



MORVERN CALLAR

A Film by LYNNE RAMSAY

'MORVERN CALLAR' is unrated and has a running time of 97 minutes.

Press Notes

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COWBOY PICTURES PRESENTS

MORVERN CALLAR

Director Lynne Ramsay
Written by Liana Dognini
Lynne Ramsay
Based on a novel by Alan Warner
Executive Producers Leonard Crooks
Andras Hamori
Barbara McKissack
Seaton McLean
David M. Thompson
Producers George Faber
Charles Pattinson
Robyn Slovo
Line Producer Ronaldo Vasconcellos
Cinematographer Alwin H. Kuchler
Editor Lucia Zucchetti
Casting Des Hamilton
Production Design Jane Morton
Art Direction Philip Barber
Costume Design Sarah Blenkinsop
Production Manager Alex Sutherland
Assistant Director Michael Elliott
Mark Fenn
3rd Assistant Director (Spain) Athonly Wilcox
Sound Designer Paul Davies
Sound Richard Flynn
ADR Mixer Gerard Roche
Visual Effects Supervisor Simon Frame
production coordinator James Biddle
music supervisor Andrew Cannon
negative cutter/rushes transfer Mike Fraser
business affairs: Company Pictures Willow Grylls
assistant coordinator: Spain Silvia Gómez
location manager Ben Hepworth
assistant coordinator: UK Alex Jenkins
gaffer Andy Long
assistant coordinator: London Mark Niemierko
camera operator/director of photography: Thomas Townend
second unit

Print: 1:85, Dolby Digital / SR, 97 min. 6 reels, 8761 feet

CAST

Morvern Callar	Samantha Morton
Lanna	Kathleen McDermott
Boy in Room 1022	Raife Patrick Burchell
Dazzer	Dan Cadan
Sheila Tequila	Carolyn Calder
Tom Boddington	Jim Wilson
Susan	Dolly Wells
Couris Jean	Ruby Milton
Vanessa	Linda McGuire

SOUNDTRACK

I WANT MORE

Performed by Can
Licensed courtesy of Bucks Music

GOON GUMPAS

Performed by Aphex Twin
Licensed courtesy of Warp Records

EVERYTHING YOU DO IS A BALLOON

Performed by Boards of Canada
Licensed courtesy of SKAM

SPOON

Performed by Can
Licensed courtesy of Bucks Music

BLUE MILK (EDIT)

Performed by Stereolab
Licensed courtesy of WSP

I'M STICKING WITH YOU

Performed by The Velvet Underground
Licensed courtesy of Universal Music Group

YOU CAN FALL

Performed by Broadcast
Licensed courtesy of Warp Records

GAMELAN DRUMMING

COOL IN THE POOL

Performed by Holger Czukay
Licensed courtesy of Bucks Music

HOLD OF DEATH

Performed by Lee 'Scratch' Perry
Licensed courtesy of Creole Records

SOME VELVET MORNING

Performed by Lee Hazlewood and Nancy Sinatra
Licensed courtesy of Celebrity Music

JAPANESE COWBOY

Performed by Ween
Licensed courtesy of Mushroom Records

FRAGRANCE

Performed by Holger Czukay
Licensed courtesy of Bucks Music

NANNOU

Performed by Aphex Twin

SYNOPSIS

(written by Lynne Ramsay and Liana Dognini)

It's winter in a remote Highland seaport in the West of Scotland. 21-year-old Morvern Callar, a low paid employee in the local supermarket, wakes on Christmas morning to find her boyfriend has committed suicide and is dead on the kitchen floor.

What can she do?

She opens his Christmas presents to her, puts on her new steerhide jacket, takes her new Walkman and goes to work, stocking shelves and scrubbing floors until she meets her best friend Lanna for a night out.

She tells everyone that 'he's' left her and left town. Nobody really understands - but then again Morvern is not really one for saying much about herself.

She returns home - he has left her money in the bank and his unpublished novel on a disc.

She doesn't know what to do.

She'd like him back but.... she changes the author's name on the novel to her own and sends it to a publisher, she hides the body in a cupboard and with the money he's left her she buys a package holiday to southern Spain for Lanna and herself.

In the bright southern light of Spain cracks emerge in the relationship between Morvern and Lanna. Whilst Lanna is content to hang out in the tourist resort clubbing and having a good time, Morvern is watching, thinking and planning.

The friendship cannot last. They split up.

As Lanna boards the plane back home with a tan and her holiday snaps Morvern is drinking Champagne with two London publishers discussing the finer points of the deal for 'her' brilliant new novel, being offered more money than she ever dreamed of...

LONG SYNOPSIS

Morvern Callar is a quiet, chain-smoking, small town girl who works at the local supermarket. A child-like creature who doesn't have much to say for herself, she has the face of "an angel come to earth." Morvern also has one unique feature - her "glitter knee" that she proudly shows to anyone who's interested.

It's Christmas Day and Morvern comes home from work to find the dead body of her boyfriend lying on the kitchen floor. Morvern's immediate reaction is to light up a cigarette and contemplate the situation. Never one to make rushed decisions, she leaves the body where it is for a few days while she decides what to do. When they ask Morvern tells her friends and family that her boyfriend left her and left town - probably even left the country. Although it seems strange that a quiet, computer-nerd of a man would just up and leave, no-one pushes Morvern to explain further.

Appropriately, her boyfriend has left a suicide note on the computer screen. He only has three requests for Morvern. Firstly, to arrange a funeral with the money he's left in the bank; secondly, for Morvern to take any of his CD collection that she wants; and lastly, to send his unpublished novel to one of the big London publishing houses.

Still contemplating what to do, Morvern goes out partying with her friend Lanna who is much more of a pragmatist about life. But a wild night out with Lanna and a couple of local boys can't erase the reality of her boyfriend's death.

Morvern goes back to the computer and re-reads the suicide note, finally bringing up the pages of the novel on the computer. She carefully erases her boyfriend's name from the author line and types in "Morvern Callar." Then she disposes of his body.

Already on a warning from her boss at the supermarket, 'Creeping Jesus,' Morvern decides she needs to get away from it all and uses the funeral money to invite Lanna on an all-expenses-paid package holiday to Spain.

Lanna is over the moon but Morvern finds that Spain is not much different from home, except the weather is better. Everyone is still taking loads of ecstasy, drinking and clubbing - only to greater excess. Even the taste of her first champagne can't sweeten the experience for her.

Morvern and Lanna finally part ways and Morvern makes a phone call to London. Tom Boddington from the publishers in London immediately flies out with his colleague, eager to meet the mysterious Morvern Callar. They enthusiastically praise her novel and want to discuss her 'next project'. Morvern successfully distracts them by taking the two on a frenzied night out in the Spanish rave scene where they are further puzzled by the ethereal creature they've met. The following day, they get down to business and speak about money – when the amount is mentioned, the naive Morvern is in shock at their proposition.

Back home, the cheque arrives in the post from the publishers and Morvern finally realises that through a bizarre chain of events, she's been handed the key to her freedom and her life will never be the same again.

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Lynne Ramsay/Writer/Director

Lynne Ramsay graduated from the National Film & Television School in 1995. She won the Cannes Prix de Jury the following year for her graduation film, *Small Deaths*. Her second short film, *Kill the Day*, won the Clermont Ferrand Prix du Jury and her third short, *Gasman*, made the same year, won Ramsay her second Cannes Prix du Jury as well as a Scottish BAFTA for Best Short Film.

With her debut feature *Ratcatcher*, Ramsay continued to win critical acclaim and awards around the world. *Ratcatcher* screened in Un Certain Regard at Cannes and went on to open the Edinburgh International Film Festival, where Ramsay received the Guardian New Directors prize. She also won the Carl Foreman Award for Newcomer in British Film at the 2000 BAFTA Awards, the Sutherland Trophy at the London Film Festival and the Silver Hugo for Best Director at the Chicago International Film Festival.

ABOUT THE CAST

Samantha Morton/Morvern

“I always knew Morvern Callar would be very special to me. I had a very funny feeling that I had to do this film, it was just something I had to do.”

Samantha Morton is best known to international audiences for her role in Woody Allen's *Sweet and Lowdown*, for which she received both Academy Award and Golden Globe nominations for Best Supporting Actress.

Morton first came to the attention of film audiences as Iris in Carine Adler's *Under the Skin*, for which she received the Boston Film Critics' Award as Best Actress. Most recently she was seen in Alison Maclean's *Jesus's Son*, opposite Billy Crudup. Other film credits include *The Last Yellow* and *Dreaming of Joseph Lees*.

Prior to **MORVERN CALLAR**, she recently appeared in Julien Temple's film *Pandaemonium*, which screened at the Toronto Film Festival, and Amos Gitai's *Eden*. Her television work includes *Cracker*, *Band of Gold* and adaptations of *Emma*, *Jane Eyre* (in which she played the title role) and *Tom Jones*.

After completing **MORVERN CALLAR** Morton starred in Steven Spielberg's *Minority Report*. She also stars in Jim Sheridan's feature film *In America*, which will screen at this year's 2002 Toronto International Film Festival.

Kathleen McDermott/Lanna

“Lanna's very confident, bubbly, outgoing, loves her parties, music and drugs. She's always up for a laugh.”

Kathleen McDermott had never considered acting as a career until Des Hamilton, casting director on **MORVERN CALLAR** approached her in the street in Glasgow. Although initially wary, she was persuaded to attend an open audition and after a series of callbacks, was cast in the crucial role of Lanna, Morvern's best friend. A trainee barber, McDermott is still to decide whether she will continue acting after **MORVERN CALLAR**.

NOTES FROM THE AUTHOR

Alan Warner

I was born in the rural town of Oban on the West Coast of Scotland, the setting of *The Port* in *MORVERN CALLAR*. My parents were hoteliers and I grew up in a 44 bedroom hotel; the greatest playground a child could ever dream of. My childhood was idyllic. Then came Secondary school.

In 1984 I attended a college in London then I wrote a thesis on Joseph Conrad at Glasgow University. As I'd hoped, no employment resulted from my studies. Like so many writers, I was a frustrated and very bad musician and I've now met so many musicians who are frustrated and bad writers. It is a strange world.

All my life I have avoided work but I have failed terribly on many occasions. Like *Morvern*, I've worked in supermarkets, in dry cleaners, in bars, in call centres and on Britain's notorious and feared railway system.

I began writing the novel *MORVERN CALLAR* in 1992. It was written quickly, in less than a year and to my astonishment accepted for publication immediately. It was published in 1995 by Jonathan Cape in London.

The problem of adapting *MORVERN CALLAR* for film was that this novel needed a daring and bold director to bring his or her own personal vision to it. Vision, daring and boldness are, sadly, not the hallmarks of contemporary British Cinema. We were blessed with the arrival of Lynne Ramsay. Firstly we had the joy of her *RATCATCHER* and now her vision of *MORVERN CALLAR* with Samantha Morton's brilliant, edgy performance.

I've written three further novels, *THESE DEMENTED LANDS* (1997), *THE SOPRANOS* (1998) *THE MAN WHO WALKS* (2002) and an original film script *CAREFUL WHAT YOU WANT*.

I'm currently living in Dublin, Ireland.

FILM FESTIVALS

2002 Mill Valley Film Festival

Official Selection

2002 Chicago International Film Festival

Official Selection

2002 San Sebastian Film Festival

2002 Toronto International Film Festival

Official Selection, Visions

2002 Telluride International Film Festival

Official Selection

2002 Edinburgh International Film Festival

Opening night film – August 14th, 2002

2002 Cannes Film Festival, Directors' Fortnight

Winner, the Prix CICAÉ, given to the best film in Directors' Fortnight

Winner, Prix de la Jeunesse

AWARDS/NOMINATIONS

2002 British Independent Film Awards

Winner, Best Actress - Samantha Morton

Winner, Best Technical Achievement - Alwin H. Kuchler

Fipresci Grand Prix for New Director of the Year

PRODUCTION NOTES

MORVERN CALLAR, Lynne Ramsay's eagerly anticipated follow up to her award-winning debut, *Ratcatcher*, was filmed over eight weeks at Twickenham Studios, and on location in London, in Oban on the west coast of Scotland, and in the Almeria region of Southern Spain.

Starring Oscar nominee Samantha Morton in the title role, the script is adapted by Ramsay and co-writer Liana Dognini from the acclaimed novel by Scottish writer Alan Warner.

Once again Ramsay reunites with director of photography Alwin Kuchler (*The Claim*, *One Day in September*), production designer Jane Morton and editor Lucia Zuchetti (*The Low Down*), the same team with whom she made all of her previous short films and her award-winning feature *Ratcatcher*.

Novelist Alan Warner began to write the first couple of drafts of the screenplay before deciding that being the author of the original novel was very different to being its screenwriter: "I found writing the screenplay very difficult. Revisiting the book, I found it very dense and I was just too close to it to be able to dissect it to write the screenplay." Although Ramsay and co-writer Liana Dognini took over the screenwriting duties from him, Warner remained very close to the project throughout the shoot: "I'm very pleased that a film-maker like Lynne, with such a defined vision and her own ideas, is making the film." He also considers her unique style "suits what I feel is the very visual nature of the book - the verbal content is less important."

Having seen Lynne Ramsay's short films, producers Robyn Slovo, Charlie Pattinson and George Faber of Company Pictures commissioned her in 1998 to adapt Alan Warner's book and direct the film. Ramsay's visual style and strong take on the narrative seemed a perfect match. When Company Pictures approached her, Ramsay, who had already read Warner's novel, immediately said yes.

"For me there's something very modern about the film. It's about a young woman who takes what she can get through hardcore circumstances," comments Ramsay. "In terms of the form, I was trying to achieve something which was realistic in some places but almost surreal in others... For me it was about stretching what I'd done before and making a kind of black fairytale." Ramsay was particularly attracted to the strong central character of Morvern Callar – a young woman whose unique sense of morality makes her a truly contemporary character. Says Ramsay, "She was really intriguing, why would she do these things and you still like her? She's pretty out there. I'd never seen a character like that in a film so I thought: this is really a challenge." Morvern is a pragmatic but vulnerable young woman, offering Ramsay (and co-writer Dognini) the opportunity to create a film about an unusual outsider with a highly original take on the world.

Despite **MORVERN CALLAR** being the first film Ramsay has worked on with someone else's original material, she still felt extremely close to the project: "The book felt very personal to me somehow. I liked Morvern and felt I was really with her." The process of Ramsay and Liana Dognini jointly writing the screenplay for **MORVERN CALLAR** sums up the collaborative nature of the project in general. Ramsay wrote the first thirty pages before becoming busy with her debut feature, *Ratcatcher*, and suggested that her friend, Dognini continue it. Dognini, an award-winning director of live action and animated shorts, had never written a feature-length

script before but Ramsay was convinced she could do it: "I was working on *Ratcatcher* when we started so I needed someone to get the ball rolling. I really liked her work - she's a great writer and I thought there was something similar in our work."

While Ramsay was shooting *Ratcatcher*, Dognini wrote a 240-page breakdown of the novel in screenplay form, extracting everything from the book that she thought would be relevant for the script. While Ramsay was completing *Ratcatcher*, she and Dognini set up an office and for the next eight months, literally wrote the script together. Occasionally they would take on different tasks, for example, one of them would focus on the Scotland-set half of the story and the other on the Spanish-set half and then they would swap. The experimental process paid off, says Ramsay: "We fancied seeing how it would go and it worked. We did it bit by bit." Ramsay and Dognini delivered the first draft of **MORVERN CALLAR** in 1999 after spending six weeks in Spain writing and researching the Spanish section of the story. Dognini remained involved with the film after the screenplay was completed and was on set for most of the shoot.

As with her previous films, Ramsay cast a mix of professional and first-time actors, with the key supporting roles of Lanna, Morvern's best friend and Red Hanna, Morvern's stepfather, being taken by first-time actors Kathleen McDermott and Duncan McHardy.

Initially, Ramsay intended to use an entirely unknown cast but when she saw a photograph of Samantha Morton, says producer Robyn Slovo, "she just said 'this woman's Morvern'." Ramsay sent Morton Alan Warner's original novel as opposed to the screenplay as she doesn't like actors becoming too familiar with the script, especially before it's a final draft. After meeting Morton several times Ramsay decided she wanted her for the part. "She really wanted to do it; I saw her in *Under The Skin* and I thought she was amazing," says Ramsay. "And then when I met her, it really took me by surprise. I was a bit unsettled because she was the first person I saw and that sort of thing never happens to me - normally I have to see at least a million people and feel like I've explored every avenue! But something just clicked; she was it. She's very natural."

Morton, meanwhile, was absolutely passionate about becoming Morvern and had been a huge fan of Ramsay's work since seeing *Ratcatcher*. She read and re-read Warner's book several times to the point where she "really felt the voice of Morvern and her spirit." Realising that she was desperate to do the film, Morton nervously waited for Ramsay's decision: "I had more butterflies in my stomach than ever before and waiting to hear from Lynne was incredibly hard."

For Morton, working with Ramsay was an incredibly collaborative experience, something she describes as "a very special time for me."

For the rest of the casting process, Des Hamilton, an actor who had never previously cast a film, was hired to find a suitable group of non-actors. Hamilton, a Glaswegian who already knew Ramsay and her work, spent several challenging months scouring the streets of Scotland, setting up open auditions and recording hours and hours of DV tape. Using unknown actors is a device Ramsay previously employed with *Ratcatcher* and something she feels brings a particularly natural quality to her work: "If you see an actor who's been in lots of other films, you focus on the other films. If you find the right person, which can be very difficult, then you can get a really fresh performance."

The role of Lanna went to Kathleen McDermott, a trainee barber from Glasgow who had never acted before. When the Lanna shortlist was down to the last few, Hamilton, Ramsay and Morton went to Glasgow; McDermott was eventually chosen after each of the short-listed actors had acted out scenes with Morton. Being picked for a major film role in such a random fashion, especially never having acted before, took McDermott by surprise to say the least: "I was approached by Des while shopping on Argyle Street. As you can imagine I was a bit hesitant being given a number to call by someone in the street but after a couple of days I called and I couldn't be happier." Ramsay is particularly pleased with their find: "It takes a lot of looking, but we were really lucky with Kathleen - she's going to go far in whatever she does. She and Sam clicked - it really worked between the two of them. I think both of them really helped each other and were kept on their toes by each other." During the shoot, McDermott was only given a week's pages in advance so the story developed for her personally as the film, which was shot chronologically, progressed. She was told the story in advance but not in any kind of character detail so that she wouldn't be able to lose the spontaneity of her character, with the result that she could always act in the moment.

The setting of Alan Warner's novel in a remote coastal town in Scotland and the light of Southern Spain also offered Ramsay huge visual possibilities and narrative contrasts. For Warner, the locations were partly autobiographical since he has lived both in Oban and Spain. "As soon as we first went up to do a recce in Oban we recognised where the book was set," says producer Robyn Slovo. "All the places are real - the port, Morvern's flat, the sea wall, the Mantrap [Morvern and Lanna's local bar]." Although it was clear to the production team that Warner had Oban in mind for Morvern and Lanna's home town, Ramsay felt strongly about keeping it unspecific in the film as Warner had done in the book: "I always get a bit of inspiration from the landscape. What I was aiming for was not to make it too specific to somewhere, a kind of nowheresville - it's one of those small towns somewhere."

The Spanish locations, however, were even less specific, as the half of the story that takes place in Spain is more of a road journey - both literal and metaphorical in the case of Morvern. "We had to find somewhere where there was quite a well-developed tourist resort as well as an incredible desert," says Slovo. The shoot was going to take place in early spring, so the original idea of shooting near Barcelona was replaced by a search for a southern Spanish location where the light and heat would be right. The Almeria region was deemed ideal - it had everything the production team was looking for including a tourist strip, a hotel, a desert and a beautiful, untouched Spanish village.

Music is as vital to **MORVERN CALLAR** as the locations. Morvern is always listening to her personal stereo, even when she's in the midst of the booming techno music that emanates within the Spanish dance clubs she and Lanna frequent. Morvern's headphones provide a constant soundtrack to her life, made all the more poignant because her tape is the compilation her dead boyfriend left her. Like her casting director, Des Hamilton, Ramsay also chose a first-timer to fulfil the crucial role of music supervisor, Andrew Cannon. Cannon, an artist, began compiling tracks during the pre-production stage, partly from Alan Warner's own playlist in his novel of **MORVERN CALLAR** and partly by bringing in many of his own and Ramsay's song ideas.

During the shoot itself Samantha Morton constantly listened to Morvern's headphones, as Ramsay doesn't use the music as an accompaniment to what's happening on the screen, but as part of the narrative itself. This wasn't an unusual process for Morton: "There is a real

connection between me and the character - we both use music to concentrate and get in to the right mood. I listened to Django Reinhardt a lot while making Sweet and Lowdown." Almost all the music in the film is what Morvern's listening to on her Walkman. Says Slovo, "Morvern's music is like an indication of what's going on in her head and is completely different to what's going on outside of her." Consequently the final playlist is an eclectic assortment of tracks which, as they are what Morvern's listening to, are often in direct contrast to what is actually going on on the screen - such as the playing of the Mamas and the Papas' Dedicated to the One I Love when Morvern and Lanna are in one of the Spanish dance clubs. Other tracks include Some Velvet Morning (Lee Hazlewood and Nancy Sinatra), Sticking With You (Velvet Underground) and Japanese Cowboy (Ween). The music of the band Can, cited by Warner in the novel, is also featured in the film.

MORVERN CALLAR is produced by Robyn Slovo, Charlie Pattinson and George Faber for Company Pictures. Executive producers are Seaton McLean for Alliance Atlantis, Andras Hamori of H₂O Motion Pictures, David Thompson and Barbara McKissack for BBC Films and Lenny Crooks for the Glasgow Film Fund.