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## **SERIES OVERVIEW**

Born in Bristol, England in 1904, to parents Elsie and Elias, Archie narrates the story of a young Archibald Alexander Leach's troubled childhood and how extreme poverty, his father's adultery and the loss of his older brother, John, tore the family apart and sent his loving mother into a downward spiral of grief and depression.

Jeff Pope's scripts reveal how deceit, cruelty and one, overpowering lie shaped Archie's life.

At 14 he auditioned for the music hall act, the Bob Pender Troupe, a band of acrobats, stilt walkers, clowns and comedians after seeing them perform at the Bristol Hippodrome. Lean and athletic, he learned the art of stilt walking, and when the troupe went on tour to the US, teenage Archie was intoxicated by the land of opportunity. Believing he was not wanted by his family in the UK, he decided to stay in the US to try to make his way in showbusiness.

Despairing of a career on stage, a chance meeting with the comedian George Burns helped him find his first footing on the acting ladder and a contract with a movie studio who felt he needed to change his name, and Cary Grant was born.

The drama intercuts with scenes from 1961 when at the height of his fame, living in Benedict Canyon, Los Angeles, the legendary actor was breaking all box office records, but desperately unhappy in his private life.

With two failed marriages behind him, he began to woo an actress he'd seen on a TV show, Dyan Cannon. Thirty-three years his junior, Dyan, didn't initially fall for his charms turning down his attempts to meet, because she didn't feel they could ever be a match.

Dashingly handsome, suave and sophisticated, Cary continued to pursue her, with introductions to his famous friends, until they eventually wed in Las Vegas in 1965.



## **EPISODIC SYNOPSES**

### **EPISODE 1**

58-year-old Cary Grant is lonely in Los Angeles and on his third divorce. We flash back to his troubled childhood as Archie Leach in Victorian Bristol with a bullying father and a mother grieving for the loss of his older brother. After Archie's father, Elias, tells him his mother is dead and sends him to live with his grandmother, Archie finds a new '*family*' with the Pender Troupe - acrobats playing at the Bristol hippodrome. We follow teenage Archie as he journeys to New York with the Pender Troupe and his thrill at performing to an audience. He falls in love with the vibrancy of America and its people and when it's time to go home, he refuses because he has nothing to go back for.

Meanwhile in 1962, Cary Grant, now the most famous film star in the world, is captivated by a beautiful young actress called Dyan Cannon, who he first sees on television. Enlisting the help of his agent Stanley Fox to find her, he finally persuades Dyan to meet him at his bungalow on the Universal Studios lot. Dyan provides the breath of fresh air he needs with her infectious laughter and beautiful smile. While filming '*North by Northwest*' with Alfred Hitchcock, Cary confesses that he has fallen in love again. Cary invites Dyan to his house in Benedict Canyon where they laugh and sing a duet - and she experiences his idiosyncratic dining habits. But she is taken back when he announces he doesn't want children, he wouldn't want to bring them into his world.



### **EPISODE 2**

Twenty-something Archie Leach is struggling to make his way in New York when a chance encounter with comedian George Burns leads him to audition for a play starring screen actress Fay Wray. After receiving rave reviews on Broadway, Archie travels to Hollywood with his girlfriend Virginia Cherril.



Virginia is the one with the screen test but Archie's good looks soon get attention. He signs a deal with Paramount Studios and is given a new name – Cary Grant. Strolling through the studio, he is spotted by screen icon Mae West and on-the-spot she chooses him to play opposite her in '*She Done Him Wrong*'.

Years later, the now successful movie star Cary Grant wakes up with a hangover and an unexpected call from his father. Elias summons him to Bristol where he finally confesses that his mother Elsie, is not dead. She's been in Fishponds lunatic asylum all this time after he'd committed her and run off with another woman. Cary is beyond furious that his father could have done such a thing to both him and his mother. Cary goes to Fishponds where his mother has become an old lady with no idea that her son is now a famous movie star.

Meanwhile in the 1960s, Cary's relationship with Dyan Cannon falters. When he takes her to a party at the Hitchcock mansion, Dyan tells him she wants commitment - marriage and children - and she doesn't want to be with someone who doesn't want that. With the help of some relationship advice from Grace Kelly, Cary persuades Dyan to join him at his place in Palm Springs and romance finally starts to blossom.



### **EPISODE 3**

Cary takes Dyan to the beautiful apartment he has bought for his mother in Clifton, Bristol, and introduces her to Elsie – now in her 70s. He has purchased a completely new wardrobe for Dyan full of tasteful but slightly middle-aged designer clothes. But Elsie does not take to Dyan, deliberately calling her Betsy, the name of Cary's previous wife, and humiliating her when Dyan tries to paint Elsie's nails. Elsie is clearly jealous of Cary having another woman in his life. The encounter brings Cary and Dyan closer together and they make love for the first time, but Cary doesn't want to take any chances with pregnancy.





Back in Los Angeles, Dyan moves in with him but their relationship falters as he finds fault with her dress sense and love of partying. She also hates his use of LSD as a form of therapy and the way he encourages her to take it with him. Dyan appears on the Danny Kaye television show, where she is well received and performs a beautiful song. However, Cary is not impressed and not happy with the afterparty in his home. Dyan overhears Cary and his agent Stanley Fox discussing whether he is too old to be in a movie with Audrey Hepburn, but Dyan says Audrey is older than her! Cary says his screen persona and real life are different, but Dyan is starting to feel oppressed by his lifestyle in comparison to hers. She leaves him.

This is the wakeup call Cary needs and when she refuses to answer his calls, he makes a very public proposal of marriage during her acting class. She accepts but a few months later, she has a different surprise for him: He's going to be a father.



#### **EPISODE 4**

Cary is still worried about commitment but he and Dyan get married and he is thrilled with the arrival of his first and only child – Jennifer. However, he is still trying to control Dyan and cracks begin to show in their marriage as she wants to pursue her own acting career. After one final clash, Dyan leaves him – for good this time – taking Jennifer with her. But as the pain of the break-up finally settles down, Dyan is offered a play on Broadway and she asks Cary if he will look after their daughter while she is away. Spending time with Jennifer provides the family security he always craved and he retires from his stellar acting career to become a stay-at home dad.



Several years later he is on business in London working as the face of a friend's perfume and make-up company, when he meets Barbara Harris, who is helping him with PR. Cary and Barbara bond over their love of fish and chips and a quiet life and as their loves grows, after much soul-searching he asks his now teenage daughter Jennifer whether it would be ok if he and Barbara got married.

Meanwhile 82-year-old Cary Grant is performing a series of theatre shows where he tells the audience about his life and answers their questions. He admits his 'Audience with Cary Grant' is turning into a therapy session as he talks about later life with his domineering mother, how he loved Dyan Cannon as best as he could and how he never knew whether Elsie accepted the person he had become. Looking back on his life he realises that it was fatherhood that gave him a purpose. Archie Leach made up Cary Grant, the perfect movie star. But Cary Grant didn't know how to be happy away from his film sets. He tells the audience that Jennifer has provided the peace and security he has been craving all his life, and that he has finally introduced Archie Leach to Cary Grant and the two of them 'get along just fine'.





## **CHARACTER BIOGRAPHIES**

### **CARY GRANT (Jason Isaacs)**

Cary Grant is the biggest movie star of the Golden Age of Hollywood, having featured in over 70 films regularly working alongside directors such as Alfred Hitchcock, Stanley Donen and Howard Hawks. Having worked alongside some of the most beautiful actresses, including Sophia Loren, Marilyn Monroe, Grace Kelly and Audrey Hepburn, Cary's life, from the outside, is perfect. But by the 1960s he has two failed marriages behind him and he is about to embark on a high-risk new relationship.

But before Cary Grant, there was Archie Leach. A young boy born into a harsh-life of poverty in Bristol, England, who couldn't have grown up further from the glitz and glamour of Hollywood. Archie must work his way up through the British music hall circuit, across the Atlantic to New York and Broadway, and then finally into Hollywood, all the while trying not to let his tortuous past catch up with him.

### **DYAN CANNON (Laura Aikman)**

Dyan Cannon is a breath of fresh air. Her laugh is infectious, her beauty unmatched. No wonder that Cary Grant, the biggest star in Hollywood and confirmed ladies' man, can't take his eyes off her.

New to California and the bright lights of Hollywood, Dyan is driven and focused on making it on her own - to become a star in her own right. But when she meets Cary to discuss a potential movie, she is quickly swept off her feet and falls passionately in love with him.

But he's more than 30 years older than her and inevitably has a controlling attitude towards her. It is now up to Dyan to keep balance in her life, to continue working hard to fulfill her dreams of a successful career, and to maintain a happy home-life with Cary.

### **ELSIE LEACH (Harriet Walter)**

Elsie was born into upper-middle class Bristol, England and enjoyed a genteel childhood. But when she married Elias Leach, a man from the working-classes, her life lurched into poverty.

Attempting to raise her children with next to no money, Elsie's mental health deteriorated. And with the untimely death of one of her children throwing her into despair, Elsie's husband Elias - already conducting an extra-marital affair - cynically has her committed to a mental asylum.

Abandoned by her husband, and with her only remaining son Archie having been told by Elias that she is dead, Elsie faces the prospect of living out the rest of her years behind bars, alone.



## **INTERVIEWS**

### **JASON ISAACS – CARY GRANT**

#### **What were your thoughts when you heard about this role?**

My initial thought was only an idiot would take this part, that anyone with half a brain would run in the opposite direction. It was obviously impossible to play the icon who was the biggest star in the world for nearly thirty years and who's still legendary for being the very epitome of suave, lady-killing manliness. What was Jeff Pope thinking coming up with the idea? He'd written so many brilliant things in the past, why had he lost his mind now?

Then I read his script and wondered why I'd doubted him, that wasn't the story he was telling at all. The more I researched and, eventually, the more people I spoke to who knew Cary, the clearer it became that '*Cary Grant*' was fiction. A creation, that the abused and abandoned Archie Leach was nothing like him. He'd spent most of his adult life relentlessly searching for relief from the childhood demons that never stopped haunting him. For proof that he was worth loving. That his behaviour off screen, his emotional dysfunction, his broken marriages, were all symptoms of deep and open wounds. He didn't just want to be the biggest star in the world, he needed to be and applied all his street-learned guile to make it happen. He thought the love of half the planet might fix him and, of course, when he got it, the thing he thought would help, it just made things considerably worse. He trusted no-one and to nothing. In many ways success made him even more anxious, obsessive, and insecure and whilst he couldn't control himself or his instincts in any way there was one thing he could control; his image. So, he directed an enormous amount of his uneducated brilliance at curating and protecting his brand, building '*Cary Grant*'. The gap between the private and public person seemed to me to be enormous. The secret, conflicted layers of his personality, was something incredibly playable and a feast that any actor would jump at. So, I said yes. I said yes thanks and ran at it full tilt.

#### **So, it was a scary prospect?**

Scary and exciting are the same thing, they are the same adrenaline. I was comfortable with the fact I could never be Cary Grant, because even *he* struggled to play Cary Grant anywhere but on film. Despite our incredible make-up and hair department I'm never going to be, as Dyan Cannon described him to me '*The most beautiful man in any room. So beautiful that nobody could take their eyes off him, men or women.*' I knew I needed the willing participation of the audience. For them to come along for the ride. If they could imagine the outer Cary, I'd do my best to show them the inner Archie.

I was also aware that some fans of the legend might be surprised or upset by being shown where and how their hero had feet of clay, but that's one of the reasons to tell the story. In today's connected world, fame is an even bigger religion than Andy Warhol predicted and it's important to remind ourselves that people who appear to have it all are often wrestling with all the same things - or worse - as we are.





The other thing that took this far away from the mimicry that could have been intimidating was knowing that Paul Andrew Williams was directing. I've admired his storytelling skills for a long time - he and I nearly worked together a couple of times previously - and it's his third collaboration with Jeff. I knew that, in his hands, it would be far from a traditional biopic and, sure enough, he brought a welcome creative chaos to the story. Nobody's mind works in a chronological and ordered way and Paul played with the timelines and exchanging the actors across the generations in ways that were continually surprising and revealing, partly to reflect the way an old man looking back on his life would think and feel. Especially, an old man whose brain was failing and who had taken psychedelic drugs in his time. This was never a traditional biopic, anyway, but in Paul's hands it became even more of an exploration of a man's inner life.

### **How did you prepare ahead of filming?**

As many different ways as I could: firstly, I started by rewatching many of Cary Grant's films, but they really weren't that much use in terms of playing Archie: it's all a construct - except for his bandy legs and tendency to turn his whole body instead of just his head when he was looking at something. You could see the progression from a stiff, eager young man who was a vaudeville light comedian, a carnival barker, and an acrobat through to someone who, eventually, after stealing different elements from various actors he admired. A head turn from one, a single hand in a pocket from another etc., mastering the craft, medium and the rhythm required of film.

In some ways it was more instructive to register what parts he was playing. At first, he was doing the movies they made him do and, later, the films and the roles he could choose and develop. The films he didn't do are also quite instructive, the parts he turned away from, often Oscar-winning, either because he didn't think the fans would accept him that way or because it would muddy the brand. He built, evolved, and polished his screen persona perfectly. By the end, all his films had something similar at the core, albeit the stories and situations were completely different. He's always unflappably cool and sophisticated and a young woman (by the end of his career, younger than him by decades), tries repeatedly to seduce him. After multiple attempts, he reluctantly concedes. They were all fun to watch, but little to no use at showing me what he was like at home, dealing with a failing marriage and the ghosts of his past. Who he was when the mess was showing?

Then I read all the biographies I could find, many of which are meticulously researched and contain treasure troves of fantastic anecdotes and testimonies, albeit that they're often controversial and, also, contradictory. He was so many different things to so many people. So generous and yet so tight-fisted, so full of rage and yet so often helplessly, obsessively in love. So sure of what he wanted and yet so insecure about so much.

Jennifer, Cary's daughter, was amazingly candid and helpful and very graciously shared not just stories but an archive of video footage and audio recordings of Cary in unguarded, playful moods, far from a camera (except his own) and every inch the dad. She obviously only knew him as his daughter, but that was a valid and authentic slice of who he is, or who he was to her. It was also an indication of what he thought about childhood and parenting, what he'd missed out on as a child and what he was determined to correct. Most informatively for the period we cover, I spoke at length to his former wife, Jennifer's mother, Dyan Cannon. Dyan was amazingly open and shared many things that will





remain just between us. I read her book and then she made herself available to talk to me whenever and about whatever I liked, and I liked a fair bit. I was stunned and remain incredibly grateful for how candid and vulnerable she made herself, how nothing was off limits, and, also how insightful she is.

Lastly and unavoidably, I had to work on the voice. That famous, utterly idiosyncratic voice that's actually mostly remembered not for itself, but for Tony Curtis's parody of it in *'Some Like It Hot'*. It surprised me when Jennifer told me that he corrected her pronunciation a lot, insisting that she pronounce things the *'proper, English way'*, but after breaking down the sounds phonetically in a bunch of the films, it was clear that he was *'putting on'* an American accent for some of them and less so for others. On film, he also had a consistently similar delivery, an almost identical speech pattern that made him delicious prey for impressionists but was so constructed and contrived that I knew it wasn't the voice he used at breakfast or when angry or upset. I was desperate to find a candid recording of him just talking but none existed - no talk shows, no impromptu speeches etc.

Finally, and in some ways most importantly, I tracked down a man who, as a student journalist, had secretly recorded a phone interview in Cary's final year, 1986, after Cary insisted he mustn't record it. Or rather, his friend did to give him his due. He'd never played it to anyone out of a sense of guilt and responsibility but, after a little persuasion and a lot of begging, generously shared it with me for the duration of filming. It was a real revelation. I heard so much that I'd been craving, in the content of his answers, yes, but mostly in the tone. His familiar certainty was absent, even with a 22-year-old film fan, to be replaced by a man who wanted to be understood, to correct misconceptions, who could be plaintive, irritable, and unsure. Who thought, in retrospect, that acting was kind of silly and that the greatest quality to admire in any performer (Grace Kelly, in this instance) was that they were *'relaxed'*. Someone who had finally come to a place in his life where everything was pretty much how he wanted it. I heard many things that I hadn't found anywhere else and, ultimately, I heard peace.

### **What story does *'Archie'* tell?**

It's a look behind the curtain at one of the most famous movie stars of all time, at the very peak of his powers, beloved by hundreds of millions of people, wildly successfully on every front, living his and everybody's dream and how that doesn't tell you one single thing about him. Archie Leach had an alcoholic, violent, abusive father who abandoned him, his older brother died, he lost his very critical, controlling, depressed mother early and his alcoholic grandmother completely neglected even to feed him. Archie had to completely erase his past and invent his future by being whatever people needed him to be. Thematically, it's about the damage the past can destroy you if you don't deal with it properly. Once he was famous, he did press interviews when he had to, and they were always bland. He would happily parade the fact he had been poor, a stilt walker and so on. He loved telling people the story of where he came from and would just trot out the same four or five entertaining facts in a charming and amusing way.

What he never talked about was how lonely and desperate he had been. How close he had been to falling through the cracks of life. What it was like to be starving. Or the things he'd had to do to survive. That he was still haunted by nightmares that woke him up screaming and crying.

### **What was it like working with Laura Aikman, who plays Dyan Cannon?**



Laura is amazing. She's not just a magnificent actress, always emotionally present and nimble, but funny as hell and with incredibly honest instincts. She can literally do anything. All of that being quite apart from the sheer good fortune that she looks a lot like Dyan Cannon. I'm a huge fan.

**He became a style icon and was very particular about the clothes he wore.**

His father pressed clothes and had given Archie advice that stuck with him – that you are judged first by your clothes. Being poor, they revered the rich people with nice clothes. Like in many other areas of his life, Cary Grant was absolutely obsessive about where he got his clothes from.

One surprising thing I found out was that right up to the 1950s the biggest movie stars in the world were being paid a fortune, but they had to provide their own costumes as part of the contract. Cary Grant mostly used Savile Row tailors in London. His clothes were always a classic cut. Everybody wanted to dress like him, and he took it very seriously. He would send them back if the cuts were a millimetre too long. He spent a fortune and insisted they made things exactly how he wanted them. He also dressed his wives, his accessories, they needed to look right. Dyan found it charming at first, but then it was just another area where Cary had to have absolute control.

All of my clothes for this were handmade by the greatest tailors in the world, many from Savile Row. Every single bump and contour of my body was compensated for or highlighted by these extraordinary artists. Unfortunately, they were made for me on behalf of some of England's brilliant costume houses and they go back into stock.

**Why did Cary stop making films?**

That's up to the audience to decide. There's a version of his life, and I think this is one of the things that attracted Jeff to write the script, where he had a daughter, Jennifer, and decided to give her the full-time attention that he had so badly lacked as a child. I think it's more complicated than that. Sure, Jennifer came along and that changed his life, but it's also true that his career was changing in ways that were difficult to navigate. He often talked about showbiz using the metaphor of a tramcar that you first saw speed by, then got to press your face up against, then crammed into when a door opened and that, eventually, you got a seat and held onto it as long as you could. I think he knew it was his time to get off. It had been a source of great concern to him that he couldn't really play opposite gorgeous young women anymore. In fact, he'd started to make films, *'Walk Don't Run'*, for instance, where he didn't get the girl at all, he helped someone else get her. I think he didn't want to be the thicker-waisted, wrinkly-skinned, older man on screen. He had already shied away from a few strong character parts in his life that went on to win Oscars, so my impression is that he wanted to keep the Cary Grant brand perfect. Ironically, leaving the movie business and entering business was a huge part of what brought him a measure of ease. He was really good at it and didn't miss making films at all.

He hadn't made films for 20 years when he died. He thought his and all films were trivial and that his work would be forgotten. Or at least that's what he said. It's interesting though, that once he started - filling in for a sick friend - to have *'A Conversation with Cary Grant'* in theatres with live audiences, he liked it enough to keep doing it and to do it even after he'd had a stroke. He enjoyed the laughter



and, I suspect, the thought that it did matter to some people who did remember. But to those audiences, seeing an 80-year-old man shuffling on the stage and relishing his stories, their Cary Grant still lived on on-screen as a perfect, handsome, sophisticated, slim, lady-killing man of action and adventure. Just how he wanted it.

## **LAURA AIKMAN – DYAN CANNON**

### **What did you know about Cary Grant before this role?**

I knew who Cary Grant was and that he had originally come from Bristol, but I didn't know the story about Archie Leach and how he became Cary Grant. I like to think of Cary Grant as the Brad Pitt of his day, that's what I always had in my mind. When we filmed the scene where Dyan met Cary for the first time I thought, '*It's like me meeting Brad Pitt.*' I was more familiar with Dyan Cannon because I was a big *Ally McBeal* fan, and she played the Honourable Judge Jennifer 'Whipper' Cone.

As soon as I started watching her, I desperately wanted the part, more than I had wanted a role in a long time. I read Jeff Pope's scripts and thought they were so brilliant. I love Jeff's work and had wanted to work with him for ages. I was also working with Jane Asher at the time who had a good memory of Dyan Cannon, and she said, '*Oh, this is for you.*'

### **Who is Dyan Cannon?**

Dyan Cannon is an actress, the late Cary Grant's fourth wife, and the mother to their daughter Jennifer. When she first met Cary in 1961, she had done a few TV and film roles and was also a singer. Dyan went on to act in some great films as well as write and direct.

### **Did you speak to her about the role?**

We had a lot of phone calls, emails, and texts; we got on great from the beginning. Dyan was so generous and willing to answer anything. She even gave me private information about hers and Cary's relationship, just for me to help with my performance, including little nuggets about their lives that she held back from putting in her book '*Dear Cary*'. That was incredibly helpful.

Dyan would text me all the time when we were filming to say, '*I'm thinking of you,*' or, '*I'm watching the daily rushes*' and, '*I'm loving everything you're doing.*' I couldn't have asked for a more supportive, generous person to play. I'm completely head over heels for Dyan.

Dyan said to me about her younger self, '*Think less, don't be so British and thoughtful in your performance in the very early stages.*' That helped me to be a little more immediate. Dyan is also slightly goofy. In comparison with all the other beautiful women who Cary Grant knew, like Grace Kelly and Audrey Hepburn. What I loved about playing Dyan was she doesn't take herself too seriously. That was also helpful when it came to her relationship with Cary. They have a lot of fun together and he could be quite clownish, she brought that side out in him.



### **How did Cary Grant first come to notice Dyan Cannon?**

Cary first saw Dyan on TV. She was in a 1960s' show called *The Aquanauts/Malibu Run*, which is a bit like a PG *Baywatch*. We recreated a very short scene from that, the costume department designed a similar gingham bikini to one Dyan wore and the hair and makeup department did a great job with the wig. We did a side-by-side picture comparison and got it really close to how Dyan had looked in her role as Diane Hogarth. So having seen Dyan on TV in that, Cary wanted to meet her. She was away in Rome having just finished filming there. She was told, '*Cary Grant wants to meet you*', and she asked if it was just a general meeting or about something specific. She said, '*Well then, unless he's paying for me to fly back and then return to Rome, I'm not coming*', so she kept him waiting.

I think that was a big part of what was so intriguing about Dyan to Cary. She didn't drop everything to come and meet him. Cary said to her there seemed to be something about her which seemed untamable. He told her he would never try to tame her. But then, sadly, that's a foreshadowing of what actually did happen in their relationship.

I think what he fell in love with was the free spirit energy she had. Dyan was not afraid of looking silly and saying what she thought. She was fun and sexy. All of those things he found really appealing. But as the relationship went on, he couldn't handle her independence and ended up stifling it.

### **What happened when they finally met?**

We filmed their first meeting which was in Cary Grant's '*star bungalow*' on the Universal lot in Hollywood. These were very different to the trailers actors have today and were personalised to the star. His bungalow was cool, brightly coloured and had a cheeky bar at the back of it. It was beautiful and substantially bigger than a trailer.

Dyan ended up talking to him for hours. Although she did think it was a work meeting, they obviously got on very well as there was an instant attraction between them. She was 33 years younger than Cary, but Dyan says the age gap never bothered her. Although I think maybe the implicit power imbalance became a problem. He became a kind of father figure and had the say on what they did, where they went and where they didn't go.

As their relationship developed and they got married, he was very exacting about everything. What she wore, how she presented herself and all those things for himself as well. He was certainly quite a controlling man and liked things done a certain way. There's a scene where he has bought Dyan a whole new wardrobe of classic clothes. That actually happened. He did buy her all of these amazing and exclusive things from top designers which she took at face value at the time. But at the same time, he was rebranding her and reshaping how she looked and how the world saw her. So those early things which felt exciting and generous were actually the first signs of those measures of control he had over her.

Costume and make-up did this incredible transition. You see Dyan's free spirit reflected in her early 1960s' clothes and slightly messy hair at the beginning. Then, by the end of her relationship, her hair is in a full set and she's wearing these two-piece suits and tights. So, you see the transformation into



who he wanted her to be by the end of the relationship. Then as they break up, she returns to how she was before.

**Cary Grant was Archie Leach before he found fame. What impact did his past have on him?**

It was probably well over a year before Cary spoke to Dyan about his childhood. He did let her in, in a way he hadn't let many people in before and he did shed light on his past. I think that was a really big deal to her and to him for him to share more about his past.

What's interesting about the story we are telling is all of the problems he experienced in his earlier life are expressed through his relationship with Dyan and his inability to be truly intimate with someone and let his guard down. I think what happened in his younger life explains how he was when he was older.

The amazing thing Dyan has about her is that she is very in the moment. She experiences joy and fun in the moment and is still very much like that, being grateful for every day.

**What about Cary's mother?**

When I read the scripts, I felt like his mother was a horrible woman. Obviously as a consequence of everything that had happened to her, but then when Harriet Walter, who plays Elsie, came on set she was so much more sympathetic to her and wanted to make her softer. It was interesting to see her then take on Elsie, she is absolutely great in this.

Elsie was not a fan of Dyan or, indeed, any of his other wives. By the time Dyan met her, Elsie had been put away in a mental institution in Bristol for almost 30 years. Cary finds out she is still alive, after being told by his father she had died many years ago. Elsie spends the rest of her life wanting to be with Cary all the time, having missed out on so much of his life. He keeps going back to America and abandoning her, which reminds her of everything that has previously happened to her in life.

I think all of the women who came into Cary's life were, in her eyes, the thing that is taking him away from her, so she is pretty hostile towards Dyan and all the other women he meets.

**Cary Grant claimed he never wanted to have children. But changed his mind when he married Dyan. What sort of father was he?**

He seemed so against ever having children, but was really devoted to his daughter Jennifer, who was born when he was 62. He did seem to be a good father, although probably slightly controlling. She wasn't allowed to wear make-up and there were strict rules about what she was allowed to do.

He seemed to be able to have a more successful romantic relationship following Jennifer's birth with his fifth wife Barbara Harris. I don't know if having a child solved something for him or reconciled things he wasn't able to reconcile before.

**How did you approach portraying Dyan's American accent?**





Initially I was trying to do her voice when I was auditioning. Then writer Jeff Pope and director Paul Andrew Williams said, '*You sound too much like her.*' Paul didn't want an impression of her. He wanted my version of Dyan. So, I tried to get as close to what I felt her accent was as possible without impersonating her.

We recreated scenes where Dyan sang on '*The Danny Kaye Show*' and also sang '*Night and Day*' with Cary Grant sitting by his piano at home. Dyan was a very good singer. Among many other things she made a film with Willie Nelson called '*Honeysuckle Rose*' where they played country and western singers.

#### **What was it like working with Jason Isaacs as Cary Grant?**

I was a fan of Jason's before this. Jason is an incredible actor, so I was excited when Paul told me Jason was going to play the role of Cary Grant. He was lovely. When I first met him, he ran up to me, gave me a hug and said he'd been watching everything I've done. He gave me a really warm welcome. I hope you'll see we've got good chemistry on screen together.

#### **And director Paul Andrew Williams?**

I'd wanted to work with Paul since I watched '*A Confession*'. Paul is magic. He's really thoughtful and sensitive. He was an actor so he's brilliant at coming in and giving you notes and ideas. Paul is always interested to hear your take on things and your thoughts.

His creative mind is incredible. We've used a range of different cameras on this. There is footage that looks like home movies, mixing film mediums. As well as everything we had to do on the page, we did some fantasy sequences. I'm sure there was some magic in there from Paul that will end up in the final edit. I found him brilliant to work with.

#### **How do you reflect back on playing Dyan Cannon?**

There have only been three or four parts I've wanted as badly in my career as I wanted this one. This is the first time I've played a real person in depth and to actually have access to that person was incredible. Quite aside from a fascinating story.

There were so many fantastic things about the job. It really was a wonderful experience. I'm so grateful and so happy we got to make it.

### **HARRIET WALTER – ELSIE LEACH**

#### **Why did you want to play Elsie Leach?**

I just trusted the team behind *Archie* because I'd seen their previous work. I always think it's good if a director and a writer know each other well and have a shorthand. Their projects are very varied, so



this was not territory I'd seen Jeff Pope do before. I had no qualms about going in on it because I knew they were a rock-solid team.

**Did you speak to Kara Tointon, who plays the younger Elsie?**

Kara and I met, and we shared quite a lot of stuff. I wanted some things to be clear just in our minds, even if they couldn't always be shown on camera. I was keen that we both understood where much of Elsie's behaviour came from and not to judge her through the lens of today. There is quite a lot of emphasis in the script on how exacting she could be, putting quite a lot of pressure on Archie to live up to some of her social aspirations. But instead of dismissing that as nagging or snobbery, we needed to remember that she had witnessed great poverty in her background, and in the days before the NHS and the Welfare State poverty could lead to absolute destitution with no safety net. She was determined that her son would be equipped to climb out of poverty and better himself. She was strict but her aims were loving. It was tough love.

Luckily Kara and I agreed. It was a great advantage to be able to share our thoughts. We had a shared responsibility to tell Elsie's story.

I also spoke to Elsie's granddaughter Jennifer Grant. She was around the week I was filming and was very helpful. She had very fond memories of Elsie.

**Archie was born into a very different world to today.**

Archie was born in 1904, which was a brutal time in terms of poverty and public health. It was a battle for families like the Leaches just to survive and they lost his older brother through illness and infection. All of this contributed to Elsie's desire for Archie to better himself. It's such an extraordinary story that Archie went from rags to riches as Cary Grant but also a tragic one for Elsie, even after she was rescued from the mental asylum. It is ironic that her son did indeed '*better*' himself but once he had become this massive film star, Cary Grant, the distance between him and his mother was almost impossible to bridge.

Having been abandoned, as he thought, by his mother at an early age he didn't really know how to love her, so she was sort of abandoned all over again. She did make a life for herself, and Archie was very generous to her but there was so much deep damage that couldn't be repaired. I am sure she was very lonely a lot of the time. The tragedy is that if he hadn't become a huge film star, he probably could have just taken his mum in to live with him. But because he moved in the glamorous movie world of Hollywood, Elsie wouldn't have fitted in.

**What sort of mother was the younger Elsie and what influence did she have on Archie?**

He was always very careful in later life about standards of dress and behaviour. Things had to be just right. I think that came from his mother. Also, the fact he lost her when he was so young, having been told she was dead with no clue about the real story and what actually happened, that must have had a deep effect on his ability to trust people, especially women.



Elsie's husband Elias had her committed to a lunatic asylum. It happened to women in those days. If you'd had an extra marital affair, a child out of wedlock, there were all sorts of reasons why women would be put away. You had no rights as a woman. Your husband could just sign you in.

She certainly had what we might call a breakdown when her oldest son died and we suspect the rest of it was Elias wanting to put her away because he had fallen for somebody else. Elsie was very fragile because of what had happened to her other son, but she wasn't insane, she was simply reacting quite sanely to a tragic situation. She was locked up for nearly 30 years and became totally institutionalised. Nobody reported any psychotic incidents while she was there, so she wasn't actually clinically insane at all. Kara had to act out the moment when Elsie was committed and doesn't know what's happening to her. I watched that very distressing scene so that it would become part of 'my' memory of what happened. It becomes very vivid. The actual raw emotion is dealt with by Kara, and it was very helpful and inspiring for me. My main acting challenge was working out how Elsie unfurls from that. How she awakens and comes out of it and adapts to a world that has completely changed. Having previously had everything done for her.

Then she is suddenly living in her own flat where she can do anything she likes. That's quite an adjustment. Plus, her little boy who she last saw when he was 11 is now this film star. It's quite a challenge for an actor to get behind what that could possibly be like. But the writing did a lot of that work for me, and the team were very sympathetic when I had any suggestions.

For Archie to grow up, become Cary Grant and then later find out the truth, I cannot imagine what that would do to somebody.

### **How did you approach playing Elsie?**

To begin with I tried to pace her slow awakening and adjustment to her new reality. It was hard to imagine all those years in the same institution. Her past was like a bad dream that she was waking up from. She had a strange mixture of total naivety about the modern world she was thrown into and a sort of cunningness about how to manipulate Archie. For instance, I think she deliberately pretends to confuse the names of his girlfriends. It is a kind of childish spite, but it stems from jealousy and a fear of abandonment again. When she's unkind to her son's fourth wife Dyan Cannon it's because she's still stuck somewhere else in her mind with her own husband and his affairs. She tended to confuse the grown-up Archie with her husband, therefore any woman in Archie's life was a threat to her. Her husband had done this terrible thing consigning her to a mental institution while he went off with another woman and started a new family. However, she couldn't ever face blaming her husband. It was women who lured men away.

She was unkind to Dyan but when she was presented with a grandchild that reconciled her and things got a bit better.

I hope we found some nice moments when I was able to show another side to Elsie, a bit of warmth or a bit of humour. In general, I do work at finding the reason why people are the way they are, and I want to make it harder for the audience to make simple judgements about them. There is often a fear



underneath people, particularly older women. There's a fear of being abandoned and not being important. I try very hard to mitigate those types of characters when I get asked to play them.

**Cary Grant ruled out ever taking Elsie home to California with him. Why?**

Elsie wasn't an educated woman; she didn't have broad experiences or interests. It would have been very difficult for Cary Grant to live the life he was living in Hollywood with the likes of Katherine Hepburn and Alfred Hitchcock and bring his mother into that situation. It would have inhibited what he could do so he set her up in her own very nice apartment in Bristol. She always wanted to visit him in Hollywood, but I think if she had she would have felt pretty out of place and unhappy.

Archie probably had quite a lot of Elsie in him. Cary Grant writes about how they made one another laugh. You don't really see that in the film. He and his mum had been very close in some ways. He didn't spend that much time with his dad as a kid. Then his dad's new partner didn't want Archie around and his grandmother didn't want him. He was rejected by all sorts of people. For all those years he thought his mother had left him and that she was dead. I think there is something more fundamental about being left by your mother. We tend to be less forgiving of mothers than we are of fathers.

**What did the director Paul Andrew Williams bring to 'Archie'?**

I'm expecting great things from him. He's a wonderful director. Very unusual and individual. He did some quite experimental things. You knew this wouldn't be just another biopic, that he would bring something different to it. I went along with anything he suggested because whatever he does is interesting and we all like a bit of a challenge, to try different things.

**Elsie was described by her son as '*a small, fierce woman*'. How would you sum her up?**

If you are petite, I think it gives you a fierceness, a fight. Your physical attributes dictate quite a lot about how you behave. She wasn't going to go quietly. But, at the same time, what I liked about her was she showed moments of sensitivity and great awareness along with humour, so with what little she had she was a fighter and I admire that.

**And what about the boy called Archie who became Cary Grant?**

Archie Leach's traumatic past never really left him and was the springboard to the rest of his life. He certainly did try to move into another world in a big way. But what is remarkable is that he did maintain a fondness for Bristol and was quite torn about going back there and torn about leaving each time.

He did such a brilliant job creating the world-famous Cary Grant persona and actor while at the same time knowing he had this little Bristolian boy inside him. It took a lot out of him trying to reconcile those two. He needed to work through various therapies in order to get his past into a workable perspective, for his own peace of mind. His were unbelievably exceptional circumstances and somehow, he managed to salvage enough from his wrecked childhood, through to the surreal world



of massive celebrity and arrive at a place of some kind of calm. That is a totally remarkable achievement.

## **JEFF POPE – WRITER/EXECUTIVE PRODUCER**

### **How did 'Archie' originate?**

I was at an airport looking for something to read on a flight home and saw a book written by Jennifer Grant, Cary Grant's daughter. Just reading the blurb I realised there was something I didn't know, which is when he was still one of the biggest stars in Hollywood with a massive career, he gave it all up to become a stay-at-home dad - a single father, and I was quietly stunned.

I realised I didn't know he'd had a child and that he had given his career up for her. So, I read the book and that made me want to read more and it led me to Dyan Cannon. I knew her from her work but didn't realise she had been married to Cary Grant.

I then read Dyan's book and went to meet her in Los Angeles. That's when what I call a kind of Dickensian story emerged. The story of Cary Grant's life is a story that Dickens could have written. A young boy is told his mum is dead, runs away, becomes a huge global movie star and then discovers decades later that, actually, his mum is still alive. That's when the pieces fell into place.

Really 'Archie' is a story about a traumatic childhood. The scars from which were visited on him in later life. It didn't matter that he was Cary Grant and world famous. The point is that what happened to him as a child messed him up.

Cary made his name in what were called *screwball comedies* and as a romantic lead. Then along comes Alfred Hitchcock who spots something in him, a darkness. He then casts him in these quite deep, dark, complex thrillers: '*To Catch a Thief*', '*North by Northwest*' and '*Notorious*'.

The mists parted and I suddenly thought, '*This traumatic childhood in Bristol is what Hitchcock must have seen in his eyes*'. That's why Alfred Hitchcock thought this romantic lead who played in light comedies could be at the centre of dark, complex thrillers.

### **How did the project develop?**

I was in Los Angeles for the movie '*Philomena*' and the hotel I was staying at was close to where Dyan Cannon, Cary Grant's fourth wife, lived. So, I just took the plunge and said, '*Can I come and talk to you?*'

Dyan and Cary's daughter Jennifer loved both of her parents. But she's very protective of her dad. Yet Dyan's book does talk about some of the issues with Cary, most notably his use of LSD and the fact he was much older than her. He was in his late 50s and she was in her mid-20s and therefore he liked to control their relationship. It was quite dark, there was a messy split and it had quite a profound impact on Dyan's mental health.





Dyan was eager to talk, and we got on really well. While Jennifer was much more circumspect and guarded. She's done little bits and pieces of documentaries but never really done a proper in-depth piece about her father. Our relationship formed over a couple of years. Gradually we got to know and trust each other. What was important to Jennifer was that people understood her father.

She was protective of him. But it wasn't about whitewashing or trying to always show him in the best light. Jennifer acknowledged his flaws and those parts of his life which were unsavoury. But more importantly than anything was the fact he was no longer around, and she wanted to make sure it was accurate, which was music to my ears. In my background of making dramas based on real stories, that is a journalistic imperative. So, we wanted the same thing. I didn't want to mess around with the truth. I wanted to tell it like it happened too.

### **Who else did you speak to?**

I also met his fifth and final wife Barbara Harris, a lovely woman, in Benedict Canyon, near Beverley Hills in California. She had just redeveloped their house there from a quite modest bungalow into a stunning villa.

Barbara comes in right at the end of our story. What she helped me with was Cary after his and Dyan's Cannon's daughter Jennifer was born. That was a very stressful time for Dyan and her and Cary and fought a lot. When the paternity lawsuits, childcare and so on were finally resolved, Barbara was able to give me an insight into the peaceful last decade of his life.

### **Did Jennifer Grant visit the set?**

Jennifer flew over from Los Angeles to Liverpool and spent a week on set. I think she found it weird, exhilarating, frightening, fun... all of those things. But ultimately, she was very glad she visited.

There was an amazing day where I went with Jennifer to Bristol and we visited some of the key locations in her father's life and in her grandmother's life. The most extraordinary was the house where he was born in a back street of Bristol. There's a blue plaque on the wall so we knew we'd got the right house. I'd also researched it beforehand and looked at it myself just to get a sense of where in the city he came from.

I took a photo of Jennifer in front of it, and said, *'I'm going to knock on the door. Are you OK with that?'* And she went, *'OK.'* There was a lovely elderly lady who lives there now. I said, *'We're making a drama about Cary Grant.'* She invited Jennifer in, and it was a magical hour or so. Jennifer looked around her dad's old bedroom, the parlour and garden, remembering the things he had talked about. Jennifer is quite spiritual, and she found it fascinating to see what his view would have been from his bedroom window and so on. It was just a wonderful afternoon.

Cary Grant began his career at the Bristol Hippodrome. We were walking past the back entrance and that hasn't changed since his day. You suddenly got this view of the back street entrance to this



Victorian theatre which her father would have used. Jennifer got this great vibe of, *'This is exactly what he would have seen roughly a hundred years ago.'*

There were also some tough moments for her. We visited the former Fishponds Mental Asylum, which is now a student campus but was the asylum where her grandmother Elsie was committed.

### **What was life like for the young Archie in Bristol?**

Archie was born in 1904. In that era - pre-First World War - where every day was a struggle to eat and stay warm to begin with. It was a time of poverty and depression. The house he was born in was pretty tiny with no heating. His mother was grieving from the loss of his older brother John from something these days would have been easily treated with antibiotics. An infected finger from just a childhood rough and tumble.

Life every day was a struggle. That never left him. He could have had anything in later life. He had the money for whatever he wanted. But he still cut discount coupons out in newspapers for ten per cent off things where he lived in Benedict Canyon. You could take the boy out of Bristol, but you couldn't completely take Bristol out of the boy.

### **How did Archie's childhood impact on his later life as Cary Grant?**

Because of what happened in his childhood, the single most important thing to him in his life when he grew up was control. It's to do with the fact he had no control as a child. He couldn't control the fact that he was kicked out of the family home as a young boy by his father. Most importantly, he couldn't control what happened to his mother.

Then he got to New York in 1920 with the Bob Pender Stage Troupe playing vaudeville. He was 15 or 16 then and stayed in digs with the rest of the boys in the troupe while they did their engagement. But when the time comes for them to go back to England, Archie decides to stay. At the mercy of goodness knows what. He has to feed himself and put a roof over his head with no safety net. Bob Pender and his wife were like mother and father chaperones to all of the boys and suddenly Archie is alone. There is not a living soul he knows in America.

Today you can video call your parents and they can help. What would he do? If he wrote a letter to someone it was going to take two weeks to arrive. There was no-one back at home in Bristol who was the slightest bit inclined to help him, so therefore he was utterly alone.

In later life when he achieves success and becomes wealthy, I never got the sense that, for him, it was wealth for the sake of wealth. To do extravagant things with it. Because he was still like minded with his parents. If there were leftovers in the fridge, he would eat them before he ate anything else. He couldn't stand waste. He was still influenced by the poverty of his childhood in Bristol.

Control was the key. If you look at him, it's right in front of you. How he looked - that perfect tan, the hair, immaculately groomed with a rigid parting and not a hair out of place. The clothes were so perfectly tailored. Utterly elegant. Everything about him. He could control that. He could control how



he looked and what he wore. The story of his career is, again, control. He didn't sign to a studio. He was one of the first to say, *'I don't want to be under contract. I will do the movies that I want to do.'* There are some movie stars out there now that would love to have Cary Grant's contracts.

So that's what life was about for him. He wanted control. He wanted to completely obliterate Archie Leach. He became Cary Grant who looked like Archie Leach, behaved like him but wasn't at the mercy of other people as Archie was. Then there is an extraordinary moment when his father tells him his mother is still alive, Archie Leach is suddenly back in his life again. That was an extremely difficult thing for him to have to deal with.

### **Chance also played a part in his success?**

I was absolutely astonished that the often misquoted line, *'Why don't you come up some time and see me. I'm home every evening'*, was said by Mae West to Cary Grant in the film *'She Done Him Wrong'*. He was cast opposite her in the movie after she saw him dressed as a dashing officer in a white naval uniform walking past her at the film studio. Quite by chance. Mae West said he was the man she wanted for the role.

As ever, there is a lot of luck and chance on his route to stardom. The Bob Pender Stage Troupe going to New York and so on. There was something guiding him, for sure.

### **Who was Cary Grant in terms of what cinema audiences knew?**

At one time he was Hollywood's top star. The most desirable man in the world who got more desirable the older he got. Around the time of *Charade* for some six years in a row he was the number one box office star in the world. He's like Brad Pitt, George Clooney and Tom Hanks rolled into one. He was considered dazzlingly handsome.

It was the slightly unknowable quality about him that I think women found very attractive. He wasn't the boy next door because there was no one in America that lived next door to someone who spoke like that. No-one knew where he was from. He had this darkness about him that Hitchcock latched on to.

### **Cary Grant's voice was often impersonated. It was unique to him?**

It was fascinating working with Jason Isaacs, who plays Cary, and Calam Lynch, who played the younger Archie on that voice and its evolution. Jason has a brilliant ear for accents. What is it? American people don't think it's British but can't place it. We think it's not American and we can't quite place it.

Jason hears bits of New York and Bristol in it. But to me it's another thing of control. He didn't want to sound like Archie Leach. He didn't want to have that West Country burr anymore. He wanted to have a different voice.



Cary was the voice of the classless American man. Women and men both loved him. Working class and wealthy people liked him because he didn't appear to be in any camp. He changed how he looked, how he spoke, he changed his name. He wanted to completely eradicate Archie Leach.

### **Why did Dyan Cannon have such an impact on him?**

I think that inadvertently Dyan pressed every button. She was from a quite proper family in Seattle and had grown up with the belief that you marry for life and have children. You are faithful and don't mess around. And she was a beautiful, fresh-faced young woman working as an actress in a very glamorous environment. Dyan wasn't interested in having a fling with Cary Grant. She didn't act like that in order to ensnare him, it was because that's how she felt. Although she didn't realise it, if she could have acted in any way towards Cary to make her attracted to him, it would have been that.

By his 50s one can only imagine how many starlets had thrown themselves at him in his life. Here was this young girl with an irresistible combination of both physical beauty and beauty in her soul and spirit. A naivety, a desire to learn, which is very appealing to somebody who wants to be controlling. Add to that the fact she was quite virtuous, not someone who had lots of relationships and casual flings. It was exactly the right personality at exactly the right time in his life.

### **What happened to his mother Elsie Leach?**

In those days it was perfectly legal for a husband to commit his wife into a mental asylum with no appeal possible. All it took was for Elias Leach to sign a declaration that he believed his wife Elsie was not of sound mind. On that say-so, she was locked away for more than 20 years. It is an extraordinary notion to us today. But that's what happened.

Elsie had lost her eldest son and was grieving and probably behaving erratically in her paranoia about Archie also coming to any harm. Once Elias had her committed that conveniently meant he could then go off and be with another woman with whom he had at least one child. I don't believe he and Elsie ever saw each other again. He clearly didn't give her a second thought once he had got her out of the way.

Archie was told by his father that his mother had died. How callous is that? It wasn't until decades later - when he was the big movie star Cary Grant - that he found out the truth and had his mother released. But over time Elsie had become institutionalised and damaged. It's almost impossible, I would imagine, to embrace that fact that you were dumped in a mental asylum, and nobody cared. It's too enormous, too horrible to think about and accept.

There was information already published about his mother but not in the detail we were able to go into. The key to that part of this story for me was Dyan Cannon. Because Cary Grant had directly told her about it and then she told me.

### **How did that affect him?**

If you look at the story of his life with him and women... he married five times: Virginia Cherrill, Barbara Hutton, Betsy Drake, Dyan Cannon, and Barbara Harris. Certainly, with the first four wives, less so with



Barbara Harris, he had this thing that they would leave him. Like his mother did. It was just something in him. The trauma of being told his mother was dead never left him. I think it overshadowed all of his relationships with women. Of course, the more you keep saying, '*You will leave me,*' it ultimately becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. And they did. Because he pushed them away before he thought they would push him away.

#### **Was there any element of like father like son?**

No, I don't think Cary Grant was ever unfair or spiteful. Certainly, in terms of supporting his ex-wives. I don't think he broke up with any of his wives in order to go off with someone else. He had a lot of female companions, lovers, and wives. He knew a lot of women. But he wasn't a womaniser or cheater.

With Virginia and Betsy, he did the right thing with the divorce settlement. While Barbara Hutton was the Woolworth heiress and one of the wealthiest women in the world, Dyan Cannon was a different situation. It was complicated as they had a child. By the point at which they split up, Dyan was out for blood and on the warpath. She would say the settlement was mean on his part. He would say it was adequate. But he was never going to let his child be raised in the kind of poverty he faced as a child.

#### **Some may be surprised to learn that Cary Grant regularly took LSD?**

Cary Grant famously took LSD at a period in the US when it was not illegal, and he did it under medical supervision. A doctor friend of his was there. Cary got Dyan to try it as well, from a good place, but it was clearly not a great thing to do. You can't really defend that. She was younger, impressionable and she still regrets taking it to this day.

But I think, again, this was about control. If you spend every waking minute trying to control things - your career, your emotions and so on... everything is control. We all have this to a greater or lesser extent. And what he needed was an outlet. Now that can be booze, I guess. But I suspect that didn't do it for him. He wasn't really a drinker. He needed an outlet and the whole point about LSD is you lose your mind. You have no control.

So, he took this tiny tab and I think it was like being hit over the head with a mallet. He went from way too much control or the desire to control everything to being utterly helpless. He could not stop the thoughts that came into his head or the feelings he had, so I think he found it enormously liberating and addictive. So that's what I think LSD represented to him. That's why he did it. He wasn't some junkie. He just needed to let go.

#### **When he took the role, Jason Isaacs said he would be playing Archie, not Cary Grant?**

I thought it was really clever to set that mission statement. A very smart way of handling this. Jason is an actor first and foremost, but he knows what it's like to be a movie star through the '*Harry Potter*' films and some of those big action movies he's done. And, of course, he has friends who are huge stars.





But Jason has had enough experience and enough of a questioning mind to think, *'What's it like to play that?'* And he brought an absolutely incredible intensity to the part.

**Can you tell us about casting Laura Aikman as Dyan Cannon?**

I was able to joke with her about it once we started filming - I said, *'One of your problems is that your audition for the part was almost too good. It was uncanny.'* She captured Dyan Cannon not just physically - she does look something like Dyan - but it is this mad giggle she has. She had the accent just right even though she lives in London. Dyan had no idea that Laura was not American and was really thrown by the fact that she wasn't.

Laura had done such a lot of work, but the crucial thing was, and what we realised the more we worked with her and the more scenes we did, was that this wasn't an impersonation. You have to master being like the person but then throw that away and then play the story, and that's what she did.

**You have worked with the director Paul Andrew Williams before?**

This is our third collaboration. What I thought was fascinating was the way Paul broke it down because this is a film that jumps around in different time periods. He was very clever in the way he used footage he shot on Super 8mm and 16mm film, which helps to remind us of where we are.

This story moves across the early 1900s, the 1960s and then towards the end of his life in the 1980s. Paul was very inventive in the way he used different film formats to keep all three stories in the air at the same time.

**Cary Grant always claimed he didn't want children and was 62 when his daughter Jennifer was born. Did that change him?**

The thing that changed everything in his life was when Dyan got pregnant and he became a father. I don't believe he had ever experienced unconditional love. You can choose to be someone's husband, but you cannot choose to be a father or not. You can be a terrible father, an absent father, but you're still the father. That never goes. You can't divorce a child. You are always biologically that child's father. I think that had been an alien concept to him. That's what he was scared of until he had Jennifer in his sixties. I think it changed him for the better. Ultimately it helped him to reconcile Archie and Cary. Because being a father, he brought Archie into the life of the adult Cary. By his own standards he finally found contentment as a father.

## **DYAN CANNON – EXECUTIVE PRODUCER**

**When were you first approached about this project?**

Jeff Pope reached out to me in 2013. He talked about optioning my book *Dear Cary*. I knew who Jeff was and I knew his reputation. I met with him, and it was a wonderful meeting. I felt encouraged by what he was talking about.



At that time, it was just talk. We hadn't signed any contract. So, I just talked about it generally with Cary and my daughter Jennifer as there was nothing definite to talk about at that time. When there was, of course, I discussed it with her further and Jeff met with her. Jennifer had the same feeling about him that I had.

**Why did you decide to trust Jeff with this story?**

Jeff has an integrity about him. I'd seen his previous work, including *'Philomena'*. On spending time with him, the questions he asked, the promises he made, I had a peace about it. That's the only way I know how to describe it. I trusted it, so we went for it. Jeff wants to tell the truth; he is at home in himself, and he makes you feel that way when you're with him. He's really brilliant. He gets it.

**What story does *'Archie'* tell?**

Heart. That's what is missing in so much of today's work for me. The heart of the subject. People tend to deal with special effects and tremendous violence and the heart is left out. I think that is reflected in society today. Where is the heart of man in all the political scenarios going on all in the world? Where is the heart? Where is the understanding? Where is the compassion? I think Jeff has managed in his writing to contain and show some of those things.

**One of the themes of *'Archie'* is about leaving the past in the past and not being trapped by it. What are your thoughts about that?**

I think it's individual. I would say that spirituality is important for everyone. Understanding that there is a higher power is the thing that helps you understand all that. It's called grace. No matter what you call it, because people give a lot of different names to their higher power, I choose to call it God. Or Love, with a capital L. When you are engulfed in a dream and pretending that the dream is true, it'll catch up with you.

**What did you make of Cary Grant when you first met him?**

I was unusually quiet. He had reached out to my agent while I was filming in Rome to meet me, and I asked if he was going to pay my way back. The answer was no. So, I said, *'Well, I'm not coming back. I'm staying in Rome.'* I sold my car so I could afford to stay there. Finally, when I came back, one of my agents, Hal Gefsky, took me to the Universal lot under the guise of another appointment. He said, *'Cary Grant wants to meet you.'* I said, *'Well why didn't you tell me?'*

We went in and I was stunned by his appearance. He was probably one of the handsomest men that's ever lived. He was very tanned, he had on a white shirt that was open to the waist, just casual - it was very hot. White slacks and brown Huaraches on his feet. He just took my breath away. We sat and had a very natural, real, down to the earth talk for four hours.

The script is a little different to what really happened. But in essence it is right on. When I left, I realised he was supposed to have been seeing me about a part in a movie and he hadn't even mentioned it.



He had glamour, charm, class, and intelligence. All those things. He called me the next morning to listen to a radio show that was called, I think, *'The Daily Word'* and it was about God.

Then he kept asking me out. My little voice just kept saying, *'No, don't do it. Don't go.'* I was concerned because he was older than my father, who had been married three times.

I was living with one of my agents, Addie Gould, because I'd just come back from Rome, and I was completely broke. She said, *'Well if you're not going to go, I will.'* Ultimately, several months later, I did go out with him, but it took me a while.

He was one of the most desirable men in the world at that time. When he entered a room, everything stopped. I've only seen two people like that in my life. The other one was Ingrid Bergman. He had such a presence about him. He had the *'It'* factor. He was a presence to deal with and a full deck of cards.

**Cary Grant was friends with people like Grace Kelly, Audrey Hepburn Doris Day, Alfred Hitchcock, Frank Sinatra and the Kennedys. What was it like entering that world?**

One day you wake up from the dream. My first meeting with him in a public scenario was at the Universal Commissary. They had a special room at the back. That day he was surrounded by the producer Milton Greene and the co-stars he was working with. He left to go to the men's room and Milton said to me, *'You can join the conversation anytime you want.'* But it was like, *'Where am I? Who are these people that I've been watching on the screen and I'm now part of them?'* I don't think it was really a conscious thought at the time. I was just simply enjoying it.

Later the same day I was in Cary's trailer on what was the last day of filming. Each member of the crew would come to the trailer to get their end of filming gift from Cary which was something like a \$25 bond. When he had finished, he said, *'How would you like to go to my home in Palm Springs with me this weekend?'* I said, without even thinking, *'My girlfriend and I would love to.'* He said, 'OK, I'll make arrangements.'

So, I called my girlfriend Darlene. I said, *'How would you like to go to Palm Springs this weekend...?'* She said, *'It's so hot I'd rather hang by my toenails from the highest wire.'* I said, *'...with Cary Grant.'* She said, *'What time?'* But I didn't stay with him. I stayed at a motel. I said, *'No, I don't want to stay in your house.'* That was the beginning."

**He proved to be very persistent despite the 33-year age gap?**

Oh yes. I really wasn't playing a game. I wasn't trying to be clever, cute, or coy. My little voice just said, *'Uh-uh.'* But he didn't give up. I don't think he was used to hearing *'No.'* I wasn't used to saying it, but it transpired into something else.

I remember later on when he had rented a house in London and Sophia Loren called him. I sat outside the door and listened to the conversation. I never told him that. She wanted to reunite with him, and he said he was really stuck on me. Those kinds of conversations that I could hear gave me confidence that he really meant what he was saying.



**Did you know about his past life as Archie Leach in Bristol?**

I knew nothing about his past. I didn't know anything about that until much later on when he took me to Bristol for the second time to meet his mother. The first trip there was not a good one. His mother was not in the mood. One night in Bristol we went for a long walk, we sat on a bench, and he told me the entire story. Then my heart was his.

**His mother Elsie was put in a mental asylum by his father for almost 30 years. What are your memories of her?**

When we first met, she kept calling me Betsy, after his third wife Betsy Drake. I did try and manicure her nails and that was a horrible scene. When she threw the nail varnish bottle, it looked like there was blood all over the walls. It was just horrific. He didn't know how to deal with it. Nor did I.

Remember, Cary was older than my father and, honestly, in a way, I married daddy. If you've ever seen pictures of my father, he's a good-looking Cary Grant. I didn't do that consciously. But I was obedient, let me put it that way. I tried to make friends with her, and it did get a little easier as we went along. Even so, she never really approved of me. But she never really approved of him either.

I suggested moving her to Los Angeles to spend time with us, but he wasn't ready for that. That's part of why I'd say he didn't deal with those issues. If he had, I think he would have welcomed his mother into our home. It wasn't his fault, but Elsie didn't know who to blame. She even kept extolling the virtues of her husband who had put her in a mental asylum. It was quite Charles Dickens-esque.

She was so angry, and she deserved to be angry. Her life was stolen from her. The merry-go-round was not so merry. It is an astonishing story.

**Was he born into poverty?**

It wasn't just that he had nothing, it was the fact he was abandoned by his father who had put his mother into a mental home and then told him that she was dead. It's about anyone in the world who has grown up without having the same clothes to dress like the other kids, not enough food... anyone that's been impoverished will understand that immediately.

It's beyond shocking what Cary's father did to his mother. For the majority of his life, it was an irreparable situation. I think for that reason, the minute I became pregnant with Jennifer our situation changed. It all came flooding back to him and he didn't know how to handle it. It brought back memories of what he had been through as a child when he was ultimately abandoned. I don't think he'd ever faced that or had it healed in his consciousness.

**Does 'Archie' depict the difficulties that arose in your marriage to Cary Grant?**



The series outlines those things. My career was just taking off, but he didn't want me to work anymore, he wanted me to be a stay-at-home mother. There were so many rules that I had to agree and behave to. From answering thank you notes to the way I cooked. I stopped being me.

The thing I wanted more than anything in the world, more than a career, was to make him happy. Because of what had happened to him in his life and that he had had three failed marriages before. He hadn't trusted any of them enough to have a child with them. He had trusted me enough to do that because he could. I devoted myself to making him happy, but you cannot make anyone else happy. You cannot. It's an inside job. I really tried, I'm a strong girl.

I even knew that I shouldn't do the LSD. I knew I shouldn't. I don't take aspirin. It had a horrible impact on my life at the time. Thank God I didn't take any more. But it really was detrimental to my thinking, to my entire being. He wanted me, even after that, to do more. I couldn't do it., I then said, '*I have to leave.*' I left and then he came to me and said, '*Star in a movie with me, there's a movie called The Old Man and Me you're the star and the studio will do it. We can make a movie together.*' I couldn't breathe in that atmosphere. I couldn't do it. So, I said no and left.

#### **Can you tell us about the casting of Laura Aikman to play you?**

As an executive producer I had a hand in the casting. I first of all couldn't believe that she had my laugh. Second of all, I didn't know she was a Brit. I thought she was an American, her accent was so good. Besides all that, oh, what a lovely girl. What a beautiful spirit. Beautiful soul. I just love her; she did such a good job.

They wanted me to come to Liverpool during the filming. But I know myself, I know that having been an actress, director and producer for many years, I knew that if I see... imagine seeing someone acting you and you're watching it. You'd think, '*Wait a minute, that's not the way I do it. Hold it.*'

I knew it was better for me not to go over and meddle, to stay out of it and let her do her thing. To also let the director do his thing. Because I knew what would happen if I sat on set watching the filming. It doesn't matter how good she is, it's not me. It's not the intonation I would use, it's not the way I would read it, it's not the way I dealt with him. So, I had to stay away. But Laura did wonderfully, I loved her performance. She took on a big task and I think she did a wonderful job.

#### **Jason Isaacs made clear at the outset that he could never be Cary Grant - but he could play Archie Leach?**

I love Jason. I think he's a genius. He is absolutely brilliant in this. He put himself on the line and he did a masterful job. I talked with Jason a lot before filming began. It wasn't easy to watch his performance or anyone else's from my point of view. Let's be real. It's strange for me to watch '*myself*' on screen played by someone else. Put yourself in my shoes.

#### **It's now 62 years since you first met Cary Grant. How do you reflect on that period of your life?**



For the most part I don't look back on it. When I do, at this point in my life, I remember the good times. I remember the wonder, the joy, the adventure we had together. The most romantic moment of my life has never been surpassed.

It was very late at night before we were married. We'd had a late supper, and we were walking along a boulevard in Los Angeles, which I can still see from my window today. It was very late at night, nearing midnight, and what was usually a very busy avenue was exceptionally quiet that night. Then when we were mid-block, approaching Santa Monica Boulevard, he took me by the hand, led me to the middle of the street and he said, *'Do you know how I feel about you?'* I said, *'No.'* He did a pratfall on the sidewalk, on the cement, like an oak tree falling. He went straight flat down, face down on to the pavement. and he turned around, looked up at me and he said, *'Head over heels.'*

I'll never forget it. In all my life, I've never had another moment like that. He stood up, picked me up and carried me to the other side of the street and said, *'That's how I feel about you'* and kissed me. Can you imagine? Oh my goodness. I still, as we're talking now, I get goosebumps reliving it and remembering it. That'll never happen again. Not like that.

He was brilliant. He usually got up before I did. He would leave me notes every morning next to my bed and drawings. Some of the letters I have... I fell in love with him again several months ago reading a letter. I thought, *'Oh my goodness, I really wish that I understood love then as I do now.'* I really could have loved him. I was a baby. I really didn't understand love. I believed at that point in my life that a man is supposed to make you happy. Can you imagine? I believed he also thought that a woman was supposed to make him happy. Because we were all under that spell, that dream.

### **How do you think he should be remembered?**

He should be remembered as a genius. The happy-go-lucky adventurer, the fearless pioneer that he was. His drawings, his letters, his writings, his imagination... the reason it took us so long to cast that part is because you can't act Cary. It was different. It was special. It was unique. It was a presence you can't imitate.

Jason took it on and did it brilliantly. Obviously when you know the real deal, you can't really act Cary. You can't pretend to be Cary. That was the reason it took me six years to write my book. Because my experience with him was just one person. The masses absolutely loved and adored him.

It was hard for me to watch some parts of this drama. But it is very good. It will give people an adventurous ride and a look into one of the biggest stars our business has ever known. People don't remember Cary Grant now. They don't know him. Whatever people think about you or know about you, it's going to change. It's just one step at a time being true to ourselves and our highest sense of right. Because tomorrow, from once being one of the biggest stars in the world, it's Cary who? Archie who?

But I hope the younger generation will now rediscover his work. Well, they will. Because his work comes up on TV and they say, *'Who's that?'* They then watch and say, *'Oooh, he's awesome.'*





## JENNIFER GRANT – EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

**How and when did Jeff Pope first approach you about a possible drama about your father? What was your initial reaction and why did you ultimately decide to trust him and endorse this project?**

Jeff approached me around seven years ago. Before meeting him, I rewatched two of the films he'd written, '*Philomena*' and '*Stan and Ollie*'. Like Jeff himself, his films are thoughtful in a seemingly effortless manner. Digestibly intelligent.

When we met it was obvious that Jeff had done his homework on my father, but he never tried to show it off, instead, he was most intent on listening. That's rare. Most of the writers, producers, and directors I've met through the years have their own ideas about Cary Grant and want to drive them home to me which I find amusing. The fact that Jeff is British also gave him a distinct advantage in my mind. British and American men are quite different, and Jeff instinctively understood Dad's heritage. The entire production is British - the studio, the stars, the director - it seems fitting. We've brought Cary home to Archie.

Jeff and I spent countless hours working and reworking the scripts. We were both invested in honouring my father by getting it right. I thoroughly enjoyed working with him and only wish I had a new script to help Jeff mould. This was my first real in-depth experience of being behind the camera. I grew up surrounded with film making and film makers, and I've done my share of acting, but thanks to Jeff I've been given the opportunity to dive in to producing and all that it entails. From writing to casting, wardrobe, editing... it has been a joy of a learning experience.

**If it was up to me, I'd simply give a copy of '*Good Stuff*' out to every journalist writing about '*Archie*'. But being unable to do that...what kind of dad was your father?**

Dad was a very focused person. Some of the same qualities that brought him success as an actor - his attention to detail, thoughtfulness, playful sense of humour, diligence, and intelligence made him a phenomenal father. He was the kind of dad who left sweet little notes in the kitchen for me when I came back from a friends' house.

I've heard it said that we often want for our children what we weren't given. My father was robbed of a relationship with both of his parent's and he made sure that wasn't the case for me. Because dad retired when I was born, I enjoyed the rare experience of sharing most of my time with him— just being together at home. We played backgammon, a tricky card game called *Spite and Malice* and discussed current events from the newspaper. Slow, easy times like these are something I cherish with my own children today. Dad and I had plenty of fun outside the gates as well - we loved Dodger baseball games, Hollywood Park racetrack, the Brentwood country mart and travelling together. I think the pain of his childhood could be somewhat rewritten in this new context of parenting.



**He was 62 when you were born and essentially took on the (new) role as single father. I'm told that at times he could almost be *overwhelming* in terms of the love and attention he gave as a Dad. Is that true?**

As a child I absolutely adored all the attention and time spent with dad. In my early teens, as I naturally began to spread my wings a bit, my father met Barbara. It was splendid timing for both of us. Dad held very high standards for himself, and for his friends and family as well. The best and most challenging part about being his daughter is that I've internalised these standards. It was a terrible feeling to disappoint him — and myself.

**Your father and mother went through what I believe to have been a fairly acrimonious divorce when you just 18 months old. But despite that, did they both still do their very best to be good parents?**

Mom and dad had radically different parenting styles, but they were each committed to me in their own way. My mother was and is a very free-spirited independent thinker who held bongo drum parties in the living room. Mom was a fully expressed career woman. Mom's reaction to my homework...*'What is algebra?'* I remember a couple of mornings mom awakened me with, *'Want to play hooky today?'* We spent the day going to the Malibu fruit stand, walking on the beach... just because. Dad, on the other hand, sat me down with the *Wall Street Journal* to discuss the importance of economics. Dad helped me rewrite my essays with Beethoven as our accompaniment. For Dad, work could be play. They were very different parents.

I think my parents were ahead of their time- being a career woman wasn't the norm when I grew up and being a stay-at-home dad even less so. Luckily for me, I could watch my mom trot off to work and spend my time with dad, who had already reached the heights of his success.

**What life lessons did he teach you?**

The main thing dad imprinted on me was to be kind. He would say, *'Whether you are face to face with the janitor or the Queen, think about them. Look the person in the eye. Be gracious. We are all made of the same stuff.'* Of course, many other odd bits and pieces have funnelled down. I find myself cutting out articles for my son, as dad did for me, and Elsie did for him. I'm also stickler for tidiness and can't think if the room I'm in is out of order. With dad, everything in the home had its place.

**Growing up presumably you were aware of just how big a star your father was - even though he was then retired? He had many friends, and many famous visitors came to the house. What are your memories of that?**

As a child, having Gregory Peck, Sidney Poitier, and Quincy Jones over for dinner did seem perfectly normal. These were dad's friends. I didn't really think about their position in life. (Quincy used to bring me books which I loved).



Running an errand with dad was another matter altogether—it seldom happened because getting from point a to point b was a complex matter. Everyone we happened across wanted dad’s time and attention—a picture, please? An autograph for my cousin Mary? Who could blame them, but it was readily apparent that my father was someone quite special.

**Your grandmother Elsie died when you were aged around seven. Do you have any memories of her?**

What I remember most was Grandma Elsie’s smile and her large rather gnarly hands. She used to reach out to take my hands in hers and the warmth of her smile completely engulfed me. We visited Elsie only a few times before she passed, but I clearly remember her sweetness.

Elsie had an arduous life, and her story played a large part in attracting me to making ‘*Archie*’. The fact that my grandfather could commit my grandmother to an institution with one signature – and the snowball effect of that choice on the family. I hope people will stop to think about misogyny’s impact on children— in particular the damage inflicted on boys. Men damaging men through their disregard of women. Elias’ choice to institutionalize Elsie, for nothing more than his own convenience, deeply impacted my father’s relationships with all women. How could he trust a woman when as a boy he learned that they might leave and die ‘*on vacation*’ at any moment? The story has a potent message about the destructive power of secrets within the family.

The magnificent Harriet Walter plays Elsie brilliantly— I’m a huge fan.

**At what age did you learn about ‘Archie Leach’ from Bristol and how did he talk about his past?**

Dad rarely discussed his childhood. For the most part, he downplayed the extent of his poverty, but his actions spoke. We made rubber band balls from the outside of our daily newspapers and weren’t to waste any food. There was always a stock pot on the stove for leftovers. Food was scarce when my father was a boy and receiving an apple in his stocking for Christmas was an enormous treasure.

The memories were written on dad’s brow, and I felt the pain of his youth in him. My father was a very elegant man who held his grief with grace. He used to say that if life deals you something terrible, you simply move on with it. There’s too much happiness to be had. I still wish I’d asked him more. The truth is that our parent’s stories are our stories, whether we know them or not. We are born into our own genetic programming – it’s helpful to understand the genesis of one’s own buttons. The more I understood about dad’s upbringing, the more my own life made sense. Dad didn’t share these things because he was still too close to them. With time and distance, it’s far easier for me to see the breathtaking beauty of his journey. It made me want to share that story with the world.

**I believe you spent around a week in Liverpool during filming. What was that experience like?**

I spent a few days in Bristol before coming to the set of ‘*Archie*’ in Liverpool. Those three days were quite possibly the best trip of my life. Jeff Pope and his son George very kindly shared their research



with me, including the three addresses from dad's boyhood, and the nearby schools he'd attended. I set out from my hotel and spent an entire day walking the paths of his youth, trying to imagine how he must have felt so many decades ago as a boy in Bristol. Had he been cold? Was he hungry? Did he wonder if his mother might magically return? The schools were incredibly Victorian... is that why he had later preferred strict schools for me? Walking these paths, I felt as though I had regained a limb. I never knew that Bristol was so hilly—perhaps that's why he felt at ease in our hilltop home in Benedict Canyon.

The time in Liverpool was slightly surreal. It was one thing to sit with Jeff and help him commit 'Archie' to paper, it was quite another thing to see actors playing my mother, father, grandmother and indeed baby 'me' in amalgamated scenes from our lives. In writing there's some control, but once the train leaves the station with a production, there's all sorts of interpretation going on. The director, actors, cinematographer, wardrobe department, lighting all play a part in setting the tone. Jason asked how it felt to watch all of this and kindly brought me back to earth with the reminder that this wasn't life, it was four hours of television in which we were all doing our best to be true to the spirit of things.

**You and Jeff visited your father's former home in Bristol as well as the theatre where he worked. Can you tell us about your experiences on that day and how it felt to make those direct, physical connections with your father's past after all these years?**

Jeff asked that I wait to see Dad's first home until he and George came to meet me in Bristol. The homes in this specific neighbourhood of Bristol are still structurally the same as they were when Dad lived there. Two up, two down. When we arrived at the front of the house I was tempted to knock, but couldn't bring myself to do it, so Jeff kindly stepped up for me.

To our lucky surprise, the gracious owner opened the door. I was a bit emotional. This was the home where young Archie lived with Elsie and was very badly treated by Elias. Aside from the addition of an upstairs bathroom (the house of my father's youth would have had an outhouse) the structure was the same. I was able to spend some time in what would have been Archie's bedroom and look at his view. The years seemed to collapse. When we left, after thanking our host profusely.

Our next stop was the former home of the far less lovely Fishponds asylum. Jeff and George drove me to where Elias took Elsie and proceeded to rob her of her life. Suffice it to say it was grim. From Fishponds we went to the beautiful Bristol Hippodrome theatre. By chance, we parked on a block which exposed the back of the theatre, and the stage door was open. Chills. This was the very cobblestone street where my father would have stood. This was where his love of acting began. We imagined him there with the other boys in the Pender troupe. My father was one of the youngest... perhaps this is where, with the other boys, he had his first sip of beer?

At the end of the day, we went for fish and chips, just as Cary and Elsie had done many times, at a spot overlooking the Clifton suspension bridge. That day is forever imprinted in my memory.



**What were your thoughts on the casting of Jason Isaacs and Laura Aikman and what it was like watching them on set? Including Laura's uncanny resemblance to your mother?**

Finding an actor to play my father was, as you might imagine, not easy. One man might have the humour, but not the good looks, another actor had dad's frame, but lacked his timing and charm. Initially we had a lot of fun trying to recreate Cary Grant, but it became our largest obstacle. Finding Jason Isaacs, who plays my father was an immense relief. Jason is undeniably masculine, but he has a tenderness that's rare for men. Watching him in the film *'Mass'* sealed the deal for me. He's obviously gorgeous, charming, and talented, but it was his understated depth that convinced me he could play Cary Grant.

On set one day, while watching a scene which takes place at Elsie's apartment, I heard Jason knock before entering. My father had a very specific knock, which Jason used. I marvelled at the fact that he had somehow found that knock in his research for the part. When they finished the take, I trotted over to say sing Jason's praises and ask where had he heard it? He laughed, *'Oh, I didn't know—I just figured your dad was playful, so this might be his knock'*. Clearly, we landed the right guy for the part.

When we were looking for the actress to play Dyan, Laura's audition jumped off the screen immediately. Not only did she bear an uncanny resemblance to mom, but Laura had imitated Dyan's riotous laugh to a T. She was an absolute standout and our obvious choice. Laura is British as well, so this was no small feat for her. The chemistry between Laura and Jason is phenomenal. One can imagine how my mom's light free spiritedness and dad's refined nature would attract them to one another but be almost impossible to sustain as a match.

**It's almost impossible for a modern-day audience to realise just what an incredibly tough environment your father was born into in 1904. Brutal poverty, very poor public health provision and no safety nets. How do you reflect on your father's life journey and achievements?**

Knowing my father's intrinsic grace, and the thoughtfulness he brought to all matters, one might imagine he had been born into entirely different circumstances. It's deeply inspiring that he had the grit and grace to rise from his given station in life. The breadth of his journey explains a lot about his patience and the unruffled state he achieved in his later years. He had seen the worst and risen from it. Everyone knows the charismatic, handsome, winsome Cary Grant. Few know the troubles of Archie Leach's childhood and the extraordinary courage it took for him to transform himself into the man he became.

**At its heart, what story does *'Archie'* tell and why is it important to you that it is told?**

It is scary to try to summarize my father's life. I have a deep fear of being reductive. One cannot truly explain the magic of Cary Grant. I've spent a lot of time in my own sort of prayer- praying to my ancestors for their guidance, and to my own highest sense of right.



'Archie' is an inspiring story of self-determination. It is the story of a boy born into extreme poverty and abuse, who is led to believe that his mother has died when it is his father who has abandoned them both. Archie Leach, through creativity, resolve and relentless work, turns himself into the idyllic Hollywood icon, Cary Grant. This beloved movie star then finds out that his mother is alive and must reconcile his past with his present. It is the story of a man who reached the highest pinnacle of success, only to discover that there were interior landscapes still to master. It is the story of Cary Grant coming home to Archie Leach, embracing the life he never had, and creating a family of his own.

I think those who love him will have a whole new appreciation for Cary Grant, Archie Leach, and my father. It's also a timely message that translates to today's audiences. Dad was seen as the perfect man. He did a great job at coming quite close to this, but he was trying to create that ideal to overcome his childhood pain. It's akin to what you see today in social media- everyone curating their lives to artificially high standards. Young girls airbrushing their portraits to attain a model-like image as if perfection is possible and fame is the answer. Until we face our pain head on, it will always catch up with us.

**Do you hope it might lead maybe a younger generation to discover your father's movies?**

My father's charm has a tangible, magical quality that inspires those it touches. Yes, I hope that dad's movies and the life story behind them reach as many generations as possible.

**You were just 20 when your father died. By all accounts he had found true happiness and contentment as a father in his final years. You later named your first son Cary. It begs an obvious answer, but why did you name him this?**

When a friend first suggested that I name my son Cary, I instantly bristled. Never! Then I sat with it. Sadly, my father passed away long before I became a mother. Dad would have savoured getting to know my children, and they missed great fun with their grandfather. At its heart, naming my son Cary was a way to connect them. Obviously, my father created a magnificent legacy. I worried about the pressure that legacy might place on my son and rationalized, perhaps naively, that young Cary's generation of stars would be far enough removed that his friends wouldn't register the name. My son's generation of celebrities are sports stars and YouTubers, not 40's 50's and 60's film icons. The truth is, my son's generation have little idea of who *Cary Grant* is, but their parents know! My aim was to give young Cary the benefit of his heritage without too much pressure. So far so good. The now fourteen-year-old Cary is an absolute gem of a boy and wears his grandfathers' name proudly.

## **PAUL ANDREW WILLIAMS – DIRECTOR**

**How did you become involved in Archie?**





I've known the screenwriter Jeff Pope for a while now and we've done a few projects together. I really like working with him and knew he had a Cary Grant project. Then one day he asked me if I fancied directing it.

**Did you know about Archie Leach from Bristol before this?**

Weirdly, I had also written a script about him myself a number of years ago. So, I was very aware of his life and what had happened. It never got made and I wasn't due to direct it, but I had obviously read a lot about Cary Grant. He was a very interesting character.

**What story did you want to tell about Cary Grant?**

It was always important to be as truthful as possible. He's not part of our generation, so why would anyone of a younger age be interested in him? That was one of the challenges. To show what a really interesting character he was. Someone who was very empathetic but also very vulnerable and also there was a lot of controlling behaviour which we shot as the script portrayed it.

We had to carefully consider how we filmed this story so that an audience would be able to follow it. What was interesting for me was all the different journeys Archie goes on within the script and getting to create these worlds. From the poverty of his childhood in Bristol up to his life in Hollywood with other films stars, his retreat in Palm Springs and so on.

Archie Leach invented Cary Grant who became one of Hollywood's greatest stars. Yes, he's a fake, but he knew he was and questioned that his whole life.

**What did you want to achieve in terms of the look of this drama?**

We were focused on how we could achieve the different looks, including those seen in his movies. That bright Hollywood Technicolor look was achieved by using different filming formats like 8mm and 16mm. We've also got famous characters in this story, making his life appear more like a movie at times in the way we shot it. We've recreated some of the scenes from films he was in as well as TV footage. The ambition for this production was high, with lots of different looks and aesthetics, costumes from different period, make up and so on.

**What was it like working with Jason Isaacs, who plays Archie Leach / Cary Grant, and the rest of the cast?**

Jason worked extremely hard in what is a very complex role. He was very good at giving everything towards every scene, regardless of what it was. Laura Aikman is brilliant as Cary Grant's fourth wife Dyan Cannon. She is absolutely fantastic in this. We were very lucky to have all the cast. Including Kara Tointon and Harriet Walter as Archie's younger and older mother Elsie Leach. They both brought a lot to the role and were a pleasure to have on set.

Although Elsie is portrayed in the script as a very strict mother and difficult in later life, Harriet had to have sympathy for the character she was playing because Elsie was locked up in an asylum for a very



long period of time. Both Kara and Harriet showed a woman who went through an awful lot and was trying to do her best as a mother.

Cary Grant's daughter Jennifer Grant visited the set, and she was lovely. It must have been rather weird for her as this is a drama about her dad. Sometimes it was emotional, but she's a very nice lady. I also met Dyan Cannon in Los Angeles and she's really great.

**The scenes from Cary Grant movies you recreated included Charade with Audrey Hepburn?**

We recreated a number of his scenes, so we were fortunate to be able to show different bits of his movies. I think we have done that in a way I hope the audience will appreciate. Cary Grant was a style icon on and off screen. Both the costume and make up departments were absolute joys. They did such a fantastic job.

**Cary Grant was 62 when his daughter Jennifer was born. He turned down all offers of work and retired from the movie business?**

The time of his type of actor and his type of star was coming to an end. He probably got out at the right time. Of course, the world has moved on since then, but I hope people will be really interested in him as a person and his life. For me, it was all about how he was.



## **CAST BIOGRAPHIES**

### **JASON ISAACS**

JASON ISAACS is an award-winning actor who has had numerous nominations including Golden Globes, BAFTA, International Emmy, Critics' Circle, Satellite, SAG and Critics' Choice Awards amongst others.

Notable film credits include the *HARRY POTTER* film series, playing Lucius Malfoy; Armando Iannucci's *THE DEATH OF STALIN*; *A CURE FOR WELLNESS*; *BEHIND THE GLASS*; *LOOK AWAY*; mystery-thriller *LONDON FIELDS*; *THE PATRIOT*, with Mel Gibson; *ABDUCTION*; *GREEN ZONE*; *GOOD*; *PETER PAN*; Ridley Scott's *BLACK HAWK DOWN*; *ARMAGEDDON*; *FURY*; *THE TUXEDO*; *HOTEL MUMBAI*, *SKYFIRE*, *CREATION STORIES*, with Ewen Bremner, *OCCUPATION RAINFALL* and *DR. BIRD'S ADVICE FOR YOUNG POETS*; Lorian Haynes' *EVERYTHING I EVER WANTED TO TELL MY DAUGHTER ABOUT MEN*; John Madden's *OPERATION MINCEMEAT* opposite Colin Firth and Matthew Macfadyen; and *MRS HARRIS GOES TO PARIS* opposite Lesley Manville and *SPINNING GOLD*. In 2021, we saw Jason star opposite Ann Dowd, Martha Plimpton and Reed Birney in Fran Kranz's *MASS* for which Jason received critical acclaim for his performance. The film went on to win the Independent Spirit Robert Altman Award at the 2022 Spirit Awards.

We can look forward to seeing him in *ANNA* and He has wrapped filming *THE SALT PATH* with Gillian Anderson, a film based on the best-selling novel of the same name.

On television, Jason has starred in *CIVVIES* (BBC), *AWAKE* (NBC), *DIG* (USA), *CASE HISTORIES* (BBC) *THE STATE WITHIN* (BBC), *THE CURSE OF STEPTOE* (BBC), *SCARS, BROTHERHOOD* (Showtime) and *GOOD SAM* (CBS) along with appearances in *ROSEMARY'S BABY*, *THE WEST WING* and *ENTOURAGE*; and Netflix's hugely popular *SEX EDUCATION*. His notable TV credits include the hit Netflix show *THE OA*; Captain Lorca in *STAR TREK: DISCOVERY* for CBS All Access; and Apple TV+'s *THE CROWDED ROOM* alongside Tom Holland.

### **LAURA AIKMAN**

*Laura Aikman is an award-winning performer, with notable credits across film, TV and animation. Previous roles include Sonia in GAVIN AND STACEY, Ellen Best in BLUESTONE 42, as well as Natalie Mason in THE JOB LOT and DI Charlotte Sullivan in LIAR.*

In 2022, Laura played Victoria in the BBC/Netflix film *THEN BARBARA MET ALLAN* as well Victoria Sands in Sky's *THE RISING*.

In 2023, she starred in Picturehouse's comedy-drama *SCRAPPER*, which premiered at Sundance Film Festival. Other work includes the short *TALL DARK AND HANDSOME* opposite Amit Shah, ITV's *GRACE*, and the Sky Original *BREEDERS*.



Next year, we can look forward to seeing Laura in ITVX's drama *JOAN*, starring opposite Sophie Turner as Val, the Disney+ animated series *RHONA WHO LIVES BY THE WATER* as well as the dystopic film *THE UNREASON*, with Stephen Fry and Sophie Thompson.

### **HARRIET WALTER**

Dame Harriet Walter is a highly respected Olivier award-winning British actress, with a rich and varied body of work spanning across theatre, film, and television. She attended the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art(s) and has an honorary doctorate Birmingham University's Shakespeare Institute in Stratford. She was appointed as a Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire in 2000 and in 2011 she was additionally appointed Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire.

We can next see Harriet as the formidable matriarch in Alice Birch's radical adaptation of Lorca's masterpiece, *THE HOUSE OF BERNARDA ALBA*, to be directed by Rebecca Frecknall. In the domain of Bernarda Alba, a daughter who disobeys is no longer a daughter. Upon her second husband's death, Bernarda Alba imposes an eight-year mourning period on her household in accordance with her family tradition causing her five daughters to live under their mother's tight grip as they mourn their father. It will play at the National Theatre's Lyttelton Theatre from 16<sup>th</sup> November 2023 to 6<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

This year, Harriet reprised her roles as 'Lady Caroline Collingwood' in the fourth and final series of HBO's *SUCCESSION* and 'Deborah Welton' in the third series of Apple TV+'s *TED LASSO* as well as a guest star appearance in BBC's *THE CLEANER* opposite Greg Davies. For the second year in a row, Harriet pulled off an incredible feat to be Emmy nominated for both Guest Actress in a Drama Series (*SUCCESSION*) and Guest Actress in a Comedy Series (*TED LASSO*). Harriet was most recently seen starring alongside Rebecca Ferguson in the Apple TV+ science fiction series *SIL0*, written by Graham Yost and directed by Morten Tyldum and based on the novel series of the same name. This dystopian 10-part drama is a set in a world where the last ten thousand people on earth live a mile under the surface to evade the, supposedly, toxic and deadly world outside. Season Two is currently in production. Harriet also plays Anna Marshall in feature film thriller *BURIAL* directed by Ben Parker. The film follows a small group of Russian soldiers who have the task of taking Hitler's discovered remains back to Stalin in Moscow. In 2022, Harriet starred alongside Ben Whishaw and Alex Jennings in the BBC and AMC 7-part series *THIS IS GOING TO HURT*. Created by Adam Kay, based on his best-selling medical memoir series, the show delivers a brutally honest depiction of life as a junior doctor on the wards and the toll the job can take back home.

In 2021, Harriet starred in Ridley Scott's *THE LAST DUEL*, opposite Matt Damon, Jodie Comer, Adam Driver and Ben Affleck. Based on Eric Jager's novel, the script, by Damon, Affleck, and Nicole Holofcener, is set in 14th-century France. It follows the story of Marguerite de Thibouville (Comer) who claims she's been raped by her husband's best friend. Her husband, knight Jean de Carrouges (Damon) challenges his friend and squire Jacques Le Gris (Driver) to trial by combat. It is the last legally sanctioned duel in France's history. Harriet plays Nicole de Buchard, mother of Jean.

Harriet has appeared in some of the most well-loved television series of the past few years including *KILLING EVE*, *THE CROWN*, *DOWNTON ABBEY*, *PATRICK MELROSE*, *BLACK EARTH RISING* and *CALL THE*



*MIDWIFE. Film-wise, she had roles in MY DINNER WITH HERVÉ, THE SENSE OF AN ENDING, DENIAL, and STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS. Other notable film and television credits include ATONEMENT, BABEL, THE YOUNG VICTORIA, MINDHORN, SENSE AND SENSIBILITY, LITTLE DORRIT, ROCKETMAN, LAW & ORDER UK, THE ASSETS, CURFEW and LONDON SPY.*