APPLE ORIGINAL FILMS Presents

In Association with MARV

A CLOUDY Production

A MATTHEW VAUGHN Film

**A gold letter on a black background

Description automatically generated**

BRYCE DALLAS HOWARD

SAM ROCKWELL

BRYAN CRANSTON

CATHERINE O’HARA

HENRY CAVILL

SOFIA BOUTELLA

DUA LIPA

ARIANA DEBOSE

with JOHN CENA

and SAMUEL L. JACKSON

Executive Producers

CLAUDIA VAUGHN

CARLOS PERES

ZYGI KAMASA

ADAM FISHBACH

Produced by

MATTHEW VAUGHN, p.g.a

ADAM BOHLING, p.g.a

DAVID REID, p.g.a

JASON FUCHS, p.g.a

Written by

JASON FUCHS

Directed by

MATTHEW VAUGHN

**A gold letter on a black background

Description automatically generated**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

THE SYNOPSIS 3

THE BACKSTORY 4

THE CHARACTERS 6

Elly Conway – Bryce dallas howard 6

aidan – sam rockwell 7

ritter – bryan cranston 8

ruth – catherine o’hara 9

argylle – henry cavill 10

Lagrange – dua lipa 11

wyatt – john cena 11

alfred solomon – samuel l. jackson 12

keira – ariana debose ………………………………………………………………………………………………12

Saba al-badr – sofia boutella ………………………………………………………………………………….13

Fowler – Richard E. Grant ………………………………………………………………………………………13

alfie – chip………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….13

THE STUNTS 14

the PRODUCTION DESIGN …………………………………………………………………16

the costume design …………………………………………….……………………….17

THE MUSIC 18

**THE SYNOPSIS**

The greater the spy, the bigger the lie.

From the twisted mind of MATTHEW VAUGHN (*Kingsman* franchise, *Kick-Ass*) comes *Argylle*, a razor-witted, reality-bending, globe-encircling spy thriller.

BRYCE DALLAS HOWARD (*Jurassic World* franchise) is Elly Conway, the reclusive author of a series of best-selling espionage novels, whose idea of bliss is a night at home with her computer and her cat, Alfie. But when the plots of Elly’s fictional books—which center on secret agent Argylle and his mission to unravel a global spy syndicate—begin to mirror the covert actions of a real-life spy organization, quiet evenings at home become a thing of the past.

Accompanied by Aidan, a cat-allergic spy played by Oscar® winner SAM ROCKWELL (*Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri*), Elly (carrying Alfie in her backpack) races across the world to stay one step ahead of the killers as the line between Elly’s fictional world and her real one begins to blur.

The top-flight ensemble features—as Elly’s imagined book characters—HENRY CAVILL (*The Witcher*) as agent Argylle; JOHN CENA (*Fast X*) as Argylle’s best friend, Wyatt; Oscar® winner ARIANA DEBOSE (*West Side Story*) as their fearless field tech, Keira; Oscar® nominee RICHARD E. GRANT (*Can You Ever Forgive Me?*) as Fowler, a senior member of agent Argylle’s organization, and Grammy winning superstar DUA LIPA (*Barbie*) as Argylle’s elegant, lethal nemesis, Lagrange.

The film’s real-world characters include Emmy winner and Oscar® nominee BRYAN CRANSTON (*Breaking Bad*) as Ritter, the director of the evil spy organization known as The Division; Emmy winner and comedy icon CATHERINE O’HARA (*Schitt’s Creek*) as Elly’s mother, Ruth; SOFIA BOUTELLA (*Kingsman: The Secret Service*) as Saba Al-Badr, the mysterious “Keeper of Secrets,” and the legendary SAMUEL L. JACKSON as former CIA deputy director Alfred Solomon. Alfie is played by CHIP, the real-life cat of supermodel Claudia Vaughn (née Schiffer).

*Argylle* is directed by MATTHEW VAUGHN and is written by JASON FUCHS (*Wonder Woman*). The film is produced by MATTHEW VAUGHN p.g.a, ADAM BOHLING p.g.a. (*Kingsman* franchise), DAVID REID p.g.a. (*Kingsman* franchise) and JASON FUCHS p.g.a.. The executive producers are CLAUDIA VAUGHN, CARLOS PERES, ZYGI KAMASA and ADAM FISHBACH.

Apple Original Films presents, in association with MARV, a Cloudy production. *Argylle* is distributed by Universal Pictures and Apple Original Films.

*Argylle*’s director of photography is GEORGE RICHMOND bsc (*Kingsman: The Golden Circle, Kingsman: The Secret Service*); the costume designer is STEPHANIE COLLIE (*London Has Fallen*, *The Hitman’s Bodyguard*) and the production designers are DANIEL TAYLOR (*Tetris*, art director *Mr. Turner*) and RUSSELL DE ROZARIO (*Kick-Ass* films, *The Hitman’s Bodyguard*). The film is edited by Academy Award® winner LEE SMITH ace (*Dunkirk*, *The Dark Knight*), TOM HARRISON-READ bfe (2018’s *Tomb Raider*) and COL GOUDIE bfe (*Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*, *Tetris*).

The music is by Grammy winner LORNE BALFE (*Mission: Impossible -Dead Reckoning Part One*, *Black Widow*) and the casting is by REGINALD POERSCOUT-EDGERTON csa/cdg (*The Kingsman* franchise, *Rocketman*) and by LILLIE JEFFREY (*Tetris*). The hair and make-up Designer is MY ALEHAMMAR (*Bodyguard*, *Silent Night*); the VFX supervisor is MARTIN WATERS (*Kingsman: The Golden Circle*, *Tetris*). The music producers are Emmy and Grammy winner GILES MARTIN (*The Beatles: Get Back*, *Rocketman*) and Grammy winner STUART PRICE (*W.E.*, *X-Men: First Class*). The co-producers are IAIN MACKENZIE (UPM on *Tetris* and *The King’s Man*) and TOBY HEFFERMAN (First AD on *Dune: Part Two*, *The Batman*).

**THE BACKSTORY**

In 2020, with the world in lockdown, visionary filmmaker Matthew Vaughn—the director and producer of *The Kingsman* films, *Kick-Ass*, *Stardust* and *Layer Cake*, and the producer of *Snatch*; *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*; *Rocketman* and *Tetris*— sat down at his home outside London and decided to stage a film-appreciation class for his wife, Claudia Vaughn (née Schiffer), and their two daughters, who were around 10 and 15 years old at the time. “Because it was lockdown, it gave me license to keep screening movies for them to watch,” Vaughn says. He showed them movies such as John Hughes’ 1986 high school comedy *Ferris Bueller’s Day Off*, but it was the 1984 Robert Zemeckis comedy-adventure *Romancing the Stone*, starring Michael Douglas and Kathleen Turner, which made the biggest impression on them. “It played like gangbusters,” Vaughn says.

He then screened Alfred Hitchcock’s 1959 classic *North by Northwest* for them, in which an ordinary man (albeit one who looks like Cary Grant) gets swept up in an extraordinary, espionage-tinged adventure. His girls went crazy for it. “And I thought, ‘I want to make a movie like that for my daughters,’” Vaughn says.

As it turned out, the answer—or rather, the genesis of one—would soon land on his desk in the form of a manuscript for an unpublished spy novel by an unknown author. Elly Conway’s book, *Argylle*, was, Vaughn says, the best spy thriller he had ever read. But the structure of the novel was straightforward, focused on a young secret agent named Argylle, and Vaughn is not a straightforward filmmaker. Throughout his career, Vaughn has used source material as a cliff from which he can make daring, often breathtaking, creative and narrative leaps, and *Argylle* would be no exception. Far from a traditional adaptation, the film of *Argylle* would use the world and characters of the book as inspiration only, functioning as a springboard for an entirely new, original film.

“I’ve helped orchestrate what people have come to expect from spy thrillers, and it felt like the right time to challenge some of the clichés I’ve been guilty of upholding,” Vaughn says. “Those ‘80s films I watched with my kids combined great storytelling with pure escapism. I thought the post-COVID world would need something to make people smile and feel like they’re on an exciting thrill ride.”

Vaughn and screenwriter Jason Fuchs began developing a screenplay with a major meta-shift, in which a fictional version of the real-life author of the *Argylle* novel, Elly Conway, would become the central character in the film. Rather than being a film about a spy, *Argylle* would now be a film about a reclusive spy novelist who gets catapulted into real-world espionage when the plots of her books get a little too close to the activities of a nefarious spy organization. “My primary motivation is to craft a compelling narrative,” Vaughn says. “I don’t aim to reinvent the genre, but to provide a fresh perspective. I direct as if I were an audience member, thinking about what I would like to see or what unexpected elements I can incorporate to keep it feeling new.”

Early in the scripting process, Vaughn and Fuchs decided that the film would fuse the real world, in which Elly Conway is on the run with Aidan, and the world she created, in which Argylle, the unstoppable secret agent, holds sway. As the danger for Elly escalates, the lines between her imaginary world and the real one blur with increasing speed and frequency. As a result, the audience is catapulted into a cinematic rocket ride where convention and expectation are constantly upended. “I prefer movies that provide escapism, a combination of glamour and grit,” Vaughn says. “For me, beauty is essential. When I used to watch *Bond* movies as a kid, I felt I was on an adventure—going places I had never gone and seeing people I had never seen. It was an astonishing feeling and I have tried to recreate that type of feeling with this film.”

For Fuchs, the experience of writing a globe-trotting espionage thriller while the world was in COVID lockdown allowed him to escape, too. “I hadn’t written an original screenplay in a long time, so *Argylle* became my little passion project,” Fuchs says. “It was cathartic and allowed me to escape my apartment office and traverse the world with Argylle on a Greek island or explore Europe with Elly and Aidan.”

Fuchs and Vaughn collaborated closely, and at all hours, to make sure that every aspect of the script was as sharp, unexpected, witty and thrilling as possible. “What I admire about Matthew’s approach to development is his secure and confident style,” Fuchs says. “From the beginning, it was clear that the elements that excited me about the story were the same things that excited him. Our notes and the development process flowed organically. Matthew’s fearlessness as a storyteller encouraged me to take bolder and unconventional paths, even if it pushed me out of my comfort zone.”

Out of the comfort zone is exactly where Vaughn thrives, and where he loves to transport audiences. “The cinema remains one of the last places where we, as a society, can connect on a deeply human level,” Vaughn says. “It’s a place where we can come together and experience the rollercoaster of emotions, the highs and lows, as a collective. This film, in particular, was made for the big screen. It’s grand and filled with unexpected moments you won’t see coming. When you’re in a theater, surrounded by fellow audience members, and those moments hit, the reactions create an unforgettable experience. It’s more fun, more immersive. It is pure escapism, something we all need in a world that is not always sunny. A little ray of sunshine, even in a dark room, is a good idea.”

**THE CHARACTERS**

**Elly Conway**

**Bryce Dallas Howard**

Novelist by day, cat mom by night, Elly Conway lives a quiet life with an unhealthy obsession to her written characters. Played by Bryce Dallas Howard, Elly is a recluse who lives in a world of her own making, until an agent named Aidan (Oscar® winner Sam Rockwell) approaches her on a train, informs her that she is the target of a nefarious spy organization known as The Division, and Elly is thrust into a dangerous, glamorous, global race against the clock to unlock a mystery trapped inside her own head and save her own life.

“The Division is, in essence, a covert spy organization, but its operations go well beyond what one would expect from a standard intelligence agency like the CIA,” director Matthew Vaughn says. “The Division specializes in black ops, conducting missions that are often hidden from public knowledge, and, if uncovered, the government would deny any involvement. They operate in a manner that defies expectations, which becomes a crucial point of intrigue in the story. When Elly’s book exposes their unconventional actions, it threatens to expose them, setting off a chain of events that drives the plot as the CIA becomes aware of their activities.”

Neither Howard nor Rockwell are the first stars who come to mind when you hear the words “spy thriller” and that was exactly what Vaughn intended. “I wanted to cast people you’re not going to expect in these roles,” Vaughn says. “It feels fresh after you’ve seen the same thing. When people saw Colin Firth beat people up in a pub in *Kingsman: The Secret Service*, they were delighted. But off we went.”

Although Vaughn had made a series of spy thrillers with the two *Kingsman* movies and their prequel, *The King’s Man*, he was drawn to the chance to embrace a new world of spies and double-crosses, and a completely new tone. “There’s a fantasy world of spies that I’ve been portraying in many movies for years,” says Vaughn. “The joke here is that this is the real world, and Aidan and Elly are normal, accessible people.”

Vaughn had worked with Howard once before, when she played the mother of Elton John in *Rocketman*, which Vaughn produced. But their paths had first crossed years before, when he was looking for someone to play the living embodiment of a star in his family-friendly fantasy, *Stardust*. “Bryce was the first person to ever audition for *Stardust*,” Vaughn says. “She did this phenomenal audition, but then she got cast in *Spider-Man 3*. So, from her *Stardust* audition, I knew she could play Elly. She could play sweet, charming, freaked out. And her mother is an author, which gave it a real form of veracity. She was just Elly Conway.”

Howard was immediately wowed by the screenplay. “This is a spy thriller like you’ve never seen before, and I couldn’t believe it when I was reading it,” Howard says. “I thought, ‘I think I can play this character.’ And then I thought, ‘Wait, I think I *am* this character.’ As a 40-year-old woman, it’s not every day you get a part like this sent your way. It feels like a small miracle, so empowering and satisfying and fun. It is the best script I have ever read and the best part I have ever gotten to play.”

The opportunity to work with Matthew Vaughn was irresistible. “Matthew makes choices that aren’t to appease some studio exec or agency,” Howard says. “His choices are instinctual, those of a pure creative, and that is so rare. Matthew’s films simply are not what typically gets made in Hollywood.”

Vaughn’s films are also in a class by themselves in the high-style and wit of their action sequences. “When you sign on to a Matthew Vaughn film you know there’s going to be a lot of action,” Howard says. “You also know it is going to be conceived in a way that is incredibly fresh. In this film, the action sequences were a hybrid between dance and martial arts.” At every level, says Howard’s co-star Sam Rockwell, Howard was more than up to the task. “No one works harder than Bryce; no one shows up earlier than Bryce,” Rockwell says. “Her work ethic is unmatched.”

For Elly Conway’s signature hair and make-up look, *Aryglle*’s hair and makeup designer My Alehammar (*Bodyguard*, *Silent Night*) and her team emphasized Howard’s stunning red hair, focusing on a natural, understated aesthetic that enhances her features, emanating a radiant, wholesome glow.

**Aidan**

**Sam Rockwell**

In every way that Elly Conway’s imaginary secret agent, Argylle, is smooth and confident, real-life secret agent Aidan, played by Oscar® winner Sam Rockwell, is a bit rough around the edges. “Elly and Aidan meet on a train, where he looks like an unlikely passenger to be holding a first-class ticket,” director Matthew Vaughn says. “Elly finds herself face-to-face with Aidan, who is actually in disguise, sporting long hair and an impressive beard—one that Sam actually grew for two years. The striking contrast between Aidan and Henry Cavill’s Argylle is unmistakable. Aidan seems like he hasn’t done laundry or glimpsed at himself in a mirror for ages. Reluctantly, Elly agrees to embark on an adventure with this guy that one would not typically choose to accompany.”

As with his decision to cast Bryce Dallas Howard as Elly Conway, Vaughn wanted to cast Aidan with an actor who would subvert our collective notions about what a spy is supposed to look like. “You wouldn’t immediately peg Sam Rockwell as a spy, and that’s precisely the essence of a spy,” Vaughn says. “In films like *Kingsman* or *Bond*, spies are typically impeccably dressed, but in our movie, Sam’s character deliberately goes against that norm. He is the kind of spy who is meant to blend in seamlessly by not standing out. Ian Fleming would never have cast Sam Rockwell as a spy, but John le Carré might have.”

For his part, Rockwell had long been an admirer of Vaughn’s work. “Matthew is into classic themes,” Rockwell says, “*Pygmalion*, *Cinderella*—he’s telling those sorts of stories, but he’s doing it with this wonderful dark humor.”

The actor brought his distinct and disarming energy to the role of Aidan. “Sam is quite spontaneous; he loves improv and if you give him a few seconds he’ll start dancing, whether it’s on-cue or not,” Vaughn says.

Rockwell was happy to dive into Aidan’s world head-first. “I was very excited by the first read of the script,” Rockwell says. “We added a kind of Han Solo humor to Aidan. He is an amalgam of anti-heroes I have watched over the years, including Bill Murray, Jack Nicholson, Richard Pryor and even Mercutio. He pretends to be a bit of a cad, but he’s just *posing* as Mercutio. He is really Romeo at heart.”

All that analysis came in handy on set and forged a bond between Rockwell and Vaughn. “We connected as nerdy cinephiles, trading references back and forth,” Rockwell says. “Then, on set, Matthew would say, ‘More Bill Murray,’ or ‘More Jack Nicholson,’ which was this shorthand from the movies we’d been talking about.” Rockwell also appreciated Vaughn’s willingness to think about the characters, and the casting of those characters, in unconventional ways. “Matthew’s casting is so punk rock,” Rockwell says. “He’s willing to take a chance, to go outside the box—which is probably why I was there.”

Bryce Dallas Howard loved watching Vaughn and Rockwell in conversation. “Sam’s magic,” Howard says. “Sam is so present and so spontaneous. The superpower was seeing Sam and Matthew engage, to push things, to go to places that feel a bit dangerous. Sam is somehow both vulnerable and bold at the same time.”

The film’s outré action sequences took a bit of a toll on Rockwell’s body and further elevated his admiration for the work of stunt performers. “Those women and men are extraordinary badasses,” Rockwell says. “I clipped my leg in one of the scenes, just a stupid little thing, but it hurt for days. I was complaining about it to one of the stunt doubles, and he was like, ‘Yeah, I once drowned filming *Game of Thrones*.’ He was dead for three minutes. I stopped complaining after that.”

*Aryglle*’s hair and makeup designer My Alehammar and her team created multiple looks for Aidan as the film progresses. For Aidan’s initial undercover look, his appearance is deliberately disheveled—long hair and a wild beard. This transformation sets the stage for the surprising turn of events that follows. For his “hero” look, Aidan transitions back to his original self. Seamless hair transformations were essential between scenes, involving bleaching Rockwell’s hair in most instances. To achieve this, a special mousse was used to adapt his hair color for the hero look and the subsequent significant reveal. Finally, for what the team referred to as Aidan’s “kickass” look, Aidan’s hair design was inspired by Dolph Lundgren’s iconic flattop as Ivan Drago in 1985’s *Rocky IV*, reflecting a bold, powerful demeanor.

**Ritter**

**Bryan Cranston**

The leader of a sinister rogue spy organization known as The Division, Ritter, played by Emmy winner and Oscar® nominee Bryan Cranston, is desperate to keep his secrets hidden. Devious and dangerous, Ritter wants to know just what it is that Elly Conway knows and how she knows it—even if she doesn’t. “I’ve been a huge fan of Cranston’s ever since I first saw him in *Seinfeld* and *Malcolm in the Middle*,” director Matthew Vaughn says. “Then, *Breaking Bad* came along, and I could not believe it was the same guy. Bryan is a rare talent who can master drama like no other and tackle comedy with the same finesse. There is no genre or character he could not handle.”

Cranston was delighted for the opportunity to work with Vaughn. “When you are first starting out as an actor you say ‘yes’ to everything because you need the job,” Cranston says. “If you are fortunate, you get to a place where you can choose. And, if you do get to that place, you look for projects helmed by people with vision. Matthew has vision. And it’s comforting when your director has that level of confidence that Matthew possesses.”

Cranston was equally captivated by Fuchs’ screenplay. “Matthew had incredible confidence in Jason Fuchs’ work, and when I read the script, I was blown away by the audacity of the plot, but I was also thoroughly entertained,” Cranston says. “On set whenever anyone questioned a line or description in the script, Matthew would yell out, ‘Fuchs!’ The similarity to a ubiquitous expletive made me laugh every time!”

Cranston contributed a personal element to the script in the scene where Ritter is introduced, in memorable fashion, talking about his beloved shotgun, Clementine. “I remembered the stories of my grandfather having this shotgun that was a family heirloom. It was old and probably would implode if fired,” says Cranston. “But I threw out the idea that Ritter named his shotgun after his mother, Clementine. It is our version of Rosebud, an homage, if you will. The shotgun is particularly important to him – and it worked!”

**Ruth**

**Catherine O’Hara**

Elly Conway’s long-suffering mother and de facto book editor, Ruth, played by Emmy winner and comedy icon Catherine O’Hara, is proud of her daughter’s success, but worries about Elly’s obsessive devotion to her fictional world. “Ruth is Elly’s loving mother,” O’Hara says. “She’s also very controlling, rigidly guiding her daughter’s life, prodding her to just stick close to home and work on her spy novels.”

Director Matthew Vaughn says that O’Hara was a dream casting choice. “I loved Catherine O’Hara in *Home Alone*, and being an ‘80s boy, I thought it would be a nod to all the movie influences of this film,” Vaughn says. “She is not only very funny but also an incredibly talented actor. For this film, I needed actors who could seamlessly switch between humor and seriousness within the same take, and not many can do that or handle the multi-tonal shifts that occur even within a single scene. Catherine was exceptional in this regard, and she trusted the process, making her a perfect fit for the role.”

O’Hara loved how the film’s tone and the audience’s expectations of the characters keep shifting and evolving through the screenplay. “Every twenty pages another anvil drops,” O’Hara says. “It’s really exciting, and I couldn’t stop reading.” And she was energized by the opportunity to work with Vaughn. “Matthew Vaughn’s movies are thrilling, inventive and filled with beautifully executed action set pieces,” O’Hara says. “It was really fun to watch Matthew himself in action, especially while directing his amazing stunt men and women.”

**Argylle**

**Henry Cavill**

Handsome, charming, with a flattop haircut, Argylle is, as imagined by Elly Conway in her novels, a world-class spy who will stop at nothing to bring justice to those who deserve it. He is the epitome of espionage cool and director Matthew Vaughn needed to cast an actor who would be convincingly chivalrous, noble, larger-than-life and able to deliver both the dramatic and action demands of the role.

There was only one choice: Henry Cavill, reteaming with Vaughn for the first time since *Stardust*, in which Cavill played the role of Humphrey. “I felt Henry could give me all the classic spy stuff,” says Vaughn. “He can give me a wink; he can do all the things I want from a spy.” And he looks good in a flattop haircut. “Agent Argylle’s appearance is a bold, instantly iconic throwback to the ‘80s,” Vaughn says. “I have had an enduring obsession with the styles of that era, including the likes of Dolph Lundgren as Ivan Drago in *Rocky IV*, and the era’s signature flattops. That’s why we decided to give Argylle one. Henry’s portrayal is great. I needed someone who could exude the essence of a James Bond-type character, but with a twist. Whoever could play James Bond, I thought, ‘I’m going to give him a flattop and a Nehru jacket.’ It is quite challenging to pull off that look but Henry managed to do it seamlessly. Henry could make a fabulous Bond as well, and that’s why we cast him.”

Cavill’s co-stars were equally impressed. “Henry has everything you want from a leading man,” says John Cena, who plays Argylle’s wingman, Wyatt. “Poise, charisma, professionalism. The man is just a flat-out stud.” And, as it turns out, a flat-*top* stud as well.

Vaughn sold Cavill on the haircut before Cavill even read the film’s script. “Matthew said, ‘Look, you’re going to have a flattop. I know it sounds crazy, and maybe it is, but I promise you it’ll work. Or maybe it won’t. But have fun with it anyway and trust me,’” Cavill says. “So, I did. Matthew is a great storyteller. He knows what he wants and his eye for detail is extraordinary. He and I have a great shorthand; we’ve known each other for years and he always brings a sense of unique fun to anything he’s working on. He’s a good, straightforward communicator, and as an actor, that’s what I need. At the end of the day, it’s about trusting your director and leader, and Matthew is someone you can trust.”

Once Cavill read the film’s script, he realized that the story was different from anything he’d read before. “It was unique in its own space,” Cavill says. “It was refreshing to see something new, bold and willing to take risks. There is a tendency these days for a good product to come out and then, for the next ten years, everything is just like that product, but not quite. Matthew’s projects are never like that. *Argylle* is about as far from generic as you can get.”

Audiences will be introduced to Cavill’s agent Argylle in an opening scene confrontation between Argylle and his elusive nemesis, Lagrange (Dua Lipa), that evolves into a tour-de-force (and heavily armed) dance sequence. “The choice to open the film with Henry Cavill and Dua Lipa performing the Whirly Bird dance stems from my somewhat mischievous mind,” Vaughn says. “I wanted to start with a memorable dance sequence that we could revisit later in the film. I don’t have a background in choreography, but I immersed myself in ‘70s disco films, where I discovered that dance move. It wasn’t known as the Whirly Bird; we coined that name. I found it exciting because almost everyone attempted to dissuade me from including it. But that kind of reaction often signals that I am introducing something unique and unprecedented. In conventional films, the characters might have just slow danced, leaving the scene forgotten. But for me, it is about challenging norms. The Whirly Bird adds an unexpected flavor to the film. It is a choice that is meant to be remembered.”

**Lagrange**

**Dua Lipa**

Elegant, beguiling, lethal, and Argylle’s nemesis, Lagrange, played by Grammy winning superstar Dua Lipa, is an international terrorist, working for the highest bidder. Lipa officially made her film debut in *Barbie* in the summer of 2023, but director Matthew Vaughn cast her and filmed her in *Argylle* first, making *Argylle* technically her screen debut. “I was starting to put out feelers that I wanted to do a film at some point, and Matthew got in touch,” Lipa says. “I was excited but nervous because I had never done anything like this before.”

Lipa was exactly what the role needed and what Vaughn had been hoping to find for the role of the sexy, sinister Lagrange. “I needed to cast someone who could hold her own opposite Henry Cavill and embody the world of the classic spy,” Vaughn says. “The role needed someone instantly recognizable and glamorous. My kids introduced me to Dua Lipa through her music and then I saw her on a chat show, wearing a beautiful Valentino dress that not many could pull off. In the wrong hands, it could have looked like a Christmas tree decoration, but she looked glamorous and exactly like what we were looking for in the role. As soon as she showed up on set, she proved to be a true professional, a pleasure to work with, punctual and dedicated. She did a fantastic job.”

Lipa loved playing Lagrange. “I feel like she’s definitely my alter-ego,” Lipa says. “I’m going to take her with me after this everywhere I go.” And she was thrilled to be working with Vaughn on such a fresh, innovative take on the spy-thriller genre. “What I love about Matthew is he’s always out there pushing boundaries,” Lipa says. “There is this wonderful contrast to the movie. There are incredible stunts and fight scenes, but there is also this disco element that has been intertwined. And I’m a sucker for juxtaposition.”

**Wyatt**

**John Cena**

Serving as the self-described ‘muscle,’ Wyatt, played by John Cena, is the best-friend and main accomplice to agent Argylle. “John reached out to me expressing his interest in any role that might be right for him in my films,” director Matthew Vaughn says. “You often hear that in Hollywood, but with John, it was genuine. I offered him a small part, just a two-week commitment, and he enthusiastically said yes. He is a lovely person and one of the most impressive guys I have ever met. His focus, stemming from his background as an athlete, is remarkable. He has such a powerful desire to excel and he is incredibly kind to everyone. He was a welcome addition to the film.”

Cena says that Vaughn did not have to wait long to get a yes from him. “He was selling to someone who was already buying,” Cena says. “I can’t describe how much I love the *Kingsman* franchise. If Matthew just wanted me to stand in the background of this movie, I would have done it. Matthew's ability to create a universe from the ground up is incredibly rare. He is able to conjure IP [intellectual property] from thin air.”

*Argylle*, Cena predicts, is going to blow people’s minds. “I don't think audiences are only looking for bigger and brasher,” Cena says. “I think they also need purpose, narrative and characters to invest in, and *Argylle* has this stuff in spades.”

**Alfred Solomon**

**Samuel L. Jackson**

The legendary Samuel L. Jackson plays the pivotal role of Alfred Solomon, the former deputy director of the CIA, now living in exile, shunned from the spy world. “Alfred is kind of the master behind the screen,” Samuel L. Jackson says. “He knows where a lot of the skeletons are buried, so he has access to a lot of information—or he has ways of getting information.” Director Matthew Vaughn immediately knew that Jackson was the ideal actor for the role. “Sam and I have a running joke that he’s un-directable—he’s so incredibly talented that he doesn’t need any direction,” director Matthew Vaughn says. “I have a fantastic working relationship with Sam. I had the time of my life working with him on the first Kingsman, and I have wanted to collaborate with him again ever since. Although his role in this film might not be long enough for my liking, I will always consider him at the top of the list for any role he is right for in my movies.”

For Jackson, working with Vaughn is always an invigorating and enjoyable experience. “Matthew trusts me and allows me to present my ideas for the character to him—how the character looks, dresses, sounds,” Jackson says. “He trusts my instincts for creating a character that is going to work inside of the kind of story he’s going to tell. Working on this film for me was a bit like doing a play because I do a lot of studying before I ever get to set. Matthew and I talk before we go to work, so that he knows what I am about to do. He pays meticulous attention to every detail, and he is a technical genius, but one of his greatest strengths as a filmmaker is that he trusts his actors.”

**Keira**

**Ariana DeBose**

Academy Award® winner Ariana DeBose plays Keira in Elly Conway’s imaginary world of the *Argylle* novels, a field tech who often teams up with agent Argylle and Wyatt—usually to bail them out of trouble. Vaughn cast DeBose prior to her Oscar® win for *West Side Story*.

“When I cast Ariana, she was still relatively unknown,” Vaughn says. “When I met with her, she blew me away, and I had a feeling she was going to become a sensation. She was perfect for the role. In fact, her newfound fame following *West Side Story* created some editing challenges because I originally intended for the role to be played by an unfamiliar face. People started recognizing her, saying, ‘It’s Ariana DeBose!’ This necessitated re-editing to maintain surprise elements in the story. It was both frustrating and fortunate, as we now have another Oscar®-winning, brilliant actor in our film. And she is exceptional in this role.”

DeBose was elated to be working on a Matthew Vaughn film. “With him, I always go back to elegance,” DeBose says. “You know how you always knew when you were watching something from Bob Fosse? I feel that way about Matthew: You always know when you are watching a Matthew Vaughn film.” And sharing the screen with this particular cast exceed all her expectations. “It’s one of those pinch-me moments,” DeBose says. “I’m honored to be even a small part of this universe.”

**Saba Al-Badr- Sofia Boutella**

**Fowler- Richard E. Grant**

Rounding out the extraordinary cast of *Argylle* are two enigmatic and critical figures. In the world of Elly Conway’s novels, Fowler, played by Oscar® nominee Richard E. Grant, is a senior member of agent Argylle’s spy organization based in Washington D.C.

In the real world of Elly’s and Aidan’s race around the globe to protect Elly from The Division, Saba Al-Badr, played by Sofia Boutella, is the mysterious “Keeper of Secrets,” who resides in a fortress-like palace.

**Alfie**

**Chip**

Alfie is Elly Conway’s cat and her closest friend. She never leaves home without him, so when Aidan drags Elly on a life-or-death race around the globe— with Elly’s future and the future of the world hanging in the balance—Alfie is also hanging on Elly’s back, in a feline-couture backpack with a domed viewing window.

But Alfie was not always quite so prominent in the film. “In the first draft of the script, Alfie the cat made just one appearance, and Elly embarked on her adventure, leaving the cat behind,” director Matthew Vaughn says. “I realized we needed the cat to join her to add some conflict and tension to drive the drama. I drew inspiration from my kids, who had me watch a Taylor Swift documentary featuring Taylor wearing a cat pack. I made a mental note to use it in the future. Then, to my surprise, my wife brought home kittens, one of whom we named Chip. As I’m not particularly a cat person, it took some time for me to adjust.”

That feline addition to the Vaughn household would prove fortuitous, for both Vaughn and for Chip. “On the first day of filming *Argylle*, the professional acting cat we hired turned out to be expensive and utterly uncooperative,” Vaughn says. “So, I went to my daughter’s room, picked up Chip, and declared that he would join me for the next three months of work. Driving to the set with a cat in the car was an unusual experience, and Chip lived in my trailer during filming. Over time, he won me over, and his performance in the film was excellent. He became the perfect source of contention between the characters, and, surprisingly, he was charming, fun and scene-stealing.”

Chip, a classic nepo baby, was not as popular with some of his co-stars, however.

“This fucking cat has been a nightmare,” jokes Sam Rockwell. “Always stepping in my light, cutting in the middle of scenes to ask for a smoothie, shutting himself up in his trailer. If there is a sequel it is going in my contract: Chip is not allowed to look me in the eye.”

**THE STUNTS**

Whether it is the single-shot Nicolas Cage assault sequence in *Kick-Ass* or the iconic moment in *Kingsman: The Secret Service* where Colin Firth locks the doors of a local pub and teaches some local miscreants that ‘manners maketh man,’ the action sequences in Matthew Vaughn’s films are consistently audacious, astounding and unlike anything seen on screen before. With *Argylle*, Vaughn exceeds all his earlier achievements, with an elevated, balletic violence that marries music and mayhem, hilarity and high style.

The film’s action sequences are a tribute to the legendary stunt coordinator BRADLEY JAMES ALLAN, who had served as supervising stunt coordinator on all of Vaughn’s film beginning with *Kick-Ass*, and who expanded his role to second-unit director on the *Kingsman* films. Allan, 48, had begun designing the stunt sequences for *Argylle* when he died from illness in August 2021. “Brad was my true partner-in-crime,” says Vaughn. “He had just become part of my company, MARV. We needed to train more young people as second-unit directors, so I had told Brad, ‘Come on board and we’ll start giving sequences to younger directors and we’ll oversee it.”

ROY TAYLOR *(Barbie*, *Solo: A Star Wars Story*), who had worked on Vaughn’s *Kick-Ass* and *Kingsman: The Secret Service*, stepped in as stunt coordinator on *Argylle*. Second-unit director DAMIEN WALTERS (*Kingsman* franchise, *Jurassic World Dominion*) and fight coordinator GUILLERMO GRISPO (*Kingsman* franchise, *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings*), both of whom had worked closely with Brad Allan, completed the action sequences that Allan had started before his death, and helped create the rest of film’s stunt design.

For Vaughn, it was critical that the sequences Allan had worked on were realized. “I said, ‘This is going to be the last action choreographed by Brad Allan, and we have to make him proud,’” Vaughn says. “Brad was so good at not giving up. He was so passionate about the action we were doing. He was a genius. I miss him.”

Among the film’s most spectacular stunt sequences are:

**Amtrack Train Fight**

* In this scene, Aidan (Sam Rockwell) meets Elly Conway (Bryce Dallas Howard) on a train and alerts her that she is being hunted by agents from The Division. She does not believe him, of course, until she and Aidan come under attack. As Aidan fights them off, Elly begins to hallucinate that her fictional spy hero, Argylle (Henry Cavill), is fighting the battle instead of Aidan. The scene flashes between the real world and Elly’s imaginary one.
* Rockwell and Cavill learned matching choreography for the pivotal scene set in the confined train space, while the stunt team endured physical hits and executed somersaults, facing logistical challenges because of the limited space for stunts and cameras. “The first sequence we shot was the train,” Vaughn says. “I was worried about shooting an action sequence on a train, but the confinement makes it easier, in a way, because you have less choice.”
* The sequence required meticulous planning and fight choreography, and it is critical to establishing the state of Elly’s mind as her two worlds collide for the first time. “For me, action is about plot and story and character, and there’s more to it than just people smacking the crap out of each other,” Vaughn says. “I find straight fights boring. If I am not seeing action done in a new way, or I do not understand the stakes, I’m not interested.”
* For Howard, it was a thrill to watch. “Everyone had been rehearsing for months and months,” Howard says. “It was really fun for me because I got to see Henry Cavill do it, and then Sam do it, and it felt like they were all performing for me, which is quite wonderful. But it is really precise, because Henry and Sam need to do all the same movements at the same pace.”
* Rockwell was dazzled by the skill of the stunt team. “I had done a little boxing, and a little dancing, but they were very patient with me,” Rockwell says. “I worked really hard on the train fight, but when we got to set, and you watch these people move, it is on another level. It is a distinctive style; it’s very heightened and beautiful to look at. There’s a very Jackie Chan vibe to it.”

**Bakunin Apartment Safe House Fight**

* This scene features a single continuous shot through the apartment’s corridors, with special effects for wall explosions, and Sam Rockwell and Henry Cavill propelled backward via a wire in the exact same body position so that the perfect blink transition could be achieved.

**Murder Ballet Sequence**

* This sequence blended romantic dance movements with tactical combat, seamlessly choreographed in-sync with music. “I said to Brad Allan, ‘I want to do a love dance where they’re using smoke and the smoke becomes hearts, and Brad said, ‘Yeah, yeah, I get it,’” Vaughn says. “And he goes off and comes back with it. We were an unbelievable yin and yang. I could have these crazy action ideas and he would never even blink.”

**Oil-Skating Sequence**

* Brad Allan crafted instantly legendary action scenes for *Argylle*, including a lethal oil-skating scene. The team’s innovative approach synchronized the graceful dance-like action with the illusion of gliding on oil.
* Vaughn and his team achieved this by actually pouring loads of oil onto the floor.
* During the oil-skating sequences, the stunt team faced challenges maneuvering on the oil-covered surface. The scene required skilled ice skaters who could safely navigate the oil-slicked floor.

**THE PRODUCTION DESIGN**

From conception, the look and style of director Matthew Vaughn’s *Argylle* was as integral and essential as the film’s characters and plot.“I firmly believe in branding, and when it came to the movie, I looked into what Argylle signified,” Vaughn says. “It was an old word referring to a gravy boat, which didn’t quite fit what we wanted to convey. So, we decided to redefine and modernize the Argylle brand. We wanted it to be cool, pop-y and the first thing that comes to mind when you see the argyle pattern anywhere in the world. We have integrated this pattern throughout the film, creating a vibrant, bold and colorful visual identity for *Argylle*. In my view, *Kingsman* is a quieter, more elegant brand, while *Argylle* is exuberant and daring. These two universes balance each other out. We now have these two distinct brands, each with its own character and appeal. Perhaps one day they will intersect, but for now, they remain distinct and far apart.”

* Throughout the production of *Argylle*, production designers Daniel Taylor and Russell De Rozario employed a dynamic collaboration. They worked together on certain aspects, capitalizing on each other’s strengths, and also independently tackled specific tasks.
* To create the unique settings for *Argylle*, Taylor and Rozario’s teams blended real-world and digitally created environments. This process involved scanning real locations, designing digital sets and seamlessly merging them for filming.
* The production design team used Lidar scanning and digital set integration to seamlessly blend the film’s physical sets with digital environments. This technology allowed Vaughn to visualize how the sets would fit into the broader world of the film.
* When designing sets, Taylor and Rozario collaborated with various departments, including costume, lighting, camera, computer graphics and location teams to ensure consistency and coherence in the film’s visual style.
* *Argylle* includes scenes set in various countries and continents, including Greece, Colorado, London, France, Hong Kong and the Arabian Peninsula.
* The color palette and design choices for each set were influenced by the real-world characteristics of the respective locations and the specific needs of the scenes.
* Two of the most challenging sets for Taylor’s team were the headquarters of The Division—an environment with no direct real-world reference—and the server room, featuring a striking, Kubrickian aesthetic with intense blue lighting.
* The two most challenging sets for Rozario’s team were the nightclub set and the Middle Eastern courtyard set, both of which required meticulous attention to detail.
* MinaLima, a graphics company renowned for its work on the *Harry Potter* films, collaborated with the production design team to design the interior of Elly Conway’s bookstore. The bookstore prominently features the Argylle diamond pattern on myriad items.
* The character Alfred Solomon, played by Samuel L. Jackson, has a specific man-cave desk made from varnished wine boxes. Jackson was so pleased with the desk that the production design team also created a bar using the same method.

**THE COSTUME DESIGN**

* Costume designer Stephanie Collie had collaborated with director Matthew Vaughn on earlier projects, including 2021’s *Silent Night* and 2004’s *Layer Cake,* and had also previously worked with cast members Sam Rockwell, Bryan Cranston and Samuel L. Jackson, all of which informed the costume-design process.
* Vaughn is meticulous about costume details, even down to precise measurements, ensuring that suits fit the actors perfectly. The pandemic presented challenges for costume sourcing, as items became scarce because of supply-chain disruptions. In some cases, costumes had to be custom-made.
* Executive producer Claudia Vaughn contributed her extensive knowledge of fashion and fashion contacts to assist with costumes, particularly the dresses in the film. Dua Lipa’s Lagrange Versace dress in the film’s iconic opening scene was developed by Collie, Claudia Vaughn and Lipa’s stylist LORENZO POSOCCO. “Lagrange has this ‘80s, Debbie Harry look going for her, in this golden Versace dress, which is glamorous, sophisticated but very fun and cool,” says Dua Lipa. Versace also created custom dresses for Elly Conway, portrayed by Bryce Dallas Howard, and in some cases even manufactured the fabric themselves to meet the film’s requirements.
* The costume department on a film of this size can be quite extensive, with around thirty people involved in various roles, from stand-bys to costume-aging specialists.
* During the initial stages of the film’s production, Collie and her team collaborated closely with the production design team, especially concerning the colors of the sets, to ensure that the costumes complemented the set design.
* When designing costumes for characters like swat teams and military personnel, Collie aimed to strike a balance between realism and a unique, stylized look. While she wanted the costumes to appear grounded in reality, there was also room for creativity within these constraints.

**Elly Conway (Bryce Dallas Howard)**

* Elly Conway’s costumes aimed to reflect her transition from an ordinary, small-town life to a more action-oriented role, with an emphasis on practicality for action sequences.

**Aidan (Sam Rockwell)**

* Aidan wears a style of leather jacket designed to make him stand out, and he sports the jacket for most of the film.

**Argylle (Henry Cavill)**

* Argylle required a distinctive and instantly recognizable look, which was achieved through a specially tailored Nehru jacket.

**Alfred Solomon (Samuel L. Jackson)**

* As Alfred Solomon, Samuel L. Jackson, known for his love of clothes and impressive style, wears suits with slight variations, including double-breasted, Nehru and single-breasted styles.

**Wyatt (John Cena), Keira (Ariana DeBose) and Lagrange (Dua Lipa)**

* Like Argylle himself, Wyatt, Keira and Lagrange exist within the world of Elly Conway’s novels, so they wear slightly heightened outfits with bright colors and eye-catching designs to make them stand out.

**THE MUSIC**

Music in the films of Matthew Vaughn is as important and integral as plot, character and design. From the score to the soundtrack, every musical element serves the storytelling, narratively and emotionally. Never has this been truer than it is for the exuberant, daring and thrilling musical landscape of *Argylle*.“To capture a ‘feel good’ feeling for this film, I turned to the most feel-good music I could think of, which, for me, is disco,” Vaughn says. “It’s the kind of music that, whenever it’s played, is almost impossible not to make you smile and tap your feet. We have incorporated a range of disco tracks into the film, including classics and even an original disco piece that truly captures the essence of the era.”

With *Argylle*, Vaughn was keen to craft a screen romance that fizzed with banter and chemistry, redolent of those movies he had watched with his wife and daughters during lockdown. As Elly Conway and Aidan go on the run, they find themselves slowly drawn together, in spite of all the danger. “It is a love story deep down,” Vaughn says. “It’s a weird one, but it is one.”

And as their relationship deepens, one song in particular becomes increasingly important to them and their story. “We needed a love song that we would play three times, and the meaning would change each time,” Vaughn says. Vaughn tried multiple tracks, but in the end the song he went with is a little piece of music history all by itself. At the heart of *Argylle*’s soundtrack and score is the just released new, and final, song from The Beatles, “Now and Then.” At the time Vaughn heard it, it was unreleased. *Argylle* will mark its cinematic debut, and the song’s very existence is something of a miracle.

Giles Martin, the son of famed Beatles producer George Martin, had approached Vaughn about using a Beatles track in the film. Vaughn, a devoted Beatlemaniac, had considered it, but there were obstacles that prevented it. “I laughed and told Giles, ‘A) we can’t afford it, B) we can’t afford it and C) we can’t afford it,’” Vaughn says. “And Giles said, ‘How about D)? There’s a new Beatles track that might just work.’”

“Now and Then” is one of multiple songs John Lennon recorded rough demos for back in 1978, but never completed. Years after his death in 1980, Lennon’s widow, Yoko Ono, handed Lennon’s former songwriting partner, Paul McCartney, a tape containing the songs. The tape was marked, ‘For Paul.’ Of the four songs on it, one—“Grow Old with Me”—had already been released. Two of the songs—“Free as a Bird” and “Real Love”—were worked on by the surviving Beatles and were included on the landmark release of *The Beatles: Anthology*.

The last remaining unreleased song, “Now and Then,” was earmarked for the Beatles treatment, but work on it had been abandoned. But then, Giles Martin and his production team—using the same state-of-the-art technology that Oscar® winning filmmaker Peter Jackson had used to turn the *Get Back* sessions into 2021’s *The Beatles: Get Back*, one of the most startling music documentary series of all time—realized that there was a chance to remove tape hiss and the sound of electrical current from “Now and Then.” And with the involvement of surviving Beatles McCartney and Ringo Starr, they could turn it into a fully-fledged band number, anchored by Lennon’s plaintive, emotional vocal.

When Martin played the finished number for Vaughn, he was blown away. “We put it on the film as a test, and without having to change a single edit it fit everything,” Vaughn says. “It was as if Lennon had watched the movie and written the song for us. It’s got lyrics that encompass the central relationship.”

Vaughn knew that he had to have it for the movie, even going as far as to have the film’s composer, Lorne Balfe, incorporate its melody into his score. “It plays so well with an orchestra,” says Vaughn, who got to meet one of his heroes thanks to the song. “I was incredibly starstruck when I met Paul McCartney to talk about it,” Vaughn says. “And when we were mixing the film, when Aidan and Elly are dancing, I said, ‘drop out the orchestra and give me Lennon and McCartney,’ and I thought, ‘Wow, I am playing around with two of the greatest songwriters of all time. It is a real honor.”

In the film, the song’s classic, timeless melody serves as a narrative trigger for Elly Conway, offering a vivid and poignant connection to her past. “‘Now and Then’ plays for 10 minutes in the film; that’s how good it is,” Vaughn says. “Working with The Beatles on their last-ever song is something I would have considered a wild dream in my life, but it has now become a surreal reality in my journey as a director.”

In addition, two new songs were also written for *Argylle*. Vaughn was struggling to find a song that would fit on the action sequence in Bakunin’s apartment. He needed to continue the ‘feel good’ disco vibe that Sylvester’s track, ‘Do You Wanna Funk?’ had done so well in the train sequence, but nothing he tried to use on the sequence was really working. Vaughn decided to get a team together and write the song themselves. The result was “Electric Energy.” The next decision was to bring in the right voices for the new track, which Vaughn quickly found in Ariana DeBose and BOY GEORGE.

With the success of the first song, Vaughn and his team decided to write another. This new track, “Get Up and Start Again,” would also be sung by Ariana DeBose and would be played over the film’s end credits as a wink to the James Bond themes.

Additional details about the film’s score and soundtrack include:

* In the world of espionage and high-stakes intrigue, music often takes a backseat to the action, but *Argylle* defies convention. While Vaughn’s films are known for incorporating modern pop songs to drive the narrative, *Argylle* takes it a step further. “We’ve given well-known songs a fresh spin and introduced entirely new ones,” says composer Lorne Balfe, renowned for his work in blockbusters such as *Mission: Impossible—Dead Reckoning Part One* and *Top Gun: Maverick*. “The goal was to seamlessly blend the soundtrack with the score, ensuring that transitions between disco tracks, orchestral compositions and iconic songs would be fluid and almost imperceptible to the audience. We discovered old recordings of disco’s songs and worked with GARY BARLOW, Stuart Price and Boy George to bring them back to life and found ways to embody the themes from the score throughout. The studio was a crucible of creativity!”
* *Argylle* stands out from typical spy films by focusing on emotional depth rather than genre clichés. “We’ve tried to make sure that it’s not a usual pastiche or nod to the spy genre,” Balfe says. “Instead, we focused on the emotional depth of the characters and their backstories; the score is really a musical representation of their characters.”
* *Argylle*’s score takes a bold leap into the vibrant world of disco, infusing the soundtrack with the infectious energy and rhythmic dynamism that defines the genre. Balfe’s venture into the disco realm was a departure from his typical musical repertoire, yet it yielded an exciting and dynamic score that adds an extra layer of excitement to the film. “When Matthew brought up disco music, I knew it was going to be a new, fun challenge,” Balfe says. “Our goal was to marry the over-the-top orchestral action sequences with the infectious energy of disco.”
* *Argylle*’s innovative approach to music and storytelling promises a spy thriller unlike any other. Balfe’s collaboration with Vaughn elevates the film, making it a must-see cinematic and musical experience.

###