

VULNERABLE

A Short Film by Adam Bellamy



AN ADAM BELLAMY FILM IN ASSOCIATION WITH OUTER DARK PICTURES PRESENTS "VULNERABLE" ADAM BELLAMY MILES GALLANT SAMSON READ SUE MAUND ETHAN ROUÉ
AND CHARLES MAYELL-THOMAS NATALIE READ OLIVIA ROSE DAVID MUSIC BY TREVOR WENSLEY WITH SOUND DESIGN BY CHRIS PROCOPIOU
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY NIALL DONEGAN WITH ELLIOT READ EDITED BY MALACHY PETERS WRITTEN DIRECTED AND PRODUCED BY ADAM BELLAMY

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Directed & Written by
ADAM BELLAMY

Starring
ADAM BELLAMY, MILES GALLANT, SAMSON READ, SUE MAUND, ETHAN ROUÉ,
CHARLES MAYELL-THOMAS, NATALIE READ, OLIVIA ROSE DAVID

Cinematography by: NIALL DONEGAN with ELLIOT READ
Editor: MALACHY PETERS
Original Music by: TREVOR WENSLEY

Produced by
ADAM BELLAMY

An ADAM BELLAMY film
in association with OUTER DARK PICTURES

CONTACT DETAILS

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www.vulnerablesortfilm.com/contact



“This film is excellent; a perfectly paced and well told story”

- *Will Gompertz*

“A really interesting way to handle such a tender subject, revealing a side you wouldn’t consider”

- *Film London*

“This film really resonated with me based on the relationship and content but it also took me on a journey. I didn’t think it was possible to travel from one point to a different point of time within a span of a short film and I just thought it was fantastic”

- *Lou Ferrigno Jr*

Runtime	17:57mins
Sound mix	5.1/Stereo
Colour	Colour
Camera	Canon EOS C300 Mark I
Language	English
Country of Origin	United kingdom
Aspect Ratio	16:9, 2K Scope (239)
Frame Rate	25FPS SMPTE

LINKS

www.vulnerablesortfilm.com

OFFICIAL TRAILER

IMDB PAGE



www.facebook.com/VulnerableShortFilm/



www.instagram.com/vulnerable_short_film



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#vulnerablesortfilm



LOGLINE

The shock of a chance meeting, after 22 years apart, launches a young man onto a bittersweet journey into the past with his 'oldest' best friend; the man who groomed him as a boy.

SYNOPSIS

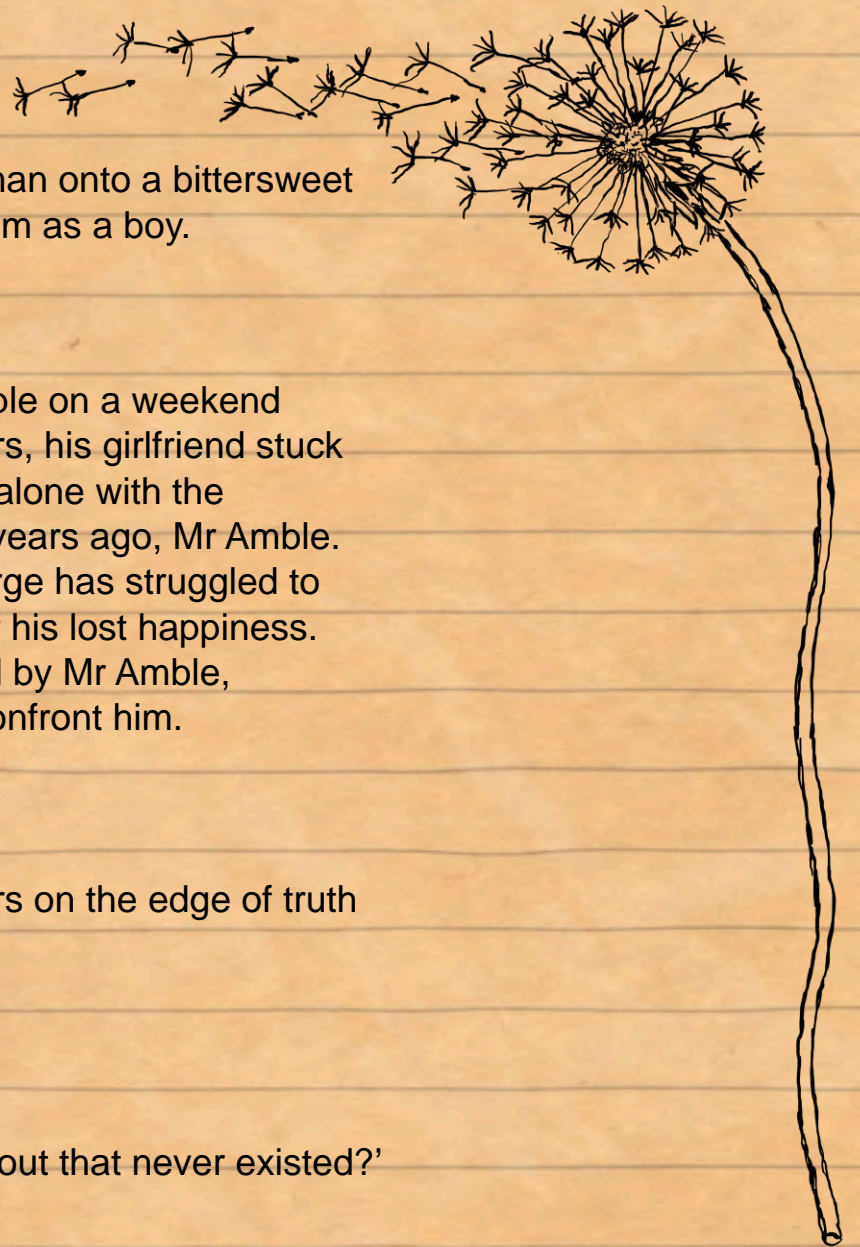
Among the peace and quiet of the rural English countryside, a young couple on a weekend camping break stop by a quaint village shop for supplies. As George enters, his girlfriend stuck outside talking to a local busy-body, he finds himself paralysed by shock, alone with the shopkeeper; a previously convicted man who groomed him as a child 22 years ago, Mr Amble. Ever since his idyllic childhood memories were thrown into question, George has struggled to accept the apparent truth of it all, living a life longing for the consolation of his lost happiness. Struggling to master overwhelming emotion, George, as yet unrecognised by Mr Amble, emboldened by adrenaline and a life-long need for answers, decides to confront him.

But what follows isn't entirely what George had imagined.

At once both beautiful and traumatic; a journey of reconciliation that teeters on the edge of truth and deception.

Tagline

'Can you imagine having a place to go to be safe and happy then finding out that never existed?'





Directors Statement

Vulnerable is a film inspired by something that happened to me when I was a boy. At 10 years old, I began a friendship with a 40 year old man who came to mean the world to me and who forged a meaningful and trusting relationship with my family. It was like having this amazing big adult-kid best friend who took me out on day trips, taught me new things, wrote to me and inspired me. Many of my happiest and most cherished childhood memories were made during my time with him. Though when we eventually parted ways, no physical advances had been made, 12 years later he was being sentenced to imprisonment for grooming and sexually abusing children. In that moment, that remembered contentedness which I could once console myself with was lost - replaced by survivors guilt.

When you're so sure of the legitimacy of a feeling, it's exponentially harder to digest the possibility of it not being real; the greater its meaning to you, the deeper the potential consequences are of its loss.

How could it be true? Having to accept the apparent truth of his guilt left me living for a long time suspended in unrest, longing for that lost happiness. It was only through the making of this film that I have come to understand the full gravity of that.

22 years since we first met, and with his sentence served, I began to feel empowered by the sheer courage of others, who, finding strength in movements such as MeToo, have come forward with historical traumatic experiences similar to or worse than mine. My thoughts turned towards my own story and the questions started to stir again.

What drives someone to behave in such a way towards a child?
Does he understand the enormous impact those days had on me?
Was any of that shared happiness which I'd cherished for so many years, real?
And what would happen if I had the chance to confront the man responsible?

Vulnerable follows George, a young man who has a shock chance meeting with Mr Amble, the man that groomed him as a boy, launching us onto a bittersweet journey into the past.

The contemporary scenes are the imaginary and speculative take on what might happen if this event occurred; the scenes set in the past are directly inspired by true events experienced by me.

I was passionate about making a film that shares, reveals and explores - with raw honesty, all the truths, light and dark, of an experience like mine. The film looks to challenge, surprise and expand the viewer's understanding of the profound, long lasting emotional and psychological effects that can remain with a victim into their adulthood.

While there are a lot of films which deal with this subject, *Vulnerable* is unique in that it does not set out to portray explicit or harrowing events. Instead it immerses you into an account full of beauty, love and earnestness that one might not associate with the subject.



It's estimated that one in five adults have experienced some form of child abuse

Vulnerable is a societal mission film. When it comes to representing the victim experience, my film (and many others) should be an enlightening experience for the public, even if this feels unsettling. The film tackles a subject choked by taboo, particularly as it gives voice to a character that society deems inherently evil. Our usual approach to such characters is to avoid humanising them, as it's uncomfortable. However, if this is a problem we wish to move towards solving, we need films like *Vulnerable* that examine these kinds of cases with a greater depth of honesty. This is the only way to make progress, to avoid future victims, and to widen the understanding of the complexity of the effects of abuse.

I was careful to ensure that, while *Vulnerable* does this, our condemnation of Mr Amble does not waver. The film does not seek to justify, but through extensive research, working with a specialist on schedule one offenders, the film provides scope to the background that culminated in his actions, and presents him as a human, not a monster.

Making Mr Amble a potential catalyst for a change of perception, appeasing and questioning the validity of our judgement, opens up a sense of moral and emotional jeopardy which immerses us in George's dilemma while simultaneously giving a nod to the manipulation associated with engaging with a man like Mr Amble.

What is honest and what is manipulation? The ambiguity is intentional and something I wanted audiences to really experience for themselves. This is how it feels in reality - never really settling on either side of truth or deception.

As well as these primary aims, at its heart the film also examines the depth of impact of loss, the search for consolation and what happens without it.

Because so much of the story is woven into what it is to remember a land of contentedness and magic, I wanted to be sure that a sense of nostalgia and the essence of what it is to be a child was really present in the film. This sense is evoked not only by the use of authentic props, clothing, toys and sweets but also by the score; fleeting xylophonic motifs representative of the innocence of childhood; an arrangement of clarinets evoking a harmonic sense of the 'good old days' and a single continuous note underpinning the whole score that bonds the two characters together.

By contrast, I wanted to have a solidity to the world of the present, reflecting the importance of keeping one foot in reality and the seriousness of the situation. Cinematically this is supported through the colour grade; moving from the fluorescence and ordinariness of the shop into the rose-tinted warmth and vibrancy of the past, as well as switching between shooting static and handheld. The blending of these modes of reality comments on the ease with which the ebb and flow of reminiscence can permeate our consciousness, particularly when we are at our most vulnerable, as both our characters are.

Sadly, the relevance of this film increases every day as new victims are preyed upon. Countless lives - children, family members, even perpetrators - are being irrevocably changed. This film endeavours to expand awareness and start a conversation. An early private screening has already given rise to discussions surrounding the ethics of empathy, the efficacy of rehabilitation, and the spectrum from regression to remission. The film has also provoked introspection among the audience, giving rise to questions of where our own childhood experience might sit relative to events in the film.

My hope is that this film will embolden others to step forward and speak of their experience; it exists for all those who have been silenced by guilt, pain, shame and other such lacerating emotions.

Adam Bellamy
Writer and Director





The Cast

Adam Bellamy - George

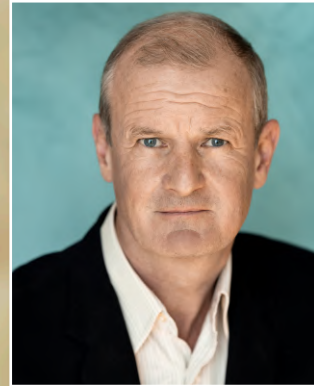


Adam is a British actor based in London, originally from Hampshire. Since training at East 15 Acting School, Adam has worked extensively in film, television and commercials in the UK and abroad. Notably as Cecil Gosling in James Gray's *The Lost City of Z* (Plan B/Studio Canal) alongside Charlie Hunnam and Robert Pattinson and David in BAFTA Scotland nominated *Body of Water* (BFI/BBC) with Sian Brooke, directed by Lucy Brydon.

Adam has also worked on numerous short films including ThatFilmFestival finalist, *Blue Room*, directed by BAFTA winning, Kate Cheeseman. He won Best Actor for his role of Thomas in 80's social realist drama, *Blue Monday* directed by Fintan O'Connor, at Feel The Reel Int Film Festival. Also a finalist for Best Short at BAFTA qualifying Carmarthen Bay 2023.

Onstage, Adam played in the RSC's *King Lear* with Anthony Sher and in the UK premier of *Dead Man Walking* with Joyce Didonato at The Barbican. He is also the first actor to play Barnaby Rudge in a full stage adaptation of the Dickens novel, staged at the Kings Theatre, Portsmouth. This was met with great acclaim from the World Dickens Fellowship, where Adam was subsequently highlighted for his work on Barnaby in the publication, *The Dickensian*.

Miles Gallant - Mr Amble



Miles's experience in theatre ranges from immersive, devised work to classical texts and includes a critically acclaimed solo show about Stan Laurel, national and regional tours, and the West End. Screen credits include *Darkest Hour* with Gary Oldman and *Little Howard's Big Question* - a credit which, coincidentally, he shares with Samson Read - though not the same episodes!

With the return of live performance after the pandemic he is very pleased to resume his long-standing connection with the Globe Players bringing the work of Shakespeare, Dickens, Priestley and others to young audiences.

Miles has been involved in the realisation of his character in *Vulnerable* since the beginning of the creative process and is very excited to be bringing it to the screen.

Samson Read - Young George



Samson made his TV debut in *Comedy Cuts* (ITV2) when he was three weeks old followed by *Little Howard's Big Question* (CBBC) a few months later. He took a break for a few years to concentrate on dribbling and generally being a baby. He joined Comedy Club 4 Kids at the age of 8 and started performing stand up comedy as a solo artist and sketch comedy with his sister. Since then he has performed gigs all over the country including: The Edinburgh Festival, The Soho Theatre, The Udderbelly, Latitude Festival and at the Disney DVD launch for *Inside Out*. Samson has played a number of roles in *Horrible Histories*, including Charles Dickens' son. He is very excited to be in *Vulnerable*.

Sue Maund - Audrey



Sue trained at Drama Studio London. She started out in fringe theatre, playing Patty in Bond's *The Fool* and Mae in Fornes' *Mud*, while supporting herself with a variety of jobs including ironing Ken Russell's underpants. Following a baffled two years with Theatre Pur trying to understand performance art, she moved on to make micro-appearances behind Nicole Kidman in *The Birthday Girl*, Peter Mullan in *Miss Julie* and a rather large volcano in *Krakatoa* for Channel 4. Her one title role, in Scarlet Theatre's *Princess Sharon*, involved walking, sitting down and suffering in silence, before choking to death on a haddock. Since graduating to full Old Bat status playing Miss Havisham for Northern Stage, she has variously been typecast on film as an alcoholic prostitute in *Saxon*, a delusional child-killer in *6 x 6* and a psychotic vengeful axe-murdering Irish Gypsy matriarch in *Traveller*. More recently she has played eccentric spinster Miss Missy 2 in *Set Fire To The Stars*, hapless Teacher 2 in *Holmes + Watson*, and Druid Elder 3 (with dead squirrel on head) in *Britannia*. Occasionally her roles have actual names: Einstein's landlady Frau Schnellham in *Genius:Einstein*, and French witch Bette Ozanne in Netflix series *The Bastard Son & The Devil Himself* Sue's kindest review (for Princess Sharon) described her as "plain, strange and luminous". However her brother thought she looked like Old Steptoe.



Ethan Roué - Rowan

Ethan has been a member of Stagecoach Performing Arts school from the age of 4. He has enjoyed a variety of roles including Tiny Tim in a *Christmas Carol*, Jim Hawkins in *Treasure Island* and Riff in *West Side Story*. He played the lead role in the film *Believe* written and directed by students at Southampton Solent University. On stage Ethan has performed in *An Inspector Calls* at the Mayflower, Southampton and as Winfield Joad in *Grapes of Wrath* at the Nuffield Theatre. He is now studying drama as a GCSE and is looking forward to adding to his experience and film roles in *Vulnerable*.

Charles Mayell-Thomas - Boys

Charlie is delighted to be making his film debut in *Vulnerable*. Charlie's acting experience has been in school productions, where he has thrown himself into all sorts of roles (from Jesus to Declan Donnelly!) with great enthusiasm. As well as acting, he enjoys music, maths and performing magic, and has recently been invested in his local Scouts group. Charlie's next theatrical ambition is to perform in a Shakespeare with the theatre company to which his parents both belong, the Southsea Shakespeare Actors.

Natalie Read - Lisa

Natalie has written, acted and produced for TV and theatre. Her credits include: Comedy Cuts (ITV2) The Advantage for Jobsite, Derek Acorah's Ghost Towns: Revealed (LivingTV) and Robbie Williams Uncovered (Chart Show TV). She has recently dipped her toe into stand up comedy.

Olivia Rose David - Laura

Olivia is a graduate of East 15 Acting School, having previously studied in Bristol and taken part in the Edinburgh Fringe and Bristol One Act Festival. Since graduating, she has worked on a devised show called *Whale* at the Courtyard theatre, shot several short films and worked in two productions at the Lyric Hammersmith. Most recently, she has been on the other side of 'the desk' and has helped casting shows for the West End and television shows for Netflix, Disney+ and ITV.

The Creative Team



Adam Bellamy - Director/Writer/Producer

Adam makes both his screenplay and film directorial debuts with *Vulnerable* and has enjoyed bringing his story to fruition both in writing and by translating his knowledge and skills of working as an actor in front of camera to directing behind it!

His playwriting credits include co-writing *The Keepers*, a comedic and poignant piece about the ravens of the Tower of London, exploring what it is like to be born into duty. First performed at the Corbett Theatre at East 15 with a subsequent run at the Etcetera Theatre Camden, it was met with great acclaim by Chris Skaife, Raven Master of the Tower and audiences alike.



Niall Donegan - Director of Photography

Niall Donegan is a filmmaker based in Belfast and London. He is a co-founder of Outer Dark Pictures, along with the brothers Elliot & Reuben Vick. Since 2015 Outer Dark has independently produced a dozen films ranging from 8 to 80 minutes. Details of their work are available at www.outerdark.co.uk Their most recent project is their first horror film, *The Microscope*, which has played at several prestigious horror festivals including Arrow FrightFest London and the Telluride Horror Show. In addition to producing all of Outer Dark's projects, Niall has directed two short films. He describes himself as a fifth-rate Terrence Malick tribute act.

Besides filmmaking, Niall has an academic background in International Politics and Anthropology, and worked for a number of years across several arts institutions in London including the Barbican and the BFI.



Elliot Vick - Lighting Cameraman

Elliot Vick is a filmmaker based in London. He currently balances his time between working in video production and making films with Outer Dark Pictures, which he co-founded with Niall Donegan. As part of Outer Dark Pictures he has worked on several shorts and one feature film.

He is a self-taught cinematographer and has honed his skills through a varied career in video production and watching every interview that Roger Deakins has ever done. Other cinematography influences include, Robert Elswit, Robert Richardson and Robbie Ryan. Anyone called Robert, basically.

He is drawn to stories that expose the dark undercurrent that is often hiding just beneath the surface of civilised society. Upcoming projects include a post-apocalyptic stop-motion film and a screenplay about birdwatching in Norfolk.



Diarmaid Browne - Assistant Direction

Diarmaid Trained in acting at East 15 Acting School and has worked professionally as an actor, director and acting coach in London and abroad. His theatre credits include *The Trojan Women* at The Gate Theatre, *Brief* at TDC, Cork Irl, a UK tour of *Wasted* with Theatre ADAD and various site specific pieces around London, including *Secret Cinema* and *Alice's Adventures Underground*. Directing credits include *White Meat* at the Courtyard Theatre, *Infraction* at the Etcetera Theatre for Camden Fringe and *Flail* at The Cockpit Theatre. Diarmaid has since regularly directed and facilitated with the Globe Theatre across a variety of programmes.

Trevor Wensley - composer

After studying composition at Bristol University, Trevor spent a number of years playing synthesizers in a band; touring and recording multiple albums. He now divides his time as a performer, composer, arranger, session musician, teacher and accompanist. As well as recording music in a variety of styles for music libraries, Trevor has recently released a collection of contemporary classical piano pieces.

Christodoulos Procopiou - sound design/overall mix

Chris Procopiou is a London based Sound Designer specialising in narrative-driven Sound Design with an emphasis on reinforcing emotion and highlighting action. His professional approach employs an amalgamation of organic sound sources derived from bespoke recordings blended together to create a complex soundscape that drives and contributes to the story. His work spans across feature films, documentaries, branded content, and Virtual Reality.

His most recent credits include feature documentary *Meet Me in The Bathroom* premiered in Sundance Film Festival 2022 as Sound Effects Editor; audiobook *The Christmas Pig* by J.K.Rowling as Sound Designer; feature documentary *Going Circular* by the producers of the award-winning documentary *My Octopus Teacher* as Sound Effects Editor; VR experience *Ripples of Kindness* that accompanies the theatre production *The Boy With Two Hearts* as Sound Designer. A selection of past notable credits include: multiple feature films on the critically acclaimed *DAU film project*; multi-sensory VR documentary and VR Awards finalist *Some Inattention to the Left*; and award-winning short films *A Girls*, *Acceptance*, and *Nothing Ever Happens*.

Steve Bond - Music mix

Steve Bond is an award-winning sound designer and re-recording mixer for film, TV and radio. He graduated with a distinction from the National Film and Television School in 2012 (MA Sound Design) and works from various locations, including his own 5.1 studio in London. Before turning his attention to sound, he had a successful career in the music industry, releasing albums through major and independent labels across the world.

He has been part of many award-winning and nominated productions including *Boogaloo and Graham* - BAFTA win and Oscar nomination in 2015. At the 2021 BBC Audio Drama Awards he won twice for his work as both sound designer and producer. He picked up three gold awards at the New York Festivals in 2018 and 2019 and was named 'Best Sound Designer' at the 2017 Audio Production Awards. At the 2016 Music and Sound Awards, he won 'Best Sound Design: Feature Film', for *Nina Forever* and 'Best Sound Design: Television Programme' for *Messy Goes to Okido*. In 2015 he won the BBC Audio Drama Award for 'Best use of Sound' for *The Boy at the Back* for BBC Radio 3.

Laura McFall - Social work consultant

Laura McFall is an experienced Children's Social Worker who has worked across the spectrum of service user groups. She has a special interest in Looked After Children and understanding and supporting trauma related behaviour. She has also worked extensively in criminal justice settings where her work extends from supporting young people in PRU's to working with schedule one offenders with a view to reducing their risk of re-offending. She has been a consultant for the NSPCC and Solace Women's Aid and is currently working for the National Fostering Group as an Independent Assessor. Laura is also a trained actor and therefore understands the process of developing and embodying character. She is therefore in the unique position of understanding the requirements actors and directors have on a film set, as well as having expertise in the area of perpetrators and the impact they have on vulnerable people. She was delighted to be able to contribute to the development of this important film.









Frequently asked questions of director Adam Bellamy about the making of 'Vulnerable'

This story is inspired by real events, personal to you. Have you found this process cathartic?

This has been one of the most asked questions and it's a tough one to answer.

Before embarking on the film, I'd have said I didn't expect it to be.

I knew I had a myriad of feelings that I felt I'd dealt with sufficiently successfully over the years that I could transpose them into a film. A piece that would enable viewers to reflect upon, and come away with a better rendered understanding of, the effects of this kind of abuse.

However, I didn't expect to find myself a stronger person at the end of the process. Making the film meant excavating my feelings more deeply than before, and I came to realise I'd perhaps not actually reached the level of content and acceptance I thought I had.

Having to consider things from Mr Amble's side without bias or active judgement - even to allow empathy (though not justification) as to the origin of his behaviour - led me to better understand his emotional connection to events and ultimately to a better film.

Although George is essentially a version of myself, I deliberately gave him more courageous characteristics than I possess and used him as a conduit to explore what it would be like if I, like George, was more conscious of an absolute need for answers; and had the nerve to confront his abuser given the chance. It is through the experience of all of this that I feel it was cathartic, as the film allowed me to excavate deeper than had before.

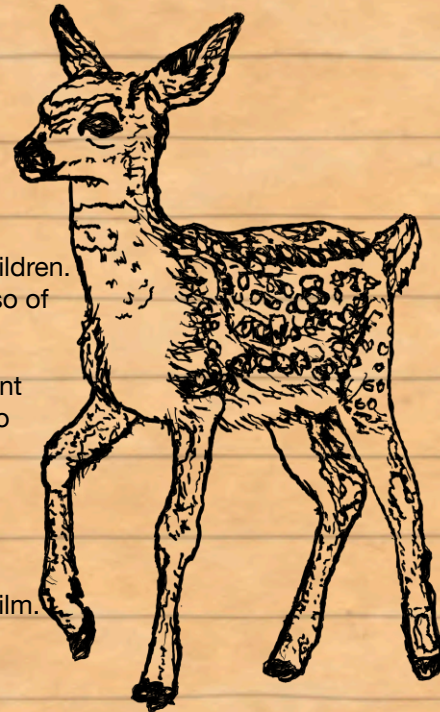
What was your approach to working with children on a film with this subject matter, and what were the challenges?

The challenge was to obtain natural, instinctive performances, representing the naivety, playfulness, spontaneity, magic and innocence we all have as children. I needed to simultaneously navigate all the seriousness of the conditioning happening without it being spoilt by any kind of subconscious judgement. Also of course, safeguarding was also a prime consideration.

It was particularly important to capture from Samson, who plays young George, a natural, in-the-moment performance utterly true to these pre-adolescent qualities. I felt the best and most freeing way to allow him to do this while interacting with Miles and taking direction, was for him to remain unaware as to what the film was about. It helped that Miles and Samson had an existing foundation of trust and a great rapport. In fact Miles is Samson's sisters' godfather.

Samson's parents agreed and together we saw this as an opportunity to use the experience as a catalyst for educating him about the dangers of adults who might behave in a certain way towards children. So, a month or so after filming, he was told and I was pleased to hear that it was a successful approach, leading towards an enriched understanding and perception of how relationships like this occur. Similar was done for the other children in the film.

Finally, I made sure that the parents of all the children were involved throughout the process and were on set.



What form of rehearsal process, if any, did you have prior to shooting?

I spent a lot of time working with Miles during the writing process, workshoping bits of dialogue and physically carving out moments, investigating where things either were or weren't working well.

So the relationship of the characters in time and space developed over a long time and also informed the script. While not considered rehearsals, they still helped render the how the story might progress in a textual way and also gave us the opportunity to discuss approaches to character, actioning lines and movement.

I chose not to rehearse any of the moments between Miles and Samson however, as I wanted to keep that as spontaneous as possible although, like all of the film, it was storyboarded. When it came to the run up to filming in the shop we rehearsed much like you would a play, running the scene from start to finish without breaking. We had a studio at the Globe Theatre for a few days where we set out the perimeters of the shop and played in the space, allowing the freedom of our instincts in character to bring out the pacing and movements organically. It was important to me that the shot designs arose from performance rather than the other way around because I didn't want the already difficult, emotional complexities the actors were navigating to be stifled or restricted by technical aspects. The presence and sensitivity of the DOP in the rehearsal process meant that the visual story telling really aligned with the characters' states and facilitated the intended feel of the journey I wanted the viewer to experience.

Of course, when on location we inevitably found some alterations were necessary due to the confines of the reality of being in the space - supportive pillars, furniture and stock for example. However, because of the way in which we'd rehearsed together, the integrity remained solid.

How did you approach understanding and writing from the perspective of an offender such as Mr Amble?

Aside from the truth-based depiction we see of the past, I knew it was essential to present a realistic, well-informed imagining of the character of Mr Amble as he might be in the present. Regardless of how society might perceive and treat those who have committed such offences against children I believed, even as a victim myself, that I had a responsibility not to approach the construction of this character with the aim of simply vilifying him. If I did, then I would deny viewers, and indeed myself, the opportunity to gain a better rendered understanding of him, others like him, and, crucially, what it is that may have led to his developing this behaviour and the feelings that lie behind it.

Equally important is an understanding of the emotional and psychological complexities involved and their effects, past and present on George, and how and why he could ever engage in conversation with the perpetrator responsible.

To construct an set of circumstances for Mr Amble today, during the writing process I met with Laura McFall - a children's social worker with extensive experience working with schedule one offenders in criminal justice settings and an expert on their impact on vulnerable people. She was able to advise on the character's realistic behavioural attributes and the language and tactics they might use when confronted by a situation such as in the film. Laura also gave me a better insight of what's involved in the rehabilitation process, now and historically, and of the integration of offenders back into society. Having an idea of how they are supported and monitored, the possible types of employment, likely geographical placement, and what stimuli might cause regression, was invaluable and helped to enrich the clarity and situational accuracy of the script.

What made you want to direct this film yourself? How did you manage directing and acting in the film?

I was passionate from an early point that I was the right person to direct the film. It wasn't just the advantage of my understanding of the intention behind the script, having written it, but also that I felt I was uniquely placed to get the viewer as close as possible to the unique and truthful perspective of the lived experience. The result, I believe, has led to a better insight, journey and understanding of the difficulties surrounding the psychology of George's experience - particularly as the scenes of the past are so close to the actual remembered events. In fact, often times on set during the scenes with young George, I felt I was staring directly at my younger self through a kind of time travelling mirror.

When it came to acting & directing, I tried to keep those different states of mind as independent as possible. I had a trusted director friend of mine, Diarmaid Browne, work on the scenes in which I am in. We spent a lot of time prior to rehearsals talking about my intentions as writer, so that when it came to Diarmaid implementing direction and ideas, I was able to solely and freely respond as an actor without being worried about the integrity of the piece overall. As a result, I didn't find this too difficult and I always made sure to be present in the moment as George, staying curious about the scene at hand and open to direction just as I would be in any other role.

How important do you think the music and sound design is in the storytelling of the film?

They're both vital. I think the role that music, and sound design more broadly plays in the film is critical in transporting you into the world of the central characters, both environmentally and viscerally.

I knew on a very deep level that the music had to arise unobtrusively from performance and story, to be intertwined within the words and the emotional progression of the characters.

While existing music might have worked tonally, I didn't want it to just co-exist, so although I had ideas of sound and timing during the edit, it had to come in post picture lock. I worked closely with Trevor Wensley to compose an original score, written to picture. Trevor was recommended to me by a friend and his incredible music and emotive style were a perfect fit.

I took some inspiration from sections of romantic classical waltz pieces that I'd heard the London Symphony Orchestra play. While I didn't want the score to sound too classical, I love the embracing warmth of the string section and the time signature of a waltz always puts me in mind of a pulse, something with life in it. I chose to use these elements in the score to represent the accelerating pace and the nostalgic memories coming to life. Furthermore, I knew I wanted the beauty of the piano to be a driving force - it's such an emotional instrument - capable of expressing both the strength of fondness and the melancholy of the wistful way in which the past is recalled by both the characters.

In terms of sound design, I wanted the soundscape to reflect the emotive journey and subject matter with the same degree of consideration and honesty as the score. There's a lot of precision to the timing and presence of textures, SFX's and foley across the film, all designed with care to align the viewers experience in affinity with George's. The degree of control I had with Chris Procopiou on the sound design was so precise in fact, I was even able to hone in on individual birds to cut, move or intensify within the birdsong!



What is the relevance of the lined paper and drawings on the poster and in the film?

I wanted something that visually represented how magical, imaginative and open the world felt with him while also giving the flavour of being betwixt reality and memory that we experience in the film. It was important to me for it to be drawn from something that was unique to our relationship.

A big part of our connection was the exchange of letters. Letters are such an intimate form of communication and in our case, it really nurtured the relationship greatly. He always wrote his letters to me on this distinct yellow lined paper in black fountain pen and, being a remarkable artist, he would surround the words with beautifully drawn animals that we'd seen on our walks. I remember them feeling so animated and so personal to our adventures, I was always excited as to what might come next. The content of the letters was very inspiring and deeply encouraging of my (terrible) reciprocal artwork. They gave me a sense that I could do anything, they were a part of something good for my confidence. That was the teacher in him.

This was a world before smart phones, instant messages and email and I wanted to include in the film the way that communication continued in-between our time together; the anticipation and the importance that that element had on the relationship. Receiving a handwritten message in a letter is like owning a little imprint of the author, evidence that they touched that very page, evidence of the relationship we had. Revisiting or remembering an old letter from an important person can be powerful; feelings and memories reverberating through the intervening years can cause joy and sadness in equal measure. Something I have tried to capture within the film.

I remember my mum sharing in the excitement of me opening these letters. It's important to acknowledge that these events cast a long shadow and she was as much a subject of manipulation and the nurturing of trust as I was.

How did you create the world of the summer of 1996?

I was once told when shooting a period scene that if the audience don't notice the attention to detail in the production values, then that's the mark of a job well done. One item out of place breaks the spell; pulling the audience out of immersion and the world of the story. I love that sentiment. So I set the goal that everything had to be authentic or be recreated from scratch to look so.

It was important for me that the viewers could really draw on their own emotional memory and have a shared experience of nostalgia. I found that exploring other provocative planes, transcending solely visual stimuli, really affective; for example old 'retro' sweets, particular to an era, can trigger a long forgotten sense of taste or smell.

I'm a very sentimental person so I often keep things that have some memory, or value beyond the mere monetary, associated with them. I feel these relics stand for something that contribute to what makes you, you and I think that this sense is inherent in the nature of '*Vulnerable*' - a story so shot through with what it is to remember, and value, a land of contentedness and magic. Some indication of how impactful those days were to me and, I like to think, a sign that in some ways I was destined to tell this story - is that many of the items we see in the film belonging to young George in the film are actually my own childhood possessions.

Perhaps the most poignant is that the football shirt worn by Samson in the film is literally the very same shirt that I wore when this was happening to me.

What inspired you cinematically and how did this inform the way in which you shot?

The film takes us across two time periods, with two distinctly different tonal identities. The present needed to feel anchored in reality and the past a progressively looser, freer, far away land of happy memories.

I chose to distinguish them by having the camera static in the present, creating a feeling of stability representative of both the seriousness and complexity of the subject matter and the consciousness we experience in reality. By contrast, in the past the camera was almost entirely handheld, drawing us from confrontation and reality into immersive reminiscence and nostalgic dream by its ability to move.

Some of my cinematic inspiration was drawn from a short by Ben Briand called *Apricot*. Like *Vulnerable*, *Apricot* sees a shared experience between two characters emerge from years long past. I loved Ben's use of intermittent focus, subjects partially in shot, and synergy with a textured sound design to introduce us slowly to a world of memory. This was something I had already envisioned for *Vulnerable*, so tonally it was a great point of reference for how I wanted the viewer to experience the journey of the film.

The choice to shoot in a cinematic aspect ratio and on prime lenses reflects the way in which I feel happy memories can sometimes play out in our heads like a film - always seeming to be at the golden hour, a story of which we are part of but which we also experience as a viewer, a voyeur. It gives the film a sense of focus and scope to match the breadth and depth of the subject matter.

What led you to set the film inside a shop?

It was important to me that the encounter was set within a quiet, aesthetically idyllic environment in order to heighten the sense of injustice George might feel as to his expectations of how someone like Mr Amble should be living. The fact that Amble appears to be liked by the locals and comfortable exacerbates this. Along with the rural setting, the shop provides a space at once both public and private for the characters' encounter. Furthermore, as a functioning shop, it also elevates the jeopardy for Mr Amble as anyone can walk in at any minute.

The possible employment engagements in the initial stages of integrating people like Mr Amble back into society, include volunteering - often at establishments classed as community assets. These are places in the control of local people. The shop in the film, where Mr Amble is volunteering and has built a life, is presented as such a community asset - as indeed it is in real life!

What were some of the most challenging aspects about the shoot?

As an entirely self-funded and produced film with a tight budget, the production was often confronted by certain limitations - whether that was access to particular equipment, time restrictions in a location or simply me having to save up the money.

However, I really believe that when you encounter constraints you gain an opportunity to be more creative and to find imaginative solutions. For example, we only had access to the shop for little under 8 hours, so to utilise the time best, we managed to integrate the use of shop's practical's more than we might otherwise have done, combining light sources already present in the location with our own light resources. I saw this as a way to enhance the visuals of the story telling to better creative effect; leaning into the ordinary and everyday feeling of the present day, strengthened the nostalgic sunny images of the past, and resulting in a more extraordinary, brighter and vibrant contrast.

9 months into post, we found we had to shoot a small number of additional shots in the shop. Tricky when the stock had changed and so too has the 11-year-old, who is now nearly 12 - kids grow up fast! Luckily, with a little creativity, we were able to match him. However, we were not so lucky with an item of furniture which had since been disposed of. There was nothing for it but to create a replica (which involved getting enthusiastic with a hacksaw). Then we painstakingly recreated the relevant stock by referencing the original preceding clip and getting inventive on an iPad. The two shots, 9 months apart, are separated by one cut-away and you'd never know!

A large portion of post-production was done during the pandemic, causing delays and additional challenges in having to work remotely on the music and sound design. However, while feedback on the artist's work was difficult and less immediate as it might normally have been, I was able to turn it into an opportunity to use the additional time to really be specific about small details.

What did you enjoy most about making the film and what aspects are you most proud of?

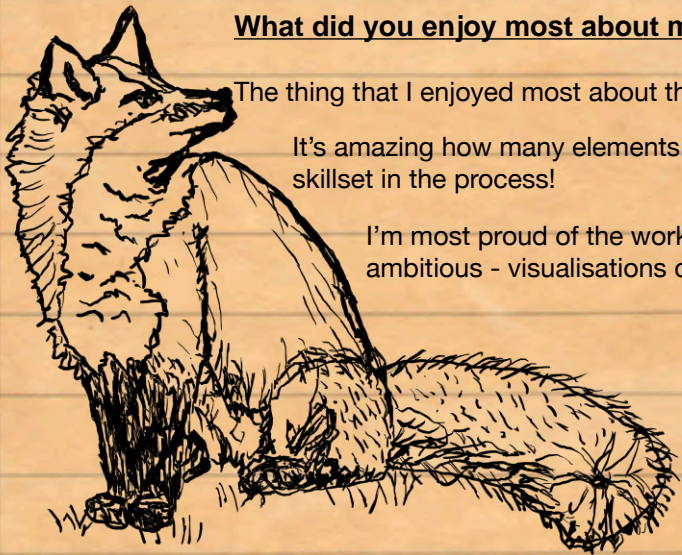
The thing that I enjoyed most about this experience was seeing an idea go from concept right through to creation, and ultimately having the film I'd envisioned brought to life.

It's amazing how many elements are involved in making a film, from pre-production right through to post, so I've also enjoyed developing an entire new, and very broad, skillset in the process!

I'm most proud of the work of the team of people that I've had the immense privilege of working with on this film, without whom, the realisation of my - often ambitious - visualisations could not have been achieved. The cast and creative team were all amazing, generous and immeasurably talented.

On a personal level, I feel pride in having been able to turn and face an experience from my past and allow myself to explore the truth of it; the bad and, yes, the good: to help play my part in raising awareness of the breadth, depth and longevity of the effects on victims of conditioning. Also, hopefully, to help open a discussion and provoke people to ask questions on a difficult subject.

I'm also really pleased of how authentically I managed to capture the essence of the experience, as it felt to me, all those years ago.









Cast & Crew

Directed Written & Produced by
ADAM BELLAMY

Assistant Direction
DIARMAID BROWNE

George
ADAM BELLAMY

Mr Amble
MILES GALLANT

Young George
SAMSON READ

Audrey
SUE MAUND

Rowan
ETHAN ROUÉ

Boy
CHARLES MAYELL-THOMAS

Lisa
NATALIE READ

Laura
OLIVIA ROSE DAVID

DOP/Cinematography
NIALL DONEGAN

Lighting Cameraman
ELLIOT VICK

Editor
MALACHY PETERS

Original Music by
TREVOR WENSLEY

Sound Design & Mixing
CHRISTODOULOS PROCOPIOU

Music Mix
STEVE BOND

Sound Recordist
REUBEN VICK

Production Management
NATALIE EAGLING

Production Assistant
HARRI PLUNKETT & NATALIE READ

Script Supervisor
NIALL DONEGAN

Colourist
GERARD GIORGI-COLL

Dialogue Editor
PANOS CHOUNTOULIDIS

Foley Artists
YURI PRIDACHIN & DMITRIY ALEXEEV

Foley Mixers
NATASHA SELEZNEVA & VLADIMIR SMAGIN

Foley Editors
SERGEY KLIMENTOVSKIY & SLAVA POBORUEV

Radio V/O Artist
ANDREW BAGULEY

ADR
OUTER DARK PICTURES

Costume Design
TAVI AUSTIN & ADAM BELLAMY

Illustrations and Artwork
EBONY FAHEY

Title Design
YASMIN LENNON-CHONG

Locations
ADAM BELLAMY &
JESS CHANNON

Stills Photography
GIULIA DELPRATO

Social Work Consultant
LAURA MCFALL

Digital Cinema Mastering
THE POST FACTORY

Sound Mixed at
SOUND DISPOSITION

Lens Hire
HIRE A CAMERA

Equipment Hire & Insurance arranged by
OUTER DARK PICTURES

A Very Special Thanks to:
MILES GALLANT & JESS CHANNON

Thanks to:

OUTER DARK PICTURES - SHERI BIRCH & THE LODSWORTH LARDER - THE GARDEN GATE AND FARM -
HERTFORDSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL - MIDHURST PRIMARY SCHOOL - NICHOLS PLC - OUGHTONHEAD
COMMON MANAGEMENT - PHILLIP LAWTON & ASHCROFT FARM - THE HOLLIST ARMS - THE GLOBE THEATRE

NICHOLAS AGNEW - DAVID BROWN - JANET GOODYEAR - JOHN GOODYEAR - LAURA MCFALL - HOWARD READ -
NATALIE READ - CELINE ROUÉ - ANDY THOMAS - DIARMAID BROWNE - REBECCA GOODEVE - LEIGH-ANNE
GILBERT - DAMIEN HUGHES - YASMIN LENNON-CHONG - RUTA RACKAUSKYTE - MABEL READ - LAUREN REED -
JOANNA WARD - ANNETTE WESTWOOD - RICHARD BROWN - ROBERT DAOUST

Cover/Poster image: Samson Read & Miles Gallant in '*Vulnerable*' Design by Adam Bellamy

Shot on locations at: The Lodsworth Larder Petworth, Oughtonhead Common Hitchin, The Garden Gate and Farm
Hertfordshire, Letchworth Garden City, Hitch Wood Hertfordshire.



