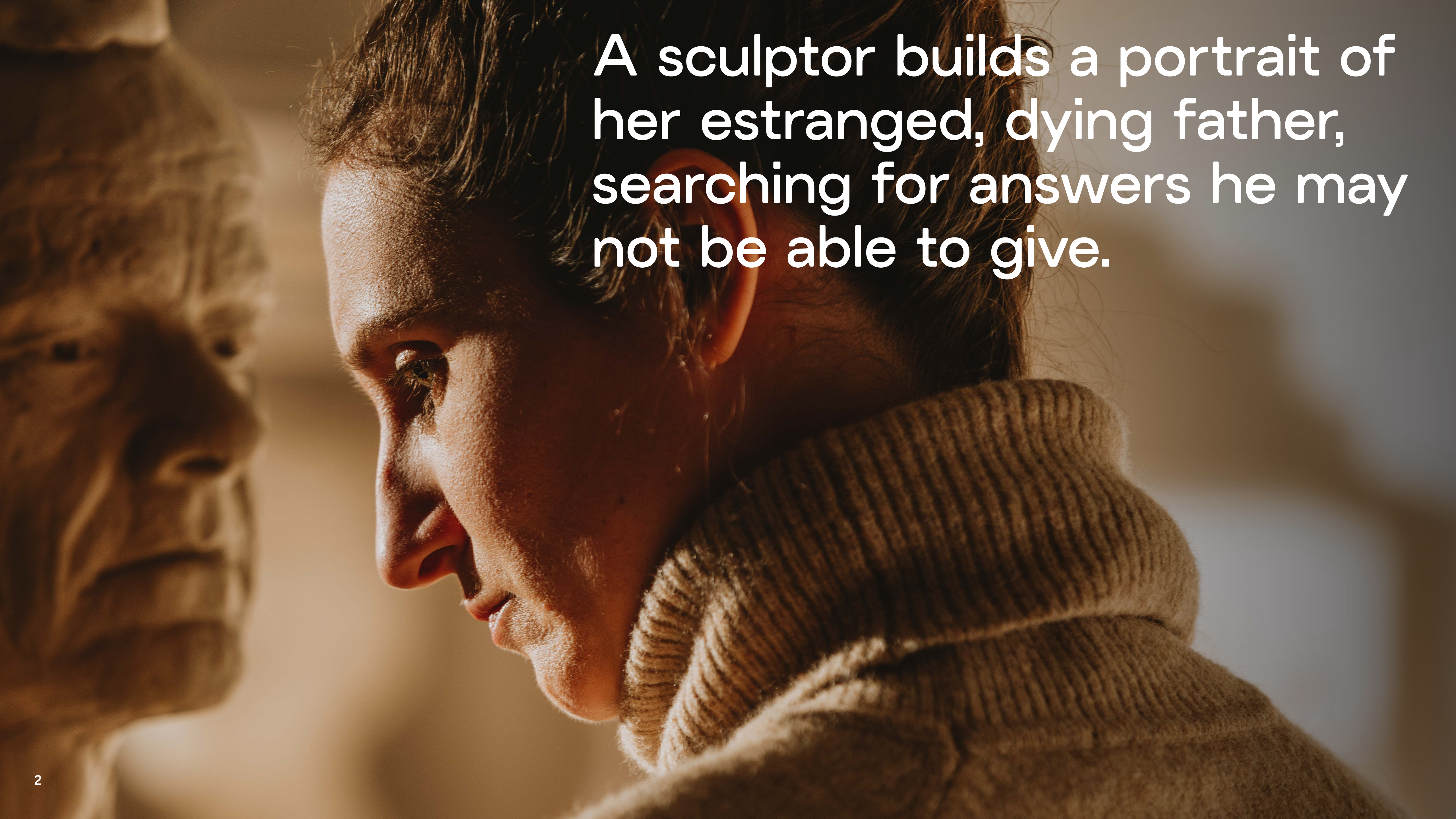


A family drama about legacy, loss and unanswered questions
written & directed by Benjamin Verrall

MODEL PARENT

A man with short brown hair, wearing a dark sweater, sits on the left, looking thoughtfully to his right. On the right, a woman with dark curly hair tied back, wearing a brown sweater and green apron, is sculpting a clay skull on a workbench. She uses a small wooden tool to refine the features. The background is a cluttered studio filled with various sculptures, including a large white bust on the right and numerous small clay figures on shelves to the left. The lighting is warm and focused on the subjects.

toffee
hammer

A close-up, profile shot of a woman with dark hair, looking intently at a large, weathered stone sculpture of a man's face. The woman is wearing a light-colored, ribbed turtleneck sweater. The lighting is warm and dramatic, highlighting the textures of the sculpture and the woman's features. The background is softly blurred, suggesting an indoor setting like a museum or gallery.

A sculptor builds a portrait of
her estranged, dying father,
searching for answers he may
not be able to give.

Synopsis

Maya (Bessie Carter), a sculptor, agrees to create a portrait of her estranged father, David (Alistair Petrie), a once-celebrated writer now coming to terms with a terminal diagnosis. As she builds his likeness in clay, Maya is forced back to the question that has shadowed her life: what led to her mother's suicide, and what part David played in it.

Outside the studio, Maya navigates the tension the reunion creates in her relationships with her partner, Della (T'Nia Miller), and her sister, Jade (Poppy Lee-Friar).

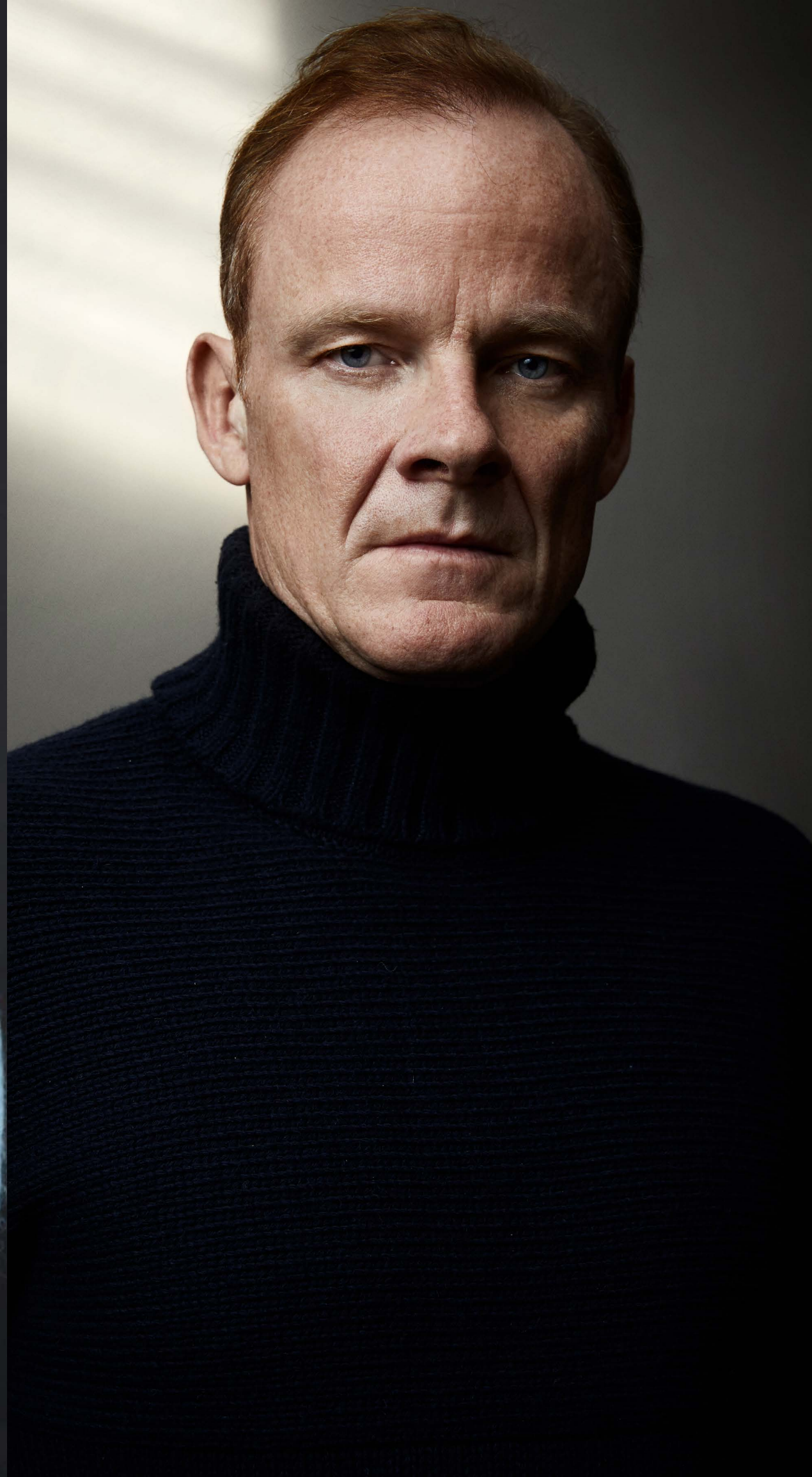
In the final scenes, Maya is left alone in the studio with the almost-finished sculpture, trying to complete the father she has only just begun to understand.



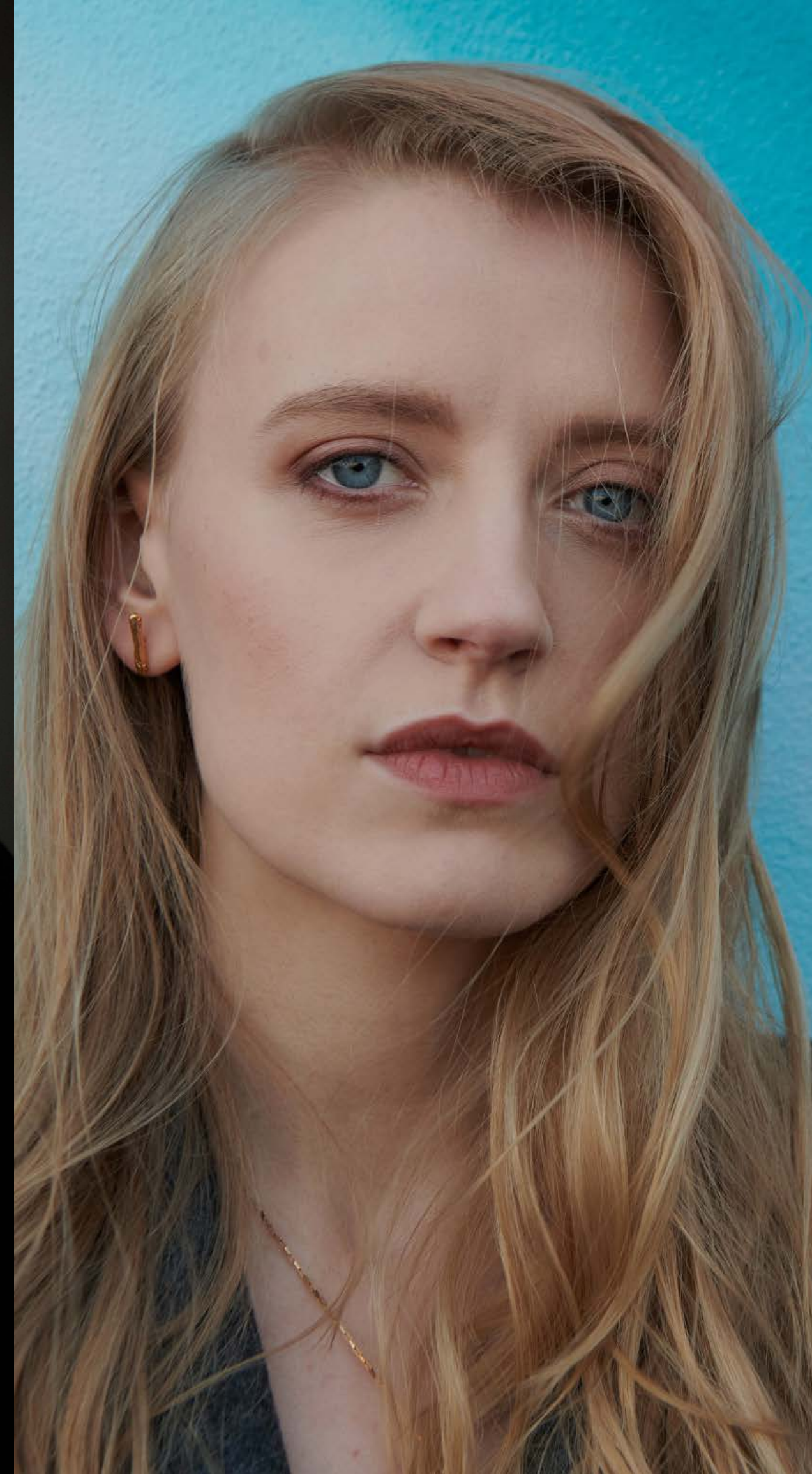
Cast



Bessie Carter as “Maya”
(Bridgerton, Outrageous, A Cruel
Love: The Ruth Ellis Story)



Alistair Petrie as “David”
(Sex Education, The Night
Manager)



Poppy Lee Friar as “Jade”
(The Witcher, Good Omens,
Domino Day)



T’Nia Miller as “Della”
(Vision Quest, Marvel; Gangs of
London S3, Sky; Generation Z,
C4; The Peripheral, Amazon)

Writer-director statement

I wanted to explore inheritance: what we carry from our parents, what we reject, and what we unknowingly repeat. Family dynamics are being looked at with a new kind of honesty. Old silences around mental health, absence, blame and emotional neglect are harder to keep. But this reappraisal does not always lead to clean catharsis. Often, it leaves people in a more complicated place: wanting peace, but not necessarily reconciliation.

Model Parent resists the language of closure. It asks what it means to look at a parent not as a symbol, villain or wound, but as a flawed, fading person, without letting them off the hook.

I was drawn to the act of sculpting: the intimacy of looking closely at someone you have spent years choosing not to see. A portrait is never just the subject; it is also the artist's hand. Making a likeness is a form of confrontation.

The film is about the unresolved tension between presence and absence: the person in the chair, the likeness emerging in clay, the parent who was never fully there, and finally an object that may outlast them all.



Writer-director biography

Benjamin Verrall is a UK-based writer-director whose work explores memory, identity, and the emotional weight of what remains unspoken.

His films are performance-led and character driven. He is particularly interested in how meaning builds through behaviour, conversation, silence, and attention.

Benjamin is the founder of Toffee Hammer Productions. He has written and directed five short films and one feature, with work screening at festivals including Aesthetica, HollyShorts, Norwich Film Festival, and Cinequest.



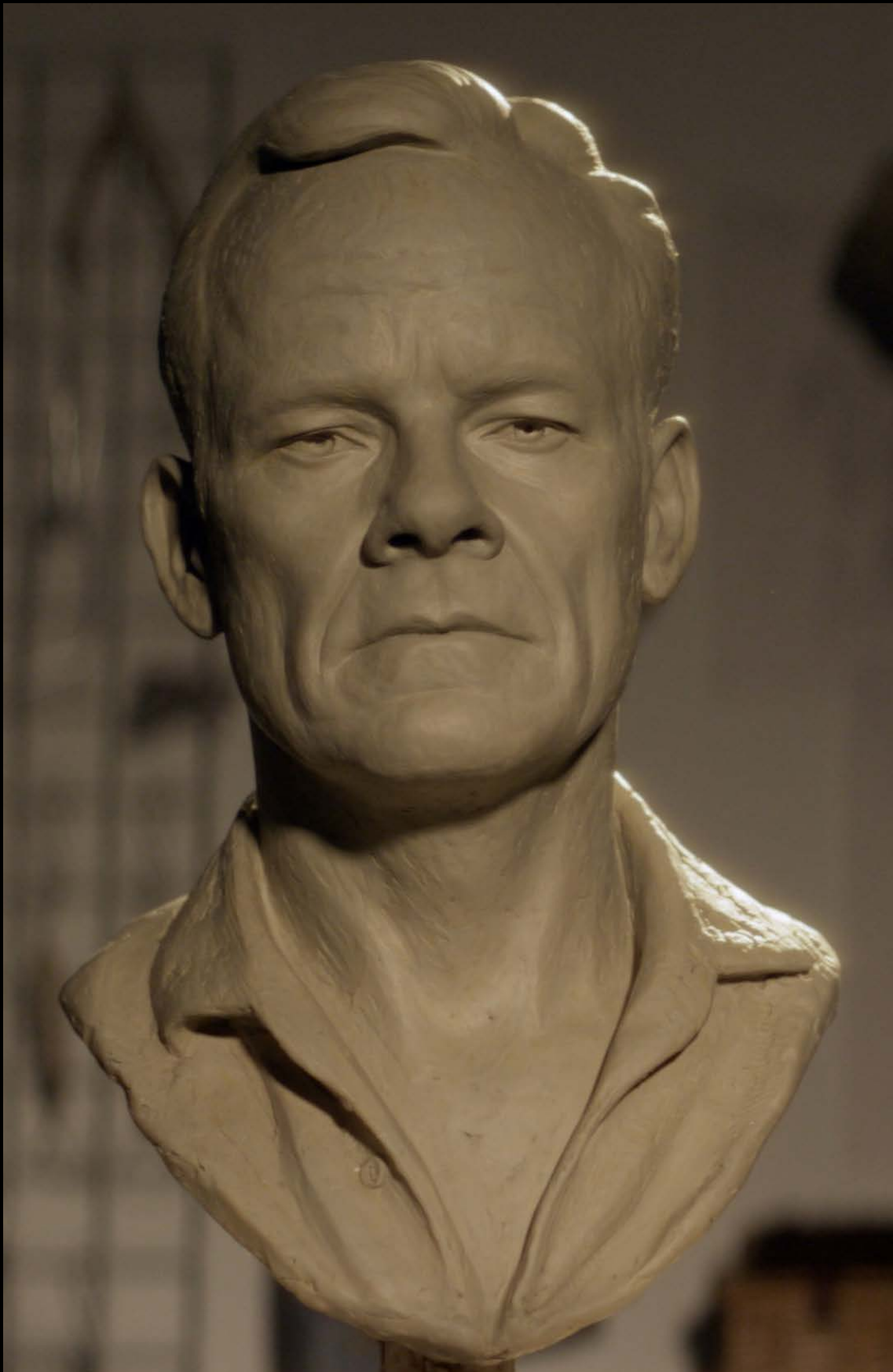
Production designer statement

As a sculptor, I know a studio is never just a workspace. I wanted Maya's to feel like a limbo: David exists in borrowed time, and Maya is literally remodelling the way she sees him. The palette is deliberately limited to whites, greys, clay tones and earthy textures.

When you grow up by the sea, you never quite lose the sense of its scale – the feeling of being tiny against something so vast. I wanted to bring that into the studio. I cast small plaster heads and placed them among pebbles, shells, driftwood and clay dust, creating a “sea of souls”.

The film is full of questions about seeing and being seen. David wants Maya to see him as he really is, but Maya also wants him to see her – in her own space, doing what she does best. David sits on the plinth, surrounded by Maya's ever-vigilant portraits, and is studied, judged, remembered and remade.

I was also interested in shadows – the shadows we cast on one another. In the final scene, a female shadow falls across the wall behind the sisters, suggesting that another presence could still be in the room.

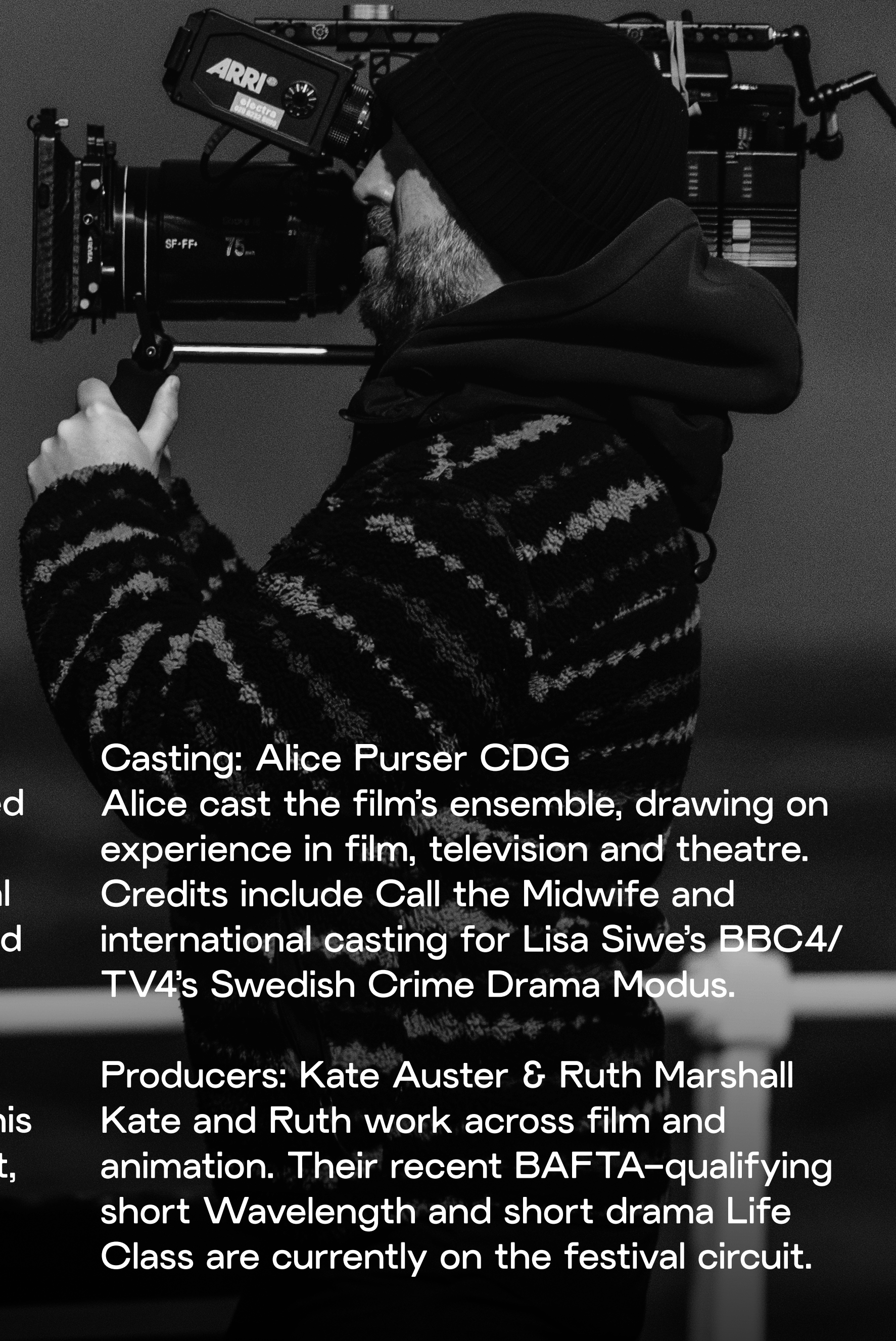


Key creative team



Production Design: Amelia Rowcroft
Renowned portrait artist Amelia ensured authenticity and sensitivity throughout the sculpting process, and led the visual design. Her work spans film, fine art and public commissions.

Director of Photography: Alex Took
Emmy-winning filmmaker Alex brings his observational approach to Model Parent, giving the film a grounded and intimate aesthetic.



Casting: Alice Purser CDG
Alice cast the film's ensemble, drawing on experience in film, television and theatre. Credits include Call the Midwife and international casting for Lisa Siwe's BBC4/TV4's Swedish Crime Drama Modus.

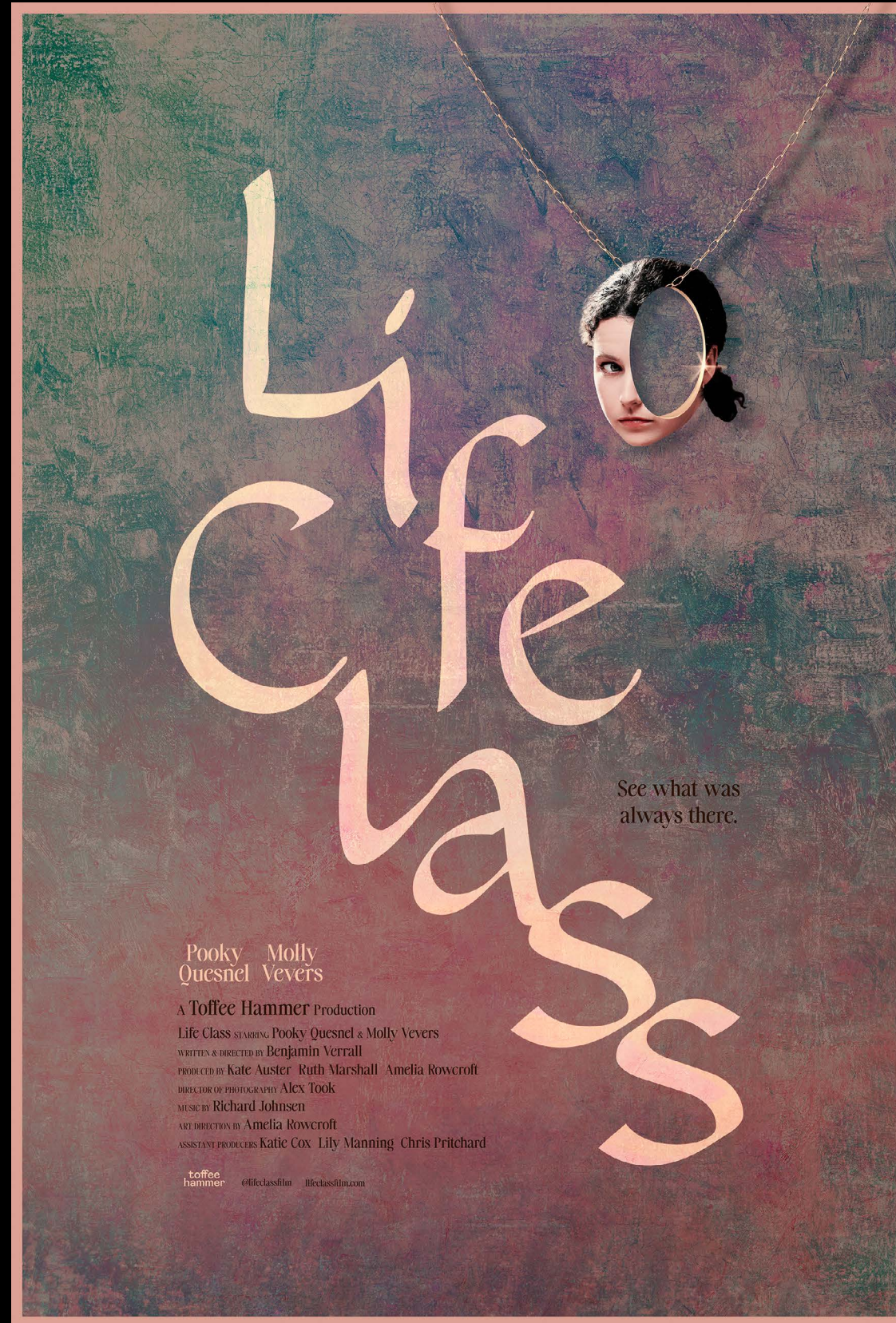
Producers: Kate Auster & Ruth Marshall
Kate and Ruth work across film and animation. Their recent BAFTA-qualifying short Wavelength and short drama Life Class are currently on the festival circuit.

Film details

Runtime: 23 minutes
Format: ARRI Alexa Mini / Digital
Exhibition Format: DCI 4K
Country: United Kingdom
Language: English
Aspect Ratio: 2.39:1
Completion date: June 2026
World Premiere available



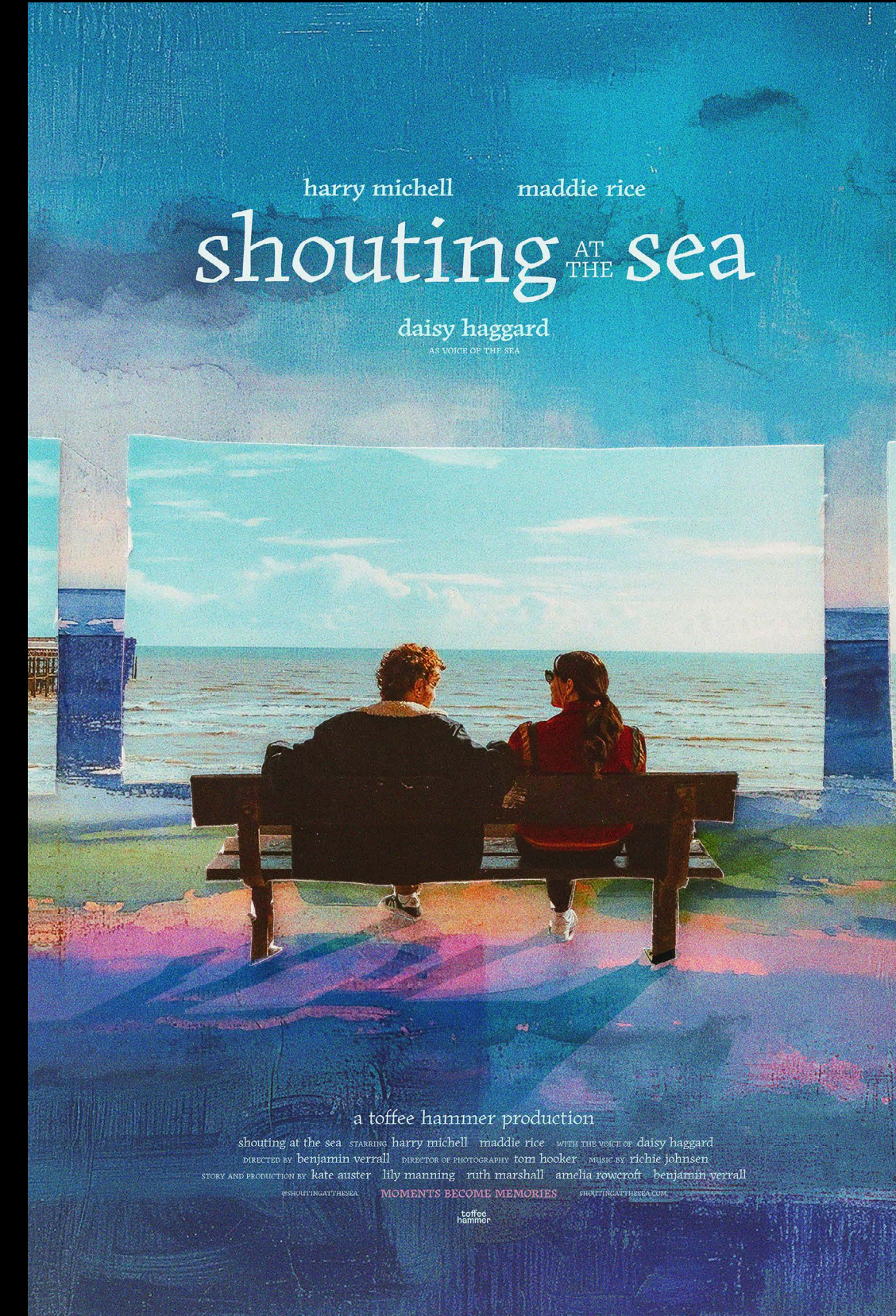
Toffee Hammer Productions



Life Class, 2026



Wavelength, 2025
BAFTA & BIFA Qualifying



Shouting at the Sea, 2024
BIFA Qualifying



Incidental Characters, 2020

Features in development

- A Wedding Night, Drama
- Jesters Curse, Psychological Horror

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