

# PRESS KIT AFTERSUN



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# SYNOPSIS



Eleven-year-old Sophie and her father, Calum, vacation at a Turkish beach resort in the late 1990s. They swim, play pool, and enjoy each other's company; they're partners in crime. Calum is the best version of himself when he is with Sophie. Sophie feels like anything is possible when Calum is around.

When Sophie is on her own, she navigates new friendships and experiences. As they enjoy their time together, layers of melancholy and mystery ripple through Calum's behavior. Twenty years later, the memories take on new meaning as Sophie tries to reconcile the father she knew with the man she didn't. Written and directed by Charlotte Wells, *Aftersun* explores how we may never truly understand the complex interior lives of the ones we love.

The feature debut of Wells, starring BAFTA Award-winning actor Paul Mescal (*Normal People*, *The Lost Daughter*) and 11-year-old Scottish actor Frankie Corio in her debut role, *Aftersun* juxtaposes a hopeful coming-of-age story with a poignant, intimate family portrait that leaves an indelible impression.

# Q&A

## CHARLOTTE WELLS (WRITER/DIRECTOR), AMY JACKSON (PRODUCER) & ADELE ROMANSKI (PRODUCER)

### What are the origins of this film?

Wells: My parents were quite young when I was born and growing up my dad would often be mistaken for my brother although he never seemed to mind. It always seemed like a fun relationship to explore on film and when I was flipping through old holiday albums toward the end of film school — a time when potential feature ideas were on my mind — the seed of the story began to take hold.

Working on it for so long meant a lot of reminiscing about my own adolescence, my parents, and my dad specifically. That process of reflecting while writing lent a retrospective gaze to the script and what began as more conventional fiction slowly gave way to something more personal, more emotionally autobiographical I suppose.

Romanski: We had been in conversation since 2017, when we first met. When Charlie pitched the idea, I was drawn to it in imagining how Charlie was going to take us through that experience, just based on the strength of her short film work and the tone and the style that she employed in her storytelling. When she shared the script, even as a first draft, Sophie's interior world was so authentically realised and the father/daughter relationship was unlike others I had seen on screen... I remember sitting in silence for a long time after reading...I mean, Charlie is just an incredible writer.

### How did you cast the film?

Wells: It was an extensive casting process, I think about six months for Frankie. We worked with Lucy Pardee, our amazing casting director, who is especially fantastic at making discoveries and street casting talent. Eventually we were able to meet sixteen kids in person from about 800 submissions.

When we met Frankie, she was the biggest surprise. I was hoping to find someone who was already in essence the character on the page and who I could meet the rest of the way through some post-casting rewrites. I wasn't really expecting to find a kid who could act. And Frankie could act. We worked through some exercises in the room, and she could transition between different moods at the flip of a switch. It was so impressive and yet she was completely unaware of the talent she had.

She brought a lot of herself to the character too, as actors do. It was extremely exciting to watch that happen. To watch her engage with the idea of Sophie as somebody distinct from herself, similar in some ways, different in others.

### How did you cast Paul as Calum?

Wells: Paul was 25 at the time and a little bit younger than we had imagined, but the character was written to look younger than his age of 30/31 and Paul effortlessly carried it. In our first chat his response to the script was so considered and his early commitment was something I respected a lot. Working with Paul was exactly the collaboration I hoped it would be. He became a partner on set, especially as Frankie had never acted before — really, the strength of her performance is owed to Paul as much as it is to any direction that I gave.

Once Paul and Frankie were on board, the biggest challenge was giving them the space to get to know each other. For the two weeks prior to shooting, I was able to spend the first couple of hours each day with them, but beyond that it was time they spent together; at the beach, playing pool, eating ice cream. They formed a genuine bond and their fondness for one another was beautiful to observe. That time together, which was ongoing during production, was key to creating the impression of familial intimacy essential to the story.

# Q&A

## CHARLOTTE WELLS (WRITER/DIRECTOR), AMY JACKSON (PRODUCER) & ADELE ROMANSKI (PRODUCER)

You leave a lot open for interpretation in this film. Did you share any more information about Calum and Sophie with Paul and Frankie?

Wells: I was clear with Paul about my vision of the character. I don't think he was constrained by that, but it felt necessary for him to know where I was coming from ahead of time for me to be able to effectively direct.

Frankie was never given a complete script. During prep, we read through her scenes together with Paul, but to maintain a sense of spontaneity, we moved day by day, scene by scene.

Sophie's knowledge of Calum is constructed through her remembering of him, informed by knowledge acquired later in life, by events that unfold beyond the film's eye, but ultimately Calum's interior life remains unknowable to her. Sophie is interpreting and that keeping of Calum at a certain arm's length leaves space for the audience to do the same.

**Why did you want to shoot the film in Turkey?**

Wells: When I was around 10, I spent two weeks in Turkey with my dad. As I worked on the script, I found myself repeatedly coming back to the memory of that specific holiday. My first dive, my first impression of ancient ruins, the mudbaths, the hamam, the endless scattering of paragliders in the sky above. It was a very happy trip. Drawing from it infused the story with the joy and wonder I felt was essential to Calum and Sophie's time together.

How did you and your DP conceive of the look of this film? Obviously the format is so significant but also the way you frame both characters in relation to one another at different moments in the story.

Wells: Images are always the starting point for me — and Greg Oke, the cinematographer, and I invested a lot of time in discussing our strategy for shooting. It's the part of the process I find most creatively challenging and interesting, allowing the most subtle visual choices and observations to accumulate to the film's ultimate feeling.

As a starting point, we pulled together our family holiday photographs, thinking specifically about the sea, sun, sky. Those pictures carried us through to the colour grade where we tried to replicate their high contrast, saturated look. The richness of the colours felt very present which we liked as a counterpoint to the idea of setting the film in the past. In adult Sophie's scenes, set now, Kath Raisch, our colourist suggested a more contemporary look. That type of nuance was really fun to discover.

Those photographs were all taken on point and shoot 35mm cameras, which was one of several factors that influenced our decision to shoot on film. And of course, the DV is so evocative and nostalgic, at least for people of our generation. It offered a sort of factual view of what happened on the holiday and I loved the idea of those scenes being quite banal, the way that holiday footage often is.

In terms of more general strategy, prior to shooting Greg compiled this unbelievably thoughtful and detailed document about memory on film and point of view, articulating the different perspectives embedded in the film. The document included writing, photographs, paintings, sequences from other films. From there, when shotlisting, we tried to be very deliberate about how to shoot each of these perspectives. For example, Calum is often obstructed from full view, shot from behind, shot at a distance. This is the arm's length we tried to keep him at to help convey that these scenes are in some way imagined. Sophie wasn't there, yet here we are alone with Calum.

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**The music in the film similarly is so effective at establishing time and place – can you tell us a bit about how you chose the soundtrack and how it informs the sense of the time period?**

Wells: I never wanted the period to draw too much attention to itself especially since the 90s are still mid-revival, but it is infused throughout the film in costumes, props, even slang. Music is probably the most overt example and just one of those things that was a lot of fun to think about. In the years of writing the film, I had a playlist I would listen to and constantly add to. Some of those tracks are in the film, others were unexpected additions that felt correct to the space or moment. I tried to mix up genres and include some older throwbacks to the 80s or before. It was tempting at times to build out something that felt a little “cooler”, more indie-alt, but I wanted to keep it authentic to the place and characters and I think that instinct helped to create a sense of cohesion across the soundtrack even though the genres do vary. I was buying my first cassettes and CDs in around 1997/1998 which was the cutoff I tried to establish for the soundtrack and those were the pop tracks, the Aqua, Steps you hear in the film. My dad's influence — R.E.M., Blur — filled that out. “Now 36” was the first CD I owned — and the soundtrack doesn't look too dissimilar to one of those compilations. At the end of the day, I feel incredibly lucky to have been able to bring so much music into the film and that is thanks to Lucy Bright, our music supervisor.

Music was also a helpful tool to place Paul and Frankie in the period. I shared a “Calum” and “Sophie” playlist with them both during prep and I think Frankie's parents tormented her with 90s music of their own accord to get her in the mood. She wasn't a fan (laughs).

**Was it challenging to work with a child actor, especially since she plays such a major role?**

Jackson: There are practical realities of working with a child, and the hours and how that impinges on your shooting day. But we certainly got there in the end.

Wells: We had Frankie on camera for four hours a day, which isn't very long and is punctuated by very specific breaks, so that was our leading constraint – more than shooting on 35mm, more than fading light.

It was challenging, but it was also a joy to have her there. The highest highs in the day were watching Frankie do something special. As a kid and as a person, she doesn't overthink things and that leads to a lot of really lovely, spontaneous moments on camera.

**We see glimpses of Sophie 20 years later. Why did you decide to include those moments?**

Wells: The scene in which a sleepless Sophie gets up in the middle of the night and her partner remains in bed was very instinctive. I don't think it was in the original outline that I was

# Q&A

## CHARLOTTE WELLS (WRITER/DIRECTOR), AMY JACKSON (PRODUCER) & ADELE ROMANSKI (PRODUCER)

working from and scenes like that tend to be ones I trust. The rave space emerged from a similar place. Eventually in experimenting with different endings, I added another. Our 35mm production camera captures Adult Sophie watching footage shot by Calum of her younger self. For me, situating adult Sophie opposite the television at the end acknowledges her as the film's overarching point of view while drawing together in a single shot the others we have experienced throughout.

### Why did you connect to this film and want to produce it?

Romanski: I find it a very emotional experience watching the film, especially getting to the end. On a personal level, what I connect to – and I think probably a lot of people can connect to – is (the theme of) memory and the excavation that we do around memories, whether that's looking back three months, three years, or 20 years. It's wondering what it was that maybe you weren't capable of understanding at the time or you weren't available to observe in the right way. ... That's what gets me every time. It's brutally, powerfully emotional for me.

Jackson: When I saw the script for the first time, I remember just being really struck by the intimate and evocative nature of the project. My first viewing of the film ... everything I experienced when I first read that script was there in such a visceral way that I felt incredibly excited. And the chemistry between Sophie and Calum, the emotional end of the film ... it really stayed with me in a massive way. It's so powerful because it becomes so personal to the individual.

# Q&A

## ACTORS PAUL MESCAL & FRANKIE CORIO

### **Why did you want to be a part of this film, and what was the casting process like?**

Mescal: I read the script in one sitting and immediately was like, “OK, we’re gonna go after this hell for leather, whatever it takes.” I did a self-tape, which was a scene where Calum is by himself smoking and dancing to Blur. I was really enjoying even just the first couple of steps towards the prospect of playing him.

Then I met Charlie and was just bowled over at how bright she was and what she knew she wanted from the story. She’s so thoughtful and precise in her work. The centre of the film feels quite warm to me, but in the edges of the film it’s a little more complicated. I really trusted her that that would be really held up from an acting point of view.

Corio: There were a lot of videos that we had to send in, and then a Zoom call, and then I went to Glasgow for an audition. I didn’t have emotions other than, “Oh my god, this is so cool!”

### **When did you meet each other?**

Mescal: I did a chemistry read with Frankie (over Zoom). When people see the film, I think they’ll feel what I saw the first time that I met Frankie, which was you would just die for her. She’s got this amazing spirit. I genuinely consider it a massive honour to be sharing her first credit with her.

Corio: We did a couple Zooms, and then I saw him in person when I went over to start filming. He’s a very good person. He’s very funny as well, and he has good music tastes that are similar to me!

### **Describe your character.**

Corio: I’d say Sophie is quite like me — except for the fact that she wears a lot of dresses. She’s a tomboy, sort of. So am I. I feel like if she was a real person, I would definitely be friends with her. Her dad is very good because he looks after Sophie a lot.

Mescal: Calum is a single father; he and his partner have separated. I think he is an excellent father, but he is definitely battling his own demons in private. He’s somebody who has immense ambition for himself, but I don’t think he has the tools in which to consolidate what he wants from the world. To put it simply, he’s somebody who loves his daughter completely but struggles to love himself as much as he loves her.

### **What was it like once you both got to Turkey? Did you spend any time together before you started shooting the film?**

Mescal: I hadn’t worked with a child actor before, and every scene in this film is either with Frankie or by myself. I got to Turkey a little early, and then we “rehearsed” — and by rehearse, I mean we hung out for two weeks. Frankie would go to her tutor in the morning, and then we would go play pool, we would jump in the pool. Her parents were absolutely incredible with how they invited me in. Over the two weeks we just became pals, and we would dip our toes into scenes.

Corio: I got to go in the sea, go swimming, go to the amphitheatre. All the people there are just so kind and nice. And all the teenagers who were gonna be in the film – we all just had a good time together and we played pool ... and then my dad and Paul would play (pool) against each other, and I’d be sitting there eating my ice cream.

### **What was it like working with Charlie?**

Mescal: I was kind of in awe for a first film to involve a pretty remote location and two actors – one of them a child actor who hasn’t worked before. But Charlie just puts full trust in the

# Q&A

## ACTORS PAUL MESCAL & FRANKIE CORIO

words that she's written and the people around her to do their job and then supports you from the ground up around that. She's very gentle in how she approaches actors and how she was able to navigate talking to Frankie about her character. One of the greatest joys that I got from the experience was seeing Frankie really enjoy the process of acting. Also, when you're acting with a child, you don't sit around talking and contemplating – with other adult actors, you can kind of talk (a role) out of existence. Whereas with Frankie, you go into it and whatever she decides or whatever happens, happens, and you run with it.

Corio: Charlie gave me all these tips when I was filming – just good, confident advice. She'd help me a lot to do it right. She had ideas that made it a really good film because it felt more natural. I think she's a really good director.

### **Any favourite moments during the shoot?**

Corio: My birthday! When I was at lunch, they brought out a big chocolate cake, and all of my family and friends were there. Although that day there was a part in the movie where I needed to cry, and that was very hard. I didn't wanna cry because it was my birthday, and I was so happy.

### **The audience doesn't know Calum's backstory. Did you learn more about him, or did you come to your own conclusion?**

Mescal: If I had any pressing questions, they would be answered, but the film is almost in total from Sophie's perspective, so the whole point is she doesn't fully know what her father is experiencing. Some of it was consciously kept unelucidated so the integrity of the perspective of the film could be protected. To me, it feels like a crystallised version of Sophie's memory of her father.

### **What do you hope viewers take away from this movie?**

Mescal: Is the message of the film about cherishing memories that we have with loved ones while they're happening? I think people will decide what the film's about for them, and I think that's what a good film should always do. I don't think it's telling you what to feel; it's a film that made me laugh when watching it; it also made me emotional. It's loads of things. I really hope people like it and respond to it.

Corio: I'm very excited to see it, and I can't wait until it comes out so I can show all my friends.



# CAST BIOS

## PAUL MESCAL

### CALUM

BAFTA TV Award winner and Emmy nominated actor Paul Mescal trained at The Lir Academy, Ireland's National Academy of Dramatic Art. Immediately after graduating, Paul was cast in the title role of 'The Great Gatsby' at Dublin's prestigious Gate Theatre. This was the first of several consecutive leading stage roles in both Dublin and London. His credits include: 'The Red Shoes,' 'Asking For It,' 'The Plough and the Stars,' 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man' and 'A Midsummer Night's Dream.'

Paul has also appeared in Lisa McGee's new TV drama *The Deceived* and short film *Drifting*. In January 2020, Paul played the title role in Martin McDonagh's critically-acclaimed 'The Lieutenant of Inishmore,' to outstanding reviews.

Paul is most well known for playing the lead role of Connell in the adaptation of the Sally Rooney novel *Normal People*, directed by Lenny Abrahamson. Paul won the 2021 BAFTA TV Award for Leading Actor for his role as Connell and was also nominated at the 72nd Primetime Emmy Awards for Leading Actor in a Limited Series and the Critics' Choice Award 2021. In 2020, Paul was named a Screen International Star of Tomorrow and one of The Hollywood Reporter's Next Gen Talent.

Paul was most recently seen in Maggie Gyllenhaal's acclaimed directorial debut *The Lost Daughter*.

He will also star in leading roles in Benjamin Millepied's *Carmen*, A24's Psychological Drama *God's Creatures* alongside Emily Watson, *Aftersun* alongside Frankie Corio, *Foe* alongside Saoirse Ronan and *History of Sound* with Josh O'Connor.

## FRANKIE CORIO

### SOPHIE

Frankie Corio is an 11-year old actress, hailing from Livingston, Scotland. She has a love of the performing arts, as well as a love for football. Frankie's work on *Aftersun* marks her professional debut as an actress. She is set to begin work on her second feature in summer 2022.

# CREW BIOS

## CHARLOTTE WELLS

WRITER/DIRECTOR

Charlotte Wells is a Scottish filmmaker based in New York. She wrote and directed three short films as a student in the MBA/MFA dual-degree program at NYU where she was supported by BAFTA New York and Los Angeles. Wells has been featured in Filmmaker Magazine's "25 Faces of Independent Film" and was a Fellow at the 2020 Sundance Institute Screenwriters and Directors Labs. *Aftersun* is her first feature.

## ADELE ROMANSKI

PRODUCER

Adele Romanski is an Academy Award, Independent Spirit Award, and Golden Globe Award winner for Barry Jenkins' *Moonlight*, also a BAFTA and PGA Award nominee. Romanski and Jenkins' second collaboration, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, earned the Independent Spirit Award for Best Film and the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress for Regina King, in addition to nominations for the Academy Awards, Golden Globe Awards, and Critics Choice Awards.

Most recently, Romanski produced Charlotte Wells' debut feature *Aftersun* premiering in the 2022 Cannes Film Festival and *The Underground Railroad*, a limited series based on Colson Whitehead's Pulitzer-Prize winning novel directed by Barry Jenkins and produced in partnership with Plan B and Amazon Studios. The show earned BAFTA, DGA and Golden Globe wins as well as Emmy, Gotham, and Independent Spirit Awards nominations.

She has produced several other notable independent films including director Eliza Hittman's acclaimed feature *Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Always*, which was honoured with the U.S. Dramatic Special Jury Award for Neo-Realism at Sundance, the Silver Bear Grand Jury Prize at Berlin International Film Festival, and Best Screenplay Award at the National Society of Film Critics, among many other accolades.

Romanski's prior work includes Chad Hartigan's celebrated *Morris From America*, David Robert Mitchell's prize-winning *The Myth of the American Sleepover* and *Under the Silver Lake*, Aaron Katz's *Gemini*, Jacob Vaughan's *Bad Milo!*, Justin Tipping's *Kicks*; and Katie Aselton's *The Freebie* and *Black Rock*. She also served as an executive producer on the second season of Starz' Golden Globe nominated series *The Girlfriend Experience* written/directed and executive produced by Amy Seimetz and Lodge Kerrigan alongside executive producer Steven Soderbergh.

She is a co-founder of PASTEL with partners Barry Jenkins and Mark Ceryak. In addition to developing material in-house for Mr. Jenkins, the company focuses on supporting diverse projects and filmmakers that further the mandate of integrity, urgency, and specificity set forth by *Moonlight*. Upcoming PASTEL projects include Disney's *The Untitled Lion King Prequel*, also directed by Jenkins, and Raven Jackson's debut feature for A24, *All Dirt Roads Taste of Salt*.

Alongside Sara Murphy, Romanski was honoured with the 2016 Amazon Sundance Producers' Award.

# CREW BIOS

## AMY JACKSON PRODUCER

Amy Jackson is a British feature film and television producer. In 2020 Jackson founded the Scottish production company Unified Theory with a focus on finding and supporting distinctive new voices, forming collaborative relationships with international partners, and developing original stories across a variety of genres for global audiences. Jackson's most recent producing credits include Sean Durkin's second feature, *The Nest*, and Graham Moore's directorial debut, *The Outfit*.

## BARRY JENKINS PRODUCER

Academy Award winner Barry Jenkins co-wrote and directed all ten episodes of his critically acclaimed adaptation of Pulitzer Prize winner Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad*. As well as receiving seven Emmy nominations, three Broadcast Critics Choice Awards nominations, two Film Independent Spirit, WGA and USC Scriptor nominations, Jenkins was awarded Best Director and Best Limited Series in the AACFA TV Honors 2021. In addition, Jenkins is the recipient of the 2022 USC Libraries Literary Achievement Award which recognizes his contributions to cinematic storytelling. Most recently, Jenkins was awarded the prestigious BAFTA Television Award for Best International Series.

Jenkins' feature films include *Medicine for Melancholy*, which received several Independent Spirit and Gotham Award nominations, and the Academy Award and Golden Globe winning Best Picture MOONLIGHT. His third feature, an adaptation of James Baldwin's *If Beale Street Could Talk* went on to receive three Academy Award nominations and won Best Picture at the Independent Spirit Awards. Jenkins also received the Independent Spirit Award for Best Director.

Jenkins' upcoming work includes a follow up to *The Lion King* for Walt Disney Studios as well as a biopic of famed choreographer Alvin Ailey for Searchlight Pictures.

## MARK CERYAK PRODUCER

Mark Ceryak co-founded PASTEL alongside partners Barry Jenkins and Adele Romanski. He served as Executive Producer on Jenkins' film *If Beale Street Could Talk* and Eliza Hittman's film *Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Always* as well as the limited series *The Underground Railroad* directed by Jenkins and based on Colson Whitehead's Pulitzer Prize winning novel for Amazon Prime Video. He is currently producing a prequel of *The Lion King* for Disney with Jenkins directing and Raven Jackson's debut film *All Dirt Roads Taste of Salt* for A24.

# TOP CREDITS



**DIRECTOR**  
Charlotte Wells

**SCREENPLAY**  
Charlotte Wells

**PRODUCERS**  
Adele Romanski  
Amy Jackson  
Barry Jenkins  
Mark Ceryak

**EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS**  
Eva Yates  
Lizzie Francke  
Kieran Hannigan  
Tim Headington  
Lia Buman

**CINEMATOGRAPHY**  
Gregory Oke

**EDITING**  
Blair McClendon

**SOUND**  
Jovan Ajder

**PRODUCTION DESIGN**  
Billur Turan

**COSTUME DESIGN**  
Frank Gallacher

**CASTING**  
Lucy Paradee

**MUSIC**  
Oliver Coates

**STARRING**  
Paul Mescal  
Frankie Corio  
Celia Rowlson-Hall

# TECHNICAL DETAILS



**TITLE**  
Aftersun

**RUN TIME**  
98 minutes

**COUNTRY OF PRODCUTION**  
United Kingdom, United States

**YEAR OF PRODUCTION**  
2022

**LANGUAGE**  
English

# ASSETS



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