

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

We've Given You Enough

Paul Greengrass and Andrew Garfield on faith, rage, and why 1381 feels like now

Interview by Paul Salfen · AMFM Magazine



Andrew Garfield as the Ploughman. Official key art courtesy of Focus Features.

Paul Salfen does not ease into the tape. He tells Paul Greengrass and Andrew Garfield he is honored to have them, then he says the thing a lot of people are about to say in the dark: the movie is beautiful. Greengrass thanks him. Then Salfen names what is actually sitting under the spectacle — open belief, standing up for what is right, and a 1381 story that does not feel six hundred years away.

The Uprising, written and directed by Greengrass and opening in theaters nationwide on September 11, is the filmmaker's first true historical epic: England after the Black Death, a boy king ringed by oligarchs, a poll tax that detonates the countryside, and tens of thousands of ordinary people marching on London. Academy Award nominee Andrew Garfield stars as the Ploughman, a farmer history never named. Around him: Jamie Bell as the radical priest John Ball, Cosmo Jarvis as Wat Tyler, Thomasin McKenzie as Alyce, Katherine Waterston as the Countess, Woody Norman as King Richard II, plus Stephen Dillane, Tom Hollander, Jonny Lee Miller, Stanley Townsend, and Sky Yang.

Salfen puts the clock on the table. The story could have come out any year. Why this one?

IT SPEAKS TO OUR WORLD

Greengrass does not reach for a marketing answer. "It speaks to our world, doesn't it?" he says. Then he admits the personal hunger underneath the history. He had never made a big historical epic. He loved Braveheart. He loved Gladiator. He wanted his own version of that kind

of picture — grand spectacle, battles, a love story, intimate rooms — built around a simple farmer given a hero's journey through an epic rebellion.

"So I took this story and created the character, the simple farmer, and tried to sort of give him a hero's journey through this epic rebellion," Greengrass tells Salfen. "But the more I wrote it, the more it just seemed to speak so powerfully to today."

In the production notes, he is even more specific about the spark. The Peasants' Revolt sat in the back of a British schoolboy's mind for decades. It returned during the coronavirus pandemic: half of England once wiped out by plague, grief turning into fury, trust in the people who ruled collapsing in a matter of weeks. Greengrass did not want a reenactment. He wanted something you experience rather than watch — immediate, alive — told not through the famous names first, but through the first man to raise his hand in Essex.

The more I wrote it, the more it just seemed to speak so powerfully to today.

— PAUL GREENGRASS

Salfen turns to Garfield. The actor does not treat the timing as a coincidence either. "I've been looking for something that speaks to what I'm feeling in the world that we're in," Garfield says, "and it's the thing that woke my soul up when I read this script that Paul wrote."

What woke him was not pageantry. It was the assignment: to inhabit rage, longing, pain, and suffering in the service of hope. "What an honor it would be to try to inhabit that level of rage and kind of longing and pain and suffering in order to hope for a better world and try and plant seeds for a more just society," he tells Salfen. "I mean, that's the story of our times right now."



Garfield's Ploughman, a farmer history never named, carries the first raised hand in Essex. Still courtesy of Focus Features.

THE FARMER WHO RAISES HIS HAND

Greengrass has spent a career putting cameras inside events that already feel too close: Bloody Sunday, United 93, Captain Phillips, 22 July, The Lost Bus. The Uprising looks, on paper, like a departure — armor, bows, a young king on a throne, Bavaria standing in for medieval England.

Underneath, it is the same Greengrass problem: what happens when order tears and ordinary people have to decide who they are.

The 14th-century poem *Piers Plowman* gave him the figure. In the notes he is blunt about the choice. Rebellions romanticize themselves. Films romanticize rebellions. Every rising has a dark side. The question that interested him most is the one that comes after the shouting: what happens when it is over? As *Wat Tyler* says in the film, you only know what you hold when it is done.

Garfield, talking to Salfen, keeps the character on the ground. The knowledge the Ploughman would have had is limited to the ox, the day, the harvest, the land. In the production notes he frames the break even more cleanly: an ordinary man squeezed until something snaps, who would rather die than live without dignity. "None of us should have to live like this anymore."

That snap has a scene Greengrass cannot stop returning to. Early in the picture the Ploughman goes to town to pay his taxes. The collectors are there. You watch the rage brew. Then he sweeps it aside and says the line that is doing the most work in every conversation around this movie.

We've given you enough. It's not a question really of politics. It's a question of a collective feeling that people have, that it's not working and we've had enough.

— PAUL GREENGRASS

"That's, I think, what this movie taps into most of all," Greengrass says.

CROSSING THE WHITE LINE

Salfen asks the craft question that sits under every Greengrass set: when it is time to go do battle — on camera, in the mud, with extras who have been living inside the revolt for weeks — what do you say to yourself to get in the right headspace?

Garfield's answer is almost comically practical, and then it turns devout. "Do what Paul says and try and make sure you're helping our DP and camera operators get you in frame and just stay connected, stay in the moment." The DP is Pål Ulvik Rokseth, shooting his third Greengrass picture after *22 July*, handheld and close to the eyes. The ensemble does the rest.

"Luckily we had an amazing ensemble of actors everywhere you looked," Garfield says. "You could feel a kind of truth looking in the eyes of Jamie Bell or Cosmo Jarvis or Thomasin McKenzie or Katherine Waterston or any of the extras that we had on set. You look in any one of those people's eyes and you are thrown directly into the Peasants' Revolt. So it was an immersive treat for an actor."

Greengrass compares the work to professional sport. There is a crossing-the-white-line feeling. Everybody has to bring their A game, then leave it on the field. He thinks that is what they did. He also hands the credit across the table. "Thanks to Andrew's wonderful leadership and commitment, I think we realized what we wanted to realize, which is a big movie experience that you're going to enjoy in the theater and find very rewarding."



Paul Greengrass on set in Bavaria, where medieval towns and churches stood in for 1381 England. Photo courtesy of Focus Features.

The production itself was a high-wire act in the middle of nowhere. Cameras rolled September 15, 2025, at Penzing Studios near Landsberg am Lech, then moved through Bad Windsheim's open-air museum and into Nuremberg — the Heilig-Geist-Spital, the Pellerhaus, and St. Sebaldus Church, a 13th-century parish used almost inch by inch. Hungarian costume designers András Dániel Tóth and Attila Godena-Juhász built a wardrobe that had to look serious, not theatrical. Volker Bertelmann, Oscar winner for *All Quiet on the Western Front*, wrote a score Greengrass asked to have attack and contemporary roots instead of period plush. Jason Blum produces through Blumhouse Atomic Monster with Gregory Goodman, Joanna Kaye, Greengrass, Lars Sylvest, and Joe Neurauter.

None of that is what Garfield talks about when Salfen asks how you get ready. He talks about eyes. You look across the frame and the year falls off the calendar.

FAITH WAS NOT A CHOICE

Salfen asks whether they were able to tap their own faith for the picture. Greengrass hedges at first — "a little bit," he is not sure he looks at it that way — and then he goes back to the tax table, to the feeling that the system is not working. The faith question is waiting for Garfield.

"My faith is a forever flowing river of doubt and confusion," Garfield says. "I feel like that's the only way to really have a life of faith is that doubt goes hand in hand." The Ploughman's journey, as he reads it, is a question: is the king, the divinely sent messenger of God, going to deliver justice to him and his brothers and sisters?

He thinks for a second that Salfen asked about his politics. Then he hears it cleanly. Did the story speak to faith?

"For sure," he says. "Because people in that time, faith was not a choice. Everybody had faith. What happened at this time in history was because of the pandemic. People started to have a crisis of faith and ask themselves, what do you do when God's law, which must be just, is being

betrayed by the law that the oligarchs have written, which is unjust. What happens when there's that disconnect? And that feels very like today."

My faith is a forever flowing river of doubt and confusion. I feel like that's the only way to really have a life of faith is that doubt goes hand in hand.

— ANDREW GARFIELD

That is the sentence that will travel. Not because it is tidy. Because it refuses to be. Garfield will not sell certainty as piety. He will not pretend 1381 is a costume. He will say what the picture is actually asking: when the law that claims heaven's authority is written by men who are not just, what do you do with the instinct that still knows what is fair?

"People feel very challenged by the fact that our instinctive feelings of what is fair and right and just are challenged by what we see in the world and how we make sense of it," he tells Salfen. "And that's, I think, one of the reasons why this film really speaks to people."

Greengrass, in his director's statement, refuses to close the ledger for the audience. Historians have drawn a line from 1381 to individual rights, even to the American Constitution. The film has armor and crowds and a boy born to be a messiah king. Underneath is a dislocated world angry at its elite, with hope and democracy hanging in the balance. He does not answer that. He wants people to recognize the world when they see it, and carry the question home.

Salfen congratulates them. He thanks them for the answers. They thank him back. The tape is short. The question it leaves is not. Rise or die, the key art says. The conversation says something harder: we have given you enough. Now what?

THE VOICE OF THE ARTIST

The Uprising is a Focus Features release, in theaters September 11. Watch it on a screen that can hold a crowd. Then sit with the farmer who was never supposed to have a name.

FIND THE UPRISING

In theaters nationwide September 11, 2026 · Focus Features · Written and directed by Paul Greengrass · 2 hrs 8 min

Andrew Garfield, Jamie Bell, Cosmo Jarvis, Thomasin McKenzie, Katherine Waterston, Woody Norman, Stephen Dillane, Tom Hollander, Jonny Lee Miller, Sky Yang

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Paul Salfen is Managing Editor of AMFM Magazine and a veteran interviewer of film, television, music, and sports figures. He is the author of *Going For It!*, a collection of Hail Mary moments from the artists and athletes he has spent two decades putting on the record.