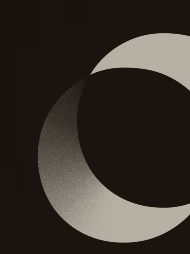


CALLIGRAM PICTURES PRESENTS



BLOOM

A film by Noah Gerometta



International Press Kit

FILM INFORMATION

MAIN CAST

JACK T. MURPHY, CALRE FOTINOS, REBECCA SAUNDERS-SMITH, TAYLOR GLOCKNER, JOEL DRABBLE

LANGUAGE

ENGLISH

COUNTRY OF PRODUCTION

AUSTRALIA

YEAR

2024

RUN TIME

90 min

SCREEN RATIO

1:85:1

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WWW.CALLIGRAM.PICTURES/PRESS

SYNOPSIS

A NOVELIST IS COMPELLED TO
WRITE AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL
BOOK IN THE MIDST OF A
FAMILY TRAGEDY.





Interview with lead actor

JACK T. MURPHY



I found this film to be original and quite unusual. I can imagine the screenplay might have been confusing. Reading the script, what appealed to you?

Honestly it was quite confusing at first. I think what drew me to it mostly was the relationships between the characters. There was a very strong relationship between Tom and Samantha throughout the film, and I've got a good relationship with my mum, so I really latched onto that.

I understand you've worked with Noah Gerometta before on short films. What was it like working with him on a feature?

Much better. Not that I didn't enjoy working with Noah on the shorts, I mean that's how we became friends. But for this feature, the script was so much more fleshed out, and the scenes had the room to live the way they needed to. We did a version of this script as a short years ago, and it was okay, but it was great to see that idea reach its logical conclusion in this film. Lots of ideas are best kept to shorts, and some really need a feature length of runtime to work, this was definitely the latter.

What was your process in preparing for this role?

I hadn't had to prepare this much script in isolation ahead of a shoot before, so it was quite a challenge. I'd done plays of similar length, so learning a script top to bottom wasn't new to me, but I was living in Melbourne at the time so I did all my preparation by myself, and only sporadically talked to Noah. I ended up getting quite methodical and broke the script down scene by scene, rating them in terms of difficulty so I could know how best to pace my rehearsals. I did a lot of writing from my character's perspective too, to fill in all the history between the characters. Which I wrote in a notebook that I lost unfortunately. It would be great to go back and read some of it now. Anyway, it was a great tool to read before a take to get in touch with the character's state of mind.

This is your first leading role in a feature. Were you excited? Were you intimidated?

Equal measures excited and intimidated. Particularly with a film like this which has more of a subdued tone. Your instinct is, or at least mine was, as the lead character, is to make sure you are the central focus and your performance is as commanding and as interesting as possible. You want to fill the room. It's definitely one approach, but with this I knew that wasn't the way to go about it. That wasn't the tone of things. I think some of the references Noah and I talked about ahead of time helped me focus. Things like 'The Piano Teacher', the specificity and the focus of Isabelle Hupert's performance in that film was a great inspiration. Other things like Sir Ben Kingsley in 'Sexy Beast'. The stillness he has in that is so comforting to see



Cont'd

as an actor. To know you can allow yourself to do less, and as long as you're emotionally connected to the character, your performance can still be riveting. So those are the things I used as guiding lights for me to prepare a very still internal performance, because god, yeah. It was scary.

You play an author in the film. Did you do any research to prepare in relation to writing books?

Not so much in terms of the profession of being an author, but I did a lot of backstory development into figuring out how Tom/John got to this place in his life. I more or less decided he was a reasonably successful author, and quite young, so figuring out how he got there was the most important thing to me. And then how that related to this mother. There was no father in the script, so I factored that into their joint backstory, and other things like her being a professor, and his schooling, and how he got into writing.

Do you intentionally try to find a way to relate to the characters you play? Do you relate to your character in Bloom?

I saw aspects of myself in that character. Like I mentioned before, I have a good relationship with my mother, so there was a great emotional truth for me to draw on there. I didn't need to create any parallels, or dig too deep there. Sometimes you do. I did a play where I loved this bloody lamp because my character was really superficial, and I had to really work to find the obsession with this lamp, because it's just a lamp you know? But the relationships were very present here and easy for me to work on. So it's different for different performances, but this one was very immediate for me. And I have obnoxious friends like Julian too.

One of the things I found to be strange is that the film movie never really pleads for sympathy from the audience for your character. He's portrayed, I think, quite unsympathetically, and I think that's deliberate. How do you feel about him as a central character? Do you find him difficult or awkward or sympathetic?

There's the audience's point of view and then there's my point of view from playing him. I kinda get where that question is coming from, but it's kinda hard to separate for me after having already been through the shoot. Tom is a person who holds everything internally. Those kind of people exist, and they can be seen as shy, withholding or even arrogant. And I've heard that shyness is a kind of arrogance. Orsen Wells I think said this in regard to Woody Allen actually. I don't think he liked him at all. So I can see that people might take a position like that with Tom, since he's so closed off. Films can't always be about heroes and charming leading men, I just hope that this character is compelling to watch.

You are in every scene in the film. Is that exhausting?

Not really, no. We had a pretty reasonably paced shoot I think. I think the highest number of takes was maybe between 15 or 20, and I remember Noah, the director, asking me around the 12 mark if I was struggling, and I said, "No. Let's keep going. I'm in a good groove here!". The toughest day was the day we shot was with Taylor Glockner and Joel Drabble. We maybe only shot it from 3 directions, but were doing these long 12 minute takes of the entire scene, and that's tough. Really exhausting. The rest of it was challenging and nerve-wracking for sure, but nothing compared to that. That was the hardest day for me.

You act across from a number of other actors throughout the film. What were those experiences like?

I've heard the set was relatively small. Did that have an impact on your performance?

What was your favorite scene to perform and why?

What have you taken away from your work on 'Bloom'?

What sort of movies would you like to be in, and what sorts of roles would be excited to play in the future?

It was good. I spent most of the shoot with Rebecca and Clare so we found good working relationships between us and our respective characters. They were very giving and lovely people to work with so it made getting into that space really easy. Then it came to the end of the shoot where we shot with Joel and Taylor, it was a real breath of fresh air to have those two guys come in and inject different personality types into the set, because the film is very steadfast in its tone for the majority of the runtime. Taylor completely shook up the dynamic I had with the other cast members, he was a lot of fun to work with.

I don't think so. I'm quite comfortable performing and getting into emotional spaces in front of people. It's a reason I got into acting in the first place. You want to access those parts of yourself. I remember one day one of the runners was sort of giving me a bit of extra space because I was doing some emotional scene work and it was nice, but it wasn't needed. I like the respect but I also kinda hate being treated with kid's gloves. The whole crew were really considerate actually, it was a good space to work in.

I enjoyed some of the practical in-camera effects we did as filmmaking fan. I love anytime someone gets a dolly and zooms past me or zooms in. There's just a thrill that you're part of making a film that excites me more than anything else. So to shoot stuff that appears underwater, you know with the fish tanks and fans, that was really cool. It's something that I haven't done before, and even though I was just sleeping in a bed for those shots, it was exciting to be part of and was great to see in the finished product.

It galvanised a lot of things that I had developed over the years in my acting process, and lead to some new ideas too. I sort of fell in love with my process again. So I want to do more of those things. More internal research and writing, even improvisation as part of my character development. I'm pleased with the work I did, but all I can think of is all the ways in which I want to take things further and bring more ideas to the table. I want to be the actor who has an answer for everything. I don't like being unprepared. I want to be able to be dumped into any situation and immediately know what I'm doing.

On one hand I'd like to play more dramatic things, I think some more romantic dramas would be exciting. Things like 'Marriage Story' or 'Her'. Those kinds of stories really excite me, but also, I'd like to do something more villainous. I like intense characters, so playing a serial killer, or some kind of Kylo Ren would be a lot of fun. To give yourself over to a totally alien way of looking at things, like an Amy from 'Gone Girl'. That would be a lot of fun to explore.



Interview with director

NOAH GEROMETTA



What was the process of developing Bloom?

I started writing it in October of 2017. After a few months I became disinterested with the script and found myself writing about another subject that was more pressing to me at the time. During this time I came across a hypothesis for the purpose of memory, which provided me with the connective tissue I needed to integrate my new writing with the original version of Bloom. I completed the script in September of 2019. I asked one of my best friends and closest creative collaborator, Jackson Kanaris, if he would produce it. During 2019, I met Taylor Glockner while we were both working on a film set together, and he became attached to Bloom as an actor, and during post-production as a producer.

There's a shocking, disruptive shot in the film that stands out because of its camera movement. How does this shot contribute to the narrative for you, and how was that shot achieved?

The plan before shooting was to handle that scene as an unbroken handheld shot. During our technical rehearsals we were working on another camera setup for a different scene, and Angus, my cinematographer, suggested that at some point in the film, the camera could fall off the bed. I suggested integrating the aforementioned handheld shot into his idea, and we worked together to refine the camera blocking. The shot was then practically refined and executed by Angus and our first camera assistant Lillian Carrara. They rehearsed the camera operating for about an hour or two. We did seven takes. I think I used the fifth one. I don't shoot for coverage, so when looking at sequence shots while editing it becomes about weighing up the strengths and weaknesses of different takes. I thought the intended camera movement was best executed in the take used in the film.

How were the underwater shots achieved?

'Dry for Wet'. I'd read about it while writing the script being used for 'Godzilla', the original 1954 one. Also in 'The Shape Of Water', 'The Hunt for Red October', and the first 'Lord Of The Rings' movie. I thought it looked sort of mystical and theatrical and not completely realistic which appealed to me, and I knew it would be inexpensive to execute for the shots in which I wanted to use it. My camera department worked out the correct shutter speed, and used blue gels for the lighting. We used a fan to blow the fabrics, and so on. It's not an exact science. I asked my cinematographer, also the colourist, to colour the shots blue to go along with a more fictional, story book representation of water. I discussed layering some VFX into those shots with my VFX artist Angus William Taj Manion, but we decided against it. The shots were done completely practically.



Bloom is your debut feature. How is it different working with the cast for the duration of a feature?

I don't think I really did much. They give you these wonderful performances, and you film them. Due to resources we didn't rehearse, but I think I was very fortunate to be able to spend more time than just a few days working with most of them, as opposed to shorts which only take a few days to film. I had previously made two shorts with Jack T. Murphy. One in four half-days, and the other in one day. This time we spent 12 of the shooting days together. We became better friends by the end of it I think. He was lovely to work with as were all the actors.

We don't hear a lot in the movie about the events of the character's lives leading up to where the movie starts. Did you have any discussions with the actors about their backstories before filming?

Not really. I had a few conversations with the actors who I hadn't worked with before to explain logistics about the shoot, and to get to know them at least a little as we'd not talked properly aside from auditions. Some actors told me things they'd invented about the characters' histories but I don't encourage long discussions about characters or backstories. I think the history that audiences infer is mostly imposed by production design and other presentation elements. I've found long discussions to often be counterproductive and dangerous because actors can begin acting their opinions about the situations, and their opinions about their characters and the other characters, rather than acting the situations themselves. I don't need to know what's going on in their heads and they don't need to know what I've thought about either. I've found often with expression that once you analyze something you can't use it anymore. I don't think most people like to discuss their emotions anyway, so sometimes it just starts spilling out at the seams. That sort of festered emotion was present in most of the characters. Regrets and things left unsaid. If my actors and I don't discuss the people I've made up, I think the emotion just starts spilling out of their performances, which for me is much more realistic. Normally, after an emotional take, we can just hug or smile, and it's an unspoken understanding that would probably be worse off for the film if specifics were discussed. I don't need to tell someone what they're feeling. I think it's disrespectful to them. I have my own taste as to what sounds and looks to me like an actor consciously thinking about how they're expressing an emotion while they're doing it. I see that sort of unintegrated, analytical type of performance as cringeworthy. It sounds and feels and looks contrived.

How do you speak to actors? Do you give much direction?

No. I just start running takes and see what they've prepared. Often they don't need much or any at all. Sometimes I tell them to "keep it simple", which I've stolen from Paul Thomas Anderson. Sometimes I use language I've stolen from Lars von Trier like "Take it down ten percent." Often I don't feel like it's right for me to impede on what they're doing. I'm watching the performances on set knowing I'm going to edit them together, so I'm crossing script lines and reactions off in my head until I think I've got enough to construct the edit. My aim is to cut together the parts in which I

believe the performances to be most accurate, real, and interesting. Most of what I can say to them will stand in the way of that, so mostly I just have to facilitate what they're doing within reason. I'm not a parent, but I think it's like being a parent. I view most of directing actors as an interruption, so I only try to say something when I feel they're doing something that isn't cohesively sound for the film.

What are you working on now? Will you be making another film with Calligram?

Yes, absolutely. I'm writing a few different scripts. One of which I've just finished. Hopefully we'll be shooting another film soon.

Are you wearing two very different hats as a writer and as a director? Does your directing override your writing at the end of the day?

I plan very heavily, and eighty-five percent of the time I stick to the plan. The film is complete and ideal on paper, so shooting becomes primarily about not making mistakes rather than inventing new ideas. Shooting is very stressful, and I've been on enough sets to know that spur of the moment ideas are ideas that have not been carefully considered with any perspective, whereas my screenplay ideas have been considered over long periods of time, and since I still like those screenplay ideas after all this time, I tend to not trade them for impulse decisions. Sometimes however, you start filming a scene and a happy accident happens, and I try not to deprive myself of those. I'll defer to what Orsen Welles said about his definition of a director being someone who presides over accidents. I view directing as being of secondary importance to writing. When you're working with great actors and a scene isn't going well, it's generally the fault of poor writing on my part, so I try to fix the bad writing. It's a deeper problem that can't be solved by saying some magic incantation to make your actors get to the honesty of something. You can't expect actors to give you something of value if you haven't given them something valuable enough. There's no saving bad writing unfortunately, no matter how wonderful your actors are, or how much I'd like them to be able to save my writing sometimes.

What was your collaboration like working with your composer and sister, Isabella Gerometta?

She's brilliant. Obviously I'm going to say that. She's my sister. I didn't tell her what the film was about because I didn't want the piece to be too "one to one" informed by the plot of the film. I sent her a few pieces I liked and asked her for a piano piece. It seemed more appropriate for a small scale, chamber type film like this one. I suggested a structure that I thought might be appropriate which involved call and response between octaves. She sat at her piano and we worked out the structure. After about two hours of our first session we more or less knew what to do. We had subsequent working sessions, then she performed and recorded the piece herself. It was one of the easiest parts of making the film.

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CREDITS

TOM / JOHN

JAMIE

SAMANTHA

JULIAN

ADRIAN

DEBORA

DOCTOR

CHLOE

DIRECTED BY

WRITTEN BY

PRODUCED BY

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

ORIGINAL MUSIC

EDITOR

SCRIPT SUPERVISOR

PRODUCTION MANAGER

VISUAL EFFECTS

COLOURIST

FIRST ASSISTANT CAMERA

FIRST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

SECOND ASSISTANT CAMERA

BOOM OPERATOR

JACK T. MURPHY

CLARE FOTINOS

REBECCA SAUNDERS-SMITH

TAYLOR GLOCKNER

JOEL DRABBLE

THERESA-ANNE WEBB

STEPHEN WALKER

KIRRILY ANNALISE

NOAH GEROMETTA

NOAH GEROMETTA

JACKSON KANARIS

NOAH GEROMETTA

TAYLOR GLOCKNER

ANGUS McARTHUR-WILLIAMS

ISABELLA GEROMETTA

NOAH GEROMETTA

IZAC BRODRICK

JACKSON KANARIS

ANGUS WILLIAM TAJ MANION

ANGUS McARTHUR-WILLIAMS

LILLIAN CARRARA

BEAU BELL

DANIEL KTWOR

DANE SHAW

LESLIE BRADLEY

MICHAEL BUI

DISTRIBUTION COMPANY



CALLIGRAM PICTURES

If writers and directors don't have the freedom to shape their projects as they see fit, then they relinquish their authenticity as artists.

Calligram Pictures was founded in 2020 by 5 friends drawn together by a love of cinema and filmmaking. Based in Brisbane, Australia, we develop, produce, and distribute original stories that challenge, engage, and inspire discussion.

Above all we respect each other's artistic expression, and aim to facilitate a space in which our collaborators have the same freedom to experiment we strive for ourselves.

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