

THE BIRTH OF  
Valerie Venus

**BFI NETWORK and MADREFOCA**

present

a production from

**LUNAPARK PICTURES**  
and  
**RED BREAST PRODUCTIONS**

THE BIRTH OF  
Valerie Venus

A short film by  
**SARAH CLIFT**

Produced by  
**SERENA ARMITAGE**  
**PIETRO GREPPI**

-  
2:39:1 - 15mins - HD

## **LOGLINE**

A selfless vicar's wife is possessed by a strange force, unlocking a mischievous (and pleasurable) side she never knew she had.

## **SYNOPSIS**

Trapped in a world of domesticity and servitude, long suffering vicar's wife Valerie (55), has spent a lifetime serving others. At her wits' ends, she makes a quiet plea to the Virgin Mary, who answers her prayers in the form of a strange force. Convinced she is possessed, Valerie fights her path to enlightenment every step of the way, until she realises there actually might be some benefits to being kind to yourself.

## **PRODUCTION NOTES**

The Birth of Valerie Venus is the second short film by visionary writer/director Sarah Clift and the first joined production by producers Serena Armitage and Pietro Greppi.

The short was developed and produced with the assistance of BFI NETWORK and with additional funding and support from the Mexican production company Madrefoca.

## BIOGRAPHIES

### **SARAH CLIFT – Writer and Director**

A creative and visionary writer/director, Sarah Clift's background is in writing award-winning advertisement campaigns in London agencies.

Sarah made a bold move to writing and directing film with her debut short, *LA MADRE BUENA (THE GOOD MOTHER)*, which arose to immediate acclaim in Oscar and Bafta-qualifying festivals, receiving 50 wins and nominations.

She is currently working on several projects focusing on unique stories led by strong female characters including the feature film *TWO OLD MAIDS* (producers Serena Armitage and Pietro Greppi), part of the iFeatures 2019/20 development lab run by Creative England and supported by the BFI, BBC Films and ScreenSkills.

*THE BIRTH OF VALERIE VENUS* is Sarah's second short film and has already been selected for the Oscar-qualifying Bermuda Film Festival.

[www.sarahclift.com](http://www.sarahclift.com) // @scliftuk

### **JANE GUERNIER – Valerie**

Jane trained at Middlesex University and with Phillippe Gaulier in Paris. She has worked extensively with movement-based theatre companies Complicite, Told By An Idiot, Scarlet, and Brouhaha and also with Clod, Volcano and Paines Plough.

Theatre includes: *All Night I Dream About Being Good* (The Yard); *And The Horse You Rode In On* and *A Little Fantasy* (Told By An Idiot); *Shelf Life* (National Theatre Wales); *Beauty and the Beast* (Lyric Theatre/Warwick Arts); *Red Ladies* (Clod); *Copenhagen* (Tabard Theatre); *Senora Carrar's Rifles*, *Winners* and *Interior* (all Young Vic); *The Unconquered* (Stellar Quines/ Traverse); *The Last Present* (Polka); *Love & Other Fairy Tales*, *Sisters & Others*, *The Fruit Has Turned To Jam In The Fields* (all Scarlet); *Brand* (RSC/Haymarket); and *The Opium Eaters* (Brouhaha).

Television includes: *Dr Thorne*, *Doctors*, *Dalziel and Pascoe* (BBC); *Murder Prevention* (C5); *Hustle*, and *Passer By* (BBC)

Film includes: *Marigolds* (Zona Pictures – as Award Nominated lead role); *Hello You* (Fecund Films); *Not Waving* (Arcane Pictures) and *Love Juggling* (C4).

## **PAUL HUNTER – Norman**

Paul is co-founder and Artistic Director of *Told By An Idiot*.

Theatre includes: *La Cage aux Folles* (Park Theatre), *Wise Children* (Old Vic/Kneehigh), *Life of Galileo* (Young Vic), *The Little Match Girl*; *The Mystery Plays*; *Much Ado About Nothing*; *Troilus and Cressida*; *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; *Under the Black Flag* (Shakespeare's Globe), *Gaslight* (Northampton), *Tartuffe* (Birmingham Rep), *The Fantasticks* (Duchess Theatre, West End), *Napoleon Disrobed*; *The Fahrenheit Twins*; *Don't Laugh – It's My Life*; *You Haven't Embraced Me Yet*; *I'm So Big*; *On The Verge of Exploding* (Told By An Idiot Tour), *Nocturnal* (The Gate Theatre), *Rapunzel*; *The Red Shoes* (Kneehigh), *Beauty and the Beast* (Belgrade Theatre Coventry), *The Water Engine* (Young Vic/Theatre 503), *Physick Lies-A-Bleeding* (Apothecary Hall), *Oliver Twist*; *Aladdin*; *Pinocchio* (Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith), *Playing the Victim* (Traverse/Royal Court), *The Play What I Wrote* (Wyndham's Theatre/Liverpool Playhouse), *The Firework Maker's Daughter* (Sheffield Crucible), *I Can't Wake Up*; *Happy Birthday*, *Mister Deka D* (Told By An Idiot/Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith/Tour), *Richard III* (English Shakespeare Company), *Twelfth Night*; *Animal Farm* (Northern Stage), *Les Enfants Du Paradis* (RSC), *The Servant of Two Masters* (Sheffield Crucible), *Baldy Hopkins* (The Right Size), *The Wasp Factory* (Glasgow Citizens Theatre), *Popeye* (David Glass Ensemble).

Film and TV includes: *Bridgerton*, *Quiz*, *The Birth of Valerie Venue*, *Midsomer Murders*, *Still Open All Hours*, *Denial*, *This Beautiful Fantastic*, *Pan*, *Marvellous*, *Cinderella*, *Maleficent*, *Wizards vs. Aliens*, *Snow White and the Huntsman*, *Pirates of the Caribbean*, *One Day*, *Trinity*, *After You've Gone*, *Absolute Power*, *The Only Boy For Me*, *Tunnel of Love*, *Mitchell and Kenyon*, *Black Books*, *Hardware*, *Everything I Know About Men*, *My Family*, *Music at the Close*, *Absurd*, *Vertical Hold*, *Hanging Around*.

## **SERENA ARMITAGE AND PIETRO GREPPI – Producers**

Joined by a common interest in stories of outsiders and visionary talent, Serena Armitage and Pietro Greppi are developing several projects together. Their combined slate includes Sarah Clift's feature debut *TWO OLD MAIDS* via the iFeatures programme and a feature adaptation of

Laura Kaye's novel ENGLISH ANIMALS with director Claire Oakley and writer Emily Marcuson, supported by the BFI.

THE BIRTH OF VALERIE VENUS is their first completed production together.

Serena spent a decade making programs for ITV, including the BAFTA nominated 'For The Love Of Dog's, before winning an Academy Award for producing Benjamin Cleary's short film 'Stutterer' in 2016. In the same year, she set up Red Breast Productions, and the company received slate funding through the prestigious BFI Vision Award. To date, Red Breast has produced a Film London funded short 'FOG' with the team behind 'Stutterer' and a TV pilot 'Bored' directed by Georgia Oakley, selected to have its world premiere at SXSW2020. Serena is also developing an LGBTQ drama with writer / director Chika Anadu, backed by BBC Films.

[www.redbreastproductions.com](http://www.redbreastproductions.com) // @redbreastfilms

Pietro produced Andrew Steggall's BFI-funded debut Departure, starring Juliet Stevenson and Alex Lawther, and Giacomo Cimini's award-winning short The Nostalgist. He has developed projects with partners including The Wellcome Trust, Ingenious and Creative England and executive-produced three debuts due for release in 2020/21: Camille Griffin's Silent Night, starring Keira Knightley, produced by Marv and Maven Pictures; Marley Morrison's Sweetheart, funded by Film London's Microwave scheme; and Eliza Schroeder's Love Sarah, starring Celia Imrie. Pietro began his career across sales, finance and distribution at Magnolia Pictures in New York and Goldcrest in London. His company, Lunapark Pictures, was selected for a BFI Vision Award in 2020.

## **BFI NETWORK**

BFI NETWORK exists to support, develop and champion new filmmakers looking to kick-start their career.

Made possible through National Lottery funding, they collaborate with film organisations and leading cultural venues across the UK to provide short film and early feature development funding, industry-backed professional development and networking support to producers, writers and directors of all ages.

## **MADREFOCA – Executive Producers**

Madrefoca is an internationally awarded production company based in Mexico City and Los Angeles that creates content for film and advertising. It was created in 2012 by Jorge Aguilera, Alejandro Saevich, and Vanessa Hernández.

Madrefoca has twice been named *Mexico's Production Company of the Year* at *Circulo de Oro*, Mexico's premiere advertising awards. In 2016, Madrefoca produced Sarah Clift's short film *La Madre Buena*. The film was shot in and around Mexico City. It screened at Academy and BAFTA recognised film festivals and received 50 wins and nominations including a BIFA long list, BFI Postroom Pick, Gold Cannes Young Director Award, Shots New Director of the Year, Free the Bid New Director and New Filmmakers LA Best Screenplay. The film received high profile coverage including The New York Times, BBC World News, BuzzFeed and Huffington Post.

In 2018, Madrefoca produced *Mamartuile*, directed by Alejandro Saevich. The film has screened at more than 80 film festivals including Clermont-Ferrand, Palm Springs and Biarritz and was an Oscar contender for 2020. It won best short film (Golden Hugo) at the Chicago International Film Festival, and was nominated for best short film at the Ariel Awards, Mexico's Academy Awards. The film was picked up by HBO for viewing on their platform.

In 2019, Madrefoca co-financed *The Birth of Valerie Venus*, Sarah Clift's second short film, with the British Film Institute (BFI).

### **SAFITRI WIDAGDO – Executive Producer**

Safitri Widagdo appreciates women's work and representation across various storytelling media.

She took an active interest in film in 2019 by collaborating with producer Pietro Greppi to support *The Birth of Valerie Venus* along with two feature debuts: Eliza Schroeder's *Love Sarah* and Michelle Antoniadis' *Sweetheart*.

### **JONAS MORTENSEN – Director of Photography**

Originally from Denmark and now based in London, Jonas Mortensen began his journey at film school, lighting shorts and art films before progressing into commercials, music videos and a wealth of feature documentaries.

His Short Film "Cowboy Dave" directed by Colin O'Toole won a BAFTA for Best Short Film in 2018.

Most memorable from his collection of documentaries is his feature length "Ole, Ole, Ole, A Trip Across Latin America - The Rolling Stones" directed by Paul Dugdale and more recently "Rude Boy - The Story of Trojan Records" a feature drama documentary directed by Nicholas Jack Davies out of Pulse focusing on the origins and ongoing love affair between Jamaican and British Youth Culture.

Jonas continues to shoot a strong combination of long and short form, including edgy music videos, fashion work and slick car commercials for the likes of Pulse, Indy 8, Giant Owl, Movie Magic and Fat Lemon.

### **JOHN MAYES AND BETH ROBERTS – Editors**

John Mayes has been editing for over 25 years and in 1999 John and his business partner opened the doors to Marshall Street Editors, one of London's leading film editing companies.

John's work has won many Awards over the years, notably a world class PROMAX, British Arrows and Creative Circle award. He is a member of D&AD and has had work included in the book over many years. John's commercial work has included many top brands including, Adidas, British Airways, M&S, Tesco, McDonalds, giffgaff and Aldi to name but a few, being one of the team responsible for the 'birth' of Kevin The Carrot. John was one of the most sought-after music editors of the Brit Pop era, working with bands such as Blur, Pulp, Oasis and artists such as Fat Boy Slim to Led Zeppelin. As well as commercials and music videos, John enjoys working on longer form drama and short films. His longer form work of note includes Agatha Christie's 'Death On The Nile', BBC2's 'Bad Boy Blues' starring Clive Owen and premiering at The Edinburgh Film Festival and Channel 4's 'Psychos' for director Andy Wilson; a challenging drama set in the psychiatric ward of a Glasgow Hospital. He cut 'La Madre Buena' a short film with Director Sarah Clift that won over 50 awards.

Beth Roberts is an up and coming video editor, specialising in music and branded content. Beth has worked with the likes of Vice, BuzzFeed, Kode Media, Agile Films and Marshall Street Editors to name a few, working with artists and brands such as Ella Henderson, Rihanna, Fickle Friends, Gibson, Furla, Desperados and more.

### **KEVIN SARGENT– Composer**

Kevin Sargent is a composer and multi-instrumentalist best known for his score to CRUSH (Film4). KILLING JOE which he scored was nominated for an Academy Award. Many of his television scores have been nominated in music categories for top awards: including a BAFTA for THE HOUR (BBC), RTS for MAPP & LUCIA (BBC), Music+Sound Awards for THE WRONG MANS and WE'LL TAKE MANHATTAN and an Ivor Novello for A WASTE OF SHAME. Other scores include RATBURGER (Sky), KATY (CBBC), BALLET SHOES (BBC) and ORDINARY LIES (BBC).

After signing to A&M and Elektra Records for three albums with influential band THRASHING DOVES, he was a founder member of The Hurricane Club comedy improvisation group in London's West End for many years. Naxos has released his recordings as joint soloist in the Malcolm Arnold double piano concertos with the Ulster Orchestra.

### **SOFIA STOCCO – Production Designer**

Sofia is a production designer focusing on work in independent British film. Twice nominated for design awards, her recent work includes: 'Makeup', screened at BFI Flare festival and selected by Artificial Eye, CURZON cinemas and BBC for release and distribution; 'Real', premiering at London Film Festival; 'The Flood', which received 4 star reviews from The Times & The Independent as well as Time Out and 'The Isle', released in cinemas in the US and the UK. Recently, Sofia set decorated two films: 'Amulet' screening at Sundance 2020, 'Mogul Mowgli' winner of Critics award at Berlinale 2020.

Sofia is committed to homegrown British cinema and has worked with independent filmmakers across the British isles, in Scotland, Ireland, Wales and England.

Alongside her design work Sofia is passionate about supporting women in film. She has worked on many projects led by women including, most recently, 'A Battle of Waterloo' for the Bumble and Female Film Force initiative, a film that explores lives of secret female soldiers in British army in 1815.



# CREDITS

BFI NETWORK & Madrefoca Present	
A Production from Lunapark Pictures & Red Breast Productions	
A film by Sarah Clift	
The birth of Valerie Venus	
Starring	Jane Guernier Paul Hunter
Written & Directed by	Sarah Clift
Produced by	Serena Armitage Pietro Greppi
Executive Producers	Jorge Aguilera Vanessa Hernandez Alejandro Saevich
Executive Producers	Sarah Clift Safitri Widagdo
Valerie Venus Norman Venus Mr. Hughes Mr. Gluten-free Golf Twin Rob Golf Twin Bob Golf Tea Guests	Jane Guernier Paul Hunter Paul White Christopher Poke Ant Griffith Alastair Evans Gordon Phellim Kelly Anthony Williams Jason Yip Alfred Brown Gino Picciano

	<p>Mohd Aslam Andrew McCarthy</p>
<p>Director of Photography Edited by Casting Director Composer Production Designer Costume Designer Hair &amp; Make-up Designer</p>	<p>Jonas Mortensen John Mayes &amp; Beth Roberts Irene Cotton Kevin Sargent Sofia Stocco Hannah Glossop Stephanie Lynne Smith</p>
<p>Line Producer 1st Assistant Director Production Coordinator Production Runner Floor Runner Script Supervisor Focus Puller Clapper Loader Grip Gaffer Sparks  Lighting Trainee</p>	<p>Jack Knott Jonay Sevillano Regalado Eszter Telegdy James Godfrey Danny Rumbelow Shaida Kazemi Matt Farrant Robyn Skead Liam Hartney John Burke John Wenman Paul Bremner Ana Krkljus Mark Packman Josie Williams Carmen Pellon Brussosa</p>
<p>Production Mixer 1st Assistant Sound Art Director Set Decorator Make-Up and Hair Assistant Costume Assistant Digital Imaging Supervisor DIT</p>	<p>Cassandra Rutledge Declan Chew Laura Lily Smith Eliora Darmon Bob Garbutt Eryl Davies Alix Milan Anton Badstuber Vincenzo Onorato</p>
<p>VFX Producer Colourist Flame Artist Edit Supervisor Music Supervisor Sound Supervision &amp; Sound Mix Sound Design &amp; Sound Mix</p>	<p>Chris Anthony Jessica Vile Tim Greenwood Beanie Goldsmith Rebecca Grierson Jack Sedgwick Lauren Cooper</p>

<p>Sound Producer  Music Score Recorded &amp; Mixed by  Violin  Cello  Piano &amp; Accordion  Title &amp; Poster Design</p>	<p>Beth Tomblin  Steve Parr  David Juritz  Nicholas Holland  Kevin Sargent  Louise Sloper</p>
<p>Development Producer</p> <p>For BFI NETWORK</p> <p>Head of BFI NETWORK  Development Executive  BFI NETWORK Coordinator  Production Manager</p> <p>Script Editor  Storyboard Artist</p>	<p>Harriet Harper-Jones</p> <p>Jessica Loveland  Jessica Jones  Caragh Davison  Iris Cohen</p> <p>Theresa Boden  Adrián Murguía</p>
<p>Catering  Insurance  Camera Equipment  Lighting Equipment  Edit Facility  Sound Facility  Music Supervision  Post Facility  Walkie Talkies  DIT Services  Props</p>	<p>Leon Rothera Honest Foods  Gareth Graham at Performance  Media  Movietech Camera Rentals  Panalux  Marshall Street Editors  Wave Studios  64 Music  Framestore  WaveEnd Radios  We Love Hue  Superhire  Scenery Salvage</p>
<p>“It’s Illegal, It’s Immoral, or It Makes You Fat”  Written by Gary Bruce, Ken Hecht, Wally Griffin  Published by Barton Music Corp (ASCAP) © 1957  Performed by The Beverley Sisters  Courtesy of Decca Records. Under licence from Universal Music Operations  Limited.</p>	
<p>Special Thanks To</p> <p>Ian Benson</p>	

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Matias Penachino  
Sarah & Pete Dawson  
Max & Tricia Cliff  
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Laura Kaye  
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Sarah Poland  
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Sarah Giles  
Greg Turner

Logos:

Madrefoca  
BFI NETWORK  
MSE.TV  
Wave  
Sixty Four Music  
Red Breast  
Clever Mule  
Framestore

#ValerieVenusFilm  
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Filmed on location in London

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