

**Iona**

Starring Douglas Henshall and Ruth Negga



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Certificate: tbc /Running time: 85 minutes

**SHORT SYNOPSIS**

Iona and her teenage son Bull seek refuge among a Christian community on the island where she was born. Iona’s return exposes her tormented son Bull to a way of life she rejected when she left the island as a teenager. As Bull seeks forgiveness for an act of violence from which he and his mother are hiding, Iona comes to terms with her loss of faith.

**DIRECTORS STATEMENT**

I went to the isle of Iona with my mum and my sister when I was ten-years-old so writing and making this film was a return for me as well as for the character of Iona. I remember arriving by boat, sleeping on the beach and boiling potatoes in sea water. All things that found their way into the script.

I remember being told that people came there to feel close to God and somehow this translated over time into someone returning there who does not feel close to God. I was interested in the conflict this would give someone and in the rawness they might feel. I thought I was on new ground because unlike my last film *Iona* had this momentum from the start; a journey, the burning of a car and a young woman and her son arriving on a remote island without saying why. The real catalyst for the story is not what has brought them to the island but what caused Iona to leave it fifteen years before. The loss of her mother and the loss of her faith when she was fifteen seem to have led to the sexual relationship she with Daniel before she left the island. I’ve tried not to judge this relationship. I think we can see how Daniel feels about it now. What was important to me was that their relationship as well as giving her a reason to eave the island is the reason she returns to it, believing this is where she can hide and protect her her child. For me Iona’s problem with returning is not that she doesn’t believe in God, it’s that she does. The island is not somewhere she can hide from this. It’s the opposite of that. I hope anyone who engages with the film no matter how they feel about faith will recognise someone reeling from a broken relationship because this is something most of us can relate to. By the time they return to the island Iona’s loss and the way it has shaped her has become her son’s burden. A burdened child is how I would define Bull and so for me it was fitting that he should carry Sarah - a girl who cannot walk because of an accident while she was in her father’s care - around the island on his back. Their coming together in the barn where they have sex is where we see their physical and emotional scars. The comfort Sarah provides for Bull is not enough to stop him thinking he has done to her what his step dad used to do to his mum. He thinks men hurt women and it’s this he runs from more than the sight of distant strangers. The film ends with Iona crying out at God over the death of her son. I don’t know if anyone will find catharsis in the way she releases her anger and her pain but providing catharsis is not my intention. the film ends I would welcome that but providing catharsis is not my true intention. I find the final image and especially the sound of her in the sea to have a kind of electricity rather than an emptiness and it’s that spark, that provocation that I want to leave people with.

Scott Graham August 2015

**PRODUCTION NOTE**

Iona was filmed over six weeks in September and October 2014.  Filming began on the 1st September in Oban, the starting point for the ferry to the Isle of Mull.   There were then two days filming on the Isle of Mull followed by another ferry trip from Fionnphort to Iona, a small island which lies off the south west coast of Mull in the Inner Hebrides.  Most of the film is set in Iona which is only three miles long and one and a half miles wide with just over a hundred permanent residents and very few vehicles.  At the heart of the island is the Abbey which is visited by hundreds of thousands of visitors and pilgrims each year. The islanders were extremely welcoming and the cast and crew were spread across two hotels as well as some self-catering houses and B and Bs.  The team stayed on Iona for ten days filming exteriors scenes and happily the sun shone almost every day.

The next four weeks of the schedule were filmed in and around Glasgow.  The exteriors of the two main houses (Daniel’s and Matthew & Elizabeth’s) having been filmed on Iona, the interiors were matched at two different locations near Neilston less than half an hour from the production base by Kinning Park.

**Writer & Director – SCOTT GRAHAM**

Scott Graham grew up outside Fraserburgh, a small fishing town, in the North East of Scotland. He returned there to make his first short film, Born To Run, in the winter of 2005. His second short, Shell, won the UK Film Council Award for Best Film at the London Short Film Festival in 2008. His third short, Native Son, was produced by Film Four under their Cinema Extreme banner and premiered in Critics Week in 2010. In 2011 Scott was chosen as one of Screen International’s UK Stars of Tomorrow. His first feature, Shell, based on his 2008 short about a teenage girl's last days in the remote highland petrol station she shares with her father won Best Film at Torino International Film Festival in 2012 and earned Scott a nomination for Outstanding Debut by a British Writer-Director at the 2014 British Academy Film Awards.

Filmography:

Iona (2015)

Shell (2012)

Native Son (Short) (2010)

Shell (Short) (2008)

Born to Run (Short) (2006)

**Producer – MARGARET MATHESON**

Margaret began her producing career with the feature film It Shouldn’t Happen To A Vet in 1975 . Next came BBC’s Play For Today where her productions included Abigail’s Party and Alan Clarke’s Scum which was banned by the BBC. In 1980 as Head Of Drama for Central Television she was responsible for many successful series including Auf Wiedersehen Pet. She also produced the David Leland quartet one of which was Alan Clarke’s Made In Britain.

In 1984 she was a founding director of Zenith Productions and was responsible for Sid And Nancy, The Hit, Personal Services, Prick Up Your Ears, Wish You Were Here and The Dead amongst others. In 1995 she started her own production company, Bard Entertainments.   Films include Marleen Gorris’s Antonia’s Line (Best Foreign Language Oscar), Kasi Lemmons’ Eve’s Bayou, Elaine Proctor’s Kin, Alex Cox’s Revengers Tragedy,  American Cousins written by Sergio Casci and directed by Don Coutts, Duncan Roy’s AKA,  Mark James and Phil O’ Shea’s Vampire Diary, Gideon Koppel’s ‘sleep furiously’, Skin, directed by Anthony Fabian, In The Dark Half written by Lucy Catherine and directed by Alastair Siddons and Hard Boiled Sweets written and directed by David L G Hughes.

 In 2012 she  produced Scott Graham’s first feature, Shell with David Smith. In 2013/4 she produced the television series, Katie Morag and also in 2013 she produced Gideon Koppel’s film installation, BORTH.  Most recently she has produced Iona, Scott Graham’s second feature.

[www.bardentertainments.co.uk](http://www.bardentertainments.co.uk/)

**Director of photography – YOLISWA VON DALLWITZ**

Born in South Africa in 1975, Yoliswa grew up in Tübingen, Germany. From 1999 to 2005 Yoliswa studied cinematography at Potsdam-Babelsberg film school (HFF).

Since film school Yoliswa has worked all over the world in 22 countries on documentaries, commercials and feature films  such as "And along come tourists", "Sonja" and "Netto" which were screened at film festivals as Cannes and Berlinale.

She first worked with writer/director Scott Graham on the short film "Native Son" which screened in Semaine de la Critique at Cannes Film Festival in 2010, and for which Yoliswa won the Fuji Short Film Award for best cinematography. She photographed Scott's first feature Shell in the Highlands of Scotland in October 2011.

[www.yoliswadallwitz.de](http://www.yoliswadallwitz.de/)

**Production Designer – STEPHEN MASON**

Stephen Mason has been working in the Film and Television industry for over a decade. He received his BA (Hons) in Fine Art from Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design. Stephen’s credits in the art department include The Wicker Tree, Field of Blood, Sunset Song and Stonemouth.

**Line Producer – VICTORIA DABBS**

Victoria moved to Scotland in 1997 where she started working on TV and Film productions as a production assistant, co-ordinator and production manager on productions such as Valhalla Rising (2009), Neds (2010) and Garrow’s Law (2011). Her credits as line producer include Outpost: Rise of the Spetsnaz (2013), Sunshine on Leith (2013) and Sunset Song (2015).

**CAST**

**Iona – RUTH NEGGA**

Ruth was born in [Addis Ababa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Addis_Ababa), Ethiopia in 1982 and trained at the Samuel Beckett Centre at [Trinity College, Dublin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trinity_College,_Dublin) graduating with a BA in Acting Studies.

Her extensive and award-winning theatre credits include PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD at The Old Vic, HAMLET at the National Theatre, PHEDRE (National Theatre) for which she won the Ian Charleson Award, LAY ME DOWN SOFTLY, OEDIPUS LOVES YOU, THE CRUCIBLE, THE BACCHAE, BURIAL AT THEBES (all at the Abbey Theatre) and TITUS ANDRONICUS (The Project Theatre) for which she received the Irish Times Award for Best Actress.

Big screen credits include NOBLE for director Stephen Bradley, WORLD WAR Z (Paramount), THE SAMARITAN (opposite Samuel Jackson) and Neil Jordan's BREAKFAST ON PLUTO (with Cillian Murphy). Upcoming features include the independent UNA VIDA directed by Richie Adams, the big screen adaptation of WARCRAFT for legendary director Duncan Jones and John Ridley's ALL IS BY MY SIDE.

On television, her variety of US and UK credits include the HBO pilot THE MONEY with Brendan Gleeson, COUP with Gabriel Byrne, the hit UK series MISFITS and LOVE/HATE for RTE. Ruth won the Irish Film and Television Academy Award for Best Actress for her portrayal of 'Shirley Bassey' in the TV movie SHIRLEY. Ruth currently recurs as the beautiful and sinister 'Raina' on Marvel's AGENTS OF S.H.I.E.L.D for ABC.

Ruth was nominated as 2003's Most Promising Newcomer at the [Olivier Awards](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olivier_Awards) for DUCK. She was chosen as Ireland's Shooting Star for the 2006 [Berlin Film Festival](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berlin_Film_Festival).

**Daniel - DOUGLAS HENSHALL**

While at school Douglas Henshall joined the [Scottish Youth Theatre](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scottish_Youth_Theatre) based in Glasgow, after which he moved to [London](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London) to train at [Mountview Theatre School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mountview_Academy_of_Theatre_Arts) where he received critical acclaim for his theatre work, notably "Life of Stuff" at the Donmar Warehouse (1993) and "American Buffalo" at the Young Vic (1997).

One of his first successful film roles was as Edgar in [Angels and Insects](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0112365?ref_=nmbio_mbio) (1995) before going on to star in [Orphans](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0119842?ref_=nmbio_mbio) (1998), [Twice Upon a Yesterday](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0138590?ref_=nmbio_mbio) (1998), [Lawless Heart](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0276276?ref_=nmbio_mbio) (2001) and [It's All About Love](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0273689?ref_=nmbio_mbio) (2003)

Currently Douglas is about to embark upon the next series of his critically acclaimed BBC Crime Drama SHETLAND in which he stars as detective Jimmy Perez. Prior to this, Douglas shot a new 3-parter for ITV, BLACK WORK alongside Sheridan Smith, Geraldine James and Phil Davis amongst others.

Douglas' Western-style Feature Film SALVATION featured at the London Film Festival following its Cannes debut - Douglas stars alongside Mads Mikkelsen. Douglas' other recent Feature Film work includes the IONA directed by Scott Graham.

Having won Best Actor at the Monte Carlo Television Festival for his amazing performance in KID IN THE CORNER and appearing in the Emmy Award winning production CROSSING THE FLOOR.

**Matthew - TOM BROOKE**

Tom Brooke was born in 1978 in London and trained as an actor at the London Academy of Music & Dramatic Arts (LAMDA). He is known for such feature films as The Boat That Rocked (2009), [Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0317198?ref_=nmbio_mbio) (2004) and [The Young Victoria](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0962736?ref_=nmbio_mbio) (2009). On television he can be seen in Sherlock (2010), Ripper Street (2012) and most recently From The Cradle To The Grave (2014). Theatre credits include Edgar in King Lear at the National Theatre and Bamforth in "The Long and the Short and the Tall" at the Lyceum Theatre, Sheffield in 2006 for which he was awarded the TMA Award for best supporting actor.

**Elisabeth –MICHELLE DUNCAN**

Michelle Duncan (born 14 April 1978) is a [Scottish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland) [actress](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Actress). She was nominated for a [BAFTA Scotland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BAFTA_Scotland) Award for her performance in *Sea of Souls*.

Born in [Perth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perth,_Scotland), Duncan trained in acting at [Queen Margaret University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queen_Margaret_University), [Edinburgh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edinburgh) before studying English and Classics at [St Andrew's University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Andrew%27s_University). She moved to London in February 2005.

Her roles on [TV](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/TV) include [*Sugar Rush*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sugar_Rush_(TV_series)), [*Doctor Who*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doctor_Who), [*Low Winter Sun*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Low_Winter_Sun_(Channel_4)), [*Lost in Austen*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lost_in_Austen), and a TV film, *Whatever Love Means*, as [Princess Diana](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Princess_Diana). She has also appeared in such [films](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Films) as [*Atonement*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atonement_(film)), [*The Broken*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Broken_(film)) and [*Driving Lessons*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Driving_Lessons), and she co-starred in the award-winning 2006 British short film [*Sucking Is A Fine Quality In Women And Vacuum Cleaners*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sucking_Is_A_Fine_Quality_In_Women_And_Vacuum_Cleaners). On stage she has appeared in plays such as [*Time and the Conways*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Time_and_the_Conways) (on UK tour) and [*A Midsummer Night's Dream*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Midsummer_Night%27s_Dream) and [*The Burning*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Burning_(play)) at the [Edinburgh Festival Fringe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edinburgh_Festival_Fringe). She appeared in the third episode of 'New Tricks' and an episode of '[Call the Midwife](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Call_the_Midwife)'.

**Bull – BEN GALLAGHER**

Ben Gallagher is part of Glasgow Acting Academy and has been in involved in many productions over six years such as Homer’s Odyssey, A Christmas Carol and The Crucible. Ben is currently rehearsing for the role of Francis in Hamlet at GAA. IONA is Ben’s first feature film.

He was born and raised in Glasgow where he lives with his family.

**Sarah – SORCHA GROUNDSELL**

Sorcha Groundsell has appeared in short films The Scribbler(director Kurosh Kani), Dregs (director Alix Austen) and Wonderland (director Mark Westbrook) and in theatre in Macbheatha (The Tron) Blackbird (Mephisto Theatre Company), Our Brethren Shield and In The Beginning (both ACS). Iona is Sorcha’s first feature film.

a Bard Entertainments production

in association with

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Hanfgarn & Ufer and ZDF

in co-operation with Arte

IONA

Ruth Negga

Douglas Henshall

Tom Brooke

Michelle Duncan

Ben Gallagher

Sorcha Groundsell

Christine Steele

Matthew Zajac

Jim Sturgeon

Casting Director

Orla O’Connor CDGOrla Onnn

Make Up & Hair Designer

Sarah Cairncross

Costume Designer

Jo Thompson

Editor

Florian Nonnenmacher

Colin Monie

Production Designer

Stephen Mason

Director of Photography

Yoliswa von Dallwitz

Line Producer

Victoria Dabbs

Produced by

Margaret Matheson

Written and directed by

Scott Graham