

# I THOUGHT THE WORLD OF YOU

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## **Abstract**

An experimental biography written in speculative fiction, *I Thought the World of You* is a short film concerning the elusive Canadian outsider-artist musician Lewis and the uncanny realization of his landmark record *L' Amour*, which was recorded in 1982 but lay in obscurity until later discovered in 2008.

To stay true to the enigma found in both the life and art of Lewis, the film elects to abandon classical biographical forms traditionally applied to musicians to instead embrace a formalization of mosaic portraiture—written in myth, fact, and speculation.

This project's production began on July 9th 2021 after many months of pre-production and previsualization. The film entered 4 days of principal photography in Vancouver, B.C., later to be followed by additional shoots in Calgary and Toronto. Post-production was done simultaneously alongside the succeeding pick up shoots, and the film was ultimately completed in February 2022.

## Acknowledgement

I'm immensely grateful for the gracious creative space provided by my committee, who from day one welcomed my non-traditional approach to this subject. My gratitude and thanks to my advisor Phil Hoffman for both his erudite practical advice on production, and his incisive feedback on the formation of the work. I would also like to extend my gratitude to my reader Michael Zryd for all his thorough feedback, in addition to John Greyson and Ingrid Veninger for engaging in a directed reading with me amidst a pivotal moment in the film's genesis. I'm also grateful for the producing collaboration with my cohort member Sandra Ignagni. Additionally, I appreciate all the guidance provided by Manfred Becker and Kuowei Lee through my coursework.

Above all, I would like to extend my gratitude to the many who in a multitude of capacities helped me make this film. My crew, who took great risk with no reward, the beauty I believe we realized with this picture could not have been born by anyone but this group. I have no doubt that the true future of motion pictures in this country will in part be realized by the artists I was lucky enough to work with over the course of production.

In the shaping of this film's story, I also spoke with many research subjects around the globe, all of whom have my utmost appreciation for their participation. I must also thank my family, especially my mother Karen Borsholt, for supporting me to make it this far to begin with. Finally, I thank Randy Wulff for his elusiveness, grace, and beautiful music, without which there would have been no film.

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## Introduction

An experimental biography written in speculative fiction, *I Thought the World of You* is a short film concerning the elusive Canadian outsider-artist, musician Lewis. It focuses on the birth of his infamous 1983 album *L'Amour*, an artwork that would remain largely undiscovered until 2008. Thereafter it would slowly begin to amass an impassioned audience of fans in awe with not only its hazy, ethereal songs but also the many conflicting and uncanny narratives regarding its pseudonymous author.

Many pathways led to my finally realizing this project, not all of which I have yet discerned. What has been certain is that since the fateful summer of 2014, I have been irrevocably entranced by both the music and beguiling enigma of my subject. In my direct participation with the online search effort for this man, later to be explored in this essay, I also witnessed a distinctly 21st century experience: the formation of an online myth. The events that would subsequently unfurl were amongst the most uncanny, and beautiful moments I have witnessed on the internet.

Years would pass, and I would immerse myself entirely into new projects, but I would still feel the pull of the vaporous, enigmatic subject of Lewis and the soft texture of his songs. Eventually, it became clear I could no longer turn away, and that I had little choice but to make this film not only to move forward as an artist, but to remain true to the impetus of my artistic project thus far, which has been to chase and distill those rare, intangible, and fleeting experiences shared between people: whether it be the beauty of collaborative friendship in a new place (*Hit 2 Pass*, 2014), or a short lived convergence of an online friend group of artists (*s01e03*, 2020). Chasing these decidedly insular feelings between friends and translating them

into something immediate and pervasive to others has been a constant challenge of my cinema—it is a question primarily addressed by form itself.

Thus, my central inquiries arise: what shape should a film take when enigma is central to both the art and artist in question? How does one realize a film from someone else's life experience with little to no confirmed facts and most research leading to dead ends instead of answers? What form is most befitting of a distinctly online experience, while also entangled with pre-internet events from 40 years ago? And finally, more practically, and perhaps most importantly: how does production with a shoe-string budget healthily and ethically realize these ambitions?

## My Background

My first formal experience with filmmaking began by happenstance as a video game player. I was 13 years old and hopelessly addicted to *World of Warcraft* yet had also hit a dead end and lost inspiration to play the game as it was designed to be played. Apparently uninspired by the real world around me, I began to explore the possibilities of machinima—the practice of making cinema within and through video games. The film amounted to nothing more than an ugly, sluggish bricolage of adolescent obsessions. The experience making it would nonetheless resonate and echo in me, even though filmmaking wouldn't become a vocation for me until assisting on a friend's film in Winnipeg, Manitoba in 2012.

After a long day's shoot, I was up late one night and encountered an article by American film critic Phil Coldiron on the films of Raya Martin, whose work I had barely seen, but was nonetheless taken by this passage: "What is communicated by these images? Nothing, I would argue, more or less than the impulse of love, a genuine desire to explore that which is unknown, shot through with a humble understanding that the only way to really know these lives is to live them."<sup>1</sup> Here, I would find my then working, intuitive aspirations distilled into an exacting articulation. That one could begin their artistic project with intuition and love, reassured me in my nervous footing that meaning could be found through following this humble impulse to its furthest reaches. I attained certainty that this was the expressive path I wished to travel, and that I wanted to do so with the durational form of cinema. Shortly thereafter, I would embark on my first feature film, *Hit 2 Pass*, which was to be a free form production centered around my friend, Tyson Storozinski, returning to his hometown of

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<sup>1</sup> Coldiron, Phil. "The First Impulse." *Museum of the Moving Image*, October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2012. <http://www.movingimagesource.us/articles/the-first-impulse-20121019>

Prince George, B.C. and enrolling in the ritual bi-annual demolition derby crossed with a race. Yet I knew that such subject matter was thin and would need to be approached from a specific angle and shaped by a structure non-conforming with any underdog story conventions. The plot would need to travel beyond this impetus to arrive at a new, undeterminable locale. It was decided a year before even cameras rolled: the story of the race and portraiture of Tyson would cease halfway through.

Flash forward, halfway through the summer 2013 shoot, and succeeding the saga of the race being documented, I faced my first true creative ordeal, which I myself had unknowingly designed. Up until this point, I had been intuitively feeling my way through this film and its overall shape, while still loosely guided by the trajectory of the race narrative. Regrettably, I did not have the means to communicate and clarify with collaborators at the time, in that I lacked the language necessary to translate the intuition I was working from. If I were to go back, I would elucidate matters by quoting the French structuralist and landscape filmmaker Jean-Claude Rousseau:

What's the point of making a film if you know the subject?  
It is the lack of the subject that calls the film. The reason for the film is precisely the discovery of the subject.

We waited weeks for said subject to be found, with morale amongst crew dipping, I elected to shoot even when I knew it wouldn't be used. Through said shoots I paved our way to encounter our eventual subject: a young man named Nathan Giede. Indigenous yet adopted into a white anglo saxon family as an infant, Nathan found himself largely divorced from his Assiniboine heritage yet at a stage where he reached a desire to reconnect both with his origins and his birth mother. In a 2-hour interview, later distilled to an unbroken 17-minute shot, Nathan shared an abbreviated version of his life story. Nathan would eventually arrive at

a rich meditation on the practice of oral storytelling itself, proposing it as an inherently indigenous form on the land in which we reside. To which I decided to try and make the remainder of the film listen and explore the thesis of his words. Thus, the remainder of the shoot I wrestled with cinema's history with narrative, more specifically its initial impetus seen through by its creators Lumière and Muybridge to capture and document with little to no narrativization—a tradition upheld today by James Benning, Sharon Lockhart, and eventual collaborators Jessica Johnson & Ryan Ermacora. Thus, the remaining film plays out as a landscape film, eventually coalescing into a montage of video game play seeking to express and make tangible the feelings of connection and memory beneath the film's surface.

I would pursue this thread to the furthest reaches with my next film, a 6-year production made in Vancouver, New York, and the online fantasy realm of Vana'diel. This film returned to the practice of machinima where my filmmaking first began. *s01e03* primarily concerns a long-distance relationship hosted by a massively multiplayer online role-playing game that was set for closure by the end of the day, yet the film also highlights the community of friends around these lovers and their communion, fraternity, and eventual convergence. The film's pastiche title originates from the pursuit of composing an excerpt—a piece of ambient melodrama missing a cohesive narrative design. Instead, I was after expressing and giving form to a connection shared between numerous figures (it would be a stretch to call them characters) against the backdrop of gentrification. While neoliberalism was not yet a word I knew, I was unknowingly describing a set of its circumstances from simply culling together friends' and my experiences living in metropolis cities. Film critic Michael Sicinski perhaps elucidates it best in his review:

Walker's film examines the relative freedom of online 'landscapes,' particularly at a time when actual space -- the city, housing, the public sphere -- is being destroyed by privatization and gentrification. In *s01e03*, Walker's players are seen trying to exist in the 'reality' of Vancouver, only to be thwarted by various spatial impediments. By contrast, the two prospective lovers share an existence in *Final Fantasy* that, while hardly unfettered -- the game code has its limits, of course -- provides a field of action that they control and define.<sup>2</sup>

With this film I went deeper down one of the doorways which *Hit 2 Pass* opened, while also calling upon my lifelong experience with videogames to express the potentiality of virtual space that lies in wait. I wanted to express the rare, fleeting feeling of a singular online convergence between friends, who also happened to be like minded artists. Said artistry flowed into the movie's form, as I opened up the canvas and made it more participatory than before, with various formats of footage provided from collaborators folding into the work, alongside an autonomous short film by Douglas Dixon-Barker and Michelle Yoon playing mid-way through, and many more facets. This was to make tangible the love which pulses at the movie's center, and experiment with collaborative filmmaking a few degrees further than *Hit 2 Pass* had done previously.

Ultimately, *s01e03* ended up being an excessive and cumbersome production for a multitude of reasons, one being, frankly, I got lost in my movie and couldn't see which way was up. Initially designed to be completed in a 4-day traditional shoot with a few potential days of pickups in Summer 2016. I shortly thereafter realized I had overestimated the elliptical scenario I had designed and filmed and came out with a fragment of a film. I began ruminating on its empty gaps and got lost in a sea of possibilities before being moved to New York City by my employer. There, with collaborators in toe, I would slowly begin to

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<sup>2</sup> Michael Sicinski, "s01e03" *Patreon*, July 17, 2020

construct the missing parts of the movie previously unseen to me. It was a trying, difficult no-budget production thankfully graced by patient collaborators. Ultimately, its extensive timeline benefited the movie in that this passage of time and the spaces gentrified since the 2016 shoot became part of and enriched the film's fabric.

Surfacing from this production and unfurling my mistakes after taking a year off from filmmaking, I knew that I would put my all into making my next production concise and exacting. Before long I began gravitating back towards the seed of an idea left in the past, an uncanny internet happening and zenith in Canadian music that pulled me back towards...

## The Story of Lewis

In the spring of 2014, my friend and collaborator Douglas Dixon-Barker introduced me to an album entitled *L'Amour* by the artist Lewis. Its cover was graced by a gorgeous man, possibly the artist, aiming a piercing, beguiling gaze towards the viewer. The music inside was a collection of hazy, ethereal love songs with wispy vocals that unfurl amidst glistening synthesizers and gently strummed acoustic guitar. Immediately I was entranced, not just by the forlorn, romantic music I somehow felt I had been waiting the greater part of my youth for, but by the compelling mystery around its artist. An array of myths and narratives began to surface: that he was possibly the descendant of the oil heiress Doris Duke; he was a millionaire stockbroker; that he dated American supermodel Christie Brinkley; that he was not the man on the album's cover' or that the whole narrative around the album being a lost artwork was a hoax and that the album was actually made in 2008. Questions beckoned: Was Lewis still alive? And if so, where was he now?

The search effort occurred on multiple fronts. Amongst the online fandom, it largely took place via the message board "hipinion." Perhaps more officially, the record label Light in the Attic, who at the time were in the process of re-releasing *L'Amour*, were also desperately seeking Lewis' whereabouts by way of a private investigation. Notably, Light in the Attic also re-released a debatably comparable outsider artist album *Cold Fact* by Rodriguez, which would prove to be hugely successful due in part to the immensely successful documentary *Looking for Sugarman*, a subject to which I will later return. The label would soon get in touch with American photographer Edward Colver, the singular chronicler of the L.A. punk scene of the 1980s, and artist behind the cover photo for *L'Amour*. Apart from expressing significant dismay about his experience with Lewis—he

was scammed out of a measly \$250 for his labour on the photo shoot and album design— Colver provided an essential missing piece: Lewis’ real name was Randall Wulff. This changed the search entirely: now there was concrete means to search for the man, and yet even with all the data afforded by modern search engines, databases, and archives, still none of the Randall Wulff’s appeared to be a match.

Before further concrete leads could be found, a bombshell dropped: a second album by Lewis surfaced. *Romantic Times*, released in 1985, was discovered blanketed in dust by yet another Canadian record collector, Kevin ‘Sipreano’ Howes, in his own collection. The album was simultaneously located in the infamous Calgary record store Recordland, an institution that will prove to be a key player in this story and my own research. The astonishing cover now finds Wulff at an airport with what implicitly appear to be his own private jet and Mercedes Benz parked behind him. The music within proved to be much darker than its predecessor, with the ethereal romanticism being traded in for darker, more sinister shades. By this point it was now clear that Lewis was a far cry from a folk hero outsider artist like Rodriguez. *Romantic Times* brought with it the integral final clue confirming his nationality: the album was not another creation born from Beverly Hills but was actually recorded at Calgary’s Thunder Road Studios. This, paired with the fact that all the records had indeed been found in Canada, affirmed that Randall was Canadian.

We were now nearing the fateful month of August 2014, when online sleuthing for Randy was at its height. International attention soon began to brew upon the re-release of *L’Amour*; with stellar reviews sparking across the internet, journalists worldwide began to pen pieces about the search for Lewis. In a particularly cogent review, Maddy Costa writes for The Guardian:

What a strange and singular album this is. Recorded in 1983 by one Randall Wulff – a man who looks like a humanoid from *Blade Runner*, played the stock market, paid for the sleeve image for his vanity album with a cheque that bounced, and now can't be traced – *L'Amour* is so private it sounds transgressive, so diaphanous it might echo the sighing of ghosts. Every song comes across as a coded declaration of passion for someone inaccessible and intangible.<sup>3</sup>

Then on July 30th, 2014, a crucial development occurred, a former Calgarian by the name of Heath Ellingham, on rare exception, picked up a copy of the Calgary Herald in a coffee shop in Vancouver. He flipped through the paper he previously frequented and stumbled upon a 2-page spread regarding his former friend Randy, aka Lewis. At the end of the piece the email address "[asboatsgoby@gmail.com](mailto:asboatsgoby@gmail.com)" was printed for readers who may be able to provide any clues to his whereabouts. This address was run by hipinion member "evanfeite", also known as Calgary's Evan Van Reekum, a Recordland employee. Evan would shortly thereafter receive an email from Heath that cracked the code not only on who Lewis was, but where he might now reside. Evan then connected Heath with Matt Sullivan and Jack D. Fleischer of Light in the Attic to assist them with their investigation. At the time they were pursuing a clue from a record producer reporting to have worked with Randy in the early 2000s and had traveled from Los Angeles to an undisclosed Canadian city in a final bid to locate Lewis.

Sure enough, Heath would point them in the right direction, and by the next afternoon they would be sitting across from Randy at his favourite neighbourhood Starbucks. Still clothed in his favoured all-white attire, Randy hadn't a clue about the global search for his

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<sup>3</sup> Maddy Costa, "Lewis: L'Amour review – a coded declaration of passion," *The Guardian*, July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014. <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2014/jul/10/lewis-amour-review>

person, nor did he appear to have any interest in this reclamation of his music or the subsequent re-release: *Light in the Attic* offered him a cheque for \$20,000—the total earnings the *L'Amour* rereleased had thus far raked in—and he turned it down on the spot. “I’m not interested in coin”, Randy regaled.



Image 1: Randy Duke in August 2014. Used with permission by Jack D. Fleischer.

Subsequent to this meeting, Fleischer would become mediator for a handful of media interviews with Wulff (who now prefers the last name Duke, in accordance with his confessed Aunt Doris Duke), and then a short few months later he was no longer to be found.

Around this time, the music engineer Len Osanic, who had collaborated with Randy at his Fiasco Brothers Recording Studios in the early 2000s, would add his own production and release some of Duke’s demos as albums online to little fanfare. Now with some of the myth

unfurled, and a happy ending found, interest in Duke and his still undiscovered music began to diminish. At this time I was 23 years old and was preparing the premiere of my first feature, *Hit 2 Pass*, and was convinced from rumblings that surely in the light of the mass success of *Searching for Sugarman* that either a more accomplished or, frankly, more conventional filmmaker than myself was sure to adapt this before I could even begin development. Surely...

## Research, Development, Pre-Production, and Some Inspiration

Six years later, no modest “info” documentary or narrative film detailing the Lewis story had actualized. Further, the online obsession with the man and his music, of which there’s rumored to still be an undiscovered 1989 album, had largely faded. In 2015 Maxim magazine published an interview piece involving Wulff and others, wherein his old friend Heath hints at the fact that Randy had stolen a sizable amount of money from Heath to help make his dream a reality: “Ellingham found himself looking for new business opportunities, and on Larry’s advice, he reached out to Randy, who was making good money on Wall Street. Ellingham eventually assembled a group of wealthy acquaintances, and together they enlisted Randy to invest on their behalf. The mineral stocks they bought rose swiftly in value, but Ellingham says he never saw a dime in profit from Wulff, who was living in a suite at the Plaza hotel.” Online interest would begin to settle at the first sign of moral darkness, as Lewis was previously mistaken as an angelic figure whose narrative arrived at an uncanny happy ending.

In a previous interview with the guys of Light in the Attic, Randy put a period mark, followed by ellipses, on the saga: “I wish you guys all the best. I’m not looking back. I’m doing stuff now that’s taken me forty, fifty years to write. I’m not looking into coin. I’m not looking into anything. I’m just strumming my guitar. I just wish you guys all the best in the world.”<sup>4</sup>

Additionally, Len Osanic of Fiasco Brothers Recording Studios released the albums *Love Ain’t No Mystery* and *Hawaiian Breeze*, both unofficial releases frankensteining together

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<sup>4</sup> Jack D. Fleischer. “Lewis found!” *Light in the Attic*, August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

Randy's demos with garish production considerably out of step with the aesthetic of his melodies. While much mystery remained, the boundless enigmatic string of myths that had enraptured so many had largely dissolved in the face of this imperfect artwork. Meanwhile, the numerous film projects that were rumored to be in development presumably ceased after not being able to attain participation by Wulff's family, friends, collaborators, or himself.

In the fall of 2020, I found myself at the beginning of my Master's deciding between two concepts to realize as my thesis film: either continuing the thread of my previous works and unfurling the possibilities, forms, and experiences of video games through a portrait of a game designer crafting a videogame, or, pursuing this long incubating idea of some type of Lewis film. Revisiting his album *L'Amour* still managed to bring on all the same emotions I felt listening to it in my early 20s. The idea of doing something in an entirely new register—shot on film, short form, non-participatory, biographical—became most enticing as a welcome reprieve from the subject matter I previously frequented. I would also soon decisively discover that a family member owned the same infamous Mercedes convertible Lewis drove. The answer swiftly became clear—I had to finally at least attempt to realize this film.

What shape the film could and should take would become the first quandary, and a question at the epicenter of the 10-month period of research, development, and pre-production. Meanwhile I was sifting through dozens of films regarding the life and artistic project of artists, not so much to look for an approach to lift from but to crystallize the lineage wherein the film might be situated. I viewed numerous rote music biopics (*Almost Famous* [2000], *Velvet Goldmine* [1998]) and contrasted them with films abiding by similar conventions that somehow succeed (*Jersey Boys* (2014), *Elvis* (1979)), through varying means of aesthetic sense, storytelling measure, and musical delicacy. While the music biopic

structure is a nearly exhausted storytelling form in its structuring of artists lives around salacious greatest hits moments from their personal life (rather than focusing on the art itself), I still found myself often moved by their ambition to encompass a lifetime, and what is possible within a lifetime, into a 2-hour film. Nonetheless, this form was not only beyond my means but also outside my sensibility. Furthermore, as I began to immerse myself back into both the Lewis myth and the music itself, it was quickly clear to me that it was antithetical to portray his art and life in a clearly drawn story laden with exposition. To return to the example of *Searching for Sugarman*, a film incessantly summoned in most conversations regarding my film: it depicts the outsider musician Rodriguez, whose forgotten music, unbeknownst to him, has found a considerable audience in South Africa while Rodriguez was a working-class father living in Detroit. This story is one of catharsis for Rodriguez upon discovering his belated fame and appreciation. Where Rodriguez is a kind of folk hero, Lewis is a diaphanous cloud of mystery punctuated by dark myths. It would be untrue to adapt both his person(a) and music into a conventional framework of a popular documentary. Instead, in order to adapt the online myths and the singular texture of the hazy songs, I gravitated towards making a more impressionist and elusive film.

This angle prompted a return to *Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach* (Jean-Marie Straub, Daniele Huillet, 1968), a film that is ancestor to numerous films poised around the beauty of performance, most notably *Sympathy for the Devil* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1968) and *Ne change rien* (Pedro Costa, 2009). Apart from Straub/Huillet's gorgeous panoply of Bach performances in the film, it is also richly structured and canted towards the avant-garde in its abstraction of Bach's interiority. In the film, Bach is frequently seen from behind or buried in the fame amidst a sea of faces. The mise-en-scène does not center or particularly elevate him,

and in doing so expresses his personhood to be unattainable. Thus, the film resorts to written text: diary entries and correspondences, and the perspective of his wife, to compose an incomplete portrait of his life. Similarly, I had begun gravitating back towards this approach (similarly executed in previous films) of withholding character interiority, in addition to becoming increasingly attracted to, against many odds, realizing a performance film with Randy Duke himself set amidst his home environment as depicted by *Light in the Attic*: “Randall Wulff is alive. Living and breathing and content, simply playing his music in the comfort of his own home, with a girlfriend and some kittens by his side.”<sup>5</sup>

Concurrent with this purveying of cinema history for its portraits of artists, I was also pouring over every published article and internet post regarding Duke, whilst composing an expansive timeline of Randy’s life events. Additionally, I had begun speaking with numerous research subjects, either over the phone, Zoom, email, or in person, which I will list here for posterity:

- Edward Colver, photographer responsible for the *L’Amour* album art, and whom Duke also robbed.
- Jack D. Fleischer, Music blogger who co-produced the re-release of the albums for *Light in the Attic*. Located Randy and met with him numerous times.
- Aaron Levin, “Weird Canada” blogger who wrote about *L’Amour*, subsequently broadening its audience.
- Evan Van Reekum, Musician and former Recordland employee who discovered *Romantic Times* and was pivotal in the search for Lewis.
- Jon Murphy, Record collector who discovered the first known copy of *L’Amour* on January 1st, 2007 at an Edmonton flea market.

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<sup>5</sup> Jack D. Fleischer. “Lewis found!” *Light in the Attic*, August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

- Heath Ellingham, an old friend of Randy Dukes who knew him leading up to the recording of *L'Amour*.
- Len Osanic, the owner of Fiasco Brothers Recording Studio in New Westminster, B.C., where he recorded Randy from (approximately) 2000 until Randy disappeared in 2006.
- Jeremy Wulff, Nephew to Randy. The only family member known to be open to speak to researchers regarding Randy.

Through these conversations I slowly was able to fill in a few of the gaps missing in the loose biographical chart I had been composing. Yet as much as things became clearer regarding Duke's origins and his eventual shady dealings, certain myths, namely whether he indeed had become a surrogate nephew to Doris Duke by way of his girlfriend, or if he picked up another undiscovered pseudonym in Europe and continued making music abroad, remained undeterminable. Yet at the turns where I hit such unresolvable contradictions or unaccounted for gaps of time, I only found my intrigue deepened and renewed by way of uncovering further enigma. This enigma would become fuel for my eventual approach to the film.

After months of remote research in Toronto, I was getting increasingly impatient to return to my home city to try and make direct contact with Randy, both as an avid fan, but also with the hope of realizing a performance film with his participation. In my solitude amidst the Toronto COVID-19 lockdown of Winter 2021, I slowly reckoned with the unlikeliness of this option and soon pivoted the film towards a narrative approach. Nervous of overdesigning a trajectory, however, I opted to write a loose 9-page scenario, which initially formalized as a kind of neo-silent film akin to the lovers-on-the-lam narrative convention: Lewis and Karen have just acquired a great deal of money under mysterious circumstances and together flee to LA to live their opulent dream life in Beverly Hills. The details of said

acquisition are abstracted into a Faustian bargain, literally citing a scene of *Faust* (Murnau, 1926) to convey the dealing. Further, the scenario was drafted with no dialogue and the barest of characterization to realize the people within (Young and old Lewis, Karen, Edward Colver) as inaccessible figures. The silent cinema's device of intertitles would be resuscitated to host comments from the online fandom: their myths, theories, and possible facts. In part the intention was that once interstitially woven together, the montage would shift and make undeterminable at what level of reality the diegesis functions: truth, fiction, or myth.

My fateful revisiting of the television show *Unsolved Mysteries*, itself an ur-text of the 1980s, helped lead me to this approach, as that show was founded upon an eerie ambient atmosphere guiding a series of reconstructions culled from various scenarios of documented crime to the fantastical realms of alien abduction. Had Lewis' exploits and art been uncovered in the 80s, one could imagine this tale taking up a 10-minute slot on *Unsolved Mysteries*, complete with Robert Stack ruminating on the many sordid details.

My web of influences reached outside the limitations of television though, with not only a vast array of cinema proving key to my process, but also Lewis' music itself. The ethereal nature of the songs, composed of buried, often indecipherable vocals, glistening synthesizers, and soft acoustic strumming, became centerpiece to my visual treatment, and indeed, the motivating force behind utilizing the intrinsic impressionism of Super 16mm. The film's impetus to abandon dialogue originates here too, in the ambition of instilling the film with a similar affect of serene calm and mystery, perhaps mostly cogently articulated by Jack D. Fleischer as an "event horizon of soft."

In regard to cinema, in keeping with my previous film *s01e03* and its romanticism, I found myself partly inspired by the works of the Hollywood auteur Frank Borzage and his

works of transcendental romance. Although there is but a small trace of classical filmmaking in *I Thought the World of You*'s aesthetic makeup, I sought to adapt the feeling and affect of melodrama and its heightened expression of emotions into the film's fabric and ambience. The story I've composed for Lewis and Karen, arranged from a mosaic of secondhand accounts, online myths, and possible facts, is that of a tragic love story entangled with art. *L'Amour* and its 10-tracks of forlorn love songs, possibly culled from many of the experiences the two shared, inspired this faint trajectory in the film's threadbare story. How to film love, whether it be familial, platonic, or romantic, and translate it into mise-en-scène and montage, is my most consistent inquiry within the practice of cinema. With *Hit 2 Pass*, I explored the love between a group of friends experiencing a new place. In *s01e03*, I aimed to articulate what long distance relationships (both romantic and platonic) feel like. And with *I Thought the World of You*, I sought to portray a love lost to time yet documented in art and mythologized online.

I also found myself inspired by the aforementioned French filmmaker Jean-Claude Rousseau, particularly his film *Faux départ* (2006) and its enigmatic formalization. Its minimalist scenario focuses on a man in repose inside a motel room. A large ticket, likely for air or train travel, sits across from him on a table. He looks towards the ticket, the window in front of him, and eventually the camera lens to his right. No interiority or narrative premise is provided; instead, one might wonder what brought the man here and where he is going. Yet with no provided boundaries, the ruminative possibilities are endless. Like a figure in a Renoir or Hopper painting, their enigmatic indecipherability expands the boundaries of the artwork through a richly nuanced ambiguity.

Similarly, I find I constantly return to the singular work of Italian filmmaker Franco Piavoli, who with *Voici nel tempo* (1996), achieved a high singular cinematic expression I have long obsessed over as both filmmaker and cinephile. *Voici nel tempo* or *Voices Through Time* distills the shape of a lifetime through the cycle of seasons: beginning with an infant crawling up the stone steps of an unnamed Italian village in Summer, and ending with a man passing on his deathbed at the height of winter. The film, through condensing the duration of a lifetime across numerous figures' presences, expresses the true beauty and possibility of life free from the usual maudlin philosophizing or distended introspections attached to similar thematic pursuits. Moreover, its acute and endlessly beautiful compositions all distill and actualize this philosophy through filming both human and nature with immense gravity and warmth.

While my aspirations with *I Thought the World of You* did not reach the heights of mortality, I nonetheless wanted a similarly distinct approach to the passing of time: to make time and its unfurling move with dramatic weight. From Rousseau, I wished to enact a similar enigma, one not made trite by arbitrary ambiguity, but instead expansive with possibility and curiosity. From *Borzage*, I wanted to make a picture that concludes on a final note soaked with an inspired romanticism.

Finally, I also revisited a few 1980s American titles to further immerse myself in the aesthetic and nature of this time period. One was *Manhunter* (Michael Mann, 1986), which enraptured me with its sleek images and art-deco spaces that house its cat-and-mouse serial killer story. In the film, Detective Will Graham (William Petersen) hunts a murderer named "The Tooth Fairy" (Tom Noonan). Mann was notably a student of Murnau, whose *Faust* inspired him to make movies to begin with, and so it's no surprise that Graham must make a

Faustian bargain with the iconic Hannibal Lecter in order to succeed in his hunt. As of this writing, it's clearer to me how I arrived at Muranu's *Faust* as a symbol to be sampled within my diegesis.

The second title I returned to was *Cruising* (William Friedkin, 1980), similarly a tale of an obsessed detective in search of an elusive phantom. This time in the queer S&M scene of pre-Giuliani New York City, Steve (Al Pacino) must immerse himself in this scene as bait to the killer to eventually lure him out for a deeply corrupt Police department to encircle. This premise is deeply complicated by the filmmaking, however, in that Friedkin plays with multiple actors to embody the serial killer. suspicious cuts, narrative ellipses, and eerie sound design might cumulatively even suggest that Pacino himself could be implicated in the killings. *Cruising* is the rare unresolvable, enigmatic film which depicts a man's identity deteriorate yet offers no concrete psychological answers.

From these works I found myself immersed in the gaudy world of Reaganite America. Admittedly, I also saw in their trajectories both my own obsession, and the fandom's (to which I belong), the combination of which would eventually shape into the silent narrator of the movie.

## Ambient Cinema

Until recently, I've never been satisfied by categories applied to my films and would settle for perfunctory descriptors like "Experimental Fiction" or "Hybrid", when really these fail to accurately describe my aesthetic aims. It wasn't until I noticed a Letterboxd user by the name of "dante" ask in their review of *s01e03*: "is ambient film a genre?" that I embraced this categorization. Encountering this fruitful questioning was my long-awaited arrival at the language and terminology that satisfied my intuitive definition of my filmmaking thus far.

In *The Ambient Century*, Mark Prendergast defines ambient music as being a musical form "that emphasizes tone and atmosphere over traditional musical structure or rhythm. A form of instrumental music, it may lack net composition, beat, or structured melody."<sup>6</sup> If we accept narrative as the organizing structure of most films made today, then my films in part forgo this arranging principle in the name of highlighting emotion and atmosphere over plot and premise. It's a precarious trade, as emotive responses are often reached by way of the latter two frameworks, but with the right rhythm, cadence, and texture, I believe that ambient cinema can reach similar affective notes, albeit registering in an entirely different mode of experience.

In the same breath, it's not as though my films are without premise or story. In *I Thought the World of You*, there is the thin sketch of a framework drawn over the canvas of the film. Deduced from the intertitles, time period, narrative totems (the briefcase, the cheque, the camera, the guitar, etc.), and locale, there is a graspable if threadbare story being expressed. Yet instead of dialogue, action, confrontation, crises, and traditional classical

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<sup>6</sup> Mark Prendergast, *The Ambient Century* (London, UK: Bloomsbury, 2003), 24.

storytelling, these elements have been adapted and sublimated into the film's textural fabric. For example, instead of a tightly plotted yet expository scene detailing how Lewis and Karen came into the money they attained, I instead opt for a foreboding scene in which Lewis picks up a briefcase and loads it into the back of his Mercedes-Benz. Where a page of dialogue and plot may have articulated the shadowy contents of the briefcase, I instead leave it to mise-en-scène and an iris overlay of Mephisto from *Faust* to express darkness. In the following scene, wherein Karen and Lewis resume their drive down a highway, a sunbeam refracts off the car's interior into the lens. Here I synced a piece of music by James Emrick, the only piece not by Lewis to appear in the film, to further pronounce and punctuate the ambiguity. Further, the decision to extract from the scenario any opportunity for dialogue further underlines the film's ambient nature: to focus on gestures, the body, place, and texture before any trajectory of story or character.

## Pre-Production and Pre-Visualization

My first stop upon arriving to Vancouver at the beginning of May 2021 was Fiasco Brothers Recording Studio. I had previously booked this appointment in the summer of 2014, when I was flirting with the idea of making a film and jumped at the chance to help with the online search effort for Randy. Regrettably, or perhaps by way of destiny, that meeting did not occur, making this visit feel like a momentous, long-awaited occasion. Founded by Len Osanic in the early 1980s, Fiasco resides in New Westminster and is a familiar spot for musicians looking for an affordable spot to record. Much like how *L'Amour* was recorded at LA's Music Lab (described as "a dive" that was home to the lo-fi punk scene), Fiasco might be Vancouver's equivalent as a home for independent rock music scene. My first meeting with Len proved to be about 5 hours long, in which we rehashed their collaboration for an expanse of years which he could no longer precisely determine. One thing was certain: it began sometime around 9/11, as Len distinctly recalls watching the news coverage with Randy and his conspiratorial comments about the stock market anticipating the attack. At this moment Randy revealed his extensive knowledge of the stock market, and Len began to think he might be distinct from his usuals. Over an approximately 5-year period, Randy would come in every month and book the studio for an entire day to hone and perfect but a few demo songs. Len uncovered the ancient hard drive during my visit and within must have been 100+ demo tracks, mostly all unheard (except for those which Len released on *Hawaiian Breeze* and *Love Ain't No Mystery*). At the conclusion of our meeting, which I recorded and assembled for my directed reading with John Greyson and Ingrid Veninger, I asked whether we might possibly shoot at Fiasco Brothers, using it as a double for Music Labs circa 1982. Len immediately accepted in his signature casual yet entirely committed tone. The first

location had been locked—the movie and all its haunted spaces were beginning to take on a tangible shape through which a production could be mounted.



Image 2: The hard drive to which Randy recorded his collaboration with Len Osanic.

First, however, a text of some form would be required to proceed. A brief, precise scenario took shape within the space of a night or two. I found myself surprised by this acuity and speed but attribute it to the thorough investigation and research I had executed in the many months preceding. Further, experiencing the online phenomenon at its initial time and remaining obsessed with the music over the years had me immensely immersed in this world. After completing the first draft of my scenario, then entitled *R.A.W. 1001* (after Randy’s incorporated company cited on the records, and an abbreviation of his full name), I began previsualization by crudely drawing storyboards of each scene, on average arranged in 1 to 3 shots. After years of making films partly improvised, with vast gaps awaiting improvisation and discovery, *R.A.W. 1001* was to be my first fully previsualized movie with little to no room for my previous on-set freedoms I had previously afforded myself through casual, often imprecise scheduling.

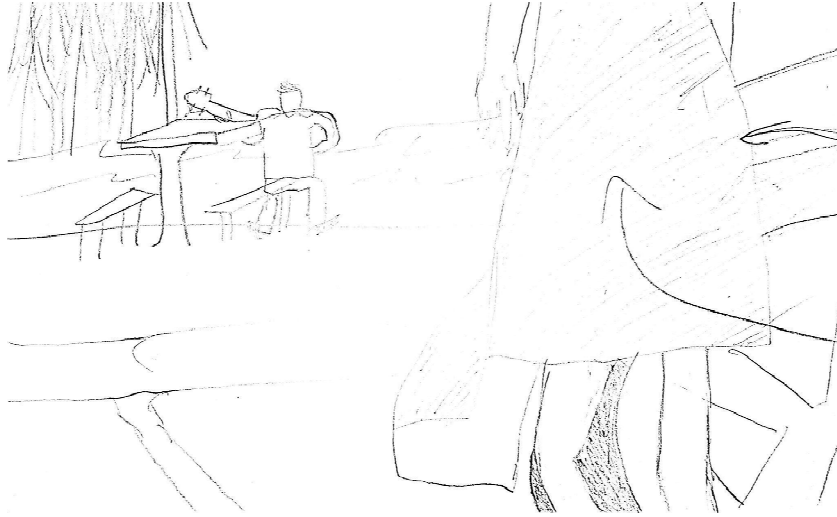


Image 3: Storyboard #1.



Image 4: Frame #1.

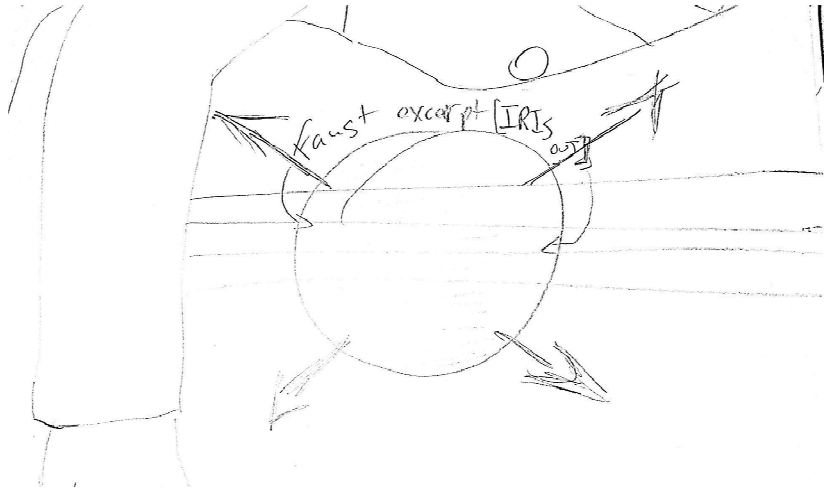


Image 5: Storyboard #2.

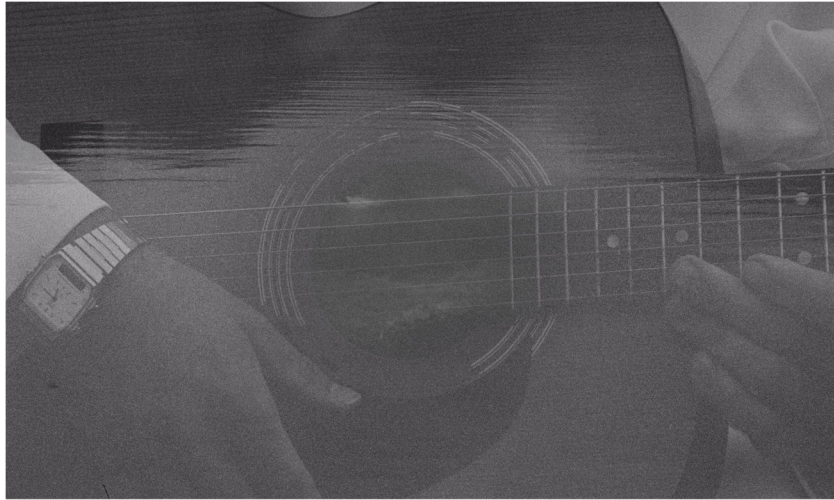


Image 6: Frame #2.

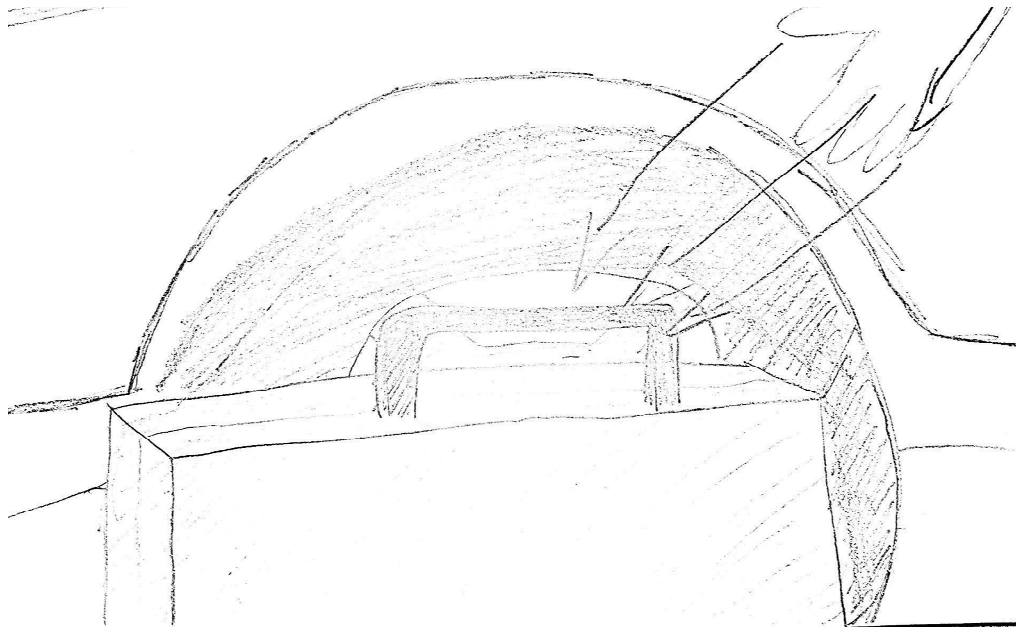


Image 7: Storyboard #3.



Image 8: Frame #3.



Image 9: Storyboard #4.



Image 10: Frame #4.

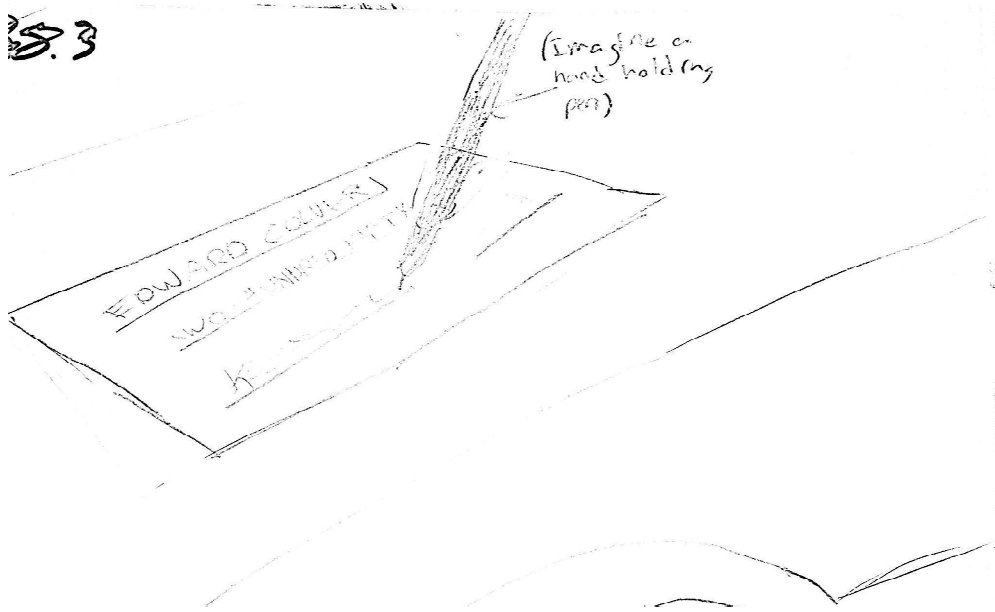


Image 11: Storyboard #5.

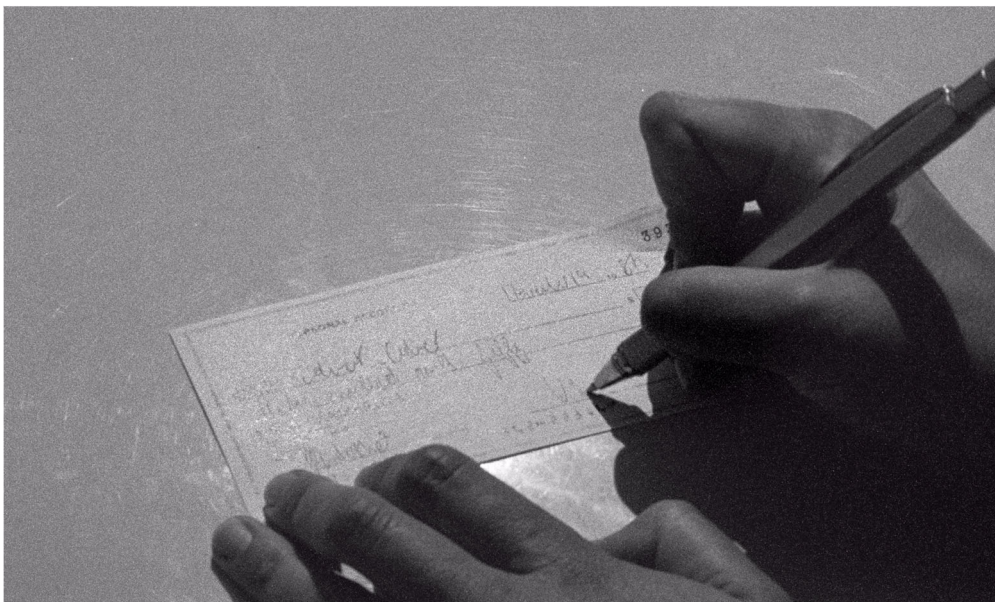


Image 12: Frame #5.

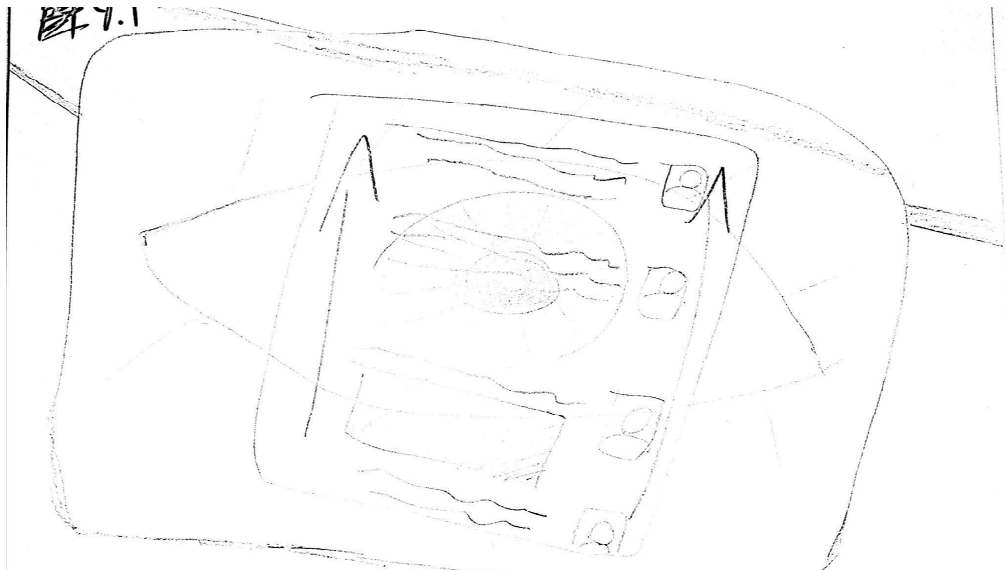


Image 13: Storyboard #6.



Image 14: Frame #6.

From here I began working closely with my producer Heather McDonald, who I previously collaborated with for *s01e03*, on scouting our 11 locations. Heather brought with her a professional expertise of Vancouver location filmmaking with her background in prop mastery, but she also has an expansive knowledge of the city itself: its layout, architecture, history, and rapid development. As in our previous collaboration, this knowledge became key to charting out the distinct and highly specific locations for our many scenes, many of which were to be set in Vancouver circa 1982 and another portion being in Los Angeles.

In the making-of documentary shot on the set of *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (Coppola, 1992), Coppola remarks that “I was going to lead with the costumes, I was going to put most of my money in the costumes, and diminish the sets and have the sets be a highly imaginative use of space and shadow, with one set piece and a black void with a cloud projection, which is more the technique of *Citizen Kane*. The costume would be the jewel of the set.” Which brings me to the imperative role of costumes in my film’s diegesis: while my team and I did not have the means of Coppola and the nigh creatively boundless freedoms in studio filmmaking, I do nonetheless find resonance in costumes being the “jewel” of this movie’s design, in that given our budget and scale we had no means of reconstructing the 1980s through location, thus it fell to costumes to express period. Over the course of the months of June & July, costume and production designer Maria Katarina took the lead here by searching the many thrift stores and costume shops of Vancouver to distill and curate the many details the story’s fabric necessitated.

Approaching the shoot, I also began working closely with my cinematographers Ryan Ermacora and Jessica Johnson. I have been a longtime fan of Ermacora & Johnson’s landscape films, in particular their film *Ocean Falls* and its haunted, vacant spaces found in a

dead town off the coast of British Columbia. Together they brought their erudite expertise of 16mm photography and their precise sensitivity to the tones of light the movie was chasing. Their own compositional sensibility also became key in a few instances where producing duties had me distracted. With my relative inexperience in 16mm filmmaking, Ryan and Jessica were key collaborators who not only made the film's visual texture a reality, but also taught me a great deal about the ins & outs of celluloid filmmaking along the way.

## Production

The film's shoot would commence on July 9th, 2021, with a first day more challenging than any other I had ever encountered. Shooting and permit-less location work was running smoothly until a mid-day location change, wherein our team moved from the Sea-to-Sky highway back to our headquarters in East Vancouver. Amidst the move, my family member who lent their 1987 Mercedes Benz convertible to the production (as Lewis' iconic wheels that graced the *Romantic Times* album art) got into an accident. The car was totaled. No one was hurt, yet it highlighted the preciousness this vehicle held: it was designed as a lovers-on-the-lam picture, with said car being the central vehicle guiding the loose plot. Now it was irretrievably gone, despite my having many more scenes planned with it, including even multiple scenes that evening. We forgoed the evening shoot and I continued ahead with no alternatives in mind. The tight 4-day schedule, and my extensive producing duties, would barely leave me slivers of time to rethink these sequences until it organically began to happen: a shot of Lewis driving down an empty highway would be translated into Lewis exiting a recording studio and evaporating into a mist of darkness. The opening scene, initially capturing Karen walking from a beach's edge to get in the car and drive off with Lewis, would be shifted to a bench. In both cases the movie would unexpectedly benefit: in the former, the location of Fiasco Brothers recording studio—the actual studio Randy recorded in the 2000s—could be fully expressed. Meanwhile the opening scene would be graced by a greater degree of intimacy and tangible love between the central characters by closing the gap between them had they otherwise been in an automobile.

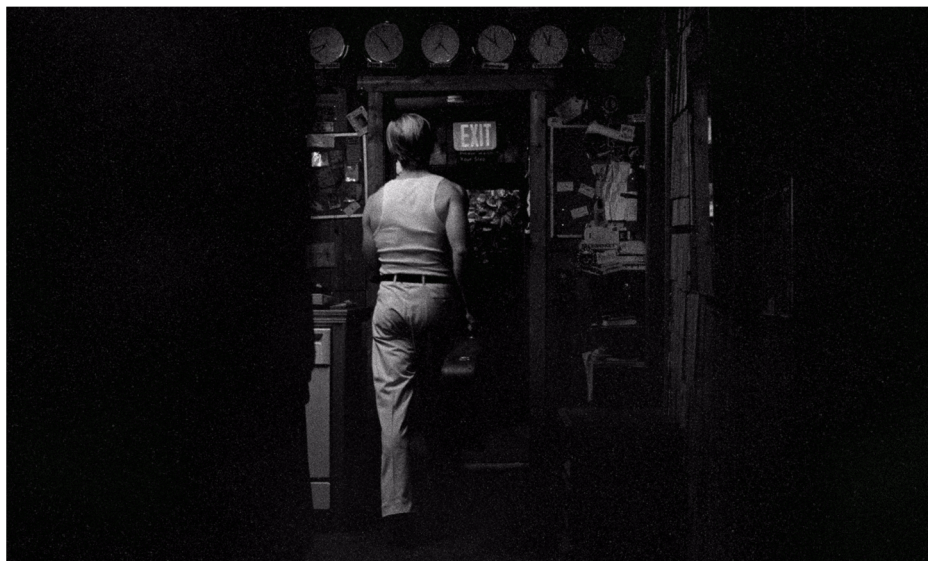


Image 15: Frame #7.

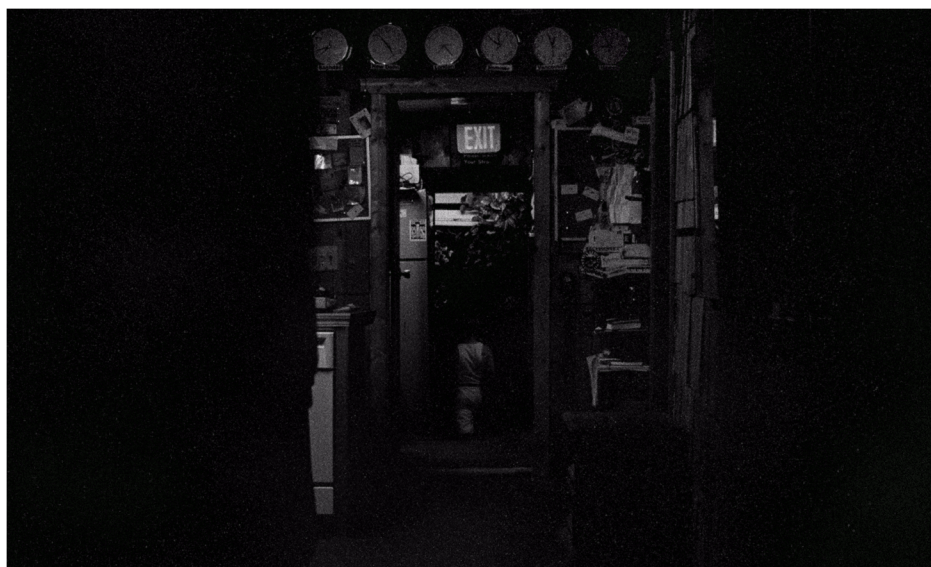


Image 16: Frame #8.

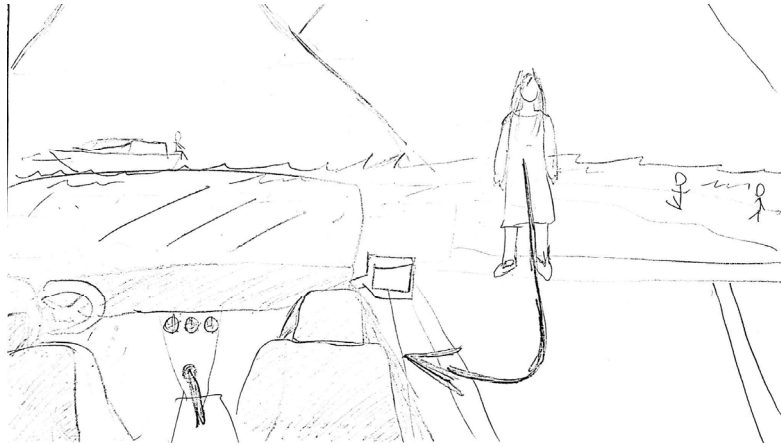


Image 17: Storyboard #7.



Image 18: Frame #9.

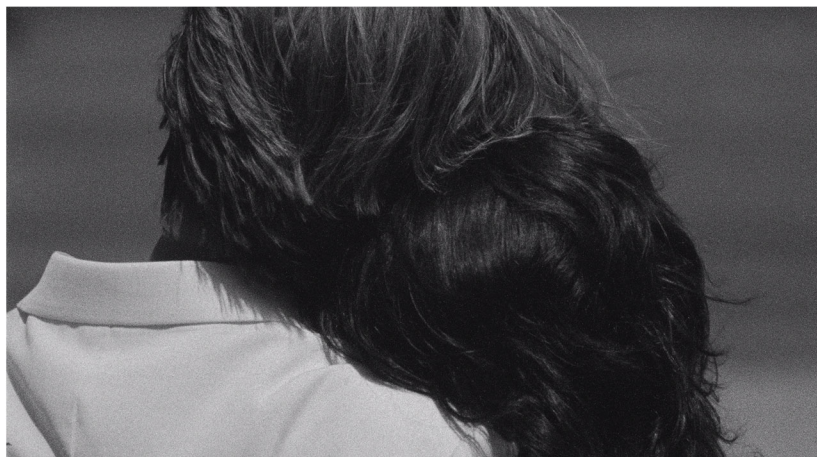


Image 19: Frame #10.

The succeeding days, each with their own immense challenges, would thankfully prove to be without crisis. The days were nonetheless long, intense, yet immensely fulfilling. For myself as a producer, I grew two-fold, learning to balance the many demands of the role from organizing to location management. I also learned how to direct a crew more akin to traditional production models when compared to my previous shoots. Further, for perhaps the first time, I managed to be more consistently articulate about my intentions whenever necessary. Where previous films were intuited this film was carefully designed, and thus I found myself empowered with a greater sense of precision when it came to my intentions as director and in those imperative moments where one must rethink what had been previously planned.



Image 20: The morning of day 1, at Porteau Cove.

In the aftermath of the shoot, I realized my foremost mistake: in building the schedule I had not accurately factored in the irregular number of locations in relation to our limited vehicles and storage space for the cumbersome kit for an ARRI SR3 camera and its many utilities. As a result, we were stretched much too thin, and days went on longer than they should have. Where most shoots of this scale comfortably shoot in the space of 4-days, this film has an untraditional quantity of locations given its breadth of time and place. Further, we had a few malfunctions in wardrobe as a result of my not prioritizing time for necessary fittings. On a practical level, I left the shoot with a development in key organizational abilities, and from my mistakes I learned a stronger sense of prioritization regarding the many tasks of both directing and producing.



Image 21: On set (star John R. Taylor's apartment).

## Post-Production: Montage and Beyond

Post-production began in earnest upon the receipt of the scans from our July shoot, conducted by Colorlab of Rockville, Maryland. In keeping with the film's origins in silent cinema, montage began with a preliminary, near silent cut of the footage thus far. This was primarily done partly out of impulsivity and excitement, but also to test whether the intended rhythm of my montage and intertitles, as laid out by my previsualizations, had worked as planned. Upon assemblage it became clear that my planning had mostly paid off: the shots flowed with the intended rhythm and made for compelling associations with various intertitle comments I was then experimenting with. A first cut materialized quicker and more organically than I had ever previously achieved.

Montage continued concurrently with numerous collaborations that would take place over Fall and Winter 2021/2022. My visual planning, combined with a slim footage ratio meant that I had less freedom in the edit room than ever before. Where *Hit 2 Pass* and *s01e03* were sculpted down from nearly a hundred hours of footage, this film's footage was composed from about 2 hours of material, making its shooting ratio far more precise. Nonetheless, much freedom remained, as even trimming a few planned frames of a shot can produce an entirely new affect, idea, or rhythm. Indeed, many of these opportunities surfaced as I discovered new pathways in the few instances where planning hadn't entirely succeeded. For example, the concluding shot of Lewis disappearing like a ghost amidst the financial district was a new ending quickly surmised just before the shoot began. I had no time to precisely triangulate its sequencing or flow, and thus it was one of the few things I opted to leave to chance and discovery. Eventually I found a small gesture Alex Henderson, who plays Karen, makes whilst in medium close-up listening to the record: a slight head raise and blink,

as though she sees something in front of her. Cutting to Lewis here, across time and space, rekindled their connection on a purely formal level. Drenched in shadow as a result of some poor scheduling—inadvertently working in this sequence’s favour!—only further highlighted the solemnity behind this mythical bygone romance.

The first post-production collaboration began with my friend Kerr Holden, who previously assisted on post of *Hit 2 Pass*, and later did CGI Animation for *s01e03*. To actualize the motifs and loose adaptation of *Faust*, and distill the story’s themes of time’s passing, I enlisted Kerr to animate backgrounds for the intertitles and a 3D hourglass, which was to appear at the pivotal moment of Lewis beginning to record *L’Amour*, and later return in an elusive scene of old Randy sitting at a bench looking out at the sea, reckoning with the past. Beyond further crystallizing the film’s themes, I also gravitated towards the potentiality of CGI converted to 16mm and the possible fruits to be found at this aesthetic frontier. To get there though, Kerr had to both acquire and realize a complex array of 3D assets, arrange precise virtual lighting setups, and adapt my direction into virtual camera movements. After many months of work, close collaboration, hundreds of hours of rendering, and extensive tutelage to a director most underserved in the art of CGI animation, the final versions would be delivered in January 2022.

Concurrently with this process I was also planning a shoot at Calgary, Alberta’s infamous vinyl record store Recordland. A kind of ground zero for the discovery of the records, Recordland contains what is likely the largest collection of vinyl in Canada, and perhaps even North America. Being in Randy’s native Calgary, where he took many copies of *L’Amour* back upon leaving L.A. in 1983 (and where he later recorded and privately pressed *Romantic Times*), Recordland became the natural end point for the few copies that survived

and escaped forgotten storage lockers. Thus, despite the extensive costs, the sequence I had planned had to be shot there, and no substitutes could be made. All my films have had this relationship with place, and aside from the circumstantial shooting of Vancouver as Los Angeles in this film (a cost we simply had no way of confronting in the absence of funding), it has remained imperative to film in the true places that host an expanse of experience for my subjects: Prince George as Tyson's native hometown in *Hit 2 Pass*, Vancouver & New York for its housing precarity in *s01e03*, and Vancouver once again for *I Thought the World of You* as it was the city Randy last (reportedly) resided. His possible presence in the shooting city cast a long, ghostly shadow over the project, which I opted to weave into the film itself: our reconstructive, mythical rendition of Lewis, as played by Reece Presley, dissolves into the ether at the film's end, providing no illumination or answers. Had we not filmed in Vancouver, this emotion would have been inaccessible, and the movie would not have been composed in the same register.

Thus it followed, despite the costs, it was necessary to travel to the actual Recordland and film its hallowed halls of vinyl. After eventually being connected to local filmmaker Justin Skrundz through the Calgary Society of Independent Filmmakers, the shoot could finally occur. Luckily, my friend and producer Heather McDonald was working on a Netflix production in town and thus was able to put me up. Eraz Cohen of Recordland was immediately welcoming and fully supportive of the project: "Finally, someone is actually doing this," he commented. Recordland opened the doors to us for what could have turned into an all-night shoot, and over the course of 8 hours we listened to an original pressing of *L'Amour* over the shop's audio system and filmed one of the final pieces of the film whilst Eraz and I talked about the history of Lewis and I learned the perspectives of the employees

that experienced the whole affair in real time, including the uncanny discovery of *Romantic Times*' existence. Once again, I found filming in the actual location, and the subsequent conversations this act inspired, to be uniquely inspiring. After all, the film has shades of a ghost story, and thus shooting in the real locations actualized the haunting.

Amidst the organizing and execution of this shoot I had begun working with my sound designer James Emrick. An experimental musician based in New York, James previously did the sound design for *s01e03*, and more recently the immensely inspiring *Worlds* (Isaac Goes, 2021). As with most every collaborator on this project, James also appreciated Lewis' music, and brought with him his own expertise of music to our conversations. Collaborating with me by way of a remote workflow from New York, James would primarily utilize the location audio recorded by Vladimir Fedulov, and slowly finesse the sound design and mixing to the exacting balance it currently resides. A primary creative challenge of this collaboration became the nature of how much silence resides in the film: no dialogue, extensive intertitle sequences, the hourglass sequences, etc. It became a question of striking a balance so that the soundtrack did not dip into dead-air or stasis. After much deliberation we opted to fill the intertitle slots with the textural sounds of audio equipment through the eras encompassed within film: from Vinyl, to 8-tracks, to tapes, to CDs.

One of the last collaborations was with Alter Ego colourist James Graham, with whom I hit it off instantly, and over the course of two extensive sessions we connected over a great deal of cinema and music. This would be the first time I worked with a professional colourist, with my previous films only being briefly touched up in spots by collaborators Kerr Holden and Kelley Dong. James applied a strong, unified look to the film's many shots, with a focus on pushing the highlights and whites away from the murkier greys they initially registered

towards the brilliant glow in which they are now cast. James was patient with me as I learned the ins and outs of this new workflow, especially given how complicated many of my dissolves and superimpositions made things. The results elucidated to me both the workflow and the necessity of this process.

Fast forward to January 2022, with now most of the final assets delivered, a picture lock of the edit achieved, and sound complete, the final step remained: converting several elements from digital to 16mm. This included the *Faust* sequence, the intertitle backgrounds, the hourglass sequences, and the Edward Colver photographs of Lewis. This involved refilming a projection of a 4-minute clip (encompassing all the above) onto 16mm. This was done with ease in collaboration with local cinematographer and filmmaker Nikolay Michaylov on the York campus and was swiftly delivered to Colorlab for development. Upon receipt of this final piece, the film was largely now complete barring a few final touches.

## **Ethics**

One of the primary ethical questions at nearly every stage of this production was how does one make a film ethically about a subject who is not involved in the film or its making? The answer I eventually arrived at, as with most of my cinema, was that it was a matter of formalization. If I were to take the liberty to compose the film as if it were the self-appointed, definitive biography of Lewis, this would be overstepping and neglectful to Randy's personhood. Thus, I figure that if the film could position the retelling of possible events from the angle of a purely speculative narrativization, then it could perhaps strike an ethical accord. This was partially the function of the intertitles, which host an array of comments ranging from obsessive mythologizing to unconfirmed firsthand accounts, and online speculation. When pillowed between scenes, these comments intend to destabilize the veracity of the story's narrative makeup, with the cumulative ambition of deepening the enigma of who Randy/Lewis is.

The other primary ethical priority of the film was in its making: after nearly a decade of making no budget films and feeling as though I had proven myself as a filmmaker, I frankly felt ready—even entitled—to proper funding with this project so as to pay my crew for the first time. Things did not work out as I had anticipated, and this project was not supported by OGS or SSHRC despite its extensive costs of being filmed on Super 16mm in another province without access to York University's equipment. While I found myself empowered by having an all-star crew, I would yet again not have the means to pay them. Further, the film was on the precipice of collapsing but a week before going to camera, unless necessary funds could be attained for key production costs. I was lucky enough to be in a position where a longtime collaborator offered me a loan to prevent the shoot from falling through. Before I

felt like I could proceed, I made sure to touch base with all collaborators and ensure they were comfortable with the unlikelihood of payment. The most production could offer now, was the full coverage of any expendable costs (gas, production expenses, etc.) and provide all meals.

My failure as a producer did not begin and end with this lack of payment, but instead dovetailed with the aforementioned scheduling issue: the schedule was overloaded for the scale of crew, number of locations, and the time allotted; thus 3 out of the 4 days became unexpectedly long. The crew was once again supportive, understanding, and largely aboard to put in the work, but it nonetheless was not what people had signed up for, and certainly took a toll on everyone. Nonetheless, there was a general air of positivity and celebration upon wrapping the film, with everyone feeling proud of their work and knowing that they made an immeasurable contribution to the film. In post-production, similar challenges continued, affirming what I previously already knew: this would be my final “no budget” production, and that no future film of mine will go to camera without the necessary backing in order to at the very least pay people for the immense labour and care that goes into making a movie. Where I half-heartedly believed this prior to this film, it is now held as a certainty in my mind, and I will accept nothing less before continuing my artistic project.

## Conclusion

It is my continued belief that cinema is irrevocably shaped in part by the place in which it is made and the bonds between the people on all sides of the camera. Where this surfaced in more tangible forms in my previous films, here it again remains an animating spirit of the work. Despite the absence of improvisation, the immense care and investment which everyone approached the subject with, translates into the film's fabric of obsessive fandom. It is my hope to continue making work without distance, for distance can permeate and potentially terminate the power held with subject matter such as this. Had myself and my crew been less than avid appreciators of Lewis' music, then the whole film could register in a cold remove that short circuits the intrigue of enigma. For without the immense investment of my cast & crew, and everyone having some degree of knowledge or investment in Lewis, this movie would never have taken the form it took. This film also found its diaphanous shape through my process of extensive research, while through my conversations with numerous contacts I was able to learn more about my subject than is in the public realm, though still much remained a mystery. With family and friends largely not reachable or uninterested, this meant many doors would remain firmly closed, but rather than let this dissuade me I instead chose to embrace and listen to the potentialities in these dead ends. This inversion helped me find my way to a more elusive structure, with the interstitial weaving of text intending to further destabilize a speculative narrative. Cumulatively, I think the film reaches a similar cadence of a Lewis song as a result: soft, fleeting, with slivers of hazy murmurs.

As with most any production, I've learned many lessons on this project, namely, to crystallize the vision and ambition of a film prior to going to camera. While intuition remains an integral and intrinsic part of my process, I need not unnecessarily place a gambit on it at

the stages of pre-production and shooting when I have now proven that previsualizing the majority of the work is not only possible for me, but also likely preferable. For with this film, I have achieved for the first time a vision that is with the least concession or compromise, which of course was only possible with this singular team of artists. I hope that someday Randy finds out about our little film and perhaps encounters some of the emotions that inspired these songs back at Los Angeles' Music Lab recording studios in that fateful year of 1983. Then and only then would it affirm there is basis to this myth, but as with most everything on this project and with this subject, I'll likely never know. Thanks to this production and the resulting film: this not knowing is now no longer a shut door but now another juncture of vast inspiration.

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## **Filmography**

*All About Lily Chou-Chou* (2001), directed by Shunji Iwai

*All the Vermeers in New York* (1990), directed by Jon Jost

*Almost Famous* (2000), directed by Cameron Crowe

*Anyox* (2022), directed by Ryan Ermacora & Jessica Johnson

*Bird* (1988), directed by Clint Eastwood

*Catch Me If You Can* (2002), directed by Steven Spielberg

*Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach* (1968), directed by Jean-Marie Straub & Daniele Huillet

*Cruising* (1980), directed by William Friedkin

*Cry When It Happens* (2010), directed by Laida Lertxundi

*Dont Look Back* (1967), directed by D. A. Pennebaker

*Elvis* (1979), directed by John Carpenter

*Faust* (1926), directed by F.W. Murnau

*Faux depart* (2006), directed by Jean-Claude Rousseau

*Histoire(s) du Cinema* (1989 - 1999), directed by Jean-Luc Godard

*Hit 2 Pass* (2014), directed by Kurt Walker

*I've Always Loved You* (1946), directed by Frank Borzage

*In Praise of Love* (2001), directed by Jean-Luc Godard

*Jersey Boys* (2014), directed by Clint Eastwood

*Last Days* (2005), directed by Gus Van Sant

*Los Angeles Plays Itself* (2003), directed by Thom Andersen

*Manhunter* (1986), directed by Michael Mann

*Mr. Arkadin* (1955), directed by Orson Welles

*Ne change rien* (2009), directed by Pedro Costa

*Ocean Falls* (2015), directed by Ryan Ermacora & Jessica Johnson

*Renaldo and Clara* (1978), directed by Bob Dylan

*s01e03* (2020), directed by Kurt Walker

*Searching for Sugar Man* (2012), directed by Malik Bendjelloul

*Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story* (1988), directed by Todd Haynes

*Sympathy for the Devil* (1968), directed by Jean-Luc Godard

*The Company of Strangers* (1990), directed by Cynthia Scott

*The Moderns* (1988), directed by Alan Rudolph

*Unsolved Mysteries* (1987 - 2010), Created by John Ceosgrove & Terry Dunn Meurer

*Van Gogh* (1991), directed by Maurice Pialat

*Velvet Goldmine* (1998), directed by Todd Haynes

*Voici nel tempo* (1996), directed by Franco Piavoli

*Wall Street* (1987), directed by Oliver Stone

*Worlds* (2021), directed by Isaac Goes