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THE ECLIPSE

A film by Conor McPherson

88 min., 1.85:1, 35mm

Official Selection:

2009 Tribeca Film Festival

2009 Tribeca Film Festival - Winner Best Actor - Ciarán Hinds

2009 Sitges International Film Festival - Winner Grand Prize European Fantasy
Film

2009 Chicago Film Festival

49 west 27th street 7th floor new york, ny 10001
tel 212 924 6701 fax 212 924 6742
www.magpictures.com

SYNOPSIS

THE ECLIPSE tells the story of Michael Farr (Ciarán Hinds), a teacher raising his two kids alone since his wife died two years earlier. Lately he has been seeing and hearing strange things late at night in his house. He isn't sure if he is simply having terrifying nightmares or if his house is haunted.

Each year, the seaside town where Michael lives hosts an international literary festival, attracting writers from all over the world. Michael works as a volunteer for the festival and is assigned the attractive Lena Morelle (Iben Hjejle), an author of books about ghosts and the supernatural, to look after. They become friendly and he eagerly tells her of his experiences. For the first time he has met someone who can accept the reality of what has been happening to him.

However, Lena's attention is pulled elsewhere. She has come to the festival at the bidding of world-renowned novelist Nicholas Holden (Aidan Quinn), with whom she had a brief affair the previous year. He has fallen in love with Lena and is going through a turbulent time, eager to leave his wife to be with her. But all Lena is trying to do is extricate herself from this mess and just get through the next few days.

As the festival progresses, the trajectories of these three people draw them into a life-altering collision.

Embellished by the supernatural, **THE ECLIPSE** is a film about the challenges of love, fear of the unknown and release from the burden of grief.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT - CONOR MCPHERSON

THE ECLIPSE came about through my friendship with playwright Billy Roche. Billy sent me his short story collection, "Tales from Rainwater Pond." I had always been a big fan of his plays and books and this was no exception. I was particularly drawn to a story called "Table Manners," which was set amid the hustle and tussle of a literary festival. The story concerns a teacher called Michael Farr who has aspirations to be a writer. He is a volunteer at the festival, driving writers to readings and interviews. He is married with two children, a boy and a girl, and the story concerns his developing obsession with a female poet who he has been assigned to take care of.

I loved the world of the story and suggested to Billy that we try writing a screenplay based on it. Billy agreed so I travelled down to Wexford where we began working. Over the following three years or so we developed a number of drafts, but we were never entirely happy. In prose Billy could take us inside Michael Farr's head so that we could understand his unravelling state of mind, but in terms of images in a film where we actually *see* him in action we felt it was going to be difficult for the audience to sympathise with a married father who's stalking a young woman. Yet something about the story wouldn't let me go.

In 2007 I was stranded in New York City waiting for a stage-hand strike to end so I could open my play "The Seafarer" on Broadway. We had three weeks of false dawns and broken hopes during which I decided to keep hammering away at the screenplay. At my wife's suggestion, Michael Farr became a widower. And in that moment I could see where the whole thing could go. I started writing about a man who was literally haunted by grief. He was also now free to find love anew and I knew that Lena Morelle, the writer he falls for, should write horror books, thus becoming the only person in the world who might believe he has been seeing terrifying ghosts. I also knew we were now making a horror movie. But because of all the work we had done over 20 drafts I realized it could have an unusually rich range of character detail that good actors could really get stuck into and I felt it could cross genres - it's a ghost story and a love story.

We set the movie in Cobh, County Cork for its gothic atmosphere. The period buildings with their scale and elegance add so much to the feel of the story where past and present, the dead and the living, need to be palpably within reach of each other.

We had a great time making the film and it really has been a labour of love from beginning to end.

- Conor McPherson

ABOUT THE ACTORS

Ciarán Hinds (Michael Farr)

Ciarán Hinds began his professional acting career at the Glasgow Citizens' Theatre in a 1976 production of "Cinderella." He remained a frequent performer at the Citizens' Theatre during the late 1970s and through the mid-1980s. During this same period, Hinds also performed on stage in Ireland with the Abbey Theatre, the Field Day Theatre Company, the Druid Theatre, and the Lyric Players' Theatre. In 1987, he was cast by Peter Brook in "The Mahabharata," a six-hour theatre piece that toured the world, and he was also featured in its 1989 film version. In the early 1990s, he was a member of the Royal Shakespeare Company. One of his most notable RSC performances was in the title role of the 1993 production of "Richard III," directed by Sam Mendes; Mendes turned to Hinds as a last minute replacement for an injured Simon Russell Beale. Hinds gained his most popular recognition as a stage actor for his performance as "Larry" in the London and Broadway productions of Patrick Marber's Tony Award-nominated play "Closer." In 1999, Hinds was awarded both the Theatre World Award for Best Debut in NYC and the Outer Critics Circle Award for Special Achievement (Best Ensemble Cast Performance) for his work in "Closer." He was on stage in 2001 in "The Yalta Game" by Brian Friel at the Gate Theatre in Dublin. He appeared in the Broadway production of "The Seafarer" by Conor McPherson, which ran at the Booth Theatre from December 2007 through March 2008. Hinds is currently in the cast of "Burnt By The Sun" by Peter Flannery, which ran at London's National Theatre from February to May 2009.

Hinds made his feature film debut in John Boorman's *Excalibur* (1981). His portfolio of film portrayals also includes "Captain Frederick Wentworth" in Jane Austen's *Persuasion* (1995), "Jonathan Reiss" in *Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life* (2003), "John Traynor" in *Veronica Guerin* (2003), and "Firmin" in the film version of Andrew Lloyd Webber's *The Phantom of the Opera* (2004). Hinds also played "Carl," a cover-up professional assisting a group of assassins, in Steven Spielberg's political thriller *Munich* (2005). In 2006, he appeared in Michael Mann's film adaptation of the '80s television show *Miami Vice*, and as "Herod the Great" in *The Nativity Story*. In the 2007 film *Amazing Grace*, Hinds portrays "Sir Banastre Tarleton," one the chief opponents of the abolition of the slave trade in parliament. He stars in *Margot at the Wedding*, alongside Nicole Kidman, Jack Black and Jennifer Jason Leigh, in a drama-comedy about family secrets and relationships. He also appears in *There Will Be Blood* (2007), directed by Paul Thomas Anderson. Other films include *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover* (1989), *December Bride* (1990), *Circle of Friends* (1995), *Some Mother's Son* (1996), *Oscar and Lucinda* (1997), *Titanic Town* (1998), *The Weight of Water* (2000), *The Sum of All Fears* (2002), *Road to Perdition* (2002), *Calendar Girls* (2003), *Mickybo and Me* (2005) *Mister Foe* (2007), *Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day* (2008), *Race to Witch Mountain* (2009), *LIFE During Wartime* (2009), *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2010) and **THE ECLIPSE** directed by Conor McPherson (2010).

Aidan Quinn (Nicholas Holden)

Aidan Quinn was born in Rockford, Illinois to Irish parents and was raised in Chicago and Rockford, as well as in Dublin and Birr, County Offaly in Ireland. He has

three brothers and a sister. His older brother, Declan Quinn, is a noted cinematographer. Quinn got his start in Chicago theatres at age 19 and trained at the Piven Theatre Workshop

His first significant film role was in *Reckless*, followed by a breakthrough role in *Desperately Seeking Susan* as the character Dez (the love interest of the character played by Rosanna Arquette). Quinn next starred in the controversial TV movie "An Early Frost," about a young lawyer dying of AIDS (it was broadcast on NBC in 1985) and co-starred such luminaries as Gena Rowlands, Ben Gazzara and Sylvia Sidney. He received his first Emmy Award nomination for the role which allowed him to gain recognition in Hollywood.

During the 1990s Quinn's career grew immensely. He found work alongside such Hollywood stars as Brad Pitt in *Legends of the Fall*, Johnny Depp in *Benny & Joon* and Sir John Gielgud in *Haunted* and continually starred in films that allowed him to return to his Irish roots, such as *Michael Collins* and *Evelyn*.

Quinn gained his first regular television role as the lead in the short-lived, and controversial NBC drama "The Book of Daniel" in 2006 before it was cancelled after the first three weeks of its run. In 2007, Quinn received his second Emmy nomination for the television movie "Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee."

Iben Hjejle (Lena Morelle)

Danish actress Iben Hjejle had a breakthrough US role in the film *High Fidelity* (2000) after acclaimed turns in the Denmark-filmed productions *Portland* (1996) and *Mifune* (1999). Hjejle, who lived in Massachusetts as a teenager, studied acting at The National Theatre School of Denmark, and teamed up with director Neals Arden-Oplev in the short film "Naked" (1991). Five years later, he cast her in *Portland*, marking her feature film debut as a woman abused by her lover in this nihilistic look at the human condition. She followed up with a co-starring turn in *Mifune*, Soren Kragh-Jacobsen's feature, the third Dogme '95 production. Here she gave a winningly feisty performance as an on-the-run prostitute who takes a job as a housekeeper for an odd family in an attempt to start a new life.

Director Stephen Frears, impressed with Hjejle's work, approached the actress about making her American film debut and subsequently cast her in the Chicago-set reworking of *High Fidelity*, Nick Hornsby's seminal novel about a pop music-obsessed thirtysomething man's relationship problems. John Cusack starred as the protagonist Rob and Hjejle played Laura, his live-in girlfriend and the latest in a line of women to break his heart. Since then Hjejle has starred in *The Emperor's New Clothes* and *Dreaming of Julia*, *Flickering Lights* in 2003 and Edward Zwick's *Defiance*.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Conor McPherson (Director/Co-writer)

Award-winning screenwriter and Tony-nominated playwright Conor McPherson is one of the most acclaimed young dramatists working in the world today. Born in Dublin in 1971, he attended University College Dublin where he began to write and direct. His feature films include *I Went Down* (screenwriter) Samuel Beckett's *Endgame* (director), *Saltwater* (writer/director), and *The Actors* (writer/director). His stage plays include "Rum & Vodka," "The Good Thief," "This Lime Tree Bower," "St. Nicholas," "The Weir" (Broadway 1999), "Dublin Carol," "Port Authority," "Shining City" (Broadway 2006) and "The Seafarer" (Broadway 2007).

Conor is a three-time Tony Award nominee and a recipient of the Laurence Olivier Award, Evening Standard Award, Critics' Circle Award, George Devine Award, Meyer-Whitworth Award, Stewart Parker Award, two Irish Film and Television Academy Best Screenplay Awards, The Spanish Association of Screenwriters' Best Screenplay Award, and the CICA Award for Best Film from the Berlin Film Festival. *The Eclipse* recently won the Melies d'Argent award for Best European Film at the Sitges Fantasy Film Festival.

His new play, an adaptation of Daphne Du Maurier's "The Birds," opened at the Dublin Theatre Festival in Fall 2009.

CREDITS

Directed by	Conor McPherson
Screenplay by	Conor McPherson and Billy Roche
Based on	“Tales from Rainwater Pond” by Billy Roche
Produced by	Robert Walpole
Co-Producers	Donal Geraghty Cathleen Dore
Executive Producers	Paddy McDonald Rebecca O’Flanagan
Director of Photography	Ivan McCollough
Film Editor	Emer Reynolds
Production Designer	Mark Geraghty
Costume Designer	Consolata Boyle
Music by	Fionnuala Ní Chiosáin
Casting	Gail Stevens Oonagh Kearney

Principal Cast

Ciarán Hinds	Michael Farr
Aidan Quinn	Nicholas Holden
Iben Hjejle	Lena Morelle
Jim Norton	Malachy McNeill
Eanna Hardwicke	Thomas Farr
Hannah Lynch	Sarah Farr

Additional Credits

Production Manager	Cathleen Dore
Production Executive for Treasure Entertainment	Claire McCaughley
Production Coordinator	Georgina O’Connor
1st Assistant Director	Peter Nightingale
2nd Assistant Director	Lisa Kelly
3rd Assistant Directors	Mike Hayes Anna Harrison
Camera Operator	Roger Tooley

Script Supervisor	Kerensa Burton
Art Director	Johnny Byrne
Sound Mixer	Ronan Hill
Boom Operator	Michael McKnight
Make Up Designer	Lizzi Lawson Zeiss
Hair & Make Up Artist	Kath Rayner
Wardrobe Supervisor	Sue Wain
Special Effects by	Team FX
Special Effects Supervisor	Kevin Byrne
FX Team	Kevin Nolan
	Gerard Farrell
	Andrew Nolan
	Tony Cannivan
	Liam McDonald
Stunt Co-ordinator	Andy Bradford
Stunt Double	Stuart Clark
Second Camera Unit	
Director	Paddy Breathnach
Director of Photography	Volker Ehlers
Post Production Supervisor	Tim Morris
Supervising Sound Editor	Jon Stevenson
Music Composed by	Fionnuala Ní Chiosáin
Music Produced by	Fionnuala Ní Chiosáin and Conor McPherson
Musicians	
Fionnuala Ní Chiosáin	Piano, Guitar, Hammond Organ
Conor McPherson	Guitar, Bass, Drums
Úna Ní Chiosáin	Violin, Viola
Paul Moore	Double Bass
Choral pieces arranged by	Orla Flanagan, Fionnuala Ní Chiosáin & Conor McPherson
Original Latin lyrics by	Fionnuala Ní Chiosáin
Choral Group	The Mornington Singers
Conductor	Orla Flanagan
	Singers
	David Larkin, Kerri O'Connell, Emma Farrell
	Emer O'Connell, Jarrod Leaf, Douglas Lane
	Joost Slingerland, John White, Philip Rowlands
	Aine Jackson, Rupert Levene, Philip Shields, Clodagh Merry
	Melissa Hardiman, Arthur Parkinson, Clíodhna Ní Fhátharta
	Anna O'Herlihy, Richard Duckworth, Meike Beumers
	Theresa Slingerland, Charlotte Lary, Claudia Schacke
	Fionnuala Dillane, Kieran Tully, Katie Flanagan

Developed with the assistance of Bord Scannán na hÉireann / Irish Film Board

Developed with the of the MEDIA Programme of the European Community

Made with the assistance of the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland

Produced with the support of investment incentives for the Irish Film Industry provided by the
Government of Ireland

Filmed on location in Ireland in Cobh, Co. Cork

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