

SONGS

SHE WROTE ABOUT PEOPLE

SHE KNOWS



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SYNOPSIS:

Carol, an emotionally repressed woman, loses friends and alienates people when she begins singing songs she wrote about people she knows. But she unexpectedly inspires her boss, to whom she dedicates the song *Asshole Dave*, to attempt to reignite his dream of becoming a rock star.

LONG SYNOPSIS:

Carol, an emotionally bottled up woman, discovers the pitfalls of honest self-expression when she begins writing and singing songs she wrote about people she knows. Her songs immediately alienate her friends and co-workers with one notable exception: her boss Dave, to whom she dedicates the song *Asshole Dave*. Inspired by the song, Dave fires Carol with a nifty severance so she can pursue her music. Dave, in turn, quits his job, and picks up a guitar in an attempt to revive his long-abandoned dream of becoming a rock star. But Dave's resolve is challenged when he finds himself in a hotel room in California without his medication. The two misfits soon find themselves working with a strange record producer, Silent G (nee Doug), whose work inspires Carol to confront her biggest emotional obstacle: her mother. Unable to find satisfaction, Carol pours her entire severance package into producing a full album that she shares with her "friends" at a special LP release party.

→ [Click here to view the Trailer](#)

*"You have no idea
How angry I am at you right now
You're an asshole Dave"*



TELEFILM
C A N A D A

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

80 minutes • Colour • English • DCP/HDCAM • Shooting Format: S16mm • 1.85:1 • 5.1/Stereo LtRt • Canada • 2014



KRIS ELGSTRAND – WRITER/DIRECTOR

Kris wrote and co-directed (with Dylan Akio Smith), *Doppelgänger Paul (Or A Film About How Much I Hate Myself)* which premiered at TIFF in 2011. His first short film as writer/director, *Love Seat* (2006) also premiered at TIFF. His work as a screenwriter and producer includes *The Cabin Movie* (TIFF 2005), *Man Feel Pain* (Winner, BravoFACT Short Cuts Canada Award, TIFF 2004) and *Big Head* (TIFF 2009). He released a CD of original music, *Songs of the Sad Sack, Volume 1: I'm so disappointed* in 2011 and occasionally hosts Kris Elgstrand's Social Anxiety Hour, a variety show for anxious times.

FILMOGRAPHY

Writer/Director:

Doppelgänger Paul (co-director) (2011)
In Her Ear (2007)
Love Seat (2006)

Screenwriter:

Big Head (2009)
Stupid Chainsaw Tricks (2009)
The Cabin Movie (2005)
Galo de Barcelos: The Chicken of Portugal (2004)
Man Feel Pain (2004)



THEA GRIVAKES – PRODUCER

Over the past four years Thea and her company, A Blue Car Films, have produced award-winning television and web-based advertising and short films. Her short films include *Clean Dirt* (2010), (winner, CINE Golden Eagle; Special jury prizes, short fiction and best actress, Edmonton Int. Film Festival), and the BravoFact! BC Arts Council-funded short *At Lunchtime: A Story of Love* (2011). Her most recent work is a documentary feature about the transformative power of photography in the lives of young girls escaping violence in Kenya, *Wetu Picha* (2014). Thea is a recent recipient of the CMPA Digital Media Mentorship Program Grant in association with CineCoup Media Inc. She is also a director of the Not-for-Profit organization Cameras4Change and a member of the programming team for the Projecting Change Film Festival (2013/14).

AMY BELLING – PRODUCER

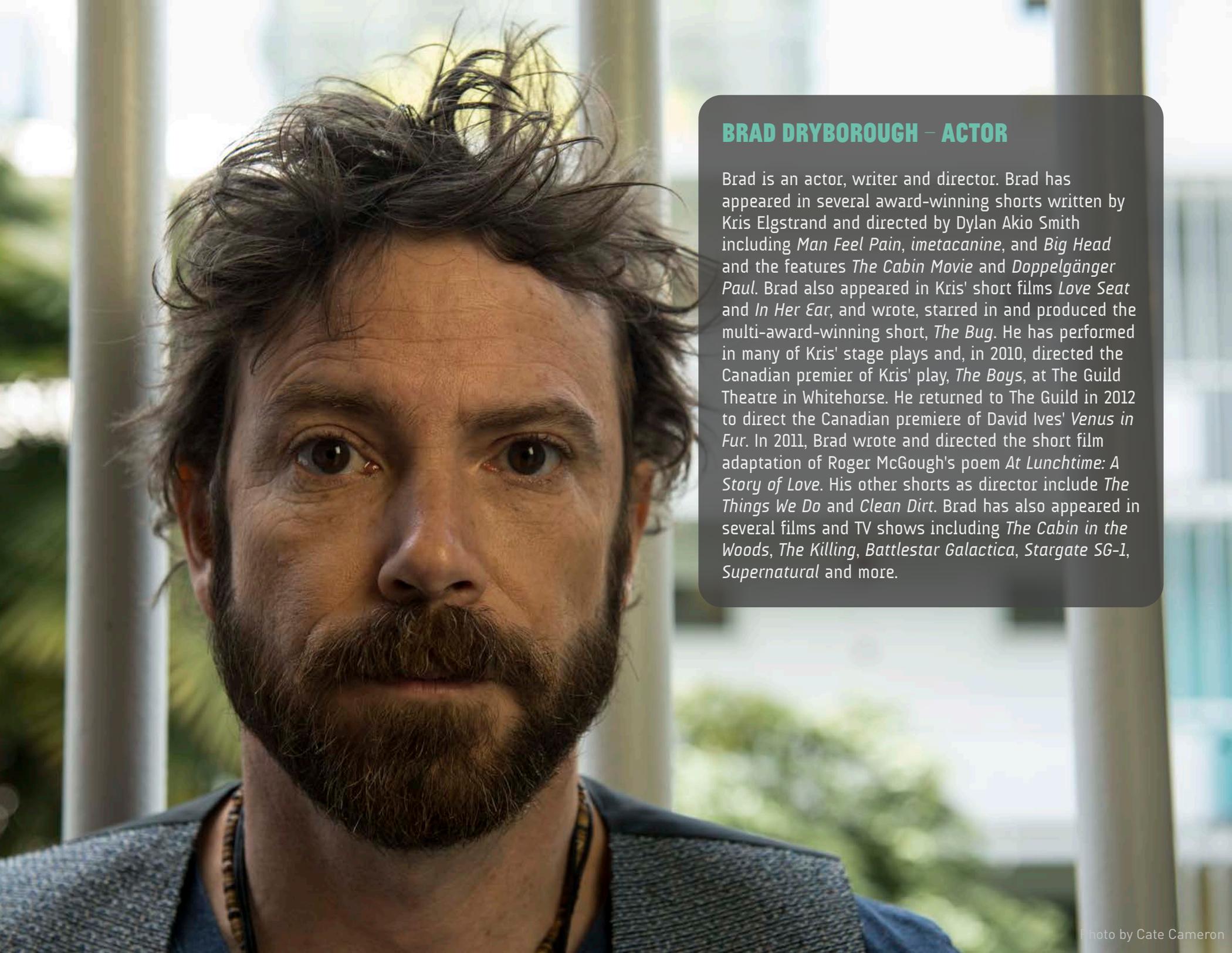
Amy is a BAFTA and Leo award-winning, Genie-nominated producer of Jamie Travis' acclaimed shorts *Why The Anderson Children Didn't Come to Dinner* (TIFF 2003) and *The Saddest Boy in the World* (TIFF 2006), Genie-nominated *Regarding Sarah* (2006), Comic-Con award-winning *Hirsute* (TIFF 2007), *Madame Perrault's Bluebeard* (Clermont-Ferrand 2011), Mina Shum's *Hip Hop Mom* (2011), BAFTA-winner *Le Jeu des Soldats* (2011) and the Telefilm-funded, Leo-nominated theatrical feature *Stress Position* (2013). She is an alumnus of the Berlinale Talent Campus, TIFF Talent Lab, Cannes Producers Workshop, Rotterdam Producers Lab, CFC Go West Project Lab and NSI Features First. Amy is a 2007 Kodak Image Award winner and holds her Masters from the American Film Institute in Los Angeles.



ARABELLA BUSHNELL – ACTOR

Arabella received her training at the Atlantic Theater Company Acting School in New York. Her screen credits include the features *The Cabin Movie*, *Doppelgänger Paul* and *Naked Night Bike*. She also appeared in the award-winning short films *Man Feel Pain*, *imetacanine*, *Love Seat* and *Big Head*. Other short films credits include *In Her Ear*, *At Lunchtime: A Story of Love*, and *Tea Party*. Her stage credits include *Life With A Hole In It*, *Black Codes: Three Plays*, *Boston Marriage*, *One Flew Over The Cuckoos Nest*, *Oedipus Rex*, and *The Front Page*.

*"I should not sing of what I want to get
otherwise I might get what I want
And I might wind up in jail"*



BRAD DRYBOROUGH – ACTOR

Brad is an actor, writer and director. Brad has appeared in several award-winning shorts written by Kris Elgstrand and directed by Dylan Akio Smith including *Man Feel Pain*, *imetacanine*, and *Big Head* and the features *The Cabin Movie* and *Doppelgänger Paul*. Brad also appeared in Kris' short films *Love Seat* and *In Her Ear*, and wrote, starred in and produced the multi-award-winning short, *The Bug*. He has performed in many of Kris' stage plays and, in 2010, directed the Canadian premier of Kris' play, *The Boys*, at The Guild Theatre in Whitehorse. He returned to The Guild in 2012 to direct the Canadian premiere of David Ives' *Venus in Fur*. In 2011, Brad wrote and directed the short film adaptation of Roger McGough's poem *At Lunchtime: A Story of Love*. His other shorts as director include *The Things We Do* and *Clean Dirt*. Brad has also appeared in several films and TV shows including *The Cabin in the Woods*, *The Killing*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *Stargate SG-1*, *Supernatural* and more.



AMY BELLING – DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Amy is a multiple Leo Award winning director of photography with an MFA in Cinematography from the AFI Conservatory in Los Angeles. With director Jamie Travis she lensed the critically acclaimed short films *Why the Anderson Children Didn't Come to Dinner* (TIFF 2003) and *The Saddest Boy in the World* (TIFF 2006), as well as A.J. Bond's Comic-Con 2009 award-winner *Hirsute* (TIFF 2007), *Madame Perrault's Bluebeard* (Clermont-Ferrand 2011), Mina Shum's *Hip Hop Mom* (2011) and BAFTA winner *Le Jeu Des Soldats* (2011). She has shot these features: A.J. Bond's genre-bending *Stress Position*; Matthew Smiley's documentary *Highway of Tears* (2013); the American indie *A Remarkable Life* (2014) starring Daphne Zuniga, Chris Bruno, Marie Avgeropoulos, Helen Slater, Eric Roberts, Dylan Bruno and Mark Margolis; and Maureen Bradley's comedy *Two 4 One* (2014) starring Gavin Crawford. Amy is a 2007 Kodak Image Award recipient who resides between Vancouver and Los Angeles.

DREW SHAFFER – PRODUCTION DESIGNER

Drew is a Vancouver based artist who has won the Helen Pitt Award and been a critics choice in the Vancouver Sun. He has been represented by the Monte Clark Gallery, Pthalo Gallery and Bjornsen-Kajiwara.



JÉANNE BRANDT – MAKE-UP/HAIR

Jéanne is a recent graduate of John Casablancas Institute. She has been a makeup artist on several music videos and short films.

ALEX LEIGH BARKER – EDITOR

Alex spent a chunk of her teenage years with her parents VCRs hooked together to create pre-Internet "super cuts" of her favorite flicks. Upon graduating from high school she was accepted into SFU where she garnered a BFA in film. After synching countless music video and stringing out dozens upon dozens of corporate videos, Alex slowly worked her way towards the kind of creative projects with talented folks that most kids who join the film industry aim to start making. She is especially proud to have worked on the CBC documentary *what happens next: a portrait of Dan Mangan* and *Doppelgänger Paul*, an official selection of the 2011 Toronto International Film Festival. She lives and works in Vancouver BC, with her two cats and one husband.



KEVIN HAMILTON – SOUND DESIGNER

Kevin is an award-winning audio producer, sound designer, composer and voice over actor who has been working in TV & Film for the past twenty years. He is currently working on several film, TV, game and corporate projects as well as mixing and producing for such bands as Celestial Ruin, Jets Overhead and Jackie Treehorn. Film and TV highlights include *The Patterns Trilogy*, *The Saddest Boy in the Word*, *Hirsute*, *Stress Position*, and Global TV's *The Next Great Chef*.

CHRIS GESTRIN – MUSIC PRODUCTION & SCORE

Multi-keyboardist, composer, engineer and producer Chris Gestrin, of Public Alley 421, has appeared on almost 200 albums covering a wide range of musical styles - from avant garde electronic improvisations to greasy soul organ music, introspective piano jazz to top of the charts rock and hip-hop. Projects he's been involved with have won 9 Juno awards, 3 West Coast Music awards, 2 East Coast Music awards, Aboriginal music awards and a Canadian Folk Music. His recording, *Stillpoint* was listed as one of the best albums of 2003 in Downbeat magazine.

ROLL

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SONGS SHE WROTE ABOUT PEOPLE SHE KNOWS

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KRIS ELGSTRAND

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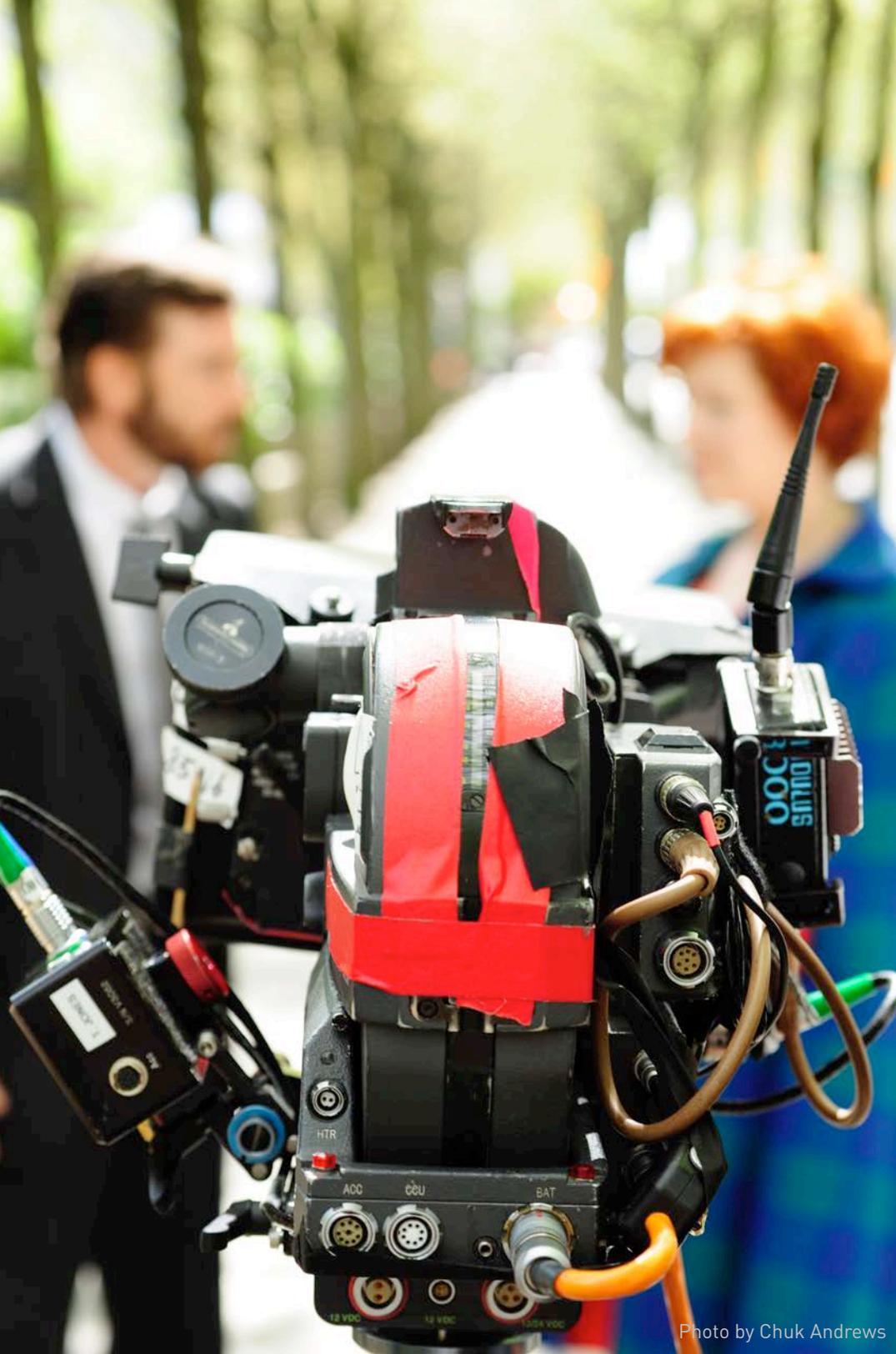
AMY BELLING

MAY THE 4TH BE WITH YOU!!!

2014

DATE

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WHY FILM?

Film is definitely a dying format, but it is possible this medium can stay alive in our modern world of filmmaking--so long as filmmakers and audiences create the demand for stories to be told on film. For me, film grain is the textural, emotional and tonal soul of the cinematography. I feel different watching films shot on film. There is an inherent organic, soulful quality that reaches beyond nostalgia. As I continue my career as a director of photography, and embrace digital cinema cameras, the process and conversation with each director is always the same: how do we make this look the most like film? This time around, in working with writer/director Kris Elgstrand, we found immediately that we share a mutual love for this dying format, so the conversation was different: Why don't we just shoot *Songs She Wrote About People She Knows* on film? From a story perspective, it's a natural fit for our characters, Carol and Dave, who are both learning to express themselves honestly and organically, while simultaneously following Dave's former dreams of being a musician. There is a charm and nostalgia to Dave's dream and Carol's songs that match the texture and grain of film stock. It just makes sense.

So, we reached out to vendors for support. Clairmont Camera's head office in Hollywood was thrilled that we decided to shoot on film, and fully supported us with an ArriSR3 camera package. Kodak Canada in Toronto supported us with our film stock, and Fotokem in Los Angeles assisted with the processing and transfer. We are honoured to have the industry support that we have - across the country and down south in Los Angeles - in order to tell the story of *Songs She Wrote About People She Knows* on 16mm film!



Photo by Cate Cameron

WHY FILM?

On a side note, about film being a dying medium: Fuji stopped the manufacturing and sales of movie film negative just about a year ago--and *American Hustle* used up the last of their Vivid supply. Kodak is the only supplier of film stock, and they have one manufacturing lab left in the world, and it's in New York City. On the post end of film processing and transfer, labs have been shut down all over the world with Technicolor and Deluxe no longer processing film. Deluxe stopped processing in Los Angeles in June 2014, and Technicolor Laboratories in Los Angeles closed its doors the Friday before Christmas in December 2013. Film is still a viable option, but the supply and demand is low. We can only hope that film doesn't ever completely disappear.

– Director of Photography, Amy Belling



*"I wish I could crawl into a hole
And stay there until
Everything falls away"*

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Q&A WITH WRITER/DIRECTOR, KRIS ELGSTRAND:

What was the genesis of this story? Where did the idea come from and how did it evolve from there?

I have a kind of radar for stories about the different kinds of ways people attempt to clear up emotional blocks in their lives or resolve conflicts. The true stories of people trying this or that kind of therapy or falling into the thrall of this or that religion or cult are endlessly fascinating to me. In the case of Songs, I heard about this method of conflict resolution that forces people to sing their problems to other people in a group. I know someone who went through some version of that. I didn't research the details but I was really drawn to the idea because it sounded so funny, sad and human. As it happens, I also like music a lot. In the ensuing years, I started writing and singing music myself and some of those songs started to take the shape of a character singing dark, violent songs to work through emotional issues. The character became Carol, the she of SONGS SHE WROTE. Then her boss, whom she unaffectionately calls Asshole Dave, entered the picture and this bizarre, funny and slightly sad story started to emerge. At that point, I just let the characters react to each other and went along for the ride.

Were there any cinematic inspirations for this film that you can point to? Or other artistic inspirations?

I could probably go on about this for hours. There are some influences that are perhaps more or less obvious.

A BLUE CAR FILMS IN ASSOCIATION WITH

CHAMPAGNE ROLL PRODUCTIONS AND ELGSTRAND PRESENTS

SONGS SHE WROTE ABOUT PEOPLE SHE KNOWS STARRING ARABELLA BUSHNELL BRAD DRYBOROUGH

MUSIC PRODUCTION AND SCORE CHRIS GESTRIN SONGS KRIS ELGSTRAND SOUND DESIGNER KEVIN HAMILTON

EDITOR ALEX LEIGH BARKER PRODUCTION DESIGNER DREW SHAFFER DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY AMY BELLING

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS GEORGE ELGSTRAND DAVID J. COHEN HEIDI & MARK BELLING CONSTANTINE CARMICHEL

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS CHRISTOPHER GRIVAKES TASS GRIVAKES JOCELINE HERNANDEZ DARREN BRYENTON

PRODUCERS AMY BELLING KRIS ELGSTRAND THEA GRIVAKES

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY KRIS ELGSTRAND

TELEFILM
CANADA

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Photo by Katie Yu

Like so many other directors, I love the films of the French New Wave. In particular, Godard's *UNE FEMME EST UNE FEMME* and *PIERROT LE FOU* are never far from my mind. The colour and the playfulness are constant inspirations. Paul Thomas Anderson's *PUNCH-DRUNK LOVE* certainly came to mind. Wes Anderson. Jacques Demy's *LES PARAPLUIS DE CHERBOURG*. And, though saying so does not win me any friends, I cannot deny that Woody Allen has been one of the largest creative influences on me. I also love Miranda July's body of work - her movies, fiction and visual art. I'm certain some of that made it's way into the script and production design. The strangeness and emotional extremes of the films of Powell & Pressburger also feed a large part of my creative imagination on a daily basis. I don't claim to hold a candle to the work of any of these filmmakers but their influence can be discerned. On another level, a lot of my ideas for production and costume design were informed by my lead actress and my apartment, where we shot. Arabella has wonderful red hair and a very retro fashion sense that informed a lot of the physical production in a very organic way. Randy Newman, whose music I discovered when I was about 13, had a huge influence on the songs and the fact that I even write music at all.

What themes are you exploring in your work and how does your sense of humour help you do it?

I think pretty much every story should start from the notion that life is an impossible mess and it's kind of awful but you have to find some way to live through it anyway. I don't know if I honestly think that but it seems an excellent place to start from. A sense of humour seems necessary to make that starting point anything less than miserable.



The film is peppered with original songs, but it is not a musical, describe how the songs fit into the narrative? Why did you want to make a movie with music figuring so prominently?

Like the 10-minute sex scene, the songs are absolutely essential to the story. Wait, there is no 10-minute sex scene. But I assure you, if there was, it would be essential to the story. I love musicals and movies with music, particularly when performed by the characters in an organic way. So, I guess the simple answer is I love music and characters who sing once in a while.

What was the process of writing the lyrics and music for the songs?

For the most part, writing the songs was like writing the movie. You get an idea, look at it from a bunch of different angles, then jump in and hope it works. Some of the songs had existed for a while and I was able to put them in the movie. Others were written or significantly rewritten to fit the movie. For example, Asshole Dave started out as a completely reprehensible musical venting about someone with whom I once worked. Over time, it mellowed into the much more acceptable - and funnier - Asshole Dave. I must stress, however, there was no specific Dave it was about. The guy had a different single-syllable name. I would never have been proud to present that original version to the public. Brad Dryborough wrote Dave's songs himself. Like me, Brad would probably rather be a musician than anything else. We both enjoyed writing our songs and spending time in the studio creating polished studio versions.



Photo by Cate Cameron

Did you write the screenplay with Arabella in mind to play the lead? What does Arabella's screen presence bring to the film?

I conceived of the story with Arabella and Brad in mind. Arabella and I met doing children's theatre 23 years ago. We continued doing theatre together for several years before we became a couple so she's someone I've always worked with. She has a terrific natural and commanding presence and a very expressive face. I gave her a somewhat thankless part in that she doesn't really say very much through most of the movie despite being in almost every scene. As far as I'm concerned, she's beautiful, magnetic, and enigmatic. Great things for a screen actor.

What is it like for you and your wife to work so closely together?

As I mentioned, we worked very closely together before we were a couple. We've been collaborators for 23 years and a couple for 18 years. Though we sometimes do other things for money, working together on plays and films is what we do and part of how we relate to each other. *SONGS SHE WROTE* was definitely the most intense collaboration we had and part of that complication was arranging for childcare since we both had to be on set all the time. We had a grand old time.

You have worked with Brad Dryborough in many of your films and in the theatre - why do you return to him again and again and why was he the right actor to play Dave?



Photo by Chuk Andrews

Brad and I go almost as far back as me and Arabella. We've been working together for 14 years. I met him through a friend when I was casting a play I wrote. Within hearing him read two lines, I knew this was the guy I was looking for for that part. As it happens, it turns out he was the guy I was looking for to be in virtually everything I write. He's an honest actor. He's virtually incapable of lying and he has a tremendous amount of integrity. So I return to him because I just love what he does.

The film has a very distinctive almost period production design and bold use of colour. How would you describe the look you strove to achieve with production design and wardrobe, and what inspired the use of colour?

I think most of the "period" feel or retro quality came from our decision to shoot on S16mm film rather than digital. The richness and grain became a defining quality of the world the characters inhabit. We went with film for a variety of reasons but the main one is the films we talked about in pre-production were almost exclusively shot on film. Ultimately, my DP Amy Belling and I decided to get the film feeling right from get-go by shooting on film rather than applying a bunch of digital filters in post. As for colour, it was always a question of how to use it. Going in, I knew we had Arabella's colourful red hair working in our favour. For Carol's apartment, we knew where we'd be shooting and that the colourful teal and orange walls were already in place. That helped define Carol. She's shy or timid but not beige. The colour of her hair, her clothes and her apartment became central to who Carol is. We knew that would contrast Carol with the bland office where she works.



Your films seem to make a point of putting characters who might otherwise not be noticed by the world in the leading roles. What are you trying to draw the audiences attention to?

I don't know that I'm trying to draw the audiences attention to anything aside from a fun and surprising story. I always start from what interests me and I always hope other people will find it interesting too. I will admit that many of my characters find themselves in the midst of some kind of creative or psychic panic. There is something so true and human about our desire to define ourselves, to push back against the colourless world we sometimes find ourselves living (or trapped) in. I think that struggle is important, interesting and often hilarious.

- Writer/Director, Kris Elgstrand

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Thea Grivakes

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SONGS
Kris Elgstrand