

VENUS AND THE SUN **PRESS KIT**

Directed by:
Adam Randall

Produced by:
Andy Brunskill

Written by:
Reuben Grove

Music by:
Stephen Warbeck

Website: www.venusandthesun.com

Strap Lines:

Never judge a book by its cover.
God is dead... Long live Keeley Hazell
Fancy a threesome in the library?
Being a love goddess can be such a boar.
Keeley Hazell. Living the myth.
What would you do, if all eyes were on you?

SYNOPSIS

Summary

This warped, witty re-imagining of the world-famous Venus and Adonis myth transports the essential elements of Ovid's Classical tale to a very different world: 21st Century, celebrity-obsessed London. Former Page 3 girl and modern-day Love Goddess Keeley Hazell plays a wryly fictionalised version of herself: a glamour model with a secret passion for Classical Latin. The library offers Keeley the ideal escape from an army of testosterone-crazed fans - her fellow readers are more into Tacitus than the tabloids - and the Latin even begins to grant her magical powers (stunningly captured in the film by superb animation). But when Keeley meets gorgeous librarian Adam, the one Sun-reader in the country she hadn't bargained for, she is given a lesson in not judging books by their covers. Her hilarious, hallucinatory journey of discovery reveals just how far she's come to rely on the advantages of fame.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

The film's main catalyst was the involvement of its star, Keeley Hazell. Producer Andy Brunskill reflects: "the film was built around Keeley, she was always our star. After meeting her, Reuben and I worked up a treatment that took ages. We really worked hard on it as we could see the potential of the whole project from that moment." Much of the original concept was the product of writer Reuben Grove: "Reuben went off and dreamed up the main concept from God only knows. I could never have done that. Then we'd meet up and argue for long sessions at a time. Then he'd go off, realise that the odd thing I'd said did actually make sense, and work on it more. It was really a very long time to be working on a 3 page document! But thank goodness we got it right and Keeley liked it." Once Keeley was on board, Reuben began turning the treatment into a full script. In Reuben's opinion Keeley was "the perfect girl to tell this story, being pretty damn close to a modern-day love goddess - her long reign as undisputed Queen of Page 3 means she has her own little corner in the hearts of millions of English men! But we also knew she was about to emerge onto the acting scene - that she had intelligence, charisma, *talent* in her locker too. So we were pleased when she liked the idea, to say the least. It couldn't have happened if she hadn't said yes." Hazell remarks "there has always been quite a bit of acting involved in my career as a model - you have to step in to a role before getting in front of the camera - so it was really just a question of using those skills, adapting and expanding them, to tap into something bigger and more suited to film acting."

Speaking about his first impressions of the script, director Adam Randall says "it was just so fun; I loved the combination of tabloid celebrity and classical mythology and the hilarious way this was presented - the clash between the two worlds, and the way one fed into the other. I'd never read anything like it before. I loved the idea of the animation, too."

Ukweli Roach - who features as our modern-day Adonis, Adam - attended a rather unusual audition for the part: upstairs in a private members' club in Soho. "There was a pool table in there and someone practising opera in the adjacent room, so it was quite a funny audition situation. But Andy and Adam were really relaxed and we had a lot of fun improvising on the script - it was one of the best auditions I've ever been to." Director Adam Randall admits being "worried about the character of Adam, because the Simon and Keeley characters were so witty, I found it difficult to place Adam. However, when I met Ukweli, he made Adam into a totally believable character - perhaps a more flawed, more nervous character - but a charming guy overall and, most importantly, someone it was easy to imagine Keeley falling for. At the audition we got Ukweli to improvise with Andy (Brunskill), which was hilarious. He made moments that weren't even meant to be funny, utterly brilliant"

What of Will Smith's character, the geeky Simon? Although Reuben hadn't thought of Smith from the beginning, "there was a point in the writing process when I began to hear all the character's lines as if Phil Smith from *The Thick of It* was saying them -

with that dorky snobbishness which Will makes so funny. I admire the writing on *The Thick of It*, which Will is a part of too, so there was a two-fold satisfaction in eventually getting him on board." Director Randall admits he "loves *The Thick of It* and, even though Will doesn't have a main part, I've always thought his character was brilliant. Reuben mentioned him and I just thought he'd make a perfect Simon. Then when I met him he was such a lovely guy: so funny, such a rounded character. He personifies that brilliant mix of vulnerability, insecurity, and the ability to be an utter arsehole!"

Going on to speak about Keeley herself, Randall reflects that "she handled her first role as an actress very impressively. She was nervous to begin with, yet we started to see her natural talent emerge as filming went on. When the cameras weren't rolling, or she thought they weren't, she became much more natural, bringing that essential humour and vulnerability to the character." How did Hazell feel about the role? "It was strange to be, in a sense, playing myself. It definitely makes it harder to separate yourself from a character, and yet it's easier, in a way, as you're building on real experience. I was a little apprehensive as it was my film debut, but gradually I began to relax and, thanks to the encouraging, laid-back atmosphere created by the cast and crew, I was able to settle well into the role, and hopefully those nerves brought a vulnerability to the character that was really needed."

ADAPTING A MYTH?

Venus and the Sun is a modern take on a famous Ovid myth, an unusual subject and basis for a film starring a tabloid star. Writer Reuben Grove describes the process as "a case of teasing out the interesting parallels, weaving the myth with our fictional Keeley's situation in the most interesting and comical way. I thought the two sides of Venus' character you see in Ovid's book - she's both powerful as a goddess and powerless when she falls in love with a mortal - would fit nicely with a modern-day pin-up, someone navigating the pleasures and pit-falls of celebrity. Some elements of the script came quickly, more or less immediately after deciding to use the *Metamorphoses*, and others emerged through conversations with Andy over the space of a year or so. Then of course Adam came on board and had a significant input also."

Talking about his prior knowledge of the myth, Ukweli Roach admits "I was vaguely aware of the myth but didn't know it in detail. I knew who Adonis was (or what he was supposed to be) so I wasn't sure I was up to playing a modernised version. But the script was so funny and quirky that it became apparent that Adonis didn't need to be quite like the stereotype." Was the mythical background difficult to work with? "I think I would have found it a little intimidating but all credit to the writing and production because the atmosphere of the piece and the fellow actors made it very easy to elaborate and begin to have fun with it. Plus my training at Rada and first job at Shakespeare's Globe had prepared me well to take on classical subjects."

ABOUT THE CAST

KEELEY HAZELL

Keeley is the most successful page 3 girl of the last two decades and consistently appears in the top 5 UK FHM top 100 sexiest women charts. In a step away from her tabloid fame, Hazell has decided to pursue a career as an actress. *Venus and The Sun* will be her first project in her new career but since filming she has also appeared as Kirsty in Dominic Burns' HOW TO STOP BEING A LOSER and won a leading role as Peckham Princess in Frank Harper's ST GEORGE'S DAY.

WILL SMITH

Will is best known for his stand-up comedy and his role as inept Tory researcher Phil Smith in the television series *The Thick of It*. Will also writes for *The Thick of It* and was a writer on Sacha Baron Cohen's *Bruno* and Armando Iannucci's *In The Loop*. He is a regular panelist on Radio 4 shows such as *Banter*, *The Personality Test* and the Sony award-winning *Charm Offensive*.

UKWELI ROACH

Ukweli is another rising star whose latest film *Streetdance 3D*, in which he played the lead role, proved to be a box-office smash. The UK's first 3D movie, *Streetdance 3D* was produced by Vertigo Films and the BBC.

ABOUT THE CREW

ADAM RANDALL

A graduate of Westminster University Film School, Adam has directed numerous short films, music videos, documentaries and commercials, including short films *Easier Ways To Make a Living* and *The Catch*. He has just directed a series of *Secret Diary of A Call Girl* web films and a CH4 *Funny Cut* starring Andi Osho. His short film *Hooded* was a huge success, having had a short and incredibly popular London run. It was soon taken on by both the British Council and Shorts International. It is now achieving great success on the festival circuit. The film has been picked up by Box TV and is being developed as a series which he will direct. Adam has also been nominated for a 4Talent Directing Award.

ANDY BRUNSKILL

After a brief spell at DNA Films, Andy started as Assistant to the Academy Award nominated Producer Alison Owen at her Ruby Films. As Alison's right hand man he worked on films such as BRICK LANE, from the Monica Ali novel, for Film 4, THE OTHER BOLEYN GIRL starring Scarlett Johansson, Natalie Portman and Eric Bana, for BBC/Sony, THE MEN WHO STARE AT GOATS, starring Kevin Spacey, Ewan

McGregor and George Clooney for BBC/Winchester and the 7 Emmy Award winning (14 Nom's) TEMPLE GRANDIN, starring Claire Danes, Julia Ormond and David Straithairn for HBO. Recent productions that Andy and Alison worked together on include CHATROOM, directed by Hideo Nakata, starring Aaron Johnson and Imogen Poots for Film 4 and TAMARA DREWE, directed by Stephen Frears, starring Gemma Arterton and Dominic Cooper for BBC/West End. Andy progressed up through Ruby Films to become the Development Executive contributing to the development of a slate of around 15 feature films ranging from £3M-£20M budgets including JANE EYRE for BBC/Focus which was directed by Cary Fukunaga, starring Michael Fassbender, Mia Wasikowska and Judi Dench and will be released in 2011. Andy has also produced a collection of low-budget short films but VENUS AND THE SUN was his first with a notable budget and will be his first release since leaving Ruby Films at Christmas 2010. Andy is now a freelance producer with a slate of his own projects including four micro-budget feature films that will be shot in succession from June 2011 across Brooklyn, London and Berlin.

REUBEN GROVE

Reuben is an exciting young writer whose debut play *Hidden Light* - about the 18th Century French Physicist Emilie du Chatelet - transferred to the Oxford Playhouse in 2007 after a successful run on the London fringe. His verse play *The Wild Bull of Heaven* - written while he was Writer in Residence at the legendary 'Shakespeare and Company' in Paris, is forthcoming.

STEPHEN WARBECK

Stephen is acknowledged to be one of the world's leading film composers, having scored a series of high-profile features including *Mrs Brown*, *Shakespeare in Love*, *Billy Elliot*, *Captain Correlli's Mandolin*, *Charlotte Grey*, and *Proof*. In 1998 he won the Academy award for original musical score for *Shakespeare and Love*.