

The background is a dark, textured wall with a brick pattern. It is heavily layered with blue graffiti, including various scribbles, lines, and circular patterns. The overall aesthetic is gritty and urban.

# SOFA SURFER

**directed by Michele Olivieri**

# LOGLINE

A sofa surfer seeks a place for the night but as everybody turns him down, he must face the demons of an old addiction.

# SYNOPSIS

Rob is a sofa surfer who wanders the streets while making several phone calls to find a place for the night. After many failed attempts, there is a name he hesitates to call. When Carl, an old friend, opens the door to him, Rob is forced to confront the temptation of his own past addiction.



# TECHNICAL

**RUNNING TIME:** 12:36

**EXHIBITION FORMAT:** digital or DCP

**ASPECT RATIO:** 16:9

**SHOOTING FORMAT:** digital HD / colour 4:2:0

**LANGUAGE:** English

# ABOUT THE FILM

Director Michele Olivieri and screenwriter Kim Taylor first met in September 2017 to discuss making a low-budget short film based on a story by Taylor. After months of script development and pre-production, the shooting took place in the summer of 2018 for a total of three days.

Unfortunately, once in the cutting room, it became clear that the movie was not what the team had hoped for. A lot in the footage just didn't work and it involved almost every department. It took a few months to get over the disappointment and swallow the hard pill, but eventually, Olivieri and Taylor took the difficult decision to discard the whole footage and try again, knowing that things had to change dramatically this time around.

As a result, the script underwent heavy rewrites, the story was cut back and made to centre around the main character's own internal conflict, the actors were recast, the crew were replaced and other decisions were taken to ensure things wouldn't go south again. Finally, in February 2020, in between storm Ciara and storm Dennis and right before the UK was conquered by the pandemic, principal photography took place in East London, with a skeleton crew, for only two days. Filming locations include the areas of Westferry/Limehouse and the suburbs around Leytonstone.

Sofa Surfer was edited by Olivieri, mostly late at night, while spending the first lockdown in his Italian hometown of Verona. The excitement toward this picture grew bigger with each draft until it became clear the movie was going to be our best artistic achievement so far and a great addition to everyone's portfolio. The picture was locked in August 2020 and the rest of the post-production went smoothly throughout the remainder of the year. Today the film is in festivals, set for a 2022 release.





# WHAT IS SOFA SURFING?

A Sofa Surfer is a homeless individual who stays temporarily with friends, acquaintances or relatives while attempting to find permanent accommodation. **They do not own or rent a property and solely rely on the kindness of others.** Many are sofa surfing or sleeping on the streets because of family breakdown, having outgrown children's homes, domestic abuse, end of tenancy, loss of a job, etc. Many become depressed, at risk, turn to substance abuse and because of their constant moving, they are not often able to get appropriate help. Personal relationships also suffer.

Data suggests sofa surfing is the largest form of homelessness (yet the least visible and understood) and that 35% of all young people, especially men, have experienced sofa surfing at some point in their lives. Key findings of the 2019 Crisis' report suggest "there are 71,400 homeless families and individuals forced to sofa surf across Great Britain on any given night" and a third of them have been doing so for more than six months.

In portraying the phenomenon, we asked ourselves questions such as, what's it like to have no home? To move from one floor or sofa to another? To never know which friend or family member will put you up next, if anyone at all? To having to overstay your welcome? What it's like to attempt to take back control of your life while being homeless?

\*\*\*useful links on the last page\*\*\*

# THE CAST

## TOM DAYTON as "Rob"

Tom Dayton is a London based actor. His first film appearance was in the short 'Knowledge is Power' in 2018. Before portraying the conflicted character of Rob, Tom has had numerous on-screen roles including 'Cafe talk' and the award-winning short 'Lucky Break'.

In open-air Shakespeare, he portrayed Orlando in 'As You Like it' and went on to make his fringe debut in 'Cockroaches', at the Cockpit Theatre, with Gamayun Theatre company.

Tom believes in the importance of honing his craft and continues to develop his acting skills at The Actors Centre while preparing for two feature lead roles, a play and a TV pilot.



## JAMES CAMPBELL-WARNER as "Carl"

James Campbell-Warner is a 24-year-old actor living in London who began his acting career performing theatre at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, appearing in two five star shows with the Young Pleasance Ensemble: John Godber's 'Teechers' in 2012 and Tim Norton's 'The Death of Chatterton' the following year.

James continues to partake in independent theatre productions when he has time off from his role as a teacher and has acted in a number of short films including 'Behind Closed Doors', 'Mobius: The Shape of Things to Come' and 'The Look'.

James' TV credits include Pick TV's 'Britain's Most Evil Killers' as Hungerford mass-murderer Michael Ryan.



# DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Even though I never experienced drug addiction or homelessness personally, when I first read the script of *Sofa Surfer*, Rob's life resonated with me. I know what it means to feel lost and how hard one must fight for one's own sanity. We often don't realise how fortunate it is to have your life under control, and how easy it can be to give in to the temptation of letting it all go.

Rob is a sofa surfer and a recovering addict. In the past, he made many wrong choices, but now he tries to get his life back on track. Picking yourself up after addiction is no mean feat and Rob, like anyone who sets this goal for themselves, is a hero.

Rob's journey takes place mostly outdoors, in a world of blue and green, where we don't see any face but his. We do sense, however, the presence of insistent cars, trains and aeroplanes, which all seem to have a destination. This is to underline Rob's condition of being lost and aimless.

Rob's temptation is conveyed through a dream sequence where the display of contradictory images will pose the question of what is real and what isn't. The increase in shock and anxiety is dramatised by rotating lights and extreme close-ups, while the editing is meant to heighten the feelings of confusion and dreaminess.

Amongst the many sources of inspiration for this film, worthy of mention are the works of Clouzot, Aronofsky, Wong Kar-Wai and especially Kieslowski.



# THE DIRECTOR

**Michele Olivieri** is a non-binary Italian filmmaker based in London.

Beginning in 2017 with the comedy short *Butterflies*, this West London Films production was his first serious attempt at narrative filmmaking. The following year Olivieri's sophomore project *The Game of The Clock* came to fruition and conquered festivals all around the world, premiering at top-of-genre Frighfest in 2019. The short also got digital and physical distribution through Amazon Prime Video, Filmzie and Meridian Releasing Group.

The drama short *Sofa Surfer* - the most recent addition to the director's filmography - will release on Filmzie on 11/07/2022.

Olivieri is currently working with Paguro Film on an LGBT+ short drama about clergy sexual abuse on children, titled *White Shorts*.



# THE WRITER



**Kim Taylor's** crime drama TV Pilot *The Watcher* was one of six winners of the Netflix and Sky Screenwriters' Fellowship 2021 and finalist for the BBC Studios ScriptWorks and Thousand Films Scriptwriting competition 2021.

Kim is a freelance writer for the screen and stage. Her original scripts reflect a clear interest in family, social issues, women's rights and mental health. Her genre of choice is drama but she loves blending it with crime thriller, supernatural and comedy.

Her commissioned film *No Entry*, a drama on the Windrush Injustice, was officially selected in international film festivals, including BlackStar Film Festival 2021 and American Black Film

Festival 2022. His script *The Draft*, a sci-fi short about Friendship and Motherhood, won the EQUAL short screenplay competition 2020 by ProcamTV and the Farm Group.

Kim is a proud Bajan and British citizen.



## F.A.Q.

### • Where did the idea for 'Sofa Surfer' come from?

*Kim:* This story has been with me in one form or another since 2015. First, it was inspired by simply walking the streets of London and seeing the dire state of homelessness, too often among young men. Then it was inspired by hearing the term sofa surfer, 'an invisible type of homelessness' and sadly recognising it through an acquaintance. On the surface, as a writer, I want to bring attention to the two-fold struggle of an individual not only grappling with pulling themselves out of homelessness but also facing what led them there. Beneath the surface, as a writer at the start of my career, the fear that homelessness could happen to any of us loomed in the background and served as a push through several drafts.

### • What was the budget?

*Michele:* the production was low budget, about 1200£. We tried to save as much money as possible for festivals' fee, which can get quite expensive. The total festivals' fee amounts to about another £1000.

### • Why the operatic score?

*Michele:* Most people who have watched the film said they were expecting some sort of electronic score given the concept and the setting of the film. I always strive to be original and do things differently, in my opinion, filmmakers should try to surprise their audience. I am a huge fan of Krzysztof Kieślowski and when I was looking for references, I kept rewatching 'La double vie de Véronique' (1991) and just loved how masterfully it was scored. The rest is magic from my trusted composer (and friend) Jean-Loup Pinson.





# CONTACTS

## DIRECTOR/PRODUCER

Michele Olivieri

[mo@micheleolivieri.film](mailto:mo@micheleolivieri.film)

[www.micheleolivieri.film](http://www.micheleolivieri.film)

## WRITER/CO-PRODUCER

Kim Taylor

[ktaylor2write@gmail.com](mailto:ktaylor2write@gmail.com)

# USEFUL LINKS

Visit these links to know more about the phenomenon of sofa surfing.

• [DEC 2019 ARTICLE, Crisis - Humiliating, painful, depressing: New report lifts the lid on the brutal realities of 'sofa surfing'](#)

• [JAN 2020 ARTICLE, Visible homelessness is up. But don't forget the hidden pain of Britain's sofa surfers](#)

• [OCT 2020 ARTICLE, Young 'hidden homeless' left with nowhere to turn due to Covid restrictions](#)

• [DEC 2019 ARTICLE, sofa surfing having 'horrific' effects on people's mental and physical health](#)

• [2012 VIDEO, "Sofa Surfing"](#)