

A dramatic sunset scene with silhouettes of people and palm trees against a bright sun. The sky is a gradient of red, orange, and yellow. In the foreground, a large silhouette of a person's head and neck is on the left. In the middle ground, two more silhouettes of people are visible, one standing and one sitting. The background features silhouettes of palm trees and a building. The overall mood is intense and atmospheric.

Midday Sun

WHERE PARADISE GOES TO HELL

Midday Sun

Information

Short Synopsis

A couple's dream of the good life in Spain turns to a nightmare when their son Mark is killed. Dan is revenged of the killing of his son by a mysterious stranger, Liam, before the killer's guilt is even proven. Liam has done a deal with Dan that could go fatally wrong. Dan is drawn into a web of deceit, murder and revenge.

Project Status

Genre: Thriller
Location Shoot: Spain
Shooting Language: English
Shooting Date: May 2008
Shooting Format: 35mm
Shooting Duration: 6 weeks
Film Running Time: 95 mins
Provisional Budget: £1.5m / \$2.96m / 2.28m Euros

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Synopsis

Englishman DAN TANNER is about to realise his dream of a life in the sun, creating a rustic home and a lush garden from the run-down farmhouse he has bought in the hills of Granada, Spain. Dan's struggle for his dream is symbolised through an ongoing unequal battle to uproot an obstinate tree stump, a battle he finally wins just as everything else is lost. In the opening sequence Dan and his wife SARAH are in celebratory mood expecting the arrival of their 21-year-old son MARK. A celebration that turns briefly into concern as Mark asks to borrow the car to drive to the village on the very first night of his arrival. But the night is hot and there is champagne left, in the end Sarah and Dan toss worry to the side as she seduces him.

While his parents make love, Mark visits the village's only café in search of a young man, ALEJANDRO, who he made eye-contact with on his arrival. They meet over a game of pin-ball and there is a promise of intimacy in the air. It is a promise that is brutally broken when two tougher village lads enter the café. Alejandro turns against Mark, homophobic abuse of "queer" and "faggot" are hurled; and goaded by the lads, Alejandro threatens to break Mark's face if he looks at him again. Knowing when to flee Mark makes a hasty exit but is pursued by Alejandro and the lads. They catch up with him and the first fist hits Mark square in the face sending him reeling. The next minute his head hits the kerb and he lies dead with blood oozing from a crack in his skull as his assailants flee.

In a futile attempt to get justice for Mark a court case is launched against Alejandro but with no witnesses coming forward and no evidence apart from Alejandro's threat, the case is thrown out. The feeling of devastation hits Sarah and Dan in different ways. She is numbed while he screams at Alejandro's celebrating relatives and especially confronts his triumphant FATHER. Dan is thrown out of court and ends up getting drunk in a bar while Sarah returns alone to the hotel room, contemplating but not going through with an overdose of sleeping pills.

In the bar Dan is approached by a scruffy-looking young Englishman, LIAM, who unbeknownst to him was in court and observed DAN. Drunken talk leads to confidences about Liam coming to Spain in pursuit of a man he would like to see in court, but the Spanish will not give him justice. Dan speculates in how Alejandro will meet his come-uppance one day, someone else will do it, and Liam concludes that maybe everybody needs someone else to take care of their problems. When Dan goes to the toilet, Liam inspects the wallet he has left behind and before he leaves Liam makes him shake hands on something, Dan is never clear what.

Dan's and Sarah's struggle to come to terms with their grief pits them against each other, tearing them apart. He thinks they owe it to Mark's memory not to let people drive them away, while she wants to sell up and go home and even contacts an estate agent behind Dan's back.

Midday Sun

The situation is further complicated when Alejandro is killed in a hit and run accident. Dan becomes prime suspect. He has no alibi for that evening and a dented, blood-caked car that he claims is the result of hitting a deer. The car is towed away for tests and Dan made to hand over his passport. Worse still, Alejandro's father now wants revenge, stalking Dan and attacking him on several occasions.

As Dan struggles to keep on renovating the house, his life spirals out of control faster and faster. Sarah pushes him away, openly pursuing her wish to sell up. Even after a pleasant evening with friendly Spanish neighbours she cannot bring herself to allow their old intimacy. Liam reappears, making it clear that he killed Alejandro and now expects Dan to fulfil his part of a bargain that Dan has no memory of ever having entered into. Dan is to kill an Englishman living in Spain who when working as a care worker in England abused the orphan Liam over a period of many years. Dan has had his justice. Now Liam demands the same, supplying him with the name and address of his victim.

When Dan remains inactive Liam puts pressure on him. Liam reveals that he killed Alejandro driving a car that he hired with a credit card borrowed from Dan's wallet. If Dan does not play ball he will contact the police. Who will they listen to? The prime suspect Dan or Liam with all the car hire documents to show? Cornered from all sides Dan sets off to kill RALPH CHALMERS in his home. Liam has given precise instructions but everything goes wrong. Instead of shooting Chalmers from behind using Chalmers' shotgun, Dan ends up being shot and fighting for his life before the old man suddenly dies from a heart attack.

Returning home dishevelled and with a gun shoot wound Dan is forced to tell Sarah the truth. Her reaction is to bandage his wound and comfort him, then pack her bag and leave for England taking Mark's ashes with her. Dan is now a murderer in her eyes and she can see no way back.

Ironically this is the morning when the police arrive to inform them that a witness has come forward telling that it was one of the other lads, not Alejandro, who hit Mark. He has been arrested. Trying to reach Sarah in the airport on her mobile, Dan is distracted by the news on TV. It is all about the murder of Ralph Chalmers who turns out to be a scientist not a care worker. The biggest shock is the appearance of Chalmers' son William appealing for information. Dan stares at the image of the well-groomed Liam who now speaks with a middle-class accent. Beyond himself he sets off to Chalmers' house to challenge Liam and his worst fears are confirmed. The young man is a cold-blooded manipulator who has used Dan in his plan to come into his inheritance quickly. They fight and Liam ends up falling to his death down a ravine.

Dan returns to the farm with only one plan. He is going to uproot the constantly resisting tree-stump. Using the neighbour's tractor he finally succeeds. Spectators are the two policemen who have come to return Dan's passport. The tests on his car have confirmed his story. Dan packs in a hurry, ordering an airline ticket over the phone. A knock on the door makes him open, half hoping to see Sarah outside. The face that meets him is Alejandro's father holding a shotgun. A shot rings out and Dan's body hits the floor.

END



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Producer's Intention

The desire for revenge is as old as the world itself, one of the most basic human impulses. And no matter how civilised or educated or tolerant we become, given the right circumstances, this primitive desire is never far away.

What excites me about Midday Sun is the way it explores how I - a son, a husband, a father - live perilously close to that place where committing the most barbaric of acts seems the only 'reasonable' option left. And how opening that door leaves me vulnerable to being exploited by others.

The tight psychological focus of the narrative – Dan Tanner's desire to revenge the death of his son, the tightening police investigation into the killing of the Spanish boy, Dan's estrangement from his wife and the careful manipulations by Liam – provides a great motor to inspire terrific performances from actors out to prove their worth, and a wonderful hook to draw in audiences who demand an emotionally complex cinematic experience.

I am greatly excited by the visual potential of the story: these desperate characters lost in the evocative landscape of rural Spain. At first the heat and light are seductive, but as the narrative develops, they become unbearable. The only sanctuary is the shade, the darkness, the night.

If you imagine the moral complexity of Hitchcock, the psychological unease of Don't Look Now, and the ever-present heat of Do The Right Thing, you're just about there...

Midday Sun Talent

Writer Biographies

Writer

As solo writers, Steve Lewis currently has a big budget feature in development with Harry Potter exec-producer David Barron's Contagious Films and was also a contributing writer on Trouble TV's award-winning animation Flashband.

Tony Owen's adaptation of a Jill Paton Walsh novel is in development with Double Scorpio Pictures. His short film Fish was short-listed for the Levi prize and he also worked on on Three Blind Mice (2003) for Haystack films.

Working together for the past five years, they currently have a New York based drama in development with Tony Garnett's World Productions with award-winning Romanian director Robert Pejo (Dallas Pashamende) attached. A British based comedy-drama is in development with Simon Films (USA) to be produced by a team including Martin Huberty (Fried Green Tomatoes) and Laura Burrows (Rabbit-Proof Fence) with Jon Avnet (Up Close and Personal) as Exec-Producer. A third project is in development with London-based Whatever Pictures, a comedy-drama to be directed by Bruce Webb.

Mark Lavender

Producer

After university Mark Lavender won a scholarship to the London Film School. He began his career as a staff cameraman for ITV and then worked in production producing arts documentaries. He has worked in television as series producer, producer and director for ITV, BBC and Channel Four. His award winning programmes have included drama shorts and drama documentaries.

Mark is a graduate of the European producer development scheme, EAVE. He was also chosen for Sources and The Film Business School. His feature by writer Catriona McGowan, ELEPHANTS & ANGELS, was selected by MEDIA, EAVE, Euroscript, Northern Production Fund, the Film Business School and Moonstone. In 2001 he was co-producer on the feature in development LAUGHTER WHEN WE'RE DEAD by Sean O'Brien (director Julien Temple), which was short-listed for the BBC's Dennis Potter Award.

His first feature is FROZEN, by writer & director Juliet McKoen. It was co-financed by Zentropa, four U.K. Lottery-backed regional film funds and a specially established tax fund. Frozen premiered at the Odeon, Leicester Square in the London Film Festival; was selected for the AFI Film Festival, Hollywood and many other festivals; and is released in the U.K. in January 2006 with the support of the UK Film Council P & A fund. It has won eleven awards including Audience; Best Cinematography; and Best Actress Awards. His second feature is in post-production and his third in pre-production. He manages RS Productions; Liminal Films Ltd; and Living Films LLP.

He is in development with Garden of Mirrors; Midday Sun and Hitler's Grand Prix Hero.

Midday Sun

RS Productions

RS Productions is a film and television production company, established since 1993, by its two principals, Mark Lavender and Derek Smith, both of whom have produced and directed many award-winning programmes.

The company recently produced the much-lauded feature film, Frozen. For Frozen producer Mark Lavender established a U.K. tax fund; garnered the support of four regional public funds in the U.K.; and co-finance from Zentropa in Denmark.

RS Productions has worked for the BBC; C4 and ITV in the U.K. and has had the support of Northern Film and Media; the UK Film Council; Moonstone and the MEDIA Fund.

It is a co-producer on a feature length documentary about gypsy music. It is in development with Midday Sun; Garden of Mirrors and Hitler's Grand Prix Hero; and a series on Edward Lear.

RS Productions is working with both established and new talent. The company is keen to undertake more co-productions, finding and financing the best projects with the most marketable elements.

Midday Sun

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