



REFUSED CLASSIFICATION

DIRECTED BY CHRIS ELENA

WRITTEN BY BRADFORD ELMORE AND CHRIS ELENA

PRESS KIT



PRODUCTION INFORMATION

Title	Refused Classification
Duration	13:18
Shoot	16MM
Resolution	1920 x 1080 HD 25fps (DCP 24fps also avail)
Aspect Ratio	16:9 FH Anamorphic 1:78.1
Audio	Stereo
Genre	Drama/Comedy
Screening Masters	Apple ProRes444, H264, MP4 and DCP
Language:	English
Funding	Independent / Philanthropic
Country of production	Australia
Year of production Completed	2021
Executive Producers	Robbi James, Erica Lovell
Producer	Chris Elena
Director	Chris Elena
Writer	Bradford Elmore and Chris Elena
DOP/Editor	Kym Vaitiekus
Art Director	Jess Stirnemann
Sound Designer	Rowan Yeomans
Music by	Nerida Tyson-Chew
Cast	Bernie Van Tiel, Sam O'Sullivan, Gabrielle Scawthorn, David Whitney, Angela Elmore

KEY CONTACTS

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PUBLICITY & INTERVIEW REQUESTS

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TAG

This film has NOT been approved for all audiences.

SYNOPSIS

Matt, Pam, and Amy are in love. They want to make their polyamorous relationship official, but an omnipresent MPAA censor won't allow it – not without serious editing. Confronted with the idea that their loving relationship is considered indecent for most audiences, the family must make a choice: should they abide by the MPAA's wishes, and possibly see relationships like theirs finally represented on screen, or should they stay true to their authentic selves? Should they conform to the system, or reject it?

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Three people in love must justify their relationship and existence to the MPAA: the Motion Picture Association Of America

LINKS

Screener
Password

<https://vimeo.com/640278939>
NC172021

Website
Facebook
Instagram

www.rogueprojects.com.au/refused-classification
www.facebook.com/rogueprojectsau
www.instagram.com/rogueprojects.au

Letterboxed Viewer Reviews

<https://letterboxd.com/film/refused-classification/>

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Refused Classification has always been a dream project of mine. I came up with the idea almost a decade ago and it hasn't left my brain since. A fifteen-minute film about a queer relationship where we get to know and love the characters within a few minutes and have that moment ruined by a member of the Motion Picture Association of America, who picks them apart using the very language and terminology that we've become desensitised to.

The idea stemmed from seeing seminal queer films at an early age (*But I'm A Cheerleader*, *Shortbus*) and noticing two things that left a huge impression on me as a filmmaker: The open, positive and playful attitude towards sex, and how rarely these films were released and how difficult they were to access, especially as a teenager. It eventually led me down the rabbit hole of film censorship, in particular the MPAA and the NC-17 rating. The emphasis on the heterosexual male gaze and the outright rejection of female and queer perspectives and experiences on screen. It made me upset, it made me angry, it made me want to make this movie.

My first challenge, from day one was the relationship and making it the emphasis of this story but as well as including characters you knew, understood and ultimately cared for. That's when I approached Bradford Elmore to write the screenplay with me. Making those characters, the dialogue and their personalities multi-dimensional, organic and whole. The other big challenge was tone - making a film that juggled various tones, comedy, drama, romance all in a short time frame and in doing so acknowledging the MPAA and most censorship bodies' fear of serious queer relationships and representation.

Having Bradford really flesh those characters out with me, including the censors who couldn't think of themselves as villains and incorporate actual terminology from the MPAA into the dialogue. The most important thing for me as a director was to make the film feel like a film, not as a meta exercise or a sketch, riding solely on jokes and punchlines. It had to feel like those films I saw at an early age that defined my understanding of sex and relationships. It had to be a romantic queer film - The one type of film that a censorship board is most afraid of.

I decided to shoot on Super 16mm film, a preferred choice between myself and my cinematographer, Kym Vaitiekus to make the film look and feel timeless, like this was made 20 years ago when it would've been censored and not made readily available. The choice to shoot on film also meant the emphasis on a vibrant colour palette - Reversing the depressing, dreary aesthetic mostly given to queer films that involve tragedy or heartbreak. Our visual references besides the queer films of the late 90s/early 00s was old hollywood romances shot on technicolour.

Working with Bradford and my team to make this film unique, informative, entertaining, life affirming and heartfelt is one of my greatest achievements as a filmmaker. To recapture the feeling those early queer films gave me and put that on screen with the question of: Why were we robbed of this for so long? I hope it also serves as a love letter to the bi and polyamorous community who aren't represented in film enough.

Chris Elena
November, 2021



WRITER'S STATEMENT

When Chris Elena approached me to discuss collaborating on *Refused Classification* my first thought was, "Absolutely!". Growing up, I had never seen anyone like myself on screen. Knowing how important representation can be, I was thrilled to throw myself and my personal experiences into *Refused Classification*, creating authentic polyamorous and bisexual characters who felt real and relatable.

Exhausted with films showing the persistent erasure of bisexuality and the use of ethical nonmonogamy as a comic relief trope, I wanted to write something unique. Alternative relationships are often treated as perverse and shameful in films whilst violence and violent themes, despite the viewers' age, is often acceptable. Why? Because someone with a pen, an opinion, and the power to exercise it, decided it were so. So we live in a world where we are shoved, sometimes forcibly, back into our closets.

This film, in collaboration with Rogue Projects, has allowed me to expand my unique experiences, sharing alternative relationships and, hopefully, making them feel normal. Because they are. I am thrilled for the opportunity to speak through these characters as authentically as I can.

It is important to show that alternative sexualities and alternative relationship styles are not only acceptable but should be celebrated, and not censored, or edited, or deleted.

Refused Classification is a chance for those who have been edited because of their love to stand proud, see themselves on screen, and know that they aren't alone. Who are is not wrong, and it is within us to have the power to refuse classifications.

Bradford Elmore
November, 2021

PRODUCER'S STATEMENT

Rogue Projects are proud to produce Bradford Elmore and Chris Elena's keenly-anticipated short film *Refused Classification*. This warm, biting, and funny indictment of censorship, and celebration of sexual and romantic diversity, highlights the power of censorship on the evolution of representation and acceptance on our screens.

Using the expansive love experience that is polyamory, writers Bradford Elmore and Chris Elena have collaborated to produce a unique joint project - one that echoes Bradford's own experience in a proudly bisexual, committed poly relationship, and Chris' passionate advocacy for the development of contemporary censorship models that are inclusive, honest, and reflect our evolving times.

As a company with deep connections to the LGBTQIA+ community, we were inspired by their vision to depict polyamorous life on screen within the confines of the MPAA system - to generate conversation about who is really judging our lives on screen, and what we must conform to to be seen. Film ratings in the United States effect the representation of diverse communities on screens globally, and increasingly so in the age of streaming. *Refused Classification* asks us to interrogate the system that classifies us against rules made by people we don't know, and who's agendas are forever unclear.

Bradford's humour and trademark writing style was an exciting match for Chris' flare for emotion, romanticism, and colour. Together they have created a powerful tool to challenge taboos, expose hypocrisy and generate visibility and acceptance for audiences both queer and mainstream.

Film is a powerful medium for creating conversation, understanding, and compassion. It gives us an opportunity to highlight just how damaging and far-reaching the censorship of the Motion Picture Association of America is, while also showing that poly-queer relationships have, and must, survive, thrive, and write their own rules in order to be visible in a world that still treats their families as oddities, or worse.

Robbi James & Erica Lovell
November 2021





FILM FESTIVALS

2021	Made in the West	Sydney, Australia / Digital
2022	Revelation Film Festival	Perth, Australia / Digital
2022	Cannes Short Film Festival	Cannes, France / Digital
2022	Sydney Underground Film Festival	Sydney, Australia
2023	Capricorn Film Festival	Queensland, Australia
2023	Queerscreen Worldpride Film Festival	Sydney, Australia



ACCOLADES

2021	<p>Made in the West Film Festival</p> <p>Nominated: Best Film</p> <p>Nominated: Best Screenplay (Bradford Elmore)</p> <p>Nominated: Best Actor (Gabrielle Scawthorn)</p> <p>Nominated: Best Supporting Actor (Bernie Van Tiel)</p> <p>Nominated: Best Cinematography (Kym Vaitiekus)</p> <p>Nominated: Best Production Design (Jess Hole)</p> <p>Nominated: Best Original Score (Nerida Tyson-Chew)</p> <p>Nominated: Best Director (Chris Elena)</p>
2022	<p>Cannes Short Film Festival</p> <p>Winner: Best LGBT Short - Jury Prize</p> <p>Winner: Best Comedy Short - Jury Prize</p>

BIOGRAPHIES - KEY CREATIVES

CHRIS ELENA DIRECTOR / WRITER / PRODUCER

Chris Elena began his career studying Creative Writing at the University of Wollongong. His first short film *The Limited*, premiered at the Queensland Film Festival. His most recent short *Audio Guide* just finished its successful twenty-four film festival run, including three Oscar Qualifying official selections resulting in fourteen award nominations and four wins including Audience Award and Best Screenplay at the St Kilda Film Festival. The film was recently acquired by Alter where it currently sits at over seventy-five thousand views. Chris regularly shoots on Super 16mm film and has a working relationship with both Kodak and Panavision to support his projects.



BRADFORD ELMORE WRITER

Bradford Elmore is an emerging Kentucky-born playwright who found his forever home in Sydney almost eight years ago, and his passion for playwriting not long after. A graduate of Western Kentucky University he is one half of the APA award-nominated duo behind the ByTheBi Podcast, and is a leading figure in the bisexual+ visibility movement. Since partnering with Producer Robbi James in 2017 Bradford has developed three new works, *Gravity*, *Terrible Twos* and *Refused Classification*. The first work, *Gravity*, was selected for the 2019 Mardi Gras Playlist event by director Kate Gaul, was shortlisted for the 2020 Australian Queer Playwriting Award, winner of an Art in Isolation Residency with Sydney Fringe and is currently slated for a world premiere production with director Anthony Skuse in 2023. He is currently working with composer Jye Bryant on a new musical, *Murder Trust*.



KYM VAITIEKUS DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY / EDITOR

Kym Vaitiekus made his first award-winning film at the Art School of South Australia. He went on to graduate from the Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS) as a Director of Photography in 1989. As DP he has shot commercials, documentaries, and television. His forte is drama, including *Swimming*; *Sex Rules*; *They*; *The Sewing Room*; *ETC in Paper Jam*; and *Audio Guide*. As Director, he has produced many award-winning shorts including: *Knock it on the Head*, *Magic Happens*, *Work it Out* and the web series *Eating with Soula*. His work includes the short *Moustache*, which screened at Venice Film Festival in addition to many other international festivals; the Australian sitcom *Stupid Stupid Man*; and the feature *The Resident Magician* with Canterman productions.



BIOGRAPHIES - KEY CAST

BERNIE VAN TIEL PAMELA

Since graduating from the International Screen Academy in 2016, Bernie has built a strong portfolio of performance across film, television, music, and voice overs. Bernie can be seen in the short films *Yellow* (Viktorius), *Risen* (Tony Radevski), and *The Dream Channel*; as Mandy in *Reef Break* (ABC TV); and in the web series *The Mother Load* (Loani Arman). Bernie is a talented beatboxer, singer, and musician, and is fluent in Kapampangan (Filipino dialect). Represented by Sophie Jermyn Management.



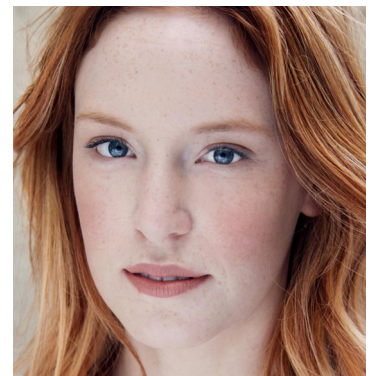
SAM O'SULLIVAN MATT

Sam is an award-winning actor, writer, voice over artist and presenter. He has appeared on numerous television productions including *Amazing Grace* (NINE), *Black Comedy* (ABC TV), and *Wonderland* (Fremantle Media); the web series *Crossing Paths* (Hello Future); and most recently on stage in *Wink* (KXT/Wheels & Co), *The Norman Conquests* (Ensemble), *Journey's End* (ATYP/Cross Pollinate), and *Kill the Messenger* (Belvoir). As a writer his work has been produced on some of Australia's most prestigious stages including *You're Not Special* (KXT/Rogue Projects and Australian Theatre Live), *The Block Universe* (Cross Pollinate - nominated for Best Independent Production, Sydney Theatre Awards), and *Charlie Pilgrim* (ATYP - winner of the ATYP Foundation Commission). Sam was nominated for best actor for his role in *Journey's End* in 2016. Represented by Sophie Jermyn Management.



GABRIELLE SCAWTHORN AMY

Originally from Australia, Gabrielle trained at NIDA and has since studied with The Atlantic Theatre Company (US). Some of her theatre credits include: *The Apologists* (The Omnibus Theatre, VAULT Festival), *The Underpants* (Seymour Centre), *Stop Kiss* (Unlikely Productions - Sydney Theatre Award Nomination), *Young Tycoons* (Darlinghurst Theatre Co), *Young and Jackson* (45 Downstairs), and *Ride and Fourplay* (Darlinghurst Theatre Company) among many. Her television credits include *The Killing Fields* (Cornerstone/Channel 7), *Doctor Blake Mysteries* (ABC), *Freshblood* (ABC), and *Deadly Women* (Beyond Entertainment). In film she can be seen in *Dick's Clinic* (Smack Art). Gabrielle directed the musical *Death Suits You* (Camden Fringe Festival - OFFEST Nomination) and co-wrote the play *1&Only* (2020 VAULT Festival). Represented by Rebecca Singer Management..



DAVID WHITNEY THE MAN

David has been performing on Australian stages and screens since 2001. His most recent television and film work includes roles on *A Place to Call Home* (Channel 7), *Love Child* (Playmaker Media), and *Blue Murder: Killer Cop* (Shine). David has extensive appearance on stage, most recently performing in *The Wharf Revue* (Sydney Theatre Company), *Much Ado About Nothing* (Bell Shakespeare), *Dracula* (Shake & Stir), and *Money and Friends* (Ensemble). A talented baritone his most recent musical theatre credits include *The Merry Widow* and *West Side Story* (Opera Australia), *Funny Girl* (Sydney Symphony), and *Baby* for Neil Gooding's Neglected Musicals. Represented by Mollison Keightley Management.



BIOGRAPHIES - PRODUCING TEAM

ERICA LOVELL

Erica studied English Literature, Media & Communications, and Theatre & Performance Studies at UNSW, where she graduated with Distinction. At UNSW, Erica performed in Clare Grant's *Everyone Was There & Carla Cooked*, and wrote her first piece for theatre, *Ophelia Likes Her Tea Black*. She won the 2010 Act Now Play Now creative youth competition in the microfiction section for her piece *Lucky Will*. She trained in devising for theatre through the imPACT Youth Ensemble.

As an actor, Erica's career highlights include playing Amy March in *Little Women* (Kookaburra National Musical Theatre Company), Fredrieka Armfield in *A Little Night Music* (Opera Australia) Martha in *Spring Awakening* (Sydney Theatre Company), Deb in *Ordinary Days* (Squabbalagic/Darlinghurst Theatre company), Bitch in *Great Falls*, Zelda in *Happiness*, Gail in *A Conversation* (Ensemble Theatre Company), Nerissa in *The Merchant of Venice* (Sport for Jove).

in 2018 Erica joined The Rogues to direct *Boy Out of the Country* by Felix Nobis, which premiered at the inaugural Pioneer Play Festival. Since then Erica as become one of the company's leaders, including directing the company's award-winning Sydney Fringe work *Gravity Guts*, and the remount of *Boy Out of the Country* at the Bondi Pavilion Theatre. Erica also directed the world premiere production of *Wil and Grace* by Madeleine Withington at FringeHQ Newtown (Old 505 Theatre) in 2021, which garnered a Sydney Theatre Award nomination that year.

Erica currently works with the drama and English department of Dulwich Hill High School of Visual Arts and Design, and is a Director with Poetry in Action.



ROBBI JAMES

Robbi has been a producer with The Rogues since 2017 when he joined the company to take Gina Schien's *Morgan Stern* to the 70th Edinburgh Fringe Festival and Brisbane's Undercover Artist Festival. He has since gone on to help produce all of the Rogues' projects including the *Bedlam Cabaret* series, Sophia Simmon's *Gravity Guts*, (Sydney Fringe, Fringe HQ), Sam O'Sullivan's *You're Not Special* (KXT), and Kasia Vickery's *Taz vs The Pleb* (Flight Path).

He began his theatre life with a decade of performance as an actor and singer, completing theatre studies while studying for a law degree at Western Sydney University. Robbi has built an extensive portfolio career across media, business and brand development, marketing, public relations, and project management.

He completed his Masters in Arts Management at the Sydney Opera House in 2018 with the Australian Institute of Music. His final thesis critically investigated the measurement, systems of support for, and impact of, diversity strategies in Sydney theatre companies, and he is a passionate advocate for supporting artists in the development of local voices, stories, and experiences. He is also the Digital Producer, and Marketing and Engagement Manager, for Critical Stages Touring, Australia's national touring theatre company, where he works with the country's leading independent theatre makers such as Belloo Creative, The Good Room, Red Stitch Actors' Theatre, and Red Line Productions to bring Australian stories to stages everywhere.



ABOUT ROGUE PROJECTS

Rogue Projects is a multi-award-winning independent theatre and film partnership creating in Sydney and Melbourne. Some of our most recent work includes Madeleine Withington's *Wil and Grace*, which was nominated for a 2021 Sydney Theatre Award, Kasia Vickery's *Taz vs The Pleb*, Sophia Simmons' *Gravity Guts* (Winner Best Emerging Artist, Nominated Best in Theatre Sydney Fringe 2017), and the short film *Refused Classification* by Bradford Elmore, which was nominated for 8 awards including Best Film at Made in the West Film Festival, and the winner of Best LGBT Short and Best Comedy at the Cannes Short Film Festival.

In 2021 and 2022 the company presented *Not Today*, directed by Miranda Middleton. The production has been staged at Theatre Works, Seymour Centre, and Riverside Theatres, and recently won the Best Musical Theatre and Cabaret Award at the Sydney Fringe, where it was also nominated for two touring awards and Best in Music. We also produced Sam O'Sullivan's *You're Not Special*, directed by Samantha Young, which enjoyed a sell-out season at Kings Cross Theatre. It was the first ever production at KXT to be captured for on-demand streaming by Australian Theatre Live.

The Rogues are busy making art with a commitment to invisible artists and untold stories. We seek out great talent, we nurture it, and we hold the door open for the artists without opportunity. We create pathways for both emerging and established artists, with commitments to audition at least 50% of all roles in our work, and to actively seek artists who have demonstrated talent and skill but for reasons beyond their control have not been afforded the opportunities that others take for granted.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We acknowledge the custodians of the land on which we filmed, the Gadigal of the Eora Nation. We pay our respect to Gadigal Elders past, present and future, and extend that respect to other First Nations peoples.

Refused Classification was made possible with the generous support of dozens of donors who contributed to our Australian Cultural Fund campaign, philanthropic contributions, the By the Bi Podcast, and in-kind contributions from artists and producing partners. We would also like to acknowledge the support of Panavision and Kodak Film Australia.



FILMOGRAPHY

CHRIS ELENA - DIRECTOR/PRODUCER

YEAR	TITLE	DUR	FORMAT	ROLE
2021	Refused Classification	13:18	Super16mm	Writer /Director /Producer
2019	Audio Guide	14:00	Super16mm	Director /Producer
2018	Can You Dig It?	20:00	Super16mm + Digital	Writer /Director /Producer
2016	The Limited	12:00	Digital	Writer /Director /Producer
2011	Life in Night	11:00	Digital	Writer / Director
2010	Kill Your Darlings	10:00	Digital	Writer /Director /Producer

CREDIT LIST

Pamela	Bernie Van Tiel
Matt	Sam O’Sullivan
Amy	Gabrielle Scawthorn
The Man	David Whitney
The Woman	Angela Elmore
Director	Chris Elena
Written by	Bradford Elmore and Chris Elena
Executive Producers	Robbi James and Erica Lovell
Producer	Chris Elena
Director of Photography & Editor	Kym Vaitiekus
Production Manager	Will Usic
1st Assistant Director	Stefan Goslinga
2nd Assistant Director	Nicole Fouzas and Janine Lau
Sound	Rowan Yeoman
Music by	Nerida Tyson-Chew
Art Director, Costumes, Hair and Make-up	Jess Stirnemann
Asst Art Director	Nathan Knowles
Camera Assistants	Reswin Bahas and Blake Wise
Gaffer	Will Suen
Best Boys	Lucky Chen & Kenji Sasai
Colourist and VFX	Tim Egan
Script Supervisors	Bradford Elmore And Isabela Gonzalez
Intimacy Coordinator	Erica Lovell
Archive Photography	Parker Floris
Production Assistants	Miro Astore, Michael Dennington, Sylvia Fouzas and Marlon Malic

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Addy Fong, Alan Patriarca, Alana Mizzi, Alexander Castillo, Alexandra Donald, Alfred Boyadgis, Allison Chhorn, Amanda Russell, Andreas Giannopoulos, Andrew Hazel, Andrew Kennedy, Andrew Roberts, Anne Plummer, Arthur Kassabian, Ashleigh Burns-Edwards, Audrey Blyde, Bina Bhattacharya, Bradford Elmore, Braeden Glickman, Cameron Green, Carlin Hurdis, Catherine Dunk, Charles Broad, Chris Ford, Christine Frew, Christy Arseneau, Clair Joyce, Debbie Zhou, Elisa Armstrong, Elizabeth A Friedrich, Ella Donald, Emilia Graham, Emily Qing, Emily Wade, Emma Wright, Erin Bingham, Esther Barra, Felix Brown, Fiona Teale, Fiona Underhill, George Kapaklis, Harrison Rutherford, Hayley Inch, Jacob Brinkworth, James Russell, Janine Lau, Jay Knapp, Jayden Beveridge, Jemima Bucknell, Jesse Locke, Joanne Warrenner, Joean Yun, Josh Palin, Katherine Zheng, Katie Aghazarmian, Kieran Thomas Ramsay, Kim Love, Larina Alick, Lauren Henderson, Lawrence Bien, Lee Zachariah, Leila Murton Poole, Lisa Malouf, Lucy Pritchett, Madeleine Borthwick, Madeline Dell, Marcus Liddle,

CREDIT LIST CONTINUED

Marina Osadcha, Marlon Malic, Mc Buckle, Melissa Potter, Miro Astore, Misty McPhail, Natasha Cooper, Nicole Fouzas, Nicole Price, Noddy Desmond, Oliver Burton, Orla Smith, Pamela McLeod, Paul Anthony Nelson, Paul Ryan, Perri Cummings, Philippa Hawker, Rachel Baikie, Rachel Dorrian, Rhys Griffin, Richard Wickman, Riley Beech, Rivers Industrial Services Pty Ltd, Ruth Richards, Saoirse Redmond, Sarah Stipo, Sean Coates, Sharone Carmona, Shaun Heenan, Sidney Im, Simon Hopper, Stephan Holmes, Stephanie Gal, Steve Herold, Swinging Downunder Podcast, Theodor Steen, Tim Egan, Tim Hoar, Timothy Woodbury, Tony Fegan, Vitas Varnas, Wye Herbert

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Refused Classification was made with the support of by Kodak and Panavision.

Produced and filmed on the traditional country of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, NSW.

For Maddy Dell

