

elwoodtakesalover.com

USC School of Cinematic Arts A CTPR 581 Graduate Thesis Project Production # 172-582-5002

Total Running Time: 16:25

#### Format/Specs:

Color DCI 2K (1998 × 1080) 1.85:1 23.98fps 5.1 surround sound

#### DIRECTOR/PRODUCER

# PRODUCER

John Ira Palmer trehaus@gmail.com +1 424 298 0292 Gracie Corapi graciecorapi@gmail.com +1 865 898 0882

#### DIRECTOR, FESTIVALS AND DISTRIBUTION, USC SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS

Sandrine Pascale Cassidy cassidy@cinema.usc.edu +1 213 740 4432

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### **GENRE**

Drama when it needs to be, comedy when it can't help it.

### **TAGLINE**

A short film about love, loss & movin' on.

### LOGLINE

Cancer patient Hannah fears her husband Elwood will have no one to care for him after she's gone. Long suspecting Elwood had feelings for another man in his youth, Hannah sets out to find his unrequited love in hopes of reuniting them.

### **SYNOPSIS**

Cantankerous cancer patient Hannah has invited a surprise guest over for dinner with her sweet-but-clueless husband Elwood. When the guest doesn't show, Hannah sneaks out of the house to track them down, with a little help from her in-home nurse, Dennis.

Hannah arrives at a farmhouse overflowing with doilies and ceramic figurines, where she confronts P.J., the mystery dinner guest with whom she clearly shares a history. While P.J. is less than happy to see his uninvited houseguest, Hannah confesses that her days are numbered and has long suspected Elwood's unrequited feelings for P.J. Hannah begs him to care for Elwood after she's gone.

When P.J. staunchly rejects Hannah's proposition, she must head home to reconcile her failed mission and Elwood's hurt feelings.

### **MEET THE FILMMAKERS**

#### John Ira Palmer, Director/Producer/Co-Writer

#### Short Bio

John Ira Palmer is a filmmaker whose work spans fiction, nonfiction, and experimental projects. While earning his MFA in Film and Television Production at USC's School of Cinematic Arts, John was invited to the Film Society of Lincoln Center's Artist Academy for emerging filmmakers at the 2016 New York Film Festival. He has been selected for artist residencies at Echo Park Film Center and AICAD's New York Studio Program, and awards including the ARRI Emerging Filmmaker Grant, the James Broughton Film Award and a Princess Grace Foundation Film Honorarium.

#### Long Bio

John Ira Palmer is a director, writer, and producer whose work spans fiction, nonfiction, and experimental projects. He earned his MFA in Film and Television Production at USC's School of Cinematic Arts, and his BFA in Fine Art from San Francisco Art Institute.

John was invited to the Film Society of Lincoln Center's Artist Academy for emerging filmmakers at the 2016 New York Film Festival, under mentors Christine Vachon, Ira Sachs, Laura Poitras, and Edward Lachman. John's short films PITBULL and ELWOOD TAKES A LOVER have screened at festivals around the world. In 2018, he was named a quarterfinalist for the Academy Nicholl Fellowship in Screenwriting and was also a selected co-writer of SAMIR, the Warner Bros.-funded USC feature film adaptation of THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO.

John's experimental 16mm and super-8 short films have screened at venues such as REDCAT and Pacific Film Archive. He has been selected for artist residencies at Echo Park Film Center and AICAD's New York Studio Program, and awards including the ARRI Emerging Filmmaker Grant, the James Broughton Film Award and a Princess Grace Foundation Film Honorarium.

At USC, John was a co-founder of the School of Cinematic Arts' "Our Voices" Speakers Series, which hosts an inclusive roster of entertainment industry professionals from diverse backgrounds. Inaugural guests included Cheryl Boone Isaacs, Andrew Ahn, and John Singleton. As a programmer, John has also presented screenings for American Cinematheque, Artists Television Access, and Echo Park Film Center.

Outside of filmmaking, John has logged over ten years as a volunteer at The Trevor Project, dedicated to suicide prevention and crisis intervention for LGBTQ youth.

### **MEET THE FILMMAKERS (cont...)**

#### Youthana Yous, Story Creator/Co-Writer

Youthana Yuos is a writer and director from Harrisburg, PA. He graduated from Penn State in 2007 with a degree in Information Sciences and Technology before earning his Masters in 2011 for Information Systems. Having switched gears from IT to film, he received his MFA in Film and Television Production at the University of Southern California where he was awarded the Jack Nicholson Scholarship for Directing.

### Gracie Corapi, Producer

Gracie Corapi is a Tennessee-born dancer-turned-filmmaker, currently earning her MFA at USC's School of Cinematic Arts. Her focuses of study are writing, producing, and cinematography, spanning both documentary and fiction. She previously earned her BA in Dance and Media Arts from American University in Washington, D.C., where she filmed micro-documentaries for local dance artists and was a member of the contemporary dance company, Christopher K. Morgan & Artists.

#### Adriana Serrato, Cinematographer

Adriana Serrato is a cinematographer based in Los Angeles. Born in San Francisco and raised in Switzerland, she returned to the United States to pursue a career in the Arts. Adriana attended the Corcoran College of Art and Design in Washington, D.C., studying Visual Arts, where she discovered a passion for photography and eventually filmmaking. She is a graduate of the University of Southern California, where she received her MFA in film production with a focus in cinematography. She has since been shooting a constant stream of short films and music videos.

### Sara Fenton, Production Designer

Sara Fenton was production designer for *Phone Tales* and *Elwood Takes a Lover* and was part of the art team for *A Cowgirl's Story*, *WYRM*, and *The Best and Loneliest Days*. When not on set, Fenton enjoys combining projections and 3D structures to create media based installations. Her digital puppet theatre installation, *Alice in Dohenyland*, garnered Fenton the "Wonderland Award" from USC's Doheny Library Cassidy Collection.

### Andrew Thiels, Production Designer

Andrew Thiels is a native of Louisiana and holds a bachelor's degree in theatre from Seattle University. He interned at Chicago's Steppenwolf Theater in scenic painting and properties. Andrew has worked professionally in film, television and theatre in Los Angeles for the past fifteen years as a set decorator, art director and prop stylist. He is currently the prop director at Center Theatre Group in downtown Los Angeles which operates the Mark Taper Forum, Ahmanson and Kirk Douglas theatres.

### **MEET THE FILMMAKERS (cont...)**

### Meibei Liu, Editor

Growing up in Shanghai and shooting her first short film when she was 16, Meibei Liu earned her BA Degree in Cinematic Arts at City University of Hong Kong, School of Creative Media, as a First-Honor Graduate in 2014. The same year, her short film was selected and screened in the 38th Hong Kong International Film Festival. She went on to earn her MFA at USC School of Cinematic Arts.

### J.R. Schwartz, Composer

J.R. Schwartz is an LA-based composer, and the founder and first violinist of Queertet, LA's premier LGBT string quartet. A graduate of USC's Scoring for Motion Pictures and Television program, they previously attended Los Angeles County High School of the Arts, studied music and psychology at Bennington College, and completed UCLA Extension's film scoring program. In addition to film, they compose and perform for theater and dance productions, most recently in the Mel Brooks production, *Hitler's Tasters*, at the Geffen Playhouse.

#### Shealyn Biron, Costume Designer

Shealyn Biron is an innovative costume designer whose work includes independent films, music videos, short films, and student productions. She is based out of LA and earned her costume design degree from FIDM. Inspired by history and human psychology, Shealyn strives to create costumes that accurately depict a character beyond the limits of their dialogue to further materialize a director's vision. She believes that costume design is an integral part of visual storytelling and hopes to introduce audiences to a character's complexities through the intricacies of their fashion choices.

### Lydia Lane, Production Sound Mixer/SFX Editor

After completing her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Digital Filmmaking at Stephens College, Lydia Lane is now in her second year at the University of Southern California.

#### Ryan Vaughan, Sound Designer & Editor

Ryan Vaughan is an MFA Film & Production student at the University of Southern California with a focus in sound and directing. Born and raised in Williamsburg, VA, Ryan has a BA in English Literature and Film Studies from The College of William & Mary where he had his own mockumentary show on the college's television channel. While there he also helped develop a youth filmmaking program for the college's Global Film Festival in which local elementary, middle, and high school students work with film students to create short films.

### MEET OUR CAST

#### Sarah Lilly as Hannah

Screen and stage veteran Sarah Lilly has appeared in nearly 100 films and television shows over the past 35 years. Her film credits include *Valentine's Day, Georgia Rule,* and *Eating Out 2: Sloppy Seconds*, and television credits include *Grey's Anatomy* and *Ray Donovan*. Sarah trained at the London Academy of Music/Dramatic Arts and received her MFA in Acting from UCLA. For her stage work, she's been honored with two Garland nominations and an LA Weekly Award, as well as a "Best Performance of the Year" nod from the Los Angeles Times.

#### Warren Sweeney as Elwood

With nearly 30 years of experience in television, film, and stage, Warren Sweeney has appeared in the films *Unstoppable* and *Apollo 11*, and is familiar to television audiences for his work on *Baskets*, *Veep*, *The Fosters*, and *New Girl*. He's also appeared on stages around the world, including working under director Alan Arkin twice, at American Place Theater and Wilbur Theatre.

#### César Carmona as Dennis

A veteran stage actor, César Carmona hails from East Los Angeles and is making his big screen debut in *Elwood Takes a Lover*.

### Alex Egan as P.J.

Having most recently appeared in television's *Feud*, Alex Egan also has a long career in theatre, including performances on stages as far and wide as The Groundlings and Boston Court.

### **A NOTE FROM OUR DIRECTOR**

I was mostly raised by my grandma, and she was often–like our protagonist Hannah– quite a cantankerous person. But under that façade was a heart of gold, constantly yearning to care for the people she loved. Even though my friend Youthana created the story and characters in *Elwood Takes a Lover*, I felt as if I knew Hannah well when I read the first draft of the script.

Elwood is sort of a combination of my grandfather, who's nearly 90 and struggling to take care of himself in a small town after my grandma died, and another close family member who passed away many years ago. I always knew this person as heterosexual, but I found suggestions after they died that they'd carried on a clandestine affair with a same-sex friend. I've always wondered what their life would have been like if they'd been able to live openly as I'm so lucky to do. Needless to say, I connected in a very real and personal way to both Elwood and Hannah.

Telling LGBTQ stories is important to me as a filmmaker, and I love that this is a portrayal of queerness that doesn't fall prey to stereotypes but instead thrives on nuance and complexity. There is a quiet hopefulness at play in Elwood's affirmation, in P.J.'s patience, in Dennis' gentle friendship, and in Hannah's journey being fulfilled in an unexpected way. Love lives in many forms.

- John Ira Palmer, Director of Elwood Takes a Lover

### **FESTIVALS & SCREENINGS**

<b>Bogotá Short Film Festival*</b> Bogotá, Colombia *Oscar-qualifying festival	2019
<i>The American Pavilion Emerging Filmmaker Showcase at the Cannes Film Festival</i> Cannes, France	2019
<b>USA Film Festival (Finalist)</b> Dallas, Texas	2019
<b>Sedona International Film Festival</b> Sedona, Arizona	2019
<b>Ojai Film Festival</b> Ojai, California	2018
<i>ImageOut: Rochester LGBT Film Festival</i> Rochester, New York	2018
<b>Conscious Loving Film Festival (Winner: Third Prize)</b> The Hendricks Institute & The Foundation for Conscious Living	2018
<i>Out on Film: Atlanta LGBT Film Festival</i> Atlanta, Georgia	2018
<i>Cinema Diverse: Palm Springs LGBTQ Film Festival</i> Palm Springs, California	2018
<i>North Carolina Gay &amp; Lesbian Film Festival</i> Durham, North Carolina	2018
HollyShorts Film Festival* Los Angeles, California *Oscar-qualifying festival	2018
<i>GLITTER! Oklahoma LGBTQ Film Festival</i> McAlester, Oklahoma	2018
<i>Queers in Shorts</i> Cambridge, UK	2018

### FESTIVALS & SCREENINGS (cont...)

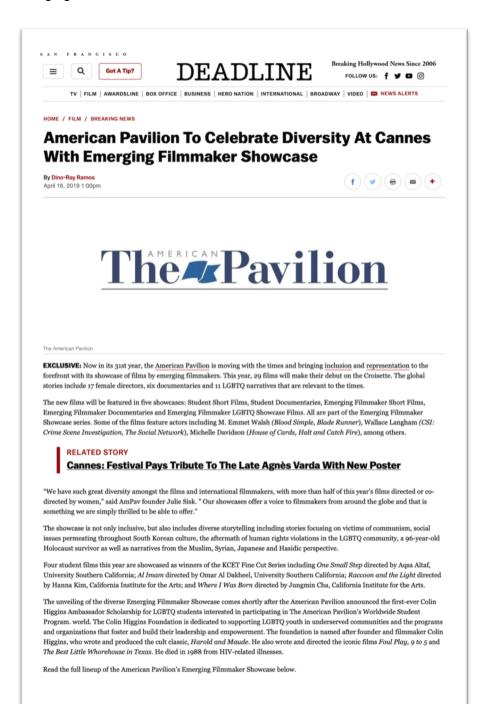
<i>Connecticut LGBT Film Festival</i> Hartford, Connecticut	2018
<b>Tel Aviv International LGBT Film Festival</b> Tel Aviv, Israel	2018
<i>OUTshine Film Festival</i> Miami, Florida	2018
<b>Don Thompson LGBT Film Festival</b> USC School of Cinematic Arts	2018
<i>Mardi Gras Film Festival</i> Sydney, Australia	2018

### **PRESS**

Deadline [April 16, 2019]

"American Pavilion To Celebrate Diversity At Cannes With Emerging Filmmaker Showcase"

https://deadline.com/2019/04/cannes-the-american-pavilion-diversity-inclusion-representation-emerging-filmmaker-1202596419/



### PRESS (cont...)

#### San Francisco Bay Times [July 26, 2018]

"Elwood Takes a Lover Brings LGBT Seniors to the Big Screen" Print & web article about *Elwood Takes a Lover* and its representation of LGBT seniors.

http://sfbaytimes.com/elwood-takes-lover-brings-lgbt-seniors-big-screen/



Elwood Takes a Lover Brings LGBT Seniors to the Big Screen

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### HOW WAS THIS FILM MADE?

#### How was this film made?

*Elwood Takes a Lover* is a graduate thesis project and was student produced at USC's School of Cinematic Arts. It was funded through a successful Kickstarter campaign supported by 231 backers, several private donors, and a grant from ARRI's Emerging Filmmaker Grant program.

#### What is USC School of Cinematic Arts?

The University of Southern California's School of Cinematic Arts was founded in 1929, and is the world's oldest and largest program of its kind. Founding faculty include Douglas Fairbanks, D. W. Griffith, William C. DeMille, and Ernst Lubitsch, and major donors include alumni George Lucas and Robert Zemeckis, as well as Steven Spielberg. Other notable alumni include Ryan Coogler, Brian Grazer, Jon Chu, Judd Apatow, John Carpenter, John Singleton, Paul Feig, Ron Howard, and Shonda Rhimes. USC School of Cinematic Arts has graduate and undergraduate programs across seven divisions, including the John C. Hench Division of Animation & Digital Arts, the Division of Cinema & Media Studies, Film & Television Production, Interactive Media & Games, Media Arts + Practice, the Peter Stark Producing Program, and the John Wells Division of Writing for Screen & Television.

USC School of Cinematic Arts website: http://cinema.usc.edu

#### What is the ARRI Emerging Filmmaker Grant program?

Celebrating 100 years in business, ARRI is a leading designer and manufacturer of camera and lighting systems for the film and broadcast industry. ARRI recognizes the need to support independent storytellers with tools to bring their visions to screen by offering grants in the form of equipment loans for camera and lighting. Past projects to receive support include *Beasts of the Southern Wild* and *Fruitvale Station*.

ARRI website: https://www.arri.com

### **FUN FACTS**

- Director John Ira Palmer had a personal connection to the material even though he didn't write the original story.
- The movie was filmed on location in Ladera Heights, California, and Santa Paula, California. P.J.'s house is an actual farm house, located at Fig Tree Farms in Santa Paula.
- While filming in Santa Paula, the cast and crew stayed in a haunted brothelturned-hotel, where ghost hunters were conducting paranormal research.
- The ceramic cat that Hannah steals from P.J.'s house is a mid-century design. Production Designers Sara Fenton and Andrew Thiels tracked down two actual vintage figurines, exact duplicates in case one was broken during production.
- The cover of the romance novel featured in the movie was painted by artist Lark Soleil LeClear, with characters based on two of the movie's Kickstarter backers. The type layout and copy was created by Director John Ira Palmer, and the prop book was crafted by Producer Designer Andrew Thiels.
- The whiskey bottle that Hannah steals from P.J.'s house features a label that was designed by Director John Ira Palmer as an homage to his grandmother. The prop bottle was crafted by Production Designer Andrew Thiels.
- Actor César Carmona (Dennis) does not have a driver's license. To depict the driving sequence, the actors were filmed through the sunroof of the parked car (to avoid seeing a static background) while crew members gently rocked the car and created passing shadows with tree branches to suggest motion.
- Unbeknownst to the filmmaking team, lead actor Sarah Lilly (Hannah) knew fellow cast members Warren Sweeney (Elwood) and Alex Egan (P.J.) for many years before working on this movie together.
- Funds to make this movie were raised primarily through a successful Kickstarter campaign, supported by 231 backers.
- ARRI awarded the filmmaking team an Emerging Filmmaker Grant, which allowed this movie to be shot on an ARRI AMIRA camera.

### **OFFICIAL WEB LINKS & SOCIAL MEDIA**

Official site: http://elwoodtakesalover.com

Trailer: https://vimeo.com/240314448/

IMDb: http://www.imdb.com/title/tt7157516/

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/elwoodfilm/

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/elwoodtakesalover/

**Kickstarter crowdfunding campaign** (the campaign is over, but the video is still fun!): *https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/johnpalmer/elwood-takes-a-lover-a-usc-thesis-film* 

### PRESS KIT, STILLS & POSTER

**Digital Press Kit:** http://elwoodtakesalover.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/ElwoodTakesALover\_DigitalPressKit.pdf

**Production Stills:** http://elwoodtakesalover.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/ElwoodTakesALover\_PressKitPhotos.zip

#### **Poster:**

http://elwoodtakesalover.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/ElwoodTakesALover\_Poster.jpg

### **CREDITS**

### **ELWOOD TAKES A LOVER**

DIRECTED BY John Ira Palmer

WRITTEN BY Youthana Yuos & John Ira Palmer

STORY BY Youthana Yuos

PRODUCED BY Gracie Corapi & John Ira Palmer

CINEMATOGRAPHY BY Adriana Serrato

PRODUCTION DESIGN BY Sara Fenton & Andrew Thiels

EDITED BY Meibei Liu

ORIGINAL MUSIC COMPOSED BY J.R. Schwartz

COSTUME DESIGN BY Shealyn Biron

PRODUCTION SOUND MIXING BY Lydia Lane

SOUND DESIGN & EDITING BY Ryan Vaughan

STARRING Sarah Lilly as Hannah Warren Sweeney as Elwood César Carmona as Dennis Alex Egan as P.J.

### CREDITS (cont...)

UNIT PRODUCTION MANAGER Mark Richey

FIRST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR Susan Maiorana

CO-PRODUCERS Bruce Brown Arvada Darnell & Cheryl Pike

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER Elise Brown

ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS Joey Chou Paula Lumbard John Roelofs Larry & Cathy Roelofs Steve Snyder & Robert Mann Lisa Stickler Darnell Witt

RE-RECORDING MIXER Allison Ng

FIRST ASSISTANT CAMERA Abraham "AB" Troen

SECOND ASSISTANT CAMERA Artin Aroutounians Jasmyne Peck

DIGITAL INTERMEDIATE TECHNICIAN Steve Greist

SCRIPT SUPERVISOR Bethann Morgan

BOOM OPERATOR Lars Struck

### CREDITS (cont...)

GAFFER Bash Achkar

KEY GRIP Cassio Mariscotti

GRIPS Stephen Burchell Sevag Chahinian Jonathan Chen

MAKEUP ARTIST Colette Balzano

LEAD DRESSER Valentino N. Misino

SET DRESSERS Rachel Boyajian Lisa Dooley Julisa Wright

"WIDE OPEN FIELDS" ARTWORK BY Lark Soleil LeClear

CASTING READERS Lisa Ermel, Steve Greist, Chante Griffin & Shon Wilson

PRODUCTION ACCOUNTING PROVIDED IN PART BY Reba Molock/USC School of Cinematic Arts Office of Business Affairs

POST PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR Nicholas Manting Brewer

ASSISTANT EDITOR Marcus Heleker

SOUND EFFECTS EDITOR Lydia Lane

VISUAL EFFECTS Meibei Liu & Enrico Targetti

### CREDITS (cont...)

COLORIST Enrico Targetti

SCORE ARRANGED & CONDUCTED BY J.R. Schwartz

SCORE PERFORMED BY Jonathan Alvarez, Steve Chiu, Fay Kochkarn Chalermisrachai, Tim Fleming, Ro Rowan, Nick Stone & Micah Wright

SCORE RECORDED & MIXED BY Ken Huffman

"CRY ME A RIVER" Written & Performed by Jackson Emmer Courtesy of Jackson Allan Emmer

FACULTY MENTOR Brenda Goodman

THIS FILM WAS MADE POSSIBLE IN PART BY A GRANT FROM ARRI Inc.

THANKS Our incredible individual donors & kickass Kickstarter backers & many more (see separate list)

LOGOS Captured with ARRI AMIRA SAG-AFTRA USC School of Cinematic Arts

Student Produced at the University of Southern California

In Loving Memory of EllaBelle May

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Sarah Lilly as Hannah in *Elwood Takes a Lover*. © 2018 University of Southern California



Warren Sweeney as Elwood in *Elwood Takes a Lover*. © 2018 University of Southern California



Still from *Elwood Takes a Lover*. © 2018 University of Southern California



Sarah Lilly as Hannah & Warren Sweeney as Elwood in *Elwood Takes a Lover*. © 2018 University of Southern California



Warren Sweeney as Elwood & Sarah Lilly as Hannah in *Elwood Takes a Lover*. © 2018 University of Southern California



César Carmona as Dennis in *Elwood Takes a Lover*. © 2018 University of Southern California



Sarah Lilly as Hannah & César Carmona as Dennis in *Elwood Takes a Lover*. © 2018 University of Southern California



Alex Egan as P.J. in *Elwood Takes a Lover*. © 2018 University of Southern California



Sarah Lilly as Hannah in *Elwood Takes a Lover*. © 2018 University of Southern California



César Carmona as Dennis & Sarah Lilly as Hannah in *Elwood Takes a Lover*. © 2018 University of Southern California



Warren Sweeney as Elwood & Sarah Lilly as Hannah in *Elwood Takes a Lover*. © 2018 University of Southern California



Sarah Lilly as Hannah & Warren Sweeney as Elwood in *Elwood Takes a Lover*. © 2018 University of Southern California



Warren Sweeney as Elwood in *Elwood Takes a Lover*. © 2018 University of Southern California



Warren Sweeney as Elwood & César Carmona as Dennis in *Elwood Takes a Lover*. © 2018 University of Southern California