



SOMERS TOWN

Director Shane Meadows

“Endlessly charming...witty and warmhearted, it's a feel-good movie that never seems forced” – Aaron Hillis, **The Village Voice**



England / 2008 / Dramey / In English and Polish with English subtitles / 70 min./B&W/1:1.85/Dolby Digital

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SYNOPSIS

Two teenagers, both newcomers to London, forge an unlikely friendship over the course of a hot summer. Tomo (Thomas Turgoose) is a runaway from Nottingham and Marek (Piotr Jagiello) is a Polish immigrant who lives with his dad in the working-class immigrant district of Somers Town. When Marek agrees to allow the homeless Tomo to move into his bedroom, behind his father's back, they quickly form a strong bond. Together they spend their days working odd jobs for an eccentric neighbor and competing for the attention of Maria, a beautiful young French waitress with whom they are both infatuated. But their simple pleasures are thrown into a tailspin when Maria leaves town and Marek's father discovers what the boys are up to.

FESTIVALS AND AWARDS

WINNER – Best Actor - **Tribeca Film Festival**

WINNER – Best New British Feature - **Edinburgh Film Festival**

Nominated – Best Actor, Best British Independent Film, Best Director, Best Screenplay – **British Independent Film Awards**

Official Selection – **Berlin Int'l Film Festival**

Official Selection – **Karlovy Vary Film Festival**

Official Selection – **Opening Night Film at San Francisco Independent Film Festival**

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT: Shane Meadows

“During the last year or so travelling from Nottingham to London by train, it was amazing watching the changes happening around the St Pancras area and the idea of making a short film that was set in this period of transition was immediately attractive. It was the first film I have made in London and I wanted to try and capture both the familiarity and the strangeness of the place. In a funny way it has also become a much more cosmopolitan production than my previous work, with a cast from Poland, France and the UK and an Argentinean DoP. It's an exciting prospect to take all of these elements and produce a piece of work that stays true to the philosophy and method of working that I have developed in all my previous films. The fact that what was conceived as a short film has evolved into a longer piece has made the whole thing a really rewarding experience”

PRODUCTION STORY

An idea born out of the regeneration of the area around Kings Cross and St Pancras in central London, *Somers Town* started life as a project using fiction to examine the changes caused by these events. With the relocation of the Eurostar International terminus to the newly renovated St Pancras Station on the edge of Somers Town, Eurostar took the decision to produce the film and celebrate this period of transition.

Paul Fraser wrote what was initially a short film script, which approached the subject through the eyes of two boys, both recent arrivals in London. When Shane Meadows came on board as director, his particular working method laid the ground work for an expanded story that would use improvised performances grown organically out of an intensive rehearsal timetable, as well as the written script that in turn evolved throughout this process. During this time, Paul's short film script developed into a full length story.

Pre-production started in August with casting in Nottingham, London and Warsaw and location scouting in London. The location was always to be centred on Somers Town, the historic area of London almost defined by the existence of the 3 railway termini of Euston, St Pancras and Kings Cross. Wanting to create a sense of the immediacy of this neighbourhood, all of the locations chosen were within a few hundred yards of one another, with local people acting as extras and all of the interior locations being found within the community.

Once Natasha Braier joined the team as Director of Photography, the decision to shoot in black and white was finalised – something that Shane had been committed to since the beginning of the project. Shane, Natasha, and Lisa Marie Hall, the production designer, felt that Black and White would give the film a cohesive quality, pulling together the many different textures, shapes and forms that fill Somers Town. In particular it seemed a way of uniting the modernity and disruption of the huge construction business that was then in full swing, with the more timeless aspects of Somers Town as a long-standing community.

Whilst Paul Fraser had delivered a detailed script based on his original concept, the film developed considerably during production itself. Every scene was carefully and extensively rehearsed and improvised with the actors before the film crew became

involved, and the schedule was painstakingly structured to allow the director to shoot the whole film in chronological story sequence. Shane was particularly committed to allowing scenes to be filmed as one continuous take, frequently lasting the length of a roll of 16mm film (10 minutes). To aid editing and allow for necessary coverage two cameras were used on most days. Early in the shoot, a scene that was a quarter of a page of dialogue took nearly 6 hours to film and represents about 4 minutes of screen time! The result gives the finished piece an immediacy and naturalness rarely found in films – particularly those featuring younger actors.

Once principle photography was finished Shane began the editing process in Nottingham. Closely involved in all aspects of the post-production, he sometimes worked on his own, or sometimes with his editor, Richard Graham, on both the sound and the picture and he is in control of every cut and every sound cue. His old friend Gavin Clarke was working on his first solo album at the time, and became involved with the film at the very beginning of the editing process – indeed Shane already had some of Gavin's tracks in mind whilst he was shooting the film. The result is a haunting and lyrical soundtrack, which will see Gavin's solo career launched to a much wider audience, supported, it is hoped, by a soundtrack album release containing of all the songs that appear in the film.

Somers Town: A History

Somers Town is an area of central London between Camden and Kings Cross and St Pancras. Named after the first Baron Somers of Evesham who was Lord Chancellor at the end of the 17th century, the area has always had its own identity, and since the mid 19th century has been defined by the three great mainline railway termini servicing the North and East of England, the Midlands and Scotland: Euston, St. Pancras and Kings Cross.

One of the first housing developments in London was built in Somers Town, named the 'Polygon'. It was a 15-sided building containing 32 houses. Home at various times of Charles Dickens and William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, it is also the birthplace of Godwin and Wollstonecraft's daughter Mary Shelley. From its earliest days it was a home to refugees and immigrants from other countries, and to this day remains a culturally diverse neighbourhood. A lot of the poorer French émigrés moved there during the French Revolution, which led to the building of a Catholic Chapel and four schools for young and poor children, dedicated to St. Aloysius. Due to the large influx of foreign artisans, it became nearly as great a home of industry as Clerkenwell and Soho. However, the polygon descended into notorious slum housing and was demolished during the 1890s during the construction of the St. Pancras station.

St. Pancras churchyard is equally steeped in history. The famous 'Hardy Tree', which *Somers Town* filmed around, is a large ash tree, which is surrounded by gravestones that were (reputedly) moved by Thomas Hardy in his days as an Architect clerk during the regeneration of Kings Cross in the 1860s. Some of Hardy's poetry, particularly 'In The Cemetery' is thought to be inspired by his time working at this unpleasant job exhuming and moving bodies. The churchyard is also the place where Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin was buried, and while visiting her mother's grave, Percy Shelley declared his love for her daughter Mary Godwin.

SELECT BIOGRAPHIES

Shane Meadows / Director Bio

After dropping out of school, Shane Meadows tried a variety of jobs, including a clown's assistant, before borrowing a camcorder and making a short film every month for a year.

UK film producer, Stephen Woolley, saw Shane's eclectic mix of films and signed him to write and direct the popular film *24/7*. Starring Bob Hoskins in his ill-fated attempt to help a disaffected group of youths, *24/7* picked up many top film festival awards.

Preferring to stay in England, Shane turned down Hollywood offers in order to continue his Midland trilogy with the highly acclaimed cult film, *A Room for Romeo Brass*. The final film was the comedy *Once Upon A Time in The Midlands*, selected at the Cannes Film Festival and released in America.

In 2004 Shane teamed up again with writer Paddy Considine for *Dead Man's Shoes*, described as "an outright masterpiece" (The Telegraph) and "Brilliant" (Uncut).

2007 saw the successful release of *This is England*, which has been nominated for two BAFTA awards. In *Somers Town* Shane collaborates once again with the talented young star of *This is England*, Thomas Turgoose.

Thomas Turgoose / Tomo

Thomas Turagoose is an award-winning English film and television actor.

In his first ever film role, he played the lead character, Shaun, in *This is England* written and directed by Shane Meadows. His performance won the 2006 British Independent Film Award honor for Most Promising Newcomer (on screen). In 2008 Turgoose shared the Acting Award at the Tribeca Film Festival with Piotr Jagiello for their work in *Somers Town*.

Piotr Jagiello / Marek

Piotr was born in Warsaw and has been acting since the age of ten. He has had roles in a number of Polish TV shows. Still only 16, *Somers Town* is his first English language film.

Elisa Lasowski / Maria

Born in the Netherlands to French parents, Elisa also has eastern European origins and grew up in several different countries. She is bilingual English French and fluent in Dutch, German and Spanish. She trained and began acting in London working on a diversity of dance projects and theatre plays. She made her film debut last year with a

small part in David Cronenberg's *Eastern Promises*. Based in London she is pursuing her acting career whilst working on music, dance and photography projects.

Perry Benson / Graham

Perry Benson is a well-established British actor with over 30 years of experience in Film, TV and Theatre. Perry is best-known for his roles in the films *Scrum*, *Sid & Nancy*, *Final Cut* and *Love, Honour Obey*. Perry has just finished filming the lead role in the film *Mum and Dad* playing a serial killer, and in the short film *Where have I Been All your Life* directed by Jim Field Smith playing Imelda Staunton's bit on the side! Perry Benson has worked alongside many high profile actors and directors including Joan Collins and Harold Pinter. Perry Benson trained at Anna Scher & Charles Verral Theatre School in Islington London, his debut was in 1972 playing 'The Boys' in Samuel Becket's *Waiting For Godot* for The London Bubble Theatre Company.

CREDITS

CREW

Director	Shane Meadows
Producer	Barnaby Spurrer
Story and screenplay	Paul Fraser
Director of photography	Natasha Braier
Editing	Richard Graham
Production Designer	Lisa Marie Hall
Costume Designer	Jo Thompson

CAST

Tomo	Thomas Turgoose
Marek	Piotr Jagiello
Maria	Elisa Lasowski
Woman on the train	Kate Dickie
Mariuz	Ireneusz Czop
Graham	Perry Benson