

SARA AND THE
ANIMALS

THE WAY OUT IS IN

an ONYX AND MOONSHINE PRODUCTION
starring RONNIE TOONE IAN POTTER MICHAEL TOONE and COLIN HINCKLEY
cinematography by DANIEL WOLFF music by FRANK CODA
written and directed by JOEL AUSTIN



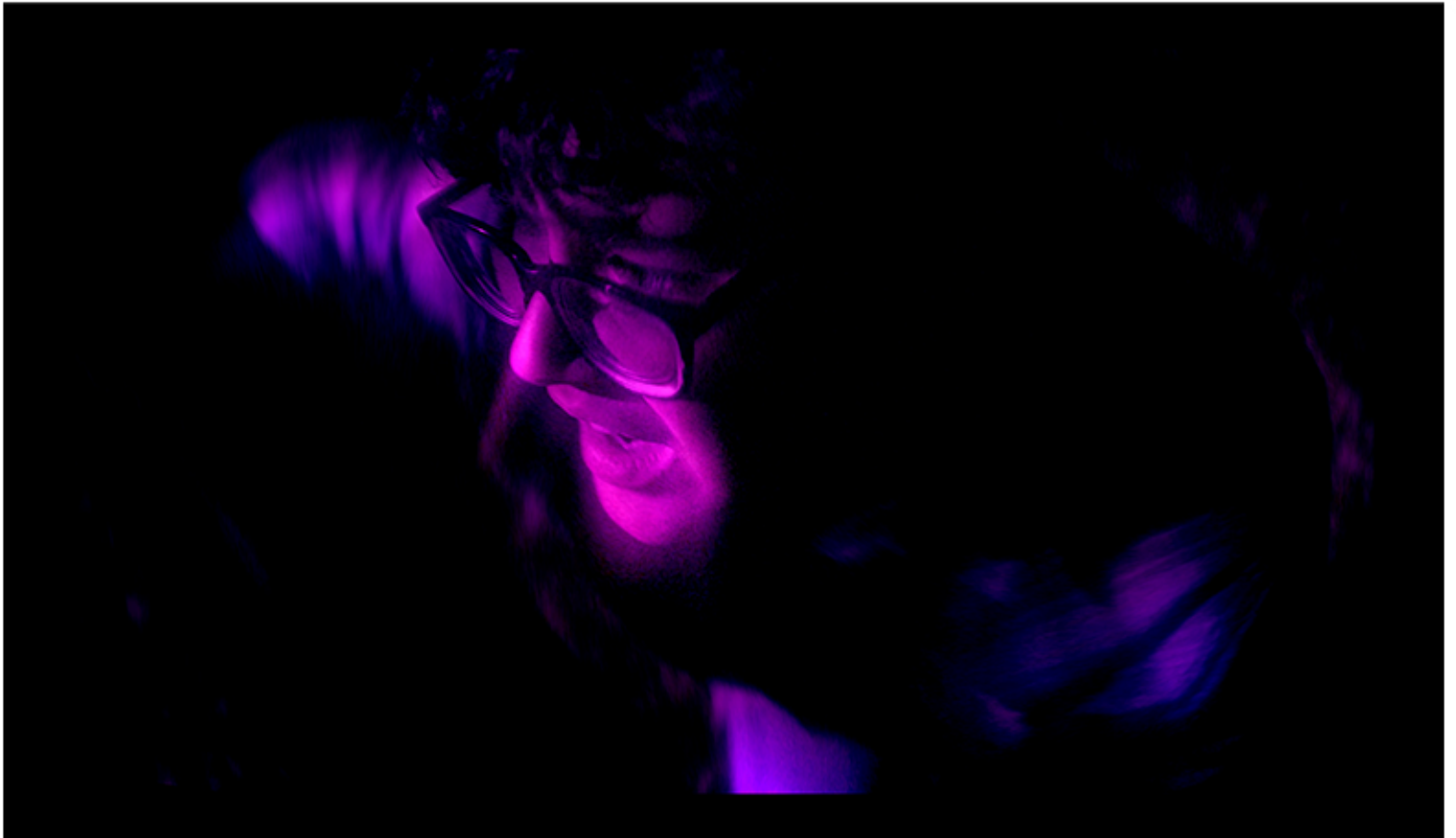
"SARA AND THE ANIMALS" IS A SHORT COMPLETED IN THE WINTER OF 2020. THE STORY FOLLOWS SARA SCHRADER, A 20 YEAR-OLD WHO, STILL IN THE EMOTIONAL AFTERMATH OF HER MOTHER'S SUDDEN DEATH, IS THRUST INTO THE ADULT WORLD BY HER SIMILARLY GRIEF-STRICKEN FATHER.

AFTER SARA'S ATTEMPTS AT GROWN UP NORMALCY FAIL MISERABLY, SHE HAPPENS UPON A GROUP OF MASKED MYSTICAL JOURNEYERS WHO ARE IN THE LEAD-UP TO A DRUG-FUELED, HALLUCINOGENIC RITUAL. THE GROUP'S LEADER, WHO DONS A WOLF MASK, INVITES THE STILL-SHAKEN SARA TO TAKE PART IN THEIR STRANGE REVERIE.

THE RESULTING JOURNEY INWARD FORCES SARA TO CONFRONT THE EMOTIONAL DEMONS SHE'S THUS FAR AVOIDED, A PROCESS WHICH WILL EITHER VAULT HER TOWARD HEALING OR DESTROY HER COMPLETELY. "SARA AND THE ANIMALS" IS A HARROWING, EMOTIONAL, SURREAL SHORT FROM FIRST-TIME WRITER-DIRECTOR JOEL AUSTIN.



SARA AND THE ANIMALS TRAILER



Praise for Sara and the Animals



"A thought provoking exploration into the challenges one Millennial faces as she comes face to face with her less than perfect life outside the rosy haze of social media."



- Summer Crockett Moore
Managing Partner
Choice Films



"'Sara and the Animals' is the kind of dream you hate to wake from. It is a powerful exploration of what it means to be a family and be true to yourself during times of hardship. This beautiful and haunting story is visually and emotionally stunning, leaving you wishing for more time in their world."



- Robin Weaver
Theatre Professional



"A captivating, imaginative film appealing to both the heart and mind! 'Sara and the Animals' offers a realistic depiction of one person's struggles with everyday life and loss—insufferable grief and guilt—and the path of healing they discover through a strange, utterly surreal, wyrd journey inward."



- Dayna Winters
Author



"'Sara and the Animals' was not the first film I watched while at home, during the pandemic - but it was the only one I watched twice. Every detail of this film had me feeling. It's hard to say which element pushes this film into its own category of excellence, so I will credit the keen direction, the creative concept, the stunning visuals and the outstanding performances..I give due applause all around."



- Tessa Faye
Tessa Faye Talent
Casting Director

Production Information

The Script



THE INITIAL IDEA FOR "SARA AND THE ANIMALS" CAME ABOUT AFTER WRITER-DIRECTOR JOEL AUSTIN AND STAR RONNIE TOONE RECONNECTED FOLLOWING A FILM THEY'D BOTH WORKED ON IN MID-2018. AFTER BOUNCING SOME IDEAS BACK AND FORTH, JOEL SET ABOUT WRITING THE SCRIPT WITH ONE GOAL IN MIND: TELL A SURREAL, STRANGE, EMOTIONAL STORY THAT A SMALL TEAM COULD ACTUALLY MAKE WITH LITTLE-TO-NO FUNDING OR SUPPORT.

JOEL WAS AND IS FASCINATED BY THE WYRD TALES OF OLD — STORIES THAT WEAVE IN AND OUT OF LITERAL, SYMBOLIC, AND MYTHIC LANGUAGE TO TAKE A CHARACTER FROM A STATE OF UNAWARENESS TO TERRIBLE, IRRECONCILABLE RECOGNITION. HE SET ABOUT WRITING A CONTEMPORARY INTERPRETATION OF A WYRD STORY, ONE THAT WOULD REST EQUALLY IN DRAMA, COMEDY, AND HORROR. SEVERAL DRAFTS LATER, THE SCRIPT WAS COMPLETE.

RONNIE TOONE THEN HELPED TO ASSEMBLE A TEAM OF ALUMS FROM THEIR ALMA MATER (HOFSTRA IN NEW YORK) TO HELP OUT ON THE SHOOT. AMONG THESE WERE EXECUTIVE PRODUCER ANDREW GRELL, DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY DANIEL WOLFF, AND MORE.

THE CAST WAS ENTIRELY COMPRISED OF EITHER PEOPLE JOEL HAD WORKED WITH DURING HIS TIME AS A NEW YORK CITY PERFORMER OR RONNIE'S FAMILY. BOTH RONNIE'S MOTHER AND FATHER APPEARED IN THE FILM. THEIR FATHER PLAYED SARA'S FATHER IN THE SHORT AND THEIR MOTHER PLAYED DOROTHY CALDWELL, THE COPY STORE EMPLOYEE WHO ASSISTS SARA DURING HER JOB HUNT.

ABOUT THREE MONTHS ELAPSED FROM THE TIME SCRIPT WRITING OFFICIALLY BEGAN TO THE TIME SHOOTING STARTED.

Production Information

The Shoot



"SARA AND THE ANIMALS" WAS SHOT ON A SHOE-STRING BUDGET OVER THE COURSE OF THREE DAYS. THE SHOOTING DATES WERE SEPTEMBER 6TH, 7TH, AND 8TH IN 2019. THE PRODUCTION COST WAS ROUGHLY \$2,000 BEFORE GOING INTO POST.

THE LOCATIONS USED WERE IN PEEKSKILL, NY (THE CELL STORE, COPY STORE, AND EXTERNAL CITY STREET SCENES), CORTLANDT MANOR, NY (THE HOUSE INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR SCENES AND THE TRIPPING SCENES), AND AT SHERWOOD ISLAND STATE PARK IN CONNECTICUT (THE BEACH SCENES).



The Influences

THE FILM'S INFLUENCES ARE MULTIFACETED, BUT THERE WERE A FEW AT THE FOREFRONT OF JOEL'S MIND WHEN CRAFTING THE INITIAL SCRIPT.

A MAJOR B-PLOT THAT WAS CUT FROM THE FINISHED FILM (BUT WHICH ASTUTE VIEWERS WILL NO DOUBT NOTICE THE SHADES OF) HAD TO DO WITH WHAT SARA IS DOING ON HER PHONE FOR THE MAJORITY OF THE FILM. WHILE MUCH OF THIS MATERIAL WAS SHOT, IT EXTENDED THE FINISHED RUNTIME BEYOND THE BOUNDS OF MANY FESTIVALS AND WAS THEREFOR CUT. THIS B-PLOT WAS LARGELY INFLUENCED BY THE WORK OF RIDLEY SCOTT AND CHARLIE BROOKER. SHOULD THE SHORT EVER BE OPTIONED FOR A FEATURE INCARNATION, THIS B-PLOT WOULD LIKELY MAKE ITS WAY BACK IN.

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCES ON THE FINISHED SHORT, HOWEVER, WERE PANOS COSMATOS AND DAVID FINCHER. FINCHER'S TONE AND MELODIC SENSIBILITIES WERE AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN DIRECTOR JOEL AUSTIN AND DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY DANIEL WOLFF FROM THE BEGINNING. COSMATOS' WORK HAS BEEN REVELATORY TO JOEL AND MORE OR LESS THE ENTIRE TRIPPING SEQUENCE IN THE FILM IS AN ODE TO PANOS' FILMS.

Production Information

The Score

THE ORIGINAL SCORE FOR "SARA AND THE ANIMALS" FEATURES FIVE SONGS AND WAS COMPOSED, PERFORMED, AND RECORDED BY FRANK CODA. FRANK AND JOEL FOUND EACH OTHER VIA REDDIT. FRANK POSTED A STRANGER THINGS COVER TRACK THAT JOEL HAPPENED UPON JUST AS HE WAS LOOKING FOR A MUSICIAN TO SCORE THE FILM. AFTER HAVING A LISTEN, JOEL GOT IN TOUCH.

THE TWO LARGEST MUSICAL INFLUENCES IN THE CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN JOEL AND FRANK WERE TRENT REZNOR AND JOHAN JOHANSSON (LARGELY FOR THEIR PREVIOUS WORK WITH DAVID FINCHER AND PANOS COSMATOS).

YOU CAN LISTEN TO THE FULL SCORE [HERE](#).



The Cast and Crew



WRITER-DIRECTOR: JOEL AUSTIN

JOEL AUSTIN IS A WRITER, DIRECTOR, AND PERFORMER WHO WAS RAISED IN THE SOUTHEAST UNITED STATES. HE'S ALSO A PUBLISHED FICTION AUTHOR, POST PRODUCTION INSTRUCTOR AT UCLA EXT., AND ONLINE PERSONALITY. HE IS BASED ON THE WEST COAST.



"SARA": RONNIE TOONE

"SARA" WAS RONNIE TOONE'S FIRST LEADING ROLE IN A SHORT FILM. THEY ARE ALSO A COSPLAY ARTIST WHO FREQUENTS CONVENTIONS AND ONLINE EVENTS. RONNIE IS A HOFSTRA ALUM, CURRENTLY WORKING OUT OF THE GREATER LOS ANGELES AREA.



"THE WOLF": IAN POTTER

IAN POTTER IS A SKILLED SCENIC DESIGNER, SCENIC CARPENTER, AND SCENIC PAINTER, LIVING AND WORKING IN BROOKLYN, NEW YORK. WITH YEARS OF PROFESSIONAL THEATRE EXPERIENCE AND A LIFE TIME IN THE ARTS UNDER HIS BELT, HE ENJOYS BRINGING NEW, INNOVATIVE, AND ABOVE ALL, CREATIVE IDEAS TO ANY PROJECT.



DANIEL WOLFF: DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

DANIEL WORKS ON A WIDE RANGE OF PRODUCTIONS; FROM FILM SETS TO SPORTS BROADCASTS TO TELEVISION STUDIO PRODUCTIONS.



FRANK CODA: COMPOSER

FRANK CODA IS A STUDIO MUSICIAN, FILM COMPOSER AND OVERALL CREATOR OF SOUNDS. "SARA" IS HIS FIRST FILM SCORE.



BROWSE THE FULL CAST & CREW

YOU CAN LEARN MORE ABOUT THE REST OF THE CAST AND CREW ON THE FILM'S [IMDb PAGE](#).

Contact

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