



“A MIND-BENDING
VISUAL FEAST”

- Steve Oldfield, FOX-TV

THE WASTING

Would you believe her?

MONSIEUR ENTERTAINMENT • APT 1984 • STRANDBERG / ENSTROM • CAROLYN SANDERSON • “THE WASTING” • LARREN MACQUEEN • GRAY STUBBS • ALEXY JONSON

SEAN STEVENSON • BRIGIDTE LYNN • DANIELA HILTZ • JESSIE VANCE • WENDYSON • “GAMMA” CHONG • MARIO RODRIGUEZ • “O” DANIEL BUCKLEY

• A TONY MANDUKIANS • ANDREW WYMAN • ALEXY JONSON • JESSIE VANCE • WENDYSON • CHRYSTY BROWN • DAN LINDBERG • LUCIA SANCHEZ • LEAN • JOAN GERTNER • MONSIEUR

• APT 1984 • STRANDBERG • ALEX BAUSTEIN • CAROLYN SANDERSON • “THE WASTING” • LARREN MACQUEEN • GRAY STUBBS • ALEXY JONSON





Director: Carolyn Saunders

Writer: Carolyn Saunders

Cast: Lauren McQueen, Gray O'Brien, Alexz Johnson, Shelagh McLeod,
Brendan Flynn, Sean Stevenson

Producers: Jeanne Stromberg, Alan Hausegger, Carolyn Saunders

Runtime: 98 minutes



NORTH AMERICAN DISTRIBUTOR

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SHORT SYNOPSIS

Set in an idyllic English village, *The Wasting* is a psychological thriller about teenager Sophie, stumbling toward sexual awakening with her secret boyfriend Liam, even as she fights her controlling parents by refusing to eat...until a nightmarish ghost appears that may be real, or may be a deadly creation of her starving body. Her credibility lost to anorexia, nobody believes her. Sophie's life is on the line and a dark family secret surfaces as the battle of wills becomes a battle for survival.

LONG SYNOPSIS

SOPHIE, 18, is in love for the first time and fighting for her life. She's anorexic, the result of a battle for control with her overbearing father ILYAS. He's a chef; refusing food is her only weapon, and her secret boyfriend LIAM is her only relief.

Sophie doesn't tell her father about Liam, because he is already opposed to her friendship with strong-willed GRACE, 22 and Grace's boyfriend KAI, who is Liam's older brother. Walking the fence between two worlds, Sophie spirals deeper into her anorexia.

Then she starts having nocturnal visits from a horrifying ghost that returns night after night. Terrified, Sophie leans on Liam, becoming ever more intimate with him. Sophie's possessive mother VALERIE is disturbed, sensing that her "little girl" – her closest ally in an unhappy marriage - may lose her virginity. Sophie's reliance on Liam grows when she discovers Ilyas is secretly seeing SHABANA, the polar opposite of her free-spirited mother. Pressure builds and the paranormal activity gets worse. But nobody will believe Sophie. Her credibility stolen by her illness, they think she's hallucinating, and blame the anorexia.

One day, as they make out in the forest, Sophie thinks she sees Liam's face morph into something monstrous and sends her confused boyfriend away. He goes to Ilyas for help, and they argue about his affair with Shabana. Ilyas drops a bomb - he's not cheating. Valerie is dead. She drowned two years earlier, and the troubled Sophie can't let go. Valerie is a figment of her imagination.

Sophie is sent to a clinic, but sees her ghostly attacker again, and flees, to end up lost in old smuggler's tunnels under the town. Her friends and Ilyas find her there, and they help her understand at last that Valerie is dead. It seems Sophie has turned a corner, but she flips it by insisting her mother is the ghost that's been attacking her all along. Sophie thinks the possessive Valerie has come to take her away.

As they escape the tunnels, Sophie sees Valerie again, this time threatening to kill Liam and Ilyas if she doesn't go with her. Sophie bolts, trying to pull her mother away from the two men she loves most in the world. They give chase, but catch up with her too late.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

I wrote *The Wasting* after meeting an anorexic young woman who suffered nightly attacks that she believed was a ghostly hag. Whether it was true or she was hallucinating doesn't matter, because it was real for her. So was the hell she went through when nobody believed her, because her eating disorder had stolen her credibility.

I made *The Wasting* to explore that hell. To play with the ambiguity of supernatural experiences, and dig into the complex life issues that can lead a person to the terrifying point that Sophie reaches. The battle for control that manifests in anorexia, her complicated relationship with immigrant parents, and hanging over all of it, her burgeoning sexuality, which seems intimately connected with the haunting. The chemistry between Lauren McQueen and Sean Stevenson is palpable, and was so important to the way the story unfolds. I didn't want this to be a run-of-the-mill horror film, but a story whose scares come honestly, a result of who the characters are and what's happening in their lives. There are no cheats, and no "convenient" scares for the sake of scares. Everything relates directly to who these characters are. Everything that Sophie experiences carefully satisfies both of the possibilities for her condition – that it is real, or that it's a hallucination.

I've used metaphor throughout to reinforce the story. Mirrors and water – reflective but dangerous – are recurring motifs that speak to Sophie's anorexia and her inability to see what is really going on. As an anorexic, she sees a distorted version of herself in the mirror. But her refusal to see the truth goes beyond her own body. Another powerful metaphor is the smuggler tunnels; their claustrophobia is a symbol for her world caving in.

Sophie's story was so important to me to tell because of how it resonates in today's world. After we screened to more than 400 young people at the Vittorio Veneto Film Festival, I was humbled by the long queue that formed to speak to me after, and the number of kids who told me how much they related to Sophie, and how film convinced them to reach out for help. Sophie's issues are very real for many people.

Eating disorders are common, but the psychological spin-off is largely unexplored, as is the notion that anorexia could lead to disturbing hallucinations.

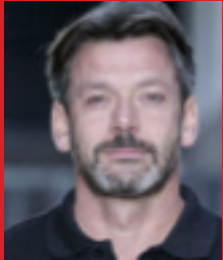
As a woman, I bring a unique voice to this story, and I do more than simply pay lip service to the underlying factors that drive all the characters from whom the story springs. I believe my feminine insight gives both the characters and the story a depth that will appeal to a wide audience.



CAST BIOS



LAUREN MCQUEEN: Rising star Lauren earned rave reviews for her performance in *The Violators*, prompting *Variety* to call her “a particularly strong discovery,” and the British Independent Film Awards to name her one of the top 12 British actors to watch. Lauren played Henry VIII’s fifth wife Catherine Howard in BBC’s *6 Wives* with Lucy Worsley, and now stars in the hit teen series *Hollyoaks*.



GRAY O'BRIEN: Glasgow native Gray has played the spectrum from killer to heart-throb, currently in crime drama *The Loch*. After appearing in Oscar winner *The Queen*, Gray starred in the *Doctor Who* Christmas special with David Tennant, the mini-series *Titanic: Blood and Steel*, and won Villain of the Year in the Brit Soap Awards for his portrayal of *Coronation Street*’s murderous Tony Gordon.



ALEXZ JOHNSON: Alexz starred in box office smash *Final Destination 3*, *Devil’s Diary*, and *House of Bodies*, with Terence Howard and Queen Latifah. She was the lead in the cult teen drama *Instant Star*, and Disney’s *So Weird*. The double threat actor/musician’s songs also feature prominently *The Wasting*. Her latest album, *A Stranger Time* just released to rave reviews in America.



BRENDAN FLYNN: Brendan landed a lead role on YTV’s *Ghost Trackers* at age 14, and later starred in the series *The Fall* and in multiple episodes of *Ghostly Encounters*. Stage appearances include *Nashville Stories* at Toronto’s Summerworks Festival and *Cherry Corsage* at the Citadel. He next stars in the dystopian feature *Island West*, shooting in Scotland in late 2017. Brendan is an accomplished fiddler and mandolin player.

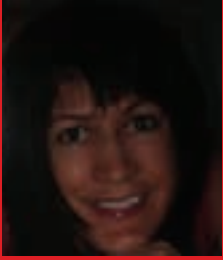


SEAN STEVENSON: Sean is in his final year of an Acting Honours degree at London’s prestigious Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance. Like his real-life brother Brendan Flynn, he appeared in numerous episodes of the award-winning series *Ghostly Encounters*. He was on stage at the 2016 Camden Fringe Festival, and was recently Stephano in *The Tempest*



SHELAGH MCLEOD: Shelagh had a long-time starring role in the hit British series *Peak Practice* and later Brit TV stalwarts *Holby City*, *Judge John Deed*, *The Bill* and *Doctors*. Her movie credits include *Cold Front*, with Martin Sheen, and *Charles and Diana: A Royal Love Story*, with Christopher Lee.

CREW BIOS



CAROLYN SAUNDERS, WRITER/DIRECTOR: Carolyn grew up on air force bases watching films. Following her fighter pilot dad around the world, pretending to love German food, and trespassing in the potato fields of European farmers honed her knack for storytelling. She parlayed that into a career writing documentary series like *Mighty Ships*, *Forensic Factor*, *Yukon Gold* and *Outlaw Tech*. In 2014 she penned the British docudrama feature *A Sicilian Dream*, nominated for Best Story at the Nice International Film Festival. Carolyn is an alumna of Women in the Director's Chair (WIDC) and greatly appreciates all the love and support they have given as she develops her next film, a sci-fi called *Island West*.



JEANNE STROMBERG AND ALAN HAUSEGGER, PRODUCERS: Former award-winning television drama producers, Jeanne Strømberg and Alan Hausegger, through their company Stomhaus Productions, are in pre-production on several indie films including *Come Back to Sorrento*, from a script by David Mamet and Rebecca Pidgeon.



MAIN CREW

DIRECTOR AND WRITER:

Carolyn Saunders

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY:

Michal Wisniowski

EDITOR:

Diane Brunjes

COMPOSERS:

Matt Chung and Marko Koumoulas

SOUND RECORDIST:

Pietro Giordano

SOUND DESIGN:

Mark Shnuriwsky

COLOURIST:

Tony Manolikakis

PRODUCERS:

Jeanne Stromberg, Alan Hausegger,
Carolyn Saunders

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS:

Cheryl Brown, Ian Lindberg,
Rob McVeigh, Leigha Smawley-Lean



Q & A WITH DIRECTOR CAROLYN SAUNDERS

What was your biggest challenge?

We lost our main location a week before going to camera. It was near Upton-upon-Severn in Worcestershire, so I phoned Upton's mayor and said, "I have a little glitch." We met at the pub and before the first pint was gone, he'd found alternatives, including 300-year-old smuggler tunnels and a Queen Anne mansion where we also housed the four young actors and fed the crew. The neighbours on both sides were lovely and let us shoot in their houses as well.

How did you handle making Lauren McQueen look anorexic?

First, I made it clear that I did not want Lauren to lose weight. I think any director who asks an actress to do that is irresponsible. There are so many other ways to show anorexia – remember it is a disease of the mind, with physical symptoms. There's no need to get overly graphic. Our makeup artist, Sian Leigh, was brilliant at making Lauren look gaunt and sick. We dressed her in baggy clothes, common for anorexic girls. We lit her in a way that made her bones stand out. And we did the rest in post-production.

Are the brothers in the film, Liam and Kai, brothers in real life?

They are. When I wrote a film with two young men who have a rivalry, it made sense to make it a sibling rivalry, and the natural progression from there was to cast real brothers. I auditioned them and was thrilled with their acting chops, and the natural chemistry that you can only get with real brothers.

Did being a woman director mean you had to do anything differently?

I don't know if I did things differently than a man would, or just did them my way. I had a young crew I asked a lot of, but I nurtured them and let them ask for help. There was no yelling and no berating. And they rose to the occasion and went to the wall for me. With my actors, I was patient. I let them be vulnerable and take the time they needed, and created an environment of trust that I think women are particularly good at creating.

Are the actors really playing those instruments?

Yes. Alexz is a well known musician and the first scene she's in, she's playing and singing live. We didn't have to re-record. The music in the campfire scene was the three of them jamming, unrehearsed. Brendan Flynn has been playing fiddle since he was six, and composed two of the tunes he plays in later scenes.

AWARDS

Winner - Best Feature, Vittorio Veneto Film Festival, 2017

Winner - Best Thriller, Austrian Film Festival, 2017

Nominated - Best Feature, Carmarthen Bay Film Festival, 2017

QUOTES

STEVE OLDFIELD, FOX TV

- A visual feast that tingles the spine and bends the mind.
- Deliciously smart, featuring four rising stars worth watching.
- Cinematographer Michal Wisniowski creates a beautiful, captivating world
- Carolyn Saunders' first feature shows she is a force to be reckoned with - a visual storyteller with a gift for suspense.

MARCO ARDENGO, GENERAL DIRECTOR VITTORIO VENETO FILM FESTIVAL

- The Wasting conveys intense emotions by using the language of film to tackle one of the biggest problems affecting our youth: anorexia.
- An original film with special attention to the technical details (photography, music, screenplay, ...). I believe in it!
- A great film that must be presented in each secondary school, within a path to raising awareness.

THE SPRINGS AT BORREGO NEWS

- Captivating and suspenseful
- Dramatic and entertaining, this one falls into the must-see category.

