

Edinburgh International Film Festival 2023 – surf star needed swimming lessons

Actor Louis McCartney has revealed he had to learn to swim after he was cast as a surfer in Scottish movie Silent Roar.

McCartney plays Dondo in the “teenage tale of surfing, sex and hellfire” set in the Outer Hebrides, which had its world premiere at the opening night of the Edinburgh International Film Festival.

McCartney’s character is struggling to accept his father’s disappearance at sea, but is helped by rebellious teen Sas, a high achiever who dreams of escaping the island, played by up and coming star Ella Lily Hyland.

McCartney spends much of the film in the water swimming and surfing, but revealed he had to take an intensive six-week course before filming began in Uig on the Isle of Lewis.

He said: “Dondo is a troubled surfer dealing with the death of his father, but I was a bad swimmer and couldn’t surf so I had to learn for the film.

“I couldn’t swim. I had about a month and a half to learn and I was hooked up to a wave machine. I put myself into boot camp and I think it shows, I don’t look daft in the film.

“Once or twice (filming) in the water my heart skipped a beat but it was all ok because of the training I did.”

McCartney, from Belfast, got his first acting break when he was burnt alive by a dragon in Game of Thrones. He later appeared in BBC series Hope Street before landing the leading role in Silent Roar, his first feature film.

He said he loved the two month shoot on the Isle of Lewis, adding: "It was cold but the weather played to us beautifully. It was such a good experience."

Silent Roar is the debut feature from BAFTA-nominated Scottish writer and director Johnny Barrington, who presented the film alongside its stars and Scottish producer Chris Young at Edinburgh's Everyman Cinema.

Barrington, who drew upon his own teenage years on the Isle of Skye, said: "Louis was literally the very first actor I saw for the part of Dondo and I was astonished by him. Likewise, I was convinced that Ella was right for the part of Sas because she has an effervescence that I've not come across in other actors before.

"I didn't know that Louis couldn't swim. He did a very good job of disguising it. There were times when it was so cold that he had two wetsuits on, so he was buoyant. But he was amazing.

"When you're shooting with people in the sea, the whole time is a hairy moment, especially if you're shooting with waves breaking around you, but the people running the safety boats were very responsible and safety conscious."

He added: "I'm very happy (with the film). It's blown me away how special it is to open the Edinburgh Film Festival."

[The Edinburgh International Film Festival](#) runs until Wednesday.



Louis McCartney; Edinburgh International Film Festival, Aug 2023 Photographer: Lloyd Smith © EIFF, Edinburgh International Film Festival



Chris Young, Victoria Balnaves, Anders Hayward, Johnny

Barrington, Ella Lily Hyland, Louis McCartney; Edinburgh International Film Festival, Aug 2023 Photographer: Kat Gollock © EIFF, Edinburgh International Film Festival