

Robin Williams: A Life Remembered

P. 22



Entertainment Weekly

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Ben Affleck and Rosamund Pike

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Ben Affleck and
Rosamund Pike

GOING

BY • Chris Lee

PHOTOGRAPH BY • David Fincher
PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY • Justin Metz





GIRL



STARRING •
Ben Affleck,
Rosamund Pike,
Neil Patrick Harris

DIRECTED BY •
David Fincher

RATED • R

RELEASE DATE • 10/3

IT'S ALWAYS THE HUSBAND.

In the funereal hush of a candlelight vigil crawling with TV crews, police detectives, and somber neighbors, Nick Dunne (Ben Affleck) is about to address the crowd regarding the disappearance of his wife, Amy (*Jack Reacher's* Rosamund Pike). He has quickly become the prime suspect, so his goal here is to appear grief-stricken and slip out of the glare of guilt. He will fail. "I may not behave the way the cameras want me to," he says. "If you need to mock somebody, mock me. But please don't turn this investigation into a circus."

"Where's your wife, Nick?!" a voice shouts from the dark. "What did you do to your pregnant wife?!"

Gone Girl, Gillian Flynn's blockbuster novel, burst into the public consciousness in 2012, polarizing readers with its bleak view of modern love and America's criminal justice system, as well as its jaw-dropping third-act reveal. The film, directed by David Fincher (*Fight Club*, *The Social Network*), presents the story as dueling narratives: a clammy crime procedural mixed with flashback scenes of a marriage going straight to hell.

In the book, Nick and Amy's fairy-tale romance unfolds in an intoxicating swirl. Until, that is, the characters lose their New York City magazine jobs and are forced to relocate to Nick's Missouri hometown, where individual resentments calcify into hostility. Nick is revealed to be hot-tempered and self-absorbed: a has-been with no small number of shameful secrets, quick with a well-timed lie. Meanwhile, Amy—a Big Apple glamour girl with a Harvard degree who assiduously



Pike on the set with David Fincher (in baseball cap)

chronicles her bend-over-backward homemaking attempts in her diary—never acclimates to small-town America.

So when Amy vanishes in a flourish of broken glass and mysterious arterial splatter on the couple's fifth wedding anniversary, Nick becomes the investigation's central person of interest. His alibi is shaky at best, while Amy's diary, discovered by police, paints him as increasingly desperate. But in the absence of a corpse, it's uncertain whether Amy is dead or just...gone.

For Fincher, who screened a few scenes from the film for EW, the project provided more than





an opportunity to play with a prestige potboiler plot that thickens faster than wet cement. It allowed him to explore gender roles and relationships—what he calls “the idea of marriage as an extension of narcissistic seduction” (whatever that might mean)—and to arch an eyebrow at our 24-hour media culture, where murdered young women such as Laci Peterson and murderous young women such as Jodi Arias have become a profitable commodity on broadcast news. If tabloid TV confirms one central narrative in American lives, it’s that homicide begins at home. “I liken it to a *National Lampoon* record that was put out in the mid-’70s called *That’s Not Funny, That’s Sick*,” Fincher says. “That’s the tone! You have to kind of be going, ‘It isn’t funny—but it is.’”

TWO YEARS AGO, Reese Witherspoon optioned the film rights to *Gone Girl* with the plan, she says, to play the role of Amy herself. But when Fincher expressed interest in helming the movie, he also expressed his uninterest in her doing that. The director—who has historically cast relative unknowns like Kristen Stewart (*Panic Room*) and Rooney Mara (*The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo*) in career-making roles—prefers to do things on his own terms, with his own team. “I think it would be awkward to have somebody who is starring in a movie and

Nick (Affleck) sits down with two police detectives (Patrick Fugit and Kim Dickens) and Amy’s parents (David Clennon and Lisa Banes)



producing it,” he says now. Witherspoon says she understood. “He told me a vision for what the characters were, and it was very clear that I was not right for his vision,” she says. “But talk about matching a director to the material! I can’t imagine somebody who could create more tension and a more interesting telling of a marriage than Fincher could.”

With Witherspoon still on board as a producer but with the material now entirely in his control, Fincher, 51, hired Flynn to write the screenplay, her first. As preparation, the two discussed the Stanley Kubrick classics *Lolita* and *A Clockwork Orange* as touchstones for the mixture of substance and seabousness they wanted to inject into the script. “Those films are extremely dark but have weird, surprising moments of creepy humor to them,” says Flynn, 43, a former EW writer whose 2009 thriller, *Dark Places*, is also being adapted into a film, starring Charlize Theron. “Fincher and I talked about how much we like that kind of feeling where the audience is looking around, going, ‘Am I supposed to laugh here?’”

Early on, writer and director agreed that they were willing to

make changes to reformat it for film. Little, aside from major plot and character points, was sacrosanct. Fincher says the movie contains material found nowhere in Flynn's novel, but he also dismisses the idea of any wholesale revision.

BACK IN JANUARY, the director was quoted in this magazine implying that Flynn had thrown out the controversial third act of *Gone Girl* and had "started from scratch." Since then, he's had to contend with fan outrage over that comment, and says we took his quote out of context. (We disagree.) So let's clear this up now: What has been changed from page to screen? "Everything and nothing," he says. That's, um...not helpful. Care to elaborate? "You're not changing the marrow of the creature," he says. "You're just changing the bone structure and the muscles and the skin." Pause. "And the hair." He laughs. "It's all of its outer sheathing. But at its core, it's exactly what I think Gillian always intended."

THE ACTUAL BONE structure and muscles (and hair) of *Gone Girl* are now lounging on a gray sofa at Milk Studios in Hollywood, having just completed their cover shoot for EW, photographed by Fincher (see sidebar, next page). Pike, out of her wedding gown and in a black minidress, is showing the contours of a baby bump—her second child with her longtime partner, Robie Uniacke. Affleck, next to her, is still wearing his tuxedo shirt and pants but has slipped on a pair of high-tops. Now 42, he got into caped-crusader

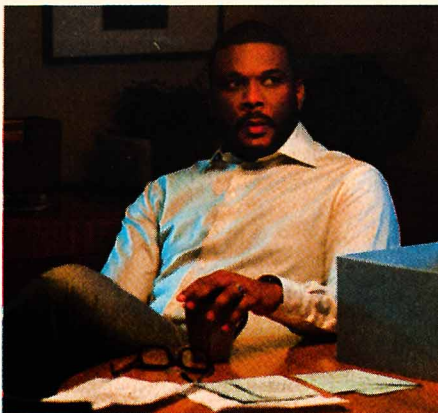
CASTING AGAINST TYPE

FOR THREE DEADLY SERIOUS ROLES, DAVID FINCHER HIRED THREE VERY FUNNY ACTORS. **BY CHRIS LEE**



↑ NEIL PATRICK HARRIS

David Fincher furrowed some foreheads when he cast the *How I Met Your Mother* alum as Amy's mysterious ex-boyfriend Desi Collings, who is simultaneously much more and much less than he seems. But Ben Affleck was impressed by the depth Harris brought to the role: "Neil's got this inscrutability, but you know there's something going on inside him. It's perfectly veiled." Author-screenwriter Gillian Flynn's take on NPH? "He's the wonderful host and charming talk-show guest," she says. "But he comes in and injects exactly the right amount of what-the-f---ness into the movie."



↑ CASEY WILSON

Far from pratfalling Penny on *Happy Endings*, the comedian appears as Noelle Hawthorne, Nick and Amy's overbearing neighbor, who may or may not be Amy's best friend. As Flynn says, "David Fincher doesn't do bad casting."

← TYLER PERRY

The multihyphenate trades his *Madea* drag for button-downs as Tanner Bolt, Nick's legal counsel, a man whom Affleck describes as "really intimidating to me in the film. A Johnnie Cochran kind of guy."



Fugit and Dickens

shape after shooting *Gone Girl* for *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice*, currently filming in Detroit.

The actors are comfortable with each other, but that rapport belies their contentious onscreen chemistry. “We’re not dealing with pleasant people,” Pike says of both their characters. “The dread is overpowering.” And that vibe continued off camera.

For a substantial part of the movie’s 100-plus-day shoot, which stretched from last fall in Cape Girardeau, Mo., into early 2014 in L.A.; Affleck kept his distance from Pike. “It’s such a complicated relationship, I didn’t want to get too relaxed around Ros,” he says. “If you get too at ease with someone you’re supposed to have this thorny relationship with, it gets harder to compose that relationship.” Not that he was blatantly rude to her, of course. “It wasn’t like I refused to talk to her or anything,” he says. “We would come, do our jobs, and go our separate ways.” Adding to the chilly vibe, Fincher, known for asking actors to do up to 70 takes for a given scene, showed his usual meticulous attention to detail. “It was a bit like being in an operating theater,” Pike says. “It wasn’t a light, fuzzy atmosphere.”

Fincher has proved himself masterful at casting actors throughout his career (see sidebar, left), and in hiring Affleck and Pike, he chose to play with audience projections, in opposite ways. Nick is a guy whose identity becomes defined by the media—something Affleck knows a thing or two about. “It wasn’t something I had to do a lot of research for,” the actor says with a weary smirk. “I knew what it was like to have the tabloid world paying attention to me and ascribing negative motivations to whatever I might be engaging in. I knew what it was to be cast in the soap opera I had no control over.”

Amy, by contrast, is an intentional enigma, and Pike—who reportedly beat out Natalie Portman and Emily Blunt, among others, for the part—is still a mystery to audiences. Although she’s relatively well-known in her native England, the 35-year-old actress is not a household name here. Consequently, we project nothing onto her at all and have no preconceived ideas of what she may or may not be capable of. For now, Pike prefers to keep it that way.

She’s staying *schtum* about her motive for undertaking a boxing regimen in the final months of filming, but says that she modeled Amy, at least in part, on Carolyn Bessette-Kennedy, the alluring but somehow

unknowable wife of John F. Kennedy Jr., both of whom died in a plane crash in 1999. “You never heard her speak,” Pike says. “You just see those pictures of her hiding her face. The way she moved—I used quite a lot of that body language and mood. She’s the dream girl. That’s what Amy was for Nick.”

Over the course of the film, audiences make startling discoveries about Amy. During production, that required the actress to drop and regain 15 pounds repeatedly. “She had to lose and gain that weight three times,” says Fincher. “She’d be down working with a trainer eight hours a day, or she’d be at, like, the Häagen-Dazs store.” He laughs. “I’m kidding. She would never do that. But it was a big deal.”

THE MOVIE ITSELF is a big deal too, with the potential to be that rarest of Hollywood entities: a critically acclaimed blockbuster. It’s no wonder that Affleck, coming off his Best Picture Oscar win for *Argo*, was willing to put his directing career on hold and postpone his planned adaptation of Dennis Lehane’s *Live by Night*. He says he really just wanted a master class in directing from Fincher, but there was an unexpected side effect. “It’s rekindled my connection to acting because I’ve had the chance to work with someone I admire and respect so deeply,” he says. “Playing a guy who’s ruined and lying and making mistakes, who keeps suffering and failing—that’s a lot of bummeo to deal with. If I didn’t like David so much, this would have been a miserable experience.” Yes, when you’re suspected of killing your wife, it’s good to have a friend. ■ (Additional reporting by Tim Stack)



WHEN DIRECTOR DAVID Fincher agreed to shoot his *Gone Girl* stars for this week’s newsstand cover, he found real-world inspiration: specifically, the way the media cover the abduction (or murder) of young, beautiful women (such as Laci Peterson, above right). Suddenly a benign image can take on a sinister air. Fincher’s wedding photo is a commentary on “the picture that PEOPLE magazine would run the week after the wife has disappeared,” says the director, who also shot an EW cover for this film in January. “Like, ‘They look so happy. What happened?’”