



# *What Richard Did*

## **Dansk synopsis**

*What Richard Did* følger Richard Karlsen (Jack Reynor) i sommeren mellem Richards afslutning af skolegangen og kommende start på universitetet. Som privilegeret teenager i Dublin er Richard en talentfuld atlet og ubestridt alfahan i sin omgangskreds. Han forelsker sig i Lara (Róisín Murphy) og alting er godt indtil en skæbnesvanger sommernat, hvor Richard begår en katastrofal handling, der kaster en sort skygge over Richard og de mennesker, som betyder mest for ham.

**What Richard Did** is a striking portrait of the fall of Richard, golden-boy of his privileged set of Dublin teens, whose world unravels one summer night.

**What Richard Did** follows Richard Karlsen, golden-boy athlete and undisputed alpha-male of his privileged set of South Dublin teenagers, through the summer between the end of school and the beginning of university. The world is bright and everything seems possible, until in one summer night Richard does something that destroys it all and shatters the lives of the people closest to him. Featuring extraordinary performances from its mainly young cast, **What Richard Did** is a quietly devastating study of a boy confronting the gap between who he thought he was and who he proves to be.

Richard Karlsen is a charming and talented young man – the undisputed leader of his circle of privileged South-Dublin teenagers. Straight out of school with a long summer and then university ahead of him, Richard’s world seems full of possibility.

This is a time of transition and change for Richard, and despite his easy manner and outward confidence, he is sensitive to the shifts occurring around him. He is serious about retaining his friendships and preserving the ideals that have become important to him during his time at school.

A new relationship with Lara, a friend of a friend that he meets at a beach party, seems to offer Richard the sort of mature relationship that he’s yearning for. Yet he can’t help but pick away at Lara’s imperfections and the relationship challenges him as much as it thrills him.

During these long easy summer days, Richard’s sense of self seems to slip and a minor row turns into a fight that pushes him over the edge.

In the aftermath, his world and the relationships which sustained it, crumble and yet we watch Richard continue to live his life, as if unscathed...

# What Richard Did

## Crew

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Directed by	Lenny Abrahamson
Written by	Malcolm Campbell
Produced by	Ed Guiney
Executive Producer	Andrew Lowe
Director of Photography	David Grennan
Production Designer	Stephanie Clerkin
Editor	Nathan Nugent
Music by	Stephen Rennicks
Costume Designer	Leonie Prendergast
Casting Director	Louise Kiely
Line Producer	Breda Walsh
Script Editor	Emma Norton

# What Richard Did

## Principal Cast

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**Richard**

Jack Reynor

**Lara**

Róisín Murphy

**Conor**

Sam Keeley

**Peter**

Lars Mikkelsen

Shot on location in Dublin and Wicklow over 5 weeks in late summer 2011, **What Richard Did** is the third film from director Lenny Abrahamson. It was produced by Ed Guiney and written by Malcolm Campbell.

The film was funded by the Irish Film Board/ Bord Scannán na hÉireann and was made for a budget of approximately €1million.

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### **Lenny Abrahamson** - Director

Born in Ireland, Lenny Abrahamson started shooting shorts while studying philosophy at Trinity College, Dublin. After a period of post-graduate study in philosophy at Stanford University in California, he returned home to concentrate on film-making. **What Richard Did** is his third feature; his previous award-winning films were **Garage**, which was the recipient of the CICA Art Cinema Prize in the Director's Fortnight at the 2007 Cannes Film Festival and **Adam & Paul**, which was an Official Selection at the 2005 Berlin Film Festival; both were written by Mark O'Halloran.

### **Malcolm Campbell** - Writer

Malcolm Campbell is an established UK screenwriter with a diverse range of credits across television and film. In recent years, he has worked on some of the UK's most popular dramas, including the hit Channel 4 shows **Shameless** and **Skins**, and ITV's long-running police series **The Bill**. Malcolm also co-created the interactive teen drama **L8R**, which won the Educational Television BAFTA in 2008.

Malcolm is currently writing for **The White Queen**, a mini-series based on Philippa Gregory's popular historical novels, for Company Pictures and the BBC, and **Wanderers**, a feature for Warp Films based on a true story about a 1970s Sunday League team who went to Germany and were mistaken for Wolverhampton Wanderers.

### **Ed Guiney** – Producer

Ed Guiney runs Element Pictures with partner Andrew Lowe. Recent productions include **Shadow Dancer**, directed by James Marsh, starring Clive Owen and Andrea Riseborough, the co-production **This Must Be the Place** (Paolo Sorrentino) starring Sean Penn and Frances McDormand and **The Guard** (John Michael McDonagh) starring Brendan Gleeson and Don Cheadle.

Past productions include Lenny Abrahamson's previous films **Garage** and **Adam & Paul**, Sundance winner **Five Minutes of Heaven** (Oliver Hirschbiegel), Cannes Palme d'Or winner **The Wind that Shakes the Barley**, BAFTA winner **Omagh** (Pete Travis) and Venice Golden Lion winner, **The Magdalene Sisters** (Peter Mullan).

(See also Element profile, page 17-18)



**Where the film began:**

**What Richard Did** is loosely based on the novel *Bad Day in Blackrock* by Kevin Power. *Bad Day in Blackrock* dissects the motivations behind a seemingly meaningless killing within Dublin's wealthy schoolboy community. Element Pictures optioned the novel, attached Lenny to direct the project and then brought Malcolm Campbell on board to adapt.

**Ed Guiney, Producer:** "I read the book, liked it and optioned it. Lenny was the first person I gave it to - as we've worked together so much - and he saw something in it. There aren't that many contemporary stories about Dublin, particularly South County Dublin and children of the boom. I thought it had something to say. I responded to the world it shows, the subject matter and the characters".

**Andrew Lowe, Executive Producer:** "Lenny is very careful about the projects he gets involved in. He spends a long time working through ideas before he commits to them. Once he locks on something, we know we have to take it seriously."

**Lenny Abrahamson, Director:** "Reading the book, I started to think about Richard, the Alpha Male character. I'm always very interested in characters that are forced to deconstruct their sense of themselves, or for whom the conditions of their lives are radically changed and Richard is one of those characters."

**Lenny:** "For characters like Richard, who are not used to failure - especially at his age - any action that they think lets them down can have a catastrophic effect. I wanted to show a character attempting to fantasize himself back into the person he once was."

**Lenny:** "The book is fiction, but there are parallels with some real events. But from the beginning, it was my aim that these parallels would be broken in the film adaptation. I think we succeeded in this. **What Richard Did** is very, very different from the book, so I think it's more accurate to say that it's inspired by - rather than an adaptation of - Kevin Power's novel."

**Lenny:** "This story also seemed to me to be an opportunity to work in a different way to the way I'd worked on the first two films; looser, more responsive, building characters from cast rather than fitting actors into pre-existing moulds. Malcolm really responded to this challenge. He's a subtle writer with a great ear and it was a collaborative relationship I enjoyed immensely."

**Malcolm Campbell, Writer:** “We did a lot of research. I hung out in Starbucks and just listened. I’d start writing and the boys would come in from school and sit on the big couches and talk. The machismo was there, but so was this love for each other. It was like a bromance. I would listen to them... and they’re very serious and committed about life, they know where they’re going. But then they would also talk a lot of rubbish, so you would be reminded that they are still kids.”

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## Themes and Ideas

**Lenny:** “There is a poignancy to watching teenagers when you’re middle-aged. I wanted the film to be informed by that sense of longing or nostalgia. I hope younger people who watch the film might reflect on themselves with that degree of objectivity that a more mature style gives.”

**Lenny:** “Most of us know very little about ourselves. This is something that we begin to understand as we get older, but it’s an insight that’s largely hidden from teenagers. In **What Richard Did** we see a teenager having to digest a lifetime’s worth of self-disillusionment in one big blast.”

**Lenny:** “I try to really love the characters that I make films about, not in a sentimental way, but in the sense of feeling the wholeness of their condition. Richard has this swagger that I didn’t like in guys when I was that age, and at times he’s a baby. When we cracked how to represent both sides, it was really powerful. Being a parent of a small boy, added to my emotional connection to the Richard character. I found myself projecting my boy onto Richard.”

**Ed:** “The film talks about how we bring up our children, how we help them build a sense of self, a persona, how that when that’s shattered, what it does to the people around them. Richard has a bright future and everything is mapped out for him, but there is a loss of control and that has a massive impact. In the film, rugby is a context, but we didn’t want to say that rugby-playing schools pump up kids or make them more violent.”

**Ed:** “What Lenny has managed to do with the film is humanise the characters. We really believe them as individuals, not just ciphers from this world. Jack is very compelling, for a large part of the film we’re with him. These are characters who grew up in prosperity. There is a sense of entitlement, of having lived through the boom that they don’t think the good times are ever going to end.”

**Lenny:** “Although I never think of myself as someone who makes social chronicles, with **What Richard Did**, I wanted to show that you can make a serious film about this country, while looking at the people from this class, without it being some exposé of elitism. I hope it makes an audience think about where we are at the moment. Perhaps there’s a slight allegorical touch – in a sense that the disintegration of Richard’s easy self-regard mirrors the changes in the national psyche post-boom.”

## Casting

**Ed:** “Louise Kiely went to all the schools and colleges in South Dublin looking for actors and non-actors, and as it turned out, we mainly ended up with actors. We saw Jack first and then saw hundreds but came back to him. The idea was to find a company of actors of that age. What we wanted was to just get eight to ten actors and work with them, and not even assign parts. The characters as written changed a lot. The characters moved closer to the actor and vice versa. Jack was in Belvedere College, Paddy and Gavin were in Gonzaga. They came from that world so they had a real sense of it.”

**Lenny:** “We had a group of eight young people, and we met them over the course of the year. All we did was talk, in fact they talked and Malcolm and I listened. A lot of what ended up in the film originated from those conversations and discussions – what they did at the weekend, what the sexual rules were. A lot of the ideas that came out of that process helped us to refine the script. While late in the process we did do some improvisation, we didn’t use this technique to develop plot or story - this was always used with an eye to building authenticity within a few key scenes, which needed to be particularly loose.”

**Lenny:** “During the shoot, I was very fast and loose with this script – it changed all the time. I worked on the scenes with the actors very intensely on the day, and if we didn’t believe it, we just changed it.”

## Casting continued...

### Casting Richard

### Jack Reynor



**Lenny on Jack:** “With Jack, I wanted someone who had that easy authority, who is incredibly charming, but what Jack also has is that he’s very conscious of how he behaves, and this is also a key aspect of Richard. It would have been a very different film, if we hadn’t cast Jack.”

**Jack on Richard:** “From the start, there’s something melancholy in his character. Even though he’s outgoing with the lads, he’s popular, he’s got a lot going for him. When you watch him, there’s a slight sadness about him. Any young man could feel the same as Richard. We didn’t want him to be the richest kid, the funniest kid...we didn’t want to make him invincible. We tried to make him normal and believable.”

### Casting Peter

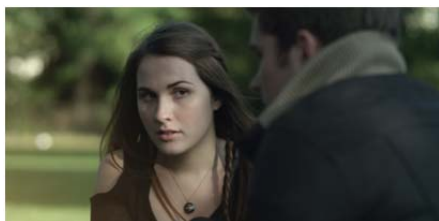
### Lars Mikkelsen



**Lenny on Lars:** “Choosing to cast Richard’s father as non-Irish was part of a decision to break out of the standard representation of the Irish middle class family. Thinking back to my own childhood, there were no generic families. I also wanted to work with an actor who could bring a certain depth and melancholy to the part of Peter and Lars is capable, in a few short scenes, of creating a character of great power and poignancy. He brought great ideas to the role and has an extraordinary intelligence as an actor.”

### Casting Lara

### Róisín Murphy



**Lenny on Róisín:** “Róisín is very gentle and unassuming and it was only when I reviewed her casting tapes that I realised what an amazing screen actress she is. There’s a presence, purity and stillness to her performance in the film that’s quite a revelation.”

**2007 Garage**

**Written by Mark O'Halloran**

Feature

Element Pictures for Film4/IFB

Cast: Pat Shortt, Anne Marie Duff, Conor J Ryan

85 min.

*Set in a small Irish town, Garage is the hypnotic and austerely funny story of Josie's search for acceptance and of what happens when the certainties of his small life come under threat.*

Won the CICAÉ Art Cinema Prize in the Director's Fortnight at 2007 Cannes Film Festival

Won the Best Feature Film prize at the Torino International Film Festival, Italy 2007

Won Best Feature Award at IFTA's (Irish Film & TV Awards) 2008

Won Best Director Award at IFTA's 2008

Won the Golden Taiga at the Spirit of Fire Festival, Russia 2008

Won the 'Coup de Coeur' Hitchcock de Bronze Award at the Dinard Film Festival 2007

Won Evening Standard British Film Award for Best Actor for Pat Shortt

**2007 Prosperity**

**Written by Mark O'Halloran**

Television Drama

Element Pictures/RTÉ

4 x 1 hour Episodes

*Set on the same day, Prosperity follows the stories of four individuals in Dublin, each with their own hardships and struggles.*

Won Best Director for TV at Irish Film & Television Awards 2008

**2004 Adam & Paul**

**Written by Mark O'Halloran**

Feature

Speers Films/Element Pictures

Cast: Mark O'Halloran, Tom Murphy

83 min.

*A stylised, downbeat comedy, Adam and Paul follows the boys over the course of one day, which, like every other, is devoted to scrounging and robbing money for drugs. The difference, today, is that Adam and Paul have finally run out of luck, credit and friends.*

Won the Best First Feature award at 2004 Galway Film Fleadh  
Won the Best Director award at the 2005 Irish Film and Television Awards  
Won FIPRESCI Prize at 2005 Sofia International Film Festival  
Won Grand Prix at 2005 Sofia International Film Festival  
Selected in the Panorama section of the 2005 Berlin Film Festival  
Nominated for Best Irish Film at 2005 Irish Film & Television Awards  
Nominated for Golden Iris at 2005 Brussels European Film Festival  
Won Evening Standard British Film Award for Best Screenplay

**1991 3 Joes**

**Written by Lenny Abrahamson & Michael West**

Short

Cast: Dominic West, Gary Cooke, Mikel Murfi

Won Best European Short Film award at the Cork Film Festival  
Won Audience Award at the Galway Film Fleadh  
Won Organiser's Award at the Oberhausen Short Film Festival.

**In Development**

**Frank**

**Written by Peter Straughan & Jon Ronson**

Feature

Element Pictures / Runaway Fridge / Film4

**Into That Darkness**

**Written by Enda Walsh**

Feature

Element Pictures / Film4 / Irish Film Board / MEDIA

**Adsville**

**Written by Chris Niel**

Feature

Element Pictures / Film4

### Jack Reynor – Richard

Prior to his title role in **What Richard Did**, Jack Reynor's recent roles include Tommy in **Chasing the Green** (Kevin Connor, Big Apple Films), Robbie in **Dollhouse** (Kirsten Sheridan, DH Film Productions) and Colin in **Three Wise Women** (Declan Recks, Reindeer Films)

### Lars Mikkelsen – Peter

Lars Mikkelsen is one of Denmark's best known actors, famous for a number of acclaimed roles, but he is best known for his role as politician Troels Hartmann in **Forbrydelsen**, the Danish TV series shown on BBC as **The Killing**. His first film was **Royal Blues**, and he has appeared in numerous other projects to date including **Seth** (1999), **Under overfladenn** (1999), **En Kaerlighedshistorie** (2001), **Thunderbirds** (2004), **Kongekabale** (2004), **Nordkraft**, (2005), **De fortabte siales ø** (2007), **Cecilie** (2007), **Det som ingen ved** (2008), **Flammen & Citronen** (2008), **Flugten** (2009), **Headhunter** (2009). He has also voiced numerous animated films, including the Danish version of **Bee Movie**. **What Richard Did** is Lars first English-speaking film role.

### Róisín Murphy - Lara

Róisín's previous film and television work includes **Roadkill** (Hubble Films), **Who's Next** (Moonstone), **Stardust** (RTE), and **The Clinic** (RTE). In 2008, she starred in **Chatroom**, a play by Calipo Theatre Company as part of the Dublin Fringe Festival.

### Sam Keeley

Prior to **What Richard Did**, Sam appeared in **The Borgias**, directed by Neil Jordan for Showtime; **Jack Taylor** on TV3, **This Must Be the Place**, directed by Paolo Sorrentino and starring Sean Penn, **The Misfits** for E4, and the lead in Rebecca Daly's **The Other Side of Sleep**. In autumn 2012 he will return for season four of **RAW** on RTÉ.



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## Element Pictures

Ed Guiney and Andrew Lowe run film and television drama production company Element Pictures with offices in Dublin and London. The company also operates Element Pictures Distribution, and runs both the Light House Cinema, one of Dublin's premiere art house cinemas, and Volta.ie, a video-on-demand service specializing in the best of Irish and Independent film

Currently, Element is in post-production on **Dark Touch**, a thriller by writer and director Marina de Van and co-produced with Agat Films and Filmgate. Recent productions include **Shadow Dancer** directed by James Marsh, starring Clive Owen and Andrea Riseborough, which Element produced with Chris Coen of Unanimous Entertainment and which premiered to great acclaim at Sundance 2012; **This Must Be the Place** (Paolo Sorrentino), starring Sean Penn and Frances McDormand, which was selected for Competition in Cannes 2011 and Sundance 2012 ; and Irish box office hit **The Guard** (John Michael McDonagh) starring Brendan Gleeson and Don Cheadle, which is currently the most successful Independent Irish film of all time.

Past productions include **All Good Children**, Alicia Duffy's first feature which was selected for Director's Fortnight at Cannes 2010; **Little Matador**, a feature length documentary directed by Sandra Jordan and Gabriel Range; **Essential Killing**, directed by Jerzy Skolimowski, which won the Special Jury Prize and Coppa Volpi for Best Actor at the Venice Film Festival 2010 and was selected for the Masters section at the Toronto Film Festival 2010; **Zonad**, directed by John Carney (Once) which screened to great response at the 2010 Tribeca Film Festival; **Cracks**, the first film from director Jordan Scott starring Eva Green and co-produced with Scott Free, which had its world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival 2009, and **Five Minutes of Heaven**, directed by Oliver Hirschbiegel and starring Liam Neeson and Jimmy Nesbitt which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival 2009, winning the Best Director and Best Screenplay Awards.

In 2007, Element produced **Garage**, the follow up film to the award-winning **Adam & Paul**, from the same team of writer Mark O'Halloran and director Lenny Abrahamson, and starring Pat Shortt, which was selected for the prestigious Director's Fortnight at Cannes Film Festival and won the CICAÉ Art and Essai award. The film also won the awards for Best Film, Best Director, Best Script and Best Actor at the 2008 Irish Film and Television Awards (IFTAs).

Other Element Pictures films include; **Death of a President** (Gabriel Range) which won the International Critics Fipresci Prize at the 2006 Toronto International Film Festival and the International Emmy in 2007; **The Wind That Shakes the Barley**, directed by Ken Loach,

winner of the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival; **Adam & Paul** (Lenny Abrahamson), which premiered at the Berlin Film Festival; **The League of Gentlemen's Apocalypse** (Steve Bendelack); **Isolation** (Billy O'Brien); **Lassie** (Charles Sturridge); **Omagh** (Pete Travis), which won the BAFTA for Best Single Film 2004, the Discovery Award at the 2004 Toronto Film Festival and the prize for Best European Film at the San Sebastian Film Festival 2004; and **The Magdalene Sisters** (Peter Mullan) which was a major critical success, winning the Golden Lion at Venice 2002, the Discovery Award in the Toronto Film Festival 2002 and the Audience Award at the Ljubljana Film Festival 2002.

### **Television, Co-Production and Distribution**

Element Pictures is one of the leading television drama producers in Ireland supplying drama to RTÉ, the national Irish broadcaster and working as a very active co-producer of international television shooting in Ireland, having co-produced a range of successful programmes for ITV, SKY, BBC and Channel 4.

Element Pictures Distribution handles all of Optimum Releasing (Studio Canal) titles in Ireland, as well as acquiring approximately half dozen Irish titles for distribution each year. Recent titles released by Element Pictures Distribution in Ireland have included: **Silence, Grabbers, The Guard, Parked, Sensation, The Runway, As If I'm Not There, Essential Killing, His & Hers, Zonad, The Yellow Bittern, Wide Open Spaces, Waveriders, Kisses and Garage.**

## Irish Film Board

Bord Scannán na hÉireann / the Irish Film Board (IFB) is Ireland's national film agency. The IFB funds the development and production of Irish films aimed at domestic and international audiences, and promotes Ireland as a location for international production.

This role sees the agency directly involved in the creative process of Irish films from script to screen. The IFB provides investment for the development, production and release of Irish feature films, television, animation, documentaries and shorts. This funding process has helped Irish Film Board financed projects to pick up more than 100 awards at key film festivals, such as Cannes, Berlin, Venice and Toronto, including the Palme d'Or for **The Wind That Shakes The Barley** at the 2006 Cannes Film Festival and the World Cinema Audience Award for **Once** at the 2007 Sundance Film Festival.

The Film Commission arm of the agency attracts direct inward investment by assisting international producers with their needs while on location in Ireland. The Location Services Unit provides comprehensive information about all aspects of filming in Ireland, from tax incentives to locations, casting, crews, equipment and facilities.