



My Lonely Heart Calls

A Film by Stanley Swindling

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TRT: 08:47

2.39:1, Stereo

Format: ProRes, DCP

Synopses

Short: Tristan copes with a breakup during one terrifying night home alone.

Medium: Tristan is reeling from a devastating breakup. He spends the night home alone, indulging his vices and calling it self-care. His night of serenity, however, will be quickly (and brutally) interrupted when a terrifying presence invades the space.

Long: Tristan and Joel were together for over a year. When Joel calls it quits, Tristan is devastated. He calls his new ex over and over. No answer. Smoking and drinking to excess, Tristan spends the night home alone, coping with the loss. Unbeknownst to him, there is an intruder in the neighborhood, ransacking houses and killing anyone in his way. Tristan will have to overcome his self-pity, and fight for his life, before the night is over.

Director's Statement

My Lonely Heart Calls is, as the title implies, an exploration of loneliness, and the paranoia with which isolation can often breed. Tristan is reeling from the end of his longtime relationship with Joel, a figure who, critically, is not seen throughout the film. We follow Tristan as he copes alone, smoking cigarettes, doing laundry, and so on. His night of seclusion takes a frightening turn when his home is invaded by a vicious, shadowy intruder. The film, then, must have a clear thesis: breakups are difficult, but remaining mired in a loveless relationship is equally, ahem, suffocating. For Tristan to overcome his grief, he has to fight for his life as his sanctuary is desecrated.

With this project, I attempted to play with horror's long-held concepts of masculinity and femininity. My film does not feature a prominent female character, and yet I feel it has deeply feminist values. *My Lonely Heart Calls* allows its protagonist to be not just vulnerable, but pathetic. It is through his traumatic experience of victimization that Tristan will be compelled to not only rise above the imminent threat, but also the more insidious threat of regressing to a state of complacency in a worn-out relationship.

I hope to market my film to an unsung niche of horror fans. The genre could generously be called 'formulaic'; as a result, the perception is often that it may only be enjoyed as vapid popcorn entertainment, rather than intelligent and artful fare. In my experiences as a lifelong fan of horror, I have found comradeship in the unlikeliest movie buffs. These filmgoers are not fixated on gore, but are rather keenly interested in how each film in the genre subverts expectations, toying with horror's prescribed set of rules. These same viewers value social commentary and deliberate character-building as much as they value the delirious doses of blood and guts.

I was inspired to create *My Lonely Heart Calls* after a year of living in an old suburban house with close friends that would often take weekend trips to visit their families, leaving me as isolated as Tristan when we begin his story. It was on these occasions that I began to see not only my home, but the larger construct of a 'home,' as the perfect breeding ground for horror. Tristan's panic upon meeting the killer is fight-or-flight: he can either rise above, or succumb to the elements that have put his guard down on this fateful night.

Your home is where you should feel safest to simply exist. How would you fare if this perception was abruptly, brutally destroyed?

-Stanley Swindling

Director Bio

Stanley Swindling is a writer, director, and actor based in Orlando, Florida. His latest, *My Lonely Heart Calls*, is currently being submitted to festivals across the world. His last short film, *It's Been a Weird Week*, was an official selection of the 2018 Queer Hippo LGBTQ+ Film Festival, the January 2018 Enzian FilmSlam, and the 2017 Brouhaha Film & Video Showcase. Additionally, the film was selected to play at the historic Timucua Arts White House on November 12, 2017, as part of a specially-curated showcase for UCF Film. Mr. Swindling has appeared in other short films which have played at Florida venues, such as *SLAS(HER)* and *Gone From Daylight*. Mr. Swindling is currently pursuing his MFA in Writing for the Screen at Loyola Marymount University, beginning in August 2018.