

PRESS KIT

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Teddy Mate

Short Film Directed by Rommel Villa

Written by Lydia Lane

GENRE

Fantasy/Drama

TAGLINE

It'll transform into the best thing that ever happened to you

15min | 2019 | ENGLISH | USA | COLOR



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Synopsis

LOGLINE

In a world where children bond with magical teddy bears that eventually transform into their perfect, human life partner; an optimistic and strong-willed young woman struggles when her teddy mate subverts expectations.

SYNOPSIS

In a conservative world where teddy bears transform into human persons to become regular humans' partners in life, MARIE, an excited and hopeful little girl, gets her magical teddy bear named JORDAN, with the company of her optimistic father, PAUL. Years go by, and Marie grows as she nurtures a beautiful relationship with Jordan, who learns about Marie's hopes and fears. When Marie is a teenager, Jordan transforms into a beautiful and cheerful girl. A surprised Marie contemplates a human Jordan, waking up an array of emotions in her. However, strict and conservative BEATRICE, Marie's mom, enters the room to find a female Jordan which in her mind should have transformed into her daughter's male partner.

An agitated Beatrice takes control of the situation and drags her family to the Returns and Enquiries department at the Bureau of Teddy Affairs to solve the problem. In the meantime, Marie and Jordan spend some alone time together outside the cold and scary office. They exchange looks, share their fears, and finally, dance together remembering the times when they were happy. Beatrice steps out of the office and informs Marie that Jordan will be "damaged out" and that she'll get a new teddy bear that will turn into a man. Marie confronts her mother, telling her that Jordan is perfect for her and that she wants to stay with her and marry her. Marie takes Jordan's hand and walks her to the outside world under the worried looks of her mom and the accepting smile of her father.



Director's Statement

I remember the first day I arrived in the US. I was wearing my dinosaur t-shirt and a llama jacket made in my beautiful Bolivia, excited about coming to the land of dreams where I could be myself with no judgements. When I got into the taxi, the taxi driver asked me if I had cocaine in my bag after I mentioned where I came from. Even at school, my friends kept asking me if I had access to drugs. Such misconceptions reminded me of my high-school times in Bolivia, where my teacher would tell me to stop being so kind and delicate because only gay people act that way.

We live in a world that puts us in a box as soon as we're born: high-class or low-income, male or female, tall or short, funny or serious, straight or gay, talented or not so talented. People are used to telling us who we are before we have a chance to figure it out ourselves. In my case, I was immediately put in the "Delicate male" category, and once I found a group of friends in the U.S, I became the "Bolivian who has access to good coke" one. For our protagonist Marie, she is immediately put in the "wrong" box, and her teddy mate is the "damaged" one. That's where my love for this story comes from.

Teddy Mate follows a little girl's journey, who grows to learn how to accept herself and to fight for what she believes in. Of course, it all happens in a magical world where teddy bears transform into humans. I am excited to say that we made the film with a diverse cast and crew, many of whom identified ourselves with the story as part of the LGBTQ+ community.

When I first talked about the story with Lydia, the writer, she mentioned how important it was for her to tell a story that works as a fairy tale for children to learn that love is not a choice, it's a feeling and an innate attraction. For me, this was crucial. It was my goal to show the excitement of a little child when they get the teddy bear of their dreams, and then contrast the story with the problems that arise when society gets in the way of relationships. Teddy Mate is a story for all ages and backgrounds. It educates children and reminds grown-ups that you don't choose who you love, but you do choose to stay in love with your actions and decisions.



The Production

Teddy Mate was shot in September and October, 2018 in Los Angeles, CA. It was a ten-day production with most of the interior locations in the Downtown Los Angeles area and Thousand Oaks, while the exterior locations - the town streets - were shot in San Dimas, CA. The last one was essential to find because I was looking for locations with a magical small town feel with wide sidewalks and a view of the sunset in the horizon that looked nothing like Los Angeles. After scouting several towns, we found San Dimas, which had the look we were searching for. In contrast, finding the Bureau of Teddy Affairs was another challenge. I wanted that location to have a clinical, colorless and unwelcoming feel. Fortunately, we found some beautiful corporate stairs in a new Science building at USC, in which we also filmed the hallway scene towards the end of the film.

Visual Effects were also a key component in the making of this film. I remember spending several days preparing for the transformation scene. My biggest inspiration for it was Fiona's transformation in *Shrek*. I wanted that combination of magic and mystery in the teddy bear's metamorphoses. We shot several takes of different plates in order to get everything we needed for the VFX Supervisor to work their magic.

In terms of acting, working with children was a fulfilling and challenging experience. The biggest test for me as a director was to convey real emotion out of little Marie - played by sweet Hadley Scheff - by helping her imagine a world in which teddy bears are magical. I asked Hadley to imagine that in every take the teddy bear speaks with her, only her, and they communicate in a special way that other people cannot hear. To help her, I would speak lines off camera pretending to be Jordan, the teddy bear, during takes, so that it'd be easier for Hadley to interact with the teddy.



The Production

The dancing moments in the film were among the most emotional scenes, which is why it was essential to find the perfect locations, costumes and music. We worked with Jesper, the composer, in a score that evoked the magic and melancholy of a dance that like tango, reflects the sensuality and conflicts of a relationship. Once we reached the sweet spot, we found two wonderful choreographers who tirelessly worked with Jamie - Marie -, Aiesha - Jordan-, and Beau and Anisa - Paul and Beatrice - developing two choreographies.

Beatrice and Paul's dance showed the maturity of a relationship that has remained strong for years and that is very comfortable with the stage of their marriage, while Marie and Jordan's dance was in a way an allegory to the first time they met back in the Teddy Headquarters, it is more of a "first dance-human bonding" in which the characters learn about each other and explore their physicalities. The last one was shot on a stage that simulated a black void to emphasize the privacy Marie and Jordan needed at that moment.



Themes

Teddy Mate is a movie about love and self-acceptance. It's about waking up in the morning and realizing that we are free to be who we want to be whenever we are ready.

The teddy bear in the film represents all the dreams, hopes and expectations we have in life. This magical world takes the phrase "What if your dreams became true?" and makes it a reality. It is important to mention that self-acceptance means not only being proud of who you are but also, defending those beliefs like Marie did, and fighting for them even if that means facing those who are trying to protect you.

A photograph of a child's bedroom. In the center, a brown teddy bear sits on a bed covered with a patterned blanket. The room is decorated with posters, including one for 'GREEN DAY' and another with the text 'BLACK BEAR'. A window in the background is brightly lit, creating a soft glow. A purple rectangular box is overlaid in the top right corner, containing the title 'Look and Visual Progression' in a white, cursive font.

Look and Visual Progression

Teddy Mate is all about the colors. Marie's favorite color is teal, so throughout the film we played a lot with different shades of teal. Towards the beginning, we see lighter blues and greens but as Marie grows up, the tones darken and the teal turns into beautiful turquoise tones showing that our protagonist has grown. When Jordan becomes human, she introduces a new color in Marie's life: Purple, which brings romance to float. In contrast, Beatrice, Marie's mom, wears desaturated tones, with silver as her favorite color, which speaks to her conservative character. Movies like *Amelie* and *Submarine* were inspirations in terms of color palette and camera movement. Wide angle shots helped experience the magical world that Marie lived, world that became more real - hand-held - after her teddy bear transforms.

Cast and Character List



Jamie Morrow - Marie



Aiesha Eser - Jordan



Anisa Alamia - Beatrice



Beau Bowker - Paul



Hadley Scheff - Marie (child)



Mark Schwarz - Collin



Jumarcus Mason - Thomas



Laila Montana - Marie (teen)





Rommel Villa - Director

Rommel is a director, producer, and writer born and raised in Sucre, Bolivia. His interest in telling stories started when he was a kid, creating fictional stories about his family having superpowers and fighting poverty and corruption. Rommel has a Bachelor's Degree in Systems Engineering, a minor in Psychology, and he recently graduated from the MFA in Film and TV Production program at USC with an emphasis in Directing, where he directed over 8 films and wrote more than 10 scripts.

Winner of best director in several theater festivals in Bolivia, Rommel received the Lionsgate and Televisa fund for Latinx filmmakers at USC. In addition, he was awarded two directing grants: one of them being TEDDY MATE, fully funded by USC, and the second one, which will be Rommel's next project, is a historical film called SWEET POTATOES, which follows the story of Luis Miramontes, the Mexican scientist who synthesized the main component of the birth control pill. The last one will be shot in Mexico and will be funded by the Sloan Foundation.

[IMDB - RV](#)



Damon Laguna - Producer

Damon Laguna was born on January 10, 1995 and was raised in Los Angeles, California before attending the University of California, Berkeley where he graduated with a B.S. in Business Administration from the Haas School of Business. Damon has worked for production companies like NBCUniversal's Illumination Entertainment, Beachside Films, and Blumhouse Productions. Currently, Damon is pursuing a MFA in Film & Television Production at the University of Southern California, primarily focusing on producing, writing, and directing character-driven, humanistic content.

[IMDB - DL](#)



Lydia Lane - Writer

Lydia Lane grew up in a small town in southern Missouri, where magic was real. She could go outside her door and find an enchanted forest, or a quaint small town with a secret. Whatever she imagined could be real there. That being said, she always knew she wasn't meant to stay there. She worked hard and got into a Stephens College, which took her Columbia, Missouri. After that, she set out on her true journey and drove herself and all her belongings to Los Angeles California. Eventually she enrolled in the M.F.A. in Film and Television Production program at the University of Southern California and realized she could share the magical worlds she created with the world. Lydia doesn't return often since coming out as a member of the LGBTQI+ community, mostly because small towns just aren't that understanding, but it will always hold a special place in her heart that sometimes comes out in her films.

[IMDB - LL](#)

Anabel Inigo - Producer

Anabel Inigo was born and raised in Miami, Florida. Adopted at a young age by her grandparents, she grew up listening to The Mamas and The Papas and watching telenovelas. Her upbringing in the city is a large part of her identity. In that home, she lived under the same roof as her sister, her aunt, and her two cousins. From an early age, Anabel always knew she wanted to be an artist. In her younger years, her family would hope that she would grow up to be a lawyer due to her inability to stop speaking. However, as she got older, she began to write stories and poetry, reading them to her grandparents. This cemented her love for film and theatre and led her to complete her BA in Theatre at Florida State University where she worked on numerous shows and films in various capacities. Her free time is spent writing about her personal experiences and those around her, specifically people of color. She has been excited to continue her journey here at USC's School of Cinematic Arts and hopes to further her education in understanding the role of the producer.

[IMDB - AI](#)





Yannis Faidherbe – Director of Photography

Yannis Faidherbe is a filmmaker from Belgium currently studying in the M.F.A. in Film and Television production at the University of Southern California. His specialties are still photography and cinematography. Being born in South America and having lived in three continents, travelling is an important part of his life that has opened his eyes to many different landscapes and cultures. Sharing his vision and appreciation for the surrounding world while emotionally moving people through the images he shapes is what drives him everyday to do what he does.

[IMDB - YF](#)



Paolo Antypas – Director of Photography

Born and raised in Cyprus to Lebanese parents, Paolo grew up on the outskirts of Larnaka, a large coastal town on the island. His father had been the owner of a local 2-screen cinema named 'Attikon', where he would regularly watch films with his three other siblings. He moved to Buffalo, NY to pursue a bachelor's degree in communication at the State University of New York at Buffalo. Returning back to Cyprus, he worked in film distribution and is currently completing his MFA in Film Production at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, CA.

[IMDB - PA](#)



Adele Biraghi – Production Designer

Adele Biraghi is a passionate Production Designer from Italy currently pursuing her MFA at University of Southern California, School of Cinematic Arts. She recently graduated with a BA in Film Practice at the University of Arts, London. Since 2015 she has worked on a variety of short films, feature films, commercials, music videos and art exhibitions in a variety of genres and roles. She is especially passionate about fantasy and science fiction genres. Her latest favorite projects include being Production Designer for the USC funded 546 thesis film "Teddy Mate" as well as on set dresser for feature film "Voodoo Macbeth".

[Website](#)



Ari Bach – Production Designer

Ari Bach was born in San Diego in 1981 and raised in Colorado Springs before attending CU Boulder and UCCS as a film studies major, followed by graduate film production at USC. He is the author of the Valhalla trilogy of sci-fi novels published by Harmony Ink Press, and the writer/director of the film Jealous Gods. Among his other works are The Snail Factory, a webcomic; a Surrealist Tarot deck published by Tarotsmith, and hundreds of drawings and paintings on deviantArt. He aspires to make surrealist films in the future.

[IMDB - AB](#)



Ashley McGraw – Editor

Before going back to school, Ashley worked primarily in political campaigns for candidates such as President Obama and Senator Mark Warner, as well as on issue advocacy campaigns. Storytelling was the primary force behind the success of these campaigns, connecting people's lives to the issues and each other. Her undergraduate degree was in Media Arts and Entertainment where she focused primarily in documentaries, such as one about a multigenerational farmer family in North Carolina. While in film school at USC and beyond, Ashley hopes to work on films that highlight our shared humanity.

[IMDB – AM](#)



Andy Gladbach – Editor

BAndy Gladbach is a Los Angeles-based filmmaker and composer originally from Oconomowoc, Wisconsin. His editing work includes short narrative and documentary films as well as web series, including Personal Space on Amazon Prime. Andy's most recent scores have been for films from the silent era, which were commissioned by the Mary Pickford Foundation and have appeared on Turner Classic Movies. Andy likes long walks on the beach, plays piano in his spare time, and thinks toilet paper should go over, not under.

[IMDB – AG](#)



Deja' Robinson – Sound Designer

This self-proclaimed "digital artist" prides herself on the endless content she creates with the simple clicks of a mouse and a keyboard.

After graduating from Clark Atlanta University in 2016, she immediately relocated to New York City, working full-time in post-production. Just over a year later, the Georgia native moved across the country to Los Angeles upon her acceptance into the graduate film program at the University of Southern California (c/o 2020). With her passion and extensive experience in post, editorial and technical operations, her ultimate goal is to become a Post Production Supervisor as well as a member of the A.C.E. editor's union.

[Website](#)



Tracy Egbas – Sound Designer

Born and raised in Lagos, Nigeria, Tracy is currently a Film Production graduate student at USC School of Cinematic Arts with a concentration in writing and directing. She graduated Summa Cum Laude from Fisk University in 2014 with a Masters in Visual Arts. In 2017, her dark and innovative PSA on 'The Freedom of Speech' won her first place in the National Association of Broadcasters Education Foundation (NABEF) contest, and was broadcasted on stations nationwide. In 2015, she worked as an editor at the Metro Nashville Television station, and collaborated with award-winning illustrator, Wayne Brezinka, to create a documentary on youth cancer hero, Zach Sobiech.

As a writer, Tracy has received some recognition, including the Clark Atlanta National Writer's Award. In 2013, she was nominated to participate in the Vermont Studio Center Fellowship, and her artwork has been displayed in the Nashville Arts Magazine, as well as the Stein, and Aaron Douglas Galleries. As a filmmaker, Tracy strives to weave elements of her unique cultural experience with deeply personal stories, to create films that both inspire and entertain.

[IMDB – TE](#)



Jack Walterman - Assistant Director

A native of Lakeville, Minnesota, Jack Walterman graduated with a BA in Theatre Arts: Acting/Directing from Saint Mary's University of Minnesota in 2017. While there, he was able to study abroad and perform in both London, England, and at the Gaiety School of Acting in Dublin, Ireland. He also directed stage productions and coached competitive speech for neighboring high schools. During the summer he worked as a teaching artist at the renowned Guthrie Theater. Now, he has made the move to Los Angeles to pursue an MFA in Film and Television Production at the University of Southern California where he focuses his energy on writing, producing, and directing stories about characters overcoming personal fears and allowing more room for love in their lives.

[IMDB - JW](#)



Jesper Ankarfeldt - Composer

Jesper is a Danish film composer with more than 100 films to his name. Latest his music was awarded the Golden FIPA award for Best Original Music at FIPA / Festival International de Programmes Audiovisuels for the Van God Los: Kerstkado.

[IMDB - JA](#)



Stephen Burchell - VFX Supervisor

Originally from Santa Cruz, California, Stephen is an experienced visual effects artist and editor. He first started making stop-motion films as a hobby around the age of eleven, and from there, he continued to develop his skill set, branching out into other areas of film, such as documentary filmmaking and visual effects. Stephen just graduated from the film production program at USC, where his proclivity for visual effects gave him the opportunity to work on many student projects, including a number of graduate thesis films, a television series, and even a couple feature films. A big science fiction and adventure fan, Stephen hopes to work as a visual effects supervisor, but is also interested in directing his own films someday. He is fascinated by the psychology of the mind, and wants to use his skills to both entertain and challenge.

[IMDB - SB](#)

Teddy Mate

(individual cards)

Jamie Morrow

Aiesha Eser

Anisa Alamia

Beau Bowker

Directed by Rommel Villa Barriga

Written by Lydia Lane

Produced by Anabel Inigo
Damon Laguna

Cinematography by Paolo Antypas
Yannis Faidherbe

Production Design by Ari Bach
Adele Biraghi

Edited by Andy Gladbach
Ashley McGraw

Sound by Tracy Egbas
Deja' Robinson

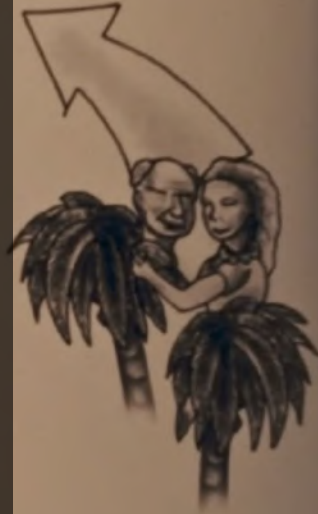
Assistant Director Jack Waltermann

Music by Jesper Ankarfeldt

Costume Design by Yi-Hsien Cheng

VFX Supervisor Stephen Burchell

Animation by Grace Wang



(SCROLLING)

Associate Producers Xinwen Chen
 Natalie "Shug" Cvitanic
 Ali Jalal-Kamali
 Michelle Lin

2nd Assistant Director Michelle Lin

2nd 2nd Assistant Director Alyssa Amer

CAST

<i>Marie</i>	Jamie Morrow
<i>Jordan</i>	Aiesha Eser
<i>Beatrice</i>	Anisa Alamia
<i>Paul</i>	Beau Bowker
<i>Marie (child)</i>	Hadley Scheff
<i>Collin</i>	Mark Schwarz
<i>Thomas</i>	Jumarcus Mason
<i>Marie (teen)</i>	Laila Montana
<i>Marie's Friend</i>	Emma Hyland
<i>Elektra</i>	Eiko Watanabe
<i>Brihanna</i>	Jay Goldstuck
<i>Alexander</i>	Karan Menon
<i>Eddie</i>	Ka Lun "Alan" Chang
<i>Alicia</i>	Joana Perey
<i>Amy</i>	Virginia Brazier
<i>Ruth</i>	Dita McCool
<i>Sergio</i>	Chris Blunt
<i>Vincent</i>	Edward Mattiuzzi
<i>Theodore</i>	Darren Liu

<i>Nora</i>	Victoria Floro
<i>Erica</i>	Caylie Jones
<i>Claire</i>	Kristina Malloy
<i>Penelope</i>	Lili Fox-Lim
<i>Teddy Technician #1</i>	Liam Gibb
<i>Teddy Technician #2</i>	Ari Bach
<i>Teddy Clerk (voice)</i>	Paolo Antypas
<i>Luke (dog)</i>	Winston Laguna

BACKGROUND

Adel Acar	Allison Kajikawa
Isaiah Azuaje	Cameron Klein
Gerald W. Barlows	Jackie Langelier
Reagan Barlows	Nikole Leanos
Rina Barlows	Michelle Lin
Joan Barrick	Jon Long
Madison Barrick	Irina Malkmus
Andreas Bigger	Paxton Malkmus
Adele Biraghi	Ashley McGraw
Yi-Hsien Cheng	Mario Ruiz
Alexander Colbeth	John Patrick Shulak
Benjamin Cross	Sophia Soriano
Ephraim Cross	Nikola Stajszczak
James Espinosa	Mariah Tavares
Emery Fernandez	Yueh-Lin Tsai
Sophie Galvan	Rooban Vijay
Parker Graves	Monika Wilga
Ali Jalal-Kamali	Stanley Yamaguchi
Brily Jones	Polina Yamshchikov
Lyrik Jones	Xinyi Zhu

CREW

Script Supervisors Andy Gladbach
Ashley McGraw
Theodoros Vasiloudes

1st Assistant Camera Dmitry Kovalev

2nd Assistant Camera Julian Bridges

2nd Assistant Camera Nick Lane

2nd Assistant Camera Autumn Palen

2nd Assistant Camera Carly Stone

Steadicam Operator Justin Danzasky

Steadicam Operator Jose Espinoza

Gaffer Ariel Cantrell

Key Grip Juan Gutierrez

Grip Darren Cohn

Grip Perry Fallahi

Grip Elisa Sofia Fioretti

Grip Mark Matthews

Grip Emily Paik

Grip Mario Ruiz

Costume Designer Yi-Hsien Cheng

Hair and Makeup Artists Eiko Watanabe
Yueh-Lin "Star" Tsai
Gratia Arguelles
Deja' Robinson

Post Production Supervisors Anabel Iñigo
Damon Laguna

Colorist Enrico Targetti

Boom Operator Chehade Boulos
Boom Operator Angel-Emilio Villegas

Dance Choreographers Jesus Fuentes
Chysanti Krishna Kandula

Graphic Designers Manhoor Euceph
Dmitry Kovalev

Illustrator Ari Bach

On Set Dresser Karan Menon

Prop Master Jay Goldstuck

Set Dressers Stella Asmon

Jacqueline Langelier

Huanxi Li

Mishal Mahmud

Musicians Leonard Chong

Mya Greene

Akane Hinamoto

John Mietus

Matias Pachalian

Scoring Engineer Daniel Blanco

Assistant Scoring Engineer Camilo Velez

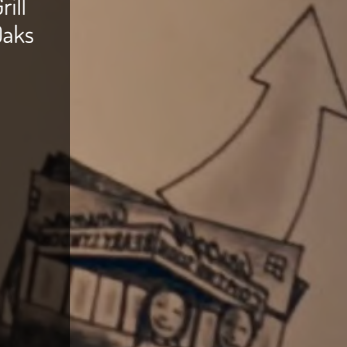
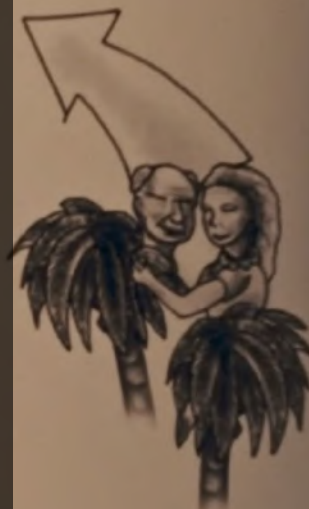
Production Assistants Thomas Meadows
Polina Yamschikov

Photographs by Oleg Magni
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Earl53
Pete Bellis
Sylvie Tittel

Studio Teachers Cathy Sverev
Jan Turetsky

SPECIAL THANKS

ICI Worldwide
Keith Yamaguchi
Gerald W. Barlows
Daurio Family
Laguna Family
Shane Laguna
Dedria Laguna
Norman Hollyn
Megan McGraw
Jacqueline McGraw
Ana Marabotto
Ada Iñigo
Paul Kowalski
Angelo Pacifici
James Savoca
Thomas G. Miller, ACE
Reine-Claire
Everett Lewis
Craig Sabin
Joe Wallenstein
Reed Simonsen
Jason Piemnopkao
Villa Barriga Family
Adam Johnson
Rudy Salas
Shaina Ghuraya
Kara Fein
Color & Copy LA
MS Teddy Bears
BJ's Restaurant and
Brewhouse, Montebello
BJ's Restaurant and
Brewhouse, West Covina
Georgie's Mediterranean
Cuisine
La Barca
Chipotle, Culver City
Jesse's Camarones
Chipotle, South Gate
Chipotle, Culver City
El Cholo
Casa Oaxaca
La Paloma Mexican Restaurant
Village Eatery
Chili's, Chino Hills
Chili's, La Verne
El Sancho Loco Taqueria
Buca di Beppo
Rubio's Coastal Grill
The Latigo Kid
Starbucks, Thousand Oaks
Patron Mexican Bar and Grill
Olive Garden, Thousand Oaks
Cisco's
Brent's Deli
Home Restaurant
The Cheesecake Factory
Ralph's
Trader Joe's
El Abejeno
Baja Fresh
New York Bagel Co.
Dan Carlin
Owen Neary



Technical Specs

Country: United States.

Language: English.

Film: Short.

Genre: Drama, Fantasy.

Run Time: 15 minutes.

Picture Format: Color HD.

Sound: 5.1 Surround, Stereo.

Aspect Ratio: 1.77:1 (16:9).

Screening Format: DCP, ProRes, Quicktime.



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