



From the producer of OSCAR®-winning One Day In September
Starring OSCAR®-nominated actor Pete Postlethwaite

THE AGE OF STUPID

FROM THE MAKERS OF MCLIBEL





**“Fantastic. Knocks spots off
An Inconvenient Truth.”**
THE ECOLOGIST

Spanner Films Presents

THE AGE OF STUPID

A film by Franny Armstrong

UK - 2008 - 89min - Documentary - Color - English/Multilingual

World Sales

Celluloid Dreams


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the directors label





“In my opinion our use or misuse of resources the last 100 years or so, I’d probably rename that age, something like The Age of Ignorance, The Age of Stupid.”

Alvin DuVernay
(Shell paleontologist and hero of Hurricane Katrina)

SYNOPSIS

‘The Age Of Stupid’ is the new documentary-drama-animation hybrid from Director Franny Armstrong (McLibel, Drowned Out) and Oscar-winning Producer John Battsek (One Day In September, Live Forever, In the Shadow of the Moon).

Oscar-nominated Pete Postlethwaite (In The Name of the Father, Brassed Off, The Usual Suspects) stars as an old man living in the devastated world of 2055. He watches ‘archive’ footage from 2008 and asks: Why didn’t we stop climate change when we had the chance?

Runaway climate change has ravaged the planet by 2055. Pete plays the founder of The Global Archive, a storage facility located in the (now melted) Arctic, preserving all of humanity’s achievements in the hope that the planet might one day be habitable again. Or that intelligent life may arrive and make use of all that we’ve achieved. He pulls together clips of “archive” news and documentary from 1950-2008 to build a message showing what went wrong and why. He focuses on six human stories:

- Alvin DuVernay, is a paleontologist helping Shell find more oil off the coast of New Orleans. He also rescued more than 100 people after Hurricane Katrina, which, by 2055, is well known as one of the first “major climate change events”.
- Jeh Wadia in Mumbai aims to start-up a new low-cost airline and gets a million Indians flying.
- Layefa Malemi lives in absolute poverty in a small village in Nigeria from which Shell extracts tens of millions of dollars worth of oil every week. She dreams of becoming a doctor, but must fish in the oil-infested waters for four years to raise the funds.
- Jamila Bayyoud, aged 8, is an Iraqi refugee living on the streets of Jordan after her home was destroyed - and father killed - during the US-led invasion of 2003. She’s trying to help her elder brother make it across the border to safety.
- Piers Guy is a windfarm developer from Cornwall fighting the NIMBYs of Middle England.
- 82-year-old French mountain guide Fernand Pareau has witnessed his beloved Alpine glaciers melt by 150 metres.

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR FRANNY ARMSTRONG

Question: What prompted you to make *The Age of Stupid*?

Franny Armstrong: Either we seriously tackle climate change or we wipe out most life on Earth. So it's not a tricky decision, as a filmmaker, to decide which subject to work on. I find it hard to understand how anyone who grasps the problem can work on anything else.

Q: What are the strengths of film as a medium for portraying big, complex issues like climate change?

FA: I think independent documentaries are currently the number one way to pack the biggest emotional punch while disseminating ideas to the most number of people with the least number of editorial restrictions.

Q: What can it communicate that other mediums can't?

FA: Because it is a mixed-media format - ie spoken words, images, music, graphics - the size of the emotional punch it packs can be so much bigger than single-media formats like books, songs, photographs or newspaper articles. Plus, the 90-odd minute length has been shown by the history of cinema to be the perfect slot for people to follow and feel a story.

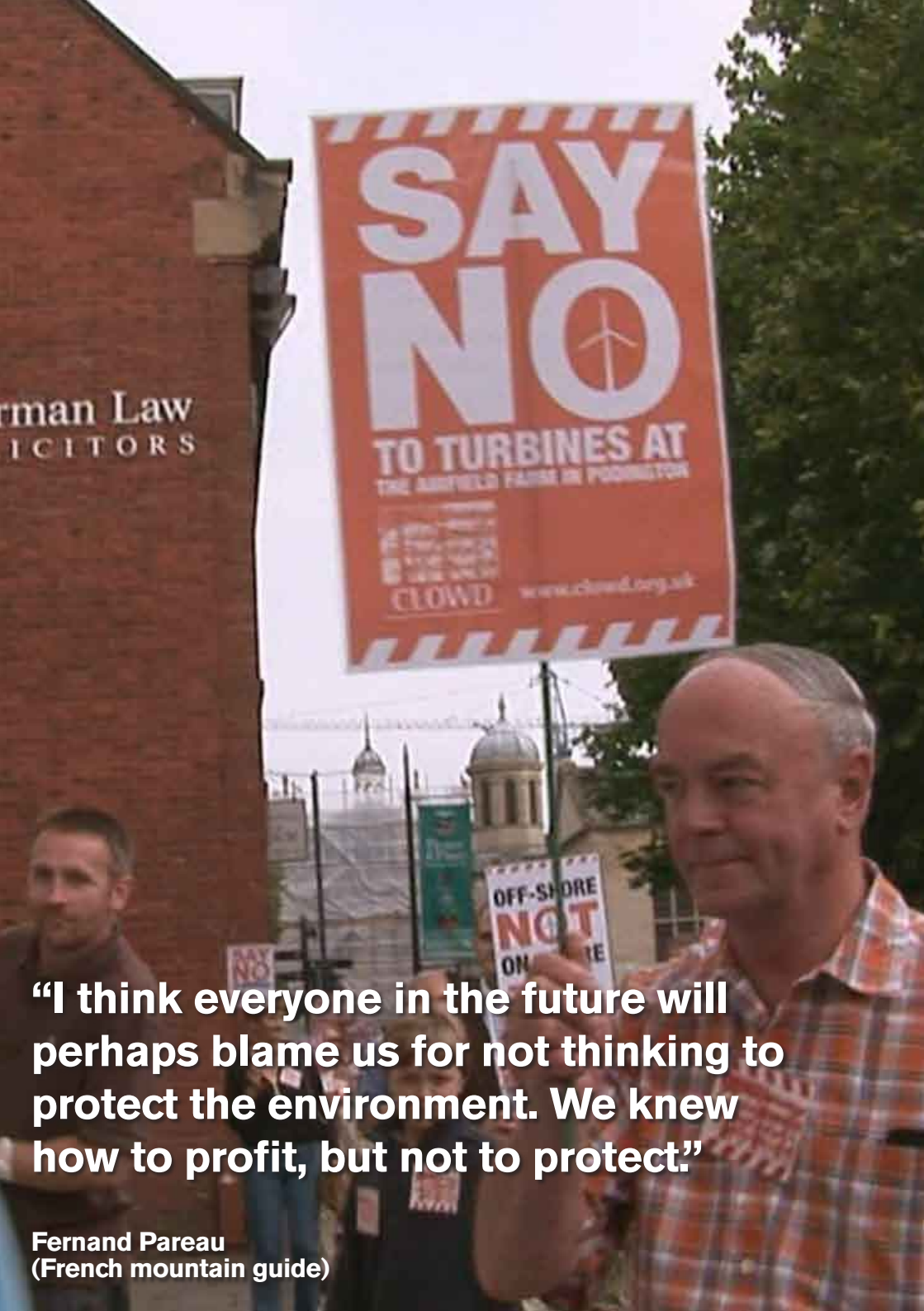
Q: How did you choose the six subjects of the film?

FA: The original plan, back in 2002, was to steal the structure of Stephen Soderberg's movie "Traffic": six human stories on all sides of a complex international issue. His was fiction and drugs and ours was going to be documentary and oil / climate change. That's exactly what we did for the first two years. We had a pretty much a finished doc about a year ago, but when I sat back and watched it, I just didn't think it was good enough. So we decided to introduce the fictional element - set in the future - to amplify and explain the significance of our six human stories set in the present day. I divided the film up into six main themes: consumption, war, climate change, alternatives etc. Then we had a team of researchers exploring all the possibilities within those themes until, over several months, we narrowed it down to a particular country and a particular story: eg a low-cost airline starting up in India. Or a French mountain guide who is old and has grand-children. Then we bought two tickets and set off to find the real person. Each of the characters were a thousand times more interesting and nuanced than I could ever have imagined. Which reinforced my belief in both documentaries and humans.



“How the heck are we meant to persuade people in India and China to develop in a more sustainable way when we're not even prepared to accept the odd windfarm in the landscape?”

Piers Guy
(UK windfarm developer)



“I think everyone in the future will perhaps blame us for not thinking to protect the environment. We knew how to profit, but not to protect.”

Fernand Pareau
(French mountain guide)

Q: Of all the stories in the film which is the most interesting one for you?
FA: I find each one of them endlessly fascinating. I couldn't possibly choose a favourite, it'd be like choosing a favourite child.

Q: Are there any significant angles which you feel have been left out?
FA: The two angles I would have liked to include are the top-level political manoeuvrings which prevent real action on climate change and the behind-the-scenes shenanigans at a major multinational oil corporation. But clearly we didn't have a hope in hell of getting decent access to anyone like that, so we had to weave them in through the animations and archive.

Q: What were the biggest challenges you encountered in making the film?
FA: It was non-stop challenges every day, for three and a half years. How to raise 450 thousand pounds, how not to get kidnapped in Nigeria, how to switch the new camera on, how to minimise our carbon footprint, how to write drama, how to contact Pete Postlethwaite, how to encode OMFIs, how to rock-climb, how to pay for 17 animators. But there's nothing like continual challenges, towards a worthwhile goal, surrounded by inspiring people, to really feel alive.

Q: What moment from your experience of making the film is strongest in your memory?
FA: One of the most memorable moments was actually four hours long. We were waiting for a 15-year-old Iraqi boy to cross the border into Jordan. He was supposed to take two hours to travel from Baghdad, along the most dangerous road in the world. He went out of mobile phone coverage, as expected, but then ended up taking six hours instead of two. We found out later that it was because he got stuck behind an American tank convoy (apparently if you overtake, you get shot). During those extra four hours, when I concluded that someone had died because of my film, I did a lot of re-evaluating.

Q: What kind of impact do you hope your film will make?
FA: We want to be part of the sea change in awareness which leads to the greatest ever public uprising which in turn forces the world's Governments to make a binding international agreement to cut global emissions so as to stabilise global temperatures below two degrees and keep the planet habitable for humans and other species.

Q: If you want people to take one thing away from watching the film, what would it be?
FA: The question “What are we leaving our children?” has become slightly meaningless and empty from overuse. I hope that everyone watching our film not only understands - but also deeply feels - the answer.

Q: How can people possibly be expected to navigate their way through the complexities and ironies of climate change? And why should they have to?

FA: Because the future of our species and everything we have ever achieved is at stake.

Q: Do you believe that we can turn things around in the 100 months that we supposedly have left before we pass the tipping point for runaway climate change according to Andrew Simms of the new economics foundation? If so, what needs to happen? Surely, it is only governments that can make the necessary decisions?

FA: When we were working on McLibel (the film, the website and the court case) we never for a moment thought we would have any actual influence on McDonald's. We just did it as a point of principal and because it was a story worth telling. So then, ten years later, when their profits collapsed, there was a sea-change in public awareness about healthy eating and the laws about advertising junk food to kids were changed, we were flabbergasted. So immovable mountains can be moved.

Q: How did you calculate the carbon footprint of the film and what was it? Are you offsetting it?

FA: We just kept notes of the distance and type of every journey (by foot, bicycle, motor boat, rowing boat, plane, train, car, tuk tuk and helicopter), as well as all the electricity, gas, food etc we used and all the equipment we bought. Then we got a volunteer to research and add them all up. It added up to 94 tonnes - equivalent to four Americans for a year or 185 patio heaters for a month. I definitely think our film is worth 185 patio heaters for a month. No, we're not offsetting it, that is self-deluding nonsense.

Q: What advice do you have for anyone thinking of picking up a camera for the first time to make their own film (especially on environmental themes)?

FA: When I started making my first film, McLibel, (www.mclibel.com) all the TV commissioners told me it wasn't a strong enough story. Although they had decades of experience in the TV industry, and I had none, I thought I was right and they wrong. Which turned out to be the case. So, I'd say: don't let anyone tell you what to think. And always have an afternoon nap.

“We wouldn't be the first life form to make itself extinct. But what would be unique about us is that we did it knowingly.”

The Archivist





THE NEW WAY TO PRODUCE AND RELEASE A FILM - AND SAVE THE WORLD WHILE YOU'RE AT IT

The Age of Stupid has revolutionised the way in which a film can be funded and released. The complete £450,000 production budget was raised via the filmmakers' innovative "crowd-funding" scheme, which has already featured in countless press articles worldwide, including TIME magazine. 228 individuals and groups invested between £500 and £35,000 and each now own a percentage of the film. All profits will be shared between them and the crew, who worked at very reduced rates.

"We came up with crowd-funding primarily to keep the film utterly independent" says Franny Armstrong, "But we didn't anticipate the enormous range of extra benefits it would bring. The moral support from having 228 people rooting for you was absolutely key, as was the fact that whenever we needed anything whatsoever - from a free recording studio to a country cottage in which to write the script - someone on the list would offer it."

Crowd-funding enabled the filmmakers to have complete creative freedom and also to ensure that the film reached the widest possible audience. Franny Armstrong's previous documentary, *McLibel*, pioneered a wide range of new distribution techniques - some of which are common practise now - and so, was eventually watched by more than 25 million people. Clearly this wouldn't have been possible if the rights had belonged to a commissioning broadcaster.

Throughout the four-year production of *The Age of Stupid*, the filmmakers deluded themselves that their work would be done as soon as the master tapes were handed over, at which point they would be able to have their lives back. But since completing the film in October 2008, they have been persuaded that their work is in fact only just beginning. They have formed a new not-profit organisation, "Not Stupid", supported by Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace International, Stop Climate Chaos (a coalition of more than 70 climate NGOs) and many others.

The aim of "Not Stupid" is, firstly, to get 250 million people to watch the film and, secondly, to turn all those viewers into virtual or physical campaigners, all focussed on the UN Climate Summit in Copenhagen in December 2009, where the successor to the Kyoto Treaty will be finalised. It is not an exaggeration to say that the future of humanity will be decided at the event, which leading thinkers are calling "the most important meeting in human history".

Top British rock band Radiohead are supporting the campaign with a remix of their song "Reckoner" - which they also donated for the film's end credits - which will be available exclusively from the Not Stupid website.

The effort to reach a quarter of a billion viewers starts on March 15th at the World Premiere in London or, the "People's Premiere". The film will screen in a solar-powered cinema tent in Leicester Square, together with simultaneous screenings at about 50 cinemas across the UK, as well as at high profile venues such as The Eden Project. The star of the film, Pete Postlethwaite, will arrive in a solar-powered car and other celebrities will join him by bicycle rickshaw, before heading up the green carpet. After the film screening there will be a live event at Leicester Square, which will be beamed to the participating cinemas - and to news crews - via satellite link. Other key venues which do not have satellite will be given access to the internet feed which will be streaming straight onto the film's website www.ageofstupid.net. This will be not only the world's first truly eco premiere, but also the first that is INclusive rather than EXclusive. Which chimes perfectly with both the unique "crowd-funding" method by which the film was financed, but also its key message that climate change is something that is going to effect everyone in the very near future. Cont...

The UK theatrical release (from Dogwoof distribution) follows on March 20. With a combined supporter base of eight million people, the climate NGOs will be attempting to pack out every screening of the film in every cinema in the opening week, thus ensuring a wide pick-up for week two. As one example, there are TWENTY separate events planned at the Edinburgh Filmhouse in opening week. Everything from students, church groups and pensioners to theme nights and green fairs. In comparison, the most events any previous film has attempted at the same cinema is.... two.

Celluloid Dreams are handling international sales and aim to follow the UK lead with high-profile premieres in key European territories, followed by an NGO-led packing-out of cinemas. Greenpeace, for example, have offices in 42 countries and WWF in even more. They are all standing by ready to activate their members to support the film's release in each territory. And in the USA - clearly a key territory for both climate change action and documentaries generally - the NGO campaign will be coordinated by Working Films, who have pioneered this kind of grassroots network-building for independent films.

Finally, the film will be screened at select high-profile international events in the run-up to Copenhagen. The UK Parliament screened last year (and had the highest turn-out for an outside event, other than the Real Ale festival, which was giving out free beer). In December, Franny went to the UN Climate Summit in Poznan (the precursor to Copenhagen). Originally scheduled to just screen once, it was re-scheduled twice more as word got out and more and more delegates tried to see it. The EU Parliament are screening to MEPs on February 10th and just today the filmmakers received an invitation to screen at the Global Humanitarian Forum in Geneva in June, hosted by Kofi Annan.

These are incredibly exciting times and plans are changing so fast that everything will no-doubt be out of date by the time you read this. See www.ageofstupid.net or email addtolist@ageofstupid.net for the very latest.

There is still time to become Not Stupid.

Director Franny Armstrong Biography

Franny's first documentary, *McLibel* (1997, 2005), told the inside story of the infamous McDonald's libel trial. Filmed with no commission, no budget and a voluntary crew - including Ken Loach, who directed the courtroom reconstructions - it shot to notoriety after getting stopped by lawyers at first BBC1 and then Channel 4 on its first release in 1997. Eight years later - after the 'McLibel Two' had defeated the British government at the European Court of Human Rights - it was finally broadcast on BBC2, to excellent viewing figures (1 million at 10.30pm on Sunday) and fantastic reviews. It was then broadcast on TV in 15 countries - including Australia, Canada & America - and released on DVD worldwide. Cinema Libre distributors released it in American cinemas and DVD stores in Summer 2005 and *Revelation* followed in the UK in 2006. *McLibel* was nominated for (but never won) any number of awards, including the Grierson Documentary Award and the British Independent Film Awards. It was recently picked for the British Film Institute's prestigious series, "Ten Documentaries Which Changed The World".

When the *McLibel* crew were making their films, website and court cases they didn't for a moment think they'd have any impact on McDonald's. They just thought it was worth doing. Which made the resulting law changes, store closures and sea change in public awareness all the sweeter.

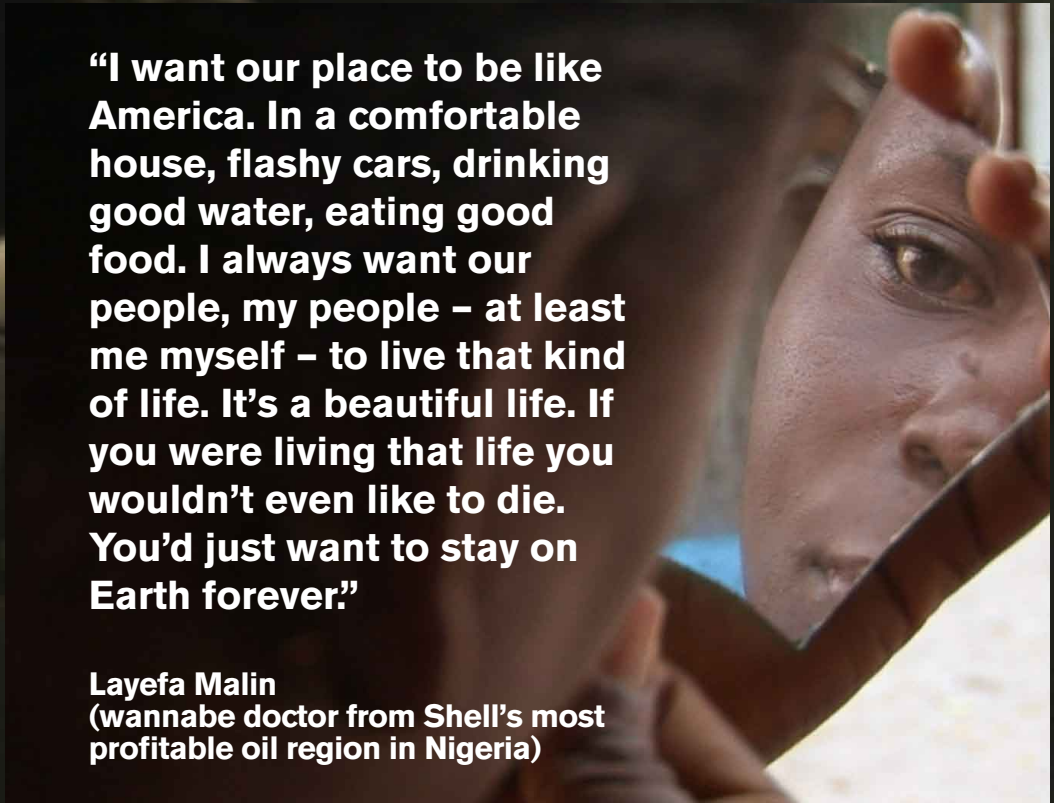
Franny's second feature doc, *Drowned Out* (2002), followed an Indian family who chose to stay at home and drown rather than make way for the Narmada Dam. It too sold to TV round the world, was nominated for 'Best Documentary' at the British Independent Film Awards 2004 and was released theatrically in America and on DVD worldwide in 2006.

Franny's obsession with climate change, then called *The Greenhouse Effect*, started with her "Name and Shame" campaign at High School, which promised to reveal which teachers were driving to school rather than biking or walking - and to list which of their cars had catalytic converters (what were they again?). By the next day she'd forgotten all about it, but years later met a former teacher who said the campaign had terrified her to the extent that she had actually gone out and converted her car.

At university seven years later, Franny caused a fuss when her thesis "Is the Human Species Suicidal?" (which is pretty much the blueprint for *The Age of Stupid*) split the examining committee. One bod called it "the most original undergraduate work I've ever seen" but another riposted "Ms Armstrong is not the kind of person who walks out of the University of London with a First Class Degree". Thus ended Franny's academic career and respect for large institutions.

During the *McLibel* decade, Franny made two climate change films - *Baked Alaska*, about the ironies of drilling for oil in a place which is melting ten times faster than the rest of the world, and *Going Under*, about rising sea levels in the Pacific. Sadly the latter was never finished as Franny got so spectacularly dumped while filming in Tuvalu she was never able to look at the footage again. (But she did later sell it to a BBC film about Tuvalu also made by a Director who got dumped while on the island. Good job it's disappearing eh?) The silver lining of the sorry experience was that Mark Lynas - who was promoted overnight from climate change colleague to Pillar of Support as they were sharing a single-roomed hut on a 1km island with no phone, internet or plane out for "at least a week" - wasn't so bad after all. Mark became the co-writer of *The Age of Stupid*.

With zero backing from the UK TV industry, Franny's films have been seen by more than 53 million people.



"I want our place to be like America. In a comfortable house, flashy cars, drinking good water, eating good food. I always want our people, my people - at least me myself - to live that kind of life. It's a beautiful life. If you were living that life you wouldn't even like to die. You'd just want to stay on Earth forever."

Layefa Malin
(wannabe doctor from Shell's most profitable oil region in Nigeria)

Producer John Battsek Biography

John Battsek has probably produced more feature documentaries than anybody in the UK. His most famous is 'One Day in September' (1999), the Oscar-winning feature length doc about the tragic events of the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich. (As also featured in Spielberg's movie, 'Munich'.)

At the 2008 Sundance Festival, John launched three feature documentaries, 'My Kid Could Paint That', 'Crossing The Line' and 'In The Shadow of the Moon', securing distribution deals worth more than 4 million dollars.

In 2006, John's film about the New York Cosmos soccer team, 'Once In A Lifetime' was released to ecstatic reviews by Miramax and Pathe, with a book and soundtrack album released alongside.

John has also produced 'Live Forever' (2001), 'Game Of Their Lives' (2002), 'State of Mind' (2003), 'Peace One Day' (2004), Once In A Lifetime (2006) and two movies - 'The Serpent's Kiss' (1996) and 'Lila Says' (2004).



Producer Lizzie Gillett Biography

From Local TV Reporter to Hit Documentary Producer (fingers crossed)

Blagged work experience at Local TV Station. Interviewed the Dean of the Cathedral about his controversial sacking / quitting over the boys' choir on first day. Within the week I'd been given a Proper Job as a reporter and loved finding, reporting, shooting, editing, and scripting 3 stories a day.

Ross, the very inspiring and slightly scary boss, wanted to start a sports show. I was the sportiest person working at the station (not saying much) so was the natural candidate for the job.

"The Score" was my one hour weekly sports show. It wasn't your usual Sports Show as ballet, wheelchair basketball, and 5 year olds swimming were given equal prominence with All Blacks' victories.

The upshot of all this small town success was little old me heading for London expecting to get a job Directing Panorama at the Beeb. Ah, yes well. That didn't quite happen (thankfully now but painfully humbling at the time) and I got a job as a secretary.

In one year I applied for 300 jobs. Didn't get one of them. Finally got a month of unpaid volunteering at the Beeb (I was a bit obsessed w that institution coming from the Colonies) which I thought was my lucky break. Turned out to be opening mail in a stationary cupboard with 8 other lucky wannabes on the Watchdog show.

Read Franny's article in The Guardian. Got last tickets (probably not true but adds to the story so taking artistic licence) to Premiere of Drowned Out. Cried. Thought it was Best Doc Ever. So profound and brilliant on so many levels.

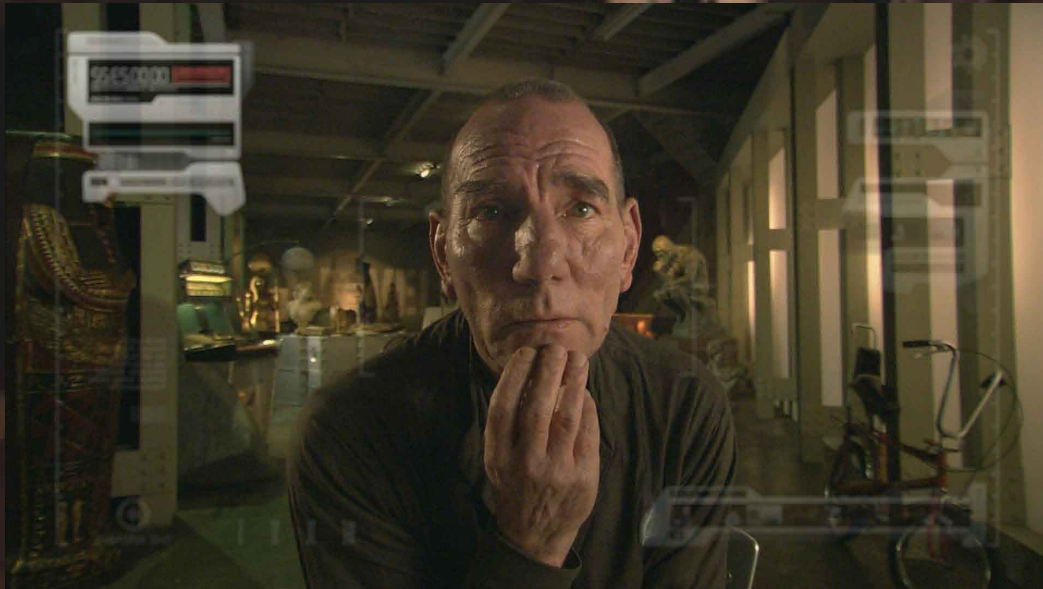
Stalked Franny on the internet. Began volunteering for her in Sept 2002. After about a month I started working for Franny, though we didn't have enough for me to be fulltime so I had another job to stay afloat. Worked for two years promoting McLibel and Drowned Out, then Franny took me on as the Co-Producer of The Age of Stupid (then called Crude) and my life was happily taken over by the Stupid beast (then name Crude). See the Stupid Diaries for all the adventures making the film.

Actor Pete Postlethwaite Biography

Pete was born in 1946 and grew up in Cheshire, England amid middle-class surroundings. He went to college and while completing his studies developed an interest in theatre, to the chagrin of his family. His father, a laborer, wanted him to find a more secure position in life.

A drama teacher initially, he decided to follow his acting instincts full-time and gradually built up an impressive array of classical stage credits via repertory, including the Bristol Old Vic Drama School and stints with Liverpool Everyman, Manchester Royal Exchange and Royal Shakespeare Company. By the 80s he was ready to branch out into film and TV, giving a startling performance as a wife abuser in the British film *Distant Voices, Still Lives* (1988). His highly distinctive features were subsequently put to good use in a number of versatile roles, usually menacing but sometimes humble, and most frequently as working-class types.

By 1993 he had crossed over into Hollywood parts and earned his first Oscar nomination for his superb role as Daniel Day-Lewis' father in *In the Name of the Father* (1993). Other quality roles came his way with *The Usual Suspects* (1995), *Brassed Off* (1996), and *Amistad* (1997). Television has been a creative and positive venue as well with such fine work in "*Sharpe's Company*" (1994), *Lost for Words* (1999) and *The Sins* (2000). Working equally both here and abroad these days, Postlethwaite avoids the public limelight for the most part and lives quietly in England.



CREW

**Written & Directed by
Producer**

Editor

Executive Producer

Composer

Animation Directors

Visual Effects Supervisor

Climate Change Supervisor

Special Thanks

More Executive Producers

Franny Armstrong

Lizzie Gillett

David G Hill

John Battsek

Chris Brierley

Martyn Pick

Jonathan Hodgson

Gregory McKneally

Mark Lynas

Alex Garland

Peter Armstrong

Bruce Goodison

Emily James

Andrew Ruhemann

STARRING

Pete Postlethwaite as The Archivist

And

Jeh Wadia

Alvin DuVernay III

Layefa Malin

Jamila & Adnan Bayyoud

Piers Guy

Fernand Pareau

as themselves



SYSTEM RESTART

the directors label

