



IT'S A FREE WORLD...

Directed by
KEN LOACH

Written by
PAUL LAVERTY

Produced by
REBECCA O'BRIEN

Starring
KIERSTON WAREING
JULIET ELLIS
LESLAW ZUREK

Running time: 93 minutes

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It's a Free World...

Kierston Wareing, Juliet Ellis, Leslaw Zurek

Production Designer Fergus Clegg

Photography Nigel Willoughby

Sound Recordist Ray Beckett

Casting Kahleen Crawford

Locations Emma Woodcock

Sound Editor Kevin Brazier

Costume Designer Carole K. Fraser

Line Producer Tim Cole

Editor Jonathan Morris

Music George Fenton

Executive Producer Ulrich Felsberg

Screenplay Paul Laverty

Producer Rebecca O'Brien

Director Ken Loach

IT'S A FREE WORLD...

DIRECTED BY KEN LOACH
WRITTEN BY PAUL LAVERTY

Angie may not have much formal education, but she's got energy, wit and ambition, and she's in her prime. She's been messed about in the past and she's fed up. She has a point to prove. This is her moment.

Angie sets up a recruitment agency with her flat-mate Rose, working in a twilight zone between gangmasters, employment agencies and the migrant workers they place. This is a tale set against the reality of the Anglo Saxon miracle of flexible labour, globalisation, double shifts and lots of happy, happy, consumers: us.

INTRODUCTION

PAUL LAVERTY - WRITER

After *The Wind That Shakes The Barley* we were keen to do something that was of the moment, with a real contemporary smack to it. It might sound daft but we had this idea of three young lads working in a shed. More of a comedy really, and maybe we'll come back to it one day. Benjamin Disraeli wrote that Britain was the "workshop of the world". Today if you drive by any major motorway and look around the outskirts, the country has more of the feel of one big warehouse; shed after shed. In days gone past there were more factories. It reflects deep structural changes in our world – massive manufacturing imports from China, among others, and the endless transport of food and materials from all around the globe. It all has to be stored somewhere and moved on. Internet shopping too has played its part. It felt like a hidden world beyond the ring roads, all connected by lorry. So I began trying to imagine what it might be like to work there. Of course, most of these jobs are very badly paid and casual labour is the norm.

After visiting some of the above I got more interested in distribution centres and supermarkets, again with a notion of three daft lads causing mayhem behind the scenes. Supermarkets are wonders of administration, communication, distribution, and concentration of power; the whole world comes together in one space. Fresh fish from New Zealand; 'mange tout' from impoverished Zimbabwe; harsh contracts with British farms using foreign labour; threats of 'delisting' to those who do not obey their whim; bad-tempered store managers and crazy customers all thrown in. There is an endless array of possibilities, with part time students, part time working mothers, and older workers retired from factories all working there. There was plenty of material for a dozen screenplays. But somehow the actual physical space is very static and, let's face it, ugly as sin. The more I spoke to people in the sheds, the depots, and in the supermarkets, it became obvious that casual short-term labour was at the heart of an enormous transformation of the work experience.

But a trend, no matter how profound, doesn't make for a story. Despite the mischief I had imagining our three lads, all this was sabotaged one day when the character Angie just popped into my head. She was totally fictional. From the very beginning I could smell trouble. I was drawn to her energy, ambition, and vulnerability. In my mind she was full of contradictions and somehow it is more exciting to write a story where you are not exactly sure where the main character might lead you. In addition, Ken was very encouraging with this hunch. Angie could be viciously selfish, but tempered with some sense of impetuosity and generosity. Somehow she felt of the times. To run with Angie also meant a huge knock-on effect. It meant telling the story from her point of view and not the hundreds and hundreds of foreign workers coming into the UK.

Where to pitch Angie's story was another key decision. Given the desperation of so many people fleeing war or unemployment and desperate to get a job in Europe, there is a whole other world of gangmasters and mafia involved in people smuggling. Some of the stories I heard were almost beyond belief. At the time of writing it cost Chinese immigrants \$25,000 to be trafficked into the country, which would take years to pay off. There were endless possibilities but I suppose we were more interested in something closer to the 'norm' rather than the extreme. Angie's world is

more on the hinterland – as if crossing over into illegality-‘light’, rather than the world of the violent gangmaster. But this so-called ‘light’ version too has its own special violence, and I suspect it is more insidious because it is more widespread and somehow tolerated – or at least ignored – in a way the outright gangster isn’t.

I met many workers who had been totally screwed and left on the streets – quite literally. Some had worked on one building, been tempted to another and another, and then never paid. Others were abused on farms receiving a pittance – well below the minimum wage. Others had escaped serious injury, and told stories of minor injuries and close escapes. And some stories were truly tragic in a world where lines of responsibility had long since been abandoned. A young Pole was actually cut in half with a rope reeling machine. A Portuguese worker without safety equipment (and sleeping in the back of a van) fell while pruning a tree and broke his back. Others worked long and dangerous hours. I spoke to an investigative journalist who told me the story of a man who died of overwork doing continuous double shifts. His job? To stamp company logos on a box, sometimes for 24 hours a day. If we had shown this we would have been accused of exaggerating. After countless conversations with many workers I had a dream-like sensation that 150 years of trade union organising had suddenly evaporated in a puff of smoke.

This story could have been told in any major city in the UK, or indeed most of Western Europe. But there is something special about London. Its scale and mix is quite spectacular. It’s somehow easier to imagine the ties that bind us in a local community broken in the anonymity of the megapolis, with hundreds of languages and miscommunication to divide us. Angie asks her father at one point, “Does anyone give a shit out there?” And how many times have we heard politicians and economists talking about the Anglo Saxon miracle? Newsweek has just published a report on the advantages of cheap and disciplined East European labour, and indeed there are many success stories. Yes, it is a booming economy, but how many bones does it burst? They never look under the stone or personalise the abstract statistics. But maybe, in a small way, a film can, so I suppose we thought it might have a special resonance if told in London.

Angie lives in a totally different world to that of her father’s. Having bounced from one job to another over the past decade she understandably fears old age and poverty, and is determined not to end up like him. There is a brutal honesty to her that I can’t help but admire. When her friend Rose accuses her of living off foreign workers she agrees, but adds, “We all do.” And it’s true. “Remember that next time you go to the supermarket, Dad,” she tells him in an argument. It takes many Angies to lubricate the long, intricate chain of subcontract to subcontract that brings us our fresh sandwich, frozen chicken or juicy strawberry. Invisible, exploited labour permeates every aspect of our lives. Maybe we need the brass neck of the Angies of this world to do the dirty work for us – and keep the nasty details out of sight in a shed beyond the ring road.

KEN LOACH – DIRECTOR

“Angie? She’d be business woman of the year in a few years’ time”

Where did this story come from?

I did a documentary with the Liverpool Dockers [The Flickering Flame] back in the 1990s when they had a long dispute to preserve job security against casualisation. The way workers’ job security has disappeared and agency work has increased is something that I felt was very significant and completely underrepresented. It is both a significant fact in the way people’s lives have changed and something that is the result of a political decision – which can be challenged. But we have no challenge to that at all – New Labour, Tories, Liberals, they’re all pro-marketeters. They all want this. It’s called modernisation and it’s seen almost as a force of nature – it has to happen. Whereas in fact I think it’s in the interest of one class and we’re being conned in to thinking this is the way we have to live. We don’t.

We also did a film called *Bread and Roses* (2000) about Mexican immigrants in Los Angeles, and we did a film called *Ae Fond Kiss* three years back which is about second-generation immigrants; and *The Navigators* (2001) was about a group of railway workers fighting against privatisation, which meant becoming agency workers.

So all those interests really came together, just as the scandal of the exploitation of immigrant workers here in Britain was growing stronger. That shift in the way work is done, the interest in immigration and immigrants, the lives they lead, what prompts them to come – all roads seemed to lead to this story.

To what extent were you influenced by stories in the news, for example the deaths of the Morecambe Bay Cocker Pickers in 2004?

It’s a story that has emerged in one form or another in the papers over several years. But I think we were concerned not simply to do a story about victims. We’d made a number of films where the protagonist is somebody whose plight you get drawn in to. We thought in this case it would be interesting just to look at the attitudes and the mindset of people who were on the other side – who were doing the exploiting. Making a film about the exploited seemed too predictable.

There are more extreme stories you could have told. Why this one?

Because we wanted the two women, Angie and Rose, to be people the audience could identify with. If you pick someone who is too extreme the audience will reject them in the first minute or two. You need to think, “Well, yes that’s reasonable... yes of course if she doesn’t do that, somebody else will... and she’s in a competitive market so she’s got to be as competitive as the next person – of course she must do that... she’s got to get a toehold so she’s got to be pretty tough to begin with...” And be drawn into her logic. And then, at the end, you see how horrifying that logic is. That was why we picked Angie, or Angie came to Paul’s mind. And, also she’s very much the spirit of the age. She’d be businesswoman of the year in a few years’ time.

What’s Angie like?

She's a woman of thirty or just over with a child, Jamie. She's got great energy and attractiveness and she's from a very respectable, proud working-class family. She's never found a real outlet for her talents, she's probably had a number of bad relationships in her twenties, and her ambition is greater than what she's been able to achieve. And yet she's got a sense that she can really make a go of something if she really gives it a shot. She's reached the stage in her life that if she doesn't go for something now she'll be mid-thirties, late-thirties before she knows it and she won't really be in her prime. I think she feels at the moment that she's absolutely in her prime. She's a product of the Thatcher counter-revolution that prioritises business and entrepreneurial skills and doing deals and cutting your way through and elbowing past everybody and looking after number one. She'd be fun to be with but you wouldn't have her as a close friend. And you can see that in the way men treat her. She'll be racy, go out to whatever club you like and be the star attraction. But you might not want to spend a week with her, never mind your life.

How did you come to cast Kierston Wareing as Angie?

Kahleen Crawford, who is the casting director, and I looked at several hundred people over a period of three or four months. We must have seen Kierston about six or seven times and each time we'd try a little piece of improvisation. She came up trumps every time – she was always interesting, always fun and racy and surprising. And she's an immensely likeable person as well, which helps if you're going to work closely with somebody.

What were you looking for?

A capacity to be absolutely likeable, but ruthless. She needs to be tough. Sentimentality and ruthlessness – the two things often go together. I think Kierston drew that out. You read her immediately. You just see behind her eyes all the time.

Why do you think the rest of the industry had overlooked her?

I think we tend to like people who've still got some corners that the industry hasn't knocked off. That don't fit in to the easy, bland model that television uses so often. Kierston's got a kind of angularity about her, a kind of uncompromising quality. But why hadn't she been picked up before? Because there's a sense that there's something dangerous about her, something really original that doesn't fit too easily in to a compartment.

Did Angie's character come from the story or vice versa?

The two things came together. It was the character who would be able to do that job and exist in a male world of business and competition and who would also – though she wouldn't use the words – but would unconsciously see herself as a feminist. She'd think, 'Why shouldn't women do what men do?' I think that's very much a character of the age. She wouldn't have done what she's been able to do until this present time.

Does the film offer any moral judgment on her?

Not on her. The judgment is on the system in which she flourishes.

After several films set elsewhere, why did you return to London?

We both felt London is the heart of British capital. Obviously Paul's a Scot and he writes well there but we didn't want it to seem a Scottish or Northern or East Anglian problem. It's at the heart of the economic system and what's interesting is the hypocrisy with which it's treated. On the one hand people say the economy couldn't survive without the underground workforce. On the other, the right-wing is saying get these people out of our country. It's absolute hypocrisy.

Is this film meant to shock or change behaviour?

The scandal of exploitation is known – for those who want to know. So it's not breaking new ground in terms of, 'Shock horror, look what's happening.' What we're more concerned about is just to challenge this prevailing wisdom that ruthless entrepreneurship is the way that this society should develop – that everything is a deal, everything is this kind of competitive, acquisitive market-orientated economy, and that's the way we should live. It seeks out exploitation. It produces monsters.

REBECCA O'BRIEN – PRODUCER

The Wind That Shakes the Barley was big for us, both in terms of budget and scope, so after that we wanted to do a smaller film: more of a chamber piece. We definitely wanted to do something about the migrants' working conditions, something very contemporary and straight down the line, and something with a strong character base. But rather than focussing on the plight of an immigrant labourer, we chose to look at it from the motivation side. It's the character of Angie that rules this film, she's so dominant in every way. What motivates her?

Getting the research right was one of the biggest challenges. You need to be able to stack up evidence which shows that the stories that you're telling are actually based on truth, so the work that Nina Lowe, our researcher, did over two or three months was vital. Paul had done his own research of course but what Nina then did was go round backing up everything that he'd done, so that everything that was said in the story stacked up.

As for the financing, I received the script before Cannes in March or April last year. I took it to Channel 4 with Ken and we decided that we would do it so that in the UK it goes first to television, whereas it's a cinema release everywhere else. The thinking is that if Channel 4 put it out with enough noise there's a strong possibility that we'll get a bigger audience than we do in the cinema, which in turn widens our future audience base.

The new tax credit system has also helped. Before, people were using all sorts of loopholes to claim tax relief. The good thing about the new tax credit system is that it doesn't allow that – you have to be a producer and have a production company to be able to access it. It means that in this film the European pre-sales that we always do, plus the Channel 4 pre-sale, plus the tax credit basically equals the cost of the film. We're more our own financiers this time round, which gives us complete creative control. It's a good model for future work.

FERGUS CLEGG – PRODUCTION DESIGNER

When it was decided to place the film in the East End we started looking for locations around that area. It took some time. What we wanted was a feel of a proper environment where you could see high streets and shops and high-rises – a real feel of real London to pull it all together, so you'd see various episodes of the film in a neighbourhood, and in amongst that neighbourhood would be people from Eastern Europe, who were moving in to the area and finding work.

Because Angie's partner Rose had found steady work, she'd had a reasonably constant income, so they'd got a flat. We asked both of the actors to bring photographs of where they lived and their bedrooms and living rooms. We based it very much round the real people, because that's something Ken always likes: when the actor walks in to the room they shouldn't feel alienated – 'this isn't me.' So Kierston and Juliet brought in some items and we dressed them in to the flat, as something they'd recognise as theirs. Photographs are a starting point – them as children, teenagers, on holiday, which we put up in the kitchen on a noticeboard. And then the radio they'd have beside the bed or a photo frame or a poster. One or two items that weren't too outrageous but would fit in and make the actors feel involved.

Everything is attention to detail. Ken is an absolute stickler for going through the whole process. So with an employment agency, he wants to know how they would do things, the correct methodology, the correct paperwork that would be involved. It's checked and rechecked – in terms of the action we just want it to be as real as possible. It seems almost obsessive, but it helps – you don't need to rehearse it; people know what they're doing. He doesn't go in for rehearsal so it's straight in to it. That's always the thing with Ken – the people aren't acting so much. They're actually living the film.

NIGEL WILLOUGHBY - DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

You always want to work with directors whose films you like, so it was a huge honour for me to be called by Ken Loach. I first met him years ago when I was a camera operator and then he called me back for *Land and Freedom*, so I was hoping he'd call on me – in fact I told him I was looking forward to the day when Barry [Ackroyd, DOP on several previous Ken Loach films] couldn't do a film with him!

There were a whole load of challenges photographically which I had to deal with – mainly about shooting in natural conditions, low-light levels and being unobtrusive. Nothing should interfere with the story or the actors. So you have to keep any lighting situations down to an absolute minimum. It taught me a lot about film stock, how you can push it, tolerance at low lighting levels. Plus Ken has a very particular eye for filmmaking, which is usually using fairly long lenses – I enjoy that anyway because again, you eliminate distractions. You're in there with the actors and that's what it's all about: telling the story. I had an upbringing in documentaries and there you don't get a second chance – you have to learn to work very quickly and you have to pick your camera angles carefully. That's very much how we worked here.

It was Kierston Wareing's [*Angie*] first big film and I was really impressed with the way she dealt with it. Kierston's very photogenic, she has an incredibly animated face and I think as she grew into the part and became more confident it just shows – her enthusiasm for life shows in her face. Anyone that can act naturally in front of the camera is always photogenic, whoever they are, but she has a kind of serene hidden beauty about her that's very engaging.

JONATHAN MORRIS - EDITOR

Funnily enough this film was harder to put together than *The Wind That Shakes The Barley*. Ken always shoots action sequences like the ones in that film very efficiently and we can put them together quite quickly. It's dialogue scenes that are harder. Particularly when there are voices coming from different directions, as there were here. We have several gatherings of the workers in this so you have to look out for continuity. In that sense social realism can be a bit of a bugbear – because things have to look so real!

As I was cutting it I thought we'd have to lose one or two of the crowd scenes, but there was a progression, mainly because of Kierston's performance. There's one scene where her father and her son are watching her at work. There's not a lot of plot in that and I thought it might be one scene too many, but as it turned out it was very powerful.

Ken works with no more stock than other directors but he prints everything, so everything is up for grabs in the edit. It makes it harder because there's more to look at and more to absorb in your head. But at the same time it's easier because you have more options. As much from a continuity point of view – people's heads and arms and hands and cigarettes – you've got a chance of cutting angles together and it not jumping around too much.

Our very first cut of, say, an eight-minute take might well be five minutes long. So we've already trimmed two or three minutes. Then we have our first viewing of the whole film, which is always the best viewing for us, but of course it's usually at least half an hour too long. You have to decide how long a story is worth. So we go back and before anybody sees it we do the basic cut. Then we go back to a second viewing, usually with Paul [Lavery, Writer] and Rebecca [O'Brien, Producer], so they can see as much as possible. And then we'll hack away again.

You see it seven or eight times and over that period you become more aware of hiatuses and pauses. Sometimes you can't get round it, but sometimes you can help the atmosphere, help things move a little bit faster. And of course we've done this a lot together – we have a routine if you like which is very comfortable for us.

GEORGE FENTON – COMPOSER

I'm always kept away from the film until it's finished. When I do get to see it, I'm completely new to it and I have no idea what's going to happen. It's a slightly different way of working which I like very much because I see what the film is, and then I instinctively respond.

Watching it I came away with three things. First of all that it was a really good story, very dark but very witty. Secondly that it was a really good subject and then thirdly I thought it was unusual and very interesting that the main protagonist was, ultimately, a non-sympathetic character – and Kierston Wareing's performance was unbelievably strong.

After viewing, the process is quite mechanical. Firstly we 'Spot', which means identifying where the music's going to start and stop in the film. Usually Ken and Jonathan [Morris, Editor] have a road map for where they think it should go. Based on what I remember from my first experience of seeing it, I go in to the cutting room and throw in my two cents' worth. Then I take that away and when I start writing quite frequently I change things again. Normally you look at a film and you identify what you need to do in order to make the audience respond in the way that the film-makers intended. Ken doesn't work in that way because if he relied on music for their response he would, in a way, be asking them to respond to something that was less real – it could be a sop, an easy way out. None of us like that but of course it's fine in most films because most films aren't meant to be real. They're meant to be a diversion.

It means you've got less space to work, but it also means you have to think about what you're doing and what colours you're going to use in a completely different way. Because if you introduce music, the music itself has to have a spine – it can't just be padding. The story is so tight and the experience of watching so immediate and real and unadorned that the music has to have its own logic. Quite often it has to achieve that with minimal expression. So a single instrument or a small group, a single voice, works much better than using great big sounds or a huge orchestra.

Angie clearly is a 21st century creature. So there are sequences in the beginning where I used all sampled percussion and quite a lot of industrial loops and sounds that would give a kind of clanging landscape to it. The basis of the score is between a viola and an alto sax. The sax is not an annoyingly jazzy voice: it's a pure, hard, modern tone. The viola isn't used very much as a solo instrument but it's a very beautiful instrument and it has an Eastern European quality to it, a slightly old country feel, particularly when it uses all of its range. With a mute the viola can almost sound like a saxophone. It's got the same breathiness. So they're quite interesting when they meet up.

I had a piece in my mind that plays at the end of the film: it becomes like a little sonata. I introduce it at one central point in the film and then in a way it becomes like the conscience Angie never had. As it all unravels for her the piece becomes more prevalent. And then it comes back at the end as if to say, 'there's something deeply wrong here.' You have to work out the logic of the score, you see – otherwise it's meaningless.

CAST

ANGIE - KIERSTON WAREING

Casting Angie took four months of auditions, call backs, improvisation sessions and screen tests. Finding the right actor was essential for the film. But for Kierston Wareing being found meant even more:

“I was studying to be a legal secretary just before all this, because I was about to give up acting – even though acting’s my first passion. It’s been a good ten-year struggle to get a break, to be honest. I’ve had so many situations before where I’ve got to the last person and never got it. I knew I was down to the last few. I thought, ‘Please, if it’s going to be one of those situations again – so close but so far...’ Then finally my agent called me and put on a really upset voice, ‘I’m sorry to tell you... you’ve got the part.’ I didn’t even scream. I was in shock, I just sat there going, ‘Are you sure?’”

Wareing, 31, from Leigh-on-Sea in Essex, trained at The Lee Strasberg Theatre and Film Institute in New York for three years between 1997 and 2000. “I had a good response in the States and ended up getting a working visa. But I found it extremely difficult over here – just getting an agent was really hard, and I couldn’t even get in to an extras agency. Up until this film it’s been bits and pieces really, because I haven’t been sent out that much – it was just for commercials, which I never got anyway, and then a part in *The Bill*, which I got and then this. So this is my big break.”

Having been told she’d got the part, Wareing was given only scant details about her character’s storyline. “The first time I got the script was on the plane to Poland. We were filming it just the next day. I tried not to panic. Then my first day on set I was kind of thrown in at the deep end. It was an assembly hall full of Polish workers. I was at the head table thinking, ‘Oh my God. Could it have been a worse day to start?’ But to be honest it was best that way – you just get on with it.”

They’re words that could easily have come from the mouth of Angie, Wareing’s character. “She’s very ambitious and very feisty – don’t get on the wrong side of this woman. She does want the best for her son but nothing’s really going to stop her. She’s put up with enough shit in her previous life and now she’s not going to take any more.

“I don’t think the audience will like her, but the odd few will see what I’ve seen in her. If you met her on the street she’d come across as quite bolshy and bossy. But I think deep down she’s quite a nice person. She *has* got her moments and you see it in the film. She’s like the guy [in relationships] – she uses men when she needs them. But I think she’s a bit greedy – she won’t stop. She becomes more and more outgoing and ambitious. That’s where you start to dislike her. She just becomes more aggressive and knows what she wants more and more and not really caring about the people around her.”

Does she empathise with Angie, in light of her own struggle to find work?

“Absolutely. I wouldn’t actually go out and do what she does, wouldn’t go that far! But I do have that in me. I am an ambitious person and I don’t give up.”

Following his usual methodology, Loach continued to withhold crucial plot twists from his leading actress, sometimes until the moment they were filmed.

“The secrecy is phenomenal. I was living with the wardrobe girl. She knew all the secrets and she didn’t let on at all. And then Ken would say to me, ‘Oh, don’t eat much today,’ and the reason he’d say that was to keep energy levels up. I usually eat loads, so that’s how I would know he was about to spring a surprise.”

Wareing and Juliet Ellis (Rose) were sent to a recruitment agency in the lead up to the shoot to learn about the logistics of running an office. There was also time set aside for some team bonding. “We went to Polish karaoke, Leslaw (Zarek, Karol), Juliet and myself. It was a hall with about five Polish people in it. They were just singing in Polish.” And did she do a number? “Oh my God no! I wouldn’t do it in English!”

She chose not to watch any of Loach’s previous work as part of her preparation. “I didn’t want to be intimidated. My friends were saying, ‘Oh my God, Ken Loach!’ I was like, ‘I don’t want to know.’ Not being rude but I just wanted to get out there and do my job.”

And in an apt coda, Wareing’s casting as Angie has served as a launchpad for her acting career. “You learn more working for Ken Loach in a matter of six weeks than I did in three years at drama school. I’m going to a lot of interviews at the moment, and I’ve just done another film.”

JULIET ELLIS – ROSE

Juliet Ellis was born in Sheffield, studied at The Arden Theatre School in Manchester and lived there for ten years. She moved to London last year.

“A friend of mine told me that Ken Loach was looking – she said you need to go down to casting because you’d be perfect. It was near my birthday. I said to my agent get me a meeting for my birthday – that’d be a good present. I did some improvisation, then came back and did some with Kierston and they called me the next week to say I’d got the job!”

Rose, she says, is very much the quiet partner of the pair. “Rose is one of those people who’s moved down to London hoping to go art college – to really make a go of it. She ends up just working in a call centre in a dead end job, she’s living with Angie in a flat and maybe she’s hoping for better times but she can’t quite kick herself out of her mundane existence. Angie’s the catalyst. It’s very much Angie’s energy and Rose really kind of goes along with it – she’s got nothing to lose I suppose. She’s good with the figures, very technical and logical and lateral thinking. She’s also very cautious – she wants everything done right. In the back of her head Rose might be unsure but because Angie persuades her she goes, ‘Okay then.’”

LESLAW ZUREK – KAROL

Leslaw Zurek, 27, owes his dramatic career to his ex-girlfriend. He had been studying Economics in Krakow while she was at drama school. The year after she finished, she left Leslaw for an actor. “I thought I’d show her that it’s not so hard to be an actor, so I decided to study in drama school. Anyway, economics was not very interesting...”

Zurek had been studying drama in Krakow for four years before being cast in *It’s a Free World*. “I think Ken Loach wanted to find somebody who had had this kind of experience like my character in the film. He didn’t tell me too much. He just said this character is me. Be myself.”

Karol is a Polish immigrant looking for a job who finds himself caught between the recruiting agencies and the jobseekers, but, says Zurek, “It’s more like an adventure for him. He’s not desperate. He understands both sides.”

The same goes for Zurek. “I’ve experienced what it’s like for people to be treated badly. I worked for six months in the US. It was a work and travel programme. You pay an agency, they look for a job for you, send you to the US, you work for two months and for the last month you can travel spending what you earned. It was like the Polish people who live in London – we were in a motel in one room with five people there. We were treated okay. But when I worked in California my set job was in Palm Springs. Palm Springs in summer is not a good time. It’s very hot and no Americans want to work there, so we got the jobs. My supervisor was a 16-year-old Mexican guy. I was 20 then and he was screaming all the time at my friends and me. He treated us like... After three days I left and went to San Diego. There were a lot of people without work who’d paid for this work and travel programme. The Polish agencies hadn’t found work for them. When they got 20 contracts for a company in San Diego they offered it to 200 people. So 180 didn’t have this work, although they’d paid for it back in Poland. Plane tickets weren’t booked for two months so they had to wait, but they didn’t have enough money to live. They went to hospital to give blood for money. That was their main source of income.”

COLIN CAUGHLIN – GEOFF

With no acting experience, Colin Caughlin was understandably nervous when he was asked to play Geoff, Angie's father.

“When they offered me the job I was lost for words for a minute. Ken Loach said if you can confront mass meetings, go to conference and talk to a thousand delegates you won't find it so difficult. Although at work they started calling me Colin Winston. I've had nothing but abuse for the past six months!”

Caughlin, 61, comes from Canning Town in East London. “I've been involved in industrial politics for many years – I was a fourth generation stevedore in the docks and a member of the Transport and General Workers Union. But because of health problems I'm semi-retired – although you don't like to think it's all over.”

Loach discovered Caughlin through contacts in Liverpool. “Working in the docks you make very, very close friends in Liverpool – comrades. A few years back the Liverpool Dockers had a major dispute and Ken Loach done a documentary for them. All of a sudden in Autumn last year I got a phonecall from one of our lads up there and he's telling me that Ken Loach is making this film in London and needs to get hold of one or two people in order to get – I think the words used were ‘background experience’. He's a rascal Ken – we was led to believe that the film was about the docks in the 60s-80s. When I confronted him with it he said, ‘If I'd have told you lot I don't think many of you would have showed up.’ He ain't far wrong! Then the story was explained.”

Angie's father, in stark contrast to his daughter, is a product of a different political and economic era. “He was a caretaker in a school. Good family man, involved with a little bit of local politics. A good trade union member but that was it,” says Caughlin.

As for the actress who plays his onscreen daughter: “When we first met we had a couple of beers and a chat and it worked well. She seemed to be happy with me, comfortable, and I felt good with her. It could have been my daughter I was talking to.”

JOE SIFFLEET – JAMIE

Twelve-year-old Joe Siffleet was discovered working in a furniture shop. “I was being... not shy – being cocky, telling jokes and stuff like that. And then a woman spotted me and said would you like to go in to filming? So I said, well yeah.”

It was an agent. “I went for a few things and never got them. Then I come to do the Ken Loach one. And I got it.”

Siffleet, from Cheshunt in Hertfordshire, plays Angie’s son Jamie. He describes his character as, “A boy who’s single-parent, who misses his mum. He’s got a bit of a hard life and his mum does funny jobs.

“He loves his mum. He gets in trouble because he doesn’t live with his mum and he’s not got a dad. When his dad says he’ll come and see him, he doesn’t come. He lives with his Nan and Grand-dad most of the time.”

Just like other, older actors, Joe found Ken Loach’s working methods unusual: “There was one scene where I got a surprise phonecall. And I just had to start talking. That was quite hard that was. I had been told by the costume department, they said be careful because Ken does surprises. So I had an idea.”

BACKGROUND

Hundreds of thousands of migrants have come to Britain since the enlargement of the European Union in 2004. Many are prospering. They are net contributors to the Exchequer.

But those at the bottom of the heap – the unskilled, the non-English speakers – are becoming a new kind of workforce. They come expecting a reasonable wage, and in the belief that they will work full time. Instead, they find themselves part of a vast and transient pool of casual day labourers, not knowing each morning whether they will be working or not, and often bonded to their employer by debt and circumstance.

Britain is more than happy to have them: jobs get done that Britons won't do.¹ Employers know that businesses would suffer without migrant labour, in fact migrant workers are sometimes preferred over UK nationals, particularly in the agricultural, hotel and catering sectors.² They are preferred because migrant workers are generally better qualified³ and they offer 'flexibility.'⁴

'Flexibility' is a loaded euphemism. Although some migrant workers don't want to be tied down to solid contracts, more often 'flexibility' means a workforce that can be hired, fired, mistreated and underpaid with impunity.

And in return for their flexibility these workers get very few rights in return. They might, for example, be offered temporary, non-renewable grants of leave. But temporary leave stops workers enforcing their workplace rights, as it usually requires at least twelve months in a job to challenge unfair dismissal.⁵

Some of these workers may be working illegally. But it is one of the crowning ironies of the system that the features characteristic of the deregulated economy – recruitment agencies, the use of outsourcing and contractors; lengthy sub-contracting chains – all obscure and facilitate forced labour, trafficked labour and illegal migrants. Papers get lost, someone else is to blame, and that suits everyone very nicely. It is no coincidence that, under the current system, employers are punished solely for the administrative failure of not having checked documents. If the Government really wanted to tackle exploitation, employers would be punished primarily for employing migrants in exploitative conditions.

What action is the Government taking? In the 2004 Warwick Agreement, Labour pledged to introduce domestic legislation to protect temporary workers, should the EU fail to reach consensus on a European Directive. It is now widely recognised that such a consensus is unlikely (due, inevitably, to efforts by some EU governments to maintain 'flexibility' in their labour markets).

¹ A London study by Queen Mary College found migrants constituted 90 per cent of low-paid workers in cleaning, hospitality, home care and food processing

² Home Office, 2006

³ In their London study Evans et al (2005) found that 49 per cent of low paid migrant workers had obtained at least a tertiary qualification before entering the UK

⁴ Home Office, 2006

⁵ JCWI Bulletin, 2005

On January 30 this year, a private member's bill, the Temporary Agency Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Bill, was brought by Paul Farrelly, the Labour MP for Newcastle-under-Lyme. It sought to give agency workers the same rights as full time staff on key issues including basic wages, sick and holiday pay. UK trade unions believed that the bill would meet Labour's Warwick Agreement commitment. But it failed to make it through a second reading on March 2 due to 'lack of parliamentary time'. Evidently some institutions are more flexible than others.

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Home Office (2006), *Employers' Use of Migrant Labour*

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<i>Sound Editor</i>	Kevin Brazier
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<i>Geoff</i>	Colin Coughlin
<i>Cathy</i>	Maggie Hussey
<i>Andy</i>	Raymond Mearns
<i>Mahmoud</i>	Davoud Rastgou
<i>Mahmoud's wife</i>	Mahin Aminnia
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<i>Tony</i>	David Doyle
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Caterers Red Chutney
Security Michael Borowski, Dominic Malinowski

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Protools Mat Bartram
Music Associate Simon Chamberlain
Musicians' Contractor Isobel Griffiths
Musicians Bruce White, Bill Hawkes *violas*
Mike Smith *saxophone*
Dave Daniels, Caroline Dearnley *cellos*

MBGate performed by Max Tundra, published by Balatonic Music, administered by Bug Music

Smoke Bubbles (Buxton Ratcliffe) performed by Basement Jaxx, published by Universal/MCA Music Ltd

Faith (Patel/Holmes/Leaosavaii) performed by Aradhna, published by Dawn Raid Music Publishing/Universal Music Publishing Pty Ltd

Clip from *Dog Soldiers* courtesy of Kismet Entertainment Group

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For Channel 4

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