



OFFICIAL SELECTION  
Santa Barbara  
INTERNATIONAL  
**Film**  
FESTIVAL



OFFICIAL SELECTION  
**aGLIFF / Prism**  
**Film Festival**  
2021



Official Selection  
**NewFilmmakers**  
Los Angeles



OFFICIAL SELECTION  
**ShortFest**  
**Film Market**  
2021



Semi-Finalist  
**Flickers' Rhode**  
**Island International**  
**Film Festival**  
2021



# WAKING UP

a short film by James Patrick Nelson



# Synopsis



A young gay man visits his uncle in the hospital when he finds something scandalous on the old man's phone. Eager to make a connection with a queer elder, he launches into an awkward ramble about sexual fantasies, which becomes a vulnerable confession about love, shame, and a search for community. This innovative short film explores the complex experiences of gay men of different generations, all in a single shot!



# Director's Statement

I spent a year co-authoring a memoir for an 80-year-old Broadway veteran. Among his many stories, he told me about being a young man in the 50's when being gay was a crime. He was my age when Stonewall happened. He spent decades denying his identity for the sake of his career. He lost dozens of friends and lovers in the AIDS epidemic. And then he lived long enough to witness an era of progress and possibilities he could never have imagined.

On the one hand, my time with this man taught me to be thankful for the liberty, safety, and visibility afforded me and my generation. But on the other hand, this awareness often induced a lot of shame. The pressure of living up to my elders' wildest dreams invariably made me feel like I was letting them down whenever I was anxious or heartbroken about anything.

Despite my capacity for joy, I'm learning that a healthy life has got to have a bit of heartache. And even though I'm lucky enough to live in liberal cities, in tolerant communities, in an era of marriage equality, and I don't encounter a lot of prejudice, I still experience heartache... because I'm a human being.

But in the majority of arts and media, LGBTQ+ people are not portrayed as full human beings. We serve a single function in the story - to be quippy, righteous, sexy, or in the old days, mostly pitied or feared. On the rare occasion we're the protagonist, our queerness is always the conflict, and the message is "once we find the courage to come out, everything will be fine".

My short film "Waking Up" is a reaction to all of the above - the story of a queer person long past the coming out phase, still struggling to find love and connection, as he reconciles his pain with his privilege, wrestles with his responsibility to his elders, and searches for his place in the community.

- James Patrick Nelson



# Festivals



"Waking Up" premiered at the Oscar-Qualifying Santa Barbara International Film Festival in April 2021. Thereafter, it screened at the OUTshine LGBTQ+ Film Festival in Miami, the Prism Film Festival in Austin, the Oscar-Qualifying Out On Film: Atlanta's LGBTQ+ Film Festival, and the New York City Indie Theatre Film Festival. It was a semi-finalist in Flickers' Rhode Island International Film Festival, and participated in the ShortFest Film Market. The film will be screening in the June Edition of NewFilmmakers Los Angeles, and currently streams on Dekkoo.

## Contact

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James Patrick Nelson has appeared in numerous award-winning indie films. He wrote, produced, and stars in the upcoming TV pilot "For Years to Come," with Richard Riehle. His many theatre credits include Broadway's *Slave Play* at the Mark Taper Forum, Bedlam's *Sense and Sensibility* at the American Repertory Theatre, the world premiere of *Immortal Longings* by Terrence McNally, and Off-Broadway productions of *The Three Sisters* with Maggie Gyllenhaal and *Ivanov* with Ethan Hawke. James has written several feature screenplays, and he is developing "For Years to Come" as a limited series.

[www.james-patrick-nelson.com](http://www.james-patrick-nelson.com)



## Cast

Jasper..... James Patrick Nelson  
Uncle Louis..... Dennis Elkins

## Crew

Director of Photography..... Adam Khan  
Art Director..... Brock Stillmunks  
Composer..... Kevin Sherwin  
Color-Correction..... Matthew Barnes  
Sound-Operator..... Jesse Flaitz  
Sound Mixer..... Kenneth Wilkinson  
Assistant Camera..... JD Acha  
Gaffer..... Grayson Horan  
Grip..... Miguel Rivas  
Make-Up..... Nicholette Talley  
Production Assistant..... Acacia Willis

Written, Produced, and Directed by  
James Patrick Nelson