



**Squeakin' Yojimbo Pictures  
and  
Grant Guignol**

**present**

**CORIANDER AND A PENNY'S WORTH OF  
LONESOME**

**The enclosed material and information is under a press embargo  
until September 1, 2019 unless otherwise notified or negotiated**

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# SYNOPSIS

**Logline:** A fifth-rate vaudeville brother and sister act must deal with sudden celebrity when one of its members is mistaken for the last great love of Rudolph Valentino.

**Tagline:** There's a New Star in Heaven Tonight

**Short Synopsis:** When vaudeville performer Coriander Simm is plucked from the stage, she has no idea what lies ahead performing as Valentino's last love during his 1926 wake in NYC. Add an over-protective stepbrother with more than brotherly love on his mind and an amorous 'puss-pitcher' from United Artists, plus a rival movie star intent on usurping Coriander's position as the bereaved suitor and you've got a dark-tinged tribute to the films of yesteryear and the Tin Pan Alley.

**Long Synopsis:** Summer 1916: Coriander "Cory" Simm, age 9, attends the funeral of her murdered father. Unsure of how feel at this event, Coriander is swept up by the Preacher who pushes her to expressing her feelings through song, Cory avoids this show of emotions and confuses the crowd by singing "Pop Goes the Weasel." Also present at this funeral is the stuttering Tom Kintner, age 14, Cory's neighbor and protector. The next morning, Cory's stepmother runs off with the Preacher and leaves Cory in the care of Tom's mother. Tom and Cory exchange Indian head pennies to symbolize their newfound roles as siblings.

Ten years later, Tom and Cory now have a very bad vaudeville dance act called "The Two Pennies." Tom knows the act could be improved immeasurably if he could convince Cory to use her beautiful singing voice but she refuses. Tom also confesses that he is in love with her but she refuses this as well. She cites their "brother/sister" relationship as reason for her not being able to love him as he wants. One day, a rather pale Rudolph Valentino and Harry Clemens, publicity director for United Artist Pictures, come to the theater in search of women for cheesecake photos with the Great Lover. Tom immediately changes the act to a tango routine then mistakes the applause for Valentino to be applause for their act. Cory is selected for the photos while Tom tries to secure a screen test from the disinterested Harry.

The next day, Cory's pictures are splashed on the front page of the newspaper along with word that Valentino has been stricken. Shortly, Valentino dies and the grieving public determines that Cory was his last great love. Harry, realizing that he needs to pump up the funeral into a huge event so that they can sell the last two Valentino movies on the shelf, hires Cory to play the role of prostrate "widow" at the funeral. Cory agrees on the condition that Tom receive a screen test. Cory also allows herself to be seduced by Harry.

Cory is an overwhelming success but the notoriety and her affair with Harry put more and more distance between her and the failing Tom. Tom's isolation is further increased when his newfound tango image is mistaken by Kenny, the stage manager, as a sign that Tom is gay. By the time that Cory is able to get away to do the screen test with Tom, her former partner is bitter and frightened. Oddly enough, this edge gives Tom's performance on film a more intense quality. Unfortunately, no one cares at United Artists, the screen test having been arranged strictly to mollify Cory.

Cory's stint is beginning to show signs of trouble as well. Movie star Pola Negri announces in Hollywood that she and Valentino were secretly engaged the day before his death and she will be traveling east to take the widow's seat. The crowd outside the funeral home, tiring of the "girl next door" image eagerly awaits the arrival of the vamp. Harry, realizing the change in tide, pushes Cory to the side as he awaits the arrival of the new widow.

Depressed, Cory returns to Tom, bringing him the discarded film of their screen test. Despite their finally making love, Tom sees that his dreams are never going to come true. He leaves Cory in bed, goes to the United Artists building, enters the elevator, wraps himself in his flammable screen test footage and lights it on fire. He leaves behind only a charred photo of himself with Valentino and the Indian head penny he once swapped with Cory.

Cory is devastated by the loss and determines to find a way to make Tom's dream of stardom come true, if only in death. She has his remains sent to the funeral home and, under the cover of a riot of mourners at the arrival of Pola Negri, works with Kenny to switch the Tom's body with that of Valentino (kept in a freezer for safekeeping while a wax dummy is used in the coffin upstairs). It is at this "funeral" that Cory finally allows herself to sing out her feelings. She then arranges a cremation of "Tom" (actually the remains of Valentino) while the real Tom is buried in Valentino's place.

One year later, mourners line up in Los Angeles at the gravesite of Rudolph Valentino. Harry is flakking the event for United Artists. Out of the crowd steps a mysterious Lady in Black. Harry recognizes her as Cory but the rest of the crowd sees only an elegantly dressed mourner. Without saying a word, Harry allows her to place flowers on the gravesite while the cameras whirl away. Cory disappears into the crowd, leaving Harry with the story of the Lady in Black, a famous legend in Hollywood lore.

## CAST AND CREW

### Crew

Co-Producers	Julian Grant and Ron Falzone
Director/Animator	Julian Grant
Screenplay	Ron Falzone
Original Music	Zachary Walter
Sound Design and Mix	Matthew Festle
Wardrobe	Merik Pelletier
Production Sound	Bill Bryan
Casting	Katie Pryor

### Cast

Madelaine Anderson	Coriander Simm
Brandon Howard	Tom Kintner
Brian Shaw	Harry Clemens
Terry Bell	Kenny
Keith Kelly	Frank Campbell/Preacher
Johnny Moran	Joe Schenck/Rudolph Valentino
Mark Child	The Photog/Repertory
Ruth Kaufman	Cleophe/Repertory
Nicole Lockard	Mrs. Simm
Joette Waters	Melda/Pola Negri
Gina Rose	Woman Mourner/Repertory
Kevin K. King, Sr.	Songplugger/Repertory
Niko Gerentes	Songplugger/Repertory
Matthew Arenson	Songplugger/Repertory
Carmine Cervi	Italian Fan/Repertory

with

Lewis Bandersnatch as Dr. Monckton Korenbluth  
Anne Arden as Peggy Korenbluth

# KEY BIOGRAPHIES

## Crew



**Julian Grant** (Director/Animator/Co-Producer): Julian Grant is an award-winning filmmaker with thirty-four feature films to his credit. A published author, fine-art photographer and acclaimed digital artist, Julian Grant's work can be seen worldwide on cinema screens, television, independent forums and on the internet. As an independent writer, producer and director he has created numerous short films and music videos and continues to develop new media showcases, transmedia events and pedagogical strategies. An advocate of visual effects and emerging technologies, Julian Grant is a digital cinema evangelist. Julian is an Associate Professor at Columbia College Chicago where he specializes in numerous areas including animation and cinema visual effects. He holds a BA in Film from York University and an MA in Film from Staffordshire University.



**Ron Falzone** (Screenwriter/Co-Producer): Ron Falzone is an award-winning screenwriter and Associate Professor in Cinema and Television Arts at Columbia College Chicago and an instructor at Harold Ramis Film School at Second City. His short script, *Typing* and his feature screenplay, *Close Quarters*, were both made into films directed by Jack C Newell. The latter was nominated for six 2012 Midwest Film Awards, including Best Film and Best Screenplay. Currently, Falzone is in development at Montrose Pictures with his screenplay *Unity in Love*. Falzone has been an Artist in Residence at Ragdale Foundation in Lake Forest, Illinois and Arte Studio Ginestrelle in Assisi, Italy. He is the recipient of an Illinois Arts Council Artist Fellowship in Screenwriting as well as IAC Finalist Awards for

his screenplays *Hope's Dash* and *Unity in Love*. Films he has written and/or co-produced have been screened at festivals around the world including the Cannes Film Festival Short Film Corner, the Friars Club Comedy Festival, Chicago International Film Festival, Big Bear Lake Film Festival, Kansas City Film Festival, and Montreal World Film Festival. He holds a BA in Film from Columbia College Chicago and an MFA in Directing (Theater) from Northwestern University.

**Zachary Walter** (Original Music): Zachary Walter is an American musician, film composer and audio engineer with a career in music spanning two decades. To date, he has scored three feature length films, six short films, three documentaries and two podcasts. Zachary also has independently released two full length albums, an EP, and wrote an original composition titled "Velkomin," which was performed by the Bloomington Symphony Orchestra.

Quote from Zachary Taylor: "Working on a project for so long equals out to an immense amount of dedication and time. It's hard not to watch the finished film and not see potential flaws or mishaps. Saying that – stepping out of that lens – I feel the film is incredibly amazing (and) bound to touch audiences all around."

**Merik Pelletier** (Wardrobe): After ten years in fashion design, Merik Martin Pelletier, shifted to the film and television industry. Now, for over twenty years, he has been producing multimedia content for playback, visual, special and practical FX, now concentrating on 3D modeling and animation.

Quote from Merik Pelletier: "This film gives a soul to virtual animation combining classic and new to present a profound and touching story."

**Matthew Festle** (Sound Design and Mix): Matthew Festle is an Audio and Foley engineer. Matt found his way into the sound of movies from his love for music at a young age. Since finishing his studies, he lives and works independently in the LA area; recording and working with new sounds daily as Flick Fanatics Audio

Quote from Matthew Festle: "Coriander is what I've always wanted to be a part of. A truly unique, beautifully animated, yet tragic film. It's the kind of material I have dreamed of working on."

## Cast

**Madelaine Anderson** (Coriander Simm): Madelaine Schmitt (Anderson) is a Chicago-based actor specializing in film, commercial, and voice work with a foundational background in theatre. She is also a recreational silks aerialist training at Aloft Circus Arts. In 2019, Madelaine co-founded Talus Films, a film production company exploring the richness of storytelling and the human experience, and serves as its Creative Director.

Quote from Madelaine Anderson: “A one of a kind experience. I love the way it explores the perils of love and fame with breathtaking visuals with a haunting narrative.”

**Brandon Howard** (Tom Kintner): Brandon Howard is a Chicago-based actor who has appeared in numerous independent films and series episodes including *Unspoken*, *Neighborhood*, *Long Island Volunteer*, *Orange is the New Black* and *Louis*.

**Brian Shaw** (Harry Clemens): Brian’s work as a performer and director spans theater, dance, film and voice over/commercial work. He is currently working on a podcast titled *Growing Voices*, which documents youth theater programs in two Chicago community arts organizations. He is a Professor in the Theatre Department of Columbia College Chicago.

Quote from Brian Shaw: “Ron wrote some killer dialogue! I had a blast playing with the language while simultaneously being sensitive to the character’s complexity--which is exactly the kind of challenge an actor relishes.”

**ADVANCE PRAISE FOR  
*CORIANDER AND A PENNY'S WORTH OF  
LONESOME***

“It’s the real thing: visually rich, excellent dialogue, a wonderful story with great feeling. And those eyes! Haunting.”

John Hancock, Academy Award-nominated director, *Sticky My Fingers...Fleet My Feet, Bang the Drum Slowly, Suspended Animation*

“Amazing! A fascinating and bizarre silent era gothic tale. The story is so unusual. Dark, twisted and romantic. Bravo!”

Pablo Berger, Goya-winning director, *Blancanieves, Torremolinos '73*

“Poignant and richly textured.”

John McNaughton, Independent Spirit Award-nominated director,  
*Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer, Wild Things*

“With brilliantly realized animation, *Coriander and A Penny's Worth of Lonesome* tells the story of a talented damaged-by-life girl pulled into vaudeville by her adoring step-brother. It unfolds at a time when the movie business is first becoming a powerful enticement. The public's devotion to movie stars -- in this case Rudolph Valentino - the cynical ambition of the men and women behind the scenes who casually destroy lives of those longing for fame, is rendered in this chilling, haunting, even tragic tale.”

Victoria Riskin, Emmy-nominated screenwriter, *World War II: When Lions Roared, My Antonia*

“Quite an achievement. I’m blown away. I’ve never seen pacing like this in an animated feature, and I think it really works! I rarely get lost in a story, and almost never in animation. Remarkable. Truly remarkable!”

Andrew Huebner  
Emmy-winning Vice President of Animation Production, Nickelodeon

"*Coriander* evokes Nathaniel West’s Hollywood, in this compelling, film noir tale of the fleeting price of fame, and the lives destroyed in its wake. Falzone gives voice to the silent film era of Rudolph Valentino while Grant gives it an animation style that is, at the same time, dreamlike and visceral.”

Dan Castellaneta, four-time Emmy winner & Deb Lacusta,  
WGA Award nominee, *The Simpsons*

“A spectacular mystery of fame's dark ramifications during the silent movie era. (A) stark, dark nightmare.”

Patrick McDonald, *HollywoodChicago.com*

“Laced with hardboiled argot of 1926, this animated noir melodrama offers a revisionist scenario about the last days and eternal rest of Rudy Valentino.”

Bill Stamets, freelance film journalist

“(*Coriander and a Penny's Worth of Lonesome* has) an eerie charm. Very hypnotic. Like a Norma Desmond puppet show.”

Jim Rohn

Co-Chair, Animation, Columbia College Chicago

“I love so many details...and I feel haunted by it: it's tone throughout, in script, performance, appearance, the black and white, the beyond-the-pale of failed dreams (all were) quite intense. This is a sharp script with real characters set on the edge of an event (relatable) to contemporary culture.”

Dan Andries, senior producer, WTTW Chicago

## INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR JULIAN GRANT

### **What made you decide to become a filmmaker?**

I fell in love with *King Kong* as a child and there was no stopping me. My first heroes were all animated - the creations of Ray Harryhausen, *The Thunderbirds* and *Captain Scarlet* TV series — and of course, Kong. But as I came to start my career in the late 80's, stop motion was a forgotten art form. I moved happily into genre cinema making do with films for HBO, Roger Corman and more throughout the 90's - and never stopped nurturing my love for the animated form.

### **What drew you to this project?**

Ron's script was brilliant. I fell in love with the world and we both agreed that German Expressionism and the dour Poverty Row aesthetic of early cinema and stage (despite the illusion of grandeur) was critical. I'd been looking for a property that spoke to my black heart — and this was that one in a million chance to make my a 'Norma Desmond Puppet Show'.

### **What character or characters did you most identify with?**

I understand Tom — his fears and frustrations, his inability to make it or get the girl. Heartache is something that I have dealt with throughout my life and the depth and darkness of Tom is something that I know. I love Harry's hustle, I too was a snake oil salesman for the studios and also read fortunes as a kid at the Canadian National Exhibition. I think all filmmakers have to have a little bottle of larceny in their soul. I would have been a dynamite grifter back then, just like Harry, selling flim-flam, film and dreams to the American public.

### **Was there anything in your personal or professional background that made the era of this story particularly important to you?**

The Tin Pan Alley aspect, 'The Show Must Go On', the black and white era (I truly believe that the world didn't become in color until *The Wizard of Oz* — all of this was instrumental in helping me see the story. I'm a "Visualizist." I need to see it to make it. In my mind's eye, at least. Ron gave me the perfect blueprint for a noir film that had all of the old-time show biz veneer peeled back that I love. As a kid, I binged on the black and white films of this era and later and I've always loved them. How could I pass this up?

### **You've done numerous features as well as animated shorts. This, though, is your first feature length animated. How was working on this different from your other films? What new things did you learn?**

Live-action and animation all start with script, schedule and budget as you figure out how to make the darn thing. In a studio animated feature, the work would be broken down to multiple art personnel and then visually developed as casting for voice performance went on and the actors recorded. We brought all the actors into one large recording studio - something rarely done in animation due to cost and availability - and we married the best of both worlds in putting this

together. The thought of doing ALL of the film as the sole animator was daunting (normally this is the domain of hundreds or thousands of artists) but with Ron's reminder that you make a film one shot at a time - I began. The one thing I did enjoy was working sequentially on the animated film as this is something rarely done in live action.

**The film is certainly unique. Were there any specific new or experimental techniques that you used in order to tell this story?**

I wanted to make a film that married CG and stop-motion in a tribute to the marionette aesthetic that I adore. As much as I enjoy photo-real CG, that wasn't this film. This film is a shadow show - and I wanted to craft a world that reflected the fragile puppetry of the stage plus concentrate on non-verbal acting. Traditional animation is very gag-based with overblown gestures. I wanted to show the characters 'thinking' and this is where the eye-light and size of the characters actual eyes were instrumental in conveying this. When you add the camaraderie of the ensemble recording (we mic'ed it like a radio show with performers stepping up to a communal mic.) and having Ron there - we could improvise and play as the film organically related itself. Midwifing is the director's lot and here I had the great chance to add super performances to a distinct visual treatment in our vision of the greasepaint and grime of yesteryear.

**How would the experience of making this film been different if you had done it in Toronto or Hollywood? Why was Chicago the right place to make it?**

Chicago is an actor's town. A rich tradition of theater - and of course, the movies started here! I love Chicagoland as it's offered me so much. Hollywood is a company town with a company mindset and Toronto is called Hollywood North for a reason. Here we have the love of the craft, the unbridled passion and, of course, some of the best professional and amateur players all willing to 'put on a show'. If I had made this in LA, we wouldn't have the same sense of roots-level pluck that defines working in the Midwest. There is 'true grit' here that allows for flexibility and outstanding experimentation- all essential for work of this nature.

**What is your approach to collaboration and how did that play out in this project?**

Ron wrote this and allowed me the option to adjust as needed. I don't believe in rewriting a script to suit one's ego. As a writer myself, I know what goes into crafting work. I respect the writer and Ron, as a collaborative partner, has been the ideal workmate. We have the same references, the same sensibilities when it comes to the work - but we are distinct enough to aid and abet each other as needed. When I'm worried, Ron helps me off the ledge. And hopefully, I've been able to bring to life a piece of showbiz history near and dear to Ron's and my heart.

The goal of collaboration, for me, is to find someone who augments your own skills and is a good player when it comes to the realities of the project. There's no equity

in an unfinished project and Ron gets that. I look forward to working with him again. He's a great talent and one that I'm honored to work with.

## **INTERVIEW WITH SCREENWRITER RON FALZONE**

### **How did you come to screenwriting?**

I had always wanted to work in film and had assumed that that meant being a director. I got my graduate degree in this area then spent fifteen years directing theater all around Chicago. The odd thing was that as I progressed in the theater, I kept finding myself more and more drawn to writing. When I finally did make the switch to film, I puttered around as a director for a couple years until a friend of mine asked me to write a script for her. By the time I was done, I knew screenwriting was where I belonged. Nothing ever felt quite so right.

### **What drew you to this project?**

I never think of myself being drawn to it so much as stumbling upon it. In 1977, I was in Galena, Illinois for a weekend trip. While there, I found a copy of the original sheet music for “There’s a New Star in Heaven Tonight,” the song written to commemorate the funeral for Rudolph Valentino. Five minutes later, I found a copy of Irving Schulman’s biography of Valentino. I figured it was Kismet so I bought it as well. On the way home, I read about the carnival that was his funeral and I was hooked.

### **1977? What took so long then to get it made?**

I knew I wanted to write about the event, but events don’t make a story. For years, I researched the particulars, but I didn’t know who or what it was about until a particularly failed relationship in 1999 gave me my hook.

### **What happened?**

I had been dating an opera singer. She was quite successful. One day she told me that she got into opera only after she had spent several years with a rock band. I was surprised. I mean, who goes from rock to opera? When I asked her why, she told me that she didn’t like singing rock because it made her feel. For her, opera was strictly technical. I was really thrown by this. Besides knowing that this relationship was going nowhere, I couldn’t figure why someone with a great gift would deliberately choose not to express herself with it. I’ve frequently written about artists in the throes of some kind of creative crisis, but this was one I’d never considered. I guess you could say it was the right idea at the right time.

### **Did you write it to be an animated film?**

No! It never occurred to me. The problem that I knew I would always have if I tried to produce it as a live action was a combination of cost and subject matter. A story this big – with all the crowd scenes and locale changes – would require a big budget. As a period film with no action set-pieces, it certainly wasn’t going to be made in Hollywood, and it was too big for a low budget indie.

### **Did you ever consider giving up on it?**

Absolutely not. It was my baby. I kept it out there, showing it around. In 2005, composer Sara Doncaster read it and asked me if I would consider doing it as an opera. I'd never done one before so I figured "why not?" It was also a chance to find out how flexible the story was. We did a couple of concerts of the work at the Warebrook Contemporary Music Festival in Vermont. The most important thing I got from the experience was the knowledge that the story could work in another medium.

### **But animation?**

I can't say exactly when that idea occurred to me. I think it had been gestating for a couple years. The key moment, though, came when I was in Julian's office one day. He showed me some shorts he was working on and I was very taken by the style. The more I thought about it afterward, the more I thought that his sensibility would be the right one for *Coriander*. We had been talking off and on for several years about doing something together, but we never could quite see how our very different styles would mesh. I also admit it took me a while to go from being certain he was the right person to actually asking him.

### **Why?**

What I call the Julian Train. Julian is so profoundly concentrated on what he is doing that once he commits, he's relentless until he gets it done. I had other projects I was working on so I was worried about leaping onto that particularly high-speed train. I remember quite clearly walking down to his office to pitch the idea. I saw that his door was open so before I got in his line of sight, I stopped and took a deep breath.

### **How long did it take for him to commit?**

Seriously? Let's see, I went back to my office, sent him a pdf of the script then went to teach a class. When I got back to my office after class there was a message on my phone: "We're doing this!"

### **How did the collaboration work out?**

In all honesty, it was a total dream. A lot of times when friends get together to do a creative project, the death of the friendship is a by-product. All I can say about this one is that we're closer friends than we were at the beginning and I look very forward to doing something else with Julian as soon as he wants to start up that train.

## IMAGE GALLERY



The Photog, Valentino and Harry choose Cory



Tom impulsively kisses his "sister" Cory



Taking the fateful photo



The assumptions of the crowd give Cory an unfamiliar taste of celebrity



Cory agrees to Harry's proposition



Cory and Harry discuss coverage



Valentino's "last great love" takes her place



Melda tries to comfort Tom



Cory and Tom arrive for their screen test with The Photog



Tom gets ready for his big scene



Kenny and Cory seek help from the Mortuary Assistant



Final resting place

## IMPORTANT LINKS

To view the trailer:

[Coriander and a Penny's Worth of Lonesome trailer](#)

To view the feature (this is a private link and not for sharing or publication):

[Coriander and a Penny's Worth of Lonesome feature \(PRIVATE\)](#)

To view the graphic novel version (244 pages):

[Coriander and a Penny's Worth of Lonesome graphic novel](#)

To read Reallusion article on Julian Grant and the creation of *Coriander and a Penny's Worth of Lonesome*:

[Reallusion interview with Julian Grant](#)

For more information on Julian Grant:

<http://www.juliangrant.com>

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

**Contact for more on the film, including production information, press inquiries and screening opportunities:**

Julian Grant: 773-968-4676; [juliangrantproductions@gmail.com](mailto:juliangrantproductions@gmail.com)

Ron Falzone: 773-267-3817; [Rdfalzone@sbcglobal.net](mailto:Rdfalzone@sbcglobal.net)

(If you are viewing this in hard copy, please contact us for the links)