

SHINE

SCREENPLAY BASED ON A TRUE STORY

Sometimes your true time to shine comes when the spotlight dies.

London actor Drew Goodall is on the verge of great things, and he'll do whatever it takes to get the part. Nudity? Not a problem. As the film opens, friends and family gather at his parents' pub in Ipswich. Everyone cheers his appearance in 'Sex on the Job' on Sky One where he plays a randy hotel worker shagging a cantaloupe. Even his nan admires his bum.

Drew's appeal onscreen is undeniable. But in real life his kinetic energy is even more magnetic—whether he is unexpectedly tackling childhood friends, entertaining street crowds by diving into a fountain, or trading quips with friends from drama school. He thrives on making people laugh, making them feel, and making them take notice.

Back in London plans fall through for a production with his actor flatmate. They end up doing a Harold Pinter play on the back of a trailer in his parents' pub carpark. His opening act is a pale kid with bright orange hair and a guitar—that we later learn is destined for greatness. Drew's answer to every opportunity is 'Why wouldn't I'? He lands a high-profile stage gig that seems perfect; starring in 'Equus' – in a role suffused with psychological torment, horrific violence, and quite a bit of nudity. This is it. His time to shine. Just like his parents have always said.

Rehearsals are exciting, scary, and often quite mad. Everything points to a raging success but on opening night Drew chokes. It is a massive, very public failure. And it almost destroys him. The darker side of his quest for success emerges. His hunger for attention isn't rooted in a love for acting. It's a manic need for approval. His flatmate lands a high-profile gig on 'Coronation Street' that requires him to move to Manchester. Alone, Drew grows more desperate.

He loses everything—his home, his pride, his sense of self, and for a time, his sanity. As he drifts in and out of the homeless community, he hides his struggle from his family. They are completely in the dark about his living situation and his nervous collapse. They have their own secrets. His parents are facing financial ruin. His sister is drinking herself to death. Their hearty good humour and penchant for getting on with things seems natural. Admitting they might need help is unthinkable.

Drew is befriended by a homeless army vet with paranoia issues, he learns the ropes of survival, he falls in love, and with the help of strangers and new friends alike, he brings himself back to the land of the living. By shining shoes. He creates an entire business, Sunshine Shoeshines, that hires homeless and disadvantaged people who need another chance at building their lives. His true path emerges: Helping others to shine—literally and figuratively. And his new sense of authenticity is key to helping his family heal as well.

In the occasionally meta construction of the script we get commentary from Drew as the story unspools. And in the end, we meet the real Drew—as well as a few real people from his story—including Ed Sheeran (his skinny pale opening act for the Pinter show). The irony? Drew finds his true path by giving up his need for fame. Yet now a film is being made about him, and here he is soon to be onscreen, kind of... famous. And why wouldn't he be?

Screenwriter Samuel Garza Bernstein is a British Independent Film Festival and London Film Awards winner whose Showtime film 'Bobbie's Girl' earned an Emmy nomination for its star Bernadette Peters. He is also the award-winning author of three books.