

BEVERLY



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Logline

Teenage Sam has a crush on his best friend's mum, Beverly. In a world where time stands still, a firecracker forces things to unravel.

Synopsis

Sam, a fourteen-year-old outcast is in love with his best friend Dexter's mother, Beverly, who used to be the prettiest girl in the room, but now no one is paying her any attention. When Sam comes to stay for the weekend his obvious distraction during video game sessions causes tension between the two boys. Beverly, rejected by her boyfriend Bruce, stays home on Saturday night while the boys sneak out to film a firecracker explosion, convinced this holds the key to their popularity. When it ends in tears things start to unravel quickly and Sam is forced to make a choice between his best friend and his crush

BEVERLY



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From the first time I read *Beverly*, the short story written by Rupert — I couldn't shake it from my creative mind. The story was a door into a world I've always wanted to explore.

Rupert and I have been friends for nine years and at the core of our friendship is a creative spark and mutual respect for our individual creative endeavours. *Beverly* presented a perfect path forward for us to collaborate. After more than a year of meetings and workshops we find ourselves with a well-developed script and ready to bring *Beverly* to life.

Dark comedy has always been one of my favourite genres. I'm attracted to the balance it strikes between comedy and tragedy. The great thing about *Beverly* is despite dealing with lurid subject it takes a comedic route. Even in the darkest moments of life I find there is always something humorous to discover. It's what makes me engage with story as an audience member and a filmmaker.

Beverly, with its recognisable suburban milieu, deals with a world many of us know. I am fascinated by the suburbs. I grew up on their outskirts. I can recall visiting friends' houses with their sprawling carpets and "good" living rooms. These spaces left me feeling like a foreigner from a different world. I can relate to the outsider – like the character of Sam (Lurch). Sometimes I think as an outsider you can see things more clearly.

I have perpetually been drawn to suburban landscapes like those found in *American Beauty*, *Happiness* and *Donnie Darko*. These seemingly virtuous worlds, both familiar and strange, become the backdrop for loneliness and disconnection. These places of fascinating contradiction are separated by distance and formed around togetherness.

It's the overarching theme of disconnection inherent to the suburban setting of *Beverly* in which all the characters, so desperate to make connections with one another, reflect the changing behaviours and values of people both isolated and a slave to technology and make this such an important story to tell.

While I've always wanted to tell female stories, *Beverly* scrutinises how women are affected by their male counterparts. The film shines a light on the creation of misogyny.

One of the most natural parts of filmmaking for me is the visual component. I often come upon stories through images, costumes or art direction, and with *Beverly* it has been no different. I feel a strong connection to the visual ideas present in the script. This thought of a woman made up to hide her true feelings underneath layers of artifice. The slightly exaggerated art direction that still feels very real, but there's something emblematic about it. The world of *Beverly* has been for so long vividly living in my head that I can't wait to finally bring it to life through this multifaceted story.

Beverly is my first scripted short film project and the culmination of a life long, consuming passion for storytelling and cinema. I love the collaborative process of filmmaking and feel so privileged to work with such a wonderful team on this project. From its beginnings with Rupert Taylor to now Stephen Fitzgibbon producing, as well as Matt Noonan, I know we are in a great place to create something truly special. Our collaboration, I am certain, will take us to places we didn't know were possible and I wouldn't have been able to arrive at on my own.

BEVERLY



BEVERLY



Earlier this year, while attending the Toronto International Film Festival, I was handed a script by a colleague of mine. She urged me to read it, telling me, “you should produce this film, you’ll love it.” She was right.

The script was for a film titled *Beverly*. I fell in love with it the instant I picked it up. From the very first page I was absorbed in its rich characters, the world they inhabited and, not soon after, the way it carefully revealed its layered themes. These themes of disconnection, survival, sexuality and technology felt prescient, contemporary and compelling. I come across a lot of scripts and this one was exceptional.

The following day I was on Skype with Roma to meet for the first time and we both felt an instant connection in our goals as storytellers and in the creative ways we wished to achieve these goals. In particular we found a common bond in using humor as a dramatic mechanism to explore emotions, no matter how dark, to plumb the depths of modern human experience. We both identified the potential in which to do this in *Beverly*.

Although there are a myriad of narrative elements in the outstanding script there is one theme, in particular, that I am drawn to as a producer: the effects of technology on younger people. To be more specific I’m fascinated how technology shapes young boys as they grow to become young men and then men.

In *Beverly* we see the negative impact technology is having on young boys, the negative ideas it teaches them about how to treat each other and how to treat women. *Beverly* concerns the way in which perceptions of the outside world are shaped and the lasting influence it has on our relationships and daily interactions.

I thought immediately of myself as a 14 year old boy and the technology I was exposed to. The contrast with what it must be like to grow up in 2016 is immense. The exposure through social media platforms, the internet and pornography exerts new pressures and ideas that feed young minds. How can we highlight this and look forward to finding positive ways to teach through these platforms?

Generator: Emerging Filmmaker Fund is a great opportunity for filmmakers like Roma and I to build strong partnerships and, to continue these partnerships, into the future. A project such as this one will also enable our partnership to build a network of filmmaking collaborators around us from Cinematographers to Art Directors to Editors and others. In being able to achieve our expectation is to further and share our knowledge together through a common passion that we hope to sustain on our future projects.

Ours is a commitment to testing the limits of our inspiration through the format of film and to tell stories that reflect what it means to come of age in these fast changing times.

I am looking forward to working closely with all these collaborators and in particular to working with Roma to insure her vision for *Beverly* becomes a reality.

BEVERLY



BEVERLY



The great advantage of working in a dark comedy genre is that it works as a platform in which to talk about much bigger universal ideas.

Disconnection remains the central theme in *Beverly*. Each of the characters is desperate to be loved, understood and connected to the people around them. The boys create online memes in order to gain notoriety and validation. Beverly wears sexy outfits and loads of make-up to garner attention.

Beverly thematically looks at what it means to be coming of age in a digital world. The constant act of looking at a screen – screens are inescapable at Dexter's house – ritualises behaviour. It facilitates myopia. Video games, another recurring presence, highlight our reliance on virtual experiences and the media that occasion them. The technology while acting as a surrogate to human contact in the process pushes us further apart. For the boys in *Beverly*, their first insight into their own sexuality is not through human-to-human contact but through video games and online pornography. What does this mean for the men they are going to one day become? It will no doubt mean something to the women they will later encounter.

Beverly takes a crosshairs to the birthplace of misogyny. It tells the story of two boys who are a product of their own society, stuck in a loop. Dexter has no positive role models; no concept of how to respect or treat women. Bruce mistreats Dexter's mother and Dexter fixates on video games where the goal is raping women. These characters are all culpable and stuck in a perpetual cycle.

The character of Beverly does not know how to be a mother or an adult, as she never has had the necessary emotional tools or role models. Dexter will only further compound and perpetuate this. The scary part about this situation is its normality; the way a family operates, reconciles and survives. This is not magical realism this is a glimpse into how people really live.

The boys in *Beverly* are coming of age sexually. It's an odd age as you experience all these sexual desires without completely understanding them. Sam (Lurch) lusts after Beverly and naively mistakes his sexual attraction for something more. He seeks understanding from her, mistaking her as an answer to his loneliness. She also finds solace in his attention. He seems to be the only one who can see her, they both yearn for connection – no matter how unstable.

BEVERLY



BEVERLY



***Beverly* aims to be both sad and funny. Tragi-comedy can often be one of the most enthralling cinematic expressions given the emotional elements at play.**

In other words I believe if something can make you laugh and move you to tears then that's an experience worth having. As a filmmaker, I think this is worth striving for.

The suburban world of *Beverly*, although rooted in reality, will be exaggerated to draw the audience in. The precise art direction and costumes will serve to heighten the films comedic edge as we are transported into a world at once strange and familiar. *Beverly* is a world where new is best and beige undercuts a carpeted landscape. The frame will include carefully considered colour plates akin to *Welcome to the Dollhouse*, *Little Miss Sunshine* with a hint of Wes Anderson.

The costumes in *Beverly* will be realistic but again amplified. Beverly will put her sexuality on show as she tries to groom an image according to the expectations of others (or at least her perception of these expectations). Because of this something will always seem slightly off, ajar.

Dexter will be the epitome of a preppy brat about town. He is a consumer granted a disposable income and everything he possesses is shiny, polished, brand new. Sam (Lurch), in contrast, with his humble beginnings and outsider status will be costumed accordingly; the clothes worn and faded, the colours drained to an earthy palate.

The camera work will be carefully considered with strong graphic frames and a definite use of wide shots in the beginning to portray the awkward interplay of the characters. The camera will be reasonably still at the beginning of the film only moving with on screen motivation. This will take a turn in specific sequences in the film such as when Sam (Lurch) is in Beverly's bedroom smelling her perfume. The camera will change to have a floating quality as if he is in a dream, reflecting his subjectivity. Again we will see a shift in camera work when they go on their nocturnal adventure as seen through a hand held camera to reflect the wild nature of the night.

BEVERLY



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Beverly, 41, blonde with dark regrowth and a full face of makeup. Beverly used to be the prettiest girl in the room. Her sexy image, once her biggest draw, is no longer a card to play. When Beverly was a girl she was introduced to the adult world all too soon. She doesn't have the tools to be a mother. Life and the decisions she's made have worn her down. No one's listening anymore, she's become invisible. She's imprisoned by her own material things. So she tries to hide her pain but with the years passing by the cracks are starting to show.

Sam (Lurch), 14, possesses wise eyes. He is innocent, and unintentionally charming. A good student, he is an old soul; keeping to himself, mostly — an avid reader of books. He tries to keep up with Dexter and pretend he's just one of the boys. He is completely infatuated with Beverly. He wants to be close to her. He yearns to be connected and understood.

Dexter, 14, slovenly, lazy, bully, spoilt video game addict and extremely concerned about what others think. He shields his insecurities with bravado and attacks those around him. Desires he is not yet fully equipped to understand rule his world. He wants more than anything else to be popular. His father left when he was younger and he hasn't heard from him since. He blames his mum for everything, big and small.

Bruce, 56, a boorish gambling addict bereft of manners and taste. Outside of the horses his favourite game is grab-arse. His character is manifested in his ill-fitting suits. The main purpose of a woman is for his sexual gratification. The rest is eating what they cook. He promised Beverly the world but once she moved in he stopped paying any attention.

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