

= Uncle David =

Uncle David is a 2010 British black comedy film directed by David Hoyle , Gary Reich , and Mike Nicholls . It was produced by Reich and stars Hoyle , an English performance artist , in the titular role alongside English pornographic actor Ashley Ryder . Developed collectively under the banner of the Avant @-@ Garde Alliance , it was filmed in October 2009 . Created without a script , every scene was improvised and filmed in a single take .

Set in a caravan park on the Isle of Sheppey in Kent , South East England , a young man with a childlike mind named Ashley ( Ryder ) arrives to stay with his Uncle David ( Hoyle ) . Escaping from his abusive mother , Ashley enters into a sexual relationship with his uncle who offers his insights into the world and the nature of reality . Eventually Ashley tells David that he wants to die , and David agrees to carry out the killing .

The film premiered on 25 March 2010 at the London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival held in the BFI Southbank in central London . Reviews were mixed , but the film won several awards at international film festivals . It was released on DVD by Peccadillo Pictures in 2011 .

= = Plot = =

Late one night , Ashley ( Ashley Ryder ) ? a young man with a childlike mentality ? arrives at the caravan home of his Uncle David ( David Hoyle ) on the Isle of Sheppey . Ashley confides in his uncle that his mother has been physically abusing him by stubbing cigarettes out on his hand . David lambasts the mother and society in general ; the two embrace in a kiss before going to bed together . The next morning , they awake and have breakfast in bed before David bathes Ashley in the bathtub , telling him a story about an unhappy nuclear family . Going to a local café and then a park bench , David continues to explain his anti @-@ establishment opinions about society . Ashley reveals that he wants to die , and the two express their love for one another .

The pair snort cocaine before playing in the local entertainment arcade . Returning to the caravan , they engage in sexual strangulation and anal sex . Putting on make @-@ up , they then drink wine and dance to a remix of the Muse song " Uprising " , while same @-@ sex pornography starring Ashley plays on the television set . While Ashley puts on drag , David encourages him to kill himself , telling him that he is " too nice for this Earth " and needs to escape the world 's problems .

The next morning , Ashley plays on the beach and builds sand castles . When Ashley 's drunken mother phones , demanding to know where her son is , Uncle David feigns ignorance , telling her that he himself is not in Sheppey but in Manchester . Taking Ashley to an abandoned military bunker , he injects an unknown substance into his nephew 's vein as they kiss . Ashley enters an altered state of consciousness , and David guides him back to the caravan as they smoke marijuana . Once there , David gives Ashley a second injection , as they sit and look out at the shore . After dark , David places his near @-@ catatonic nephew in a dog bed , showing him a copy of a picture book titled Is Britain Great ? . He proceeds to give him a third and final injection , which he remarks will make Ashley lose consciousness and suffer organ failure . As Ashley dies , David professes that he has never loved anyone else as much before . The next morning , he goes onto the beach to place his nephew 's body in a shallow grave , tearfully kissing the body goodbye before it is swept away by the sea .

= = Production = =

= = Background = = =

According to The Guardian , Hoyle became " something of a legend " on the British cabaret circuit during the 1990s , initially under the alter @-@ ego of " The Divine David " . The Divine David was an " anti @-@ drag queen " who combined " lacerating social commentary " with " breathtaking instances of self @-@ recrimination and even self @-@ harm . " Taking this character to television ,

Hoyle produced two shows for Channel 4 , The Divine David Presents ( 1999 ) and The Divine David Heals ( 2000 ) , before killing off the character at a farewell show at Streatham Ice Arena , South London , titled The Divine David on Ice ( 2000 ) . Independently , Hoyle appeared in the film Velvet Goldmine ( 1998 ) and the television series Nathan Barley ( 2005 ) .

Ryder had hoped to be a fashion designer , undertaking a course at Central Saint Martins which he did not complete ; from there he worked in retail , first for Prowler and then for the designer Vivienne Westwood . Subsequently appearing in gay pornography as a twink bottom for production companies like Eurocreme and UK Naked Men , he starred in such films as Drunk on Spunk and Stretch that Hole , winning numerous awards for his work . By the time he made Uncle David , he was also running his own weekly gay wrestling night in London .

Hoyle and Ryder met at a performance art event , after which the former asked Ryder if he would appear in one of his stage shows . Ryder was busy at the time , but agreed to the request several years later . Staged at the Royal Vauxhall Tavern ( RVT ) , a gay bar in Vauxhall , South London , the duo constructed a piece in which Ryder played the role of Hoyle 's nephew in an ad @-@ lib performance . Hoyle played a department store Santa Claus while Ryder portrayed a misbehaving nine @-@ year @-@ old . The performance ended in Hoyle 's Santa character pulling Christmas tinsel from the child 's anus before strangling him .

Reich ? who had known Hoyle since the late 1990s ? was in the audience , and enjoyed the chemistry between the two actors , suggesting that they appear in a feature film together . Over the course of a day , he filmed three shorts starring Hoyle and Ryder , in which they explored some of the scenarios and themes that made it into Uncle David . In these shorts Hoyle wore a wig and makeup , which were omitted from the later feature . The two actors continued to develop their characters through a series of text messages and phone conversations .

= = = Development = = =

Uncle David was filmed over five days in October 2009 on the Isle of Sheppey , a location chosen for its proximity to London . Hoyle commented that the profusion of barbed wire fences there made him wonder if they were " keeping people out or keeping people in ? " . Reich said that he had been " obsessed " with Sheppey , a place he had considered " a truly Godforsaken wasteland " since working on a television show there ten years previously . He remarked that the " trailer trash setting " of the film was influenced by Harmony Korine 's Gummo ( 1997 ) and John Waters ' Female Trouble ( 1974 ) . He also said that the filming budget of under £ 1000 was a homage to " the spirit of John Waters . " All the extras featured in the film were real inhabitants of Sheppey , and to film a scene in a local cafe , they walked in and asked the proprietors if they could shoot there . Although they had planned to tell any enquirers who approached them that they were shooting a horror film , during the shoot none of the locals expressed any interest in the crew 's activities .

The caravan park was largely empty at the time , and closed for winter several days after filming ended . Both actors and crew slept in the same caravan in which the film was set . Ryder later commented on the extreme cold and the crowded nature of the caravan , which had eight people inside it during filming ; he felt that it was " quite hectic but [ had ] a great atmosphere " . Throughout filming , Hoyle and Ryder remained in character , improvising their scenes around a basic narrative structure rather than using a script . Hoyle told a reporter that they " wanted everything to feel like real time ... As soon as you woke up , the cameras would be on you . I look knackered . " During filming , he contracted swine flu , but insisted that all he needed was a 30 @-@ minute break before filming , attributing his ability to continue acting to adrenaline . He noted that " I just said , ' No , no , no . We 'll carry on . I 'll just stop eating . ' I was completely purged during the making of that film . Afterwards , during the edit , I started to feel a lot calmer . " Hoyle felt that the process of making the film had been cathartic , noting that " When I was 14 , I had ? let 's call it an existential crisis . I wondered if [ Uncle David ] was a case of me destroying that part of me . If you do have a breakdown that young , for the rest of your life you 're very aware of it . It can make you feel your foundations are a little bit shaky . It 's a devastating experience but we revisited it . I just went with my instincts and intuition . "

The footage was captured on two Sony HVR @-@ Z1 camcorders . Costumes had been purchased at an Oxfam charity shop in Dalston , East London , while a wig worn by Ashley in one scene was purchased from a Dalston wig store . Knowing that he would appear nude in several scenes , Ryder went to the gym regularly in the weeks proceeding filming to gain greater muscle tone . He decided to include footage from one of his pornographic videos in Uncle David , inspired to do so after learning that serial killers Fred and Rosemary West screened pornography throughout the day in their home .

The composer Richard Thomas , co @-@ creator of the controversial Jerry Springer : The Opera , agreed to produce a musical score for the film , having long been a fan of Hoyle 's work . After the cast and crew listened to a Muse album while driving between locations , they decided to include the band 's work as they felt it was " empowering " . They had also planned to include a song by Antony and the Johnsons in the film , but this was scrapped , to be replaced by a track by Boy George . After the film was screened for Boy George , the first person outside the Avant @-@ Garde Alliance to see it , he commented " well it ain 't The Sound of Music " .

= = Release = =

Uncle David premiered on 25 March 2010 at the London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival held in the BFI Southbank in central London . Attending the screening was Steve Marmion , the boss of Soho Theatre , who suggested to Reich and Hoyle that they produce a theatrical adaptation of the film . They initially showed an interest in the project ; Reich commented that " It was a very mischievous concept , doing an upbeat , life @-@ affirming song @-@ and @-@ dance musical with that storyline and subject matter . " However , the theatrical adaptation never surfaced , something Thomas attributed to the difficulty in obtaining funding for a musical on such a " dark subject . " Instead , Hoyle and Thomas teamed up to produce Merrie Hell , an " alternative Christmas celebration " that appeared at the Soho Theatre in December 2012 . A two @-@ man cabaret that differed every night , it featured Thomas on a piano , accompanying Hoyle 's rendition of various songs about Christmas and Britain 's societal problems ; Thomas described it as " David Hoyle at Christmas - the Musical " . One of the songs featured in Merrie Hell , " It 's Alright to Want to Die " , carried a pro @-@ suicide theme influenced by Uncle David .

= = = Home media = = =

In December 2011 , Uncle David was released as a Region Free DVD by the company Peccadillo Pictures , a UK based film distributor of art house , gay and lesbian , independent and world cinema . The release contained several extras , including the three preparatory shorts detailing the relationship between the characters of Ashley and Uncle David and a cast commentary track voiced by Hoyle , Ryder , Reich and Nicholls . Reviewing the DVD release for the Sex Gore Mutants website , Stuart Willis noted that the disc contained periods of " murkiness or softness in the picture " and a few " ( infrequent ) instances of muffling " , all of which he put down to the original production values of the film . British gay magazine Attitude celebrated the DVD 's release with a competition to win one of three copies ; they described the film as " a bit surreal , but totally amazing . "

= = Reception = =

= = = Awards = = =

The film received a number of awards at international film festivals . At the 2010 Paris International LGBT Film Festival it won the best film award and Hoyle and Ryder shared the best actor award . It also won best film at the 2011 Berlin Porn Film Festival , and best film at the 2011 Erotic Awards . Reich expressed surprise at the Erotic Award , because he did not consider the film to be a work of erotica , but discovered that they 'd won because they had explored " an extreme fetish that to be

honest we 'd not actually heard of nor knew we were exploring . "

#### = = = Reviews = = =

Reviews of Uncle David were mixed . Writing in The Guardian , Ben Walters noted that " suspense and dread accumulate as the low @-@ key naturalism and the characters ' obvious affection for one another play off against the enormity of what looms ahead . " Comparing Uncle David to Hoyle 's earlier stage work , he felt that the two were " consistent " , but that in the film Hoyle abandoned the " fireworks of his performance persona " , opting for a " controlled , beguiling style " . He believed that Ryder 's familiarity with being filmed meant that he carried a " disarmingly ingenuous presence , by turns determined and naive . " Walters opined that the film 's " menacing " use of British seaside locations was similar to that in Brighton Rock and London to Brighton , while he also drew comparisons to Badlands , Bonnie and Clyde and The Talented Mr. Ripley , in that in all of them , the viewers ' sympathy for the characters eclipses moral judgement of their actions . Walters would follow this with another review published in Time Out , in which he awarded the film five stars out of five .

" Not to everyone 's taste , granted , [ Uncle David ] is nevertheless an original and disturbing take on modern love stories " was the view of Stuart Willis writing for the Sex @-@ Gore @-@ Mutants website . Believing that the film was a " pleasant surprise " , he praised the improvised nature of the work , believing that it created believable scenes and allowed the viewer to get to know the characters " almost without realising . " He considered the acting to be very good , and particularly praised Hoyle 's ability to portray a paedophile grooming a young man in a way that was both " pathetic and truly sinister all at once " . Rather than falling into " tasteless exploitation " , Willis thought that the film was saved by a lack of sensationalism . Praising the exterior scenes as " beautifully atmospheric " and the music as " fitting the laconic mood and sense of ill @-@ foreboding well " , he considered the film to be a good example of low @-@ key filmmaking , akin to that produced in Britain during the early 1980s .

Other reviewers were far more critical . Writing for the So So Gay website , Damien Ryan gave Uncle David a rating of 0 @.@ 5 out of 5 , describing it as " terrible " . Believing that the film simply intended to shock viewers with its taboo subject matter , he felt offended by the story 's " sheer inelegance " . Opining that it reminded him of " the very worst attempt of a first @-@ year film student " , he questioned the description of Uncle David as a " black comedy " , arguing that it wasn 't at all funny , instead labelling it " the most vapid , transparent attempt at shock this side of a Lady Gaga performance . " Criticising the acting , he said that Ryder " shouldn 't quit his porn day job any time soon " and that Hoyle 's character was simply a " marriage of wannabe Holden Caulfield @-@ style outsider and mincing paedophile . "

Cleaver Patterson was similarly critical in his review on the Cine @-@ Vue website , awarding the film one out of five stars . He questioned the purpose of the film , arguing that it will only serve to alienate the gay population by portraying them as " sad , perverted and ultimately lonely individuals . " More positively , he praised the appearance of the film with its " muted colours of the shingle beaches and piercing blue skies " .