

## A PINWOOD DIALOGUE WITH FOREST WHITAKER, JAMES McAVOY, AND KEVIN MACDONALD

Forest Whitaker's electrifying performance as Ugandan leader Idi Amin Dada in *The Last King of Scotland* was hailed by *Wall Street Journal* film critic Joe Morgenstern as "one of the great performances of modern movie history." Fresh from the film's success at the Telluride and Toronto Film Festivals, Whitaker, co-star James McAvoy, and director Kevin Macdonald met with a rousing ovation at a special preview at the Museum of the Moving Image—the first public screening of the film. The director and the two lead actors discussed the film's unusual blend of fact and fiction, and the story behind their remarkable collaboration.

### **A Pinewood Dialogue following a preview of *The Last King of Scotland*, moderated by Chief Curator David Schwartz (September 16, 2006):**

WHITAKER: (Applause) Thank you. It's great to be here. Thanks a lot. Thank you.

SCHWARTZ: So, this must be gratifying, the response the film has been receiving so far.

WHITAKER: Oh, yeah, it's amazing. It's really, really exciting. Thank you for that. We did a lot of work, so it's exciting when people, you know, enjoy the film and accept it for what it is. And it's exciting. (Laughter) That was very...profound! (Laughter)

SCHWARTZ: Kevin, I want to ask you just how—tell us how you sort out the question about fiction versus reality. This is based on a book that's not—that's a novel, but based on true events.

MACDONALD: Yes. It's an unusual kind of blend of fact and fiction for movies, but it's the kind of thing that's done all the time in literary fiction. And you know, you have Don DeLillo or E.L. Doctorow, those kind of people, who have real characters in their fiction. And in this instance, we've actually moved quite a long way from the novel. There're only one or two scenes that are in the film that are in the novel. But what we loved was this central relationship between the doctor and the Ugandan dictator. So unlikely. So strange. But so much affection in it, weirdly. And so we took that as the basis from the novel. And then we went back, quite a lot, to history, and we looked at Amin's rise to power—what the real reaction had been in the

country—and tried to make an educated guess as to what had been going on in his mind.

And then, the character of Garrigan is quite different than the character in the novel. The character in the novel is somebody who was described as Hamlet by the novelist. And of course Hamlet is a—you know, about the worst possible protagonist for a movie you can ever imagine. Because he doesn't do anything. So, he's a (Laughing)—so the Dr. Garrigan figure is very much an invention of myself and of Peter Morgan, the first screenwriter on the project.

SCHWARTZ: And could you tell us how you—both of you—became involved? James, starting with you: just how you first heard about the project, and then your reaction to the script...

McAVOY: Really conventionally, in a very dull fashion. I got called by Kevin and I was bored to tears... (No!) And I decided to read it and I came in for an audition at some point in the process. It took about a year, though, didn't it? Like, from first point of contact to you actually making it?

MACDONALD: We had quite a lot of trouble—not raising the money, exactly, but convincing the people who were committed to making the film, convincing them that they were committed to making the film. (Laughter) So, it took a long time from the first time I met James and slightly less time from the first time I met Forest. But still quite a long time before it actually took off.

**McAVOY:** It's really strange. (To Whitaker) I always thought they met you first. I can't imagine this film without you. And I'm so shocked to hear that you met me first. (I heard that last night, by the way, but I just thought I'd tell him that now.)

**SCHWARTZ:** I'd read that you had in mind Forest from the very beginning, and it's hard to think of anybody else doing this. But could you....

**MACDONALD:** Well I'll butt in there because it's slightly different—the reality is actually rather different than that, and I've had to be embarrassed to admit that recently. The producers on the film—there was a previous incarnation of this project, and they—Andrea and Lisa, the producers—had always thought that Forest was perfect casting. And when I got involved and we started again from scratch on the script, whatever, I wasn't so sure. And it was only when I met with him that I realized that—that he was. And of course, in retrospect, now it's difficult to imagine anybody else in the world doing the part.

**SCHWARTZ:** Could you share with us why you were not so sure?

**MACDONALD:** Well, it's my first time working with actors and I had, I guess, a particular—I'd seen a lot of Forest's work. I'd admired his work. But I'd never seen him do anything like this. And the part requires, as you've seen, great explosiveness and anger, and to be terrifying. And those were not qualities that I associated with the performances I'd seen of Forest's previously. They were gentler, more thoughtful, internal characters that he had played. And I guess maybe somebody, a more experienced director, would have seen beyond that superficial disagreement there. But I didn't. And it took me meeting Forest and hearing him talking about the character, and also doing a scene and showing how it could possibly be done, to make me realize that he was the man born to play this part.

**SCHWARTZ:** So now, from your point of view, how did you get involved in the film, and how did you... (Laughter)

**WHITAKER:** This is like *déjà vu*, because we were joking about this last night.

**MACDONALD:** It's humiliation—public humiliation of the director! (Laughter)

**WHITAKER:** No, it's not! No, he's right. Andrea Calderwood and Lisa Bryer brought the book to me, probably about five or six years ago. But the project went away, and it fell apart. And I was on to doing other things; I wasn't involved. And then, about a year and a half ago, I met with Kevin, because Kevin became the director of the project. And then, you know, he had certain doubts. And then we met. And then I had the part. (Laughs)

**SCHWARTZ:** Okay. One of the great things about the film is that you filmed it in Uganda, which does not have much history with film production. And I don't know if it was easy getting that—I mean, convincing the officials there. This is a very sensitive topic, I'm sure, to them.

**MACDONALD:** Yeah, it was. It was hard to convince the financiers, in a way, more than it was to convince the Ugandans, because it's much cheaper and much easier to film in South Africa, which is generally where most African-based films are shot. But when I went to Uganda and I saw how different it was from South Africa, and what a wonderful country it was, and how interesting the architecture was in the cities, and how beautiful the landscape was, I thought: We have to film it here. And also, we're going to be surrounded all the time by people who know this story, who know about Amin and his regime. And so, that's going to give the film a flavor that it wouldn't otherwise have. And—being a documentary-maker and all of that—taking the audience to a different world was important to me. And making it feel very specific, culturally specific.

But persuading the Ugandans was not as hard as I thought it would be. We arranged to have a meeting with the president of Uganda. And we told him what we wanted to do; we told him the aims of the film. And he said this: "You know, it's important not only for the world to know this story, but also for young Ugandans to know about Amin. And we have to learn from our past in order to move forward into the future." And so, they gave us every help that we could possibly have had. They opened up the Parliament buildings to us. We filmed while they were in session below us in a very important constitutional debate. They let us have the use of

the army. They let us film in their aircraft hangars with their MiG jets. They let us do all sorts of stuff. Never got in our way. Never tried to censor us. Never tried to impose what the film should be or shouldn't be. And it was a great experience, I think, all around. I think we all really loved being there and loved the place. Loved the people.

**SCHWARTZ:** And in terms of preparing for the role, I mean, you had footage of Idi Amin to look at. There's the Barbet Schroeder documentary [*General Idi Amin Dada: A Self Portrait*]. I don't know if you saw that film, or if you saw the film...

**WHITAKER:** Oh, yes, I looked at it many times.

**SCHWARTZ:** So, what was it like sort of working with somebody who was larger than life, who really existed?

**WHITAKER:** I mean, that was one of the tapes. And there's a lot of footage of Idi Amin—because he was a showman, and he had a lot of press come. So, I had access to a lot of it, and a lot of the audio cassettes of him talking, and making speeches in different languages. And then I started trying to learn the language, Kiswahili, and the dialect. And I went to Uganda and I started to meet with people who knew him: his ministers, his brothers and sisters. And it just started to grow. And it was from that that I started to finally process, at least, what I was thinking that he was feeling.

**SCHWARTZ:** Hmm. You seem so nice in person. What was it like... (Laughter) what was it like for you, playing this...?

**McAVOY:** This is the best performance right now, let me tell you. (Laughter)

**SCHWARTZ:** Oh, we're seeing the real him on film? (Laughter) As you were working on the film and making it in Uganda, what were people—what were their reactions, their memories of Idi Amin? I mean, I'm sure everybody you met had responses; it's very recent history.

**MACDONALD:** People, I think, fall into, you know, two or three camps. There are people who absolutely loathe the idea of him and who are a hundred-percent negative about him—and that's probably ten percent of the people you meet. And

at the opposite extreme, there's probably ten percent who will say he's the best leader Uganda ever had, and he didn't do a thing wrong in their eyes. But most people lie somewhere in the middle, and they have a sort of dualistic vision of him. They see the positive sides. They see that he primarily, I think, gave Ugandans a sense of themselves and a sense of pride in themselves. And they're proud of him, also, because he became such a figure on the world stage. He was this enormously famous, semi-mythic figure, obviously, all over the world. And there's a certain pride in that. But on the other hand, people will say, Of course, he murdered this whole group of the population, or, He killed my uncle, he killed my cousin, killed my father. And we were surrounded by people talking about this the whole time. And surrounded by people who also had come into contact with him. You know, as Forest said, he met a lot of the sort of friends and family and ministers and whatever. There were people working on the film day-to-day who had had encounters with him themselves. And usually those encounters, when they recounted them, would begin with a joke. They'd begin with saying, "Oh, he was so funny, Amin, when he did this; he was hilarious." And then they'd say, "Well, we were terrified of him, and he killed my auntie," or something. So, it was a very mixed perception of him.

**SCHWARTZ:** Could you talk a bit about the filmmaking style—maybe both you and also the actors? Because it has a flavor of documentary. You used a cinematographer who had made Dogma films and worked with Lars von Trier. Could you talk a bit about your approach in terms of what the filming was like?

**MACDONALD:** We needed to take a kind of a documentary approach because we weren't a big, big production, you know. We needed to make use of what was around us, and make use of the spontaneous, and of accidents, in a sense. Which is what, coming from documentary, I like. Little things that go wrong are actually better than what you expected to happen. And we shot the film mostly on 16mm, and that way we could film with two cameras a lot of the time. So, we could have one camera just picking off little moments, seeing little details, and the other camera doing kind of more classical coverage. We chose to have a very strong color journey through the film, so that we

start very much in one place and end somewhere completely different in terms of the palette of the colors. So, hopefully, there is a kind of expressionistic quality to that aspect of the movie. Maybe James and Forest can add something to that.

**WHITAKER:** The fact that he shot in Uganda allowed us to be in all these places, and I think it really helped me. I mean, this is the car that was Idi Amin's car. This is the plantation that he grew up on as a kid. I met elders there who talked to me about his youth and his childhood. All of these events, all these places, were real and present. And for me, you do gain something from the energy of a place, the operation of a place, from the people, from the walls. That is documentary filmmaking; it's in the truth of those places, you know.

**SCHWARTZ:** Yeah. And you had a consultant, is that true? A Ugandan, a playwright, who was a consultant to help with things like dialect and...

**MACDONALD:** Well, there were two people, really, helping. A playwright called Charles Mulekwa, who had been studying for a while here, I think at Brown University, doing a post-doctorate in theater studies. And he helped me, specifically, a lot. So, he was really the first Ugandan to read the script and to give his opinion of it. And he worked with me on the dialogue a little bit. And also, every day, he was on set to be able to say, "No, no, no. They would never do that." Or, you know, suggest other things, other names for people. I remember one particular instance was the names of the two "good-time" girls, the two prostitutes at the party. And I think originally they were sort of "Sarah" and "Joan," or something. And he said, "No, no, no, no, no. In the seventies in Uganda those girls would be called 'Betty' and 'Joy.'" And I thought Betty and Joy were two fantastic names for these girls, so we changed it to that. So, he was full of all those kinds of things. (Laughter) Not that he had firsthand knowledge, I'm sure. (Laughter) But then, Forest also had somebody who worked specifically with him: a local actor who helped him with, specifically, with his dialogue and with accent, et cetera.

**WHITAKER:** Yes, Daniel Ssettaba, who I hired to help assist me. He not only helped me with dialect, but he brought me into Uganda. I mean, he really started to try to teach me the customs and the

place and the people, and the way people live and eat and deal with their children. He really is deeply responsible for a lot of the work that I did.

**SCHWARTZ:** Okay. Let's open it up. I'll take some questions from the audience and I'll repeat the question so everybody can hear. Okay, right down in front.

(Repeats audience question) What were your most memorable moments on the set?

**McAVOY:** I suppose my most memorable moment on set was the one that I can't remember. And that it was the torture scene—I shouldn't call it a torture scene, but when I got hung up. And I passed out on the very first take. And it was the day of the London bombings. I don't know if you guys know exactly when that was; it was a very panicked day. A lot of people were very upset; we couldn't get in touch with our families; mobile phone networks were down... And we had to shoot this horrific scene. And, you know, we just had to plow on because it was a relentless shoot, and it was: we just get it done. We didn't have a lot of money, and we certainly didn't have a lot of time. And, as Kevin has just told me, the last reel of the film, the last fifteen minutes, was done in, like, a six-day period. So, it's a hell of a lot. And we just had to get it shot. And the very first take I just (snaps fingers) blacked out. Straightaway. And I'm hanging from these wires. Just, like, dangling.

**MACDONALD:** We thought the wires had gone—and the hooks had gone—in the wrong place, actually.

**McAVOY:** Yeah. But the weirdest thing is, nobody ran in immediately to help me, because they thought I might be doing some crazy maverick acting. (Laughter) And I was just gone. I was in shock for the rest of that day. So, that day was the most vivid memory I have. But there's about twenty seconds where there's no memory at all.

**SCHWARTZ:** (Repeats audience question about Forest Whitaker's having acted with Sean Penn in *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, and how Whitaker imagined his career trajectory at the time.) But Sean Penn is also playing Huey Long (or Willie Stark) in *All the King's Men*, which has some similarities... But could you, I mean, how—could you have imagined your career coming to this point?

**WHITAKER:** No, I don't think so. Because at the time, I was thinking I might go and do theater. I really didn't like my work. 'Cause me and Sean... I remember, because Sean was—I had gone to school up north because I didn't want to act anymore on film. I was scared that I wasn't good enough to be put on film, and it's permanent, you know? And I came back to do some re-shoots on *Fast Times*. I had to come back, and Sean was like, "You know, I'm about to do this movie *Bad Boys*. You know, there's this part..." And I was like, "Nah, I'm just not ready for that." So, at that time, I really, really didn't feel... I wasn't sure if I would even be able to keep going in this career. I wasn't sure I would be able to do it in a way that was good enough for me to feel comfortable with my work. So, I went back to school; I went back up north. Luckily, later, I was able to work on film more.

**SCHWARTZ:** You're kind of modest. I mean, you've worked with some amazing filmmakers.

**WHITAKER:** No, I've been really lucky, but, I mean, at that time—the question was "at that time." I think Sean, who I really respect and really like as a person—I think he had a deeper clarity about his work at that time than I did. You know, I was playing a football player in *Fast Times*—I was a football player in college. You know what I mean? I mean, people were not taking me seriously. Really, I didn't really take myself that seriously. By that I mean that I didn't think my work was really that good. Not that I wasn't trying to make it good, but I think that he had a deeper clarity at that moment. And we were at about the same age, you know.

**SCHWARTZ:** Okay. In the back, over there.

**MACDONALD:** (Responds to audience question about how similar the events in the film are to the actual course of Ugandan history.) As I said earlier, it's inspired by a novel. But the novel itself is inspired by some real individuals. And there are various individuals who we've taken something from. There was a Scottish doctor that Amin had—for a short time, actually, I think about eighteen months at the beginning of his regime—but these things didn't happen to him. There was also a Ugandan doctor who had an affair with Kay Amin, the wife, who she became pregnant by, and there was an abortion that failed. And then, probably closest of all, there was another man, who was

actually English, who became Amin's closest advisor; his "white monkey," as he was called. He started off in an interesting, similar kind of moral journey to the doctor in this. He started off as someone who was quite idealistic, and supportive of Amin as a kind of a proud African politician who wanted to rid Uganda of the colonial influence. He ended up, you know, with his hands covered in blood.

**McAVOY:** He was the kind of guy who was—like, in India, he was a corporal, I think it was, in the British Army. And, you know, he got put in prison for handing out anti-imperialist leaflets. So, I mean, a real idealist, in the form that some people might say, "I don't believe that people are that idealistic and then can do such bad things." He was one of those guys. He started off a textbook good guy and ended up becoming the kind of guy that could make people disappear.

**MACDONALD:** So, it's "Inspired by..." rather than "the factual events." Everything to do with Amin in the film is true. The depiction of Amin is accurate as far as, you know, it can be in a biographical film about who Amin was. So that's factual. [Israeli rescue operation] Entebbe is factual. All those things are factual. He did have these wives, et cetera. What I was trying to say earlier on, right at the beginning, is that we have then inserted a fictional character (or character who is inspired by these various people, as I was just saying) into that world.

We did have a lot of debates about what should it say at the front of the film. And it's very difficult because it's quite a complicated situation, as I'm describing it, where you have a world that is real as depicted, and a character like Amin who is real as depicted, but you then also have the other central character who is at a second remove from reality. So, that's not an easy thing to explain in a caption. We tried to have something which wasn't just, you know, "Based on a true story," or whatever. It says, "This film is inspired by real people and real events," which I think is accurate.

**SCHWARTZ:** (Repeats audience question) Was it hard to convince the industry that you could make a fiction film?

**MACDONALD:** It was not hard to convince them I could make a fiction film, but I think it's all to do with the money and the amount of the budget that somebody's willing to give you. This film cost five million pounds, like eight or nine million dollars. And in the independent film world, that's quite a lot of money. But to do this film, it wasn't a lot of money. So, it's more to do with that, yeah. So, that was hard, to convince them.

**SCHWARTZ:** (Repeats audience question) Did Idi Amin really refer to himself as "The Last King of Scotland"?

**MACDONALD:** He offered to become the last king of Scotland so that he could "liberate Scotland from under the heel of English imperialism as he had done in Uganda"; that was actually what he said.

**WHITAKER:** It was one of his titles. He gave himself many titles, and they go on for a long paragraph. But in his career, in his reign, he did say that, too.

**MACDONALD:** As I said, the way that he is portrayed is very much accurate: the fetish for Scotland, the kilts, and all this; this is all real.

**SCHWARTZ:** (Repeats audience question) Okay, what are your hopes for this movie reaching a wide audience?

**MACDONALD:** That's a hard one for me to say. I have no idea whether there's an audience for this film. I hope there is. And I've seen now, you know—I've seen audiences respond to it. We've taken it to a couple of festivals, to Toronto and to Telluride. I mean, you are actually the first people who have paid money to see it. (Laughter) So, triply, thank you for that. (Laughter) I think you're the first people in the entire world to pay money. (Laughter)

I don't know. I hope that if audiences enjoy it, then that means they will tell other people that it's good, and that people will go to see it. I recognize that it's hard, however, because there're so many movies in the marketplace, and a movie about, you know, a man who ruled a small African state thirty years ago, and his friendship with a Scottish doctor, is maybe not going to be top of everybody's list. But I don't know, I'm not the one to answer that, I suppose.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** I loved the movie, and I really admire all of you for making this film. Kevin, how did you decide that this project, this topic, would be your first foray into narrative filmmaking?

**MACDONALD:** Well, actually I wanted to make a film in Africa, and this was actually the second thing I tried. I tried something else before this, which didn't work out because we couldn't get the script right. And then the producers, Andrea and Lisa, phoned me up and said, "We've got this book. Do you know it?" And I said, "Strangely, I read this book when I used to work in publishing." I worked at the publishing house that published it, and I read it in manuscript. So I thought, "Oh, there's obviously something there that's meant to be." I was always just attracted by that central relationship. It's always hard to say what it is about something that resonates within you. You think, well, maybe it only resonates for me, but, you know, maybe it'll also resonate for other people. And I believe that if you're the filmmaker, you shouldn't really interpret what the things are that are important in the film. I don't know, and I don't try and rationalize it too much.

**SCHWARTZ:** Forest, I did want to ask you: Kevin said you hadn't really played a character quite like this, and you really capture the intoxication in somebody's rise to power, and so many different emotions. I'm just wondering, what it was like having gone through that—what playing this character felt like for you as an actor, and what you got out of it?

**WHITAKER:** As I started to acquire the character, I became so passionate about different things. His strength! It was a very empowering feeling, actually. Just the first time I remember walking out to the hospital and I was wearing the uniform for the first time. It was an unusual feeling, and people's reaction—because they are used to Idi Amin; they know him—was so strong, that immediately you fall into that energy.

**MACDONALD:** You even walked differently when you were in costume. I remember noticing that on the first day when you came on and you were bearing yourself in a completely different manner than you do normally.

**WHITAKER:** Yes. (Laughter)

**SCHWARTZ:** (Repeats audience question) Okay, it's a very complex performance. (I agree!) What did you take from your research about the real Amin to make the character interesting and complex instead of one-sided?

**WHITAKER:** I was trying to decide how I felt about everyone, everything. The more I defined that—the more I defined how I felt about this person, how I felt about this food, these clothes—the more human I believe he became. Because it's very simple, I mean, it's simple. Even though you don't know someone, when they walk into a room and you watch them, they decide to sit in that chair as opposed to this one. And you watch them make that decision. You take a *cold* shower... And all of a sudden, the person starts to define himself. And I was making those definitions slowly. I mean, I also think there are certain things about him that help me be guided to his spirit, too: the way he speaks, the timbre of his voice. If you speak differently, you immediately feel differently. If you move your hands differently, you feel differently. When you put those things together, these decisions, and you say it's okay to truly care about something completely, with your whole being...

Ultimately, I knew that he was a soldier. I knew that was really one of the most important things about him. But I wanted to define it more specifically: which of my soldiers I liked the best, which one's from my tribe, which one's... And once I start to do that, I don't think—as long as it's honest and in my heart—I don't think I can become a caricature. I think if I really believe it in my mind and in my spirit, then it can be as big as he needs to be. I wasn't purposely trying to be gargantuan or anything. But if I feel and I believe it, then it's not going to walk into that area. You're not going to say, "Oh, that's false. That's false."

**SCHWARTZ:** And just on a related note, James, if you could talk about—because you play a character who is very interesting, too, who aids in some of the evil things that go on. And the intentions are good, but it's a very complicated character in terms of how we feel about him.

**McAVOY:** Yes, it's a complicated character. He's us. He's the West in the film. And if there's any criticism—the only criticism that somebody has said to me is that, you know, "Oh, there's always a

white man in an Africa movie." And actually, well, it is. But it's the antidote to all the white men in African movies because the white man in this particular movie is not heroic. He is us. He does represent the West. But he's self-serving. He's egotistical. He's vain, and he's selfish. And he's that from the very beginning. And it was clear. Kevin and I were very clear from the very outset that we had to walk a very fine line between—undoubtedly we had to carry the audience through the film with Nicholas because he's the eyes of the film. We see Amin through his eyes. And while Forest's performance is amazing, there's bits where you would have gone to sleep had you not gone with Nicholas. And so, you had to be sympathetic enough to him. You had to go with him a little bit. But at the same time, trying to make him negative—he's not a hero. You know, he's not an upstanding... He's not an example of what we should be, you know? And that was the most difficult task, I think, in playing Nicholas: walking that line of bad guy/good guy. He's not an evil person; don't get me wrong. But he's just selfish, the whole time. And he loves himself far more than he loves the world.

**MACDONALD:** But he's like a lot of people. That's what, hopefully, we can all kind of relate a little bit to the experience we've had in our lives where we've kind of, you know, done something that's maybe not quite right because we admire somebody, you know, somebody who's more powerful than us. We wanted to get close to them. We wanted them to like us. We do something that maybe we don't feel great about in retrospect. And I think in small ways we've all kind of—we've all been there. And that was the idea, just to take that notion a bit further. And when you're a 25-year-old guy—fresh out of college, no experience in the world—I think you can forgive a lot more of that character than you can of somebody who's 40 and has lived a bit.

**SCHWARTZ:** (Repeats audience question) So, how did you manage this sort of balancing act where you keep such a complex, interesting portrayal of these characters? Where it's not clear...

**MACDONALD:** Well, the only thing I would add to what I said before was that, I mean, we did work together quite a lot beforehand. But for me, it was always—I wanted the audience to be in the shoes of Garrigan. I wanted the audience to love Amin

when he first appears on screen and be desperate for him to come back because he's so charismatic, so fun to be around. So that the audience, then—when they start to see this is all a bit too good to be true, [that] they were a bit like the McAvoy... (Laughs) The McAvoy. The James character, where—

**McAVOY:** Thank you, Macdonald.

**MACDONALD:** (Laughs) Where they, you know, the audience doesn't want to see the bad side in Amin because they're enjoying themselves with him too much. So, they kind of go into that denial, in a way, in the same time as his character does. I don't know if that makes sense. But I wanted the audience to feel complicit, so that when he starts being really mean, two-thirds of the way through, you feel guilty for having enjoyed him and for having laughed with him and at him earlier on.

**McAVOY:** Also, he does... I think Amin does to Garrigan what Amin does to the audience—hopefully, I think. And that he empowers you through feeling good about yourself, you know? That's what he certainly does with Nicholas. But he empowers the audience as well, so that when you start to not go with him, you question yourself because you went with him in one instance, you

know? And that's the important thing about Garrigan, is that seeing as he is your only representative in this film—I suppose Ginger is a bit of a representative of the audience; an idealized, higher self as well... But since he is your representative, it's important, the last fifteen minutes, I think. I know a lot of people disagree with me a bit. The last fifteen minutes is so punishing, you know. Because when I first watched it, I felt like as an audience member, I was being personally punished for liking this film. (Laughs) You know? I don't know what I'm talking about! (Laughter)

**SCHWARTZ:** Did you walk around in character all day long on set?

**WHITAKER:** I stayed in the energy as the character. You know, I wasn't always, like, running around commanding things: "Stop!" You know. (Laughter)

**SCHWARTZ:** Okay. Well, if any of you win any awards, remember: it started here tonight. So, thank you. (Applause)

**McAVOY:** Thank you very much.

**WHITAKER:** Thanks a lot.

**MACDONALD:** Thank you very much.

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**TRANSCRIPT: A PINWOOD DIALOGUE WITH FOREST WHITAKER, JAMES McAVOY, AND KEVIN MACDONALD**

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