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a  
DAVID MACKENZIE film

# STARRED UP

Directed by David Mackenzie  
Written by Jonathan Asser

Theatrical release beginning August 29, VOD beginning August 26  
Run Time: 106 minutes  
Rating: Not Rated

Press Materials:

<http://tribecafilm.com/press-center/tribeca-film/films/5318ed3fa32a618693000001>



Nominated for 6 British Independent Film Awards  
Winner: British Independent Film Award for Best Supporting Actor for Ben Mendelsohn

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## Introduction



***Starred Up*** is the story of a young man prematurely transferred from a young offenders' institution to adult jail for being too violent.

The film is directed by award-winning UK filmmaker **David Mackenzie** (*Young Adam*, *Hallam Foe*, *Perfect Sense*) from a screenplay written by first-time scriptwriter **Jonathan Asser**, who has a background in the prison system working as an innovative therapist. The title comes from the process of prematurely upgrading a teenager from a Young Offenders' Institution to Adult Prison.

***Starred Up*** stars **Jack O'Connell** (*Unbroken*, "Skins", *Eden Lake*), **Ben Mendelsohn** (*The Dark Knight Rises*, *Animal Kingdom*, *Killing Them Softly*) and **Rupert Friend** (*Pride and Prejudice*, *The Boy in The Striped Pajamas*, "Homeland").

The crew includes director of photography **Michael McDonough, ASC** (*Winter's Bone*, *New York – I Love You*, *Albert Nobbs*, *13*), and production designer **Tom McCullagh** (*Hunger*, *Wilderness*, *Killing Bono*) and Producer **Gillian Berrie** (*Red Road*, *Hallam Foe*, *Perfect Sense*). Film4 financed the project in association with Creative Scotland, Quickfire Films, Lipsync productions and Northern Ireland Screen. Executive Producers are **Katherine Butler**, **Sam Lavender**, **David Mackenzie**, **James Atherton**, **Jan Pace**, **Norman Merry** and **Peter Hampden**.

## Synopsis

***Starred Up*** is about ultra-violent 19-year-old Eric (Jack O'Connell), who is prematurely transferred to the same adult prison facility as his estranged father (Ben Mendelsohn). As his explosive temper quickly finds him enemies in both prison authorities and fellow inmates — and his already volatile relationship with his father is pushed past the breaking point — Eric is approached by a volunteer psychotherapist (Rupert Friend), who runs an anger management group for prisoners. Torn between gang politics, prison corruption, and a glimmer of something better, Eric finds himself in a fight for his own life, unsure if his own father is there to protect him or join in punishing him.

## About the Film

**Starred Up** is a powerful film that turns an unflinching eye to the cruelty depicted within the fictional prison walls, while at the same time revealing hidden layers of camaraderie and hope amidst the violence. The focus is on emotional truth not stylization or glamorization. Also woven into the narrative are details about prison life that we have not often seen before, details which are revealed here with authority. Despite the tensions within the film, director **David Mackenzie's** perspective is ultimately a compassionate one.

Rising star **Jack O' Connell** gives Eric an edgy, unpredictable energy that carries much of the story, and his plight is framed by two opposing forces: his father and his therapist. Australian veteran actor **Ben Mendelsohn** creates an explosive picture of a man twisted by the system and unable to prove himself as a father. Mendelsohn, who gave a terrifying performance in the multi-award-winning *Animal Kingdom*, shows great sensitivity beneath the violent façade. At the other extreme is Eric's therapist, portrayed by **Rupert Friend**, a character who might just crack, and who may have a secret history of violence. In a way that reflects the protagonist's own experience, we the audience don't know who to trust – father, therapist, or neither.

In an attempt to capture the tension and raw immediacy of the story, Mackenzie shot the film in sequence and edited with a two-editor crew – including long term collaborator **Jake Roberts** – to get results almost immediately after they were shot. This energy is amplified by Mackenzie's careful preparation with the cast who were given the freedom to explore the material and inhabit their characters, producing performances that are alive and unpredictable.

This, along with the use of an almost fully intact former prison (with subtle and detailed production design by **Tom McCulloch**) creates a picture of a real environment. This is complemented by cinematographer **Michael McDonough ASC**, who worked closely with director and cast to capture the atmosphere and nuances of the story, giving it unexpected human warmth.

With **Starred Up**, we see a filmmaker achieving maturity, paradoxically through his embrace of greater simplicity. We also see the emergence of a new energetic and important talent with O'Connell creating what may be his signature role in years to come.

## Interviews and Quotes

### Jack O'Connell - Eric



"I think he's a really fine, important actor with an incredible future ahead of him," says director **David Mackenzie** about his lead, **Jack O'Connell**. O'Connell plays the ultra-violent Eric with an extraordinary physical presence – "when Eric's cell door opens," says one fellow cast member, "there aren't too many words... there aren't too many needed." O'Connell has a great deal of empathy for the kind of character he plays: "Is he a brat, a little shit, or is he older than his years? I decided to go with the latter and I modelled it on blokes I used to know at school. I wanted to make an adult of him at 19. He's had to grow up fast. Because of his upbringing, his mum being a prostitute and all, he's missed out on being a kid... He's got a brain as well. If someone's physically handy and intelligent then he's twice as dangerous."

Eric embarks on a difficult journey of self-discovery and for O'Connell the film was a learning experience, one facilitated by his trust in the director: "You can't work on a film like this if you've got any ego baggage," says O'Connell. "That's what's wonderful about working with David. There's nothing precious about him at all. It's like it's everybody's film and not just his film." Trust was not just a theme in the film but a strong component of filming. With the actors pushing themselves physically to the edge, a special kind of trust evolved in acting out the scenes of extreme violence: "It's vital. You need to be able to put yourself into those situations completely to be convincing, but you need to know there are limits. I still managed to bust my hand one day! I think it shows how far you have to take a film like this if it's going to look real."

O'Connell has played gritty parts before in films where violence and retribution were key themes, but **Starred Up** offered different challenges: "I've always liked prison movies, but not just any prison movies. They need to get the morality right to interest me, and this one had a great big question right in the middle of it. You had to think: is this guy – and this guy is me – going to make it? Is he going to come through?"

What's he going to come through as?" To embed his role even further in a credible reality, O'Connell took risks: "I decided not to read the ending and know what was going to happen to me, I'm learning the lines the night before... it means I was reacting to things just as they were happening, thinking on my feet... I don't even know the ending, which means I can't give anything away. I think it gives a lot more depth." As a result, O'Connell's performance has a knife-edge focus on 'the now': "It was really exciting for me as an actor to try to unravel the head space he's in." O'Connell felt the importance of having a tight team spirit among the cast: "I don't say this lightly, but hands down this is one of the strongest casts I've ever been with. The raw talent and intelligence and good decision-making – I really think it's a formula that's few and far between. I'm really grateful to David for that. As a result, I think we've been able to achieve my proudest work to date." O'Connell holds Mackenzie in high regard: "I was in awe of him, from the beginning."

## David Mackenzie - Director



With ***Starred Up***, David Mackenzie, the award-winning director of *Hallam Foe*, *Young Adam* and *Perfect Sense*, takes a step into new territory. Known in the industry as a highly intuitive director who always has a strong, driving vision for a film, Mackenzie found himself working in new ways: "It's the first time I've shot a film in story order. I found it very invigorating and it seemed to add to the sense of purity in the process that I hope gets a bit closer to the truth of the story."

"I've always had a conflict between the poetic and the factual, between making a film pretty and making it true. Of course, usually you're trying to have a bit of both but it's a fine line to tread. In general, I've always been suspicious of realism. To me it seems bogus because it gives the impression of being more truthful than it actually is. But with ***Starred Up***, we were very much helped by having an intact location that we could use without having to cheat. I am always interested in how to change the filmmaking

process to fit the material and to find ways to allow it to work to the project's advantage. It's been interesting for me to explore what attempting realism can do to try to minimise the fakery of the process and allow the cast to inhabit the environment as much as possible."

"We decided to shoot in sequence because the confines of the single location allowed us to do that. The great thing about shooting sequentially is that we were all marching on the journey together and discovering the story as we went on. The only negative was the gradual pile up of the more emotional and violent scenes towards the end and just how exhausting and emotionally draining it was for all of us. But even that helped add to the intensity and purity of the process."

"There are two other things that I did this time for the first time on this film that I will definitely do again. One was I filmed the rehearsals, in full costume, with the full crew. Rather than sitting around doing a read through which is totally boring and gives you very little inspiration, we went into the deep end, and by the time we were shooting we were running at full speed. If I'm allowed to take that method into my next project, and develop a David Mackenzie method, I will shoot my rehearsals and I will shoot sequentially. The other thing that I did was have two editors in collaboration working brilliantly together, right from the get-go; at any given point we were only a few hours behind in the edit relative to the shoot, so we were looking at cut scenes the day we shot them. And by the time we finished the shoot we showed the crew a full rough cut. This was a revelation; instead of filming being one thing and editing being another, we integrated them and they fed into each other. Of course we still had an editing process post film, but with two editors that was a more energised and collaborative process and we were already a long way down the line."

"I'm interested in making films that try to be original, so working in genre is not where I am instinctively drawn to. But, it's been good to embrace the double limitations of both a genre and a closed environment – a place where there is a contained visual language, and the rhythms and patterns of behavior have degrees of repetition. There's something really powerful for me about entering a world of cinematic limitations that have a real reason for being there, like a prison, and then trying to explore this limited palette as openly as possible."

"To complement this, I tried to make the film as unadorned as possible to keep it simple and minimize the barriers between the purity of the performance and the audience. As a non-musician, I did (with **Tony Doogan**) what little music there is in the film, but even that is designed to be on the edge of perception. I am particularly happy with the way that the tension of the film seems to be carried so effectively without music or heavy sound effects. In general I tried to avoid anything showy, just to keep focused on the characters and the world."

"Two prison films that lodged themselves with me as references were films I watched when I was quite young. Bresson's *A Man Escaped* – where the detail and clarity/simplicity felt really strong and amazingly

tense and engaging. I watched it again about three days before we filmed and was still blown away by it and 'carried it into battle' with me for the shoot. The other one was Don Siegel's *Escape From Alcatraz*, which I saw as a teenager and haven't really seen since, but I also remember a sparseness, an unsentimentally and a kind of purity of realism. I think both films use the repeated rhythms of the daily cycle to good effect and I think this had a reflection in what I was trying to do with this film."

"I've not explored violence to this level before and I'm extremely uncomfortable with the glorification of violence, or any kind of cartoonizing of it. We tried to shoot the stunt scenes in as realistic a way as we could and to rely on the editing as little as possible. We had a great stunt team who prepped everything really well in advance; even so, it was shocking to experience these things. Part of the challenge was to hold onto the purity of the other parts of the film process, while also incorporating the violent sections that obviously had to be more managed and more fake. The days with the more brutal fights were emotionally draining for everyone, at least partly because although it is not real it evokes the reality and affects everyone around it."

"I think I am learning to trust my intuition more and learning to fight my corner to try to follow it as I grow as a director. There was a purity to this process that came from the direct power of the script, which meant that the filmmaking was more direct and personal. I was lucky enough to make some good choices - in terms of cast, location, crew and process. I think for this film, the elements aligned in a good way."

### **On Working with Jack O'Connell**

"He's a formidable and brilliant actor. He could really relate to the character a lot; he said to me that if things had gone a bit different for him, a few years ago, he could have easily been going the way Eric went. I'd never seen Jack's previous work before, but then I saw him on the casting tape and here was a kid who had the right combination of the energy, the hardness and the movie-star good looks, with a real raw talent – seeing that, I settled on him right away. When we met, he gave me the impression that he would trust me and that he would go out and out for what was necessary, so we struck a deal there and then. I know he's very happy with the film and I'm extremely happy with his work. He threw himself totally into that really challenging part. I know that his performance will be recognised as an important performance by a young star."

### **On Working with Writer Jonathan Asser**

"Jonathan's script is an angry and unflinching look at British prison life; it has been made with passion and is based on his experiences working as a therapist in a large London prison. It's a piece of fiction, but it has a real ring of authenticity to it, which is so refreshing to come across. This authenticity became a slight problem for us when trying to find the money to make the film because there was a concern that the

authentic slang would be incomprehensible to audiences. One of the things I am really pleased with is that we were able to fight to keep much of this unique language, while still I hope making a film that should be broadly understandable. (A glossary of script terms, which was on the front page of a few drafts of the script, is at the back of these notes.) Jonathan also served as a vital sounding board for any of the details of prison life that we needed and in this he was supported by some of the former prisoners he worked with in prison, who also helped the cast and the team in general.”

It's been an amazing experience to work with Jonathan on this film – particularly because so much of it comes from his experiences and his spirit. It's such a detailed script about such a particular world that he really needed to be there all the way and it was a real privilege to have him by my side during the pre-production and the shoot as well. From the moment I first met him, one of the immense positives about the experience of making the film has been dealing with the openness and honesty of Jonathan. And I have tried to take the spirit of that openness and truthfulness with me into every area of the filmmaking process. It's his baby in so many ways and I really wanted to serve that vision as best I could.”

I've never made a film where the writer was present throughout the entire shoot, but it was really important to me that he remained with us during this part to guide us all through the intricacies of the world we were trying to represent. It was great to experience the gentle handover between his vision and the film we were actually making and that was another positive part of the process.

## **Ben Mendelsohn - Nev**



“As soon as I first spoke to Ben, I knew I would have a brave and compelling performance for Nev. He had an immediate grasp of what needed to be done to make this character, who in Nev's own words is 'not wired up right in the father role', come alive with both power and vulnerability,” says director Mackenzie. Cast and crew were united in the conviction that **Ben Mendelsohn** (*The Year My Voice Broke*, *The Dark Knight Rises*, *The New World*) was a powerful force on the shoot. GQ's Australian Actor of the Year 2010 plays the part of Eric's father Nev, who disappeared into the prison system when Eric was a child. Mackenzie says: “It wasn't an easy part, but Ben threw himself at it and I think it's a beautiful, nuanced take on something that could have easily swung into obvious hard-man territory. I am



embarrassed to say this but actually I think Ben is a kind of slippery genius; it can all seem wild and unpredictable with him – which I love and very much encouraged – but I don't think I have ever worked with an actor with such a command of the stagecraft of film acting. So I guess it's the best of both worlds to work with.” As **Anthony Welsh** (Hassan) says: “You could have got someone to play Nev as the typical ‘I’m hard’ prisoner, but what I love about Ben is that you have absolutely no idea how he’s going to be in a particular scene. When Ben walks along a landing, everyone is on edge. It could go either way.” **David Avery**, who plays Nev’s cellmate and prison lover (Ashley), says: “Ben’s a bubbling pot. You know he could explode at any minute. But I guess Ashley sees two sides of Neville, which not a lot of the other characters are able to see. There’s the front he has to put on in order to survive, but there is also a vulnerable side.” Cast members are united in describing Mendelsohn as one of the most generous people on set, the first to greet younger and first-time actors, a generous presence in contrast to his volatile fictional persona.

## Rupert Friend - Oliver



*Friend: “It’s the freest, most liberating set I’ve ever been on.”*

The therapist character is played by **Rupert Friend** (*The Libertine*, *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *5 Days of War*, “Homeland”). “There’s definitely something that draws Oliver to Eric, whether it’s the possibility of saving someone who is almost beyond saving, or a little of that paternal love one can feel for someone,” says Friend. “Eric’s never had a father present and I don’t think Oliver has either. He doesn’t have a partner, or children, and as Nev puts it, he doesn’t have a life outside the jail, which I think is true. There is just this group, a kind of super-gang that gives the men a sense of belonging they’ve never had before. It’s almost magical.” Friend feels the same about the production itself: “It’s the freest, most liberating set I’ve ever been on. No slates, no checks between takes, sometimes no cuts between takes. David’s the opposite to dictatorial, he just lets it flow, in the moment. And that’s a difficult thing. It depends on a special chemistry. You can say to someone play this note, then play this note, and then play this note, and they’ll do it and it’s still not music.” Mackenzie was impressed by what Rupert did with the character of Oliver: “Rupert had to negotiate a path through the reality of Jonathan and the fiction of Oliver without it being any kind of impersonation – which it totally isn’t. He

found a brave and forthright way of playing quite a messed-up character that is really strong and interesting, and he had the balls to play it posh and fragile in a place where neither are regarded highly. There's a fantastic combination of humility, courage and anger which comes across really well in his interpretation of the character and in particular in the group scenes which pepper the film.”

## Jonathan Asser - Writer



*Writer Jonathan Asser worked as a real prison therapist.*

“I guess you could say writing got me into prison in the first place!” First-time screenwriter **Jonathan Asser** was a poet and performance artist working the London and South-East cabaret circuit when he was asked to do a show at the young offenders prison in Feltham. Asser became interested in, and felt a connection with, the lives and problems of young inmates. “I went through those prison gates and in a sense stayed in that world for the next twelve years.” Writing was sidelined in favor of a new approach to prisoner therapy. Working with the small minority of violent prisoners whose aggression continued and escalated while in custody, Asser traced the roots of violence to feelings of shame, loss of status and diminished or absent sense of belonging. Working with the prisoners themselves, he developed a highly intuitive group technique in which violent impulses are allowed to develop in confrontation with others and then are safely de-escalated. “I was bringing together people who were theoretically too high risk to bring together and yet there was never a contact-violent incident in any session and never a contact-violent incident between sessions involving active participants in the group.” The **Starred Up** therapy group represents a potential path to redemption for Eric. It’s run by Oliver, who stands out quietly against the prison system’s usual philosophy of containment and control. Asser says: “The therapy dramatized in **Starred Up** works against the conventional prison practice, which is to separate and segregate prisoners who are currently being violent in the system. Conventional practice, in my view, merely passes the problem further down the line, because those prisoners in conflict with each other are going to meet again in another prison, on another wing, or out in the community, or they will reach each other through intermediaries. One can look at it this way: prison governors are incentivized to reduce violence within their own establishments, but they’re not incentivized to reduce violence downstream. What I did was the

opposite of separating and segregating prisoners who were having violent conflict. I brought them together, worked with the escalation and helped to de-escalate the conflict so that those prisoners could live safely together, which reduced victimization and risk.”

The idea for the script came to Asser after a film agent read a collection of his poems and suggested his visual imagination might transfer onto the screen. Unusually, Asser was present throughout the **Starred Up** shoot, a presence that actors and director were united in believing essential to the film’s authenticity and attention to detail. “It’s been brilliant being here while the film’s being made because, particularly in relation to the group scenes, I’ve been very intimately involved and David [Mackenzie]’s been gracious enough to give me a great deal of scope in helping to shape the group therapy scenes in particular. By developing a sense of belonging in the group, Eric begins to feel a healthy sense of pride that strengthens him and enables him to tackle shame and disrespect without being driven to violence, which is revealed as a social problem, a problem of alienation and failed relationships. The real-world system, on the other hand, views violence as a problem inside the individual perpetrator’s head: if you can change the way the individual thinks, you can change their behaviour. This is convenient for the system, because it demarcates clearly between the right-thinkers and the wrong-thinkers, between ‘us’ and ‘them’, but this demarcation in itself inflicts more shame on ‘them’, the already marginalised and dispossessed, which may generate more of the violence that the system is trying to prevent. The fictional prison portrayed in the film is a microcosm of society: the turning a blind eye, the vested interests and the corruption are things in which we are all, whether actively or passively, to some extent implicated. The finger is pointed at ourselves.”

## The Group



**Anthony Welsh** (*My Brother the Devil, Red Tails, Comes A Bright Day*), who plays Hassan, and **David Ajala** (*The Dark Knight, Fast and Furious*), who plays Tyrone, are in the therapy group set up by Oliver and joined by newcomer Eric. Anthony and David hadn’t previously worked together but “we did a screen

test together,” says Anthony, “and pretty soon we were finishing each other’s sentences. There’s only one scene in which we don’t appear together. That was actually quite emotional.” That instinctive bond is vital to the dynamic of the prison therapy group of which they are key members. “The whole essence of that group,” says David, “is ‘I won’t give you the answer, you have to find the answer for yourself.’ It’s tough love for Eric. That world is really heightened, claustrophobic. There’s no outside world, which means that every little thing is important. Something that wouldn’t be noticed on the outside just erupts in that environment. You can never switch off.” Says Anthony: “With all the characters in the film, there’s an outer life, how you carry yourself on the wing and in the group, and then there’s an inner life as well. You see Tyrone and Hassan in their cell, drinking tea, having a little smoke, or working out. That’s intimate. It’s the opposite of how you have to be the rest of the time.”

**Director Mackenzie’s** plan that the actors should practically live in the prison had benefits says Anthony: “It really took time to think of that place as a film set. The first time I stepped into a cell and the door closed I just stood there for five minutes, trying to take it in, thinking about the people who’d been in there, the writing on the wall... You have to be match fit for this kind of filmmaking. David doesn’t do many cuts; it’s just ‘go again, go again, go again’. I think that keeps it real. You watch this and you think, ‘these guys are serious’.”

## D-Wing Voices

According to Northern Irish actor **Ian Beattie** (Officer Johnson), “the officers are locked up as badly as the prisoners. Until the end of my shift, and that’s fifty per cent of my waking time, I’m an inmate, too”. He’s echoed by **Sam Spruell** who plays Deputy Governor Hayes, responsible for day-to-day running of the prison: “I think the thing that fascinated me about doing a film about prison is that it’s not just the prisoners who are institutionalised. It’s also the people who look after prisoners. Everyone is in that prison together.” Spruell says of his character: “He’s a ticking-boxes, good-stats kind of guy. All he wants is for his prison to run smoothly and Eric challenges that monumentally. I didn’t want to play him as a malevolent character. All he wants is to protect his career. There’s nothing unusual about that. I’ve seen people in the acting profession behave badly for the same reason!”

Some characters try to maintain a bridge, however self-serving, between officials and prisoners. A nice example of poacher turned gamekeeper, **Tommy McDonnell** plays Officer Self: “He’s the ‘nice guy’ out of the officers, a bit younger than the others. He keeps a little bit back from what’s going on. He’s crooked, but wary, too. Self has got in a bit deep with Nev, you might say, but he keeps his distance and I think there’s a bit of mutual respect there.” If ever a prisoner found himself in the wrong place at the wrong time, it is MacDonald, who has the cell on D-Wing opposite the newly arrived Eric’s. He’s played by **Darren Hart**, whose openhearted gesture triggers the first violent action of **Starred Up**: “One act of kindness sparks the madness. He beats seven bells out of me.” Like most of the cast, Hart responded strongly to the physical environment of Crumlin Road and believes the film offers a vividly authentic

portrayal of incarceration: “You watch this film, and if you’ve been to prison yourself, you’ll think yeah, they’ve got it right. And if you haven’t, you’ll think that’s a place I never want to go to.”

## Producer **Gillian Berrie**



**Gillian Berrie** is highly regarded as an independent European producer with a strong commitment to art and innovation in modern cinema. She has worked with **David Mackenzie** since they jointly established Sigma Films in 1996. It’s a strongly intuitive relationship that has seen them collaborate on seven of Mackenzie’s full-length features, and with ***Starred Up***, the team felt they should follow their gut instincts and push each other into uncharted territory. “Cinema is in a state of turmoil and change just now... Independent film-making is in crisis and this calls for bold moves and new strategies. It’s forced us to become very focused and, I think, to make our very best work to date.”

***Starred Up*** is a confident film in terms of theme and action, and it’s also a bold step closer to the mainstream. “What interested me about David doing a genre film,” says Berrie, “was his ability to find the emotional complexities and ironies within situations, to take a genre and layer it with sub-text and texture so it can appeal on many different levels to different kinds of people. From the very start, this film had something fresh and vital about it. We’re very proud of it.”

## **Michael McDonough, ASC – Camera**

“It’s really a dance with the actors,” says McDonough. Credit for a highly flexible and actor-aware set goes to a close understanding between director **David Mackenzie** and director of photography **Michael McDonough, ASC** (*Darling Companion*, *Lawrence Kasdan*, *Albert Nobbs*, *Rodrigo Garcia*, *Winter’s Bone*, *Debra Granik*). “David was very specific about what he wanted. When you’re working with hand-held [cameras], you don’t set up a shot, light it and shoot. You light the spaces and let the actors act. ***Starred Up*** was the biggest space I’ve ever lit and with the least amount of light. It was physically... I

won't say extreme, but very challenging. You'd be shooting in one wing, come out through the central space, into another wing and then into a cell, all in a continuous shot." McDonough has worked for many years in independent film in the US; on **Starred Up** he faced some new challenges. "In a more conventional set up, you might go back and re-shoot something that you didn't quite like, but not when you're just going again, going again and what you're looking for is to capture a mood and an energy, and there's so much energy coming off that script. As a technique, it's something I've done before. When I worked with Debra Granik, we had a t-shirt printed that read 'STILL ROLLING' and that was how it went at Crumlin Road." McDonough's choice of a warm palette for *Starred Up* will come as a surprise to many, accustomed as we have become to seeing crime and prison scenes with a wash of cold colour. This choice of colour brings an unexpected human warmth to the depiction of the lives of the inmates, which is totally in keeping with the person-centred focus of the film. With McDonough, Mackenzie has discovered a D.O.P with whom he can share a strong intuitive sensibility.

# BIOGRAPHIES

## Jack O'Connell

After graduating from Performing Arts College and making his acting debut in 2005 Jack O'Connell has gone from strength to strength in his varied career.

Most recently Jack has been seen in David Mackenzie's Film 4 backed *Starred Up*, in which he played young prisoner 'Eric' opposite Rupert Friend. The gritty prison based father-son drama premiered to great acclaim at the Toronto Film Festival, and also screened at the London, Tribeca and LA Film Festivals. The role also earned Jack a British Independent Film Award nomination for Best Actor, and contributed towards his nomination for the South Bank Sky Arts Times Breakthrough Award.

Jack has recently filmed the lead role in Angelina Jolie's new film *Unbroken*, a chronicle of the life of Louis Zamperini, an Olympic runner who was taken prisoner by Japanese forces during World War II. *Unbroken* which filmed in Australia is set for release in December this year. Next up Jack will be seen in *71*, a thriller based on the troubles in Belfast, which recently screened in competition at the Berlin Film Festival and will release in the UK this autumn.

Jack is currently filming Weinstein's *Tulip Fever* opposite Dane DeHaan, Alicia Vikander and Holliday Grainger.

Earlier this year Jack also featured in the role of 'Calisto' in *300: Rise of an Empire*, the prequel to Warner Bros epic '300'. In 2012 audiences saw Jack as lead character *Charlie Peaceful* in Pat O'Connor's 'Private Peaceful'. This adaptation of Michael Morpurgo's novel follows the rites of passage of two brothers in the early 20th century. Jack also starred as 'Kurtis' in thriller *Tower Block* alongside other British talent including Sheridan Smith and Russell Tovey; and as 'Adam' in thriller *The Liability*. Last summer Jack reprised the character he played in "Skins" in new feature length film *Skins Rise* charting the development of his character since the last time viewers saw him.

2011 saw Jack star in both film and television. In "The Runaway" Jack starred as 'Eamonn' in the critically acclaimed Sky drama alongside Keith Allen and Alan Cumming. In the same year he starred as 'Bobby Charlton' in "United", the BBC Two dramatization of the 1958 Munich Air Crash. For film he played the role of 'Dylan' in Karl Golden's *Weekender*. Following the wild adventures of two friends who move from Manchester's rave scene to the clubs of Ibiza the film soon takes a sinister turn.

In 2006 Jack had his film debut with the role of *Pukey* in the controversial and critically acclaimed British film *This is England*. He followed this up with role of villain 'Brett' in James Watkins' horror film *Eden Lake* in which he appeared opposite with Michael Fassbender and Kelly Reilly. In 2009 he won the role of

Marky in Daniel Barber's crime thriller *Harry Brown* and later starred in TV movies "Wuthering Heights" and "Dive", directed by Dominic Savage.

Jack's theatre credits include 'Scarborough' at the Royal Court, 'The Spidermen', 'The Musicians' and 'Just'.

## **Ben Mendelsohn**

In 2010, Ben starred opposite Guy Pearce in David Michod's highly acclaimed feature *Animal Kingdom* (winner of the Sundance Film Festival World Cinema Jury Prize). His performance in the film earned him both of Australia's top awards - an AFI Award and an IF Award for Best Lead Actor. From his incredible performance in *Animal Kingdom* he landed three starring roles in coveted films: Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight Rises* opposite Christian Bale and Anne Hathaway; Derek Cianfrance's *The Place Beyond The Pines* with Ryan Gosling and Bradley Cooper; and Andrew Dominik's *Cogan's Killing Them Softly*, opposite Brad Pitt. His other recent work includes Rachel Ward's feature debut *Beautiful Kate* alongside Rachel Griffiths (for which he received an AFI Award nomination for Best Lead Actor), David Caesar's *Prime Mover*, Alex Proyas' *Knowing* starring Nicholas Cage and Rose Byrne, and Baz Luhrmann's *Australia*. Ben will next be seen in Ryan Gosling's directorial debut *Lost River* and Kevin Macdonald's *Black Sea*.

## **Rupert Friend**

**Rupert Friend** trained at the Webber Douglas Academy of Dramatic Art in London. He was named Outstanding New Talent at the 2005 Satellite Awards and was also nominated Best Newcomer at the British Independent Film Awards. He first came to the public's attention as Mr. Wickham in the 2005 adaptation of *Pride And Prejudice* opposite Keira Knightley and directed by Joe Wright. He also appeared with Johnny Depp in *The Libertine* (2004). Other film credits include *Outlaw* (2007) directed by Nick Love, *The Moon And The Stars* (2007) with Jonathan Pryce and Alfred Molina, directed by John Irvin, *The Last Legion* (2007) with Ben Kingsley and Colin Firth, directed by Doug Lefler, *Mrs. Palfrey At The Claremont* (2005), opposite *Joan Plowright*, and David Leland's *Virgin Territory* (2007). In 2008 he appeared in Dan Ireland's *Jolene* and Mark Herman's *The Boy In The Striped Pajamas*. In 2009 he starred opposite Emily Blunt in *The Young Victoria* directed by Jean Marc Vallee and later that year opposite Michelle Pfeiffer in Steven Frear's *Cheri*. His other credits include *Lullaby for Pi* (2010) with Clemence Poesy directed by Benoit Phillippe, produced by Christine Vachon of Killer Films, and *The Kid* (2010) starring Natascha McElhone, Ioan Gruffudd and directed by Nick Moran. Since 2012 Rupert has played the role of 'Peter Quinn' in the Showtime Emmy winning series "Homeland."

## **David Mackenzie Director**



**David Mackenzie** stepped into feature film making (after several serial-award-winning shorts) with his oddball-revenge movie *The Last Great Wilderness*, which had its North American premiere at TIFF in 2002. He followed this with his acclaimed adaptation of Alexander Trocchi's existentialist classic, *Young Adam*, starring Ewan McGregor and Tilda Swinton, which premiered in Cannes 2003, played TIFF and Telluride that year and went on to win 4 Scottish BAFTAS, a European Film Academy, several BIFA nominations and a London Critics Circle award for Best Newcomer. Subsequent films include *Asylum*, starring Natasha Richardson and Ian McKellen, the highly regarded *Hallam Foe* with Jamie Bell, which won a Silver Bear in Berlin 2007, the Gold Hugo in Chicago, the Golden Swan in Copenhagen, the Golden Hitchcock in Dinard, a Scottish BAFTA and 4 nominations, and 8 BIFA nominations, and *Spread* with Ashton Kutcher and Anne Heche, which premiered in Sundance 2009 (and was released internationally as *Toy Boy*, *L.A. Gigolo*, *S-Lover*, *Love, Sex & Celebrity*, *Oh Yeah*, *American Celebrity* and *Jogando com Prazer*, depending on territory!). Recently, Mackenzie's work has continued with his futuristic fable *Perfect Sense* starring Eva Green and Ewan McGregor, which premiered in Sundance in 2011 and won several awards including Best Feature in Edinburgh and several Scottish BAFTA nominations, and the gonzo comedy romance *You Instead (aka Tonight You're Mine)* (SXSW '11) in which two rival pop stars, male and female, find themselves involuntarily 'united' at a massive music festival. With ***Starred Up***, starring **Jack O'Connell**, **Ben Mendelsohn** and **Rupert Friend**, Mackenzie steps confidently into new territory, making a film within the confines of a genre for the first time. The BFI Statistical Yearbook 2013 notes that Mackenzie is regarded as one of the top five most prolific directors in the UK. His work continues to challenge, inspire and provoke.

## **Gillian Berrie** *Producer*

Producer **Gillian Berrie** is a prolific and highly regarded Scottish producer. She co-founded Sigma Films in 1996 with **David Mackenzie** and since then she has producer credits on over 20 feature films. During this period Gillian also worked as a freelance casting director and in various capacities on projects including Ken Loach's *My Name is Joe* and Lynne Ramsay's *Ratcatcher*. She went on to co-produce *Wilbur (wants to kill himself)*, *Dogville*, *Manderlay*, *Brothers*, *Dear Wendy* and *After The Wedding* with Denmark's Zentropa. She initiated the Advance Party project of which Andrea Arnold's Cannes Jury prize winner *Red Road* was the first film produced and the second was Scottish BAFTA 2011 winner, *Donkeys*. Gillian's most recent features with director David Mackenzie are ***Starred Up***, *Hallam Foe*, *Tonight You're Mine* and *Perfect Sense*. Gillian exec-produced *Citadel*, which won several awards internationally, as well as co-produced Jonathan Glazer's *Under the Skin* starring Scarlett Johansson. In 2002, Gillian received the BAFTA Outstanding Achievement Award. As well as founding and overseeing Jumpcut, a summer school for emerging film-makers, Gillian founded Film City Glasgow in 2009 and is driving the plans for Scotland's first film studio.

## **PRISON SPEAK – A GLOSSARY**

ACKI - fellow Muslim  
BACON - any type of sex offender  
BAG HEAD - heroin addict  
CLUMP – hit  
CSU (Care and Separation Unit) - solitary confinement  
DOUBLE BUBBLE - two for one  
FRAGGLE - vulnerable prisoner  
GWAP – money  
KANGA - prison officer  
KICK OFF BACK DOOR - anal sex  
MUG OFF - show disrespect  
OFF – kill  
STARRED UP - premature transferal from juvenile to adult jail  
STRAIGHTENER - pre-arranged fist fight  
TECH - mobile phone  
TOP - kill

## CREDITS

DIRECTED BY  
DAVID MACKENZIE

WRITTEN BY  
JONATHAN ASSER

PRODUCED BY  
GILLIAN BERRIE

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS  
KATHERINE BUTLER  
SAM LAVENDER  
DAVID MACKENZIE

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS  
JAMES ATHERTON  
JAN PACE  
NORMAN MERRY  
PETER HAMPDEN

CO-PRODUCER  
BRIAN COFFEY

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY  
MICHAEL MCDONOUGH, ASC

EDITED BY  
JAKE ROBERTS  
AND NICK EMERSON

PRODUCTION DESIGNER  
TOM MCCULLAGH

COSTUME DESIGNER  
SUSAN SCOTT

HAIR AND MAKE UP DESIGNER  
NICOLE STAFFORD

PRODUCTION SOUND MIXER  
RONAN HILL C.A.S.

FIRST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR  
NEIL WALLACE

LINE PRODUCER  
ALEX O'NEIL

CASTING DIRECTOR  
SHAHEEN BAIG

JACK O'CONNELL

BEN MENDELSON

AND

RUPERT FRIEND  
SAM SPRUELL  
ANTHONY WELSH  
DAVID AJALA  
PETER FERDINANDO  
GERSHWYN EUSTACHE JNR  
ASHLEY CHIN  
RAPHAEL SOWOLE  
GILLY GILCHRIST  
TOMMY MCDONNELL  
FREDERICK SCHMIDT

CAST AND FULL CREDITS  
ORDER OF APPEARANCE

ERIC LOVE	JACK O'CONNELL
PRINCIPLE OFFICER SCOTT	GILLY GILCHRIST
OFFICER GENTRY	FREDERICK SCHMIDT
OFFICER EVANS	EDNA CASKEY
MACDONALD	DARREN HART
JAGO	RAPHAEL SOWOLE
OFFICER WHITE	DUNCAN AIRLIE JAMES
HASSAN	ANTHONY WELSH
TYRONE	DAVID AJALA
REAMES	JEROME BAILEY
MUBARAK	BASIL ABDUL-LATIF
NEVILLE LOVE	BEN MENDELSON
OFFICER HALL	MATT FARIS
NURSE BANKFORD	AISHA WALTERS
DEPUTY GOVERNOR HAYNES	SAM SPRUELL
ASHLEY	DAVID AVERY
OFFICER SELF	TOMMY MCDONNELL
OFFICER SMITH	JAMES DORAN
OFFICER JOHNSON	IAN BEATTIE
OFFICER CORSAIR	CC SMIFF
OLIVER BAUMER	RUPERT FRIEND
DES	GERSHWYN EUSTACHE JNR
RYAN	ASHLEY CHIN
GOVERNOR CARDEW	SIAN BRECKIN
DENTON	MARK ASANTE
WORSLEY	PAUL LEWIS FERGUSON
DENNIS SPENCER	PETER FERDINANDO
OFFICER EDWARDS	JONATHAN ASSER
OFFICER HENRY	PATRICK ROCKS
O'SULLIVAN	RYAN MCKENNA

OFFICER WILSON	ANTHONY ADJEKUM
OFFICER STOKES	AMMA BOATENG
SUPERVISING SOUND EDITOR	JOAKIM SUNDSTRÖM
COLOURIST	ADAM INGLIS
B CAMERA OPERATOR	MICHAEL McDONOUGH, ASC
A CAMERA / STEADICAM OPERATOR	COSMO CAMPBELL
A CAMERA FOCUS PULLER	ANDY GARDNER
B CAMERA FOCUS PULLER / 2ND ASSISTANT CAMERA	SAM DONAGHY BELL
DIGITAL IMAGING TECHNICIAN	IAN MARRS
DATA WRANGLER	SCOTT JAMISON
CAMERA TRAINEE	LIAM DEVINE
GRIP	JOHN CONNON
SECOND ASSISTANT DIRECTOR	STEPHEN DARRAGH
THIRD ASSISTANT DIRECTOR	JAMIE HAMER
TRAINEE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR	HUSSAIN YASIN
ART DIRECTOR	GILLIAN DEVENNEY
PROP BUYER	CATHERINE MacFERRAN
ASSISTANT ART DIRECTOR	SARA JO BAUGH
ART DEPARTMENT ASSISTANT	LYNN WILSON
FIRST ASSISTANT SOUND	SIMON KERR
SECOND ASSISTANT SOUND	DANIEL McCABE
ASSISTANT EDITOR	ZUZANA KLIMOVA
ADDITIONAL ASSISTANT EDITOR	IAIN MILLER
COSTUME SUPERVISOR	CATHY YOUNG
COSTUME STANDBY	CARLA BARROW
COSTUME TRAINEE	CAROLINE HILL
SPECIAL EFFECTS MAKE-UP ARTIST	VICTORIA MONEY
PROSTHETICS	KRISTIAN MALLETT
PRODUCTION CO-ORDINATOR	KATRINA McBRIARTY
PRODUCTION TRAINEE	HELEN LOGAN
PRODUCTION ACCOUNTANT	STEPHEN McCONNELL
ASSISTANT PRODUCTION ACCOUNTANT	LISA ORR
CASTING ASSISTANT FOR SHAHEEN BAIG	AISHA WALTERS
LOCATION MANAGER	CATHERINE GEARY
UNIT MANAGER	ROBBIE HUFFAM
LOCATION TRAINEE	AARON MARSHALL
CARPENTERS	TOMMY DALZELL

	RYAN MURDOCK
	CIARAN TWOMNEY
PAINTERS	MICHAEL MURRAY
	PAUL HEATLEY
MASTER PAINTER	KEVIN FRASER
PROP MASTER	DARREN LYTTLE
CHARGEHAND STANDBY PROPS	CHRIS MOORE
PROP HANDS	MICHAEL CULLEN
	NEIL McNALLY
TRAINEE PROPS	CHRIS SMITH
PROP RUNAROUND DRIVER	JOHN MORRISON
GAFFER	TONY DEVLIN
BEST BOY	SEAMUS LYNCH
GENNY OPERATOR	DENNIS MULHOLLAND
ELECTRICIAN	STEVEN LIVINGSTON
TRAINEE ELECTRICIAN	CONOR DUNN
STUNT COORDINATOR	ROB INCH
STUNT PERFORMERS	CC SMIFF
	FLORIAN ROBIN
DIALECT COACH	BRENDAN GUNN
STILLS PHOTOGRAPHER	AIDAN MONAGHAN
ELECTRONIC PRESS KIT	COLIN KENNEDY
	IAN ROBERTSON
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	ORLA MARLEY
UNIT NURSE	RONAN OREILLY
	BILL ROTHWELL
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PROP HAND	PETER MARLEY
RIGGER	HUGO WILKINSON
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	NICHOLAS KEOGH
TRAINEE ASSISTANT DIRECTORS	GRAEME LIVINGSTON
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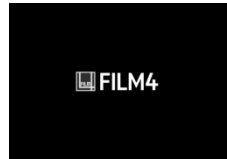
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