

Strand Releasing presents

SET FIRE TO THE STARS

A FILM BY ANDY GODDARD

**Starring Elijah Wood, Celyn Jones, Steven Mackintosh,
Shirley Henderson, Kevin Eldon and Kelly Reilly**

PRELIMINARY PRESS NOTES

Official Selection:

Edinburgh International Film Festival 2014

Cork International Film Festival 2014

Miami International Film Festival 2015

Seattle International Film Festival 2015

Cinetopia International Film Festival 2015

Country of Origin: United Kingdom

Format: DCP/2.35/Black and White

Sound Format: Dolby Digital

Running Time: 93 minutes

Genre: Drama

Not Rated

In English

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LOGLINE

An aspiring poet in 1950s New York (Elijah Wood) has his ordered world shaken when he embarks on a week-long retreat to save his hell raising hero, Dylan Thomas (Celyn Jones).

SYNOPSIS

Based on true events, Elijah Wood stars as John Malcolm Brinnin, the New York academic who brought Dylan Thomas to America. Actor/co-writer Celyn Jones plays the volatile celebrity poet - tormented by anonymity, alcohol and the abyss - who scandalized the Manhattan literati of the Fifties and challenged Brinnin's hero worship of his work. In the face of the Welsh poet's wilder excesses in the Big Apple - angel, beast and madman - John has no choice but to hijack Dylan to a private retreat to get him ready for America. The days and nights that follow will change his life forever. Part literary biopic and - shot in cut-glass black-and-white - part love-letter to the American B-movies of the Forties and Fifties, Andy Goddard's debut feature is both a character driven chamber piece and a cautionary tale about the fly trap of meeting your heroes.

ABOUT THE CAST

ELIJAH WOOD is an award-winning American actor and film producer widely known for his role of Frodo Baggins in Peter Jackson's blockbuster *Lord of the Rings* trilogy (2001-2003) and its prequel *The Hobbit* (2012). In the wake of the first movie's success, he won Best Actor for the role at the Empire Awards in 2002. Critically acclaimed as a child actor, Wood has enjoyed a varied career including roles in Ang Lee's *The Ice Storm* (1997); *The Faculty* (1998); *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004) and *Sin City* (2005). In 2006 he provided voice work for the award-winning animated musical *Happy Feet* and, a few years later, its sequel, *Happy Feet Two* (2011). In 2010, Wood co-founded The Woodshed, a production company that promotes horror films; the company was later rebranded as SpectreVision. Since 2011, Wood has starred in FX's dark comedy, *Wilfred* for which he's been nominated for Best Actor at both the Satellite and Online Film & Television Awards.

CELYN JONES is a well-known character actor who has built a strong reputation in television, theatre and film. His screen debut was in Charles Sturridge's BAFTA winning epic *Shackleton* (2002) starring Kenneth Branagh. He has since played lead characters in three series of ITV's *Above Suspicion* (2009-11); Tony Marchant's *Leaving* (2012) and played opposite Jean Reno in the international police drama, *Jo* (2013). His other credits include Stephen Poliakoff's *Joe's Palace* (2007); BBC's *Da Vinci's Demons* (2013-14); the hit Sky comedy *Stella* (2014) and more recently the TV movie, *Castles In The Sky* (2014) which premiered at the Edinburgh International Film Festival. As a writer, Jones co-wrote *Set Fire To The Stars* with director Andy Goddard in 2013. He is currently in development with Wildgaze Films and is under commission from Film Cymru Wales for his feature script *Major Goon* based on the origins of The Goons.

STEVEN MACKINTOSH is an award winning actor known for *Lock, Stock & Two Smoking Barrels* (1998); the *Underworld* franchise (2006-9) and BBC's *Luther* (2010). In 2001 he scooped Best Actor at BAFTA and the Royal Television Society for his incendiary performance in Antonia Bird's TV movie, *Care* (2000). In an accomplished career spanning film, television and theatre his many credits include ITV's *Prime Suspect* (1996); the BAFTA winning Dickens adaptation, *Our Mutual Friend* (1998); the BBC mini-series *Criminal Justice* (2009); *Inside Men* (2012); the big screen reboot of *The Sweeney* (2012) and *Kick-Ass 2* (2013).

SHIRLEY HENDERSON is perhaps best known for her roles in *Trainspotting* (1996); *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001) and for playing Moaning Myrtle in the *Harry Potter* franchise. On television from 1995-97 she starred opposite Robert Carlyle in the popular BBC series *Hamish Macbeth*. Her other television credits include *The Way We Live Now* (2001); *The Crimson Petal and the White* (2011) and *Dirty Filthy Love* (2004) for which she was nominated for a Royal Television Society Award. In cinema, Henderson has worked with director Michael Winterbottom on several occasions including *Wonderland* (1999); *24 Hour Party People* (2002) and *The Look of Love* (2013). Elsewhere on the big screen she has

worked with directors including Mike Leigh, Shane Meadows and Joe Wright and was nominated for Best Supporting Actress at the 2013 British Independent Film Awards for Irvine Welsh's *Filth*. In 2014 she received a BAFTA nomination for the acclaimed Channel 4 miniseries *Southcliffe*.

KEVIN ELDON is an actor, comedian and musician who has blazed a trail in British radio and television comedy over the last two decades with regular appearances in *Fists of Fun* (1995-96); *Big Train* (1998-2002); Chris Morris's *Brass Eye* and *Jam* for Channel 4 (1997-2001) and *Stewart Lee's Comedy Vehicle* (2009-14). Other television credits include the award winning *Nighty Night* (2004); Charlie Brooker's dark zombie satire *Dead Set* (2008) and *Ruddy Hell! It's Harry and Paul* (2008-12) with Harry Enfield and Paul Whitehouse. In 2013, Eldon starred in a self-penned six-part sketch show called *It's Kevin* broadcast on BBC2. His film appearances include *Hot Fuzz* (2007); *Four Lions* (2010) and Martin Scorsese's *Hugo* (2011).

KELLY REILLY is one of the most acclaimed young actresses of her generation following her breakout performance in *After Miss Julie* at the Donmar Warehouse which earned her a Best Actress nomination for an Olivier Award in 2003. She went on to win Best Newcomer of the Year in 2006 at the London Critics Film Circle Awards for her role in *Mrs Henderson Presents* (2005) opposite Judi Dench and later received a BIFA nomination for the British horror-thriller *Eden Lake* (2008). She has since starred opposite Denzel Washington in *Flight* (2012) and more recently won acclaim for the award winning *Calvary* (2014) which has been described as a '*tragic, devastating masterpiece*'. Her other film credits include *Pride & Prejudice* (2005); *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) and *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* (2011). In 2014, Reilly led the ABC-TV series *Black Box* about a neuroscientist struggling to overcome her own bipolar disorder.

BEHIND THE CAMERA

MAD AS BIRDS FILMS was formed by AJ Riach, Andy Evans, Celyn Jones and Andy Goddard as the production company to make the feature film *Set Fire To The Stars*. The four have had success in their respective fields: acting, writing, directing, producing and post-production. In Spring 2013, with script in hand, the four launched into pre-production and following its completion the film has attracted stellar reviews across the board. Mad As Birds is currently in development with its second feature, *The Devil To Pay*, a high-octane thriller written by Celyn Jones and actor-writer, Joe Bone.

DIRECTOR

ANDY GODDARD'S debut short *Little Sisters* was nominated for a BAFTA and went on to win several festival awards including Chicago's Gold Hugo. His directing credits for television include *Doctor Who* (2008); *Downton Abbey* (2011-12) and *Once Upon a Time* for ABC (2013). *Set Fire To The Stars* is Goddard's feature debut. He is currently in pre-production on a feature adaptation of Patricia Highsmith's *The Blunderer* to star Patrick Wilson, Jessica Biel and Toby Jones. Financed by Sierra/Affinity and produced by Killer Films, the movie will be released in 2015.

PRODUCERS

AJ RIACH graduated from the University of Sunderland with a 1st Class Honours Degree and went on to work for the production company, New Black Films. Working with the Oscar winning team at New Black, he developed key skills and a thirst for producing great cinema. His short *You Are Me*, produced in association with the charity War Child, enjoyed great success on the festival circuit. The acclaimed documentary *The Battle of the Sexes*, which Riach associate produced, has been released across the world in major territories including UK, USA and Australia. He produced his first feature *The White Room* in 2013 starring Bill Paterson and the Goya winning Oscar Jaenada. More recently in 2014, Riach co-founded Mad As Birds Films.

ANDY EVANS is one of the UK's leading Technical Producer talents, previously owner and MD of the Pavement Studios, one of Europe's most productive and creative DVD, Blu-ray and digital production facilities. He is the preferred choice of top UK/US artistic talent including musicians, directors and leading filmmakers for transposing product onto cutting-edge delivery systems beyond the realm of physical packaged media. Evans's work includes Led Zeppelin's *Celebration Day*; Pink Floyd's *The Wall*, *Wish You Were Here* and *The Dark Side of the Moon* Immersion box sets and Julian Lennon's multi- platform *Everything Changes*.

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

STEVE CLARK-HALL is one of the most successful film producers in the UK

having worked closely with director Guy Ritchie on the *Sherlock Holmes* franchise for Warner Bros (2009-2011) and more recently the re-imagining of Sixties spy-fi caper *The Man From U.N.C.L.E* (set for release 2015). His other credits with Ritchie include *Revolver* (2005) and *RocknRolla* (2008). His television credits include NBC's *Dracula* and the award winning TV movie *Britz* (2008) which explored the aftermath of 9/11 for British-born Muslims. Clark-Hall is Vice Chair of the Production Guild, a member of the British Screen Advisory Council and the co-founder of Skyline Films with producer Mairi Bett.

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

CHRIS SEAGER BSC is a BAFTA and RTS winning cinematographer whose many television credits include *The Way We Live Now* (2001); the multi award winning *State of Play* (2003); *Archangel* (2005); the RSC's Emmy nominated *Hamlet* (2009) and *Game of Thrones* (2013). In addition to his BAFTA wins for *Sex Traffic* (2004) and *The Girl in the Cafe* (2005) Seager has received no less than six BAFTA nominations for excellence in photography and lighting across his television career. His film credits include the award winning *Beautiful Thing* (1995); *White Noise* (2005) and *Stormbreaker* (2006). He was voted onto the British Society of Cinematographers' Board of Governors in 2002 and elected Vice President in 2008.

PRODUCTION DESIGNER

EDWARD THOMAS is an award winning production designer who has won acclaim for his work on *Doctor Who* (Series 1-5); *Torchwood* (Series 1-3) and *The Sarah Jane Adventures* (2007). In 2010, he designed the large-scale BBC science fiction production *Outcasts* in South Africa for Kudos Film & Television. The following year he explored the Manchester United Munich air disaster in *United* for World Productions. His recent credits include the acclaimed police drama, *Line of Duty* (2012) for BBC2 and the high-concept fantasy drama series *Da Vinci's Demons* for STARZ (2013-14). Thomas has received BAFTA and RTS Award nominations for Best Design and won a BAFTA Cymru Award for his work on the first series of *Torchwood* (2007) and *Doctor Who: The Waters of Mars* (2010). He is Vice President of both Swansea City Football Club and the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama.

MUSIC COMPOSER

GRUFF RHYS is an internationally acclaimed musician, songwriter and composer. He has performed solo and with several bands, most notably Super Furry Animals with whom he recorded nine studio albums (1996-2009). In 2006 Rhys formed the electro-pop outfit Neon with American hip-hop producer Boom Bip. Their debut album *Stainless Style* was nominated for the 2008 Nationwide Mercury Prize. In 2010, Rhys collaborated on the feature documentary *Separado!*, which explored his musical heritage and the Welsh diaspora in Patagonia. He won the 2011 Welsh Music Prize for his solo album *Hotel Shampoo* and his 2014 multimedia project *American Interior* - album, app, book, movie

and tour - has received five-star acclaim and its book format has been shortlisted for the Gordon Burn Prize for writing.

COSTUME DESIGNER

FRANCISCO RODRIGUEZ-WEIL graduated with distinction from the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School and his formal training gave him the artistic and technical tools to immerse himself in different art forms ranging from ballet, opera, television and film. The Royal Northern College of Music's 2011 production of *Carmen* included over 400 costumes designed by Rodriguez-Weil and he's worked on productions including *Alice in Wonderland*; *The Beggar's Opera* and *Robin Hood*. In 2013, he designed the stage sets and costumes for the Coronation Festival Gala at Buckingham Palace. His work on film includes the documentary features *The Battle of the Sexes* (2013) and *Pantani: The Accidental Death of a Cyclist* (2014).

FILM EDITOR

MIKE JONES is a BAFTA nominated editor working in film and television. His credits include *Doctor Who* (2007-2009); *Law & Order: UK* (2010); *Downton Abbey* (2011); the dramatized Kenny Everett story, *Best Possible Taste* for BBC4 (2012) and both series of the award winning ITV drama *Broadchurch* (2013-14).

CAST

Elijah Wood	John M. Brinnin
Celyn Jones	Dylan Thomas
Steven Mackintosh	Jack
Shirley Henderson	Shirley
Kevin Eldon	Stanley
Kelly Reilly	Actress

CREW

Director	Andy Goddard
Screenwriters	Andy Goddard, Celyn Jones
Producers	AJ Riach, Andy Evans,
Executive Producer	Steve Clark-Hall
Composer	Gruff Rhys
Cinematographer	Chris Seager
Editor	Mike Jones
Production Designer	Edward Thomas
Set Decorator	Lotty Sanna
Costume Designer	Francisco Rodriguez-Weil
Make-Up & Hair	Andrea Dowdall, Sarah Jane Marks, Cara Parry, Adrian Rigby, Victoria Yates
Casting Director	Martin Ware