

FLOATER

Category: Narrative Short Film

Running Time: 13:52

Genre: Drame/Horror/Weird



Directed by:

D.M. Harring

Written by:

D.M. Harring

Produced by:

**Liana Montemayor, Rafi Jacobs,
Stephen Mastrocola**

Starring:

**Jacob Wysocki, Jeffrey Nordling,
Darcy Rose Byrnes, Christine Elliott**

IMDB: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt22740388/>

FILM INFORMATION

FILM TITLE

Floater

SYNOPSIS

After his abusive father's death, a troubled man builds a mausoleum to the relationship they never had... in his parents' bathroom, while his grief-stricken family attempts to rescue him from his madness.

CONTACT INFO

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Stephen Mastrocola – Producer & 1st AD
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TECHNICAL INFO

Running Time: 13:52
Exhibition Format: 4K Scope (4096x1716)
Aspect Ratio: 2.39:1
Shooting Format: Arriraw 4.5k
Audio: 32-bit float WAV
Color, English

Q&A

What was the inspiration behind the story?

Isn't it obvious?! Kidding. Honestly, the film evolved so much over time, there really were three inspirations. The first was a story my late uncle told me years ago. He was a middle school science teacher in rural Maryland. One day he was asked for help by the janitor... someone had clogged a toilet. But this wasn't just any clog. The bowl-blocking turd was allegedly so large, they had to use garden shears to chop it up so the toilet could flush. That image always stuck with me, and the question... *How did someone pass that without dying?!!*

That fecal fable jumbled around in my brain for years until... I had my heart ripped from my chest and wrote a short story while possessed by that heartbreak. To explain, I was dumped by the first woman I ever loved. She was a musician (which should have been the only red flag I needed, but I guess you live and you learn). She gave me the ol' "I'm going on tour, so I can't be with you right now, even though I love you," and then started dating someone new a few months later. To make things even more agonizing, her band went supernova. Grammy noms. Performances on SNL. I had to hear songs about our relationship in the f***ing frozen food aisle at Trader Joe's. My pain was inescapable. I no longer had agency in my own life's narrative. And in that maelstrom of suck, the story of a huge piece of shit that torments a traumatized young man emerged fully formed from my mind. I'm nothing if not literal.

The last piece of inspiration happened that same year, a few months after getting dumped. My childhood friend died in a terrorist attack, and I was... happy? See, he had long ago stopped being my friend. I'd say it was around 9th Grade, the first time he convinced our friends to play "Hide and Go Seek," which involved eight wannabe skate punks hunting me with sticks while I (the only Jew in the group), tried to hide. I didn't stay hidden for long. I never did. Anyway, he got blown up by the Taliban while sipping coffee in a Kabul café and I genuinely didn't know how to take the news. Here was a guy whose idea of "tackle football" was tossing me a pigskin and having the others beat me until I cried. But he was also my first real friend, and I wasn't a kid who made friends easily. We met in 3rd Grade, bonded over *Sid Meier's Civilization* and *Star Wars*. We had sleepovers, watched movies, went on ski trips to a sad little hill in Maryland they called a mountain. Normal friend stuff. Sure, he became an evil sociopath, but that didn't take away that he had once been my best friend.

Anyway, all that trauma bled into the story I wrote after getting my heart broken by the musician. Similar to the journey of the film's protagonist, the story itself mutated. It got darker. Sadder. More complicated. A little confusing. But that was what it felt like, that confusing, *complicated* grief that I experienced. I guess making this film was a way for me to finally move past it (or at least try to).

Q&A CONT'D

What was the biggest obstacle you overcame during production of this film?

My daughter was born a few months before production, so I was juggling the experience of being a new father while trying to put this film together. It'd say that was a pretty insane obstacle, because I'm the type of dad who wants to be as present as humanly possible in my kid's life. I would not recommend making a film while raising an infant. It's rough. Also the trauma, that was tough too. I wouldn't suggest making a movie inspired by your core trauma.

This was the Director's first solo venture – how was that experience?

F***ing amazing. Am I allowed to write that? I have been obsessed with movies since childhood. Hitchcock. Kurosawa. Lucas. Gilliam. An unapologetic film N-E-R-D. I was that kid begging his parents to send him to film camp, making bootleg war movies and skate videos with my degenerate friends. All I ever wanted to be was a film director, but years of bullying and emotional trauma sapped any confidence I had in achieving my dream. But after establishing myself as a writer in Los Angeles, producing a few short films that I wrote, and studying theater directing under the incredible Howard Deutch, I finally found the courage to pursue my dream of directing a film. And it turned out all those years not directing prepared me exceptionally well for stepping behind the camera. I knew how to work with actors, how to adjust scenes on the fly, how to communicate effectively with my crew, how to handle conflict, etc. Sure, there were some bumps along the way, but for someone who never went to film school, I felt perfectly at home on set. I love problem-solving in real time, which I discovered is about 95% of a director's job, so I guess that little kid who dreamed of making movies wasn't *completely* out of his mind... or maybe it just takes a certain type of crazy to actually like this job.

What were some visual/literary influences for the film?

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind, 2004 (Dir: Michel Gondry)

Honey Boy, 2019 (Dir: Alma Har'el)

Swiss Army Man, 2016 (Dir: Daniels)

The Fisher King, 1991 (Dir: Terry Gilliam)

Black Swan, 2010 (Dir: Darren Aronofsky)

Delicatessen, 1991 (Dir: Marc Caro & Jean-Pierre Jeunet)

The Metamorphosis, 1915 (Wr: Franz Kafka)

Unreal, "Skeleton On The Dunny," 1985 (Wr: Paul Jennings)

How long did the project take?

Almost a decade. From that original short story to the finished film. Although the trauma started waaaaay before that. So I guess you can say I've been developing this project since high school. Damn...

Q&A CONT'D

What do you hope audiences take away from this film?

I want the audience walking away thinking, "What the f*** did I just watch?" That would tell me they'll likely remember the film. I can't tell you how many short films I've seen in my life and just... don't remember. I wrote FLOATER to be something you can't forget. Once they're past the initial shock, still thinking about the film days later, maybe then those imaginary audience members will meditate on their own experience with trauma and grief, maybe they'll develop a little empathy, or maybe they'll just be grossed out. Either way, unforgettable.



ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

This film began ten years ago as a short story, written during a particularly tumultuous and tragic period in my life. While already struggling with my mental health, I lost two uncles, my grandfather, the first love of my life, and my childhood best friend (who had become my abuser during my high school years). Like my feelings toward my onetime friend, my short story evolved over time, but even in its moment of genesis, FLOATER was always about *complicated* grief. So many stories, especially those on film, depict a simple form of grief. The death of a beloved parent or spouse. The loss of a child. Receiving a cancer diagnosis. We recognize that grief. It's always tragic. 10/10 on the Richter Scale of audience manipulation. A guaranteed cry. But how do we mourn those who hurt us? Those we once loved but have since grown to hate? How do we grieve without the familiar "5 Stages" playbook?

I'll admit that a short film might not be the most effective method of exploring this type of grief, but given the fact that this was my first real stab at directing since a few bad student films over a decade ago, I wasn't about to mortgage my family's future on a feature. So that short story was adapted into a short film, and I couldn't be prouder of the result. The film is messy, ugly, disturbing, funny, scary, and definitely not for everyone. But those are the kind of films I like to watch, the films that challenge their audience. Films that stay with us long after the credits roll. Films that haunt us. That ethos was my north star in writing and directing this film – Don't be afraid to turn people off (and as a recovering people-pleaser that was no small feat). Like the main character of the film, Philip, I hope this film haunts you, or at the very least makes you empathize a bit more with those struggling with mental illness and grief.

The last thing I'd like to mention is that there is a level of ambiguity to the film that is intentional. Is Philip having a mental break? Is he possessed? What about his mom? I don't want to answer those questions for the audience, because I don't have them. I never had answers during my struggle with grief and trauma, so I couldn't give those answers to my audience (plus it's more fun this way). I also likely watched way too many films by Terry Gilliam as a kid. What I will admit is that the events of the film change Philip physically and mentally. Anyone familiar with this type of grief/trauma knows that, like a disease, it can transform you in horrifying ways. You might end up stronger on the other side, or you might become a version of the monster who hurt you. All I can hope is that those suffering through this particular type of anguish can find some comfort in this film, knowing that there is no easy way to process this pain.

CREDITS

CAST

PHILIP	Jacob Wysocki
FATHER	Jeffrey Nordling
MELANIE	Darcy Rose Byrnes
VICTORIA	Christine Elliott
YOUNG PHILIP	Bentley Patrick Kreher

CREW

DIRECTOR / WRITER	D.M. Harring
PRODUCERS	Liana Montemayor Stephen Mastrocola Rafi Jacobs
CASTING DIRECTOR	Rachel Reiss
CASTING ASSOCIATE	Aika Greenidge
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY	Daniel Bombell
PRODUCTION DESIGNER	Renna Pilar
COSTUME DESIGNER	Caroline Allander
EDITOR	Brian Swanson
ORIGINAL SCORE	Andrew Gonzales Nick Ladue
1st ASSISTANT DIRECTOR	Stephen Mastrocola
SCRIPT SUPERVISOR	Danielle Clarke
1st ASSISTANT CAMERA	Michael Ashe
2nd ASSISTANT CAMERA	Jordan Green
DIT / ASSISTANT EDITOR	Luka Stojcic

CREW CONT'D

CAMERA PA	Noami "Mimi" Miyamoto
GAFFER	Giovanni Zelko
KEY GRIP	Justin Bernard
BEST BOY ELECTRIC	Chase Erickson
ELECTRIC	Jack Motter
BEST BOY GRIP	Mark Johnson
GRIPS	Pedro Penteado
	Zandra Cullen
ELECTRIC INTERN	Omar Gutierrez
ART DIRECTOR	Noah Dains
SET DECORATOR	Paris Peterson
SET DRESSER	Jamie Weiss
ART PA	Omar Gutierrez
HAIR & MAKEUP	Maddie Webb
SOUND MIXER	Rob Spence
CLARINETIST	Stephen Taylor
PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS	Connor McNeilly
	Allison Allbee
	Zach Strunin
SOUND EDITOR	Matt Schwartz
SOUND EFFECTS EDITOR	Xiodan Li
SOUND SUPERVISOR	Hamed Hokamzadeh, MPSE
COLORIST	Jason Knutzen
VFX	Ryan Harpole

BIOS



D.M. HARRING – DIRECTOR / WRITER

D.M. Harring is a writer/director based in Los Angeles. He was an Executive Story Editor on ABC's freshman drama series, THE COMPANY YOU KEEP. He previously wrote on FOX's ROSEWOOD. He has developed projects for CBS, Warner Bros TV, Electric Somewhere, and Basset Vance Productions. He has written and produced short films that have amassed over 4 million views on Youtube. Since 2017, he has studied theater directing under legendary director, Howard Deutch. FLOATER is his cinematic directorial debut.



DANIEL BOMBELL – DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Daniel Bombell is an Australian cinematographer known for his feature film, television, and commercial work. As a Director of Photography, he has shot commercials for some of the biggest brands in the world, including Home Depot, Evian, Snickers, and Bank of America. He recently completed principal photography as 2nd unit DP on the upcoming KINGDOM OF THE PLANET OF THE APES. He has worked for over fifteen years in film and television, on blockbusters such as JUMANJI: WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE, MAZE RUNNER: THE SCORCH TRIALS, and MAZE RUNNER:

THE DEATH CURE, as well as television pilots for SCORPION, HAND OF GOD, and 1600 PENN. He has worked with some of the top filmmakers in the world, including Justin Lin, Marc Forster, Craig Gillespie, and Jake Kasdan.



STATIC FILMS – PRODUCER(S)

STATIC FILMS is a full-service boutique production company realizing artistic visions. Focusing on talent-driven material, Static provides the necessary resources and support throughout every step of the filmmaking process. Producing four features in its first year alone, spanning comedy to psychological thriller, the team

continues proving what can be accomplished through ingenuity, grit, and resolve. The team has showcased such talents as Chandler Riggs (THE WALKING

DEAD), Steve Little (EASTBOUND & DOWN), Erik Griffin (WORKAHOLICS), Michael Vlamis (ROSWELL, NEW MEXICO), Aurora Perrineau (WESTWORLD), Harvey Guillén (WHAT WE DO IN THE SHADOWS) and, most recently, Michael Madsen (RESERVOIR DOGS), Rob Morrow (NORTHERN EXPOSURE), and Zachary Gordon (DIARY OF A WIMPY KID).



JACOB WYSOCKI – ACTOR (“PHILIP”)

Jacob Wysocki is an actor-comedian (TERRI, PITCH PERFECT) who came up in the mean streets of improv comedy and early internet sketch. DIY til you DIE. His film and TV credits include: UNFRIENDED, SUPERSTORE, RENO 911, AN EVENING WITH BEVERLY LUFF LINN, and others.



JEFFREY NORDLING – ACTOR (“FATHER”)

Jeffrey Nordling received his MFA in Acting at Southern Methodist University and began his career on the stage both in New York and regional theatres. He was seen in Richard Greenberg's TAKE ME OUT at The Geffen as well as the premiere of LEWIS AND CLARK REACH THE EUPHRATES at the Mark Taper Forum. His other regional credits include The Old Globe, The Oregon Shakespeare Festival and many others. His New York credits include Shakespeare In

The Park, The Public Theatre and CSC. He has been a member of The Antaeus Company since the beginning and has participated in many productions and projects there including Uncle Vanya and The Autumn Garden.

Jeffrey can be seen on the Apple TV limited series FIVE DAYS AT MEMORIAL, the CBS drama SO HELP ME TODD, and is best known to audiences for his role opposite Laura Dern in the Emmy-winning HBO series BIG LITTLE LIES. He can be seen in Clint Eastwood's SULLY and Showtime's I'M DYING UP HERE. Also seasons on 24, DESPERATE HOUSEWIVES, BODY OF PROOF, RAKE, KILLER WOMEN and the films TRON, HOME OF THE BRAVE, SURFER DUDE, FLICKA and FLIGHT 93 for A&E. Other work: HBO's AND THE BAND PLAYED ON and CITIZEN COHN, as well as CRIMINAL MINDS, CASTLE, ARROW, MALIBU COUNTRY, CLOUD 9, ONCE AND AGAIN, ASK ME AGAIN, PROVIDENCE, APOLLO 11, QUIZ SHOW, RUBY, WORKING GIRL, HOLY MATRIMONY, MIGHTY DUCKS 3, and many others.



DARCY ROSE BYRNES – ACTOR (“MELANIE”)

Darcy Rose landed her first TV role as "Abby" in THE YOUNG AND THE RESTLESS at the age of 5. When she ended her five-year tenure on the show (and its sister show, THE BOLD AND THE BEAUTIFUL), she joined shows like HOW I MET YOUR MOTHER as "Lucy," and DIRTY SEXY MONEY as "Kiki." She is best known for playing "Penny" in DESPERATE HOUSEWIVES, "Ikki" on THE LEGEND OF KORRA, and the speaking and singing voices of "Princess Amber" on SOFIA THE FIRST and

"Maricela" on SPIRIT RIDING FREE.

Most recently, while playing "Harper" on BIG SHOT, she wrote Disney's first queer love song, "Everything to Me," which ended with Disney's first queer kiss. After a brief stint at RADA, Darcy Rose studied at UCB where she was tapped to perform musical improv for their Mess Hall shows. The self-described "Foul-Mouthed Flower Child" is also a multi-instrumental songwriter and a musical stand up comedian. When asked if she had anything she wanted to say for this bio, she said, "I can't HEAR you when I don't have CHOCOLATE in my MOUTH!" Her debut album is currently scheduled for release February 2024.



CHRISTINE ELLIOTT – ACTOR (“VICTORIA”)

Christine Elliott started her acting career in New York. A couple of her favorite gigs were "The Buddy Holly Story" on Broadway and "Return To The Forbidden Planet" Off-Broadway. While in NYC, she studied with Anne Jackson and Austin Pendleton at HB Studios and learned the Meisner Technique with William Alderson. She continued her studies in Los Angeles, most notably learning the Stella Adler Technique with Arthur Mendoza. Her production of the two person play

Oleanna, by David Mamet, at the Victory Theatre in Burbank, received the LA Times Critic's Choice Award. Some of her credits include: HUNTERS (Amazon), HAND OF GOD (Amazon), REAL HUSBANDS OF HOLLYWOOD (BET), GLOW (Netflix), PROMISED LAND (ABC) and ROPED (Netflix). Christine is currently repped by the William Kerwin Agency.