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LORD OF MISRULE

Directed by William Brent Bell

Starring: Tuppence Middleton, Ralph Ineson, Matt Stokoe, Evie Templeton

104 minutes / UK

Official Selection:

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FINAL PRESS NOTES

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SYNOPSIS

Directed by William Brent Bell (THE BOY, ORPHAN: FIRST KILL), LORD OF MISRULE follows Rebecca Holland (Tuppence Middleton), who has recently taken over as priest of a small town. When her young daughter Grace (Evie Templeton) goes missing at the local harvest festival, a desperate search begins. The closer they edge towards finding Grace, the more secrets emerge from the town's dark past. Soon, Rebecca must decide just how much she is willing to sacrifice to rescue her daughter from the grip of evil.

LONG SYNOPSIS

The Holland family have lived in the village of Berrow for almost a year. Rebecca is the vicar of the local church and supports her husband Henry, a struggling author, and their 9-year-old daughter Grace.

Each year, Berrow holds an autumn festival to give thanks for the harvest. The villagers dress up in outlandish costumes and a masked figure known as the Lord of Misrule leads them in casting out the evil spirit Gallowgog. This year, Grace has been chosen to the play the Harvest Angel. As dusk falls, a procession takes the villagers up to a ceremonial field where three great bonfires burn and Rebecca loses track of Grace in the throng. Fearing that she may have wandered into the woods, Rebecca searches for her in vain. Grace has disappeared.

The next day is a living hell for Rebecca. The police comb the area around Berrow looking for Grace, but to no avail. Henry discovers a video on his phone showing Grace on the edge of the woods, speaking to the man in the Gallowgog costume. The pub landlord identifies the man as a troubled local, Derry Nash, and the Hollands drive out to his grandfather's farm to confront him; it looks as though Derry has also gone missing, but in his caravan they find a gruesome shrine to the spirit Gallowgog. It seems likely that Derry has their child.

That night, Grace appears to Rebecca in a vision. The next day, Rebecca calls the villagers to church to tell them of her spiritual experience – God has shown her that Grace is still alive, and while the police search for Derry Nash she asks the villagers to help pray for her safe return. But one man refuses. Jocelyn Abney, the village's Lord of Misrule, tells Rebecca that Grace is beyond God's help – she has been taken by the spirit Gallowgog, and will not return. The villagers nevertheless propose holding a candle-light vigil for Grace.

As the police investigation continues, Rebecca finds church organist Ida Tremlow wandering aimlessly through a storm and takes her home; she claims to have been visited by the spirit Gallowgog. Her sister, Miri, gives Rebecca some new insights into the mythology of the local spirit, and reveals that Grace is not the first child to have disappeared at the harvest festival – Jocelyn Abney's own son vanished from the same festival years before.

Armed with this new insight into his pain, Rebecca visits Jocelyn, seeking to build bridges, but he remains adamant that her daughter is beyond reach in Gallowgog's supernatural Black Barn. He insists that her child will be claimed by Gallowgog the following night, as his own son Thomas once was, in return for blessing the village and its people. He also tells her that



Derry Nash was Tom's best friend and the last person to see him alive. Dismissing Jocelyn's superstitious claims, Rebecca returns to the woods where Grace was abducted; there she finally encounters Derry, who denies abducting Grace and warns that Rebecca is in great danger. She chases him into the woods, where she has a vision of the Black Barn – but can she trust her eyes?

The next day, Rebecca tracks down Grace's friend Bryony, who confides that both girls attended an after-school Nature Club, where Jocelyn Abney taught the class local history and lore in a concealed room hidden under the village hall. Bryony takes Rebecca there, and shows her evidence that Jocelyn chose Grace as a gift for Gallowgog. Rebecca realizes there might be a more sinister explanation for her daughter's disappearance; a fear that is reinforced when Bryony's father appears to know all about Nature Club and tries to dismiss it as a harmless celebration of local history.

Henry is reluctant to believe there might have been a conspiracy to abduct their daughter, but changes his mind when he calls the police to discover that the investigation of Grace's disappearance has officially been closed. A confrontation with Jocelyn Abney at the candle-light vigil convinces them both that they are in terrible danger; but before they can flee, their home is attacked, Derry Nash is murdered and both Rebecca and Henry are taken prisoner.

In the village hall, which has been redecorated as a place of pagan worship, Rebecca is urged to pledge allegiance to Gallowgog. When she refuses, Jocelyn brings out an injured Henry and burns him alive in front of her. With nothing left to lose, Rebecca follows the worshippers back to the ceremonial field, where bonfires are burning again. Following the ancient rituals, she is able to access the Black Barn deep in the woods; miraculously, she finds Grace alive inside. Mother and daughter finally confront Gallowgog himself, and Rebecca bends her knee to the spirit.

Rebecca returns to the bonfires carrying Grace's body. Jocelyn condemns her for breaking the pact with Gallowgog. Rebecca counters that, far from betraying the spirit, she has shown the courage Jocelyn never did, to face him in his own house and pledge herself to him, and that in return he has made her his new Lord of Misrule. At her signal, the villagers attack and murder Jocelyn, casting his dead body onto the pyre. They have a new high priest now.

THE HISTORY BEHIND THE PROJECT

Producer Nik Bower became involved in the project in 2021, through Jason Newmark, who had developed the script with his partner Laurie Cook.

Jason and Laurie had wanted to work with screenwriter Tom de Ville for some time: "We pitched him the concept of a vicar as a central character battling an evil force that was linked to their city church" explains Laurie Cook, "Tom took this idea and came back with something wholly original, with its own detailed mythology, resetting the story to a rural village and weaving in a backstory about the origins of the church there and its battle with a pagan sect." The BFI agreed to develop a script based on Tom's idea. William Brent Bell was one of the first directors Cook and Newmark sent the script to, through his producing partner James Tomlinson, and "Brent immediately engaged with the atmosphere, folklore and great



horror moments" recalls Cook. Bankside boarded the project to handle international sales and they launched it at Berlin in 2020.

"About 7 years ago, producers Laurie Cook and Jason Newmark brought the bare bones of a project called *Heretic* to me" explains screenwriter Tom de Ville. "At the heart of it was a really striking idea - what if a woman who is a vicar and also a mother, loses her daughter to dark forces outside of her control? How would she react and how far would she go to get her daughter back? That idea really resonated with me and so I started shaping up my own version of it that gradually grew into *Lord of Misrule*".

Around the time that Tom de Ville was working on the script for *Lord of Misrule* (2015 – 2017), he was aware that two very significant things were happening: "Firstly, people were starting to take renewed interest in folk horror through the rediscovery of writers like Robert Aickman, and secondly the real world was torn apart by some very messy politics - Brexit in the UK, and Trump in the US". For de Ville, these two elements went hand-in-hand, as he explains: "Folk horror is fundamentally about old fears and superstitions turning people against each other, generally driven by blind faith. That's exactly what we saw happening in that period of recent history."

"So, *Lord of Misrule* became my film about populism - the way it's turned politics into blind faith, and the way so many people choose blind faith to decide how they will live their lives and shape the lives of others."

When it was *Heretic*, the story was set in London and the enemy were devil worshippers, but *Lord of Misrule* was set in the countryside and de Ville created an old superstition (*Gallowgog*) that would take over the village when the vicar's child went missing.

Gallowgog is an ancient demon believed to haunt the area. It was while de Ville was researching British pagan beliefs for the film that he came across the concept of the *Lord of Misrule* - anarchic masters of ceremony who used to oversee the old heathen festivities. "I realised that a *Lord of Misrule* was in many ways an opposite and equal figure to a priest - a figure who could turn faith on its head and push people to do terrible things in their name. Again, there are at least a couple of political figures I can think of in the last few years who have done exactly that!"

Director William Brent Bell recalls when *Lord of Misrule* was first brought to his attention by producer James Tomlinson, arriving with a note that simply read, "This is good." Within the first few pages, Bell knew he was right. "I was enthralled by Tom's disturbing pagan mythology with haunting imagery that framed this drama of a missing child. In my experience, it's rare to find such well-written and beautifully dark material. My head was spinning with ideas for how to make this film and I couldn't wait to do it."



ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Producer Nik Bower explains how he joined the team in May 2021: "After a successful launch in Berlin in 2020, Coronavirus swept in and put the production on hold indefinitely. Fast forward just over a year, and Brent was ready to make the film, but Jason and Laurie had both committed to producing other projects in the meantime. Jason and I have worked successfully together on other projects over the years, so he invited me to come on board."

It quickly became clear that the pandemic had impacted several aspects of the production and the financing plan for the film, so the team had to rebuild it from the ground up. Bankside were able to confirm most of the pre-sales they had made before the first lockdown and the Irish financier BCP Asset Management remained on board to lend against their estimates for the value of the unsold territories. "We had to replace the equity, which my business partner, Deepak Nayar and I raised from Harcourt Capital, and we had to relocate production to Hertfordshire, where we started filming in October 2021" explains Bower.

Says William Brent Bell: "The most obvious challenge was producing a film during the COVID19 pandemic. It forced us to prep remotely and collaborate virtually. So little physical interaction complicated the creative process. Once we got the hang of it, we were able to make the process work for us."

Post-Covid, after resurrecting the project over the summer of 2021, the team had a short window to pull the cast together: "It was a very exciting process and we got incredibly lucky, plus we had the unflappable Colin Jones on board as casting director" recalls Nik Bower.

"We all loved Tuppence Middleton for the lead role of Rebecca" says Bower. "Brent was already in London for pre-prep and Tuppence met with him. They got on brilliantly, so she agreed to come aboard. She had some creative notes that chimed absolutely with our own ambitions for the production pass on the script, and so it was really a meeting of minds and the beginning of a true collaboration."

"When Tuppence Middleton was suggested to play Rebecca, I thought it was a great idea, but it wasn't until I actually met her that I realized just how perfect she was for the part" recalls William Brent Bell. "Tuppence immediately became a key collaborator and her input to help shape Rebecca's story was invaluable. At its core, this is the story of a mother searching for her lost daughter. Rebecca's love drives everything forward and that meant Tuppence was in virtually every scene. Her commitment to the role and the vulnerability she brings to her performance carries the film."

At the same time, William Brent Bell had arranged to meet up with Ralph Ineson, who has been a friend since they worked together on Brent's movie *Brahms*, the sequel to his earlier hit *The Boy*. "Between their relationship and the power of the story, Ralph was hooked and claimed the role of Jocelyn Abney" notes Bower.

"The role of Jocelyn was a unique challenge" recalls William Brent Bell. "I knew I wanted Ralph in the movie and in talking through that, I realized he would be an inspired choice to play Jocelyn. Luckily, he agreed. I thought Ralph would bring something unexpected and unforgettable to the role, and that is exactly what he did. Now I can't imagine anyone but him playing this character."



For William Brent Bell, it was important to find someone who had chemistry with Tuppence for the role of Henry, Rebecca's husband, and Matt Stokoe proved the ideal choice, as he explains: "We read a myriad of talented actors but it was Tuppence who suggested Matt because they had worked together before. Matt quickly read for the role and he was absolutely perfect."

"The role of Grace, played by Evie Templeton, is an integral part of the film. Even though Grace goes missing early in the story, she's still the heart of it all. When I saw Evie's audition I was blown away and I knew immediately she was our Grace" says Bell.

The next stage of the process saw casting director Colin Jones really go to work to bring forward a deep pool of options for the remaining cast.

"The talent in the UK is so rich and the casting process was super exciting. For the supporting roles, we had a wealth of riches. The mission was to assemble the most interesting ensemble to portray the villagers. And I believe we did that. Their attention to the detail and willingness to take chances was so impressive and really made this project special" notes director William Brent Bell.

"The roster of talented actors and their universally excellent performances contributed to the success of the film" says Bower. "Finding two amazing children to play Grace and her friend Bryony was a great challenge. Colin and his associate Marta Noguera really came through when they found Evie Templeton, who is both luminous and terrifying as Grace, and Alexa Goodall, who perfectly captures the conflict and complicity of Bryony."

"I think Brent really focused on keeping the movie grounded, and every performance reflects that. Tuppence, Ralph and Matt are all honest, understated and utterly convincing in their roles" says Bower. "Working with children is always unpredictable and this film puts more weight than many on the performances of Evie and Alexa, but both of them delivered in spades."

Shooting an indie project during a British winter, under full Covid protocols on a tight schedule was always going to present its challenges as Bower explains: "We had full-fat Covid protocols to deal with, plus we didn't have a long shooting schedule, and there was a lot to accomplish, especially taking account of the children's restricted working hours. However, we were lucky to have stable weather conditions at an unpredictable time of year.

"The entire film was shot in and around the village of Aldbury in Hertfordshire, so we depended a great deal on the goodwill of the local people whose homes and public spaces we were filming in, and on the blessing of the local parish council." Despite the challenges, by the time production wrapped, they made it through "without any major arguments" laughs Bower, "that's testament to the respect and consideration shown by the entire crew."

The village of Aldbury in Hertfordshire lends itself perfectly as the setting for the film. It is an ancient settlement full of beautiful Grade II listed homes surrounding the magnificent 13th century Church of St John the Baptist, all of it hemmed in by the heavily wooded hills of the National Trust's Ashridge Estate. Although only a short distance from St Albans, and a mere stone's throw from the town of Tring, Aldbury feels totally isolated. After nightfall, there is barely enough light to walk the streets. "We were incredibly privileged to be granted permission to film in the church itself and in the surrounding woods, and many local residents



welcomed us into their homes and businesses and onto their land to film. We remain enormously grateful to the parish council and the church staff."

"On every project, I strive for the main location to become a character of its own" says William Brent Bell, "and that has never been more true than with *Lord of Misrule*. This time, the entire village was a main character. When we first scouted Aldbury, it felt like we were walking around in the movie. The picturesque village had so much charm with its timber-framed cottages and historic buildings. It was like shooting on a studio back lot, only our locations were real."

It was no small feat for production designer Alison Butler and set decorator Clem Cartwright to create the world of *Lord of Misrule* within those centuries-old and often listed spaces. It was also a daily challenge for William Brent Bell and cinematographer Simon Rowling to set up their shots in the incredibly cramped confines of some of those tiny old buildings. "But there's no doubt it looks stunning on screen, so all the hard work paid off" says a relieved Nik Bower.

Cinematographer Simon Rowling reflects that "dealing with the various locations is usually the hardest aspect of a production. The small tight spaces of the old cottages were consistently a problem whilst shooting and certainly slowed things down a lot for us as you could not get many crew members or kit into some rooms". He recalls one particular challenge when "we needed a top shot over a bed, but the room was only 6ft wide and 7ft long, so I had to have a jib coming through the doorway of the bedroom from the hallway outside, which limited us even more with our movements and speed, but was the only solution to get the shot."

"I knew however that the shallow depth of the anamorphics would help us separate the actors more from the background of the small cottages and having our rules of not moving the camera much at all meant I was able to use diopters for our extreme close-ups."

"Filming in the woods and outside during winter is always a tricky thing, and this film was no exception. I think one of the hardest shots to light was in the valley of a woodland, where we could not get any cherry pickers or machinery in for our moonlight" says Rowling. "Luckily, however, because of such a steep hillside on one side of the valley, it was in fact higher than most lighting stands, so we ended up placing multiple lights sources along the top of the valley ridge to act as our moonlight."

THE LOOK, FEEL AND STYLE

Screenwriter Tom de Ville feels that at the heart of *Lord of Misrule* is a strong emotional story about a family torn apart when their daughter goes missing. It's about Rebecca refusing to let her daughter go and standing up against the fear that's sweeping through their small rural community in the wake of that loss. "The film is a dark, unflinching look at how a community can be turned against itself by blind faith and superstition. I think that's something that, unfortunately, should resonate deeply with audiences who have lived through world events of the past six years".

"Tom is an incredibly detailed writer, both in terms of creating a mythology that feels very organic and real, as well as the atmosphere of dread that pervades the small village life of the



story" notes producer Laurie Cook. "I grew up surrounded by the Morris Dancers, Green Men, and the small mindedness that Tom taps into. I already knew the characters he had written, and their familiarity made the script even more terrifying. With a small child of my own, I could identify with the panic of Grace going missing, and the lengths Rebecca would go to find her."

Fellow producer Nik Bower echoes Cook's sentiments: "The script brilliantly mines the very primal fear that every parent feels of losing their child, particularly as they try to balance the urge to protect against the need to foster independence. Without being exploitative or sensationalist, it challenges the audience to confront the sacrifices they might make for the safety of their own children. It's a grounded, truthful story, which makes the horror all the more disturbing and deeply felt."

Director William Brent Bell and Cinematographer Simon Rowling had many long discussions about the tone and vibe they wanted to create, "more so than I think I have with any other director" says Rowling. "Ultimately that put us in the right headspace and helped push the film in the right direction. Working with Brent was a fantastic experience, he's a genius in his own right and I learned so much from him."

"I wanted to create a film that was visually striking and would take the viewer into a unique world. The village's harvest festival allowed us to establish a rich autumnal color palette. As our story turns darker, so too does our world," explains William Brent Bell. "What starts as charming pagan imagery becomes disturbing and dangerous. I wanted to create an atmosphere of inescapable dread as the village turns against Rebecca. Her feelings of isolation and fear become terror and violence."

"Simon came to the project with a clear, haunting vision for how to shoot the film. He also had an amazing ability to expand our world into something bigger, when we had such limited resources" recalls William Brent Bell, "and at the end of it all, he truly delivered. I've never been happier with the cinematography of one of my films."

Bell and Rowling created a list of rules to make sure they stuck to the look and tone of the film. These consisted of such things as symmetry, centre framing lead actress Tuppence Middleton, and shooting her on her own and never over the shoulder of someone, so she always feels more isolated. "We also introduced high-up shots looking down as though God and the village are judging her" explains Rowling, "and any camera movements had to be purposeful, so being reactive to the actors rather than pre-empting their movements."

The choice of lenses was a key element which added to the character's story, explains Rowling: "After lots of testing we went for the Vintage Cooke Panchros/Lomo Anamorphic hybrids. These are a custom-built lens set, I believe the only one in the country, and consists of the vintage lens being used as the back glass and the Lomo Anamorphics being used at the front end.

"The lenses have a lot of distortion on the edges of the frame, which was meaningful both to help draw your focus onto our lead and distort the background, and to represent the distorted world she now inhabits and aids the feeling of her living nightmare. The fall off of the focus and the soft flaring was subtle, painterly and not overly distracting. I believe that the overall vintage look of the lenses mixed with a wider cinema framing represented the look and tone we wanted to achieve in the film."



"In terms of colour and look we pushed towards autumnal colours, more single source lighting, a general de-saturated colour palette, and not too contrasty an image, but more subtle variants of grey tones" says Rowling. "A big theme for me was keeping some green in the darks to have an unsettling vibe to each scene."

Inspirations for Rowling in terms of tone and feeling were Denis Villeneuve's *Prisoners* and M. Night Shyamalan's *The Village*. Andrew Bernstein's *The Outsider* was an inspiration in terms of look and style in its camera movements, as was the use of colour in Mark Romanek's *Never Let Me Go*. "I did an extensive visual look book for *Lord of Misrule* using hundreds of images that I'd gathered and eventually a consistent look came from what I'd found and we moved forward with those as a base."

"Alison Butler, our production designer, brought such authenticity and quirkiness to the film's design" notes William Brent Bell, "and all in the face of such a challenging shoot. Her talent and flexibility was crucial in telling the story of Berrow and its wicked traditions; a village almost trapped in another time."

Simon Rowling echoes these sentiments: "Alison was a joy to work with. From day one of meeting her, I knew we'd see eye to eye as her mood boards and my look book were very similar in tone and colour. She created some beautiful artwork for the village's history and always added amazing, intricate details on set which eventually aided us in creating the right environment for our actors to interact in and come alive through."

Production designer Alison Butler was attracted to the project by the script and genre and "the freedom to be creative designing folk horror". Her prep time was short – only four weeks and she admits that the budget was pretty tight, being an indie, but "the great team of people made everything possible and special. I loved every minute of it."

Inspiration for Alison came from films such as *The Wicker Man, Grey Gardens,* "dolls in general and naïve art." She describes the look, feel and style of *Lord of Misrule* as "a dark version of a children's book – inviting and terrifying all at the same time."

The collaborative process with director William Brent Bell was an incredible one for Alison as she found him to be "full of unique ideas, enthusiasm and boundless creative energy."

She also enjoyed the close working relationship with cinematographer Simon Rowling: "We worked very closely because colour choices and light are the building blocks of filmmaking."

Aldbury Village, the main location for *Lord of Misrule*, is located in Hertfordshire and Alison describes it as "eerie and picturesque in equal measure. We had this incredibly atmospheric Tudor house to use as the foundation for my designs. I was very lucky."

For costume designer Libby da Costa, *Lord of Misrule* was a joy to work on: "The script had so many twists and turns and I loved helping create such interesting and diverse characters, showing their individual journeys through their clothing. I'm obsessed with texture, the ageing of costumes and the clashing of prints".

Her design process was really about collaboration and teamwork, so she worked closely with the cast and director William Brent Bell and from there she created mood boards,



visualisations and many sketches in order to achieve the most effective, realistic and interesting outcome for each character. She had a small team of talented seamstresses, milliners, mask and model makers, painters and 3d printers who all helped her vision come alive.

One of the most exciting challenges of the film for director William Brent Bell was the design of its pagan mythology: "There were so many exciting elements to create and one example was the Lord of Misrule mask. I knew it would be iconic if we got it right and I was thrilled with the way it turned out along with so many of the other elements. The entire creative team was exceptional and worked together so well to bring the script to life."

Producer Nik Bower sees *Lord of Misrule* as a "chilling and utterly convincing horror, in the vein of *The Wicker Man* or more recent hits like *The Witch* and *Midsommar*. I hope audiences will enjoy it for that. It's also an emotionally complex character-driven drama with compelling performances, beautiful production design and stunning cinematography."

"There is an ever-growing collective thirst for films that push the genre into places that audiences can relate to in frightening and fundamental ways. I hope *Lord of Misrule* will do what movies do best and transport the audience to another world" concludes William Brent Bell.



Q&As – THE CAST

Tuppence Middleton on playing "Rebecca"

Q: What attracted you to this project and how did you get involved?

A: I have always loved horror films, and in particular folk horror. When I first read Lord of Misrule it reminded me of those very distinct kind of 1970s horrors, like The Wicker Man or Don't Look Now. The search for a missing child, the strange and secret behaviours of a community turning against a lone figure. I met Brent when he came to London and we talked a lot about films and what we both wanted from the project. It felt like we were immediately in sync in terms of our tastes and vision for how the film should be, and of course I knew he had a huge wealth of experience with the horror genre, so it was a very trusting and natural process from start to finish.

Q: Who is *Rebecca* and what's her journey in this film?

A: When we meet Rebecca she is living a relatively carefree life in a small but beautiful English village with her husband and daughter. She is a vicar and very much the centre of a community that has existed long before she found herself there, adjusting to a quieter life outside the city. After a local village fair, her daughter goes missing and her life starts to spiral out of control. As she dives deeper into an ancient secret held by the members of her community and struggles to locate her child, everything she previously knew and trusted is tested. Her relationship, her friendships and ultimately, her faith.

Q: Can you relate to Rebecca? Have you enjoyed playing her?

A: Rebecca has been a lot of fun to play. I think she is actually quite different from me, which was part of the attraction of playing her, but I can absolutely relate to her tenacity and her passion. It was important to me that she didn't fit the onscreen stereotype of being "a vicar" - I worked carefully with the creative team to create her look and I think we found an interesting complex character by challenging expectations and allowing her to have flaws and quirks that felt human and relatable.

Q: Briefly, what's the storyline?

A: A vicar and her family attend the local fair in the village where they live. When her daughter goes missing, she slowly discovers that her community is hiding a terrible secret, and the more she learns, the more she is convinced there is some truth to the ancient folk stories of a dark spirit lurking in the forests surrounding her home. Her



marriage, her friendships and her faith are tested in the struggle to find her daughter and expose the truth.

Q: What sort of research did you do to prepare?

A: Initially, I was kind of ignorant as to what it meant to be a modern vicar working in a community like this today. A friend of mine has an aunt who is a vicar and so she arranged for us to talk so I could learn more about that way of life and the duties you have to your parish. Aside from that, I rewatched some of my favourite folk horror films to remind myself what it is I love about the genre and what works tonally in terms of performance.

Q: What was it like working with director William Brent Bell?

A: Brent is so much fun! He loves and knows horror better than anyone else on set, and he works so hard, but I have never once seen him look stressed or rattled. He always has a great sense of humour about things but takes his work very seriously and always makes time to talks things over or listen to your ideas. The really lovely thing about working with Brent is that he remains open throughout the filming process, everyone's suggestions are valid and that allows for true creativity and collaboration.

Q: How was it working with your other cast members, particularly Matt, Ralph and Evie?

A: I had such a good time with the rest of the cast. It wasn't a big core cast, so we spent a lot of time together and got to know each other really well. Matt was my scene partner for the majority of the film and that was wonderful because he is so funny and we have a very similar way of working on set, which always helps. He is such a grounded actor and that's really important when shooting an elevated genre - he kept the scenes rooted in realism and made you really care about and trust his character. Evie was so professional and polite, it was almost like she had been working in the industry for decades! She had some long, cold night shoots to get through but she kept us all smiling and showed everyone how it should be done. And I had been such a fan of Ralph's work for a long time, so it was a real pleasure to watch him work. He makes it look so easy but he works really hard and he brought such a unique, unnerving quality to Jocelyn.

Q: What were the challenges of the shoot?

A: We had a pretty packed schedule, just 5 weeks to shoot the entire film, so the days were long and full-on, especially when you are shooting mostly outside between October and December in the UK! I found myself frequently running through cold, dark forests at night whilst crying in search of my lost daughter, so there were some days that your mind and body took a bit of a battering. But we were so well looked after and the crew were



always in such good spirits. It is so important that everyone is there because they want to be and they believe in making the best version of the film we possibly can, so we were very lucky in that respect.

Q: What was your favourite scene to shoot?

A: My favourite scene to shoot was probably the village fair at the beginning of the story. It was a bright and sunny October day, we were in a lovely little village with traditional market stalls, lots of colourful characters and costumes. There was a really great energy amongst the cast and crew and it's always nice to have big crowd scenes as there is a lot going on and it always feels very free and authentic, always changing and playful. After that scene in the film, things go downhill for Rebecca and there is a lot of crying and trauma, so it was nice for my character to be happy on set for a change!

Matt Stokoe on playing Henry

Q: How did you get involved and what attracted you to this project?

A: My first experience of the film was a meeting with Brent (the director) after I had read the script. I immediately discovered that we had a shared love of folk horror, to the point that we were even reading the same book simultaneously. That was a good a sign as any that Brent would be great fun to work with.

Q: Who is *Henry?*

A: Henry is a loving father and husband who is fiercely protective of his family. He is also an independent thinker and natural cynic, which creates a fair amount of friction with his wife, Rebecca.

Q: Did you enjoy playing him? Can you relate to him?

A: I had recently become a father when filming began, so *Lord of Misrule* was my first experience playing a character who had children. I found that I could easily relate to and empathise with Henry.

Q: Tell us about working with Tuppence and Evie.

A: Working with Tuppence and Evie was wonderful from start to finish. Evie was brave, sharp and incredibly emotionally intelligent and without a doubt has an incredibly bright career ahead of her. I'm also of the firm belief that Tuppence is not only one of the best actors in the industry, but also one of the kindest and most generous people I've ever had the good fortune to work alongside.

Q: What were the challenges of the shoot?

A: As with most horror films, it was mainly shot at night, in the depths of winter, and quickly. However, conditions like these always seem to lend a film a degree of pathetic fallacy. Everything contributes to the soul of the movie and hopefully translates in the finished product.

O: How was William Brent Bell the director to work with?

A: Brent is an incredibly kind, generous and positive director. As actors we were continually buoyed by his palpable enjoyment of the film, and really motivated by his trust in us. We were allowed to be creative, make changes, take risks and improvise, knowing that if things began to veer away from the right track, Brent would find a clever way to reel us back in.

Q: What was your favourite scene?

A: Any of the scenes between Henry and Rebecca (Tuppence) were fantastic. Spending almost every day with someone across the course of a shoot means that the script and the characters are constantly analysed, dissected, and reconstructed, over and over again. By the time Tuppence and I would reach the set and the cameras would roll, it always felt as though we were playing, as opposed to slogging through a day's work.

Q: Briefly, what's the storyline? What's the appeal of this film?

A: To me, the film is both a piece of and celebration of the great tradition of British folk horror. It is about a young couple whose daughter goes missing in a small country village, and the disturbing secrets they uncover as they try to get her back.

Ralph Ineson on playing Jocelyn Abney

Q: How did you get involved in *Lord of Misrule?*

A: I had worked with the director Brent on one of his previous movies. He was in the UK prepping for *Lord of Misrule* when by a happy accident I had to drop out of a very physical part due to injury, leaving me free. Brent sent me the script, we met for a pint in my local pub and I was on board, how I wish it was always that simple!

Q: Who do you play in this film?



A I play Jocelyn Abney, retired house master at a boys' boarding school, widower, a frayed man, who is trying to deal with the loss of his only child.

A vicar moves to a new parish with her young family, encountering ancient, pre-Christian rural traditions. The leader of these wild, folk harvest celebrations is the *Lord of Misrule*, played by my character Jocelyn.

Q: How was it working with Tuppence Middleton?

A: Working with Tuppence was a wonderful experience. Making independent movies can be tough work, gruelling mentally and physically especially when playing the lead character. Tuppence is a warrior, the kind of actor you want next to you in the trenches during weeks of night shoots. She's also a perfect actor for the genre, she can be put in the most terrifying situations and still look stunning (in a dog collar!)

Q: What was it like working with William Brent Bell the director?

A: I love working with Brent, both sets I've worked with him on have been fun places to be, he's a director who enjoys watching actors work. He really knows his horror too.

Q: What were the challenges of the shoot?

A: The main challenges I recall were linked to shooting scenes outside at night in November: cold and wet!

Q: What was it like working with Evie Templeton and the rest of the young cast?

A: I enjoy working with child actors because some of the instinctive work they do can be amazing. I had a great day improvising a Sunday school type scenario with the kids. I also weirdly enjoyed a scene where my character decapitates a character played by my own son!

Q: How did the costumes and hair and make-up help you in the role?

A: As the *Lord of Misrule* I wear a fantastic, terrifying ensemble that's part court jester and part Pulcinella from commedia dell'arte. Not hugely comfortable to wear but it looks great on screen.

Q: How would you sum up the story?

A: A vicar moves to a new village where the locals have some quaint ancient traditional celebrations. She soon begins to realize that these traditions are far from quaint.

Evie Templeton on playing Grace

Q: What did you like about this story?

A: I really loved the concept of the whole village being in on the plot and how the story unravels the dark past and secrets of the village.

Q: How did you get involved?

A: I was fortunate enough to be asked to submit a self tape initially for a part in the film, and was then recalled and offered to take on the role of Grace.

Q: Tell us about "Grace". What happens to her?

A: Although very young, Grace is very intelligent and curious about everything around her. She and her parents move to a small village in the countryside and her mother takes up the position of the local vicar. Grace joins a nature club and makes friends with Bryony and is taken into the village community which she doesn't realise, is some form of a strange cult. She is chosen by their leaders and taken away. Her parents desperately try to find her, but soon realise that they are up against all the evil of the village.

Q: Did you enjoy playing Grace?

A: I loved the role of Grace, it was so much fun because there are so many elements to bring to her character, she is innocent and angelic, however she is also incredibly brave and becomes taken over by the evil as the plot unravels.

Q: How was it working with Tuppence?

A: Tuppence was so lovely and inspiring, she really helped me and made it easy for me to act alongside her and we had a great connection.

Q: How was it working with Matt?

A: Matt is super fun and supportive and I think that both Tuppence and Matt made me feel relaxed and confident and we had good chemistry as a family.

Q: How was it working with William Brent Bell the director?

A: Working with Brent was incredible and I really enjoyed seeing him bring the scenes to life. He has a very calm approach which makes everyone feel at ease on set.

Q: What was your favourite scene?

A: My favourite scene is when my mum Rebecca comes to save me and I am on this huge throne of branches, twigs and brambles. It felt very intimate and suspenseful between mother and daughter. The set for this scene was incredible and was very eerie which helped set the mood of the scene.

Q: Tell us about the costumes

A: The costumes were very cool with some pagan style outfits and lots of variations of really strange masks. I had the same dress throughout which would be clean and then become dirty and covered in moss. However, my absolute favourite things were my wings. I loved my Angel wings!

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

TUPPENCE MIDDLETON

Rebecca

An accomplished talent of the big and small screen, highlights in Tuppence Middleton's recent career credits include David Fincher's Academy Award-nominated *Mank* starring Gary Oldman; the ITV thriller *Our House* alongside Martin Compston and Rupert Penry-Jones, as well as the gritty dramatic thriller series *The Defeated* for Netflix.

She starred in the acclaimed film adaptions of Julian Fellowes' *Downton Abbey* and *Downton Abbey: A New Era;* and took on the role of Thomas Edison's wife Mary in *The Current War* alongside Michael Shannon, Benedict Cumberbatch and Katherine Waterstone. In 2019, Tuppence starred with Daniel Mays, David Hayman and Dave Johns in the Cornwall-shot feature film *Fisherman's Friends*.

In 2018, Tuppence starred in Phillip K. Dick's *Electric Dreams*, an anthology series of ten epic, ambitious and moving standalone episodes, each set in a different and unique world, inspired by one of Philip K. Dick's renowned shorts stories and adapted by an exciting list of leading British and American writers and directors, including Ronald D.



Moore, Michael Dinner and Bryan Cranston. Tuppence starred alongside Timothy Spall, Anne Reid, Ann Akin, and Hayley Squires. The show was commissioned by Channel 4 in the UK and picked up by Amazon for the US.

2018 also saw Tuppence take to the stage at the Soho Theatre with Vicky Jones' "astounding and astonishing" (Telegraph) *The One*, which saw her play alongside John Hopkins, as a couple trapped in a destructive and violent cycle of love and lust.

Other notable performances include *War and Peace* with Gillian Anderson, Jim Broadbent and Lily James; the 20-part series *Dickensian* for the BBC, in the role of young *Amelia Havisham; Spooks: The Greater Good* opposite Kit Harrington; and the Netflix series *Sense8* for the Wachowskis.

Earlier in her career, Tuppence starred in *Jupiter Ascending*, the award-winning *The Imitation Game* opposite Benedict Cumberbatch and Keira Knightley, *The Lady Vanishes* for the BBC, Iain Softley's *Trap for Cinderella, Love Punch* with Pierce Brosnan, Emma Thompson and Timothy Spall, *A Long Way Down* opposite Rosamund Pike, Aaron Paul and Toni Collette, and Danny Boyle's *Trance* with James McAvoy and Rosario Dawson.

RALPH INESON

Jocelyn Abney

Ralph Ineson is an accomplished screen actor, delivering magnetic performances across film and TV. Ralph's impressive film credits include Robert Eggers' greatly anticipated 'The Northman', A24's 'The Green Knight', with Dev Patel and directed by David Lowery. Other credits include the science-fiction drama 'True Love' directed by Gareth Edwards, The Coen Brother's Netflix original 'The Ballad of Buster Scruggs' opposite James Franco, Robert Egger's 'The Witch', Spielberg's epic sci-fi feature 'Ready Player One' and Lena Dunham's feature film 'Catherine Called Birdy' starring alongside Bella Ramsey, Andrew Scott and Billie Piper. Ralph is currently shooting with Phantom Four Films on Arkasha Stevenson's 'The First Omen'.

Ralph's television credits include HBO's Emmy award-winning 'Chernobyl' and 'Game of Thrones'. Ralph is perhaps best known in the UK for playing series regular Chris Finch in cult classic 'The Office'. Ralph will next be seen on the small screen in Element Picture's 'The Gallows Pole'.

MATT STOKOE Henry

A popular face on both film and TV, Matt Stokoe played Luke Aikens in the hit BBC1 series *Bodyguard*. Prior to that he was seen as James Read in *Jamestown*. He also starred in the Netflix feature *Outlaw King*, directed by David Mackenzie, with Chris Pine and Aaron Taylor-Johnson starring.

He played Captain Marcheaux in the third series of BBC 1's hugely successful *The Musketeers*. He has also appeared regularly in E4's *Misfits and The Village* on BBC1's. Other notable film credits include the lead in *The Dyatlov Pass Incident* and *Comes a Bright Day*.

Recent highlights for Matt include the ITV drama *The Hunt for Raoul Moat*, the ITV Series *Grace*, starring John Simm and the Netflix Series *Cursed*.

He wrote and starred in the indie feature *Rose*, with Sophie Rundle, which premiered at LFF in 2021 to great reviews.

EVIE TEMPLETON

Grace

Thirteen-year-old Evie Templeton is a British actress based in Buckinghamshire. Evie has been involved in Musical Theatre productions including 'Les Miserables' in the west end along with acting projects since the age of 6, gaining credits in major TV dramas and short films.

In 2021 she was cast in 'Lord Of Misrule' for the role of Grace.

2021 was a busy year, she also filmed the BBC drama, 'Life after Life'. Evie takes private acting lessons with her agent and manager Mark Jermin, she also attends singing lessons with her vocal coach and dances competitively. Evie enjoys Athletics, loves animals and is a keen equestrian.

FILMMAKER BIOGRAPHIES

WILLIAM BRENT BELL

Director

William Brent Bell is an American film director, screenwriter, and producer born in Lexington, Kentucky. Brent has achieved record-breaking success in the genre film space as a filmmaker, with his movies having grossed over \$300M worldwide to date.

Bell's first horror project was as co-writer and director of the horror thriller, *Stay Alive*, which was produced with McG and Peter Schlessel and financed by Spyglass and Endgame Entertainment. The film was acquired and distributed by Disney. Brent then directed *The Devil Inside* for Paramount Pictures. The film went on to achieve enormous commercial success grossing over \$100M at the box office.

He directed *The Boy* for Lakeshore Entertainment and producer Roy Lee, and followed that up with the sequel *Brahms: The Boy II*. In 2021, he directed *Orphan: First Kill* for Paramount, a prequel to the cult horror film *The Orphan* (2009). The film has garnered both financial and critical success.

NIK BOWER

Producer

Nik Bower is a film producer and financier with more than fifteen years' experience at the forefront of the British independent film industry.

In 2014 he and Deepak Nayar co-founded Riverstone Pictures, which has produced and financed more than twenty films, including Taylor Sheridan's directorial debut *Wind River*, starring Jeremy Renner and Elizabeth Olsen; Karyn Kusama's detective noir *Destroyer*, starring Nicole Kidman; Julian Schnabel's Van Gogh biopic *At Eternity's Gate*, for which Willem Dafoe won the Volpe Cup in Venice and was nominated for an Academy Award; and the English-language remake of Susanne Bier's *After the Wedding*, starring Michelle Williams and Julianne Moore, which opened the 2019 Sundance Film Festival.

In 2017, he produced *Final Portrait*, written and directed by Stanley Tucci and starring Geoffrey Rush. Since then, his productions have included Michael Winterbottom's *The Wedding Guest*, starring Dev Patel and Radhika Apte; the period romantic drama *Tell It to the Bees*, starring Anna Paquin and Holliday Grainger; Ruth Paxton's debut feature, *A Banquet*, which was released by IFC Midnight in the US; Prasanna Puwanaraja's bittersweet first film *Ballywalter*; veteran genre director William Brent Bell's folk horror *Lord of Misrule*; and the children's animated adventure *The Silk Road Rally*.

Before setting up Riverstone, Nik was Managing Director of the UK's largest private investor in film and television production, where he was responsible for financing dozens of independent feature films (such as *Happy-Go-Lucky*, *Carol* and *Brooklyn*) and major studio motion pictures (including *Life of Pi*, *Rise of the Planet of the Apes*, *Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* and *The Fault in Our Stars*).

Nik originally qualified as a barrister and spent six years working in London and New York with law firm Allen & Overy, where he specialised in leveraged finance, mergers and acquisitions and project finance.

DEEPAK NAYAR

Producer

Deepak Nayar began his career in his native India, collaborating with the Merchant Ivory group on *Heat & Dust, The Deceivers* and *The Perfect Murder*. After a move to Los Angeles, he produced David Lynch's highly acclaimed *Lost Highway*, followed by *The Million Dollar Hotel*, starring Mel Gibson, and the hugely successful *The Buena Vista Social Club*.

In 2002, he produced Gurinder Chadha's box office hit *Bend It Like Beckham*, earning both Golden Globe® and BAFTA nominations. He followed this with more collaborations with Chadha, the cross-cultural box office hits *Bride and Prejudice*, *Mistress of Spices* and, most recently, *Viceroy's House*, which was released in 2017.

Other notable films have included Paul Schrader's thriller *The Walker*; Wim Wenders' *End of Violence* and Mika Kaurismaki's *LA Without a Map*.

Nayar has more than 50 productions to his name, including the television shows *On The Air* for ABC; *Hotel Malibu & Second Chances* for CBS; *White Dwarf* for Fox; *Hotel Room* for HBO; *Beecham House* for ITV; *Sense8* for Netflix; *The Mysterious Benedict Society* for Hulu and *Vampire Academy* for Peacock.

He co-founded India Take One Productions, a production services company based in Los Angeles which has been responsible for *Slumdog Millionaire*, *Eat Pray Love*, *Mission Impossible: Ghost Protocol*, *Zero Dark Thirty*, *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* and *Lion*.

Among other ventures, he also co-founded Riverstone Pictures with Nik Bower in 2014.

JASON NEWMARK

Producer

Jason began producing in 2001 with Christopher Smith's horror films *Creep, Severance* and *Triangle. Creep* premiered at Toronto's Midnight Madness while *Severance* became the first horror film to be selected for Telluride.

In 2011 Jason set up Newscope Films and sister company Bigscope Films, with inaugural productions including *Honour* starring Paddy Considine, and Channel 4's International Emmy-nominated political thriller *Secret State* with Gabrielle Byrne. More recently Jason has produced Chris Smith's film *Detour* starring Tye Sheridan and Bel Powley, Noomi Rapace's *Close*, Frederic du Chau's live-action dog movie *A Street Dog Story*



and *The Bay of Silence* starring Olga Kurylenko, Claes Bang and Brian Cox.

Projects currently in post-production include Chris Smith's *Consecration*, Gary Shore's ghost story *The Queen Mary* with Alice Eve and the 12- part mini-series *Taj: Royal Blood* for Zee5 in India.

LAURIE COOK

Producer

In 2011 Laurie joined Jason Newmark's Bigscope Films as head of development and a producer, with a remit to develop and produce commercially positioned, high concept, elevated genre films with international sales appeal.

Completed titles include micro-budget alien contact feature HANGAR 10, futuristic alien invasion documentary OUTPOST 37, underwater survival thriller PRESSURE, , starring Danny Huston and Matthew Goode, and teen horror DON'T HANG UP, starring. More recently, Laurie produced writer/director Neil Biswas' debut DARKNESS VISIBLE, Charles Dorfman's debut BARBARIANS for Media Finance Capital, and Chris Smith's THE BANISHING for WestEnd Films.

He is currently delivering religious horror/thriller CONSECRATION, starring Jena Malone & Danny Huston. Laurie co-wrote the script with writer director Chris Smith.

JAMES TOMLINSON

Producer

James Tomlinson is a film producer and writer based in Los Angeles, California. Tomlinson spent over a decade in Hollywood working as an executive both in and out of the studio system, with stints as a creative executive for Joel Silver's Silver Pictures as well as Peter Guber's Endurance Media, where he was vice president of production. In 2019, Tomlinson began producing films on his own. His first feature was the international breakout success, ORPHAN: FIRST KILL, which was released by Paramount and grossed over \$37 million dollars globally.

ALISON BRISTER

Producer

Alison started her professional career as a lawyer specialising in film and television production and finance. She spent 8 years at Ingenious Media where she worked on a wide variety of productions, ranging from low-budget independent British films and



European co-productions to US studio franchises. In her capacity as a partner in Harcourt Capital LLP, Alison has been managing a portfolio of films produced by various UK companies, with recent credits including acting as a producer on *The Almond and the Seahorse* starring Rebel Wilson and Charlotte Gainsbourg. Alison is also a keen singer and is regularly involved in recording soundtracks for high-profile film and TV productions.

SIMON ROWLING

Cinematographer

Selected by British Cinematographer magazine as its 'New Wave' rising star DOP in 2020 issue, Simon has shot 10 feature films, countless shorts and TV pilots, as well as a multitude of commercials since then.

Initially starting out over 13 years ago in the props and special effects department, Simon soon found his potential behind the lens and moved into the camera department.

At the end of summer 2022 Simon wrapped on *Duchess*, a crime thriller for director Neil Marshall (*Dog Soldiers, The Descent*) and starring Sean Pertwee, Phillip Winchester and Charlotte Kirk. Prior to that, he shot the UK unit for the Lionsgate feature *One Ranger* starring Thomas Jane and John Malkovich for director Jesse Johnson.

During 2020/21 Simon shot the latest instalment in the well-known horror franchise *Jeepers Creepers* with director Timo Vuorensola (*Iron Sky*).

In 2019 Simon filmed the espionage spy thriller *Legacy of Lies* starring Scott Adkins. Released in the USA through Lionsgate, it reached No.4 in the UK and No.2 in USA of the Netflix film charts.

Other highlights include the SKY TV funded short films *Boys* directed by Ashley Walters (*Bulletproof, Top Boy*), and *Daddy's Girl* directed by Jessica Magaye which screened on SkyArts and are now available on the NowTV app. He also shot the Sci-Fi short *Cognition* starring Andrew and Jeremy Irvine which was longlisted for the 2021 Academy Awards.

Commercials credits include Eurostar, Berocca, Wahl, Superdry, Renault, Mars, Samsung, Glenfiddich, and Warbuton's to name a few.

ALISON BUTLER

Production Designer

Alison Butler has been working as a production designer for film and television for 25 years. Following a design degree, Alison became interested in puppetry and animation while travelling through Eastern Europe, which led to several years designing for children's TV.

When she was given the opportunity to work on Nick Broomfield's *Ghosts*, her love of designing for drama and film developed. Alison has since worked with many great companies, including Warp Films, Sky, BBC and Film4; and she has collaborated with several award-winning directors including Paul Andrew Williams, Jim Loach, William Brent Bell, Michael Keillor and most recently Eva Riley on *Fifteen-Love* for Amazon.

LIBBY DA COSTA

Costume Designer

Libby da Costa is based in London and trained at the prestigious London College of Fashion and Wimbledon College of Art.

Over the course of her career, Libby has had the pleasure of working for a diverse range of clients, creating unique and powerful designs for television, film and commercials.

Libby has been seduced by the industry's fast-paced, creative lifestyle and is never afraid of a challenge. She is a storyteller and fantasist and through her costumes the characters are born. From sketch through to realisation and from contemporary through to period, Libby has created costumes with that date back to as early as 1744. Whatever the brief or project, Libby combines her passion, insight and years of industry experience to realise any vision with imagination and flair.

HAELWYN ADAMS

Hair & Make-up Designer

Haelwyn Adams is a South African Hair & Makeup Designer based in London. Some of the dramas and features that Haelwyn has worked on include *Mad Max Fury Road, Black Sails, Homeland* and HOD on pick ups for the new Amazon drama *Mammals* directed by Stephanie Laing. Haelwyn designed the Amazon Prime docuseries *The Greatest Show Never Made* directed by Ashley Francis-Roy and the *Billy Idol* documentary directed by Jonas Åkerlund. Haelwyn has a diverse skill set that allows her to jump between features



and dramas to stills and advertising. Vogue, Elle and Rolling Stone are just a few of publications where Haelwyn's work has been showcased.

ANDREW LEVEN

Editor

Andrew is best known for New Line Studios' *Don't Worry Darling*, where he worked as an additional editor with director Olivia Wilde. His editing work in television includes all three seasons of the Emmy-nominated series *The Accidental Wolf*. Most recently Andrew worked with Rupert Wyatt on the feature, *Desert Warrior*, also as an additional editor. Currently he is cutting the feature *Valiant One* directed by Steve Barnett and starring Chase Stokes and Lana Condor.

CREDITS

DIRECTED BY WILLIAM BRENT BELL

WRITTEN BY TOM DE VILLE

PRODUCED BY NIK BOWER AND DEEPAK NAYAR

PRODUCERS JASON NEWMARK, LAURIE COOK, WILLIAM BRENT BELL, JAMES TOMLINSON, ALISON BRISTER

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS MARK FIELDING, LAURA BROOK, JOHN GLEESON, OISÍN O'NEILL, STEPHEN KELLIHER, YANA GEORGIEVA

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY SIMON ROWLING

PRODUCTION DESIGNER ALISON BUTLER

COSTUME DESIGNER LIBBY IRWIN

HAIR & MAKE-UP DESIGNER HAELWYN ADAMS

EDITED BY ANDREW LEVEN

MUSIC BY BRETT DETAR

CASTING BY COLIN JONES

CAST:

TUPPENCE MIDDLETON

RALPH INESON

MATT STOKOE