



CONFESSIONS OF A

**BOX
MAN**

A FILM BY **MIKA JOHNSON**

“ THESE MEN
ARE CHRONIC
MASTURBATORS
DR. ALBERT WOODARD

WRITTEN BY **MIKA JOHNSON**
INSPIRED BY **KOBO ABE'S** *THE BOX MAN*
MUSIC BY **RYAN LESTER**

SOUND DESIGN BY **ELI STINE**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **JULIAN M. GRÜNTAL**
EDITED BY **INGA KEMPE, MARTIN SCHUMET,**
AND **MIKA JOHNSON**

PRODUCED BY



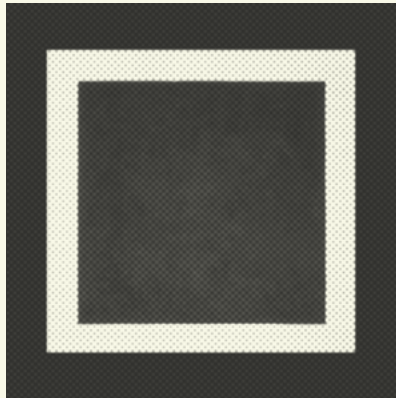
IN ASSOCIATION
WITH **THE LAB**



LOGLINE

When a frustrated journalist seeks to understand a group of men who leave society behind for life inside a cardboard box, he uncovers a story that will either set him free or destroy him.

SYNOPSIS



Running time: **84 min.**

Aspect ratio: **2.39:1**

Screening format: **Color 2D DCP 2K**

Sound: **Stereo**

Language: **English**

Countries of production: **Czech Republic**

Year of release: **2020**

Inspired by Kobo Abe's novel *The Box Man*, *Confessions of a Box Man* tells the story of Thomas Zielinski: a journalist researching a group of men who leave society behind for life inside a cardboard box. Mistaken for common street trash, the Box Men move about almost invisibly, wearing only boxes and rubber boots and observing the world through small, mail slot-like openings on their cardboard homes. After landing an interview with a former Box Man, Thomas learns about their obsessions with women's legs, which Box Men see as objects of erotic and spiritual worship. Seduced by the man's strange tales, Thomas soon finds himself possessed by urges he can no longer repress—all mirrored in the film by micro-documentaries that interrupt and comment on the Box Men. Subjects include the invention of cardboard, the erotic nature of legs, Box Men throughout history, and more. By mixing fiction and reality, *Confessions of a Box Man* presents an imaginative world where perverse forms of male desire can only lead to tragedy or transformation.

DIRECTOR'S STATE- MENT



CONFESSIONS OF A BOX MAN is my first feature film. It is a story about obsessions with a particular shape (more a cuboid than a box) and perverse desires that dehumanize us. It is also a story about escape and freedom. The script's inspiration comes from Kobo Abe's novel *The Box Man* and my love for creating mythologies, in this case by mixing documentary and fiction film techniques. As a project, the film was also a desperate act, as I needed to make *Confessions* at any cost because my life and the story began to overlap. In this way, the film is truly confessional.

MIKA JOHNSON

Mika Johnson is a multimedia artist who directs XR projects, music videos, commercials, and fiction and documentary films. His most recent projects include *VRwandlung*, a virtual reality adaptation of Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, and *The Republic of Dreams*: a project combining AR, VR, and immersive audio to adapt the short works and visual art of Bruno Schulz. Long term projects include *The Amerikans* (theamerikans.org): a web series featuring 15 short documentaries that were co-authored with their subjects, a series of music videos, and *Confessions of a Box Man*—the first feature in a trilogy. Johnson is now working on his second and third feature films, *Kafka's Son* and *The Secret of O*, the latter inspired by the circle. Based in Prague, Johnson also teaches directing and visual art at AAU, Prague Film School, and FAMU.



DIRECTOR

SCREENWRITER

PRODUCER

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY



KAFKA'S SON / feature / drama - fantasy / in development
THE SECRET OF O / feature / drama - fantasy / in development
CONFESSIONS OF A BOX MAN (2020) / 85:00 / feature / drama - fantasy
ALL IS LOST (2020) / 19:10 / Czech Republic / drama
LAST STAR (2019) / 4:46 / Czech Republic / music video
SITUATION (2019) / 3:30 / Czech Republic / music video
STARE (2019) / 3:37 / Czech Republic / music video
VRWANDLUNG (2018) / 4:00 / Czech Republic / virtual reality piece
TWO IN ONE (2016) / 3:37 / Czech Republic / music video
RESOLUTIONS (2016) / 2:22 / Canada / drama
FOREVER PROFESSOR (2015) / 30:00 / US / docudrama
THE AMERIKANS: 15 EPISODES (2011 - 2013) / 3 - 5 minutes / US / documentary web series
YONDER (2007) / 20:00 / Czech Republic / drama



MAIN CAST

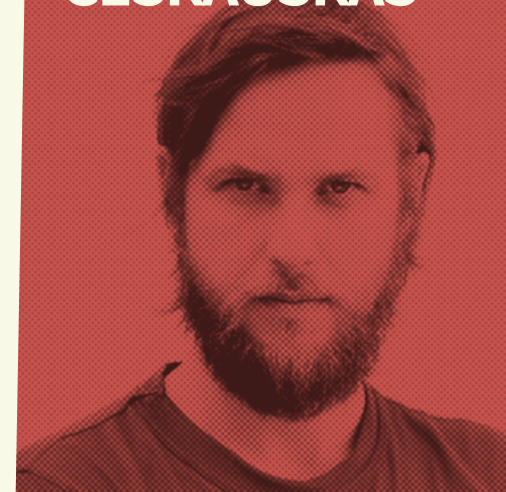
MAREK
ZELINKA



Zelinka studied at Charles University and the Nonverbal Theater Department at HAMU, in Prague. In the last years he performed in *SYNovial*, *From the House of the Dead* (an opera at the National Theater in Prague), and created choreography for productions at Theater Vinohrady and the Palace Theater in Prague. He currently performs at the Brother Formans' Theatre, with choreography that he co-authored. Zelinka is also the winner of the TV dance competition *Stardance*.

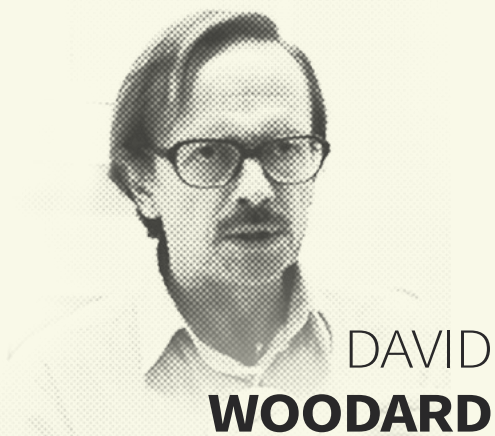
LEAD

MANTAS
CESKAUSKAS



Mantas Ceskauskas is an actor from Lithuania. He studied film acting at Prague Film School and worked on *Patriot* (2015), *Transporter: The Series* (2012), *Birdwatcher* (2015) and *A Boy Called Christmas* (2020). He is a member of the indie post-rock band Axis.

SECONDARY LEAD



DAVID WOODARD

David Woodard is a conductor who coined the term prequiem to describe his Buddhist practice of composing dedicated music to be rendered during or slightly before the death of its subject. He is also known for his replicas of the Dreamachine, a mildly psychoactive lamp. In *Confessions*, Woodard plays Dr. Woodard: a urologist best known for his paper on ragged penile tissue: symptoms which result from Box Mens' abuse of Fleshlights. In addition to authoring his own role in the film, Woodard is also responsible for additional concepts, stories, and texts.

DR. ALBERT WOODARD



OZCAR BURFITT

Ozcar Burfitt is a filmmaker and actor best known for his work on his own short films—*The Slunk*, *Padre*, and *Case Brief*—all inspired by his favorite genres: horror and thrillers. The idea of losing yourself in a world where you are allowed to be scared and terrified has for a long time been a sanctuary for Burfitt as he found his early school years to be frightening. Having acted in numerous short films, Burfitt's feature debut was as the character A in *Confessions of a Box Man*.

A



LUCIE KONČOKOVÁ

Lucie Končoková is a theater actress who has worked throughout the Czech Republic. After studying dramatic acting at JAMU, she played Natalia in Kleist's *Prince Homburský*, Lada in the *Creature*, Jitka in the retromusical *Stars on the Willow*, and Anežka in the *Year in the Village*. Other notable roles include her role as Ophelia in *Hamlet* and Lygia in the musical *Quo vadis*. Playing the Nurse in *Confessions of a Box Man* was Končoková's debut as a feature film actress.

NURSE

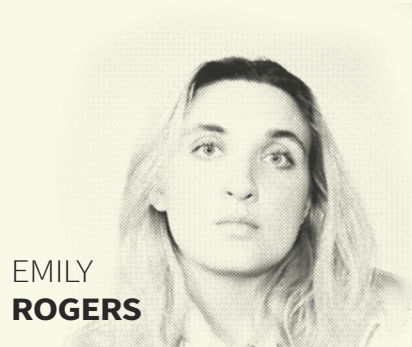


EVA LARVOIRE

Eva Larvoire is a French actress living in Prague. Debuting on the stage in Hungary, Larvoire went on to act for the camera in Prague. Starring in both feature films and shorts, she recently received the “Best Actress” award at the Maniac Film Festival for her performance in *Supine*, directed by Nicole Goode. In *Confessions of a Box Man*, she portrays Marie, Thomas's lover, who encourages him to write a book on the box men.

EDITOR

MAIN CREATIVES



EMILY
ROGERS

A filmmaker, artist, photographer and writer based in Brooklyn, New York. She is a graduate of Oberlin College and currently works as an associate producer and graphic designer. She has worked with director Mika Johnson previously on the short film *Forever Professor* and *VRwandlung*.

ARCHIVAL
FOOTAGE
RESEARCHER
ASSISTANT
DIRECTOR
POST
SUPERVISOR



JULIAN M.
GRÜNTHAL

Studied at the Theatre School Zurich (ZhdK) and Prague Film School. He lives in Switzerland and works as a director, actor, cinematographer, and author. As a director, he co-directed the features *Mary & Johnny* (Bernese Film Prize) and *Polder* (Prix Molière Best European SciFi). He regularly writes, directs, and shoots short films and music videos. He is currently working on a feature film project to be shot in Switzerland and Canada.

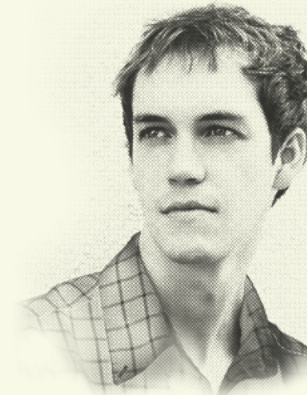
DIRECTOR OF
PHOTOGRAPHY



ELI
STINE

SOUND
DESIGNER

A sound designer and electronic musician who has studied electronic sound and media technology at Oberlin Conservatory and the University of Virginia. He has collaborated in the past with director Johnson on projects including *VRwandlung*, *The Amerikans*, *Forever Professor*, and others. His sound design has been featured in *USA Today* and *The Economist* and his sound design portfolio includes short films, web series, commercials, and virtual reality experiences.

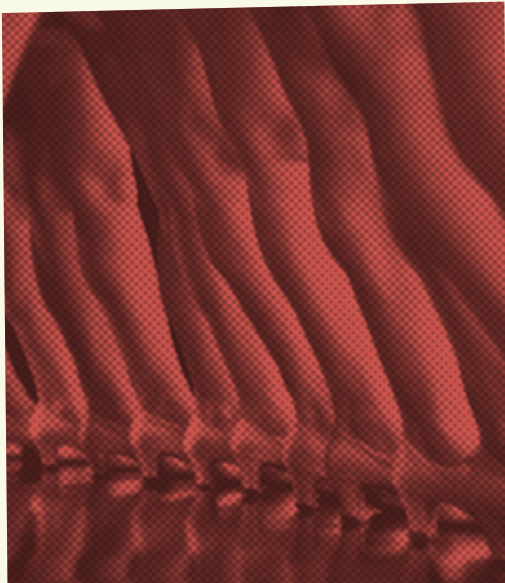


RYAN
LESTER

COMPOSER

An internationally performed composer of music for film, television, games, theater, and the concert stage. His most recent credits include *The Daily Show with Trevor Noah*, and *The Fake News with Ted Nelms* starring Ed Helms. *Confessions of a Box Man* is the first feature collaboration between Johnson and Lester, their previous projects including *The Big G*, *Silo Boy*, and *Resolutions: a commercial for Franz Kafka*.

IN ADDITION



Film colorization by **SUNNY KURAPATI**

Additional photography by **XOASHER MUSAVVIR**

Musical track by **INVISIBLE CONGA PEOPLE**

Edited by **INGA KEMPE, MARTIN SCHUMET, and MIKA JOHNSON**

Titles by **MENA ASSAD**

Narration by **JULIE JOSEPHSON**

Additional Concepts, Stories, and Texts by **DAVID WOODARD**

Poster and press kit by **JAKUB TRANTA**

THE LAB is an international production company based in Prague, Central Europe, headed by French producer Steve Reverand and German producer Martin Raiman. The company prides itself in running projects from development to post-production entirely in-house. The LAB's projects have been played in close to a hundred film festivals, winning prizes such as the Melies d'Argent Award. The company is about to distribute its dark fantasy feature film, Playdurizm.



DIRECTOR'S Q&A

WHAT DOES THE FILM SAY
ABOUT THE WORLD WE LIVE IN?

I think *Confessions of a Box Man* says a lot about our world, in a troubling way, as the news is filled with stories about men whose desires distort their basic humanness. Why this happens is complicated. On the one hand it relates to men's power, which has gone on almost unchecked. But I think consumerism, which surrounds us with sexual imagery so we'll buy stuff, along with the porn and sex industries, also play a part; and as new technologies arise to satisfy male desire, I imagine human sexuality will morph even further into places hard to even imagine. *Confessions of a Box Man* playfully challenges us to question these things, as it presents a world in which none of the sexual desires that manifest are natural, Catholic priests being the archetype.

WHAT
UNIVERSAL THEMES
ARE EXPLORED IN YOUR FILM?

If there is a universal theme in *Confessions of a Box Man* it is obsessions. People obsess about almost everything: cleanliness, grammar, food, politics, pets, clothing, social media, etc.; and two of our biggest obsessions are sex and identity. Unable to live with their identities, the Box Men withdraw from society. However, while drawn to the isolation and anonymity of life inside a cardboard box, they also mutate, which creates new obsessions, in this case with women's legs. To this end, the dual obsessions of sex and identity arise and repeat throughout the film. The second theme explored is the mystery of all life or the idea that any truth on who or what we are is unattainable. By creating mythologies and imagining the box as a spiritual vehicle, *Confessions of Box Man* questions the ways in which we invent meaning.

BRIEFLY DESCRIBE THE
APPEAL YOU THINK YOUR
FILM WILL HAVE FOR
AUDIENCES (AND WHY).

I think the appeal of *Confessions of a Box Man* is that it's a strange, surreal, and absurd satire on our world which will also make audiences laugh. While mainly about the follies of men, the film also interconnects a lot of serious narrative threads, for example, the rise of sexually repressive regimes, like Nazi Germany, the erotic history of legs, the invention of corrugated cardboard boxes, and spirituality. In this way, *Confessions of a Box Man* reaches a density of meaning which forces each viewer to co-author their own way through the film, as there is no correct interpretation.

HOW DO YOU
WORK WITH ACTORS?

I can't say I have a specific method but I prefer to work with actors, professional or non-professional, in ways that break conventions with psychological realism (Stanislavsky, Method, etc.). To this end, I'm attracted to projects where the story, characters, real people, themes, and shooting situations merge, real-time, into something unique and ideally unhindered by conventions (a tightly written script, backstory, scene objectives, etc.). In short, I like to experiment.

HOW DID YOU COME UP
WITH THE IDEA FOR
CONFESSIONS OF
A BOX MAN?

When I first read Kobo Abe's novel *The Box Man*, I found the book one of the most original and imaginative stories I'd ever read. Later, while teaching documentary filmmaking, I reread the book and couldn't help but muse on what an anthropology of these Box Men might be. I imagined episodes on the box in human history, religion, and western art alongside theoretical proposals on how the Box Men's unique predicament might alter their identity, rituals, and sexual practices. Thanks to a teaching job, I had access to free film equipment. I was also surrounded by talented students eager to volunteer. After meeting some of the key actors—Marek Zelinka, Mantas Ceskauskas, Ozcar Burfitt, and David Woodard—the time felt right to make the film. Woodard, for example, not only co-authored his own role but he also expanded on the Box Man's mythos, contributing additional concepts and stories that are now integral to the rest of the film. In a certain sense, the entire script and shooting style evolved that way, at each stage, in part because there was no real budget nor any shooting schedule or deadline. Nor was there a producer. Instead, we simply made the film when and how we could, experimenting at each step of the way.

IF YOU HAD TO DO IT
OVER AGAIN, WHAT WOULD
YOU DO DIFFERENTLY?

It would have been nice to have a budget and set producer but we didn't. At the same time, I had free equipment thanks to my teaching job at a film school and actors and students who volunteered as cast and crew. So hard to complain in retrospect, especially since this unique situation gave me the opportunity to direct outside the box so to speak. Thankfully, I did receive some finishing funds.

WHO ARE YOUR INFLUENCES?

Different directors inspire me for different reasons. When it comes to the ways in which a director can use a project to raise a series of personal questions, I am inspired by the films of David Lynch, Lars von Trier, and Andrei Tarkovsky. In terms of performance, I admire those directors who work with their actors to generate new worlds, unique to the presence of the actors' performances. These include performances by actors in the films of Wes Anderson, Yorgos Lanthimos, Jim Jarmusch, Aki Kaurismaki, and Ulrich Seidl.

HOW DOES YOUR FILM PRIMARILY
DIFFERENTIATE OR DISTINGUISH
ITSELF FROM OTHER WORK?

I think the collaboration between myself, Sound Designer Eli Stine, and Composer Ryan Lester distinguishes *Confessions of a Box Man* from other films. As a trio, we worked as equals in post-production, spending one year experimenting with the ways that sound and music could amplify the themes in the film and weave together all the fictional and documentary elements. So while the film's structure remained very experimental, it nevertheless achieved great unity thanks to this process.

CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT
YOUR UPCOMING PROJECT(S)?

I am presently working with writer Aaron Labaree on a feature film titled *Kafka's Son*, which follows a graduate student whose obsession with the idea that Franz Kafka had offspring puts him on a road-trip across Eastern Europe, where he attempts to track down the author's last living heir. Another feature, *The Secret of O (or O)*, echoes the structure of *Confessions of a Box Man*, only the focus is the circle. That film is part II in a trilogy. The story follows K Gray: a depressed drug dealer, in his forties, who is hired to solve the murder of a pharmaceutical genius who seems to have created the key to cosmic consciousness, in the form of a pill that can't be reproduced. It's a psychedelic neo-noir, with accompanying micro-documentaries throughout.

CONTACT

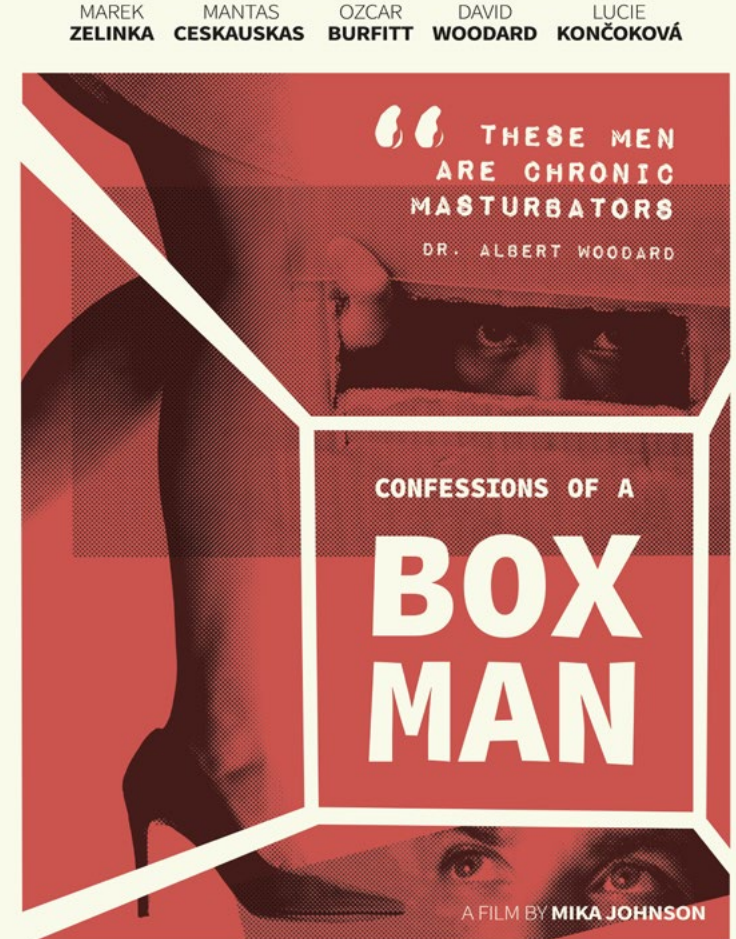
Director, Writer, Producer

MIKA JOHNSON

+420 736 127 325

mika@mikajohnson.com

mikajohnson.com



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