**Heavenly Creatures - Film Information**

**Cast:**

Pauline Parker - Melanie Lynskey
Juliet Hulme - Kate Winslet
Honora Parker - Sarah Peirse
Hilda Hulme - Diana Kent
Henry Hulme - Clive Merrison
Herbert Rieper - Simon O'Connor
John/Nicholas - Jed Brophy
Bill Perry - Peter Elliott
Doctor Bennett - Gilbert Goldie

Director/Writer - Peter Jackson
Co-writer - Frances Walsh
Special Effects Designer - Richard Taylor

**Introduction**

 Peter Jackson's film *Heavenly Creatures* was released in 1994 to widespread critical acclaim, including an Oscar nomination for Best Original Screenplay.

 Though the characters and events depicted in the film are based on a real and deeply disturbing murder committed by two young girls, the film must be seen as a work of fiction, since it is his and screenwriting partner Fran Walsh’s interpretation of published information, rather than the “truth”. At no stage were the major participants consulted, though many other people alive at the time were.

Peter Jackson: We wanted to interview as many people as we could find. Several refused. We talked to about 15 or 16 of their classmates, which was an experience. These were 55-year-old women spread out around the country, and they all had changed their names because they'd gotten married. It was quite a detective job to find them.

 However, Jackson was meticulous about using actual locations, artefacts and even archival film footage in *Heavenly Creatures*. He aimed to recreate as accurately as possible the environment, the known facts and the real people involved in the case. But he has not made a documentary, not even a 'docu-drama.' And he gives no simple answer to the central question of why these two girls murdered Pauline’s mother.

 What the film is doing – and using some stunning effects in the process – is exploring the inner world of the two girls, creating an unforgettable portrait of troubled adolescence, showing the world as they saw it, and at the same time showing us the reality of it.

 The sheer speed and onward momentum of the narrative carries the viewer; but the complexity, the subtleties, the sophistication of the film, make it ideal for deep study. It is one of those rare films that gets better every time it is seen.

**Time**

The film covers the time period between (October), 1952 (October) - Pauline, (nearly 14), and Juliet (13) are in Form 3 (Year 9) - and mid-afternoon Tuesday June 22, 1954 – midwinter; nearly the shortest day - when the two girls murdered Honora Rieper in Victoria Park.

**Filming on Location**

**Peter Jackson:**

“The only location we couldn't use was Pauline's house, which had been torn down… We found out what classroom Pauline and Juliet actually were in… So that was the actual classroom where they were, down to the seating. The Ilam house, where Juliet lived, is still there. It's owned by the university, and they were very happy for us to use it. As for the doctor's surgery, where Pauline is interviewed by the doctor, we found out the address … we knocked on the door, and the woman who answered happened to be the doctor's daughter - the doctor's long since dead - and we asked her where her father's office had been, and she said, "Oh, he had rooms out the back of the house here; we've never really touched them." We went into this doctor's surgery which was almost exactly the same as it had been 40 years before. So we ended up filming those sequences in the actual room where Pauline was interviewed by the doctor. We also spoke to the woman who was working at the tearooms at Victoria Park and found out exactly where they sitting, and filmed that scene there.

**…**We went to the murder site, and we just felt uncomfortable about filming there. It was very strange, and maybe it was just our imagination, but it was very quiet, very tranquil. I mean, all the way down the path you hear the wind and the birds, and suddenly, when you arrive at the spot, you hear nothing. So we filmed the murder scene at Victoria Park, but it was on a different track, about a hundred yards away.”

**The Music**

Peter Jackson: With this movie, probably more than any other I've done, the camera moves were integral to the scriptwriting. I'll tell you where that came from: the music. We read very early in our research that Pauline and Juliet were both obsessed with Mario Lanza. Neither of us was familiar with his music, so we went out and got some of his records, and before we started writing we played through them and came across several songs that we really liked. One of the very first ones we heard was "The Donkey Serenade".

Fran Walsh: Well, we knew that was important to them because Pauline had named one of her novels "The Donkey Serenade."

PJ: When we heard it, just the life and vitality in the song immediately indicated Steadicam. [laughs] It immediately told you you had to have a moving camera. We chose all the songs that were in the movie, and, in the case of "The Donkey Serenade," wrote scenes around them. I found it a great visual tool. It's never happened before in anything I've done - I mean, I've never had the music in advance. We had these songs playing while we were working to get ourselves psyched up to write a scene.

**Special Effects**

 The special effects were handled by WETA Limited, the most comprehensive special effects house in the southern hemisphere. **The Borovnian sequences** were supervised by Richard Taylor while the digital effects were supervised by George Port. Richard and his team constructed over seventy full-sized, latex costumes to represent the Borovnian crowds - plasticine figures that inhabit Pauline and Juliet's magical fantasy world. *Heavenly Creatures* contains over thirty shots that were digitally manipulated ranging from the morphing garden of the "Fourth World," to castles in fields, to the "Orson Welles" sequences.

**Entries from Pauline’s Diary:**

*1953, April 3 (Fri)*"Today Juliet and I found the key to the Fourth World."

*1954, Feb. 13 (Sat) or 14. (Sun)*"Why could not mother die? Dozens of people, thousands of people are dying every day. So why not mother, and father too? Life is hard."

*1954, April 28. (Wed)*"Anger against mother is boiling inside of me, as it is she who is the main obstacle in my path. Suddenly the means of ridding myself of this obstacle occur to me. If she were to die..."

*1954, June 22. (Tues)*"day of The Happy Event."
"I am writing a little of this up in the morning before the death. I felt very excited and the night before Christmassy last night. I did not have pleasant dreams though."