

Mongrel Media presents

NOVEMBER

A Film By Greg Harrison

with
**Courtney Cox, James Le Gros, Michael Ealy, Nora Dunn,
Nick Offerman and Anne Archer**

**2005 Sundance Film Festival- Official Selection
2005 Sundance Film Festival- Winner,
Cinematography Award**

(2004, USA, 73 minutes)

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Cast & Crew

Filmmakers

Editor & Director Greg Harrison
Writer Benjamin Brand
Producers..... Danielle Renfrew
..... Gary Winick
..... Jake Abraham
Executive Producers..... Jonathan Sehring
..... Caroline Kaplan
..... John Sloss
Casting..... Sheila Jaffe, CSA
..... Georgianne Walken, CSA
Original Music Lew Baldwin
Costume Designer Danny Glicker
Production Designer Tracey Gallacher
Director of Photography Nancy Schreiber, ASC

Cast

Courteney Cox Sophie

James Le Gros Hugh

Michael Ealy Jesse

Nora Dunn Dr. Fayn

Nick Offerman Officer Roberts

Anne Archer Sophie's mother

Synopsis

After a dinner out, photographer Sophie Jacobs (Cox) and her boyfriend Hugh (Le Gros) stop at a corner store for a late night snack. While Sophie waits unaware in the car, Hugh is murdered in a violent robbery.

Haunted by guilt, Sophie goes on with her life as best she can: teaching photography at a local art college, meeting her mother (Archer) for lunch, and visiting her therapist (Dunn). But one day at school, a slide mysteriously appears in the projector's carousel: an image of what looks like her car in front of the corner store the night of the shooting. Are these paranoid visions stemming from her grief and guilt, or does someone know something about the murder?

As her investigation deepens, more strange events start to occur, drawing into question exactly what happened the night of Hugh's death. As Sophie struggles with her memory of that night, her life becomes like a photograph itself, an image refracted through a lens, with as much outside the frame as in.

November is a psychological thriller exploring a woman's struggle to transcend trauma through a surreal blend of emotion and memory. The narrative and visual style are comprised of dreamlike moments and images stemming from Sophie's subjective experience, blurring the line between reality and the unconscious.

About the Production

The script for NOVEMBER was written by screenwriter Benjamin Brand, a long-time friend of producer Danielle Renfrew. Says Renfrew, “Ben had the seed of the story in his mind since 1995 when he came across a New York Times article about a convenience store robbery. Then in 2002, in a week-long burst of writing, he wrote the first draft.” Brand gave the script to Renfrew and director Greg Harrison. Both found it to be an intriguing story as well as a viable independent film. Harrison worked with Brand over the next four months developing his original idea further.

Renfrew gave the finished draft to producer Gary Winick at InDigEnt, who felt the script was exactly what they were looking for: it expanded on an established genre, could be filmed relatively inexpensively and had the potential to push the aesthetic boundaries of digital video. With InDigEnt on board, the film moved forward very quickly.

Says Renfrew, "InDigEnt is focused on making movies, not developing them and they're willing to take risks. I knew that if we could agree to work within their filmmaking model, Greg would have the freedom to make the movie he really wanted. That was thrilling to me as a producer." Harrison adds, “At the time NOVEMBER came to us, Danielle and I had been frustrated by the long and arduous development process that our other projects were going through at studios. One of the refreshing things about the way InDigEnt makes films is that they are committed to giving creative power to the filmmakers. They find a script they like, a filmmaking team they trust, and let you go make the movie.” In a matter of months a production start date was set and casting was underway.

Harrison first met Courteney Cox in a casting meeting for a project he was developing with “Doonesbury” creator Garry Trudeau. “From our first meeting I was very impressed by her. She clearly had more potential as a dramatic actress than one would think given her comedic performance on ‘Friends’.” In addition to Harrison’s enthusiasm for Cox’s acting talents, he was also thrilled to find her open to redefining her image. “Courteney and I discussed all the ways in which her character in NOVEMBER could be different from Monica on ‘Friends’. I threw out a lot of changes to her appearance and worried she would think they were too much. But she was more than game and suggested many herself. In the end we cut seven inches

off her hair, gave her gray streaks, put her in glasses with virtually no makeup, gave her right ear multiple piercings, and dressed her in simple, loose-fitting clothes.”

Cox and Harrison discussed the script at length prior to shooting.

“Courteney was incredibly thoughtful and detail-oriented in her approach to the role. Our first of many meetings lasted six hours without a break. Given the non-linear and somewhat experimental nature of the narrative, she asked a lot of questions, not only about the emotional arc of her character but also about the various meanings of the story. I welcomed it, as it’s exactly how I like to work. Throughout shooting, we constantly discussed the emotional place her character was [in] at any given time in the fractured narrative. Amidst all the demands of the production -- structurally, aesthetically and technically -- these discussions kept her performance honest and real.”

With Courteney as the film’s center, Harrison set about casting the other roles. “In order to further redefine Courteney, I carefully considered the actors I placed around her. Specifically, I wanted to make an unexpected choice for the role of Hugh, the boyfriend. I had been a fan of James Le Gros for a long time, going back to DRUGSTORE COWBOY, and felt that his unpredictable, slightly quirky performances contrasted nicely with Courteney’s popular image. James loved the experimental, ambiguous elements of the script and came on board after our first meeting.”

Regarding the casting of Anne Archer as Sophie’s mother, Harrison says, “I met Anne following a performance of ‘The Poison Tree’ at the Taper Forum in Los Angeles. I was friends with the playwright and Anne was starring as the lead. After a performance we all went out for a drink and Anne and I hit it off. When it came time to cast NOVEMBER, I immediately thought of her. I liked the idea of turning the tables so that the mother would appear sexy and glamorous while Courteney’s character appeared plain and slightly disheveled. Anne filled this role perfectly.”

Shooting began in May of 2003 for 15 days on mini-DV, using the Panasonic DVX-100 camera. Harrison says, “Even though we were shooting mini-DV on an extremely short schedule and small budget, I wanted to avoid the rough, hand-held, natural light aesthetic that most films of this size often resort to. I wanted to push mini-DV into a new realm. I didn’t want to abandon thinking cinematically -- telling the story through light, color, framing and camera movement. My plan was fairly ambitious

for any film, but the 15-day schedule really pushed the entire cast and crew to the absolute limit.”

This presented particular challenges to the film’s director of photography, Nancy Schreiber (whose work includes Neil LaBute’s *YOUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS*). Harrison remembers, “Trying to fuse guerilla filmmaking with a complex cinematic style drove Nancy insane, but I was amazed at the innovative ways she solved a lot of the problems she faced. For the corner store, for instance, I wanted it to look dark and murky, with a pale green tint. We didn’t have the time or money to light or use colored gels, so Nancy white-balanced the camera in the warm tones of a nearby streetlight. Under the store’s cooler fluorescent lights the image turned a perfect pale green. We were able to create the look we wanted in camera, instead of having to wait to dial it in during postproduction.”

In fact, the entire filmmaking team often had to find creative solutions to problems. For Sophie’s apartment, the location scouts had little luck finding one that would work for the four shooting days required. With production underway and only two days before the apartment location was needed, the crew took over producer Danielle Renfrew’s house and turned it into Sophie’s one-bedroom apartment. Renfrew adds, “My house has a lot of natural light, windows and a view of Los Angeles but Tracey Gallacher, the production designer, changed all that. Overnight, she turned a well-lit Spanish-style home into a dark, claustrophobic apartment with mid-century design, all without a budget.”

Unable to afford trailers or any of the other amenities usually found on a film set, Renfrew convinced her neighbors to allow the production to take over their apartment as a staging area. Renfrew: “It was a little surreal for the neighbors to come home and find Courteney Cox hanging out in their kitchen or James Le Gros coming out of their bathroom, but the spirit on the set was very friendly and everyone involved worked together to make the best possible film. Harrison adds, “I’d like to believe we returned Danielle’s home back to its original state once we left, but she might have another opinion on this.”

Another location that posed its own set of problems was the corner store, the location where Hugh’s murder takes place and to which the story continually returns. “I wanted this location to almost be another character in the film, but we had no money for production design. However, when Tracey

returned with scouting photos of LoLo's Market in Boyle Heights, I knew we had found it. The store had been independently owned for 30 years by a local and had never been modernized or refurbished. It would have cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to recreate the history and texture of this store on a set." But that didn't mean shooting there was entirely without difficulties. Renfrew continues: "With little money for location fees, there were only a limited number of hours we could shoot there a night. A few of those hours overlapped with the store's normal business hours, so we were often setting up shots while real customers continued to shop."

As with his previous film GROOVE, Harrison served as editor on NOVEMBER as well. Harrison says, "Given the non-linear structure of the script, I felt editing would be where I would discover the final film. Most films go through a re-think after the rough cut, but after assembling the film as written and screening it, it was clear I needed to profoundly rethink the structure. For example, the original script employed something like 15-20 flashbacks throughout, but seeing that on-screen, it was clear things were too fragmented. I had always thought of the flashbacks as an indelible part of the story, but I eventually cut the flashbacks by more than half. In the end, almost every scene in the movie ended up in a different position, and yet somehow I was able to unearth my original intention for the film."

Another element that Harrison sees as key to the tone of the film is his collaboration with artist Lew Baldwin, who composed the music and developed many of the abstract visual effects featured in the film. Lew's unique work fusing sound, music and graphic design with interactive media has been featured at galleries around the world. He was also part of the Whitney Biannual in New York City in 2000, the first year the prestigious gallery accepted computer-based work into the show. "Lew and I had worked together in the past and I had always been inspired by his art. I felt my vision for NOVEMBER's disturbing, surreal and free-associative tone were exactly what I had loved about Lew's work. The idea of bringing on an artist like Lew to create the score and visual effects instead of a traditional composer and effects person was exciting to me. I think we came up with something unique and unexpected."

Despite the challenges posed to them, the filmmakers enjoyed the process and feel the finished film reflects the unique experience of making it. Says Executive Producer John Sloss, "Greg and the November cast and crew managed to do with this film what indigent has strived for since its

conception -- they took the relatively limited resources available to them and turned them into artistic opportunities. In the process I think that they have expanded what is thought of as "possible" within the context of lower-budget filmmaking." Executive Producer Jonathan Sehring agrees, adding, "We were very eager to work with Greg and Courteney on this film and we couldn't be happier with the end result. They took a lot of major creative risks with this film, which is exactly what we were hoping for."

As for audiences, Harrison says he's excited about having made a film that might challenge an audience's expectations: "I worked hard to balance the narrative between intrigue and confusion, between ambiguity and fact. For me, the film was designed around a specific meaning, but it may only be a personal meaning to me. The ambiguity in the film allows room for audience to become personally involved in determining its meaning. Many of the films that inspired me in making NOVEMBER – Nicolas Roeg's DON'T LOOK NOW, Alain Resnais' LAST YEAR AT MARIENBAD and Steven Soderbergh's THE LIMEY – did this effectively.

"For me the movie is about how memory creates a person's reality. What we choose to remember, how we choose to remember it and what we choose to forget creates the world we think we live in. Particularly in the context of a trauma, I think this process of selective memory is part of a person's struggle toward acceptance, toward facing the truth.

"On one level, NOVEMBER is a work of narrative fiction, but on another it is very much like a work of abstract art wherein the experience of watching the film is what the film is about. If it can engage people on that level and spark lively discussion then I think I've done my job."

About the Filmmakers

Greg Harrison – Editor & Director

Greg Harrison made his debut as the writer/director of the independent feature film GROOVE, an ensemble comedy chronicling one night in the underground rave scene in San Francisco. Shot for \$200,000, it premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in January 2000. Sony Pictures Classics purchased worldwide rights to GROOVE for \$1.5 million. The film garnered national press attention, with feature stories appearing in The New York Times, Entertainment Weekly and Rolling Stone, among others. It also received an Independent Spirit Award nomination for Best Feature Film Under \$500,000.

Greg's career began in the early 1990's assistant editing on feature films such as Mira Nair's THE PEREZ FAMILY and Fred Schepisi's SIX DEGREES OF SEPARATION. In less than two years he became an editor, working on such projects as THE LIFE AND TIMES OF RICKIE LEE JONES, a feature-length performance film for Warner Brothers Records; HOUSE OF LOVE, a feature documentary on recording artist Amy Grant for A & M Records; and a music video tribute to Jerry Garcia directed by Wayne Wang for Miramax called CIGARETTES & COFFEE.

In addition, Harrison has worked as writer, editor and graphic designer on many well-known feature film ad campaigns for Walt Disney and Touchstone Pictures, including FLUBBER, BEAUTY AND THE BEAST and ALIVE, and has worked as a post-production consultant on projects at American Zoetrope, MGM, Skywalker Ranch and Amblin Entertainment.

While writing GROOVE, Harrison spent time with teacher Marcia Kimmell at THE NEXT STAGE, an improvisational theatre group in San Francisco that brings actors, writers and directors together to use improv techniques to explore scenes and develop directorial skills.

Danielle Renfrew – Producer

Danielle Renfrew produced the independent feature film GROOVE, with Greg Harrison. In 2001, she formed Map Point Pictures with Greg Harrison. Through Map Point Pictures she produced NOVEMBER, and Amanda Micheli's feature documentary about Hollywood stuntwomen, DOUBLE DARE. DOUBLE DARE features interviews with Quentin Tarantino, Steven Spielberg, Lucy Lawless and Lynda Carter and recently received the audience award at the AFI festival.

In 1998, Danielle produced and directed the short documentary DEAR DR. SPENCER, narrated by Lili Taylor. It was nominated for an Emmy Award in 1999 and has received numerous awards from festivals including the National Educational Media Network, the San Francisco International Film Festival and the Nashville Independent Film Festival. The Los Angeles Times called DEAR DR. SPENCER "fascinating...an illuminating documentary" and New York's Village Voice called it "the real and far more subversive Pleasantville."

Previously, she worked with Concentric Media as the Distribution Coordinator and Associate Producer of FROM THE BACK ALLEYS TO THE SUPREME COURT AND BEYOND, a three-part documentary series for public television. Awards for the trilogy include an Academy Award nomination, an Emmy Award, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting's Gold Medal. She continues to serve as a member of Concentric Media's Board of Directors. Danielle is represented by attorney Alex Kohner of BARNES MORRIS KLEIN MARK & YORN and THE WILLIAM MORRIS AGENCY.

Benjamin Brand - Writer

Benjamin Brand is a Los Angeles based filmmaker and screenwriter. He was born and raised in New London, Connecticut.

His short film, THE GOOD DEED, was the winner of the Dore Schary Award, as well as prizes from the Chicago International Film Festival and the USA Film Festival. His documentary, OPPOSITE CAMPS, which aired nationally on public television, was funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, making Ben the youngest filmmaker to receive the prestigious grant.

His other screenplays include CONVICTION, an assignment for HBO and Baltimore/Spring Creek, and MINOR CHARACTERS, adapted from the National Book Award winner for Propaganda Films. His original screenplays include COIN-OPERATED, THE ACCOMPLICES, and JEWBOY, a fact-based drama set during World War II.

About the Cast

Courteney Cox (Sophie)

Courteney Cox is best known for her standout performances as “Monica” on the hit series “Friends” which won a 2002 Emmy Award for “Best Comedy” and her role as Gale Weathers in Wes Craven’s horror trilogy SCREAM.

Courteney moved to Los Angeles in 1985 and nabbed her first big break when she was cast in “Family Ties” as Michael J. Fox’s girlfriend. She starred opposite Jim Carrey in 1994’s breakout hit ACE VENTURA: PET DETECTIVE, and her other film credits include 3000 MILES TO GRACELAND opposite Kurt Russell and Kevin Costner, GET WELL SOON directed by Justin McCarthy, MR. DESTINY opposite Michael Cain, and COCOON: THE RETURN.

Courteney recently created the interior design show “Mix It Up” which she also produces for cable’s WE (Women’s Entertainment) Network. Courteney lives in California with her family and dogs.

James LeGros (Hugh)

Minnesota native, James Le Gros has appeared in over sixty feature films and numerous television productions. Among these films are DRUGSTORE COWBOY, SAFE, THE MYTH OF FINGERPRINTS, LIVING IN OBLIVION, and SCOTLAND P.A.

Michael Ealy (Jesse)

Michael Ealy has given strong supporting performances in KISSING JESSICA STEIN, BAD COMPANY, BARBERSHOP and 2 FAST 2 FURIOUS opposite Paul Walker. Ealy is set to star in the upcoming Ernest Dickerson film NEVER DIE ALONE opposite DMX and David Arquette after which he will reprise his role as “Ricky Nash” to film BARBERSHOP 2.

Nora Dunn (Dr. Fayn)

Nora Dunn is best known for her 5 years on Saturday Night Live. She has since been weaving effortlessly between comedy and drama in roles such in

THREE KINGS, WORKING GIRL, WHAT PLANET ARE YOU FROM?, BRUCE ALMIGHTY, HEARTBREAKERS, DROP DEAD GORGEOUS, BULLWORTH, RUNAWAY JURY, LAWS OF ATTRACTION, DIE MOMMIE DIE, and CHERISH. For television, Miss Dunn recently shot Comedy Central's "Knee-Hi P.I."

Anne Archer (Sophie's mother)

Anne Archer is best known for her Academy Award-nominated role as Michael Douglas' sympathetic, tortured wife, "Beth Gallagher," in Adrian Lyne's thriller, FATAL ATTRACTION. Archer is also well-known for her other work in films such as SHORT CUTS, PATRIOT GAMES, and CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER. In 2000 she appeared in the film THE ART OF WAR. She will soon be seen in Showtime's new series "The L Word" with Jennifer Beals.