RUN

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY SCOTT GRAHAM

BBC Films, Creative Scotland and BFI present
A bard entertainments production in co-production with barry crerar
2019 / UK / 77 mins

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Screening Schedule:
Tuesday, April 2 at 6pm | Tribeca Screening Room (Pre-fest screening)
Friday, April 26 at 5pm | Village East Cinema 02 *WORLD PREMIERE*
Saturday, April 27 at 12pm | Village East Cinema 04 (P&I)
Saturday, April 27 at 5pm | Regal Battery Park 06
Sunday, April 28 at 12:45pm | Regal Battery Park 09
Wednesday, May 1 at 2:45pm | Village East Cinema 01 (P&I)
I grew up near a small Scottish town where young men and women come of age through racing cars. When I first conceived of the story for Run it was with the intention of capturing the illusion of freedom that racing cars can give you even if you’re going nowhere. After I left I was led to a new understanding of my hometown through depictions of small-town life by American writers like Carson McCullers, Raymond Carver and Bruce Springsteen, writers who speak plainly about the epic in the every day. When writing the script for Run I tried to capture the same painful collision between youthful optimism and adult responsibility that I found in those songs and stories because they did and still do give me hope. While making the film I felt it was important to reflect the vulnerability and aggression you feel when your life feels pre-destined or when you feel it’s gone by you in the blink of a young girl’s eye and whilst Run is certainly about the consequences of everything that ties you to your family and your community it’s also about the hope that can be found in falling in love even if it means you never leave them. This will be my first time at Tribeca but given that it’s a stone’s throw from Asbury Park I hope it will feel like a spiritual homecoming.
LOGLINE
An after dark joyride drives a small town fish worker to risk everything.

SHORT SYNOPSIS
In the Northern Scottish town of Fraserburgh, boys become men through late-night drag racing as they dream of escaping their own lives. Finnie is a 36-year old former street racer who now works at the local fish factory with his teenage son, who is slowly following in his footsteps. Struggling with his own inner turmoil, Finnie realizes he is going nowhere. One night, he decides to go back out for a dangerous joyride, risking his own future and possibly losing his family forever.

LONG SYNOPSIS
Steeped in the mythos of Bruce Springsteen songs about growing up in small towns, racing cars and falling into the trap of replicating your parents’ lives, Scott Graham’s third feature is a stripped-down character study of a former “boy racer” whose failure to leave the small Scottish fishing port where he grew up is brought into sharp relief by his teenage son starting to follow in his footsteps. For 30-something Finnie (Mark Stanley) the daily grind of working in a fish factory and providing for his family has numbed him to the point where he can no longer be emotionally available to his wife and kids. Having taken on too much responsibility too soon, the pain of remembering himself as an arrogant, carefree teen who spent his nights racing cars through the streets is just too great. But with his own car-racing teenage son, Kid (Anders Hayward), recently getting his girlfriend pregnant, he now has an inescapable reminder of where he thinks his own life went wrong. Unable to articulate his depression to his wife (Amy Manson), he borrows Kid’s car for an after-dark joyride, one that might lead to a new understanding of himself — or might cost him everything.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION
For his third feature, Scottish writer/director Scott Graham follows his BAFTA-nominated debut Shell and the Ruth Negga-starring Iona with a Bruce Springsteen-
inflected drama about a former “boy racer” no longer able to avoid the fact that his life is going nowhere. Set in Graham’s hometown of Fraserburgh — a fishing port in the northeast of Scotland where racing cars offers teenagers an illusion of freedom in a town short on opportunities — the film depicts a bleak-seeming world of boarded-up shopfronts, prison-like fences and the production-line monotony of factory work. But it also offers a more complex portrait of life in a small town, one that doesn’t conform to the easy clichés of Scottish social realist cinema or the standard Brexit narratives about forgotten communities feeling rejected by the status quo. In zeroing in on a thirty-something guy who married young, had kids and now finds himself regretting his choices as he watches his teenage son fall into a similar cycle, the film is a delayed coming-of-age story: at once an intimate portrait of one man’s suffering — a Springsteen song made flesh — and a more elliptical exploration of the redemptive power of family and love.

After *Shell* and *Iona*, Graham had actually been looking to do something with a more positive resolution, so he circled back to the first script he wrote: a drama set amid Fraserburgh’s aforementioned boy-racer community. His initial plan for the film — which he first adapted into a short with the Springsteen-referencing title *Born to Run* back in 2006 — was to do something on the kids who break up the monotony of their existence by racing their souped-up Escorts and Hondas through the streets at night. “There’s always been a culture of that and I’d gone home to speak to some of the boy racers and girl racers,” says Graham, who was living in Glasgow at the time, having left Fraserburgh ten years earlier. But returning home he also started to notice how popular Bruce Springsteen was and heard stories about guys shutting themselves in their garages to listen to the Boss instead of talking to their wives.

“The closer you get to Fraserburgh, the more Bruce Springsteen you hear on the radio,” he says. “I hadn’t listened to Springsteen for years, but I started listening to him again and could just really imagine a guy from the town being unable to express his feelings and relying on Springsteen to do it for him. That told me something about where I’m from.”
Spending his own teenage years in an industrial coastal town like Fraserburgh, Graham had always been struck by the way parts of Scotland resembled America, not just geographically but culturally too. It’s partly why he related to depictions of small-town life in New Hollywood classics like *Five Easy Pieces, Badlands* and *The Deer Hunter* — and why he reckons the kids he was speaking to who still lived there all listened to American rap and hip-hop. “They all seemed to be looking to America to express the frustration of growing up in a small town.”

But Springsteen songs like ‘The River’, ‘My Hometown’ and ‘Born to Run’ capture the quiet despair of life in small towns better than anything, poetically exploring the painful collision between youthful optimism and adult responsibility in regret-tinged stories about falling in love young, racing cars and, inevitably, replicating the mistakes of your parents. The more Graham thought about Springsteen’s popularity in Fraserburgh, the more interested he grew in making a film about the sort of guy who might see himself in his songs.

This all fed into the film, becoming the basis for Finnie, a former boy racer with a ‘Born to Run’ tattoo on his chest, whose frustration at not leaving town when he was younger has hardened into an isolating form of self-loathing, one intensified by his difficult relationship with his teenage son as he comes of age. “There’s something interesting for me about how an adolescent coming of age impacts on the parents,” says Graham, who explored similar terrain in *Shell*. “All the things Finnie was feeling at 17 that made him want to leave, they probably remained buried until Kid got his first car and wanted to have those dreams too.”
Finnie is played by rising Brit actor Mark Stanley, who saw an odd tension in the way the character is simultaneously nostalgic for his youth and shackled by it. “There’s this feeling of needing to relive your past and remember yourself as you were. But then you’re also walking around haunted by your own existence. The interesting thing about this film is that Finnie has things: he has a wife, he has a house, he has two children. His older son is going the way he did, but there’s still love in that family — he just can’t see it. He feels too inadequate as a man.”

Stanley spent a couple of weeks in Fraserburgh before shooting started doing shifts at the same factory we see Finnie working in at the start of the film. It helped the Leeds-born actor perfect the accent and get to grips with the specific Aberdeenshire dialect (Graham also included a glossary in the script. See Page 10). But the anonymity of working on the production line also helped him tap into Finnie’s feelings of insignificance in a town that already feels oppressive. It’s this, reckons Stanley, that separates the character from the “angry young man” tradition in British cinema. The film doesn’t just offer another defiant portrait of a working class angst, and nor is it an exploration of toxic masculinity. Though there’s rage within Finnie, that rage is directed back at himself. His family (played by Amy Manson, Anders Hayward and Fraserburgh schoolboy Scott Murray, making his acting debut as Finnie’s youngest son Stevie) don’t
fear him; if anything, they fear for him. “When I looked at myself I thought I looked a lot rougher in this film than I actually am,” says Stanley, who, at 30, is four or five years younger than his character is supposed to be. “Maybe I do look older because that’s just how you get on when you’re working in a freezing cold fish factory all day and the only highlight of the week is a fajita on Friday night and a few cans of nine-percent lager. It’s easy to slip that way.

“The social commentary,” he continues, “has more to do with the fact Finnie can look in the mirror and what is staring back at him is a well made-up guy who’s physically capable, but what he sees is a shadow of that, a ghost of that. Rather than being angry, he feels cornered by his own inadequacy.”

The film is subtle in its presentation of all this. Fleeting shots of Finnie’s and his wife Katie’s ’Born to Run’ tattoos serve as painful reminders of the road not taken (they’re among the few direct Springsteen references in the film). The way Finnie doesn’t have a working car of his own teases out themes of emasculation. Innocent exchanges between Katie and Kid, meanwhile, have a weird oedipal undercurrent thanks to Finnie’s inability to prevent his self-hatred from fuelling his jealousy of his eldest son — something echoed later in the film when Finnie forms a fleeting connection with Kid’s pregnant girlfriend Kelly (Marli Siu) as they drive around town and make (short-lived) plans to escape.

“It’s all about offering little clues to what’s going on in this person’s life,” says Graham, who counts the spare prose style of American writers like Raymond Carver, Willy Vlautin and Larry Brown as inspirations for his own minimalist approach. “Because of my influences, the types of characters I’m naturally drawn to are quite contained,” he adds, though he also points out that he did made a conscious effort to differentiate Run from his previous movies by making the protagonist more active in the narrative. That’s why the majority of Run takes place over 24 hours, with most of the action focusing on what happens when Finnie takes Kid’s car out after dark — an inversion of the teen-movie trope that normally sees kids stealing their parents’ cars and embarking on night-long journeys of self-discovery.
Though Graham cites the urgency of Romanian director Cristian Mungiu’s hard-hitting abortion drama *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days* as the main reason he wanted to set the film over a single night, perhaps the more obvious reference point is *American Graffiti*, George Lucas’s nostalgic, yet bittersweet, homage to his own car-obsessed youth. As it happens, Graham did direct his art department to look at that film, especially when it came to creating the scene outside the bowling alley in which Finnie observes the boy racers lined up in the car park as an abstract row of headlights and flickering neon.

“We were all mindful of some of those iconic shots from that film, but in reality, Fraserburgh bowling alley car park isn’t going to be as full or as gleaming as the one from *American Graffiti*. But you try and recreate what you can. It was about nodding towards those things, but also acknowledging it’s small-town Scotland.”

Nevertheless, there were some interesting parallels. One of the innovative things Lucas did on *American Graffiti* was to use the near-constant soundtrack to subtly underscore the naivety of his characters. In *Run*, Graham riffs on this idea, using the sound design to capture snatches of music blaring from the cars and soundtracking one sequence to Scottish electro pop band Chvrches’ song ‘Make them Gold’. “You can hear this music pounding away inside and to me that just shows you how naive it all is: they’re in this
bubble and listening to these songs and thinking they’re going somewhere, but they’re not. If you step outside the car, there’s something a bit sad about that.”

Finnie is still in that mindset when he takes his son’s car, more so when Kid’s girlfriend, Kelly, joins him. “He’s driving in circles, but inside the bubble of that car there’s a feeling that they can do anything or go anywhere,” elaborates Graham. “I wanted to use the racing to get progressively closer to what’s in his head and what’s going on with him.”

That idea dictated the way he shot the driving scenes. Graham wasn’t interested in attempting the sort of action cinematography found in a *Fast and Furious* movie. For one thing, he didn’t have the resources. But he was also committed to the idea of capturing street racing as it’s experienced by those who do it. In the film, the cameras are mostly kept inside the car, giving us point-of-view shots of the road, or they’re strapped to the side-panels and the hood. Both techniques help shrink the world of the film to let us experience everything from Finnie’s point of view, something aided by Stanley doing most of his own driving.

The sound was also important. Graham had seen the way John Frankenheimer’s largely forgotten motor racing film *Grand Prix* had managed to capture the drama of the track by cranking up the engine revs in the sound design. “It’s the roar of the engine that makes it gripping,” he says. “I was thinking as well about Robert Bresson’s rules for filmmaking [the French master published a book of memos called *Notes on the Cinematographer*]. There’s one that warns against having the sound and the picture doing exactly the same thing because they kind of cancel each other out. So it made sense to me not to do that when it came to the action. We focused more on the experience of being in the car and let the noise of the engines do the work.”

One of the strengths of the film, though, is the way Graham cuts from moments of visceral realism to moments of poetic abstraction. When Finnie races a stretch of harbour known as the “Breakwater” and a wave hits the windscreen, the sound suddenly drops away as if the entire car has plunged into the sea. It’s the one moment in the film where Finnie seems to achieve some kind of serenity. “It’s a bit like a drug
or a high that he’s been searching for all night and he finally gets it,” says Graham, who conceived the shot after witnessing the drama of the waves crashing against the harbour wall. “And then Kelly’s reaction is, ‘Is that it?’”

That says something too about the way the action is almost a red herring. There are no car crashes in Run. Instead, the crashes are all emotional. “In a way he crashes into Katie when he gets home,” says Graham, referring the moment in which Amy Manson’s character attempts to make her husband understand that he’s loved, only for their tender exchange to escalate into a heart-wrenching confrontation as he tells her he wants to get rid of everything that reminds him of his past. “It’s her emotional outpouring that’s the emotional climax of the film,” says Graham. “And she steals the scene.” But this also paves the way for a potential moment of redemption in the final scene as Finnie comes to some sort of new understanding about what he has in his life. Though Graham is aware that not everyone will view it positively, he’s also clear that it’s not supposed to be a big happy-ever-after movie moment. “They might not have much,” says Graham, “but they’re in love and that might be enough.”
RUN Glossary from script

PLEASE NOTE the dialogue includes words and phrases from the local dialect which are translated below.

A = All
Al = Old
Aff = Off
Afore = Before
Ain = Own
At = That
Athing = Everything
Bide = Stay
Cal = Cold
Dinna = Don't
Dee/Div = Do
Deein = Doing
Doon = Down
Een = One
Far = Where
Fa = Who
Fan/Fin = When
Fit = What
Fit like = Hello / How are you?

Fleer = Floor
Gie = Give
Hae/Hiv = Have
Hame = Home
Hale = Whole
Hasnae = Hasn't
Hinna = Haven't
Itsel = Itself
In a = In all / As well
Ken = Know
Kent = Knew
Lang = Long
Loon = Boy
Mak = Make
Maist = Most
Mare = More
Mysel = Myself
Nae = No/Not
Sae's = So has
Sma = Small
Tak = Take
Telt = Told
Till = To
Winna = Won't
Ye = You
CREDITS

Mark Stanley as Finnie
Amy Manson as Katie
Marli Siu as Kelly
Anders Hayward as Kid

Written and Directed by Scott Graham
Produced by Margaret Matheson, Ciara Barry, Rosie Crerar
Executive Producers – Lizzie Francke, Rose Garnett, Robbi Allen, Ross McKenzie
Director of Photography – Simon Tindall
Production Designer – Andy Drummond
Editor – David Arthur
Costume – Rebecca Gore
Make Up – Bethany Swan
Sound Design – Joakim Sundström
Casting Director – Carla Stronge CSA

BIOGRAPHIES

Mark Stanley (Finnie)

John Le Carré’s *Little Drummer Girl* (2018). Notable theatre roles have included Richard Wilson’s 2015 production of *Blasted* at the Sheffield Crucible and Josie Rourke’s 2013 staging of *Coriolanus* at the Donmar Warehouse.

**Amy Manson (Katie)**

Having trained at the Central School of Speech and Drama, Scottish actress Amy Manson’s numerous screen credits include roles in *Doctor Who* spin-off *Torchwood* (2006-2011), a recurring part in the BBC’s supernatural comedy/drama *Being Human* (2008-2013) and the roles of Medea in the BBC fantasy series *Atlantis* and Queen Merida in the ABC-produced fairytale series *Once Upon a Time* (2011-2018). On the big screen she’s appeared opposite Karen Gillan in *Not Another Happy Ending* and Kevin Guthrie and Sheila Hancock in *Edie* (2017). In 2017 she also appeared in Danny Boyle’s *T2: Trainspotting* and in 2019 will be seen in the 1990s-set Scottish rave movie *Beats*, from director Brian Welsh and executive producer Steven Soderbergh. On stage she’s appeared in the National Theatre of Scotland’s 2007 production of Luigi Pirandello’s *Six Characters in Search of an Author* and the Edinburgh Royal Lyceum Theatre’s 2014 production of Bertold Brecht’s *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* — winning best female performer for both at the Critics’ Awards for Theatre in Scotland.

**Marli Siu (Kelly)**

One of Screen International’s 2018 stars of tomorrow, Scottish actress Marli Siu was a standout in the zombie-horror musical *Anna and the Apocalypse* (2017) and in 2019 will appear as one of the leads in Michael Caton-Jones’s forthcoming adaptation of Alan Warner’s cult Scottish novel *The Sopranos*. She was nominated for a BFI Fresh Blood: Best Under 25 award for her role in the short film *Scoring* (2015) and, in 2016, was nominated for the Sunday Times/National Theatre Ian Charleson award for her performance as Hero in Dundee Rep’s production of *Much Ado About Nothing*. She also won acclaim on the London stage for her performance in the Orange Tree Theatre’s 2017 revival of George Bernard Shaw’s *Misalliance*.

**Anders Hayward (Kid)**
Born and raised in London, Anders Hawyard’s acting credits include the E4/Hulu-produced comedy series Gap Year (2017) and the forthcoming BBC films production Looted (2019), in which he stars opposite Thomas Turgoose. He’s also a trained dancer specialising in abstract contemporary dance. He has appeared in the dance-themed short Sistema (2015) and worked as a choreographer on the short film All the World’s a Stage (2018).

Scott Graham (Writer/Director)

Award-winning Scottish filmmaker Scott Graham is one of the rising stars of the British independent filmmaking scene. Largely self-taught, he made his first short film — an early incarnation of Run — in 2006 and, inspired by the landscape he was driving through while making it, wrote and directed the short film version of Shell (2007) that he then spent the next few years developing into his first feature. In the interim, his short film Native Son (2010) — a dark drama starring Sean Harris — was accepted into the Cannes film festival where it was nominated for a Discovery Award. The feature version of Shell (2012) also played multiple festivals, winning three major awards at the Torino International Film Festival in Italy. It was nominated for outstanding debut feature at the BAFTAs and for the BFI London Film Festival’s Sutherland award. Star Chloe Pirrie won a BIFA for Most Promising Newcomer. His follow-up film Iona (2015) starred Ruth Negga and was nominated for the Michael Powell Award at the Edinburgh International Film Festival. Run is his third feature.

Margaret Matheson (Producer)

Margaret Matheson produced Shell and Iona, Scott’s first and second features, through bard entertainments, the production company she formed in the 1990s. Previous films include Antonia’s Line (Best Foreign Language Oscar), Eve’s Bayou, Revengers Tragedy, American Cousins, AKA, Skin, Sleep Furiously and Lore. She also recently produced Katie Morag, the double BAFTA winning Children’s TV series filmed in the Outer Hebrides.
Ciara Barry & Rosie Crerar (Producers)

With the support of a BFI Vision Award, Glasgow based production company barry crerar was set up in 2016 by producing duo Rosie Crerar and Ciara Barry. barry crerar are developing a slate of authored stories that seek to inspire and provoke. Feature drama projects in development include, with BFI & CS, Cuckoo (Paul Wright); with BBC Films, The Flaming Heart (Ruth Paxton) and with iFeatures, Girl (Adura Onashile and Chika Anadu). In 2018, barry crerar co-produced feature documentary Irene’s Ghost, director Iain Cunningham, producer Rebecca Mark Lawson, funded by BFI, Creative England, Creative Scotland & Wellcome Trust. The film premiered at BFI London Film Festival 2018 and was nominated for the BIFA Discovery Award 2018. Also in post-production is short film Be Still My Beating Heart, written and directed by Ruth Paxton, funded by BBC Films alongside BFI and Creative Scotland through Scottish Film Talent Network. Run is barry crerar’s feature debut.