

***I'm Not Finished* - Director's Statement**

I'm Not Finished follows Alex as he bonds with Ellie at a house party. Sparks fly between the two, but when one makes a move and takes things too far, what started as a fun night ends up being a traumatic experience. *I'm Not Finished* is a short film about desire, intimacy and consent and the complex social codes surrounding these notions. As a young woman, this story particularly resonates with me. I know how it is to be nice and to have the person opposite believe it is flirting. I know how it is to be objectified. I know how it is to be sexually harassed.

As a director, this story has many themes linked to societal issues that I am eager to explore. It looks into the complexity of setting boundaries while flirting, the dangers of our "hookup culture" and how common toxic masculinity is. Through my work, I always attempt to raise awareness on social issues. In the past I have directed award-winning short fiction films (winner of the Vox Milo Festival and Pocket Film Festival in 2022) about loneliness, street harassment and bullying. I have also directed commercial videos for charities such as Emmaus Leeds and the Two Riding Community Foundation, who were regular clients of mine. With *I'm Not Finished*, I will attempt to raise awareness on the importance of consent.

For the story to have a thought-provoking impact on viewers, I believe realistic performances are essential. Ellie and Alex's connection needs to seem believable which is why the two main actors will go through a chemistry test before being cast. The connection between them will be shown through glances and subtle touches. The raw and realistic performances such as those seen in the films of director Noah Baumbach are what I will be looking for. I will attempt to create this in rehearsals where every detail, from little looks to the pacing of the text, will be discussed and analysed with the cast. I see directing as a collaborative process, so I will be open to suggestions and ideas from the cast if it can help them bring out a natural performance.

The themes cited above will also be portrayed through an intimate aesthetic focused on the characters. Most of the shots will be handheld medium close ups focusing on Alex and Ellie's chemistry and their emotions. Some key inspirations in terms of aesthetic are *I May Destroy You* (Michaela Coel, 2020), and *Lost in Translation* (Sophia Coppola, 2003). Although these two projects have very different pacing, the framing and lighting always portray the characters naturalistically and softly as they connect with someone else. There will be a clear contrast between the unique bond Ellie and Alex are creating and the house party happening around them. This will be done thanks to supporting artists acting carefree in extravagant clothes and vibrant party lights. Jack, who is the opposite of Alex, will invade Alex's personal space through his body movements and the framing.

The fun, vibrant party setting strongly contrasts the distressing and horrible situation Alex experiences by the end of the film. The rise in tension leading to the climatic scene in the bedroom will be indicated by progressively more menacing and intense lighting and soundtrack.

While some scenes will clearly be uncomfortable for the characters, I will make sure that the set will be a safe place where the cast and crew can talk freely about how they feel, and as part of this an intimacy co-ordinator will be present.

As a director, I am compelled to bring the script of *I'm Not Finished* to life. Its natural dialogue, complex characters and the shocking plot twist have the power to make the audience understand the importance of consent and the emotional complexities victims of sexual assault face. I also believe that seeing a man as a victim can help to open up conversations about toxic masculinity and break the many clichés that are still prevalent about men, which is why the film can have great social importance and resonance.