants to know if he's been out grafting again, she just wants him to go to school. Arbor's cross and wound up that she won't accept the note and kicks off. Shelly tells him he has to take one of his pills for his ADHD – his hyperactivity disorder – but she discovers that Martin has stolen them.

At school Arbor is given his ADHD tablet. Once in class, Arbor is bored and tries to distract Swiftly and gets into trouble. The teacher orders him to the study room, which he hates. After school the boys go to Swiftly's house; it's chaos there, the electricity's off and MRS SWIFT is trying to make tea for 7 kids. PRICE DROP, Swiftly's Dad, is giving her a hard time for not remembering to put money in the meter. Swiftly tries to help out. A neighbour turns up, Price Drop is selling him the new sofa they're buying on HP. All the kids are told to sit on the floor as the deal is negotiated and watch as the sofa disappears out the front door.

Arbor walks towards Swifty's house the next morning. Ahead of him some boys from his school laugh and make jokes about the state of the Swift house, as they walk past. Arbor shouts after them, trying to defend the Swifts, but the boys laugh at him. He climbs a lamppost opposite and waits for Swifty.

On the way to school they spot Kitten standing in a disused warehouse courtyard, he is watching a boy (DANIEL) practice driving a sulky and trotting horse. Arbor and Swifty stop and watch, Daniel is having trouble and Swifty tells him it's because he's holding the reins too tight, Kitten tells Daniel to loosen the reins and the horse takes off. Kitten asks how Swifty knows this and Swifty tells Kitten that he used to be taken to road races when he was younger. Kitten tells them to be on their way, but rebukes Daniel for not knowing what Swifty has pointed out.

At school, Arbor is in the study room, he can see Swifty in the playground below. Swifty is getting taunted by the same group of boys from earlier. Arbor rushes out and grabs Swifty's tormenter, telling Swifty to thump him. At first, Swifty won't but when he does he floors the kid and Arbor fights with the others. Although Shelly tries to argue with the Headmaster to keep her son in school, Arbor is permanently excluded. Mrs Swift is told that Swifty is excluded for 10 days. Shelly tries to defend Arbor to Mrs Swift and apologises for Swifty's exclusion but Mrs Swift won't engage.

Arbor's delighted to be free. He and Swifty go scrap collecting with a child's push chair, they pick up a few bits and pieces including a tap and an aluminium saucepan. Arbor rows with Price Drop as he and Swifty try to take battered and broken bikes for scrapping from the back of the Swift house. They walk through the estate and see Martin stealing a bike and being chased by some lads.

When Arbor and Swifty arrive at Kitten's yard, they are overawed by the mountains of scrap and the huge cranes, moving around them. They walk towards the weighbridge, with their pushchair of scrap but find that Kitten is totally dismissive of their haul. Swifty is embarrassed, but Arbor is defiant - the pan is aluminium, he knows it's worth something. Kitten tells them to make themselves useful, now that they're there, he tells them to join the other boys and strip some brightwire out of the piles of broken scrap.

They set to work but can't help but watch the unfolding scene of Kitten's workhorse, Tarmac Tommy, being led across the yard by Daniel, (the boy who was driving the sulky). Daniel's scared as Kitten threatens him over the £25 Daniel owes him for the hire of the horse for collecting scrap. Johnny and Mick (who'd been trying to nick the cable from the railway) turn up at the scrapyard with 'processed' cable and copper bales to sell. Arbor and Swifty are only paid a few coins for their scrap, so when Arbor clocks Mick collect £2,600 he asks Kitten if he and Swifty can hire out Kitten's horse and cart, so that they can make some decent money. Kitten scoffs at them, they've no experience.

Mick asks Kitten if he's up for the race on the M62, he wants to see Diesel, the horse Kitten has been training. They walk into the yard and watch as Daniel leads Diesel from the stables, but Diesel is spooked by a loud noise and rears up. Kitten grabs his reins, but the horse is uncontrollable, rearing and trying to bolt. Swifty steps in, takes the reins and calms the horse, whilst Mick and Johnny howl with laughter.

It's dawn on the motorway and men gather in a lay-by to watch as Diesel and Mick's horse – Chip n' Pin are yoked up to the sulkies in preparation for the race. Daniel is looking nervous and is teased by some of the men. Arbor and Swifty run down to the motorway bridge - the finish line - and watch as through the mist we see Diesel racing Chip 'n Pin. There's chaos as cars with spectators hoot and bump behind them – the spectator cars form a rolling road block behind the horses; men and boys hang out of car windows cheering and making bets on which horse will win. One car is so close to Diesel that Daniel struggles to control him. Swifty is watching from the bridge, urging Daniel to just ignore the car and let Diesel fly. But Daniel has lost vital ground and Chip n' pin is the first to reach

the bridge and wins the race. Kitten is furious with Daniel, Daniel calls Kitten a wannabe gypsy and tells him that everyone laughs at him behind his back. Kitten fires him. Swifty talks to Diesel and brushes him down – he asks Kitten if he can drive him.

Later at Swifty's home, the debt collectors from Smart Price are demanding money for the three piece suite. Mrs Swift says she has no suite and no money but when Swifty gives his Mum her purse, she's surprised to find a £20 note, which she gives to the debt collectors. Mrs Swift urges Swifty to go to school, she doesn't want him grafting. Swifty explains that he's been excluded, Mrs Swift tells him to go anyway. Price Drop has a row with Swifty about how much he got for the scrap. Arbor calls for Swifty but Mrs Swift tells him he's at school.

Back in Kitten's yard Arbor's sorting copper from aluminium. Kitten's wife, Mary, is suspicious about where the copper came from – the laws are tightening up, it all has to be accounted for. Arbor asks Kitten if he can take Tarmac Tommy and go scrapping. Kitten tells him to fuck off but Arbor persists and negotiates taking the horse out for the £20 he's got with him.

Swifty waits and waits in the school reception area, bored and staring into space. The secretary smiles, tolerant, but her smile fades as she watches Arbor pull up on a horse and cart. He's come to rescue Swifty and it doesn't take much for Arbor to persuade Swifty to go with him. They take off on Tarmac Tommy as the secretary calls security.

As they're collecting scrap, Arbor and Swifty spot two men leaving a telecoms van unattended. The boys grab the cable, throw it onto the cart and ride off. They cut the cable and burn off the plastic cover over a fire they make in a field. The field is near a small electricity pylon. Arbor looks at the cable and discusses how much money it would be worth if they could find a way to get it from the pylon. Swifty tells him – don't even think about it. They take their load to weigh in at Kitten's yard and while Swifty unyokes Tarmac Tommy, Arbor is given a docket for £240. Mary pays the notes to Arbor but Kitten deducts £10, claiming he needs to pay their tax, as they are under 16. Arbor is too delighted with the money to remonstrate and runs over to Swifty to give him his share, saying it will help with his Mum's bills. Arbor then steals a small copper bale from Kitten's stockpile and hides it under his jacket. He's agitated when Kitten walks over to talk to them, but Kitten is more interested in telling Swifty to meet him at dawn so he can see how he drives Diesel, and doesn't even notice Arbor. Swifty is delighted.

At a disused power station, dwarfed by huge cooling towers some workmen seal a cable chamber closed and place a large concrete block over the top.

That evening at the scrapyard, Swifty is tending to Tarmac Tommy and Diesel. Arbor sees Kitten, Mick and Johnny having some beers around the Friday night burning bin and wanders over and loiters trying to be a part of their evening ritual. Arbor hears Kitten and Mick talk about 4 grand of copper wire being sealed up in a cable chamber. They talk of the dangers of nicking it - 132,000 volts – someone would have to be mad to take that risk.

Arbor is jealous and resentful when Swifty gets up early next morning – he wouldn't do that to go scrapping but Arbor's wired step-brother, Martin, comes storming in, frisks Arbor and demands money from him saying that he, Martin, will be killed if he doesn't pay the people who're after him. Arbor fights back but can only win with Swifty's help.

At the dawn meeting Kitten and Arbor watch Swifty on the sulky driving Diesel. Arbor quizzes Kitten about road racing and how he makes money, Kitten is irritated by Arbor's stream of questions, as he is trying to focus on Swifty. A beeping lorry closes in but Swifty guides the horse out of danger without slowing him down. Kitten's impressed but Arbor's jealous. As Swifty pets and praises Diesel, Arbor jumps into the sulky and as Diesel bolts, Arbor is unable to control him. Swifty runs after them

but luckily Arbor is able to slow the horse down as Swifty grabs his bridle. Kitten is furious and yanks Arbor off the sulky and tells him to keep away from Diesel.

Back on the estate, scrapping with Tarmac Tommy and cart, Arbor's horrified to discover that the windows of his house are broken. There's an axe in the front door. A weeping Shelly tells him that men were looking for Martin – he's been nicking off people. Arbor says he's going to make some money to pay off Martin's debts but Shelly says no, he's a kid. Arbor sees the axe in the door has a plastic handle and he grabs it.

Arbor and Swifty are together in Arbor's yard, wrestling on an old trampoline, chatting, laughing.

Later Shelly looks out of her window and sees the police coming. She tells Arbor she's going to let them know where Martin is, stop people from smashing in their windows. But the police have come to interview Arbor under caution about cable theft – a witness saw him burning what could have been cable in a field. Arbor denies it but the police warn him that it's a very serious offence and tell Shelly that she needs to look out for him – unscrupulous people are using kids to steal cable. Shelly later tells Arbor that he mustn't go to Kitten's yard anymore.

At the training ground, Swifty is yolking up Diesel. Arbor pulls on Diesel's bit, hurting Diesel, but Swifty quickly steps in and Swifty asks him how he would like it. Kitten warns Arbor to keep away from Diesel. Kitten's delighted with Swifty's performance and asks him to drive Diesel in the race. Swifty is thrilled. Arbor tells Swifty that Kitten is using him.

Scrapping again, the pair find a burnt out car, too heavy to put on the cart. Arbor persuades a couple of lads from the pub to load it, in return for a few quid. Back at the scrapyard, Kitten takes the burnt out car but says it's worth nothing and demands his twenty-five quid for the hire of the horse. As they're leaving, Arbor hides two copper bales under his jacket, jumps on the cart and tells Swifty to drive fast.

Back at Arbor's house, Swifty sees the scrap Arbor's been accumulating including piles of copper bales in Arbor's shed. He realizes that Arbor's nicked them from Kitten and he's upset because he knows that Kitten will go mad if he finds out and he'll lose the chance to ride Kitten's horse in the race. Arbor tells Swifty to harden up, Kitten's been using them and he's going to weigh in at another yard.

On the scrubland, Arbor and Swifty see that someone's been cutting cable but not finished the job so the cable hangs down from the electricity pylon. Arbor looks at a foal grazing nearby and has the idea to test the cable on the foal to see if it's live. Swifty realises what Arbor's trying to do and is furious, he grabs Arbor's arm and pulls him close to the electric wire, threatening to electrocute him. Arbor wriggles free and runs.

Arbor loads the scrap from his shed onto the cart and heads off out of Bradford to weigh in at another yard. At the Huddersfield scrapyard, Arbor's told he can't go in with a horse. Mick and Daniel arrive offering to sort out a deal with Arbor on the scrap – they'll load it in their van and weigh it in and split the proceeds with Arbor. Arbor has to agree. As they unload it, they see the copper bales that Arbor nicked from Kitten. Following weighing in, Mick holds out the money for the scrap to Arbor but then snatches it back, calls him a thief and drives off.

As Swifty is training Diesel on the scrubland he's horrified to find the dead foal. Back at the stables, Swifty breaks down and cries.

When Arbor returns to Kitten's yard, Kitten's found out he nicked his copper, demands his money and drags Arbor over to the cable stripping machine, telling Swifty to turn it to the widest setting. Arbor looks at Swifty, angry, he thinks Swifty has betrayed him to Kitten, but he's terrified when Kitten pulls his hand to the mouth of the stripper. Demanding that Arbor do a job for him, Arbor frantically agrees. Kitten kits Arbor out in rubber soled boots and electrical gloves. He gives him a length of rope and some customized tools and tells him where to go. He can use Tarmac Tommy to pull the concrete off at the powering substation where the cable rolls are stored. Kitten has a prick of conscience when he sees Swifty looking at him but he tells him to go and see to Diesel.

Arbor finds the concrete block covering the cable chamber. Arbor ties the rope around the block and then on to the horse but Tommy can't move it. Arbor is alone and vulnerable, dwarfed by the enormous cooling towers of the disused power station, exposed to the electrical threat from the nearby substation, Arbor sees someone approaching and ducks down, he's relieved when he sees it's Swifty but Swifty is angry, he accuses Arbor of killing the foal. Arbor swears he didn't do it, he asks Swifty if Swifty grassed him up, Swifty says he wished he had done and goes to walk off. Arbor pleads with him to stay and help him. Swifty is torn, but slowly starts to believe Arbor and turns. He agrees to help.

Swifty gets Tommy to pull the concrete block until it shifts to reveal a metal lid with a bolt. Arbor saws through the bolt and they lift the covering and stare into the cable chamber. Arbor's terrified but he makes contact with the cable and he's ok. It's dark and they have to hurry – there are workmen around. Arbor gets Swifty to drop the torch down to him so Arbor can find the cable coils and unscrew the bolts that secure them but as Swifty helps Arbor to clamber up, Arbor loses his footing. There's a splash as the cable lands in the bottom of the pit. Swifty jumps in, grabs the cable and helps Arbor up. There's a terrible buzz of electricity. A massive flash of light and smoke.

In the half light of early morning, Arbor lies motionless amongst the debris, holding Swifty's burned and blackened hand. Arbor kneels before Swifty's body but he can't get him to breathe. He's pleading, trying to resuscitate him but Swifty's dead. Arbor curls up beside his friend.

At dawn, Arbor covers Swifty's corpse on the cart with a tarpaulin. The sound of shrieking gulls as Arbor guides Tommy back across the scrubland.

At the scrapyard Arbor hurls himself at Kitten, wild and spitting, trying to strangle him with the cable. Mary's desperate, screaming at him, wrestling to stop him. It takes four men to drag Arbor off and lock him in the weighing in booth. But it's Mary who lifts the tarpaulin, sick and horrified, to find the charred body. Kitten puts his head in his hands.

Flashing blue lights as the police arrive. When they unlock the door to the weighing in booth, Arbor springs out at them. Later as they're leaving, Kitten whispers to Arbor to say nothing but as the police restrain him, Kitten says: "I made 'em do it. It's my fault the lad died."

Arbor, pale and devastated, trudges over the scrubland, until he finds the body of the foal.

Arbor treks through the estate in the rain and waits at the top of Swifty's road. Swifty's brothers and sisters are playing outside. Arbor forces himself to walk past them. They stare at him. Arbor knocks on the door. Mrs Swift opens it and looks at him, devastated, guarded, unsure, but pushes it shut. Arbor sits on the pavement outside. The kids pass on their way to school and he's still there when they return. Arbor knocks on the door again and Price Drop, pale and gaunt, tells him to go - Swifty's Mother doesn't want to see him. Swifty's sister watches Arbor on the pavement as night falls. When the next day dawns, he's still there. He knocks on the door for a third time and Price Drop slaps him. Arbor collapses on the pavement, crying. Darkness. As another day dawns he's still there.

Shelly runs up the street, stands by Arbor, then sits beside him, tries to talk to him, to hold him. But he bats her away then stiffens. Mrs Swift watches them behind the misted polythene window. Shelly sinks down beside him. Arbor starts to hit himself round the head as she tries to hold him but the blows become harder, stronger until he begins to calm.

The wooden slats on the underside of Arbor's bed – Arbor's battering them, groaning. Martin comes into the room, firstly gently trying to coax him out, then shouting in frustration and becoming aggressive, as Arbor won't even look at him. Time passes, Arbor still under the bed sees Swifty holding out his hand. Their hands mesh together. Then Swifty goes. Arbor's alone. Still.

Soft voices on the stairs. Still under the bed, Arbor sees Shelly's feet followed by the feet of another woman – it's Mrs Swift. Arbor leaps out and grabs her. She pulls him to her, holds him close, her face full of pain. Arbor wraps his arms around her and they both sob.

Arbor's in the stables with Diesel, patting him, stroking, looking into his eyes, brushing him, holding his head close. We hear a quiet and gentle breath as we focus on the horse's eyes. Then darkness. Silence.



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# Production story

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## The Writer/Director and her inspiration for the film

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When Clio Barnard was researching her multi award-winning 2010 film, *The Arbor*, about Bradford playwright, Andrea Dunbar and her daughter, Lorraine, she did some workshops in a local school. There she met a volatile and charismatic 14 year old, Matty. He stayed for a while then left but reappeared when Clio was working on the Buttershaw estate where *The Arbor* is set – always in rigger boots, fixing something. Later when she was shooting there his horse was on the set. Usually Matty would help by moving the horse and once or twice he rode it right through the middle of the set.

As Clio got to know him and his family, she discovered he'd been scrapping – scavenging for metal to sell to scrap dealers - from the age of 11. Matty had a best friend and it was this friendship that inspired the emotional core of *The Selfish Giant*. So the characters of Arbor and Swifty were born.

Matty had built a makeshift stable in his Mum's council house garden to keep his horse who would pull his cart for scrapping. With scrap prices going up, he could earn as much as £200 on a good day. But Matty's Mum was threatened with losing her council house tenancy if the stable wasn't taken down. After the stable went, Matty kept and grazed his horse as he could and his story of scrapping and horses built the core of the film's narrative. Matty himself was very opposed to illegal drugs because of their effects in his family and this, in turn, inspired the story strand about Arbor's half brother, Martin. Matty himself had ADHD – a hyperactive disorder causing angry fits and treated with Ritalin which, in the wrong hands, finds its way onto the black market as 'kiddie coke'.

Clio had long wanted to do an adaptation of Oscar Wilde's fairy tale that gives the film its name – *The Selfish Giant*. In that story, the Giant excludes the children from his garden so they have nowhere to play. Clio had seen the way children on these Bradford estates had been excluded – marginal in marginalized communities and with little future on the edges of a declining, deindustrialized economy. She wanted to explore their exclusion but she couldn't figure out who the Giant was in her own story until she learnt more about the scrapyards and their owners. Whilst most scrapyards operate within heavily regulated rules designed to reduce metal theft, she found out about smaller, less regulated yards and wondered about the ambivalence of these people – were they giving these scrapping kids opportunities or were they exploiting them? Then she had her Giant, who she named Kitten, (a nickname she picked up on whilst researching 'The Arbor').

Another strand of the story, about the racing of horses and 2 wheel carts called sulkies had interested Clio before she began to think about the film. She'd already been a motoring spectator at these dawn races on the motorway and they began to take their place in the narrative.

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## Looking back to the Future: the theme, the tone and *The Selfish Giant*

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A key theme of the film is the notion of looking back to the future. These children with their horses and carts are scrapping and scavenging in a landscape which has lost its industry and greened over, almost back to its rural past – a landscape which is beautifully captured by many visual images in the film of disused power stations almost lost in mist beyond the fields and the sheep. These children survive in a way which may become the future for them and their generation in a world of no jobs and declining resources. Ironically, the scrapping helps to strip parts of the modern infrastructure, like copper railway cable, from their own country and feed the growth of developing economies, particularly China. Ironically, they are helping to create as well as live that future.



The original *Selfish Giant* is a Victorian fairy story but the Victorian analogies don't end there. Kitten is perhaps a Fagin like character from Dickens' 'Oliver Twist', the head of a thieving makeshift family which sucks in children who would otherwise be destitute and turns them into thieves. Sean Gilder ('Shameless') who plays Kitten sees his character more as the nasty burglar Bill Sykes. And Clio agrees that Arbor, the boy who drives the story, has a flavour of the Artful Dodger.

Clio says she always found the Oscar Wilde fairy tale very moving. The Giant lets the children back into his garden when he discovers that there is only winter there without them. "The Giant finds love the moment he loses it", says Clio. "If you open yourself to love, you also open yourself to pain. This is a powerful story because everyone has experienced loss."

Initially the film story was drafted from the Giant's point of view but it became clear that the most powerful turning points were from the child's point of view. "In the merging of these two different worlds – the world of the fairytale and Matty's world, the world of the fairy tale became more subtle, but thematically the ties remain very strong" says Tracy O'Riordan, the Producer (who also worked on *The Arbor*).

Clio says that after the point of view and the story changed she wondered if the film should still be called *The Selfish Giant*, but she realized that the word Selfish picked up on another key theme in the story – greed and individualization. "It's very contemporary," she says. "When people are stealing at the top" - and many see the activities of tax avoiders, expenses fiddlers and casino banks as theft - "then that will go all the way down as it did in the riots. Kitten is selfish and so is the ideology of greed."

When Clio was developing *The Selfish Giant* she wanted to make a contemporary film with a timeless quality that melded two seemingly contradictory genres – a fairytale and social realism. She sees films like *Kes* (Ken Loach 1969) as a realist fable, as are the films of the Dardenne brothers and *The Apple* (Samira Makhmalbaf 1998). The aspiration was to tell a simple story which, under scrutiny, reveals nuance and complexity through symbolism and metaphor.

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### **Finding the Boys...**

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Arbor and Swifty are the emotional and narrative core of the film and Clio was always clear that they should be fresh and untutored so Casting Director Amy Hubbard started her trawl for them at Andrea Dunbar's old school now called Buttershaw Business and Enterprise College. When Conner appeared there on the first day, she knew she'd found someone extraordinary. "You could have put him on set the next day," she says. "He's a natural born actor." At this stage Amy was thinking of Conner for Swifty, a role that needed a skilled horse rider and Conner said he was. Producer, Tracy O'Riordan, took Conner to a riding stable to double-check his level of experience. Although it became clear he had never been on a horse before, his trainer on set said he'd crack it in a week. And he did.

Finding Shaun wasn't so easy. Amy rang around riding stables in Bradford and one of them suggested she contact a West Yorkshire Police Liaison Officer who teaches animal welfare at Tong High School on Holmewood, another Bradford Housing Estate. Through this WPC Amy met Janis Duff – "an incredible vocational teacher" who in turn introduced her to the kids who knew their way around horses and scrapyards. Shaun wasn't there on that first occasion but when she returned to the school a few months later after a wider trawl had failed to unearth the second lead, Shaun was sitting in Janis Duff's office entertaining fellow pupils. She knew immediately that the search was over. He had a natural talent and was not only an experienced horse rider, he also had a genuine rapport with horses and cared passionately about their welfare.

Once Shaun appeared Clio and Tracy decided they should switch Conner to Arbor, and Shaun settled naturally into the role of horse-mad Swifty. Amy's "chemistry tests", where each showed the other around their own turf, confirmed that the relationship between them would be powerful.

"You can teach an adult how to act", says Amy, "but a kid has to walk on with that ability." Shaun reminded her of a young Peter Kay, funny, warm and very talented. Shaun would turn up at the open auditions for kids in supporting roles, and help Amy set out the chairs, operate the camera, "read-in" for the auditionees and practice their lines with them. "Playing a lead role is hard work and a long sometimes monotonous commitment and this was further evidence that Shaun could be relied upon for the entirety of the shoot." Conner has the ability to simply "tell the truth" on camera. Amy compares him to Peter Mullen in terms of his believability in performance. Clio asked Conner to improvise a scene that's later scripted in the movie – going into the pub to get some guys to help move a wrecked car. The scene required Conner to image a £5 note on the table "and for Conner that note was real – his eyeline was impeccable. He was aware of that imaginary fiver wherever it went" – he had an emotional instinct for story telling that would really work on screen.

Amy also worked on *The Arbor* and has a particular interest in and passion for Clio's films. "The casting demanded for *The Selfish Giant* is the highest form of casting," says Amy. "Brand new and of the landscape."

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### **...And Working with Them**

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Clio says that the boys are two very different personalities. Shaun, an extrovert 15 year old, found it hard to accept that, as Swifty, he'd be the dossier of 12 year old Conner as Arbor. Conner was very self-contained but with confidence that waxed and waned.

Conner found it difficult to be anything other than totally natural. Clio's attempts to talk to him about a scene or give him notes were sometimes met with: "I wor doing that." But he was getting what she said and as soon as he got it, he did it. Shaun is a very open and warm person. He could talk about things he'd experienced and could use them in his performance. For one tough scene Shaun asked Clio if she wanted him to cry and he was able to do that by drawing on his experiences of seeing horses badly treated as well as his own difficult personal experiences – he was able to be truthful and cry in all five takes.

But both boys had to learn to make friends with the camera. Mike Eley, the DP, would try to find their faces and they'd turn away. It took them a while to realise that they had to be found. And how did Conner and Shaun feel about working with Clio? "Brilliant," says Conner. "She's sound." "Clio's laid back," says Shaun, "and takes things nice and easy."

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### **The Professional (Adult) Actors**

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#### **Sean Gilder - Kitten**

Sean Gilder (Paddy Maguire of 'Shameless' fame) plays Kitten, the scrap merchant – the Selfish Giant of the title - a character he describes as "mean, greedy, bullish and impatient – a brash northern man but a man of many layers."

When Sean got the script he thought it was one of the "best ever". He found Clio, who, like him, has a northern background, to be extraordinary, quiet, modest and deep. He spent a lot of time walking round Bradford with her, discussing the project and she gave him 4 pages of character notes. "She's very democratic", he says, "easy to understand. She's instinctively generous to actors and the ways actors find truth in scenes."

When Sean's asked about working with children and animals – something you should never do - he smiles. "Conner and Shaun are naturals," he says. "Their naïveté brings truth and reminds professional actors not to go back to their old tricks. Children learn lines fast and absorb directions but some of Conner and Sean's scenes were very tough, asking them to go through some difficult emotions "and I felt trepidations about that."

For Sean, *The Selfish Giant* harks back to *Kes* (1969). It's about kids' love, loss, disappointment and struggle in a world which is deprived and difficult. It's about nature and nurture set in a grand landscape of industrial decay. What was working on *The Selfish Giant* like compared with working on 'Shameless'? "First, I had a lot more time with the script," he says. As time went on he got to know his 'Shameless' character though – "well I played him for 4 years." As Kitten in *The Selfish Giant*, he had to spend time finding his feet. "There are hidden depths in his character." Sean loves Dickens and he thinks his character is very Dickensian – closest, he believes, to Bill Sykes, the nasty and violent burglar in 'Oliver Twist'.

### **Siobhan Finneran – Mrs Swift (Swift's Mother)**

Siobhan's first major role was in *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* (1986), a darkish comedy about a triangle of two young female friends and an older man, scripted by Andrea Dunbar, the Bradford playwright whose story was featured in Clio's first feature, *The Arbor*. More recently, she's starred in 'Downton Abbey'. Siobhan plays Mrs Swift, the sad and gentle Mother of the boy, Swift. She describes her character as "not the full shilling but," she says, "she loves her eldest son and she tries to protect him."

Siobhan immediately loved *The Selfish Giant* script and she also loved Clio's first film, *The Arbor*. She says it's great to work with Clio and watch her working with the boys – "they're fantastic." She's worked with her screen husband, Steve Evets, before, most recently on radio.

This role, she says, is very different from the one she plays in 'Downton Abbey' – "much freer in every way, worlds away from the big house and being covered in black from floor to ceiling."

Siobhan knew *The Selfish Giant* story from her childhood – she thinks her Granny first read it to her. The film, she says, is "a very moving tale about two boys and their friendship and how they desperately want to help their families. It's beautifully written, heartbreaking. I think you'd have to be made of ice not to find it moving."

### **Steve Evets – Price Drop (Swift's Dad)**

Price Drop, says Steve, (Eric in *Looking for Eric*) is only good at one thing – breeding. He has 8 kids and he's not really able to give them anything – not even electricity. But he's not in the pub all day either – he is trying to feed them.

Price Drop gets his name from his doomed attempts to make money, says Steve, buying furniture from a store on HP and then selling it on. Of course he makes much less than he pays and the family, particularly Mrs Swift, have debt collectors permanently on their backs.

When he first read the script he thought it was "gritty, not Hollywood," and he knew that Clio had a great reputation. He was delighted to get the role and prepared for it by developing his own back story, working with his own approach. He's really enjoyed the experience of having some space to improvise and the freedom of working with a handheld camera. "Clio gives notes," he says "and she's not happy until she gets what she wants. But you don't feel under pressure. There's freedom but there's also parameters."

He's worked with his screen wife, Siobhan Finneran, before – the last time on a radio play which was also the first time they were in scenes together. "She's a great actress," he says and I was made up when I found out she was my screen wife."

The two young actors are well cast, he says. They have a natural rapport. With a smaller part, Steve came on the set late and he could see the difference in the quality of Conner and Shaun's performances from the days before shooting when he was improvising with them. "They're able to do take after take and not lose energy," he says.

Steve describes the film as a slice of life with real life tragedies in it. "It's a breath of fresh air – real and contemporary in a way that people can relate to."

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### **Scrapping, Sulkies, Travellers and Gypsies**

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Scrapping and sulkies (the 2 wheel carts attached to horses for racing) are part of the traditions of Gypsies and other travelling communities. There are settled travellers in Bradford, particularly on the Holmewood estate but these traditions and communities are not separate and distinct. They blend into the wider communities on these estates – people intermarry, others are drawn into these customs out of interest or a desire to make a living. Clio says that non-Gypsy people are particularly drawn to these ways of life now that they have very few economic possibilities in their world. Shaun Thomas (Swiftly) had done scrapping and worked with horses even though there was no Gypsy blood in his family.

People may assume that the Swift family are Gypsies but they are Gorjes (gypsy word for non-traveller). The word 'pikey' has historically been a pejorative term for gypsies but now that word has come to have the more general meaning of scruffy and poor. The way the Swifts live is affected by Mrs Swift's learning difficulties and her husband, Price Drop's, counter productive way of providing for his family, buying from HP stores and selling the goods to his neighbours. The family are ostracised and yet their neighbours benefit from their mistakes. The prejudice which the family experience is as a result of contempt for what is seen as their poverty, not their racial or cultural origins. Infact for many, particularly dispossessed teenage boys, the Gypsy way of being is something to aspire to.

Some scrap merchants may have Gypsy origins, some may have married in and some may have no connection - the picture is more complicated. In the film, Mary, Kitten's wife, is a Gypsy but Kitten isn't. What is clear, as both Tracy (O'Riordan, the Producer) and Clio (Barnard, the Writer/Director) acknowledge is that scrapping has become big business. Scrap metal has dramatically increased in price over recent years, fuelled by demand from the rapid industrialisation in China, India and South Korea. Whilst there are big, licensed dealers who won't take risks, Kitten plays on the margins, he's an opportunist, if someone brings him stolen metal, he'll turn a blind eye.

There are organized gangs who run sophisticated operations to steal metal but there is also opportunist nicking. At Thorpe Marsh (a disused power station) a child was killed after he'd been sent down to steal cable by older teenagers. The Government, as Mary, Kitten's wife, suggests in the film, are taking much stronger measures against scrapyards. The yard where Clio was doing her research was raided by the police. Kitten's small business is licensed but he's greedy and selfish. Kitten is an opportunist and he's not necessarily typical, says Clio, and Mary, his wife is pushing him to stay above board.

Obviously scrapping isn't confined to Bradford nor is cable theft. "I've been on quite a few trains which couldn't go any further because the cables had been stolen," says Clio, "it's happening all over the country."

Road racing has been going on for hundreds of years. Again a Gypsy tradition but done more widely and with a wider audience. As in the film, it happens at dawn in the winter on motorways with cars blocking off other traffic and driving behind the racing horses.

Clio had been a motoring spectator at one of these races before she wrote the script – “it was really good fun,” she says. And Tracy was a motoring spectator during the filming – “it was crazy and exhilarating,” she says. Clio had previously made a two screen gallery installation on road (sulky) racing. She says travellers originally told her about it. “When I asked people if they’d done it,” she says, “the ones who hadn’t done it, said they had and the ones who had, said they hadn’t.”

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### **Horses and Road Racing on Set**

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“A local man, Jimmy Tate, who runs a stables found us some amazing horses,” says Producer, Tracy O’Riordan. “He couldn’t understand why we needed extra horse masters and riding doubles, but at the beginning especially, I wanted to make sure that the horses were going to be safe to be around and that we had back up for the boys, if they weren’t confident on the horses.”

Tracy says “Hiring film horses can be expensive, understandably so, as they need the right transport, food and stabling to ensure their welfare. There are companies who specifically supply horses for filming and these horses have been trained by getting them used to lights, cameras and the hustle and bustle of being on a film set. But because we wanted very specific horses (a cob horse, who was used to pulling a scrap cart on busy roads and two trotting horses) and because I wanted to work with local people and support local businesses, when I heard about Jimmy Tate and his Bradford Based riding stables, his connection to the scrap world and trotting horses, he seemed like an obvious man to approach. We brought cameras and equipment to Jimmy’s stables and did our own training and safety tests with the horses he had sourced and we had a qualified stunt co-ordinator and horse master (Abbi Collins) oversee these tests. This meant that the horses would be at ease with a film crew and not put under undue stress, once the filming started. We took on board all the advice from Abbi and Jimmy concerning the welfare of the horses, regarding how much rest the horses need and how to ensure their safety in the scrapyards and during the road race. Tarmac Tommy, the cob horse who pulls the scrap cart (whose real name is Ragdoll), is such a gentle and wonderful horse, the crew found her a very calming influence and she and the other horses quickly became part of the filming family”.

Jimmy Tate could not have been a better person to work with. He is a legend. Conner and Shaun were very professional with the horses throughout. Shaun was a natural to start with, Conner’s confidence grew and grew.

“When making a film with children, stunts and horses, you do have to be clear about the Insurance issues from very early on and work closely with the right media insurance company,” says Tracy. “Too much is at stake not to. And we were in consultation over the issues with Film4 and the BFI. The approach was to keep everything as authentic and true to the world as possible, whilst adhering to a tight budget and keeping everyone (cast, crew and animals) as safe as possible. The safety of everyone was my responsibility at the end of the day,” says Tracy. “At times it was nerve-wracking.”

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### **Horses in Bradford**

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“In UK law, you don’t need a license to have a horse and cart on the road, but it seems particular to Bradford”, says Tracy, “that so many people have horses and carts for collecting scrap. Horses are so much a part of the landscape”, she says, that having spent some time there during the research period, she was taken aback but not totally surprised to see a teenager on a street corner sitting bareback on a horse, whilst texting on his mobile. Horses can be bought cheaply on line or locally. Shaun (Swiftly) bought and sold a horse while he was working on the film.

Horses have become a very hot political issue in the area. Some are tethered on public land and this causes issues for the council and some of the local people and there are also concerns that some of the horses are not properly cared for. Historically the Council have impounded the horses tethered on public land and the price for their return is around £3,000, so many people can't afford to get them back. When Matty, the inspiration for the film, built a makeshift stable at the back of his Mum's Council house garden, his Mum was reported on and was made to take the stables down. This seemingly benign activity – keeping a horse, using it to collect scrap metal, recycling waste using a form of environmentally friendly transport – for Matty was effectively outlawed, as he had nowhere to keep his horse.

Because keeping horses on public land is such a contentious issue on certain Estates, *The Selfish Giant* walked straight into this politics and had to find alternative Estates to film on. "We had to bring horses to other Estates, in other parts of the city, not associated with horses and recreate the scenes there" says Tracy.

For someone like Matty, who had been excluded from school and found an opportunity by buying a horse and going out scrapping, (a better alternative for him than getting involved with drugs or crime) - horses changed the course of his life. Even those closest to Matty thought he would end up in prison. He was a volatile and angry child. But developing his knowledge and skill with horses helped him. The boys on Holmewood are incredibly skilled horsemen and their knowledge of the scrap metal business is admirable. However, the marginalisation of the community means that there seems to be a growing stand off between the authorities and the boys. Tracy and Clio want to explore finding a place for kids like Matty to keep their horses and a way of developing training and support. "In one of the three fantastic new local schools," says Tracy – the one where Amy found Shaun – "they do have an animal welfare department and that's a start." Clio adds, "The most important shift that needs to happen is for the boys to be respected rather than being regarded as a problem."

