

A close-up photograph of a woman with blonde hair, looking slightly to the right. She is wearing a red top with a dark, repeating pattern of what appears to be horses or similar animals. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights on her face and hair against a dark background.

Billy

Ghost

FILM INFORMATION

FILM TITLE: **Billy Ghost**

TAGLINE: you're dead, but it's okay!!

LOGLINE: a young medium helps a bumbling ghost
and his grieving widow find closure.

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TECHNICAL INFO

running time: 16:40
aspect ratio: 1.78
shooting format: red helium 6k
color, english

SOCIAL MEDIA:

instagram: @afilmbyaestheticrebellion

facebook / pinterest: @aestheticrebellionfilms

CLICKABLE HYPERLINKS:

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[BILLY GHOST SHORT FILM](#)

PRESS RELEASE

A GLIMPSE INTO THE ETERNAL VOID AS BILLY GHOST CONTINUES 2022 FESTIVAL RUN

LOS ANGELES, CA [insert date]. *For Immediate Release*

The film stars Rachel Damiani (O2) as Lola, Rey Marz (*Straw Man*) as Billy / Ghost, with Claire Haller (*Monday Mourning*) as The Medium, and Marv L. Rousan (*Artist's Lament*) as The Bouncer.

BILLY GHOST was co-produced by writer/director Timothy Burnham (*Silver Dreams, The Couple Upstairs*) and sound engineer/composer Jasmine Sankaran (*front-woman to local LA band Jangus Kangus*), photographed on RED Helium 6k by Ben Hoskin (*My Own*), lit by Danny Padilla (*Parallel*), and composed by Mark Hartzog (*Silver Dreams*).

Of the no-budget pandemic production, Producer Jasmine explains, "Tim wanted to create a live-action Pixar feel, so we plundered my mom's ample bookshelves and our friend's backyard plants to create a heightened sense of Billy and Lola's intense lockdown lives." Shot over four days and nights and guided by a scrappy, farm-to-table approach to filmmaking, *Billy Ghost* tells the story of the unlikely friendship between a young medium and her tormented living and dead clients.

Billy Ghost has been officially selected by South Coast Film Festival in Hastings, UK, Fortean Film Festival, the Amazing Stoner Movie Festival of Thailand, and CannaCulture Film Festival in Pennsylvania, and has twice been named an Honorable Mention by Experimental Forum and LA Underground.

More information about the making of *Billy Ghost* can be found on the Aesthetic Rebellion Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube page.

"The whole experience felt like slipping into a dream."

- Rey Marz
(Billy / Ghost)

"I am incredibly grateful to have had this experience so early in my career. Making Billy Ghost with this wonderful team taught me how to take a breath, be present, and let my inner artist be greedy."

- Rachel Damiani
(Lola)

SYNOPSIS

SHORT SYNOPSIS

A Medium is hired by a grieving widow named Lola to clear her apartment of the malignant entity that has been terrorizing her since her husband died. The Medium quickly learns that the ghost is her bumbling husband, Billy, who has been trying to care for Lola from the afterlife. The Ghost recounts the story of his idyllic life torn apart by a careless act of stupidity, his venture into the afterlife guided by a sarcastic, washed up Afterlife Bouncer, and his many failed attempts to cheer up Lola. The Medium shares her own story about death and the lack of closure, which resonates with both The Ghost and Lola, neither of whom can see each other, and both of whom are lost in grief. The Ghost agrees to be saged, although the unknown next chapter terrifies him. The Medium and Lola bond and Lola confesses her part in his death. She didn't stop him from juggling the knives that killed him. The Medium says the quiet part out loud. Her husband was an idiot. Lola hears a voice outside her own head reassure her and lets it all out. Lola and The Medium are changed by their experience. Billy is gone.

LONG SYNOPSIS

A young Medium enters into an apartment in disarray. Moving boxes everywhere, paintings half off the wall. Her flustered, absent-minded client Lola explains that something evil has been haunting her. The Medium senses the Ghost, who tells her his story. He was once named Billy. He was Lola's love and they lived in a maddeningly peaceful cocoon in their increasingly cluttered apartment. He died juggling knives in an idiotic attempt to impress her. He is given a choice by a chainsmoking Afterlife Bouncer. Stay here in this apartment forever or go to the non-specific Next Place. Lola moves around the apartment like a ghost. She's ruined by his death. Things are falling apart, she leaves the lights on...So he decides to stay and help her. The Bouncer hands him a silver ghost sheet and wishes him well. Billy, who is now starting to lose his sense of time and place, begins his haunt. Following Lola around, turning off the faucet when she falls asleep in the bath, washing dishes she left in the sink. But everything he does torments her. She can't sleep without being woken up by the sound of someone rustling around, moving her things in her apartment, touching her. It culminates in him trying to let her see him and her running out of the apartment into the night. The Medium gets it now. They are haunting each other out of guilt and grief and it's tearing them both apart. But the apartment also looks cleaner now, more put together. Lola has started to put Billy's things away. She just can't help but blame herself for his death. The Medium offers Billy a choice. She can sage him, releasing his hold on this place or she can pretend to sage him and he can promise to stay out of Lola's way. Billy is scared of the unknown, of what will happen if he is released. The Medium tells her own story, about her father, who died without saying goodbye. Billy agrees to the saging. The Medium sages Billy and Lola feels better already. The Medium and Lola share a meal of leftovers brought by wellwishers and Lola shares her deep dark secret. It's her fault that he died because she knew he couldn't juggle but she didn't stop him from picking up the knives. The Medium is flabbergasted by the realization that THIS is what is haunting her. Her boyfriend's death is his own fault. Lola breaks into cathartic tears. They're all learning to let the past go.

F A Q

1. How was the project funded?

It wasn't. Everyone who worked on this project did so out of a desperate need to be creative after the first wave of the pandemic. All resources scavenged.

2. Is *Billy Ghost* a horror movie?

Although Billy Ghost has moments of horror, the film doesn't follow a horror structure. It's a movie about people and ghosts. It's scary and sad and funny. He's dead, but it's okay.

3. Name some inspirations and influences.

*The first eight minutes of *Up*, *Lemon Glow* by Beach House, Miranda July's *The Future*, The nesting structure of *The Prestige*, *A Ghost Story*.*

4. What movie is Lola watching during the two ghosts scene?

*Roger Corman's *The Terror*, a vibey Jack Nicholson starrer from the public domain.*

5. Do you believe in ghosts?

Everyone on set had at least one unexplainable, personal ghost story. You'll have to ask Rachel about hers when you see her.

6. What was post production like?

It was an intensive process to weather and date our materials so that the fidelity of the camera wouldn't compromise the softness of the story. We wanted to move the raw materials of sound and picture away from reality and into the memory place where ghosts are. Kodak prints for nostalgic reference, stagey movements that feel uncertain, sound that melts the barriers between moments, ghosts that are losing corporality.

CREDITS

RACHEL DAMIANI as lola
REY MARZ as billy / ghost
with CLAIRE HALLER as the medium
& MARV. L ROUSSAN as the bouncer

BEN HOSKIN - director of photography
DANNY PADILLA - a/c
ZELDA PUGH - editor
LEONARD WILKEY - production designer
MARK HARTZOG - composer
BEN PEACOCK - associate producer
JASMINE SANKARAN - producer / sound / costumes
TIMOTHY BURNHAM - producer / writer / director



BEHIND THE SCENES



ABOUT THE FILM

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In my life I have had many experiences with ghosts, whether in the form of spooky sounds heard late at night in empty rooms or in the form of unbidden memories, which are much scarier. My first childhood home in the Australian outback was the former house of a child killer who my mother claimed I would talk to when left alone. When I was ten, I moved to America and learned all about the ghosts that haunt this troubled land. And when I was twenty-five, my father, still in Australia, passed away. That one haunts me more than the others.

During November 2020, just as we were starting to lose our minds in Covid isolation, my co-producer and partner Jasmine and myself, sent out a signal to our friends and collaborators and brought together old and new friends, all eager for a chance to be creative again. We were all feeling the worldwide grief and we all wanted to return to the dream of creating. All our unresolved relationships were taking on a new importance and weight. We pooled our resources, took our collective anxiety about the times, and channeled it into this handmade project about the messy, funny, and unsettling nature of grief and closure. I took a lot of inspiration from Miranda July, Pixar, and that uncomfortable feeling when someone asks me close I am to my family and I already know how quiet it's about to get when I answer. It was a strange project that required an impossible amount of trust and vulnerability.

In the time since making Billy Ghost, our burgeoning collective has made three additional short films and each one has taught us more about ourselves as friends and artists.

Thank you for reading this and giving our film a chance. I look forward to attending your festival should we be so fortunate as to be accepted.

- Tim Burnham (writer/director)

PRODUCER'S STATEMENT

The idea for Billy Ghost came from a conversation between myself and Tim Burnham, our fearless writer-director, who also happens to be my life partner. We had just moved into our first place together and were talking about how many of my Vietnamese relatives believed in ghosts. In Vietnamese culture, ghosts are less something you believe in and more a reality of existence: ancestor worship is common and many claim to have encountered lost loved ones. I asked Tim if he would haunt me if he died, and he joked that he would, but only to turn off the lights I'm always leaving on. We had a good laugh and a few days later Tim showed me the script for Billy Ghost.

At our first cast and crew meeting at LA State Historic Park in Chinatown, we began by listening to a temp track I'd made for Tim: a slowed down, warped version of a Beethoven Symphony which put everyone in a reflective mood as we shared our stories of loss and encounters with spirits. The experience united us as a team and laid the emotional groundwork for the shoot.

Billy Ghost was filmed over four days as we staged a play for ourselves in our one bedroom apartment. We pushed ourselves emotionally and physically to make something we had never before seen that we felt passionate about, fueled by community and a damn-good chocolate chip cookie recipe (for morale).

The loose nature of Tim's production ethos allowed us to constantly explore new solutions for familiar situations. Our home-recorded foley and in-house sound mix created a sense of warmth and impact to contrast the horrors of an empty home (I'm especially proud of the sound you hear when Billy dies so suddenly and so absurdly). Rey's in-character discovery (on Day 1 of shooting) that Billy's juggling not be so tight unlocked the payoff scene we filmed on Day 4 in which Lola confesses her dubious complicity in his death to the bemused Medium. Color correction focused on recreating the warm, stilted look of Kodak prints from our childhoods, and special effects were added to fray reality and accentuate the unreal natural lighting of the mysterious realm between life and death.

Billy Ghost represents two years of our lives. It's what home means to us, all we create together and all we lose together. It was a fun and challenging and moving experience for everyone involved as we communed around questions of life and death in the midst of a global pandemic. A character dies in a stupid way, and yet we smile, because he is not alone, because all death is stupid, and because, as Tim's late father so eloquently states in the quotation at the end of the film, there is beauty in embracing change.

- Jasmine Sankaran (producer/sound)

BIOS

RACHEL DAMIANI as lola

Rachel Damiani grew up in a family of classical musicians, dancers, writers and artists. Rachel began studying classical piano at the age of 5, later taking up flute and singing. She lived abroad in France, Costa Rica and Japan, graduating with a B.A. in Linguistics from the University of Minnesota. Rachel is a professional ballroom dancer and United States Open Professional Nine-Dance Semi-Finalist. She trains with Gregory Berg of Berg Studios and is a member of SAG-AFTRA. Rachel splits time between Los Angeles and her family's home in Santa Barbara, CA.



REY MARZ as billy / ghost



Rey Marz has earned a master's degree in Special Education, and he's had the privilege to teach theater for children with emotional behavioral disorders at a therapy school. He learned so much from his students, and he saw firsthand the power of this art form, encouraging these kids to become more empowered. This in turn empowered Rey to find his own artistic expression in the form of a meditative approach to film and theatre acting and visual art.

CLAIRE HALLER as the medium

Claire Haller grew up in a military family, which sent her from coast to coast. She got her start in acting when she was just six years old at The Pinewood Players Theatre in Munds Park, Arizona and continued there until her late teens. She received professional training from The American Academy of Dramatic Arts and was a member of their theatre company.

Claire currently resides in Los Angeles, California.



MARV L. ROUSSAN as the bouncer



Marv Roussan has lived many lives in many lands, explored the multiverse, and currently resides in Los Angeles, California, where he lives the life of an artist.

BEN HOSKIN - director of photography

Ben Hoskin is an LA based DP and Steadicam Operator. He graduated from Middlebury College with a film degree in 2017. While his passion is steadicam, he loves any role in the camera department. When Ben isn't behind the camera on set, he's getting hours in the pilots seat of a helicopter as he works toward his license.



MARK HARTZOG - composer

Mark Hartzog has been playing piano since he was an embryo and competed nationally as a child with dreams of growing up to be a composer. His dual interest in computer engineering has lead him to a career designing robots that won't take over the world. Billy Ghost is his second short film score. Mark is currently working on a Yancey-inspired beats album and resides in Florida.



JASMINE SANKARAN - producer / sound / costumes

Jasmine Sankaran hails from Ventura County, California. She studied English Literature at UC Berkeley where she developed an unhealthy obsession with noise machines that go 'beep'. This led to her writing, recording, and producing several albums of music as UI/UX, Sankaran, and, most recently Jangus Kangus. She resides in Los Angeles.



TIMOTHY BURNHAM - producer / writer / director

Timothy Burnham was raised by psychopaths in the Australian desert and learned about civilization from movies and television. Now he works at the American Film Institute in Los Angeles and makes short films and music videos.



AESTHETIC REBELLION PRESENTS CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES

It has become a tradition to bake a couple trays of cookies up for each rehearsal and shoot day as a restorative and good luck charm for the troops. With love, we pass the recipe on to whoever is reading this.

**A key before beginning - This recipe follows the guideline of Aesthetic Rebellion, careless precision removes the human element from the art. These cookies taste better when you allow a little chaos into the mix and let the circumstances (and your preferences) inform the recipe. Just so long as the batter isn't too dry or wet.*

THE WET:

1 cup salted butter, melted
1 ½ cups dark brown sugar, packed
½ cup white sugar (or slightly less)
2 generous tsp vanilla extract (Trader Joe's bourbon vanilla is best)

"EGG" VOLCANO:

2 generous tablespoons apple cider vinegar
2 generous teaspoons baking soda

THE DRY:

2¼ cups all-purpose flour
1 tsp baking soda
½ tsp baking powder
1 tsp sea salt

THE CHIPS:

1 ½ - 2 cups semi-sweet chocolate chips, to preference

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Line baking pans with parchment paper.

In a medium bowl with steep sides, beat together the egg volcano ingredients.

In a large mixing bowl, thoroughly mix the sugars and the butter, then add the vanilla and egg volcano. Mix until combined.

In a separate mixing bowl, sift together the dry ingredients with a fork.

Add the dry to the wet in installments. Use an electric mixer (or strong boyfriend) to combine until dough is one consistency and there are no visible streaks or clumps of flour.

Fold in the chocolate chips until evenly distributed through the dough.

Roll 2-3 tablespoons (depending on how large you like your cookies) of dough into balls and place evenly spaced on cookie sheets.

Bake for 8-10 minutes. Take out of oven at first indication of browning. Leave in the pan for a minute, then carefully transfer to a flat surface to "cool."