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Capstone Film: Kansas City

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Director's Statement

REASON & IMPORTANCE

Kansas City was conceptualized after processing my feelings about a past breakup. In 2022, I stumbled upon my ex-boyfriend's Reddit account. Scrolling through the comment history, I saw many beautiful girls who all looked different, though I resembled next to none of them. While I don't blame my ex directly, I did develop an eating disorder shortly afterward and struggled with my body image for years. We broke up a few months later due to his infidelity. I never confronted him about the pornography, which has been a huge regret of mine.

Bianca, the film's female protagonist, represents me—at least to some capacity—while Parker, the male protagonist, amalgamates many different men with whom I have had romantic relations. With the film, I aim to talk about the psychology of my generation in this new digital culture and how it directly affects relationships. Despite this, I not only want to talk about parasociality in this context, I want to talk about porn addiction— an uncomfortable topic for sure, but something that needs to be discussed if we want to preserve intersexual respect between the women and men of today, especially in regards to the youth of our society.

With Kansas City, I want to ask people to confront their feelings or experiences about expectations for their relationships. I hope that by representing the sensitive subject of porn on

the screen, it inspires my audience to feel more comfortable having these tough conversations about porn and addiction.

In an interview with Kris Taylor, an academic of psychology with a focus on porn and sex addiction, he begged the question of whether the promise of connectivity between influencers and audiences in digital, sexual spaces, promising a sort of relationship, is better or worse for these typically male members of the audience— that young men are often showcased this two-dimensional image of what women should be and act like, and how that skewed perspective offered can mess with the heads of young men, making it difficult for them to flourish and find meaningful relationships with women in the future. I want to approach this idea head-on while at the same time approaching this circumstance sympathetically, as these situations tend to occur out of anxiety towards romantic and sexual relationships; the internet tends to showcase bad examples of how to participate in these relationships.

A concern with my film was the prevention of further exploitation of sex workers. In my research and discussions with influencer Margot May and OnlyFans creator Dignan Madigan, I had the goal of ultimately showcasing that we should absolutely not villainize online pornographic creators, as they are not the reason, nor is it their responsibility, for men who fall victim to sexual depravity. In fact, they are often victims of parasociality of their fans. The porn industry, in a way, thrives off the overconsumption and desensitisation of consumers and the mistreatment of creators. In my efforts to prevent further exploitation, I chose not to utilize pornographic visuals and instead relied on audio.

I spent a lot of time being mad at my ex-boyfriend due to his porn addiction. What I know now, and what has helped me heal, is understanding that men aren't inherently "bad" in these situations; they are just set up for failure.

Kansas City is a story about how the misuse and misinterpretation of women and sex perpetuated by a patriarchal digital space can affect the psyche of young men and their relationships with the ones that they hold dear.

VISUAL INSPIRATION

Kansas City was shot from January 26 to January 29, 2025, with Quintana Jones as the Director of Photography. A pickup shoot for the coffee shop scene was done on April 2nd, 2025. The erotic taped photoshoot that was used to create an image for Kansas Fox stars Lucie Tellier, the same actress who plays Bianca.

Some of our primary sources for visual inspiration include *Videodrome* (1983), *We're All Going to the World's Fair* (2022), *Nichols Canyon Road* (2020), and *Last Night in Soho* (2021). *Kansas City* was produced by Isabella Gierbolini, edited by Avinoam Israel-Davis, and scored by Jesper Admund Funck. In the dream sequence at the film's end, Kansas's body is formed as a rotoscoped 3D model by animator Aayan Ghoshal.