

A Look Into Bertie Gilbert's Upcoming Film, 'PLEASE CARE'

"I'm incredibly fascinated by the ways in which we do or don't bear our souls," explains UK-based filmmaker, Bertie Gilbert, when discussing his upcoming short film, *PLEASE CARE*. The 23-year-old recently announced he was prepping to film the new project, his first since the release of 2019's *GOOD RIDDANCE*. In order to help bring the project to fruition, he has launched an IndieGoGo campaign, where viewers can donate funds in support.

PLEASE CARE is a dark comedy, which will focus around a character by the name of Max, "a drama teacher who decides to make a spectacle of his suffering by writing and directing a play about a recent tragedy in his life, for his students to perform". With a storyline, which Bertie describes as showing someone, particularly a male, losing touch with reality and having to come to terms with his emotions, the film will focus on how "suffering only breed[s] more suffering".

"I've come to [realize] this instinct I have to share my woes and transpose them into a video or a short film," shares Bertie in regard to how the idea for the film came about. "Maybe it isn't healthy. I'm not as in-touch with my emotions as I once though. It's this notion that sparked the idea to make a film more broadly about performative suffering." Such a topic can be difficult to bring comedy too, but Bertie was able to do so via a collaboration with Dean Dobbs, a fellow UK filmmaker whose work includes numerous comedy sketches alongside creative partner, Jack Howard. According to Bertie, many of what he considers to be the best moments of the film are a result of Dean's input in the script.

Using comedy to explore such themes as toxic masculinity and performative suffering is not an approach many would take, given their serious nature. However, as Bertie explains, using such an approach works to highlight what he deems the "futility" of Max's actions and decisions. "What's so sad and frustrating about the most extreme expressions of toxic masculinity is the futility of it all. The waste, just totally beyond comprehension. I think if you want to highlight the futility of a character's actions, comedy is a natural place to go. Laughing at someone's appalling behaviour only serves to heighten how ridiculous it all is."

"There is a version of this film that is much, much darker and more serious – but I think in doing it that way, you partially lose the opportunity for hope [and] optimism," he continues. "If we're still just about laughing at Max's actions, a path remains for redemption. He's not too far gone. That was important to me, showing that there's a way out."

If all goes according to plan and the film receives a positive reception, Bertie has shared that there is potential for it to develop from a stand-alone project to a full series, which would "unravel Max's emotional journey, as well as the parallel journeys of the characters orbiting around him. A more complex, richer story more broadly about all the ways which we cope".

PLEASE CARE is set to feature British actor Hugh Skinner, known for his roles in the television show *Fleabag* and the 2012 film version of the musical *Les Misérables*. Bertie will also be working with the Oscar-winning production company, Slick Films, a partnership which he says came about naturally. “Ash, our producer at Slick, has been involved off-and-on with the YouTube scene for years. They were looking for new ideas [and] people to collaborate with.”

Given the age of COVID-19, both Bertie and Slick Productions will have to work in a new environment, with new restrictions and protocols in place in order to protect those involved in the project. This is something Bertie is mindful of. “We don’t want to compromise creatively in any way, but it’s imperative we ensure that the set is as safe as [it] could possibly be,” he explains. However, he is also quick to point out that this doesn’t mean the film’s quality will be reduced in any way, as he’s used to working with smaller crews and what he calls “limited resources”. “I do think filmmaking at a very low level for so long makes you quite nimble and able to adapt to various challenges and limitations,” he adds.

As aforementioned, Bertie has set up a crowdfunding campaign to help raise the necessary amount to bring the film to life. With a goal of £40,000, those who donate have the ability to pick from a variety of perks, including the ability to watch the film before its release and access behind-the-scenes photographs, amongst other options.

While many creators have utilized crowdfunding in the past, Bertie admits to having difficulty asking for help. Despite the perceived difficulty in asking his viewers to help him financially, he knows doing so will not only ensure the film’s quality, but also be a way of thanking those who have stuck with him throughout his filmmaking journey. “I’ll forever be so grateful to anyone who’s been a part of my ‘journey’ since I was [16], and this feels like a real [crystallization] of all of that,” he says. “[I] feel even more compelled to get this one right.”

As of publishing, there is no release date for *PLEASE CARE*. Those wishing to keep up-to-date on the project can do so via Bertie’s Twitter account and the film’s official IndieGoGo page.