COLD READER

Director/Producer: Michael Beddoes

Cold Reader by Director/ Producer Michael Beddoes. Here the writer, actor and director all share their different experiences behind this outstanding short comedy with FTM.

**THE WRITERS STORY** – *Kristina Heaney...*
Writing *Cold Reader* I wanted to explore homelessness from a different angle. I didn't want it to be about being saved from a tough situation, or a kitchen sink drama. People in difficulty so often become their circumstances in the minds of others, stripping them of individuality. I wanted Gaia to give Edward his humanity back. She recognises him as a person, not a social issue. Writing this gutsy, perceptive young woman who isn't afraid to challenge was great fun. We all need a bit more Gaia about us.

On set, being part of a big team of ladies was just brilliant. Film is such a male-dominated field so it was uplifting to look around the set and see far more women than men. Qualified, talented women fulfilling roles usually attributed to men and making it unmistakably evident that there is no reason cinema should continue as a boys club.

For me, the most revelatory aspect was working with our female DoP, Catherine Goldschmidt, who insisted the images were a slave to the narrative. I can't say it's because she's a woman, but she obviously connected deeply with the story and wanted every shot to tell that story foremost, and look beautiful as a secondary consideration. It was really refreshing as I'm used to cinematographers who are happy so long as everything is pretty. This was the first time I felt the roles of writer and cinematographer were intrinsically connected.

THE ACTORS STORY - *Melissa Clements...*
Due to several work commitments prior to the shoot, our only rehearsal had to be squeezed in several months earlier with a stand-in actor in the role of Edward. Between Kristina, Michael and myself we discussed my character, Gaia, a great deal and experimented how far we could push the comic boundaries. The further we pushed, the more we felt it worked. Mettlesome, straight talking female comedy roles in particular have been stomping the spotlight recently and while *Cold Reader* differs slightly in genre, Gaia I do feel is very much within this band. I knew the script was something quite special from the start. Kristina had shaped such a fresh creation in Gaia; a plucky young female, who dares to speak boldly or humbly entertain with twinkling, knowing charm. She felt like a gift from the first read. She could be a contemporary, comedic heroine straight out of a Shakespeare play - which we all know were great female roles only to be performed by men in dresses.
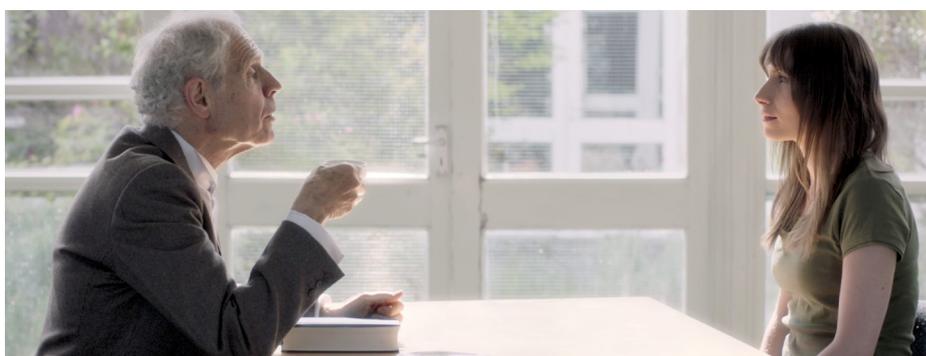
The shoot itself ran seamlessly. A flow of creative production in a fun and harmonious working environment. From my point of view as an actor, practically and artistically, a welcome opportunity and brilliant experience.

THE DIRECTORS STORY - *Michael Beddoes...*
I hadn't planned to make a short film when the script for Cold Reader made its way into my hands. I'd been intending to concentrate on co-writing feature projects and developing my first full-length film as director. But the script was so delicate, it didn't preach or hammer an agenda, it merely let the characters be real people, and allowed an audience to take away any emotions on their own terms. So I had to do it!

It was halfway through the first shooting day when I noticed the strong female presence on set. All the Heads of Department, plus several crew were women. I'd just recruited the best crew I could. I'd always say that I'm gender blind; I just want a team of the best in their field regardless of whether they're male or female. Unfortunately, there are others in our industry who don't agree.

Cold Reader is without doubt, the best set I have ever had the pleasure to work on, and that feeling has translated through into the finished film. The care, attention and skills of everyone have percolated through to make a short that I am incredibly proud of and that we hope people enjoy watching.

Run Time 11 Mins