Press Kit

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EJI Films LLC

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EJI FILMS

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SYNOPSIS

Logline

A former cop is conflicted between his desire to pursue a life as a competitive bodybuilder and a new relationship.

Brief

Donnie just changed careers and begins a relationship with Mara, a single woman in her late 30s, who's looking to quickly settle down. Since Donnie left the police force, he has been cultivating his interest in bodybuilding for quite some time and a questionable mentor from the gym tries to recruit Donnie into competing. Donnie and Mara's personalities and priorities collide when Donnie makes a critical decision.

Detailed

Donnie is in his mid 30s and has an obsessive personality. After leaving the police force, he works as a personal trainer and part-time as a bouncer. Most of his free time is spent studying bodybuilding. He has recently begun a relationship with Mara, a single woman in her late 30s who is desperately looking for someone to have a family with. Her odd sensibility coincides with Donnie's temperament and their relationship develops. Donnie is in the off season, the time when bodybuilders are not getting ready for a show and are trying to make improvements to their physique. Donnie has been cultivating his interest in bodybuilding for quite some time and Craig, a questionable mentor from the gym, tries to recruit Donnie into competing. When a previous commitment to Mara and the prospect of advancing his bodybuilding career collide, Donnie is faced with a decision that will be detrimental to his relationship or his future in the bodybuilding world.

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Director's Statement

During my freshman year of college, I helped my brother prepare for his first bodybuilding competition. At the outset, I didn't quite understand it, didn't quite know what to make of it, but this was obviously important to him, and I wanted to be a supportive brother. This is when I was first exposed to bodybuilding.

I helped by periodically taking pictures of his physique so my brother could send them to his coach who would review his progress. I helped him apply his color, and I stayed with him on the day of the competition from weigh in through the pictures taken backstage at the night show of the top competitors in each class. At the end of his months of prep, he placed fifth in his first competition. It was certainly an experience for me to witness the entire journey as an outsider.

I admired the work ethic, the discipline, the dedication to training, cutting body fat, posing, maintaining a strict diet with very few carbs and almost no fat. It was not really a sport, it was more of a lifestyle choice. I took it all in and I was a visitor to not only a niche group with a common interest, but it was a world of its own. It isn't mainstream, you don't see it on ESPN, but what I saw was incredible and impressive, regardless of the stigma that often goes along with it.

Through osmosis, I learned a lot about the sport, the history, the ins and outs, the politics, and everything that goes into this lifestyle. Above all else required is sacrifice in so many ways, and the commonalities of the participants were fascinating to me. I decided to make this film because there have been many documentaries about bodybuilders, they are ever-present in our society, one Mr. Olympia was even the Governor of California- yet there hasn't been a serious movie done about a bodybuilder. Similar to Darren Aronofsky's treatment of the worlds of wrestling and ballet, I thought this was an interesting world that hasn't been explored on film and my goal was to tell a story about it. I felt that the world was so rich, and yet untapped that it could make for a compelling narrative. Ultimately, my hope is that this film will give me the opportunity to take this subject matter and explore it in even more depth in a feature film. Thank you and I hope you enjoy the movie.

Best,

Eugene Ioannou

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Production Notes

Pre-Production

- The first draft of the script was completed in October 2010. Over 50 drafts were written between the first draft and the shooting draft.
- Pre-production officially began in January 2011 with the hiring of Samuel Baumel as producer. This was Eugene and Samuel's second collaboration on a narrative project. *Off Season* was an EJI Films and Gravity Sleeps co-production. EJI Films maintained full ownership of content/copyright.
- Casting began in January 2011 on Breakdown Express with over 1200 submissions for the four principal roles. 50 actors and actresses were selected to audition and 15 were called back. The film was cast under the SAG Short Film Agreement.
- Locations were secured between January and June 2011. Locations include Diamond Gym in Maplewood, NJ and Frenchy's Bar & Grill in Roselle Park, NJ, which was also featured in Darren Aronofsky's *The Wrestler*. The movie was also filmed at the 2011 NPC NJ Bodybuilding Championships in Union, NJ as well as other locations in Bayonne and Jersey City, NJ.
- Table read and rehearsals took place between July and August 2011.

Production

- Principal photography took place in 5 consecutive days between August 17, 2011 and August 21st, 2011. The entire film was shot digitally on the Canon EOS 7D.
- In total, the crew size was 12 people .
- There were over 20 featured and background extras hired.
- Over 8 hours of footage was shot.
- The scenes at the bodybuilding show were shot during an actual show taking place: the 2011 NPC NJ State Championships on August 20th, 2011.

Post-Production

- Picture edit began in September 2011 and was completed in February 2012 on FCP.
- The first cut was about 27 minutes long. The final runtime of the film was trimmed to about 23 minutes, including the opening and closing credits.
- Sound design and color correction took place between February and March 2012.

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Writer/Director/Producer

Eugene Ioannou

Eugene graduated from NYU's Business School with a minor in producing from the Tisch School of the Arts. He has worked in cable programming for two years with Comedy Central and HBO. He's helped produce music videos, and an industrial. He's worked with Gravity Sleeps Productions for over three years, including serving as associate producer on a short film directed by Amy Redford, starring Ethan Suplee and Lukas Haas. He is the associate producer and casting director for a SAG feature film entitled: *Last Ride on the Midwest Pacific*. *Off Season* is his first narrative short. He has also recently worked on Adam Newport Berra's feature film *Thanksgiving* as a location manager. Please visit his website for more information: www.ejifilms.com.

Associate Producer

DELIVERY	SHORT	2012
LAST RIDE ON THE MIDWEST PACIFIC	FEATURE	2011

Director

OFF SEASON	SHORT	2012

Producer

OFF SEASON	SHORT	2012

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Producer

Samuel Baumel

Sam is the co-founder of Gravity Sleeps, he has experience producing content ranging from documentary to music videos, narrative films and commercials. Clients include Dell, Hart Shaffner Marx, Revlon, Collegeboard and Cantora Records. Collaborators include Amy Redford and Jeff Lipsky. Baumel studied Entertainment, Media, and Technology at NYU's Stern School of Business and Tisch School of the Arts. Please visit his website for more information and a complete portfolio of work: www.gravitysleeps.com

Producer

DELIVERY	SHORT	2012
OFF SEASON	SHORT	2012
EUREKA!	SHORT	2011
LAST RIDE ON THE MIDWEST PACIFIC	FEATURE	2011
MOUSTACHE NOVEMBER	SHORT	2011
CURRENTS	SHORT	2010
THE NOBLE SAVAGE	SHORT	2009

Associate Producer

THE MEN OF DODGE CITY	FEATURE	2011

Executive Producer

MOLLY'S THEORY OF RELATIVITY	FEATURE	2012
BEING PATIENT	SHORT	2011

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Leading Cast

Robert Youells ("Donnie")

Robert is a national level competitive bodybuilder who has appeared on *Saturday Night Live*, *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*, *Guiding Light* and has done voice work for the *Grand Theft Auto* video game series. He is an MHP sponsored athlete who has modeled for *Vogue* and *Muscle and Fitness*, including two covers. Most recently he had a supporting role in a short film entitled, *Meet My Boyfriend!!!* which screened at the 2011 Manhattan Film Festival. He also appeared in *The Sitter*. Among his many accomplishments, he has won the overall at the 2009 NPC East Coast Championships, first place in the 2009 NJ Suburban, and 2nd place in the 2011 Nationals in Miami. For more information on Rob, check out his website at www.robyouells.com .

Sharon Maguire ("Mara")

A native New Yorker, Sharon attended the Circle in the Square Theatre program, the Shakespeare Conservatory Program at the American Globe Theatre, and studied with Terry Schreiber at the T. Schreiber Studio. Theater credits include Elmire in Tartuffe, Olivia in Twelfth Night both at The Pearl Theatre, as well as originating the role of Jessie in the Off-Broadway premier of In the Daylight, directed by the LAByrinth Theater's Associate Artistic Director, John Gould Rubin. Favorite roles include Jean in The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie, Annie in Last Summer at Bluefish Cove, (nominated for two NYIT Awards) and Debbie in Sexual Perversity in Chicago. She has performed at Playwrights Horizons, The 13th Street Repertory Theatre and Theatre Row. Sharon recently starred in Tony Glazer's Indie thriller, JUNCTION, opposite David Zayas and Michael O'Keefe. Film and TV credits include Law & Order SVU, Hands That Hold Us Together, Baystate Blues, Tabitha's Aquarium, Standing Up, and Off Course, winner of the UCLA Film Festival's Best in Show Award. Please visit her website for more information at www.sharonmaguireactor.com.

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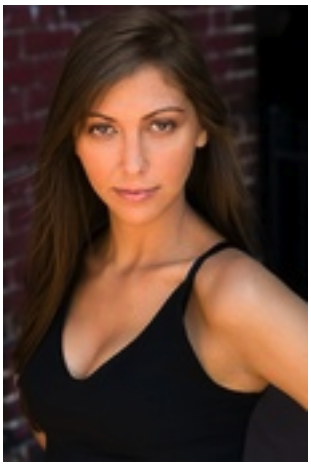
Supporting Cast

Mark Vincent ("Craig")

Mark has worked on many Film and TV productions of varying scope from leading roles in short films to featured roles in studio films including: *Are We There Yet, Two Lovers, White Collar, 13, Sex & the City, Law and Order,* and *Fringe*. Mark has worked in sales, construction, modeling and fashion industries, and has done voiceover work. Mark was trained at HB Studios, Actors Connection, SAG Conservatory and he currently resides in New York City. For more information please visit **http://resumes.actorsaccess.com/mvm**

Tiffany Hodges ("Valerie")



Tiffany earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Theatre from Stephen F. Austin State University in Texas where she played many lead roles such as Stella in A Streetcar Named Desire and Mary in On The Verge. She spent 4 years entertaining over 10,000 audience members from all over the world in the interactive theater experience, Accomplice: New York and Accomplice: The Village. Recently, Tiffany starred in Exhibition at NYC's Bridge Theater and can now be seen in The Perfect Witness starring Wes Bentley on Showtime. She is currently developing original work as a member of the PDW at The Actor's Studio. To watch clips and read reviews of Tiffany's work, visit www.TiffanyHodges.com

Gregg Valentino ("Dave")

Gregg has been known as the man with the largest arms in the world. He has appeared on the Tonight Show, Tyra Banks, Last Call with Carson Daly, and in Chris Bell's acclaimed documentary: *Bigger, Stronger, Faster*. Additionally, he has starred in the BBC special: *The Man Whose Arms Exploded* and on ESPN E:60. He also writes the number one column in Muscular Development Magazine: Ramblin' Freak, and he's written two books including *Gregg Valentino's Essentials of Bodybuilding* and his biography: *Death, Drugs, and Muscle* with Nathan Jendrick. Please visit his website for more information: www.greggvalentino.net.

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Film Stills

Robert Youells, as "Donnie", exiting the gym after a workout.
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Sharon Maguire, as "Mara", looking through her phone, waiting for a call or text the night after. Copyright © 2012 EJI Films LLC. All Rights Reserved.

Mark Vincent, as "Craig", talking to Donnie in the gym the morning of a bodybuilding show. Copyright © 2012 EJI Films LLC. All Rights Reserved,

Mark Vincent, Robert Youells, and Gregg Valentino, "Craig", "Donnie", and "Dave", talking backstage before the pre-judging of a bodybuilding show. Copyright © 2012 EJI Films LLC. All Rights Reserved.

Robert Youells, as "Donnie", during a workout deadlifting in the gym. Copyright © 2012 EJI Films LLC. All Rights Reserved.

Sharon Maguire and Robert Youells, as "Mara" and "Donnie" playing some pool at a local bar. Copyright © 2012 EJI FILMS LLC. All Rights Reserved.

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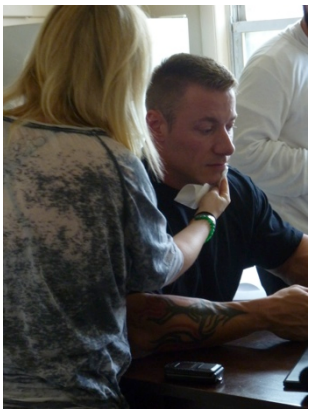
Production Stills

Script Supervisor and Production Still Photographer Sarah Secunda slating the final shot of the picture. Copyright © 2012 EJI Films LLC. All Rights Reserved.

Eugene Ioannou, Director-Producer, directing Kris Lecomte and Mark Vincent before a scene shot backstage at a bodybuilding show. Copyright © 2012 EJI Films LLC. All Rights Reserved.

Wesley Wingo, DP, and Eugene Ioannou, Director, looking at footage between takes. Copyright © 2012 EJI Films LLC. All Rights Reserved.

Eugene Ioannou, Director, setting up the frame with Wesley Wingo, DP, and Esteban Pedraza, AC, at Frenchy's Bar & Grill in Roselle Park, NJ. Copyright © 2012 EJI Films LLC. All Rights Reserved.



Margo Mendez, HMU, touching up Robert Youells between setups. Copyright © 2012 EJI Films LLC. All Rights Reserved.

Alex Gallitano, Gaffer, setting up the lighting with Matt Hayes, PA, at Diamond Gym in Maplewood, NJ. Copyright © 2012 EJI Films LLC. All Rights Reserved.

Most of the cast and crew before shooting the last Scene. Copyright © 2012 EJI Films LLC. All Rights Reserved.

Eugene Ioannou, Director-Producer, with Samuel Baumel, Producer, after wrapping principal photography at 4am, 8/22/11. Copyright © 2012 EJI Films LLC. All Rights Reserved.

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Credits

Crew

Written and Directed by
Eugene Ioannou

Produced by
Samuel Baumel
Eugene Ioannou

Director of Photography

Wesley Wingo

Film Editor and Colorist
Jesse Fisher

Associate Producer
Harry Bainbridge

Production Designer
Brian McGaw

Gaffer
Alex Gallitano

Sound Mixer and Editor
Patrick Burgess

Assistant Camera
Esteban Pedraza

Script Supervisor
Sarah Secunda

Hair and Makeup
Margo Mendez

Original Music
Evan Paris

Production Assistants
Carissa Abraham
Matt Hayes
Matthew Spitalieri

Consultant
Steve Ioannou

Cast

Donnie Robert Youells

Mara Sharon Maguire

Craig Mark Vincent

Valerie Tiffany Hodges

Dave Gregg Valentino

In order of appearance:

Donnie's Client
Molly Lovell

Real Estate Clients
Teddy Ioannou
Pagona Ioannou

Gym Background
Elizabeth Chahin
Chris Melendez
Courtney Markland Heller

Front Desk
Steve Ioannou

Big Guy
Guy Cisternino

Other Guy
Chris Bouhoutsos

Bartender
Frank Signorello

Bar Patrons
Dawn Kojak
Mary Bonczek
Davanna Jared
Rob Roig

The Ram
Steve Silverman

Guy on Machine
Matt Garafalo

Sexy Gym Patron
Kaelin Birkenhead

Guy on the Phone
John Kelleher

Ticket Takers
Ursula Johnson
Julio Martinez

Species Crew
PJ Braun
Tiani Norman
Joel Goldberg

Show Security
Curtis Gibson

Protégé
Kris Lecomte

Catering and Craft
Pagona Ioannou
Victoria Spitalieri
George Makrogiannis
Frank Signorello

Courtesy of Chrysler Group LLC

Special Thanks to the
Screen Actors Guild

Music By
Evan Paris
Dirt Church
The Roadside Graves
Al Sheez
Billion Dollar Babies

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Credits

Songs

"**Family and Friends**"
Written by John Gleason
Performed by The Roadside Graves
Courtesy of War and Oats Music

"**That Day**"
Written by Robert Youells, Robert Marcazo, Warren Hibbert and Steven Marcazo
Performed by Dirt Church
Courtesy of Warren Hibbert, Steven Marcazo, Robert Marcazo and Robert Youells

"**Make 'Em Run"**
Performed by Al Sheez
Courtesy of Audiosocket

"**Wreckin Ball"**
Composed by Bruce Aronson
Performed by Metalurgy
Courtesy of Killer Tracks

"**Key To My Heart"**
Written by Franky Rich, Pat Kramer, Nic Lester and Jon Silver
Performed by Billion dollar babies
Courtesy of Music Dealers

"**Sight, Seeing**"
Written by Evan Paris
Performed by Evan Paris
Courtesy of Evan Paris

"**Step Walks**"
Written by Evan Paris
Performed by Evan Paris
Courtesy of Evan Paris

Special Thanks

Frenchy's Bar and Grill
Diamond Gym
Lefgram Corp

Frank Signorello
Evan Ferguson
Panayiota Paraskeva
Dwayne McDaniel

Teddy Ioannou
Pagona Ioannou
Victoria Spitalieri
Gerard Dente
Steve Downs
Craig Larsen
Danielle McGurk
Dave Palumbo
Joel Goldberg
Steve Blechman
Robbie Durand
Michael Yetter
Nick Ferroni
Dane Sundseth
Lisa Bergami
Marilyn Batchelor

MHP
Muscular Development
RX Muscle
Species Nutrition

Screen Actors Guild
NJ Film Commission

The incredible competitors and audience at the 2011 NPC NJ State Bodybuilding Championships

Thanks

Darren Aronofsky
Martin Scorsese

Simple Studios NYC
Liberty Park Café
Stage Door Delicatessen
Westway Diner
Café Duke
Mydavinci.com
Ken Castellano
Caitlin Colford
Erika Frierson
Mike Pulcinella
David Manganiello
Adam Paris
Mike Masone
Mickey Kaufman
Lindsay Gambini
Anthony Johnson Jr.
Lisa Pompliano
Brian May
Alicia Harris

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Additional Facts and Anecdotes

- Originally, Eugene Ioannou wanted to pitch this idea to a short film contest for the 2011 Tribeca Film Festival, where the winner's 30-second pitch would be turned into a short film by a professional filmmaker and crew. However, upon further consideration Ioannou decided not to pitch and that he wanted to tell this story and make this film himself.

- When Robert Youells first read the script, he felt like many elements were déjà vu with many of the scenes and even dialog mirroring real memories and conversations from his past. He was the first to be cast and read with all of the talent called back for the roles of Mara and Craig.

- Robert Youells competed in a national competition just 10 days after completing principal photography. His competition almost made Ioannou push the production schedule, but it was Youells' insistence that he would be able to handle the strain on his body that allowed the production to continue as scheduled.

- Gregg Valentino originally auditioned for the part of Craig, and he was great. He was one of the inspirations for the character, however Mark Vincent's audition and presence was perfect for the role. Ioannou thought Valentino, not a formally trained actor, was so good that he decided to cast him as the part of show promoter. Valentino's appearance in the documentary *Bigger, Stronger, Faster* is what caught Ioannou's attention.

- Everyone in the cast and crew was a local New York/New Jersey hire.

- Kris Lecomte, who portrayed the protégé, is a good friend of Robert Youells. He was competing in the show where the film was shot. He placed second in the overall competition that night. His shots on stage are actual footage from the pre-judging at the 2011 NPC NJ State Championships. His scene backstage was shot immediately following the pre-judging.

- New Jersey, Eugene Ioannou's home state, was a natural choice for the film's setting, which was also partly inspired by Darren Aronofsky's *The Wrestler*. New Jersey's Diamond Gym, where the film was shot, is a historic gym in the bodybuilding community, and many professional bodybuilders train there.

- Many competitive bodybuilders appear in the film other than Youells and the competitors at the 2011 NJ State Bodybuilding Championships, including Kris Lecomte, Guy Cisternino, Steve Silverman, PJ Braun, and Steve Ioannou,

- The Jeep featured in the film, also served as one of the crew's production vehicles.

- The scenes in the gym were shot off hours at Diamond Gym over night, from 4pm to 5am.

- The heavy metal track used during the bodybuilding show sequence features lead actor Robert Youells on drums.

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