

The Cast on Their Characters

Tom Hughes on playing *Chaz Jankel*...

“My Dad’s a ridiculously massive Ian Dury fan so I’ve grown up with a lot of the music around the house I think *What A Waste* is my favourite song - being a guitarist as well as an actor, the riff kind of gets me every time”.

“The Blockheads got together a few months before we started filming and re-recorded all the music, then we were given the tracks with the levels of whichever instrument we were playing lifted up so we had that to listen to. I already knew *Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll* and *What A Waste* anyway. Once you get the style, it gets easier”.

“I met up with Chaz Jankel and spoke to him about the way he played. To prepare I also watched a lot of DVDs and documentaries and a few of the old gigs. There was one in Belfast that was particularly helpful as it was an hour and a half long. Chaz has definitely got his own style, but I didn’t want to make him a caricature, you have to get the essence of the character”.

“Chaz goes off into another world when he’s playing. There was this great interview with him where he’s talking about music and he says ‘I kind of see music as colour, it just takes me over’ and I think that was my way into the character because when you’re watching him on stage it’s very much like he’s off on another planet”.

“It was weird for me to play someone who is still alive, but I think it was far weirder for him to see me playing him. It’s the question that everyone says though ‘Who’s going to play you in the film of your life?’ and then this cocky little guy walks in and says ‘Hey I’m playing you’ Chaz’ He was after Richard Gere and he got me! It was humbling really, in a weird way, because I met him weeks before we started filming and it kind of makes you realize how important this is. It’s a person’s life and he’s there and he’s going to be watching it and living through”.

“We had some strange experiences where we spent time together and he’d be finishing my sentences and I was finishing his and we just looked at each other at the one point and burst out laughing because we’d reached this other level which was lovely. I think he would have been devastated if I’d turned up and I’d been nothing like him. He’s a great guy Chaz, a great guy and I feel very privileged to be playing him”.

“As far as my look in the film, I have a lot of tight white t-shirts! There was an old shot of Chaz where he’s standing at the front of the band with his tightie whitey t-shirt, his jeans and Converse and he’s kind of giving it his all, so we decided that was the look for him. The other Blockheads can be quite mad with the way they dress, quite eccentric, but there’s something about Chaz that we wanted to try keep it rooted and specific, direct and clear. We’ve gone for the 70s high-waisted jeans - kind of Simon Cowell-style, white t-shirts and a couple of velvet jackets – one’s a Ralph Lauren one which is pretty cool. I love the hat! The hat’s brilliant! I don’t really feel like I’m in character if I don’t act in the hat. There’s just something about it that gives it a Blockheads feel”.

“The energy on this film has been amazing. Andy Serkis was in America when we did the first few rehearsals, so when he arrived and started singing with us something happened - he’s so much in the body of Ian that when that enormous personality walked in we all upped our game. Anything we were holding back just came out and suddenly it felt like the Blockheads were in the room. We sounded pretty good - I think we might be able to make a living out of this after the film, we could do a few weddings and stuff!”

“Andy Serkis is a great guy to work with. You can always approach him. I’ve learned a helluva lot from working with him, his commitment and his passion for it just rubs off on you. When he’s in character he’ll walk around with the limp and chuck a line at you, then you’ll realize he’s being Ian not Andy. It’s cool. Once you’ve got your character you just need to listen to a guy like Andy and he gives you what you need. As long as you’re reacting to him you’re doing better work than you could ever wish for. He’s a great, great guy to work with. I’m really learning a lot from him”.

“Mat Whitecross our director is young and his vision is incredible. He’s so talented and I think he’s got an amazing future ahead of him - you get that from the way he talks about film making and his passion for it. When he came on board this he wasn’t a massive Blockheads fan, but I think that’s worked in his favour because when you’re making a film about a real person and real events, it’s something that’s touched a lot of people, so the one thing you don’t want is for it to be too sentimental. Ian was a crazy and brilliant guy but without that edge to the film, it could seem a bit like a montage of how brilliant Ian was and that’s not how it needs to be. It needs to be warts and all, this was the man. Which is how it’s written and that’s how Mat’s directing it. Mat brings a real skill, technique and a craft for filmmaking and that coupled with the passion of Paul Viragh the writer, makes for a good relationship”.

Naomie Harris on playing *Denise Roudette*...

“Denise was Ian Dury’s girlfriend for about four or five years. She knew him before he became really successful and she helped to kind of make his style and they fell madly in love, but sadly it all fell apart when he made it big and all the fame went to his head a bit and she became disillusioned”.

“She started to get fed up with the whole lifestyle, him being drunk all the time, all the partying. It kind of got to a point in their relationship where they stopped arguing, which therapists say is the most dangerous point in a relationship because it’s like you’ve given up already and walked away, so in the scenes we’re filming at the moment she’s at that point really. They’re together but it’s broken and the trust has gone and in the scene today she discovers him with another woman so it’s all downhill”.

“Denise was quite eccentric, creative and artistic in her styling of herself and Ian and really avant-garde, so I get to wear some really cool, funky stuff that I wouldn’t normally be brave enough to wear. Some of the costumes are really colourful and bright”.

“Working with Andy Serkis has been incredible - apart from being an amazingly nice person and being really hard-working, losing about two stones in two months to play Ian, he can also sing, he can play the instruments and he’s a real team player. Andy’s really passionate about the project and he’s a brilliant actor, so for all of those reasons, I think he’s one of the nicest people I’ve ever worked with. Everybody says that in interviews and it’s so annoying, but it really is true in this case. He’s really amazing”.

“The whole vibe on set has been really good generally. I was sitting off set just yesterday when all the rain was pouring down, which really wasn’t good for the schedule, but everyone was still laughing and joking and having a really good time and I was just thinking it’s been a real family atmosphere. I think that stems from having a wonderful director like Mat Whitecross who’s really chilled and easygoing. We have Damian Jones behind it and he’s a brilliant producer as well as Paul who wrote the script. Their energy is so happy and upbeat, I think it keeps everyone else happy”.

“I have to be honest, I wasn’t really familiar with Ian Dury’s music before I was offered the film. This has been a real education for me to find out about his music and his following. He really does still have a cult following and people are still really big Ian Dury fans. In fact we had a masseuse come down on set yesterday and she gave lots of us free massages because she loves Ian Dury so much and wanted to be part of the project in some way! There are big fans out there”.

“His one song that sticks out for me would have to be *I Made Mary Cry* because that’s one I’ve had to learn on the bass so it’s the one I know the words to now and can sing along to. I’ve never played bass before and I still don’t play bass really, but I just had to learn the notes for this one particular song because that’s what I have to performing on stage”.

“Bill Milner who plays Baxter is one of the most amazing children I’ve ever met in my life because he’s so cool, so chilled, so brilliant, so witty, and so charming... he’s just a really, really special kid. I’ve got a brother of the same age as him and I can’t believe how self-possessed Bill is. I keep asking his Mum how’s she’s produced a child like this who’s not bigheaded at all. None of this world has gone to his head. I wish I could have been that brilliant at that age. It’s taken me years and years of training and drama school to be able to deliver my lines without shaking, but he just finds it so easy, he says “yeah, just do that”. He’s amazing”.

“I think one of the my most memorable scenes in the film is where Ian and Denise go crazy and beat each other up because she tries to sell his typewriter and he finds out about it and goes crazy. It’s not just about typewriters, it’s a stage of frustration within their relationship, but in the scene we physically attack each other and I end up throwing the typewriter at his head. That was pretty memorable because I still have the bruises and my thumb still hasn’t healed yet from where it got bent backwards during the whole fight scene!”

Ray Winstone on playing *Bill Dury*...

“Ian Dury’s music is the music of my generation. I’d never heard anything like Ian Dury before. I’m not someone who goes and sees a lot of bands, I was brought up on Frank Sinatra and Tony Bennett so Ian Dury just came out of the blue. He was a kind of poet I guess. In three hundred years time hopefully they’ll look back at him as they would on Lord Byron”.

“I read the script and I loved it, then I found out Andy Serkis was involved I knew it would be a good film to do. I’ve got a lot of time for Andy Serkis, he’s very talented and I’ve known him for many years. Plus it’s Ian Dury himself -it’s quite an honour to play his Dad. I get to play the old parts now!”

“Ian’s father Bill Dury was a chauffeur. Ian wrote a song about him called *My Old Man* which was probably the only insight I had into what he was like. When I read the script I saw Bill Dury through Ian’s

eyes. Like any kid, your Dad is a kind of hero figure and then as you get older you start finding out more about your parents and realize that they're just mere mortals and not Superman".

"I saw lots of footage of the family talking about Ian, but there wasn't much to go on about his Dad so I kind of based Bill on the song in a way and really a little bit of Ian in there – particularly a little bit of his smile".

"Bill was a bus driver after being a chauffeur and being a bus driver years ago was a really good job to have, I'm not saying it's not today, but being a chauffeur as well you were kind of looked up to. But Bill was from the wrong side of the tracks compared to Ian's Mum because she was quite middle class and very well-educated. It was a marriage that was doomed in those times, so you take all of that into account and you come up with the man I'm playing".

"There's a scene in the film where I take young Ian out for the day, we go over to a lake and we talk and I teach him how to box and I let him drive the car which is a nice big old Bentley, and I kind of feel that's an image of Bill through Ian's eyes. At the end of the scene he's fallen asleep in the back of the car but I have to take him back to the home for the disabled. That would be a difficult thing for any good parent to do, but they were different times and he probably thought it was the best thing for his child".

"I watched an interview with Ian on the Parkinson's show years ago and he was talking about the needs of the disabled and he said 'The worst thing about being disabled and all the treatment is that all you really want is a bit of love'. Everyone shows a bit more emotion to one another these days, but in those days it was very much about that kind of Edwardian stiff upper lip attitude".

"I was born in 1957 so it was 12 years after the end of the Second World War. My Dad was of the younger generation and I can remember us kids getting into bed with Mum and Dad on a Sunday morning reading the papers and listening to a bit of Frank Sinatra. That was our Sunday morning and it was great. Then you get to a certain age and your Dad stops cuddling you because you're a man. It's not that he stops loving you he just stops showing it in a way. It's funny that you can cuddle your Dad or your uncles when you're older and they go all stiff as a board. It's funny that in my generation of mates don't do that. We'll see one another - I've known them all my life and we'll have a cuddle - it's like a gay club when we meet up! It's funny that we haven't become like our fathers".

“A funny memory about Ian Dury’s music came back to me recently. I was in New York during the 1980s and I met one of the Rockefeller kids. I was with a bunch of mates, it was at lunch time and he asked if we wanted to go to some big posh cocktail party. We were just a bunch of young fellas and we looked really out of place in this party sipping our cocktails. They were bringing all these little kids on to entertain the party but no-one was taking any notice of these kids, which I found really rude. Me and the boys were pretty inebriated and we gave this kid a clap and asked him if he could play *Billericay Dickie* by Ian Dury on the piano. He knew it and I sung it the whole way through and we were escorted off the premises as a result”.

Olivia Williams on playing *Betty Dury*...

“Ian Dury and the Blockheads has a particular place in the hearts of my generation. I remember my teachers at school doing a spoof of *Hit Me With Your Rhythm Stick* in our end of term assembly! Ian Dury had that kind of status. The nation was gripped when I was at a very impressionable age”,

“When I heard that Andy was playing Ian Dury, I had to be involved. I’m a big fan of his and he was on the radio as I was driving in LA, and he was being interviewed about another film he’d done and he said, ‘I don’t want to talk about that, I want to talk about this other film where I play Ian Dury’ and I thought, ‘I want to be in that film!’ but it’s not the kind of work I normally get because there’s no corsetry involved! When I got back to England it was like a message from the Gods, my agent said they want you to be in this Ian Dury film and I said, ‘I know all about that and yes I want to be in it’ so it all worked out”.

“Andy Serkis is gorgeous. He’s a proper actor. He’s the real deal. He’s completely sensitive to whatever you bring as an actor, he’s sensitive to what the scene needs. He’s a very adaptable and extraordinary actor. In the scene we’re doing today he’s playing a character with polio, who’s doing a gig, who’s singing and dying of cancer at the same time. Think of all the layers of skill required to do that – he’s got to play a disability, he’s got to be a musician, he’s got to be the character, and he’s got to play the particular pain of the scene at the same time. Just watching him, I am in awe”.

“My character Betty met Ian Dury at art school and she was going to be the big star – she was a very well-regarded artist. Sadly she’s dead now, but her art is extraordinary. He was a slightly less passionate artist but she could have gone a long way, but he went into music and she supported his period of playing

weird clubs and not really making any money. When things took off for him, he took up with various other women, notably Denise Roudette played by beautifully by Naomie Harris”.

“Betty remained married to Ian through all this and raised his kids Jemima and Baxter, and everybody who speaks about her says she was an extraordinarily generous person, who seemed to have a limitless capacity to care for people and to encourage people in their chosen passion to the detriment of her own extraordinary painting career. I didn’t realize when I first took the role how brilliant a painter she was, so that added another dimension. She was taught to paint by Peter Blake and I got to meet him and see his studio, I talked to him a lot about her and I asked him to teach me how to look like I knew what I was doing when I held a paintbrush. So, the bonus was, I got an hours painting lesson from Peter Blake which must be one of the most valuable things I take away from this experience!”

“I approached the role very carefully. I decided to speak to Betty’s older sister so I understood what she was like as a child, and then I spoke to Peter Blake to find out what she was like as an artist. I’m a wife and a mother and so I know how those two roles can take over everything else in your life, so I thought it was important to establish her as a woman before she became a wife and mother, particularly as an artist. Then I met Jemima and Baxter her children and heard so many fantastic anecdotes. The hardest thing for me was that everybody said she was softly spoken, even when she was very angry. I have a very loud voice even when I’m not very angry so my hardest challenge was to find my quiet voice, and try to play that!”

Bill Milner on playing *Baxter Dury*...

“When I was filming *Skellig*, *Reasons To Be Cheerful* was in one of the scenes because the director Annabel Jankel is Chaz Jankel’s sister and that’s how I first got to know about the Ian Dury and the Blockheads really. Before that I didn’t know much about him, but I’ve got really into it. I’ve done a lot of research and found out more about his music and I really like it”.

“A lot of my scenes in this are with Ralph Ineson who plays my babysitter and minder *Sulphate Strangler*. Ralph’s lovely, we worked together before on *Is Anybody There?* In the scene today we’re by the swimming pool and Baxter is taking *Sulphate Strangler’s* drugs and going off the rails”.

“I get to wear some pretty crazy costumes, I wouldn’t exactly call them cool though. I wear Doc Martins through quite a lot of the film and I have these crazy Vivienne Westwood trousers. But I do have this brilliant dog-print shirt which is one of my favourites”.

“One of the scenes I really enjoyed shooting was where Ian’s drunk and he’s in the recording booth and a bit fight kicks off. It was a really fun scene to watch because my character Baxter is just sitting on the sidelines and he sees all of this unfolding!”

“My character goes through a big change through the film and one of the main changes is his hairstyle! At the start it’s just normal, straight, with no products in it but after a while he starts experimenting with a quiff and then he grows a big rats tail at the back and so it goes pretty crazy. I’ve got used to it now and I actually quite like it!”

“I was eleven when I did my first film and I’m fourteen now. When I’m on set I have to have in tutoring. When I’m needed for a scene, I’m called out of tutoring and sometimes I’ll have an earlier call so I can get a couple of hours of tutoring in before I go on set, but it’s quite easy, I’ve got used to it now. I just really enjoy my work and as long as I’m enjoying it I may as well carry on doing it. It doesn’t feel like a chore and I enjoy being on set”.

Ralph Ineson on playing *Sulphate Strangler*...

“My character’s based on a guy called Pete Rush, who was *Sulphate Strangler* and he was well-known for his earrings and jewellery - he jangled a lot. He used to be a roadie for Led Zeppelin before he joined up with the Blockheads, so he has kind of rock roadie thing going on, and I’ve always loved cherry red Doc Martin boots so it’s great that I get to wear those in the film!”

“I think it’s a great script on lots of levels and not your regular rock biopic and immediately I liked the sound of *the Strangler*. He’s interesting; he’s a nutter, but the kind of nutter you would want on your side and not just in a dangerous way. He seems to be remembered really fondly by everyone who was involved. I’ve spoken to Ian Dury’s family, his son Baxter and everyone’s got really fond memories of *Strangler*. He’s this huge over-the-top lunatic with drug and violence problems but he’s loyal and well-loved by everybody who was close to him. I kind of like the fact that he was this wild animal who was also a really nice soulful person too”.

“We had a big fight scene in the recording studio and I managed to get concussed! I was pulling Noel Clarke who plays the studio engineer off of Andy Serkis in the fight scene and at some point the movements went slightly wrong and I got the back of his head straight onto my nose! It sent me a bit doollally for a bit - I felt a lot more like Strangler so that was an interesting start to the film”.

“Ian actually wrote a song called *The Ballad of the Sulphate Strangler* which wasn't recorded until after he died. The Blockheads play it when they tour now. Listening to that track is a great essay about the character that you're playing”.

“Today we're shooting a scene where I'm doing a huge pile of speed at a party by the pool – it's your typical *Strangler* scene! I'm explaining to Baxter, Ian's son, about the drugs basically. I think it's quite a funny scene because it's a guy explaining this to a kid without any knowledge of how inappropriate it is. That's the beauty of the character: he's the worst, most inappropriate babysitter you could ever think of. He's explaining speed to a twelve-year-old kid and telling him how speed won the Battle of Britain because it kept the pilots awake. He was just very matter of fact about it and there's no acknowledgement of it being really quite wrong”.

“Bill Milner and I work very closely on this as he plays Baxter. Bill's fantastic. He's so relaxed, which is great. There's no side to Bill. He does what he's told, he hits his mark, he knows his lines, and he doesn't seem to suffer with nerves or anything which a lot of young actors do. I did a film with him last year called *Is Anybody There?* where I played his teacher. Whatever he's doing, I'm going to try to play the significant adult because he's just brilliant. I can't speak highly enough of him – he's one of the best actors I've worked with, adult or child.

“I've known Andy Serkis for a lot of years. I went to his wedding and I worked with his wife a lot a few years back so I know him quite well so there's immediately that knowledge and that feeling of being relaxed with each other, which makes playing it easier when we're playing these characters that have spent a lot of time together”.

“Andy's one of the most committed actors I've ever known. Everything he does, he does 100%. There's no faking it with him. He's got a lot of internal energy and he's an incredibly physically strong person - he climbs mountains and has this focus and drive. The ways he's physically transformed himself to play Ian Dury and pick up the mannerisms and the voice – he's amazing. He's just got an intensity about him which is brilliant for a character like this because he's got to be incredibly charismatic”.

The Costumes, Look and Feel and a Peek Behind The Scenes...

With only thirty-two days to shoot such an ambitious project that included mixed media, live gigs, special effects, green screen, animation, rock 'n' roll, some really powerful dramatic moments, kids, disabled kids, hundreds of extras and three different periods of history, producer Damian Jones and the team had quite a challenge on their hands, "It's been tough and really very ambitious for the amount of time and what we've fitted it, but I think the results are amazing" notes Jones.

The key location base for much of the shoot was the old disused Brunel University campus at Runnymede, near Egham in Surrey. The sprawling campus, set over 67 acres holds an elevated position in the Surrey countryside, overlooking the Windsor Great Park and is close to where the Magna Carta was signed in 1215 by King John. The old interior buildings and grounds were transformed to become sets for Chailey Heritage Craft School, the school for the disabled in East Sussex that Ian Dury attended as a young boy in the early 1950s; as well as Baxter's school, the recording studio, Bill Dury's flat, the hospital that young Ian was taken to when struck down by polio, the band's hang-out room at Rolvendon which was Ian's country house and the interior of Catshit Mansions - the flat Ian and Denise lived at together in Kennington. Two major locations were also used in nearby Englefield Green to double for Wingrave the Dury family home in Buckinghamshire and pool and party scenes at Rolvendon. Watford Palace Theatre was used as the location for all of the gig and music hall scenes over a four day period in early June. Principal photography was completed in the tank at Pinewood Studios on 5th June with scenes featuring Ian and the band playing *Hit Me With Your Rhythm Stick* underwater.

Production Designer Richard Bullock worked flat-out and produced stunning results, as Jones will testify "Richard's been fantastic. The Dury family gave us lots of memorabilia so we could replicate authentically. We also had Peter Blake working with Richard from the beginning and he's been terrific. Peter's also doing our title sequence in his pop art style and has given us a lot of his paintings for the backdrop, props and set-dressing. Some of Ian's own paintings feature as do Betty's".

The whole team's passion and commitment to this project is very apparent and much of that filtered down from lead actor Andy Serkis, whose preparation for the role started over six months before shooting commenced, as producer Damian Jones explains "In terms of research and thought process it's been a long process for Andy and the physical preparation has been pretty radical. He hasn't had alcohol for six months, he started to muscle up on one side but not the other because Ian's whole left side was withered

and fragile from the polio, so Andy bulked up on his right side to give that look. He also had a full body wax as Ian was pretty much hairless. Andy's completely immersed himself in the role".

For costume designer Joanna Eatwell, the opportunities presented to her by a film like this were too exciting to turn down, "It's been particularly good fun because of Andy Serkis enthusiasm as much as anything. It's also a brilliant period in history, a period that I love. I've waited a long time to do a piece set during this time. It's an opportunity to put together many looks and it's not bound by convention. We've created a lot of costumes and have hopefully ended up with some really interesting, extraordinary looks".

The film spans Dury's entire life and the costumes start off during a very grey childhood in the early '50s, where there's little light or colour in his clothes, up to his pinnacle and down to his final performance. "It's an interpretation, not an impersonation" explains Eatwell, "There are one or two iconic costume pieces, like the t-shirt we've actually recreated but on the whole we haven't copied anything. It's been more fun that way and for Andy it's freed him up, and for a lot of the other actors it's freed their characters up. If they're not strictly bound to photographic reference it allows people to make the characters their own".

For the scene where Dury performs *Spasticus Autisticus* he was dressed in a strait jacket which Serkis wears and then breaks free to reveal himself. During this time, to show disability was incredibly daring because society was less forgiving.

A number of original pieces from the heyday of the Blockheads were sourced including pieces supplied by sax player Davey Payne, who actor Joe Kennedy visited at his home in Falmouth, Cornwall. Payne gave Kennedy an original copy of Melody Maker, his trumpet and original touring case. Dury's daughter Jemima gave her father a fried egg brooch which he pinned on his jacket and wore onstage, this was an idea picked up on by Costume Designer Joanna Eatwell and incorporated into the film.

Betty, Ian's wife was given the air of the beatnik, art student in her look. "People didn't throw everything away then" says Eatwell. "with Betty, we've used a lot of 50s and some 60s stuff. People inherited stuff, things lasted, and people were imaginative and I think with Betty being an artist and having gone to the Royal College of Art was free-thinking and imaginative in the way she dressed herself and her children".

Hair and make-up designer Jackie Fowler embarked on a lot of research to prepare for this film and she found meeting with Mat Whitecross very useful as he gave her a wealth of footage and documentaries. “It was a real joy doing the research” says Fowler, “I also had a really good brief from Paul the writer. They basically wanted to create five looks for Ian Dury’s life and one look for the music hall story-telling scene. Much depended on what I could do with Andy’s hair because Ian Dury had so many different hairstyles, I just picked five that I thought were iconic and we recreated that on Andy’s own hair and then we did wig replacement after I’d cut it off”.

“In the music hall scene where he starts telling the story of his life, he’s meant to look as though he’s come back from the dead, so we had to make it a bit stylized and over the top. It’s almost like *Cabaret* when he comes out and starts looking back over his life. I work very closely with Joanna our costume designer – her costumes are fabulous and the costumes and hair and make-up have found their own level”.

Apart from Dury’s childhood and his final performance, much of the film takes place between 1968 and 1977 so Fowler used lots of period colours and styling. “Punk was only just starting in ’77, so basically the look for me was the punk that had just been created. A lot of people were unemployed, so they were ripping their own clothes and making their own statement so the look was quite crude and quite raw. Mohawk hairstyles were coming in but I wanted to keep it all quite raw and quite natural. For the girls it’s about the make-up colours - blues, greens, purples, highlighting on the brow and blue mascara. For the punks it was more dramatic black eyes, it was always black and maybe some funky shapes at the sides”.

The Music

Producer Damian Jones originally approached music supervisor Ian Neil when he was first looking at the idea of a film project about Ian Dury. “Damian approached me at the very beginning before he knew Paul Viragh and Andy Serkis had an idea in the works. I told him I thought it was a great idea”.

Once the film was financed and casting was underway, the decision needed to be made on which of the cast playing the Blockheads needed to be real musicians or actors. “The key decision was with regard to the roles of Chaz Jankel and Davey Payne because they were speaking roles, they had to be actors first and foremost” explains Ian Neil. “The rest of the band could have been musicians, so we had a mixture of auditions and it just so happens that the actors we chose could play. Not only could they play, they could play live”.

The Blockheads line-up includes Tom Hughes in the role of Chaz Jankel (songwriter, guitar, keyboards, vocals), Joe Kennedy as Davey Payne (saxophone), Shakraj Soornak as Norman Watt-Roy (bass guitar), Clifford Samuel as Charlie Charles (drummer), James Jagger as John Turnbull (guitar/vocals) and Arthur Darvill as Mick Gallagher (piano, synthesizer, organ).

The backing tracks were recorded in the studio back in February 2009 by the original Blockheads. Ian Neil recalls the moment Andy Serkis walked into the recording studio for the first time: “I think The Blockheads were maybe feeling a little bit of reticence and a bit of nervous then Andy walked in and did the big leap of faith and said, ‘Good evening. I’m from Essex, in case you couldn’t tell’. Everyone knew from that point that this was going to be something special. It was never a question of Andy always having to sing these songs live; the fact that he can do them, and not only mimic them but do them in his own way as well, just makes it that much extra special for all of us”.

The songs featured in the film were chosen for the narrative and obviously Paul Viragh scripted the songs around the storyline. Throughout the processes of development there were various contributions. “There are obviously the hits that people are going to want to hear in the film because they all have a strong narrative tale to tell, we knew the audience would expect to hear *Hit Me With Your Rhythm Stick*, *Reasons to be Cheerful*, *Billerica Dickie*, and *Sex and Drugs and Rock and Roll* but there are also some more obscure ones in there like *I Made Mary Cry*, but they all serve a purpose” explains Neil.

The Dury song that has Ian Neil feels great nostalgia for is *Sweet Gene Vincent*, “You have that opening melancholy and I remember as a kid it being that song that just ramps up and everybody freaks out and goes, ‘What the hell’s this?’; but I suppose for me *My Old Man* is really special because I just love that song. I love the sentiment of the song, I love every lyric to that song, but I was a huge Dury fan myself so there’s not a song on the set that I don’t like!”

For so many of the team involved in this project, it’s one of passion because of that element of nostalgia. Ian Neil recalls the vibe around the release of the album *New Boots & Panties* “I was just leaving school in that post-punk period and everyone knew that it was a special album. We all used to just stare at the album sleeve. I didn’t know the kid on the sleeve was Ian’s son Baxter, so it’s kind of ironic now all these years later to be working with Baxter knowing that I used to stare at him on that album cover!”

Chaz Jankel is co-writer on a number of the Blockheads songs with Ian Dury, so quite early in development, the team needed to make sure they could access the rights to his songs. “Without the rights

to his songs, we couldn't make the movie" explains Neil "and obviously that was one of my key roles as the music supervisor. We thought it was very important to have Chaz really involved rather than just grabbing his songs, so we came up with the idea of bringing him on board to help produce the recordings, which we've done. That also helped us get the band in place and beyond that, Chaz has also written some of the musical score. The more dramatic moments in the film which are not being followed by song, Chaz has written some material for, which is something that he's done in the past for other feature films and for us it's very appropriate and he's absolutely the right person for it. Chaz has been amazing".

The Disability Training Programme on “Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll”...

When production was announced on “*Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll*” producer Damian Jones approached 104 Films to set up a disability training scheme on the film in conjunction with the UK Film Council. After being struck down by polio as a young boy, Ian Dury was a beacon of light amongst the disabled population with his irreverent and controversial style of campaigning and a film about him and his life offered a perfect opportunity, with 104 Films assistance, to provide a training programme on the production for disabled actors and filmmakers.

During the Spring of 2009, 104 Films sourced and trained actors and placed crew trainees on the production as well as seeking out supporting artists for scenes set in the care home Ian Dury attended as a child. The participation of two of the UK’s most prominent schools and colleges for disabled youngsters was secured. Hereward College boarded the film, providing over eighty disabled young adults from its performing arts courses. The head of creative media at Hereward, Karen Johnson, was passionate about the project from the very beginning and Michelle Eastwood and Justin Edgar from 104 Films visited the college in March 2009 in search of possible actors. Director Mat Whitecross and screenwriter Paul Viragh then visited and held a workshop with fifteen students as part of the talent search.

During their trip Whitecross and Viragh not only found supporting artists, but also an actor to play the role of a young boy who communicates with Ian Dury at the end of the film with the aid of a care worker. Cortez Nelson was thrilled to be cast in this role.

Treloar was the second school to board the film, providing younger disabled children. As part of his role as an Assistant Director for crowd scenes on “*Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll*” Andy Mannion obtained child licences for Treloar children to participate and also found further children for crowd scenes from a local riding school for the disabled.

Being performing arts students and aspiring actors, members of Hereward College found the on-set experience a massive confidence boost and Karen Johnson the college’s head of creative media expressed this afterwards to the production in the following message:

“Thanks to all the production team for making this happen. The students built a tremendous amount of self esteem and confidence from the whole experience.”

The younger children from Treloar who were new to the film world enjoyed the experience tremendously and many expressed an interest in further forays into film in the future, as did Hamish Thompson who is the only young boy with polio in the UK. Hamish became involved in the film at a very early age and found the entire experience amazing.

104 Films had met a host of aspiring young disabled filmmakers during the selection process of its Magic Hour short film scheme and Justin Edgar met others through various workshops he conducts across the UK. Four students were selected to shadow key filmmakers on “*Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll*” and all of the students expressed how generous everyone had been with their time and advice. Students selected include Marcelo Starobinas, a directing trainee who shadowed Mat Whitecross, writing trainees Philam Nguyen and David Proud who were assigned to Paul Viragh and Marc Lambert-Clarke who shadowed Director of Photography Chris Ross.

One already accomplished young acting talent who producer Damian Jones is proud to have on board the film is Cardiff-based actor, Wesley Nelson who suffers from cerebral palsy. Acclaimed for his role in *Mrs Affleck* at the National Theatre in London, Wesley also has a raft of television credits to his name and was subsequently chosen to play Young Ian Dury in “*Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll*”.

104 Films is a UK-based feature film production company with an international reputation in the field of disability cinema. The company was formed by respected director Justin Edgar and producer Alex Usborne and is a strategic partner to the UK Film Council and runs The Magic Hour short film scheme for disabled filmmakers. 104 Films has also been awarded a UK Film Council Producers Vision Award to develop feature films with disabled film talent and themes. Its award-winning first feature *Special People* was released in UK cinemas in 2008 to great critical acclaim and controversy.