

PRESS KIT - NEW AMSTERDAM

Short Synopsis

Shot on a single cartridge of Super 8mm film, *New Amsterdam* is both the story of a hungover young man in Battery Park contemplating a fresh start and a meditation on the end of civilization.

Longer Synopsis

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The short was adapted from the final scene of a feature that Gabe (the writer) is working on, in which a young man's existential crisis and resulting downward spiral happen in parallel to the 2016 defeat of the Bernie Sanders movement. It takes place over the course of seven days, and each day is metaphorically paralleled with an era of New York's history, going back in time as the main character's life unravels.

This is the final section, so it's matched with the arrival of the Dutch in New York, this sense of a strange, wild new place, an unknown future. Thus the title, which was the original Dutch name for New York, and the location at the Battery, which was where the Dutch first arrived.

As a standalone film, it is essentially about the feeling of the kind of moment of clarity that comes at a pivot point in one's life -- where you wake up (in this case, literally), everything looks a little strange and different, and you have the dizzying feeling that you've made a clean break with your past and now have to figure out what your future is going to be.



Production

The film was the collaborative effort of a trio of filmmakers - Rebecca Shoptaw (the director), Gabriel Ice (the writer), and Jesse Feldberg (the cinematographer) - who met and became friends through the Film at Lincoln Center New Wave group for young film enthusiasts.

The film came to be when Feldberg invited Shoptaw to collaborate with him on a Super 8 film, and she invited Ice to write the script. Filming took place over the course of about six hours on March 10th, 2023, and the film was shot using a single 3 minute 20 second cartridge of Super 8 film, with just a single take for each shot.

This shooting method required an exciting level of precision on set — before the camera started rolling for each shot, Shoptaw and Feldberg would spend a while discussing and adjusting the framing until it was exactly right, and Shoptaw and David Ladwig, the principal actor, would confer about the specific emotional beats of the shot and do a series of rehearsals. When everything was ready, Feldberg would roll the camera for a single take, and the team would move right on to the next shot. Nerve-wracking as this method was, it made for a thrilling on-set experience, and brought out everyone's best work.

Shoptaw recorded the voice-over with Molly Bremer a few days before the shoot, and she edited it together with the film, making minute adjustments to the timing and minor adjustments to the grade, until a completed cut was ready on May 5th.

Cast Bios



David Ladwig

Lead Actor

David Ladwig is an actor and musician based in NYC. This was his second film with Rebecca Shoptaw, after *Mrs. Dalloway* (in post-production), in which he played Septimus. He also played the role of Ronnie in the short film *What Exists*.

You can find his music on Spotify, and learn more about his acting work on his [IMDb page](#).



Molly Bremer

Voice-over

Molly Bremer is thrilled to be a part of *New Amsterdam*, her first Super8 film! Film: Rebecca Shoptaw's *Portrait of Mrs. John Lennox* (Marian), *Mrs. Dalloway* (Sally), & an untitled Shakespeare project (Violet/Viola); Exemplar Pictures' *Titans: Oblivion* (Cassandra Sandsmark/Wondergirl). Theatre: *Sweeney Todd* (The Hangar Theatre), *Cabaret* (The Hangar Theatre), *Impossible But True* (Brooklyn Tavern Theatre), *Broadway's Greatest Hits* (Feinstein's 54 Below) & *Love Song Saturday Night* (Feinstein's 54 Below). BA from Princeton University and alum of the Chicago Academy for the Arts.

You can see more of her work at mollybremer.com.

Crew Bios



Rebecca Shoptaw

Director

Rebecca Shoptaw is a prolific writer and director, whose work has screened at festivals internationally and been featured in publications such as *The New Yorker* and *Le Monde*. This was her first time directing a Super 8 film.

You can see more of her work at rebeccashoptaw.com.



Jesse Feldberg

Cinematographer

Jesse Feldberg is a veteran of the US Coast Guard, and a writer, director, actor, and cinematographer. He teaches film at Stony Brook University, and when not looking through a viewfinder, writing, or holding a boom pole, he can be found racing sailboats on the Hudson River with his father. He's shot several films on Super 8, and will likely shoot many more.

You can see more of his work at jessefeldberg.com.



Gabriel Ice

Writer

When asked for a short bio, Gabe replied, "A writer should have no biography other than his work."