

## Screen Shots

# It's a pretty great, perfect, true story...

**RACHAEL DAVIS CHATS TO DIRECTOR GEORGE CLOONEY AND STARS CALLUM TURNER AND JOEL EDGERTON ABOUT THE REMARKABLE TALE OF THE BOYS IN THE BOAT**

**ROW ON:**  
Joel Edgerton  
(left) and Callum  
Turner star in  
*The Boys in  
the Boat*

QUITE rightly, the United States' participation in Berlin's 1936 Olympic Games is often remembered through celebrations of Jesse Owens, the black American sprinter and long jumper who won four gold medals, quashing Adolf Hitler's myth of Aryan supremacy which he vehemently pedalled through the Games.

Lesser known, however, is the story of the men's rowing crew, a ragtag bunch of University of Washington students who overcame the odds stacked against them to take the gold.

The Boys in the Boat, George Clooney's latest directorial venture, tells the story of the young men, many rowing novices, who prevailed over the lingering effects of the Great Depression to represent their country at the Olympics.

"I like the idea of people coming together against odds and actually accomplishing something," says Oscar winner George, 62, of the true story behind his new film.

"And I'm of an age that we used to watch a lot of films like this. This is a little bit old-fashioned. And I like to see it.

"You know, I've done a lot of cynical films in my life. I like them, I think they're fun. Maybe I'm just getting mushy in my old age, but I kind of wanted to see something where everybody was working towards one goal and succeeding."

George's film follows Joe Rantz, played by British actor Callum Turner, who was abandoned by his father and stepmother and raised himself from the age of 15.

He's earned himself a spot at the University of Washington, but his big dreams and hardworking attitude will not pay the bills. When word circulates about try-outs for the university rowing team, with a



**Teamwork: Novice rowers come together and triumph against the odds in the new movie**

place coming with food, lodging, and enough money to pay for his education, Joe decides to give it a go, despite his inexperience.

After making it through the grueling selection process, going up against hundreds of others in the same situation, Joe lands one of nine spots on the rowing team under the tuition of coach Al Ulbrickson, played by Star Wars and Loving's Joel Edgerton. But that is just the beginning of a long journey for Joe and the team, one which takes them all the way to Berlin through grit and determination to succeed.

Like his character Joe, Callum, 33, was a novice rower when he took the role. He and his co-stars had to complete rigorous training: the actors had sessions twice a day involving weights, cardio, and all the other training requirements of a college rowing team.

"We had two months of training, bootcamp, before we even went to the set," says Callum, who is best known for playing Theseus Scamander in the Fantastic Beasts series and for TV series like Glue and The Capture.

"We got good, we got good.

"The most beautiful thing about rowing is that you're doing it with eight other people. So there's a synergy and you're all in sync, and you're together, and you're all aiming for the same thing.

"You create these bonds; these guys are some of my best friends now. And I love them."

Overseeing the crew's progress in the true story is Ulbrickson. Joel, who portrays the tough-to-please coach, says that he's "always fascinated by coaches", particularly the ones that "look like they're not enjoying themselves, at all - they look like they've got really high blood pressure, and the whole thing is painful for them."

"But it's a sign that they care more," adds the 49-year-old Australian actor.

"I'm really interested in the coach as a kind of a father figure, particularly in this story, and I think there's something that reminds me of dads - sometimes they don't come across so warm, but then the slightest gesture, or just one word, might make you feel really loved."

Cinematographer Martin Ruhe, George creates a visually stunning film with gripping boat races and gorgeous landscape shots, but it was not all plain sailing, so to speak. Despite the rigorous training sched-

ule and dedication of the actors, there is one thing that could not be controlled: the water during filming.

"There is not one thing about shooting on the water that's fun," says George.

"You can't just say, 'let's line up eight boats across with nine guys in each of 'em, and start the race'. There is a current, so the boats all start moving around, and they're not in straight lines ... if the wind blows, everything's moving around you. Everything is constantly moving."

Creating an engaging, entertaining portrayal of the true story was all the more important since, for many heading to the cinema to watch *The Boys in the Boat*, George's portrayal of The

Revenant writer Mark L Smith's screenplay - which is based on Daniel James Brown's 2013 non-fiction novel of the same name - will be the first they hear of Joe Rantz and his team's incredible story.

"I didn't know anything about the story, and I knew very little about rowing, in fact," says Joel, who adds that when he read Brown's book he felt it represented "those times in history where just a story is perfectly built to become a movie".

"All the aspects of it... all the ups and downs, the characters and what they're up against, and where it all

ended up, the fact that Hitler's involved - it's a pretty great, perfect, true story."

While the rise of Adolf Hitler in Germany is far from a key plot point, scenes of the Olympic Games do include the Nazi leader, as well as other key figures like Jesse Owens.

Inclusion of the dictator, albeit in a minor capacity, was important to

George because, he says, "he was there, and it was part of his story" - the 1936 Olympics was used to push his racial supremacist and anti-semitic ideas on the global stage.

"It's interesting, it's a tricky thing to do," George says of including Hitler.

"First of all, we don't have to convince the world that the Nazis and Hitler were bad. So we didn't have to get too much into it. But it was also 1936, so it was before most of - certainly the United States - had understood how bad it was going to be.

"And you can't play that, right. They can't be sitting there going, 'Oh, these people are all evil' - they just are confused by them at that moment.

"So it's a tricky thing to remind people, you know, this isn't 1944 yet, and we don't know as much about what was going on as what eventually happened."

■ **The Boys in the Boat is in UK cinemas now**



**Director George Clooney**

**“**You create these bonds; these guys are some of my best friends now  
**”**  
Joel Edgerton