

la famiglia films

Presents

## Much Ado About A Minor Ting

Running time: 24 minutes and 30 seconds

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## ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

*"Yeah well that's quite a lot of money. I mean I know nuff mans that will merk you for that"*

-Tom

La famiglia films presents ***Much Ado About A Minor Ting*** directed by Jesse Lawrence from an original screenplay written by himself and long-time writing partner Cristian Solimeno. The film stars Bronson Webb, Anwar Lynch, Daniel Kaluuya, Helen Koya and Nathan Welsh. Kaleem Aftab is the producer. Bruce Melhuish is the Director of Photography.

Jesse Lawrence's follow-up to his internationally acclaimed short *Mash Up* is a funny, dark and tragic exploration of betrayal told through the eyes of young working class London kids. Rene (ANWAR LYNCH), having been overseas for nearly two years receiving medical treatment following a car accident returns to his native Ladbroke Grove in West London (an area famous for the Notting Hill Carnival and Portobello Road Market).

Rene's immediate goal is to find his ex-girlfriend Natalie, who he now realises is the key to forging a new and meaningful life. Looking for Natalie he is quickly intercepted by his childhood best friend Tom (BRONSON WEBB, who worked with Jesse on *Mash Up*) who is on-edge and has clearly fallen on hard times due to substance abuse. Tom informs Rene that he must leave because there is a price on his head. As Tom walks Rene to the nearest underground station Tom receives a phone call from Shocker (DANIEL KALUUYA) the man who ordered the hit on Rene. Tom, realising that there is no way out, decides to be the one to prosper from the reward and agrees to bring Rene to Shocker. Using the possible whereabouts of Natalie as bait he easily convinces Rene to follow him. As they walk to West London's famous Trellick Tower (Europe's tallest social housing project, built in the 70s) Rene discovers that the price on his head is a measly £150...a definite minor ting.

Shocker is waiting outside the lift with his gang, who are armed with knives, screwdrivers, a pipe-gun and a fierce pair of Bull Terriers. As the lift doors open Shocker raises a hammer to the crudely constructed pipe-gun and attempts to shoot Rene, missing him and Tom by mere inches. Rene runs for his life with the gang in pursuit.

With the price increasing to £400 and with no regard for collateral damage, a chase ensues across West London involving bicycles, motorcycles, cars and a daring rooftop jump. At this point Rene starts to realise the awful truth about the reason for the hit and who is

really responsible for the whole mess. Shocker, now properly armed with a Glock and with dozens of boys and girls on the lookout, is slowly beginning to realise that all is not as it seems. But with things moving at such a frantic pace will he realise the truth in time...

*"Are you in cahoots as such with my man?"*

-Shocker

In 2006 Jesse Lawrence wrote and directed the internationally acclaimed short film Mash Up - a magical realist story about life, death, drugs and friendships amongst young inner-city kids. With ***Much Ado About A Minor Ting*** Jesse returns to the world of inner-city kids, this time focusing his great eye for detail and searing sense of humour towards a much grander tale. "I really wanted to explore the themes of betrayal," writer/director Jesse Lawrence comments. "After sitting down with my writing partner Cristian Solimeno we decided that it would be great to explore this through an exhilarating chase movie."

"Treachery is a theme that has fascinated storytellers throughout history, from Greek tragedy to Shakespeare to the modern age" says the director "But rather than have a story about Princes and Kings stabbing each other in the back, I wanted to create one that features underclass, juvenile delinquents and characters that are hard to take seriously on face value, but who, never-the-less, are making life and death decisions. Sadly it appears that in the UK at least, this vision is becoming an ever-increasing reality."

Once the screenplay was completed Jesse turned his focus to finding a group of extraordinary actors who could bring these characters to life. At the core of the piece is Rene, a real existential anti-hero. "Rene is a detached and somewhat mournful character but in person couldn't get a more cheerful and positive guy than Anwar," says Jesse. "But it was precisely Anwar's boyish and optimistic reading of Rene that I found attractive and made me see that it would be a valuable thing if the character too, had these innocent and sympathetic qualities. But Rene is also the most complex character of the piece and to help get Anwar into existentialist mode I oversaw his research, which included reading *The Outsider* by Albert Camus and discussing with him the similarities between Meursault and Rene. It's important too remember too that the role is a very physically demanding one and by easily winning the race that I set the Rene's who auditioned, Anwar again impressed me."

The villain of the piece, Shocker, had to have an intimidating, on-the-edge presence while at the same time still appear very juvenile and immature. "What makes Shocker such a cool bad guy is the fact that as well as being extremely intense and vengeful he is also a

deep thinker, albeit in a slow and methodical way,” says the director. “Daniel seemed to have an instant and innate understanding of this and blew everyone away with his audition. It was a very exciting thing to witness and there was no doubt in my mind that he would play Shocker.”

When it came to casting Tom, the onetime best friend of Rene - whose life has taken a nose-dive into drugs and petty crime - Jesse had always envisioned Bronson Webb in the role. “Bronson made such an impact on me when we made Mash Up that I was very keen to work with him again,” Jesse explains. “He always brings that little bit extra to a role and I think his performance in the film is a deep and entertaining one. In fact his character, immersed as he is in treachery and guiltiness, is very Shakespearean and another benefit of casting Bronson is that he brings an English timelessness to a contemporary story. Limping about in his scruffy hoody he actually resembles a 14<sup>th</sup> century peasant and that’s a great thing.”

*“It’s proper good to see you bruv. You’re a true friend Tom. A true friend.”*  
-Rene

With a strong desire for authenticity Jesse spent days trawling around Ladbroke Grove looking for locations. Once he had an idea of where he would like the film to be set he sat down with Bruce Melhuish (Director of Photography), Kaleem Aftab (Producer) and Cristian Solimeno (Writer/Editor) to analyse the logistics and feasibility of each location. As a small crew la famiglia don’t have the worries of where to park dozens of trucks and how to rig up massive pieces of kit so on the whole getting access to real world locations wasn’t a massive obstacle.

The focal point for the film is West London’s famous Trellick Tower, a social housing project designed in the Brutalist style by architect Erno Goldfinger in 1972. “Trellick truly dominates the West London landscape and is visible for miles around like a medieval castle,” says Jesse. “Some people hate the building but I think it’s a bold and beautiful piece of architecture and utterly cinematic.” The interior scenes where Rene and Shocker first clash were shot in Trellick’s sister tower Balfron in Poplar, East London “Unfortunately we couldn’t use Trellick Tower to shoot but luckily we found an almost identical version of the tower in Poplar which actually served us better as a location as the communal areas are quieter and we were able to keep disruption to a minimum,” opines producer Kaleem Aftab.

For the stunt scenes involving motorcycles a much larger open estate was needed and the production turned to South London's Heygate estate which they had used in Mash Up. "We built a really strong relationship with the film department that runs Heygate Estate when we shot Mash Up and hoped that given our previous track record they would be open to us shooting stunts," says the producer. "We had to spend the day with their representative explaining what we wanted to do and then get a risk assessment carried out by our stunt co-ordinator Paul Heasman. We were very lucky to get such a hugely experienced stunt co-ordinator on board."

The decision to make a black and white film was initially a stylistic choice. "We had wanted to make a black and white film for ages and were racking our brains for a way to do it that wasn't totally arbitrary and then Kaleem came up with the idea of emulating Rumble Fish and making the character colour-blind as a result of his accident," says Jesse.

With his strong hand-held camerawork and natural lighting Bruce Melhuish created a really intimate and observational feel to the film whilst also paying homage to the Hitchcockian style that Jesse and he had desired: "We talked about a lot of films such as Hitchcock's North by Northwest, Psycho and Fritz Lang's M as well modern films like La Haine," says Bruce Melhuish. "All these films fed directly into the visual style and I was also definitely influenced by my recent viewings of Tell No One and The Bourne Ultimatum."

Jesse had very specific ideas on how the characters should look and took them as a group to buy clothes from Hackney Market. "Bronson was a great help talking the prices down," remarks Jesse. "I could see him slipping into the character of Tom already. Daniel too was enjoying bartering with stubborn market traders as well as buying the crazily outlandish clothes and fake, cheap jewellery that Shocker would wear with pride. It was a fun day out and a valuable bonding experience."

*"Why did you he 'Oh Tom' though?"*  
-Shocker

George Kallis who had recently composed the score for Highlander, on which Cristian worked, was called in to create a really dramatic score. "Initially I wanted George to create something similar to The Rite of Spring," says the director. "I also believed that a classical score would juxtaposition cleverly with the contemporary setting, but George convinced me that we could still have those frantic Stravinsky elements in a less clichéd,

more modern sounding score. I'm glad to say that he was right and his composition magnifies the action and suspense immeasurably."

Ali Bla Bla, who plays the role of Mohammed also penned a track for the film entitled, *It's not a Minor Ting*, which was produced by his 12 year old brother 8-bit. "Ali also acted in and produced the theme tune for Mash Up and did such a great job at both that I was keen to use his considerable talents again," says Jesse. The film also features original music from West London hip hop artists, Big Frizzle and Reveal.

*"Watch! I'm gonna shank you in your neck!"*  
-Erinma

As the shoot progressed Jesse was pleased to see his talented and predominantly teenage cast, steadily morph into their characters: "As the cast hung about between takes, they seemed to attract the most desperate and dodgy of local characters. But it was when a local in a passing car, saw Bronson in front of the camera and exclaimed, 'what are they filming that crack head for?' that I knew we were on the right track."

## SYNOPSIS

### **Much Ado 20 word synopsis:**

18 year-old Rene, returns to West London to track down his ex-sweetheart. But why is there a £150 price on his head?

### **Much Ado 50 word synopsis:**

After a lengthy absence, a lonely Rene reappears in his native West London on a mission to track down his ex-sweetheart. But romance soon gives way to survival as Rene stumbles into a hornet's nest of treachery, homemade weaponry and teen bounty hunters. But what has he done to deserve so much ado?

## ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

### **Jesse Lawrence (Writer/Director)**

Jesse Lawrence was born in West London and raised in a creative household on the Worlds End Estate. He studied painting and photography at the Chelsea School of Art & Design.

Jesse cut his teeth writing and acting in the theatre before turning his attention to digital video and co-founding the production company, la famiglia in 2004. Since then Jesse has directed and produced on a number of documentaries including the mini series, *Don't Hate Me Because*, for Channel 4 television.

The UK Film Council backed short, *Mash Up*, marked a return to drama for Jesse and is currently playing in festivals around the world.

*Much Ado About A Minor Ting*, is Jesse's latest film and is funded by the prestigious Cinema Extreme scheme.

Jesse was featured in Screen International's 2007 Stars of Tomorrow.

### **Kaleem Aftab (Producer)**

Kaleem Aftab wrote the authorised biography of acclaimed New York director Spike Lee that was published by Faber and Faber in the UK and Norton in the US. He is a film writer and contributes regularly to the Independent. He produced and co-wrote the short film *International Murder and Mayhem* that appeared on the Child's Play 4 DVD.

More recently, he has produced shows for Channel 4, short films for the United Kingdom Film Council and the forthcoming feature film *This Is What It Is*.

### **Bruce Melhuish (Director of Photography/Visual Effects)**

As a Director of Photography Bruce's credits include *Mash Up* (Jesse's first dramatic piece) and *Not Here Now*. Bruce has recently shot his first feature film *This Is What It Is* and also works as a commercial cinematographer, recently completing projects for Vodafone and Tomy.

### **Cristian Solimeno (Writer and Editor)**

Cristian Solimeno is an actor, screenwriter and director. His acting credits include *Footballers Wives*, *Beauty and the Beast* and *Tunnel of Love* for ITV, BBC's *Vicar of Dibley* and the feature films, *Rogue Trader*, *Dead Babies* and *Unstoppable*. Cristian recently worked with Dario Argento on “*La Tezra Madre*” and Brett Leonard on “*Highlander The Source*”.

He wrote and directed plays for the theatre group Firewater Productions. Additional writing credits include *Tame* for Channel 4. He has directed programmes for Channel 4 and is currently helming *This Is What It Is* which he wrote and directed.

## CAST

Rene	Anwar Lynch
Tom	Bronson Webb
Shocker	Daniel Kaluuya
Erinma	Helen Koya
Jamal	Nathan Welsh
Tourist	Kenji Watanabe
Suffian	Youssef Berouin
Mohammed	Ali-Reza Bazrcar
Quincy	Wayne Stephens
Squatter	Gary Grant
Mews woman	Aisha Bicknell
Bar man	Rene Lawrence
Lindsey	Norval Lindsey
Jose	Joe Rivera
Natalie	Laetitia Lawrence
Eagle eyed Spotter	Craig Johnson
Female Junky	Niamh Flood
Male Junky	Raymond Moon
Innocent	Lalana Lawrence
Boyfriend 1	Jesse Lawrence
Boyfriend 2	Tom Gradey
Van driver	Kaleem Aftab
Renealike	Jerome Samuel
Spotter 1	Burt Webb
Spotter 2	Daniel Calvin
Spotter 3	Adnan Berouin

Car driver	Marie Solimeno
Pub Local 1	Bernadine Lawrence
Pub Local 2	Loz Invicta
Bus Stop Woman	Latifa Raiz
Marathon Man	Luis Ribera

### **CREW**

Casting Director	Jayne Collins
Casting Associate	Danielle Tarento
Casting Assistant	Anna Collins
Stunt Co-ordinator	Paul Heasman
Stunts performed by	Calvin Warrington- Heasman Marlow Warrington-Mattei
Steadycam operator	Robert Heart
Production sound mixer	Simon Firsh
Boom operator	Dylan Voigt
1 <sup>st</sup> Assistant Director	Cristian Solimeno
3 <sup>rd</sup> Assistant Director	Tom Grady
Set Medic	Lindsey Wilkinson
Wardrobe	Moana Schmidt
Tom's Costume Design	Linda Hendy Joan Hendy
Production Assistants	Paul Barrington Joe Wihl Don Paulick
Stills Photography	Thomas R Grady
Dog Handler	Lawrence Wahlund
Sound Designer	Huckleberry

Visual Effects	Bruce Melhuish
Production Manager for Film4	Geradine O'Flynn Andrew Gregory
Film4 Business Affairs	Kathy May
UKFC Business Affairs	Jodie Orme
Music Composer	George Kallis
Editor	Cristian Solimeno
Director of Photography	Bruce Melhuish
Writers	Jesse Lawrence Cristian Solimeno
Executive Producers	Kate Ogborn Matthew de Braconier Rebecca Mark-Lawson Jo McClelan
Producer	Kaleem Aftab
Director	Jesse Lawrence