

CHOOSE LIFE script v3

R4 INTRO:

This is BBC Radio 4. It's exactly twenty years since the release of 'Trainspotting' – the film based on Irvine Welsh's novel depicting the realities of heroin addiction. The closing credits include mention of Calton Athletic Recovery Group, whose members are thanked "for their inspiration and courage". Who are they – and how were they involved in the making of the film? We find out, now, as they tell their own stories... in: CHOOSE LIFE.

0'00" OPENING

WILLIE: The first time I tried it, it was... I didn't even realise it was heroin initially, to tell you the truth. Somebody came into the pub, wheeling and dealing, and this guy comes in this night, and says "That's just excellent Willie, you need to try this". I says "what is it?" He says "it's dynamite". So I tried a wee line of it, went into the toilet... oh, it was SO good man, it was unbelievable. I was sitting on the wee throne in the cubicle, and I felt as if I'd just took right off, and just, BOOM! Oh, euphoria was... the rush I got was incredible.

(MUSIC UP: Brian Eno – Deep Blue Day)

JOHN: As Willie said, you got this – I injected heroin, so there was this really overwhelming feeling of... fantastic. Every pain in your body, gone. Everything in your scheme looked rosy. I came from a scheme where the windows were all boarded up, and half of the houses were empty, half of the roofs were ripped off the building. But as soon as you took this heroin your place just looked like the Bahamas! It could have been the Bahamas on any given day through your own rose-coloured specs, you know?! But the honeymoon period, as they call it, the enjoyment side of the drug, never ever lasts very long. It never lasts very long.

WILLIE: I didnae realise the price I was going to have to pay for that wee rush. See for that first amazing hit? Then it's numbness after that. There's nae amazing hit. Cos you're chasing that forever. And it just never ever is the same.

1'48" LUST FOR LIFE

FX video cassette

WILLIE: I chose life, because – it's better than being numb.

*MOVIE: ("Lust For Life" begins...) Choose life. Choose a job. Choose a career. Choose a family, Choose a f***ing big television. Choose washing machines, cars, compact disc players, and electrical tin openers.*

(VOICEOVER:) Trainspotting.

MOVIE: (screech – crash – shouting)

Screenplay by John Hodge, adapted from the novel by Irvine Welsh.

MOVIE: (laughter) Choose good health...

Producer: Andrew Macdonald.

MOVIE: ...choose fixed-interest mortgage repayments....

Director: Danny Boyle.

MOVIE: ...choose your friends. (FADES TO MUSIC ONLY)

Stars: Ewan McGregor, Robert Carlyle, Ewan Bremner, Jonny Lee Miller, Kevin McKidd, and Kelly MacDonald.

Release date: February 1996.

Special technical advisers: Calton Athletic Recovery Group.

2'47" CALTON INTROS

MUSIC: "Lust For Life" begins again – drums only.

CALTON, VARIOUS VOICES MONTAGE: "Hi I'm John, I'm a recovering drug addict... my name's Peter... (etc etc) ... in the east end of Glasgow."

MUSIC: "Lust For Life" – full mix.

Calton Athletic Recovery Group. A charity formed in the 1980s, in the east end of Glasgow, to help people recover from drug and alcohol addiction.

MOVIE: Choose your future. Choose life. ... But why would I want to do a thing like that? ... I chose not to choose life: I chose something else. And the reasons? There are no reasons. Who need reasons when you've got heroin?

DAVIE: Why did you choose drugs over your kid, why did you choose it over your family? Why did you choose drugs over whatever? You know, people – that's what drugs is – once you've entered into addiction, then you hadnae really got a choice.

WILLIE: Believe me, I had a very serious heroin habit. And everything else, like, your family – it's so, so powerful a drug, it just takes over everything. The people that you love the most on this planet, they don't even matter. If it's between them and getting a hit, it doesn't really matter, because that's the main focus in your life.

MOVIE: It's a waste of your life, Mark, poisoning your body with that shite. ... Every chance you've had, son, you've blown it. Stuffing your veins with that filth.

DONALD: That's somebody trying to spoil your fun. That, from my experience anyway, you would think, aye – you've probably already done it, and you're just trying to tell me what to do. Everybody made the choice cos they thought they could handle it. That's the bottom line, it won't happen to me.

MOVIE: People think it's all about misery and desperation and death ...

DONALD: I always wondered – why would you do it? If you know what's gonna happen?

MOVIE: ...but what they forget – is the pleasure of it... (laughter)

DONALD: There was a fun side to drugs for me as well, you know, you're out there partying, this is great.

MOVIE: ...otherwise we wouldn't do it!

DAVIE: It is fun. And I think Trainspotting showed that as well, up the dancing, the dance scene, chatting up the girls and that, there is a fun side to it. It is enjoyable at first, but nobody tells you about tolerance, nobody tells you about progression onto other stuff. There's not a big neon light saying "you've now entered into addiction".

WILLIE: You're taking it initially just to get high, just for kicks and all that, and then – the fun side soon runs out. You know? Once you take it to the point of addiction, then the fun's over. Then the dark side creeps in.

DARK MUSIC STING

6'12" PETER

PETER: I remember the film, yeah, I was still at school at the time ... And I can remember thinking, just looking at it – how many guys in my area were starting to look that way, were starting to become that way. And you were looking at the Trainspotting people, and you were looking at people in your area, and saying – that's like him, that's like him, that's like him – and you're just trying to figure out, you're actually putting those Trainspotting characters into the people... "I don't trust him"... cos you seen that in the film. But they nailed it with each and every... from the skullduggery, to stealing off each other... just total drug addicts, do anything for drugs. Anything. And I always said to myself as a young boy, "I'll never get to that stage. How could you let yourself get to those stages?" And, I got to those stages, through alcohol. Easy. I was in the same situations, ripping people off, stealing, doing what I had to do. But growing up in the east end of Glasgow as well, all the guys I looked up to were all hoodlums, gangsters, and that's who I wanted to be. But deep down I didn't want that lifestyle. I wanted something else for my life. I'd lost completely who I was, deep down. I'd lost the person who I was, and that's why I was unhappy, cos I was living a life I didnae want to live. I was living against myself, I was trying to put this macho image on, I was trying to put the bravado, and living up to the image and the hype, and just no

wanting to do it anymore. Just wanting a way out – and Davie Bryce was gonna give me that way out.

7'53" CALTON HISTORY + FOOTBALL

MUSIC: Primal Scream – "Trainspotting"

DAVIE: David Bryce, the founding member, started this – we just celebrated our 30th anniversary there, of the organisation starting up. Davie was a recovering alcoholic and a recovering drug addict himself, who came up with the idea of Calton Athletic.

WILLIE: It's called CA because Davie actually came from the Calton. That's where the name came from. And the "Athletic" side of it just because of the fitness aspect. We discovered that running and football was good for getting the endorphins, just getting a bit of fitness back in our life after being lying about on our arses for ages, because the place was awash with heroin at the time, and just getting caught up in the drugs, and getting deeper and deeper into it – and now this was us finding our way back out.

DAVIE: There was a big football following, they were brought up in the football culture, Glasgow Celtic and Rangers, and they thought the idea of the football was an attracting agency to get people in.

FOOTBALL FX

MARK: This is the five-a-side football's about to start, it's the two teams just getting prepared to play just now and, hopefully we win tonight. This is what you can hear, you can hear the boys kicking the ball about, they're itching to play – so, I think it's time to get started!

FOOTBALL FX

THOMAS: We're in the main gymnasium in St Mungo's Academy, Glasgow. It's a big secondary school in the East End.

THOMAS: We come down here every Tuesday. We see each other, play a game of football, stuff like that, and we've got the privilege of the meeting afterwards.

COLINM: It's really good for us to kinda bond on a Tuesday. Meet up....

MARK: ...it's always good banter, it's great. It's probably the highlight of my Mon-Fri week, definitely. That's what I get out of it.

FOOTBALL FX

9'48" COLIN M.

COLINM: I used to play, probably from 9 years old. And I loved football, I looked forward to weekends and stuff, I didn't bother about drinking, taking drugs, anything like that, it was the furthest thing from my mind. That all left me when I started on drink and drugs, probably about 16 year old. Call it peer pressure, y'know, can't say no to your friends, if they're drinking at the weekends – but basically the more you're going down that road, the more you're drinking to start with, and – before you know it – you're taking drugs on top, you're getting into states. Prison comes into your life after that, getting into trouble at the weekend with the police, then there's fines, court dates, so that creates pressure on yourself. And you just keep going and going, until you're at a point where you're broke, no self esteem, and you've nowhere to turn. And obviously with CA being there, I knew people that were there. My best friends that I'd seen one day, and they were doing different stuff like out running etc, and that's like alien. You're like – what are they doing running?! Voluntary work? Like, six months before that they were stealing cars and what have you, and then you see them again and they're looking good, they've got a fresh look about their face, looking fit. Training, at gyms. And that wee bit of me wanted that, so bad. You want a slice of that. And that's what I basically done to get myself to CA – pluck up some sort of courage, and get myself down there.

MOVIE: Without heroin, I attempted to lead a useful and fulfilling life as a good citizen.

11'48" CARG MEETING

DAVIE: This is just outside our premises in the East End of Glasgow, in the Parkhead area. This is where people come for their first contact with CA, they come down here and meet with one of the members before they get involved with the group... so I'll take you through, and show you inside it...

DAVIE: The group in here, there's always about 15 or 20 members will come here. This is our self-help meeting on a Tuesday night, where the members will speak about – obviously about their previous lifestyle, because that's what brings people through the doors of CA – but also talk about the most important thing, about their recovery, and about being off drugs, and how they've managed to stay sober.

PAUL (IN MEETING): I cannae believe it's been 9 months. But the honeymoon period's over for me. The main thing is, I don't want to drink, I don't wanna take drugs. I just don't want to do it anymore. I just don't want to do it anymore. But, I still doubt myself. I still doubt myself. I still find it hard. Cos I do think about a drink, and I think... I know I cannae have even one drink. It's not fear that's keeping me here, it's youse that's keeping me here as well. Cos youse are all, the most decent people I've ever met in my life. I don't say that often enough to youse, cos I still find it hard to communicate. I still find it hard to say what I mean. But I want to learn, I want to learn, to be able to open myself up to people. Cos I've never talked about my problems to anybody – and how are you gonna resolve anything if you can't speak about it? So, I'm trying, I'm trying hard.

PAUL (AFTER MEETING): My name is Paul. I've just done a talk at CA, where you open up and talk about your life, all the bad things that you've done, your addiction, how you're coming through it, and about your recovery. It's a very hard process, this time last year I

couldn't have done it – but I've just done it. Spoke for quite a while... and it's great. I'd recommend it to anybody.

13'56" HONESTY

WILLIE: You know, there's nae bullshit in here, bullshit's just not tolerated. We're opening up. We've never opened up like this in our lives, to anybody. It's all about getting honesty back in our life, and for dodgy characters like all of us have been in our lives, it's really really hard.

MUSIC: Leftfield – A Final Hit

COLINN: You have to strip yourself bare and build yourself back up again, and that's not easy, it takes time. But I can't think of a better feeling that I've ever had in my life than actually sitting up there and doing that. It helped me, and it's saved my life – cos the only people that I see that make it in recovery, and make it to sustain a good life, is the people that are prepared to be honest, and honest with theirselves, and talk about it.

COLINN: People won't give you anything unless they trust you. And the hardest thing to trust is a recovering addict. You have to earn that trust.

(MUSIC up)

ANDREW MACD: It might be old fashioned, but I tend to trust people at face value, and er...

JOHN HODGE: Why would anyone trust filmmakers, is a better question!

15'05" FILMMAKERS

JOHN HODGE: My name is John Hodge – I was the scriptwriter on Trainspotting.

ANDREW: My name's Andrew MacD, I'm the producer of Trainspotting.

JOHN: The one thing we were most clear about was that we didn't want to make a film about "victims" – the classic, pityable portrayal of heroin addicts. What the book does – and through language and character, Irvine achieves – is to present rounded human beings who are both good and bad, but some of them happen, at some times, to be addicted to heroin. And so we wanted to find a way to put rounded human beings, as it were, on the screen. So that's what we wanted to do. And CA fitted in to that very importantly.

COLINN: The production team of Trainspotting approached CA to make the film as realistic as possible. CA, being CA, agreed to help. Its members being all recovering addicts, there probably isn't anything they don't know about addiction.

DAVIE: I remember, it was actually in this hall, that they came to. And they'd just been the previous night at the BAFTAs, they got an award for Shallow Grave... anyway, Danny Boyle appears with Ewan MacGregor the following evening, sat in the meeting, and they couldn't believe – they were totally blown away with the honest of people in here.

JOHN: When we met the guys at Calton, they had a sort of honesty about what they'd done, who they were, who they wanted to be, that was very – that informed the actors a great deal, and inspired them to... be real. And being real, when portraying heroin addicts, is not just a question of being a victim, it's having a sense of humour, for example. That was considered outrageous, that these people could have a defiant, dark sense of humour. But we got that very strongly from Irvine's book, and then again from CA.

ANDREW: You want to get a sense of the reality of it, for the director and the actors, that's very important. And we needed people who they could relate to, who were real people, and who could – and a certain amount of technical advice, in terms of using a syringe etc...

MOVIE: I rolled up my sleeve, I spiked my vein, and I did what had to be done.

ANDREW: ...but really it was about the experiences and the reality.

(MUSIC up)

17'33" FILM SCENES + EXTRAS

DAVIE: Obviously, a scene at the start was filmed in Edinburgh, but a lot of it was filmed here in Glasgow. And even a lot of the members, and a lot of our family were all extras in it – we used to play five-a-sides with them at night, with the whole scene at the start where we're doing the football thing...

MARK: The start of the film when they're playing football, they're playing five-a-side against a team – and they cannae kick a ball between themselves, and the team they're playing are pretty good. And it just happened to be the Calton Athletic they were playing!

COLINN: I got involved just as being an extra in the beginning – taking a free kick and it hit Ewan McGregor in the face!

MOVIE: (fx – ball hits Ewan in face)

COLINN: And I'd like to say that, probably, I made him good looking! But that's another story. But, it ended up being quite a good rapport with Trainspotting.

ANDREW: We wanted access to that world, they provided it, and we hopefully gave them some support in the media, and we also did some fundraising and financial aspect to it which is obviously incredibly important to any charity – and these guys are, in that charity sort of tradition, they're amateurs trying to run something really worthwhile, financially it's always a problem, and sometimes they are at odds with the way that other people believe how best to help people in this situation. And I know, for instance, that David Bryce – who started the group and the charity, who sadly passed away a few years ago – David Bryce often told me that they didn't believe in methadone, and lots of other people did. And that put them at odds.

19'02" WITHDRAWALS + METHADONE

MUSIC: Underworld – Dark and Long

MOVIE: I don't feel the sickness yet, but it's in the post, that's for sure. I'm in the junky limbo at the moment, too ill to sleep, too tired to stay awake, but the sickness is on its way. Sweat, chills, nausea, pain and craving. Need like nothing else I've ever known will soon take hold of me. It's on its way.

DAVIE: I got to realise that stopping drugs was easy, going through withdrawals I thought was the hardest thing I was ever going to do in my life, and it is hard to get through that. But once you get over that it's about staying off it. That's where CA came into play, because they were about changing your full lifestyle. People at CA can't go back to taking drugs, it is an abstinence-based programme.

MOTHER: We'll help you, son. You'll stay here with us until you get better. Gonna beat this together.

RENTON: Maybe I should go back to the clinic.

MOTHER: No. No clinics, no methadone. That only made you worse, you said so yourself.

RENTON: You could bring us some jellies?

MOTHER: No! You're worse coming off that than you are with the heroin. Nothing at all.

FATHER: It's a clean break this time.

JOHN HODGE: You're worse on that than you are on the heroin – certainly that whole section, when he's locked inside his bedroom by his parents, to going cold turkey – obviously, yeah, that coincided with the view and policy of CA. They regard what's euphemistically known as "harm reduction" as being the wrong way to go. And they're absolutely adamant about that. And they strive for something better, rather than compromising.

WILLIE: To be quite honest about methadone – if you give an addict an easy option they're gonna take it. So how is that benefitting? It just seemed crazy to us to switch from one Class A drug to another Class A drug.

20'57" GLAMORISING DRUG USE?

JOHN HODGE: I think when the film came out, there was a lot of ill informed hysteria – mainly from people who hadn't seen the film, or who had preconceived ideas that they then slotted the film into – that the film was in some way glamorising drug use. It seems to me the majority of people who'd actually been involved in that world simply saw it as an accurate depiction. That kind of went away after a while, because the truth was the latter.

DAVIE: For me personally, I think Trainspotting done more to deglamorise drugs than any government campaign. OK, it was hard hitting, and true to the fact, and – people don't like the truth. It was the truth about me, it was the truth about my life.

WILLIE: I was going mad arguing with everybody who was thinking it was pro- drugs – how can you think it's pro-drugs when you know the depths you'll go to, and you'll rob your pals, you know what I mean?! (laughs) They're all together and good mates, and then they're bumping each other for the money, and stealing, and... as soon as I saw the film I could identify with it immediately, man, you know? It was a realisation, what a thunderbolt it was for me, cos I saw myself in this. Cos my boys were young....

22'12" FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

(WILLIE) ...In fact, the oldest one... him and I have still not got a good relationship, to this day, man, and it's because of my abuse of drugs at that time. I've tried so hard to make things up with him, and we get along ok for a wee bit, and then the least wee thing and – bang. And we've not been speaking now for a good few months. I've tried to atone for all the mistakes I've made in my life, man, but sometimes you just – (sigh) – it's really really unfortunate, but – I don't know if we'll ever get it back, to be honest.

MUSIC: Perfect Day (reversed)

(WILLIE) Everything becomes secondary, if you've got a drug habit. Everything else is – even your kids, which is – I'm embarrassed to say it today, because my feelings are so different today. They mean everything to me now, and they should have at the time, but they just didnae cos the drugs were more powerful, and that's the truth.

DAVIE: Some people are 20 odd years in recovery, and their sons won't forgive them for what they've done, their wives won't forgive them. We're looking for forgiveness – we've made a mistake in our lives, and we're trying to change that mistake. But, we find the majority of people, they just want their son or daughter back, they just want the person back in the lives again.

JOHN: Trust with my family? It did take time, you know? I had stole off them, I had lied to them, I'd cheated them, and I'd promised I'd come off the drunk and drugs so many times, and failed so many times, miserably. They were just waiting for me to fall again, and start using and abusing again. So the trust took years to build up for me, years to build up. But my family WANTED to trust me.

FATHER: Well, I hope you've learned your lesson, son.

MOTHER: Oh, son, I thought I was going to lose you there. You're nothing but trouble to me, but I still love you! (laughs)

PETER: My mother and father, to be honest I think they thought I wasn't serious at the start. But, they realised after a couple of months – they seen the difference in me, the physical appearance – I was going to work, turning up, not drunk, invited to family dos! (laughs) – I wasnae, you cannae invite him, he'll start something! – so, everything was changing in my life. But the effects on the family, it's different, in certain ways. Cos sometimes it's your family that tests you.

One of my family members says to me – do you not want a drink? I says, I don't drink anymore. He says, but you weren't that bad... This is the same person that came up to

prison to see me, to hospitals to see me, that tried to talk me out of drink. So that's where I had to change, and that's where CA came into it. And that's where courage comes in. And that's what CA show you, you need to have the courage to say no. You need to have the courage. And CA are showing people, in Glasgow, this is what sober guys do.

MUSIC: Underworld – Born Slippy

This is what the real people do.

25'30" END SEQUENCE

PETER: CA can make you achieve beyond your wildest dreams. And it all happened very fast for me – within three months of CA my girlfriend was pregnant! I'd been engaged, I'd got a job, I'd got my driving licence. And, I've got four kids now. My main priority is keeping sober and straight, and leading a decent lifestyle, and showing them the right way, and the right life to lead. Show I can be an example to them.

DAVIE: Peter's working now, he's got his family, we do move on from drugs... but we never say we're "fully recovered" because there's a lot of things that can happen. We believe it is an illness. No matter what we achieve in recovery, we're still alcoholics and drug addicts, and we always say that at the start of our meetings as well, and we can never forget that.

MEETINGS: I'm a recovering alcoholic, recovering drug addict... a day at a time...

PETER: Every day, my mind tries to trick me, into saying: "you cannae deal with that, you cannae deal with that, right, go and have a drink." And, to the day I die, I will always be a recovering alcoholic, recovering drug addict. And I need to keep fighting on that every single day.

DIANE: Are you clean? / RENTON: Yes. / DIANE: Is that a promise, then? / RENTON: Yes it is, as a matter of fact. / DIANE: Calm down, I'm only asking.

DONALD: The community's watching, always. But, you're not hiding from anybody, you're out there, you're showing them what you're all about. It needs to be down to you and it's going to be hard work. But, it does pay off. If you want to come here, you need to choose to work hard, and you need to get involved. You choose to be here, you choose to be with positive people. Choose life.

MUSIC up

**CHOOSE LIFE featured members of Calton Athletic Recovery Group, in Glasgow.
The producer was Steve Urquhart.
It was a Falling Tree production, for BBC Radio 4.**

27'35" MUSIC ENDS – NO BACK ANNO REQUIRED, credits included in programme