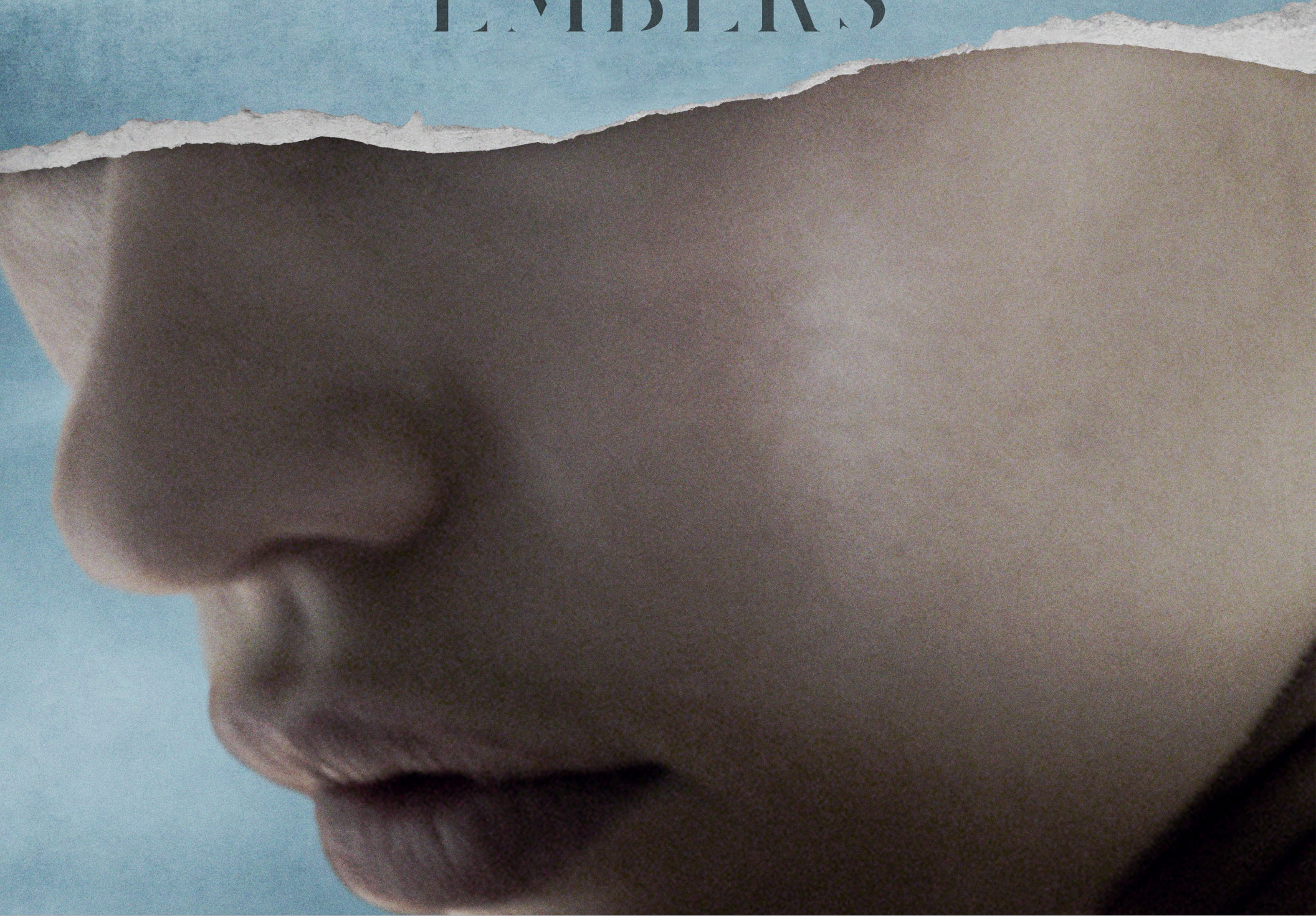


EMBERS





“The best science fiction discovery of the year. A startlingly accomplished first feature.”

– Eric Kohn, Indiewire

“Carré’s clear intelligence, resourcefulness and vision combine to make this calling card tough to forget. ”

– Scott Tobias, Variety

“Brilliantly acted and beautifully styled, *Embers* is an evocative directorial debut from a promising new voice in independent cinema.”

– Paul Rachman, Slamdance Co-Founder

“Like all good science fiction, Claire Carré’s *Embers* transcends its genre. It does not bask in its temporality nor its teleology, rather, it renders fragments of experience visceral and haunting .”

– Sophie Larigakis, Berlin Film Journal

“Deft and poignant mastery. Oliver Sacks meets Ray Bradbury.”

-Torsten Neumann, Founder & Director, Filmfest Oldenburg

“A promising post apocalyptic debut film that is sparse and minimal, but fascinating and hypnotic at the core.”

– Jim Laczkowski, The Director’s Club

“With a striking eye for visual storytelling and an original and intriguing set up, Claire Carré’s *Embers* is one of the most immediately engaging science fiction films of the year.

– Josh Brown, The 405 (UK)

“With nothing more than performances and ruins, [writer/director Claire Carré] creates a convincing and enthralling world. More importantly, she achieves that to which the best sci-fi aspires: She probes the nature of what it is to be human. She examines the quixotic nature of memory as both enlightenment and burden, moral boundary and source of pain. Each character treads a different path in this amnesiac’s Divine Comedy, and each finds a different meaning in this meaningless world. In that ambiguity, she finds tragedy, poignancy, and even optimism.”

– Richard Whittaker, Austin Chronicle



SHORT SYNOPSIS

After a global neurological epidemic, those who remain search for meaning and connection in a world without memory. Five interwoven stories explore how we might learn, love and communicate in a future that has no past.

LOVE

Two lovers struggle to stay together, afraid that if separated, they will forget each other forever.



FAMILY

A boy loses his guardian and searches for a new home beyond the limits of the city.



MORALITY

A violent young man takes what he needs to survive, no matter the cost.

LEARNING

A professor researching a cure makes a connection that is not what he expected.





FREEDOM

A girl living with her father in an underground bunker safe from the virus must decide whether to risk infection to regain her freedom.

The world as we know it has been forgotten. A decade after a global epidemic, those who remain suffer from lasting effects of the virus - retrograde and anterograde amnesia. The survivors navigate a decaying landscape, unable to recall the past or create new memories. Each finds their own way to cope with life in a perpetual present, where meaning must be experienced moment by moment.

By looking at a vision of the world without memory, *Embers* considers if our humanity is one thing that is impossible to forget.





**Memory is uniquely imperfect,
and profoundly personal.**

My memories are precious to me. I love how memories are formed and reformed in a way that is so specific to each of our minds, like a fingerprint constantly being redrawn. Strung together, memories allow us to tell a story of who we are - to ourselves and to others. But if who I am is built upon who I have been, who would I be without memory, without a story of myself? Is there a core to identity deeper than the sum of our experiences? I created *Embers* to explore these questions.

Claire Carré
writer/director/editor





THE WORLD WITHOUT MEMORY

At its core, *Embers* is a thought experiment exploring the relationship between memory and identity. If memory were suddenly removed from the human equation, what would the world be like? How would we live, love, learn? Without our histories, both personal and cultural, what is left? Who are we?

This extreme situation of worldwide amnesia makes the familiar strange in a way that allows us to experience the role of memory in our lives with fresh eyes.

After all, whether affected by a memory virus or perfectly healthy, we are all forgetting all the time. That's part of being human.



CONCEPT DRIVEN CHARACTERS

Each of the five stories was developed to explore a particular aspect of life without memory. Writer Milan Kundera's explanation of character creation is a great description of our process, in which the characters "are born of a situation, a sentence, a metaphor containing in a nutshell a basic human possibility."

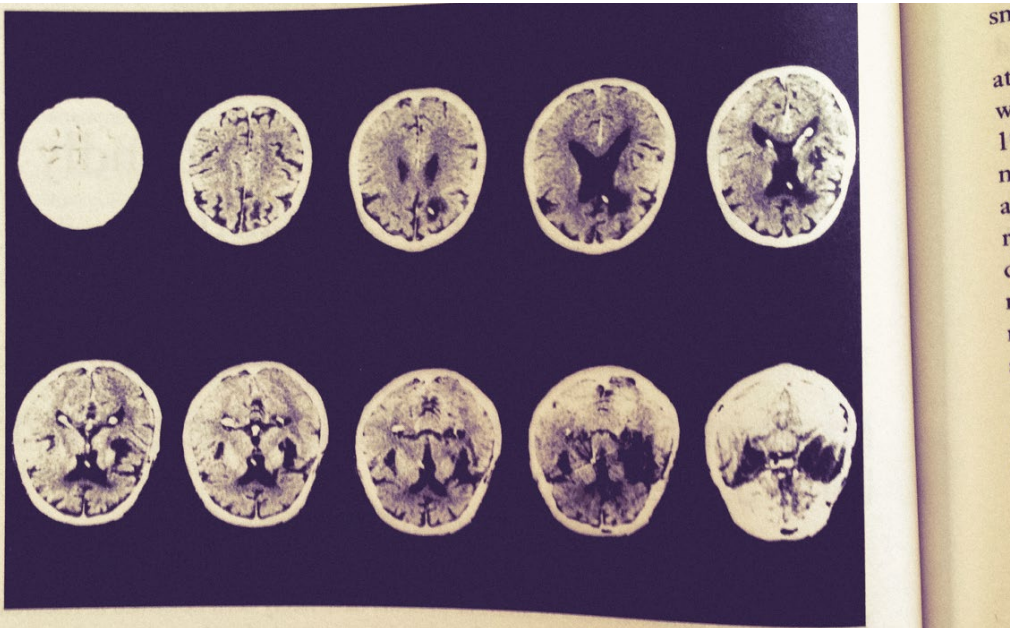
For example, if you could do anything, what would you do? In a future where no one can remember, there would be no punishment, no lasting guilt, and no societal consequences. Are you innately the kind of person who would take a wandering kid under your wing, or would you steal his food for yourself?

There are decisive moments that define us as people. We used these moments as the starting point to understand who our characters are.

PIECE BY PIECE

We set a date - April 2014. We were going to start shooting, no matter what, with whatever resources we had by then. And we did, thanks to the support of our friends who backed our Kickstarter campaign and the investors who first believed in our film.

After having spent years on set, first as a director's assistant and then as a director of music videos and fashion films, I have built a great team of collaborators. I finally felt ready to make my first feature and I didn't want to wait for anyone to give me permission. Charles and I strategized that we could shoot the film in sections as we raised money, so we could get started right away. In the end, **it took almost a full year to shoot *Embers*. We shot in three sections over three seasons - in Gary, Indiana in April, in Upstate New York in July, and in Lodz, Poland in November.** I edited each section after shooting, which allowed me to really get a sense of the film as it was building, and always sparked significant rewrites for the next shooting section.



AMNESIA RESEARCH

During the writing process, I dove deep into research on memory impairment and amnesia. It was critical for both myself and the actors to have a clear idea of exactly what aspects of their memory would be impacted, and how that might manifest. **The “double amnesia” depicted in *Embers* is a combination of severe anterograde and retrograde amnesia, which can be caused by damage to the hippocampal region by communicable diseases such as viral encephalitis.**

Retrograde Amnesia is what people typically think of when they imagine amnesia. The infected cannot access episodic or autobiographical “event” memories except for the oldest and most consolidated of memories (following Ribot’s law). The younger characters in the film can remember basic things they knew when they were young children, while the older characters can remember a bit more of their most distant past.



Anterograde amnesia causes an inability to record short term memory to long term memory. Our characters can keep information and experience in their short term memory, and therefore accessible, by continuing to focus on that information or task. However, the adage **“out of sight out of mind”** applies quite literally - if a character is no longer looking at something they want to remember, they need to continue actively thinking about it. If they get distracted and start thinking of something else or go to sleep, that information slips out of their short term memory and is lost forever.

Because our virus specifically affects the hippocampal region, it only damages a specific type of memory consolidation and retrieval. Procedural memory - physical skills - and emotional memory remain unaffected. So someone affected could still swim or ride a bike without even remembering that they know how. Similarly, they can retain an emotional memory, like a strong feeling of affection for someone, without remembering who that person is, or why they feel that way.

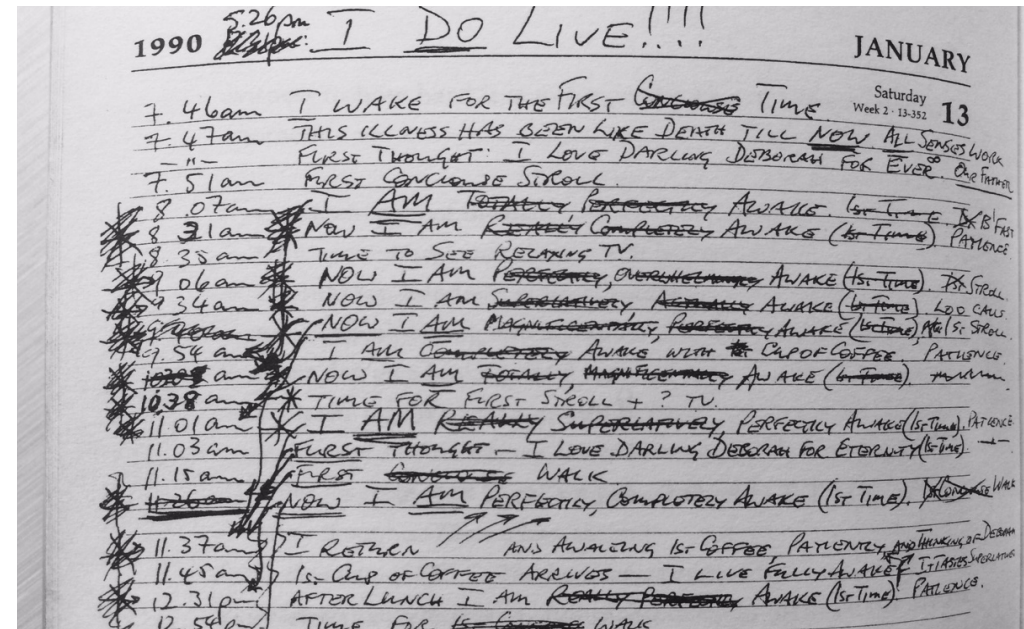


LOVE WITHOUT MEMORY

Case studies of real world amnesiacs provided a grounding basis for the representation of amnesia in the film. In particular, I was inspired by Henry Molaison and Clive Wearing.

Henry Molaison ("Patient HM") spent his life as a medical test subject after an extreme surgery in the 1950s removed his hippocampus and cut out his ability to form long term memories. Despite this, he maintained a positive disposition throughout his life.

The relationship between amnesiac Clive Wearing and his wife Deborah is beautiful and profound. In the wake of an attack of encephalitis, Clive's memory only lasts about a minute. He constantly feels that he waking for the first time from nothingness. But one thing Clive always remembers is his love for his wife Deborah. If she leaves the room and returns, he hugs her with the passionate joy of being reunited after ages apart. In the absence of memory, his love for her persists, integrated into his emotional being on a level untouched by brain damage.





REAL LOCATIONS

It was important to me to shoot in real locations. **The decay that nature brings to an abandoned space carries the weight of real time. That's a kind of authenticity that can't be recreated.** Walking into these spaces you are moving dust on the floor no human has touched in years. Paint has been peeling off the walls in slow curls for decades. Scouting became an urban exploration adventure. In Gary Indiana we found and shot in amazing abandoned spaces including an apartment building, train station, roller rink, church, factory and an architect's office. This of course had its challenges. We had to avoid rusty nails and broken glass everywhere, and there was no heat or power. For instance, it was below freezing while we were shooting the scenes between Jason and Iva in the apartment building. You can see their breath in some of the shots. They had to warm up in big parka jackets between takes.

Miranda's story takes place in a high tech underground bunker, where she lives alone with her father. They are protected from the infection, but at the cost of all outside human contact. There is a scene where Miranda walks through the tunnels of the bunker. We were able to shoot at Miedzyrecki Fortified Region in Poland, a real WWII bunker with a 30km network of underground tunnels. In the morning as the equipment was getting set up for the first shot, I brought Greta all the way down 10 stories of stairs into the tunnels of the bunker. We sat for a while in silence in that pure black darkness so deep within the earth. And then began shooting. Of course it's possible to imagine being in an underground bunker, but there's a unique presence and claustrophobia to actually being down there for hours without any natural light or fresh air, and I think you can feel that in the film.



VISUAL LANGUAGE

There are two contrasting environments within *Embers*: the surface world of those without memory, and the safety of the underground bunker. Todd, Chelsea and I worked together closely to develop a distinct visual language for each.

In the world without memory, the camera is always handheld. It feels loose, a little unstable and unpredictable. I wanted the camera to feel subjective, like we are there living through everything right alongside the characters in the film. The soft feel of the Cooke S4 lenses reinforces the cloudy experience of amnesia.

We shot on the Arri Alexa using almost entirely natural daylight or fire light. It was exciting to film a scene in the middle of the night lit primarily by burning emergency flares that the actors were holding.

In the art direction, this is a raw world, featuring decaying brick, exposed rotting wood, faded wallpaper, where nature dominates the manmade.



The bunker, where Miranda and her Father live in isolation, has a different tone and style. The camera is controlled, locked off on a tripod or on a slow dolly, using crisp Ultra Prime lenses. By confining the camera, the audience shares in the static constricted nature of Miranda's life. The look of the bunker is monochromatic - whites against slate concrete. It's a stark minimal environment designed to provide everything necessary to survive, but without access to the outside world.



CLAIRE CARRÉ

WRITER / DIRECTOR / EDITOR

Claire's first feature film *Embers* won Best Narrative Feature at New Orleans Film Festival and was selected to be the Closing Night Film at Slamdance. Claire is an alumni of the IFP Narrative Lab, was nominated for the Gotham Awards Spotlight on Women Directors and won the Mary Shelley Award for female science fiction creators. When she's not circumnavigating the globe as a director and editor, she is in upstate New York playing video games, writing, and practicing archery.



CAST

GUY	Jason Ritter
GIRL	Iva Gocheva
MIRANDA	Greta Fernández
TEACHER	Tucker Smallwood
CHAOS	Karl Glusman
BOY	Silvan Friedman
FATHER	Roberto Cots
WOMAN IN THE LONG DRESS	Dominique Swain
GUARDIAN	Matthew Goulish

TECH SPECS

RUN TIME	86 minutes
ASPECT RATIO	1:85
SHOOTING FORMAT	Arri Alexa 2k
SOUND	Dolby 5.1
LANGUAGE	English & Spanish
SUBTITLES	English
PRODUCTION COUNTRIES	USA / Poland
PRODUCTION COMPANIES	Papaya Films Chaotic Good Bunker Features

KEY CREW

DIRECTED BY	Claire Carré
WRITTEN BY	Charles Spano & Claire Carré
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY	Todd Antonio Somodevilla
PRODUCTION DESIGNER	Chelsea Oliver
EDITOR	Claire Carré
ORIGINAL SCORE	Kimberly Henninger & Shawn Parke
SOUND DESIGN	Michael Baird
SOUND MIX	Jason Dotts

PRODUCED BY	Charles Spano Claire Carré Mevlut Akkaya Karen Fischer Warren Fischer
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS	Kacper Sawicki Pawel Bondarowicz Jason Hill

WITH SUPPORT FROM





CONTACT

CHAOTIC GOOD
Charles Spano
+1 310 218 9405
charlesspano@gmail.com

բոբոլո
CHAOTIC GOOD
BUNKER FEATURES