

Sleeping Dogs Lie

*A performance-driven psychological thriller
from an emerging writer/director*

Director Statement

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As an emerging filmmaker, I have dreamed about this industry for as long as I can remember. I chose to make a **psychological thriller**, inspired by the world I am stepping into, which touches on the **normalization of bad behavior we are witnessing in our culture**.

Entertainment is filled with storytellers who have the power to create empathy, challenge the way we see the world, and give people a voice. But behind that power is another reality: **an industry where access, money, and influence can create unequal relationships**.

I wrote this to be a **performance-driven project**. As I worked on the script, I had a specific actor, Brian Sutherland, in mind for the title role of Maxwell Campbell. Through a network of friends and contacts I was able to reach him. He connected with the story and loved the final monologue, which sealed the deal. We heard similar enthusiasm from the other **professional, working actors who round out this amazing cast**.



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These characters are fictional, but they are inspired by some famous figures in entertainment and the patterns of disturbing, predatory behavior we have all heard about. I was not interested in recreating specific people but rather in highlighting the ecosystem that allows predatory behavior to exist: the silence, the complicity, and the people who convince themselves they have no choice.

Visually and stylistically my goal was to lean into the **vibrance of Linus Sandgren** (Babylon, Saltburn), the fast pace and highly **stylized aesthetic of Baz Luhrmann** (Moulin Rouge!, The Great Gatsby) and juxtapose that against the **slow-burn suspense of Stanley Kubrick** (Eyes Wide Shut).

I was aiming for a seductive tone so that the audience is pulled in and nothing initially appears sinister. The horror here is in their hospitality.

With the score I wanted to introduce something unexpected. The score lives in 2 registers: one that is as **dynamic and enticing** as the retreat appears initially. The second sets in as the **seduction turns into suspense**. As the setting for the film is near the ocean, I chose a modern sea shanty by a folk duo from Cornwall, UK (Swallows and Crows) that beautifully contrasts the exciting upbeat of the fiddle with the melancholy of the cello.

Although I am currently a college student, I approached this film as my first professional independent production. I self-funded the film and assembled a professional cast and crew, including recognizable actors who believed in the story and wanted to help tell it. This amazing team has worked on projects from *Lioness*, *Stranger Things*, *Lanterns* and *Hacks* (our key actors) to *Saltburn*, *Wuthering Heights*, *No Time To Die*, and *Goodwill Hunting* (our post production team) And I am proud to say that our tenacious crew was a 50/50 split of female/male young professionals from across the country.

Stories of powerful people exploiting those who need something from them are not new. What is unsettling is how often the people around them learn to look away, rationalize it, or decide that the opportunity is worth the cost. And while **my dream is to tell stories in this industry**, I refuse to lose myself to it in the process.