

FEATURING THE VOICE OF **NOEL FIELDING**

PUDDLE MAN

WITH RISING STAR
DAINTON ANDERSON

**'POWERFUL & AUTHENTIC
ONE OF THE STRONGEST SHORT
FILMS I'VE SEEN'** ★★★★★

— DAVID M. THOMPSON
4X BAFTA WINNER

A FANTASTICAL RECKONING WITH FEAR AND MYSTERY

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY **JACOB JOSEPH HELD** ORIGINAL MUSIC BY **VERONICA MANUEL** DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY **ALFIE DICKENS** PRODUCED BY **JAMES MAY**
AND **INDIA PLUVES** EXECUTIVE DESIGNER **BELLA BLOSS** AND **BLYTHE BRUNT** WITH **SARA WILSON-SOPPITT** AND **LEON DRAGO**



A twelve-year-old evacuee uncovers myth and memory on Dartmoor in this powerful short film voiced by Noel Fielding.

Synopsis

Toby is a twelve-year-old boy who is evacuated to Dartmoor in the midst of the Second World War. With new fears looming over him, Toby discovers his grandmother Julie's dark past and a mysterious figure who wanders the moorland.





Director's statement

Puddle Man is a story about fear - the kind of fear that twists reality and makes us believe strange things. Mixing history, magical realism, and mystery Puddle man unfolds in a powerful thirteen-minute drama.

When I was eighteen, I had cancer. For years afterward, I lived with the constant fear that it would return. That fear was made sharper by the fact that, three years before my diagnosis, my dad had died from cancer. Over time, my anxiety began to take on unusual forms - I found comfort in imagining that there might be magic in the world, something powerful enough to make my illness vanish.

This experience inspired me to explore the idea that fears can create strange beliefs - and that sometimes, those beliefs might hold a kind of truth. From that came Toby, a boy terrified his father would die, and the Puddle Man, a mystical figure who roams the moors collecting people's tears. Then came Julie, a woman trapped in the grief of losing her husband, and had once refused the Puddle Man's help.

I've always been fascinated by the 1940s, so I set the story in Britain during the war. In this setting, Toby's fear became that his father would die in battle, while Julie's husband had died in the First World War. By weaving their stories together in a mysterious, dreamlike world, I wanted to capture the strange and unsettling ways that deep fear can shape our reality.

The filmmaker Jacob Joseph Held

Jacob Joseph Held is a filmmaker from London and is the creator of multiple short films which have been screened in festivals across the UK. Jacob's films focus on themes of boyhood, magical realism and loss. Jacob is currently studying Philosophy at University of Bristol whilst pursuing filmmaking as a career.



Audience and potential placement

Puddle Man is designed for theatrical short film programs, digital platforms or curated acquisitions. With strong audience appeal for fans of British folklore, magical realism and period drama, the film sits comfortably alongside works like *A Monster Calls*, *Pan's Labyrinth* and *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse*. Featuring Noel Fielding as the voice of the title character, the film is suited for cinema screenings and streaming or broadcast platforms looking for high-quality short-form storytelling with emotional depth and broad accessibility.

The filmmaking process

The writing of Puddle Man started in September 2024, during this process Jacob went on a number of trips to Dartmoor. On one of these trips he stumbled across a converted farmhouse in West Dartmoor that a retired couple had converted into a holiday cottage, this became the main location for the film.

In January, casting took place in Bristol where 10 boys between the ages of 8-12 auditioned. Dainton Anderson was chosen to play the character of Toby Hutton. Filming commenced in February, Jacob and DOP Alfie Dickens wanted the cinematography to capture a small in a big world. They utilised deep focus, wide shots and the natural fog of Dartmoor. Post production was completed by August 2025. Jacob edited the film working closely with Halo Post Production to develop the colour and Veronica Manuel to create the original score.



The actors

The Puddle Man is voiced by the English comedian, artist, and actor Noel Fielding. Toby Hutton is played by 12-year-old Dainton Anderson from Bristol, who began acting at age 4 and has since appeared in Patrick Melrose where he played Benedict Cumberbatch son, the BBC's Xmas special of This Country, Stonehouse playing Mathew McFadden's son, and recently starred as the title character in Archie. Julie Hutton is played by award winning British actor Sara Wilson-Soppitt. Sara recently won Best Actress at The Berlin Film Festival. Puddle Man is played by Leon Drago, an actor from Malta whose background is in Television and stunt work. The film's donkey is played by Dermot, a rescue donkey currently living in South Wales who's last gig was with Rickey Gervais!

Technical decisions

We chose to shoot on the NISI Athena Primes. With a fast T1.9 aperture and beautifully soft bokeh, they delivered exceptional image quality and subtle background separation, ideal for the naturalistic look we were after.

Their compact form and robust build made them a perfect fit for the tight, often challenging conditions of our shoot, particularly inside a centuries-old cottage on Dartmoor where space was limited.

The Funding Process

To raise the required funds we had to get creative. We launched an instagram promoting the story, characters and inspiration through instagram reels, after an initial buzz the crowdfund opened. Offering fortnightly newsletters, posters, books of concept art, hoodies and even bottles of The Puddle Man's tears to our contributors.



FAQ's

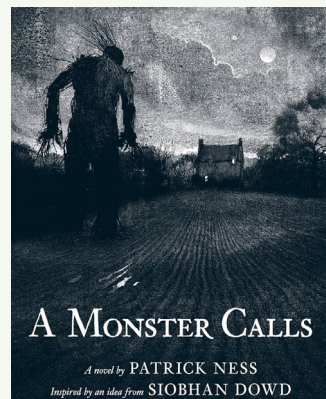
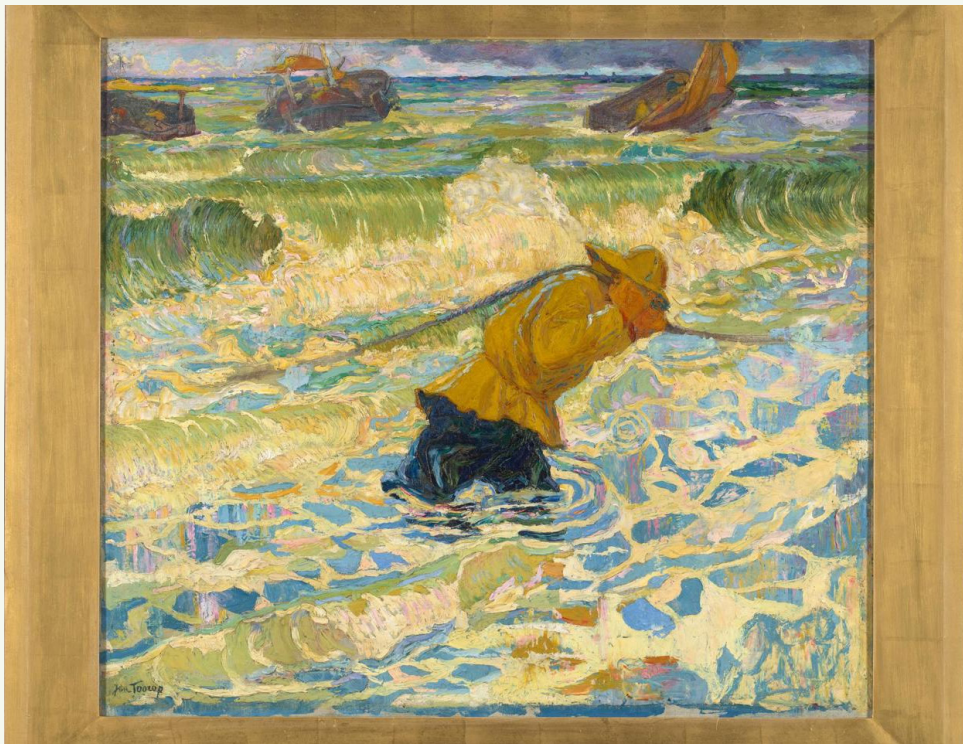
Who is the Puddle Man?

The Puddle Man is a manifestation of human fear. He wanders Dartmoor 'neath sombre skies and preys on the scared, collecting their tears.

What works inspired the Puddle Man?

The themes of fear and magical realism were inspired by the novel 'A Monster Calls' by Patrick Ness and the film 'Pan's Labyrinth' by Guillermo del Toro.

The visual inspiration for The Puddle Man came from paintings, 'Sisyphus' by Titian and 'High Tide' by Jan Toorop.



What were the challenges of the shoot?

Wind! The shoot was in West Dartmoor during February and the open landscape allowed for huge gusts that made communication very difficult.

How did Jacob Joseph Held get into filmmaking?

What started as a love of photography soon transitioned into a desire to turn his first short story Reverie to life in his final year of school. Reverie became Jacob Joseph Held's first film, it featured in the Moving Image Awards at the BFI Southbank which began his journey as a filmmaker.

Why does Jacob not study film at University?

Jacob taught himself how to make films through trial, error and youtube! Upon choosing what to study at university Jacob thought studying film would restrict his ability to make films rather than enhance it. Instead he chose to study Philosophy due to his personal interest in the subject and his hope that it would help improve his writing and critical skills.

Who is the Donkey?

Dermot was the fabulous donkey actor who joined the Puddle Man Team. He lives in a donkey sanctuary in South-West Wales and enjoys carrots.



Key specifications

Country of production: United Kingdom

Length: 13 minutes

Aspect ratio: 2:1

Format: 4K Digital

Date of completion: 2025

Genre: Drama

Key production credits

Writer & Director: Jacob Joseph Held

Executive Producer: James May

Producers: India Pluves, James May & Jacob Joseph Held

Director of Photography: Alfie Dickens

Composer: Veronica Manuel

Production Designer: Bella Blue Bloss

Costume Designer: Bella Blue Bloss, Blythe Brunt

Editor: Jacob Joseph Held

Sound Recordist: Henry lee

Sound Supervisor: Noah Grose





Contact



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