



# PETER HUJAR'S DAY



From Writer / Director Ira Sachs

Starring Ben Whishaw and Rebecca Hall

**WORLD PREMIERE** – SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL 2025 IN PREMIERES SECTION

**INTERNATIONAL PREMIERE** – BERLIN FILM FESTIVAL 2025 IN PANORAMA

Runtime: 76 minutes

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## SYNOPSIS

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Ira Sachs's new film, *Peter Hujar's Day*, stars Ben Wishaw and Rebecca Hall in a richly cinematic rendering of a conversation recorded in 1974 between photographer Peter Hujar and writer Linda Rosenkrantz. Their talk that day focused on a single 24 hours in the life of Hujar, the brilliant and famously uncompromising artist who was one of the most important figures in downtown New York's legendary cultural scene of the 70s and 80s. Set entirely in Linda's Manhattan apartment, the film freely and imaginatively recreates that long-ago afternoon and the wonderfully discursive exchange between these two singular individuals. As the photographer vividly describes interactions with leading cultural figures of the day, including Allen Ginsberg and Susan Sontag, as well the challenges of living on limited financial resources in 70s New York, *Peter Hujar's Day* transforms unexpectedly into a Bloomsday-like rumination on both an artist's life and time itself.

## ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

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Writer/director Ira Sachs was in pre-production on his eighth feature, *Passages*, in the fall of 2021 when he sat down to read the newly published book *Peter Hujar's Day*. The 36-page book reproduced a newly discovered transcript of an audiotaped 1974 conversation between the author Linda Rosenkrantz and her close friend, photographer Peter Hujar (1934-1987). Rosenkrantz had an idea for a book featuring different people's descriptions of a typical day in their lives, and had friends, including Hujar, Chuck Close, and others, write down everything they did on a randomly chosen day. On December 19, 1974, Hujar went to Rosenkrantz's apartment and proceeded to chronicle his activities on the day before, from the time he woke up until the moment he went to sleep. Far from a dutiful recitation of events, Hujar's account of his waking hours was full of astute observations, honest self-assessment, amusing dollops of gossip and quotidian minutiae. The creative ferment and dodgy conditions of 1970s New York City came alive in his telling, as did Hujar himself: exacting, slyly funny, passionately dedicated to his art and rigorous about its execution.

Sachs came to Rosenkrantz's book as someone with a longstanding interest in and admiration for Hujar, a pioneering queer artist and master of black-and-white photography. Hujar turned away from commercial work early in his career to focus on subjects of his own choosing, including his circle of friends and lovers, landscapes, nudes and animals. He loomed large as both a brilliant artist and valuable mentor in the Lower East Side avant garde arts/cultural scene of the 1970s and 80s. Sachs moved to New York in January 1988, at the twilight of that creative era. "As someone who came to that part of New York in my 20s, I was late to the scene that Peter was involved in, and also experienced its passing in my youth," Sachs remarks. "I find Peter and a number of other artists of that time incredibly generative because of their commitment to their work and their seeming lack of fear. They were making work that was very honest and in its honesty became radical. And they were doing this at a time in which bourgeois expectations were present, but not very possible for most of them. They made their art because they had to, not because there was anyone giving them money or permission to do so."

Sachs wasn't looking for a potential film subject – yet that is what he found in *Peter Hujar's Day*. As he explains, "The book evoked a feeling and a time and a place and also a surprising emotional narrative. I felt something at the end that I didn't expect at the beginning. On the last page I was like, 'I want to make a film from this material.'"

The idea to adapt the book was entwined with the belief that it would be an ideal project to make with Ben Whishaw, who was playing one-third of the love triangle in *Passages*. As he explains, "I felt that I had found a rare collaborator in Ben – someone with a deep curiosity about art and beauty, life and queerness, an interest not limited to movies alone, but including all the various art forms, as well as all sorts of cinema, from the experimental to the narrative, mainstream to the avant-garde. It makes for a very fruitful partnership. Even as we were making *Passages*, I felt we had more to do and now was the time."

Sachs and Whishaw began talking about the adaptation soon after *Passages* wrapped. Like Sachs, Whishaw loves Hujar's work and is deeply familiar with it. "There are many reasons that I am drawn to Peter but one of them is that he captured a world that's gone, a world

that's not that long ago. There's something very tender and melancholy about the way he looks at people, but also so unguarded and so raw. And at the same time, his photographs are classical, they're so beautifully framed and spare. They are truly beautiful images. Some months before I worked with Ira for the first time I saw an exhibition in London of Peter's work. It was the first time I saw a lot of Hujar images together and it was very moving. Because he was really an artist, the quality of the prints is very much a part of what they are doing as images."

The actor tracked down Rosenkrantz's book as soon as he learned about it from Sachs. "I was excited that this transcript had been published for the first time and I read the book in one sitting," he recalls. "I enjoyed it as a kind of stream of consciousness, a portrait of a moment in time and the kind of tiny events that make up a day in someone's life. I had no idea how it would be the basis for a piece of work. But I really wanted to work with Ira again and we were fascinated by Peter Hujar. When Ira constructed that text into a screenplay, I started to see other layers. It seemed very much like the territory Ira explores in his films: small moments of everyday life, but with a sensitivity to the monumental things within those moments. I was totally up for whatever the film transpired to be."

Meanwhile, Sachs had also begun an online conversation with Linda Rosenkrantz, after reaching out to her via Instagram in December 2021. He'd described how her book had affected him and expressed his interest in making it into a film. It was a surprising but welcome inquiry, says Rosenkrantz. "I was very excited by the thought of it being a film in any way. I couldn't imagine how Ira was going to do a film of just two people talking, but I was all for it. I really liked Ira, and found him very impressive. It all felt right from the very beginning."

Sachs and Rosenkrantz developed a friendship over the coming months, and she was involved throughout the development and making of the film. Says Sachs, "Linda's an extraordinary woman, kind and funny, curious, excited, and as young at heart at 90 as any of us could ever hope to be. She was collaborative at every step, answering questions big and small, from sharing photographs to describing in detail her friendship with Peter."

While a film centered on two people talking in 1974 would seem to be a difficult project to get off the ground, the opposite turned out to be true. *Peter Hujar's Day* quickly attracted the support of a small group of investors who recognized the unique nature of the endeavor, and were willing to give Sachs, Whishaw and their collaborators complete freedom. Says Sachs, "They set no boundaries upon us as to how we might make the film or what it would turn out to be. For all of us, it was an art project first and foremost and only a commodity upon completion."

However, there remained the question of just what an adaptation of *Peter Hujar's Day* would look like. How could a transcript of a conversation be transformed into a motion picture – emphasis on "motion"? The answer wasn't immediately obvious to Sachs, who spent some fairly miserable hours thinking about it. "It was night after night of waking up in the middle of the night trying to envision this film," he recalls. "I thought to myself, what have I gotten into? The text was exactly the opposite of what interests me most in film, which is movement and action and cinema. I'd set up something that had inherently no movement, no action, and no cinema!"

He began to see a path forward as he looked at a number of films from '60s and '70s, including the documentaries *My Girlfriend's Wedding* by Jim McBride, *Portrait of Jason* by Shirley Clark and *Poor Little Rich Girl* by Andy Warhol, along with narrative features such as Chantal Akerman's *Je Tu Il Elle*. His sister, experimental filmmaker Lynne Sachs, gave him a list of 25 experimental films of people in a room with a camera and one other person. What those films shared, he explains, was "an intimate relationship between the camera and the subject. They led me to an understanding of how a movie that has boundaries of space could actually be expansive. And also could be extraordinarily intimate and engaging, without inherent plot."

The highly unusual nature of the film, together with the opportunity to work with Sachs and Whishaw, was hugely appealing to Rebecca Hall, who signed on to play Linda. Her involvement came on the heels of a general meeting with Sachs in New York, where they both live. Hall notes that she had initiated the meeting. "I'd been a fan of Ira's movies for some time. After I saw *Passages*, I did something which I don't often do when I really admire a filmmaker. I called my agent and said, 'What are the chances that I could do a general meeting with this director?' Ira and I had breakfast and just talked about everything under the sun. I adored him and adored his sensibilities. A few weeks later, he contacted me and said, 'I have this thing that I'm trying to do with Ben Whishaw that is more like an art project than a traditional film.'" I basically said yes before I even knew what it was or understood anything about it. Ben is one of my all-time favorite actors working today. I think he is touched with a kind of magic. When I understood what the movie would be and what would be required of me, which was essentially to sit and listen to Ben talk, I said, 'Actually, that sounds really special.'"

Sachs had long admired Hall's work— he cites in particular her performance as a Florida newswoman in *Christine* (2016) — and they quickly established a comfortable rapport. Says Sachs, "I think Rebecca is one of the most interesting actors working. I was obsessed with *Christine*; I thought it was a genius performance — so hard and so human. I left the breakfast meeting with Rebecca and thought, of course she should play Linda. That was based on the ways that we could talk to each other, as well as her acting chops. And then her intelligence, her beauty, her poise, her curiosity, her intimate knowledge of New York. So it was my good luck, really, that she responded to the material."

The materials Sachs provided included not only the book and the script but also photos of Hujar and Rosenkrantz and a large sampling of Hujar's photography. Hall also read Rosenkrantz's 1968 book *Talk*, which transformed a summer's worth of recorded conversations among the author and her friends into a novel in dialogue. The more she learned, the more Hall realized just how special *Peter Hujar's Day* would be. "I remember thinking: this is such a sort of dodo of an idea for a movie. How many people get to do this anymore? Purely make art for art's sake without any kind of attempt to make it commercial. Here it is just two people talking in a room. Perhaps not since *My Dinner with Andre* has anyone tried to do something like that — where nothing, and yet everything happens in the recounting of time. I thought it was so daring and bold, and I wanted to be part of it."

Hall and Rosenkrantz spoke by phone a few times, and Hall was able to get a feel for the person Rosenkrantz was and is. "Linda and I had some wonderful conversations," Hall affirms.

"I told her, 'I'm going to be playing you but it's not an impression of you. It feels like I should get to know you a little bit before I do that.' So we mostly just chatted – about her career, her life, all sorts of things. We talked about Peter a lot and her relationship with him and what she felt about it in hindsight now. There was a funny aspect to it because at one point I said, 'Look, would you mind terribly if I recorded some of this on the voice note, so I have some of your voice to listen to?' Occasionally I would check in with her if I wasn't sure how to say a particular word in her voice, because I obviously am British-accented even though I'm half-American. I asked her once about the word 'hibiscus' and how she would say it. And she left me a voice note saying 'hibiscus, hibiscus, hibiscus.'"

Working with producer Jordan Drake, Sachs began assembling a team of behind-the-camera collaborators in 2023, with an immediate focus on the film's cinematography. He knew that finding an evocative visual language for a two-character, single-location film would be tricky, and the fact that he planned to shoot on 16mm film further complicated the brief. "I was looking anywhere in the world for a cinematographer who would be the right partner for this film," Sachs recalls. "My friend, producer Mike Ryan, suggested that I look at a young cinematographer named Alex Ashe, who had just shot a film for him in Florida on 16mm. I saw the film, *The Ballad of Suzanne Césaire*, and called Alex that day to say, 'Would you like to work together on this project?' Alex's understanding of light and beauty is rare. I have since learned that he's a beautiful camera operator. That is actually significant in a film like this because the camera moves so seldomly that when it does, it has real force. Alex brought a simplicity, an elegance and a rigor to those movements. There's a lot of cinematic pleasure in the work we did together that we didn't resist."

As is Sachs's customary practice, he and Ashe watched numerous films together while figuring out their cinematographic approach. In terms of lighting, Ashe notes that they took inspiration from several of Jean-Luc Godard's 1980s films, including *King Lear* and *Passion*, along with several works by Maurice Pialat. "These films by Pialat and Godard had very naturalistic but beautiful lighting," he remarks. "Many of the films we watched don't look perfect in the classical Hollywood movie sense. They're not glossy. Ira and I were both interested in the idea that sometimes the most beautiful image is a little underexposed, in a way that is almost too underexposed from a commercial standpoint. But those images are some of our favorites to look at."

The filmmakers got a critical boost when they were offered a stunning location: a split-level apartment at Westbeth Artists Housing in the far West Village. Established in 1970 to provide affordable housing and work spaces for artists and arts organizations, Westbeth occupies a complex of repurposed mid-19th Century industrial buildings. The organization donated the space because the ethos of Sachs's film project aligned with its core mission to support artists. "It was wonderful to have access to this apartment but also this building, which comes with its own history," says Sachs. "It's a building full of artists' lives, artists' living, and artists' work."

Moreover, Westbeth allowed Sachs and his creative collaborators to begin working in the apartment several months before shooting began. Sachs and Ashe spent days and nights together there, getting to know the different spaces within the apartment and observing how the look of those spaces changed relative to the position of the sun. Ashe also went on his own some days, arriving very early in the morning and staying through the evening. In the

process they came to the understanding of how to harness space, movement and light in the absence of conventional narrative dynamics. As Ashe explains, “Typically in a film you might have anywhere from like 20 to 100 locations during different times of day, which keeps it moving. Even just cutting to a new location can jumpstart the audience's attention. And so our plan was to use every single inch of the apartment and a lot of different kinds of light to do that same thing.”

Sachs and Ashe also spent some days working with stand-ins for Peter and Linda, photographing them in different sections of the apartment, at different times of day, doing different things. Taking those photos answered simple but important questions, and gave Sachs the building blocks for a kind of storyboard. Says Sachs, “We needed to know, what does a figure look like at daytime? What does a figure look like at night? What does a figure look like inside? What does a figure look like outside? What is the difference between someone lying on a bed and sitting on a couch, standing at a window or eating apple pie at a table? Each of these things are drama. Because of the time we spent at Westbeth, I had a series of photographs that I could sequence to see how they would become the movie.”

The months of preparation shifted Sachs’s approach to transforming the book into the film. “I began the film much more realistically and it was in the process of pre-production that it became, in terms of time and location and space, more abstract,” Sachs summarizes. “Unexpectedly, during this time, I realized that I was making a film as much about photography, and portraiture, as anything else. I had in fact run into the very thing in Peter’s work that moves me the most: the manner in which he treats bodies, light and space, and in such, creates something intuitively psychological.” Over the course of their exchange, the camera might find one or both of them sitting at Linda’s dining room table, or lying together on her bed, or standing on the roof as the sun begins to set. Sachs was interested in how these purely physical differences transformed the mood of the scene. And at times, the film might step outside of Peter and Linda’s moment altogether, and the camera instead would be focused on Ben Whishaw and Rebecca Hall. The film asks in a variety of unexpected ways, “How do we look, and what do we see?”

That question is posed from the film’s opening shot of Whishaw getting into an elevator, with a film clapper signaling the start of the scene. Says Sachs, “It’s a moment to say that this is a theatrical event. It’s a simulacrum of period, and part of that is entertainment and enjoyment and theatricality. Both Ben and Rebecca are speaking in accents different than their own. It’s a translation, and it’s a transformation. I think that gave me the freedom to change their costumes four times in the course of a day, and go inside and outside. And trust that the viewer could move through the ellipses without pause.”

While the structure became more abstract, care was taken to ensure the setting – the apartment, the clothes worn by the actors – felt true to the moment without tipping into 70s kitsch. Production designer Stephen Phelps was careful to strike a balance between period-appropriate decor and the types of furniture and objects that people naturally acquire over time. Explains Phelps, “A lot of times, period films can be very stylized and specific, and everything is very much like *that* year. But Linda being a real person living in New York, I didn’t want the apartment to be overly stylized to look like ‘this is period.’ Because the way people actually live, their furnishings are a little more eclectic. And that made sense going through

the photos of Linda's actual apartment and the places that she and Peter were hanging out together.”

He dressed the space in a mixture of furniture styles and accent pieces – a Noguchi glass-topped coffee table, a traditional upright piano, a mid-century style cream-colored couch (lent by Ashe) – with homey touches like a crocheted pillow, a gold lace table covering and potted plants. And he built a shelving unit that holds a turntable, receiver and speakers, as well as albums, a variety of books and decorative pieces. A portable TV occupies space on a kitchen counter next to the sink.

His choices enhanced the visual appeal of the film while also telling a story about the apartment and the woman living there. Says Sachs, “Stephen Phelps turned an empty shell of an apartment into a home with life and history and character and color. It's period without shouting. That is also true of the work by the costume designers Eric Damon and Khadija Zeggai. All of them found things that were of the period, but didn't turn it into a period film.”

Production on *Peter Hugar's Day* began on April 14, 2024 in New York City.

As is his habit, Sachs didn't rehearse with the actors prior to the start of filming. Because Whishaw carried the majority of the film's dialogue – 55 of the screenplay's 58 pages – maintaining this approach – no rehearsal – was particularly risky for a film in which one actor has so much text to deliver. Ultimately, however, maintaining this unrehearsed quality was vital to the texture of the finished film and Whishaw's performance in it.

Whishaw took a practical approach to mastering all that text prior to filming, assigning himself a certain number of words to learn per week. “I've never had to do anything quite like it,” he remarks. “I showed the script to a friend of mine who's a musician. She read a few lines and said, ‘This is like trying to learn somebody else's improvisation.’ That's sort of what it felt like. But once we decided to learn the text exactly as it was transcribed, it was great. Peter remembers things in a way that I know I wouldn't remember them if I were to narrate my day yesterday. The things that happen over the course of this day are quite small things, but they nonetheless speak somehow about who he was. There's an obsessiveness, I think. As obvious as it might sound, he had a photographic eye and he's very precise about the details. The more I sat with the text and learned it the more all the tiny details – what he ate, which part of the city he was travelling to, what people were wearing – became incredibly fascinating.”

For as much as Peter talks during the film, the words never overpower the character. Says Sachs, “Ben was able to make everything have value. There's not a wasted article. There's not a wasted adjective. It was extraordinary to witness someone take this amount of text – and very detailed text, and also this simple text emotionally – and convey so much in every phrase and in every pause. And that is the beauty of Ben and his acting.”

The director found that Hall did something analogous in her performance as Linda. The dynamic between Hall and Whishaw makes palpable the intimacy of a friendship that began when Linda and Peter were in their early 20s. Says Sachs, “Starting on set, I saw the love story that was being told about friendship. That is something that Rebecca brought to the film instinctually, I have to say without being directed to do it. The way that she looks, the way



that she adores, the precision with which she listens, means that she becomes equal to Ben in terms of space and time and volume, but not through dialogue. The finished film is, rather unexpectedly, a true two-hander."

Hall was keenly focused on telling that story about Peter and Linda's relationship. "That was the most important thing," she remarks. "It wasn't going to be an active performance. It was about receiving something and then reflecting back the love and the warmth that Linda had for this person. You might not see that in reading the book because Linda doesn't really say much, but the act of asking him to be part of this project is infused with love. And when I spoke to Linda, it was just so apparent how much she adored him. And looking at photographs of the two of them from the time, you could see the intimacy there."

She adds that it wasn't a difficult emotion to register in performing opposite Whishaw. Their paths had crossed at the occasional theatre opening in London, but they'd never worked together and had an opportunity to socialize prior to making *Peter Hujar's Day*. "I pretty much fell in love with Ben on sight. The moment that we met each other, it was as if we had been friends for a lifetime. We just had an ease with each other which was very lucky and right for the movie."

Whishaw agrees. "Rebecca and I really enjoyed each other's company. We would often just natter away between takes whilst everything around us was being prepared. It was somewhat similar to what the two characters are doing. I think we just really loved each other and loved doing this work with each other. And that's what you hope for."

Hall explains that Sachs was very intentional in how he shot each scene, but the actors themselves had room to discover the different moods that came into play depending on what area they were shooting in, and what time of day. "How Ira was marking the passage of time was very precisely envisioned, and that's exciting. But the acting wasn't prescribed in the same way. Within his vision of the film, it also felt like we were all finding those scenes together. It felt like we were making something that was experimental – not for the sake of being experimental, but experimental because it was sort of rooted in a particular time with people and characters that were artistic souls and had that spirit. So, there was a sort of fluidity to the way we could do things."

"It was wonderful to work with such freedom," adds Whishaw. "I remember when I got to New York, Ira messaged me and Rebecca. And he said, 'we're just going to gather images and make images together. And it's going to be light and space and bodies and this text, and that's it. And we'll see what we get.' And that felt lovely."

Editing was a crucial part of achieving the cinematic effect Sachs was after; not only creating transitions between one section of conversation and the next, but also determining when and how to step away from the world of Linda and Peter into the purely photographic moments with Rebecca and Ben. And so Sachs reunited with his editor Affonso Gonçalves, continuing a collaboration that began with *The Delta* (1996), the first of seven feature films the two have made together. .

Gonçalves did a first pass on his own, without Sachs's involvement. It wasn't the typical way Sachs works, but in this case it was to the film's advantage. "It allowed Fonzie [as Sachs and others call Gonçalves] to work on an associative level that didn't require explanation or motivation or an explanation of reason; it could just exist in the place of instinct," Sachs explains. "He wasn't afraid to use takes that I shot conventionally. For example, there are some moments in the film which are shot/counter-shot, and that's not something that I imagined for myself, but they work. On the other hand, he really understands that sounds and image create emotion. So these images of Rebecca and Ben that are interstitial and dispersed in the film – we referred to them as the 'photo shoots' – I wasn't certain how they would be used, but Fonzie understood their place, and their potential poetry, as both disruptors and new layers."

Gonçalves also suggested the ongoing use of Mozart's *Requiem in D Minor* in the film, a cue that given the scale of the story is almost shocking in its over-the-top grandeur. Sachs liked the use of the *Requiem* because it reminded him of ideas embedded in works like James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, in which everyday events become unexpectedly monumental. "Film can capture moments in life that seem to contain nothing and everything," he reflects. "In some ways, *Peter Hjar* is filled with the kinds of scenes that in my fictional films, I only hope that I get to achieve. Because it's just people together with the camera, watching and listening and observing how they are, how they listen to each other, how they speak to each other, how their bodies entwine, what happens on their faces in a moment and in a second that disappears. So this movie allows for that kind of observational patience, which is, for me, one of the great pleasures of cinema."

Hall felt something similar in watching the film for the first time, struck by the mundane details that are threaded into Peter's account. "It calls to mind those rare moments that everybody gets, like when you smell the top of your child's head," she comments. "And you're like, this is just an everyday occurrence but it's making me so starkly aware of how much I want to remember every detail of my life and how precious it all is. That feeling is in the film. It becomes less about the famous names or the 70s or New York and more about the preciousness of it all, and how art is always trying to capture those moments. Which this film does."

And it does so while offering a genuinely pleasurable viewing experience. "Ira is a great lover of beauty and I so admire that," says Whishaw. "Watching the film for the first time, I felt like it doesn't matter if you don't follow bits of the text or know who every person is. But that's not really the point. There is something else going on and I think it is to do with beauty and feeling and something fleeting and ephemeral that's being captured."

Fifty years after she spent that afternoon with Hjar, Rosenkrantz is happy to see their time reflected in *Peter Hjar's Day*. "Ben and Rebecca are so perfect. The glamorous Rebecca Hall playing Linda Rosencrantz from the Bronx – it was quite a stretch! But she's great. She captured how I felt about Peter so beautifully. At first I couldn't conceive how this could be a film, just two people talking. But what Ira did in constructing the film works so well – it's ingenious.

'Anything that adds to Peter's reputation as an important photographer gives me pleasure," she adds. "Peter died penniless and only known among a certain group of people. I think that hearing his voice, so to speak, in the book and in the film really tells people who he was, and I think his very individualistic personality comes through in both the book and the film. I hope people get to know him better."

## ACTOR BIOS

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**Rebecca Hall** is an acclaimed British-American actress and filmmaker whose career encompasses the multiplex, the art house cinema, and the world's most respected theaters. She has worked with many of the industry's greatest artists, establishing herself as a leading talent as she challenges herself with each new role.

Hall can be seen in *The Listeners*, a BBC television series adapted from the Canadian novel of the same name by Jordan Tannahill adapted and Janicza Bravo directing. The series follows a woman who, lying in bed next to her husband one night, hears a low hum that he cannot. This innocuous noise begins causing headaches, nosebleeds and insomnia, gradually upsetting the balance of her life, though no obvious source or medical cause can be found. When she discovers that a student of hers can also hear the hum, the two strike up an unlikely and intimate friendship, and start a community.

Hall can be seen in the film *Peter Hujar's Day* directed by Ira Sachs. The film also stars Ben Whishaw and is based on the 2021 book of the same name by Linda Rosenkrantz which documents Hujar's life and activities over 24 hours in 1974. The film had its World Premiere at Sundance Film Festival and will have its International Premiere at Berlinale 2025. Hall was also recently announced cast in Ryan Murphy and Evan Peter's FX series *The Beauty*, alongside Evan Peters, Ashton Kutcher, Anthony Ramos and Jeremy Pope. The series is based on the Image Comics series of the same name by Jeremy Haun and Jason A. Hurley and is currently in production.

Hall wrapped production on *Ella McCay*, a 20<sup>th</sup> Century feature from filmmaker James L. Brooks. Hall will star alongside an ensemble cast Emma Mackey, Jamie Lee Curtis, Woody Harrelson, Ayo Edebiri, Albert Brooks, Kumail Nanjiani, Jack Lowden and Spike Fear. The film will follow an idealistic young politician who juggles familial issues and a challenging work life while preparing to take over the job of her mentor, the state's longtime incumbent governor.

This summer it was announced that Hall has written to direct and star in the film *Four Days Like Sunday* for See-Saw Films. The film is a mother-daughter drama inspired by her own history. Set in the mid 1990s, the film follows 12-year-old Jane as she begins to rebel against her role as proxy-carer for her mother Sylvia (Hall), a recently divorced and ever so slightly fading Broadway diva. During a long weekend break between concert dates, Sylvia hosts Benton, Chris and Rahim, three male dancers from her current tour, at her anachronistically grand country house. She is also expecting the arrival of Dale, her handsome younger boyfriend. As Jane does her best to protect her mother from everything that threatens to disturb her delicate equilibrium, she moves quietly from childhood into something else-wiser, freer, and more alone.

Hall's directorial debut, *Passing*, which she also wrote and produced, premiered at the 2021 Sundance Festival to critical acclaim. Adapted from the celebrated 1929 novel of the same name by Nella Larsen, the film tells the story of two Black women, Irene Redfield (Tessa Thompson) and Clare Kendry (Ruth Negga), who can "pass" as white but choose to live on opposite sides of the color line during the height of the Harlem Renaissance in late 1920s

New York. After a chance encounter reunites the former childhood friends one summer afternoon, Irene reluctantly allows Clare into her home, where she ingratiates herself to Irene's husband (André Holland) and family, and soon her larger social circle as well. As their lives become more deeply intertwined, Irene finds her once-steady existence upended by Clare, and *Passing* becomes a riveting examination of obsession, repression and the lies people tell themselves and others to protect their carefully constructed realities. Among its many accolades, Hall and the film received BAFTA nominations for Outstanding British Film and Outstanding Debut by a British Writer, Director or Producer, as well as Gotham Independent Film Award nominations for Best Feature, Best Screenplay and Bingham Ray Breakthrough Director.

Notably, Hall's work includes Antonio Campos' *Christine*, with Michael C. Hall, Tracy Letts, and Maria Dizzia, in a portrayal that garnered critical acclaim. Based on true events, the film captures the young and troubled newscaster, Christine Chubbuck, during her time at a small-town television station in the 1970s. Additionally, her work in Woody Allen's *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* alongside Penelope Cruz, Scarlett Johansson, and Javier Bardem garnered her Golden Globe, BAFTA Orange Rising Star, London Critics Circle and Gotham Award nominations in the performance and breakthrough categories.

Her other film credits include Adam Wingard's *Godzilla X King Kong: The New Empire*; Andrew Seman's *Resurrection*, David Bruckner's *The Night House*, Adam Wingard's *Godzilla vs. Kong*; Max Minghella's *Teen Spirit*; Etan Cohen's *Holmes & Watson*; Mamoru Hosoda's animated drama *mirai*; Angela Robinson's *Professor Marston & The Wonder Women* opposite Luke Evans and Bella Heathcote; Brian Cranston's *Permission* alongside Dan Stevens; Oren Moverman's *The Dinner*, co-starring alongside Richard Gere, Laura Linney and Steve Coogan; Steven Spielberg's *The BFG*, with Mark Rylance and Ruby Barnhill; Joel Edgerton's *The Gift* opposite himself and Jason Bateman; Sean Mewshaw's *Tumbledown* opposite Jason Sudeikis; Wally Pfister's *Transcendence*, opposite Johnny Depp and Paul Bettany; Patrice Leconte's *A Promise* starring alongside Alan Rickman; John Crowley's *Closed Circuit*; Shane Black's *Iron Man 3*; Stephen Frears' *Lay the Favorite*; Nick Murphy's *The Awakening*, for which she earned a British Independent Film Award Nomination and Gotham Independent Film Award nomination for Best Actress; Ben Affleck's *The Town*, which received the 2010 National Board of Review Award for Best Ensemble; Dan Rush's *Everything Must Go*; Nicole Holofcener's *Please Give*, for which the cast and filmmakers were honored with the Independent Spirit Robert Altman Award and a Gotham Independent Film Award nomination for Best Ensemble Performance; Oliver Parker's *Dorian Gray*; Ron Howard's *Frost/Nixon*, for which she shared in a Screen Actors Guild Award nomination for Outstanding Cast Performance; Christopher Nolan's *The Prestige*, for which she received UK Empire Award and London Critics Circle Award nominations for Best Newcomer; and Tom Vaughan's *Starter For 10*, her feature film debut.

In television, Hall was recently seen in Mark Romanek's *Tales from the Loop*, an hour-long genre Amazon series based on the acclaimed sci-fi art of Simon Stålenhag. Prior to that, starred in Susanna White's acclaimed miniseries *parade's End* for HBO and BBC, which was adapted by Tom Stoppard from Ford Madox Ford's tetralogy of novels. For her role, Hall received a Broadcasting Press Guild Award for Best Actress, a BAFTA TV Award nomination

for Leading Actress, and a Critics' Choice Award nomination for Best Actress in a Movie or Miniseries. Her other television credits include Julian Jarrold's *Red Riding: 1974*, for which she won a BAFTA TV Award for Best Supporting Actress; Philip Martin's *Einstein and Eddington*; Stephen Poliakoff's *Joe's Palace*; Brendan Maher's *Wide Sargasso Sea*; Stuart Orme's *Don't Leave Me This Way*; and Peter Hall's *The Camomile Lawn*.

On stage, Hall received an Ian Charleson Award for her West End portrayal of 'Vivie' in *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. The following year, she was recognized with an Ian Charleson Award for her portrayal of 'Rosalind' in *as You Like It*, which opened at the Theatre Royal Bath and later toured in both the UK and the US. Building on this success, Hall received the same commendation for her portrayal of 'Hermione' in The Bridge Project's production of *a Winter's Tale*. The actress made her Broadway debut in the Roundabout Theatre Company's *Machinal*, written by Sophie Treadwell and directed by Olivier-winner Lyndsey Turner. She was also seen in The Atlantic Theater Company's production of *animal*, directed by Gaye Taylor Upchurch.

**Ben Whishaw** is a multi award-winning British actor. His notable film credits include the role of Q in *SKYFALL*, *SPECTRE* and *NO TIME TO DIE*; the voice of Paddington in *PADDINGTON* and *PADDINGTON 2*; *PERFUME: THE STORY OF A MURDERER*; Jane Campion's *BRIGHT STAR*; *CLOUD ATLAS*; Tom Hooper's multi award-winning *THE DANISH GIRL*; *THE LOBSTER*; in the role of Mr. Banks in Disney's *MARY POPPINS RETURNS*; Armando Iannucci's *THE PERSONAL HISTORY OF DAVID COPPERFIELD*; Alice Englert's *BAD BEHAVIOUR* with Jennifer Connelly; and *PASSAGES* with Franz Rogowski and Adèle Exarchopoulos. He was also seen in *WOMEN TALKING* alongside Claire Foy and Frances McDormand, for which he was nominated for a Satellite Award, a Hollywood Critics Association Film Award and longlisted for a BAFTA for *Best Supporting Actor*. He can now be heard voicing the titular bear *PADDINGTON IN PERU*; the third instalment in the beloved *Paddington* film series.

Ben starred in *LIMONOV: THE BALLAD* as Eduard Limonov and in Ira Sachs' film *PETER HUJAR'S DAY* as the photographer Peter Hujar, which had its World Premiere at Sundance Film Festival and will have its International Premiere at Berlinale 2025.

He starred in the short film, *GOOD BOY*, the directorial debut of Tom Stuart with the support of Gia Coppola, which was shortlisted for *Best Live Action Short Film* at the 96th Academy Awards.

Ben's TV credits include his role as Norman Scott in the mini-series *A VERY ENGLISH SCANDAL* opposite Hugh Grant. This performance saw Ben recognised with a Golden Globe for *Best Supporting Actor - Series, Miniseries, or Motion Picture Made for Television*, along with a Primetime Emmy Award and a BAFTA. *CRIMINAL JUSTICE*, *THE HOUR*, *FARGO* and a BAFTA award-winning performance in *THE HOLLOW CROWN*. He starred in the lead role of *THIS IS GOING TO HURT*, the series adaptation of Adam Kay's bestselling novel, for which he won *Leading Actor* in the 2023 BAFTA TV Awards along with *Outstanding Performance in a New Series* at the 2022 Gotham Awards and winning in the *Best Actor* category at the Broadcasting

Press Guild Awards. Ben was nominated for numerous awards as well including *Best Actor* by the TV Choice Awards; a Critic's Choice Awards for *Best Actor In A Limited Series or Movie Made For Television* and a Gold Derby Award for *Limited / Movie Actor*.

His most recent television project is *BLACK DOVES* (Netflix), where he can be seen starring alongside Keira Knightley and Sarah Lancashire.

Ben's theatre credits have included *MOJO* (Harold Pinter Theatre), *PETER AND ALICE* (Noel Coward), *SOME TRACE OF HER* and *THE SEAGULL* (National Theatre), *LEAVES OF GLASS* (Soho Theatre), *HAMLET* (Old Vic), *JULIUS CAESAR* (The Bridge Theatre), *THE CRUCIBLE* (on Broadway) and *BLUETS* (Royal Court Theatre) with Emma D'Arcy and Kayla Meikle. He was most recently seen starring opposite Lucian Msamati in *WAITING FOR GODOT* (Theatre Royal Haymarket).

## FILMMAKER BIOS

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**Ira Sachs (Writer / Director)** is a NYC-based filmmaker whose feature films include *Passages*, *Little Men*, *Love is Strange*, *Keep the Lights On* and *Forty Shades of Blue*, winner of the 2005 Sundance Dramatic Grand Jury Prize. A 2013 Guggenheim Fellow, as well as an artist resident at MacDowell and Yaddo, Sachs has been a frequent Advisor at the Sundance Directors and Screenwriters Labs since the early 2000s. His work is in the permanent collections at MoMA and the Whitney Museum of Art, and in 2009, Sachs founded Queer|Art, a non-profit arts organization now in its 15th year, that provides mentorship and support for queer and trans artists across disciplines and generations.

**Alex Ashe (Director of Photography)** is a cinematographer and director from Brooklyn, NY. He combines a love of global film history and a passion for telling marginalized stories with specialized skills in lighting and shooting analog film. In 2024 he was selected as one of Filmmaker Magazine's 25 New Faces of Independent Film. As a director, his most recent short film *Magic Ring* premiered at NYFF 2022. As a cinematographer he has lensed numerous award winning projects, including *Conspiracy* (Golden Lion w/ Sovereignty Venice Biennale 2022), *Nosferasta* (Best Short Film IFFR 2022), and *Summer of Soul* (addl. photography) (Academy Award Best Documentary 2022). His first feature as director of photography, Madeleine Hunt Ehrlich's *The Ballad of Suzanne Césaire*, took home multiple awards on the festival circuit, was an official selection at IFFR 2024, NYFF 2024, TIFF 2024, and is set to be released by The Cinema Guild in 2025. His sophomore effort, Ira Sachs' *Peter Hujar's Day*, is making its world premiere at Sundance 2025.

**Stephen Phelps (Production Designer)** is a New York City based production designer whose notable works include Sean Baker's Palme d'Or winning *Anora*, Zia Anger's *My First Film*, and Michael Covino's upcoming *Splitsville*. Before transitioning to production design, he worked for over a decade as a set decorator and prop master, lending his talents to a

number of noteworthy independent films including Josh and Ben Safdie's *Good Time* and Sean Price Williams' *The Sweet East*.

**Affonso Gonçalves (Editor)** has edited over forty films, including three Sundance Film Festival winners: Benh Zeitlin's *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, Debra Granik's *Winter's Bone*, and Ira Sachs' *Forty Shades of Blue*. Gonçalves' other film credits include Jim Jarmusch's *Only Lovers Left Alive*, *Paterson*, and *Gimme Danger*; Ira Sachs' *Love Is Strange* and *Little Men*; and Jonas Carpignano's three films, including the latest, *A Chiara*. He worked on the first season of the HBO series *True Detective* with Cary Joji Fukunaga. He teamed up with Todd Haynes on the HBO miniseries *Mildred Pierce* and the films *Carol*, *Dark Waters*, *May December*, and the documentary *The Velvet Underground*. He edited Maggie Gyllenhaal's first film, *The Lost Daughter*, Olivia Wilde's second movie, *Don't Worry Darling*, and Gina Gammill and Riley Keough's Camera d'Or winner *War Pony*. His latest project is *I'm Still Here* with Walter Salles.

**Jordan Drake (Producer)** is an independent film producer based in Brooklyn, NY. His most recent films include *Notice to Quit*, a feature film starring Michael Zegen (*The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*), *Power Signal*, a short film by Oscar Boyson (*Goodtime*, *Uncut Gems*) that premiered at Sundance in 2023; and HBO's *The Vow*. He is currently in production on a psychological thriller written and directed by Brian McGreevy (*Hemlock Grove*), starring Noomi Rapace, Emma Roberts, and Ben Platt.

**Jonah Disend (Producer)** began his career in theater as a producer and director before taking an 18-year detour as the founder of Redscout, where he helped define new futures for media, technology, and lifestyle brands such as Disney, Nike, and Uber. He is best known for architecting major brand turnarounds, including two featured Harvard Business School case studies. His latest venture, Complementary Colors, is a cultural production company focused on telling universal stories in unexpected ways. His first feature, *Mayday*, was selected for competition at the Sundance Film Festival in 2021, and he will return to Sundance in 2025 as a producer on *Peter Hugar's Day*. Complementary Colors actively supports both emerging and established voices, with several films currently in development. Jonah also serves as an advisor to innovative companies, including the LA streetwear brand Market. Jonah was featured in a New Yorker "Talk of the Town" column, co-created the pop-culture fantasy site, Cultural Fan Fiction, and has served on multiple boards, including the Ad Council. He is an alumnus of Washington University in St. Louis and NYU Tisch's Graduate School.

**Fred Burle (Co-Producer)** is a Brazilian producer based in Berlin since 2010, where he graduated from the German Film School dffb. He is a partner at the German production company One Two Films, known for producing notable films such as Juho Kuosmanen's *The Happiest Day in the Life of Olli Mäki* (Un Certain Regard Winner, Cannes 2016), Jennifer Fox's *The Tale* (Sundance 2018), and Ali Abbasi's *Holy Spider* (Cannes 2022 Competition, Oscar-shortlisted). Burle's leading projects for the company include *Armand* by Halldan Ullmann Tøndel (Cannes 2024 Camera d'Or Winner, Oscar-shortlisted) and upcoming films by Kleber Mendonça Filho, Maryam Touzani, Alex Camilleri, Sara Ishaq, and Annemarie Jacir. Recent titles include Ira Sachs' *Peter Hugar's Day* (Sundance 2025, Berlinale Panorama) and Ido Fluk's *Köln 75* (Berlinale 2025 Special Gala). A 2020 EAVE Puentes program participant,



Fred is a member of the European Film Academy and has served on the dffb Board of Trustees since 2021.

## Credits

Written and Directed By: **Ira Sachs**

Starring: **Ben Whishaw & Rebecca Hall**

Presented By: **Complementary Colors, Blink Productions & Primo Content**

In Association With: **We Are Films & Materia Cinema**

A Production Of: **Jordan Drake & One Two Films**

Based on the Book: ***Peter Hugar's Day*** by Linda Rosenkrantz

Director of Photography: **Alex Ashe**

Production Designer: **Stephen Phelps**

Costume Designer: **Eric Daman & Khadija Zeggai**

Editor: **Affonso Gonçalves**

Additional Editor: **Thomas Meyer**

Sound Designer: **Eli Cohn**

Produced By: **Jordan Drake**

Co-Produced By: **Fred Burle**

Producer: **Jonah Disend**

Executive Produced By: **Lucas Joaquin**

Executive Producers: **Paul Weston, Corin Taylor & Michelle Jaffe**

Executive Producers: **Martin Kalina, Nicolas Pérez Veiga & Alfredo Pérez Veiga**

Executive Producers: **Franklin Laviola & Nicholas Laviola**

Executive Producers: **Ellis Fox, Sol Bondy, Nadine Rothschild & Inés Massa**

Executive Producers: **Ben Whishaw & Rebecca Hall**

Executive Producer: **Adam Kersh**

Co-Producer: **Aaron Craig**

Associate Producer: **Alex Mitow**

Location Generously Provided By: **Westbeth Artists Housing**