

DEGREE OF CERTAINTY

AMAZON
MGM STUDIOS
INNOVATIVE STORYTELLERS
INITIATIVE GRANT
WINNER

PRESS KIT



DEGREE OF CERTAINTY

AFI Conservatory Thesis | 16 min | color

Genre:	Drama, Thriller, Historical
Country:	USA
Production Year:	2026
Language:	English
Subtitles:	English (Close Caption)
Aspect Ratio:	2.39 : 1
Frame Rate:	24 fps
Shooting Format:	Arri Alexa Mini 3.2k
Exhibition Format:	2k DCP, ProRes
Sound:	5.1 Surround, Stereo

50 YEARS AGO, A SMALL GROUP HAD THE CHANCE TO SAVE THE WORLD.

THEY DECIDED AGAINST IT, CREATING THE MASSIVE ENVIRONMENTAL AND MISINFORMATION CRISIS WE LIVE IN TODAY.

LOGLINE

When a young risk analyst at a major US oil company in 1982 learns that the climate research department has just discovered a rapid rise in global temperatures, he has to decide which side of history he wants to be on.

SYNOPSIS

It's 1982, and Jackson Miller, a young risk analyst at one of the biggest US oil companies, fears for his job. The company loses millions every day due to falling oil prices, and he must prove that he can come up with ideas that address the issue. But when he comes across the latest findings of the company's own climate science department, who just discovered a rapid rise in global temperature, he has to decide which side of history he wants to be on.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

The systems and crises we live in today did not arise by chance. They were created by people in power and their decision in the past. The story of the discovery of the climate crisis is exactly this story. Not only were it the scientists of the biggest US oil corporations who first discovered the climate crisis in the late 70s / early 80s, it was those same companies who then launched the biggest misinformation crisis in history to deny their own research. To understand how we ended up in the reality we are living today, we have to look into the past and confront the decisions that took us here. Only if we understand the system that created and escalated the climate and misinformation crises by design can we find a way out of them.



NEXOR

Energy Corporation





“I’m always interested in defining moments in history that created the reality we’re living in right now. So when I first heard about the involvement of one of the biggest American oil corporations in both the discovery and the denial of the climate crisis in the late 1970s / early 80s, I was immediately fascinated by this real-life event. I always knew that Big Oil was involved in the denial of the climate crisis, but what was new to me about this story is that it was actually the oil corporations that founded the field of climate science research. More than that, I was fascinated by the cultural shift that was happening in the early 80s in companies like Exxon.”

During the 70s, there was a moment when these companies wanted to move away from oil to become a more progressive energy company. They invested heavily in renewable energies and expanded their climate science programs to get a better understanding of undiscovered oil reserves. What followed was a more conservative leadership that steered a company that was fully based in science to turn against its own research. This immediately jumped out to me as a telling and tragic metaphor of how institutions turn against their own inherent beliefs and interests to secure the most power and influence they can. This is an ongoing pattern that only focuses on the most immediate, short term outcomes at the expense of our long term futures.”

– Simon Schneider, writer & director







SIMON SCHNEIDER

DIRECTOR/WRITER

Simon Schneider is a writer and director with an MFA in Directing from the American Film Institute and a Bachelor's degree in film directing from the IFS International Film School Cologne. He was a 2016 participant in the Central German Junior Film Program TP2 Talentpool. His short film **MADE IN GERMANY** was the audience award winner of Max Ophüls Prize 2022 and Fest Award Winner at the FEST New Directors New Films Festival. He was nominated for the Max Ophüls Prize 2025 for the feature film treatment development award for **A PROUD MOTHER**. He has also worked as a director and writer for German public television and screened his work at film festivals worldwide as well as on Disney+, ARTE, and ARD.

FILMOGRAPHY

Degree of Certainty (unreleased), 2026
short film | 16 min | environmental thriller
director, writer
AFI American Film Institute Conservatory

Made in Germany, 2022
short film | 25 min | comedy
director, writer
IFS Internationale Film School Cologne, inter-film GmbH

While we are here, 2018
short film | 7 min | comedy
director, writer, producer
IFS Internationale Filmshule Cologne

True, 2016
short film | 20 min | Thriller
director, writer, producer
Dare-To-Fail-Production GbR

AWARDS

Treatment Development Award Nomininee, Film Festival Max Ophüls Prize / ZDF for "A Proud Mother", 2025

Jury Prize Winner, Best Middle-length Film, Filmfest Bremen for "Made in Germany" 2023

Audience Award Winner, Film Festival Max Ophüls Prize for "Made in Germany", 2022

Pitching Award Winner, FEST New Directors New Films Festival for "Made in Germany", 2020

Producers Network Award Winner, Robert Bosch Foundation for "Made in Germany", 2020

Audience Award Winner, Cellu l'Art Short Film Festival Jena for "True", 2017

Bronze Medal Winner, Federal Association of German Film Writers for "True", 2017



MAXWELL KAGAN
PRODUCER

Maxwell Kagan is an American writer/producer with an MFA in Producing from the American Film Institute and a BA in Media Storytelling from NYU's Gallatin School. He has film and TV development experience at Marc Platt Productions and Sight Unseen, and spent three years in entertainment law and management representing artists including Charlie Puth and Lauren Spencer-Smith. Maxwell is a PGA Debra Hill Fellowship finalist and recipient of Amazon's \$30,000 Innovative Storytellers Grant and the Carole Joyce Student Filmmakers Grant. He currently serves as Manager of Production at producer Bill Block's production company.

ELIOT GRIGO
CINEMATOGRAPHER

Eliot Grigo is an American cinematographer based in Los Angeles, California. His work has been awarded internationally at festivals including Palm Springs ShortFest, Hamptons, Miami, Woodstock, and Cinema Jove, and has been featured by Vimeo Staff Picks, Directors Library, Short of the Week, Omeleto, No Budget, Film Shortage, Panavision, and Kodak. After growing up exploring darkroom photography and documentary storytelling in Rockport, Maine, Grigo went on to receive BFA in Film from Syracuse University as well as study 35mm filmmaking at FAMU in Prague, and attend photographic workshops at RIT and Maine Media. Grigo holds an MFA in Cinematography from the AFI Conservatory.





JASON LUO
EDITOR

Jason Sen Luo is a film editor and recent graduate of the American Film Institute Conservatory, specializing in narrative film, drawn to human-interest stories, whether set in the past, present, or future, that resonate with and have a lasting impact on the audience. Recent graduate of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Film, Video, New Media, and Animation, Co-founder of Dope Film Studio, Jason's portfolio includes award-winning short films FOUND YOU and PERSONA, with FOUND YOU being a 2022 Independent Shorts Awards finalist.

JESSICA BURNAM
PRODUCTION DESIGNER

Jessica Burnam is a story-centered creator with experience spanning fine art, theater, business, and film. She holds an MBA from the College of William and Mary (2022), an MFA in Production Design from the American Film Institute (2024), and has been selected for LA's Art Directors Guild's Production Design Initiative Program. She has designed short films, music videos, and indie features. Her films have exhibited at LALIFF, NYLFF, AFI Fest (AZUL), SBIFF (TWO LIE TOGETHER), and at MOMI (ARE THE STARS ALIVE?). Jessica has worked as an art coordinator at Lucuma Studios for clients such as Nike, Hyperice, and Liquid Death, and as an art production assistant for Season 2 of Apple TV's THE STUDIO.







TRACE GUZMÁN
JACKSON MILLER

Trace Guzmán is an LA-based actor and writer. He'll next be seen in **THREE MONTHS LATER** opposite Kristen Bell and Lea Thompson at Chaplin Studios, and recently workshopped **ESTHER PEREL RUINED MY LIFE** with IAMA Theater Company. On screen, he appears in the Will Ferrell-produced **HERE FOR THE WEEKEND**. Trace writes and performs sketch comedy online and around LA, most recently in the sold-out run of **NIGHT SHIFT**. He has acted in award-winning shorts including **ALL ROADS LEAD TO HERE**, **MEDIA TRAINED**, and **TEEN MARY**. Represented by Brave Artists Management.

PETER MACKENZIE
MR. LEEMANN

Peter Mackenzie moved to Los Angeles from New York to appear on the hit television show **Herman's Head**. Since then, his acting career has thrived with film highlights such as **TRUMBO**, opposite Bryan Cranston; **IT'S COMPLICATED**, opposite Meryl Streep; and opposite Harrison Ford in the Jackie Robinson biopic **42**. He was also seen on the big screen in Warren Beatty's feature **RULES DON'T APPLY**. His numerous TV highlights include **GRACE AND FRANKIE**, **MASTERS OF SEX**, **HOUSE OF LIES**, **CURB YOUR ENTHUSIASM**, **WEST WING**, **MAD MEN** and **SCANDAL**, among others.





JOHN BILLINGSLEY

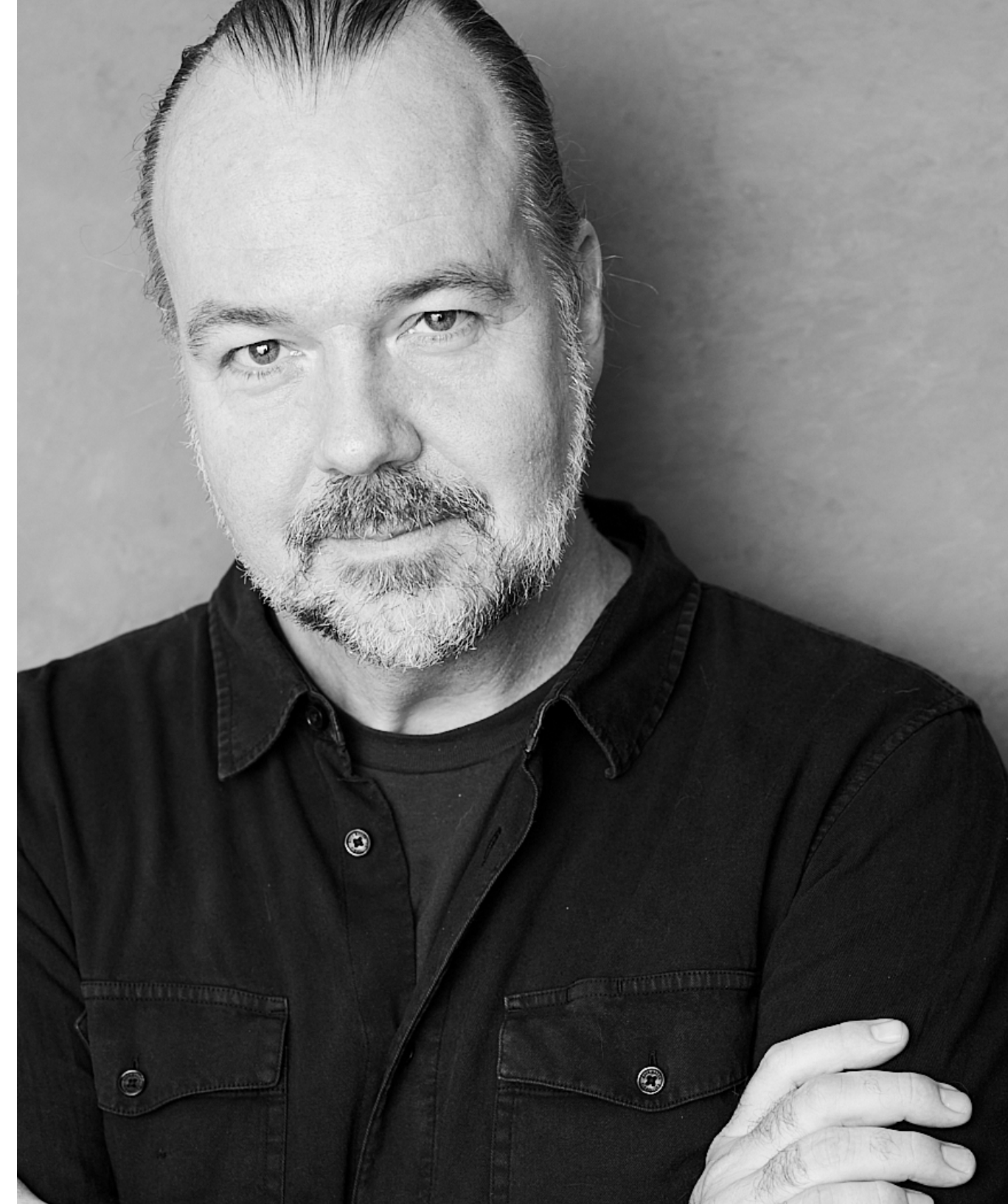
MR. WILLIAMS

John Billingsley has been a character actor for over three decades. His breakout role was *STAR TREK: ENTERPRISE*, with notable film work including *OUT OF TIME* opposite Denzel Washington. He currently recurs in *JONBENÉT* alongside Melissa McCarthy and Clive Owen, and in Ryan Murphy's *GROTESQUERIE*. Recent credits include *MANHUNT*, *SKINCARE* opposite Elizabeth Banks, and *EMILY THE CRIMINAL*. Previous series regular roles include *INTELLIGENCE*, *THE NINE*, and *THE OTHERS*. He's recurred on *MASTERS OF SEX*, *TRUE BLOOD*, *SUITS*, *PRISON BREAK*, and *GREY'S ANATOMY*, with guest spots on *PAM & TOMMY*, *THIS IS US*, *TWIN PEAKS*, and *THE WEST WING*.

ROB NAGLE

MR. BENNET

Rob Nagle is an American actor, director, and acting coach based in LA. A Northwestern graduate (1992) with degrees in theatre and philosophy, he has worked extensively in film, television, and theatre. Screen credits include *BLONDE*, *SUITS LA*, *GOOD TROUBLE*, *NCIS: LA*, *BATWOMAN*, *GREY'S ANATOMY*, *CRIMINAL MINDS*, *MAD MEN*, *CELLULAR*, and *STRAIGHT OUTTA COMPTON*. He won the 2018 LA Drama Critics Circle Award for *THE LITTLE FOXES* at Antaeus Theatre Company. Rob is a member of Antaeus, Interact, Road Theatre, Rogue Machine, and Troubadour Theater Company. He teaches at Theatre of Arts Hollywood and AMDA. Married to Emmy-nominated casting director Heather Allyn since 1995.





JONATHAN VON MERING

RICHARD JOHNSON

Jonathan von Mering's recent onscreen appearances include a major recurring guest star in COUNTDOWN (Amazon) and a recurring role on the Emmy-winning series THE PITT (HBO Max). Previous credits include the Oscar-winning film THE HOLDOVERS, THE FLIGHT ATTENDANT, JULIA, and THE REHEARSAL (HBO Max), RANSOM CANYON (Netflix), FBI (CBS), LAW & ORDER (NBC), and BIG SKY (ABC). Onstage: The Tempest at the Shakespeare Center of LA (LA Times' Best of 2023). VO: CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS IV, FINAL FANTASY: DISSIDIA NT. He is slated to appear in a major motion picture releasing in 2027.

CHRISTIAN HAINES

MR. FISCHER

Christian Haines is an actor, director, and producer based in Los Angeles. Theater Credits include: THE NIGHT OF THE IGUANA, WATER BY THE SPOONFUL, STRAIGHT WHITEMEN, SAPIENCE, ANNA CONSIDERS MARS, VALUE OVER REPLACEMENT (TBA Award for Featured Actor), THE SEAGULL, JIHAD JONES, ROMEO & JULIET, DEATH OF A SALESMAN, MACBETH, KING JOHN, THIS IS OUR YOUTH, WOYZECK, RICHARD III, TRIP TO BOUNTIFUL, FIRST TIME OUT OF BOUNDS (Best Short Play NYIT Awards) and dozens more. Christian has done dozens of short films and can be seen in LAW AND ORDER, and the upcoming film FADE TO BLACK. He holds an MFA from the National Theatre Conservatory.





