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# **FRANK & LOLA**

**A FILM BY MATTHEW ROSS**

Screening Format: DCP  
TRT: 88 minutes  
Camera: Arri Alexa



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## **SYNOPSIS**

FRANK & LOLA is a psychosexual noir love story set in Las Vegas and Paris about love, obsession, sex, betrayal, revenge and ultimately the search for redemption. Matthew Ross' debut feature stars Michael Shannon and Imogen Poots as a couple that builds an intense relationship that saves each other from their mutual despair, but begins to crack as a man from Lola's past tempts her future with Frank. The film, with a screenplay by Ross, also stars Michael Nyqvist, Justin Long, Emmanuelle Devos and Rosanna Arquette.

## **Q&A with Writer/Director MATTHEW ROSS**

### **1. Discuss your background and FRANK & LOLA as your first filmmaking experience.**

I was born and raised on movies and making them is the only thing I've ever considered doing with myself. I was lucky enough to grow up in New York City at a time when art house theaters were everywhere, some of them within a few blocks of my apartment. My mom was obsessed with Hitchcock and because of her I got to see most of his masterpieces at the old Regency Theater when I was still in grade school. I was an only child and something of a misfit, and I spent countless afternoons and evenings glued to the TV with a pile of VHS tapes lying next to me.

My first experiences making films started in college with a handful of pretentious student shorts, but my real education in filmmaking began a few years after I graduated, when I found work writing about movies for a web site. That led to a number of pretty cool gigs in the film journalism business, from writing industry pieces and profiles for Variety to helping write and edit Filmmaker magazine, which I consider the bible of American independent filmmaking. Through my journalism work, I got the chance to talk about craft with masters like Robert Altman, Steven Soderbergh and Claire Denis and travel to film festivals all over the world and call it work. I was very lucky.

Eventually, I moved to Los Angeles and began working as a screenwriter, optioning some scripts to production companies as well as writing and rewriting projects for other producers. I was also lucky enough to meet Larry David at a dinner party, which led to a friendship, as well as the opportunity to give him some comedy ideas for Curb Your Enthusiasm (which ended up in the "Palestinian Chicken" episode in Season 8). During that time I also wrote, produced and directed a number of short-form projects which proved to be crucial in building my confidence as a filmmaker – everything from short documentaries about MMA fighters to writing and directing a book trailer for Bret Easton Ellis. I also continued working as a journalist, including doing some investigative work for Playboy.

All the while, I was trying to put Frank & Lola together. This began with my great producers Jay Van Hoy and Lars Knudsen, who believed in me from the beginning and stuck with me through some very hard times. Sometimes there was financing in place, sometimes there was an actor or two attached, but getting all of the necessary pieces together at the same time wasn't easy. Countless others helped along the way, especially our executive producers Christine Vachon and David Hinojosa from Killer Films, the great film financier and sales agent Kevin Iwashina, my manager Michael Diamond (also a co-producer on Frank & Lola), and John Baker, who came onboard to produce a

little later in the game but who deserves as much credit as anyone for getting the film made.

Eventually, thanks to Kevin Iwashina, a Nevada-based financing and production company named Lola Pictures read the script and really responded. After visiting with Lola's Chris Ramirez and Charles Cantrell in Las Vegas, I was immediately intrigued by the town, specifically the downtown area, the so-called Old Vegas, which might be a few miles from the glitz and glam of the famed high-rolling opulence of the Strip but might as well be on a different planet. There are some dark corners in "DTLV," which has a real lonely, desolate vibe (especially at night) as well as a burgeoning culture of its own, that I don't think has really been shown on film. Those qualities were a perfect match for the story I was trying to tell of two outsiders (Frank and Lola), who both have a certain mystery and darkness to them. With my producers blessing and with Lola Pictures on as our new production partner, I decided to relocate the main action film to Las Vegas. It was one of the best creative decisions I made prior to production. Las Vegas is absolutely essential to the DNA of Frank & Lola.

About a year after Lola Pictures signed on, we went into production, with financing from Robert Halmi's Great Point Media. The other financing had fallen through at the last minute, and Great Point, along with CAA's Ben Kramer, who found them, saved the movie at the last possible moment.

Before I had a chance to really enjoy this awesomely cool turn of events, we were in preproduction. Along with whatever filmmaking skills I had picked up along the way, I also tried my best to incorporate what I'd learned through the years of interviewing other directors, some of whom went on to become friends and consiglieres. I was beyond fortunate to have Jay and John as my producers on the ground, as well as Chris and Lola Pictures as our Vegas production team. Lola did some amazing work on the Vegas shoot, from sourcing and hiring local crew to securing locations that no low budget movie would normally have a chance of getting access to, especially The Wynn and Encore hotels on the strip.

During prep, I made a few decisions and promises to myself that I think really paid off. The first: no matter what, I was going to enjoy myself. Making movies is this beautiful, unpredictable circus that can be massively stressful at times, but it's also such a privilege to write and direct a film, and I wasn't going to forget that. The second: bring on people who really loved and believed in the material and who would be creatively invested in the story. The third was to leave it all on the field when it came to preparation. I had never done this before and as such had no frame of reference so all I could really rely on was my work ethic. With the help of my producers, I was lucky enough to pull together a group of incredibly passionate and like-minded souls – from department heads to actors and beyond – who really bought into how I wanted to go about doing things.

Along with with out phenomenally talented cinematographer Eric Koretz and my assistant/storyboard artist/Michael Shannon stand-in/jack-of-all-trades Charles Cantrell (who also plays the bartender at Frank's restaurant), we created a comprehensive lookbook for the film along with a full set of digital storyboards for every sequence, which we shot at the actual locations with stand-ins who were same heights as our lead actors. These were then distributed throughout the crew, and as a result we all showed up on set sharing the same collective vision and ready to make the same movie. Making a low budget movie (or any movie, for that matter) involves a lot of and curveballs and complications that can't be anticipated, so having that level of preparation and deep knowledge of each sequence allowed us to be in a better position to react to the unexpected. We followed the same approach in Paris. All of that pre-visualization work allowed me to spend more time on scene work with our actors. There are a number of intense, difficult scenes in the film, some of them sexually graphic, and I wanted to make sure we did everything possible to created the right atmosphere for Michael and Immie to stay in character and focus entirely on each other.

## **2. What was the inspiration for FRANK & LOLA?**

The story was inspired by true events that occurred many years ago. Someone very close to me endured a hellish and profoundly damaging experience with a predatory person in her life who she had considered a friend. What began with a traumatizing sexual assault, perpetrated by a truly seasoned sociopath, eventually evolved into something else – an abusive relationship and a sick game that he orchestrated but which also involved a certain degree of complicity on her part. Instead of running away immediately, she stayed with him for a few horrific months. The aftermath was excruciating – the shame she felt was unbearable, and it took years for her to truly come to terms with what happened and forgive herself for whatever role she played in her own victimization.

I wanted to tell a fictionalized story that imagined the immediate aftermath of that real experience, before the character, Lola, is ready to confront what has just happened to her and is still acting out and avoiding full the truth of it all, and how that denial affects both her and her new boyfriend, Frank. I chose to tell the story from Frank's perspective, who comes to the table with his own complicated history and emotional baggage, because I felt like that would be a more honest perspective for me to write from (as opposed to telling it from Lola's point of view). I also had always wanted to tell something of a "what if" revenge fantasy, where a regular guy finds himself, through an unfortunate set of coinciding circumstances, in a position of avenging a wrong, and does so in a way that goes well beyond the usual conventions of what would be considered sane or normal behavior.

I revere the storytelling of masters like Cassavetes and Altman, and Frank & Lola is my first real attempt to capture the emotional truth that moved me profoundly in their work and the characters they created. In writing Frank & Lola, I found inspiration in Mabel in *A Woman Under the Influence* and McCabe in *McCabe & Mrs. Miller*, and tried to give life to two people in Frank and Lola who, despite noble intentions, can't seem to stay out of their own way. Frank is an intense, driven, ambitious, frustrated and scarred man, who struggles against becoming a werewolf, then, once he succumbs to his demons, desperately tries to regain his humanity. Lola is a young woman spinning like a top thanks to a recent traumatic event, who meets a special man and in jumps in anyway, then ends up overestimating her ability to be the strong, wise woman she will eventually become.

I thought making Frank a chef was the perfect *métier* for such a character. My own good friend Frank is a chef, and I named the character after him. Watching my buddy develop the concept for his first big restaurant, and build that business from scratch and see it exceed even his wildest expectations, was inspiring to me. It also became apparent to me that chefs and filmmakers often are fueled by the same combination of qualities, and face many of the same challenges. Launching a restaurant and making an independent film are both require doggedness, creativity, a collaborative spirit, the ability to impart a creative vision to a group of creative people in a high-wire environment that can't always be controlled. Chefs and filmmakers are both gamblers by nature, and I could relate to that, so I channeled a lot of myself into that character.

I also love cooking and food and wanted to see if I could capture that passion and that process in a cinematic way. It was hugely important to me to get it right, to make a film that a real chef would be able to watch and say afterwards, "Yeah, that's how it's done." My pal Frank, who now has a something of a culinary empire in New York, ended up signing on as our chef consultant, training Michael Shannon on technique, providing much-needed background on how things work in the culinary big leagues, and providing me with the menus for the food Frank makes in the film.

### **3. What was your writing process like?**

The first steps were exhilarating. I wrote the first draft in less than a month and without an outline. That's a rare occurrence for me and I really enjoyed it. The story has a kind of "fever dream" feel to it and the writing process in those early days reflected that. During the time it took to get the film set up, I matured as a person and a writer, and I made a point to keep working on the material to reflect whatever insights or skills I was able to pick up along the way. But the DNA of the screenplay – the essential nature and behavior of Frank, Lola, and the other key characters, as well as the major story beats – remained more or

less intact (but hopefully more precise and refined) as I continued to work on the script.

#### **4. Can you talk about the casting process?**

I'm one of countless filmmakers who've dreamed of working with Michael Shannon. He and I had first met several years ago, after he read and responded to the script, but we weren't able to put all the pieces in place at the time. It was pretty heartbreaking. Fast forward a couple of years, and I'm sitting across a table at the Bowery Hotel from Imogen Poots. Within a few minutes, I knew she was Lola. Then she put herself on tape, with the monologue towards the end of the film, and that sealed the deal. She brought something to the character that I had never imagined, something bigger and better than what was on the page, and that was that. We had a start date, and another actor attached to play Frank, but after a scheduling conflict, we had to move on. Then, somewhat miraculously, Michael Shannon's name appeared on a list of available actors, and we made our move immediately. It worked out.

Once Frank and Lola were in place, we were able to assemble a truly dream cast, based on some existing relationships I had as well as the work of our amazing U.S. casting directors Susan Shopmaker and Matthew Lessall, and their French counterpart, Ingrid Lanzenberg.

Casting the major European parts was a real thrill for me, as I was able to bring on two international legends who I had fantasized about working with for a long. First up was the great Michael Nyqvist. Mainstream U.S. audiences probably know him through as a villain in huge action movies (Mission Impossible 3, John Wick), but in his native Sweden (and throughout Europe), "Micke" is revered as a master as both leading man and ingenious character actor. It's well deserved. From his breakout performance in Lukas Moodysson's 2001 masterpiece Together, to bringing the iconic Mikael Blomkvist to life in the original Swedish adaptation of The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo, Nyqvist is one of the most charismatic, unpredictable and intuitive actors I've ever seen. I had met him a year prior to shooting Frank & Lola, through my manager Michael, while he was on a break in production on John Wick in New York, when he was recovering from a pretty terrifying stunt accident, and he and I just hit it off and spoke the same language. Micke was the first actor we went to for Alan, Lola's abuser and Frank's nemesis. (I guess that means that yet another American director cast Micke as a villain, but we were thrilled to have him.)

Emmanuelle Devos might be my favorite actress working today. I first fell in love with her when most everyone else did, with her breathtaking and award winning performance in Jacques Audiard's 2001 film Sur Mes Levres (Read My Lips). I actually wrote the part of Claire, Alan's French wife, with her in mind. Our French production partners, FullDawa, were able to get the script to her and she

responded to it. We finally met face to face during preproduction in Paris, at a Vietnamese restaurant, and after that she was in.

Susan and Matthew's biggest coup was landing Justin Long for the role of Keith, Lola's boss, whose presence in Lola's life plays a critical role in Frank's rapid descent in jealousy and obsession. Justin is a big star in his own right, and most of his independent film work has been as a leading man, but Susan got him the script and within a day or two, following a Skype session, he was onboard as well.

Rounding out the major roles was the one and only Rosanna Arquette, who plays Lola's mother, Patricia, a sexy, charismatic bull in the china shop who leaves much to be desired in the parenting department. I'd been a huge fan of Rosanna's since her early breakout roles in '80s in *Desperately Seeking Susan* and *After Hours*. As we were discussing which actors to go out to, Immie was actually the person who suggested her. It was a no-brainer – Rosanna would be perfect as Patricia. I knew her lawyer, Danny Passman, who got her the script, and a few days later she was on-board.

The supporting parts that our casting team lined up were all top notch, especially Carlos Moreno Jr., who plays Javier, Frank's best friend and sous-chef; Patrick Rocca, the great French character and opera singer who brings this awesome gravitas to the role of the French restaurateur Henri Ricard, the excellent Vladimir Consigny and Narcisse Mame, as well as Sophie Meister and David Atrakchi (who also co-produced the film), who all brought tremendous talent and energy to their performances.

In short, from the major roles to the day players, each actor brought something to their part that I could not have imagined on my own, and that's really all a director can ask for.

## **5. What was it like working with Michael Shannon, Imogen Poots and the rest of the cast?**

The way independent film works these days – especially if it involves a first-time director with no track record, on an independent film, and a cast of insanely busy movie stars who are traveling to a remote location like Vegas – actors and their director don't have much time, if any, to feel each other out. Unlike the key crew, who I had been working with constantly and intensely during our five or so weeks with prep, the only rehearsal time I got prior to production was a few hours with Mike and Immie during Thanksgiving week at a rented apartment in Brooklyn in between costume fittings. Besides that, our only real scene work happened "on the day" – right before we rolled camera. I knew I would be asking them to go into some pretty raw, dark places emotionally, and to get what the film needed I'd have to have to earn their trust immediately, individually

and collectively. Every major role – not just Frank and Lola – was filled by actors of astonishing talent and experience, and I knew I had little choice but to rely on my belief in the story and my command of the material and pretend like I'd been there before.

Mike Shannon has an energy and performative intelligence that is completely specific to him and him alone. He's a genius and a pure artist. While I wouldn't call his approach to acting as being classic "method" per se, he fully immerses himself in a part in a way that extends well beyond "action" and "cut." He's also been working nonstop for the past 20 years in film, theater, and television, and his mastery of the technical aspects of screen acting was pretty astonishing. Mike is also a perfectionist who demands the same level of preparation from those around him that he puts into his work, and rightfully so. Working with him was exhilarating and challenging in the best kind of way. If Mike ever asked for an explanation of a scene or a line and needed another take, it was always for good reason. Working with Mike Shannon wasn't simply a master class for me in terms of directing actors; it was also confirmation.

Imogen is a tremendous actor with immeasurable talent that's just beginning to get recognized. Her natural charm and obvious beauty work as something of a disguise, a distraction from the deep emotional complexity that she accesses with a total fearlessness that even the best most accomplished performers of her age (25 at the time of shooting) would take years to develop. She was all-in in her embrace of Lola and all of her complications, and made some of the most wrenching moments in the film look effortless. Immie's also a consummate pro – she arrived in Las Vegas having done two films back to back with only a few days off in between each of them, and showed up on set completely off-book and in character.

My work with Michael and Immie during the Vegas shoot was intense, exhilarating, unexpected, and a true pleasure. It was a situation that necessitated a tremendous amount of trust between the three of us: Michael is in every scene in the film, and with the exception of a few moments, so is Immie. Immie had also never done any nudity before in a film, and there are a number of other scenes involving intense emotional combat that required them to venture into some extremely vulnerable places emotionally, some involving pretty dark and uncomfortable sexual elements. Our entire crew worked incredibly hard to create an atmosphere that was as comfortable and respectful to our actors as possible, and they responded with two amazing, gritty, honest performances. I'm really grateful for their trust in me and am very proud of what we did.

The rest of the key cast were an absolutely pleasure to work with across the board. Nyqvist and Long have considerably more screen time than Arquette and Devos, and they both provided a distinct – and absolutely necessary – brand of

energy from what Shannon brings to the table. The storyline of Frank & Lola is pretty relentless in its intensity, and Justin's comedic brilliance as Keith resulted in some lighter moments that really allows the viewer to exhale, and hopefully laugh, when he appears on screen. Alan is the anti-Frank, and Nyqvist performed that role to perfection. Nyqvist has this natural erudition, elegance and mischievous to him that worked as a fantastic "to the manor born" counterpoint to Frank's brooding nature and his background as a self-made chef who started his career slinging pizzas in Queens. Arquette and Devos, who shot for one and two days, respectively, were both wonderful. It was surreal to direct them as I'd been such a fan of both of them for such a long time, and to hear them say the lines I'd written and take direction between takes is something I'll remember forever.

I was incredibly fortunate to have such a cast and crew for my first movie, nearly all of whom had worked with legendary filmmakers who've had a massive impact on my life and identity as a filmmaker (Scorsese, Lumet, Audiard, Tarantino, Herzog, Moodysson, Winterbottom, Bogdanovich – the list goes on and on). I'd happily work with all of them again, if they'll have me.

## **6. How long was the shoot and what was it like shooting in Paris and Las Vegas?**

We shot for 22 total days – 17 days over three weeks in Las Vegas in December 2014, then 5 more in Paris in late February/early March 2015.

It's hard to imagine two cities more different than Las Vegas and Paris, and the productions reflected that. Both places presented their own very distinct set of challenges and wonderful moments. What both Vegas and Paris did have in common was two absolute dynamite crews.

Given that this was my first movie, it was important to me and our producers that during our three-week shoot in Las Vegas we start with comparatively easy shoot days in terms of subject matter and production challenges, and then gradually ramp up so that most of the really heavy stuff happened at the end. Thankfully, we were blessed with an absolute magician of a 1<sup>st</sup> AD in Jeremy Phoenix, who continued to tweak the schedule as actor's schedules and location availability shifted during prep without losing site of the original mandate of starting "slow." While weeks 1 and 2 had their challenges, the third week was by far the toughest in that it began with two "reverse split" days, which entailed arriving on set at 1 a.m., shooting for 12-14 hours, wrapping in the afternoon, trying and failing to get some sleep, and then doing it all again at 1 a.m. the next day. By the end of the second day, when we wrapped the film's final sequence at 2 in the afternoon, the nights we all spent drinking and kicking back at the local dive bar during our first week of day shoots felt like a distant

memory.

After our Vegas shoot just before Christmas 2014, I spent a month editing in New York while Michael Shannon went off to play the King himself in *Elvis & Nixon* opposite Kevin Spacey, then we decamped for Paris for four weeks of prep and a week of shooting. Our crew really became something of a family during the Vegas shoot, and to reunite and finish what we started with the key department heads, including Eric (d.p.), Gerry Sullivan (production designer), Kammy Lennox (costume designer) and Erika Sanz (script supervisor), along with Jay and John, in a place as magical as Paris, which has such a rich film history and culture, was a dream. I was slightly apprehensive about shooting in a foreign country with a new crew, but my fears were quickly assuaged once I arrived at the offices of FullDawa Films in Montmartre. A passionate film collective run by a passionate trio of producers – Gaël Cabouat, Boris Mendza, and David Atrakchi – FullDawa were fully staffed and ready for us the moment we arrived, with a fully bilingual team as impressive as the group we worked with in Vegas.

Shooting in Paris is notoriously difficult. The traffic is abominable, overtime starts after 10 hours (as opposed to 12 in the U.S.), the old, narrow, cobblestone streets aren't exactly accommodating to 10-ton G&E trucks, and shooting and parking permits are a nightmare, especially if you need them last minute. But somehow, our French producers as well as our production team, led by Elodie Baradat and Camille Gautier and our excellent ADs David Hourregue and Céline Clezardin, managed to get us everything we wanted and needed, especially when it came to locations.

In Paris, we jumped headfirst into the deep end of the pool on our first day, with a shoot at a working sex club called *Le Mask*. Shannon, Nyqvist, Devos, and about 30 extras, most of them simulating sex. Overtime was not an option as the club opened for business at 10pm sharp. Add to that the fact that thanks to a freak ice storm in New York City that grounded every flight scheduled to leave JFK, including the one taking Michael Shannon to Paris, our leading man arrived at Charles de Gaulle airport an hour after call time. (We had a motorcycle waiting for him at the gate, which zipped through the rainy streets of gridlocked Paris and straight into hair and make-up.)

That first shoot day in Paris was surreal and involved more than a few comic moments. *Le Mask* was really, really dark (even proud swingers don't want to do their thing in public and under hot lights), and throughout the day, our team was constantly misplacing their phones and walkie talkies, then cringing as they reached in between cushions to fish them out, terrified of what their fingers might come in contact with once they reappeared. The club also had an assortment of snacks for their customers which were all artfully arranged, without packaging in fancy crystal bowls next to the bar. One member of our

American crew (I won't say who) absentmindedly grabbed a handful of sesame sticks and threw them in his mouth without thinking, only to have Eric interject, "You realize you just ate snacks that have been sitting, exposed, in a sex club, right? Do you have any idea what you just put in your mouth?" It was that kind of day.

The following four days didn't measure up to that first one in terms of pure chaos and drama, but they were all challenging for various reasons, nearly all of them due our shorter shoot days. In the end, however, I think our Paris sequences, from a technical/filmmaking perspective, are the strongest in the film. Thank God I had those three weeks in Vegas under my belt and another couple of months to reflect on how to be a better director. Paris was tough, but it was worth it, and I'm as proud of what we accomplished there as I am of anything in the movie.

It's also impossible to talk about Paris in 2015 without touching on the tragic events that occurred that year. We arrived for prep a few weeks after the massacre at the Charlie Hebdo offices, and the entire city was on edge. Our production office was next door to a Jewish elementary school, and every day we'd pass by soldiers with assault rifles who'd been assigned to protect the students and teachers from any potential violence. Many of the U.S. crew members who made the trip were in New York for 9/11, including me, and there was a certain somber solidarity that developed amongst us in addition to the usual bonding that occurs on a movie. We finished our mix in November, a few days before the horrific events on November 13, and stayed in close contact with our French production team as everything was happening and in the days that followed.

Thankfully, every member of our cast and crew escaped unharmed from the November 13 horror, although there were a number of close calls, and several friends of friends weren't so lucky. Hopefully, the five weeks that our incredible French crew spent working on the film was something of a welcome distraction from the violence that happened in January, and we send love to our French brothers and sisters who continue to deal with the aftermath and trauma of November.

## **7. What was the most difficult scene to shoot?**

Well, that sex club scene sure had its challenges. But I think the most difficult scene for me as well as our cast and crew, was the one that occurs in Lola's apartment immediately following Frank's first trip to Paris, when Frank unleashes his anger on Lola in a very disturbing and graphic way. It was one of the last things we shot in Las Vegas, and by that time we had all gotten to know and love both Frank and Lola as characters, as well as Mike and Immie, and to see their relationship go to such a dark place and in such a visceral way was

deeply affecting for everyone. Even though it was a closed set with only a handful of essential crew, the atmosphere in the room after I called cut the first was palpable, melancholy, shocking and somewhat unbearable. More than a few tears were shed that day.

## **8. What is your favorite scene in the film?**

That's a really tough question to answer, so I guess I'll pick two.

The first would be the scene at the mansion outside Vegas, where Frank, who's in between gigs and beginning to spiral into a pit of despair, jealousy and self loathing, is cooking for a fancy dinner party. Without giving too much away, Frank meets Keith, Lola's boss, for the first time and, thanks to a series of miscommunications, isn't exactly happy to see him. The chemistry and energy that Michael, Immie, and Justin developed during that shoot was electric and really reveals their characters. It's also maybe the funniest scene in the film.

The second would be the sequence in Paris where Frank, who's been casing out Alan's apartment, follows him through the streets of Paris and into his local bistro. Despite having a low-budget-sized crew, we were really able to craft something that I think has a lot of technical precision, suspense, and excitement. It also ends with a 270 degree Steadicam shot, which reveals Alan for the time, that's probably my favorite moment in the film. Collaboration, when it happens in the right way, is the best part of the filmmaking process, and the way Eric, our great Steadicam operator Guillaume Quilichini, and I all contributed to the making of that sequence is a great example of that. I also absolutely love the music that our ace composing team of Danny Bensi and Saunder Jurriaans crafted for the sequence. What begins as a minimal track with spare percussion grade builds and surges into something big and angry and nearly unbearable, until suddenly cutting out the moment Frank opens the door to the bistro.

## **9. What do you want the audience to take away from the film and the characters?**

I've always been someone who's been a fan of films that don't dictate too much of a message and allow the viewer to draw his or her own conclusions after watching a film. That caveat aside, the most important thing for me is that people walk out of the theater caring about both Frank and Lola, and embracing them despite all of their flaws and poor decisions.

It would also be cool for people to think that they didn't waste their time, and watched something that they felt was well made and reflective of the tremendous energy and passion that went into making it.

On a more personal note, a major goal of mine is that after our cast and crew finally see it, they'll walk out feeling like their trust in me was rewarded.

### **10. Which filmmakers had the greatest influence on you?**

It's a very long list. I drew inspiration from a number of heroes when making Frank & Lola, and there are many more whose work will inform whatever I do next, not just in regards to specific technique but also in the way they crafted their careers and stuck to their guns as artists.

If I was to name 10 right now, here they are, although there could be a completely new group if I was to answer this question tomorrow:

- Robert Altman
- Jacques Audiard
- Claire Denis
- Alfred Hitchcock
- Hou Hsiao-Hsien
- Wong Kar-wai
- Stanley Kubrick
- Michael Mann
- Lynn Ramsay
- Steven Soderbergh

### **11. Are there any specific films that influenced FRANK & LOLA?**

There were a lot and really too many to list here. During prep, I put together a list of about 20 reference films list for the department heads that listed the movie, director, and the specific nature of why the film was on the list. A few examples:

The Beat That My Heart Skipped (Jacques Audiard) - Framing/Lens Selection/Camera Movement/Color Palette

Beau Travail (Claire Denis) - Overall Visual Tone/Directorial Vision

The Conversation (Francis Ford Coppola) - Interaction of Sound and Image/Sound Design/Narrative Boldness/Overall Directorial Vision/Directing Actors

Head On (Gegen Die Wand) (Fatih Akin) - Directing Actors/Emotional Tone

Last Tango in Paris (Bernardo Bertolucci) - Overall Tone/Directorial Vision/Directing Actors/Intimate Moments/Fearlessness of Content

The Limey (Steven Soderbergh) - Overall Visual Tone/Nonlinear Editing

Rhythm/Shot Selection

Morvern Callar (Lynne Ramsay) - Directorial Vision/Directing Actors/Boldness in Oblique Narrative/Shot Selection

Sorcerer (William Friedkin) - Interaction of Image, Sound and Music/Narrative Momentum/Economy of Storytelling

And so on and so on...

**12. How does it feel to be going to your first Sundance with this film?**

It's a lifelong dream come true and it just feels great, surreal even.

## **CAST BIOS**

### **Michael Shannon (Frank)**

Academy Award® and Golden Globe® nominee actor Michael Shannon continues to make his mark in entertainment, working with the industry's most respected talent and treading the boards in notable theaters around the world.

In the upcoming Sundance Film Festival, Shannon will star in *Frank & Lola*, opposite Imogen Poots. The film is directed and written by Matthew Ross. He will also star in Joshua Marston's drama *Complete Unknown*, opposite Rachel Weisz. He plays the role of a man that contemplates moving to a new state with his wife for her graduate program, but things become complicated when an old flame reenters his life.

Upcoming, Shannon will be seen starring in Jeff Nichols' *Midnight Special*, a sci-fi thriller about a father (Shannon) desperate to protect his uniquely gifted eight-year-old son (Jaeden Lieberher). Shannon leads opposite Joel Edgerton, Kirsten Dunst, Adam Driver and Sam Shepard. Warner Brothers is set to release the film March 16, 2016. Shannon's previous collaborations with Nichols include *Take Shelter*, for which he received a 2011 Film Independent Spirit Award nomination for Best Actor; as well as the films *Mud* and *Shotgun Stories*.

This April, Shannon will play the role of music icon Elvis Presley in Liza Johnson's historical film, *Elvis & Nixon* opposite Kevin Spacey. Based on a true story, Elvis Presley (Shannon) travels to the White House to meet with President Richard Nixon (Spacey) in hopes that he will be sworn in as a federal agent against the war on drugs and communism. Amazon Studios is set to release the film April 2016. This same month, Shannon returns to Broadway co-starring alongside Jessica Lange, Gabriel Byrne, and John Gallagher Jr. in *Long Day's Journey into Night*. Produced by the Roundabout Theater Company and directed by Jonathan Kent, the play is the revival of Eugene O'Neill's landmark 1956 drama. It opens April 19, 2016 at American Airlines Theater.

Shannon has completed production on Werner Herzog's thriller, *Salt and Fire*, alongside Gael Garcia Bernal and Veronica Ferras; Bart Freundlich's *Wolves*, opposite Carla Gugino; Jeff Nichol's *The Loving Story*, opposite Ruth Negga, Tom Ford's *Nocturnal Animals* opposite Jake Gyllenhaal and Amy Adams in the adaptation of Austin Wright's 1993 novel *Tony and Susan*; as well as Seth Hendrickson's *Pottersville*, opposite Adam Scott.

Shannon will soon begin production on writer-director Siofra Campbell's thriller *The Price* opposite Noomi Rapace. The story revolves around a desperate mother (Noomi Rapace) of a kidnapped child who learns her maniacal ex-husband (Shannon) is behind the crime.

In 2015, Shannon starred opposite Andrew Garfield in Ramin Bahrani's timely drama *99 Homes*. Set against the backdrop of the economic crisis, Shannon played 'Rick Carver,' a charismatic and ruthless real estate tycoon gaming the market and home banking system. Shannon was nominated for a Golden Globe®, Screen Actors Guild®, Critics Choice®, Gotham Award® and Film Independent Spirit Award on behalf of this performance. Additionally, Shannon played 'Mr. Green' in Jonathan Levine's holiday comedy *The Night Before*, opposite Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Seth Rogen and Anthony Mackie. The actor also starred in Peter Sollett's drama *Freeheld*, based on the true story of 'Detective Laurel Hester' and her domestic partner 'Stacie Andree' in their fight for equality. Shannon portrayed New Jersey detective and Hester's partner, 'Dane Wells,' opposite Julianne Moore and Ellen Page.

Most notably, Shannon garnered critical acclaim for his Oscar® nominated supporting role in *Revolutionary Road*, playing 'John Givings,' the psychologically troubled neighbor's son. Directed by Sam Mendes and adapted by Justin Haythe, Shannon stars opposite Leonardo DiCaprio, Kate Winslet and Kathy Bates.

With over forty roles in film, Shannon's credits include John McNaughton's *The Harvest*; Jake Paltrow's *The Young Ones*; Zack Snyder's *Man of Steel*; Ariel Vromen's *The Iceman*; David Koepp's *Premium Rush*; Liza Johnson's *Return*; Marc Forster's *Machine Gun Preacher*; Floria Sigismondi's *The Runaways*; Werner Herzog's *My Son, My Son, What Have Ye Done* and *Bad Lieutenant*; Sydney Lumet's *Before the Devil Knows You're Dead*; Oliver Stone's *World Trade Center*; William Friedkin's *Bug*; Curtis Hanson's *Lucky You*; Michael Bay's *Bad Boys II*; Curtis Hanson's *8 Mile*; David McNally's *Kangaroo Jack*, Cameron Crowe's *Vanilla Sky*; Michael Bay's *Pearl Harbor*; John Waters' *Cecil B. DeMented*; Noah Buschel's *The Missing Person* and Shana Feste's *The Greatest*.

On television, Shannon's credits include Martin Scorsese's HBO series, *Boardwalk Empire*, which recently completed its fifth and final season. Based on Nelson Johnson's book of the same name, the hit show centers on an Atlantic City liquor distribution ring at the onset of Prohibition. Shannon portrayed 'Nelson Van Alden,' a dedicated senior agent with the Treasury Department who has a strong interest in controlling bootlegging.

Outside of his roles on screen, Shannon maintains a strong connection to theater. In 2012, Shannon appeared opposite Paul Rudd, Ed Asner, and Kate Arrington in *Grace* at the Cort Theatre. For his portrayal of 'Sam,' a distrustful and lonely computer genius who had recently lost his fiancé in a car accident, Shannon was nominated for a 2013 Distinguished Performance Drama League Award.

In 2010, Shannon led Craig Wright's off-Broadway play, *Mistakes Were Made*, at the Barrow Street Theater. Directed by Dexter Bullard, Shannon portrays 'Felix Artifex,' a small time theatre producer, who gets in way over his fast-talking head when he takes on an epic about the French Revolution. The play received its world premiere at A Red Orchid Theatre in Chicago in 2009 with the same cast and director. The critically acclaimed production garnered numerous accolades for Shannon, including an Outstanding Lead Actor Lortel Award nomination, an Outstanding Actor in a Play Drama Desk Award nomination, an Outstanding Solo Performance Outer Critics Award nomination, and a Distinguished Performance Drama League Award nomination.

Additional theater credits include *Pilgrim's Progress* (A Red Orchid Theater), *Uncle Vanya* (Soho Rep Theatre), *Our Town* (Barrow Street Theatre), *Lady* (Rattlestick Theatre), *The Metal Children* (Vineyard Theatre), *The Little Flower of East Orange* (Public Theatre), *The Pillowman* (Steppenwolf Theatre), *Bug* (Barrow Street Theatre, Red Orchid Theatre and Gate Theatre), *Man From Nebraska* (Steppenwolf Theatre), *Mr. Kolpert* (Red Orchid Theatre), *Killer Joe* (SoHo Playhouse, Next Lab Theatre and Vaudeville Theatre), *The Idiot* (Lookingglass Theatre), *The Killer* (Red Orchid Theatre), and *Woyzeck* (Gate Theatre).

Michael Shannon grew up in Lexington, Kentucky and began his professional stage career in Chicago, Illinois.

### **Imogen Poots (Lola)**

As an emerging actress on the rise, Imogen Poots challenges herself with each new role and continues to evolve her body of work with every project she takes on.

Premiering at the 2015 Sundance Film Festival, Imogen will be seen in Matthew M. Ross' *Frank and Lola* opposite Michael Shannon. The story of betrayal, forgiveness, obsession and revenge follows Frank (Shannon) and Lola (Poots) on a Halloween night in which Frank, a Las Vegas chef, falls in love with Lola, a mysterious girl who is new to town.

Imogen will next be seen as 'Della' in Terrence Mallick's *The Knight of Cups* with stars Christian Bale and Natalie Portman. The film follows a screenwriter and his relationships throughout his life in Los Angeles. Broad Green will release the film March 2016. Following that, she will be seen in Jeremy Saulnier's *Green Room*, portraying 'Amber,' a young woman in a punk rock band who finds themselves trapped in a secluded venue after stumbling upon a horrific act of violence. The film made its premiere at the 2015 Cannes Film Festival and will be released by Broad Green April 2016.

This June, she will star opposite Andy Samberg in *Conner4Real*. Written by Andy Samberg, Akiva Shaffer and Jorma Taccone; Akiva and Jorma also direct and Judd Apatow produced. The film follows the story of a musician (Samberg) who re-forms his old boy band. Universal will release the film domestically on June 2016. Also this summer, Imogen will be seen as the female lead in renowned director Cameron Crowe's *Roadies*, his first television show. The series a modern-day ensemble piece which chronicles a life on the road with the crew behind a rock band. The show will premiere Summer 2016 on Showtime.

Imogen is currently filming A.J. Edwards' *Friday's Child* opposite Tye Sheridan. Written by A.J. Edwards and Michael Dolan, the film is a modern day redemption story set in Waco, Texas. Imogen plays Joan, whose father is murdered by Richie (Sheridan). Not knowing the young drifter is the source of her suffering, Richie and Joan strike up an unlikely bond during the period of her grief. As complications grow, it is only through Joan that Richie can find redemption. Joan's own struggle is one of learning to forgive the most heinous of crimes, discovering that only in selflessness can there be peace.

Following that, she will go into production on Vladimir de Fontenay's *Mobile Homes*. Written by Vladimir and Danielle Lessovitz, the film follows Ali (Imogen) and her seven-year-old son Bone. They live like gypsies with Ali's boyfriend Evan; jumping from one motel to the next, they earn a living selling illegal fighting cocks from Puerto Rico in Philadelphia, the nation's underground cockfighting capital. When Bone's love for running away causes Evan's business plans to detour, Ali is given an ultimatum; restrain Bone or find another place for him.

Imogen was most recently seen starring in Peter Bogdanovich's *She's Funny That Way* produced by Wes Anderson and Noah Baumbauch. Imogen plays a prostitute turned theater star opposite an anxious theater director (Owen Wilson), with whom he falls in love. Supporting cast includes Kathryn Hahn, Jennifer Aniston, Will Forte and Rhys Ifans. For her performance, Imogen received an Evening Standard British Film Award nomination.

Since making her breakthrough performance as "Tammy" in Juan Carlos Fesnadilo's critically acclaimed film *28 Weeks Later*, Imogen has continued to impress critics and audiences alike. She was most recently seen in John Ridley's *All Is By My Side* co-starring Andre Benjamin and Hayley Atwell, Pascal Chaumameil's *A Long Way Down* with Aaron Paul, Pierce Brosnan and Toni Collette and Irvine Welsh's *Filth*, a follow up to *Trainspotting*, with James McAvoy.

Other film credits include Anna Axster, *A Country Called Home* opposite Mackenzie Davis; Scott Waugh's *Need for Speed* co-starring Aaron Paul, Tom

Gormican's That Awkward Moment opposite Zac Efron; Michael Winterbottom's The Look Of Love, co-starring opposite Steve Coogan and Tamsin Egerton; Daniel Algrant's Greetings from Tim Buckley opposite Penn Badgley; Yaron Zilberman's A Late Quartet alongside Christopher Walken, Catherine Keener, Philip Seymour Hoffman and Mark Ivanir; Simon Aboud's Comes a Bright Day, alongside Craig Roberts, Kevin McKidd and Timothy Spall. Additionally, Craig Gillespie's Fright Night, opposite Colin Farrell and Anton Yelchin; Cary Fukunaga's Jane Eyre alongside Mia Wasikowska and Michael Fassbender; Chatroom with Aaron Johnson; Neil Marshall's Centurion with Michael Fassbender; Waking Madison opposite Elisabeth Shue, Sarah Roemer and Frances Conroy; Solitary Man with Michael Douglas and Susan Sarandon; Cracks with Juno Temple; Richard Linklater's Me and Orson Welles with Zac Efron and Christian McKay;

Beyond film, Imogen' television credits include BBC's Miss Austen Regrets as "Fanny Knight" ITV's Bouquet of Barbed Wire as "Prue Sorensen," and BBC's Christopher and His Kind as "Jean Ross."

## **FILMMAKER BIOS**

### **Matthew Ross (Writer, Director)**

Matthew Ross is an award-winning director, screenwriter and journalist from New York City.

He will make his feature-length debut as writer-director with Frank & Lola, a "psychosexual noir love story" starring Michael Shannon, Imogen Poots, Michael Nyqvist, Justin Long, Emmanuelle Devos and Rosanna Arquette. The film will make its world premiere at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival.

His writing and directing work includes the festival shorts Lola, Red Angel, and Curtis and Clover; the 2010 viral video Inspired by Bret Easton Ellis, commissioned by Ellis and Random House and described by film critic Roger Ebert described as "one terrific video"; as well as more than 50 episodes of FIGHT! Life, an online documentary series about professional fighters, which has logged over 6 million YouTube views.

Ross was a story consultant for Larry David's HBO series Curb Your Enthusiasm, including contributing plotlines to the DGA award-winning episode "Palestinian Chicken", which Vanity Fair called "the crowing achievement of the entire series." He has also written and rewritten screenplays for Anonymous Content, Radical Studios, Palmstar Entertainment, Sundial Pictures, and Infinity Media, among other companies.

As a journalist, he has held staff editor/writer positions at a number of print and

online publications, including Variety, Filmmaker, Indiewire, and FIGHT!. His freelance articles about film, culture, sports, and politics have appeared in Playboy, The Village Voice, Nerve, Humanity magazine, and the Criterion Collection, among others.

In October, 2013, Playboy published his first longform investigative feature, "Inside El Rodeo," an 8,000 story about a young American documentary filmmaker's imprisonment in Venezuela. His 2006 Filmmaker article on Steven Soderbergh's Bubble was included in the 2015 edition of Interviews: Steven Soderbergh (University Press of Mississippi).

Ross was a Directing Fellow at the Sundance Institute's Feature Filmmaking Labs and a board member of the IFP's Program Advisory Board. He has also hosted the Independent Film Channel's IFC in Theaters series, and appeared as a commentator/panelist for CNBC's Independent Spirit Awards coverage and HDNet's Inside MMA. He has also moderated panels and served on the jury at dozens of film festivals and events, including the Sundance Film Festival, the Sundance Institute at BAM series, IFP's Independent Film Week and No Borders programs, among others.

He graduated Cum Laude with Honors from Harvard University. He is represented by the William Morris Endeavor agency and MGMT management. He lives in Brooklyn.

### **Jay Van Hoy (Producer) and Lars Knudsen (Producer) / Parts & Labor**

Jay Van Hoy and Lars Knudsen established Parts & Labor, a production company dedicated to director-driven, collaborative filmmaking in 2004. Parts & Labor has produced over 20 films that have brought emerging auteur filmmakers into the limelight.

Upcoming films include Robert Eggers' THE WITCH (winner of the Best Director award at Sundance film festival 2015), Andrea Arnold's AMERICAN HONEY, Matthew Ross' FRANK & LOLA, Joshua Marston's COMPLETE UNKNOWN, Robert Edwards' ONE MORE TIME, Shaul Schwarz's next documentary TROPHY, and Per Fly's next film BACKSTABBING FOR BEGINNERS.

Past films include Mike Mills' Oscar winning BEGINNERS (starring Ewan McGregor and Academy Award winner Christopher Plummer), Julia Loktev's THE LONELIEST PLANET, Braden King's HERE, Andrew Dosunmu's MOTHER OF GEORGE, David Lowery's AIN'T THEM BODIES SAINTS, Aaron Katz's COLD WEATHER, Cam Archer's SHIT YEAR, Kelly Reichardt's OLD JOY, Ira Sachs' LOVE IS STRANGE and KEEP THE LIGHTS ON, photojournalist Shaul Schwarz's documentary NARCO CULTURA, and more.

## **John Baker (Producer)**

John Baker is a Los Angeles based producer of films, documentaries and short form content. Most recently, he completed Matthew Ross' FRANK & LOLA starring Michael Shannon and Imogen Poots and served as executive producer on Tim Sutton's DARK NIGHT. Both titles will have their World Premiere at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival. Other recent films include Tim Sutton's MEMPHIS (Kino Lorber) which was named by the New Yorker as one of its Top 10 Films of 2014, Lawrence Michael Levine's WILD CANARIES (Sundance Selects) and the award-winning, critically lauded DRAGONSLAYER (Showtime). His short films and music videos have played film festivals around the world and aired on HBO, Channel 4 (UK), and MTV amongst other outlets.

## **Chris Ramirez (Producer)**

Chris Ramirez founded Las Vegas-based company Lola Pictures after years of working with the local productions of films including The Hangover (I & III) for Warner Bros., Steven Soderbergh's The Girlfriend Experience, The Motel Life and several others. After partnering with Zappos CEO Tony Hsieh in 2011, Ramirez launched Silver State Production Services, which became go-to vendor in Nevada for visiting film, television and commercial shoots and was a big contributor to the passage of the state film tax incentive.

In 2014, Ramirez produced two feature films under Lola Pictures, with Silver State providing services: Gerardo Naranjo's Viena & the Fantomes, starring Dakota Fanning, Zoe Kravitz, Evan Rachel Wood, Jeremy Allen White and Frank Dilate is currently in post-production; and Matthew Ross' Frank & Lola, starring Michael Shannon and Imogen Poots which premieres at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival.

In development at Lola Pictures is the biopic of legendary college basketball coach Jerry Tarkanian and the Runnin' Rebels, as well as a dramatic television series set in Las Vegas written by filmmaker Jonathan Hensleigh (Armageddon, Jumanji).

## **FullDawa Films (Paris Production Company)**

FullDawa Films is an award-winning production company which has been 'crashing the party' ever since its inception in Paris, France in 2007. Founders David Atrakchi, Gaël Cabouat and Boris Mendza consistently strive to push the boundaries of storytelling by focusing on up-and-coming filmmakers with original talent combined with a strong visual style. They also pride themselves on their solid experience, teamwork and long-lasting relationships with their directors.

Driven by expertise, eclecticism and unflaggingly high standards, FullDawa Films opened itself up to the international market in 2013 with the co-production of Israël Horowitz's first feature film, "My Old Lady," starring Maggie Smith, Kevin Kline and Kristin Scott Thomas. And just recently, in 2015, they partnered with Parts and Labor for the production of the American film "Frank & Lola" directed by Matthew Ross. The film, starring Michael Shannon and Imogen Poots, will be premiering at the Sundance Film Festival this year.

Beyond the two motion pictures, FullDawa Films has produced over 40 short movies and approximately 75 web films and music videos, successfully proving they are a force to be reckoned with within the French film industry. Aiming to capitalize on their European success and fueled by their ever-expanding creative vision, they have now set up office in Los Angeles. The brand new North American division is headed by equally disruptive EP and partner Jouri Smit.

FullDawa Films offers the gamut of creative production, from cultivating new directorial talent, to developing and handling complete production services for shorts, features, and international film projects.

### **Killer Films**

The indie powerhouse, Killer Films has produced acclaimed features including Academy Award®-winning STILL ALICE, Academy Award®-winning BOYS DON'T CRY, and Academy Award®-nominated FAR FROM HEAVEN and CAROL from Todd Haynes. Killer Films executive produced MILDRED PIERCE, the Emmy Award®-winning HBO mini-series starring Kate Winslet. Recent films include John Krokidas's debut feature KILL YOUR DARLINGS starring Daniel Radcliffe, Dane DeHaan and Elizabeth Olsen; Sebastian Silva's NASTY BABY starring Kristen Wiig, Tunde Adebimpe, and Alia Shawkat; and other titles include KIDS, HEDWIG & THE ANGRY INCH, SAFE, ONE HOUR PHOTO, I'M NOT THERE, and HAPPINESS. Upcoming projects from Killer Films include Richard Glatzer and Wash Westmoreland's COLETTE & WILLY starring Keira Knightly; Todd Solondz's WIENER-DOG starring Greta Gerwig, Danny DeVito, Ellen Burstyn and Julie Delpy; BEAT UP LITTLE SEAGULL starring Michelle Pfeiffer and Kiefer Sutherland; and an upcoming series for Amazon Studios about the life of Zelda Fitzgerald starring Christina Ricci.

### **Great Point Media**

Founded in 2012 by Robert Halmi Jr. and Jim Reeve, Great Point Media specializes in the development and exploitation of intellectual property in entertainment media, distribution of media content for theatrical release and television, media project finance, and alternative investments. Halmi is an Emmy Award and Golden Globe Award-winning film and television producer with over

300 production credits, including Tin Man, Farscape and Lonesome Dove. Reeve is an Emmy Award-winning producer with 25 years' experience in the development, production, financing and distribution of television programs and films. His credits include Foyle's War and Jack Higgins' On Dangerous Ground.