



# 23 WALKS

Written & Directed by **Paul Morrison**  
Starring **Alison Steadman** and **Dave Johns**  
12A / 97 mins / UK

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## **Short Synopsis**

Dave (Dave Johns) and Fern (Alison Steadman) meet while walking their dogs in a North London park and over the course of 23 walks romance blossoms. But Dave and Fern haven't been completely honest with one another, and their future happiness is threatened by the secrets they have withheld.

## **Long Synopsis**

Walk 1: Retired nurse Dave (Dave Johns) is walking his Alsatian, Tillie, in a North London park, when he passes divorcee Fern (Alison Steadman) and her dog, a Yorkshire terrier named Henry, on a path. Henry and his owner are clearly unnerved by the much larger dog. The dogs bark at one another and Fern scolds Dave for not keeping his on a lead.

Walk 2: A few days later, Dave bumps into Fern again. This time she picks up Henry and starts to walk back the way she came. Dave tells her that they have nothing to fear. The two dogs get acquainted, and their owners do too.

Walk 3: Dave and Fern bump into each other again. Dave asks if they ever walk in nearby King George's Field. Fern says no, and Dave takes her there. It's beautiful, with a lovely view of London.

Walk 4: The next time they meet, Dave asks Fern if he can walk with her. "It's a free country" she replies and the two stroll together and talk about their dogs.

Later, the postman hands Dave a letter from the council. Dave is behind with his rent.

Walk 7: Dave and Fern have become friends, walking their dogs and chatting. Fern wants advice on a kennel for Henry while she travels to the Canaries for her daughter's wedding, and Dave offers to look after him. Dave says he used to work as a mental health nurse. Fern is recently divorced and works part-time as a receptionist.

Walk 9: Dave takes Fern into the woods. With her upcoming trip he asks if she can speak Spanish. She can't, but Dave is fluent and offers to teach her. They gently enquire about each other's personal lives. Fern says her second husband left her for his secretary. Dave still wears a ring although his wife died two years earlier. He invites her back to his flat for a cup of tea. On the fridge are photos of his wife and children, a boy and a girl. His daughter, Donna (Natalie Simpson), lives locally and he often cares for his two grandchildren. Dave and Fern realise they don't know each other's names. They

introduce themselves and play drafts. Dave tells Fern he won't be around tomorrow. "I've got someone to see," he says rather mysteriously. Fern becomes frosty and leaves.

Walk 11: A few days later, Dave is walking Tillie and looking for Fern. Heading home, he sees her. Initially she gives him the cold shoulder, but eventually she thaws, telling Dave about her son who lives in Devon and used to do a lot of drugs. Later, Dave visits Fern for tea and cake. He sees a photograph of a young woman and asks if it's her daughter. Fern becomes upset but doesn't explain why.

Walk 12: Fern says her ex has given her six months to sell their home. Dave suggests they celebrate "walk 13" by going to the country. Fern agrees and admits the first few times they met she was scared of Dave and Tillie. Now she's only scared of him.

Walk 13: On a beautiful sunny day in late Spring, Dave and Fern and their dogs, plus Dave's grandchildren, Rafe (Liam Cointre) and Sylvie (Aaliyah Youssef Thomas), drive to the country for a picnic. Dave invites Fern round for dinner. She says she used to be a dancer at the London Palladium. Dave puts on some music and the pair dance. Over the washing up, Dave asks her to stay over "for the company". She declines but later, over FaceTime, tells him she really enjoyed herself. He asks her to sing him a song but she is reluctant.

Walk 14. Out with their dogs, Fern admits she has feelings for Dave but finds dating hard at her age. Dave concurs and she invites him to stay the night. But first Dave wants her to meet "someone important" and takes her to a local nursing home where his wife, Marcy (Marsha Millar), is living. Marcy has dementia and has been in care for two years. Fern is angry and upset. "You said your wife died. You lied to me." She storms off. "Don't call me!"

Over the summer, Dave doesn't see Fern. He is furious with himself. His daughter is angry at him for introducing Fern to her children, reminding him that her mother isn't dead yet and they're still married. To make matters even worse, Tillie is now sick.

As the autumn cold sets in, Dave is out walking on his own when he sees Fern and Henry. They greet each other in Spanish. Fern asks where's Tillie? Sick says Dave, and tries to explain about his wife, how he feels about Fern, and why he didn't tell her sooner. "You took me for a ride," says Fern who wants to see Tillie. At Dave's flat, Fern notices he's started packing his belongings. Dave tells her he's being kicked out at the end of November and is being rehoused out of the area, in Chingford or Luton. Fern's angry on

his behalf. "It isn't right. You've given your life to public service." Fern and Henry's presence seems to have perked Tillie up and they take the dogs for a walk. Fern says she's had time to think and wants to try their friendship again, telling him: "I'll be on the fields tomorrow".

Walk 18: The pair are out with their dogs. Fern apologises for her reaction to Marcy.

Walk 19: Dave and Fern are friends again. Out with their dogs, Fern takes off her coat, revealing a sexy dress underneath. She sings to Dave in Spanish, the lyrics translating as "kiss me a lot". Back at Dave's she takes an overnight case from her car. She will spend the night but insists: "No sex." That evening they kiss and cuddle. They try to make love but Dave is unable.

One morning at Fern's, her ex, Jimmy, turns up unannounced. He spies Dave and tells Fern he's pulling forward the house sale. Fern tells Dave she doesn't want to share him with Marcy. Donna is still upset about Fern and says it has to stop. Dave protests, "It's company." Dave mentions their conversation to Fern who suggests they take some time out, insisting things are getting too complicated. Dave is devastated: "Time out? We've just got started."

Dave moves into a new flat in Chingford. It's a dump. He calls Fern but she doesn't want to see him. Meanwhile, Marcy takes a turn for the worse and is admitted to hospital with pneumonia. Dave and Donna take care of her and she rallies and returns to the nursing home. Tillie's getting worse. She won't eat or drink. Distraught, Dave calls Fern. She asks to speak to Tillie who dies peacefully as Fern talks to her on FaceTime.

Time passes. Dave walks his usual route, and leaves Tillie's lead on a fence. Winter becomes spring. He writes to Fern who meets him for tea. She tells him she's been keeping something from him. Sarah, the daughter in the photograph, died of meningitis aged 18 and Fern has never gotten over it. Her late husband blamed her and worked himself into an early grave. It's why her son messed himself up with drugs. Dave sympathises. He tells Fern there's no point denying her grief, that it's best invited in and made a friend of. Fern takes Dave to see a cottage. *Her* cottage. She welcomes him inside and they make love. "I haven't felt happy since Sarah died," confesses Fern and starts to cry. "You're liable to get a lot of this," she tells him.

Walk 23: Dave and Fern walk Henry. Free of secrets, it marks a new beginning for all three.

## Directors Statement

### Production Story

A heart-warming, soulful and timely comedy-drama about finding love in later life, *23 Walks* marks the big screen return of Oscar-nominated writer-director Paul Morrison (*Solomon and Gaenor*) after a long absence. Charting a year in the lives of Londoners Dave (Dave Johns) and Fern (Alison Steadman), two lonely seniors who meet while walking their dogs in a North London park and find companionship, then romance, with one another, *23 Walks* is dedicated to Benji, a Golden Retriever who was the Morrison family pet for 16 years.

"He was a very lovely dog," says Morrison. "I'm sure your own dog is always the best dog in the world, but we had that feeling about him as a family. He was very gentle and powerful at the same time." Morrison would walk Benji in the parks and fields near his home in Barnet, and it was during their daily workout that the idea of a film based around dog walking first dawned on him. "I always had a feeling there was a movie in this dog walking business while I was doing it," he notes, "but I wasn't quite sure what movie."

After Benji passed away, Morrison decided to put pen to paper, and was particularly keen to write a film about people of his own age. "I wanted to tell a story about my generation, people who are getting on a bit, because I wanted a story that reflected the richness and complexity of older people's lives as opposed to most representations in which they're invisible or they're the word of wisdom or they're sick or ill or fading and have to be rescued," explains the 76-year-old writer-director. "There are very few films about older people that don't sentimentalise old age, for better or worse. There are very few films about older people full stop. Then it grew into a love story. And once I'd figured out that was the aim, then came the idea of telling this love story over the course of however many walks, which turned out to be 23."

Over the last few years, Morrison had been developing several feature ideas with *Swimming with Men* producers Anna Mohr-Pietsch and Stewart Le Marechal of Met Films and they were enchanted when he pitched his dog walking love story. "There is an

inbuilt and hungry audience for so-called 'grey pound' films and it made sense for the director to be a member of that audience himself," says Mohr-Pietsch who produced *23 Walks* alongside Le Marechal and Maggie Monteith of Northern Stories. "It meant that the story, script and film felt authentic, as opposed to forced. The story was delicate, and Paul is well placed to explore with tender care the nuances and complexities of aging."

"It's about two mid-aged people and they've got a story to tell," says Steadman. "Life doesn't end when you're 40. It carries on and actually gets more interesting, and even though you have terrible things that happen in life, you can pick yourself up and start again. Life keeps being lived."

To play former mental health nurse Dave, and owner of an Alsatian named Tillie, Morrison cast Geordie actor and stand-up comedian Dave Johns whose breakthrough role came as the eponymous widower in Ken Loach's scintillating *I, Daniel Blake* which won the Palme d'Or at the 2016 Cannes Film Festival and Johns a Best Actor Award at the British Independent Film Awards.

"Paul was keen not to have born-and-bred Londoners and he really loved Dave's natural style of acting which really fitted in with the kind of script he'd written," says Mohr-Pietsch. "He envisaged the Dave character to be of a lower socio-economic class than Fern and wanted someone who, when she first meets him, she might not initially feel able to trust – someone who could be a threat, could be menacing. He's bald, he wears a bomber jacket, and so she's not quite sure about this guy, and then, as she gets to know him, she realises what a soft, gentle, kind person he is."

"I had seen *I, Daniel Blake* so I was in no doubt he could play this character," says Morrison. "I courted him for a while, went to Edinburgh to see his stand-up show, and was delighted when he said yes. The character of Dave is a bit of a rough diamond. Mental health nursing is a tough game, both physically and emotionally, and he's got a very sweet, soft heart and lets himself be put about. There was a certain point in the filming when Dave Johns asked me about his character and particularly his long-suffering nature, the part that endures, that's the word that Fern uses about him, and he suddenly

twigged I was talking about me. It became a running joke after that, that he was me, which he isn't, of course, only in respect of him being someone who endures."

As Fern, the guarded, middle-class divorcee and owner of a yappy Yorkshire terrier called Henry, Morrison cast Olivier Award-winning actress Alison Steadman. Liverpool-born Steadman first established herself in the 1970's with Mike Leigh's acclaimed BBC plays *Nuts In May* and *Abigail's Party* and in the decades since has maintained a hugely successful career across television, film and the stage. Morrison had worked with Steadman on a Channel 4 film in the 80's and felt, after so many recent comedy and character roles, she'd enjoy starring in a love story. "Paul really felt she could handle that reserved kind of nature at the start, where she's a little prickly and takes a while to warm up to him, but, at the same time, be someone extremely warm, very smart, and she was perfect," says Mohr-Pietsch.

"She's a woman in her late 60s, living alone, and has a very sweet dog who she walks every day," says Steadman, "and we have a sense she is someone who is perhaps looking for companionship or a friend. Her first marriage failed, her second marriage has failed and that's quite sad. She's a very intelligent, bright lady but is looking for something in life."

"Fern has a bit more money than Dave, owns her own property (with her ex), and is independent" explains Morrison. "She has come out of two really difficult marriages, so she's nervous about getting into something new. But she really, deeply needs someone who will affirm her, and Dave does that because of who he is."

"Dave Johns came on board first, then Alison joined almost immediately after," says Mohr-Pietsch. "They were obviously keen to work together. The first time we all met the chemistry was really obvious, and I think it gave Paul a lot of confidence it would be a really good match." Morrison had wanted to be present when his two leads initially saw each other, to witness how they would each interact. But it was not to be. "Unfortunately, they screwed me on that, because they met one another in secret first," he laughs. "I had a meeting with them at BAFTA, which Stewart and Anna joined in later, and from the get-go Alison was pushing Dave away, and was kind of sharp with him, and he was

needy, the more dependent one; it so mirrored what I needed them to do in the movie. I knew then that this was going to work and we had it. They're both such good actors, once you know the chemistry's going to be right, then you can't really go wrong. Well, you can go wrong a million ways, but some of those are to do with dogs."

When it came to his canine leads, Morrison employed much the same casting process as with his main actors. "Benji was the model for Tillie in personality and character, but for he wasn't a scary dog in any way unless you were very little," he explains. "For me it was important that Dave's dog in the movie is a breed people are frightened of, so there's a bigger journey for Fern to travel to get to know and love that dog."

"We wanted a big, initially potentially menacing looking dog, but, like Dave, she's a puppy in terms of how she is with people," says Le Marechal.

Tillie was played a five-year-old Alsatian called Sheila. "When we met her, she behaved incredibly well and did exactly what she was told," says Morrison. "I was worried about her age, because she was young and had to play an older dog, but her character meant we decided to go with her."

As for Henry, Fern's dog, Morrison was after the opposite of Tillie in size and temperament. "Small, barky, a bit rebellious," he notes. Initially, the production was offered a Dachshund called Frank, but neither Morrison nor Steadman are fond of the breed. "When they brought them all in to show us, there was a sausage dog which we thought would be great," says Le Marechal, "partly because it was really cute, but also because it was the most trained dog they had and would do anything you needed it to do. But Paul wasn't a fan and he chose a slightly less well-trained dog which had its limitations." The terrier's name was Dennis. "We made the right choice although the other one might have been a better performer," admits Morrison. The talented Dachshund didn't miss out entirely, making a cameo appearance in the film. "He was the frisky one humping Tillie in that scene on the fields." As for their names, Tillie, says Morrison, was that of a friend's dog, while Henry was "a slightly posher name to reflect the class difference between Dave and Fern."



The actors first met their canine charges during the short rehearsal period. "It was only a couple of days," says Mohr-Pietsch. "The script wasn't going to be improvised but Paul wanted it to feel kind of natural, so wanted a bit of time for Dave and Alison to get used to each other. The other thing he wanted to do was spend some time on the fields with Alison and Dave and the dogs and do a bit of the walk they do in the film, so they got used to the space and the dogs. It was really about familiarity. Paul uses the rehearsal period to help the actors find an organic connection with the characters they're playing and the spaces they inhabit. He's looking for that moment of magic on screen and he feels if you can walk through the space and really get into it, then something will come out of that when the camera's turning."

"Directors are very important because they set the tone," says Steadman. "Paul is a very gentle quiet man who *thinks*, so he creates an atmosphere on set which is calm and focussed."

"Paul seldom looks at the monitors," notes Johns. "He's always in the room, standing next to the camera, watching the actors, which is really nice. He wants to see it happen as it happens, which, for a performer, is great."

Morrison was adamant that *23 Walks* should very clearly reflect the passage of the seasons. "If you walk your dog every day, you're close to nature, close to the seasons and close to the weather, and it was important that be a strong part of the film. How we did that in terms of shooting, I didn't have a detailed idea, but the outcome would be that we would have winter, spring, summer and autumn."

"We always knew it was going to be a relatively low budget movie so we thought, how do we give this as much production value as possible and how do we make it feel as truthful as possible?" says Le Marechal. "A lot of that comes through the characters, but a lot also comes through the landscape they're in, so we talked very early on about whether we could split the filming over a number of shoots so we get different weather, and really experience it in the winter, the spring and summer."

“It was important for the audience to feel the gradual changes in the landscape and the ebbs and flows of the central relationship in parallel,” says Mohr-Pietsch. “From a marketing point of view, we felt that showing the changing seasons would be a useful selling point, something to make it feel distinct. Given our tight budget, this was always going to be a challenge but we feel it really benefits the film and the storytelling.”

“It's good to have that difference,” agrees Steadman, “so there's a real sense of time moving on, their relationship moving on, changing as the seasons change.”

And so, somewhat uniquely, filming took place in two blocks, shooting for nine days in November 2018 and then a further 14 days in May/June 2019 with a couple of days in between. “Obviously, there was a slight feeling of anxiety having left the shoot in November and coming back the next spring,” says Steadman, “but as soon as I got the costume back on, the dogs were there, and I was chatting to Paul again, I was fine. We had a couple of days to acclimatise and I found myself comfortably getting back into the character.”

Having to stop filming for four months was hard for Morrison. “It was frustrating,” he admits, “because you want to go on and complete the story, but it meant we had time to look at what we'd done and see if there was anything we wanted to do differently, and see if we were missing anything in terms of tone or performance. On the whole, I felt good about what we'd done and, in fact, even in the first block we told the entire story because there were a lot of interiors across the seasons. You were reliant on your own and your actors' professionalism to bring you back emotionally to where you need to be in each scene, and I think we did it. But it was also a challenge of scheduling. Dave and Alison are such busy people, it's hard enough to get them together once, but to get them for a block of time twice took some doing.”

Working with his canine cast was even more challenging. “It wasn't easy,” he reflects. “I mean, the dogs were great, it's not a complaint against either dog or the handlers. But in the first shoot, we were struggling and chasing our tails, or chasing their tails. It was

tough on the cast because Dave and Alison not only had to produce a performance, they had to control the dogs at the same time. It didn't work totally for the dogs to be in the control of the handlers because you needed them to look towards Dave and Alison, so we had to do a lot of learning and we had to do it quite quickly."

For starters, every shot involving a dog had to be carefully blocked out in advance to take into consideration the actors, the dogs and their handlers. "The shots had to be designed so the handlers could see the dogs, but not so their signals would be too evident," says Morrison. "And where we could, we tried to get the dogs out of shot reasonably quickly. But sometimes you'd be shooting and there would be nothing and nothing and nothing and then there would be a little "Wow! That's it" We got it. Sometimes to get a little look or moment took a long time."

"Although we tried hard to plan and rehearse, it took a while to get the dog handlers, the crew, camera crew, the AD department and the actors to be working in unison," says Mohr-Pietsch. "And it turned out to be a little trickier than we first thought. Also, because we were on limited schedule, the actors didn't have quite enough time to form a relationship with the dogs." It didn't help that Johns "didn't have any affinity for dogs," says Morrison. "He wasn't a dog person at all and it wasn't really until the second shoot that we found a way for him to be comfortable with Sheila and feel in charge. The secret was putting Sheila's tennis ball in his pocket, and that made all the difference."

"I don't have a dog. I've never had a dog. I don't really know dogs," says Johns. "So I was not up to speed on how dogs behave. It was quite interesting to have these dogs on set and get to know them really throughout the course of the shoot, and I've become somebody who's really fond of dogs."

"I think they came to a working relationship," says Morrison. "I wouldn't say he fell in love with the dog. *I* fell in love with the dog. Directors are meant to fall in love with their leading ladies, with their leading cast, and I certainly did. Alison was a dogs' person already. They had had their family dog, as we had had our family dog, so she identified. She's such a pro, she was absolutely able to work around the dogs."

“They’re both lovely dogs,” says Steadman. “I love dogs. I used to have one for 15 years. But the first couple of days were quite difficult because they didn’t know us, we didn’t know them, and they’re being asked to do all sorts of things and asked to look as though me and Dave Johns are their owners, which is quite tough, but they settled down. Although I had to have a pocket full of sliced hot dogs. Little treats do it.”

Even so, there were issues trying to get the dogs to perform, particularly in terms of barking on command. “Unfortunately, dogs aren’t humans, they do what they want to do to a certain extent,” says Mohr-Pietsch. “Dennis was supposed to ‘speak’ on command, and we tried and tried and tried to get him to bark, but no sound came out. It was like he had stage fright or something. It was really, really funny. We ended up using the shot of Dennis’ mouth opening and just put in a bark.”

By the time the second block of filming had come around, the production had learned its lessons, “so there was more planning around the dogs. Being in the cold and wet probably didn’t help us on that first block,” admits Le Marechal.

“On the one hand, it was nice for them to be outdoors for large chunks of the shoot, which meant when they weren’t doing a take they could run around,” says Mohr-Pietsch. “The downside was it was difficult when you’ve got a dog walking along in the park. Normally they’re used to sniffing what they want to sniff, finding what they want to find, but now they’re being asked to walk along a straight path. That’s really challenging.”

Not that it was really any easier away from the park. One scene in front Dave’s flat required Tillie comes outside, before being sent back inside, took 16 takes to get right. “It was at night, last shot of the day, absolutely pouring down, Anna and I standing outside holding various bits of lights,” says Le Marechal. “I remember thinking, please dog, get this right. And she just wouldn’t do it.”

“It was pouring with rain and freezing cold and I was so cold my brain froze as well,” recalls Morrison. “I thought, if this shot doesn’t work I have absolutely no alternative. I don’t know what else to do. Sometimes you can think of another way of getting around

things — let's break this down into two shots or whatever — but my brain stopped working and I just hoped. Thank goodness, on the last take, Sheila did the business."

Getting Sheila to die on camera in Dave's pokey Chingford flat proved to be a major practical challenge for Morrison. "She was a dog who was so full of life and was cramped up in Dave's tiny flat, but she was great, she did it, and she got it." The secret, Morrison reveals, is patience. "You have to wait until they're so bored they close their eyes. And get the room warm." It also brought back painful memories of his own dog's passing. "The scene did mirror Benji's dying. At the time, we didn't know he was dying, he was very sick, and I called up my son and said we were thinking of taking him to the vet if he wasn't any better the next day. My son, who lives in Bristol, asked if he could see him, just like Fern, and my son was on FaceTime with Benji, talking to him when he died. So that moment in the film where Fern is on the phone as he dies, that was also taken from real life, and, for me, was a powerful moment to shoot."

*23 Walks* was filmed entirely on location in North London with Dave and Fern and their dogs covering much the same ground that Morrison had walked Benji on for years: King George's Field in High Barnet, Hadley Common, Hadley Woods, and Hadley Green, as well as in North Mymms park in Hertfordshire. "Paul did a forensic sweep of all the outdoor locations, and pushed to make sure we used as much of each park as possible, in order to have visual variety and also to make sure that the conversation didn't become repetitious or boring in any way — that they were always finding pastures new, so to speak," says Mohr-Pietsch.

The production also shot in and around Barnet High Street. Fern and Dave's homes belong to friends of Morrison — "I kind of risked a lot in terms of my friendships," he jokes — and a number of his friends, neighbours and their dogs appear as extras. "The joy of filming so close to home was being able to shoot in places I knew. I knew where the light would be at a given time on a given day. And I knew all the views, as it were. It was also a great joy to get up in the morning and be on set, and everybody's coming to me. Although, in a way that was also a problem during the first shoot because my home was

the base and it meant you never got away from the film. For the second shoot, we managed to find a base on the High Street so when I got home, I could relax."

Alas, not every location brought with it such happy memories. "The alleyway where Tillie and Henry first confront one another, Benji was attacked by a bull mastiff," says Morrison, "so the whole thing about alleyways being difficult for dogs to pass was something I'd experienced and had been a very nasty one for Benji."

Overall, the production benefitted from the weather, although the one scene in the film that features rain is actually a visual effects shot. "We didn't have the time to wait for cloud cover or for the sun to come out or for it to rain," says Morrison. "There was one really rainy day that we shot the rain scene on and it stopped raining the moment we were about to shoot that scene." Still, the production did get lucky with snow. "Those sequences were shot six months before we started when David Katznelson, the director of photography, and I were just playing around and it snowed," reveals Morrison. "Although the shot in the final film of Dave in the snow is fake snow."

For Morrison, *23 Walks* is a tribute to his late pet, as well as a labour of love for everyone involved. "We did this film incredibly cheaply, so everybody was there because they liked the script," he concludes. "It was tough in a way, because we didn't have the paraphernalia that a lot of shoots have. We didn't have caravans, we didn't have toilets, but everybody mucked in and there was a great atmosphere in the crew and people made it work, and we managed to shoot out every day. Dave and Alison were incredibly funny between takes and bounced off one another and they were lovely to have around."

## **Cast and Crew Bios**

### **Alison Steadman (Fern)**

Award-winning actress Alison Steadman OBE is well-known for her notable television roles in 'Gavin & Stacey'; 'Hold the Sunset'; 'Pride and Prejudice'; and BAFTA nominated 'Care'. Earlier in her career, she won the 1991 National Society of Film Critics Award for Best Actress for the Mike Leigh film 'Life is Sweet', and the 1993 Olivier

Award for Best Actress for her role as Mari in the original production of 'The Rise and Fall of Little Voice'. She also received BAFTA TV Award nominations for the 1986 BBC serial 'The Singing Detective', and in 2001 for the ITV drama series 'Fat Friends'.

### **Dave Johns (Dave)**

Dave is a multi-award-winning film actor, accomplished stage actor and improviser who played the lead role in Ken Loach's film *I, Daniel Blake* (Palme d'Or winner), winning Best Actor award at the British Independent Film Awards and Best Newcomer at the Empire Awards. He stars in *Fisherman's Friends* alongside Danny Mays and Tuppence Middleton and has a nice cameo in *Blithe Spirit* with Judi Dench. He will be returning to Edinburgh this summer with a new show to celebrate 30 years of doing stand-up. Other credits include *Walk Like a Panther*, *Trautmann* and *Two Graves*. Stage credits: *Shawshank Redemption* and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

### **Paul Morrison (Writer and Director)**

Paul has a distinguished track record as a drama and documentary filmmaker.

His BBC film, *John and Yoko*, was commemorated by Broadcast magazine as one of the great moments of fifty years of television. *Like Other People*, about disability and sexuality, won the Grierson Award for best documentary.

He made several ground-breaking documentary series for Channel Four exploring subjects close to his heart: *About Men*, about masculinity, *A Change of Mind*, on psychotherapy, and *A Sense of Belonging*, about British Jewish identity. His powerful and moving documentary feature, *From Bitter Earth: Artists of the Holocaust*, told the story of painting and drawing made secretly in the camps and ghettos of WWII.

Paul's first feature film *Solomon & Gaenor*, was nominated for an Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film in 2000 and won the Welsh BAFTA for Best Film in 2001. His next movie, *Wondrous Oblivion*, won Best Feature Film at the Racism in the Media awards, among other prizes. His feature *Little Ashes* subsequently won best international feature at the GLAAD awards in Los Angeles.

Since completing *23 Walks* Paul has been in development on *The Leningrad Gig*, a rock and roll journey of return inspired by a trip he took to the USSR in 1964.

### **David Katznelson (Director of Photography)**

Born and brought up in Denmark, David specialised in Cinematography at the National Film & Television School in the UK. Since graduating in 2000, he has shot a number of feature films, TV pilots, TV series and won several awards including an EMMY, a BAFTA and an RTS Award.

### **Bruce Green (Editor)**

Film editor Bruce Green ACE is known for his work with director's Garry Marshall, Mark Waters, and Jon Turteltaub. He was assistant editor on the original "Star Wars", "Raiders of the Lost Ark" and "Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom". His editing credits include 40 theatrical feature films ranging two "Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>" pictures to comedies like "Cool Runnings", and "Big Momma's House" as well as family films "The Princess Diaries" and "Freaky Friday". He has also edited television including the critically acclaimed series "Jane the Virgin". Bruce has taught and lectured at various universities and conservatories. He is a former vice-president of the Motion Picture Editor's Guild, on the board of Inner-City Filmmakers, and a graduate of the California Institute of the Arts.

### **Gary Yershon (Composer)**

Nominated for an Academy Award and Ivor Novello Award for his score to Mike Leigh's highly acclaimed *Mr Turner*, Gary Yershon's 40-year career as a composer – spanning film, television, theatre and radio – continues to grow and grow to this day.

After reading Music and Drama at Hull University, Gary pursued a parallel career as an actor up until 1991, when he gave up the limelight to focus primarily on composing.

For film, Gary has collaborated extensively with the celebrated director, Mike Leigh. Their first collaboration began in 1999 with *Topsy-Turvy*, on which Gary was musical director. His first score for Leigh was on the iconic British comedy-drama, *Happy-Go-Lucky*,



followed by *Another Year*, which gained Gary a nomination as European Film Award Best Composer, the short film *A Running Jump*, and most recently *Peterloo*, starring Rory Kinnear and Maxine Peake. Gary's other recent scores include the film *Brighton*, directed by Stephen Cookson.

Gary has also written for TV, where his work ranges from detective drama (*Trial and Retribution IX & X*) to children's cartoons (*James the Cat*, *Ebb and Flo*).

Many of Gary's theatre scores are for the Royal Shakespeare Company, where he is an Associate Artist. He has also scored for the National Theatre, the West End and Broadway, where in 2009 he received a Drama Desk nomination for *The Norman Conquests*.

Gary has written extensively for BBC Radio since 1979, beginning as a singer-songwriter for Radio 4's *Midweek*. Since then Gary has composed for many plays, including *The Odyssey*, *Gawain and the Green Knight*, *The Theban Plays*, *The Winter's Tale*, *The Eve of St Agnes*, *Three Men in a Boat*, as well as the 2002 Sony-award winning *Autumn Journal*. For Radio 3 he translated and dramatised Pushkin's *Ruslan and Lyudmila* and contributed to *The Verb*.

Gary curates and presents *Oscar@Scores* at the Barbican Arts Centre in London. His score for Northern Ballet's *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* premiered in May 2017. The London Symphony Orchestra premiered Gary's *The Great Blueness* at the Barbican concert hall in March 2019. He also works as a writer, translator, musical director and teacher.

### **Maggie Monteith (Producer)**

Maggie first started her career in film working across the media and marketing of Warner Bros Films in the UK and Europe while working at Grey Entertainment and Media. Moving to Columbia TriStar UK and Ireland, she oversaw the marketing for films such as *Men in Black*, *Mask of Zorro*, *Godzilla*, and her personal favourite, *Matilda*.

Promoted to work at Columbia TriStar in US Domestic, she moved to California, and enjoyed working on films such as *Charlie's Angels*, *Spider-man* and *Stuart Little*. Her studio-marketing career culminated in working for Lucasfilm on marketing, promotions, media and publicity worldwide for Episode II of *Star Wars*. Over the next few years Maggie worked in the start-up of Participant Media, and as a consultant to banks and hedge funds for Gerson Lehrman. It was at this time that she decided to move into film financing.

Since 2009 Maggie has been part of the financing for over 30 feature films as a producer, including Noel Clarke's *Brotherhood*, Rupert Jones' *Kaleidoscope*, Deborah Haywood's *Pin Cushion*, Carol Morley's *Out of Blue* and Oliver Parker's *Swimming with Men*. Last year saw the world premiere of Tom Cullen's *Pink Wall* at the SXSW Film Festival where critics called it "Raw, bleeding, and explosively truthful, with knockout performances" (Daily Telegraph) and "Intoxicating. This decade's Blue Valentine" (Total Film). The Tatiana Maslany and Jay Duplass relationship drama went on to tour the festival circuit and opened in the UK in December. Another first-time filmmaker Monteith was determined to champion is Dolly Wells. Encouraged by Maggie she penned and directed Brooklyn set a coming of age tale, *Good Posture*, starring Emily Mortimer and Grace Van Patten. *Good Posture* premiered at the 2019, Tribeca Film Festival and went on to have a high-profile independent release in the UK and imminently releases domestically.

In addition, Maggie has been part of the financing and production for six documentaries under her Documentary Company banner, including the Oscar winning *Searching for Sugarman* and Ferrari documentary, *Race to Immortality*.

### **Anna Mohr-Pietsch (Producer)**

Anna is a Producer and Head of Development at MetFilm Production. She is currently in post production on Paul Morrison's '23 Walks', starring Dave Johns and Alison Steadman. Her previous feature film, Oliver Parker comedy 'Swimming with Men' starring Rob Brydon, was released last summer, and she is developing a diverse slate of projects for film and TV at MetFilm.

Prior to joining MetFilm, Anna held roles at The Weinstein Company and Working Title Films, where she was involved in the acquisition, development, production and distribution of several award-winning films including 'The King's Speech', 'Inglourious Basterds', 'The Road', 'Nowhere Boy', 'Atonement', 'Frost/Nixon' And 'Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy'.

Anna has worked extensively as a script consultant and has produced, EP'd and production managed shorts. She is a member of BAFTA and regularly serves as a co-chair on BIFA's voting selection committees. She provides ad hoc teaching and mentoring for the MetFilm School and is a regular panelist at film festivals and industry initiatives including EIFF Talent Lab, London Screenwriting Festival and Bafta Rocliffe.

### **Stewart Le Marechal (Producer)**

Stewart is a BAFTA winning producer and head of MetFilm Production. He is currently in post production on Paul Morrison's '23 Walks', starring Dave Johns and Alison Steadman. Thriller documentary, 'Last Breath', was released in April and his previous fiction film 'Swimming With Men' directed by Oliver Parker and starring Rob Brydon was released last summer.

Previous producing credits include 'The Infidel' starring Omid Djalili; 'French Film' starring Hugh Bonneville and 'Little Ashes' starring Robert Pattinson. Feature documentary credits as executive producer include Jerry Rothwell's 'How to Change the World' and 'Sour Grapes', Sarah Gavron's 'Village at The End of the World' and Jeanie Finlay's 'The Great Hip Hop Hoax'. He produced Esther May Campbell's short film, 'September', which won the Best Short Film BAFTA.

Stewart is a member of BAFTA, the ACE producers network and an alumnus of the Inside Pictures programme.

### **Nell Green (Co-Producer)**

Nell is a freelance TV and film producer who has worked with companies including BBC Films, Film4, Netflix, Sixteen Films and Warp. Recent work includes producing German/Polish/UK feature film ADVENTURES OF A MATHEMATICIAN. In 2019 she also developed a TV series with production company Nevision which she will produce/showrun. Before that she co-produced feature film VITA AND VIRGINIA starring Gemma Arterton and Elizabeth Debicki which opened BFI Flare 2019 and premiered at Toronto International Film Festival. She also worked as a producer on Netflix show MEDICI: MASTERS OF FLORENCE, a British-Italian production. Other credits include Lynne Ramsay's YOU WERE NEVER REALLY HERE with Joaquin Phoenix, Benedict Cumberbatch film THE CURRENT WAR, and the BBC's WAR & PEACE. She has a slate of film and TV projects in development.