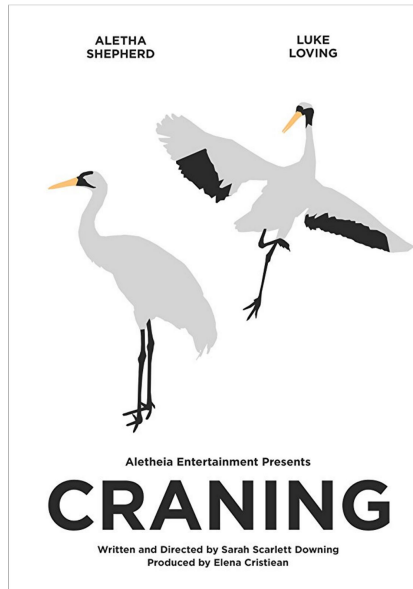


NEWFILMMAKERS

Los Angeles



PRESS KIT

STARRING

Aletha Shepherd
Luke Loving

WRITTEN BY

Sarah Scarlett Downing
BASED ON "IDOL" BY
Aletha Shepherd

DIRECTED BY

Sarah Scarlett Downing

PRODUCED BY

Aletheia Entertainment &
Elena Cristiean

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

Aletha Shepherd &
Sarah Scarlett Downing

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LOGLINE

Craning tells the story of a trying first date between two people as they attempt to break through the niceties of social norms to discover something deeper and more real.

SYNOPSIS

Erika and Noah are on a first date that is off to a bad start, but the evening takes a turn when Noah opens up to Erika about what he does for a living. An animal lover and environmentalist, Noah's job is to help endangered Sandhill cranes mate. He reveals that in order to do this, he must put on a giant crane costume and perform a complex mating dance to attract female cranes. Later that night, Erika and Noah end up back at Noah's loft apartment. Immediately the mood shifts as they walk into a messy, dark bedroom. Erika tells Noah that she has to go, but an upset Noah begs her not to go without explaining why she is suddenly so distressed and uncomfortable. Erika reveals that she's been sexually assaulted. Noah, now the uncomfortable one, fumbles an apology, unsure what to say or how to proceed. The two are caught in a moment of awkwardness and disconnection that seems to last ages, until Erika finally breaks the silence by asking Noah to perform the mating dance. Noah in all his awkwardness performs the dance for Erika, and in doing so, returns to her a kind of power over him that her earlier revelation took from her. Now on equal ground, the two have a chance to connect, or at least to share in the catharsis that comes from opening themselves up to one another.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

When Aletha approached me with the story and concept behind *Idol*, I was deeply moved and drawn to the project. As a woman and a feminist, it was important to me to tell Aletha's story, to share it with others, and in doing so, to raise awareness of the impact that sexual assault has on the lives of women who must continue to move forward in the wake of such trauma. It is to those women that we dedicate this short film.

Let me begin by saying what a pleasure it was to work on this short film. Aletha is a tremendous force of energy and beauty, and in her I had a strong, passionate partner with whom to develop this story. Together we made some changes to the story that began as *Idol*, hoping that such changes would help to add a level of emotional development to the narrative, creating space for our characters to learn and possibly even change.

We settled on a story that explores not the moment of sexual assault itself, but the difficult residual after effects of such an event in a young person's life. We wanted to ask the question: how does someone who has been raped even begin to open up to the possibility of love? In many ways this film is about loneliness. It is about the seemingly hopeless quest to find another person with whom to truly connect. It is about the complexities of forming a connection in the wake of trauma and, ultimately, on a positive note, it is about moving Forward.

Everyone who worked on this project was dedicated and excited to participate in such a special story. Aletha and Luke did a tremendous job bringing the script to life and exploring the nuances of Erika and Noah. Part of the pleasure of directing a story like this is the

experience of delving into these characters, discovering their motivations and, in turn, learning more about the human experience.

Our crew was terrific. Aletha and I were proud of how many women we had on set. In addition to Aletha and myself, our producer Elena Christensen was an invaluable asset, and we were thrilled to have on board Leila Ciszewski as our gaffer and Bahieh Claggett working sound. Our DP, David Kirkeby did a phenomenal job creating striking images to piece together our story. He was helped by Carlos Lopez, our fearless 1st AC. All the extras and everyone who helped out on set, we thank for your hard work and your commitment to our film! We couldn't have done it without you. I personally want to say that our team was one of the easiest and most agreeable on set that I've had the pleasure to work with, and I want to thank everyone for enabling such a relaxed environment in which to create.

Finally, I want to thank everyone who has lent us their support leading up to this project. It is thanks to all of you that the creation of the beautiful story has been made possible. I want to say from my end that I am incredibly happy with what we have put together. I think we have made something very special, and I am thrilled to have the opportunity to share it with all of you once we have moved through post. At the end of the day, we hope that what we have created allows others to see the world through the lens of those who have experienced a trauma like sexual assault, and we hope we can raise awareness of the after effects of such an event. Thank you all very much for this opportunity, and I look forward to sharing this very special project with you!

Sarah Scarlett Downing

CAST BIOS

ALETHA SHEPHERD IS A TRAINED BRITISH ACTRESS NOW BASED BETWEEN LONDON & LOS ANGELES.

Shepherd started her career modeling for various commercial campaigns including Pepsi, Nokia, Playstation and Mont Blanc. She then went on to travel the world competing in international beauty pageants including Miss World and Miss Globe where she won Miss Bikini and reached the top 10 finalists. Her first acting UK credits include the BBC's Clone and the UK's hit TV sitcom Phoneshop.

In the U.S. James Franco cast Shepherd in his feature film 'Roxana' for Rabbit Bandini Productions to be released shortly. She is currently on the festival circuit for 3 short films which she wrote, directed and produced under her production company, Aletheia Entertainment which won 'Best Short Short' at the LA Indie Film Festival.

LUKE LOVING

Luke Loving is an actor living in Los Angeles known for his work in *Jilted* (2015), *The Fixer* (2015) and *Managed* (2017).