

What happens on board stays on board

cargo

Peter Mullan Daniel Brühl Luis Tosar

Trauma and Wild Bunch present · A Morena Films and Slate Films production · Co-produced by Hepp Film, Film I Vast, Oberon Cinematográfica and Vaca Films · In association with Matador Pictures and Regent Capital · With the participation of CANAL +, Televisió de Catalunya, S.A., Televisión Autónoma Madrid, S.A., Televisión Autónoma Valenciana, S.A., Televisión de Galicia, S.A., Euskal Telebista-Televisión Vasca, S.A., Televisión Pública de Canarias, S.A., Televisión Autónoma de Castilla-La Mancha, S.A · Developed in association with Film Four · Peter Mullan, Daniel Brühl, Luis Tosar
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Executive producers Nigel Thomas, Pilar Benito and Tomas Eskilsson · Produced by Juan Gordon · Produced by Andrea Calderwood · Written by Paul Laverty · Directed by Clive Gordon

www.cargo-themovie.com



TRAUMA and WILD BUNCH present

CARGO

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Written by
PAUL LAVERTY

Directed by
CLIVE GORDON

Paul Laverty, Ken Loach's longtime collaborator, joins forces with Clive Gordon, one of the UK's foremost directors of narrative documentaries, for this stylish, claustrophobic thriller set aboard a rusting cargo ship travelling from Africa to Europe where a young stowaway uncovers a murderous plot culminating in a terrifying fight for survival.

synopsis

Chris (Daniel Bruhl), a cocky young traveller in Africa, loses his passport in an altercation with the police, and has to stow away on The Gull, a cargo ship bound for Marseilles to get home. On board, he quickly discovers that The Gull is no ordinary vessel, and that its crew - led by the enigmatic, haunted Captain Brookes (Peter Mullan) - harbours a terrible secret.

Chris hides and watches, increasingly disturbed by what he witnesses. Discovered, he fears for his life, but is reprieved by Brookes who – drawn by the young man's naivete and spirit - offers him his protection. Both compelled and repelled by the Captain, Chris accepts reluctantly, and is set to work in the kitchen with Baptist, the cook (Luis Tosar).

Tensions rise amongst the volatile sailors, and despite himself, Chris is trapped in their desperate, deadly pact. When crew members begin disappearing, it becomes apparent that he is not the only stranger on board.

As paranoia mounts, as the remaining crew grow increasingly violent, and as Brookes' precarious mask of sanity begins to slip, Sean is forced into a lethal game of cat-and-mouse, faced with the unbearable choice between fighting for survival at all costs, or following his conscience and risking his life.

What's in the hold?

writer paul laverty describes how cargo began...

“Twelve years ago I read a small one-paragraph article in a newspaper about a Greek captain on the high seas who had found 6 or 7 stowaways and thrown them overboard. It stunned me. How in the name of God can that happen? I started to do some research and came across more and more incidents of it happening and was horrified to find that the logic was financial. If a captain brings a boat into a European port and say, a stowaway escapes, the fines are massive. But there is also the problem of the boats being tied up, impounded, lost shipping contracts and huge bureaucracy – so in other words it is actually much easier to throw the stowaways overboard than face the severity of the fines and loss of the use of the ship.

“Then I found out that the owners of the ships were fining the crew, who were themselves often third world workers. It’s a horrible framework for murders to take place on the high seas with no witnesses. Somehow we’ve created this fortress Europe and in a terrible way it struck me that this was a metaphor for the massive exploitation of the third world by the first world. So really this is where the germ of the idea began. I was trying to get into the mind of the mythical Captain Brookes!

“I was working in LA 10 years ago and I had 30 days left before coming home. I was living in a tough barrio in South Central LA and I suppose maybe that atmosphere rubbed off when I was writing. I went to San Pedro, a port about 40km away to do some research and that’s when the idea first came to fruition. I threw down the first draft very quickly – in 30 days – and it was a bit mad and much more surreal and disjointed than the present version, but the troubled soul of Captain Brookes is at the heart of that first version and has been ever since.

Laverty on director Clive Gordon: “I saw two wonderful documentaries, two of the best I’ve ever seen, “The Betrayed” and “The Unforgiven”, and in them I saw a sensitivity, intelligence and a courage to follow difficult stories, that I liked. I met Clive and instantly liked him and thought this is a man I could work with! We collaborated on the script and changed things over a long period of time. The trouble was always going to be that being set on a ship, it was a complicated film to make, but then I was lucky enough to meet up with (producers) Juan Gordon and Andrea Calderwood. Between the two of them they worked their magic and managed to raise the finance to make the film”.

director's statement

CARGO is a dark, gothic thriller telling the story of a man (Brookes) who, having lost faith in his own capacity for good, seeks to destroy everything that might lead him to a redemption he craves. Brookes is an absolutist, a “monster” - tormented - a man who can't have it both ways. He has retreated from life into the “Gull”, a dead ship, with his crew of weird handpicked no-hopers from around the world, all bound by an intense and mysterious loyalty that we, as viewers, seek to understand. There is a secret on board which they must protect at all costs.

Chris' arrival threatens everything. Not just because he knows about the illicit cargo. But because he is curious, the only ‘human being’ on the ship, and he awakens in Brookes the very feelings he must shut down at all costs.

The relationship between Chris and Brookes is the heart of the film: it turns into a terrifying cat-and-mouse game in which both take things to the edge - Chris, walking on egg-shells because he knows that one wrong word, one wrong move, could be the end of him; Brookes, because he allows Chris to re-open his wound.

It is crucial that we retain throughout an empathy for Brookes, and a fear for Chris, and this is why I think the combination of Peter Mullan, Daniel Brühl and Luis Tosar works so well.

Peter Mullan can be ice-cold but at the same time he has a warmth and a humanity which we must glimpse, a man who one can believe has done, and is capable of, terrible things. And Daniel has a combination of vulnerability and anger (we saw this all too well in “White Noise”) and an ability to hold an audience and be a figure of identification for the audience that's ideal. On the other hand Luis Tosar plays the tough Baptist in a very effective way.

Originally, the script was far more gothic and weird, with surreal touches which tended to drown what was potentially there and threatened to tip it all over the edge into something otherworldly. The aim of the revisions has been to strip all this out and make it work first and foremost as a straightforward thriller – with an emotional and psychological truth with which we can engage – but *without* losing the weirdness and the fabulously powerful central scenario of the huge ghost ship with its cargo of birds, mad captain and dysfunctional crew.

It was crucial to get this balance right in the film itself. Visually, the enormous potential of atmosphere and mood complements the central dynamic of the story. We have shot the film with a brutal directness and almost documentary-style immediacy. The “Gull” is a huge rust-bucket of peeling paint and 50s furniture, almost 120 metres long, with a massive deck stretching out in front and a cavernous dark hold (or series of holds) below, punctuated only by the odd shaft of light – a flash of colour where it catches on the feathers of the birds – linked by a maze of dark corridors and tiny passageways in which one could imagine a whole town could get lost and never be found. The sheer scale of it is inhuman. By contrast the scenes between Brookes and Chris take place in small spaces, and are extremely intimate.

It was important to preserve a stylistic consistency between the two. We've achieved this through a mixture of static but always hand-held camera, but shooting widescreen (2.35:1) on a real cinematic scale. Sean Bobbitt, our cinematographer, used a similar technique of hand-held widescreen to great effect in Michael Winterbottom's "Wonderland". Working this way also allowed a real freedom for the actors to move about without strict limitations as well as giving the flexibility I was keen to preserve.

We shot on a real ship, going out to sea for a few days at a time, which was highly productive in terms of dynamics. Even the potential limitations of space on a real ship were, I believe, an advantage in re-enforcing the audience's sense of the real.

Directing CARGO has been a major challenge – in terms of mood, suspense, action and psychology it is a highly complex and demanding film. It is both very different and surprisingly similar to directing a documentary. Just as, in my documentary work, I have often tried to tell an emblematic story within a big scenario, and to give that story the feel and cinematic quality of a feature film. Here, the grand scale of the ship, and the subject-matter – even the form as a thriller – belie the essential intimacy of a story of human weakness and loss, grief and the indestructibility of hope.

-- Clive Gordon

casting the film

CARGO brings together a stellar international cast. At the centre of the film is the poisoned soul of one man: Captain Brookes, played by acclaimed actor Peter Mullan. For writer Paul Laverty who worked with Mullan on the Ken Loach film "My Name is Joe", he is perfect casting. "He has a mercurial quality and can be quite tough, but actually there's something fragile about him as well. The mind of Captain Brookes is a very dark, complex place and I think he's been poisoned in many ways. He's seen how the third world is exploited by the first world. The great thing about both Peter and Captain Brookes is that they're political men in their hearts and Peter understood exactly what we were trying to do. I was delighted when he came on board".

Casting the character of Chris the young backpacker was a difficult task, as producer Juan Gordon explains: "For Chris we needed someone with the right mix of naiveté and a streetwise element to their personality. We need to believe that he's been travelling around Africa on his own, but at the same time not to lose the innocence of the character. We'd seen "Goodbye Lenin", and saw "The Edukators" in Cannes in 2004 and thought Daniel Brühl would be a wonderful choice."

With two exceptionally talented leads in place, the role of the enigmatic ship's cook, Baptist, remained to be filled. The role is a demanding one as Paul Laverty explains: "We needed someone who could bring a weight and complexity to the part and Luis Tosar is exactly the actor to do this". For Juan Gordon there was no doubt. "He's one of the best actors in Spain, having notched up a string of powerful, critically acclaimed performances in "Take My Eyes" and "Mondays in the Sun". He makes a really special Baptist. And we're all the more impressed by him as he learned English in nine months in order to play the role!"

Producer Andrea Calderwood adds that it was an unusually international process casting Cargo. "Clive was very keen to have a real variety of characters and faces from around the world to represent the dispossessed sailors who have made The Gull their home. So we were able to cast the net really wide. As well as the more established international actors like Peter, Daniel and Luis, and Gary Lewis, who plays Herman, we were able to make some real finds - like the Belgian Mr Universe Koen Balcaen, who plays Spike. The character of Rhombus was one of the most difficult to cast - we needed someone who was physically imposing, with a very flamboyant personality - and we were running out of inspiration when a tape arrived from Finland. Samuli Edelman, who is a very well-known Finnish rock star, had heard about the role, and was so determined to get it that he had recorded himself performing Rhombus's key scene with lots of fun and energy - even down to taking all his clothes off as the script required! We couldn't resist him, and called him in Helsinki to offer him the role then and there."

With casting choices complete, would the actors work together successfully - crucial for such a tightly woven psychological thriller? Juan Gordon remembers the relief after the first rehearsals. "We were all delighted to see the instant electric chemistry working between the actors, to see a first class international ensemble cast lined up in front of us".

stepping into character

Peter Mullan (Captain Brookes)

It was the script that first attracted Peter Mullan's attention. "The front page was missing, so I read it not knowing who'd written it! Of course I was very pleased indeed to find out that it was Paul, whom I had worked with on "My Name Is Joe".

"I understood instantly who Brookes was. I knew his soul, his pain and the way he looked at the world. I went to a ship in Glasgow for the day and walked about a bit, but for this part I didn't prepare - I'm not sure what that says about me as an actor, but I just knew who he was inside".

"I'm very taken by the fact that it's a film which works on various levels – it has elements of horror and of psychological thriller, but it also has a social conscience, which I liked very much. There's not many films as brave as this around".

For Mullan, acting in *CARGO* is part of a European mission: "European cinema for me, as a socialist, is very important. It's imperative that we share resources and help each other culturally and try and understand each other. In this respect, cinema is probably more important now than it's ever been. Through European films hopefully we can communicate with American people that there's another way to live, other ways to survive without, as they say in *CARGO*, 'gulling' - tearing each other apart".

Mullan is quick to acknowledge the powerful chemistry between the three leads. "Luis has an incredible presence, amazing charisma. Daniel is a very talented young actor, who has no ego and is giving and supportive. They're both beautiful actors and have a great sense of humour, which is vital".

Daniel Bruhl (Chris)

Producers Gordon and Calderwood gave the script to Daniel Bruhl in Cannes and, like Mullan, he was immediately hooked. "They told me the project was a thriller, and I was interested instantly because I had never done a thriller before. But I was very surprised because it's not just a straightforward thriller. It has a very real, intelligent and important story beneath all the suspense and genre characteristics.

"I met Clive and Paul in Berlin - where Clive lives - and then I was certain that I wanted to make the film because I saw one of Clive's documentaries and...well, I liked him and everyone else. When I was told who else was in the film...that Peter Mullan was going to play Brookes and Luis Tosar would be the Baptist, I was delighted".

Daniel explains that he's got a lot in common with his character Chris, who is at times economical with the truth. "The most important thing to me is lying, being able to lie."

Luis Tosar (Baptist)

Luis Tosar knows his character, the Baptist, very well. “The Baptist is a guy with a religious past who has lost his faith. He’s lost faith in everything: in God, and in the human condition. That’s why he is now with these guys on the boat - they’re all the same. But I think that if there is anyone in the crew who still hopes for salvation and who believes they can return their lives to normal, that would be the Baptist. And when Chris suddenly appears, the Baptist is the only one - apart from Brookes - who realises that this guy, this young blood who just boarded the ship, may be a small, last hope for them”.

Luis had an immediately positive reaction to the unique quality of the script – just like his two fellow lead actors. ‘Coming from Paul Laverty this story seemed very special and risky, especially given his previous work, which is much less genre-driven. I got the impression that he was giving it a very special twist, which makes it different to the usual psychological thriller, and that was very appealing. Of course I was also attracted to working with people whom I admire very much like Peter, Daniel and Clive, whose previous works I had already seen and admired.

“To have the guts to write on these different levels, and then to shoot it...I can’t praise Paul and Clive highly enough... I believe it adds up to something special!”

on the ship

Before production began the producers knew that finding the ship, where most of the film was to be shot, was going to be a major challenge. Juan Gordon explains. “We needed a ship that was completely rusted and decayed, which means that it was more than likely not going to be allowed to navigate anymore. However, we needed to be able to shoot at sea, so our ship would have to be able to move! A contradiction in terms and one which has given the production team a very hard time.

“We found the ship in the port of Barcelona, where it had been abandoned for three years. It had no insurance and wasn’t allowed to go to sea. Getting approval from the port and maritime authorities was an administrative and logistical nightmare.

“We hired our own captain, Vicens Tomas, and five sailors. This real crew gave a fantastic insight into life at sea for the actors”.

For Paul Laverty the ship is more than a location. ‘It’s another protagonist! It’s falling to bits, one notch above sinking. Like the characters in the story, it’s ‘gulling’, fighting for its life”.

Shooting at sea rather than in a studio helped give the cast a real sense of their characters. Peter Mullan: “Actually being on the ship at sea changes the dynamic of a scene, changes your body language, and your relationship to the sea. If we were stuck in a studio, not able to smell the sea air or feel the cold or hear the engines, then you’d get a completely different type of performance”.

the music

The unsettling, haunting music is a key element in the film. After reading the script Oscar-winning composer Stephen Warbeck saw CARGO as a great opportunity. “What I liked about the script was that, unusually, it is very distilled - it has an intensity and claustrophobic quality which can be found on every page. When I met Clive Gordon I was delighted to discover his feelings about combining sounds and music to make an overall soundtrack were exactly how I imagined the script”.

The ship itself was a source of inspiration. “I started from a literal viewpoint of hearing clanging footsteps on metal echoing around the inside of this fantastic, derelict ship and extrapolated from there”.

As well as using a range of unusual percussion instruments, including an old filing cabinet and a car door, to create a chilling soundscape of abstract metallic dissonance, Warbeck also wanted to illustrate the powerful emotion in the script and worked with the renowned Real Filharmonía de Galicia orchestra and Spanish composer Sergio Moure. “It’s been a pleasure and an enriching experience to work with a young talented musician like Sergio and with the orchestra in Galicia. We needed the additional emotional component for identifying with Chris, our way into the story”.

cast

Brookes	Peter Mullan
Chris	Daniel Brühl
Baptist	Luis Tosar
Herman	Gary Lewis
Rhombus	Samuli Edelmann
Subira	Nikki Amuka Bird
Ralph	Christopher Fairbank
Sasha	Carlos Blanco
Frank 1	Gonzalo Cunill
Frank 2	Pere Eugeni Font
Ramazan	Joan Serrats
Orlando	Luis Castro
Luis	Jan Willem
Spike	Koen Balcaen
Elvis	Ricky Grover
Abraham	Kwaku Ankomah

PETER MULLAN

The Children of Men (2006)
 The Last Legion (2006)
 On a Clear Day (2005)
 Blinded (2004)
 Criminal (2004)
 Kiss of Life (2003)
 Young Adam (2003)
 The Magdalene Sisters (2002)
 The Claim (2000)
 Ordinary Decent Criminal
 (2000)
 Miss Julie (1999)
 My Name Is Joe (1998)
 FairyTale: A True Story
 (1997)
 Trainspotting (1996)
 Braveheart (1995)
 Shallow Grave (1994)
 Riff-Raff (1990)

DANIEL BRÜHL

Salvador (2005)
 Merry Christmas (2005)
 Farland (2004)
 The Edukators (2004)
 Ladies in Lavender (2004)
 Love in Thoughts (2004)
 Goodbye Lenin (2003)
 Vaya con Dios (2002)

LUIS TOSAR

Miami Vice (2005)
 Hotel Tívoli (2005)
 La noche del hermano
 (2005)
 One day in Europe (2005)
 Unconscious (2004)
 Your next life (2004)
 The Weakness of the
 Bolshevik (2003)
 Take My Eyes(2003)
 El regalo de Silvia (2003)
 The Carpenter's Pencil
 (2003)
 Mondays in the Sun (2002)
 Sin noticias de Dios (2001)

paul laverty - writer

Paul Laverty was born in India. He obtained a philosophy degree at the Gregorian University in Rome, a law degree in Glasgow, Scotland, and went on to become a fully qualified practising lawyer concentrating on civil and criminal law. In the 1980s, Laverty spent three years in Nicaragua, working for an organisation providing evidence of human rights abuses during the war between the Sandinistas and the U.S.-backed Contras.

After his time in Central America, Laverty made contact with British director Ken Loach as a result of which he wrote “Carla’s Song”, his first screenplay, followed by “My Name is Joe”, in which Peter Mullan won Best Actor at the Cannes, 2000. His script “Sweet Sixteen” won the Best Screenplay Award at Cannes, 2002, and “Ae Fond Kiss” won Best Film in the Berlin International Film Festival 2005. Their latest collaboration is the film “The Wind That Shakes the Barley” currently in postproduction.

Selected filmography

CARLA’S SONG – Ken Loach - Official selection, Venice Film Festival
MY NAME IS JOE – Ken Loach - Official selection, Cannes Film Festival
BREAD AND ROSES - Ken Loach - Official selection, Cannes Film Festival
SWEET SIXTEEN - Ken Loach - Official selection, Cannes Film Festival
AE FOND KISS - Ken Loach - Official Selection, Berlin International Film Festival
THE WIND THAT SHAKES THE BARLEY – Ken Loach - in postproduction

clive gordon - director

Director of numerous multiple-award winning documentaries, Clive Gordon was born in London and lives in Berlin. CARGO is his first feature.

Selected filmography

CHILDREN OF CHERNOBYL (1991/ 16mm/ 52min)

(10 international awards, including: Gold Medal, New York International Film and TV Festival; British Film Institute Grierson Award; BAFTA for Best Film Editing.)

THE UNFORGIVING (1993/16mm/ 78min)

(Awards include: BAFTA for Best Documentary; Special Jury Prize, Golden Gate Awards, San Francisco; Best Documentary Award, World Television Festival, Japan.)

MOSCOW CENTRAL (1994/16mm/ 72min)

THE BETRAYED (1995/super 16mm/ 79min)

(Awards include: BAFTA for Best Documentary, Best Photography and Best Film Editing; Prix Italia; Prix Europa; RTS Best Documentary.)

THE MISSION (1997/super 16mm/ 74min)

MEN IN PINK (1999/ super 16mm/ 79 min)

PIMP SNOOKY (2000/ super 16mm/ 92min)

THE LOST BOYS (2002/ digibeta/77min)

stephen warbeck - composer

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

FEAST OF THE GOAT
ALPHA MALE
TRAVAUX
ON A CLEAR DAY
MICKYBO & ME
TWO BROTHERS
OYSTER FARMER
PROOF
THE ALZHEIMER CASE
POUR LE PLAISIR
LOVE'S BROTHER
BLACKBALL
MYSTICS
SECRET PASSAGE
DESIRE
CAPTAIN CORELLI'S MANDOLIN
BIRTHDAY GIRL
GABRIEL AND ME
BILLY ELLIOT
QUILLS
VERY ANNIE MARY
MYSTERY MEN
FANNY AND ELVIS
SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE - Oscar for Best Original Musical or Comedy Score
MRS BROWN
MY SON THE FANATIC

sergio moure - composer

Selected filmography

UNCONSCIOUS
LA COMIDA
JUANITO VA AGAFAR EL SEU FUSIL
A PINTEGA
UN HOME AFORTUNAT
DIMENSIO ALTERA
EL PAIS DEL SILENCI

morena films - producer

MORENA FILMS

Since 1999, MORENA FILMS has been dedicated to the production of feature films, documentaries and television programs, often in co-production with other countries, aimed both at the international and domestic markets.

Selected filmography

- IBERIA - Carlos Saura
- SCHOOL 'S OUT - Miguel Martí
- THE TRUTH AND OTHER LIES - Alvaro Fernández Armero
- LOOKING FOR FIDEL - Oliver Stone
- PERSONA NON GRATA - Oliver Stone
- PEOPLE - Fabien Onteniente
- DOBLE JUEGO - Alberto Durant
- SLAM - Miguel Marti
- THE CARPENTER'S PENCIL - Anton Reixa
- COMANDANTE - Oliver Stone
- DOG DAYS - Alvaro Garcia Capelo
- THE BEST IS YET TO COME - Jose Semprun and David Blanco
- FISH PEOPLE - Jorge Iglesias
- INFERNO - Joaquim Leitao
- ONE OF THE HOLLYWOOD TEN - Karl Francis

slate films - producer

SLATE is a film and television production company set up by Andrea Calderwood and Vicki Patterson. Andrea was formerly Head of Drama at BBC Scotland, where she was responsible for hit series such as Hamish Macbeth and The Crow Road, as well as features including Gillies MacKinnon's SMALL FACES and the Oscar-nominated MRS. BROWN. As Head of Production at Pathé Pictures, she was executive producer of eight films, including Lynne Ramsay's RATCATCHER Michael Winterbottom's THE CLAIM, and teen horror hit The HOLE. Vicki previously also worked at Pathe Pictures in development and production

Prior to CARGO SLATE has developed, financed and produced two feature films: Mike Figgis HOTEL and Shane Meadows ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE MIDLANDS.

In 2005 Slate also produced an adaptation of Giles Foden's best selling novel, THE LAST KING OF SCOTLAND, starring Forest Whitaker as Idi Amin, directed by Oscar winner, Kevin MacDonal. It is a Cowboy/Slate Production for Fox Searchlight, DNA and Film Four.

co-producer - hepp film

Hepp Film was established in 2003 by Helena Danielsson, who has been active in the Scandinavian film industry since 1994. Before founding Hepp Film she worked as a producer for the Swedish production and distribution company Sonet Film. Danielsson set up the company with the aim on focusing on European feature films in collaboration with strong talent in the region.

The first feature developed by Hepp Film was DAY AND NIGHT (2004) by Simon Staho. Currently in postproduction are the feature FLOW by Maria von Heland and feature-length documentary CROSSING LINE .

co-producer - oberon cinematográfica

OBERON Cinematográfica S.A. was set up in 1990. Since its foundation it has concentrated on the production of feature films for both cinema and television, while constantly on the lookout for creative quality projects.

Oberon's most recent features include NICOTINA directed by the Mexican Hugo Rodríguez and Jaime Chavarri's THE YEAR OF THE FLOOD

co-producer - vaca films

Vaca Films is a new company founded in 2003 and based in Galicia. Involved in the production of theatrical and tv features, with a particular emphasis on fantastic and horror movies, internationally oriented towards new and talented directors.

The company's latest projects include: SOMNE (2005), in co-production with Lotus Films, premiered at Sitges Fantastic Film Festival 2005.