WORLD PREMIERE – 2019 TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL

USA / 2019 / 11 min / English

Directed by Lance Edmands
Written by Lance Edmands & Sarah Tihany

For downloadable high-res images: https://tinyurl.com/y27udtk5
**LOGLINE**

When a young couple encounters a strange old man wandering in a snowstorm, they must decide if he needs their help, or if he has more sinister intentions.

**SYNOPSIS**

A young couple is driving home from a party on a snowy winter night when they encounter a strange old man standing in the middle of the road. Clothed only in a dirty t-shirt and sweatpants, he is unresponsive and blank-faced. The couple's confusion rapidly devolves into an argument as they struggle to determine if he truly needs help, or if they are the ones experiencing the threat. Then, when they finally make up their mind, things take a horrifying turn. Filmed from the interior of a car in a single, unbroken take, WHITEOUT examines what happens when fear of the unknown penetrates your bubble and privilege takes the wheel.

**FESTIVAL Q&A**

What influenced this work?

For me, this film started out with a very simple image that I had in my head: an old man, standing in the middle of the road, lit up in the headlights of a car. I co-wrote the film with Sarah Tihany, who also plays the female lead. So from that spark of an idea, she and I began to build out the story. Was this man lost? Was he hurt and in need of help? Or was he laying in wait, preying on innocent victims who happen to cross his path? How would we approach this situation? Would we get out to help the man or would we drive on in an act of self-preservation? This simple image conjured up a lot of rich, dramatic possibilities that we were really excited to explore.

At the same time, I have always wanted to make a film that was photographed in a single take. It forces you to concentrate on the timing of the performances and the precision of the blocking. You don’t have editing and camera trickery to fall back on, it all has to work within a single, unbroken shot.

Since so much of this particular story idea was about perspective, it also seemed like the perfect opportunity to combine form and narrative. The camera is literally inside the bubble with our characters, experiencing the world from their point of view. This further exaggerates the idea of the “other” and forces the audience to be complicit with the characters, almost as a third passenger in the vehicle. Hopefully, this allows the audience to ask themselves how they might react in this situation, examining their own relationship to fear and suspicion in the face of ambiguity.

Ultimately, WHITEOUT is a story about the safety of the interior being threatened by the unknown of the exterior. When Lydia and Jake set out for home in a blizzard, they remain perfectly at ease, in the afterglow of a friendly dinner party, harbored in the comfort of their car. They occupy a certain privilege. When a strange man appears, seemingly out of nowhere,
their car, along with their sense of safety, comes to a screeching halt. His neediness penetrates their security. That unstable balance leads to an immediate breakdown in communication between the couple. All sorts of insecurities come to light—his masculinity, her family dynamic—and in in the end, it ruins them.

WHITEOUT is a thriller with a dark comedic edge about how our calm insular lives often belie the lurking threat of the world around us. However earnestly we may try to construct our interior, the outside always finds a way in.

**Storytelling brings people together. How does your film accomplish this?**

I love films that are built around tension. That edge-of-your-seat feeling is really unique to cinema. The collective experience of watching something in the dark that is fraught with suspense can be both exhilarating and cathartic. Hopefully, WHITEOUT is that kind of experience for the audience.

**Why does this story need to be told now?**

I think WHITEOUT explores the idea of safety bubbles and how people react differently when that bubble is penetrated. One obvious reaction is fear. The unknown is frightful and all of your insecurities can be projected onto that which is unfamiliar. Another reaction is empathy. Perhaps that foreign presence has arrived to seeking their own shelter. This fundamental disagreement on how to deal with the unknown has even forced its way into our politics as of late. WHITEOUT examines how privilege and fear can warp our assessment of a situation. If we let terror and self-preservation take over our better judgment, the consequences can be devastating.

**What is something that all filmmakers should keep in mind in order to become better cinematic storytellers?**

Pay attention to that which is outside the frame, because what the camera doesn’t see can be just as important as what it does. The fundamental cinematic element of WHITEOUT is perspective. It’s important to consider what lies within the frame, but what is being omitted from view can sometimes shift the meaning in an even more drastic way.

**Tell us what you’re excited to experience at #Tribeca2019 or a favorite anecdote from a past Tribeca Film Festival.**

I’m really looking forward to experiencing the film with an audience. Hopefully, everyone feels trapped inside the car with our characters and considers what they would do in that situation. Premiering BLUEBIRD at the festival five years ago was one of the most important moments of my life and I’m thrilled to be returning with a completely different kind of film.

**What causes are close to your heart and how do you explore and fight for these causes in your art, or even in your life off-set? For you, what are some pertinent issues and experiences that you wish were represented with greater frequency on screen?**
For me, I'm interested in the marriage of form and content. What kinds of stories are totally unique to cinema? Of all the creative pursuits, film occupies such a unique space between popular entertainment and art. In my own work, it's always important for me to find stories that couldn't be told effectively in any other medium. The tools of cinema should be essential to the narrative itself. Emotional impact is most effective when its almost subconscious. I'd love to see more films that deal with the interior lives of characters in a way that honors the confusion, contradiction, and ambiguity inside of all of us.

BIOS:

**Lance Edmands** (director & writer) was born and raised on the coast of Maine and graduated from NYU Tisch School of the Arts. His work has been featured at the Sundance, Tribeca, SXSW, Berlin, and New York Film Festivals. His first feature film as writer/director, BLUEBIRD, was invited to the Sundance Institute Screenwriters and Directors Labs and was awarded grants from Cinereach, the Richard Vague/Chris Columbus Production Fund, and the San Francisco Film Society. BLUEBIRD, starring John Slattery, Amy Morton, Adam Driver, Emily Meade, and Louisa Krause, premiered at the 2013 Tribeca Film Festival and was released theatrically by Factory 25 and Sundance Artist Services. His first narrative feature as an editor, Lena Dunham's TINY FURNITURE, won the Grand Jury Prize at SXSW and was released by IFC and Criterion Collection. Lance also directs and edits commercials, including acclaimed spots for Ford, Google, and Cadillac.

**Sarah Tihany** (actor & writer) is a native New Yorker, currently based in Brooklyn. She was formally trained at Lee Strasberg Theatre & Film Institute, HB Studios, Larry Singer Studio, and as a BFA in Acting at the University of Southern California's School of Dramatic Arts. She graduated from NYU’s Gallatin School of Individualized Studies with a concentration in Gender Performance On Screen and Stage. Co-founder of Blakelight Productions, she wrote, produced, and starred in her first feature film, OTHER PEOPLE. She also co-wrote and starred in STRAYS, a short film directed by Lance Edmands that received acclaim on the festival circuit. Cut Print Film said of her performance: “The actress is on screen for nearly every moment of STRAYS, and her expressive, empathetic presence fills each frame with a natural, introspective intimacy rarely glimpsed on screens big or small.”

**David Call** (actor) has been a staple of the American indie film scene for the last decade, acting in films such as TINY FURNITURE, JAMES WHITE, GABRIEL, THE GIRL IN THE BOOK, TWO GATES OF SLEEP, and many others, including Larry Fessenden’s upcoming DEPRAVED. He has also been on many TV series, most recently THE SINNER, THE BLACKLIST, THE GOOD FIGHT, THE BREAKS & many more. David recently wrote, directed & starred in a short film, COLE, which won the Hammer-to-Nail Spring ’18 Short Film Contest and played many festivals, including Indie Memphis, Sidewalk, Maryland, Dallas and Eastern Oregon, where it received the Audience Award for Best Short. It also received the No Budge Award for Best Performance, was recently selected for Short of the Week and is a Vimeo Staff Pick. David was born and raised in the mountains of Washington State and is a graduate of NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts.

**Patrick Michael Walsh Jr.** (actor) was born in Trenton, New Jersey. Pat graduated from the Moore School of Business at the University of South Carolina, where he was a member of the men’s NCAA Division 1 soccer team. After college, Pat played professional soccer for the New Jersey Eagles of the American Soccer League. After hanging up his cleats, Pat began
dabbling in the film industry. Pat went on to perform stunts, act, and stunt coordinate. He has been credited in over 150 film and TV projects including BLACK MASS, MANCHESTER BY THE SEA, YOU WERE NEVER REALLY HERE, I HEART HUCKABEES and JOHN WICK.

**Kyle Martin** (producer) was named one of Variety’s 2012 “Ten Producers to Watch,” and was awarded the 2010 Sundance Mark Silverman Producing Fellowship and the 2011 IFP/Cannes Marche Du Film Producer’s Network Fellowship. His films have been released worldwide by Criterion Collection, IFC Films, BBC, Oscilloscope Laboratories, Radius, Sundance International, PBS, and Factory 25. His films include the 2014 SXSW Best Documentary winner THE GREAT INVISIBLE (Radius Films), directed by Margaret Brown; the award-winning BLUEBIRD (Factory 25), directed by Lance Edmands, TEENAGE (Oscilloscope), directed by Matt Wolf, TINY FURNITURE (IFC Films), directed by Lena Dunham, and the 2010 SXSW Audience Award winner NY EXPORT: OPUS JAZZ (PBS, BBC). Additionally, he produced the documentary RECORDER: THE MARION STOKES STORY, which is also premiering at the 2019 Tribeca Film Festival.

**Craig Butta** (producer) is an independent filmmaker, actor and producer originally from Staten Island, NY. He worked with Lance most recently on his short film STRAYS. His acting credits include PERSON TO PERSON (Magnolia), QUEEN OF EARTH (IFC Films), and the Netflix original series, EASY. His producing credits include HER SMELL (Gunpower and Sky), GOLDEN EXITS (Sony), IF YOU TAKE THIS, and the web series DAD DAY (Bric Arts Media).

**CREDITS**

Directed by: Lance Edmands  
Written by: Lance Edmands & Sarah Tihany  
Starring: Sarah Tihany, David Call, Patrick M. Walsh Jr.  
Produced by: Craig Butta, Kyle Martin  
Executive Producer: Bureau of Creative Works  
Executive Producer: Washington Square Films  
Co-Produced by: Jared Jones  
Director of Photography: Adam Newport Berra  
Music & Sound Design: Mark Henry Philips  
Editor: Lance Edmands  
Assistant Camera: Vincent Weller  
Gaffer: Kevin Bacon  
Grip: Orges Bakalli  
Production Sound: Matthew Casuccio  
Hair & Makeup: Mara Schiavetti  
Special Effects Makeup: Rutt Silverman  
Costume Design: Amanda Isaac  
Stunts: Patrick M. Walsh Jr.  
Visual Effects: Perry Kroll  
Title Designer: Kurt Woerpel  
Colorist: Mikey Rossiter

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