

A photograph of two men in a locker room. The man in the foreground is shirtless, wearing white shorts and a white headband, and is holding a tennis racket. The man behind him is also shirtless and wearing a white headband. They are standing in front of a wooden bench. On the bench, there is a white water bottle and a blue bag. The wall is green and has a wooden rack with several hooks. The floor is tiled.

SHUTTLECOCK

Preliminary
Press Notes



A photograph of a man with a white headband, looking through a window. The background is a green wall with a window. The man is shirtless and has a serious expression. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and shadows.

Synopsis 3

Production Notes 4

The Cast 10

The Crew 13

Credits 17

Contact 19

Synopsis

Carl is forced to confront his idea of masculinity when an obsession with a mysterious new member of his badminton club spirals out of control.



Production Notes

Written and directed by Tommy Gillard, *Shuttlecock* is a playful yet hypnotising study of modern masculinity.

Set in a testosterone-filled all-male badminton club, Carl (Tom Greaves) must defend his position as alpha male from a mysterious new club member, Morgan Silk (Niall Kiely). Tensions boil as Morgan Silk's elegant technique and precise moves escalate him through the tournament, and, as the lines between frustration and infatuation blur for Carl, he and Morgan Silk engage in a surprising play for power.

Brought to life by a team of strong talent from across the South West of England, *Shuttlecock* focuses on the physical and psychological battle of two opponents, blurring the boundary line between traditional and modern masculinity.

"I wanted to talk about a personal subject matter in an unexpected way. Attitudes are changing towards traditional masculinity, and rightly so, it's being put under the microscope. I wanted to focus on a character that would push back on this shift. The film is weird, sweaty and homoerotic. Which is, of course, everything I associate with both masculinity and badminton," says Tommy.

Warming up

Winning the Two Short Nights Audience Choice award for his previous film as writer-director, the success of 'Cut From Cloth' is what gave Tommy the confidence to

pitch *Shuttlecock* into the festival's 2019 commission scheme. "Shuttlecock started as a very different film. Producer Simeon Costello and I had half-seriously been thinking about doing a weird genre mash, like mixing a sports film with a noir or western. It wasn't something I ever thought of actually trying to make," says Tommy.

But when beginning to explore masculinity as the foundation for a script, Tommy came back to the idea of an unlikely genre mix. "What I loved was the concept of taking tropes of hypermasculine genres and contrasting them with something visually quite elegant... like badminton."

As the film developed, the genre elements were stripped back to allow for the film's idiosyncratic style, but tropes can be found woven throughout the visuals, sound design and music.

The film was developed through the Two Short Nights pitching process, and the project got the go-ahead for production in April 2019.

Casting the players

With the production greenlit and the script completed, it was time to find the players. An open call to cast Morgan Silk was released, and the first tape in was Niall Kiely's.

"I couldn't believe it when Niall's tape was the first to come in. Everything about him

screamed Morgan Silk, from his appearance to his voice and even his demeanour. We saw many other actors who would have done a great job, but the moment Niall read the lines I knew we were going to cast him," says Tommy.

For the lead role of Carl, Tommy approached Tom Greaves directly. "I had somewhat been professionally stalking Tom for years. I had seen him in a short documentary and thought he had a unique charisma. So I kept an eye on what he was performing in, hoping we could work together at some point," says Tommy. "When I called Tom, the first thing we spoke about was pseudocopulation in male bonobos. It set the tone for the character going forward."

Both Niall and Tom impressed the casting team with the physicality of their performances - and luckily, both were a dab hand at badminton too.

When rounding out the players, Tommy called on regular collaborator Alexander Pearn and improv-comedian Sam Morgan. Alexander has worked on three films previously with director Tommy, which allowed them to develop a short-hand on set that was key to casting Alexander as 'Ross'. Sam Morgan was cast to bring his razor-sharp improvisation skills to the character of 'Lee'.

The pair were assigned the roles before Tommy had even finished the script, and knowing both performer's comic sensibilities

allowed him to work their performance styles into the characters from the get-go.

"Because I had worked with both Alexander and Sam before, I had a lot of fun writing the characters for them. They're very much a duo in the film, and they contrast each other perfectly," says Tommy.

With the team assembled and moustaches shaved, it was time to step onto the court.

Setting the scene

Finding a characterful location that also met Shuttlecock's production needs was a challenge from the beginning. With the film needing to evoke the atmosphere of a bygone era, modern badminton courts were ruled out, leaving producer Ashleigh Powell to think creatively about the space they needed to find.

After looking at hundreds of sports centres across the country, the production eventually found a home in the South West at Sidmouth College. The school's gym and changing rooms held the original structure from the 1960s, complete with wood finishings and faux marble showers. Never-before filmed in, the location looked perfect. But there was a catch. The entire building was being demolished during the school summer holidays, leaving Shuttlecock a short window of time in which filming could take place.

Framing the game

When the filmmakers visited the gym with cinematographer Boris Hallvig, they knew it was worth taking the logistical risk for the location's unmatched feel. Quickly, Boris worked with Tommy to reimagine Shuttlecock's atmosphere and aesthetic, making use of the pastel-coloured walls to inform the film's colour palette and visual style.

Having worked together for many years, Tommy again utilised Boris' unique photographic eye to bring Shuttlecock's aesthetic to life. The pair settled on an aspect ratio of 1.33:1 to evoke the style of 16mm film, pushing this further with the use of 1960s 16mm lenses chosen for their distinctive flare.

A seasoned stills photographer, Boris is well versed in shooting celluloid. A limited budget meant the filmmakers shot digitally, but still wanted to commit to the 16mm look. "We were looking to transport people to this imaginary past that Carl is living in. The vintage lenses, coupled with the film emulation post-production techniques all helped to create the timeless world of Shuttlecock," says Boris.

Boris took colour grading responsibilities into his own hands, building upon his on-set work to execute a consistent vision from conception through to delivery.

Getting kitted out

Costume designer Charis Cherry undertook the mammoth task of creating distinguishable looks for not only the principal cast but also the numerous supporting artists that round-out the badminton club. Working from her detailed reference board, Charis focused on netted garments to exhibit the textures found throughout badminton.

Working within the confines of the narrative, Charis turned an abundance of tight white shorts into retro-styled sportswear. At the forefront of these decisions were the characters themselves. Knowing the similar costumes could all blend into one, Charis turned her attention to giving each performer specific materials in their clothing, letting small details speak loud about each character.

Managing to source period-accurate items, Charis fitted the garments to allow for maximum mobility in the high-intensity badminton scenes. Her tailoring skills ensured each costume moved in a way that enhanced each player's physical performances.

With a background in design and creative direction, writer-director Tommy Gillard also took over production design responsibilities, working with art director Lyris Richards for the shoot. The pair built on the location's existing retro feel by sourcing rare vintage props, including a collection of 1970s-80s

badminton rackets and shuttlecocks.

Working from Tommy's lookbook and designs, Lyris oversaw the transformation of the gym and changing room, working meticulously on details such as lewd changing room graffiti and obscure badminton advertisements.

Panting and penguins

Although Shuttlecock's immersive and expressive sound design was written into the very first draft of the script, it was brought to evocative heights by sound designer James Morgan.

"I was keen on Shuttlecock utilising the sounds that were inherent to the sport. Wherever I could think of interesting sounds I wrote them into the script, but I could never have imagined the sounds that James Morgan would eventually bring," says Tommy.

With established noises of whistles, swinging rackets and squeaking shoes, James opted to use the soundscape to create a sensory experience. Focusing on atmosphere over realism, he used unexpected sounds such as gunshots, tigers and even chattering penguins to communicate the ambience of the film.

A first-time collaboration between Tommy and James, the sound design was completed just ten days after their initial conversation. Looping the project back to its genre roots,

the pair took stylistic cues from Westerns to evoke the brewing tension between the characters. The film was given a 5.1 surround mix to amplify the hallucinatory editing and absorbing soundscape.

Scoring the match

For the film's sensitive yet aggressive score, the filmmakers turned to Brighton-based musician Freddy Mercer. Working outside of his comfort zone, Freddy fused elements of Western film music with electronic synthesisers to create a modern, experimental sound.

Rather than a typical underscore, the filmmakers instead decided to put music at the forefront when used. "When Shuttlecock uses music, it's not there to underpin an emotion - it's there to create it. We only used music when we knew we could put it front and centre, blending with the visuals and sound design to create a moment," says Tommy.

Freddy concentrated on the understated, sensitive side of Western film soundtracks, carrying over flute trills and slow guitar picking. As the film progresses, he introduced electronic synths to dominate the more traditional instrumentals. "At its heart, Shuttlecock is about the old being pushed out by the new. We wanted to reflect this in the soundtrack, with electronic music slowly usurping the analogue," says Freddy.

Freddy went from concept to completion of

the score in just six evenings, working with both live recordings and digital manipulation.

Bending the rules

The filmmakers needed to realise badminton in a way that fit the film's tone, which provided unexpected challenges. "We wanted to present badminton both delicately and aggressively. But when you're working with sport there's an element of suck it and see," says Tommy.

The filmmakers let themselves go during the game scenes, locking down the camera and allowing the performers to go wild. "If any professional players watch this, they won't be too impressed with our bending of badminton's rulebook," Tommy says. "I'm just as bad of a player as I was before."

The Cast



Tom Greaves Tom Greaves is a London-based actor, but recently returned from studying at the prestigious clown school in Paris; Ecole Philippe Gaulier. Tom has appeared in many productions spanning both stage and screen.

His theatre work includes 'The Seagull at Regent's Park' (directed by Matthew Dunster), 'Arcadia' (National ENT/ATG Tour), 'Four Nights in Knaresborough' and 'Henry V' (both at Southwark Playhouse). His television and film work includes the BBC series 'Strike', the award-winning film 'Damilola, Our Loved Boy' (BBC). Other notable work includes the acclaimed horror short 'My Bloody Valentine' (starring Gemma Atkinson and Danny Webb) and the viral sensation 'Offline Dating'.

Niall Kiely Niall Kiely trained as a theatre actor at Drama St Mary's, Twickenham. After graduating in 2018, he's performed in several productions, including 'Moonlight Strangers', a surrealistic theatre piece exploring the life of LGBTQ+ migrants. Since appearing on screen in Shuttlecock, Niall has just been cast in Season 2 of the Amazon Prime anthology series, 'A Series of Light'.

Alexander Pearn Alexander Pearn is an actor based in London and
Ross Devon. Since graduating drama school, he's added more strings to his racket; he's currently studying Art History at the University of Exeter and is writing a stage play.

Sam Morgan Sam Morgan is an actor, improviser, teacher, comedy
Lee writer and stand-up comedian - to name a few. He trained at the renowned Italia Conti Academy of Theatre Arts, and also has a level one certification in clowning. His credits include 'Comic Strip Presents: The Hunt For Tony Blair', 'Red Top', BBC Radio plays, TV commercials, a series of award-winning short films and extensive experience in the world of theatre. He was a lead writer and performer for BBC Radio Review of the Year.

James Cotter James Cotter is a Devon-based actor with UK and
Umpire US TV credits. He's appeared in films such as 'The Sweeney', 'World War Z' and 'The Wedding Video'. His theatrical work includes Bill Kenwright's productions of 'Evita' and 'Agatha Christie's Witness for the Prosecution', 'Jesus Christ Superstar', 'Cabaret', 'The Sound of Music', 'Twelfth Night' and 'The Adventures of Mr. Toad'. TV credits include 'Skins', 'Wakey! Wakey!', 'Mermaids: The New Evidence' and 'Kennedy's Suicide Bomber'. James has also performed in the radio production of 'A Comic Review of the Year' for BBC Radio.

The Crew



Tommy Gillard
Writer/ Director

Tommy Gillard is a Devon-based writer and director. Having previously worked as a graphic designer, he has spent the last five years as the Creative Manager of an international brand, alongside working on feature films and creating personal short-form work. His previous film 'Cut From Cloth' received the Audience Choice Award at 2018's Two Short Nights festival.

Ashleigh Powell
Producer

Originally from North Wales, Ashleigh has an impressive repertoire of producing experience, both in the UK and abroad. Producing for music, fashion and fiction industries, Ashleigh's work has been shown at London Fashion Graduate Week, Shorts on Tap and Roundhouse Pictures.

Graduating from Arts University Bournemouth, Ashleigh is also an associate artist of Exeter Phoenix, 'The South West's foremost multi-art venue'.

Simeon Costello
Producer

Simeon Costello is a Devon-based producer. His filmmaking debut came in 2016 when he was commissioned by Exeter Phoenix to create 'Bus Stories', a short-documentary which he wrote, directed, produced - and starred in.

Since then, Simeon has produced many award-winning short films, including dark comedy-drama 'Cut from Cloth' and silent gothic triumph 'Rhapsody in Blood'. Both have received critical praise, with two-time Oscar-winning cinematographer Roger Deakins describing the latter as 'masterful.'

Simeon Costello (cont.) Having worked on five films with writer/ director Tommy Gillard, the duo formed production company Spinning Path to focus on producing distinctive, director-led short films.

**Boris Hallvig
Cinematographer** Boris Hallvig is a filmmaker, writer and photographer based in the South West. With a background shooting fashion editorials, his experience in analogue photography informs his approach to filmmaking, creating a unique cinematic style.

**Charis Cherry
Costume Designer** Charis Cherry graduated from the Arts University Bournemouth with a degree in costume design. Since the bright whites of Shuttlecock, she's worked in many theatre productions and films, including the costume department of West-End theatre show, 'The Watsons' and blockbuster 'Jurassic World: Dominion'.

**Freddy Mercer
Composer** Freddy Mercer is a Brighton based composer and musician. Since scoring his first film 'Written in Blood' in 2016, he's worked on many UK and international award-winning films. He specialises in writing melodies for documentaries, commercials, and other art forms. Freddy's music can often be described as an eclectic mix of electronic and organic textures.

Hannah Kate Marshall
Make-up Artist

Hannah Kate Marshall is a Devon-based make-up, prosthetics and special effects artist. With over eight years experience in the industry, she's worked extensively with South West filmmakers and theatre companies on projects including 'The Nightman of Nevermoor', 'Let's Roll' and 'Status 2'. After graduating from Somerset College in 2015, Hannah interned at KMFx. Under the guidance of Kristyan Mallett, one of the world's leading prosthetics artists, she developed her skills in silicone, mould-making and art-finishing for film franchises such as 'Fantastic Beasts' and 'Bridget Jones'.

Stan White
Sound Recordist

Based in London and West Dorset, Stan White has worked in the sound department for directors such as Ben Wheatley, Peter Strickland and Steve McQueen.

James Morgan
Sound Designer

James Morgan is a sound designer working in film, TV and online content. Graduating from the National Film and Television School in 2012, James received the Mike Hopkins Memorial Scholarship at the LA Golden Reel Awards. Working out of his London home studio, his previous projects include 'Top Boy', 'The Emperor's New Clothes' and 'DAU'. His current focus is radio/ podcast dramas and short films.

Lyris Richards
Art Director

Lyris Richards is a London-based art director, set designer and costume designer, working across theatre and film. She recently designed the costumes for Four of Swords's critically acclaimed theatre production 'Doctor Dracula'.

Credits



Written and Directed by	Tommy Gillard
Produced by	Ashleigh Powell Simeon Costello
Photographed by	Boris Hallvig
Players	
Carl	Tom Greaves
Morgan Silk	Niall Kiely
Ross	Alexander Pearn
Lee	Sam Morgan
Umpire	James Cotter
Production Designer	Tommy Gillard
Costume Designer	Charis Cherry
Original Score by	Freddy Mercer
Sound Designer	James Morgan
Edited by	Tommy Gillard Boris Hallvig
Hair & Make-up by	Hannah Kate Marshall
Sound Recordist	Stan White
Art Director	Lyriss Richards
Executive Producers	Jonas Hawkins Claire Horrocks Luke Hagan Neil Flanagan

Contact

simeon@spinningpath.com

+44 7930 421 938



**SPINNING
PATH**