



FESTIVAL DE VENISE 2011
PRIX D'INTERPRETATION MASCULINE

SHAME

un film de STEVE MCQUEEN

AVEC MICHAEL FASSBENDER & CAREY MULLIGAN

Durée: 99 minutes

Sortie: le 4 janvier 2011

Téléchargez des photos:
www.frenetic.ch/films/823/pro/index.php

RELATIONS PRESSE

Eric Bouzigon
prochaine ag
Tél. 079 320 63 82
eric.mail@bluewin.ch

DISTRIBUTION

FRENETIC FILMS AG
Bachstrasse 9 ~ 8038 Zürich

Tél. 044 488 44 00 ~ Fax 044 488 44 11

SYNOPSIS

Brandon est un trentenaire new-yorkais, vivant seul et travaillant beaucoup. Son quotidien est dévoré par une seule obsession : le sexe. Quand sa soeur Sissy, chanteuse un peu paumée, arrive sans prévenir à New York pour s'installer dans son appartement, Brandon aura de plus en plus de mal à dissimuler sa vraie vie.



FICHE ARTISTIQUE

Brandon	MICHAEL FASSBENDER
Sissy	CAREY MULLIGAN
David	JAMES BADGE DALE
Marianne	NICOLE BEHARIE
La jolie fille dans le métro	LUCY WALTERS
Elizabeth	ELIZABETH MASUCCI
Le serveur du restaurant	ROBERT MONTANO
Une rencontre à l'hôtel	AMY HARGREAVES
Carly	ANNA ROSE HOPKINS
Le copain balèze	CHAZZ MENENDEZ
Fille de la dernière nuit #1	CALAMITY CHANG
Fille de la dernière nuit #2	DEEDEE LUXE

FICHE TECHNIQUE

Réalisation	STEVE McQUEEN
Scénario	STEVE McQUEEN ABI MORGAN
Directeur de la photographie	SEAN BOBBITT, BSC
Montage	JOE WALKER
Décors	JUDY BECKER
Costumes	DAVID ROBINSON
Musique originale	HARRY ESCOTT
Distribution des rôles	AVY KAUFMAN
Directeur artistique	CHARLES KULSZISKI
Produit par	IAIN CANNING EMILE SHERMAN
Producteurs délégués	TESSA ROSS ROBERT WALAK PETER HAMPDEN TIM HASLAM

« Le sexe est une dépendance. Comme la drogue, comme le jeu. Ces comportements compulsifs m'ont poussé à créer un personnage qui n'a aucun lien avec des gens que je connais. Je me suis senti libre de créer une histoire sans aucun rapport avec ma vie personnelle. Je voulais réfléchir sur le fait que toute la liberté dont nous jouissons aujourd'hui peut, parfois, se transformer en prison. »

Steve McQueen

« J'aime bien Brandon, vraiment. Il n'est pas mauvais. C'est quelqu'un qui vit aujourd'hui, avec les pièges de la vie d'aujourd'hui. Bien sûr, cela vous change, cela vous influence. Mais c'est un personnage qui nous est très proche, dans lequel nous pouvons tous nous voir. »

Michael Fassbender

« **Hunger** montrait un homme privé de toute liberté. **Shame** est le portrait d'un homme qui les a toutes... **Shame** est tout autant un film politique, simplement il n'est pas lié à un contexte historique particulier. C'est un film politique parce qu'il montre comment aujourd'hui la sexualité a évolué, notamment par le biais d'Internet et des nouvelles technologies. Il montre comment nos comportements et nos relations s'en trouvent modifiés. »

Steve McQueen

« Nous avons été ébahis par **Shame** et par sa puissance cinématographique. La longue scène de jouissance de Fassbender évoque les plans de fin des Nuits de Cabiria de Federico Fellini. Voilà la collaboration d'un acteur à la présence inouïe et d'un cinéaste très présent, qui l'accompagne. **Shame** est un voyage hors du commun. »

Darren Aronofsky,

Président du Jury de la Mostra de Venise

« Pourquoi New York ? C'est la ville du présent, frénétique, excitante, qui bouillonne 24 heures sur 24. La ville qui ne dort jamais. L'environnement idéal pour le personnage de Brandon. C'est la ville où tout est accessible, où tout est excessif. »

Steve McQueen

MICHAEL FASSBENDER

(Brandon)

Michael Fassbender était le héros du premier film de Steve McQueen, *Hunger*. Il y incarnait Bobby Sands, gréviste de la faim. La performance lui valut de très nombreux prix d'interprétation, dont le British Independent Film Award (BIFA), le Irish Film and Television Award (IFTA), le London Film Critics Circle Award, ainsi que cette même distinction aux festivals internationaux de Stockholm ou de Chicago. Dans ce festival il remporta l'année suivante le prix du Meilleur second rôle masculin pour *Fish Tank* d'Andrea Arnold ainsi qu'un second London Film Critics Circle Award.

On l'a vu récemment dans la suite de *X-Men: First Class* dans le rôle de Magneto et prochainement dans *A Dangerous Method* de David Cronenberg – où il interprète Carl Jung aux côtés de Keira Knightley et de Viggo Mortensen -, *Haywire* de Steven Soderbergh avec Ewan McGregor et Antonio Banderas ainsi que dans *Jane Eyre* de Cary Fukunaga.

Né en Allemagne, Michael Fassbender a grandi en Irlande. Il est diplômé du Drama Centre de Londres. C'est dans la prestigieuse série *Band of Brothers* qu'il se fit d'abord remarquer. Après ses débuts au cinéma dans le blockbuster *300* de Zack Snyder, on l'a ensuite vu dans *Town Creek* de Joel Schumacher, *Eden Lake* de James Watkins, *Jonah Hex* de Jimmy Hayward, *Angel* de François Ozon et *Centurion* de Neil Marshall.

CAREY MULLIGAN

(Sissy)

Née en Angleterre, Carey Mulligan a grandi en Allemagne où, à l'âge de 6 ans, elle monte pour la première fois sur les planches.

Elle étudie l'art dramatique à la Woldingham School de Londres. Après un petit rôle dans *Orgueil et Préjugés* de Joe Wright, elle joue principalement au théâtre et à la télévision. En 2009, elle est la partenaire de Johnny Depp dans *Public Enemies* de Michael Mann et de Natalie Portman dans *Brothers* de Jim Sheridan.

Elle est l'héroïne de *Une éducation*, écrit par Nick Hornby et réalisé par Lone Scherfig, un rôle qui lui a valu le BAFTA de la Meilleure actrice ainsi qu'une nomination à l'Oscar et aux Golden Globes.

Après une apparition dans *Wall Street 2 - L'Argent ne dort jamais* d'Oliver Stone, on l'a vue dans *Never Let Me Go*, d'après Kazuo Ishiguro, avec Keira Knightley. Elle est la partenaire de Ryan Gosling dans *Drive* de Nicholas Winding Refn (Prix de la mise en scène à Cannes 2011). Carey Mulligan vient de commencer le tournage de la nouvelle adaptation de *Gatsby le Magnifique* par Baz Luhrmann, avec Leonardo DiCaprio dans le rôle-titre.

JAMES BADGE DALE
(David)

Fils d'un chorégraphe et d'une comédienne, James Badge Dale fait ses études au Manhattanville College. Suite à un accident qui l'éloigne de la pratique du hockey, il se dirige vers une carrière d'acteur. Sur la chaîne AMC, il sera le héros de Rubicon, le thriller politique créé par Jason Horwitch.

Il est aussi Chase Edmunds dans 24 heures, un rôle qu'il interprète également dans le jeu vidéo éponyme. On a aussi pu le voir au cinéma dans Les Infiltrés de Martin Scorsese avec Jack Nicholson, Matt Damon et Leonardo DiCaprio.

James Badge Dale est une des vedettes de la série d'HBO L'Enfer du Pacifique.

STEVE McQUEEN
Réalisateur et co-scénariste

Vidéaste britannique, Steve McQueen se distingue par son travail qui couvre de nombreux domaines. S'il débute par des projets de films, il s'intéresse très vite à la sculpture et à la photographie.

Étudiant à la Chelsea School of Art et au Goldsmith College de Londres, il y produit ses premiers films, principalement muets et en noir et blanc.

Steve McQueen réalise Hunger, son premier long métrage, en 2008. Michael Fassbender y incarne le célèbre héros de la lutte pour l'indépendance irlandaise, Bobby Sands, pendant sa grève de la faim dans les geôles de la prison de Maze, à Belfast.

Hunger a reçu un accueil enthousiaste dans le monde entier et la Caméra d'Or au Festival de Cannes en 2008.

ABI MORGAN
Co-scénariste

Abi Morgan a écrit de nombreuses pièces, dont Skinned, Sleeping Around, Tiny Dynamite, Tender, Splendour et Fugue pour le National Theatre. Pour la télévision : My Fragile Heart, Murder, Sex Traffic pour Channel 4, Tsunami - The Aftermath, White Girl et Royal Wedding.

The Hour est actuellement diffusée par la BBC. Pour le cinéma, elle a été la scénariste de Rendez-vous à Brick Lane, d'après le bestseller de Monica Ali.

Michael Fassbender – Q&A en anglais

Michael Fassbender is arguably the man of the moment. One of the most in-demand actors working right now, the 35 year-old Irish-German actor has a host of projects on the way, beginning with *Shame*. Reuniting him with Steve McQueen, the director who gave him his breakthrough on *Hunger*, the biopic of IRA hunger striker Bobby Sands, *Shame* is a searing study of sex addiction that has already seen Fassbender claim Best Actor at the Venice Film Festival in September 2010. In the film, he plays Brandon, a New York office worker with an uncontrollable libido whose life is disrupted by the unexpected arrival of his sister Sissy (Carey Mulligan).

Following *Shame*, Fassbender can be seen in David Cronenberg's *A Dangerous Method*. The film deals with the complex relationship between Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung (played by Fassbender) and the Father of Psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud (Viggo Mortensen). With the actor also set to appear in Ridley Scott's *Prometheus*, a sci-fi thriller set in the *Alien* universe, Fassbender talks candidly below about how he feels towards all the temptations that are now on offer to a rising star such as he. He also tells us about his feelings towards screen nudity and why he thinks Brandon is a sign of the times.

Did it help making *Shame*, given you'd worked with Steve McQueen before?

Yes, you know when you start off, obviously that was the first experience that we were having together. You're feeling each other out, you're testing each other. And just because you're getting along and you're having an enjoyable experience doesn't mean they're aren't going to be discussions and sometimes differences of opinion. The important thing is at the end of the day you don't sit in a room and fester. That's work, y'know. Luckily enough I've been part of other jobs where people yell at you. That's happening under the pressure of the moment – and you've got to get on with it. At the end of the night, you sit down and you have a drink together, it's no big deal. But definitely on this one, it was like we picked up where we left.

You must know each other well now...

We've developed a great shorthand. Sometimes, one word is enough. Also, Steve gives me an awful lot of freedom to do different things. Nothing is set in stone. We rehearse, we discuss and then when we come to put it on the floor, we change it. And you can do anything you want. And Sean Bobbitt, I've got to say I love him. He's amazing behind the camera. Obviously you see how beautiful he shoots. But to work with him at all...he might say 'Surprise me' and that's brilliant. That's the thing. You're all dancing together, and hopefully surprising each other. If I can surprise him in the room, and the crew in the room, that might translate then to the audience later on. And that's the one thing. Steve creates this fantastic energy in the room, where everybody is on the top of their game. The focus is relentless. It's really tight when you're working. Then in between takes, we joke around a lot and have a lot of fun. It might not seem like that from the material on there but I like that way of working as well, to

step in and out. If you can have fun in between takes – not always, of course – you can go into the scene with a fresher outlook.

What else have you learned?

Something I've learned through working with Steve, and directors of a high calibre, is that it's important for me not to pre-empt and go 'I did that really well, so I'll make a note of that and I'll do that again'. Rather than allowing things to take place and being very relaxed and aware of what's going on around you.

What is your acting process?

My process is pretty simple, really. It's mainly the script. I work on the script a lot. I read the script maybe 250 times or so. And then through this process with the script, you're constantly thinking about the character and then after a while it sinks into your enamel. It's like putting on another layer of skin, and then I'll ask myself questions like, 'What have I in common with the character?' And I will list the characteristics. And then I'll go, 'That characteristic, I have that. I know that. This one, I need to work on.' And so forth. And then the biography. What does the character like to eat for breakfast in the morning? What does he drink? What do his parents do? Was he sporty at school? Academic? Does he have a lot of friends?

What is the most challenging thing about approaching a part like this?

The challenge is to not let Steve down and not let the story down, and Abi [Morgan], who wrote such a beautiful story with Steve. I just didn't want to let him down. I wanted to make sure that I wasn't the weak link. That's usually the same feeling I have for most jobs, but especially for Steve, because he changed my life.

How comfortable were you with the nudity?

I insist on it in my films! No, it's embarrassing and it's uncomfortable. But we didn't ever discuss it. I said to Steve, 'You do what you have to do.' I know that he's going to deal with that sort of thing in a correct manner, according to the story. I guess the toughest thing is doing sexual scenes with partners. For me, you don't want the other person to feel like you're taking advantage of the situation or you're exploiting them in any way. So you try and put a lot of energy into making them feel comfortable and so you can just get on with the thing, when you're doing the scene. That I find to be stressful.

Was the role painful to do? Did you feel similar to Brandon?

For sure. That was what struck me when I first read the script. There's similarities and things that I can identify with, through Brandon. Then you go on a journey with him, and go to these places mentally. Plus the fact it's a five-week shoot. It's very intense, very concentrated. And again that focus is something that puts a lot of stress on your mental capacity. Even the more

obvious thing – you come to set and it's 23 pages to do in the evening, in the one scene. So the work is intense at all times. And you never want to drop the ball because each morsel is so important.

Is Brandon a sign of the times?

For sure. I think it's a very relevant film for today. It's definitely a film of this time. I think the way that things are going in the porn department...when I was 14, you had to reach up to the top shelf and check and see who was in the shop and wait for everyone to clear out. And then of course, you have to go up to the desk and buy it. And there is somebody behind the counter...so that sort of shame or embarrassment is present at the point of purchase. Nowadays, you go onto the Internet, and it's two buttons, and there's a million different choices. So everything is very accessible and easy to access. I think that's across the board with everything we had, it's not only in the sexual realm. We also have that with food. If you're hungry, you grab something, it's easy, you can take it. There's a whole different choice of what you can have. If you want to buy a magazine, there's a hundred different options. There's so much information being thrown at us at all times, in some ways we're quite overwhelmed. It creates an anxiety. We're encouraged to look a certain way, dress with certain clothes, obtain these objects that will bring us happiness. And dealing with this idea of communication – it's so easy to communicate with people in the world, through Facebook or Twitter or e-mail without ever leaving your room. So that physical interaction, that essence of the one-to-one, is also being changed.

This does create loneliness, too, though right?

It does. Look, this is happening. I don't think it's necessarily a criticism. It's more, what sort of world is Brandon living in. I also think he is for sure a lonely character. But there is also other stuff that has happened to Brandon, in his biography that leads him to this place as well. But I do think we're a bit confused at the moment, by this overload of information and so many options. Steve said that there is access to excess – it's everywhere. And putting it in a city like New York, where that's 24/7 is the perfect habitat to show that for this character, Brandon.

His sister seems more able to have emotions...

Yeah, well her condition is the exact flip side of his. It's great that they're brother and sister. She wants to feel good about herself, just like Brandon does. They don't really like themselves very much. She will emotionally anchor herself onto anybody that she meets. She's a very effusive person with her emotions, whereas Brandon is terrified of committing emotionally to anybody. That sort of intimacy...he's not comfortable with that, it terrifies him. He wants to wriggle out of that embrace. That's why he gets involved in very physical activity – with strangers, with prostitutes that he can pay. And then they come in, and take their baggage out of his life. So when she comes into his world, which is very controlled, and he likes everything so-so, it's too much for him. She's also bringing a history and a past in that he doesn't want to be reminded of. In the biography we put together, Brandon's actually a really good piano player, but he doesn't have that in his life anymore. I found that to be so tragic. So when he's doing a song, he goes to see her play – and he doesn't want to be brought back to these memories or that place.

You've just finished *Prometheus* with Ridley Scott. How was he to work with?

Ridley is just a master. He was amazing, shooting with four cameras. He's full of energy, really precise in all departments. He has a team he has been working with for a while. They're all a really talented bunch. Again, there is a confidence in the man. He learns by doing and getting out there. He's a self-made man, him and his brother. It's pretty amazing. So he doesn't hold too tightly to anything – whatever ideas you're coming with, he'll say 'Let's see them. Great!' He's open to anything like that. And again we had a great cast there to play off. We had a lot of fun with it.

Of course, you also just did *X-Men*. Was it easy to come to *Shame* after that?

A: I didn't have much time to think about it to be honest. I was off the set of *X-Men* and straight into New York to prepare this. Essentially my work and preparation is usually the same thing. The only difference to something like *Prometheus* or *X-Men* is that there are a lot more people involved. It's just a bigger production. There's more money and more opinions. On a set like *Shame*, it's a very intimate set. Less numbers.

How do you compare Steve McQueen to working with David Cronenberg on *A Dangerous Method*?

I always think...it's better for me to say what the similarities are between them. With the great directors that I have worked with, it's always a common thread, that they're so passionate about what they do. Both men really love coming to work every day and they're obviously extremely intelligent as well. Very well read. And also just very supportive. They both seem to really enjoy actors and people, human beings. And they're very interested by human beings, and relate to human beings, and try to ask questions and understand what we're all doing here, and how we try and relate to each other. Both films are about relationships with one's self and others around them.

Both your characters, in *Shame* and *A Dangerous Method*, struggle with repression and desire. Can you talk about that?

Yeah, it's so different in both cases. But what's interesting in both cases is that there's the outer face and what's going on inside. And Brandon, that's the likeable thing about him, I hope. Well for me. He's not like an Otto Gross character, where he's just 'Go for it, hang the consequences, follow your impulses'. The problem with that is that a lot of people get effected along the way, and it can be damaging for other people. Brandon realises that he's got an illness, and he's desperately trying to combat it. At the beginning, he seems pretty content with his routine, and until Sissy comes into his place, and disorganises it...I mean, he's trying to contain these impulses. He cleans the whole flat up, throws the computer out, and then goes on this very intense, downward spiral, and almost pushes himself to that point where he needs to go and sort himself out and seek help. So the struggle is going on with all times with him.

So how about Jung?

At the beginning when we see Jung, he's very much in control, he's a doctor and he's very ambitious and feels like he has to prove himself. It's only slowly that he gets drawn into this obsession and fascination with this patient. And he's also left vulnerable by the fact that they're both exploring this journey together. He's testing out this 'talking cure' and seeing if it's effective. So he's drawn into this world. When we meet Brandon right at the beginning, that's what I love about Steve, you walk into the theatre and you think the film has maybe

already been going on for an hour. You're arriving, and something's happened beforehand. And again when you leave the film, it's continual. Brandon still goes on his journey. But we meet him and he's definitely in his depths from the get-go. He doesn't want to have to get up from his office, and go and relieve himself in the bathroom. He's leading a very secretive life, and Jung is also living a secretive life, when he has this transference with this patient. But Brandon's whole existence is secretive. He doesn't have any relationships that we see in the film that are healthy. None. With his boss, it's an unhealthy relationship, with his sister, with all his sexual partners throughout the film. So he's very much a man on his own. And also he doesn't like himself. Jung liked himself, and thought quite highly of himself.

At the end of *Shame*, do you think the journey is over for him?

No, I think the journey is only beginning. For me, it's very important to have hope, otherwise what's the point? We're trying to ask questions and we're trying to evolve. That's important for me as an audience member and for someone who is working in this medium. Otherwise, what's the point?

You went on a European bike trip recently with your Dad. Was that because you've had so little time to see family and friends?

Exactly. Absolutely, yeah. My parents had a restaurant for many years, and last year they retired from that. Like I say, this friend of mine from school, and we've known each other since we were 13, 14. And I haven't seen him for a long time either, properly. He's based out in San Diego, so it was a good chance to reconnect. Also, I like road trips. I like travelling by motorcycle on the road. There's something quite cleansing about it. It's like you leave everything in the road behind you – hopefully not your skin!

So you have a good relationship with your father?

Yeah, we do. When I was 16, my parents bought the restaurant, and if you've got a family business, you're all trying to make it work together. So I would work with them in the restaurant, and a different relationship formed from that. So I have to say I'm very blessed and very lucky to have that.

If you run a restaurant, you have to be an entertainer of sorts. Did your father pass that on?

He was in the kitchen, so it's a different deal! But yeah, it's a good place to study people. Everyone goes out to eat at some point or other, so you get a nice wide range of people. You definitely have to smile out the front, even if it's all going crazy in the kitchen. The world of catering I've always found to be really fascinating. All the characters you get in the kitchen, and the characters you get in the front of house, and then the relationships between front of house and kitchen...there's a lot of drama going on there.

Are you worried that all your success recently could lead to temptations?

I'm sure it's the same as any business where things are offered on a buffet – sex, drugs, alcohol, attention, adoration. And if you don't have a handle on it, or if you're not aware of it, and the seduction of that, and the fantasy element of that, then sure you can get sucked into it, I imagine. The fact that you're travelling a lot, and away from home, and spend a lot

of time in hotels, then you're alone. I don't mind being on my own. I enjoy it, but then I enjoy the company of my friends and family, when the time is available for that.

Are you a workaholic?

I like working. I spent a lot of time waiting to get the opportunity to work. So I don't know. I don't know if I'm a workaholic. I definitely enjoy my work, for sure it's my first passion. I've been in it, quite intensely, for the last 20 months.



Steve McQueen – Q&A en anglais

When Steve McQueen made his feature debut with 2008's *Hunger*, the story of IRA hunger striker Bobby Sands, it was greeted with universal acclaim. Awarded the Camera d'Or in Cannes, it also saw him win a BAFTA for Most Promising Newcomer. Perhaps this should come as no surprise, for McQueen had already claimed the prestigious Turner Prize in 1999 for three works of visual art, including *Deadpan* and *Prey*.

Written by acclaimed screenwriter Abi Morgan (*The Iron Lady*), his sophomore feature, *Shame*, is gaining similar plaudits. Set in New York, it focuses on high-flyer Brandon (Michael Fassbender). Barely keeping control of an overwhelming sex drive, when his younger sister Sissy (Carey Mulligan) comes to stay, his routine is further disrupted, causing the coolly suave Brandon to emotionally implode. Below, McQueen tells us about shooting sex scenes, why he chose to slow down *New York, New York* and what makes Michael Fassbender so special.

Was this a disturbing film to make?

No, it was a great film to make. We had lots of fun on the set. I think when you're making a film like that, you need something to pull you out. So things were quite light on the set. Someone told me, when you're making a comedy, it's horrible on set, but when you're making a serious drama, it's funny. I think maybe that was the case with us. We had a great time, a close bond with people. We were doing something we thought was interesting so we all pulled together.

Where did the story come from?

It was myself and Abi Morgan, the writer. We said, 'OK, we're only going to meet for an hour.' Then we ended up three hours later having these discussions. It ended up about sex and the Internet really. And we got this idea of a sex addict. At the time – this was three years ago – it wasn't so in vogue. So what was interesting for me was to investigate it. We went to the States. We spoke to a psychoanalyst who actually deals with sex addicts, and we spoke to actual sex addicts. It was very in-depth research. My goodness. And through that research, you question your own psyche. You get very deep into this understanding of how these people operate. These people go on 'sexcapades'. They spend all day on the Internet. Or if it's masturbating or going to prostitutes, doing whatever, taking the most extraordinary risks sexually. And what happens after that? After they come out of this 'sexcapade', they have this huge wave of shame. And every single one said this. And what they do, of course, to cover this is to do it again. So I was similar to everyone else. You do snigger at the idea of a sex addict. It's like the guy who drinks too much – 'Oh, he's a funny drunk. Remember him at the last Christmas party? Ha-ha!' But when the drink starts taking over, when the drink is a necessity for him or her to survive, then of course it becomes a problem, and that's similar to sex addiction. One of the quotes we got from the psychoanalyst was that sex addiction has as much to do with wanting sex as alcoholism has to do with being thirsty.

How much do you see Brandon's journey as a moral one?

I'm a moralist, absolutely. Aren't we all? Don't we still do what we do? But I'm a moralist in the way that you can reflect what's going on. Not that I'm a saint or a priest or anything like that. Far from it. But as an artist, you want to reflect something that is urgent and passionate. That's what cinema is about, isn't it? Or should be about. We're losing audiences. If we want to make films that young people go and see, if we want cinema to be like rock'n'roll, and we're making costume dramas, then what's the point? It's got to be essential, like on HBO. Cinema can be a necessity, a starting point for a conversation. It can be powerful. And that's what I want to do. Films that I would like to be involved in. I think the medium is dying. Kids aren't going to watch a period drama, are they?

What made you choose *New York, New York* for Carey Mulligan to sing?

When I realised I needed a song for Sissy to sing in the club, I thought 'What song?' And I like the idea of taking on a song, which is so iconic. But at the same time, this song was written in 1980. It isn't a classic....well, it is a classic now. It took Frank Sinatra to make it a classic. Liza Minnelli sung it in the first place. So I listened to the lyrics, and it's a blues number. 'These vagabond shoes are melting away.' This guy is a homeless person. They haven't made it. Sinatra and Minnelli sing it in a very gutsy, sassy way. But it's not a celebratory song. It's a very sad song. This person has a dream but they're not there yet. So what it does for me, when Sissy is singing it, it talks about Brandon and her past, that song. It talks about the environment that they're living in right now. It does a multitude of things in one song. Also, it's a recognition. Both of them have a shared history. So when you see Brandon responding to that song, across five minutes, you get so much information from something abstract and familiar, but at the same time unrecognisable. At that point, I'm hoping the audience can invest in it emotionally. Hopefully I can keep you in your seat, until that point, and then you feel you can invest in it.

Can you talk about working with Michael again?

I think Michael...we met in a very special situation. He wasn't as popular as he is now, of course, which is great. We met on a level playing field, which I think is very important. Neither of us were of any interest to anyone. And when I see him on screen, he's not acting. I believe him. A lot of movie stars, I don't believe them. But with Michael, I believe him. He's not a movie star. He's an artist. He's an actor. And that's the difference. And he's willing to go further, in a way, to get closer to how we are as human beings. When you see him, I feel we can recognise ourselves in him. Yes, he's a man – but you can see a bit of yourself in that person. That's what an actor's meant to do. Some people can translate reality. Not a lot of people can do that.

He said he found this role harder than *Hunger*...

Yes, I think he went a bit do-lally!

How hard was it to find the right tone for the sex scenes?

I mean, the threesome...there was DeeDee and Calamity and Michael, and they just went for it. I think we got a little help, and we just went for it. They're great actresses, and Michael is very careful and attentive to him. It was great. They didn't have any problems. Sometimes with actresses, they tighten up, but they didn't have any problems. They just went for it. It was done very quickly.

You keep that whole sequence in close up. Was there a reason for that?

I just wanted to do something different. I thought about it for a long time – 'How am I going to shoot this?' What happens when you see pornography or sex scenes? It's very illustrative and so uninteresting. How do you get close to it? I wanted it to be a foursome, with the camera. I wanted to get in there – close, close, close.

You also have the very long-range shot of him with the girl against the glass window...

She was wonderful, that lady. She was great. Like when she goes to the mirror with her bra, and ruffles Michael's hair. He looks so stupid, so silly! 'Do you want a drink?' 'No.' 'Can I help you?' 'No'. She's gone – thank you very much, I'm out. That was great. When you make a good chemistry on a set, everything's possible. It's when you have people that don't like each other, it's a problem. You're doing something that's very intimate.

How did you work on the back-story of the main characters?

Through research. Through research. Through research. I remember someone saying to me 'Why didn't you make a movie about somebody who likes sex?' Well, I don't want to make a movie about a cunt. I'm interested in people and why they do things. Everyone has a past. When you have a background, you do things because of that. It's just like picking up a cup of coffee – why do it with your pinkie out!?

But what about when Sissy says, 'We are not bad people but we come from a bad place.'

That could be to do with the world we are living in. That could be where they come from. That's it.

Why do you think so many artists are moving into cinema?

I have no idea. For myself, from day one, I was an artist. I wanted to experiment and play with storytelling. And that was it really. As simple as that. No big idea. I just wanted to play with storytelling. Cinema is very alluring, isn't it? Even my neighbour knows what I do now. Before he didn't.

How does your art inform your cinema?

It's difficult. It's a very interesting question. Sometimes you don't want it to inform the other. I was actually thinking of dyeing my hair orange after this, just to get away from myself. It's very difficult. At the moment, I'm finding it very difficult. Maybe because I'm in it, and things are coming into my head. It was never difficult for me before. Maybe because this process has

been going for a long time, so you take a break, and then you get back to it. But I'm really thinking about dyeing my hair orange – so it's not me and I can take myself out of it!

Still, there must be techniques you bring...

I think painting, really. When you think of Goya, showing the most awful atrocities, but he wants you to engage with the painting. So what he does is...the composition, how he composes an image, it's great. This movie for me is all about 'look'. Most people don't want to look. Most people don't want to deal with it. Most people don't want to talk about it. Most people will see themselves in it, but never talk to anyone about it. So I wanted the film to be like a dog-whistle. Like *Hunger*...people were saying 'How can you shoot all this disgusting stuff but compose it in a beautiful way?' Well, it wasn't a case of making it kitsch. It was making people look at something you don't want to look at.

And you took yourself out of your comfort zone here, working in New York...

Well, I'm very familiar with New York. I've been going there since '77, since the blackout and Elvis dying. A lot of my family are there and I spend a lot of my time there for work. So it's more familiar to me than maybe you would think. So it wasn't such a big thing. In saying that, it was. There are little things you have to be careful about. You have to know certain details. What we did with Brandon – where will he live? How will he travel to work? What clothes will he wear? The journey, everything else. Those kinds of details I wanted to get right. You get a situation where people are coming from different countries, making films, and it becomes almost like a tourist situation.

Was there anything specific that you told your actors?

Every conversation is different. Every approach is different. I'm just glad people want to see the movie, because a lot of people would say 'You can't make this movie. You shouldn't make this movie.' So I'm happy that people are responding to it in the way they are. I'm just feeling pleasure, because there is an audience out there that want to look at serious movies.

Why did people tell you that you couldn't make it?

Making a movie about a sex addict, it's not necessarily an enterprising investment. Because of reactions, it's been great. If you're in competition from television or computer games, whatever, why makes films? They're only an hour-and-a-half! I could get an hour TV slot and have six series. If it's *The Wire* or *Breaking Bad* or whatever. So I just think that cinema can be so powerful in an hour-and-a-half, in that it can start a discussion.

What can you say about your next project?

It's called *Twelve Years of Slaves*. It's being produced by Plan B, Brad Pitt's company. It takes on the story of a guy called Solomon, who lived in New York in 1835 and was kidnapped and put into slavery.