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Rescue You

Ghost Chasing and Filmmaking

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Rescue You
Ghost Chasing and Filmmaking

by

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Report

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Dedication

To Donna and W. Earl Hall

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Abstract

Rescue You Ghost Chasing and Filmmaking

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This report will summarize the process of writing, developing, directing and finishing the high-definition short film, *Rescue You*. This film was produced as my graduate thesis film in the Department of Radio-Television-Film at the University of Texas at Austin in partial fulfillment of my Master of Fine Arts in Film Production degree.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
The Story	3
Pre-Production	9
Production.....	16
Post-Production.....	23
The Future.....	26
Appendix 1: Shooting Script	27
Appendix 2: Process Notes.....	44
Appendix 3: Storyboard.....	49
Appendix 4: Visual Inspiration.....	55
Appendix 5: One Pager.....	64
References	65
Vita	66

Introduction

Every facilitator or professor has a ritual first day of class. Whether that's asking where the students are from or what the student's what their guilty pleasure movie is. I did both of these in addition to asking people why or how they first got interested in media. I mainly wanted to learn the student's interest so I could better steer the class but the question also served as a survival tactic. There's a difficulty that every creative person feels with the mountain of obstacles and distractions we have to brave on the way to making a piece we're proud of. During graduate school, I'd often lose sight of why I chose to put myself through so much heartache and poverty in pursuit of a career in filmmaking. While friends my age were finding success in much more lucrative and stable professions, it was hard to fend of the feeling that I was part of a sinking ship. Hearing every student's story about why they wanted to make films or television helped to bring me back to why I began making media.

I used to wish that I could say, like Steven Spielberg, that I saw Citizen Kane when I was five and realized at that moment I wanted to make movies for a living. I love watching films, don't get me wrong, but my interest in filmmaking didn't come from seeing any particular film as a child. It's much more convoluted.

In elementary school I used to ride the public bus. I didn't ride because I had to, most places I needed to go were within walking distance. I rode because I loved talking to strangers. I would catch the bus around the corner from my house and sit opposite the bus driver, Paul Caughlin. I suppose, by sitting close to him, I thought it would be okay to talk to strangers. Perhaps because people are pretty open with kids I'd always managed to hear some good stories or, even better, gossip. There were plenty of just flat out crazy

characters on the public bus, but it didn't make their stories any less fascinating at the time.

Early on in high school I started replacing essays with quirky homemade movies. Perhaps because video wasn't as ubiquitous as it is now, my teachers let me get away with this. I decided to take a class at the local university in documentary production. I pitched the idea to do a documentary about some low-rider bicycle builders in my neighborhood. I got the idea from my next-door neighbor who I discovered - when my dog's ball went over his fence - built low-rider bicycles in his backyard. I thought the bikes were beautiful but was also impressed that he was only fifteen and essentially building these bikes out of parts he found at the dump. In making the documentary, I discovered how much I enjoyed working with people collaboratively on a creative project. I also found that film allowed me to combine so many of my interests in one medium. Most importantly, film allowed me to craft stories about worlds I didn't get to see on television or at the movie theater.

This desire to explore the unknown and underrepresented has followed me regardless of where I've worked or what type of media I'm making. After facilitating media literacy and video production workshops for years after college, I started to feel limited in my technical knowledge and hands on practice making films. Coming to graduate school and focusing on fiction would not only give me access to the technology, but allow me time to hone my storytelling skills and exercise my imagination. My thesis film certainly challenged me in all these aspects and fueled my passion for filmmaking.

The Story

Choosing the story was a long, complicated and emotional journey. A thesis film holds considerable more weight than any previous projects. I wish I'd recorded the dozens of conversations I had with various members my cohort regarding how to approach this colossal film. It almost felt like, if this one wasn't perfect, we'd all be lined up and shot. I imagine this is the reason I gravitated to a story about survival.

The story follows a woman who seeks out and finds a reclusive musician in the hope of reviving his career. I've always been captivated by the idea of potential deferred. It originated years ago when my best childhood friend, a supremely talented and published fiction writer at 16, disappeared into drug-addled black hole at 19, never to write again. Growing up, she had always been my idol. Smart, talented and from what appeared to be a functional family. When she reemerged at 22, she was half the person I remembered. She got a job as an insurance agent's assistant and married an abusive 7-Eleven employee. When he stopped being able to pay the phone bill, that's when we stopped talking. The reality of the situation was too much for me. I couldn't bear to see my idol stripped so badly. Years passed and I started to invent positive reasons why she gave up writing. Maybe she just wasn't as disillusioned about her art as I sometimes I felt I was about mine. Maybe hers was a noble decision. Either way, it had a hand in haunting and inspiring most of my story ideas.

Originally, in the Fall of 2008, I started rewriting a script I wrote my first semester at UT. It was the story of a group of 12-year olds who one day, while playing on the beach, watch a girl not much older than them swim out in the ocean and not return. They spend the rest of day trying to figure out who she was and wondering why she did what she did. It was a favorite of my peers and professor when I originally wrote it and I

always felt drawn to the potential of the location. Unfortunately, I couldn't get past how similar it felt to my last film. It was also a coming of age film and I would be working with preteens again. While I love the coming of age theme and truly enjoy working with adolescents, I wanted the chance to work with adult actors.

Years before I had read an article about Bill Fox in a magazine called *The Believer*. In the article, the journalist and his wife became obsessed with a song of Fox's they heard on the radio. Since very little information about or pictures of Bill Fox exist online, the journalist decided he would go looking for him in his hometown. He learned that The Mice were on their way to LA for their first national tour when Bill Fox said he was done and went back home. He stayed out of music and essentially out of the public eye for ten years to work as a telemarketer. When home recording equipment became cheap and advanced enough, he put out two incredible solo records that were met with critical acclaim. Just when he was about to get signed by another major label, he dropped out and disappeared again. In the article, the journalist goes looking for Bill Fox. He spoke with friends, family, and former band mates gathering sparse details of his life, but never reached Bill Fox. While his friends and family wanted him to play again, they also wanted to protect his anonymity. In response to another reporter Fox said:

Okay, somebody's going to publish something about me on the internet or in a magazine that makes me look like I'm disturbed or a loser or something. Great. That's what I want. To be summed up and classified.

Joe Hagan, *The Believer*, 2007

The reporter writing the article felt guilty. He didn't want to negatively portray Fox, or do his legacy an injustice. Ultimately, he seemed more like ghost, even though he was still alive and wandering somewhere on the periphery of this writer.

I read *The Believer* article around the time I was writing my pre-thesis in 2007 and originally wanted to adapt it then, but couldn't find the right angle. I was captivated by the story and it reminded me of Anna, my best friend from home. However, doing a simple biopic would've been horrible, and approached incorrectly it could easily turn to schmaltz. I decided not to write it then but kept thinking about how I would do the Bill Fox story.

One of the problems I encountered during my pre-thesis was fatigue. I got tired of the story during the editing so I wanted to try and avoid that with this film. Since I'd been so intrigued by the reclusive artist theme for so long, I felt it would carry me through the whole process and keep me passionate. So I began conceiving of different angles to approach the story.

To me, the idea of someone who actively chooses to stay out of the limelight despite a tremendous talent is both tragic and inspiring. A musician who cannot allow himself to play publicly felt a little like a child death, or the death of a beautiful woman. However, the hard facts behind why Bill Fox gave up aren't as interesting to me. I liked the mystery behind his disappearance so I felt the story couldn't be from his perspective. In the first version, I made the main character a female journalist looking for the Bill Fox character (who I named Paul Logan). Per classic storytelling, I felt like I needed to give her a deadline, something she had to get done or her career was over. Her job is to find Paul and interview him for a feature article. At first she sees him as a conquest, something to exploit, but ultimately sympathizes with his desire for peace and trashes the article.

That approach also felt too forced and false. After twelve drafts, I stripped away the journalism and looked closely at why someone would go looking to reconstruct something from her past. Ultimately the music became tied to a time when she and her ex-husband were the happiest. A time of youth, discovery and hope. She subconsciously believes that by resurrecting his career, she will resurrect some sense of normalcy in her life.

We begin with the woman in her late thirties, Lauren, driving down dark, industrial streets with the woman. She arrives at a dive bar on the outskirts of town but hesitates before entering. She seems nervous about something but we're not sure why. Locals sparsely populate the bar playing pool and foosball. She zeroes in on the bartender, keeping her eye on him as she takes a seat at the bar. His face lights up when he sees Lauren. Approaching her, he asks if she'll be having the same as last night. She's feigns embarrassment that he already knows her drink. Their conversation is interrupted by the other bartender who tells Paul a journalist from "the Times" is asking if he can speak with him. Lauren watches as Paul gets visibly upset by the interruption and the fact that somehow the journalist found out where he works. Paul exits the bar in a huff, Lauren shortly follows.

She finds him outside behind the bar smoking and asks for a cigarette even though she doesn't smoke. She has to find a way to connect to him, to be alone with him.

Later, the bar has emptied out and Lauren puts a Warren Zevon song on the jukebox. She asks Paul to dance but again he's pulled back to work by the other bartender. In a last resort, when she learns he doesn't have a car, she offers him a ride home. Lauren recognizes that there's a chemistry between them, but she still can't fully reach him.

At his house, he seems a bit uneasy about having a stranger in his house, which she can sense not many people visit. When he leaves momentarily to let his dog out, she starts to wander through the house as if it's a museum. Looking at the wall hangings, books, and bric-a-brac. She carefully enters his room where she finds a guitar in the corner. She lifts it up revealing some rolled up posters on the dresser. Unraveling them she discovers that they're old posters of Paul when he played. She's looking for clues. Anything to tell her that this is still a part of his life, that there's still hope.

After a glass of whiskey and more conversation, he puts the same Warren Zevon song from the bar. She asks if they can dance now. Once they do, she's more comfortable, lost in the moment and tired, which gives her the ability to speak freely. "So that guy really bothered you back at the bar?" He tells her he's just exhausted of people bothering him as he can't give them what they want. "What if they just want a connection," she asks. He kisses her, but she seems taken out of the moment. "So you're never going to play again?" He's taken aback by the question. How could he have been so blind to this woman's intentions? She's not there because of who he is, she's there because of who he was. Angry and hurt, he throws her out.

She's shocked. How could she have been so stupid and insensitive? She returns to her car, but it doesn't start. She's at the end of the road. Where can she go now? This was her last resort, and it was futile. She puts her head down on the steering wheel, defeated. He sees her from the window. Perhaps he was too harsh. Perhaps he's not giving her a chance.

Inside the car, there's a knock at her door. Paul comes in and sits next to her. Feeling that she doesn't need to hide anymore, she tells him that his music inspired her when she was younger. That it carried her through the beginning of her life with her ex-husband. It all failed though, regardless of how hard she tried to save it. How could

something that worked so well at one point, fall apart so viciously? How could Paul, a brilliant artist, just give up when he had something that worked perfectly? “Because it wasn’t. It wasn’t working anymore,” he says. “Then what’s left?” she asks. He can’t respond. She doesn’t know what she expected from him. This wasn’t the answer, and she realizes that she was crazy for thinking any different. She leaves him and the car, taking all her belongings.

Walking away from the his house on a dark, empty street, she hears footsteps. Paul approaches and stops for a moment. “I didn’t give up. I moved on. Tried to at least. But, I’d like to believe that there’s a lot left.” He helps her with her bags and they return back to his house where he makes her food and she falls asleep on his couch. In the morning, he feels better, safer. He picks up his guitar and plays her a song.

I knew that this story could only work if the actress was absolutely stellar. This worried me given how difficult it is to find actresses in her age range in Austin. The length was also a concern. We’re told over and over again that a film over 10 minutes runs the risk of being rejected at film festivals unless it’s exceptional. However, strong characters were more a priority for me than length, so I committed to a longer film and started looking for Lauren.

Pre-Production

The biggest challenge was finding the two main characters, so I immediately started putting feelers out. I scoured all the local theatres and talent agencies for Lauren but didn't find any actresses I wasn't already familiar with. I had recently seen an early screening of *LOVERS OF HATE*, Bryan Poyser's feature. The ex-wife of the main character didn't have a really meaty role but I could tell that she had potential. Many people that worked with her in the past said she was difficult on set, which worried me a bit because I've worked with difficult actors and it can seriously dampen set moral. However, I wanted to meet with her first before I made any conclusions.

Concurrently I started looking for Paul. My goal was to find a real musician that had some film or stage experience. I also thought that their music could serve as the soundtrack. I know a lot of musicians, and many of them are natural performers that can be sincere despite awkward moments or big crowds. I also felt that Austin of all places would house a large selection of folk types willing to work for free. I started going to shows at Momo's and The Continental. I constantly checked in with friends of mine who work at the Onion AV Club and represent local acts. The problem with most musicians that I contacted was age; they were either too young or too old. They were also often too busy. Good musicians tour and to interrupt that schedule would require loads of cash which I didn't have. When I would find a musician who was the right age and played music I felt would work for the film, they just didn't have the screen presence. The closest I came was a musician named Walter Salas who is in a band called The Silos. He had the perfect look and his music was beautiful. When I auditioned him, I tried to make it as comfortable as possible. We met several times beforehand, I talked him through the story and asked if there were moments in his life that were like Paul's.

When we finally worked it out on camera, he was stiff and couldn't channel any anger or hurt. We tried it multiple times and in many ways but it just didn't work. This was the story with every musician I auditioned. I didn't give up this tactic until a month before shooting when I finally gave in and started looking for actors.

In the meantime, I had locked down Heather Kafka from *LOVERS OF HATE*. When I first met with her, she told me her rate and said she'd have to see the script and my previous work before making a decision. After reading the script and the seeing my last film she was excited about doing the part for no money which was a huge relief. With her on board, I was able to connect with a lot more male actors. She was instrumental in finding the Michael Swanner who I ultimately cast as Paul. Heather really lobbied for another actor, Jonny Mars. Like many actors in Austin, he mainly works in another area of film as an AD in town but acts whenever he gets the chance. We met and he really understood the role and the film as a whole, but ultimately I didn't feel like he was right for the part.

While I was still looking for my Paul I started assembling my production team. Naiti Gámez shot my last film and was an integral part in bringing the story to life. Granted I'd only worked with one other cinematographer before, but Naiti was in my mind the best shooter out there. Not only had she shot several other UT films to great success, but we were close friends who had developed an efficient way of communicating. One can never be certain if it's mutual but I felt like it was a perfect collaboration, the reason why I got into this work in the first place.

When she told me she got hired to shoot a documentary in Malawi my heart sank. I absolutely felt like I was doomed and wouldn't be able to shoot the film without her. However, I finally stopped overreacting and took stock of what I needed. I wanted to work with someone I'd worked with before, in any capacity, and someone who

I knew was comfortable with a range of equipment. Since I wasn't sure whether I'd be shooting on film, the RED or the 5D, I couldn't chance picking someone who lacked experience with any of those cameras. Mike Simpson was a natural choice. We had wanted to work together for several years and he has a wealth of experience in shooting, lighting and assistant camera work. On top of his experience, I know his aesthetic and felt comfortable that he could realize my vision.

We had meetings whenever he was in town, which wasn't often. The film takes place entirely at night and I wanted the look to be supple and rich. Both in story and aesthetic I tend to go French so the film I was most closely inspired by was Claire Denis' FRIDAY NIGHT. It is similarly the story of two strangers coming together and sharing a unique moment together. The film also takes place at night during a transit strike and the images are lush without appearing unrealistic. I also loved the look and feel of Lucrecia Martel's LA MUJER SIN CABEZA. The main character, plagued by the possibility that she hit someone with her car, looked as if she's teetering in every frame. In order for Lauren's interior state to come through, the composition would have to be slightly off kilter. Lauren may be in a familiar town, but she's in an uncomfortable mental place and physically alone. These emotions had to manifest in how she sees the world and how the audience sees her. At the same time, I didn't want it to be over stylized. I knew their connection would be supremely delicate so I didn't want to distract it with obvious visuals.

For production design I approached Nazanin Shirazi who's talent and commitment I'm very familiar with having worked together on other films. In the beginning I feared that it wouldn't be ambitious enough for her and that my budget wouldn't be attractive. Also, the script was still in flux and I wasn't sure how many locations I would have for her to work on. However, since production design is one of my

stronger skills, I tend to spend too much time on it if I don't have a strong collaborator. Ultimately, having someone like Nazanin on board would help me to concentrate more on directing than worrying about production design. That said, I ended up spending an inordinate amount of time location scouting. As a director, I like working in real locations, I glean inspiration from them and feel that they have an energy that a set cannot recreate. Of course, given a big enough budget I'm sure that would change. In my film's case, I had three interior locations: Lauren's car, the bar, and Paul's house. I wanted a dive bar in the middle of an industrial area. I imagined Paul wouldn't work at a popular place in the center of town. Unfortunately, there aren't too many industrial areas to begin with since once you get out of the city it gets either suburban or rural pretty quickly. I spent several nights driving outside of the center of town to see if anything caught my eye. One night driving up North Lamar, I saw some globe lights in the distance. It took me ten minutes to find my way through the maze of industrial streets before I found it. The outside of the bar had a large beer garden covered with a grapevine roof. The bar, C. Hunts Icehouse, was literally surrounded by nothing and virtually empty. More neon signs and beer banners hung on the walls than I'd ever seen in my life. There was a huge window or opening on the front and sidewall which worked well for the story when Lauren looks and sees Paul working. It also didn't seem excessively popular so I figured they might be more open to a film crew. Talking to the eighty-five year old owner I discovered that they'd never had anyone shoot there before and they were closed on Sundays. Bullseye!

We pursued the bar for months. I went there every week to check in with the owner and bartenders to see if they were still on. By this point Micah Barber had come on as producer and was helping me negotiate with the bar. We met the son of the owner who was a big, friendly Texan keen on working with us. Mike Simpson and I went

there a few days to drink and talk about how we were going to shoot and light the bar. We were still debating whether to shoot on film or HD. Although I'm true believer in the power of celluloid, and I had a small Kodak grant, I still couldn't get comfortable with shooting 35mm or Super 16mm. Micah and I attempted to get donations from Panavision, Lee Filters and local gear houses to bring down the cost of lenses and lighting equipment but couldn't get much, given the time constraints. Therefore, the cost of shooting film would've been too prohibitive. The next best thing in our opinion was the RED camera. Since our shooting schedule was budgeted for a week, we got a RED and all the accompanying accessories for under \$2000, less that the cost of film and its processing. I also hadn't cast the role of Paul yet and feared that if I got a sub-par actor, I might end up doing a lot of extra takes that I wouldn't be able to afford with film. When Mike and I went back to the bar and shot tests with the RED, we determined that it was really the ideal solution.

The next major location we had to find was Paul's house. In order to have the most control we wanted a house that we could take over for several days. Obviously, this isn't an easy task. I wanted his house to be a sanctuary but also a sort of cell. It's here where he's retreated and created his hermetic life. Nazanin came up with the concept of a nest, sort of scrappy and collected, with lots of browns and greens. I also wanted the house to have a vintage quality, which ruled out a fair amount of the bland apartments and condos that we could have had access to. The house needed to be filled with his basic comforts and interests, but without a curatorial design like many collectors I know. We spent a lot of time asking friends to donate books, records and nick-knacks so we could make the house feel lived in. With my budget, it took a lot of groveling to get all the furniture we needed as well.

Through further bribes and favors we finally managed to get permission to use the house of recent grad Chelsea Hernandez. She was moving out early but had the house until the end of the month, which gave us enough time to set up, shoot and clean the house. I paid for a UHaul and recruited friends to help move most of their stuff out of the house which definitely helped ease the pain. It also allowed Nazanin to get started painting and bringing stuff to the house.

Ten days before shooting, C. Hunts Icehouse decided to drop the ball. The son talked to the owner and they decided that they simply couldn't do it for less than \$300 for the day which only went from 11am to 9pm. Since the film takes place entirely at night, that wasn't going to work. I'd been begging and pleading the last few weeks so it wasn't difficult for me to keep doing so with C. Hunts, but they didn't budge. I always find it amazing how people will turn so quickly during film shoots. We had been courting them for over a month and they had been nothing but friendly and accommodating. How could they do this to us ten days before the shoot? However, since I'd dealt with this so many times before, I fortunately had a backup with the bar Lala's around the corner from my house. Lala's was closed both Sunday and Monday and Francis Lala herself (also about 80 years old) would be there the whole time. The interesting thing about Lala's is that it's decorated with a Christmas theme all year long. At first I considered this a problem since I didn't imagine the film taking place at this time of year. However, the more Nazanin and I discussed it, the more we liked the idea. If the atmosphere was supposed to accentuate Lauren's loneliness, what could be better than having it because around the holidays? Also, it wasn't going to be overt in the way we were planning on shooting it, so it would be more of a feeling than an obvious theme.

Less than ten days before shooting, I had finally cast Michael Swanner as Paul and we began rehearsing. I had access to and locked the location we were using for the

exterior of Paul's house so I decided to use it as a rehearsal space. The house is owned by a friend of former grad student and located on a huge, overgrown lot at the river's edge on the east side. From the house, there's are only trees in any direction you look, so I knew it would evoke Paul's reclusivity. There also wasn't anyone living there so I could use it whenever I wanted. As an interior it wouldn't have worked because it was too dark with all real wood paneling. It seemed like it was primarily used as a party house because there were empty beer bottles and cups strewn around the various rooms. Regardless, it was the perfect place for the actor's to rehearse in peace and explore the very private moments in the film. We did a fair amount of improvising and exercises, all of which I videotaped. Ideally, we would have been able to rehearse in the bar, but there wasn't time. I did take the actors there though and walk through the scenes with them. Rehearsing in the real locations is something I will certainly try to do more of in future projects.

I've never felt totally ready for a shoot. There are always details that I haven't fully fleshed out and last minute crises. My gaffer, for instance, dropped out 5 days before the shoot and I had to find someone else who I knew wouldn't be as prepared. Paul's house still needed a lot of work and poor Nazanin didn't have enough help. Also, this was an all-nights shoot, and though I had started trying to stay up later and later every night, I was still concerned that I'd crash during the production. However, as we know, life and film goes on whether you're ready or not and you just have to take a deep breath and jump.

Production

Soham Mehta flew in to assist in directing the film. He's someone who I've worked with most consistently during my time at UT and trust completely with the scheduling and organizing of a film production. As usual we began with the most logistically simple scenes, that we knew we could get through relatively easily while the crew got used to each other. Unfortunately, we also scheduled one of the last, most emotional scenes. Heather looked really nervous when she arrived on set and took me aside, "This is crazy Kim, just crazy."

While the crew set up a rather complicated wide night shot, Heather and I sat in the set car. The scene we were about to shoot takes place after she's broken down and revealed to Paul how she ended up in the place she's in. She leaves with all her belongings and has no idea where she's going or what she's going to do, and it's terrifying. In the car she started asking me to just talk to her, "Tell me about where I am. How did I end up here?" I started telling her stories that I essentially made up on the spot about her character's past. Things she did with her husband, plans they made, what she did to try and save the marriage. Heather just sat and nodded, looking me straight in the eyes. "I know," she said, "It's so hard being in my late thirties and working late nights, not being able to be with my daughter or my husband." Her eyes started to fill with tears as she kept talking and I listened. I felt privileged to be a part of this process as I'd never really had to direct such a dramatic scene. It's also enlightening to be a part of different actor's processes.

When we finished I went to prepare Michael Swanner (he goes just by Swanner). He didn't have the same process by any means but responded well when I started asking his character questions. What have you been doing these last five years? Are you happy

with your life? Do you wish you had done things differently? What do you want to tell Lauren? What do you want to happen with her? He got more and more emotional as he had to come up with answers to the questions. While it might have been a gamble to do such an emotional scene the first night, I feel like we ended up getting great material and the light shooting schedule allowed for all the inevitable mistakes that happen on day one.

The following two days were the most trying and frustrating. We moved on to shoot at Paul's house that was still in the process of being decorated. I wanted to shoot all the material in the house in sequence, saving the dance scene for the second day. We had a good art crew which helped things move along pretty smoothly but were lagging in the grip/electric department because we didn't have too many grips and my new gaffer wasn't as experienced. There was a moment where Mike Simpson said there were five people working on fixing a light gel, that's when I started worrying that we weren't going to get everything we needed. Also, Mike and I work in slightly looser fashion than Naiti and I did. We storyboarded out the shots and made a shotlist, but were open to adding more shots as we saw fit. This ended up happening quite a bit throughout the shoot and it was the first time I'd ever seen Soham angry. Depending on the scene or how much difficulty we were having setting up the shot, we would either change the shot or add one if we felt it was going to make the scene better. It's difficult for me to imagine shooting a film any other way - at least a narrative film. Prep time and access to crew, locations and actors always seems to be so limited. I imagine directors get better and faster at it, which I definitely had since my last film, but better solutions to ideas you have during pre-production come up occasionally during shooting. Unfortunately, even those occasional occurrences can cost the production hours.

The second night in the house was the only day we went over, precisely for the reasons listed above. The dancing scene was shot from so many angles and I had a hard time getting what I wanted from the part where Paul throws Lauren out. His anger felt false, but when he played it hurt, it didn't feel sufficient for the scene. Swanner and Heather were frustrated, and the crew was getting impatient. I just had to keep pushing on and convince Swanner that we were getting what we wanted, which we did ultimately. It's in these moments where I wish I were a little more Kubrick and could just keep going until we got the perfect take. Unfortunately, we had to finish before dawn and we didn't have the option to shoot in the house another day. On top of everything, we had considerable less crew because it was graduation day at UT. When we broke for dinner, instead of eating I took a short walk down the street to cool off and think about shots we could cut.

The following night we shot at the exterior location of Paul's house. The owner told me a few days before that they were going to be having a party but said it would be over by the time we started shooting. When we arrived, there was a huge bouncy castle in the yard and a raucous barbecue party that showed no signs of slowing. I spoke to the owner who reassured me that the castle would get taken down and they'd be quiet when we started shooting. I alerted Micah and he made sure to stay on them about being quiet.

We had several easy shots to get through before setting up for the most important scene in the car where Lauren breaks down. Leading up to that scene is the one where she's thrown out by Paul and bangs on the door. Earlier in her blue room I found her curled up on the futon with her eyes closed and headphones on. Since this scene is supposed to take place in the middle of nowhere, she felt distracted by the party next store and the amount of crew in general. I assured her that the party would tame and the crew would duck when we were about to do a take. When that moment finally came, the

party next store was still blasting music. Micah sent over his wife and our lovely assistant producer to sit with them and ask them to turn the music off when we were about to roll. Fortunately, it worked.

After we shot the outdoor scenes I sat with Heather for awhile in the car again to just talked. She was pretty scared about getting the last scene in the car right so I had to calm her down. We closed the set and told the guys next door to keep it to a whisper - which at this point worked since they were all catatonically stoned. We shot her single first because she didn't want to use up all her energy in the other setups. She obviously was just warming up in the first take, it felt very muted. In the second take, I teared up while watching from the back seat, so I knew it would be the one. She continued to give good performances throughout the remainder of the takes and setups, but I felt that I'd really gotten something special from her in that scene.

Despite the party, weed and Heather's protests, I felt like it was our best night thus far. The performances were phenomenal and the shoot felt like we were camping in the wilderness. This kind of atmosphere tends to bring people together and work harder. To top it all off, my mom who came on as craft services and general set pacifier, made the most incredible ice-cream sundaes.

Our last two nights took place at Lala's. We tried to recruit more crew for these two nights because we knew the outdoor scenes would take a lot of lighting work and we couldn't risk going over schedule due to daylight. Soham made a joke at one point early in the production that I always choose the most inconvenient times to shoot the stories I write. For UPRUSH, I shot a movie that was supposed to take place during the Summer in Winter when we have the least amount of daylight and heat. For my thesis film, the story takes place during winter but we shot in summer when it's not only horrifically hot but have the shortest amount of dark hours. However, I've found that working under such

a tight schedule helps with motivation. Also the crew knows that the shoot is finite and it won't go on for 48 hours. In my thesis film's case, the night shoots were helpful because at least it cools a little at night.

We began the first night with the steadycam shots of Lauren exiting the bar to find Paul outside then returning to the bar to play the song on the jukebox. The first steadycam shot follows Lauren from inside the bar, outside, through the laundrymat and to the other side of the bar where she finds Paul. Obviously, this took multiple rehearsals and a lot of lighting setup. After we rehearsed and while grip/electric set up the lights, Raul the steadycam operator, suggested that we shoot the other two steadycam shots: a wide and single frontal shot of Lauren walking through the laundrymat. This sped things up significantly and allowed us enough time to get the longer steady shot right.

One scene in the film that I always struggled with was the one where two young boys come into the bar and bother Paul. They recognize him as a former musician and start asking questions that he's all too familiar with. It felt really forced and expositional in way I couldn't get used to. However, I felt it was necessary to the story or else Lauren wouldn't feel any hesitation about approaching him. We also get the sense of where he is now in relation to his past. At the last minute, the day of shooting, I pulled the two actors (previous students of mine) aside and told them I needed to change the scene. I decided to make it just one guy and he's a writer from a high profile newspaper that's doing a story on Paul. I also added a second bartender to field the journalist's questions. One of the kids I'd recruited was Daniel Hill who has an incredible screen presence and looks like he could be a young, hip reporter. We quickly changed his costume and I talked to him about his dialogue. I had found Bob Tolero outside a UT studio where he was working on Kyle Henry's FOURPLAY and asked him he was busy in a few days and if he could be

in my movie. Miraculously he said yes, so I had my second bartender. The scene ended up working much better in the end.

The only other scene I had some trouble with was the scene between the couple that Lauren and Paul see while they're smoking outside. The scene was based off of something that I saw outside a bar. A middle aged man and woman were walking very close together laughing, obviously pretty drunk. He was grabbing her upper arm and suddenly pushed her up against a car. Her expression became serious for a moment but then she smiled and turned around to kiss him. I remember feeling for a split second that I should intervene when I saw it, I've seen a little too much of that kind of thing in Texas specifically. However, once it turned sexy, it was sort of a magical moment. I needed something like that in the outdoor scene between Lauren and Paul. A moment to share and lighten the mood.

For the couple, I contacted two actors that I knew from other student films. The man was in his late thirties and the woman was in her early to mid twenties. Apparently they had worked together before so I felt that would help the scene. In my version, he pushes her against a wall, she wiggles free, grabs him, pushes him against another wall and kisses him passionately. In the wide, it worked really well, but when we got to the medium shot I realized she wasn't actually kissing him, she was just doing a movie kiss. From talking to her before I realized she had a lot of misplaced nervous energy which ultimately came out in the scene. When I told her to actually kiss him, she sort of stalled and just walked away during the take. I then realized that she obviously didn't feel comfortable kissing him, so we came up with an improved movie kiss. However, I knew that we would probably just end up using the wide so we moved on.

When the shoot ended, I felt like it went very well overall. There are always shots that we wish we had time for or moments that might have been better if they weren't so

rushed. While my crew looked exhausted, I was running on pure adrenaline and could have kept shooting nights for the next week. Mike Simpson, who has been working professionally for several years thought that the schedule was too long for a short film, but I definitely couldn't have gone any shorter without losing my mind. The entire process restored my love of production and collaboration. I wish I could have jumped right into pre-production on another film.

Post Production

Post production is one of my favorite and most feared stages of filmmaking. I thoroughly enjoy editing and exploring the different directions you can take a film once it's been shot. However, getting through the first edit is pure hell. It's hard to divorce myself from my original vision and I become overwhelmed by the amount of footage. Knowing this about myself, I sought out an assistant editor. I contacted an undergraduate, Lacey Triplett, who I knew from TAing for Ellen Spiro's Introduction to Documentary. She was an aspiring editor and I always felt like she was diligent in getting post work done.

Enough people have shot with the RED at UT by now that the workflow is pretty smooth. However, I stumbled across some issues in the encoding and had to re-transfer over half of the footage after Lacey started putting together select sequences. This set us back a few weeks since I was TAing 318 and teaching claymation classes at Austin Film Festival Summer Camps. It ultimately took Lacey 2 months to put together assemblies of every scene. By the time I had to leave Austin I'd only managed to put together a basic rough cut.

When I got to New York, Soham volunteered to take over for as long as he could.

This was a huge relief as I knew I'd have no time for it until late October. When he finally showed me the rough cut, I felt that he'd made some really strong choices with the performance and layout of the scenes. From here I felt confident and excited to edit through picture lock. There were a few scenes I had major concerns with so I decided to send out Soham's rough cut for initial feedback. Most people took issue with the pacing. Soham, in an attempt to move things forward faster, crafted the opening scene, parts of

bar, and the dance at Paul's house with a lot of jump cuts. The jump cuts worked for the dance scene but not for the others. Also, the scene between Lauren and Paul outside the bar proved one of the most difficult to edit. We crossed the line with Lauren's single looking at the couple. So I essentially had to choose which character to focus on in that scene or it would be too jarring. The problem with only focusing on one character is it's supposed to be a shared moment. Ultimately instead of Paul looking at the couple, he looks at Lauren's reaction to the couple. Also, because I couldn't create tension by cutting from Lauren to Paul as they watch the couple, I had to make the moment lighter. As it ended up, it doesn't appear as a near rape but a just couple making out. It was the only way I could make the scene work without reshooting Lauren's single.

Overall people who watched it felt the connection between Paul and Lauren, enjoying the more intimate moments between them. A comment I got a few times was that they didn't feel like they saw enough of Paul. I had to cut around his performance quite a bit because there were times where it fell into monotony. However, I went back and held on him in some shots in addition to changing out takes.

The ending changed several times. Initially the last scene included a shot of Paul picking up the guitar and singing. This left little to the imagination, she got more or less what she set out to get and we assume he's going to start playing again. However, I didn't want that to be the conclusion. I wanted some mystery as to whether he actually plays and if she ever actually hears him. Instead of seeing him play we cut out before she opens her eyes and see a series of morning shots. I felt like it didn't wrap things up too much but still gave us partially what we wanted.

Overall, I achieved my goal of working successfully with adult actors. The story too, though subtle, closely observes the re-awakening of two people who've been stifled by adult morass. While there's a physical attraction between them, I don't think

everyone will walk away thinking they're going to have a relationship. Instead, they'll both be able to move on and start to rebuild something new in their lives.

The Future

I would like to believe that perfection exists but I don't feel I've achieved it yet. This film is very dear to me and I feel that I challenged myself in the way I originally intended. However, I don't think I'm done with the theme. There are many more angles to approach it and related stories that will make great films. My plan is to outline a version of this story where we see further into the past of these two character's lives, and a little farther into the future. In a short, I could really only focus on one character, but I'm ultimately interested in exploring both character's histories in a feature.

While the several years are passing trying to get the feature done, I would like to continue to make short films. The only people I know who work steadily directing are commercial directors. Although it may be years away from doing commercials for a living, I will find short subjects to make to continue flexing my director muscle. Features are too few and far between to hang all my hopes and dreams on. The shorts will be both documentary and fiction focusing on issues similar to RESCUE YOU. I'm also working on adapting a series of marine biology children's books with a friend of mine.

The future of filmmaking still weighs heavy on the choices I make today. However, we know that there will always be a need for stories in some form. As long as I continue crafting stories about people and things on the periphery, I'll feel that I'm achieving what I set to do when I was seventeen.

Appendix 1: Shooting Script

- 1 EXT. INDUSTRIAL STREET - EVENING 1 *
- A desolate neighborhood. Delivery trucks line the street, parked in front of unlabeled and dilapidated warehouses. A few people walk the street, appearing to have just gotten off of work.
- 2 INT. CAR - SAME 2
- LAUREN, mid 30s, drives, looking around every corner, dim neon lights partially reflecting on her face.
- A warped cassette tape strains from the car speakers...
- 3 EXT. BAR - NIGHT 3
- A neon sign gleams in the distance of a dark, empty street. Few cars are parked outside. Lauren sits in one, watching the place.
- 4 INT. CAR - SAME 4
- The warped cassette still plays.
- A car packed with stuff. A loaf of cheap, white bread sits on the front seat next to a jar of peanut butter.
- Lauren fast forwards the tape to see if she can find a clear spot. She watches the patrons linger about the dive bar. PAUL, 40s, appears with two beers.
- Lauren stops the tape and yanks open the ashtray. Some wadded up bills pop out.
- She gathers up the bills. Smooths them. Most are ones. Below the bill layer lies some change, but Lauren ignores it. She counts the bills. Puts them in her wallet.
- 5 INT. BAR - NIGHT 5
- Lauren enters the bar. The small group of patrons turns and look at her, she looks out of place. Low music plays on the jukebox.
- She walks up to the opposite side of the bar and waits for Paul to notice her. She watches him approach.

PAUL
Welcome back. Same as last night?

She looks up at him and smiles, as if he were a high school crush.

Two men in their twenties enter the bar, wearing tight, polyester pants and worn shirts that are too small. They're loud, talking about how their show just went. They take a seat at the bar.

Paul returns with the beer. Lauren takes out her bills, hands them to Paul.

LAUREN
Is it bad that you know my drink already?

PAUL
Photographic memory.

LAUREN
You're the guy who remembers everyone at high school reunions, aren't you?

PAUL
Maybe. I never went to mine.

LAUREN
Me, neither.

The loud guys try to get his attention.

GUY 1
Guinness. Two of them.

After Paul attends to them, one of the guys whispers to the other, he nods.

GUY 1 (CONT'D)
Hey man.

Paul doesn't register. The guy leans over the bar and taps Paul on the shoulder. Paul turns.

GUY 1 (CONT'D)
Hey man. Aren't you Paul Logan?

Paul shakes his head.

GUY 2
No? Come on man. I own all your records. Of course it's you.

Paul starts making a drink for another patron, politely nodding.

GUY 1
You just fell off the face of the
earth.

Lauren watches intently. Paul's eyes move to her, she averts her gaze to her hands. The surface of the bar is rough and stained. She stretches her fingers out, the skin on her hands is rough and worn, her fingers bony. Her ring finger has a ring indentation.

GUY 2
Have you come out with any more
albums?

PAUL
Not that I know of.

GUY 2
Really? Those last two solo records
were amazing!

GUY 1
So you just work here? Not even the
occasional gig?

He shakes his head and grabs a wet glass and starts drying it.

GUY 2
You should play with us sometime?
We have a band here.

PAUL
I don't think so.

GUY 2
We could back you up. We know all
your --

PAUL
I said: No.

Guy 2 holds his hands up in mock surrender.

GUY 2
Sorry man.

Lauren hears Paul slam down a glass. When she looks up he's gone.

She gets up, leaving her bag but still holding her beer. We follow her getting up and checking behind the bar, then as she walks outside.

She turns the corner. The bar's sign spreads light over the empty parking lot.

She turns back and walks around the other side of the building.

Paul stands beneath a beaming down street light, smoking a cigarette. She sighs, relieved. He notices her. She walks up to him.

LAUREN
(motioning to his
cigarette)
Do you have an extra?

He pulls one out, lights it.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
(motioning toward the bar)
Rough night?

PAUL
Same ol'.

They smoke in silence for a moment.

PAUL (CONT'D)
You from around here?

LAUREN
Just visiting.

PAUL
Family?

LAUREN
It's complicated.

They both take long drags, the muffled sounds of conversations and music come from the bar.

PAUL
What kind of complicated?

LAUREN
Living out of the car complicated.

PAUL
You lose your job?

LAUREN
Among other things.

Lauren looks out down the dark street.

7 EXT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT 7

Blue lit water droplets fall from an awning. It's the only sound on a deserted street.

The blue light is attached outside a warehouse and shines down into a puddle of water.

8 EXT. STREET - NIGHT 8

The blue lit warehouse glows in the background as a drunk couple walks up the side. The woman walks ahead of the man. He grabs her arm from behind and pushes her up against the car. She looks pained and struggles to free herself.

9 EXT. BAR - NIGHT 9

Lauren and Paul watch the couple, Lauren looks like she's about to run and help.

10 EXT. STREET - NIGHT 10

The woman gets away then pins the man against the car, kisses him passionately.

They put their arms around each other and walk off.

11 EXT. BAR - NIGHT 11

They turn to each other, smile. He drops his cigarette, rubs it out on the ground. Lauren finishes the beer.

PAUL
You want another drink?

LAUREN
Sure. I'll be in in a minute.

Lauren watches him go back inside. The TWO GUYS leave the bar. She remains outside, coughing slightly on her next cigarette inhale. She tosses the cigarette away.

She walks over to her car, opens the door.

12 INT. CAR - NIGHT

12

Lauren enters her car and opens up the ashtray, grabbing the change.

13 INT. BAR - NIGHT

13

She re-enters the bar where only a few patrons remain. She walks up to the jukebox, flips through the selections, seeming frustrated. She finally makes a choice, returns to the bar. Paul's counting out tips.

When he sees her, he fills a glass at the tap. She begins counting out change to pay him. He looks at her for a moment.

PAUL

You know what, it's on the house.

LAUREN

Oh, no, I --

PAUL

Really. It's cool.

LAUREN

Thanks.

She accepts the glass. The song changes.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

This is my song.

PAUL

It's a good one.

LAUREN

Will you dance with me?

He's flattered, looks down the bar at the other patrons.

PAUL

Probably shouldn't. Gotta close up here soon.

She nods and nurses her beer.

BILL, 60's, who's been sitting at the bar all night raises his glass.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Excuse me.

Paul walks over to Bill.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Might have to lay off Bill.

BILL
I'm fine.

PAUL
You said you'd give me a lift home,
remember?

Paul doesn't serve him another beer, walks back to close out the register. Lauren leans up over the bar.

LAUREN
You don't have a car?

Paul turns to her shakes his head.

PAUL
It's in the shop.

14 INT. CAR - NIGHT

14

Lauren straightens up the mess in her car. In the background, Paul locks up the bar and walks over to Lauren's car. Opens the passenger door.

LAUREN
Sorry it's a mess.

PAUL
Car's a car.

She turns the key, the engine sputters and squeals. She flashes an embarrassed grin. Tries again. It doesn't turn over. She puts her head down on the wheel.

LAUREN
It's been acting up.

PAUL
I seem to have that effect on cars.

LAUREN
Me, too.

They watch Bill's car drive off.

She turns the key again, it struggles and starts.

15 EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE - NIGHT 15
They pull up to a small house in a dark, sparsely residential area. As they approach, a dog barks from inside the house.

16 INT - PAUL'S HOUSE - NIGHT 16
The door opens to his small, dark house. The dog jumps on Lauren, she pets him.

LAUREN
What's his name?

PAUL
Leviathan. Or Levy.

Light falls on a organized but stuffed room. Bookshelves overflowing with books, magazines and records. Paul walks into the kitchen, flicks on the bare fluorescent light. Lauren waits by the door.

LAUREN
Could I use your bathroom?

PAUL
It's in there. I just gotta take him out for a second.

Lauren sets her bag down looks around the small house, Paul exits through the bedroom. Once he leaves she wanders into the bedroom.

17 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT 17
Moonlight streams into the small room. She scans his dresser, bedside table. His closet is partially open. She looks inside. A guitar leans up against the back and on the wall near by, an old picture of Paul with his band, smiling.

She hears Paul walking up the back porch.

18 INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT 18
She rushes back over to the bathroom, flushes the toilet, turns on the faucet for a second.

19 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT 19
He lets the dog loose and comes into the kitchen. Lauren enters.

PAUL
Do want some coffee or something?

He opens up the refrigerator and looks through its sparse offerings.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Bean burrito?

LAUREN
(responds immediately)
Yeah, I'd love a bean burrito.
Maybe some beer? Or... whiskey?

PAUL
I think I got a beer.

He rifles through the refrigerator then goes through cabinets.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Nevermind. I guess it's whiskey.

He pulls out a bottle of whiskey and some mismatched glasses from another cabinet.

LAUREN
How long have you worked at the bar?

PAUL
Awhile. About five, six years.

Paul turns back to the kitchen. Opens a can and lets the beans fall into a saucepan. Lauren watches him as he takes spices out of the cabinet and stirs them into the pot.

Lauren wanders into the living room.

20 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

20

PAUL (O.S.)
There's not much to look at.

Masks and exotic trinkets decorate the room. His book shelf contains rows of history books.

LAUREN
Do you travel a lot?

PAUL
I used to.

LAUREN
Not anymore?

PAUL
No need really.

She moves over to the bookshelf.

LAUREN
Do you live alone?

He peeks around the corner to see what she's doing, then goes back to cooking.

PAUL
Yeah. You?

She stops and stares at a mask on the wall.

LAUREN
Me and the car.

PAUL
That's right. I forgot we legalized those unions.

He enters the living room and stands close to her. She points to the mask.

LAUREN
Is there a story behind it?

PAUL
If I told you, you'd be cursed forever.

Their eyes lock, he looks very serious. She takes a step back. He chuckles then moves over to the record collection.

PAUL (CONT'D)
How about some music?

LAUREN
I thought you didn't like to play anymore.

Paul pauses pulling out a record and looks up at her suspiciously. He moves past it.

PAUL
I was thinking of your song.

They dance in silence again, looking at each other. The song ends.

He leans forward and kisses her. When he pulls away, she seems distracted.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Are you okay?

LAUREN
So you'll never play again?

PAUL
What?

LAUREN
Your music. Will you ever play again?

He stops dancing and pushes her at arm's length. His tone changes.

PAUL
Ah. I get it now.
(to himself)
I'm such an idiot.

He walks into the other room. *

21 INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT 21 *

She follows him into the dining room. *

LAUREN
Why don't you want to talk about it?
(motioning to his room)
You still have your guitar.

He picks up her bag and holds it out for her.

PAUL
Listen, it's been great, but I think you'd better leave.

LAUREN
Will you let me explain?

PAUL
I don't need an explanation. I was stupid to fall for this shit again. Just get out.

LAUREN
You don't understand. I'm just
trying to --

He takes her arm and leads her to the front door.

PAUL
Out!

22 EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

22

The door shuts in Lauren's face. She pounds on it. There's no response.

LAUREN
I just want to talk! Please! I'm
really not crazy. Can you just hear
me out?

No response. She pounds on the door again. Goes to the window and knocks on the glass.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
Give me a chance. Please? Hey! Open
the door!

She catches her reflection in the glass. Her hair is wild and messed up. Her eyes look a little desperate.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
(to herself)
Man.

She returns to the door. Knocks again, but not as loudly. There's no response. Lauren slumps in defeat. She looks at the door beseechingly. Leans against it, the side of her face pressed to the wood. She knocks again, even more quietly.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
I guess I can't blame you. You
wouldn't be the first person to
shut me out. What the hell is wrong
with you? *

23 INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

23

*

Paul stands on the other side of the door, his position almost identical to Lauren's: his ear against the door, listening.

24 EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE - SAME 24
 Lauren closes her eyes, still leaning on the door. She sighs. Pushes away wearily. Goes down the steps.

LAUREN
 What were you thinking?

25 INT. LAUREN'S CAR - NIGHT 25
 Lauren turns the key, the engine sputters. She pounds the steering wheel in frustration.

26 INT. BEDROOM - SAME 26 *

Paul sits on the bed in his bedroom. The dog lies on the bed beside him. He pets it.

PAUL
 If only everyone were like you.

O.S. The sound of a car engine, trying to start. Paul listens for a moment, then gets up.

27 INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - A MOMENT LATER 27
 Paul stands by the front window. Peeks out through the curtain.

PAUL'S POV

Lauren in her car. The engine tries again. Fails. The warped tape whines. She ejects it and violently throws it in the back. *

She opens the car door. Gets out. Kicks the tire. *

LAUREN
 Stupid, stupid, stupid!

BACK TO SCENE

Paul moves away from the window.

28 EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE - NIGHT 28
 Lauren walks up to Paul's door and knocks. It doesn't open but she can hear the floor shifting behind the door. *

LAUREN
Can I use your phone, my car won't
start.

He doesn't answer.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
(louder)
May I please use your phone?! I
don't have any way to get back to
town.

She waits, then steps off the porch. It's very quiet and
dark. His house is in the middle of nowhere. *

29 INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

29 *

Lauren has her head on the steering wheel. She stays that way
for a long moment. *

There's a knock on the window. She looks up, it's Paul, she
locks the door. He knocks again, then walks to the other side
of the car, gets in the passenger seat. Lauren still has her
head on the wheel. *

He looks around the car, sees the tape on the back seat.
Picks it up looks at it for a long while. *

LAUREN
I didn't use to be like this. I
used to be normal. I just thought
that somehow... I could help you to
start making music again. *

PAUL
The songs are still out there.
They'll always be there. *

LAUREN
But why aren't you? It seems wrong.
You're still here. You're not dead.
You've just given up. *

Paul smooths his finger over the tape label. *

PAUL
Where did you get this? *

LAUREN
Clearly, I'm tenacious. They're
your best songs. Not enough people
have heard them. *

Paul nods.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

I was twenty, when I first heard you play. I wasn't old enough to go in the bar, but I listened from outside. It was... I couldn't move. I stood there. I'd never heard anything like it. I used to lie in my room in the dark and listen. I used to dream about how I'd move away and start some amazing life. Then I met Jeff and got married. Things were good for a while, and then... Who knows why things go wrong. Why do they stop working?

Lost in the memory, Lauren starts to cry.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Something breaks, and then the whole thing falls apart? I don't know. I tried so hard. I really tried. You don't even know. It was like -- I gave it everything I had. Everything.

She can't talk anymore. She struggles to breathe. Wipes her nose. Paul watches her.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

But you, you had something that worked, and you gave it up. Why?

PAUL

Because it wasn't.

He sets the tape down on the dashboard.

PAUL (CONT'D)

It wasn't working anymore. So I quit.

Lauren searches his face, he turns away from her.

LAUREN

What's left then?

She rubs her hands over the steering wheel.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

I don't know what I was expecting from you. I'm sorry.

She takes out her keys and hands them to him. She grabs her bags from the back seat and exits. *

30 EXT. ROAD - NIGHT 30

ON LAUREN as she walks down a wide, dark road. She looks exhausted. *

WIDE ON ROAD as Lauren turns around. Paul stops at a distance.

PAUL
You can't just leave your car like that. When it needs you most. *

Lauren cracks a smile, but remains still. *

PAUL (CONT'D)
I didn't quit. I moved on. I've tried to at least. *

He walks closer, stops, reaches out and takes one of her bags. *

PAUL (CONT'D)
I'd like to believe there's a lot left. *

LAUREN
Me too. *

They start back to the house. *

31 INT. PAUL'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 31

Paul places a plate with a burrito in front of her. She takes a bite of it.

*

32 EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE - DAWN 32

Dew collects on the tree branches, the grass, the windshield of the car.

33 INT. PAUL'S LIVING ROOM - DAWN 33

The house is quiet. Morning lights starts to reflect on an animal statuette sitting on the bookshelf. Lauren's fallen asleep in an awkward position on the sofa.

In the foreground we see Paul's blurred figure enter the room. He puts a blanket over her and sits on the sofa.

*

We hear the bassy sound of his hands on the guitar, the scratches on strings. Then the first few cords being tuned.

On Lauren's calm, tear stained face, asleep.

We hear him start to sing over black.

Appendix 2: Rescue Process Notes

Scene 1-4

Synopsis: She's going back, for the last time. To try and get to the bottom of the mystery. We should see her changing at beginning.

Scene 5

Synopsis: Lauren's second attempt to reach Paul is interrupted by rude guys in the bar inquiring before she does. Wary of making the same mistake, she realizes she has to be more tactful.

- The times: if it's the late 90's, slightly punk kids, no cellphones
- Imagery and tone: vigilant, uneasy. She pays attention to the details. Even though she's been here before she still feels like an outsider
- The Core: It's now or never
- Pitfalls: the guys come off as unauthentic, movie-like. Paul is too accessible

Scene 6-11

Synopsis: Lauren follows Paul outside to make sure he hasn't left. They have their first private conversation.

- The times: winter, colder than normal, but not freezing
- Imagery and tone: Uneasy and whimsical, brought on by the scene with the couple. Things in the world are unsecure, uncertain.
- The Core: Their first connection
- Pitfalls: lack of connection between them. What does he want from her at that moment, what does she want from him. Is she nervous? Is he

inaccessible? The awkwardness of the couple interaction has a different effect on each of them. Paul thinks it's funny, Lauren sinister.

Scene 12

Synopsis: Lauren thinks of another tactic to connect.

Scene 13

Synopsis: Lauren puts a song on the jukebox as another way to reach Paul.

- The times: The jukebox has old music on it
- Imagery and tone: Sees bar slightly more familiar, more confident.

We don't notice the other people as much

- The Core: She has a surge of confidence
- Pitfalls: Bill, that can't come off as cheesy

Scene 14

- The times: what kind of food and drink she has in the car
- Imagery and tone: Slightly frantic. She has to hide things in the car

not to give away her situation completely.

• The Core: She can't fuck this up. Should Paul have an interaction with Bill outside the bar? Create an extra layer of tension?

- Pitfalls

Scene 15-16

Synopsis: Lauren comes to Paul's house for the first time.

• The times: What's in his house. A regular telephone, pay attention to dates of things, newspapers?

• Imagery and tone: Wonderment, intrigue. What do you first notice when you come into a house? The walls, the smell. How do you make that visual? It's stuff. Lots of books.

- Pitfalls: The house isn't interesting enough

Scene 17-18

Synopsis: Lauren sneaks into Paul's bedroom, finds his guitar.

- The times: the poster
- Imagery and tone: intriguing and tense. There should be moonlight or some unnatural light coming into the room.
- The Core: irritating curiosity
- Pitfalls: That there's no tension. The audience needs to be scared that he'll come back.

Scene 19

Synopsis: Paul entertains Lauren

- The times: the food drinks in the refrigerator
- Imagery and tone: awkward and tense
- The core: Paul isn't an entertainer, he's not used to having women over to his place.
- Pitfalls: Paul comes off as too suave and the tension is completely dissipated from the earlier scene

Scene 20

Synopsis: Lauren looks at his things in his living room. They dance.

- The times: the music, the television
- Imagery and tone: curious, delicate
- The core: Where the truth comes to light
- Pitfalls: We don't understand Paul's feeling of betrayal, and her insistence on finding out why he gave up

Scene 21

Synopsis: Lauren gets thrown out

- The times
- Imagery and Tone: tense, heightened. frantic, hands, eyes, arms
- The Core: Paul doesn't want to face this now. He feels betrayed and wants to nip it in the bud before going forward. Paul's anger comes out of nowhere, seems too harsh. We have to feel like he's the one who's a little crazy here. Or do we?

Scene 22

Synopsis: Lauren appeals

- Imagery and Tone: confusion turns to anger. Fists, furrowed brow.

Reflection. Curtains, spiders

- Core: Second chances
- Pitfalls: Don't earn reflection bit, or her anger or confusion. Make this moment real

Scene 23-27

Synopsis: Lauren tries to leave

- Imagery and tone: Frustration, tires, engine, face against door, feet, kicking,
- Core:

Scene 28-29

Synopsis: Lauren gives up and leaves

- Imagery and Tone: doors, empty apces, shame
- Core: Shame
- Pitfalls: too much emotion in one moment

Scene 30

Synopsis: paul feels guilty, asks her back

- Imagery and tone: coming together, trek, dogs feet
- Pitfalls: We don't feel his sincerity and the scene falls flat.

Scene 31

Synopsis: Lauren reveals her pain

- Imagery and tone: Burrito, tears, snot, tissue
- Core: She understands why she came. She admits what she couldn't before
- Pitfalls: too much too late

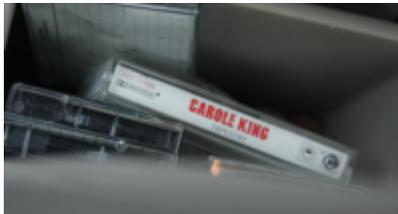
Scene 32-33

- Core: a new beginning

Appendix 4: Storyboard



2A



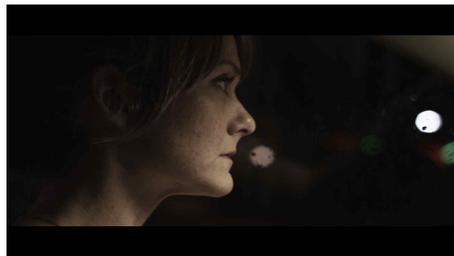
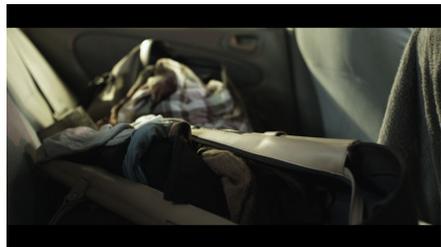
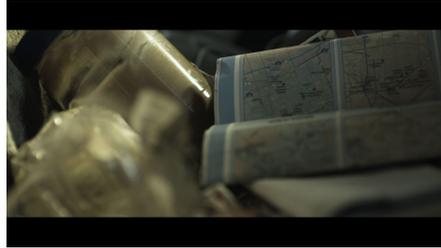
2B



2C



6A





6C



8A



14A



16C

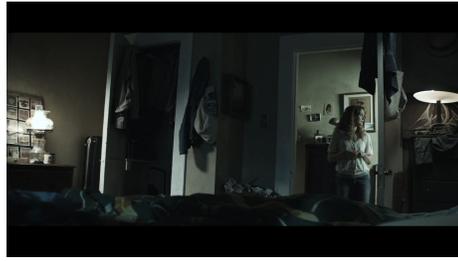


18B





17A



18A



19A

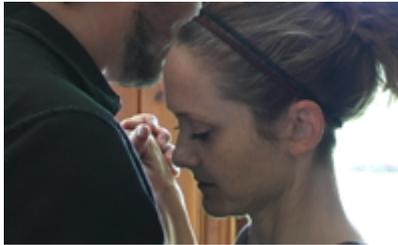


19C





20C



20D



20E



20F



22A





22B



22C



23A



25A



27A





29A



29B



29C



29D

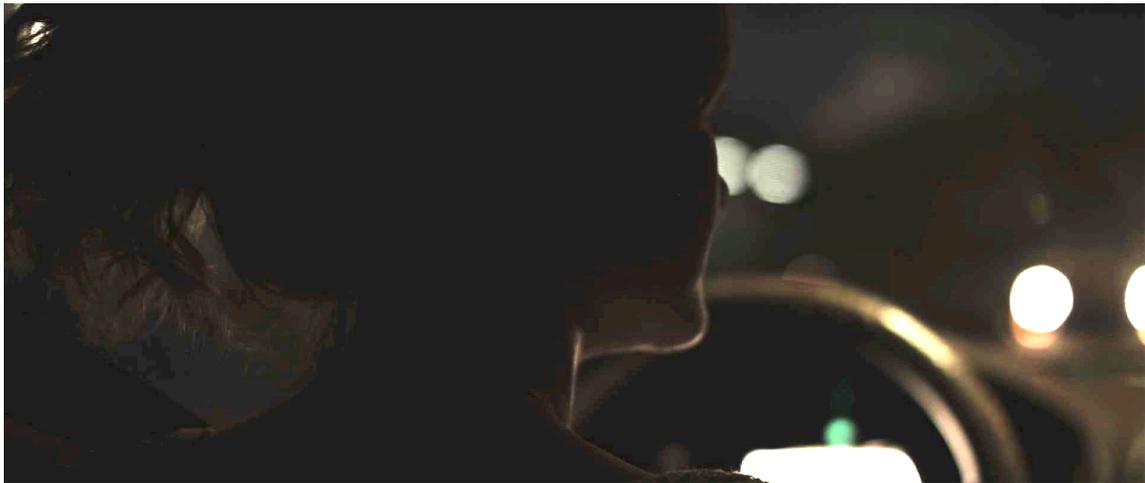


25A



Appendix 3: Visual References

The following are comparisons between Argentinean film LA MUJER SIN CABEZA and shots from RESCUE YOU



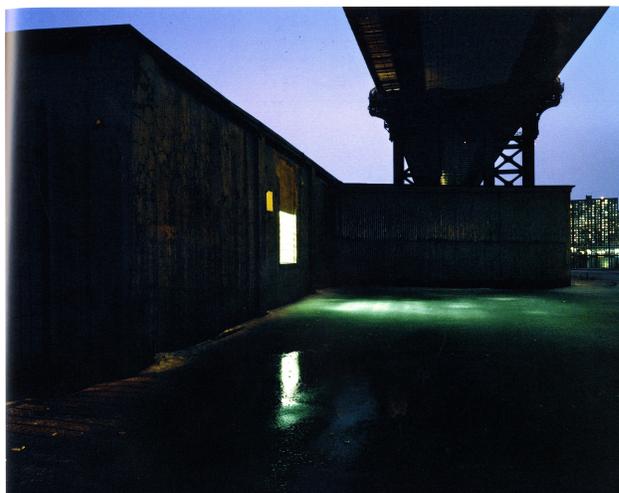
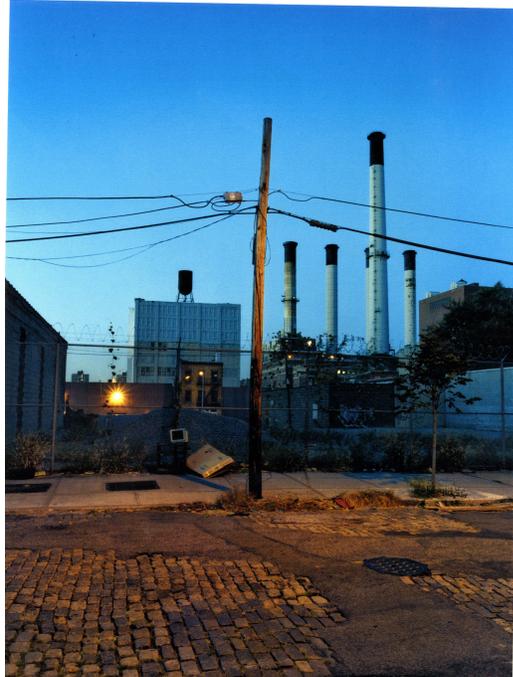








Photographs Lynn Saville. We didn't end up having the ability to shoot nights exteriors like this, but I wanted these to inform the overall mood.





Screen shots from Claire Denis' VENDREDI SOIR. Her film influenced RESCUE YOU thematically and visually.





Appendix 5: One Pager for purpose of getting donations

Rescue You Too

a short film by Kim Hall

Living in her car and out of money, LAUREN is on the last leg of an obsessive search for PAUL, a once popular songwriter who mysteriously faded from the public eye. Her desperate attempt to get him to play again unveils the deep wounds of her own failing marriage. Whether Paul will play for her remains a question, but it's his humanity that ultimately rescues Lauren.

STORY

RESCUE YOU TOO is a story of survival, an exploration of how grief weighs on us and pushes us in directions we never imagined. Shot entirely in Austin in late May 2010, RESCUE YOU TOO has the flavor of Crazy Heart, but focuses instead on the struggle and redemption of Lauren and the unique healing provided by a stranger.

Kim Hall - Director

Originally from Santa Cruz, CA, Kim made her first documentary about low rider bicycle builders when she was 16 years old. Since then she's worked variously as a director, cinematographer, and editor on award winning films in New York, Mexico, Texas and Canada. Her most recent film, UPRUSH, screened at the 2009 SXSW, Cinevegas, Lonestar, Dallas and U.Frame film festivals. Kim is recipient of an Eastman Kodak Scholarship and a Texas Filmmaker's Production Fund grant.

CREATIVE TEAM

Micah Barber - Producer

Micah Barber is a producer in Austin, Texas. He recently produced the indie feature SUNKEN GARDEN by director John Fiege. In Los Angeles, he was a script analyst for Avenue Pictures (WIT, ANGELS IN AMERICA). Micah has served as a filmmaking coach for Christopher Coppola's traveling film festival, and his films have played at the Gene Siskel Center and festivals across the country.

Mike Simpson - Director of Photography

Mike Simpson is a New York based award-winning cinematographer. Mike has shot features everywhere from Austin and Puerto Rico to Macedonia and Switzerland. Mike's recent music video, Inkredible, features Lil' Wayne and was the MTV "Jam of the Week" and #1 rotation video on MTV and BET.

Heather Kafka - Lead Actress / Lauren

TALENT

Born and raised in Austin, Texas, Heather Kafka played "Chloe" on MTV's AUSTIN STORIES, and guest starred on CSI, CSI N.Y., E.R., and HOUSE. She played Dr. Emily Dawson on the Emmy awarded HUFF and turned in memorable performances in THE WENDELL BAKER STORY and the 2003 remake of the TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE. Most recently she had a starring role in fellow Austinite Bryan Poyser's LOVERS OF HATE, which premiered at SUNDANCE.

References

Vendredi Soir, a film directed by Clair Denis, 2002.

Red Road, a film directed by Andrea Arnold, 2006.

Big Fan, a film directed by James Cameron, 1986.

Transit Byzantium, by Joe Hagan, *The Believer*, 2007.

Vita

A native of Santa Cruz, California, Kim Hall made her first documentary about low-rider bicycle builders in high school. After graduating from Smith College in Massachusetts, she moved to New York City where she began working the programming office at renowned art-cinema house Film Forum.

After a year she started teaching video production and media literacy at a number of after-school arts organizations like the Educational Alliance and Global Action Project. She also programmed a youth channel at New York's public access station, MNN.

She started her MFA in film production in 2006 to make fiction films and get a teaching degree. In addition to writing, directing and editing her own films, she also worked as a production designer and camera operator. Her films have played at festivals across the country including SXSW, Cinevegas, Sausalito and UFrame in Portugal. She won a Texas Filmmaker's Production Grant for her thesis film and an Eastman Kodak Production Grant for her film UPRUSH.

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This report was typed by the author.