

DOG ANIMAL FILMS

PRESENTS



DONOVAN SLACKS

A KIVMARS BOWLING FILM

UK/US - 2007 - 96 mins - DVCAM & Super 8mm - Colour - 1:33



US Press Contact:
Shawyonia Pettigrew
Stir Promotions
Cell: +1 518-542-5288
Email: shpettigrew@yahoo.com

UK Press Contact:
Kivmars Bowling
Dog Animal Films
Tel: +44 (0)7779 624888
Email: kivmars@yahoo.com



UK FILM COUNCIL
LOTTERY FUNDED

www.donovanslacks.com



SYNOPSIS

LOGLINE: When Donovan Slacks, a 1920s hospital patient, (re)discovers the terrible secret of his past, his world collapses. Determined to break free and win the woman he loves, the man silenced all his life leads an uprising against the government.

Donovan Slacks has a fragile head. His mass of explosive hair is always topped off with an old pilot's hat. Staying at a 1920s Sea Bathing Hospital, he lives fearing an accident, fearing change, fearing life - and yet wanting more. Sent there on doctor's orders, Donovan has a picture-postcard view. Another place to feel trapped in.

But Donovan soon scratches beneath the surface - and discovers the illicit world of the local fishermen. A community at war with the government, a community of smugglers, gamblers, drinkers - and a beautiful girl named Delilah. Like a fly to the flame, he is drawn to these people and takes to spying on them.

But the fisherwomen soon notice this suited gent - and can't wait to use him. They plan to train him up as their spokesman for a meeting with government officials. While the fishermen are violently against using this outsider, the fisherwomen know his middle class airs will carry weight. Despite warnings to steer clear of these rough-and-ready locals and to think of his head, Donovan is easily persuaded by Delilah.

As Delilah rehearses Donovan's speech with him - honing the performance they'll need to save the community's livelihood - they begin to fall in love. Delilah feels trapped in her life and wants more. But, as always, Donovan's fragile head holds him back. His fear of danger, of the fishermen, of taking a chance is too strong.

Things go from bad to worse: the government officials turn up with police and violently impound the fishermen's property. While the fishermen put up a fight, Donovan cannot and dare not do anything. Unable to give his speech, the chance to take control of his life and win Delilah slips away. He is an outsider once more.

But when Donovan suddenly discovers the terrible secret of his past, when he discovers his whole life has been a lie, everything goes into freefall. And in the eye of the storm, he takes a decision - he will make up his own rules from now on, whatever the cost. Determined to break free, determined to win Delilah, and determined to be heard, he leads the fishermen in an uprising against the government.

But as things begin to spiral out of control, can Donovan really become the leader everyone desperately needs?



CAST

Donovan Slacks	Ashley Penrose
Delilah	Lisa Payne
Reg	Frank Tucker
Madge	Pam Irving
Beatrice	Rachel Bothamley
Christina	Betty Reid
First Fisherman	Devin O'Grady
Second Fisherman	Richard Sirot
Third Fisherman	Steven Wimhurst
First Fisherwoman	Jan Gibbs
Second Fisherwoman	Melody Wimhurst
The Fisherwomen	Louise Burton
	Rachel Cotton
	Danny Michael
	Linda Humphrys-Parsons
	Deborah Windridge
The Fishermen	James Dunn
	Oliver Gardner
	Philip Gardner
	Gary Gould
	Sam Pearson
	Dave Smallwood-Hurn
The Fishergirls	Nancy Joyner
	Martina Thompson
Fisherboy	Regan Sheehy
Fisher musicians	Patricia Grayland
	Steve Grayland
	Penny Roberts
	Martin Thomson
Sergeant Major	Mike Kendrick
The Patients	James Cartwright
	John Hardy
	Bill Richardson
Dr Breton	Dale Windridge
Head Nurse	Vivienne Wimhurst
Lobby Nurse	Pam Hayfield
Junior Nurse	Aimée Payne-Wakeman
Sergeant Bradshaw	Jamie Sheehy
The County Bailiff	Ian Ulrich
Government Official	Stephen Nolan
Lady-in-Hat	Jan Findlater
Reporter	Jonathan Fischer



First Police Officer	Charlie Morton
Second Police Officer	Andrew Budell
The Policemen	Billy Bayliss
	James Cotton
	Rob Hamment
	Richard Joyner
	Scott Robinson
	Phil Smith
	Martin Thompson
Army Commander	Roger Lee
Army Officer	Matt Cole
The Soldiers	Malcolm Baker
	Mark Hopkinson
	Alan Meades
Young Donovan Slacks	Danny O'Grady
Mother	Patti Bowling
Army visitor	Mike Downes-Joyce
Thief	Braden Turner
Beach Entertainer	Barry Wootton
Barrel Organist	John Chantler
Beachgoer / Promenaders	George Brown
	Anna Chittenden
	Andrew Cross
	Imogen Culliford
	Kizzy Culliford
	Vanessa Culliford
	Debz Reed
	Tor Smith
Man-in-Suit	Christopher Wimhurst
Cinemagoers	Rebecca Bowling
	Rhue Findlater
	Julian Moore
Barber	Peter Payne
Silent film hero	Sean McNall
Silent film heroine	Rachel Botchan



CREW & CREDITS

Written, Directed & Produced by	Kivmars Bowling
Co-Producer	Christopher Wimhurst
Associate Producer	Joanna Cupano
Film Editor	Kivmars Bowling
Production Manager	Malcolm Baker
Original Music by	Christopher Wimhurst
Sound Engineer	Elliott O'Mara
Second Sound Engineer	Jonathan Fischer
Sound Recordists	Kieran Nicholas
	Chris Reynolds
Camera	Kivmars Bowling
Creative Designer	Scott Robinson
Publicity	Shawyonia Pettigrew
Storyboard Artist	Sian Davies
Stills Photographers	Tom Bowling
	Greg Caira
	Joanna Cupano
	Sarah Macdonald
	Scott Robinson
Set Design	Graham Rich
	Carl Thompson
Set Construction	Dixon Graterol
Model-T Ford Cars	Bill Hayward
	Greg Caira
Stunt & Fight Coordinator	James O'Donnell
Fight Coordinator	Stephen Oliver
Stunt performer	Nev Medhurst
Make-up Artists	Tina Wilshaw
	Carol Titmus
Costume Hire	The Oast Theatre
	Marlowe Costume Hire
Horse Handler	Linda Humphrys-Parsons
Film Stock	Kodak
DV Stock	Sony
Sound Equipment	Hammerhead TV
Insurance	AON/Albert G. Ruben
Telecine	AFX
DV Payout	OFVM

Special Thanks to
Thelma Holt CBE and Stephen Daldry CBE

Filmed on location in Thanet, England and New York City.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

What the hell is this film about? It's a question I've often asked myself.

1928 and a man who has been raised all his life to believe he has a debilitating bone condition discovers, completely by chance, that it's all a fiction. A lie. Munchausen by proxy.

Every structure he ever knew and every idea he had about himself is annihilated, he becomes an unmarked sheet of paper. And in this emptiness he sets about writing his own rules, drafting himself afresh. He becomes the leader in a local fishermen's dispute with the government and somehow persuades them to found their own country and fight to the bitter end.

Is he thinking clearly for the first time in his life, unfettered? Or is he gripped by a mania?

And how does that logic or that mania get transmitted to a whole group of people? The surreality of a revolution or an uprising. The logical mania, the suspension of disbelief that makes a whole group of people, despite the odds, decide to put up barricades and fight come what may.

Donovan Slacks' personal revolution leads to a political one, with one driving the other. It might be called a pessimistic ending, but it's also uplifting, because for a brief period he and they have really lived, they created their own rules.

So what the hell is this film actually about? There are plenty of clichés to offer. Overcoming your limitations. Beating the odds. Finding your own voice - the film moves from a 1920s-style silent movie into the harsh reality of a 'talkie' at the turning point in the film, at the discovery of the lie and the new space for truth.

People tell me it's about something - which is a good sign. I hope there's enough in it for everyone in some way.

For me personally, Donovan Slacks became a metaphor for a film director - the sense of trying to break free, of daring to try something when all signs seem to argue against it; the impossibility of leading a group of people into a ludicrous venture that somehow seems to make sense; the surreal excitement and weirdness that brings with it, the communal feeling.

How that fits in with the ending, I don't know. Maybe the sense that even though the odds are stacked against succeeding, against even just making a half-decent film, for a brief moment we did the best we could and overcame self-doubt and the naysayers.

The filmmaking process is the film. And who knows who might be inspired into making something bigger and better?

It is always better to have filmed that not to film.



DIRECTOR'S NOTES

'Your self-confidence is based on ignorance' - this is what a major UK funding body told me when we first pitched the film. As it happened, nothing could have been farther from the truth - we had researched so well and knew the scale of what was involved - but it was our first pitch, and we didn't give a good account of ourselves, or at least didn't fit into a certain mould - I guess they thought they were giving us a 'reality check'.

One other comment also really stuck with me - 'why would I go and see your film this week when I can see Troy?' To me that was an argument against ever making any film, against your first film, against a small film, an independent film, a film without a sales agent already in place, a film that wouldn't be a summer blockbuster.

Why bother?

And this was what a funding body was telling me, a body designed to foster new filmmakers and encourage filmmaking.

After my fury subsided, I thought either we give up or... we try to make it with whatever we can get our hands on - that is, we'll make a feature-length period drama with a main cast of 25 and over 50 extras, involving period cars, trains, horses, a bathing machine, a cliff stunt, oh and a massive battle scene where soldiers and police storm the barricades. I felt that most people's instincts with no resources would be to make a small film, something with three people in a lift for example. But what happens if you go to the other extreme and make something huge? Now that would be interesting.

I desperately didn't want to be one of those people who talk and talk and then fail to follow through, lose their bottle, make up excuses like lack of money or experience. Surely a first step in the right direction was the way to go and then there was a chance things would snowball?

Besides, the first film is a justification in itself. It didn't have to be the best film ever, just as good as we could make it, just to give it everything and find out whether I could even really direct, something I didn't really know at this point.

Whilst making the film I concluded that you can't listen too much to people who are quick to give reasons why something won't work, even if they appear to be knowledgeable. Especially if that knowledge is actually theoretical or commonsensical and not borne out of genuine experience.

Criticism is good and should be listened to - but not doubt, doubt is the enemy. You can never let a problem shake your belief that it's better to film than not to film.



The first time we tried to do the promenade scene, everyone was finally in place - parasols, dresses, Model-T Fords, horses and carriage, bikes, everything - and then... it rained like a bastard. We could only film on weekends - everyone had jobs - would the English summer scupper everything? We were already having to do it over a matter of months, but what if it rained consistently on each weekend?

The next week we tried to do a fish gutting scene on Broadstairs jetty. Cue torrential rain, and dragging all the boxes, tables, props undercover, standing there wondering if it would ever stop. A horrible feeling of being conspired against by forces outside of your control. Absolute depression.

But rather than call the day off, one of the actresses suggested waiting a while to see. And sure enough, eventually, beautiful sunshine appeared, carrying on all late afternoon and into the evening. We did scene after scene with great light and everything swung from utter depression to an overjoy at finally being able to work and get stuck in.

The only reason this film got made was due to that kind of waiting. A huge amount of people waiting and patiently getting the film done weekend after weekend. This was what made it a genuine community film.

Nearly all the filming took place in Thanet where I grew up - a coastal corner of Kent in South-East England. The events had always been set in definite places around there in my mind.

Thanet has beautiful areas to it, but has always had a rundown air, a sense of faded glory. And I felt that all the films that had been made there exploited this in a very obvious way, in their interpretation of what the area is.

Last Resort, Last Orders, Gypo - the titles say it all really. Thanatos rather than Thanet. That's not to say these are bad films on their own terms. It's just I wanted to challenge the dominant view or version of the area, be that faded holiday top spot, gritty East End getaway or racial battleground over asylum.

I also don't like the assumption that a film depicting social problems necessarily tackles those problems (an assumption I think that pervades the funding bodies in Britain).

Rather, it's not the film but the filmmaking process which has this value. Its collaborative nature means all kinds of interesting connections can happen. Putting a region on film has a validating effect, regardless of the kind of story, be it sweet love story or violent dystopia. Which is to say, all the filmmaking presence in Thanet is a positive one - but I think there are more interesting and original ways to use that history, those locations, that beauty for differing stories.

Donovan Slacks deliberately attempts to play with genre - beginning as a civilised 20s period piece and moving into a darker, talkie segment which looks at certain unpalatable elements underneath that civilised veneer, such



as the implied, and then ultimately real use of force to uphold a dominant view.

The people at the heart of the film learn to question the way things are and ultimately force the film to challenge the genre it begins with. The move from Super-8 to DV, from silent to talkie, reflects this questioning. I've tried to see what happens if you put *Mr Hulot's Holiday* and *On the Waterfront* into the same film.

Finally, let me share two reviews I received whilst actually making the film: first, a rather batty old woman started shouting at us during one scene, demanding to know what the hell we were doing. Once she finally understood, she duly pronounced it A BLOODY WASTE OF TIME - IT'LL BE RUBBISH ANYWAY!

Our second review was received during the bathing machine scene on a windy beach - the horse, patiently waiting for his take, gently stepped backwards into shot, paused... and then took an almighty dump.

Still, you can't please everyone...



BIOGRAPHIES

ASHLEY PENROSE (Donovan Slacks)

Ashley Penrose has performed a broad range of roles including John Proctor and Rosencrantz (in Stoppard's comedy) and has appeared at Birmingham's Crescent Theatre and the Midlands Art Centre. He is currently teaching English and Drama at a grammar school in Kent. Since moving to Thanet he has appeared as Smike in 'Nicholas Nickelby' for the Broadstairs Dickens Festival 2004, and as Billy Bigelow in 'Carousel' for the Ramsgate Operatic Society. Donovan Slacks is his debut feature film role.

LISA PAYNE (Delilah)

Lisa Payne graduated from Drama Studio London in 2000. Acting credits include work with Theatre Nomad, Ambush Theatre and the role of Tamara in 'Gypo', Britain's first certificated Dogme Film. Lisa is a founder member of 'Lost Property Theatre Co' and will be producing 'Romeo and Juliet' as part of The Canterbury Festival this autumn.

PAM IRVING (Madge)

A keen actress at school, and a keen musician/songwriter in the 90s with little-known all-girl punk band "The Screaming Sirens" (vocals) and gothic band "Ein Steiffen" (bass guitar, rhythm guitar, backing vocals), Pam Irving came back onto the stage again in 2002 in a FHODS (Folkestone and Hythe Operatic and Dramatic Society) musical production. After a couple of years with FHODS, she joined the New Deal Theatre Company, with whom she performed in 'The Old Inn' by Bettine Walters in 2004, and also performed two of the lead roles in 'Couples', three one-act plays by Bettine Manktelow, again in 2004 and rounding off the year with her part in 'Donovan Slacks'.

Pam is currently serving on the committee of Folkestone's newly formed 'Creative Players', a traditional but modern amateur drama company.

MIKE KENDRICK (Sergeant Major)

A member of the Ramsgate Operatic, Mike Kendrick has played Professor Higgins in 'My Fair Lady', the Major-General in 'Pirates of Penzance', second gangster in 'Kiss Me Kate (Brush up your Shakespeare)' and much else besides - Mike took on the role of the barmy Sergeant Major in his 71st year.



JAMIE SHEEHY (Sergeant Bradshaw)

Jamie Sheehy returned to acting a few years ago after a lengthy break. He has recently worked with professional photographer Marco Sanges on his latest project 'Aristocrats' as well as a number of musical theatre and pantomime appearances.

RACHEL BOTHAMLEY (Beatrice)

Rachel attends Sandwich Technology School and is currently studying for her GCSEs which include Drama and Media Studies. She began acting in 2002 with the Broadstairs Dickens Players' production of 'A Tale of Two Cities' and has continued to perform at the Dickens Festival, her most recent role being Young Estella in a 2005 production of 'Great Expectations'. She has also performed with East Kent Productions in the chorus line of 'Hello Dolly' at the Marlowe Theatre.

KIVMARS BOWLING (Director, Writer, Producer)

Half-Iranian, half-English director Kivmars Bowling has had short films screened at the ICA (Institute of Contemporary Art), BAFTA and on ITV. John Schlesinger, Tom Stoppard, Thelma Holt and Brenda Blethyn are among the patrons who have supported his work. He has worked at the Pearl Theatre, New York and as a script coverage writer for Open City Films/Blow Up Pictures, New York. 'Donovan Slacks' is his debut feature film.

CHRISTOPHER WIMHURST (Co-Producer, Composer)

A seasoned live music performer and frontman of the band 'Film Club', Chris Wimhurst has written music for several short films, including 'One Dimensional Man' and 'Sixteen'. He co-founded Dog Animal Films with Kivmars Bowling in 2003. 'Donovan Slacks' is his first original score for a feature film.



LOCATIONS

Royal Sea Bathing Hospital, Margate
Margate Old Town
Margate Harbour

Walpole Bay Hotel, Cliftonville
Walpole Bay, Cliftonville

Buckmaster's, Broadstairs
Dickens House Museum, Broadstairs
Viking Bay, Broadstairs
Windsor Cinema, Broadstairs
Stone Bay, Broadstairs
Broadstairs Bandstand

Ramsgate East Cliff
Military Rd, Ramsgate
Shipshape, Ramsgate
IOTA Gallery, Ramsgate

Botany Bay, Kingsgate

East Kent Railway
Kent & East Sussex Railway

Greenwich Village, New York City

