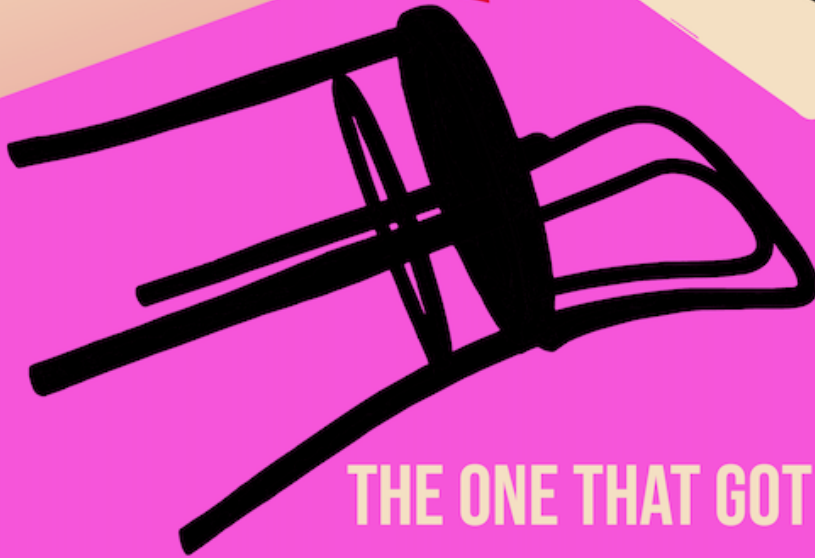


ELECTRONIC PRESS KIT

JOSEPHINE BUTLER STUART LAING GOLDA ROSHEUVEL

EK



THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY...

DIRECTOR: PALOMA OAKENFOLD

WRITER: JOSEPHINE BUTLER

PRODUCER: KATIE BOND EDITOR: FLORIAN KASPERSKI SOUND DESIGN: JIM GRIFFIN

FILM INFORMATION

Film title

EX

Logline

The one that got away

Contact Info

Josephine Butler Films
josephinebutlerfilms@gmail.com
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Katie Bond

Producer, Tel: +44 7930 544111

Technical Info

Running time: 14:50 minutes

Aspect Ratio: 16:9

Colour/English

EX synopsis

Sam is at home preparing to kill herself. Cut to 5 weeks earlier. Stir-crazy in lockdown, Sam reaches out to Jake, her ex of 15 years ago. She is delighted when he responds, and they rekindle their relationship remotely on zoom. Sam, Jake and Clare were inseparable at university. They partied throughout the nineties and noughties and at the end of the evening, it was always the three of them staying up getting hammered. But whose version of the past is the truth and who can we trust now? EX is a black comedy about sex, lies and reconciliation with a fierce sting in the tail.

Scriptwriter, Josephine Butler says: 'Inspired by lockdown life on zoom, the love story in EX is played out exclusively via laptops and mobiles. I wanted to explore how we represent ourselves digitally and how we respond to online experiences. I'd be lying if I didn't admit that in part EX is a fantasy rewrite of a mash-up of my own messy relationship breakups, and a feminist fist pump against everyday sexism and homophobia. I hope it will make you laugh and keep you guessing to the end. And my message is simple: Tell the truth, take responsibility for your actions, don't be a ****!'

EX was shot remotely on zoom and brought together a wealth of talent in the actors Josephine Butler (*Peep Show*), Golda Rosheuvel (*Bridgerton*) and Stuart Laing (*East Enders*) and theatre director Paloma Oakenfold.

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Short film **EX** is a black comedy about sex, lies & lockdown introducing new writing talent **Josephine Butler** featuring **Stuart Laing** from *Eastenders* & *Bridgerton* star **Golda Rosheuvel**

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London, UK - [insert date]

Sam is at home preparing to kill herself. Cut to 5 weeks earlier. Stir-crazy in lockdown, Sam reaches out to Jack, her ex of 15 years ago. She is delighted when he responds, and they rekindle their relationship remotely on zoom. But whose version of the past is the truth and who can we trust now? **EX** is a black comedy with bite to be savoured by anyone who has survived a painful break-up.

Scriptwriter, Josephine Butler says: 'Inspired by lockdown life on zoom, the love story in **EX** is played out exclusively via laptops and mobiles. I wanted to explore how we represent ourselves digitally and how we respond to online experiences. I'd be lying if I didn't admit that in part **EX** is a fantasy rewrite of a mash-up of my own messy relationship breakups, and a feminist fist pump against everyday sexism and homophobia. I hope it will make you laugh and keep you guessing to the end. And my message is simple: Tell the truth, take responsibility for your actions, don't be a ****!'

EX was shot remotely on zoom and brings together a wealth of talent in the actors Josephine Butler (*Peep Show*), Golda Rosheuvel (*Bridgerton*) and Stuart Laing (*East Enders*) and theatre director Paloma Oakenfold. The film's running time is 14:50 minutes.

Visit the website for more information about the film: josephinebutlerfilms.com



www.josephinebutler.com

Q&A with JOSEPHINE BUTLER

Filmmaker & scriptwriter of EX

Q. What was your inspiration for writing **EX**?

A. I'm really interested in how we represent ourselves digitally, and how we respond to online experiences. The relationship in **EX** is played out exclusively via laptops and mobiles but it feels like a

genuine love story until the twist at the end. I'd be lying if I didn't admit that EX is a fantasy rewrite of a mash-up of my own relationship breakups. A righting of unfinished business with men like Jake – a middle-aged man who behaves like a teenager. It was hugely cathartic to reclaim agency and challenge the gender bias around who is the vulnerable one, the needy one, the stay-at-home, family-orientated one. Inspired by *Thelma and Louise*, *The Last Seduction*, and *Les Diaboliques*, EX is a feminist fist pump against everyday sexism and homophobia. The other impetus for EX was tackling ageism. I want to see older actors, and especially older women, driving the narrative, swearing, having sex, making mistakes. The stories I write are character based, dialogue based - I want to hear conversations that sound real, see characters that I recognise, that are multi-dimensional.

In EX, I hope that you find a compelling black comedy with characters that you fully engage with and care deeply about and a story that keeps you guessing to the end.

Q. Was lockdown the catalyst for writing EX?

A. Yes, I wrote EX in the first lockdown when we were all housebound. I was involved in another lockdown film (*Little Room*) which was shot entirely on zoom. It was bizarre filming on zoom with Brian Cox who was in the US and Claes Bang who was in Denmark and having the directors direct us from various other parts of the world. It opened whole new possibilities for making films.

Q. And that's how you made EX?

A. Yes. It was incredible to be able to shoot a film with the actors in opposite parts of London and the director on a boat in Bristol! There's only one bit where Golda and I are together, and we had to wait until the government guidelines said touching was ok. Nuts when I look back on it.

Q. What are the advantages and disadvantages of making a film this way?

A. We all tired of life through a zoom screen in lockdown so it was restrictive not being able to be creative with angles. But it meant that the story had to be really gripping without the distraction of a beautiful wide shot. I could work flexibly and remotely with people who are incredibly busy. Nobody even needs leave their house! Zoom also familiarised us with two front-on close-ups next to each other, rather than cutting between one at a time. I find this compelling to watch, especially if one person is trying to hide something..

Q. There are stills in the film with dialogue over the top. Why did you choose that method of storytelling?

A. We didn't want to film those conversations as we didn't want the audience to think 'who's filming them?' It would weirdly have broken the 4th wall, as everything else in the film is something we can feel we're accidentally witnessing or hearing. But we tried lots of options to make them work. At one point we had a very clunky video of flowers wilting. Because the whole film is an exploration of artifice, of a lie, eventually we chose cheesy stock photographs selling a feeling. When you hear the conversations, the image comes into focus in the same way that a thought that might emerge as you're listening to someone, but each thought is a sentimental picture of staged emotion. We wanted to take the audience on a journey where they're experiencing the 'romance' with Sam and Jake, but through the portal of stock pictures which sell fake romance. Then when Paloma found the teddy picture, we just thought it was so funny that we'd include that and begin the upending process for the audience. We realise now that the audience might think 'who is putting that picture there?' and that still breaks the 4th wall, but for some reason it seemed a choice which gave the sense more effectively that the audience is accidentally there and you're not watching a film but something real.

Q. How did you choose the cast?

A. When I wrote EX, I thought immediately of Golda. I did *Macbeth* with her at Regent's Park years ago; she was Lady Macbeth, and I was Banquo. I've seen a lot of her work since and think she's phenomenal. I've worked with Stuart three times already, the first time over 20 years ago in the film *Lawless Heart*. I'd work with them both forever if I could. Just the most inventive, generous and fun actors.

Q. When did the director Paloma Oakenfold get involved?

A. I'd done various theatre shows with Paloma, but she'd moved to Bristol. When I realised that we could fit filming this around her other work because of the zoom conceit, it was a no-brainer. Paloma has worked on a lot of devised theatre so is very up for experimenting on the day. We were able to improvise and do multiple takes because it was just us on zoom. With no crew and no clock ticking, there was no pressure to get it in the can before the sparks turned the electricity off!

Q. What if anything changed during the shooting of the short?

A. We just kept adding little things...a good example would be Sam's glasses, which we see for the first time when she reads the email at the end. And then we had Sam take her glasses off to film the last zoom. I don't know many people over 50 who don't wear glasses to look at a screen - but Sam never wears them when she's talking to Jake - it's too real for her to show herself to him with glasses, greasy hair and dirty sweatshirt, which is how she appears at the beginning and the end of the film.

Q. Tell us more about Sam, Jake and Clare.

A. They were university friends from the nineties and noughties and did a lot of partying. At the end of the evening, it was always the three of them staying up getting hammered. Sam and Jake were that couple that everyone thought would be together forever. And then in their mid-thirties Sam really wanted a baby and Jake wasn't there yet. They split up. Cut to now. Since Jake and Sam split up, Sam's had some other relationships that have ended terribly. She's disillusioned with men and relationships. In his late forties Jake married someone ten years younger than him and now has two kids. He's kind of enjoying it - describing them as 'really cute sometimes and a total nightmare the rest of the time'. Sam post menopause feels quite differently about having kids, as does Clare. Clare was always single at university and didn't really start having relationships until her late twenties. Jake made a clumsy pass at Clare and didn't tell Sam. He's a bit like that - just blundering through life following his instincts and not really caring about the consequences or emotional fallout for other people.

Q. Secrets and lies underpin the story of EX. What did you want to explore about how we see the past and how views on LGBTQ+ have changed?

A. It's amazing how flexible our brains can be in editing out the things we don't want to remember. For some reason I always come back to Brett Kavanaugh. I felt a lot of rage after watching Christine Blasey Ford testify against Kavanaugh. I wonder if he thinks he did something terrible and has got away with it - I'm guessing probably not. It seems more likely to me that he's edited the events so that he's blameless. Jake does that. His response to finding out that Clare is now gay is also neanderthal. 'I knew it, the hair' - like short hair would be the giveaway. I wanted to skewer the stereotyping and casual prejudice against the LGBTQ+ community that stubbornly linger today.

Q. Are you worried about including the threat of suicide in the film?

A. I am not uncomfortable talking about suicide and have had many conversations with people about it, both objectively and with people who are on the brink. One of the things that has often surprised me is how people who are desperate can still makes jokes. I think that's one of the amazing things about humans - our ability sometimes to take any situation and make it funny, no matter how bleak. It can be the thing that gets us through the darkest times. I hope that EX will help us talk more freely about mental health.

Q. Who do you think would enjoy this film?

A. Anyone who's ever had a painful break-up. Which is basically everyone. Though not my mum, she wouldn't like the swearing.

Q. Does the film have a message? What do you want the audience to take from it?

A. Tell the truth, take responsibility for your actions, don't be a ****!

BIOGS



Josephine Butler is a British actor and writer. She has worked extensively in theatre (including the Bush Theatre and Paines Plough), film and TV, and appeared on many cult comedies including *Peep Show* and Sean Locke's *15 Storeys High*. You've probably heard her voice a thousand times as she's one of the UK's busiest voiceover artists. She collaborated previously with Paloma on *Little Fluffy Clouds*, a one-woman show that Josephine wrote and performed at The Space Theatre. She is currently writing *Cursed*, a series about an ex-reality TV star who starts a podcast about the perils of fame. Josephine co-presents the podcast *Buddhistchats* so knows what she's talking about, though fortunately she's never been a reality tv star.



Stuart Laing is a British actor whose extensive film, TV and theatre credits include *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* for the National Theatre and the title role in *Macbeth*. As well as numerous TV dramas, he was a regular in *Eastenders* playing Rob Minter. His film work includes *South West 9* and *Lawless Heart*.



Paloma Oakenfold is a director and performer. She has directed in theatres across the UK (including Soho theatre, Lyric Hammersmith, Battersea Arts Centre, Underbelly Edinburgh and Vault), and appeared in theatre and tv (including E4 cult-hit *Chewing Gum*). Paloma is the co-founder of Bareface, a theatre company of disabled artists. Their debut film *A Night of Mistakes* recently premiered at the Bolton Film festival.



Golda Rosheuvel is a Guyanese-British actress and singer. She is known for her theatre work including the title role in *Othello* in 2018 and many on-screen roles, particularly Shadout Mapes in *Dune*, Agnes in *Lady Macbeth* and Queen Charlotte in Netflix's *Bridgerton*.



Katie Bond is a book publisher, film producer & publicist inspired by great writing and compelling storytelling. She has worked with bestselling and prize-winning authors including JK Rowling, Margaret Atwood, Sheila Hancock, Khaled Hosseini and Donna Tartt.

CREDITS

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Jake Stuart Laing

Claire Golda Rosheuvel

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Editor	Florian Kasperski
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Music	<i>Sex Appeal</i> by Barry Gleddon
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Website	James Garside

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