



ART OF ACTION: CELEBRATING THE REAL ACTION STARS OF CINEMA

Polite Society

Polite Society

Directed by: Nida Manzoor

©: LLC Focus Features

Production Company: Working Title Films

In association with: Parkville Pictures

Presented by: Focus Features

Executive Producer: Cecilia Frugiuiele

Produced by: Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner,

Olivier Kaempfer, John Pockock

Co-producer: Rachel Alabaster

Production Manager: Daniel Watkins

Financial Controller: Gemma Kent

Location Manager: Keith Hatcher

Post-production Supervisor: Hannah Dunnell

1st Assistant Director: Clare Awdry

2nd Assistant Director: Darren Baba

Script Supervisor: Francesca Brooks

Casting Director: Aisha Bywaters

Written by: Nida Manzoor

Director of Photography: Ashley Connor

Steadicam Operator: Will Lyte

Visual Effects 1: Automatix VFX

Editor: Robbie Morrison

Production Designer: Simon Walker

Art Directors: Sophie Lockwood, James Cross

Set Decorator: Amanda Sorrin

Graphic Designer: Kate Trevessey

Property Master: Tom Roberts

Costume Designer: PC Williams

Hair and Make-up Designer: Claire Carter

Title Design: Peter Anderson Studio

Score by: Tom Howe, Shez Manzoor

Orchestra Leader: Everton Nelson

Conductor: Tom Howe

Orchestrators: David Butterworth, Evan Rogers

Score Recordist: Marc McCouig

Score Mixer: Jake Jackson

Choreography: Choreographer

Production Sound Mixer: Alastair Widgery

Re-recording Mixers: Simon Hill, Tushar Manek

Supervising Sound Editor: Jay Price

Stunt Co-ordinator: Crispin Layfield

Fight Co-ordinator: Rob Lock

Martial Arts Assistant: Adam Rhys Williams

Cast:

Priya Kansara (Ria Khan)

Ritu Arya (Lena)

Nimra Bucha (Raheela)

Akshay Khanna (Salim)

Seraphina Beh (Clara)

Ella Bruccoleri (Alba)

Shona Babayemi (Kovacs)

Shobu Kapoor (Fatima)

Jeff Mirza (Rafe)

Renu Brindle (Mrs Nawaz)

Rekha John-Cheriyian (Mrs Abbas)

Sally Ann (Edith)

Jenny Funnell (Ms Spence)

Sophie Aisling (Mrs Iqbal)

Su McLaughlin (Mrs Ahmed)

Tia Dutt (Jezah)

Ryan Loccohee (Sensei 1)

Ulli Ackerman (security guard)

James McNicholas (head waiter)

Tom Bonington (registrar)

Eunice Huthart (herself)

Sania Shireen Haq, Hemali Patel, Anjlee Bathia,

Aliya Meghjee (dancers)

Rob Lock (Sensei 2)

Adam Rhys Williams (Magnus)

UK 2023

104 mins

Digital 4K

+ Q&A with director Nida Manzoor

16-year-old Ria is an aspiring stuntwoman, dreaming of her future excelling in the film business while her older sister Lena becomes a world famous artist. But Lena has been withdrawing from her art, and instead becomes swept up by a charming suitor, heading into a marriage at speed. Ria doesn't trust her future in-laws – can she use her martial arts training to stop Lena's wedding and rescue her in the name of sisterhood? Nida Manzoor's (*We Are Lady Parts*) creative and original feature directorial debut is a fun, fast-paced Austen-esque comedy packed with smashing action and shenanigans.

bfi.org.uk

The Origins of 'Polite Society'

The spark of the idea that ultimately became *Polite Society* – an immensely fun and original action comedy about two sisters navigating cultural and parental expectations – was first ignited by writer-director Nida Manzoor over ten years ago. She wrote the first draft of the script in her early 20s, but it took the years that followed for her to find the perfect partners to bring the film to vibrant, action-packed life on screen. 'It's been a long road but I have now been able to make the feature film of my dreams,' shares Manzoor.

One of those collaborators was producer Olivier Kaempfer, who came on board with his company Parkville Pictures to help develop the project early on. Kaempfer immediately fell in love with the project and brought BFI on board as early development financiers. 'I first came across Nida in 2016 when I saw her short, *Arcade*, which is still one of my favourite shorts to this day,' Kaempfer recalls. 'It immediately felt so different and fresh compared to so many other shorts that I was seeing. She was a filmmaker I wanted to meet and ideally develop a feature with and that feature became *Polite Society*.

Nida is quite rare in that she has very bold and original ideas but she can also execute them. She was very much our creative leader and she has the vision that we're all behind so it's been fantastic.'

Manzoor is best known as the creator, writer, and director of the acclaimed series, *We Are Lady Parts*, about a Muslim female punk band. The series has been celebrated for its electrifying humour, fusion of styles and nuanced, complex characters. 'My favourite thing about making film and television is the opportunity to bring marginalised communities into mainstream genres – action, sci-fi, comedy,' says Manzoor. 'Occupying areas of storytelling we are so often invisible in. I love writing comedy. It's my goto form of expression when I put pen to paper, my most natural form of storytelling. I feel comedy is the most disarming of all the genres. If done well it can make us warm to characters from different backgrounds deeply and immediately.'

The filmmaker had loved collaborating with the gifted creative team on *We Are Lady Parts*, and as the feature film script evolved, many of them enthusiastically signed on to bring her latest vision to life, including Working Title's Tim Bevan and Eric Fellner who produce the film.

'We really loved the TV show and thought that Nida had a very original voice for writing and directing characters that we weren't really aware of,' says

ART OF ACTION: CELEBRATING THE REAL ACTION STARS OF CINEMA

Mission: Impossible All-Nighter

Sat 30 Nov 23:00 BFI IMAX

Big Screen Classics: The History of Action

Enter the Dragon

Mon 18 Nov 14:30

Police Story Ging chaat goo si

Tue 19 Nov 20:55; Thu 28 Nov 18:20

Bullitt

Thu 21 Nov 14:30; Tue 26 Nov 20:45

Taxi

Fri 22 Nov 18:20; Mon 25 Nov 20:50

The Mark of Zorro

Sat 23 Nov 15:00

Goldfinger 60th anniversary screenings

Sat 23 Nov 18:20

Seven Samurai

 Shichinin no samurai

Sun 24 Nov 14:30

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon

Wo hu cang long

Wed 27 Nov 18:10 (+ intro)

Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior

Wed 27 Nov 20:50

District B13

 Banlieue 13

Fri 29 Nov 20:45

Safety Last! + One Week

Sat 30 Nov

John Woo Focus

Red Cliff II

 Chi bi: Jue zhan tian xia

Tue 19 Nov 17:55

Hard Target

Sun 24 Nov 13:00; Wed 27 Nov 18:20 (+ intro by Ti Singh, BFI FAN season producer)

Broken Arrow

Sun 24 Nov 18:10

Face/Off

Mon 25 Nov 20:20

With thanks to

A BFI FAN initiative supported through National Lottery



BECOME A BFI MEMBER

Enjoy a great package of film benefits including priority booking at BFI Southbank and BFI Festivals. Join today at bfi.org.uk/join

SIGHT AND SOUND

Never miss an issue with **Sight and Sound**, the BFI's internationally renowned film magazine. Subscribe from just £25*

* Price based on a 6-month print subscription (UK only). More info: sightandsoundsubs.bfi.org.uk



Bevan. 'I asked her what else she was about and the script of *Polite Society*, which she developed with Olivier, landed on my desk.'

Bevan was delighted by the early draft but suggested expanding the world even more. 'We said, "We're interested in doing *Polite Society* but we don't want to do it as a tiny, little movie",' he remembers. 'We wanted to do it as something much bigger, making it more genre-driven and including elements that would make it cinematic, unexpected, and generally a lot of fun to watch. So, we all worked on the script and upped the fight sequences, came up with the plot twist, and generally made it even madder.'

Manzoor hoped the film would feel like an ode to all the films that had shaped her, but she also wanted to see something on screen that she hadn't experienced before. 'I wanted to make this film for many reasons but predominantly so I could see a South Asian teenage girl as an action hero,' she shares. 'I grew up loving the spectacle of action movies but feeling extremely left out, so this film is for my teenage self. South Asian characters are often relegated to shop owners and terrorists, token friends to the white leads. It meant everything to me to centre the film around a South Asian girl – who is flawed and funny and kicks ass.'

Other members of the *We Are Lady Parts* team were equally excited to board the film including series producer John Pockock, who serves as a producer on *Polite Society*. 'I was really keen to work on *Polite Society* with Nida after doing *Lady Parts* together,' he says. 'I read it and thought it was so exciting and different. There was a lot of comedy, fight sequences, and drama. What a great project to work on!'

Also reuniting for the film were *Lady Parts*' production designer Simon Walker, costume designer P.C. Williams, makeup artist Claire Carter, and editor Robbie Morrison, along with several cast members.

Director of photography Ashley Connor had not previously collaborated with Manzoor, although she had worked with Kaempfer on another film and the producer instinctively felt that Connor and Manzoor could create something visually spectacular together. 'I'm very invested in telling stories for young women, and seeing this kind of heroine is really exciting to me,' says Connor of her attraction to the project. 'The film is intelligent and doesn't speak down to its audience. There's a desire to change the ways and means by which we produce content, make films and TV shows, and somebody like Nida and her process are at the forefront of that change. She's creating sets that have different energies on them, different motivations, and different means of collaborating and working.'

Of walking onto a set every day filled with women at the top of their game, Ritu Arya, who plays Lena, says it was a special experience that won't be forgotten. 'Nida is a fantastic director who is doing amazing things,' she observes. 'It's the third time I've worked with her and every time it's just gotten better and better. Our DP, Ashley, is such a badass and she was always trying out different things as well. Then even the grips and the sound department were full of women which felt so cool. On top of all of that, it has been so empowering to have this ensemble consist of such a diverse – primarily South Asian – cast. I'm so happy that this film exists. It's what I've been waiting to see for a very long time.'

Production notes