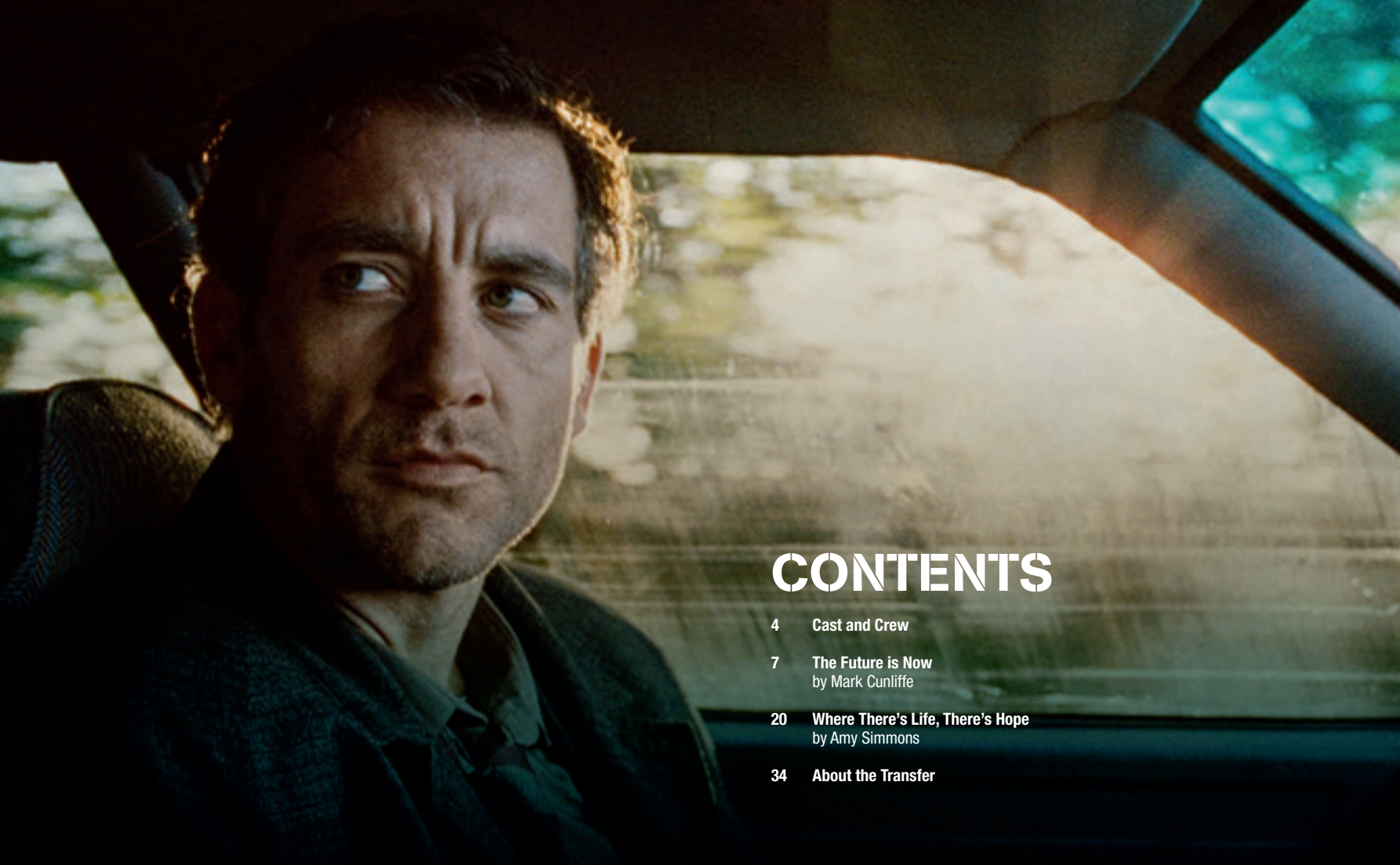

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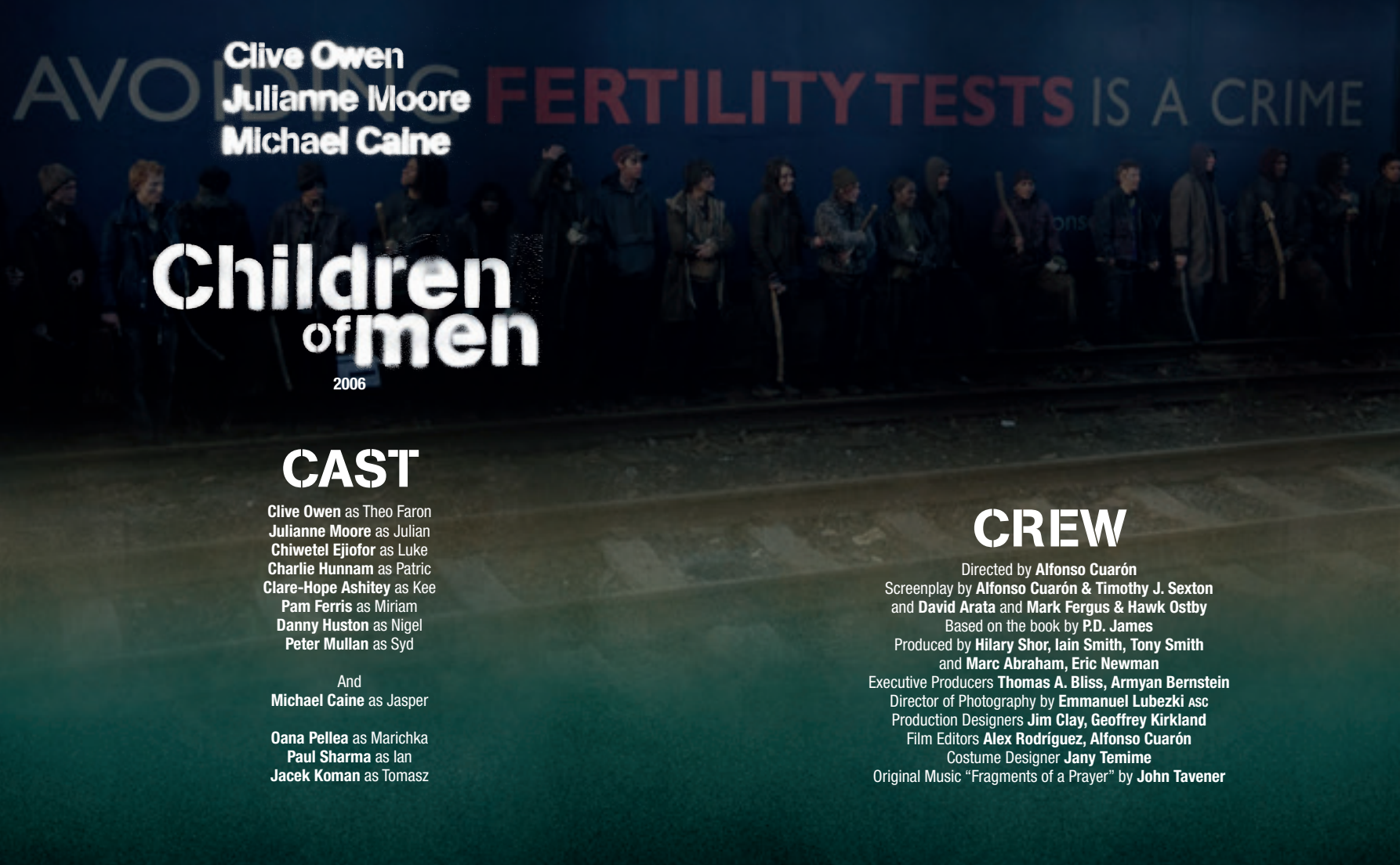

Clive Owen
Julianne Moore
Michael Caine

Children of men

2006

CAST

Clive Owen as Theo Faron
Julianne Moore as Julian
Chiwetel Ejiofor as Luke
Charlie Hunnam as Patric
Clare-Hope Ashitey as Kee
Pam Ferris as Miriam
Danny Huston as Nigel
Peter Mullan as Syd

And
Michael Caine as Jasper

Oana Pellea as Marichka
Paul Sharma as Ian
Jacek Koman as Tomasz

CREW

Directed by **Alfonso Cuarón**
Screenplay by **Alfonso Cuarón & Timothy J. Sexton**
and **David Arata** and **Mark Fergus & Hawk Ostby**
Based on the book by **P.D. James**
Produced by **Hilary Shor, Iain Smith, Tony Smith**
and **Marc Abraham, Eric Newman**
Executive Producers **Thomas A. Bliss, Armyan Bernstein**
Director of Photography by **Emmanuel Lubezki** ASC
Production Designers **Jim Clay, Geoffrey Kirkland**
Film Editors **Alex Rodríguez, Alfonso Cuarón**
Costume Designer **Jany Temime**
Original Music “Fragments of a Prayer” by **John Tavener**

THE FUTURE IS NOW

by Mark Cunliffe

> "Day 1,000 of the siege of Seattle…" "The Muslim community demands an end to the Army's occupation of mosques…" "The Homeland Security bill is ratified. After eight years, British borders will remain closed. The deportation of illegal immigrants will continue. Good morning. Our lead story…" "The world was stunned today by the death of Diego Ricardo, the youngest person on the planet…"

These are the first lines of dialogue we hear in *Children of Men*, Alfonso Cuarón's 2006 film adaptation of P.D. James' 1992 dystopic novel of the same name. These words, spoken by unseen newsreaders against a black screen, depict a future of geopolitical pandemonium, an overwhelming refugee crisis and its associated fears and anxieties, rampant Islamophobia, terrorism, street warfare and the mass mourning of celebrity death.

When I watched *Children of Men* in the cinema in 2006, I accepted this for what I presumed it was: a dystopic vision and fantasy of the future that could join the ranks of Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982), Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), Michael Radford's depiction of Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1984), and the novels of J.G. Ballard. Cuarón had presented audiences with a harrowing and chillingly believable depiction of a 'what if?' future – but, just like those others, it was only fiction… right?

Later in the film, we hear another disembodied voice. This time a cheery DJ on the suitably named Radio Avalon:

> "A blast from the past all the way back from 2003 – that beautiful time when people refused to accept that the future was just around the corner."

Having lived through the events of recent years, I now realise we were those people who refused to believe that the events played out on screen really could happen.

It was just last year, on May 1st, that the comedian and activist Josie Long posted this tweet:

> "Current political mood: Michael Caine in *Children of Men*."

It's not the first time that Long has considered the situation today in terms of *Children of Men*. In 2015 when she was reclaiming privatised spaces for public means via impromptu pop-up comedy gigs, she met with journalist and political activist Owen Jones for a YouTube interview in which she described the film as "eerily prescient" and criticised the then London Conservative mayor Boris Johnson for "exacerbating the housing crisis", "making things more expensive and difficult" and turning London into "a sadder, more stressful, more angry, worse place to live." Her fear was this inequality being allowed to continue, and she claimed that she could easily imagine the capital being fenced off as a 'green zone' for the rich, whilst outside life for the majority would be desperate. Watching *Children of Men* now, you cannot help but agree with Long's sentiments that this is a remarkably prescient film. Cuarón's vision of the future is no longer just around the corner; in the past three years we have seen a trend for a sort of universal apathetic despair, culminating in two politically cataclysmic, game-changing events: Brexit and the surprising electoral victory of Donald Trump, both in 2016. We have also seen a major humanitarian refugee crisis from Syria, an inordinate rise in celebrity death, and the widescale and frighteningly routine spate of terrorist campaigning in Europe, the like of which has not been seen since the tumultuous 1970s and '80s. All these things have conspired to make that vision of the future the here and now.

It's important to remember though that *Children of Men* wasn't that successful when it was released in 2006. In fact, in terms of profit, Cuarón's film was a flop that failed to recoup the $76 million it cost to make. Simply put, when faced with the film he turned in – an adaptation of a book about global infertility in a bleak and nihilistic future by a British author best known for a series of murder mysteries, in which its most bankable star (Julianne Moore) is killed off after just a handful of scenes – Universal just did not know how to sell the film. It was a frustrating experience for the director, who would not make another film until 2013's *Gravity* – another sci-fi film but with the wholly bankable names of George Clooney and Sandra Bullock. But something happened in those years during which Cuarón retreated to lick his wounds, and it is something that has continued to happen right until this very release from Arrow: *Children of Men* has endured, and it has received the recognition it always deserved because of a word-of-mouth following among its most ardent of fans. Finally, the film is recognised for the classic it always was and is now held in such high esteem that a 2016 BBC poll to find the 25 greatest films of the 21st century saw it come in at number 13.

But in the midst of this much needed and long overdue reappraisal, it's important not to get too bogged down with the notion of prescience. Cuarón didn't have a crystal ball when making his film – the road to where we are now can easily be mapped in socio-political terms and the director was simply responding to the events he was seeing at the turn of the century, along with events from even further back in history.

Immigration to the UK has been something of a political hot potato for over twenty years now. In 1997, the country found itself in a rather vulnerable position. The days of the empire were now over, perhaps best evinced by the handing over of Hong Kong to China, and the newly elected Tony Blair had not only rebranded his party as New Labour, he also spoke of creating a New Britain along similar lines. Anxieties as to what this new country might look like soon began to find an outlet in the shape of ethnic minorities arriving to these shores. The Dublin Convention of that year was an EU law that allowed refugees to individually choose the country in which they wish to seek asylum and ensured that that country had the right to accept or reject their claim. The term 'asylum seeker' began to take hold in modern parlance, superseding the traditional 'refugee'. More importantly, the new phrase came with a worrying prefix: 'bogus', and soon the idea that Britain was being selected by opportunistic and dishonest migrants because of its presumed 'cushy' immigration laws and welfare state was being fuelled by a tabloid press looking to capitalise on the nation's instability and create a moral panic for its readers. Such paranoia quickly took hold, and particularly among the red-top-reading working classes who were increasingly feeling left behind by Blair's reshaping of their traditional political party of choice.

Faced with this ticking time bomb, Labour adopted a surprisingly aggressive stance to appease the hard-right press. They elected to split families up and intern asylum seekers to detention centres in an attempt to appease worried voters at home and to fire a warning shot in the direction of potential migrants overseas. Their logic was to both stop asylum seekers from fleeing underground and to spare the welfare state. But statistics would often prove that registering applicants, housing them and providing them with benefits would actually be not only cheaper in the long run, but would reduce the risk of absconding overall. In containing migrants, the government ensured that inclusion was impossible whilst conversely insisting that multiculturalism was an important facet in the New Britain – an issue that was compounded by the introduction of faith schools that ensured the next generation of existing ethnic communities didn't mix as much with the indigenous population as their parents had done at a formative age, and by the media whipping up the same animosity towards 'legitimate' EU migrants coming to work in the UK, mainly from Poland. The government's opposition, the newly defeated Tory party, recognised a chink in Labour's armour and began to protest at what they claimed was unfair fiscal favouritism for migrants over UK-born citizens. When the Tories returned to power, in a coalition with the Liberal Democrats in 2010, they consistently identified immigration as a concern among its voters, while simultaneously failing to reduce numbers. Dangerous fault lines began to appear, and finally cracked open during the EU referendum some 19 years later, when even the bodies of dead Syrians escaping their war-torn homeland washed up on the shorelines of Europe wasn't enough to silence the jingoistic, selfish cries that the nation was finally 'taking back our borders'. The compassion and solidarity of just seventy years earlier, when Winston Churchill keenly advocated the notion of a European Union to ensure a lasting

peace, suddenly seemed very long ago indeed, as vicious hate crime against immigrants quickly rose in the wake of the result.

It is these concerns that Cuarón addresses in his film. But he does more than simply present them as a worst case scenario in his future world. In looking forward to a Britain where chicken-wire-caged refugee camps are commonplace enough to appear – without comment or concern from his protagonists – on tube station platforms, Cuarón is actually looking back to the symbolism of the Holocaust, reminding us that the war really wasn't that long ago after all, as evinced in the Jewish actress Miriam Karlin's imprisoned and frail German-speaking refugee and in the brief snatch of The Libertines song 'Arbeit Macht Frei' ('Work Sets You Free' – the slogan that appeared in many Nazi concentration camps, including Auschwitz) that can be heard as Homeland Security strip and beat immigrants in camps that are all too redolent of Abu Ghraib or Guantanamo Bay.

It was the decisive moment of 9/11 that compelled Cuarón to make his film in the first place. Like many confronted by this cataclysmic event at the start of the new century, he feared for the future and what shape it might take. This in turn led him to reconsider a proposition he had initially dismissed out of hand: a big screen adaptation of P.D. James' novel – a novel, he hadn't even read. (Indeed, Cuarón refused to read it, even while making the film, and would retain only the setting, the central plot and the character names.) He quickly got in touch with his writing partner, Tim Sexton, believing this bleak, futuristic tale of infertility would have relevance in the current climate. Despite this, neither man could have imagined the relevance shooting a film which opens with a terrorist bombing on the streets of London would have. Just weeks before filming commenced, a group of Islamist radicals attacked the capital's transport systems with four bombs that killed 52 and wounded up to 800 people. This event on 7 July 2005 became known as 7/7, and the existing agreement Cuarón had to shoot this pivotal scene was renegotiated down to one single Sunday morning on Fleet Street. It remains a remarkable logistical achievement, capturing a credible jump-scare of a blast right there and then rather than on CGI in post-production. This commitment to realism was continued in the scene's smallest details too: to ensure the parked cars were suitably battered-looking, Cuarón simply jumped up and down on the bonnets until they crumpled!

Though "The Fishes" – the film's militant immigrants' rights group led by Julianne Moore's Julian – owe more to terrorist groups of the 1970s such as the Baader-Meinhof Gang than they do to Islamic terrorists, Cuarón once again rightly predicted that terrorism would become a depressing familiarity in our future. This has certainly been the case in recent years, with the War on Terror unabated and with no end in sight. France and the UK in particular have suffered greatly, but it is worth remembering that not every terrorist incident has a basis in radical Islam. The 2016 assassination of the pro-European Labour MP Jo Cox

on West Yorkshire streets was carried out by a deranged, right-wing extremist who cried "Put Britain First!" and demanded freedom for his country at his initial trial hearing. In 2016, with the nation so violently divided by Leave or Remain, you could be forgiven for thinking we stood at the brink of a civil war not too dissimilar to the one presented here.

The violent, senseless murder of Cox and the subsequent stunned reaction to it are also eerily reminiscent of the film's opening scene, which sees a coffee shop full of customers come to a halt as they all stare numbly at the news that the planet's youngest person, 'Baby' Diego Ricardo, has been stabbed outside a club for refusing to give his autograph to a fan. Shuffling away from this mass mourning, Clive Owen's cynical central protagonist Theo arrives at work only to find his colleagues histrionic with grief. Such scenes would be very familiar – certainly with British audiences – in 2006 when, just nine years earlier, a similar exaggerated state of mourning followed the death of Diana, Princess of Wales. The late summer of 1997 was arguably the first time that the general public seemed overwhelmed by grief at the passing of a public figure, and the seeds of celebrity culture and the ensuing distorted investment some placed in those they have only ever seen on screen or in the pages of a magazine were subsequently sown. For many critics, the death of Diana and (over)reaction to it from the masses pointed to the UK becoming more American with its emotions and feelings, and the term 'grief fascism' was coined to describe a kind of peer pressure that compelled people to publicly show how affected they were. In 2016, this kind of reaction reached its absolute peak when notable figures in the entertainment world – including David Bowie, Prince, Carrie Fisher, George Michael, Muhammad Ali and Alan Rickman – seemingly passed away every other week and social networking sites became flooded with tributes.

Perhaps the greatest strength of Cuarón's film lies with its believable futuristic setting. His vision of 2027 has endured not just because of the uncanny predictions it makes but because it is so incredibly grounded. In the making-of featurette *The Possibility of Hope*, Cuarón remarks that "rule one in the film is recognisability", and he certainly achieves that. His dystopic London is an impressive feat of world-building precisely because it is so instantly recognisable. Cars don't hover a few feet above the air and citizens don't walk around in togas. "We didn't want to do *Blade Runner*," Cuarón continues. "Actually, we talked about being the anti-*Blade Runner* in the sense of how we were approaching reality. That was difficult for the art department because I would say, 'I don't want inventiveness, I want references to real life.'"

He got them too. The cultural appropriation of the East used to an unsavoury degree amongst the predominantly white population of *Blade Runner* is not found much here, beyond the motorised rickshaws that transport commuters from A to B. Instead, there's still the familiar red Routemaster buses on the congested roads of the grubby, grimy and

graffiti-ridden inner city. Carling Black Label is still served in pubs, and the 2012 Olympics are recalled fondly. But missing from his world is a sense of leadership. That's not a criticism as such; the pervasive air of a Tory-style Snooper's Charter is palpably felt even without an Orwellian Big Brother figure leering out from billboards, and it's all too clear that it is the minions like the corruptible, fascist pig Sid (Peter Mullan) who perhaps ultimately set the rules as our leaders hide out, cossetted up in their ivory towers (such as Danny Huston's Nigel, a government official in the Ministry of Arts, in contrast to the closest character he resembles in the novel, Xan Lyppiatt, the self-appointed Warden of England who has abolished democracy) or hunkered down in their bunkers. Viewed today, as governments the world over face accusations of being out of touch with the concerns of the people while simultaneously growing increasingly authoritarian, this feels all too familiar.

After you with the Strawberry Cough, eh amigo?

Mark Cunliffe is a regular contributor to thegeekshow.co.uk, the web home of the UK's largest independent specialist podcast network. A devotee of mostly British and European film, he lives in the north-west of England.


THE
HUMAN
PROJECT
LIVES

WHERE THERE'S LIFE, THERE'S HOPE

by Amy Simmons

> Miriam – "As the sound of the playgrounds faded, the despair set in. Very odd, what happens in a world without children's voices."

Among the most successful and talked-about Mexican filmmakers of his generation, Alfonso Cuarón has shown a remarkable flexibility in his willingness to embrace classical Hollywood elegance as well as darker-themed contemporary stories. Along with his frequent collaborator, cinematographer Emmanuel Lubezki, Cuarón brings a boldly unique and intoxicating style to each of his projects, and like the best directors, he uses the tools of cinematography to generate a powerful relationship between the viewer and onscreen action. Ultimately for Cuarón, if an audience is going to be emotionally invested in a narrative, they need to feel as if they are a part of it.

After the critical success of his languidly poetic odyssey, *Y Tu Mamá También* (2001), and the visually dazzling 2004 franchise picture, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, Cuarón's reputation grew stronger with his ferociously intelligent dystopian epic, *Children of Men,* a bleak and unforgiving portrayal of a grimy, raging society frayed at the edges and confronting its imminent demise. *Still,* despite earning rave reviews and being nominated for three Oscars, the film was a commercial failure. Cuarón, frustrated with the entire experience, retreated from public life only to re-emerge with a vengeance for 2013's *Gravity*, which garnered seven Academy Awards, including Best Director.

Yet none of Cuarón's earlier work had prepared audiences for the collective self-image found in his overlooked sci-fi masterpiece, *Children of Men*, which, unlike any film in recent memory, speaks directly to the malaise of our post-modern age and offers a brazenly unique and calamitous vision of the darkness lying before us. While the film is set in the London of 2027, Cuarón's film is no state-of-the-art fantasy. Instead, it takes place in a depressingly recognisable location: a once great city in moral and physical disintegration. It's all chillingly plausible, and the familiarity of its subject matter only amplifies the film's power to shock. However, despite everything – the doubt, despondency and doom – it is a world worth saving, as Cuarón's devastatingly beautiful visuals argue, in image after image.

When *Children of Men* arrived in UK theatres in September 2006, five years after the 9/11 attacks, and at the height of the War on Terror, Cuarón's bleak vision of the future already looked disturbingly recognisable. But this was before the Syrian refugee crisis, before the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union after a campaign that focused on immigrant numbers, and before a right-wing populist demagogue was elected president of the United States. For this reason, while many films that predict the end times quickly age and fade from memory, *Children of Men* has become eerily prescient in our current geopolitical climate.

Boasting an excellent ensemble cast including Clive Owen, Julianne Moore, Michael Caine, Claire-Hope Ashitey and Chiwetel Ejiofor, *Children of Men* offers up a dank, visceral and deeply meditative story of a world overcome by climate change, pollution, social division and terrorist bombings. Eschewing a traditional score, the film combines rock, pop, grimy hip-hop dubs and classical pieces to create an urban audio buzz, resulting in one of the most eccentric cinematic soundscapes in contemporary cinema. While the film's meticulous sound and production design provides the foundation for an utterly convincing dystopia, it is Lubezki's strikingly atmospheric cinematography that brings the film to life. Shooting in a documentary style – utilizing Cuarón's signature wide shots and long, continuous takes – a raw immediacy emerges, which forcefully challenges our subjectivity as passive viewers.

In a career-best performance, Owen is outstanding as the reluctant hero, Theo Faron, a disillusioned alcoholic with little to sustain him beyond his relationship with his closest friend Jasper (Caine), a former political caricaturist now devoted to weed, music and caring for his catatonic wife, Janice (Philippa Urquhart). Theo "feels like shit" all the time and plays out his days as a bureaucrat for the Ministry of Energy. We learn that his son's death has caused him to spiral into a dark pit of despair and that he was once a radical activist. By the film's end, however, Theo has been transformed and the possibility raised that the world might change with him.

Loosely based on P.D. James' 1992 novel of the same name, Cuarón's arrestingly grim portrait of humanity invites us through an ashen colour palette – highlighted by cold, hard blues and shades of nicotine yellow – into a world of smog, filth, revolt and resignation. The obsession with UK Homeland Security has reached new heights of paranoia: borders are closed, armed cops are everywhere, and refugees – or "fugees" – are locked up in kerbside crates. Lurid tabloid campaigns against asylum seekers have mutated into draconian government dogma, and Orwellian viewscreens spew propaganda at every bus stop and train station. Moreover, the War on Terror has proven ceaseless, virus epidemics have ravaged the populace, and the wealthiest countries in the world have yielded to Martial Law. Only Britain goes on – or so says propaganda television. Meanwhile, socio-economic class divisions have sharpened into a clear demarcation between rich and poor. The rich live within the borders of a bourgeois society, while those worst off are contained

within a maze of rotting tenements in a quasi-Victorian slum. Certainly, if government-sanctioned terrorism, fascism, xenophobia and paranoia aren't enough to justify the sour faces depicted in the film, there's the matter of universal female infertility and, as a result, the upcoming extinction of the human race. Hence, the time limit on humanity's narrative, enforced by this – unexplained – failure to reproduce, has drained the masses of any sense of hope, resulting in a worldwide breakdown of moral and social values. In such a world, fertility testing is compulsory, antidepressants are given out as part of rations, and suicide pills are openly and legally sold.

The piece of graffiti that Theo spots from the train sums up the overall mood: "Last one to die, please turn out the lights."

In this childless dystopia, however, there exists an eight-month pregnant, young black "fugee" woman named Kee (Hope-Ashitey), and a group of much-rumoured, benevolent off-shore scientists called the "Human Project", dedicated to curing infertility. Kee must be secretly escorted through checkpoints and illegal areas and reach the group aboard a mysterious ship, where she can safely have the first baby the world has seen in eighteen years – and Theo is the anti-hero who gets the job.

Cuarón's prognosis of the future is riveting from the off. Theo – wearing a washed-out "London 2012" sweater – is buying a coffee on Fleet Street when he notices a news report on TV, announcing the death of Baby Diego, the world's "youngest living man" who has been fatally stabbed by a fan after denying him an autograph. Diego is the final link to the old world, in which people were still capable of reproducing, and his murder triggers a deepening of the despair that has overwhelmed what's left of the planet's population. Glued to the newscast, the customers are stunned speechless. Only Theo doesn't seem to be affected. Casting a cursory glance at the screen, he pays and walks out. Moments later as he stops to spike his brew with whisky, the café blows up. Shaken by the incident, Theo leaves work early to smoke weed with Jasper, who now lives in seclusion in the countryside. Here, the two friends discuss who might be responsible for the explosion. Jasper offers the film's best guess: "Every time one of our politicians is in trouble, a bomb goes off."

On his way back to the city, Theo is kidnapped by the "Fishes", an underground resistance group made up of immigrants and their British sympathisers. As it transpires, their leader, Julian (Moore), is Theo's former partner and mother of his child. They split up after the boy died in the influenza pandemic of 2009. Meaning business, Julian persuades Theo to use his government ties with his cousin, Nigel (Danny Huston), to cut through the red tape so that transit documents can be provided for Kee, who is now under their protection. Urgently in need of cash and unaware of the mission's true objective, Theo grudgingly agrees to help.

Later, in a visually stunning and highly significant sequence, Theo visits Nigel, a high-ranking civil servant and curator of the "Ark of Arts", in his ultra-modern penthouse – borrowing its exterior from Battersea Power Station – that houses priceless artworks rescued from the worldwide social meltdown. Certainly, if Cuarón is commenting on our 'contemporary moment', it is nowhere better illustrated than in this scene, which incorporates various references to both high and low culture, collapsed on top of one another and stripped of meaningful context. Michelangelo's "David" stands pointlessly in Nigel's pristine foyer, a metal rod jammed into its broken leg; Picasso's "Guernica", retrieved from a depleted Spain – a study in the atrocities of war which Theo will later be exposed to – is crudely screwed onto Nigel's dining room wall; and outside – in a particularly dystopian twist – an inflatable pig, reminiscent of Pink Floyd's 1977 concept album "Animals", floats in the grey air, defying the weight of its symbolism. At the same time, embodying the film's condition of deep spiritual malaise, is the adolescent figure of Nigel's pill-popping son, Alex (Ed Westwick), who barely moves besides twitching a set of wires hooked onto his fingertips, his eyes fixated on a video game.

When Theo asks Nigel how he manages to keep calm given the certainty of mankind's extinction, he coolly remarks, "I just don't think about it." Chillingly indifferent, the art-hoarding, anti-social elitist Nigel represents the dark underbelly of apathy and of the totalitarian mindset at work in *Children of Men*, where biological infertility can be regarded as a metaphor for spiritual sterility.

The stolen papers Theo receives permit the arrival of Kee, whose appearance then sets the stage for Cuarón's most memorable display of virtuoso handheld camerawork, plunging us straight into the action. Here, Theo, Julian, her right-hand man Luke (Ejiofor) and Kee, aided by midwife Miriam (Pam Ferris), head for the coast, where the mood soon shifts from playful joviality to overwhelming violence when they are suddenly attacked from all sides in a devastating four-minute car ambush, in which Julian is fatally shot. In a subsequent scene, Kee and Miriam bury Julian's body in an isolated wooded area, fearful of its confiscation by authorities due to Julian's position as a political rebel. Theo watches in visible shock, before he turns from the makeshift ceremony and breaks down under the burden of his grief.

Later at a safe-house, Kee reveals to Theo that she is pregnant, and that Julian had told her to trust only him. Speechless, Theo's expression shows a destroyed man who in that one moment realises he's allowed to have hope and resolves to transport Kee and Miriam to the Human Project himself. To get to the boat, the pair must first be smuggled onto a bus taking "Fugees" to a concentration camp near Bexhill-on-Sea, on the Sussex coast. When they arrive, Miriam, while trying to protect Kee – having gone into premature labour – from the guards, fakes religious mania and is thrown off; however, her fate is not revealed. Still, it is one of the film's many evocative ironies that in this visibly dystopian space, at the very centre of a surveillance regime, Kee secretly gives birth to her baby daughter, assisted only by Theo.

The following morning, Theo and Kee, carrying and concealing the infant, navigate the brutal heart of an urban street battle that has broken out between the British Army and the refugees. In this viscerally intense and visually spectacular sequence, bullets fill the air and the sudden, arbitrary nature of bloody combat is made palpable. Though we see the rubble-strewn locations primarily through the eyes of Theo, much of the power here derives from the stark images Cuarón places in the margins of his frames, such as media clips of propaganda and disaster, dead bodies, caged immigrants, armed police slaughtering rebels and the splatter of their blood across the camera lens. Yet somehow, in the throes of a cacophony of exploding missiles, the faint whimper of a baby becomes progressively louder. At this point, Cuarón gives us the most poignant and captivating moment of the film – a few suspended seconds of stunned silence in which all shooting ceases and soldiers, delirious with destruction, are suddenly paralysed by the heart-stopping reality of a crying infant. Relentless gunfire quickly resumes, but not without a breathtaking interval of tranquillity.

In the strangely beautiful and quietly devastating final scene, Theo, Kee and the newborn – having been permitted to leave the war zone – make it to a small boat off the south coast and wait for the *Tomorrow*, the ship they hope will rescue them. As they watch the bombing of Bexhill from a distance, Theo reveals to Kee that he has been shot in the fighting. At this moment, just before the final credits roll, Theo loses consciousness, and the ship approaches through the dense fog that will take Kee and her child into an uncertain future.

Like all great works of art, *Children of Men* harnesses a moment when there is a feeling in our culture that things are beginning to pivot. Operating on multiple levels at once, the film is both a provocative meditation on the spiritual desolation of late capitalism, a critique of war zones, immigration policies and globalisation, a religious allegory, and a hero's journey. At the same time, it is the result of a profound artistic union, and a shared worldview – one immersed in despair and nihilism, but also in a great depth of feeling. But at its best, Cuarón's masterwork captures the very human inclination to hope, which concludes with a fragile, tenuous glimpse of survival.

Amy Simmons is a freelance film journalist and writer based in Brighton, UK. Her monograph on Lars von Trier's* Antichrist *(2009) was published in July 2015 and her upcoming book on Jonathan Glazer's* Under the Skin *(2013) will be published in September 2018 (both by Auteur Publishing).

***Amy has written for* Time Out London, Sight & Sound, *the BFI and* Senses of Cinema.**

ABOUT THE TRANSFER

Children of Men is presented in its original 1.85:1 aspect ratio with 5.1 surround sound.
The High Definition master was provided by Universal.

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Disc and Booklet Produced by **Michael Mackenzie**
Executive Producers **Kevin Lambert, Francesco Simeoni**
Technical Producer **James White**
QC Manager **Nora Mehenni**
Blu-ray Mastering **The Engine House Media Services**
Artist **Corey Brickley**
Design **Obviously Creative**

SPECIAL THANKS

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