

HE WON'T BELONG



LOGLINE

In the midst of a storm on a desolate strip of California's lost coast, Theo spots a young man named Conner wandering aimlessly on the side of the road. He picks up the shivering, silent stranger and brings him back to his home for shelter. While they wait for the storm to pass, they begin to uncover each others past.



CONNOR



Connor is introspective and guarded, though he has an expressive and warm side that is reserved for people who earn his trust. He's in his early 20s and has an over-confidence that he has himself and life figured out. He fronts assuredness that he doesn't need people to be happy and prides himself on his independence. What he can't figure out is why he's having regular panic attacks.

Connor has been cast and will be played by Cole Doman (pictured above). Cole is an accomplished actor who played the titular role in Henry Gamble's Birthday Party directed by Steven Cone. Most recently he can be seen in Uncle Frank as young Frank from writer/director Alan Ball and Gossip Girl on HBO Max.



THEO

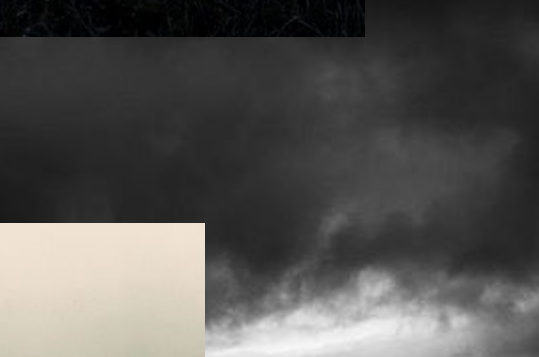
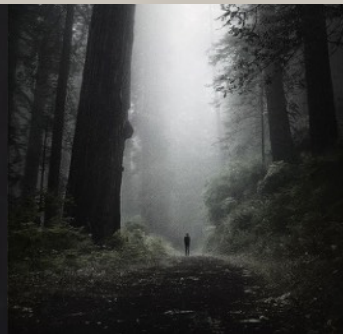


Theo is a warm-hearted and curious naturalist in his early 30s. He's a bit of a square but means well with his flat sense of humor. He's discontent to not be learning about the world and people around him and reads social cues like he was a mind reader. He often finds himself deeply invested in solving other people's problems but lacks the self-awareness to address his own.

Theo has been cast and will be played by Joel DeCandio (pictured above). Joel is a NYC based actor with numerous notable performances in stage productions including at Tennessee Williams Theater Festival and international Shakespeare productions. He recently made the jump to film with the upcoming Give by Kenya Gillespie.



MOOD BOARD



SYNOPSIS

In the midst of a storm on a desolate strip of California's lost coast, Theo spots a young man named Conner wandering aimlessly on the side of the road. He picks up the shivering, silent stranger and brings him back to his home for shelter.

After a brief stilted conversation, Theo sets up a bed for Conner. Later that night, alone in his room, Connor suffers a panic attack. He remains silent. The following morning Theo asks if Connor would like to stay a little longer and join him to go mushroom foraging. With some hesitation and exhausted from lack of sleep, Conner obliges. In the woods, Theo learns that Conner has made a sudden choice to leave San Francisco, and his boyfriend, to travel north alone without proper preparation or even a set destination. Conner coldly offers no further details and remains guarded with his words.

Upon returning to the house, Conner is exhausted and falls asleep. He dreams of his boyfriend abstractly causing him both pleasure and pain. Waking from his anxious vision, he helps Theo prepare for dinner. While doing so, Conner discovers a drawer full of pictures of Theo and another man lovingly posing together. Over dinner, Conner asks about the pictures and Theo explains his husband has recently passed away. As Conner listens to this tender story, he visibly tries to distance himself from the situation and succumbs to another panic attack. Theo helps him calm down and insists he stay another night to try and rest. Conner, in his first moment of sincerity and vulnerability, thanks him.

The following morning, Theo brings Conner to a place special to him and his late partner as they openly discuss their internal struggles with intimacy and dependence. Theo encourages Conner to reconsider running from that which scares him back home with his boyfriend. Conner, with a falsely tough exterior remains firm in his plan to pursue his independence through this northern trip. Theo drops Conner off at the highway, they say their goodbyes and part ways. Left alone, Conner makes the last minute choice to begin traveling back home to face his own insecurities and perhaps, find a deeper love.



LOCATION

He Won't Belong was written around a location secured ahead of time. It is a rustic two-story house in Sea Ranch, CA owned by a friend's family. It's about 3 hours north of San Francisco. The cast and crew will be staying in the house for the duration of the shoot along with a couple other Sea Ranch homes nearby. All the house pictures in this pitch deck are of the shooting location.



The background of the entire page is a photograph of a cozy, rustic interior. It features wood-paneled walls, a large, dark wooden table with a live-edge top, and a sofa with red and orange cushions. The lighting is warm and intimate.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

He Won't Belong explores anxiety, loneliness, fear of dependence, loss, self-isolation, and intimacy -- all through a queer lens. As a gay man, I always long to see LGBTQ characters in film grapple with issues I've had to deal with in regards to my sexuality beyond just 'coming out'. For myself and many queer people I've met, confronting yourself internally in your young formative years to present yourself externally as a queer person comes with its own set of struggles that can last a lifetime. This film explores the things that don't just disappear after you come out. While these issues are common among the LGBTQ community I believe this story can resonate with anyone regardless of sexual orientation.

This is a story for anyone who has ever felt they didn't belong.



THE TEAM

DOMINIC MERCURIO

writer / director / editor

Dominic Mercurio is an award-winning San Francisco based filmmaker. His video work has premiered on Billboard, FADER, PopMatters, The Bay Bridged, and has been featured at SFMOMA. He's worked with Tune-Yards, The Seshen, Pomplamoose, Foxtails Brigade, and more. His most recent project, a music video + short film hybrid titled CYAN, was screened at the 2020 editions of Film Fort, Portland Film Festival, and Drunken Film Festival Oakland.

CYAN and his other recent music videos, Be Brave (Best Music Video at SFFFF 2018), We Are Not Ourselves (NYC Independent Film Festival 2017) and Flames & Figures (Portland Music Video Festival 2017) are focused writer-director-editor visions that deeply intertwine visuals and music to create narrative music videos bursting with vibrant off-kilter characters and surreal nightmarish imagery.

Born and raised in the SF Bay Area, Dominic has a B.S. in Digital Film and Video Production from the Art Institute of California - San Francisco.



[WATCH DIRECTOR REEL](#)

THE TEAM

JAENA STA ANA producer

Born in the Philippines, Jaena immigrated to Southern California in the early 90s, acclimating to her new country through film and TV, igniting her passion for filmmaking. She navigated her way through film school and into the entertainment industry, with the goal of telling inspiring and diverse stories.

For the past 10 years, she has focused on creating animated series and films working at studios such as LucasFilm, Stoopid Buddy Stoodios, and DreamWorks Animation where she recently completed Guillermo del Toro's *Trollhunters: Rise of the Titans* as the Line Producer. Jaena is currently working at Netflix Animation as a Line Producer.



THE TEAM

MATTHEW ROME

director of photography

Matthew Rome is an Oakland based cinematographer. He grew up in a dark dank pacific northwest in a city that was both very urban and yet very much intertwined with the surrounding wilderness. These themes and tones that shaped his person can be found throughout his work. Matt studied many things along his path to becoming a filmmaker including the culinary arts, printmaking, education, glass blowing, fine art, snowboarding, and eventually earned a BS at AICA-SF in Digital Filmmaking.

Matt specializes in short format content such as artist profiles, music videos, narrative shorts, and documentaries. ODDBALL, an artist profile that Matt shot featuring the late San Francisco film archivist Stephen Parr, was awarded a Vimeo Staff Pick in 2017. Matt's work has also been selected to play at New York Independent Film Fest, Mill Valley Film Festival, Marfa Film Fest and many more.



[**WATCH CINEMATOGRAPHY REEL**](#)

THE TEAM

DEB LEAL production design

Deb Leal is an interdisciplinary artist using photography & cinematic practices to investigate personal bipartite narratives, often through a metaphysical lens. Leal's work seeks to pinpoint what is considered emblematic in an effort to exercise the enigmatic in different dialects.

She received her BFA in Fine Art Photography from The Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design and her work has been exhibited in galleries, festivals, and conferences including: The deYoung Art Museum, San Francisco; Connecting Perspectives, and more. She is currently living and working in Oakland, California.



DISTRIBUTION STRATEGY

Upon completion, I will submit to film festivals big and small across the country and beyond. Selections will be based on places my work has screened in the past and future goals. Additionally, it will be released online for a wider audience.



Director has previously screened at:

SF International Festival of Short Films
SF Frozen Film Festival
Portland Film Festival
NYC Independent Film Festival
Richmond International Film Festival
Hudson NY Shorts
Deep Focus Film Festival
Drunken Film Festival Oakland
Genre Blast
Atlanta Shortsfest
Atlanta Underground Film Festival

Additionally will submit to:

Frameline
Outfest
SF Indie Fest
SF International Film Festival
Mill Valley Film Festival
Sundance Film Festival
Slamdance Film Festival
Cannes Film Festival
SXSW
Palm Springs International Fest of Shorts
Tribeca Film Festival



A rustic interior with wooden walls and a large window. A wooden table with chairs is in the foreground. A wooden bench with cushions is visible on the left. A wooden trunk with books is in the bottom left corner.

CONTACT

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