

75

TO BOARD THE MIDNIGHT BUS... PLUS TIP

CENTS

A SAFI JAFRI FILM

starring...

CORY WATTS & BRUCE CLIFFORD

CRESCENT WOOD PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS

A SAFI JAFRI FILM "75 CENTS" BASED ON MUSIC FROM JULIAN HORNIK AND THE SAN FRANCISCO GAY MEN'S CHORUS STARRING CORY WATTS AND BRUCE CLIFFORD

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS GABE BRADEN AND SAFI JAFRI CASTING DIRECTOR GABE BRADEN DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY EMMELINE SHAFER EDITOR SAFI JAFRI

MUSIC PAUL IMPASTATO COLORIST ALEX SHURYPOV SOUNDTRACKING TORI MCJUNKIN GAFFER POPPY SHAW

ABOUT THE FILM

— & LOGLINE... —

The midnight bus greets a Boy just trying to catch some sleep, but the Man who boards after has more intimate ideas in mind... plus tip.

75 Cents is a short film by 20 year old director **Safi Jafri**. Produced by an *entirely queer crew*, it's foundational inspirations and loose narrative arch are based off of music composed and lyrics written by **Julian Horinik** as one movement within a body of work titled "**@queerz**". This body of work was commissioned by Safi's alma mater: **The San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus**.

Written by Jafri, the film's screenplay was finalized in San Francisco's historic Castro District days before the world shut down due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. It's pre-production occurred remotely with Executive Producer **Gabe Braden**, with principal photography occurring in mid-January of 2021. The film was shot in Safi's hometown of San Diego in it's historic downtown Gaslamp Quarter and in the heart of downtown overlooking San Diego's Waterfront Park in Little Italy.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

— BY: SAFI JAFRI —

I was inspired to write this film while still in the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus as its youngest member in its entire history. Created and composed by Julian Hornik, "75 Cents" was one musical movement within an entire body of work titled "@queerz" that chronicled the stories of queer youth across the country.

As a queer member of Generation Z, I couldn't help but feel incredibly visceral emotions while rehearsing such music... so I began writing. Due to COVID-19, the Spring 2020 show was cancelled and so was my life in San Francisco. However, the manuscript was still in my laptop and my desire to tell such a story never escaped.

Originally meant to be my college transfer application visual supplement, 75 Cents turned into a film that I knew in my heart had to be released to the world. With the blessing and support of my now former chorus, the story originally meant for the stage of the SF Gay Men's Chorus now lives on to hopefully see the light of the silver screen.

My name is Safi Jafri. I hope this film evokes the same emotion that its musical inspiration evoked within me. This short is just one song in the grand album that is the queer experience...

FULL SYNOPSIS

— SPOILER ALERT —

JOSEPH boards the midnight bus once again, still heartbroken by his family's decision to kick him out for his sexuality. Downtrodden and destitute, just trying to get some sleep, a **MAN** boards the same bus... ignoring every other empty seat except the one beside Joseph. Offering the boy gum, the Man finds his way "in". They strike up conversation - predator eyes gaze at innocent prey, hands tip toe to thighs - and the Man invites Joseph back to his place to lay his head on a proper bed.

Back at the Man's high-rise apartment, Joseph tip-toes his fingers over a desk riddled with trophies and framed pictures of a whole life. As the Man asks Joseph about his life and his family - getting only monosyllabic responses - they find a glimmer of comfort in one another. Yet it is at this moment that Joseph notices the child support paperwork on the Man's coffee table - bringing him back to reality. Despite his reaffirmation of discomfort, the Man approaches - soothing and swaying Joseph with his words and his touch. As Joseph's hand clasps his pendant and eyes stare into the framed portrait of the Man's family - with kids likely the same age as him - the Man finds his way around Josephs body and to his belt... the belt unfastens.

~

Joseph lays lifeless, staring out the window to the dark skyline, by the bed as the Man - now empty of any and all empathy - gets up, un-crumples something, and places a towel down beside before heading to the bathroom. As the shower water runs, Joseph sits up, but feels something beneath him.

Suddenly, he thuds against the window to see a leaking stain on the bed from where is backside was. Horrified, he panics as his eyes catch the \$20 bill sitting on top of the towel. Stain, towel, bill, stain, towel, bill, stain, towel... bill. His hands grasp instinctively for his chest yet find nothing to grab onto. Even more terrified, Joseph grabs the \$20 and checks his pants to grab his pendant. In the palm of his hand is a pendant and accompanying cross, engraved with the words:

ALWAYS OUR SON...FOREVER MOM & DAD'S

Gleaming with a resolute sadness, his eyes make their way forward towards the balcony beyond the glass window.

Joseph makes his way onto the balcony, overlooking the midnight hour harbor. Lights along the aircraft carrier and Victorian-era vessels of the bay lay dim as the red light of the building flood Joseph's periphery on and off. His looks down - it's a long way down - and looks outward - it's a ways way to what was home. His mind rings with the horns of the Lord's Day of Judgment and the echoes of the last words he heard from his past life - his family. Joseph stretches his arm out beyond the railing. His pendant falls from his hand and dangles with the wind as he opens his palm, still gripping it with his fingers. Ringing and ringing and ringing with the sounds that he can no longer keep, the red light floods his senses as Joseph throws his palm forward... letting go of his grip.

CAST & CREW

— MEET THE 75 CENTS TEAM —

DIRECTOR | WRITER | PRODUCER | EDITOR

SAFI JAFRI

he/him

Safi Jafri is a young, 20 year old filmmaker born in Houston, TX & raised in San Diego, California. Growing up brown, Muslim, and gay provided him a unique insight into the world that has always translated cinematically.

Whether it be visual art, music, or photography, Safi has always found a marriage between every discipline he enjoys and film. He began truly delving into his film passions within the latter half of high school and has since earned himself multiple selections and awards for his very first short film fresh out of high school: All Too Well.



For Safi, storytelling has been foundational in the way he thinks and expresses himself to others. In his mind, writing and directing is not only a practice in self-reflection but also a practice in empathy. It is the marriage of the two that make films worth making. He currently is a student at San Francisco State University's Cinema program while studying remotely in San Diego.

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER | CASTING DIRECTOR

GABE BRADEN

he/him

In 2018, Gabe was the most awarded high school filmmaker in the country. His film, Jaded, was accepted into sixteen national film festivals as well as winning the YoungArts Merit Award in filmmaking. His film, Due Process, was accepted to forty-seven festivals, winning "Best Screenplay" at The 2019 All American HS Film Festival, "Best High School Film" at the Top Shorts Film Festival, and played at The Cinequest Film Festival. In total, he has made eight short films that have played at seventy-six film festivals in eleven countries. He is currently studying at Chapman

University double majoring in Film Production and Social Work.



In his two years at Chapman he has worked on over fifty Chapman films, including as the casting director for thirty-six and producer on eight. Gabe has also cast projects for Joji, Mau y Ricky, Etsy, Honey and Love Victor. He has also PAed on Bad Bunny, Kim Petras, Jimmy Kimmel, and Kygo projects. Gabe has interned at two film production companies, Halleloo Creative in NYC and Huffman Creative in LA. Recently he began work as a full-time PA on American Horror Story season ten while he takes a break from school and works on pre-production for his next projects.

CINEMATOGRAPHER

EMMELINE SHAFER

she/her

Em Shafer is a Director of Photography based out of Los Angeles, CA and graduated from Chapman University in 2021 with a B.F.A. in Film Production (emphasizing on cinematography). She has a background in set lighting and enjoys using light design to add meaning to her shots. She has worked in narrative, commercial, and documentary and is always looking to broaden her horizons. Outside of film, she enjoys the outdoors and social advocacy and always looks for projects that highlights an important issue in our time.



PRODUCTION SOUND MIXER

TORI MCJUNKIN

she/they

Tori McJunkin is in her senior year at Chapman University studying directing, but her secret talent lays in production sound. She was drawn to the screen in the late 2000s as part of the YouTube boom, but migrated over to the silver screen as high school introduced her to the art of cinema. Production sound marries Tori's interests in storytelling and puzzle-solving, and she also loves the access it gives her to those raw, emotional moments on set. Tori is beyond excited to be a part of 75 Cents, and especially enjoyed her opportunity to be on a fully queer crew!



GAFFER

POPPY SHAW

she/her

Poppy Shaw is a director and cinematographer residing in Los Angeles. Born in England, she has also lived in Cyprus, Switzerland, and Canada. As both a director and cinematographer she heavily focuses on the power of visual storytelling and what can be shown rather than told. She has directed and shot for numerous projects, from music videos to narrative short films and documentaries. She is currently pursuing her undergrad degree at Chapman University where she will receive a BFA in Film Production, graduating May 2021.



COLORIST

ALEX SHURYEPOV

he/him

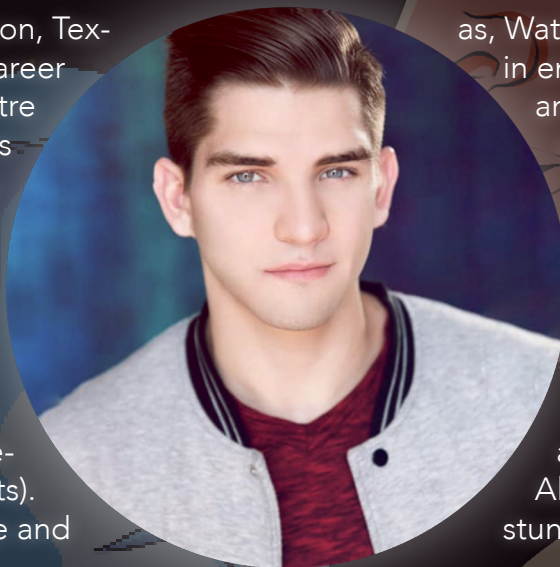
Alex grew up in Plano, Texas where he first started getting invested in storytelling via technical theatre. Working as an employee for his school district, he developed a strong basis for lighting and set design, along with experience directing actors and crew. Alex is currently a student at Chapman University. He's been enjoying strengthening his skills as a writer, cinematographer, and editor while he gets his BA in Television Writing and Production. He's currently taking time off school to gain some work experience in the film and television industry. Before he transferred to Chapman, he was a student at the UC Santa Barbara studying Film and Media.

He only attended UCSB for a year but managed to work on a few shorts during his attendance which culminated in the school sponsoring his first short film 'Mother of Chernobyl' (which has been received selections and awards from festivals domestically and internationally).



THE BOY/JOSEPH
CORY WATTS
he/him

Born and raised in Houston, Texas, Watts set out for Los Angeles, California to pursue a career in entertainment. Having been trained in the theatre since the age of 12, Watts graduated with a BFA in American Musical and Theatre Performance from the Dramatic Academy of Los Angeles (AMDA), along with extensive training in Acting for the Camera and Voice, Speech, and Dialects. Watts proceeded to book a co-star role on Nickelodeon's "The Thundermans", making him SAG-AFTRA eligible. Watts has roles on crime recreation series (Cold Case Files, Unusual Suspects). Alongside acting, Watts is a well rounded athlete and stuntman.



as, Watts set out for Los Angeles, California to pursue a career in entertainment. Having been trained in the theatre since the age of 12, Watts graduated with a BFA in American Musical and Theatre Performance from the Dramatic Academy of Los Angeles (AMDA), along with extensive training in Acting for the Camera and Voice, Speech, and Dialects. Watts proceeded to book a co-star role on Nickelodeon's "The Thundermans", making him SAG-AFTRA eligible. Watts has roles on crime recreation series (Cold Case Files, Unusual Suspects). Alongside acting, Watts is a well rounded athlete and stuntman.

CAST

Bruce Clifford was born and raised right outside of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and started acting in college and has been in the industry for 12 years. He got his feet wet in anyway he could by films, indie films, stand up comedy, improv classes and local acting classes. Bruce has lived in LA for 5 years now and continues to grow his craft and network. He recently starred in Stay Tonight (Series) both on Amazon. When he is not acting you can find Bruce on the golf course, staying fit and ac-



played guitar. He recently starred in Stay Tonight (Series) both on Amazon. When he is not acting you can find Bruce on the golf course, staying fit and ac-

THE MAN
BRUCE CLIFFORD
he/him

AND... ACTION!

— BEHIND-THE-SCENES OF PRODUCTION —

Have you ever been in an AirBnB that, according to the owners, wasn't technically an "AirBnB"? Ever told a bus driver to drive in circles all around downtown till the edge of midnight? Add a crying infant to the equation?

Welcome to the set of 75 Cents!

Pre-production was swift and time was of the essence. The transfer application deadline was approaching yet despite fears and doubts, especially in the midst of a pandemic, we had to carry on. While the script was written and developed during director Safi Jafri's time in San Francisco, it would be an entire year later till production would occur.

The casting process, spearheaded by executive producer and casting director Gabe Braden with the director, hastened as the shoot date in mid-January approached but gave our production the wonderful talents of Cory Watts and Bruce Clifford. Under our executive producer, cinematographer Em Shafer, along with production sound mixer Tori McJunkin and gaffer Poppy Shaw, signed on despite the New Year's peak in COVID-19 cases. Because of the pandemic, all cast and crew underwent Rapid PCR testing before the shoot.

We had two principal locations for the film: 1) the high-rise AirBnB and 2) the charter bus.



When the view for your AirBnB overlooks the entirety of downtown and has a perfect view of the glimmering lights that garnished the historic Midway aircraft carrier and the world's oldest active sailing ship, the Star of India... you hop right on it. When the owners of the AirBnB make a note the night before your first day of shooting that technically their building "does not permit the leasing of units via AirBnB" ... you run into a bit of a problem. Despite the fear that we would be shut down before we even began, our production crew somehow snuck in cases and bags of equipment through the building and 24 floors up to the top-floor apartment where our characters fates would be forever changed.

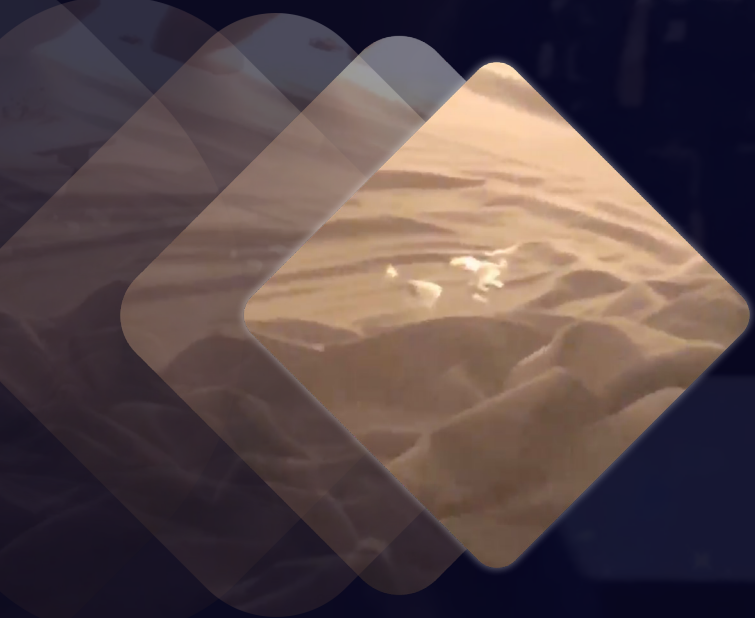
Because of the intimacy and intensity of the scene, director Safi Jafri worked closely to ensure the comfort of both actors. Considering the subject material, Cory Watts found himself enveloped deeply in the headspace of his character Joseph. The scene in the living room involved an intimacy that was inherently uncomfortable and wrong.

The director wanted to bring the audience in and then remind the audience that what they are watching isn't right: a minor being exploited for his body and being gaslighted into thinking he has control. It was rooted in the same kind of experiences Safi found himself in during his thrust into adulthood while living alone in San Francisco's Castro district.

When crafting the bedroom scene, cinematographer Em Shafer stationed herself outside with a dynamically composed shot using the reflection of the outside window while production sound mixer Tori McJunkin stayed inside to bring the soundscape back into the apartment. Meanwhile, gaffer Poppy Shaw positioned herself with one of our GVM 1200d lights on the other end of the balcony to help create a constantly moving image with the pulsating red light. This red light served not only as a compositional effect, but also helped paint the color scheme that the director was aiming towards.



A moment while setting up that caused a LOT of laughs on set



was making the bedsheet "stain" that shocks our principal character. To simulate a leaking biological substance (to put it as 'discreetly' as possible), we poured a small amount of water and pumped a few pumps of hand soap in order to shape the light around it and create the visceral image. The worst part about the entire situation was the fact that Cory had to sit on the stain multiple times for different takes to make sure we got the shot the way we wanted it. The piece-de-resistance of filming this scene was the subsequent accidental "boom-in-the-shot" that occurred in one of the principal angles used to drive the story forward. In post-production, this error - while hard at times to fix - ended up becoming a story to laugh about.

If anything is true on a film set, it's that nothing is perfect!
It's all about rolling with the punches...

Renting the charter bus with Shofur proved easy. Managing filming inside was quite the opposite. The outlets we intended to use to power our entire light scheme initially didn't even work! However, after discussing the problem with the charter bus company's technical department, our driver saved the day (for the first time) and helped bring power back to the bus outlets only 15 minutes before we planned to begin rolling. With our lighting strapped to the seats thanks to our cinematographer Em and gaffer Poppy, we welcomed the principal cast and the extras we had initially cast to be in the first 1/5 of the film (these scenes/shots unfortunately did not make it past the editing bay).



One of the original plot points of the script

was an interaction between our main character Joseph and an infant boy being held tight by his mother. The intention behind this was to outline the envy Joseph had of a child who still had his family holding onto them. Yet upon viewing it during post, the entire sequence was cut in order to help create a more compelling and well-paced end product.

This was in spite of the fact that while filming, young baby Asher had a tough time staying cooped up inside a bus as lights and cameras moved all around. For the sake of the baby and for our sake, we let Asher and his mother, Sahar, stay outside of the bus and enjoy the fresh air until we were ready to roll again. Despite these circumstances and despite the scene being cut, Asher was a champ throughout the entire time he was on set and we are still grateful.



As we rode through Downtown San Diego to film the scenes where Joseph and the Man meet and interact with one another, we mapped out an ideal route that was the most well-lit and most straight-on route throughout downtown. This included traveling down Market St, turning onto Fifth Avenue and through the Gaslamp Quarter, down J Street as it passed Petco Park, and back up to repeat. Utilizing the natural lighting variations of the true downtown city, cinematographer Em Shafer created a wonderfully realistic and dynamic lighting scheme that made...

what was a roughly \$5,000 production in total look like it cost 10x amount.

Despite a cheap camera rig that at times hurt to wear for Em, despite the constant red lights that would create an inconsistent image, and despite the variations in camera shake and background noise that would prove arduous to correct in post-production: our incredible crew preserved for 6 hours on the bus.

Post-production for the film was initially a quick and rapid road towards creating a somewhat finished product. The applications involved included Adobe Premiere/Audition, and DaVinci Resolve. Safi served as the editor as well, composing not only ever shot into a finished product but doing the sound design alongside it as well.



When it came to the mix, Safi knew he didn't want to involve any music whatsoever. He wanted the sound to be as visceral and as in your face as possible when it came to the action and it's surroundings. It was a way to envelop the audience into the film - to make them a true fly on the wall throughout the entire story. Every breathe, every touch, and every whisper was intended to strike.

Many of the indistinct noises and haunting whooshes of the film are actual real life voice memos run through multiple different processes to help deliver a haunting and suspenseful soundscape. A more fun fact is that the voice of the automated bus intercom is by Safi's sister, who spoke into the phone using the Voice Memo's app and was altered to help sell it.

Sound design was also used as a **narrative tool to give an insight into the character's mindset and history without being blatantly expository.**

The music that plays during the ending credits of the film is actually a nod to the original musical composition of "75 Cents" by Julian Hornik! We wanted to incorporate a special signature of the foundational artistic inspiration by combining both the original piano chords and the instrumental of the 'Tenor 1' choral notes of the song. This specific recording was played by Paul Impastato.

When it came to the color correction, Safi followed through by enunciating his initial color story that evolved as the character's evolved. This was through complimentary schemes to help mark shifts in the film and help create a stylized picture. Considering his amateur skills with DaVinci, he employed Alex Shuryepov to help create a similar look that not only looked smooth but was of the utmost quality. At the end of the day, the goal was to create a look that moved the audience as far from "film set" and as close to "real life" we could achieve.



Overall, the making of 75 Cents was
a **venture into wholly new territory...**

It was Safi Jafri's first time working with a formal crew and it was, for many of the cast and crew, the first time working in such interesting and challenging conditions (ie. a loud and rough moving bus, a global pandemic, etc.). Yet at the end of the day, the story being told is one that we are so grate-



For a more interactive press kit, please visit: 75centsfilm.com
and for any inquiries, please email: safijafrifilms@gmail.com

