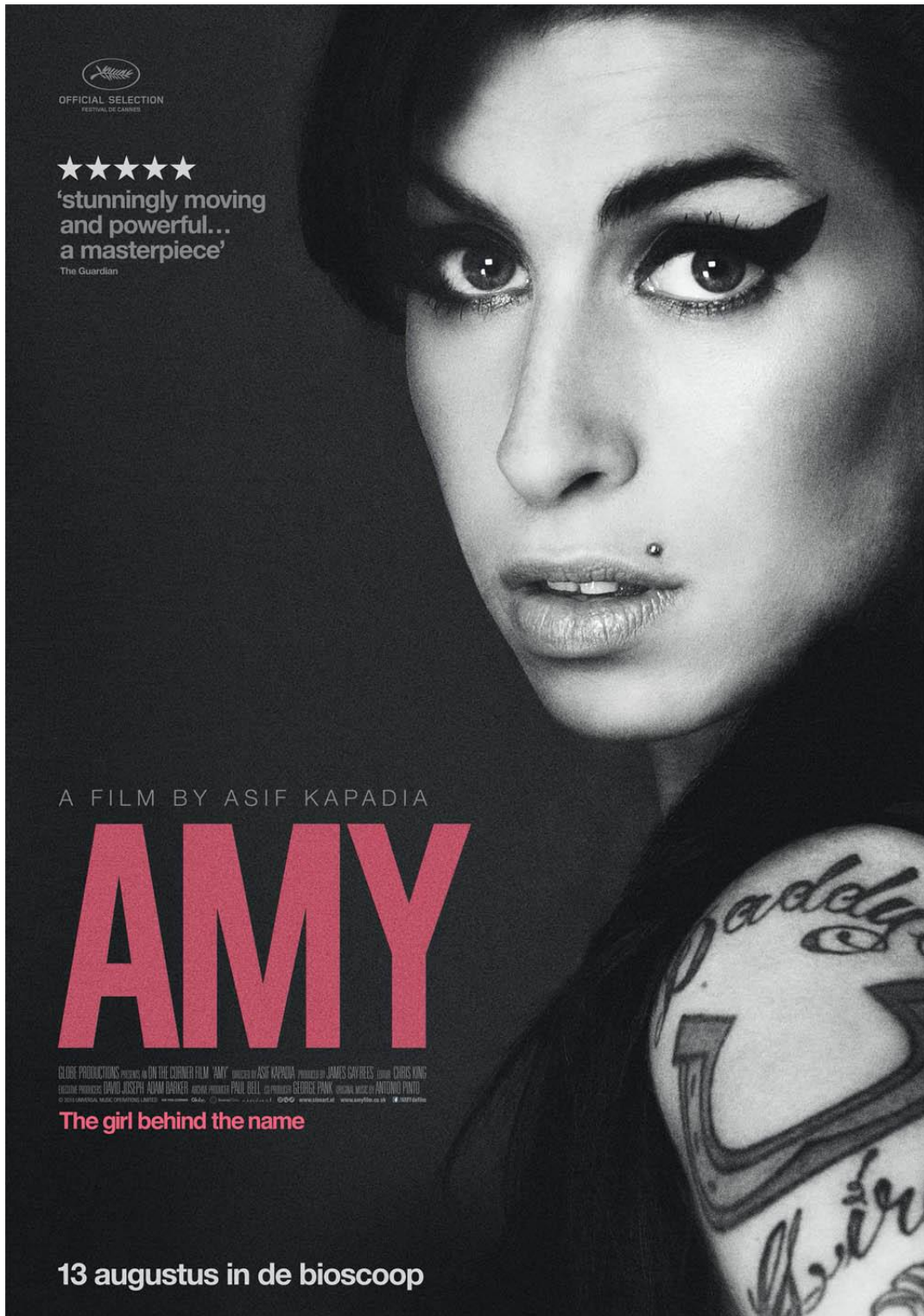


Persmap



AMY

Een film van Asif Kapadia (o.a. SENNA)

De film AMY vertelt het unieke levensverhaal van zangeres Amy Winehouse vanuit haar eigen perspectief. Met haar fenomenale stem en muzikale talent, behoort zij tot één van de grootste iconen van deze eeuw.



Als dé superster van een generatie en een authentieke jazzartiest pur sang, schreef en zong Amy vanuit het diepst van haar hart. Ze gebruikte haar muzikale gave om haar persoonlijke problemen te uiten. De combinatie van haar rauwe eerlijkheid en haar talent resulteerde in enkele van de origineelste en meest bejubelde nummers van deze eeuw, waarvoor zij bekroond werd met zes Grammy Awards. Haar wereldwijde succes had echter ook zijn keerzijde en veroorzaakte een opdringerig en genadeloos mediacircus, dat in combinatie met haar roerige relaties en rock-'n-roll levensstijl zijn tol begon te eisen. Op 23 juli 2011 overleed Amy Winehouse aan alcoholvergiftiging. Ze was 27 jaar oud.

De met een BAFTA bekroonde regisseur Asif Kapadia (SENNa, Beste Documentaire) maakt met AMY een modern, aangrijpend en onmisbaar portret. Gebruikmakend van nooit eerder vertoonde archiefbeelden en tot nu toe onbekende nummers, schildert hij een fascinerend beeld van 'the girl behind the name'.



Wereldpremière tijdens het Filmfestival Cannes 2015 – Midnight Screening

Speelduur: 127 min. - Land: Verenigd Koninkrijk - Jaar: 2015 - Genre: Biografie/Documentaire

Release datum bioscoop: **13 augustus 2015**

Distributie: Cinéart

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Cast

Yasiin bey	Hiphop artiest
Tony Bennett	Zanger
Salaam Remi	Muziek producer
Mark Ronson	Muziek producer
Peter Doherty	Muzikant
Lucian Grainge	Voorzitter & CEO, Universal Music Group
Monte Lipman	Voorzitter & CEO, Republic Records
Darcus Beese	A&R, Island Records
Nick Shymansky	Amy's eerste manager
Guy Moot	Directeur Sony/ATV Music Publishing UK
Nick Gatfield	Directeur Island Records, 2001-2008
Sam Beste	Pianist
Raye Cosbert	Amy's manager, Metropolis Music
Dale Davis	Musical Director en basgitarist
Shomari Dilon	Sound engineer
Blake Fielder	Ex-man
Juliette Ashby	Vriend
Tyler James	Vriend
Lauren Gilbert	Vriend
Phil Meynell	Vriend
Andrew Morris	Bodyguard
Blake Wood	Vriend
Dr. Cristina Romete	Dokter
Chip Somers	Drugs counsellor
Mitchel Winehouse	Amy's vader
Janis Winehouse	Amy's moeder

Crew

Regisseur	Asif Kapadia
Producent	James Gay-Rees
Uitvoerend Producent	David Joseph, Adam Barker
Editor	Chris King
Coproducent	George Pank
Archief producent	Paul Bell
Originele muziek	Antonio Pinto
Production manager	Raquel Alvarez
Postproductie leider	Miranda Jones
Geluidsediting leiders	Andy Shelley, Stephen Griffiths
Colorist	Paul Ensby
Online editor	Jaime Leonard
Eerste assistent editor	Avdhesh Mohla
Assistent editor	Rafael Bettega
Graphics en Titels	Matt Curtis
Music Supervisor	Iain Cooke
Production Accountant	Tarn Harper
Production Accountant	Tina Ellis

Productie Coördinator / Researcher	Alice Cady
Researcher	Jack Symes
Post Productie Coördinator	Nadiya Luthra
Photoshop Artist	Lucy Newman
Logger	Nicholas James Inglis
Logger	Danielle Alencar
Re-Recording Mixer	Tim Cavagin
Re-Recording Mixer	Dafydd Archard
Geluid Mix Technicus	Max Walsh
Geluidsassistent	William Miller
Recording Studio Engineer (UK)	Edward Sutton, Siman Capes, Mark Hills, Adam Smyth, Tom Mackewn
Recording Studio Engineer (NY)	Terry Derkach
Recording Studio Engineer (LA)	Will Sandalls
Interview Cinematograaf (UK)	Ernesto Herrmann, Rafael Bettega
Interview Cinematograaf (NY)	Jake Clennell
Interview Cinematograaf (Miami)	Carlos De Varona
Interview Geluidsopname (UK)	Don Chudi Nelson
Interview Geluidsopname (NY)	Greg Mailloux
Interview Geluidsopname (Miami)	Luis Marin
Senior DI Producent	Todd Kleparski, Kim Honeyman
Junior DI Producent	Kira Fitzpatrick
DI Technologist	John Quartel
Data Wrangler	Dan Helme, Dan Perry, Gavin McCarron
Kleur Assistent	Aurora Shannon, Laura Pavone, Chris Francis
DI Assistent	Lucie Barbier
Digital Cinema Producer	David Griffin
Bijkomende Muziek	Gabriel Ferreira, Dudu Aram, Felipe Ramão
Orkestratie	Antonio Pinto
Scoring Engineer	John Kurlander
Musiek Editor	Robin Whittaker
Uitvoerend Muziek Producent	Marilia K Franco, Antonio Pinto, Yaniel Matos, Ricardo Herz, Gabriel Ferreira
Voor Universal Music	Darcus Beese, Sarah Boorman, Shane O'Neill, Michael Morrison
Werk Ervaring	Georgia Rose, India Bagnall, Fergus Brown, Chadwick Jackson, Nicholas Pratt, Maxwell Smith

Production notes

When filmmakers Asif Kapadia (director), James Gay-Rees (producer) and Chris King (editor) collaborated on the 2010 documentary *SENNA*, which charted the story of acclaimed F1 driver Ayrton Senna, they earned a clutch of awards (including two BAFTAs) and a mass of critical plaudits. Such is the film's popularity, however, it still serves up fresh opportunities. Two years after *SENNA*'s theatrical release, Gay-Rees was approached by David Joseph, the chairman and CEO of Universal Music UK, who asked whether the team would be interested in turning their talents to another story about a modern-day icon whose life had ended in tragic circumstances. "David said, 'Would you be interested in making a movie in the style of *SENNA* which captures the musical genius of Amy Winehouse,'" Gay-Rees recalls. "And it took me about a nanosecond to go, 'Yes! We're up for it. Absolutely.'" Gay-Rees had not considered the Amy Winehouse story up until that point. "But I knew instinctively that there was something interesting going on there," he says. "I immediately called Asif. We weren't actively looking for something to do together after *SENNA*, but he said yes straight away."



Like Winehouse, Asif Kapadia grew up in North London and though the majority of his films have been shot overseas, he was keen to focus his talents on his hometown. He had recently shot *Odyssey*, one of four films about London that were commissioned for the 2012 Olympics. "When James called me I was living in Turnpike Lane," he remembers. "I had just been doing the film for the London Olympics and that really made me think about the city. I feel very much a Londoner and a North Londoner specifically. James asked what

I thought and while I wasn't a crazy Amy Winehouse fan, I had her records and knew that life with her was never boring. "Something happened with Amy Winehouse," he adds, "and I wanted to know how that happened in front of our eyes. How can someone die like that in this day and age? And it wasn't a shock; I almost knew it was going to happen. You could see she was going down a certain path." He felt that her story should be explored in detail. "For me, she was like a girl from down the road. I grew up in the same part of the world. It could be someone I knew, someone I was friends with or might have gone to school with. I thought we should investigate."

Gay-Rees then approached film editor Chris King who was immediately excited by the story's potential. King explains, "I think that all of us knew the broad brush strokes. Amy emerged and became hugely successful and then died, but we didn't know that much of the detail at this early stage." Much of the filmmakers' approach would depend on what material was available. "So the first task was for us to assimilate as much footage as we could and then to start interviewing people," King continues. "And by those dual processes we began to get a narrative idea." Even before beginning the lengthy and fraught interviewing process, and the difficult task of obtaining new footage, the filmmakers settled on the idea of telling the story through Winehouse's lyrics, which would appear on screen throughout the film. "The early instinct was that the songs would be key," Kapadia says. "They'd be the spine of the film. We began looking at the lyrics and thinking that this might be like a version of a Bollywood film where the narrative is in the lyrics and in the songs. We thought we might build the narrative around those songs." Winehouse's lyrics were invariably very personal. Some have suggested that her song writing was a kind of catharsis or therapy, in which she

worked through difficult emotions. “It was as simple as that,” adds the director. “Once you understand her life and you read the lyrics, they run much deeper than you might have thought. “I thought, ‘All we have to do is unravel what these lyrics are about.’ That for me became the big revelation – her writing. Everyone knew she could sing, but maybe people didn’t realise how well she could write. She wrote the music herself as well. The whole thing was her.”

After settling on Winehouse’s songs and lyrics as the narrative vehicle, coupled with the fact that the filmmakers would use as a backdrop the city in which they live, they then began to search for the right interview subjects. This would prove a very difficult process, not least because there is no definitive book that tells the Amy Winehouse story. “It was a case of seeing who we might meet and talk to,” says Kapadia. “With SENNA there were a lot of books and a lot of people knew the story. With AMY it became apparent that no one knew the story, or that people were not willing to tell it.”

Gay-Rees agrees. “On SENNA we had somebody on the team who knew how often Ayrton farted every day, but on this film we had no such person. We read a couple of key books, which are fairly inconsistent with each other. I am not saying they are not legitimate but there is a fair amount of conflicting information. She had a really complex social and family life. “She had her old friends, her famous friends, her new friends and not so famous friends and she would present different versions of herself to all these different people,” the producer adds, “so they all had completely different reflections and experiences of her. And not all of them married with each other.”



The filmmakers started their base research and secured the co-operation of the Winehouse estate, which is controlled by the singer’s father, Mitch Winehouse, and also the Amy Winehouse Foundation. They also secured the co-operation of Raye Cosbert, who managed Amy Winehouse for Metropolis Music. At the beginning of the production, all the filmmakers knew for sure that Winehouse was a highly complicated, fascinating, charismatic and very bright individual. ‘But as the research period gathered momentum, the signs were more and more evident that she might struggle to last the course’ says Gay-Rees. “She was so intense.”

It was not long afterwards, however, that the filmmakers began running into problems. “No one wanted to speak out, apart from the usual suspects,” continues Gay-Rees. “Certainly, none of the people who were really close to her wanted to speak out.” In fact, Winehouse’s closest friends had taken a vow of silence. “Right after her funeral,” says Gay-Rees, “they said ‘Let’s just keep it in-house and never share this with anybody.’” Kapadia, who completed the 100 or so interviews that tell the AMY narrative, notes that their journey through the filmmaking process was built upon winning people’s trust. “It became a journey that was different from SENNA because I had to get so many different people to trust me,” he says. “It was all quite recent and painful for a lot of people and there was a lot of guilt and a lot of baggage.”

The filmmakers spent almost a year trying to get a number of vital people to participate in the interview process. “The key people who initially didn’t want to be involved; Juliette [Ashby] and Lauren [Gilbert], her two oldest friends who were very close with Nick Shymansky, her first manager, eventually realised that they should participate so that their side of the story would be heard,”

explains Gay-Rees. “The whole experience took an awful lot out of all these people, understandably. It is hard to imagine what it must be like to see your closest childhood or teenage friend going through the perils of celebrity and mega-fame, knowing that there were underlying issues that would come to the fore.” Juliette Ashby and Lauren Gilbert were Winehouse’s oldest and closest friends, even though their relationship had its ups and downs, especially during the later stages of the singer’s life. “But, importantly, these two can contextualize Amy,” says Gay-Rees. “She was just like them, a suburban girl from north London. She wasn’t born for fame, necessarily; I don’t think anyone is. Amy was just a Jewish kid from North London who became this phenomenon and by having these two friends as a fairly constant presence in the movie reminds you of where she has come from. Amy was not a Justin Bieber. She wasn’t a Disney kid.”

The Breakthroughs

One of the filmmakers’ first major breakthroughs was winning the support of Nick Shymansky, Winehouse’s first-ever manager. Not only did he have a deep understanding of, and love for, his former client, he also held a lot of footage that would prove integral to the finished film. Indeed, AMY editor Chris King says that Shymansky was the filmmakers’ first guide into the story. “Nick was key,” he explains. “We spoke to her friend Tyler James as well and both of them described this girl who was writing poetry and playing music for absolutely personal reasons. They both had different opinions as to why she did it but there was obviously a cathartic element for her, a way of salving some sort of pain. “Writing was musical therapy for Amy,” continues King. “But also her writing was enormously witty and funny. There was a kind of healthiness in it; she had to do it. It was compulsive. She also wrote very funny and rude lyrics. Once we got all that, it became the first chunk of the film. It became solidified in our heads.”



It then took a further nine months to bring Juliette Ashby and Lauren Gilbert on-board. “They are just like Amy,” says Kapadia. “Nick said that they’d be a challenge, just like Amy was, but that they knew her better than anyone, and that became the next stage — getting their trust. “People were very wary, very nervous and paranoid,” he adds. “Our having made SENNA helped and when people watched it, even if they weren’t interested in that subject, they could see how it worked.”

When Kapadia began talking to those closest to Amy, it became clear that they were glad to free themselves of the burden that they carried. “It was like therapy for them in some way,” the director says. “There were a number of people who were becoming unwell because they were carrying this burden about Amy, knowing what they knew. And I was impartial. I wasn’t part of the music business, I had no agenda, and most of them felt better afterwards. “That then became progressive to the next stage, where there were things they didn’t want to talk about, but eventually felt as though they had to talk about. And then when 10 people have said the same thing you can see how it’s all connected.” During the interview process, most of the subjects that were close to Winehouse would break down. It was an emotionally harrowing experience for all involved. “But because I wasn’t filming them, that helped,” says Kapadia. “You don’t need to see that on a camera. The emotion is carried in the voice. “That process made the trust a lot easier to build, whereas, if you’re filming, people are guarded in a different way. We’d then play the edit of the interview back to them

and ask them if it felt honest to what they wanted to say.”

King agrees that Winehouse’s childhood friends were incredibly wary of any involvement in the project. “But eventually they came forward and we managed to get to people who were very close to Amy and the Winehouse family, who had been there all the way through,” he says. “Then what had previously been conjecture suddenly became reality.” It was not just the interviews from Shymansky, Gilbert and Ashby that proved key to the movie; it was also the footage they would provide. “There’s a lot of concert footage but not that much of Amy in her prime, because her prime was a very short moment before she came famous,” says Kapadia. “But Nick’s footage in particular showed us the girl that she really was. You could understand how intelligent, special and also how ordinary she was. I knew I could make a film from just that early footage.” The director says that the early footage gave the filmmakers a strong visual theme. “There’s a lot of stuff where she looks straight down the lens, straight at the audience,” he says. “I found that very powerful. It starts off being very friendly, and she films herself a lot, literally talking to herself on camera. “Then you also have these personal photos, where she’s photographed herself on her computer in Photo Booth. I remember thinking that was quite a powerful visual journey — the use of the lens and the camera. It then becomes something very aggressive with the paparazzi.

“Her looking at us down the lens I realised would be very powerful and that came out of her friends filming her and her husband [Blake Fielder, another key contributor] filming her. When they were in that rehab facility and Blake says, ‘Go on, sing Rehab!’ That is quite hard to watch but the fact that she’s looking at us adds to the layers.” Gay-Rees agrees. “I think that the early footage was key,” he says, “because that shows another side of her from what was presented in the press. Just seeing that side of her character shining through gave us something to go with.”



Like Gay-Rees and Kapadia, editor Chris King believes that this early footage was imperative. He cites the shots provided by her childhood friends from 2005 that show Winehouse giving a guided tour of her holiday apartment. “She was being so funny and alive and happy and she was really in love when she was on that holiday,” he says. “Her life was great. That is brilliantly funny. The tour of her flat is great, great stuff.” None of this early footage had ever been seen before. “And it was great to get hold of material that showed Amy on her wedding day, for example,” adds King. Her friend Phil Meynell, another interviewee, supplied this footage. “And nobody has seen it before. It is amazing,” says Gay-Rees. “It is the intimate stuff; it’s just her kicking back when she is at the peak of her powers. I love the stuff we see of her on the boat on her wedding day.”

The editing process

On a film like *AMY* the production schedule involved intensive research, the compiling of the audio interviews and the footage, and then the very lengthy edit, which ran alongside. The edit itself was a 20-month process and Gay-Rees says that the film benefitted enormously from having Chris King on board from the outset. “There are not many people in the world who are better at straight archive docs than Chris,” he says. “He has a brilliant nose for using archive footage.” As with *SENNA*, there would be no interviewees shown on screen. The audio would play over the existing footage. “And that is incredibly labour intensive,” the producer notes. “We have no talking heads and no voice over,

so we have got no shorts cuts. We just had to make the images work.”

Unlike SENNA, where the filmmakers had an enormous F1 archive from which they could draw material, on AMY there were many limitations. “There are still photographs in there, which we didn’t have in SENNA. In certain places there wasn’t any footage at all.” The coverage that the filmmakers could use on AMY was also completely different from SENNA. “All the material was different this time as well,” says Chris King. “We were reliant on things that many different people had shot. Also, we found ourselves early on with holes during key periods.”

He remembers 2005, where a great deal happened in Winehouse’s life but where she was out of the publicity cycle and was therefore rarely on camera. “She wasn’t that well known and so for a while 2005 was simply a question mark,” King adds. “It was a case of, ‘What happened and how can we tell that part of the story?’ That was the year when she was in between records and she probably got lost a little bit.” She became immersed in the Camden scene and was dabbling with drugs. “She started an intense relationship and she wasn’t writing. We knew there wasn’t much evidence of her actually writing tunes, she wasn’t performing, and yet this massive thing happened.”



The intense relationship that began during this period saw her fall head over heels in love with Blake Fielder. “What was all this about?” asks King. “We did not understand it because there was no record of what was happening. “From the outside, he looks like the wrong bloke for any girl to get involved with. All this happened off camera. How could we get that across? And then drip by drip, bits and pieces of interviews and then little bits of footage and stills came in and we were able to fill in holes and begin to work out how to get that part of the narrative across.” Even during periods when the coverage was strong, the quality was often very weak. “The material was so scrappy a lot of the time,” the editor says. “Very seldom was there anything where you would go, ‘Well, that’s a good shot.’ Yet there were plenty of that on SENNA. A lot of stuff was impressively shot on that film, or there was great coverage or some useful old film stock. There were many aesthetic things that were quite pleasurable to look at. But in AMY there wasn’t very much of that at all. The most interesting stuff was the roughest. That stuff was the most revealing.”

Kapadia concurs. “With SENNA we had an amazing amount of footage with really brilliant camera people, while on AMY you’ve got ordinary people filming in a car or on the street, so technically it’s never going to be as good. But you have to learn to trust that it’s real. You have to trust the quality of the material and the emotional truth over the technical quality. “Some of it looks awful,” he adds, “and you worry whether you can’t use it but you have to. Plus, we can make it look better and sound better. Also, people do get immersed in it.” On a cinema screen, viewers are likely to forgive the quality more than if they were watching on a monitor, says Kapadia. “And having done a few footage-based films, I would take a wobbly shot of something that only exists in that format over a beautifully composed shot that doesn’t have the same meaning. You have to learn to free yourself up to imperfection. In fact, the imperfection is something that I find interesting.”

That said, an enormous amount of effort was spent working on the footage and the sound quality to ensure that everything used in the film would play as effectively as possible on screen. King explains, “A lot of the job was me and Asif sitting in a room wondering where we should go next. But I was also

working with people at the other end of that process who have to take what we have spent a year-and-a-half putting together and then remake that at high resolution, so that it can be projected on to a screen in cinemas. “And those people were just amazed by the sheer amount of craft and impeccable work that had gone into what looked like a fairly messy time line. With every shot, we had to do a lot of stabilization and reframing and colour correction. We had to slow shots down and speed shots up and reformat things that were shot in a different format. “The on-line editor who took the job on said it was by far the most technically complicated film he had ever worked on,” adds King. “Even though it looks like a messy honest home video at times, it was an absolute labour of love to turn this very, very disparate collection of scrappy bits and pieces into something that flowed and felt like a piece of cinema.”

And then there was all the work done on the sound quality as well. “There was a lot of care and attention paid to how we unify all this stuff, which was shot over 10 years on people’s mobile phones, amateur stuff, professional stuff, stuff from America and from all over the world,” King says. “There was a lot of intricate work that went in to trying to make that feel as if it were a unified piece of filmmaking. That side is probably not something that people are aware of when they watch it. “Hopefully, as usual, the editing side is disguised and viewers will be caught up and be swept away with Amy’s music and the narrative and the story. But it was very hard work.”

The filmmakers concede that some powerful material, and some especially shocking moments, had to be exorcised in a bid to keep the narrative balanced, and to maintain a manageable running time. “There was quite a lot that we could not put in because it would make the film too long,” says Gay-Rees. “We really, really, really tried to get it down to a more traditional length, 90 minutes, but it was just one of those narratives. “There were definitely other things that we would have liked to pursue but we were all prepared to sacrifice things to keep it to around the two-hour mark.”



The filmmakers were also keen to ensure that the film was not too harrowing for the viewer. “I think is it dark enough,” the producer concludes. “You have to be careful about that tipping point whereby it becomes self-defeating and actually people can’t enjoy the film. “We definitely had earlier versions of the movie where we were showing what a lovely, bright creature she was, but then you went into an hour-and-a-half of hardcore misery. Then it becomes like a trial. People could have justifiably said, ‘What is the point of this?’ So we had to be very careful in finding that balance.”

The Amy Winehouse story

According to the filmmakers, the worst thing that audiences could say is that they had seen this story before in the media. They’re confident, however, that this will not be case. It is not just the quality of interviews and the footage that sets AMY apart from the existing coverage, it is the way the film broaches the Amy Winehouse narrative. “We were very keen not to just rehash the awfulness that had been shown before,” says Gay-Rees, “because there was a lot of that going on in the media at the time, and what would be the point of recycling that? We had to dig deeper – what were we trying to say?” Kapadia feels that he got to the core of her story. “This is a film about Amy and her writing,” he says. “People didn’t realise how important her lyrics were and how personal they were. “Just putting her lyrics on the screen lets people know that they might have danced to that song and maybe didn’t realise how personal the content really was.” Ultimately, the filmmakers believe that

AMY is a film about love. “It is about a person who wants to be loved,” says Kapadia, “someone who needs love and doesn’t always receive it. “Often, when those who cared for her did try to show her love, she pushed them away. She was a very complex, intelligent girl. AMY is a film about love.”

The filmmakers

Asif Kapadia – Director

BAFTA award winning filmmaker Asif Kapadia is known for his visually striking films. He directed the universally acclaimed SENNA for Working Title, a documentary on Formula One legend Ayrton Senna. SENNA is the highest grossing UK documentary of all time and has won international prizes including two BAFTAs for ‘Best Documentary’ and ‘Best Editing’ and was nominated for ‘Best British Film’. The film won the ‘World Cinema Audience Award’ at Sundance 2011, along with the ‘Evening Standard Film Award’ and the ‘British Independent Film Awards for Best Documentary’. Kapadia has an interest in exploring the lives of ‘outsiders’, characters living in timeless, extreme and unforgiving circumstances or landscapes. Born in Hackney, London in 1972, Kapadia studied filmmaking at the Royal College of Art where he first gained recognition with his short film THE SHEEP THIEF (1977) telling the story of a gifted street-kid, made in India, the film won ‘Second Prize’ at the Cannes International Film Festival 1998 (Cinefondation). Kapadia’s distinct visual style continued with his first feature THE WARRIOR shot in the deserts of Rajasthan and the Himalayas. THE WARRIOR won two BAFTA awards for ‘Outstanding British Film of the Year’ and ‘The Award for Special Achievement by a Director in their First Feature’ as well as being nominated for ‘Best Film Not in the English Language’. Kapadia’s FAR NORTH (2004) shot in the high Arctic had its world premiere at the Venice Film Festival. Kapadia is currently in production on new drama feature ALI AND NINO for Archery Pictures.



James Gay-Rees – Producer

James Gay-Rees has produced a wide variety of feature films but is perhaps best known for producing high-profile documentary films including the double BAFTA winning SENNA, directed by Asif Kapadia, and the Academy Award® nominated EXIT THROUGH THE GIFT SHOP directed by Banksy. His recent work ALL THIS MAYHEM directed by Eddie Martin received an AACTA nomination for ‘Best Feature Length Documentary’. After graduating from Southampton University in 1988, James worked briefly for Arthur Andersen in London before moving on to Miramax Films in New York and then Paramount Pictures in Los Angeles. After setting up Midfield Films as a first-look deal with Working Title Films in 1998, he has produced 11 films. In 2014, Gay-Rees joined forces with Asif Kapadia, Jolyon Symonds and David Morrissey to form 'On The Corner', an independent production company set up to produce original, high-quality drama and documentaries. Alongside AMY, Gay-Rees’ next project is PALIO, Cosima Spender’s feature documentary on the Palio horse race in Siena, which world premieres in competition at Tribeca Film Festival.



Chris King – Editor

Chris King is a BAFTA® Award winning editor with more than 40 films for cinema and television to his name, including the award winning SENNA, for which he received the 2012 BAFTA® award for 'Best Editing' and the 2011 'IDA International Documentary Award for Best Editing'. King also received an 'AACTA Award for Best Editing in a Documentary' for his recent work on ALL THIS MAYHEM. For the Academy Award® nominated EXIT THROUGH THE GIFT SHOP, King received the 2011 'American Cinema Editors Documentary Award' and the 'Cinema Eye Editing Award'. In 2010 King received a BAFTA® Television Award for his work on WELCOME TO LAGOS - the acclaimed BBC mini-series following the lives of Nigerians in the slums of the world's fastest growing megacity. His other credits include Shane Meadows' MADE OF STONE, YOUNG@HEART, MEET THE NATIVES (for which he received the 2008 'Royal Television Society® Award for Sound Editing' & a BAFTA® nomination for 'Best Documentary series') the docu-drama HIROSHIMA: A DAY THAT SHOOK THE WORLD, for which he received an Emmy® Award for Sound Editing and a BAFTA® nomination for Editing, and Stephen Walker's cult pornography documentary HARDCORE.



Antonio Pinto – Composer

Celebrated for his brilliant score to the indie smash CITY OF GOD, Antonio Pinto has been scoring films for over a decade, with a filmography that includes award winning pictures including SENNA, CENTRAL STATION, and BEHIND THE SUN. Pinto has worked with such directors as Fernando Meirelles, Walter Salles, Sergio Machado, Heitor Dhalia, Ric Roman Waugh, Tarsem, Michael Mann, James Foley, Asif Kapadia, Mike Newell and Andrew Niccol. Recent projects include the scores for: SELF/LESS directed by Tarsem (Focus), TRASH (Working Title/Stephen Daldry), MCFARLAND (Disney/Niki Caro), SENNA (Working Title), THE HOST (Open Road), and LORD OF WAR (Lionsgate) for Andrew Niccol, SNITCH (Lionsgate) for Ric Roman Waugh and PERFECT STRANGER (Sony) for James Foley. Previously, Pinto collaborated with Michael Mann on COLLATERAL (Dreamworks) starring Tom Cruise and Jamie Foxx, and LOVE IN THE TIME OF CHOLERA for Mike Newell, where he co-wrote two songs with Shakira and was nominated for a Golden Globe.

Interview with the filmmakers

What attracted you to making a film about Amy Winehouse?

Asif Kapadia

The idea to make AMY came about really by James. The Producer James Gay-Rees gave me a ring, I can remember where I was, I was walking back home to my house in north London. I got a call and James said "Someone's rung me up and said would you be interested in making a film about Amy Winehouse?" At the time I was doing a film called THE ODYSSEY about the London Olympics and so I had been spending a lot of time, really for the first time, making a film about London, about the city that I've grown up in and lived all my life and particularly north London. I suppose that is where Amy fitted in, it suddenly made sense to dig deeper into the world that I live in and where I've grown up and there is something about Amy that's always connected with me. I have never seen her live, never met Amy, but I loved her music, I had her records. There was something there, there was a question mark that I never really understood how things turned out the way they did. Why did they turn out the way they did? She seemed like a girl from down the road, she just seemed to me like somebody I could have grown up knowing. So there was an instinctive feeling that there was a story there that could be told and it felt like there was a movie to be made.



There is something about Amy, once I started doing a bit of research, just on the internet, on YouTube, there was always drama, in a positive way or in a negative way, it was never boring with her. She was funny or something would be happening around her so it was an instinctive feeling, when James called up, for me to feel like there is a movie in this and it's something that would engage me first of all as a director, to want to find out more about the story, but also for an audience. Obviously I knew she had a big fan base, obviously I knew she had real talent, but I really had no idea how talented she was, how funny she was, how intelligent she was and how brilliant, musically and lyrically, her writing is really the big reveal for me. The journey started, I don't know, three, four years ago I think, maybe three years ago when James called up.

Gay-Rees

I was contacted about three years ago by David Joseph who is the Head of Universal Music in the UK. He was a big fan of the film we made, SENNA, and he asked me if I would be interested in making a full access, very honest feature documentary about Amy Winehouse and obviously that was her label, Universal Music and Island Records were her label, so they had a long standing relationship with all the key elements and obviously owned the music, because you can't really make these films without the music. I was automatically intrigued by it, I wasn't a huge Amy Winehouse fan beforehand, but obviously very aware of the story. Even without knowing much about the story I was fairly sure that there was probably a lot more to it than the headlines that I'd read in passing to that point in time, like everybody else in the country.

Chris King

I think the thing about Amy Winehouse that attracted me in the first place was that she – it was such a modern story about celebrity and it was also a story about talent and where creativity comes from

and the way that people who are talented and very, very creative are dealt with and handled by the wider culture nowadays. There are so many great expectations placed on people, beyond the creation of their art nowadays because of the celebrity culture. I think she was one of the first victims of that, somebody who just genuinely was creative, an artist who wanted to make something, in her case music, could have been painting or sculpture or anything, that was all she wanted to do in her life, but because she was moved into a much more commercial realm and ended up being seen as part of the new celebrity culture, she wasn't able to make music, the very thing that brought her to her fame. She wasn't able to do it in the end. It was only when I went in there and started looking at the material with Asif that we saw what an amazing, vibrant personality she was and how funny and charming and witty and also appreciated her talent, her lyrical talent as well, which I think probably will be quite surprising for a lot of people. She was genuinely a world class talent and the story of how she became a kind of, at one stage was reduced to being a laughing stock, is a very modern tragedy. Those were the kind of things that drew me in and encouraged me to work on the film.



Why is Amy Winehouse important?

Asif Kapadia

I think Amy Winehouse is important on many levels. One she is a huge, successful musical artist, but really I suppose I am interested in the character, I'm interested in the person and the story behind her, her very short, sadly short life. What we found, by making the film, is that her story speaks to everybody, everybody that I've met. In London everyone is somehow connected to her, everyone that I know pretty much has at some point met her or came across her or knows someone who knew her so it feels like a relevant story to everybody in the city. But also, when you go internationally, everyone has an opinion. It's interesting, when we were making SENNA, there were people who were real, hard core fans of SENNA and there were other people who really had never heard of him. I felt like I was always dealing with these two different groups of people, people who knew about the racing driver and people who had never heard of the man. With Amy it is very hard to find

someone who has never heard of her. Everyone is aware of her and they think they know her story.

James Gay-Rees

I think what's interesting about her is it is such a modern morality tale if you like. SENNA was a very inspiring story which took place about twenty years ago and that is really about one man's drive to be the best he can possibly be and ultimately it is a sort of Icarus fable. It is about a guy who flies too close to the sun and burns his wings. But this felt different. Even though she is a young, iconic figure, he was a young, iconic figure, they both died young, this is a very different sort of journey and very different sort of film.

Fundamentally it is a very modern story, it is about the perils of fame, celebrity, money in the 21st century. I was always drawn to it and became increasingly drawn to it when we got deeper and deeper into the subject because it became quite clear that Amy wasn't necessarily that interested in fame or money or any of the trappings, 21st century trappings that so many people strive for. That in itself is quite refreshing, but she felt very alienated by her fame and celebrity and couldn't escape it and was, in some ways, be self-destructive towards it. She wouldn't court it, in fact she went out of her way to fight it as it were, which obviously took its toll. But there was just something about her

story that I felt was very relevant to the way we live now. Everybody's different obviously, but it's just with the kind of ongoing fascination with celebrity in this country, and in the western world especially, it just seemed right to shine a light on the potential pitfalls of that journey because not many people can deal with it and I think it's having young kids it's very interesting because they are so obsessed with celebrities and quite often quite vacuous celebrities. We try to instill in them it is by no means the be all and end all. I think, unfortunately, Amy's story really goes to show that it is not all upside, in fact there is only a really small percentage of that journey which is proper upside.

What were the challenges making this film?

Asif Kapadia

There is always the problem narratively, how do you make a movie when you are essentially using footage that you find or hopefully can get hold of. So there has been creative difficulties, there has been technical difficulties, but also it's been quite emotional and psychological difficulties of you are telling a real person's story, it's quite painful, it's quite difficult. There are real people out there who are affected by what you say in the film and this is really where documentaries and dramas, I feel, are different. With a drama you can do or say whatever you want, they are actors, they are pretending. No matter how powerful a film may be, it is not a real person dying on screen and that is what we have with AMY. We have somebody who is very sick and who has issues and you see it happening to a real person and people around her and connected to her. That always brings difficulties and challenges and I suppose, yes, that has been quite a challenge to try and get the trust of people and for them to stick with us on the journey so that, hopefully we can tell the story so in some way or other some form of truth comes out through the making of the film.



James Gay-Rees

I think that a lot of people felt that way about her, a lot of people felt that they knew her better than anybody else and so therefore, it was a challenge definitely, trying to reconcile all those different points of view on her, because they are all totally valid, but it is our job as film makers to try and thread our way through all those, sometimes slightly contrasting points of view on Amy. She was a very complicated human being, there is no doubt about it, she really was very complicated, incredibly smart, but very layered. So trying to really get through all those layers was a challenge.

What was the research process like? How many people did you speak to?

Asif Kapadia

So the interviews, in many ways, formed the story, formed the film and then we were looking for footage that would somehow visualize the story. It was a very unusual process, I haven't really worked this way before and it seemed unique to this story because people, most of the people I've spoken to had not given an interview before and it wasn't really like an interview for a movie, it was literally people just getting all of this information and weight that they have been carrying secretly, off their mind and of their backs. At the end of it there were a lot of tears, there were a lot of people who cried during the process. It was pretty emotional and it was almost like a therapy process out of which a movie has been made.

How many hours of footage did you look at?

Chris King

Well I actually couldn't put a figure on the amount of material we ended up having for this film. It's probably thousands of hours and it just kept on coming in. It wasn't a flood actually, it trickled in. There is a lot of stuff out there because she arrived at the heat, the big moment of celebrity culture, so every step that she took for a while was filmed by somebody or other. She couldn't walk out of her front door without somebody following her, to the corner shop, back to her house, out again, everywhere she went there were pursuit cars following her down the road. Inevitably there are hundreds and hundreds of hours of just that. She lived part of her life at the absolute epicenter of the celebrity culture. Every step was dogged by the paparazzi, and by videographers. There were hundreds and hundreds of hours of just her walking to the corner shop, walking to the chip shop, walking to the curry goat place, walking back again, going to bars, walking back from... just every single part of her life had been covered, and all her performances as well. Then we got into the more intriguing material which were people who had spent time with her, who had filmed personal material as well. There was a lot of stuff and there was a lot of connected material as well, things that were filmed by other people who were around the story. Mos Def, he had some bits and pieces, that were very interesting, of his own experiences at being pursued and attacked by paparazzi. So we ended up watching months and months and months of really just watching and slowly putting together a first assembly, a first cut of the film and you know we turned it into a film you can see now.



How did the process of making it differ to SENNA?

James Gay-Rees

The main difference really is that a, she is English and so all the key players in the story are here and it's a very familiar story to us. I knew a little bit about Senna before we started making it, but it was 20 years ago and it felt that much more removed. This felt very recent and, unfortunately, Amy only died a couple of years ago, two or three years ago, so that is the other thing that it felt very raw to a lot of people.

Chris King

I think the biggest difference between AMY and cutting SENNA was the wobbly camera footage. With SENNA we had quite a lot of things that were actually framed quite nicely and in focus for longer than a second at a time whereas in this film we had to contend with large, interesting swathes of stuff that was shot by people who never picked up a camera in their lives before and who were holding it in one hand and walking down a road with a pint in their other hand. It's captivating footage, but it's not the most attractive, cinematic footage whereas on SENNA we had oodles of really quite gorgeous film material and HD material and helicopter shots. All manner of stuff.

What is the message you think you want this film to pass on?

Chris King

If I...if there is a single message to be taken from this film it's that we, collectively, as a global audience, a global culture, need to care about those individuals who are very creative, who give us those things that we all enjoy, art and cultural things that we all enjoy. We need to look after them, we need to ensure that they are able to carry on doing that and not get consumed by the celebrity culture and by the need for quick, instant answers and for access to people's every single move all the time. People do need private lives, just because somebody does something creative, it doesn't mean that they have to share every single part of their personal life as well. I think that was a massive problem for Amy and it shouldn't have been there in the first place. She should have been looked after and revered and it's only now that we are looking back at her that we can see that people should have known that at the time and in future we should know that.

James Gay-Rees

What I would really like people to take out of the film is I would like people to re-evaluate Amy Winehouse because I think that we did a really successful job in this country of brutalizing her in the mainstream tabloid media. She became an easy target, people used her as a punch bag, totally inappropriate. You are talking about somebody with mental health issues who was struggling and I think that a lot of people knew that, but chose to ignore it. If this film stops the media from treating people like that in the future, it will be – well of course it is not going to stop that, but if it made some people think twice about doing that again in the future, I think that would be an achievement.



Asif Kapadia

I am hoping that people, for a start there are a lot of people I met at the beginning of the process who said to me "Why do you want to make a film about a junky, who gives a shit about a junky?" I remember feeling wow; that is interesting that you have a young person who, even if these people are really intelligent and well educated, they still have formed an opinion from tabloids, even if they don't feel they read tabloids, they tabloids have helped form an opinion of a human being that they have never met. It became like a journey to say "Let's reveal who this young person really was and how brilliant they were and how funny they were and how intelligent they were." Nobody starts off wanting to be addicted to drugs or addicted to alcohol or whatever, it's circumstances, which take them down a certain path. So I am hoping that somehow the film will deal with some of those issues, but primarily I hope it just makes people think. There are a lot of issues of depression, there is alcoholism, there is addictions, there are lots of issues dealt with in the film which I think everyone has someone in their family that has dealt with that or had an issue with that and maybe we don't talk about it. Maybe this will, I hope, start a debate, the film somehow.