

SUMMER SCARS

PRESS PACK

Contact

**Prolific Films
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Synopsis

SUMMER SCARS is a coming-of-age thriller about gang of young teenagers who skip school to hang out in the woods where some hot rodding on a stolen moped changes the fate of their day. They crash into Peter, a disheveled drifter, who is delighted to have a group of kids to hang out with. First he gains their trust by joining in their games, but then his behaviour begins to change. Peter uses what he has learned about the kids against them, bullying the alpha boys, belittling the weaker ones and saving his worst for the only girl of the group. The kids realise too late that they are being held hostage, and when Peter acknowledges things have gone too far, that is when things really start to get scary.

An Introduction

Following the cult success of their micro-budget feature **THE LAST HORROR MOVIE** director Julian Richards and lead actor Kevin Howarth have re-united to make **SUMMER SCARS** a confrontational coming-of-age thriller about the perils of growing up in a world where gun violence and sexual predators proliferate.

Shot over three weeks on location in Wales, **SUMMER SCARS** follows a group of six urban kids who skip school to play in the woods where they are befriended by a drifter whose behaviour becomes increasingly abusive. Held hostage in their den they are forced to embrace the dark side of human nature if they are going to survive the ordeal.

Based on an incident that happened to the director during his Childhood, the screenplay was scribed by first time writer Al Wilson and with a crew recruited from Skillset, **SUMMER SCARS** was produced on a micro-budget, adopting similar techniques to those used in **THE LAST HORROR MOVIE** (single location, hand held camera, available light).

SUMMER SCARS required a cast young teenagers, resulting in six promising new actors making their feature film debut, including Ciaran Joyce as Bingo, Amy Harvey as Leanne, Jonathan Jones as Paul, Darren Evans as Jonesy, Chris Conway as Ben and Ryan Conway as Mugsey.

Unsigned hip-hop artists D-TOX, 2PLANETS and FORMIDABLE FOE were sourced from Myspace to work with composer Simon Lambros to create the score and incidental music.

Produced by Prolific Films **SUMMER SCARS** was funded with private Equity, Arts Council Of Wales finance and the new UK tax credit.

Directors Statement;

SUMMER SCARS is a cautionary tale based on a real life incident that happened to me during my childhood. I believe that, in one form or another, incidents such as this happen to most of us during our youth yet are often kept secret and rarely discussed. **SUMMER SCARS** brings such a secret out into the open and in the context of a coming-of-age thriller, explores the experience from the point of view of victim and perpetrator.

Awards

BAFTA CYMRU AWARD - Best Newcomer (Screenplay) 2008

BAFTA CYMRU AWARD - Best Titles, 2008

BEST NARRATIVE FEATURE – Santa Cruz Film Festival 2008

BEST DIRECTOR - London Independent Film Festival, 2008

BRONZE REMI – Worldfest Houston, 2008

BEST CHILD ACTING – Seattle True Indie Fest 2008

BEST ACTOR- Austin Fantastic Film Festival 2007

Nominations

BAFTA CYMRU NOMINATION – Best Film, 2008

BEST UK FEATURE – Swansea Life Film Festival 2008

BEST FILM NOMINATION – Oxford Film Festival 2008

BEST UK FEATURE – Raindance Film Festival 2008

Festivals

Manchester Fantastic Festival, UK 2007

Austin Fantastic Film Festival, USA 2007

Oldenburg International Film Festival, Germany 2007

Raindance Film Festival, UK 2007

Atlantic Film Festival, Canada 2007

Turks & Caicos Film Festival 2007

Dublin Horrorthon, Ireland 2007

Aberystwyth Film Festival, Wales 2007

Hollywood Film Festival, USA 2007

Ravenna Nightmare Film Festival, Italy 2007

Belgrade Auteur Film Festival, Serbia 2007

Imola Film Festival, Italy 2007
Bahamas Film Festival 2007
Fantasporto Film Festival, Portugal 2008
Oxford Film Festival, USA 2008
Bradford International Film Festival, UK 2008
Philadelphia International Film Festival, USA 2008
Belfast Film Festival, UK 2008
BUFF - Malmo Film Festival, Sweden 2008
London Independent Film Festival, UK 2008
Britspotting Film Festival, Germany 2008
Cine-Excess II, UK 2008
Newport Beach Film Festival, USA 2008
Worldfest Houston, USA 2008
RioFan, Brasil 2008
Mauvais Genre Film Fest, France 2008
Santa Cruz Film Festival, USA 2008
San Francisco Indie Fest, USA 2008
Swansea Life Film Festival, Wales 2008
Zlin Youth Film Festival, Czech Republic 2008
Seattle True Indie Fest, USA 2008
Boston International Film Festival, USA 2008
Galway Fleadh, Ireland 2008
Fantasy Film Festival, Germany 2008

Crew

Director: **Julian Richards**

Producer: **Julian Richards, Sabina Sattar & Mike Tims**

Executive Producers: **Pauline Burt, Robert Bevan, Keith Hayley, Charlie Savill**

Line Producer: **Dewi Griffiths**

Writer: **Al Wilson**

Director Of Photography: **Bob Williams**

Editors: **Kant Pan & Mark Talbot-Butler**

Music: **Simon Lambros**

Sound **Keith Tunney**

Production Design: **Sue Harding**

Costume Design: **Gemma Coleman**

Production Company: **Prolific Films**
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Cast

Kevin Howarth - Peter

Ciaran Joyce - Bingo

Amy Harvey - Leanne

Darren Evans - Jonesy

Jonathan Jones - Paul

Chris Conway - Ben

Ryan Conway - Mugsey

About The Cast

KEVIN HOWARTH - (Peter)

Since graduating from the Webber Douglas Academy of Dramatic Art in London, Kevin's theatre work has included KING JAMES' EAR and DANCELAND (both critically acclaimed productions for The Old Red Lion Theatre). His television work includes playing Alexander The Great in CONQUERORS for Discovery Channel (U.S.) and Nemesis in FIRST OLYMPIANS for the BBC. Kevin's film work includes fourteen shorts and film dramas including THE WAITER (BBC Screenplay Firsts), THE INTERRIGATION (Sky Movies Network) and WHACKED (a multi-award winning short for Sky Movies Max). Kevin has also appeared in six feature films; THE BIG SWAP, RAZORBLADE SMILE, CASH IN HAND, THE GHOST OF GREVILLE LODGE, COLD & DARK and THE LAST HORROR MOVIE for which he recieved best actor awards in New York, Buenos Aires and Montevideo film festivals. Kevin recently played Kansa, the nemesis of Wesley Snipes in the upcoming horror/western GALLOWWALKER.

About The Film-Makers

JULIAN RICHARDS - Director/Producer

After winning the British Short Film Festival 1990 with his National Film School graduation film QUEEN SACRIFICE, Julian Richards was hired by Steven Spielberg's Amblin Entertainment to write CALLING ALL MONSTERS. After several years directing television drama for BBC and Channel Four, Julian wrote and directed his debut feature film DARKLANDS, starring Jon Finch, Craig Fairbrass and Rowena King; a supernatural thriller which won the *Melies D'Argent for Best European Fantasy Film 1997*. In 2001 he directed SILENT CRY, starring Emily Woof, Douglas Henshall, Frank Finlay; a conspiracy thriller which won the *Gold Remi Award* at Worldfest Houston, and in 2003 he set up Prolific Films through which he produced and directed THE LAST HORROR MOVIE, which won sixteen awards including *Best UK Feature* at Raindance, and *The Melies D'Argent for Best European Fantasy Film 2005*. In 2008 Julian was nominated for a British Academy in the Best Film category for Summer Scars. He also won Best Director at London Independent Film Festival and Best Narrative Feature at Santa Cruz Film Festival.

Features

Summer Scars (2007) - Producer, Director, Co-Writer

The Last Horror Movie (2003) - Producer, Director, Co-Writer

Silent Cry (2001) - Director

Darklands (1997) - Director, Writer

Shorts

Bad Company (1992) - Producer, Director, Co-Writer

One More Kiss (1989) - Director, Writer

Queen Sacrifice (1988) - Producer, Director, Co-Writer

Pirates (1987) - Producer, Director, Writer, Editor

Television

Brookside (1995) - Director

Rwanda Stories (1994) - Director

In With The Rent (1990) - Director

REVIEWS

Summer Scars is Julian Richards' fourth feature and his most personal. It is based on an incident that happened to him when he was a teenager - but exaggerated slightly. It's also frustratingly difficult to pigeonhole. If I had to describe it as one thing I would say that it is a dark coming-of-age drama that stands comparison with, say, *Stand By Me*. I heard one person say it was like a more serious *Goonies* which is probably taking it a bit too far.

In a nutshell, six kids bunk off school to hang out in the woods, equipped with a couple of cans of beer, a few cigarettes and a stolen moped. They're all meant to be fourteen - according to the publicity - but Bingo (Ciaran Joyce, who was in an episode of *Torchwood* and played Lol in *Tracey Beaker*) and Paul (Jonathan Jones) come across as slightly older, both with some stirrings of feelings for Leanne (Amy Harvey), the only girl in the gang. Jonesy (Darren Evans) and Mugsy (Ryan Conway, also in *Torchwood*) seem slightly younger - or at least, less physically mature. Ben (Christopher Conway) is Paul's disabled younger brother, who has to leave his wheelchair and reach the woodland hide-out by piggyback. Both Conway brothers were also in a Dutch-Belgian time travel feature called *Crusade in Jeans*, starring Emily Watson and Udo Kier.

In the woods the kids meet Peter, a bedraggled chap with a North Country accent (apparently a Welsh accent and a West Country accent were both considered before settling on a touch of Lancashire). We know nothing about Peter and we never find out anything about him - except that he is not as stable as one might hope. He is played by Kevin Howarth, who was so terrific in Julian's *The Last Horror Movie*, in another unnervingly bravura performance.

Over the course of this relatively short film - which started life as a half-hour script and now clocks in at 75 minutes - Peter helps the kids to grow up, partly through teaching and partly through conflict with them. He's an intriguing and deliberately vague character whose creepiness gradually comes to the fore but not in a steady, constant way.

Sometimes he seems like a good guy, sometimes he seems like a psycho, and bit by bit the latter view starts to become prevalent. But even when he is effectively holding the kids hostage, he shows an avuncular side. He's a creepy uncle, basically.

When a film leaves this many questions unanswered, it is easy to read things into it and I was surprised at the religious subtext (something Julian says was added - if it's there at all - by screenwriter Al Wilson). Peter initially claims to be looking for a lost dog named Jesus (pronounced like the Messiah, not the Spanish way) and later leads the frightened kids in the Lord's Prayer. With his close-trimmed but straggly beard and his mysterious (but clearly disreputable) background, there's a definite hint of *Whistle Down the Wind* in *Summer Scars*.

This is not a horror film, not by any definition, although horror festivals with liberal remits may want to programme it because it does explore the darker side of human nature and its director and star have a reputation in that genre. Nor, it goes without saying, is it a kids' film. What is impressive is that the six youngsters - quite apart from all displaying good, natural acting talent - are portrayed as modern, working class kids without limiting their vocabulary to grunts and F-words, yet nor do they come across as atypically refined or loquacious. The dialogue sounds right, even though we know in our heart of hearts that six teenagers bunking off school in 21st century Britain are unlikely to do more than swear and mumble.

If the film has a weakness it's that, although it tells a story, there's not much of a resolution. The kids at the end of the film don't seem significantly different to how they were when we met them and there's no real sense that this unusual and disturbing experience has changed them in any way. Have they learned anything about themselves or about the world from their encounter with Peter? There's no evidence of this in the epilogue. *Summer Scars* is a rite-of-passage film which, to be honest, is all rite and no passage.

But treat it as a character piece, rather than a story, and the film works well. Kevin Howarth's portrayal of Peter is key to this: at some points he's a man-child, at others he's an older brother, sometimes he's a teacher and sometimes he's a bully. It's a rich, complex performance, as was Max Parry (in direct comparison, I would say Max was richer and Peter is more complex).

Devoid of easily-dated youth culture references and with an anonymous background that could put these kids anywhere in Europe if the film is dubbed, *Summer Scars* has good potential for overseas sales. And if it's not as obviously commercial as *The Last Horror Movie*, nevertheless it reaffirms Julian Richards as a talented director with things to say and the skills required to say them.

Producer Sabina Sattar works mostly as a production designer, her credits including *The Worst Journey in the World*, Mark Gatiss' one-off TV drama about explorer Apsley Cherry-Garrard, while Mike Tims executive produced *The Last Horror Movie*. The executive producers on this film are Robert Bevan and Keith Hayley whose joint credits include Julian's *Silent Cry* as well as *Vampire Diary* and *Reverb*. Line producer Dewi Griffiths produced the 2007 vampire film *High Stakes* while cinematographer Bob Williams shot another *High Stakes*, a 2001 documentary about Las Vegas.

There are three credited editors. The brilliantly named Kant Pan also cut British horror flick *LD 50*, mathematical TV play *Solid Geometry*, Richard E Grant-starring serial killer picture *The Cold Light of Day* (not to be confused with the Dennis Nielsen biopic of that title) and Scottish IMAX ghost romance *Legend of the Loch*. Ian Seymour's credits also include a British horror picture, *The Toybox*, as well as Christina Ricci-starring fable *Penelope* and occasionally oddball soap *Night and Day*. Mark Talbot-Butler edited *Darklands* and *Top Gear!* Dawn Stewart (*The Descent*, *Mutant Chronicles*) provided the make-up. Steve Murphy (*High Stakes*, *StagKnight*, *Parasite*) was first AD. Keith Tunney (*Dark Corners*, *The Living and the Dead*, *Cold and Dark*, *Silent Cry*) handled the sound. - **MJS rating: B+**

A pleasant day in the woods turns into a terrifying and horrific life lesson for a group of friends in this thrilling drama with shades of *Stand by Me* and *Lord of the Flies*.

On a warm spring day, six 14-year-olds decide to skip school for a day. On a joy ride in the woods they encounter an apparently homeless drifter named Peter. He is instantly charming and gains the trust of the young kids. The bullies of the group think he is a "badass," but the sensitive kids are slightly cautious. The older man begins to win them over by playing their games and bonding emotionally with each of them. What they don't realize is that Peter has been carefully observing their weaknesses and is playing mind games with them. Bullies are given a taste of their own medicine while the other kids are humiliated even more. Eventually the man pulls a gun, and the young teens realize that they are being held hostage. In order to survive, they must embrace the dark side of human nature and begin fighting back with sadistic games of their own. Director Julian Richards's previous genre flick *The Last Horror Movie* created a sensation with horror fans, and his latest is a worthy follow-up based on an incident that happened to him as a child. *Summer Scars* avoids any specific genre classification, functioning both as an unpredictable thriller and a chilling examination of innocence lost. - **Lewis Tice, Philadelphia Film Festival**

Intense British kiddie hostage tale benefits mucho from volcanic-yet-vulnerable adult turn from Kevin Howarth.- **Matt Prigge, Philadelphia Weekly**

An efficient little thriller, the engrossing *Summer Scars* features six teenagers—five boys and a girl—spending a school day in the woods. Two guys are off writing graffiti, while Bingo (Ciaran Joyce) and Leanne (Amy Harvey) are kissing. Two other boys are going for a joyride on a stolen moped when they accidentally run over Peter (Kevin Howarth), an adult stranger. An asthmatic, Peter asks the kids to help him find his missing dog, but they discover some troubling things instead. When Peter catches two bullies picking on one of the boys, he tries to teach the gang a lesson about power and masculinity that backfires. Suddenly, Peter and the six teens are getting more than they each bargained for here. It would spoil the fun of *Summer Scars* to reveal what exactly happens, but this morality tale, which takes place entirely in daylight, is a slightly unsettling film about abuse (mental, emotional, and physical). And although there are plot holes for viewers who want to find them, there are plenty of tense moments, too. - **Gary Kramer, *Around Philly***

Like *Stand By Me* with a Welsh accent, Julian Richards' film is of the outcast-friends-bonding-in-the-woods variety, only everyone calls each other "wanker" instead of "asshole." And rather than trying to find a dead body before some guy named Eyeball gets to it, they're mostly just screwing around, being teenagers. But upon encountering a stranger who is not who he says he is, singular characters emerge amid the tension (if only briefly). Among them are the martyr, peacemaker, coward, protector, hasty hero — all powerful ideas worthy of character development. But without sufficient backstories to enrich these ideas, *Summer Scars* is uncomplex: It's just a story about friends in the woods who run into some trouble.

— **Carolyn Huckabay, *City Paper***.

Anyone who recalls misspent summers of youth will understand well how a single day can echo down the years. Like the similarly resonant stories of Rob Reiner's *Stand by Me*, or much of Shane Meadows's work, *Summer Scars* captures fragile youth at a turning point, with cracks opening up to the darker adult world. Six friends bunk off school to spend the day in the woods. Armed with a few cans of beer and some very inadequate barbeque skills, they're free to do just what 14-year-olds do best: show off, swear, fight and spend the day just hanging out together. The first reel of Julian Richards's low budget drama is spent solely in the company of these six. Like most real kids they're certainly no angels, and might qualify as 'hoodies' in a cruder film. Riding a stolen moped around the bumpy woodland paths, two of the gang collide with a lone adult, Peter (Howarth). They fear the worst, and leg it from the scene, but Peter is unharmed and soon emerges to join the group. Attention turns to this unknown quantity, and the focus of the group shifts. Peter seems to be 'down with the kids'. He's sympathetic, and is soon leading the gang into new scrapes. But Peter can't be pinned down – one minute he's offering life lessons to his young charges, the next he seems more sinister, playing divide and conquer, and easily exploiting tensions by turning friends against one another. As the afternoon wears on, events take worrying turns, and it appears Peter's agenda may be closing in on the gang. This low-budget indie thriller makes all the right moves with an engagingly 'real' cast of youngsters. Never patronising and edgy throughout, it's a heartfelt picture of fragile adolescent faiths.

- Maria Wallace, Bradford Film Festival.

When six 14 year old kids skip school to play in the woods, their day's antics culminate in a motorcycle crash where they fear having killed a drifter. Relieved that he is still alive and well, they feel obliged to befriend him- an obligation they come to deeply regret. The drifter's behaviour increasingly oscillates between kindness and abuse and the truants eventually find themselves being held hostage in their own den. They are soon forced to embrace the darker side of human nature if they are going to survive this ordeal. Summer Scars sheds serious light on the choices we are forced to make under extreme circumstances where our impulsive reactions can sometimes take us beyond what we thought capable. With an unsettlingly natural Jekyll and Hyde like performance from Kevin Howarth, writer/director Julian Richards superbly captures the essence of life-changing experiences. The resonance of a single event is beautifully explored here, this is a definite must for all British Film fans. - **Ramchandra Solanki, Raindance Film Festival**

Excellent coming-of-age movie, simply and superbly told. Imagine Stand By Me, with some horror thrown in: really fine – **Everett True, Plan B Magazine**