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### **Building City:**

**The impact of theory, creativity, and market in feature film development and practice-led film research**

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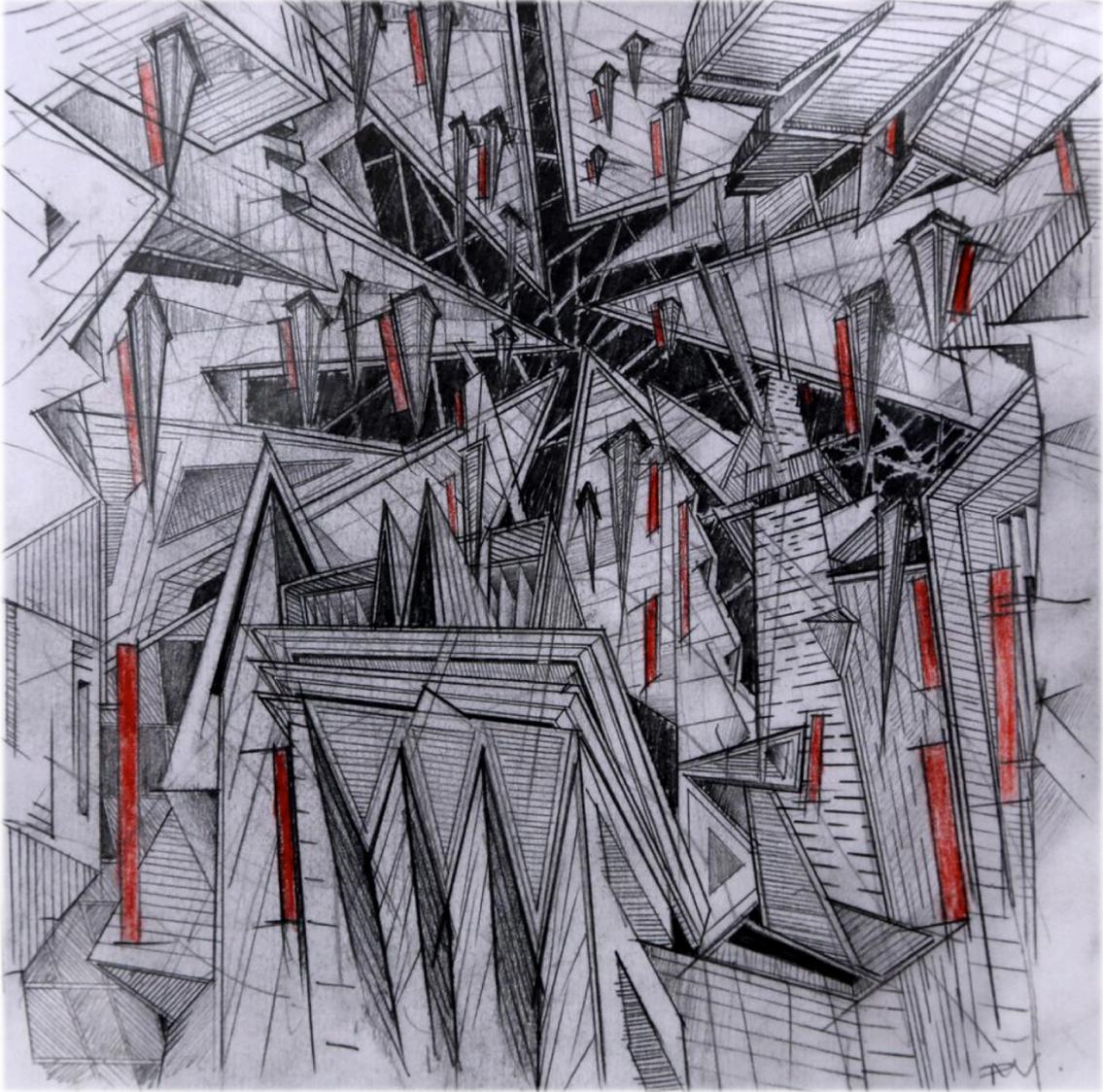
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**Building *CITY*:  
The Impact of Theory, Creativity, and Market  
in Feature Film Development and Practice-Led Film Research.**

by

**Mikey Murray**

Presented to Bangor University in fulfillment  
of the thesis requirement for the degree of  
**Doctor of Philosophy**

School of Creative Studies and Media  
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## Abstract

This thesis is *practice-led research* in the field of commercial feature film development in the UK. It addresses the growing interest in practice as research in film, while proposing how traditional research methodologies can be broadened to allow for a more fluid use of practice as research in film for the future. In doing so, this thesis indicates that practice-led research is a critical tool for allowing a more functional understanding of the film industry generally because as a methodology it has the potential to encourage filmmakers and practitioners to engage with academic and research environments, and can ultimately expose more specific aspects of the filmmaking craft.

Contextual analysis of this type does reveal the unfortunate presumption that often exists within film studies that there is a dichotomy between the theory of, and the practice of, making a film. Traditionally page-based film criticism has investigated film by seeking out associative theory and critiquing filmmaker's work, while the filmmakers themselves often suggest that their artefacts ought to speak for themselves. As the development of making an industry film has rarely been subject to process specific theoretical critique by the filmmakers that created them, film practice has suffered a divorced relevance as a mode of research at doctoral level. The creative artefacts within this study, however, face a number of affects from film theory and this thesis confronts the traditional notion of a divide between page-based critical theory and production practices in film and builds towards an outcome that promotes a core relationship between the two. By presenting practical feature film development artefacts and providing a page-based critical insight, new knowledge can be revealed about how the UK film industry and critical theory both function as stimuli for creativity in film. The methodology here treats the filmmaker (myself) as a critical commodity in understanding the film industry and will show how the practicalities of making a film as a research artefact is influenced by a fusion of three core determinants: *Critical Theory*, *Creative Process*, and *Market Forces*. Structured around these three elements primarily, this study creates a working model for practice-led research, while giving an insight into the processes of feature film development in the UK.

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I must first express my gratitude to Angela Waddell for her unwavering love and support. It is almost exactly fifteen years to the day that we went on a first drunken date together and since then you have consistently been there to lift my spirits at the most trying times. I find incredible strength from your persistent nonchalant belief that I will usually achieve what I am aiming for – make no mistake, I owe you big time.

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## INTRODUCTION



*“Nothing in the world is any good unless you can share it.”*

Figure 1.1: *Jeff Bailey* (Robert Mitchum) in *Out of the Past* (1947)

To begin this thesis, it should be pointed out that *practice-led research* is still a relatively new concept in film studies at doctorate level. Questions regarding how a practice-led thesis actually functions in the academic environment still exist because of the historical tension between the functionally opposing spheres of practice and theory in film. Consequently, progression of film practice as a vocational learning agenda for students in film at undergraduate and masters level, has also contributed to a general dichotomy of attitudes between those who make films and those who write about film. There is a general sense amongst film academics that film practitioners employed in the tertiary education environment are there to teach the fundamentals of making and constructing films. Conversely, some practitioners often feel that theorists should be left to critique and theorise cinema because their artefacts adequately communicate in a separate film language. Several researchers have crossed the borders between theory and practice or have attempted to bridge the gap. However, while it appears that there is still a traditional reluctance to combine theory and practice in film outputs from an industry perspective, practice as research is clearly beginning to gain a foothold in the film research environment. Film students have expressed their desire to engage in practical production of films in academia historically, something evidenced in the abundance of student film dissertations that combine a theoretical approach with the creation of practical artefacts. However these studies have often been constructed in a

manner whereby the student or students are under pressure to develop a research agenda for the production of their film, or the development of a screenplay that has been influenced from a traditional theoretical approach to research. This theoretical approach has often demanded that the researcher create a hypothetical problem, or a suggestion for film language, that will be put to the test or somehow 'proven' by means of a film production or a screenplay. In other words, frequently the relationship between theory and practice is one whereby the general nature of the work was research-led. However, it would seem that film students who have career goals for the filmmaking industry are lured towards the commercial side of film production and are reluctant to align their work to the rigours and demands of a theoretical or academic approach. As a result, vocational university courses are becoming more popular and while discord between film practice and film theory continues to affect the tertiary education system. There is still a general lack of understanding how film practice fits into the traditional academic system. 'Practice as research' is at the forefront of changing the attitude towards practice within research in film however, and it is now becoming more widespread in academia because, as the leading researchers in the field: Smith and Dean (2009), Biggs (2009), Barrett & Bolt (2010) et al report, the influx of film practitioners into the research environment is building interest in the practical application of film, and creating an avenue for practice-led research.

My own intention in this thesis is to construct a practice-led research project through the personal development of a commercial, feature-length film production called *City*. My aim is to write and then direct this film, and the research element will focus upon the practical considerations that face me as I progress with my feature film development. By developing this film I am attempting to build a career progression in terms of my situation as a writer/director of drama films. Furthermore, I will also give a wider indication that film production, combined with my own theoretical approach, will offer an alternative perspective to film criticism and perhaps broaden the scope of traditional forms of film theory. This study intends to show that if the practitioner addresses the practical considerations of developing a feature film, and reports on the instances where a theoretical approach guides the construction of the artefacts, then it can help to build a clearer understanding of the practitioners' process of creating film productions and content. From my dual position as a practitioner and an academic

researcher in the field of film, the core outcomes of this thesis are to reveal how the first-time feature filmmaker experiences practical and research methods and how as a research-active filmmaker I can contribute to a more informed understanding of practice-led research in film. I also wish to provide a clearer and more in-depth understanding of how the British film industry operates with, and reacts to, new and developing filmmakers.

From the start of this practice-led thesis in film it was clear that I should challenge the more traditional forms of film research and this essentially forces me, as a practice-led researcher, to justify my methodology from the outset. One such challenge, for example, is to substantiate the continued reference to 'I' and the personal journey within these pages, because that is often a key source of conflict when we consider the traditional academic approach. While I should not have any obligation to make a case for a personal practice plan as research, I have found throughout the process of my research there is still a general unwillingness in the field of critical research to accept an individual's perspective on their film practice, and personal opinions about their work as a recognised mode of research. This is because the outcomes can often be seen as subjective in the reflective nature of practice-led research in film. It is, however, slowly becoming more widely accepted that critical practice-led fields are reliant upon the practitioner as a core influence on how we understand the research because the practitioner usually positions or has a direct influence how we read the outcomes of the research. Indeed, Mathieu (2013) points out that the projects that we work on as practitioners, and the people we choose to work with, are all fundamentally linked to the development of the filmmaker's career path. Therefore it becomes essential that my thesis includes an intrinsically personal account of the production of the film artefacts, because how else can a filmmaker report their findings objectively? There are issues that arise from collating data and information through the processes of interviewing industry practitioners, as is the case in this thesis, because there can sometimes be a practical requirement in the film industry to protect intellectual property and personal communication. I have referenced many of the direct influences from collaborators by adding email correspondence and full interview transcripts in the appendices of this thesis. This supports the thesis by giving a clear indication of industry context. All parties have given permission to use correspondence freely, though some social

elements of emails have been blotted out as they involve private chit-chat that is both personal and irrelevant.

I did not initially intend to make a case for practice-led research as a relevant field of research in film in my thesis, but because it is still a relatively new area of research, it becomes necessary to explore practice-led research as a methodology<sup>1</sup>. I am not the first film researcher to explore the principles of practice-led research by any means, but the field is continually evolving and my individual process, although personal, is relevant because it gives a truthful insight into the process of film production. John T. Caldwell in conversation with Patrick Vonderau (2013) confirms the problematic alliance between practice research and more traditional forms of critical film studies when he suggests that “disclosure of the fieldworkers actions” (Caldwell in Vonderau, 2013: 14) is an important element of the research. Caldwell talks of a “traditional approach” that he has witnessed, whereby doctoral candidates in film have been warned to remove personal story out of their theses because it may “undermine the evidence and logic of the dissertation.” He further reveals how as a practitioner, he is “still stuck in the middle of this institutional and disciplinary tension between...self-reflexive disclosure and the ‘Draught approach’ from film history” (Caldwell, 2103: 14). From a personal point of view, I am a practice-led academic, someone whose research is primarily focused on how my practice fits into the industry, but I’m also interested in how it might impact upon ongoing fields of film theory and the future of film production research. The approach here comes with the full understanding that the reflections and theorisation surrounding the practice are, at this moment in time, essential to the justification of practice as research. It will also become clear, as the reader progresses through the chapters of this thesis, that my *practice-led research* also reverts to *research-led practice* at times; especially when I discuss the parameters of working within heavily theorised film studies topics like genre, film noir theory, and screenplay studies. The benefit of reporting the progression of the practice in a written document such as this is that one can start to see how reflexive the filmmaking process is. Ultimately, research by way of practice becomes a crucial commodity in film because it is an industry that creates produced artefacts, and only through involvement in a film’s construction can we fully understand the processes of that structure and the

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<sup>1</sup> See Introduction sub-heading, *Practice as Research in Film: The Basis for My Approach* (p.8)

environment in which it takes place. Critical theory has historically undervalued the importance of the individual or a production team's engagement with the process of taking a film through various elements of development and production process, and those understudied areas of practice are where this thesis attempts to add significant insight.

Several researchers now operate in the specific, contemporary field of practice as research in the arts, and some of the most prominent of those are Estelle Barrett, Barbara Bolt, Iain Biggs, Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean, who produced several core texts in recent years. Smith and Dean (2009) point out that research in the arts that is practice orientated can be “research conducted in the process of shaping an artwork; or research which is the documentation, theorisation and contextualisation of an artwork – and the process of making it – by its creator” (Smith & Dean, 2009: 3). In research terms, the practitioner is the creator in their chosen role, the person who is engaged in the process of parallel production and theoretical research. But once again, it becomes problematic to take a practitioner's approach to research without reverting fluidly between different forms of analytical address; while first person address *and* more traditional forms of critical analysis do need to crossover under these parameters. All of the commentators in the field of practice as research also make clear that, because the practitioner is a critical commodity in understanding the process of practice, the practitioner's individual position, both in terms of where they stand as a filmmaker and researcher, and where they progress to, have huge implications for their theses. It is, therefore, a natural argument to suggest that a filmmaker's experiences throughout the development of their practice artefacts, if reported, can bring a wider understanding of the conditions under which they work, and of film production generally. Consequently, the individual chapters, and specifically the conclusion of this thesis, are often created around personalised accounts of the experience of the filmmaker throughout the creative process.

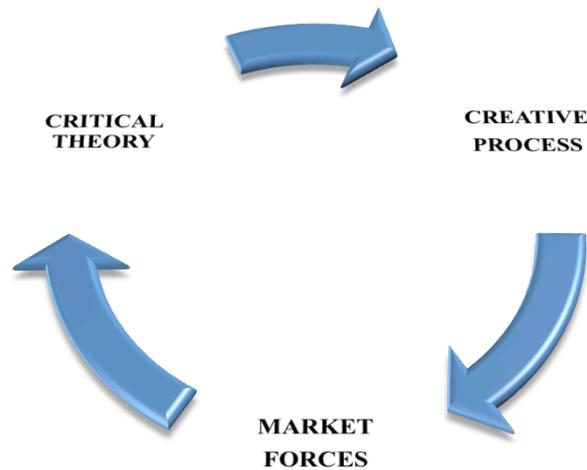
Smith & Dean (2009) and Barrett & Bolt's (2007) insights into practice as research have significantly influenced the approach to this thesis. Smith & Dean's cyclic “model of creative arts and research processes” (Smith & Dean, 2009: 20) provides an undeniable suggestion that when we as practitioners consider our research methodology in relation to practice, there will always be difficulty in distinguishing

between where research leads the practice and practice leads the research. As suggested above, practice leads this particular thesis, but on occasion there are clear moments whereby the practice is affected and led by research. Through the development of my screenplay with third party producers, it also starts to become clear that there are other core influences over the research when the filmmaker is trying to create a commercial product. Economic and collaborative pressures are hugely significant in commercial filmmaking and I refer to those influences collectively as *market forces*, an area that has powerful implications over practice-led research. This is notable in those situations where there is an aim to create a film for the broader film marketplace and not simply to fulfill a theoretical agenda. Film production, as becomes apparent throughout my thesis, is governed by the forces of producers, financial implications, and the need to *sell* the product to given markets at various stages of production and pre-production. The word ‘sell’ is highlighted because the stages of selling the product of the film throughout – the idea, the script, the filmmakers, the film – do not always involve the exchange of money or indeed the ownership of a product, and often refers to a smaller instance of convincing film professionals that their attachment to the product is beneficial. The collaborative nature of working with producers who have their own agendas related to the expectations of distributors and the paying public puts significant pressure on the whole process. I have developed a cyclical model<sup>2</sup> that gives a clearer research agenda for the practice-led researcher under these conditions. Smith and Dean’s initial discussion regarding the relationship between research and practice needs to include an added element that allows for the pressures that come from the industry in this instance. Stuart Hall’s *‘Circuit of Culture’* (Hall, 1997: 1) includes a much clearer notion that the industry that filmmakers operate in is a fundamental concern for the theorist and/or practitioner, and so that essential aspect is added to Smith and Dean’s core concerns regarding how research and practice combine.

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<sup>2</sup> See *Figure 1.2* (p.7)

*Figure 1.2 – Three-point reflexive basis for the structural approach to my practice-led thesis.*



The model I have created here is simplistic, but it borrows Smith and Dean’s fundamental relationship between academic research and practice, and brings with it the cultural influence of Hall, and the importance of consumption to the overall process. It becomes the model for this approach to practice-led research because as any filmmaker engaged in research will begin to understand, each of these three included elements impact forcibly upon the decision making process throughout, especially practice-led film research projects that have a commercial end goal for the artefacts.

Added to *market forces* in the model are the categories *creative process* and *critical theory*—terms influenced by theories posited by Smith & Dean (2009). *Creative process* refers to the subjective implications throughout the research; the creative elements of the artefact that interlock with these other elements and inform or are informed by one another in the structural approach for the practitioner. *Critical theory* is an all-encompassing term with which to address the relevant approaches and discourse of theorists who have contributed to the fields of film study—particularly where those contributions influence the practitioner. Ultimately, there are a number of considerations from film theory that are tied to the filmmaker’s creative approach, and it

is important to acknowledge that critical theory encompasses more than simply *page-based theory*. Filmmakers, for example, have often engaged in a more practical education in the screenwriting or filmmaking craft. Additionally, for the practice-led researcher, it can be argued that any gap that exists between theorists and practitioners across academia and the industry becomes bridged because the two disciplines fundamentally rely upon each other throughout any practice-led research endeavour. The three-point model that I present here ultimately becomes the basis for the structure and methodology in this entire thesis, and the chapters within this thesis are loosely aligned with the core elements of the model as a result. This thesis also includes various types of research address, because as Caldwell (2013: 21) argues, production research methods should include several types of research. Caldwell includes ethnography, participant observation, interviewing, economic analysis, textual analysis and grounded theory. All of these variant types of empirical and theoretical analysis are presented here, as well as a personal analysis of the artefacts that are so critical to this study.

### **Practice as Research in Film.**

As discussed, textual analysis and historical research have traditionally dominated the landscape of critical film studies. Not until recently has practice started to become recognised as a legitimate form of research. Smith & Dean et al. draw our attention to the fact that this growth in practice as research in the humanities has been the result of practitioners trying to better “justify and promote” their work in the academic environment, and to “argue – as forcefully as possible in an often unreceptive environment – that they are as important to the generation of knowledge as more theoretically, critically or empirically based research methods” (Smith & Dean, 2009: 2). As Biggs also notes, an artist now has the ability in the academic world to create an artefact as a piece of knowledge through attention to the “goals” or “norms” of its production and can ultimately “satisfy the demands of what research is” (Biggs, 2009: 68). Most of the commentators in this field agree however that the practical orientated or ‘praxical’ (Bolt, 2007) knowledge that arises out of handling artefacts in practice is somewhat different to historical research or theory. Additionally, it is also a different

approach when researchers or students simply apply theory to practice. Sullivan advocates this notion when he suggests that, “Generally, artists have left the responsibility of assessing the significance of what they do to others, preferring to let critics, historians and cultural theorists do the talking.” (Sullivan, 2009: 41), but both he and the key commentators in the field have created a generally perceived notion that creative practice as research must involve a theoretical write up to better explain the intention. Bolt agrees with Sullivan’s summation, stating that, “practice-only postgraduate research can disable practice-led research by confusing practice with praxical knowledge and sever the link between the artwork and the work of art” (Bolt, 2007: 33-34). Szczepanik & Vonderau (2013) expand the problems of practice as research in film when they suggest that literature that investigates production has a tendency to ignore empirical or historical research, even though it is those elements that are vital in our understanding of modern technological and cultural advances. Szczepanik & Vonderau argue further that, traditional forms of research bolster practice research. Therefore, it starts to become clear that any approach to practice as research is a complex undertaking that generally ought to consider more fully how to situate a practical work in the expanse of theory in the field. It would seem then that the boundaries between research-led practice and practice-led research begin to blur under this type of scrutiny.

As pointed out above, the essential nature of this thesis makes it difficult to maintain exclusivity for a singular practice-led trajectory, especially when discursive written elements form part of the overall process. Fundamentally the creation of practice artefacts leads this thesis, but there are several sections throughout where the practice is affected by the theoretical research. As a result, the written parts of this thesis are not simply an add-on, or reflection on the practice, but are an active part of the research that has both a participatory and separated function in the structure of the research as a whole. This thesis is informed by the practice, but through its completion it also informs the process of creating the artefacts – with all of the core elements of the research output existing as a whole. Interestingly, however, the practice elements within a thesis such as this can potentially exist in an alternative state to the theoretical sections largely because the written theory is capable of being removed from the artefacts without affecting the impact of those artefacts within their own forms or markets, even if the information contained within the theoretical written elements does inform the practice. There is an important point to be made here: practice-led research requires interaction between practice and theory, even if there is a difficult

relationship between the two. However, the market for which film artefacts are developed will, for the most part, see the associated theoretical work in practice-led research as nothing more than a mild curiosity that ought not to get in the way of producing and selling a film. However, and due to that complication, I suggest once more that my research here is fundamentally ‘practice-led.’ I will continue to define it as such because each element of the practice (screenplay, pilot film, storyboards etc) can exist without the justification of this written element, whereas much of the written theoretical elements within will make little sense without the evidence of the artefacts.

Use of the terminology ‘practice-led research’ is further complicated by the term ‘Practice-based’, and these distinctions become difficult to pin down, especially considering that a formal difference is a source of debate among the key theorists in the field. I instinctively use the definition ‘Practice-led’ because my research started with the production of the screenplay artefact and was fundamentally led by its creation. Hanney (2013) in his essay, *Towards a Situated Media Practice*, also suggests that where practice forms the crux of the thesis that we can regard the research as practice-led. That definition can be challenged however and Creativity & Cognition Studios (a web platform dedicated to understanding practice in digital media and the arts) suggests that, “If the research includes a creative artefact as the basis of the contribution to knowledge, the research is practice-based” (online). However, I would argue that my research here is not ‘clear-cut’ in its use of the screenplay artefact as the singular focus for the research, but that the development of the screenplay was just the beginning of the route into the research. This thesis includes more than one practical artefact because it attempts to investigate various elements of the creative process to develop several wider outcomes concerned with understanding the UK film industry and the environment of practice as research as a whole. In the article about the distinctions between practice-led and practice-based research on their website, Creativity & Cognition Studios also refer to practice-led research as leading primarily “to new understandings about the nature of practice” (online). And because my thesis is also concerned with a general investigation of how practice works in the research environment, and it includes the ‘operational significance’ for that practice, it conclusively falls more readily into their definition, ‘practice-led research’.

Smith & Dean (2009: 3) agree that “overlapping” is natural in practice as research and as a result the structural approach here attempts, in the main, to reflect the concerns and research trajectory of the filmmaker as I progress through the practical elements of creating

the associated film artefacts. Haseman and Mafe also suggest that, “practice can only lead research when the researcher is genuinely immersed in and attentive to the possibilities generated through creative practice...they do not need to find a stance from whence they can view their whole research enterprise” (Haseman & Mafe, 2009: 222). But even if there is no need to find a stance from where to view my research, it proves problematic to propagate a thesis that completely adheres to discussing the theoretical points that were raised, as they were raised. As a result this written element cannot fully reflect the chronology of the research because of the nature of film production and the parallel threads of advancement that take place in a film’s development; in short, the fixed chapter structure of this written element of the thesis, does not necessarily reflect the order of the research, but is created to give a logical pathway for the reader. It also becomes important to point out that while the research begins as a process driven insight, elements of goal orientated theory will develop out of that process, most specifically when it comes to justification of some of the creative decisions made throughout the practice process.

Because this study begins with the writing and development of a film that is a means to further my personal career in the film industry, it seems justified to believe that the study has greater relevance in terms of legitimacy, especially when discussing the considerations of creativity and restrictions in the marketplace. I am not simply making a film in an attempt to prove a hypothetical point, it is a piece of work that does exist outside of the theoretical context of a written doctoral thesis, even if at times it informs or is informed by this merger. Hesmondhalgh describes filmmakers and writers as “symbol makers” (Hesmondhalgh, 2006: 1), but even in consideration of his statement, there is no discussion within these pages about the semiotics of cinema, or how one reads a film. Instead this thesis works from a base understanding that film and the practice elements function within their own distinct language parameters. These parameters are ultimately read, understood and recognised via “resemblance” to generally accepted forms and logic as Deleuze (2000) or Wittgenstein’s *Form of Life* philosophy points out; because otherwise the filmmaker or screenwriter would be forced to continually explain in written words his or her own practical language. Explanation of intention of the creative artefacts is evident in this thesis, but the screenplay and film are simply presented as valid research in their own forms. This does not mean of course that the filmmaker consciously applies the theories of

Wittgenstein or Deleuze when writing the screenplay, or designing the shots, but there is a connection between those theories and how the approach is presented here in this written element of the thesis. Various instinctive forms of analytical address are used to describe the creative elements of writing the screenplay and developing the ‘vision’ for the film here, and that is because the decision making process is often subjective or creative. And while *reflexive* inquiry can be a source of conflict between the processes of practice research and theoretical research, tacit knowledge of practice (Polanyi, 1966) is crucial because it often informs the research methods. Bordwell points out the following in relation to this subject:

Much of contemporary theory in literature, art, and film consists of assembling received doctrines of vast generality, recasting them to fit one’s interests, yoking them to other (often incommensurable) doctrines, and then applying the result to a task at hand...(Bordwell, 1996: x).

Bordwell’s suggestion, although directed at critical research, is also relatable to practice-led research in film, because the intonation of one’s own demands in any research becomes paramount to the output. I am attempting to make a success of my practice in the marketplace and to purposefully record some of the procedural elements of the entire process into a structured thesis in order to better inform our understanding of film research and film production in the UK. My experience of the industry might be similar to other practitioners, but it will not be the same. Other screenwriters and directors will face different experiences than I have, but by sharing our experiences we can collectively build a tangible picture of our industry. This sub-chapter is added by way of justification for my methodology because I still feel that practice research is not yet properly understood in film studies. I should not have needed to explain how practice can work as research because critical research does not have to justify its own methodology, but with continued endeavour, and more film practitioners engaging with their work from a research perspective, this type of pre-emptive passage in future practice-led film research will all but disappear.

## The Structure of the Practice and Written Elements

The processes of making my film flows out of the cyclical model that I have suggested in this introduction, and this written component of my thesis often takes the form of critical and factual analysis of the creative process. While it often clarifies elements that exist in the practice, it also reports and reflects on the instances where the research and on-going immersion of the filmmaker in relevant theoretical frameworks starts to impose and inform the creative process. Highlighting points on the cyclical model that are pertinent to my research is important because there are decisions made in the creative process that are informed by traditional academic research (*critical theory*), arrived at through commercial pressures (*market forces*), or made through an aesthetic subjectivity (*creative process*). There is also the possibility within my research for decisions to have been made via personal subconscious abstraction, but that is still informed in some way by the cyclic of elements mentioned because my knowledge of film was generated from my immersion in the theory, creativity and market of film as my life has progressed. I will shed some light upon some of the creative decisions in the practice after the fact, but by the nature of tacit knowledge of film production and restrictions on thesis length, some will ultimately remain unreported. The chapter structure of the written sections in this thesis are loosely broken into the three elements present in the cyclical model. However, this cannot be too rigid because there is necessary occasion within every chapter to shed light on all three of the cyclical elements over the practice products. A defined chapter structure *is* utilised for the critical work, but the analysis remains a synthesis of intuitive analytical approaches that continually overlap throughout a process that cannot ultimately be reported in a linear progression of developments. This is because the development of a film rarely happens in a linear or chronological manner.

Because this thesis is practice-led, the first element presented to the reader in chapter one is the most recent draft of the screenplay for *City*. It is important for me, as a practitioner, to give the reader the screenplay as the first point of contact to justify my methodology and to foreground and encourage engagement with a creative element first, otherwise the thesis struggles to hold its proposed position as *practice-led*.

Chapter two delves into the finer detail and theorisation of *film noir*<sup>3</sup>, and how I pursued a deeper understanding for the principles of film noir while I was writing my screenplay. Throughout the development process, film noir theory has ultimately become a core consideration for the film and for me as a filmmaker. The imposition of noir might initially seem to be an obvious choice for a filmmaker who is armed with an incipient vision for creating a dark thriller with a down-beat ending and a social message. However, with a deeper investigation into the historical theory of film noir, the problem of how to write in the genre becomes convoluted amongst a framework that surrounds over seventy years of tradition and varying definitions of the term ‘film noir’. Sanders for example proposes, “that many...would agree that they know film noir when they see it even though they cannot define the term film noir per se,” (Sanders, 2006: 91). But understanding film noir as a theoretical entity rather than simply an instinctive, creative or market driven form becomes an important challenge; no less because throughout the history of noir theory it becomes clear that a host of commentators agree that the universal term is not a comprehensively definable one. While the development of a film that is written and sold as a film noir are the nucleus of the practice in this study, as the filmmaker, I am challenged to research the historical backdrop of film noir in order to substantiate use of the term and have a better personal understanding of the form. Chapter two ultimately attempts to justify the core area of *critical theory* in the cyclical model because it initially situates genre as having a profound effect over the modern film marketplace and the production of the practice artefacts.

Chapter three, continues this thesis through the discussion of screenplay development and how, as a communicative creative artefact, it utilises all three of the core elements of the proposed cycle in the process of developing a film. By analysing how the screenplay employs narrative restrictions and conventions set out by a need to create a recognisable film noir, chapter three also appraises how genre concerns inform and guide the screenwriter. The synthesis of the cyclical model’s core elements begins to impact heavily in this chapter, as it becomes clear that *market forces* and the screenwriter’s need to resort to the *theoretical* and *creative* backdrops of film noir begins to have a key influence over the construction of the artefacts. Amy Devitt’s

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<sup>3</sup> The contexts of film noir are discussed in chapter two, however a discussion of film noir elements also informs chapter three.

(2004) notion of how genre writing is managed through the inclusion of *formal markers* that are recognised by the reader is used to discuss how a practitioner writes in a genre form. However, the chapter also investigates the need for the modern screenwriter and filmmaker to avoid overused markers or cliché because it may ultimately hurt the production in the marketplace.

In chapter four the thesis analyses empirical data from the industry and begins to suggest why *market forces* have such a significant role in engaging with both film practice and film theory. It discusses the need to understand the budgeting of a feature film, the differences between low-budget and micro-budget filmmaking, and the ramifications of existing market trends over the development of the feature film ‘*package*’<sup>4</sup>. To create an informed discussion, core, primary data from the *British Film Insitutes*’s statistical yearbooks are used to investigate specific trends in the British independent film market. Furthermore, interviews with filmmakers, both attached to *City* and otherwise are also used to give first-hand accounts of industry practice and experience. Chapter four closes by describing how *City* is situated in the marketplace and outlines what might be done to improve the UK film industry in order to help the production of UK independent films.

Finally this thesis presents a short pilot film production within chapter five, and it discusses several key areas that influenced its production, specifically why the pilot becomes an important functional element for the film package overall. Chapter five also examines the increasing industry trend and demand for pilot films in the development of a feature film project, how the pilot has become a critical resource in the development of my film, and my ability to sell the idea for my feature film as a first time director. The pilot currently forms the most advanced element of practice in the thesis because the feature has not yet been made, but chapter five offers an insight into many of the elements of the process that became key indicators of how production processes for feature film work functionally in the UK. The analysis in chapter five addresses the factors that potentially hinder *City*’s ability to progress into a feature film production, and the personal evidence cited in this chapter further exposes the difficulties faced in the development of any feature film.

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<sup>4</sup> ‘Package’ is a term used across the industry to describe a film’s associative elements and market value.

The chapters of this thesis ultimately focus purely on the artefacts and the creative and development concerns that surround them. The conclusion is heavily influenced by a personal report on the overall process of developing my film artefacts within both the industry and the research environment, and ultimately returns to discuss practice-led research as a process within the film sector generally. On that basis, my thesis becomes an important research document for any theorist or practitioner that is attached to, or hopes to engage in, a study of film production or screenwriting in the UK marketplace. While many filmmakers consider theoretical and critical approaches to film within their filmmaking they have rarely been documented directly, and my intention with this thesis is to engage more fully in a critical approach to my filmmaking and document the experience as I progress. The overall intention of the thesis is to combine traditional forms of research with creative concerns and statistical data to create a work that is defined by the three elements of the cyclical model presented in this introduction<sup>5</sup>. An overview of the practice is presented that ties together *creative process*, *critical theory*, and *market forces*, and demonstrates how a film interacts with a written research output. The core production artefacts and this written element combine to communicate a unique blend of practice-led evidential language. My intended outcomes are:

- To demonstrate how practice-led research benefits the under researched area of film production.
- To outline how *critical theory*, *creative process* and *market forces* combine to influence practice-led researchers in a reflexive cycle.
- To provide an insight, and a better understanding of the feature film marketplace in the UK.

As Bordwell (2006) suggests, however, the researcher always has their own interests at the forefront of their outputs. I decided to develop a thesis in practice-led film because I understand that it is a growing field in film studies and academia; it was an opportunity to progress as a filmmaker, while fulfilling the research requirements needed for progression in the pedagogical and research environments of film studies.

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<sup>5</sup> See figure 1.2 (p. 7)

CHAPTER ONE - CITY SCREENPLAY

CITY

by  
Mikey Murray

6th April, 2012

WGA Registered.

Nic Crum / Naysun Alae Carew

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

FADE IN:

1 EXT. CITY SCAPE - NIGHT 1

A mess of shimmering lights reflect on a vast black river.

SUPER: 'THE NEAR FUTURE'

On the north side, corporate glass super-structures rise out of the haze. They seem to boast across the water to the gloomy lights on the south-side.

A distant SIREN.

In the south-side, shadow wins the battle over light. Misty showers of light from sporadic working street-lamps toil to illuminate rain splashed, deserted pavements. Concrete buildings are slopped with a clutter of hopeful corporate adverts, but the smashed windows reveal a truth.

A HOODED FIGURE steps under a street-lamp. He skillfully makes the finishing touches to his graffiti on the side of a derelict shop.

From across the street the large wall of graffiti he works on can be seen. He has spray-painted....

'WELCOME TO THE BELLY'

The 'Hoody' finishes his work and retires into the foreboding shadows.

2 EXT. STREET - NIGHT 2

A limp video camera resides blindly in the blackness overhead.

Nearby, a dimly illuminated sign reads 'ALL NIGHT NEEDS' above a grocery shop.

By the shop, TWO STREET URCHINS give money to an OLDER LAD in a hooded tracksuit. They receive something in return.

Their attention is caught by a woman who approaches with a stroller....

MELISSA GRANT; blonde, thirty-something and heady in a trashy way - She isn't fazed as she advances on them.

In the buggy is CARL; a one-year-old baby with soft red hair - without his mother, he'd be a picture of innocence.

The 'HOODY'S' step back to let Melissa pass. A respectful nod to her as she does.

3 INT. 'ALL NIGHT NEEDS' - NIGHT

3

A DOOR-OPENING-BUZZER sounds as Melissa struggles to enter with her stroller.

Under the strange hue of the fluorescent lights and encased in a Perspex cell, the edgy OWNER stops packing the cigarette shelf behind him....

OWNER

Cold tonight isn't it?

Melissa ignores him. She carries on through the market with her boy. She shops around the aisles; milk and bread.

As she stops to consider a bottle of wine, The DOOR-BUZZER interrupts the hum of the refrigeration units.

A DARK FIGURE, all in black and wearing a balaclava mask, steps into the store.

The owner turns, but scuttles under the counter as the intruder points a gun at him.

Melissa is momentarily confused as the ominous figure approaches her. Confronted by the masked man, she stands frozen to the spot; bottle of wine in hand.

MELISSA

What do you want?

He cracks her across the face with his elbow. She clatters into a grocery shelf and plunges to the floor among a pile of beer cans. The wine bottle smashes.

CUT TO BLACK:

Melissa's HEIGHTENED BREATHING....

FADE IN:

....as she tries to focus on her bloodied hand as it gropes for grip among the broken glass and spilled wine.

She hears Carl GIGGLE and quickly turns. Focussing properly, she's in time to see Carl being lifted from his stroller.

Melissa scrambles and clutches at the kidnapper's ankle.

MELISSA (cont'd)

You're fucking dead.

The man struggles to free himself but Melissa has a tight grip and is being dragged.

He directs his gun at her face. Blood has started to run from her nose.

She stares up the barrel before it is pressed into her swollen cheek. A tear rolls from her eye and her powerful grip weakens.

The man breaks free. The BUZZER sounds again as he exits the market into the darkness with Carl in his arms.

Dazed, Melissa tries to lever herself up. The spilled wine soaks into her 'joggers'.

4

INT. LARGE SUBURBAN HOME (LOUNGE) - NIGHT

4

A glass of champagne is poured.

MANY GUESTS fill out a room which owes much to contemporary Scandinavian style; warmly lit, stylish and up-market.

A large Cake that resides on a table displays: 'HAPPY ANNIVERSARY - 25 YEARS'

Addressing the guests is KERR; the epitome of elder style and sophistication - he effortlessly makes his expensive grey suit look comfortable and is well at ease with his sixty-five years.

He is flanked by his wife BELINDA; she is 15 years his junior - but she got the life she wanted.

KERR

(quieting the guests)

....and I might add that it is wonderful to have my two oldest home from university for this special occasion. It's important that I'm reminded just how badly they dress from time to time.

Playful DISAGREEMENT from the guests. Kerr looks at his two daughters, they are either side of twenty-years-old. He raises a glass to them and they both smile back at him.

At the back of the room, and enjoying the surroundings, is LISA; a refined and serious thirty-something with porcelain skin.

And behind her shoulder, with a beer in hand, is her husband. He is Max Leary; stoic, mid-thirties and kinda scrawny - his collar and tie have never been a partnership and he'd rather be anywhere but here.

Max watches EMILY; a flaxen haired ten-year-old, as she stands in front of Kerr and Belinda with a beaming smile.

KERR (O.C.) (cont'd)  
 And no we're not forgetting this  
 little rascal who's constantly  
 under our feet....

AUDIO FADE:

Kerr's speech becomes slow and silent....

Max is momentarily transfixed by the picture perfect family  
 and his eyes focus on Emily. She looks up at her father  
 happily; she's preened and in a pretty dress.

AUDIO IN:

A BIG GROUP LAUGH.

Max snaps back to reality.

KERR (cont'd)  
 ....but seriously. I'm proud of  
 all of my children.

Kerr makes eye contact with Max momentarily.

Max studies the side of Lisa's face; she anticipates the  
 rest of Kerr's speech.

His speech continues, but Max takes the opportunity to  
 ghost out of the room and step out into....

5

EXT. LARGE SUBURBAN GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

5

The garden is spacious and beautifully landscaped with a  
 perfect lawn. The air is quiet and fresh; a far cry from  
 the streets of the Belly.

Max lights up a cigarette, the undulating MURMUR of Kerr's  
 speech and the party can still be heard behind him.

He crosses to the edge of the garden and stands on a bench  
 so that he can look out over a surrounding high fence. His  
 vantage point is in the hills and from this elevated  
 position, a carpet of beautiful and uncomplicated city  
 lights spread out before him like stars on a clear autumn  
 night.

EMILY (O.C.)

Max.

Max turns. He throws his cigarette away - ashamed to have  
 been caught.

EMILY (cont'd)  
 You shouldn't smoke.

MAX  
 Emily. What's up?

EMILY

I was bored with daddy's speech.  
He can go on a bit.

She climbs up on the bench beside Max.

MAX

Always one step ahead aren't you?

EMILY

I try to be. What are you  
looking at?

He points.

MAX

The lights in the south-side.

EMILY

They're really far.

MAX

Not as far as they seem.

Emily looks at Max curiously.

EMILY

What is out there?

MAX

People.

They look at each other. Emily is fascinated.

KERR (O.C.)

She'll be gunning for your new  
badge, Detective?

Max turns to see Kerr approach.

Emily is disappointed - she knows that's an end to her  
conversation.

Kerr arrives at the bench and puts his hand out to Emily.  
She takes it and he lifts her down.

Max also steps down.

KERR (cont'd)

(to Emily)

There is some cake inside.

Emily looks at Max - Her attention now elsewhere.

Max smiles at her and she runs off to the house.

KERR (cont'd)

She's curious to know everything.

MAX  
She's terrific.

They watch her make her way into the house.

KERR  
Are you thinking about adopting?

MAX  
I still want to. Lisa's tied up  
with work at the moment.

Max sits and retrieves a cigarette.

Kerr sighs - disappointed at Max lighting up.

KERR  
She'll come around. Anything you  
guys need?

MAX  
You've done plenty.

KERR  
I've kinda thrown you in at the  
deep end.

Max nods.

KERR (cont'd)  
Trent will help you swim.

MAX  
That guy is a prick.

Kerr frowns - Max is pushing it.

KERR  
He's better police than I ever  
was.

MAX  
I can't see it.

Max looks at Kerr to gauge his mood. Kerr takes the  
opportunity to sit down on the bench with him.

MAX (cont'd)  
I should be thanking you.

KERR  
Yes you should.

Max takes a draw on his cigarette.

Kerr reaches over and clasps the back of Max's neck.

KERR (cont'd)  
 It's time to advance, Max.  
 You're ready.

Max dips his head. A long, slightly awkward, moment as they gather their thoughts.

KERR (cont'd)  
 Right. I'm done buttering you  
 up. C'mon, we'll get you another  
 drink.

They rise to head back inside.

KERR (cont'd)  
 You and Trent will get there. I  
 like to mix my talent.

6 EXT. 'ALL NIGHT NEEDS' - NIGHT

6

A car pulls up and parks perfectly inside the spread of a street-light. Inside the car a set of rosary beads swing on the rear-view mirror.

TRENT DALTRY rises out the driver's side; a sturdy and audacious detective who's irresistible presence eclipses the dark alleyways and dangerous street surroundings - something deep down in his soul drives him.

He strides towards 'ALL NIGHT NEEDS'.

There's a police car by the shop. A FEMALE MEDIC, tends to Melissa's cut hand at the passenger-side.

TRENT  
 (to the medic)  
 Tell the mother I'll be right  
 with her!

Melissa scowls at him as he enters the shop.

7 INT. 'ALL NIGHT NEEDS' - CONTINUOUS

7

Trent strolls through the store. He looks at the scattered beer cans, broken glass and the empty stroller.

A FORENSICS guy scans the area for prints with a scanner.

FORENSICS  
 Complete waste of my time.

Trent nods.

FORENSICS (cont'd)  
 On your own tonight?

TRENT  
 Always.

FORENSICS  
 (sneering)  
 Where's the new kid?

Trent shrugs.

FORENSICS (cont'd)  
 They should have mail order  
 newbies for you.

Trent returns outside.

8

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

8

Trent sees DAVID, a beat copper.

TRENT  
 The workie was the only witness?

DAVID  
 Yeah. He didn't see much though.  
 All he heard was Melissa say....

He reads his notebook.

DAVID (cont'd)  
 "What do you want?" and a bit of  
 a commotion. Then the masked guy  
 left with the kid.

Trent looks across at Melissa as she is treated by the  
 medic.

DAVID (cont'd)  
 Nothing from the store camera  
 either. The guy said the  
 recording drive is bust.

Trent looks up at a street camera that looms overhead in  
 the blackness.

TRENT  
 You check the eyes?

DAVID  
 Like the rest around here - a  
 long time blind.

Trent is drawn towards Melissa. Her face is swollen.

TRENT  
 (to Medic)  
 Buzz off.

She reluctantly moves, but stays within earshot.

TRENT (cont'd)  
Where's your other half tonight,  
sweet stuff?

Melissa spits some blood on the ground.

TRENT (cont'd)  
Word is you two aren't  
specifically cosy anymore.

Melissa glares at Trent.

TRENT (cont'd)  
Dexter would sure as almighty  
hell be my number one suspect.

Trent lifts Melissa's chin; perhaps a little too roughly.

TRENT (cont'd)  
Well?

MEDIC  
Excuse me. I need to get her  
treated.

TRENT  
What about the treatment you'll  
need after I make sure you're  
drudging in the Belly for the  
rest of your life?

The medic backs off - she knows he means it.

TRENT (cont'd)  
Did you give a voice to any of  
the uniforms?

Melissa ignores him.

TRENT (cont'd)  
(to David)  
Like I suspected. Couldn't give  
a shit about her kid.

Melissa swallows her nausea, but quickly models a response.

MELISSA  
Fuck you.

Trent smiles, completely unperturbed. He heads back  
towards his car. David struggles to keep up.

DAVID  
You think Dexter did this?

TRENT  
How does he earn his crust?

DAVID  
He's a dealer.

Trent throws his hands up; a 'there you have it' gesture.

Trent gets to his car. From the corner of his eye, he sees two 'HOODIES' in the shadows watching - they irk him.

He climbs into his car; his rosary beads swing on the rear-view mirror.

Trent starts the engine and rolls the window down.

TRENT  
You get a statement from those youngsters?

He thumbs over his shoulder.

DAVID  
Where?

Trent drives off.

David looks across in the shadows. There's no-one there.

9

INT. KITCHEN (SUBURBAN HOME) - NIGHT

9

Max has a beer in hand. Kerr has iced a glass but a muted television has caught his attention.

He proceeds to pour a drink and he unmutes the T.V. - A 'public-school' COUNCILLOR gives an address in front of the Town Hall.

COUNCILLOR (T.V.)  
....As I said before it's time that we clamped down on this explosion of crime. The extra five percent funding will bring a better police presence and improve their resources.

The news programme cuts to the Councillor being buffeted by press as he struggles to his car.

REPORTER (T.V.)  
Can the five percent make a difference?

COUNCILLOR (T.V.)  
A question from someone who was listening?

REPORTER (T.V.)  
Is the money being spent in the Belly - Or more protection for the north?

KERR

Good--

COUNCILLOR (T.V.)

The South-side is top of our agenda.

Kerr shrugs, exasperated.

2ND REPORTER (T.V.)

Has arming the police made things worse, councillor? Has it fuelled the rise of gun crime in the city?

The Councillor stops at his car and turns; several microphones are shoved up to his face.

COUNCILLOR (T.V.)

It is an incontestable fact that gun crime was a problem in this city long before our decision. This economic malaise is having a detrimental effect everywhere, and until things improve we'll have to continue to operate with limited resources. Our officers are vulnerable and the streets are difficult. Are you suggesting that these brave men and women don't have a right to defend themselves?

The Councillor retires to his waiting car.

Back to the Studio presenter--

Kerr mutes the Television. He exhales purposefully.

KERR

He's losing it.

MAX

Why don't you put yourself in there?

KERR

You've got a lot to learn.

BELINDA enters. She puts her hands on her hips.

Kerr looks at Max - The party beckons.

10

INT/EXT. CAR - NIGHT

10

Lisa drives. She and Max peer out of the windscreen.

Their surroundings are dominated by high rise office glass. It's a clean and impressive area, but deserted and soulless; a demarcation-zone by night.

Huge billboards advertise new build flats in 'North Hills'.

They approach the mouth of a tunnel; the sign above exclaims....

'SOUTH SIDE'

Lisa is not enamoured by the sign.

ECHOING noise as the car enters the tunnel and starts to descend on the downward camber.

The flicker of the tunnel lights on the windscreen intermittently obscure Max and Lisa's faces.

In the rear view mirror, Lisa watches the mouth of the tunnel shrink into the distance.

The car veers over the centre line.

MAX

You watching the road?

Lisa snaps to attention and corrects herself.

They exit the tunnel and the ECHO stops.

Max and Lisa both look across at a near-derelict shopping area....

'WELCOME TO THE BELLY'.

One shop remains open. A fortified pawn-shop offering 'Cash for Gold'. Idle, rust-ridden shutters confirm the demise of the other shop units.

Resigned, Lisa makes a left turn.

11 EXT. STREET (APARTMENT BLOCK) - NIGHT. 11

A lonely multi-storey apartment block rises into the black sky; it's a throwback to architecture long past, but it has since been saved and renovated. The gate of the underground garage clanks open and Lisa's car pulls in.

12 INT. MAX'S APARTMENT (LIVING AREA) - NIGHT 12

Max and Lisa enter. Lisa carelessly drops her keys on the table. Max goes directly to the fridge for a beer.

The flat is contemporary and minimalist; orange street light stripes the lounge through venetian blinds.

LISA  
Aren't you coming to bed?

Max opens his beer and takes his jacket off.

LISA (cont'd)  
We could talk for a bit.

MAX  
I'm not tired.

LISA  
Don't sit up all night.

He switches the television on - Lisa is used to this disappointment and she retires for bed.

Max flicks to 'News 24'.

The news story on television unfolds, the elements on-screen sensationally visualise the newscasters dialogue--

NEWSCASTER (T.V.)  
....police at the scene reported that small snap seal bags were being sold to children as young as seven....

Max turns it up.

NEWSCASTER (T.V.) (cont'd)  
....the contents of the bags were: a cotton swab, a teaspoon, a lighter, a syringe and one short potent mix of heroin....

Max sits on the sofa.

NEWSCASTER (T.V.) (cont'd)  
....children are being offered this, outside of schools and at a price they can easily afford. An act dedicated to bolstering the market for heroin across the south side.

13 INT. MAX'S APARTMENT (BEDROOM) - CONTINUOUS.

13

Lisa lies awake in the dark, compounded by the faint noise of an ALARM in the distant night; as well as the dampened NEWS from the television....

NEWSCASTER (O.C.)  
In a related story, a child was abducted tonight in the south side. The child, Carl Grant, fourteen months old....

14 INT. MAX'S APARTMENT (LIVING AREA) - CONTINUOUS. 14

NEWSCASTER (T.V.)  
 ....was in the care of his  
 mother, Melissa Grant, at the  
 time.

INSERT ON NEWS: Photo of Melissa.

Max leans forward - He knows her.

NEWSCASTER (T.V.) (cont'd)  
 Police have named the child's  
 estranged father, Dexter  
 Grant....

INSERT ON NEWS: PHOTOGRAPH OF DEXTER (A particularly  
 devilish arrest-sheet shot)

NEWSCASTER (T.V.) (cont'd)  
 ....as their number one suspect  
 in the abduction. Thirty-Four-  
 year-old, Grant, a notorious  
 crime boss and gunrunner, is also  
 thought to be the probable  
 culprit for this new wave of  
 heroin grooming. He is a key  
 figure head in the south side and  
 has previously served eight years  
 for voluntary manslaughter--

Max shuts the television off and swigs his beer.

15 INT. MAX'S APARTMENT (BEDROOM) - NIGHT. 15

Lisa's eyes are open but she faces away from Max as he gets  
 in bed.

Max lies on his back and stares at the stripes of street  
 light on the ceiling.

AUDIO FLASHBACK:

KID (V.O.)  
 Max. You've got to run.

END AUDIO FLASHBACK.

Max closes his eyes.

16 INT/EXT. CAR - DAY 16

'STOP CHILDREN'

Max's P.O.V. - Two YOUNG BOYS (7-8 year olds) are being  
 ushered over a zebra crossing by a 'lollipop lady'.

It's windy as hell and the kids are being buffeted. One of them is lagging behind the other.

AUDIO FADE TO:

FOOTSTEPS on a corridor floor....

17 INT. POLICE HQ (CORRIDOR) - DAY 17

Daylight from corridor windows flickers across Max's face as he walks.

The building is decrepit and in need of modernisation; more like a 1960s high school than a police station.

Max knocks on a door; 'Detective Chief Constable - J.L.KERR'

KERR (O.C.)

Yeah?!

Max enters....

18 INT. POLICE HQ (KERR'S OFFICE) - CONTINUOUS 18

Kerr works at his computer. The daylight sneaks through any available slit in Kerr's window blind.

KERR

Hell of a wind out there--

MAX

The stolen child case.

Kerr removes his glasses.

KERR

Is not for you. You have a case.

MAX

That can wait.

Kerr gets up and shuts his office door.

KERR

Enthusiasm. I like it.

(pause)

But you need to stay on the Whitton case for now - she was one of our own and we need to find her.

MAX

I'm getting nowhere with that case. Let me take the child.

KERR

Look. I brought you in to pick  
up some of the slack for  
Trent....

Kerr sits back down

KERR (cont'd)

....And I can't give you that  
case. We both know that.

Kerr shares a look with Max that confirms an end to it.  
Max shakes his head as he leaves - It's too soon to die on  
this hill.

19

INT. POLICE HQ (DETECTIVE OFFICE) - DAY

19

Trent leans over his computer; he prefers not to sit.

Another detective, JONES sits at his desk and 'bitches' to  
Trent about something; he's bedded in with Trent and has an  
incipient slyness.

A desk fan spins air at head height from the top of a  
filing cabinet. A large map of the city adorns the wall  
behind Jones; the north and south are clearly separated by  
a river, the south side also hemmed in by a bypass road.

The office is dingy and much of the natural light has been  
shuttered out.

Max enters and slams some papers in his 'IN' basket.

Trent holds a stopping hand out to Jones; he has taken an  
interest in Max. He relaxes by perching on his desk,  
rotating his wedding ring around his finger as he chats....

TRENT

What's the malfunction, Leary?

Max pouts like a child that has just been told off.

TRENT (cont'd)

You're in a marathon, Kid. Not a  
sprint.

MAX

Who's on the missing child case?

TRENT

I was adrift on that last night,  
while you were out playing in the  
hills. Pity - word is you've got  
a tidy interest.

Trent winks - He's enjoying this.

MAX

Your sledge-hammer approach won't work with Melissa.

Trent ambles over to Max. Max takes a step backward; the whirring fan now behind his head.

TRENT

My approach? I've been peggin' down gigs like these for fifteen years, Lappy.

Trent adjusts Max's tie to straighten it.

TRENT (cont'd)

Give yourself a chance to settle in, huh.

Trent looks at Jones. Raised eyebrows between them.

TRENT (cont'd)

Kerr wants you on the Whitton search. But remember that's my gig. Straight to me if you catch even a sniff of where she is.

Trent crosses to his desk and puts his jacket on. He smirks with Jones and then strolls out.

Max seethes. He touches his monitor and it powers up. He points at what he wants on screen - the Whitton file.

He looks at her headshot and reads, 'Missing person'.

Max opens his desk drawer and stares at a gun in there. He decides against it.

He strides out of the office.

Jones picks up his phone as he watches Max leave.

20

INT/EXT. CAR - DAY

20

Max drives. In the harsh reality of daylight the graffiti and broken streets are more visible; the Belly is truly neglected. There are few people around, but a 'HOODY' is not afraid to make his presence known and he steps to the kerb; his shadowed face staring out as Max passes.

In front of Max a traffic light turns amber, Max slows initially but decides to hit the accelerator as he approaches it. He passes through after it has turned red.

Max drives past 'All Night Needs'. There is no activity.

He drives on a little further and parks. He takes a deep breath to ready himself, then he gets out.

He looks around to gauge the scene.

Two bedraggled street urchins approach him.

YOUNGSTER  
Look after your car, Mister?

Max flashes his I.D. at them, then dips into his pocket.

MAX  
You see anything last night?

The boy shakes his head. Max hands him some change.

CUT TO:

P.O.V. - In a rear view mirror, Max is being watched as he walks away from the Urchins to a scruffy housing block. It is Trent's view; his rosary beads dangle on the mirror.

CUT TO:

Max presses an intercom buzzer. After a few moments....

FEMALE VOICE (INTERCOM)  
Who's there?

MAX  
Max Leary.

A lull. The door buzzes open.

21 INT. HALLWAY - DAY 21

Max approaches an apartment in the dingy hallway. The door is ajar and he enters....

22 INT. MELISSA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS 22

A large open apartment, nicely decorated with all mod cons. It contradicts the exterior and hall. Max is surprised by the comfortable surroundings.

Melissa sits on a large leather sofa. She's in her dressing gown; her hair is damp, face bruised and her hand bandaged.

Her four-year-old child, MARY looks at Max; she has beautiful dark hair and her blue eyes are fixed on him.

Melissa's mother, JUDE; a hardened woman in her fifties, takes the child from Melissa.

JUDE  
C'mon. You come to your Nana's  
for a while.

Max watches Jude put a jacket on Mary. Mary's eyes never budge from Max.

JUDE (cont'd)  
Call me later.

MELISSA (O.C.)  
I will, Mammy.

Mary continues to look at Max as she leaves with Jude. The door closes and Max stands with his back to Melissa.

Max's attention shifts to a framed photograph of Melissa with her two kids on the sideboard.

Melissa rises from the sofa and Max turns to face her.

MELISSA (cont'd)  
Did you come to act like that  
other cunt?

MAX  
I thought you knew me better than  
that.

Max continues to scan the plush apartment.

MAX (cont'd)  
Dexter must be giving you nice  
house keeping incentives.

MELISSA  
I don't see him no more....

She steps over to him, her gown loose enough to show a shrewd amount of cleavage.

MELISSA (cont'd)  
....we're clear of each other.

MAX  
You'll be needing him now though.

Max reaches up to touch her bruised face. She blocks his hand forcefully.

MELISSA  
I'll take whatever help I can  
get.

MAX  
Any clue?

Melissa shakes her head. Max looks at her exposed skin.

MAX (cont'd)  
Where can I find Dexter?

MELISSA  
I don't know.

Max frowns and looks deep into her eyes - Trying to read her mixed signals.

He clasps the two trims of her dressing gown and pulls them closed. He then tightens the belt.

MAX

I want to find Carl. I might be the only one in the department who does.

Melissa stares at Max - She's perplexed.

She breaks their tight proximity and returns to perch on the sofa.

MELISSA

Dexter works better when he's not distracted. You'll help by keeping your lot away from him.

MAX

That'll be a trick.

(pause)

Do you have a picture of Carl?

Melissa points at the side-board.

Max sees the framed photograph he looked at earlier. He crosses to it and removes it from the frame.

He turns the picture to her.

MAX (cont'd)

You look happy there.

She wont look at it. Max approaches and pushes it closer to her face.

She finally registers it and softens.

Max puts his hand out to her face. This time she puts up no resistance. He cups her bruised cheek and wipes a tear away with his thumb.

Max lets go just as she tries to touch his hand with her own. He reassures her with a glimmer of a smile and then he leaves.

23 INT. TRENT'S CAR - DAY 23

Trent watches in his rear view mirror as Max exits the building and approaches his car.

24 EXT. STREET - DAY 24

Max is about to unlock the door of his car when two MEN grab him. One of the men pulls a black bag over his head.

Max struggles and slips one of the men, but he is disabled with a punch to the stomach and an elbow to the head.

The two men drag him across the street and bundle him into the boot of a car.

The car speeds off.

25 INT. TRENT'S CAR - DAY 25

Trent starts the engine of his car but another car screeches in behind him and blocks him in, the DRIVER gets out and runs off down an alleyway.

TRENT  
Fuckin' joking me.

In a rage, Trent tries to manoeuvre his car out of the space. He can't.

He bangs his fists on the steering wheel.

CUT TO:

26 INSIDE A BLACK BAG. 26

A few PIGEONS can be heard FLUTTERING; some vague light shapes can be seen.

WHITE OUT:

FADE IN:

27 INT. DERELICT CHURCH - DAY 27

Max screws his eyes up as light from a stained glass window cascades down into his face.

Shadows creep around behind dusty pews in the tumble-down interior, Max has been planted on one of those pews.

Max's P.O.V. - A silhouetted figure stands over him. He steps out of the light and can now be seen properly....

He is DEXTER GRANT; attractive and rugged, with serious eyes - an unknown quantity. His wife-beater shirt exposes a collage of body art.

Within a couple of feet is one of Dexter's associates, RAY; a beast of a man adorned with a map of scars that affirm his long criminal past.

Max's face is marked and blood trickles from his eye-brow.

MAX  
What's with the fucking bag? I  
know exactly where I am.

Dexter looks at Ray, waiting for his response.

RAY  
 ....Hell. Like I give two fucks.

Ray leaves to help STEVE; a skinnier thug and Max's other assailant. He packs guns into a crate by the altar.

Dexter pulls out his gun and lets it hang by his side.

DEXTER  
 You go to Melissa to find me?

MAX  
 I could have led them here ten times over.

DEXTER  
 Why haven't you?

MAX  
 Right now, I've no idea.

Max curses as he dabs his burst eyebrow.

DEXTER  
 (off his wound)  
 I thought you'd need that when they question you.

MAX  
 When who questions me?

DEXTER  
 The big man was tailing you.

Max sinks at his blunder.

DEXTER (cont'd)  
 You walk about like a child.  
 Don't underestimate that goon.

MAX  
 If he nails you I'll have less to worry about.

Dexter puts his gun away. Max relaxes....

MAX (cont'd)  
 What do you know about Carl?

DEXTER  
 I know he's better off with his mammy. Do you see me changing nappies?

MAX

It does seem a bit convenient to blame you.

DEXTER

We're on the same page.

Dexter looks at his old friend suspiciously.

DEXTER (cont'd)

You got anything?

MAX

Nothing. I've been warned off this.

DEXTER

Yet here you are.

Max thinks for a moment.

MAX

My life will be shit if I'm caught looking into this.

DEXTER

You'll still be eight years up on me.

Max is not impressed.

DEXTER (cont'd)

I can help you.

Max is curious to hear this.

DEXTER (cont'd)

You make moves in the Whitton case and they won't realise you're looking for Carl.

MAX

You know what case I'm on?

DEXTER

Sure. Geraldine Whitton, Awol copper, stroke junkie.

MAX

Is nothing sacred?

DEXTER

Not in your house.

Max raises an eyebrow. Ray returns to Dexter's side.

RAY

We're done.

DEXTER  
 (to Max)  
 I'll try to dig up Whitton.

MAX  
 Fine. I'll keep on with Carl.

RAY  
 He's fucking dying to find the kid.

Dexter looks at Max proudly.

DEXTER  
 For once, Ray, I think you're right.

Dexter gets ready to leave.

MAX  
 One thing.

Dexter hesitates.

MAX (cont'd)  
 Those heroin packs? Is it you?

DEXTER  
 I'm trying to find out who.

Max eyes him intensely.

DEXTER (cont'd)  
 I want the boy back with his mother, Max. You owe me.

MAX  
 I haven't forgotten.

DEXTER  
 Find Carl and we'll forget.

A look between them.

DEXTER (cont'd)  
 Give it a couple of days.  
 Wednesday at one - I'll see you with my old man.  
 (pause)  
 And stay the fuck away from Melissa.

Dexter and Ray walk away from Max down the aisle of the church. Max watches on. The light in the church brightens...

FLASHBACK:

28 INT. DERELICT CHURCH - DAY 28

YOUNG MAX's P.O.V. Twelve and full of mischief, Young Dexter looks over his shoulder and grins. He is being ushered out forcefully by a priest.

YOUNG MAX; cheeky and bright eyed, his size diminutive for twelve, sits on a pew. He is turned in his seat and watches Dexter being manhandled.

END FLASHBACK.

CUT TO:

29 INT. DERELICT CHURCH - CONTINUOUS 29

Max watches adult Dexter's silhouette exit.

DISSOLVE TO:

30 EXT. CITY-SCAPE - DAY 30

Twilight transitions to night. A SIREN in the distance.

31 INT. POLICE HQ (KERR'S OFFICE) - NIGHT 31

The overheard light seems concentrated on Max. His eye now stitched and Trent is in close proximity.

Kerr paces.

KERR

You didn't want the promotion, is that it? You were happy out there padding the beat.

MAX

That's nothing to do with it.

TRENT

Where did they take you?

MAX

I had a bag over my head.

TRENT

You striking up a little deal, huh?

MAX

Piss off.

TRENT

(right in Max's face)  
The guy is selling drugs to primary schoolers. I get a whiff of you being in bed with him and I'll cut your throat.

Kerr separates them.

KERR  
(to Trent)  
Go stand outside.

Trent gladly does so. Kerr closes the door behind him, but Trent can still see them through the glass of the door.

MAX  
Why is he on this? He's not even interested in the kid.

KERR  
You don't know him.

Kerr looks at Trent.

KERR (cont'd)  
You're not the only one who grew up on the South-side. And you're too young to remember what it was like before.

MAX  
I remember.

KERR  
Not the community - kids playing football in the streets and mothers free to stand around and gossip. It was a gradual change for most....but not for him.  
(lowering his voice)  
He was leaving for work one day and opened his door to find his fourteen-year-old sister on the doorstep. She'd been off her face and had made her way to his place instead of going home. He didn't hear her and by the morning she was frozen solid.

31A QUICK FLASH: A door opens from the inside and light cascades in. 31A

31 Max looks at Trent through the glass - A first flash of empathy for his colleague. 31

KERR (cont'd)  
His motives are clear, Max. Are yours?

MAX  
Dexter just grabbed me....

Kerr shakes his head.

KERR

Try not to disappoint me.

Max leaves. Trent stares at him as he does.

32

INT. MAX'S APARTMENT (LIVING AREA) - NIGHT

32

Lisa sits at the dimly lit kitchen table. She has a laptop open in front of her, the screen illuminates her face.

Max enters. He's tired and he grabs a beer from the fridge.

MAX

What you doing?

LISA

Nothing that would particularly interest you.

MAX

You okay?

LISA

Why wouldn't I be?

Max sits down in the seat next to her and starts to eat some left over pasta in the plate in front of him.

Lisa stops for a moment and rises. She sees his bruises.

LISA (cont'd)

What the hell happened?

MAX

It's work. I had a bit of a run in with Dexter Grant.

LISA

Jesus, Max.

MAX

Someone snatched his kid.

LISA

I saw the paper. You shouldn't mix with that guy.

MAX

Please. I've had this from Kerr.

She examines the wound.

Max grabs her and pulls her onto his knee.

She softens and takes the fork from him. She starts to feed him.

LISA  
He beat you?

MAX  
He just wants his kid back.

LISA  
I'm not sure he deserves a kid.

Max looks at Lisa curiously - Sometimes he feels like he doesn't know her at all.

His attention is caught by some letters on the table. He spreads them and at the bottom of the pile....

An A4 size letter. The bold print on it reads: 'BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR ADOPTION AND FOSTERING'.

MAX  
You should have said this arrived.

Max picks it up.

MAX (cont'd)  
We can fill these out tonight.

LISA  
It's late, Max. Let's do them in the morning?

MAX  
But I'll be out the door early.

LISA  
No. We're both off tomorrow.

Max takes a moment.

MAX  
Off? I've got this case....

Lisa drops the fork in the plate and rises. Her demeanour has shifted.

LISA  
I'm not sure you fully appreciate how difficult it is for me to take a day off. You better have a re-think.

Lisa goes back to her laptop and re-engages with her work.

Max turns and looks at a calender on the fridge.

INSERT: 'TUES 25th: HOUSE VIEWING, 11am'

He smarts and scratches his head - He's been an idiot.

He takes a long swig from his beer. Then he exits into....

33 INT. MAX'S APARTMENT (BATHROOM) - CONTINUOUS 33

The light comes on as Max enters. He looks closely at his face in the big mirror above the sink. He raises a hand up and tugs at one of the stitches above his eye.

33A FLASHBACK: 33A

Max's P.O.V. - A black bag is pulled over and a sickening THUMP. Very brief BLACK OUT....

Dexter stands over Max

DEXTER  
Find Carl and we'll forget.

END FLASHBACK.

34 INT. MAX'S APARTMENT (BATHROOM) - NIGHT 34

Max looks in the mirror.

35 INT. MAX'S APARTMENT (LIVING AREA) - NIGHT 35

Lisa still works as Max re-enters.

MAX  
I'm just going out for a bit.  
(pause)  
Lisa?

LISA  
It's fine. I need to do this.

Max exits.

36 INT. 'ALL NIGHT NEEDS' - NIGHT 36

Max is mid-conversation with the Owner at the cash desk. He has a new pack of cigarettes in hand.

OWNER  
....I dunno. It happened so fast.

MAX  
Where?

OWNER  
Just in the aisle there. By the wine. After he left, I helped her up and called you lot.

MAX  
Mind if I look around?

OWNER  
Help yourself.

Max walks over to the place where the incident happened.  
He sees a wine stain on the floor.

He crouches at the stain.

After a moment the LIGHTS DIM.

FLASHBACK:

37 INT. A DIFFERENT FOOD MART (20 YEARS EARLIER) - NIGHT. 37

Max's P.O.V. - A shelf full of groceries.

SHOPKEEPER (O.C.)  
You little fucking bastard.

Moving along the grocery aisle....

Twelve-year-old Max has two bottles of alcohol in his hands. He sets them down gently and peeks around the end of the aisle.

Young Max's P.O.V. - Young Dexter has been pinned violently to the floor by an angry SHOPKEEPER; a gun shoved into the back of his neck. His face is bleeding.

The shopkeeper rises and stamps on Dexter's hand; Dexter screams in agony.

The shopkeeper sets his gun on the counter, then takes out a set of hand-cuffs from a shelf underneath. He clips one on Dexter and drags him to a shelf fixture; he cuffs Dexter to the metal frame of then starts to kick him repeatedly.

Max watches on in the background.

SHOPKEEPER (cont'd)  
How fucking proud your parents  
must be.

The Shopkeeper is becoming more violent; he takes pleasure in the beating he administers.

Max moves from his vantage point behind the aisle and grabs the gun off the counter. He points it at the Shopkeeper.

The shopkeeper catches a glimpse of Max out of the corner of his eye and turns to face him.

YOUNG MAX  
We didn't mean it.

The DOOR OPEN BUZZER sounds and Max comes to himself....

END FLASHBACK.

38 INT. 'ALL NIGHT NEEDS' - NIGHT

38

Max rises up in the aisle, he can see that a Hooded figure has entered 'All Night Needs'; it's the 'Hoody' that Melissa passed the previous night. His name is WARREN; An imposing presence for a 17 year-old - A born leader.

Warren gives Max a 'once over' and picks up a pack of beer.

Max suspiciously watches him as he returns to the cash desk, pays for the beer and leaves.

Max approaches the desk.

MAX

You get any hassle from him?

OWNER

He's got money. No trouble with him at all.

Max pulls the cellophane from his new pack of cigarettes. He nods to the owner and leaves.

39 EXT. 'ALL NIGHT NEEDS - CONTINUOUS

39

Max exits the store and opens his cigarettes. Sitting in his squad car with the window down is David; the uniformed officer from the crime-scene.

DAVID

If it isn't, Mr. Detective.

MAX

Just getting some cigarettes.

A playful nod from David.

Max offers David a cigarette but he declines. Max lights up his own - He savours the nicotine hit.

MAX (cont'd)

You down here the other night?

DAVID

What night was that?

MAX

Nothing from the eyes either, huh?

DAVID

Time to go home, Max. Your car wont sit out here much longer.

MAX

Strange that someone would snatch Dexter's kid.

DAVID  
Word is, he did it himself.

MAX  
You're with Trent's philosophy?

DAVID  
Nah. Going with my own. I've  
been on these streets a long  
time.  
(pause)  
Get yourself out of here.

Max walks back to his car and climbs in.

The headlights of David's squad car dazzle him as it  
leaves....

40 INT. SUBURBAN SHOW-HOUSE - DAY 40

Max shields his eyes from the bright sun that cascades in a  
large window. He stares out at the garden.

Lisa is being shown around a beautiful living space by TOM;  
a sales agent.

TOM  
Of course the master bedroom is  
en-suite and there are two other  
ample bedrooms. This wonderful  
living space is perfect for a  
young family. A real wood-  
burning stove....

Tom continues his speech as he strolls around.

Lisa crosses to Max and pulls him into the tour.

LISA  
(whispering)  
It's gorgeous.

Max tries to look enthusiastic.

TOM  
....and then through the French  
doors is this beautiful garden.

Tom swings open the doors like a courtier.

They all step into....

41 EXT. GARDEN - DAY 41

The sun beats down on them as they stand and admire the  
lush grass and flowers.

MAX  
 The garden is nice.  
 (pause)  
 Could you excuse us for a moment?

TOM  
 Certainly.

Tom gives them a little space, but hovers nearby.

MAX  
 We can't afford this.

LISA  
 We can.  
 (she smiles)  
 A wood-burning stove.

Lisa's enthusiasm fails to rub off on Max.

MAX  
 We could get a place in the  
 country.

LISA  
 The commute would be terrible and  
 these places so rarely come up.

MAX  
 I just think it's too much of a  
 stretch.

LISA  
 We'll manage. I'll make up the  
 difference.

MAX  
 No. We agreed fifty, fifty.

Max's MOBILE PHONE sounds. He CURSES under his breath then  
 he answers. Lisa is exasperated.

MAX (cont'd)  
 Max here....As soon as I can.

Lisa sinks. Max hangs up - His mind immediately elsewhere.

LISA  
 Let's have another quick look  
 around.

MAX  
 I've got to go.

Lisa places a hand on Max's chest in a stop gesture....

LISA  
 I wont be adopting while we're  
 living in the south-side. You  
 want a family, this has to happen  
 first.

Tom tries to look nonchalant - Max knows he's listening.

MAX  
 Can we discuss this later?

LISA  
 It's just been discussed. You  
 need to get your head in order.

Max has got the point - no question.

LISA (cont'd)  
 You can go. I'm not finished  
 looking around.

Max is glad to leave his public scolding. Tom rocks on his  
 heels a little as Max passes him.

42 INT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS (KERR'S OFFICE) - DAY 42

Lit only by his desk lamp, Kerr's office seems half of it's  
 normal size.

Max despondently knocks and enters - Lisa's words still  
 roll in his head.

KERR  
 Shut the door.

Max does.

KERR (cont'd)  
 Anything to report on Whitton?

MAX  
 Nope.

A moment.

KERR  
 Why have you been to Trent's  
 crime scene?

Max puffs his cheeks. Kerr clocks his apathy.

KERR (cont'd)  
 I made you a detective because  
 you're a smart kid.

MAX  
 I'm grateful.

KERR

Then stay smart for heaven's sake.

(pause)

What do you think your parents would say if I failed to steer you in the right direction?

MAX

(petulantly)

They're dead. You're not responsible for taking their place.

KERR

(angrily)

They were my friends. I've worked things out for you.

MAX

And where does all of that leave me? Trapped in your ample fucking shadow, right?

Kerr sucks in some air; he taps his desk, visibly dismayed.

He waves Max out of his office, but Max hesitates.

KERR

Get out.

Max gladly leaves.

DISSOLVE TO:

43

INT. BAR - DAY

43

A shady place with neon lights and a mirror behind the bar; there's a lack of a smoking ban in this joint.

Warren plays pool with his accomplice, DEV. Two of their friends sit in a booth opposite.

Dexter, Ray and Steve enter. Steve sits in a booth by the door and Dexter and Ray approach the pool table. Dexter acknowledges the barman with a nod.

Warren doesn't flinch and pots a difficult shot as Dexter and Ray stand over him.

DEXTER

You missed your pick up.

WARREN

My bad, Dex.

DEXTER

Where the fuck were you?

Warren pots a difficult black and then looks up at Dexter.

WARREN  
Had to take my kid for ice cream.

Dev sniggers uncontrollably.

Dexter grabs the cue out of Warren's hand and wraps it around Dev's face.

Dev drops to the floor clutching his nose - blood pulses from behind his hand.

Ray pulls his gun out and points it at the two friends in the booth to deter their movements.

Dexter grabs Warren by the throat and pins him to the wall. He shoves the left-over, dagger-like stump of cue up under Warren's crotch.

Warren does his best to relieve his situation by going up on his tip-toes.

WARREN (cont'd)  
Stay cool, Man.

DEXTER  
You miss another meet with me you little prick and you won't be playing any more trick shots.

Dexter pushes the shard of cue further, it tears through Warren's 'trackies' and he squeals.

DEXTER (cont'd)  
What you know about playground sales?

WARREN  
Not me. I fucking swear it.

DEXTER  
Then find out who. Otherwise I'll make you eat that fucking eight ball.

Dexter twists the cue and pulls it away from Warren's crotch.

Warren sinks down - overwhelming relief.

Dexter discards the cue. He helps to smooth out Warren's dishevelled top, then he pulls the hood up....

DEXTER (cont'd)  
Something else....

Dexter pulls the draw-string on Warren's hoody and restricts his face....

DEXTER (cont'd)  
I'm looking for someone.

DISSOLVE TO:

44 INT. POLICE HQ (MAX'S DESK) - NIGHT 44

Max works off his monitor. He types 'Geraldine Whitton'  
'189 files match your search criteria'

MAX  
Shit.

Max leaves his desk.

45 INT. RECORDS ROOM - NIGHT 45

Max approaches a desk in the basement.

JOE; A pithy uniform behind the desk, plays solitaire on his computer to pass the time.

MAX  
Hey, Joe. Need to grab some things.

JOE  
You're a big boy now. You need to learn how to use that expensive waste of equipment on your desk.

MAX  
I.T. haven't set me up properly yet. I can't access everything.

Joe laughs.

JOE  
Doesn't surprise me. They laid off another two last week. I'm glad I'm retiring soon.  
(pause)  
Sign here.

MAX  
Maybe you can help me a bit.

Joe shrugs - Maybe he can.

MAX (cont'd)  
Geraldine Whitton. Can you find me what she was working on?

JOE  
I can find anything.

MAX  
Last ten she worked?

Joe uses a wireless mouse and types on a keyboard.

MAX (cont'd)  
How come you still got those?

JOE  
Old man privileges.  
(pause)  
Here we are. Last ten she worked  
or last ten she accessed?

MAX  
(curious)  
Both.

Joe clicks and then sighs.

MAX (cont'd)  
What is it?

JOE  
Some aren't electronic. Take me  
a few minutes to find them. Want  
me to forward the others to you?

MAX  
Print them for me would you?

The printer starts up. Joe rises out of his seat.

MAX (cont'd)  
While I'm here you got a file for  
Carl Grant?

JOE  
You want these other files or  
what?

MAX  
Course.

JOE  
Then we'll just forget about that  
one then, huh?

Max smirks. The printer starts spewing out paper.

46

INT. MAX'S APARTMENT - DAY

46

Max looks tired as he enters with a box of files and a  
computer console. He sets them down.

Lisa is ready to leave for work. She takes one look at him and shakes her head.

She hands him her coffee.

LISA  
Did you give some thought to the house?

He looks at her and nods.

MAX  
You are right. We ought to move out of here.

She smiles.

LISA  
Finally.

She kisses him enthusiastically and he manages a glimmer of a reassuring smile.

LISA (cont'd)  
I'll get the ball rolling and we'll talk later.

MAX  
For sure.

Delighted, she leaves.

Max exhales - a refocus of his energy. He sits down at the table. The apartment is dull and the blinds shut out the world. Max sips the coffee and manoeuvres the computer to where he wants it.

MONTAGE:

Max reads off a file on his monitor.

Screen page: 'Internal Investigation'. 'Geraldine Whitton'. 'Suspended for Heroin abuse'

Max picks up one of the printed files and reads it.

FILE PAGE: Mug-shot of a man - 'Suspected murder....'

Max lights a cigarette and pulls out another printed file.

FILE PAGE: 'Investigating Officer; Det. Geraldine Whitton'. Her signature is at the bottom of the page.

Words come off the pages of the files: 'Witness didn't get a clear view....', 'south side', 'Single Gun shot'....

Max puffs his cheeks.

He takes the first of the 'older' files out of the box; they are in card manila folders.

Max stares intently at the pages.

FILE PAGE: Photograph of child.

Max is mesmerised by the photo. His eyes flick back and forth.

He scrolls under certain words with a pen point....

FILE PAGE: 'Nicholas Arcane - Child abduction'. 'Mother's statement'. '....but then he was gone....my back was turned for two seconds.'

The pen point stops--

'Investigating officer; Det. Trent Daltry'. Trent's signature is at the bottom of the page.

Max ponders for a moment - Why was she looking into Trent's case?

The pen nib creates a blotch on the file beside Trent's signature.

END MONTAGE.

Max checks the clock on his computer screen.

It reads: '12.43'.

He gets ready to leave.

Geraldine's face is staring out of the computer monitor.

47

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

47

Max looks down at a gravestone: 'Harold Grant beloved husband and father'; the years blocked by the long grass.

DEXTER (O.C.)  
Fifty-One ain't old.

Dexter joins Max. He drops some flowers on the grave.

MAX  
He was the man.

DEXTER  
'Til he got a bullet in the back  
of his head.

MAX  
You didn't have to take over.

Dexter eyes Max.

DEXTER  
 What the fuck else was I gonna  
 do?

Dexter looks at Max's bruises.

DEXTER (cont'd)  
 Ray really hurt you. Doesn't  
 know his own strength.

Max looks around himself and scans the graveyard.

DEXTER (cont'd)  
 I found Whitton.

MAX  
 Fuck off.

DEXTER  
 Didn't take much, she gets her  
 shit from one of my boys.

Max eyes Dexter - He's in awe of his old friend.

MAX  
 Maybe you should be the  
 detective.

DEXTER  
 You'll find her at 55 Borde  
 Street. I don't know which flat,  
 but it's on the top floor. Be  
 careful down there man, it's a  
 fucking dive.

MAX  
 I might need to sit on that for a  
 while. How could I be that good?

Dexter laughs.

CUT TO:

48 ACROSS THE GRAVEYARD.

48

Trent with shot-gun and body armour takes up a position  
 behind a tombstone. He signals to Jones and another  
 policeman to stay where they are.

CUT TO:

49 MAX AND DEXTER.

49

DEXTER  
 You found anything on my boy?

MAX  
 I'm trying.

DEXTER  
I'm starting to look weak, Max.

MAX  
Carl's file is restricted.

DEXTER  
He's gone isn't he?

Max is surprised - A rare show of defeat from Dexter.

MAX  
Don't give up.

They look at each other.

MAX (cont'd)  
You should go to Melissa.

DEXTER  
She doesn't want me around.

Dexter eyes Max - Not since they were kids has he felt such a moment of affinity with him.

DEXTER (cont'd)  
I fucked you over with her, huh?

A moment.

Dexter's softness evaporates; he has spotted something - Someone's arm protrudes slightly from behind a tombstone.

Max is puzzled by Dexter.

Dexter turns to Max, and slips a handgun from the back of his trousers.

DEXTER (cont'd)  
Don't even fucking sway, Max.

Dexter slowly edges away.

Jones peeks around a tombstone. Dexter squeezes off a ROUND and it CRACKS off the stone; Jones dives for cover.

Dexter spins around and bolts. A policeman advances on him from the opposite direction, gun pointed.

Dexter FIRES off two rounds and hits the policeman in the leg - He crumples in agony.

Chaos as SHOTS ring out from policemen who hide in many places around the graveyard. Dexter flees, dodging both bullets and tombstones.

Max regains himself and chases Dexter; bullets WHIZZ by.

Trent pursues with his shotgun.

Dexter continues to run. He leaps the graveyard wall.

A car appears which Steve drives. Dexter jumps in.

TYRES SCREECH as they drive off.

More TYRES SQUEAL as a police car gives pursuit.

Max runs to help the shot policeman, it is David. He squats down to try and help. Blood pumps from David's leg.

MAX

Try not to move.

David winces as Max applies pressure to his wound.

DAVID

Think I'll get that desk now?

MAX

It's a definite.

Max looks up and sees that a few police have now emerged from their shelter.

MAX (cont'd)

Get a paramedic!

An officer acknowledges him.

MAX (cont'd)

I need your car.

David nods.

50 INT. CAR - DAY.

50

Max drives through the streets. He listens to the police radio....

RADIO (V.O.)

All units to Hope Primary School.

Max puts his foot down.

51 EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

51

Max gets out of the car. Jones is already there.

A section of the school wall and railing has been smashed through. There are two crashed cars nestled on the side of the school. Smoke rising from the engine blocks.

MAX

What's the update?

JONES

We've got Trent in a two car  
smash with the suspects. I saw  
Dexter enter the school.

Max starts towards the crashed cars.

JONES (cont'd)

Orders are to wait for A.R.U.

Max ignores him and approaches the two car wrecks.

In Dexter's car, Steve is dead at the wheel. A large piece  
of railing has speared him through the throat.

Dexter is missing.

Max looks in Trent's car. Trent is slightly stunned in his  
seat and dizzily tries to get his door open. It won't  
open; it has been mashed against the building.

He and Max look at each other and Trent tries more  
furiously to get his door open.

52 INT. SCHOOL (CORRIDOR) - DAY 52

SCREAMS fill the corridor as Max runs.

A group of kids are being ushered in the other direction by  
a TEACHER who points out to Max where he needs to be.

53 INT. SCHOOL (CLASSROOM) - DAY 53

Dexter is bloodied from the crash and he has his back to  
the wall. He holds a CHILD into his body; his arm across  
the boy's chest.

A young teacher, ASHLEY is frantic. She pleads with  
Dexter.

ASHLEY

Please don't.

DEXTER

What's your name?

ASHLEY

Let him go!

DEXTER

Stay calm. What is your name?

She takes a little reassurance from Dexter's eyes.

ASHLEY

It's Ashley.

DEXTER

Okay, Ashley. I won't hurt  
either of you.

54 INT. SCHOOL (CORRIDOR) - CONTINUOUS 54

Max peeks through a large glass panel which looks into the  
classroom from the corridor. He sees Dexter with the child  
in his grasp.

Max enters the classroom; ruffled and out of breath....

55 INT. SCHOOL (CLASSROOM) - CONTINUOUS 55

Dexter points his gun at Max.

MAX

I've no idea how they got there.

A long look from Dexter before he lowers his gun.

DEXTER

Okay. Chill out.

Max breathes; giving himself time to wind down.

DEXTER (cont'd)

Bit of a sticky situ' we're in.

MAX

I have to take you in. Otherwise  
we're both fucked.

Dexter looks down at the petrified kid.

MAX (cont'd)

Come on, Dex. You're not taking  
no hostage.

DEXTER

I'll take the fall again, yeah?

Dexter looks up and smiles at Max.

DEXTER (cont'd)

They'll call it love.

Max grins.

Dexter starts to release the kid.

Max carefully takes his cuffs out.

Ashley watches on, hardly able to breathe.

Max sees Trent out of the corner of his eye through the  
glass panel at the door.

Dexter sees him too and flinches with his gun--

MAX

No!

Trent's gun RINGS out.

The bullet passes cleanly through the glass and hits Dexter in the chest.

The kid runs to Ashley. She shields him on the floor.

Dexter staggers back into the wall.

Max is astonished.

Trent's gun arm drops, he looks at Max briefly then turns his back and walks away.

Max turns back to Dexter, just in time to catch him as he crumples. They collapse on the floor together.

Dexter gasps for a breath - His eyes wait for Max's.

Max looks at him, their eyes connect for a brief moment.

Dexter's mouth fills up with blood and he expires - His mind finally free from torment.

Max pulls him close; a long devastated embrace.

AUDIO FADE:

The sound of a CAR driving....

DISSOLVE TO:

56 INT. MAX'S CAR - NIGHT 56

A mournful Max drives through the streets. He stares blankly at the road in front of him.

FLASHBACK:

57 INT. A DIFFERENT FOOD MART (20 YEARS EARLIER) - NIGHT. 57

Max moves from his vantage point behind the aisle and grabs the gun off the counter. He points it at the Shopkeeper.

The shopkeeper catches a glimpse of Max out of the corner of his eye and turns to face him.

YOUNG MAX

We didn't mean it.

The shopkeeper smiles at Max and moves towards him.

BANG - The gun is fired.

Young Max is startled as he sees the shopkeeper's expression change.

The shopkeeper falls backwards and lands on the floor beside Young Dexter. He gasps for a breath and clutches his lower ribs as blood seeps between his fingers.

Young Dexter quickly extends himself as far as the handcuffs will allow and starts to search the pockets of the dying shopkeeper.

A DISTANT SIREN APPROACHES.

Dexter looks up....

YOUNG DEXTER

Max!

Young Max is frozen to the spot, the gun now drooped in his hands towards the floor. He stares at the blood that oozes from under the shopkeepers hand.

YOUNG DEXTER (cont'd)

Max. You've got to run.

END FLASHBACK.

58 INT. MAX'S CAR - DAY 58

Max has stopped. He looks up at Melissa's flat.

59 INT. MELISSA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT 59

Melissa's apartment is dim and moody. She sits on the sofa in pants and a vest. There are a couple of empty beer bottles on the table and some pills.

The TV is on, but it is muted. The pictures on screen show Hope Primary School and the police activity there. Kerr is being interviewed.

The BUZZER sounds.

Melissa sits for a moment and ponders. She then gets up quickly and crosses to the intercom.

MELISSA

Max?

MAX (INTERCOM)

Yeah.

She buzzes him in.

She undoes the chain and peers out as Max approaches.

Max enters and Melissa grabs and hugs him; a lingering hug.

Max looks over her shoulder at the room behind her. He sees the muted news story on television.

MAX (cont'd)

You know.

Melissa brings her hands up and clasps his face. A tear rolls down her cheek.

MELISSA

I didn't love him.

She ushers him away from the door and closes it. She then leads him over and sits on the sofa. Patting the seat next to her for Max to sit.

He does.

MAX

Getting Carl back is slim with  
Dex gone--

Melissa puts her hand to his mouth - She has heard enough.

She then reaches over, picks up a half bottle of beer and puts one of the pills from the table in her mouth. She kisses Max and passes the pill to him.

She hands him the beer. He swigs it to wash the pill down.

MAX (cont'd)

What is it?

MELISSA

It'll make you feel better.

Max looks at her breasts; her shape is conspicuous in her underwear.

She puts her hand on his knee.

MELISSA (cont'd)

We haven't changed so much, have  
we?

He looks down between her legs. Then back to her face.

MAX

I need to go.

His initial movement is immediately curtailed as she puts a hand on his forearm and holds it.

MELISSA

And do what?

MAX

I've made a mess of things.

Melissa puts a hand to his face.

MELISSA

You have to find Carl for me.  
For Dexter.

Max grabs her and kisses her forcefully. Pushing her back on the sofa. She doesn't resist. Max pushes his hand up under her vest and grabs at her.

QUICK FLASHBACK: Dexter looks at Max as he expires.

Max stops kissing Melissa.

He climbs off her and stands up. She's confused.

Max looks down at Melissa. Her vest has ridden up enough to reveal her navel and belly, her legs are still apart.

Max shuts his eyes.

59A A JUMBLED DRUG INDUCED MONTAGE OF DISSOLVING FLASHBACK & 59A  
FLASHFORWARD:

Silhouetted by the sun, a figure appears in a doorway.

FILE PAGE: 'Investigating Officer, Geraldine Whitton'

Max's eyes flick from side to side as he reads files.

P.O.V. Lisa stands in the garden of the suburban home.

A photo of a child.

P.O.V. Melissa writhes as she has sex.

FILE PAGE: 'Child abduction'.

FILE PAGE: 'Mother's statement....but then he was gone.'

Max watches the shopkeeper gasp for a breath and clutch his lower ribs as blood seeps between his fingers.

Dexter dies in Max's arms.

Max ponders over a file for a moment.

Max and Melissa in a heated moment on the sofa.

A SCRAP OF PAPER as '55 Borde Street' is written down.

Trent's gun RINGS out - The bullet passes cleanly through the glass and hits Dexter in the chest.

Trent adjusts Max's tie to straighten it.

TRENT (V.O.)  
 But remember that's my gig.  
 Straight to me if you catch even  
 a sniff of where she is.

A pen stops at 'Investigating officer; Det. Trent Daltry'.  
 Trent's signature is at the bottom of the page. The pen  
 nib creates a blotch on the file beside Trent's signature.

END MONTAGE.

60

INT. MAX'S APARTMENT - DAY

60

Max looks intensely at Trent's signature. His ashtray is  
 full and there are a few empty beer bottles.

His eyes are sunken.

INSERT BIG CLOSE-UP ON FILE: '....but he was gone.'

Max dips into his for another one of the old files, he  
 opens it quickly scanning down to the signature....

FILE PAGE: 'Investigating Officer; Trent Daltry'

JUMP CUT TO:

FILE PAGE: Trent's Signature.

JUMP CUT TO:

Another file opens....

FILE PAGE: Trent's Signature.

JUMP CUT TO:

Max has noticed something amiss with a file. The page  
 numbers are not consecutive. Max looks closely at the hole  
 punch clip and pulls a small shard of paper from the clip -  
 A page has been torn out.

Lisa enters the apartment....

LISA  
 Oh, you're here.

MAX  
 (still engrossed)  
 I've got something. Whitton was  
 looking back at some of Trent's  
 old cases.

LISA  
 (completely lost)  
 Okay....

Max looks at her, visibly upset....

LISA (cont'd)  
 Whatever is going on with you,  
 Max. It has to stop.

MAX  
 (gesticulating to the  
 files)  
 I can't stop. Dexter was killed.

Lisa takes a breath.

LISA  
 Better him than you.

Max puts his head in his hand.

Lisa moves closer to him and crouches beside him.

LISA (cont'd)  
 You're too involved in this thing  
 because it's a kid.

Max deflects with a frown.

LISA (cont'd)  
 We live in this shit-hole and you  
 drive yourself into the ground.  
 You're always punishing yourself.

Max studies her face a moment - She'll never understand.

MAX  
 I owe this to Dexter.

LISA  
 You owe him nothing. He made his  
 money pumping drugs into this  
 city.

The BUZZER sounds.

Max stands and steps away from her.

MAX  
 The baby is innocent.

Lisa is stumped.

The BUZZER goes again.

Max crosses to the video-com. JONES appears on the small  
 screen.

JONES (COM SCREEN)  
 You have to come with me.

Max turns to Lisa.

LISA  
What do they want?

Max picks up his jacket.

MAX  
They're gonna give me a medal.

61 EXT. STREET - NIGHT 61

Max exits his building to meet Jones. Across the street he sees Trent leaning on the squad car.

Max stops. Trent smiles and gives Max a wee wave.

MAX  
What's he doing here?

JONES  
C'mon. Don't be childish.

Max continues towards the car. Trent opens the door....

TRENT  
Step into my office, Lappy.

Max seethes as he gets in.

62 INT. POLICE HQ (VIEWING AREA) - NIGHT 62

Through a one way mirror Kerr and Trent observe Max at an interview desk.

In front of Max is WENDY, a suited officer.

An interview is in progress. An audio wave appears on a sound device--

63 INT. POLICE HQ (INTERVIEW ROOM) - CONTINUOUS 63

Max turns to look at the mirror; he sees only himself.

DEXTER (AUDIO)  
Fifty-one ain't old.

MAX (AUDIO)  
He was the man.

DEXTER (AUDIO)  
'Til he got a bullet in the back of his head.

MAX (AUDIO)  
You didn't have to take over.

DEXTER (AUDIO)  
What the fuck else was I gonna do?.....

The conversation from the graveyard rolls on....

WENDY  
Sounds cosy doesn't it?

DEXTER (AUDIO)  
I found Whitton.

MAX  
Okay. Stop this shit.

Wendy signals to stop the playback.

MAX (cont'd)  
I wanted to find the kid.  
(pause)  
He also....I used him to find  
Whitton.

WENDY  
What information were you giving  
him?

MAX  
Nothing. None.

WENDY  
You told him which case you were  
on and we have you admitting that  
you intended to sit on  
information regarding Whitton.

MAX  
I'm not saying any more.

WENDY  
Well then guess what? We're  
starting a little investigation  
of our own. You're suspended.  
(pause)  
Identification and fire arm.

MAX  
(grinding his teeth)  
Take pride in your job do you?

Wendy looks on impassively.

Max takes out his ID. He drops it on the table.

MAX (cont'd)  
My gun has never left my desk.

WENDY  
You do have some funny methods.

Max stands up and leaves.

64 INT. POLICE HQ (KERR'S OFFICE) - NIGHT

64

Kerr's face is stormy.

MAX  
Trent has used me.

KERR  
You've screwed yourself, Max.

MAX  
Your foreman's got away from you.

KERR  
You're the one that's getting  
away from me. Everything Trent  
is, is down to me and he'll wrap  
up Dexter and Whitton today  
thanks to your exploits.

MAX  
Whitton?

KERR  
He'll be chasing up your intel as  
soon as he's done carving you up  
next door.

Max bolts out of Kerr's office.

KERR (cont'd)  
Where the hell are you going?  
Max get back here!

Kerr reaches for his phone.

Max runs down the corridor and out of the building.

65 INT/EXT. MAX'S CAR - NIGHT

65

Max drives through the streets - Dexter was right, this  
place is a dive. He slows to look up at a street sign....

'BORDE STREET'

Max continues and parks outside 'Number 55'.

He checks out the building, it is dilapidated, dank and  
uninviting.

He quietly slips around the back and enters through a door  
that is practically off its hinges....

66 INT. FLATS - CONTINUOUS

66

Max takes the stairs, the building is quiet with the  
exception of the faint noise of a BABY CRYING.

Max reverts to his training and visually covers all corners before moving on.

He gets to the top floor.

He sees a light from under a door and he crosses to it and gently TAPS.

Nervously he waits.

The door gently clicks open on its chain. A young woman stares back at him.

MAX  
(whispering)  
Geraldine Whitton?

The woman holds up three fingers and points down the hall.

Max exhales.

He moves warily down the hall until he reaches door '3'.

Max presses his ear up against it. He can hear a muffled TELEVISION.

He KNOCKS. No answer.

He tries the door. It's open.

Max peers into the blackness as he enters the hall.

The TELEVISION is now louder. Max hones in on its source and enters the living room. In the light of the TV he can see the back of someone's head protruding above the top of a chair in front of him. He gropes for the light switch.

MAX (cont'd)  
Geraldine! Don't move!

His finger connects with the switch....

LIGHTS ON.

Max gasps at the sight before him.

Geraldine is dead; a large piece of the back of her skull is missing. Fresh blood runs from the unnatural orifice.

As Max swings around to her front, he can see that she has been shot through the eye. He puts his sleeve to his mouth.

A needle still sticks in her arm and a belt hangs loose.

Max grabs a hand towel from the kitchenette. He doesn't cast his eyes on Geraldine again.

He looks across at a desk in the corner, a drawer in the desk lies open and its contents are disturbed; some paper work lies scattered.

As he leaves the room, he wipes his fingerprints from the light switch and the door handle.

He exits the way he came in, still with the towel in hand.

67 EXT. 'BORDE STREET' - NIGHT 67

Max hurries across to his car and gets in....

68 INT. MAX'S CAR - CONTINUOUS 68

Max drops the hand towel and starts the engine.

He pauses - Something doesn't feel quite right.

A gun is pressed into the back of his neck. rosary beads are wrapped around the gun hand.

Max freezes.

TRENT (O.C.)  
Switch it off.

Trent is in the back seat behind him.

TRENT (cont'd)  
Don't turn around.

Trent reaches forward and pats Max to check for a gun.

MAX  
Did you get what you needed?

TRENT  
And much more.

Trent drops a gun with a fixed silencer in the front seat.

TRENT (cont'd)  
Not in your desk as advertised.

Max looks at the gun and frowns.

MAX  
I know what it was.

Trent is amused.

TRENT  
Save your juice. You'll be going through the wringer shortly.

MAX  
A missing file page.

Trent's demeanour quickly changes; He thinks for a moment.  
 DISTANT SIRENS are heard approaching.

MAX (cont'd)  
 What was in the file, Trent?

Trent has come to a new decision. He cocks his gun and raises it towards the back of Max's head....

WHAM.

Trent is clattered as Max pulls the seat release lever and the driver seat crunches back into him.

BLAST. Trent's gun goes off, the shot passes out through the windscreen.

Max opens the door and rolls out of the car.

Trent's legs are pinned in a tight position, he wriggles, and can see Max running away.

Trent lets off another SHOT through the side window. The window obliterates and glass blows back into his face.

He is momentarily stunned. He wrestles the door open and falls out into the street.

He fires another SHOT at Max who disappears into the shadows.

Trent rolls over onto his back, his knee is bloodied and the left side of his face is prickled with glass cuts. He doesn't even attempt to give chase.

TRENT  
 Astounding.

Trent is illuminated with the red and blue lights of arriving police cars. He doesn't even bother to get up.

69 INT. ARCHITECT OFFICE - NIGHT

69

An expensively furnished area in a minimal open-plan style.

Lisa's space is the only illuminated area. She works on building plans with her interactive design software.

She looks at her watch.

70 INT/EXT. UNDERGROUND CAR PARK - NIGHT

70

Lisa enters the carpark; a small overhead, oval security 'eye' turns with her. Her heels ECHO on the floor. She gets in her car.

She drives out to the barricade and presses a finger against a glass sensor. The bollard opens. She drives up the ramp and out of the building....

A CLATTER on the passenger side window.

Lisa jumps as Max peers in the window at her.

LISA  
Christ, Max!

She unlocks the door for him. He climbs in....

LISA (cont'd)  
You scared the shit out of me.

MAX  
Drive.

She's puzzled, but she does.

Lisa looks at him briefly as she drives.

LISA  
Come out with it.

MAX  
I need you to do something.  
(pause)  
Can you get me one of the files I was working on at home.

LISA  
Why can't you get it?

The car enters the tunnel under the river.

MAX  
I'm in trouble. Trent's framing me.

LISA  
What? Talk to Kerr - right away.

MAX  
I'll get to Kerr, but I've got to get that file.

LISA  
What is he framing you for?

They look at each other - Only the truth will do.

MAX  
Murder and criminal conspiracy.  
That's if he doesn't kill me first.

Lisa gasps - A squeamish feeling rises in her throat.

MAX (cont'd)  
I've been suspended, but none of  
it is true.

Lisa drives out of the tunnel and she pulls over at the side of the road. She closes her eyes to let it sink in.

The 'WELCOME TO THE BELLY' graffiti can be partially seen behind Max.

After a moment, Lisa opens her eyes and stares out of the windscreen. He moves to take her hand. She retracts it quickly....

MAX (cont'd)  
I didn't do it, Lisa.

Lisa turns to Max - Her damp serious eyes are terrified, but there is a softness in them.

MAX (cont'd)  
The file I need is a child  
abduction case - it is missing  
page seven. Trent will be coming  
for all of the files, but you  
mustn't let him take that one.

Lisa nods.

MAX (cont'd)  
Bring it to your sister's house  
on Saturday night. And make sure  
you're not followed.

LISA  
(musters)  
What are you going to do?

MAX  
Some freelance detective work I  
guess.

Lisa picks up her hand bag and rummages through it.

She retrieves some cash and gives it to Max.

LISA  
What will I tell them?

MAX  
Just act normal  
(pause)  
Try not to worry.

Max opens the door.

LISA

Max....

He stops and kisses her.

MAX

I will, baby.

Max disappears into the shadows. Lisa is left alone.

DISSOLVE TO:

DREAM SEQUENCE:

71 INT. WHITTON'S FLAT - NIGHT. 71

Whitton sits in her chair, needle hanging from her arm.

Her eye twitches under it's lid and then flicks open.

CUT TO BLACK:

A SUPPRESSED GUN-SHOT.

END DREAM SEQUENCE.

72 INT. CONFESSION BOOTH (DERELICT CHURCH) - DAY 72

Max wakes up with a start....

He has been sleeping in the confession booth.

A CLATTER nearby....

73 INT. DERELICT CHURCH - CONTINUOUS 73

Early morning sun filters through broken stained glass windows and shines down on the old confession booth.

Max peeks out and sees Ray in the main hall of the church. Ray packs up guns at the altar.

Max exits the booth and hides behind one of the pews. Ray hears him and spins around bolt upright, gun at the ready.

Max shuffles closer to Ray but still out of his sight.

RAY

Fuckin' out where I can see you!

Max peeks out to see Ray still with gun pointed.

MAX

Ray. It's Max.

Ray, begins to shift and look down the aisles of pews one at a time.

Max realises what Ray is doing and moves.

Ray fires a couple of SHOTS at him and Max dives to the floor as a few splinters.

The shots ECHO.

MAX (cont'd)

Hold it!

Ray strides over to Max and points his gun at him.

Max tries to roll over but Ray boots him in the stomach.

MAX (cont'd)

(gasping)

Jesus!

RAY

Fuck do you want?!

Ray tries to kick him again. Max grabs his foot....

MAX

I need help.

A comedy struggle as Max refuses to let Ray's foot go. Ray finally kneels down and straddles Max; he pushes his gun under Max's chin.

RAY

This is nice.

MAX

Trent is fucking me over.

Ray's intrigued.

MAX (cont'd)

I've been suspended.

RAY

You're still a pig.

MAX

C'mon, Ray. Help me find the kid.

Ray considers it for a moment; and finally gets up.

Max carefully gets to his feet and catches his breath.

RAY

What do you need?

MAX

I thought I might need a gun.

Ray grins. He leads Max over to the altar.

He opens the case he was loading. Inside is an assortment of assault rifles and fully automatic machine guns.

Max looks inside.

RAY  
Take your pick.

MAX  
Don't you have something a little  
more subtle?

Ray looks disappointed. He offers Max the massive chrome hand-gun in his hand. Max smirks - He might regret this little alliance.

74 INT. SUBURBAN BATHROOM - DAY

74

Trent puts a fresh bandage on his knee.

Trent's wife DOROTHY enters; still in her morning gown.

DOROTHY  
How is it?

TRENT  
It's much better. I'll need some  
new trousers.

Trent finishes up and pulls up his trousers.

Dorothy tenderly touches his face and lightly kisses the scar spattered side of Trent's face.

DOROTHY  
Be more careful.

He kisses her forehead.

Trent walks through to the....

75 INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

75

Dorothy follows him in. His two kids - RACHEL; fourteen and JAMIE; a few years younger, are dressed for school and are at breakfast.

Trent puts his jacket on and grabs a mouthful of coffee.

RACHEL  
I need some money for a thing  
tonight--

TRENT  
Nope.

RACHEL

What?

Trent makes a joint smoking gesture at her.

RACHEL (cont'd)

Mum.

TRENT

You've still got a few more days  
on the leash.

RACHEL

That's horse-shit.

Rachel moves to leave the room. Trent grabs her arm.

She tries to tug herself free but is futile against Trent's strength. Angered to tears, she kicks him.

RACHEL (cont'd)

Get off me.

She tries to slap him but he blocks it. He pulls her in and hugs her tight. She wriggles but Trent refuses to let go. She stops struggling. He kisses the top of her head and lets her go.

She struts out of the room.

RACHEL (cont'd)

Prick.

Trent crosses and puts his hand on the top of Jamie's head.

TRENT

Fight the hormones for a bit,  
will you?

Trent makes him nod and Jamie laughs.

Trent turns and kisses Dorothy.

TRENT (cont'd)

Good luck.

He moves towards the door.

76

INT/EXT. RAY'S CAR - DAY

76

Max and Ray sit and watch a small suburban house.

The house is much like the others around it with a nice garden and driveway. There is a netball hoop over the garage door.

Trent emerges from back door and crosses to his car.

Ray yawns.

RAY  
This really is what you guys do?

Max looks at him.

RAY (cont'd)  
Sit in a fucking car and spy on  
folk.

MAX  
Or sit at a desk.

RAY  
Shit. I'm glad I'm a crook.

Trent's car leaves and Ray starts the engine.

77 INT. DETECTIVES OFFICE - DAY 77

Trent arrives at his desk. No other detectives are present. He looks at Max's desk, then he fires up his computer and sits.

78 INT. RAY'S CAR - DAY 78

Max and Ray are parked opposite police headquarters. The outside of the building is a shabby 1960s monolith.

Ray looks a bit nervous.

MAX  
So where's the action now  
Dexter's gone?

RAY  
I ain't gonna tell you.

MAX  
Fair enough. Ever thought about  
going straight?

Ray raises an eyebrow.

RAY  
Dex told me you was close when  
you were kids. Otherwise you're  
already fucking dead.

MAX  
We made a little money stealing  
timber when we were young.

RAY  
No shit?

MAX

Dexter was scared of my Pop. Me and him used to go down and steal the wood from the docks when my old man worked the saw-mill down there. He used to say to us that if he ever caught those responsible for the missing stuff, he would hang them up by their Buster Browns. Dex used to shit himself. Pop was a big fella and he had these massive arms from lifting batons of wood all day.

RAY

What happened to you?

MAX

I take after my mammy I guess.

(pause)

Yep, I think my Pop was the only guy Dexter was ever afraid of.

RAY

I never saw him flinch. Shot a guy when he was just a kid for fuck sake.

Max's smile fades. He looks blankly out of the window.

MAX

He stole some cigarettes and the guy beat the hell out of him.

RAY

You were there?

MAX

He built his rep on that story.

RAY

Guy must've deserved it. Dex coulda buried me back in the day. Fuckin' took me on instead.

MAX

Had his ways.

Ray nods appreciatively.

79

INT. DETECTIVES OFFICE - DAY

79

A MAIL-BOY drops a large brown envelope into Trent's tray and moves on.

Trent picks it up. He looks around to check he is alone, then he removes a folded piece of paper from his pocket; He slides it into the envelope.

He rises and heads out, envelope in hand.

80 INT. KERR'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS 80

Kerr sits at his desk. He types with one hand at his computer. His chin rests in his other hand.

He sees Trent in the corridor through his door. He shifts to get a better view and sees the envelope in Trent's hand.

81 INT. RAY'S CAR - DAY 81

MAX

Did Dexter find out anything about the heroin packs?

Ray looks at Max.

RAY

Go fuck yourself.

Ray looks a little put out and looks out of the window.

RAY (cont'd)

Head's up.

Max turns and sees Trent leaving the building.

Ray starts the engine.

82 INT/EXT. CAR & RIVER DOCKS - DAY 82

The tyre of Ray's car creeps over the ground and crunches to a halt on the head of a discarded, old teddy-bear.

Max and Ray watch from a distance as Trent walks along the front of a Quay. There is a mess of boats and yachts.

Max sees the envelope in his hand. Trent is met by an ELDERLY MAN and they head up the jetty, board a yacht and disappear out of sight.

RAY

What's he doing?

MAX

Dunno.

RAY

Well he best hurry up. I'm fucking starving here.

Max reaches in his pocket and pulls out a chocolate bar. He holds it out to Ray.

RAY (cont'd)  
Oh ya fucker.

He tries to take it, but Max pulls it away.

RAY (cont'd)  
I'll break your fucking arm.

Max smirks.

MAX  
Heroin Packs?

Ray curiously eyes him.

MAX (cont'd)  
He's dead. What difference will  
it make?

RAY  
Someone was ripping off the stuff  
from his stash.

MAX  
Any ideas?

Ray shakes his head, then snatches the chocolate bar.

Ray rips the wrapper open and demolishes half in one go.

MAX (cont'd)  
Jesus.  
(pause)  
What about the kid?

RAY  
(with mouth full)  
No clue. Could have been another  
gang, but no-one turned out to  
ask for fuck all.

Trent now returns along the jetty towards his car.

RAY (cont'd)  
What now?

Max considers his next move.

DISSOLVE TO:

83 INT. YACHT (KITCHENETTE) - NIGHT

83

A traditional steam kettle WHISTLES on the gas. The interior of the yacht is well-used and lived in.

The man who was just seen with Trent, drops a tea-bag into a cup. CRAVEN is pushing seventy and is a bit unsteady;

dressed down in a cardigan and slippers, he has a ban-the-bomb ear stud - a remnant of a conscientious past.

Craven turns the gas off. He hears a quiet THUD from the next room as the kettle WHISTLE dies away.

He stops momentarily to listen; something CREAKS.

A moment of thought....

Craven reaches for a tea-pot. He lifts the tea-bag out of his cup and pops it in the pot instead. He then adds another from a caddy, and proceeds to pour the boiling water in.

84 INT. YACHT (LIVING SPACE) - NIGHT

84

Craven emerges from the kitchenette slowly; momentarily backlit until he switches the light off. He carries the tea-tray in front of him into his work-space which, lit by his desk-lamp, is furnished with a work-desk, computer hardware and various types of printing paraphernalia.

CRAVEN

I made tea.

Craven sets the tray on his desk over the manila envelope.

Max and Ray step in from the outer deck.

Ray props himself against a side-unit to Craven's left and Max stands opposite him at the other side of his desk.

CRAVEN (cont'd)

May I sit? The legs are not what they were.

Max nods.

Craven sits and claps his hands, then rubs them together in a 'ready for business' manner.

CRAVEN (cont'd)

What can I do for you, gentlemen?

MAX

You spoke to Trent Daltry earlier.

Craven takes his time. He clocks Ray eyeing up the small plate of biscuits on the tea-tray. He picks up the tea-pot and swirls it.

CRAVEN

Help yourself.

(to Max)

Forgive me. I like mine weak.

He proceeds to pour his tea. Ray steps in and takes two biscuits off of the plate with his left hand. Then he steps back and places them on his right side atop the side-board he stands at.

MAX

My guess is you are fixing up  
some paper work for him.

Craven turns to Ray and offers him a little smile.

CRAVEN

He talks like police....

Craven pours tea into two cups and sets the tea-pot down.

CRAVEN (cont'd)

....but I'm at a loss with you.

RAY

I like milk and two sugars.

Craven enjoys Ray's response. He spoons the sugar in....

CRAVEN

(to Max)

What's the cut?

....then adds milk.

MAX

You misunderstand me. I'm not  
buying your info.

Craven hands the cup to Ray. He takes it in his left hand.

CRAVEN

Come now. This isn't how this  
goes at all.

Ray settles back to his perch at the side, with his tea in hand. He takes a sip and looks down to the two biscuits he set by his side.

MAX

You're willing to sell it out?

CRAVEN

We all sell out, Son. Life  
becomes impossible otherwise.

Ray picks up a biscuit with his right hand and puts it to his mouth.

THIS IS CRAVEN'S MOMENT....

Craven's right hand swings towards Ray, gun pointed.

Two LOUD SHOTS - almost simultaneously....

A picture by Ray's head smashes and Craven falls backwards out of his chair; his chest punctured.

Max practically jumps out of his skin; he staggers back and falls on the floor away from both of them.

Ray stands with his smouldering gun; biscuit still protruding from his mouth.

The picture by Ray's head slips and smashes on the floor. Ray takes in and crunches up the biscuit in his mouth.

MAX  
Fucking Christ!

Max scrambles to his feet. He darts around the desk in time to see Craven's shocked expression soften and his punctured heart give out; gun still in his hand.

Max rubs his forehead ruefully. He looks up at Ray who has now slouched on the side-board.

Max quickly starts to rummage around Craven's work area and in the desk drawers.

Ray drinks what's left of the tea he didn't spill.

MAX (cont'd)  
Are you drinking tea!?

RAY  
It's calming! Fucking Popeye here just about took my head off.

Max shakes his head and continues to rummage.

RAY (cont'd)  
Under the tray.

Max looks at Ray briefly. He pushes the tea-tray out of the way. The envelope is revealed and he grabs it.

There are a few sheets of paper inside.

Max eye's the first tattered page, it is page number 7; the missing file page. He scans down and there is a small pen mark next to the name in the report.

Max is perplexed.

RAY (cont'd)  
What is it?

Max flicks curiously through the rest of the pages.

Craven lies dead on the floor.

85 INT/EXT. RAY'S CAR - DAY 85

The sun rises over the car; Ray sleeps in his seat.

Max stares at the photograph he has of Carl.

His eyes move from the picture and stare at the pages from the envelope....

INSERT PAPER:

'Surname: Rankin. Name(s): Jacob Peter.'

'Mother's Name(s): Louise Rankin.'

'Mother's usual residence: 62 Park View'

Ray wakes up and begins to remember where he is.

MAX

You know where Park View is?

Ray shakes his head.

MAX (cont'd)

Head under the river and into the suburbs.

Ray starts the car.

86 EXT. STREET/CAR - DAY 86

As Ray's car enters the arch of a suburban community, the overhead 'eye' takes a snapshot of the number-plate.

Max looks up at the cameras as they pass through.

MAX

That's us clocked. We'll only have fifteen minutes or so.

CUT TO:

87 EXT. GRASS PARK - DAY 87

The sun now shines brightly overhead.

Max and Ray look across the park. Many kids play happily. There are mothers gathered together in sociable groups.

Ray's black surplus trousers and tats are out of place in the park. A MAN who kicks a ball with his child has 'clocked' him.

Max checks his watch and starts to walk across the open grassy area of the park. Ray follows....

RAY  
No bull-shit for these kids, man.

Max looks at the kids in the park. They are smiling and having a great time. He also takes in the tranquil trees around them, the sun glinting through them.

MAX  
My wife wants a house around here.

Max points off....

MAX (cont'd)  
Just over there somewhere.

RAY  
She pretty?

Max nods.

RAY (cont'd)  
Course she is. A regular honey I bet. You'll fit right in.

MAX  
(off the gathered parents)  
Look at them. They've got nothing better to do than fall out with their neighbours.

Ray looks at the parents gathered. They all appear to be griping about something.

RAY  
They don't live in fear.

Max checks his watch.

MAX  
Sure they do. It's a different kind of fear, that's all.

Ray looks at Max curiously.

Agitated, Max stops by an empty bench seat that overlooks a row of houses. He sits for a moment and stares at a particular house.

Ray remains standing; he takes in the park surroundings.

Max watches as a young woman exits the door of the house; she is in her late twenties and she pushes a stroller.

He immediately makes his way towards her.

Ray watches the park, he doesn't see Max get up.

Max strides on.

Ray turns to see that Max has gone.

RAY

Shit.

Max meets her. She is Louise Rankin; Fresh faced, but slightly startled by Max's energy.

Max looks at the red-headed child.

It is CARL.

MAX

(trying to remain calm)  
What a cute little boy.

LOUISE

Thank-you.

Max crouches and strokes Carl's chin with his fore-finger.

Louise looks very uneasy.

CUT TO:

Across the park a police cyclist checks the number plate on Ray's car. She turns and scans the scene in front of her. In the distance she spies Ray move towards Max and Louise and immediately lifts her radio to her mouth.

CUT TO:

Louise looks around for help.

Ray arrives alongside Max as he lifts Carl from the stroller. Carl starts to cry.

Louise looks pleadingly at Max; her eyes fill up.

LOUISE (cont'd)

Please. My husband can clear up any misunderstanding.

Max hugs Carl and looks at Louise.

MAX

He doesn't belong to you.

Max turns his back on Louise and she sobs.

Max turns back to her briefly as he walks away. He is close to tears himself.

The Man who has been watching Ray approaches them.

MAN

What are you doing?

Ray pulls out his gun and points it at the Man's face. He staggers backward and sits down on the grass, terrified.

Max and Ray continue walking.

88

EXT. PARK-SIDE - CONTINUOUS

88

Max hugs Carl close to his chest. He and Ray cross the park quickly and approach the car. Several parents have now realised that something unnatural is happening in the park and are stirring. Max and Ray are now within twenty feet of Ray's car....

The Police Cyclist steps out behind them, gun pointed.

POLICE CYCLIST

Stop.

Max and Ray turn to see her.

MAX

Stay cool, Ray.

RAY

(to Max)

Nothing wrong with me, Mate.

POLICE CYCLIST

Drop the gun.

RAY

Yep. You're saying the right things, Honey. Get in the car, Max.

Ray shifts towards the car.

POLICE CYCLIST

Don't.

RAY

No problem. I'm dropping the gun.

Ray gets to the car and opens the door.

RAY (cont'd)

You coming?

Max looks at the police woman....

She looks down the sights of her gun but Max, Ray and Carl are in close proximity in her line of sight.

RAY (cont'd)  
He's got a kid for fuck sake.

She lowers the gun slightly.

Max turns and opens the car door. Ray starts the engine.

89 INT. RAY'S CAR - DAY

89

Max gets in the passenger seat with Carl on his lap.

MAX  
It's okay. I've got you.

Ray starts to drive, he looks in the mirror and sees the Police Cyclist standing with gun pointed.

He turns and smiles to Max.

The rear window obliterates and blood splats on the steering wheel and the inside of the windscreen. Carl is startled and begins to SCREAM.

90 EXT. PARK-SIDE - DAY

90

The Police Cyclist's gun barrel smokes as she watches the car race away from her.

91 INT. DERELICT CHURCH - DAY

91

Carl sleeps on a pew with Max's jacket over him.

Max is by Ray's side. Ray is ghostly white and his shirt is soaked with blood.

Ray looks at Carl and then to Max.

Max's looks ashamed - A guilt comes over him.

MAX  
Let me take you to the hospital.

RAY  
No chance.

Ray grabs Max by the jacket and Max gives him eye contact.

RAY (cont'd)  
Don't sweat it. You needed me  
incase you got in a jam. I knew  
that from the minute you came  
back here.

Ray looks at Carl - Pride comes over him.

RAY (cont'd)  
I was never no use for anything  
else.

Max nods to Ray.

RAY (cont'd)  
Fuck-off outta here.

Max rises. He collects Carl and leaves, not looking back.

Ray looks up. The early evening sun shines in through one of the partially broken stain-glass windows.

It shines in on a statue of Jesus with his head broken off.

92 INT. LISA'S SISTERS HOUSE - NIGHT 92

Lisa sits on the sofa under a blanket. She chews her nails and stares blankly at the television set.

Unable to sit still, she gets up and walks through to the kitchen....

93 INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS 93

She looks in the fridge, but decides against taking anything. As she closes the door she startles at Max, who stands in the back doorway.

She is astonished to see Carl, asleep in Max's arms.

Lisa hesitantly reaches out to Carl.

LISA  
(affectionately)  
Who's this?

MAX  
Where is your sister?

LISA  
She's out.

Lisa takes Carl's hand. She smiles a little at him then looks into Max's eyes.

LISA (cont'd)  
What's going on?

Max clenches his jaw. Lisa puts her hand on his face.

Lisa takes Carl from Max.

LISA (cont'd)  
He's freezing.

She takes Carl back through to the living room. Max follows....

94 INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

94

Max flops on a chair, exhausted. Lisa wraps Carl in the sofa blanket.

MAX

Have you got the file?

Lisa retrieves it from a side-board. She hands it to Max and goes back to Carl's side. Max opens the file and reads it for a moment - a sense of relief washes over him.

Max pulls the missing page from the envelope and places it back in its rightful place.

Max reaches for the phone and picks it up. He dials....

95 INT. KERR'S HOUSE - NIGHT

95

The phone rings.

Emily runs over to the phone in her pyjamas.

EMILY

I'll get it.

(CUTTING BETWEEN LOCATIONS)

EMILY (cont'd)

Kerr residence.

MAX

(thrown)

....Is your Daddy in?

EMILY

(a little confused)

Dad had to work late. Is that you, Max?

Max fights his emotion.

Emily smiles.

EMILY (cont'd)

When are you coming over?

MAX

Sometime soon, I guess.

Belinda appears behind Emily.

BELINDA

Who is it?

EMILY

It's Max.

Belinda takes the receiver.

BELINDA  
(concerned)  
Hello. Max?

MAX  
Belinda. Tell Kerr I want to  
meet him tomorrow morning.

BELINDA  
Are you alright?

MAX  
Yes. Can you tell him I will be  
at Melissa's?

BELINDA  
Melissa?

MAX  
Yes.

A moment....Belinda thinks of what to say. Max hangs up.

MAX (cont'd)  
(to Lisa)  
I'm taking him back to his  
mother.

LISA  
Who stole him?

MAX  
Trent.

Lisa looks disbelievingly at Max.

LISA  
Trent? Are you sure?

MAX  
Course I'm fucking sure!

Lisa is startled. Carl stirs.

Max buries his face in his hands. Lisa turns to him and  
puts her hands on his shoulders.

LISA  
Kerr will fix things won't he?

MAX  
Trent re-homed him. And like an  
idiot I helped him get Dexter.

Max looks at Lisa - his heart burning.

MAX (cont'd)

He typed the wrong name on the missing page. A kid that didn't disappear until a few days later. Proof that he's done it before.

LISA

It's crazy.

(pause)

But he's giving them better lives.

MAX

What?

LISA

It's more or less what the adoption people do.

MAX

It's nothing like that.

Lisa nods.

LISA

Come on, Max. You have to admit....

A moment as Max stares at her in disbelief.

LISA (cont'd)

I'm not saying I agree with it.

Lisa fusses over Carl.

Max gets up his emotion gets the better of him....

MAX

Why are you acting like this?

He pushes Lisa away from Carl. She topples back onto the carpet.

Max picks Carl up.

Lisa rises to Max. She puts her hands on his face.

LISA

(begging)

I've always wanted a kid, Max. It's just been lost in a jumble of things.

(a moment)

You've been impossible....

Max sinks.

MAX

Why have you stayed with me?

She 'fills up'.

LISA

You shouldn't have to ask me that.

Max steps back from her with Carl.

LISA (cont'd)

Don't go. Please.

Max leaves with Carl....

Lisa tries to compose herself.

96 EXT. SOUTH-SIDE ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

96

Max has Carl in his arms and he walks up a dark alley.

Max stops at the end of the alley. He peers across the street. He can see a car. Jones is inside.

There is also a removal truck in the street. TWO REMOVAL MEN are loading Melissa's leather sofa into the van. The removal men have sidearms.

Max walks back up and through an adjoining alley.

He has now manoeuvred himself into a position behind Jones's car.

97 INT. DETECTIVE CAR - NIGHT

97

Jones pours himself coffee from a flask.

Max crosses the street behind him, unseen.

98 EXT/INT. STREET/TRUCK - NIGHT

98

Max stops in a shaded spot and looks again at the observing car. He waits as the men to go back inside the building.

Max walks up the ramp into the back of the removal truck.

Inside the truck, Max hides in the front with Carl behind a large stack of boxes.

He gets himself and Carl out of sight before the men return with the last of the furniture.

REMOVAL MAN (O.C.)

That's it. Close her up.

The roller shutter comes down. Max and Carl are plunged into darkness.

Carl is startled by the RASPING NOISE of the shutter and begins to cry. Max desperately tries to comfort him.

Carl's crying cannot be heard from outside as the driver climbs in.

99 INT. DETECTIVE CAR - NIGHT 99

Jones stops drinking his coffee and looks across at the truck as its engine starts. He watches as it drives off.

100 EXT/INT. REMOVAL TRUCK - NIGHT. 100

The truck comes to a halt in a secure yard with other trucks. The driver and his colleague jump down.

The gates of the yard are closed and padlocked.

Inside, Max lies sleeping on the sofa in the back of the truck. He embraces the sleeping Carl.

DREAM SEQUENCE:

101 INT. DINING ROOM - DAY 101

Young Max sits at a small dining table. His mother crosses to him with a pot in hand. She plops some peas on his plate beside a heap of mince and potatoes.

Max looks up at his father; a bear of a man sitting across from him. His father curls his arm and feels his gigantic bicep muscle.

He winks at Max.

A TRUCK ENGINE STARTS....

END DREAM SEQUENCE.

Max wakes with a start; the truck is on the move.

102 EXT. ROAD - DAY 102

The truck drives along a country road.

103 INT. COUNTRY-HOUSE (KITCHEN) - DAY 103

Melissa puts breakfast out for Mary. The house is spacious but sparsely furnished. She looks depressed but manages a brief smile at her daughter, who sits at the table.

Through the kitchen window she sees the truck arrive.

She goes outside to greet them....

104 EXT. COUNTRY-HOUSE (PORCH) - CONTINUOUS 104

The outside of the house is impressive and secluded. Melissa watches as the two men jump down from the truck. One of them opens the roller shutter on the back....

105 INT. REMOVAL TRUCK - CONTINUOUS 105

Max wakens with a jump.

106 EXT. COUNTRY-HOUSE (PORCH) - CONTINUOUS 106

MELISSA

Come in and I'll show you where I want everything.

The removal men follow her inside.

107 EXT. COUNTRY-HOUSE - DAY 107

The removal truck leaves.

108 INT. COUNTRY-HOUSE (LIVING AREA) - DAY 108

Melissa wanders from the kitchen with Mary in her arms.

MELISSA

Well, we've got a lot of work to do.

She startles. Carl is in a chair in front of her, a grin splits his face when he sees his Mammy.

Melissa sets Mary down and crosses to Carl. She picks him up in her arms and hugs him with a tight squeeze.

She starts to weep and turns to see Max approach her.

Max is tired, his face still marked from his ordeals. He puts his hand on Mary's head.

MELISSA (cont'd)

I didn't think I would see him again.

MAX

What are you doing here?

MELISSA

I got out. Away from the city.

Max watches Melissa lovingly stroke Carl's face.

He leaves her alone with the kids and enters the hall.

Melissa now has a hold of both of her kids. She hugs them both tightly.

- 109 INT. COUNTRY-HOUSE (SHOWER) - DAY 109  
 Max takes time to enjoy the hot water against his face. He rubs the back of his neck.
- 109A QUICK FLASHBACK: Adult Dexter looks at Max proudly. 109A  
 The water trickles across Max's face.
- 110 INT. COUNTRY-HOUSE (BEDROOM) - DAY 110  
 Melissa puts Carl to bed.
- 111 INT. COUNTRY-HOUSE (MASTER BEDROOM) - DAY 111  
 Max comes out of the bathroom and stops momentarily. On the bed in front of him, his clothes have been neatly folded. His gun and the file laid neatly beside them.
- 112 EXT. COUNTRY-HOUSE (GARDEN) - DAY 112  
 Max's P.O.V. - Passing through an open french door, a large sun-kissed country garden; picturesque and slightly overgrown. Melissa gently swings Mary on an old swing. They are a beautiful mother and daughter picture.  
 Melissa looks up and smiles.  
 Max smiles back at them, Mary's eyes are fixed on him.  
 He looks up at the surrounding trees. The warm morning sun catches his face.  
 WIND gently RUSTLES through the leaves overhead.  
 The faint noise of AN APPROACHING CAR disrupts the tranquillity.  
 Max looks over and can see the car advancing at a slightly impetuous speed in the distance.  
 Melissa sees it too, her smile gone as she turns to Max.
- 113 INT. COUNTRY-HOUSE - DAY 113  
 Max enters with Melissa and Mary.
- MAX  
 Where is Carl?
- MELISSA  
 In here.
- She leads into the bedroom.
- MAX  
 Wait in there.

Melissa does what Max asks.

The CAR can be heard stopping outside.

Max returns to the bedroom where he changed and picks up his gun off of the bed.

He returns to the kitchen just in time....

Silhouetted by the sun, a figure appears in the doorway.

The door opens.

Kerr steps out of the bright sunshine.

Max is relieved. Kerr looks up to see him.

KERR

Max. Thank god.

MAX

Trent fucked me over. I didn't kill Geraldine.

KERR

I know you didn't.

MAX

He took Carl.

Kerr nods.

MAX (cont'd)

I've got proof he's done it before.

KERR

Where is the child.

MAX

He's here. Safe with his mother.

KERR

Good. All of this stops now.

Max chews his teeth.

KERR (cont'd)

I'll fix everything. I can keep Trent under wraps.

Max stares at Kerr intensely.

MAX

You've got him?

Kerr puts a hand on Max's shoulder.

Max closes his eyes and shakes his head.

The noise of the DOOR makes him open them again. Trent has entered the house behind Kerr.

Max steps back and immediately pulls his gun out.

Kerr is furious.

KERR  
I told you to wait!

Trent smiles at Max. Max's eyes widen at Kerr.

MAX  
What the fuck is he doing here?

Kerr sighs.

KERR  
He's involved. Just as you are.

MAX  
(frantically)  
Melissa!

Trent steps up alongside Kerr. Max discourages him any further by aiming his gun at his face.

Melissa hurriedly enters.

MAX (cont'd)  
Get the kids and start your truck! And get the file off the bed.

Melissa does as Max says.

TRENT  
Why don't you shoot us?

KERR  
Be quiet!  
(to Max)  
Where else can you go?

MAX  
You're together in this?

KERR  
We're all together - it's the only choice for you now.

TRENT  
He doesn't have the balls to shoot us.

Trent smiles.

TRENT (cont'd)

In fact, your balls are pretty  
useless all 'round aren't they,  
Lappy?

Max steps forward and smashes Trent across the face with  
the butt of his gun.

Trent drops to his knees, clutching his face. Blood spills  
from his nose.

Kerr stumbles backwards as Max points the gun at him.

Max's eyes widen further as he begins to back out of the  
house. He sees Melissa, securing the kids in her 4 x 4.

KERR

I'm on your side.

Max backs out of the house and runs over to the 4 x 4.

Trent staggers to his feet to give pursuit and Kerr blocks  
him with his arm.

Trent grabs Kerr and pushes him up against the wall.

TRENT

What the fuck is your problem?

Kerr grabs Trent's nose between his thumb and forefinger.

Trent is immediately disabled by the pain.

114 INT/EXT. 4 x 4 - DAY. 114

The 4 x 4 scatters gravel as Max 'guns it' out of the  
driveway.

115 INT. COUNTRY-HOUSE - DAY 115

Trent tries to recover. His nose is bleeding terribly.

KERR

You've completely forgotten  
yourself.

TRENT

My nose is fucking broke.

Trent crosses to a roll of kitchen paper on the kitchen  
work-top and tears a square off. He shreds it and stuffs  
some up his nose as he continues....

TRENT (cont'd)

I told you right from the start  
he wouldn't play.

KERR  
The boy is like a son to me.

TRENT  
He's gone too far. He's got way  
more on me than I realised.

Kerr sits down on a seat and puts his head in his hands.

TRENT (cont'd)  
He'll wreck everything.

Kerr takes a brief moment for himself.

KERR  
Okay.

Trent hesitates.

KERR (cont'd)  
Deal with it.

Trent runs out.

Kerr slumps back in his chair - He runs over his decision.

116 INT. 4 X 4 - DAY 116

Max speeds down a country road. In the rear-view mirror,  
the road is clear behind him.

He turns to look at the kids strapped in the back, then  
slows his pace a little.

MELISSA  
Where are we going?

Max sees a teaspoon on the dashboard. Melissa sees him  
look at it and she tries to look nonchalant.

117 INT/EXT. TRENT'S CAR - DAY 117

Trent's car skids onto the country road out of the lane  
from the house. His nose has stopped bleeding freely; the  
paper plugs are doing the necessary job. He drives at a  
ferocious pace.

118 INT. 4 X 4 - DAY 118

MELISSA  
We should head back to the city.

Max looks at Melissa. She looks nervy.

In the rear-view mirror, he now sees a car in the distance.

119 INT/EXT. TRENT'S CAR - DAY 119

Trent can see the truck way up ahead, occasionally losing sight of it because of the corners in the road.

120 INT/EXT. 4 X 4 - DAY

120

The 4 x 4 swings off the main road into a narrow tree-lined driveway and speeds down it.

They arrive at a large SAWMILL and HOUSE in a cleared area of woodland.

The 4 x 4 skids to a halt....

Max reaches over and opens the glove-box. Inside there is an assortment of small plastic bags, lighters and other paraphernalia for heroin packs. There is also a gun.

Melissa looks up.

MELISSA

It's not what you think.

Max stares at her in disbelief.

MELISSA (cont'd)

I wanted the best for my kids.

Max turns to look at the kids.

MELISSA (cont'd)

We can be together.

MAX

Shut your mouth.

MELISSA

I know it's what you always wanted....They need a father, Max.

She puts her hand on his face.

Max grabs her face forcefully and pushes her back against the passenger side door.

He then lets her go. He opens the door and falls out of the truck into the leaves.

Melissa tests her jaw, she has blood in her mouth.

Max gets to his feet and he retches.

121 INT. TRENT'S CAR - DAY

121

Trent can no longer see the truck; his eyes smart.

TRENT

Fuck.

He slows and does a hand-break turn.

122 EXT. SAWMILL - DAY 122

Max tries to recover. He looks up at the creaking trees.

Melissa still clutches her face in the truck. Mary tries to talk to her 'Mammy'.

The sawmill owner, GORDON; a big powerful man, approaches them from the house.

Gordon can see that Max is emotionally wrecked.

GORDON  
Are you alright?

Max stands motionless, staring up into the trees.

Gordon passes by him and looks in the truck at the two kids and Melissa. He is shocked to see blood on Melissa's lips.

123 EXT. SAWMILL (DRIVEWAY ENTRANCE) - DAY 123

Trent's car slows and stops. It then continues into the driveway.

124 INT. TRENT'S CAR - DAY 124

From inside his car, Trent can see the 4 x 4 through a mess of trees. He collects his rosary beads from the mirror and starts to wrap them around his left hand and wrist.

125 EXT. SAWMILL - DAY 125

Gordon gets the kids out of the truck, they are both crying. He looks at Max again.

GORDON  
What on earth has happened?

Max looks at Carl and Mary who Gordon has in his arms. Their childishness brings him around slightly.

GORDON (cont'd)  
I'm taking them inside.

Max nods.

126 EXT. TRENT'S CAR - DAY 126

Trent gets his pump-action shotgun out of the boot.

127 EXT. SAWMILL - DAY 127

Max turns and looks into the driver side door of the truck.

Melissa stares at him.

MAX

You sick fucking bitch.

MELISSA

I love my children Max. Those  
Belly kids are all fucked anyway.

BLAST. Trent peppers the 4 x 4 with buck-shot - Ejecting the shell and continuing to fire repeatedly....

Max falls backwards, his arm has been nicked. Glass from the windows showers everywhere.

Max tries to regain himself and uses the cover of the truck to grab his gun from the inside door cubby.

Trent's THUNDEROUS onslaught continues until his shells run out.

Max looks up and sees that Melissa has been shot; her blood colours the inside of the truck and the windscreen.

Trent reloads from his pocket.

Max realises what is happening and he scrambles to his feet. He scampers inside the sawmill.

Trent pulls the plugs from his nose and follows.

128 INT. HOUSE - DAY 128

Gordon frantically dials the phone; his WIFE holds the children.

129 INT. SAWMILL - DAY 129

Max rushes into a large saw room, clutching his wounded arm. The SAW BLADE NOISE is deafening.

There are two WORKERS wearing ear protectors and goggles.

One pushes lumber through a large circular-saw, while the other uses a large planer on the cut wood. They stop what they are doing when they see Max.

Max screams at them to get out, but his words are lost amongst the CONTINUAL NOISE of the machinery.

Max waves his gun at them furiously. They rush out.

Max hides behind a large pile of lumber and waits.

Trent enters; he seems to be in no fear of being shot and wanders around freely with his shotgun.

He walks past Max's hiding place and Max steps out behind him. He aims his gun right at the back of Trent's head.

He shouts at Trent; Trent doesn't hear it; his voice is no match for the resident DIN.

Trent looks about and eventually turns around to look right down the barrel of Max's gun.

Blood trickles from Trent's nose as he drops his shotgun. They stand for a moment....Max's eyes are full of fear.

A moment between them and Max's hand trembles.

129A

FLASHBACK:

129A

BANG - The gun is fired.

Young Max is startled as he sees the shopkeeper's expression change.

END FLASHBACK.

Trent licks the blood from his top lip and smiles at Max. He reaches up and takes the gun out of Max's hand. Max puts up no resistance.

Trent revengefully slaps Max across the face with the gun and Max falls, blood from his face stains the saw-dust.

Trent throws the gun away and picks Max up by the lapels.

He pushes him towards the large WHIRRING saw-blade behind.

Max desperately resists, forcing Trent's hands to shift.

The rosary beads on Trent's left hand make his hold on Max's face awkward and....

Max pushes his chin down into his chest and away from Trent's grip, but his head gets ever closer to the blade.

Max's gives one almighty effort to free himself and Trent's hand slips across the blood on Max's face....

....it jams into the WHIRRING blade.

Blood sprays all over Max and Trent.

A silent SCREAM emanates from Trent's lungs. He staggers back and clutches what is left of his hand; his Rosary beads have been scattered.

He falls back onto the open planer blade behind him, his elbow catches the blade and is ripped out of his arm.

He drops to the blood soaked wood and flesh shavings; his eyes roll over white.

Max stands for a moment unable to move. Trent's figure lies in front of him; both arms mutilated.

130 EXT. SAWMILL - DAY 130

Max staggers out; blood stained and ghostly.

He wanders towards the 4 x 4. Melissa is slumped in the passenger side, her blonde hair matted with blood. He sees the blood soaked file and envelope on the seat, but he leaves them.

Max veers away from Melissa towards the house.

He looks in a big arched window. Gordon's wife is trying to comfort the kids in the living room.

GORDON (O.C.)  
Take it easy, Son.

Max turns and sees Gordon and his two workers standing across from him.

GORDON (cont'd)  
The police are on their way.

MAX  
Keep the kids safe.

Max walks away from them towards Trent's car. He gets in.

131 INT. TRENT'S CAR - DAY 131

The keys are in it. He starts the engine and speeds off.

Max gets to the main road and continues driving, his face stained with blood.

132 EXT. SAWMILL - NIGHT 132

The sun is beginning to set. Ambulances and police cars dominate the sawmill yard.

Gordon is being interviewed by police and Trent is being loaded into an ambulance. Drips and oxygen attached.

Kerr carries Carl out of the house and has Mary by the hand. He takes them over to one of the ambulances and steers them away from the tarpaulin which covers their mother's body.

He also has the police files.

133 EXT. CITY CENTER - NIGHT 133

Max still blood spattered sits on a bench seat that overlooks a closed down 1960s style concrete shopping area. A nearby security 'eye' looks broken.

A derelict shop overhang shields Max from the rain.

134 INT. CAR - NIGHT 134

Kerr drives. The rain washes against the windscreen of his car. He peers through the rain solemnly.

135 EXT. CITY-SCAPE - DAY 135

The sun comes up on the city. It glints on the glass super structures of the North Bank.

On the opposite bank of the river, the morning glow illuminates the derelict shopping area.

Max nods awake on the bench. The street is quiet.

Sitting next to him on the bench is Kerr. Max glances at him briefly then up at the security 'eye' - which is now trained on him.

Dejected, Max watches as a DEALER lurks in a shaded doorway a distance away from him.

He sees a MOTHER and her two kids come into his view. One of her kids, a GIRL, of about twelve, rides a bicycle. The BOY, around ten, playfully skips.

The mother crosses to the dealer in the shadows; a drug buy seems to be taking place.

KERR

Can you see them, Max? Can you really see them?

The kids are having fun and laugh at each other.

MAX

I'm going to tell people what you're doing.

KERR

To what end?

Max and Kerr watch a CRIPPLED MAN walk down the street towards the shopping area.

KERR (cont'd)

When I first joined the force, I worked the streets in The Belly. I was called to an old council block in the worst street I'd ever seen. When I got down there, I found this woman who had been beaten to a bloody pulp. The boyfriend claimed that some junkie had broken into the place and beaten her up. We couldn't prove otherwise, so he got away with it.

(MORE)

KERR (cont'd)

But I got to know this guy, he was pimping her out and selling all sorts of shit. The girl wasn't much better, involved in one thing or another--

MAX

You took their baby.

Kerr looks at Max.

KERR

My first.

(pause)

What would you have done?

MAX

I don't know.

Max looks back out to the kids playing.

KERR

I placed the baby with a nice family who were struggling to have kids. They lived in the south-side, but they were good, honest people. People who could give him a better life.

The crippled man has now reached the kids and the girl circles him on her bike. As she does, the young boy runs up behind the man and knees him in the back.

The man collapses onto the hard ground.

Max is nauseated. He stands - wanting to intervene.

Kerr stands with him and stays him by grabbing his arm.

KERR (cont'd)

It was you, Max. That baby was you.

The crippled man gathers himself and uses a street railing to help himself to his feet. He stands wavering for a bit, staring at his young assailant.

The boy laughs and skips away.

Tears wet Max's cheeks.

Kerr shifts in close and puts his arm around him.

Max puts his head on Kerr's shoulder for support. They stand in an embrace; like father and son.

- 136 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY 136
- Trent lies in a white, brightly lit single room. His severe wounds have been heavily bandaged and he lies unconscious.
- A drip feeds him fluids and a heart monitor rhythmically BEEPS beside him.
- Dorothy sits in the room with him; she has dozed off.
- Kerr enters, but he doesn't wake Dorothy.
- He looks down at Trent. He puts his hand on Trent's head affectionately.
- 137 INT. SUBURBAN HOME - NIGHT 137
- Max sits in front of a wood-burning stove. He watches the flames lick up through the wood behind the glass doors.
- Snuggled up next to him are Lisa, Carl and Mary. Max tousles Mary's dark hair.
- He rises and walks through the house.
- 138 EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - NIGHT 138
- Max exits the house, dressed all in black. He gets into his car.
- 139 INT. MAX'S CAR - NIGHT 139
- He drops a file and a balaclava on the passenger seat. He then opens the file.
- INSERT FILE: A PHOTOGRAPH OF A MOTHER AND BABY
- Max stares at the photograph and starts the engine.
- He reverses out of the driveway and drives through the city; a 'Sat-Nav' device guides him.
- He stops at some traffic lights. He stares at the red light momentarily. It turns green.
- ECHOING noise as the car enters the south-side tunnel and starts to descend on the downward camber.
- The flicker of the tunnel lights on the windscreen intermittently obscure his face.
- 140 EXT. CITY SCAPE - NIGHT 140
- A mess of shimmering lights reflect on a vast black river.

On the north side, corporate glass super-structures rise out of the haze. They seem to boast across the water to the gloomy lights on the south-side.

A distant SIREN.

In the south-side, shadow wins the battle over light. Misty showers of light from sporadic working street-lamps toil to illuminate rain splashed, deserted pavements.

From across the street an entire wall can be seen....

'WELCOME TO THE BELLY'

FADE OUT.

**CHAPTER TWO**  
**UNDERSTANDING *FILM NOIR* AS A FILMMAKING DEVICE**



*“How nicely it justifies your quest for the great whatsit.”*

*Figure 2.1: Velda (Maxine Cooper), Kiss Me Deadly (1955)*

**Introduction: The Process of Finding a Genre**

With any attempt to develop a film or a screenplay, the creator has a story to tell; in the case of *City* it was one of personal disillusionment, and that story falls right at the very beginning of the practice-led endeavour. The thematic idea for *City* initially developed from the experience of witnessing a ten-year-old boy assault a disabled man in the street, for no other reason than ‘for kicks’. As a screenwriter and filmmaker, a screenplay that addressed a thematic centered upon a personal crisis of confidence in society, was the subsequent outlet. The effect of witnessing such an assault initiated a genuinely pessimistic outpouring of screenplay ideas. *City* started out as a representation of those cynical feelings, and of how the disenchantment of seeing that assault led to a screenplay that was to be a counter-point to escapism, happiness, and the dream existence; whatever they may be. *City* did not begin its life as a film noir, at least not at a conscious level, because the initial planning of the screenplay was that of a social drama; a film that would address the confusion floating around

in my head of ‘What can possibly be done to prevent a situation where a child has the urge to commit such a brutal public act?’ An instinctive idea started to form around those themes – a thriller with a city setting wherein one of the city fathers is actively doing something to combat such an outcome, in a film that would be situated in a long tradition of films that have a similar ideal and social message. Placed inside that world, there was the protagonist, a young detective investigating the intricate case of an abducted baby and hovering precariously at a moral cliff-edge.

Upon taking an early draft to various producers (2010), there was a definite interest in the project. Producers Naysun Alae-Carew and Nicholas Crum became attached to the project (2010) and initially pushed for the screenplay to be tied into a more definitive genre category than social drama or thriller; they wanted an alternative genre that would make the film easier to sell to both an audience and investors. Science fiction was first to be considered, but to have amended the screenplay to include the genre defining elements of sci-fi would have drawn the film further from the initial vision and potentially into a bigger budget requirement. That was not something that ultimately seemed possible without a significant re-consideration of the core themes of the screenplay. Reviewing the screenplay, it became easy for me to make a tentative suggestion to the producers that *City* should be a film noir; tentative because I already understood that several conflicting critical debates questioned whether film noir was actually a genre. No objection was raised from the producers however, and the suggestion was in fact met with positive approval. In the producer’s minds, there was no legitimate reason why the film could not be written, produced and marketed as a film noir and *City* advanced into a new development stage<sup>6</sup>.

As the creative force behind the project, I was convinced that developing a film noir screenplay would require that I step back into the theory side of film noir, and understand more fully the expectations that would be placed on me as a screenwriter. My existing knowledge of the term, though initially limited, was advanced enough to suggest that I had a responsibility to justify any decision to write in a genre tradition like noir as part of my associated research, especially since film noir as an entity was born in the theoretical side of film studies. Conard (2006) suggests that film noir stems from “the loss of value and meaning in our lives” and that it is a genre of “pessimism, alienation and disorientation,” (Conard, 2006: 19). While it is difficult to suggest that these conditions must be the

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<sup>6</sup> See Naysun Alae-Carew / Nicholas Crum interview: Appendix A (p.225)

overwhelming and continual emotional basis of the author's state of mind, it was the case with *City* that it was precisely those feelings that produced the thematic kernel that became the screenplay. Film noir seemed, on the surface of my creative quandary, a most fitting genre choice because as the consensus of criticism agrees, it traditionally elicits the perfect thematic and narrative structures that are mandatory to successfully represent a pessimistic cinematic vision.

As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, practice leads the process of this research, and therefore it was through writing the first draft of the screenplay, and the subsequent collaboration with the producers, that the decision of re-writing it under a more specialised genre definition was decided. Although the screenplay had been developed under the banner of the thriller genre initially, the screenplay was now to be considered under a new guise as a film noir and there was an immediate concern with finding a level of justification for that choice. It is generally agreed amongst screenwriting commentators that genre is a key consideration for any screenwriter, and I was initially influenced by British screenwriting developer, Phil Parker (1999), who suggests that the screenwriter ought to work from four basic genre distinctions: *Romance, Thriller, Horror and Personal Drama*. Parker's model, like many others who write in the field of 'How To' screenwriting manuals, is based on an ideological method whereby the screenwriter takes control of their own craft; certainly an attractive proposition for the screenwriter. Parker's method of using four core genres is initially beneficial to the writer, but it can become difficult to apply to the marketplace and film industry external to the craft of writing the screenplay. Parker's core genres do not ultimately correlate with what the screenwriter is often asked to do under a more market savvy approach to selling a film. So while the first draft and structural elements of *City* were indeed constructed as a thriller under Parker's model, a new, more fundamental need to impose a more tangible and specific genre form became the priority from the producers' point of view. It was a key research agenda for me to explore the "film noir phenomenon" (Silver, 1996) and to find justification for why critics like Hirsch, Damico and Kaplan et al. believe that there are "substantial reasons" (Damico, 1978: 104) why film noir may be regarded as a 'self-sufficient' genre. The progression of my writing inspired me to gain a greater personal understanding of the term film noir, and how it could be applied to the creation of my screenplay. As a result, developing the

screenplay for *City* inadvertently created a trajectory for my first research agenda, and the critical theory that exists in the field of film noir became the first instance of where my practice began to lead my research. Following on from that, the theoretical backdrop of film noir studies began to impose on my whole film development and research endeavour; and while there is an argument from both an industry and theoretical perspective that could suggest that I am under no obligation to justify the terminology ‘film noir’ in relation to *City*, my research into the problematic nature of the noir genre definition was the natural progression that developed from taking my first screenplay draft into the film marketplace—something that is the very essence of *practice-led* research.

### **Film Noir as a Genre**

Steve Neale in his core text, *Genre* (1980) argues that genres were originally employed by Hollywood as an active way for the production system to order its differing outputs, and that they achieved this through careful control over their productions and effective marketing. In other words, Hollywood produce and sell films that fit into niche markets. Film noir in this instance becomes an interesting niche if we are to accept Neale’s ideal, because French critics in the 1940s were the first to begin using the term ‘film noir’ as an entity separate from Hollywood’s ordering systems. Therefore, we can begin to see more clearly how practice and theory have affected each other from the early days of both film production and critical film theory. Paul Schrader, pointed out in his seminal essay, ‘Notes on Film Noir’ (1972), that the terminology for film noir was born out of a “reaction” from French critics to Hollywood films; “In 1946 French critics, seeing the American films they had missed during the war, noticed the new mood of cynicism, pessimism and darkness which had crept into the American cinema” (Schrader, 1972: 81). French film critic Nino Frank, is commonly regarded as the first writer to have used the term ‘film noir’ in his 1946 article, ‘*A New Police Genre: The Criminal Adventure*’ (English translation). Frank referred to certain Hollywood crime dramas from the forties as film noir; literally meaning ‘black’ or ‘dark’ film, and no doubt inspired by Gallimard’s publication of French translations of British and American crime novels known as *Serie Noire*. Frank stated that, “these ‘dark’ films...no longer have

anything in common with the ordinary run of detective movies..."(Trans. from Horsley, 2001: online), and in doing so began a cycle of retrospective debate that formed a new name for a distinctive group of Hollywood films that were arguably alternative to anything seen before. After Borde and Chaumeton (1955), took up the term in their book *Panorama du Film Noir Américain: 1941 -1953*, their insight instigated a debate concerning film noir that still rumbles on after sixty years. There are of course many questions (to be discussed throughout this chapter) over the finer detail of these French critic's initial reflections upon film noir, but as Silver (1997) points out, there can be no doubt that Frank, Borde and Chaumeton et al. created a descriptive term that has endured and arguably created a basis by which to define a certain type of film:

While many subsequent writers have questioned both specifics and generalities of Borde and Chaumeton's seminal work, none have questioned the very existence of the phenomenon which they tried to define. (Silver, 1997: 5)

Film noir was defined from a purely theoretical and retrospective stance initially, and key genre theorist Rick Altman states that, "we now realize that film noir...began as a loose, adjectival, add-on mode..." (Altman, 1999: 60/61). The notion of how film noir developed as a cinematic form often fuels arguments that call into question its status as a genre, especially considering the terms that Neale suggests (as discussed above). If part of what defines genre is that it is a consciously employed mechanism for selling a film, then it stands to reason that noir could not be classed a genre because the industry itself was not using the term during the 1940s. However, one could argue that all of the critical study that pertains to some notion of film noir has actually bolstered it as a categorical entity, and has gradually supplemented its existence as a genre. In fact, in completing his opening address on noir in *Film/Genre*, Altman illustrates that noir started life as an adjective in film terms, but that it has now developed into a noun; having "mature[d] into the substantial genre we know today," (Altman, 1999: 60). Neale, and other critics who refute the concept of film noir as a genre, ultimately exert much of their critical time trying to disprove that noir is a cinematic genre, explaining that a lack of consistency in the methodology with which it is associated acts as its major downfall, however, it must be pointed out that these critics have always categorised their arguments associatively. Consider Neale (2000), for example, who dedicates twenty-seven pages of text in his book *Genre and Hollywood* to his argument in a chapter simply called 'Film Noir', and Spicer's book (2000) that uses the same definitive title. Nevertheless,

it is difficult to deny that when faced with how a film becomes included into this categorical definition, or the fundamental characteristics a film must encompass to be classed as noir, we are ultimately faced with a confusing and intricate problem. Schrader (1972) argued, for example, that film noir was not defined by means of “setting and conflict”, like a western or gangster genre film, but by the more delicate aspects of “tone and mood”. With this discrepancy, it therefore becomes imperative to look again at the boundaries for film noir that were set out initially by Borde and Chaumeton in 1955, especially if we are to acknowledge the apparent weight behind Silver’s annotation that they formed the unquestionable ‘bed-rock’ for every study of film noir since. Borde and Chaumeton initially demarcated a “series” of films, suggesting that, “It is the presence of crime which gives film noir its most distinctive stamp” (Borde & Chaumeton 1955. Trans. Hammond, 2002: 5). But they also suggest that film noir does not have a “monopoly on crime” and move for a distinction between film noir and other related crime film categories that have “noir tendencies”. They segregated these categories into:

- Film Noir
- Criminal Psychology
- Period Costume
- Gangster
- Police Documentary
- Social Tendency

(Borde & Chaumeton, 1955: 5 – 13)

Borde and Chaumeton forged a group of twenty-one films within their film noir sub-heading and argued that they differed from these other sub-divisions of crime films due to a “difference in focus”. For example, they suggested that “Police Documentaries” approached from the point of view of the police characters; “upright, incorruptible, and courageous men,” (1955. Trans. Hammond, 2002: 7). They also argued that noir films were more distinctly concerned with the point of view of the criminal, adding that, “If there are policemen, they are of dubious character...even murderers...or at least they allow themselves to get caught up in the machinery of crime...” (1955. Trans. Hammond, 2002: 7). Borde and Chaumeton seem unequivocal in describing film noir, stating that noir films were about ‘death’ and were

made up of components that disorientated the audience. Classical Hollywood conventions of logical plot lines, clear distinctions between good and evil, defined motives and honest protagonists were removed according to Borde and Chaumeton. That alienated and created tension in the viewer because “psychological reference points...[were]... removed” (1955. Trans. Hammond, 2002: 5-13). There is however a consistent lack of real clarity throughout their chapter, ‘Toward a definition of Film Noir’ due to the fact that they have a continual impulse to include films from their other sub-divisions as boasting ‘typical’ noir features and they often traverse their separate categories to better explain what they mean by film noir tendencies. From the outset they seem to have problems nailing down the specifics of their own methodology and that inevitably leads to other critics taking up the baton in an attempt to develop a notion of film noir as a legitimate categorical definition for cinema.

American and British film critics were slow to join the debate initially, whilst Australian writers Higham and Greenberg (1968) were the first to take up the reigns of the film noir debate in English, in their book, *Hollywood in the Forties*; in a chapter titled, ‘Noir Cinema’:

A dark street in the early morning hours, splashed with a sudden downpour. Lamps form haloes in the murk. In a walk-up room, filled with the intermittent flashing of a neon sign from across the street, a man is waiting to murder or be murdered... (Higham & Greenberg 1968: 27).

Higham and Greenberg’s poetic description here is not tied to one specific film, but is designed to carry a tonal correlation with Borde and Chaumeton’s overview and connotations of the term noir and its various adjective meanings. It is not clear if use of the word noir was initially enlisted to mean ‘black’ or ‘dark’, which are two legitimate meanings of the French word, and which fundamentally hold several distinctions and multiple meanings. However, due to its critical popularity as a descriptive term, film noir had seemingly been an aptly enlisted term to define a certain narrative similarity between films and it was clearly appropriate enough to forge Higham and Greenberg’s notion that the “visual mode” and “matching stories” gave 1940’s films of this film noir ilk its “completeness as a genre,” (Higham & Greenberg, 1968: 28).

## The Existence of a Theoretical 'Film Noir Cache'

The notion of an exclusive time period and geographical restrictions upon film noir, or a *Film Noir Cache* as it will be referred to here, developed initially through the French critics of the 1940s, but many critics (see: Schrader, Walker et al) have moved to uphold since. In Schrader's essay of 1972 he adds retrospectively to Borde and Chaumeton's list of twenty-one films by suggesting that, film noir at its "outer limits" starts with *The Maltese Falcon* in 1941 and ends with *Touch of Evil* in 1958. And while the French critics of the 1940s also heralded *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) as the first film noir chronologically, it has since become debated because earlier films such as *They Drive by Night* (1940) and *Stranger on the Third Floor* (1940) have been recognised by other critics as potential noir films based upon the French theorists conventional boundaries for what categorises a film noir. A debate rumbles on regarding what films ultimately belong in a film noir cache, but the existence of a restricted period and place for film noir is still commonly recognised and *They Drive by Night* and *Stranger on the Third Floor* still fall within a geographical Hollywood catchment and specific time frame, that although puffed out at its edges by additional retrospective additions to the discussions, seems to hold an exclusivity that closes with Orson Welles', *Touch of Evil* (1958).

Several suggested factors contributed to a theoretical closure of the cache. The technological, economic, and cultural influences that affected the near collapse of the classical Hollywood production cycle possibly explains the drop off in noir film productions by the late 50s, or perhaps as Borde and Chaumeton pointed out, "such series...reach a climax; that's to say, a moment of exceptional purity. Following that, they fade and die, their after effects being felt in other genres" (1955. Trans. Hammond, 2002: 2). There is an established theoretical movement that suggests film noir ceased to function in its truest form when a consciousness of the term started to affect the films. A notion of a separation of contemporary (post 1950s), or 'conscious' noir films, brought the sub-category, *neo-noir* into the film noir debate. Jules Dassin, who made two films that are frequently listed as belonging to the film noir cache (see *The Naked City* (1948) and *Night and the City* (1950)), would seem to add weight to this suggestion of the *consciousness* of the genre when he stated that his films from the earlier period, specifically *Night and the City*, were *not* responding to the critical term film noir (Dassin, 2005). *Night and the City* is arguably a British film

however, because it is set in London, and Dassin also went on to make *Rififi* (1955) in France. These two films adopt many of the narrative hallmarks<sup>7</sup> of the previously defined noir sensibility, without adhering to an American exclusivity for film noir. These two films prove that Dassin was intertextually influenced by the narrative conventions of previous films and that his directorial output was fluidly crossing the period and geographical constraints set out by a retrospective notion of a film noir cache. The date and geographical restrictions for a noir cache begin to wobble under such scrutiny. There is however no denying that the term ‘film noir’ did creep into the consciousness of filmmaking, and Todd Erickson in his essay, ‘Kill Me Again: Movement becomes genre’ (1996) is an advocate of the idea that consciousness created an effective closure for these films and created a film noir cache. In critical terms, a new cycle of films understood as *neo-noir* appeared; a hybrid genre that is fundamentally related to film noir, by the use of film noir narrative devices, but theoretically removed from its predecessor by a conscious utilisation of those devices. Erickson argues that the “burden of experience and hindsight” prevents the production of film noir now, going on to declare that, “Film noir, at its inception was an innocent, unconscious cinematic reaction to the popular culture of its time. The contemporary film noir is self-conscious and well aware of its heritage,” (Erickson, 1996: 323). Erickson does however seem content to have missed the most useful of notions from genre theory that genres can be self-aware and self-regarding. Altman’s chapter ‘Have genres changed over time?’ (1999: 179-194) points out that genres have become intertextual and that they turn a mirror on themselves; “Once identified by their ability to provide collective memorials, genres now fulfill instead a pseudo-memorial function, based on a substantial increase of generic intertextuality,” (Altman, 1999: 194). It would seem to be the case that contemporary filmmakers have the ability to subvert or copy genre traditions in a purposeful way, and that ability is in fact an ideal that is very much a part of the business of progressive filmmaking generally. As a point of fact, this opportunity to use genre in an innovative way becomes a core critical concern for this thesis. Erickson and Holt (2006) are but two in a long line of critics that refer to all films made later than the film noir cache, as neo-noir, but once again this development of a neo-noir philosophy seems problematic if we understand that genre theory allows for fluidity. It would seem more relevant to simply argue that film noir has evolved alongside genre and lean towards a bigger catchment of noir films that exist

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<sup>7</sup> ‘Narrative hallmarks’ of film noir are discussed more fully later in the chapter and in chapter three.

beyond the film noir cache limitations; as Silver (1997) has done with his list of several hundred film noirs that span several decades. Erickson's argument is also problematic under the scrutiny of two particular films. He skips neatly across *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955) and *Touch of Evil* (1958), suggesting that while these films did show a self-conscious use of noir narrative devices on the part of the filmmakers, American cinema audiences and critics were "unfamiliar" with the term noir at the time. These films can therefore, conveniently for his argument, inhabit the latter cusp of a classical film noir cache even though they do in fact contradict his neo-noir annotations about the consciousness of the filmmaker (Erickson, 1996). Both of these films and the directors, Robert Aldrich and Orson Welles show a distinct consciousness and hyper-extensive use of the conventions that were being discussed by the French critics, and so Erickson's claim that the film noir categorical definition lies "innocently" with the filmmakers and not with the Frenchman who initially coined the term, causes his suggestions to remain contradictory throughout.

Once again, a familiar complication regarding the fundamental unison of theory and practice begins to arise from Erickson's study. Erickson's suggestions indicate his belief that theory and practice are separate entities and do not work together in the definition of film noir as a genre. Genres have appeared to be created by critics in some instances, but no one element of the various levels of cultural engagement in film can singularly account for a genre's inception. Altman strengthens that position when he points out that, "It is precisely this critic-to-author-to-audience model of generic functionality that has been adopted by canonical genre theory." (Altman, 1999: 180). Because filmmakers rarely present research methods or written critiques of their own work, it is often assumed that their films offer no active critical input into new or ongoing genre debate, but that is the opposite of what this thesis attempts to suggest through the creation of contemporary film noir artifacts. In fact, the dark films of the 1940s are possibly one of the strongest cases of films affecting theory because without them, it is an unequivocal fact that the phenomenon of film noir would never have materialised. Many critics have unfortunately predicated the notion that the actual practice of making a film is irrelevant to ongoing academic debate; these opinions reducing the noir filmmakers of the 1940s and 1950s to 'innocents', who were not reacting to what was happening around them. Erickson in particular suggests that while some filmmakers from the classical Hollywood era inevitably broke away from their innocence by developing a conscious awareness for what they were doing, their actions did not carry any weight until a

scholarly theory was created to inform them and give a name to their narrative choices. This is often the type of theoretical suggestion that makes filmmakers unwilling to engage in a more theoretical approach to their craft, but it is precisely the reason that they should. Filmmakers naturally create intertextual films that contribute to cycles in the first place; they knowingly borrow and appropriate ideas from each other and actively develop bolder and more cultured incarnations of similar previous works as part of their everyday practice, just in the same way as the practice elements do in this thesis. Both filmmakers *and* critics essentially react to what is in front of them and Erickson defies the simple logic of ongoing trends, regardless of whether filmmakers or critics had successfully defined a name or working basis for film noir at the time or not. Cinema (and not just Hollywood) discovered a trend for these dark films that proved to be successful at a specific time, and more and more filmmakers involved themselves in that cycle; one that seemed, on the surface of it, to allow for more creative freedom than other generic film trends.

Narrative similarities between hosts of retrospectively named film noirs may suggest that there is an argument in favour of a singular definition, and whether the films had been specifically named or referred to as film noirs during the 40s and 50s does not ultimately matter. Noir critic Mark Bould reinforces this opinion by pointing out that, “a generic label for a group of related texts must come after the creation of those texts, the generic labeling must always be, at least initially, retrospective” (2005: 14). The film noir trend was created by both those responsible for making the associative films, and the theorists who noticed a trend and gave it a name. Clarity for a restricted film noir cache inevitably becomes murkier then, because it was based on an initial suggestion that Hollywood had started to make films that were significantly different from anything seen before. The narrative style was a shift from the “usual detective movies” according to Borde and Chaumeton (1955: 6), but as mentioned, their noir conditions were highlighted through a discussion of films that did not always fit neatly into their list of locked down films. And when they suggested that, “If there are policemen, they’re of dubious character – like the inspector in *The Asphalt Jungle...*” (1955. Trans. Hammond, 2002: 7) they contradict their distinctions because *The Asphalt Jungle* (1950) is *not* included in their list of twenty-one film noirs. It is these contradictions from the outset of noir theory that have led to a difficult understanding of the term generally. Let us also consider briefly the narrative devices that are suggested repeatedly in association with film noir: chiaroscuro lighting, dark wet streets, fog and mist, black and white

photography, stories of death or crime, etc. These elements ought not to have accounted for the initial reaction to noir either, because pre-war films evidenced these narrative devices earlier; consider the same narrative techniques in James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931) or Fritz Lang's, *M* (1931) for example. Similarly, tonal, thematic, or storyline exclusivity for these so-called film noirs is shattered by numerous other pre-war American and European films, to which Fritz Lang's pre-war catalogue will attest; "Lang anticipates the style and themes of film noir in his two influential prewar thrillers, *Fury* (1936) and *You Only Live Once* (1937)" (Spicer, 2002: 120). Production styles and certain narrative characteristics immediately become a problematic indicator for a contained film noir cache, especially if we consider the film marketplace and the films that were being released outside of the containing parameters. Additionally, lists of cultural influences have also grown as a way of defining the film noir, and were also a key means by which to promote a film noir cache. Schrader was one of the first to define these cultural indicators in the English language when he argued that: *war and post-war disillusionment, post-war realism, the German influence, and the hard-boiled tradition*, were the four catalytic elements that define film noir (Schrader, 1972). Social and cultural positioning has historically been applied to films within film theory as a matter of course, and film noir has been especially prone to such juxtapositions because of the various social and cultural factors that have led to its inauguration in to the field of film theory in the first place. Kaplan suggests that films are "reflective of the dominant feelings of the time" (Kaplan, 1998: 50) and it would seem understandable to assume that collective mindsets can often trigger an intertextual cycle of films within a specific period. However, these societal or cultural concerns can scarcely be considered proof or justification for the intentions of a single film. Let us take the example of the effect of World War II on the film noir cache as a basis for argument here. Schrader (1972), asserts "war and post-war disillusionment" as key "catalytic elements" for the creation of the film noir cache; WWII was the most significant global event during the cache period, but in reality it can be no more than convenient to suggest a theoretical route causality in the creation of any individual noir film. Films actively contribute to the way in which we, the audience, define our cultural responses—so while films can and do respond to outside influences, it must also be recognised that cinema is a creative popular medium that also instigates collective moods. Perhaps then, the collective mood of disillusionment, of which Schrader speaks, was as much a side-effect of the films themselves, films that may individually have had little or nothing to

actually say about war or post-war angst. The war is never alluded to in *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) for example, the film that is commonly regarded as the first film noir. *The Maltese Falcon* was based on the Dashiell Hammett book of the same name, written before WWII in 1930, and adapted relatively faithfully by screenwriter/director John Huston. *The Maltese Falcon* fits neatly into the hard-boiled tradition, but once again the notion of that specific tradition is a theoretical grouping of texts that comes with its own problems of definition. It is important to remember that critical theory and analysis does not constitute any factual ownership of ideas though it often professes to be just that; could it not be the case that the returning veterans of later noir films simply provided screenwriters with the correct characteristics to write stories that were thematically concerned with disillusionment generally? How many of these filmmakers, for arguments sake, were making films because they were disillusioned specifically by the war? We all, as individuals, have the capacity to be disillusioned by a whole host of important or trivial events, and the stylistics of film noir surely has a wider evolution and use as one of the go to infrastructures with which to thematically represent disillusionment generally (Holt, 2006). While period links may be found if sought, one must be extremely wary of suggesting that films of a certain era are a reflection of specific period stresses and it is fundamentally more problematic to suggest that cycles of films or genres can be defined by such ideologies. *City*, the film attached to this thesis for example, does not tap into any collective dissatisfaction of current cultural or political unrest, it is not influenced by a war and it does not represent an aggregate mood of the people. It is, at screenplay stage, an individual writer's response to his own private fears:

In cinema history, we find often that personal events in the lives of players, screenwriters, directors, producers had inevitable, even drastic, effects on the final product ... Film history, to my mind, cannot be written without taking such factors into account ... (Tuska, 1984: xviii).

Tuska's statement, more so than Kaplan's (1998) notion that film is a reflection of the dominant mood of the period, gives a stronger emphasis to the cultural phenomenon of film, and helps us to remember that filmmakers as individuals or collaborators are critical participants in creating cultural moods and are not simply positioned to reflect them. *City* certainly exists as a notable counterpoint to Kaplan here because the screenplay's thematic stems from an isolated incident that was not a shared experience. Krutnik (1991) also acknowledges this notion when he points out that:

... caution is required when considering the relations between texts and the cultural contexts in which and for which they are produced ... films address their culture through an intricate play of evasion, dissimulation and transmutation, rather than in any direct manner (Krutnik, 1991: xii).

*City* is driven by moods of a time, but those moods do not necessarily coincide with anyone else or any dominant mood of society. The screenplay chooses to raise hypothetical social and cultural concerns, but it does so from a singular perspective and while it will inevitably arouse associative feelings in its audience, those associations are what a screenwriter strives for; they are necessary and desirable functions for marketability and commercial success in a modern marketplace. It seems inevitable that a given critic may deduce some political or period specific statement from the finished product of the film and try to associate it with other films that seemingly have the same concerns, but the truth is that *City* is not motivated to speak for the culture in which it is created – it tries to create a personally motivated theme that will speak to its culture through the frameworks of the socially recognisable generic category of film noir and its relevant narrative conventions. It also displays intertextual influences from several films that have gone before to achieve its genre distinction.<sup>8</sup>

Andrew Spicer (2002), with the benefit of an additional thirty years of retrospect, casts a wider net of influential cultural elements over classic film noir. However, it should be pointed out that the span of American cultural conditions that have been associated to film noir had no effective bearing on its original definition by Frank, Borde & Chaumeton et al. Spicer's retrospective approach to noir means he never categorically commits to the notion of a contained noir cache exclusive to Hollywood the way Schrader and others do, and this would seem to be a more realistic approach. Schrader's (1972) attempt to suggest that film noir has outer limits of Hollywood and 1941–1958 is contradicted in his essay when he suggests that there were “foreign offshoots of film noir” from the UK and France in the shape of “*The Third Man*, *Breathless* and *Le Doulos*”; the latter not released until 1962. Deciding that film noir belongs in a cache ultimately becomes impossible as Schrader's now dated essay inadvertently attests when he contradicts himself in the space of two sentences. Dozens of British films, such as *Brighton Rock* (1947), *The Fallen Idol* (1948), *Obsession* (1949) et al, demonstrate the same narrative conventions that were being used in Hollywood at the same time French critics were writing about an exclusive new direction for Hollywood cinema. Spicer suggests that, “Film noir is not solely an indigenous American form ...

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<sup>8</sup> Intertextual film noir influences over *City* are covered in depth in chapter three.

British film noir was part of the same broad cultural interaction that gave rise to its American counterpart” (Spicer, 2002: 175), so while certain cultural conditions are often cited for a clearer definition of film noir they can never hold enough clarity and therefore noir still remains, as Bould (2002: 13) suggests, an “elusive phenomenon ... always just out of reach.” Marc Vernet points out this baffling nature of defining film noir when he proposes that:

What is completely strange in discourse on the Film Noir is that the more elements of definition are advanced, the more objections and counter-examples are raised, the more precision is desired, the fuzzier the results become. (Vernet, 1993: 5).

As a result, critics have continuously come up against the same problems with definition. Finding a legitimate reason why film noir is restricted by cultural or stylistic limitations has proven, time and again, to be increasingly difficult.

### **Unlocking the Noir Cache: Vernet’s Unique French Conditions**

During the 1970s and onward, a growing list of writers were marrying more and more films to a film noir cache; Borde and Chaumeton’s list of twenty-one film noirs, became expanded into a list of “several hundred” by Ward and Silver in their encyclopedia of film noirs, as Vernet (1993: 24) points out. Even today, the website, ‘Film Noir Studies’ (Blaser & Blaser, 2008: Online) offers up a list of eighty-nine subjectively chosen noir films with a button to click if you “disagree” with their list or want to justifiably add or delete one. An uncertainty over any so-called definitive list or set period for film noir has developed through critics like Silver and Spicer, but the general doctrine for a 1940s, 1950s film noir cache is still widely accepted. Once again, a full understanding of the supposition that film noir exists in a cache is critical, if one is to ultimately unlock the genre and allow, at least from a theoretical point of view, a new film noir to be made in its purest form today.

It seems that the theorist and the filmmaker can only get to the real essence of the film noir debate by asking: ‘Why did these critics and writers come together to agree on a generalised noir cache of strictly American films in the first place?’ That question is unfortunately something that is surprisingly absent from most of the critical arguments concerned with noir’s definition. Vernet takes an altogether different approach to this noir problem in his essay ‘Film Noir on the Edge of Doom’ (1993: 1-31), an approach that has not

been given due attention in the noir debate. An analysis of his essay reveals that he agrees with Alain Silver that, Borde and Chaumeton's original thesis describing film noir as a tangible entity does remain unchallenged. However, he goes on to suggest that subsequent American theories have been, in remaining close to Borde and Chaumeton's position, completely reliant and shaped by an initial thesis relevant only to the French spectators who didn't have access to Hollywood films during the war. After backing up his claims by delivering the justifiable argument that, "numerous films are swept under the rug in order to attempt to maintain an artificial purity and isolation of film noir..." (Vernet, 1993: 14), Vernet clutters his argument by suggesting a list of definitive "French cultural conditions", much in the same way that Schrader pointed out certain Hollywood conditions, to attempt to pin down the cultural constraints of film noir. Silver has attempted to dismantle Vernet's argument as, "unembarrassed Eurocentric bias" (Silver, 1997: 4), but two of Vernet's film noir conditions, taken apart from the others, arguably hold some significance over why film noir is often hemmed in to a culturally specific period.

The first of Vernet's conditions is part fact, part supposition; "... the break caused by war for the European public, particularly in Paris, which allowed pre-war American production to be forgotten ..." (Vernet, 1993: 25). There is no doubt that film noir was a phrase used retrospectively by Nino Frank et al. and that he and other French theorists, in essence, encountered a jolt to the senses after having missed American cinema for five or six years during the war. Or, as they described it: "It was during the summer of 1946 that the French public experienced the revelation of a new kind of American film." (Borde & Chaumeton 1955, Trans. Hammond, 2002: 1). Upon catching up with these films, these critics reacted to what they perceived as a significant change in the sensibility of Hollywood films. Whether they had actually forgotten that pre-war American cinema had already shown signs of a darker, more challenging ethos is impossible to prove, but it seems conceivable, especially if we consider the 'see it once' viewing habits of the 1940s, a time when critics were not afforded the luxury of the multiple DVD film revisits of today's critic. For a French critic to notice a considerable change in the sensibility of Hollywood films after a five or six year absence was arguably a natural reaction, comparable perhaps to the astonishment of seeing a child after a five-year interval and commenting – "you've changed", when the actual facts are that the change in the child would very much have been a gradual one, or a natural progression for those with an uninterrupted familiarity. For the Americans and the British,

this darkening sensibility of their films was part of the natural evolution of cinema and as a result, there was no theoretical recognition of a new genre or style in either nation; filmmakers were simply stretching the boundaries and finding the little moments of originality that become essential for maintaining collaborative or singular visions and the interest of the paying cinema customer. This five-year evolution hit several French critics all at once and they understandably reacted to it more passionately, an epiphany that in turn led to the arousal of other French critics who had shared the same experience. Vernet's suggestion seems valid, and his second pivotal condition for the justification of a formed 40s and 50s noir cache is his evaluation that, "Anglo-American film criticism [had an], over valuation of French film criticism," (Vernet, 1993: 25). It would appear that the re-engagement with a darkening thread of Hollywood cinema in France had clearly influenced certain important critics. Key crossover theorist/filmmakers like Godard and Truffaut, evidenced this fascination with the noir style through their ruminations in *Cahiers du Cinéma* and their use of typically noir narrative elements in their films; Godard's *Breathless* (1959) written by Truffaut, Truffaut's, *Shoot the Piano Player* (1962), and Godard's, *Alphaville* (1965). *Shoot the Piano Player* is specifically singled out for its noir influences by Ingram & Duncan; "with *Tiréz Sur le Pianist*, Truffaut adheres closely to the iconography of the film noir" (Ingram & Duncan, 2004: 178). Ironically, this noir influence over French and European cinema was to bounce back at Hollywood throughout the 60s and it would appear to be more than coincidental that American critics and filmmakers like Schrader would start to adopt this French descriptive term in the early 1970s. Schrader at the time was just one of a large group of self-confessed and well-documented American filmmakers and critics who extolled European, and especially French film culture in the 60s and 70s<sup>9</sup>; Schrader himself citing two French films as noir "offshoots" in his essay of 1972. Once again, there is a feeling here that distinctive periods of filmmaking are difficult to encircle; trends, it would seem, cross over geographical and time restrictions at will throughout the history of film production and no more so than those associated with film noir. An alternative argument for the adoption of the film noir term among American critics may be perfectly simple; perhaps the descriptive French term simply appealed to those American writers of the 70s because it was a more alluring term with which to associate the narrative conventions than the lackluster descriptiveness of *police procedural* or *crime melodrama*. That would seem over

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<sup>9</sup> Also see: Andrew Sarris', '*Notes on Auteur Theory*' (1962: Online)

simplified perhaps, but Vernet's latter condition would seem to hold an assured gravity when we consider that many English language commentators at the time celebrated the French criticism in *Cahiers du Cinéma*. Indeed, Vernet's argument may well be the strongest logical reason why a film noir cache became so engrained into the Anglo-American mindset in the late 60s and 70s.

## **Conclusion**

Writers such as Silver and Spicer have punched holes in any continuing notion of a theoretical film noir cache, but it appears that the classic time and period restrictions still take the form of a revered doctrine for film noir, as Vernet suggests, atop their French cultural foundations. Vernet does offer us a suggestion to the problem of defining film noir outside of that cache however by suggesting that, "Film Noir must...lead to a double opening up: the chronology must be opened up by moving back in time, and the genre must be opened up by making more permeable the boundaries." (Vernet, 1993: 17). A more free-form definition of film noir that embodies films pre-1940 and post-1958 has steadily become more acceptable, especially through consideration of genre theory's suggestion that genres are in a constant state of flux. And while the film noir cache restrictions still exist among dozens of critical papers that refuse to acknowledge this opening up, filmmakers now use the term 'film noir' to describe their contemporary film productions made in America and beyond regardless of any theoretical and critical restrictions<sup>10</sup>. Vernet closed his essay, '*Film Noir on the Edge of Doom*' by suggesting that, "Film noir is a collector's idea that, for the moment, can only be found in books" (Vernet, 1993: 26). However this element of his thesis is no longer tenable as Todd Erickson, in the more enlightened back-drop of his essay, '*Kill Me Again: Movement Becomes Genre*' (1997) validates. Erickson writes about an "increased awareness" of the 'film noir' term, with theatrical distributors now intent to, "rely on noir-descriptive quotes from critical reviews to market their pictures" and sell films as "film noir" (Erickson, 1997: 307). And therein lies the basic problem for allotting a time period within which a film noir in its truest form can exist; a separation between the business of selling and exhibiting a film, and the scholarly ruminations in the field of film noir once again opens out, and this

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<sup>10</sup> See *I, Anna* (2012). And interview with director, Barnaby Southcombe: Appendix B (p.225)

essentially allows filmmakers to market their films as a film noir if they choose to. The critic is free to disregard these films as film noirs, but the basis for this thesis is that both film practice and film theory feed off of each other, and under the grand heading of ‘practice-led film studies’, cannot function as individual entities. Because the written and practice elements within this thesis are both affiliated to a study of film noir, they overcome any potential restrictions placed upon them by the period and geographical boundaries that Frank, and Borde and Chaumeton et al. set in motion. The justification for that seems clear enough, as from the evidence presented here, Frank’s initial response, and Borde and Chaumeton’s follow-up, though natural enough reactions, were overly affected by an interrupted critical acquaintance to Hollywood films. Their reactions have instigated a cacophony of theory, drawn attention to stylistic narrative devices, and arguably developed a genre. However, the finer detail of the date specifics, or Frank’s summation of the films lacking a ‘common ground’ with previous movies, must be broken down to reactions that paid too little regard to obvious forerunners, and non-Hollywood films that exhibited decidedly similar narrative principles. Hindsight permits an overview of subsequent films that also exhibit and fit into a film noir *universe* (Silver, 1996), and ultimately any continuing debate about levels of consciousness or the cultural conditions are all but outdated in film noir’s current status as a genre. In short, the foundations that Frank, Borde & Chaumeton et al. built were reactionary and specific only to a very small window of critical response, and as a result it has now become impossible to make film noir fit neatly into a time and culturally specific film noir cache. The practice elements tied to this thesis create a distinct problem for Silver’s (1996) observation, that no-one has questioned the basis of the phenomenon that Borde and Chaumeton described. It should have been questioned, because it was significantly flawed by the temporary separation of French critics from American films during WWII, a condition that the critics themselves alluded to. Schrader pointed out in the first line of his essay of 1972 that French critics noticed a mood that had “crept” into the American cinema because they had been cut off from it. He uses the correct word “crept”, but he fails to question the relevance of his own distinctions. Ultimately, a single French cultural condition gave rise to the creation of a genre, aided by the enthusiasm of a host of critics who championed it and helped film noir theory to spin in all sorts of directions. And once the critical world realised that it had started to influence the filmmakers, arbitrary spin-off terms, such as neo-noir, *pre-*

*noir*, and *proto-noir* developed and complicated the theoretical genre condition of film noir further.

It can be concluded that an assured definition of film noir is not ultimately hindered by its “retrospective status”, as Spicer suggests (2002: 24), but rather by the initial interpretation from Frank, Borde, Chaumeton and the other French theorists, that was symptomatically and categorically lacking in contextual analysis and too motivated by what Borde and Chaumeton call, a French “revelation” in the summer of 1946. Any attempt or continuing attempt to pigeonhole film noir into a time specific cache becomes foolish, because there are too many contrary film examples that share the same narrative qualities, and do not fit any cultural or chronological mould. Nevertheless, ‘film noir’ as a ubiquitous term, and mode by which to make films, has since evolved through continued response and it has attracted various associative narrative conditions throughout a near seventy-year term of critical response and filmmaking. Critical analysis cannot alone determine the legitimate use of ‘film noir’ by association, and as the practice here, the recent commercial success of Rockstar Games video game, *L.A. Noire* (2010), or the production of a film like *I, Anna* (2012) with their associative noir narrative conventions and marketing will attest, the sense of what film noir is and how the world perceives and interacts with it, has evolved through various different textual platforms. Mark Bould discusses this subject when he posits that “Genres arise...[through]...complex feedback mechanisms involving producers, distributors, exhibitors, consumers, interpreters and other discursive agents” (Bould, 2005: 18), and that connection between the *creative process*, *critical theory* and *market forces*, the three elements discussed on the cyclical model that informs this thesis, prove to be core driving influences in the evolution and definition of film noir. Cycles of film practice, theoretical discourse, and audience perception, have taken film noir to a point where it currently exists, a phenomenon that has evolved far beyond and essentially demolished the one set out by French critics in the 40s and 50s. As with all genres, film noir is a phenomenon that is created by many more forces than just academic rumination. In terms of the practice of creating a film today, film noir has moved away from its French cultural condition and it now functions as a “contract” (Langford, 2005) like any other genre, between filmmakers, critics and audience alike; it has evolved into a definitive genre with expected codes of narrative practice and those codes are free to be exploited by the contemporary filmmaker in whichever way they choose.

The intention for the *City* feature film screenplay is to utilise noir as an emphatic genre. From the writer's perspective, 'noir' describes the screenplay presented here because the writing purposefully engages with particular narrative elements that are representative of and associated historically with the film noir universe. There is however a sense that *City* is a progressive noir because the viewer may not necessarily recognise it as such due to certain core narrative devices that will be left out (as discussed in chapter three). *City* may also be viewed as having elements that relate to other genres such as thriller or police drama of course because noir effectively operates as a sub-genre within the crime and thriller genres. Fundamentally, I am using film noir as a tool for my creative process and I have demonstrated why I retain an ability to do so beyond any suggested theoretical restrictions. However, I feel a personal challenge as a screenwriter to talk to, and meet audience and peer understanding of the genre distinction because I am engaged with the theoretical history of the noir genre. The screenplay presented in this thesis pre-emptively visualises the elements of the finished noir film with words on the page. It is designed to encourage the reader to recognise particular noir narrative devices and give a sense of how the film will look. That notion of recognising the genre from the screenplay drives the discussion forward into the *creative process* in chapter three, and addresses how the screenwriter must consider a supposed audience interpretation when writing a noir screenplay. Fundamentally, the noir screenplay presented in chapter one negates the notion of film noir as only a cinematic style because it evidences how noir can begin at story level and builds the expected narrative elements from the screenplay upwards. Crum and Alae-Carew<sup>11</sup> also validate that position when they stated that the early draft of the screenplay already showed unconscious signs of being a noir film. Chapter three particularly discusses how noir specific genre devices were added to the screenplay and that strengthens the notion that film noir is a defined genre that can be enlisted to describe *City*. Additionally, noir style is added to the screenplay with some small elements of a novelistic approach in the writing in order to build a sense of noir for the reader, and this is further discussed in Chapter three.

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<sup>11</sup> See Appendix A: Interview transcript with Alae-Carew & Crum. (p.225)

## CHAPTER THREE

### WRITING THE FILM NOIR GENRE SCREENPLAY.



*“This isn’t going to have a happy ending.”*

Figure 3.1: *William Somerset* (Morgan Freeman), *Se7en* (1995)

#### Introduction: Recognising the Unconscious

Film noir was built on a truer cinematic account of the world according to Sanders, who sees it as driven by “the problematic fabric of life itself,” (Sanders, 2006: 93). Conard adds that it also represents, “the loss of value and meaning in our lives” (Conard, 2006: 19). Invariably noir films were traditionally dark with no chance of the happy ending, and that essence was always my intention for *City*. That search to create a screenplay that brings a dark fictional version of a suggested future reality is discussed throughout this chapter and it will become clear from the screenplay and the pilot film that my intention is not to make a classically mannered film noir or a piece of ‘realist’ cinema, I am simply borrowing the elements that I think are appropriate to the development of a contemporary noir film. Several indicators of film noir are used in the screenplay, but as Kaplan (1998) points out, often the most recognised films in the noir mould deviate from the culturally discussed ‘norms’ of the genre (Kaplan, 1996: 50). Certain narrative elements from early noirs must be approached with caution because they are essentially dated. Black and white photography, voice-over and the classic trilby and raincoat for example have become dated and re-used in the genre to the extent of parody. Sanders’s (2006) ideal about maintaining the truer cinematic account of the

world would suggest that these signifiers of the genre sometimes need to be dropped, if the contemporary noir is to suspend reader/viewer disbelief and allow immersion into the storyworld. Certain classical noir indicators are excluded in my screenplay and these are discussed in this chapter along with the narrative devices that remain and are actively used in order to maintain an overall sense that *City* is a noir film. The decision to not use black and white photography, for example, is not something that is addressed at screenplay level here. There are basic references to colour in the screenplay and although there is certainly scope for developing a stronger notion of colour in any subsequent draft, those decisions are generally functions for the director. Ultimately, a screenwriter can only invoke a suggested style because the director will eventually make the creative decisions for a film. In this case however, I am writing for the purpose of directing the film myself. The screenplay here is written for the purpose of building my personal vision for the film in order to draw in finance and acting talent because the director is already attached.

Before it was decided to develop *City* as a film noir, the rough draft of the screenplay was already laden with various unconscious film noir devices, and as mentioned in the previous chapter, that led to the choice of the genre. Dancyger & Rush suggest that, a screenplay is incomplete without a genre to work from, noting that, "... until a genre is chosen, the writer can only stumble forward in the writing process," (Dancyger & Rush, 2013: 91). As the screenwriter on *City*, I already had an instinctive notion of what I was trying to achieve thematically and tonally, but only through the process of researching the theoretical history of film noir, and bringing the screenplay to the marketplace did I begin to fully consider the true ramifications of using the more specialised genre of noir instead of the wider scope of 'thriller'. The protagonist of *City*, Max, is a troubled detective who is forced to get further from the legal blanket of his job and involve himself in the underworld in the pursuit of answers. Upon researching the noir phenomenon further, I realised that this was a typical film noir trope. Once film noir became the defined genre, my immersion in the theoretical background of the genre revealed how easily *City* could be developed to follow a more defined film noir trajectory through the use of story devices that were reminiscent of films that already belonged to the film noir canon. Cameron for example, suggests that film noir "differ[s] from...crime films in the hero's entanglement in the passions of the criminal world" and while "usually located in the urban milieu, they differ from gangster movies in the type of criminal activity involved and their focus on a lone, often introverted hero."

(Cameron, 1992: 8). There is no doubt from the existing first draft of the screenplay that Max's character is introverted and essentially alone, but the investigative nature of his quest in *City* is also instinctively film noir. Max is a police detective who's 'badge' confirms his place as an officer of the law, but he essentially follows the path of the private detective throughout the story, moonlighting and taken over by his case, defying the strict instructions of his superior, Kerr, and eventually losing his status as a 'lawman'. Cameron also points out that in film noir the "moral certainties" of the traditional detective stories are missing, and that even though the truth is uncovered, there is always a sense of loss; "there is usually the sense at the end that little good will come of this or that the cost has been absurdly high." (Cameron, 1992: 12). The plot of *City* certainly adopted those classic noir traits because while Max ultimately solves the case, he lands at the bottom of a moral spiral.

The plots of noir often end on a down beat, and virtually all film noir commentators put great importance on character in its definition and the protagonist's complex journey towards failure. Hirsch backs this notion, aptly describing this focal point of film noir as the, "doomed character" (Hirsch, 1981: 2). Krutnik (1991) also offers an insightful look into film noir's male protagonist, and though he puts an over-valuation of Freud's *Oedipus Complex* on the creation of film noir's male leads, his resultant observation concludes that film noir was decisive in the development of the 'anti-hero', which was exactly how I wanted the protagonist for *City* to be interpreted in its first draft stage. Krutnik, like several theorists before him, distinguishes different types of "tough" thrillers in the noir mode but he also suggests that his sub-categorisations tend to be built on masculine aptitude:

Film Noir's tend to be structured around a testing of the hero's prowess – not merely a testing of his ability as a detective or criminal, but of how he measures up to more extensive standards of masculine competence (Krutnik, 1991: 86).

Those characteristics are apparent throughout the history of film noir – the constant questioning of Sam Spade's (Humphrey Bogart) integrity in the *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) or Nick Tellis's (Jason Patrick) failure to hold his family together outside of his work in *Narc* (2002). The screenplay for *City* thrived on these ideals from the outset, even before it knowingly adopted the frameworks of film noir. Max as the protagonist is not as virile as the other men he encounters, and while he is not unattractive to the two key female characters in the screenplay, his physical weakness, his past, and his biological inability to have children

leave him with a crisis of male identity. This point is revealed specifically when he asks his wife Lisa, “Why have you stayed with me?” (*City* Screenplay, 2012: 80), during their final dialogue scene together. Max clearly resembles Krutnik’s noir “hero-figure”, a man who manifests “one form or other of ‘problematized’ – eroded or unstable – masculinity,” (Krutnik, 1991: 85). Max’s characteristics come very much from the deep projected personal frustrations from the day and subsequent weeks of the real-life assault I witnessed and inspired the screenplay (as mentioned in chapter two). The screenwriter’s personal insecurities in this instance were concerns that mirror the concerns of several film noir protagonists – being physically quite small, like Alan Ladd’s slight protagonists who graced some early noirs (see *This Gun for Hire* (1942), *The Blue Dahlia* (1946)), and the feeling of guilt for not having had the courage to intervene during the assault that I witnessed in the street; guilt often a driving force of Noir (see *Where the Sidewalk Ends* (1950) or *Detective Story* (1951)). The necessity to develop a suitable and conflicted protagonist for *City* was also influenced by intertextual reference to the characters found in films like *Out of the Past* (1947), *The Conversation* (1974), and *Narc* (2002), films that are fronted by protagonists who are ‘doomed’, who have difficult relationships with their masculinity, and who also represented key film noir narrative conventions. *City*’s unconscious adherence to the film noir sensibility right from the outset is summed up perfectly in the words of Alan Woolfolk:

On the one hand, [these] individuals are at the mercy of psychological obsessions and compulsions that threaten and frequently lead to self destruction; on the other hand, they confront impersonal social and universal forces that preclude any remedy. Film noir tells us that existence is irremediably fractured, that the self can neither be integrated into a community nor find a home in the universe. (Woolfolk, 2002: 118).

Woolfolk describes *City*’s annotations and intentions for Max when he contemplates an alienated and haunted protagonist who cannot find his place in the world. Through my own personal experience, I had visited a dark psychological place, and as a result created a rough-draft screenplay that had employed film noir’s “dominant world view” of being “paranoid, claustrophobic, hopeless, doomed, predetermined by the past ... in a maze of right and wrong,” (Place, 1998: 51). Once the recognition of genre happened however, the conscious application of film noir narrative devices began to inform the re-draft of the screenplay more fully and that created a knock on effect over the entire creative process. Interestingly, Todd Erickson’s suggestion that traditional film noir was an, “unconscious cinematic reaction” (as discussed in chapter two) and that contemporary noir is “aware of its heritage” (Erickson,

1996) does take on some relevance here. My screenplay is borne out of both suggestions, and because my own personal experience of writing and developing *City* progressed from unconscious to conscious employment of film noir devices during the re-drafting process, I have further complicated the theoretical debate that moves for a separation between classic film noir and neo-noir based on the consciousness of the genre in the filmmaker. *City* is a film noir but it did not start out as one, and once again it must be recognised that the individuality of the filmmaker and the process of the film proves to have great significance in the development of theoretical contexts.

### **The Problems of Developing a Defined Noir Screenplay**

Film noir theory has always concerned itself with finding definitions for the films after the fact, retrospectively, and from the outside looking in. The difference here, after adopting the noir genre, is the altogether different nature of looking at the process of creating a film noir film from the inside looking out. The screenplay for *City* is embroiled in an investigation; an intention to adopt more of the story conditions that to some extent govern the filmmaker in a reverse pursuit of defining a contemporary noir film. *City* is not the first film to sell itself specifically as a film noir, but an overwhelming majority of noir films are defined after the fact, even considering many of them purposefully adopt conventions from previously defined noir films. The purpose of the *City* screenplay (presented in chapter one) was to create a clear film noir genre distinction through the absorption of the theoretical ruminations that exist under the umbrella term ‘film noir’. When one starts to move forward to creating a screenplay under such conditions, Hirsch, Damico and Kaplan’s notion of film noir as a defined genre, seems to conclusively make more sense. Ultimately, one *must* form a personal opinion that film noir is a genre in this situation, or there is a danger that the writer is simply forced to associate a film to an unattainable ideal and forever ‘write around in circles’ unconvinced that there are tangible noir genre conventions. Continuing here from the discussion in chapter two, film noir is a defined genre and not a movement because it is now narratively recognised and not solely the product of a specific time and place. Hirsch agrees, suggesting that, “conventions of narrative structure, characterization, theme, and visual

design” (Hirsch, 1981: 72) control the definition of a genre and both Kaplan (1978) and Silver (1997) concur that the noir vision is also determined under such narrative precedents.

Sanders points out the difficulty of writing a film noir screenplay when he claims, “I suspect that many... would agree that they know film noir when they see it even though they cannot define the term per se,” (Sanders, 2006: 91). Sanders is proposing that film noir is conjured by instinctive images, such as private detectives, with the weight of the world on their shoulders, ‘chewing up the scenery’ in dark, moody, urban films. While Bogart as Sam Spade immediately springs to mind, films like *The Long Goodbye* (1973) and *Chinatown* (1974), though 70s reincarnations set apart by those who revere a contained film noir cache, never actually fail to meet the narrative criteria that we have come to associate with film noir. Likewise, several European films like *The Third Man* (1949) or *Le Doulos* (1962) feel instinctively like film noirs when their narrative conventions are fully considered. It might seem obvious at this juncture to suggest that the phrase ‘film noir’ clearly conjures many different associative concerns to many people and that only a select few have the benefit of understanding it from the critical side, but let’s not forget that the critical side has never agreed on how to define film noir. Nevertheless, there *are* agreed unifying characteristics that form the basis for a personal understanding of film noir that inspire, in all of us, the inclusion or exclusion of certain films that have been associated to the genre. To use a film example that may be classed on the periphery of the noir recognition, Hirsch (1981) and Spicer’s (2002) less restrained definition allows them to discuss *Taxi Driver* (1976) under an extended banner of film noir:

Both men [Scorsese & Schrader] had a deep interest in film noir evident in Travis’ voice-over narration... Travis conforms to Schrader’s conception of the late noir protagonist who has lost his integrity and stable identity, the prey to ‘psychotic action and suicidal impulse’ (Spicer, 2002: 146).

As noted previously, the screenwriter of *Taxi Driver*, Paul Schrader, was engaged with a critical and theoretical discourse with film noir, and while Spicer points out the noir characteristics in *Taxi Driver*, its status as a film noir is initially questionable, even after engaging in the justification for such a claim. *Taxi Driver* is a film of huge influence over both *City* and me generally, but something about Travis Bickle’s (Robert DeNiro) locale does not seem to fit wholly into a film noir distinction; perhaps it is the lack of an investigative plot or the feeling that New York is represented in such a veritable manner, it is problematic to substantiate the reasons why, but it is a moot point whether it can be considered a film noir.

Noir traditionally brought a cinematic account of the real world, but it very rarely steps into the world of *cinéma vérité* or is characterised by the realism of filmmakers such as Jean Rouch or Ken Loach. One of film noir's quintessential attributes is that it is fictional even if it is set in a real locale, and it could be argued that *Taxi Driver* can fit neatly into that dramatised account of the world.

Schrader's original screenplay for *Taxi Driver*, sets out some striking imagery from the outset:

TRAVIS BICKLE, age 26, lean, hard, the consummate loner...drifting in and out of the New York City night life, a dark shadow among darker shadows. (Schrader, n.d.: Online. *Taxi Driver* Screenplay: 1)

It is possible to see that the use of *Bickle's* description as a "loner" and "dark shadows" begin to enhance Hirsch and Spicer's summations, and so a deeper study of screenplays and screenplay language can help signpost a film as a noir in the future for film noir studies. A process of cross referencing the films and a personal understanding of what film noir means, is often the way by which a definition is reached by most critics; and that was also the same process by which Borde and Chaumeton compiled their original list of twenty-one noir films in 1955. The screenplay as an artefact has traditionally not been a part of that process for the critics however, and it is that fact that leads this discussion of the film noir screenplay for *City* in this chapter and is also the reason why the screenplay here attempts to use description on the page to instigate a sense of film noir in the language of the screenplay. Once again, the example from the *Taxi Driver* screenplay confirms that there is a subjective underpinning that informs the basis of critical evaluation of noir films throughout their history, and it also explains why every individual will have a different understanding of film noir generally. My own initial reluctance to include *Taxi Driver* in the film noir genre reveals certain intuitive conditions for a noir film, because it becomes clear that genre distinctions reside with an individual's pre-ordained, textual narrative connections. *Taxi Driver*, may not have satisfied enough of the personal associative conventional devices as a film to firmly place it in the noir genre, but it is now, having been a subject of debate from a variety of critics, become a part of the film noir universe because it adopts enough of the associative narrative conventions to be considered a film noir, especially if we consider the additional evidence of the screenplay language. Upon further reflection, it is easy to see that the finale of *Scarlet Street* (1945), a revered film noir, with its rising crane shot and use of a timpani drum on the soundtrack, had a significant stylistic influence over elements of *Taxi Driver*; Kutner (1994) also points out

that *Some Came Running* (1958) had a significant influence over the colour and camera decisions employed in *Taxi Driver*. Once again, through continued interaction with the films of the film noir universe, it becomes apparent that deciding which films are film noirs is difficult, and therefore writing one is every bit as problematic as defining the term itself.

### **Creating 'Formal Markers' in the Film Noir screenplay**

The screenplay draft of *City* presented in chapter one of this thesis is designed to leave the reader in no doubt to its genre affiliation. As discussed above, when attention is paid to the films associated with the tag 'film noir' it becomes clear that they all have associated noir characteristics. The use of recognisable noir devices in the screenplay for *City* is the basis for the discussion in this sub-chapter. Neale points out that; "[Genres] consist...of specific systems of expectation and hypothesis which spectators bring with them to the cinema" (Neale, 2000: 31), and if that is indeed the case, careful consideration must be made of how the practice here facilitates those expectations, especially if *City* is to be marketed as a noir film from the outset. Once again, *Taxi Driver* proves to be an interesting example; it is rarely scrutinised by its audience under noir terms (outside of critical evaluation) because it probably does not resemble a film noir fully enough, even if as suggested, it uses several of the narrative hallmarks of film noir. Devitt (2004) describes genre hallmarks as "*formal markers*" that exist between a film and its audience and what nearly seventy years of noir genre discussion has done is authenticate those markers by which we come to associate film noirs; a guide by which to pick and choose the conventional indicators. When attempting to define any film as 'belonging' to a specific genre it is useful to consider it metaphorically. Imagine for a moment that we all as individuals have our own innate set of genre tipping scales; on one side of the scales we place a film, and on the other we start to place counter weights each time we recognise a specific genre narrative convention. How far these genre conventions pull the film into a genre depends on the weight of the associative and recognised narrative devices (the formal markers). If the narrative devices employed weigh heavily against the film on our scales, then we recognise the genre. It is not vital that all of the associative devices of a genre be used in order to tip the scales, but there must be a sufficient amount, otherwise the filmmaker risks making genre recognition unsubstantial. To the same

end, if the filmmakers add too many devices from different genres, the viewer is challenged by disorder and a more difficult genre definition. When Neale (2000) proposes “specific systems of expectation” that an audience bring to the viewing experience, he is essentially saying that recognition of genre lies with the individual.

McKee (1999) states that to write a screenplay successfully the writer must “shape” their story to express their vision and satisfy the audience’s desires; “The audience is a force as determining of story design as any other element. For without it, the creative act is pointless,” (McKee, 1999: 8). This would seem to mirror Neale’s notion of genre recognition. The idea that the audiences’ desires must be met is all-important and it is affirmed by a majority of commentators in the craft of screenwriting. Parker (2006) suggests that, writers generally have a sense of the genre they want to work with but warns that, “the failure ... to articulate a set of genre references ... remains one of the major stumbling blocks in ... reach[ing] your audience,” (Parker, 2006: 151). Snyder (2007) puts an even greater importance on the genre distinction of a film, suggesting that it, along with structure, is the other key requirement of a good screenplay; adding that the screenwriter must also, “surpass” our expectations of familiarity to further the potential commercial success of a film. Including sufficient noir devices would seem essential for understanding *City* as a film noir then, especially if it is to be marketed as such, but there is also the additional balancing act of maintaining the vision and understanding the market for the film, as McKee, Parker and Snyder all point out. Maras (2009) takes this notion further when he discusses the possibility of writing a screenplay as an, “autonomous” activity. Influenced by Martin (1999) and his concern that various screenwriting manuals and an increased theoretical interest in the screenplay form have created a separation in the film industry for the screenplay, Maras suggests that, “the movement towards autonomy takes the script out of its production context and potentially reinforces a fracture between conception and execution,” (Maras, 2009: 5)<sup>12</sup>. This has absolutely been the case with *City* because, as the researcher, I have chosen to formalise a chapter where the critical analysis and reflection is led by the practice element of the screenplay document.

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<sup>12</sup> Discussed more fully under the sub-heading ‘*Understanding the Screenplay Form*’ later in this chapter (p.155)

Returning to Devitt's (2004) notion of genre formal markers, the first conscious reflection upon an element of the screenplay in this regard was the title. 'City' started out as a working title for the screenplay but through the process of enhancing the screenplay as a film noir, it became apparent that the title fulfilled a multiple connotative and metaphorical function for the story. There is instantly an intertextual quality to the title that suggests crime and a noir tendency: *The Naked City* (1948), *Night and the City* (1950), *City Heat* (1984), *Dark City* (1998), *City of God* (2002), *Sin City* (2005). A sense of trepidation comes from these titles – What happens in the *Sin City*? Where is *The Naked City*? Who lives in the *Dark City*? Nowell-Smith points out that the City environment is often portrayed negatively in film:

A place of crime, corruption, and darkness ... The city as it is acts as a conditioning factor on the fiction precisely by its recalcitrance and its inability to be subordinated to the demands of the narrative. The city becomes a protagonist, but unlike the human characters, it is not a fictional one. (Nowell-Smith, 2001: 102-104).

*City* plays upon the metaphor of the city as a place divided by class, a setting for a noir story that Spicer sums up neatly when he says that, "Film Noirs present a city of contrasts sharply divided by wealth ... Externally, the city is a labyrinth, dark, confusing and hostile, filled with dead-ends, and above all threatening," (Spicer, 2002: 67). Mason also summarises that the dark environments and deserted back alleys in cities enable the creation of realist narratives when he suggests that "social-realist film narrative ... both mobilizes and reinforces dominant connotations of such spaces," (Mason, 2001: 247).

A creative decision that adds an unusual dimension to the *City* screenplay and noir tradition is that the city is never named. Like the use of the unknown setting in *Se7en* (1995), the screenplay adds the thematic layer that this could be any British city – It is not Manchester, Glasgow, or Cardiff, it could be any of them, the city of the near future, a place where what happens within could yet come to pass. Something that lends itself well to making the themes of child kidnapping and changing the future more universal and is suited to the near future setting. Ultimately, where the film is shot will define the realism of the piece because budget restrictions will demand that the film be shot on location. That will, like *Se7en*, serve to bring a 'real' geography to the film even if it isn't referred to directly in the screenplay. It was important for me, with the screenplay at least, to keep a suggestion of openness about specifically where the film is set in order to maintain this hypothetical notion that what happens in the screenplay could happen anywhere. It is also a practical benefit to

keep the setting non-specific because our production could be filmed in any urban environment and that opens up more options for financing the film.

Prakash (2010) emotes this writer's creative reasoning for the *City* setting in the screenplay when he comments that "the dystopic imagination places us directly in a terrifying world to alert us of the danger that the future holds if we do not recognise its symptoms in the present," going on to note that, "In this sense, a utopian desire animates dystopic texts," (Prakash, 2010: 2). In order to create a sense of this future unnamed city in the screenplay, I drew a map of the imagined locations.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> See figure 3.2 (p.146)

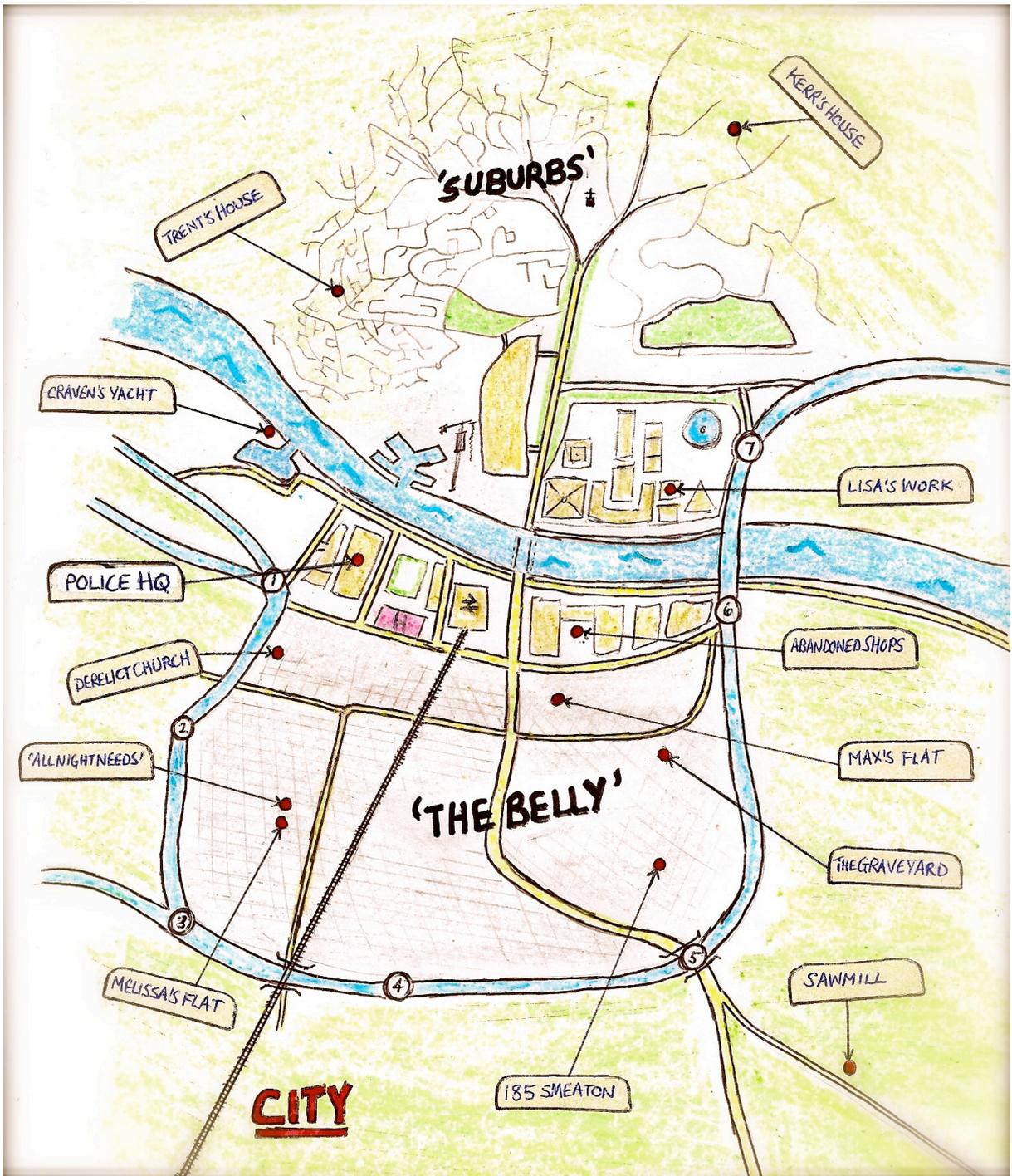


Figure 3.2: Original concept map of *City*'s urban environment (Murray, 2011). Based on the basic visual outline of Glasgow (but turned upside down and back to front), this map was created to aid the writer with a sense of the city geography during the screenplay development process.

The over-riding feelings and the thematic that permeates the screenplay for *City*, are a commentary on the urban landscapes that have long been a key concern of film noir and these narrative elements of the screenplay are the first formal marker for the reader that they are positioned in a noir world. The landscape and written descriptions in *City* are as clear an indication of film noir world as any other narrative element in the screenplay, and additionally it has been specifically developed like an extra character throughout; as can be seen immediately on page one<sup>14</sup>:

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FADE IN:

1 EXT. CITY SCAPE - NIGHT 1

A mess of shimmering lights reflect on a vast black river.

SUPER: 'THE NEAR FUTURE'

On the north side, corporate glass super-structures rise
out of the haze. They seem to boast across the water to
the gloomy lights on the south-side.

A distant SIREN.

In the south-side, shadow wins the battle over light.
Misty showers of light from sporadic working street-lamps
toil to illuminate rain splashed, deserted pavements.
Concrete buildings are slopped with a clutter of hopeful
corporate adverts, but the smashed windows reveal a truth.

A HOODED FIGURE steps under a street-lamp. He skillfully
makes the finishing touches to his graffiti on the side of
a derelict shop.

From across the street the large wall of graffiti he works
on can be seen. He has spray-painted....

'WELCOME TO THE BELLY'

The 'Hoody' finishes his work and retires into the
foreboding shadows.
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**Fig 3.3: Excerpt *City* Screenplay (Murray, 2012: 1)**

Within the screenplay language of *City*, the urban backdrop is visualised metaphorically as a living and uncontrollable entity, far beyond the management of mere mortals. To enhance this feeling, the city setting is described directly and indirectly throughout as having elements

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<sup>14</sup> See figure 3.3 (p.147)

of a living anatomy; the security cameras described as “eyes” – a notion that the goings on within are always seen, except of course where those eyes are ‘blind’ to the real crimes; a broken camera that fails to fulfill its original purpose (*City* Screenplay, 2012: 8). “The Belly”, as another example, is the motif used in the screenplay to describe the south side of the city, a ghetto-esque area of urban squalor, a wasteland of graffiti, distressed buildings, and drug users; something Mason refers to as, “short-hand signifiers of urban decay and disempowerment in British film,” (Mason, 2001: 249). The metaphor of the south side as a ‘belly’ suggests that it is the place that sucks in the resources of the city, where the sustenance descends to, is consumed, and then discharged as waste; a place that is separated physically from the corporate structures (or ‘brain’ of the city) by a river, but connected by a road tunnel that is a visual metaphor to represent the oesophagus that leads down into this dark place. *Dark City* (1998) and *Robocop* (1987) use similar devices – *Dark City*’s evolving and moving city, and *Robocop*’s Old Detroit crime problem which is described as ‘cancer’, something that only afflicts and destroys that which is living. Most film noir commentators agree that the overbearing representation of the city in the associated films is a key narrative strategy. *City* expands on this paradigm and uses it emphatically to increase the uneasy relationship for both the protagonist and the audience in their surroundings. Schrader points out why these narrative functions are so useful in the noir screenplay by arguing that when the locations are given greater weight than the characters it helps to create a “fatalistic, hopeless mood ... There is nothing the protagonist can do; the city will outlast and negate even his best efforts.” (Schrader, 1972: 85)

Moving beyond the city setting has also been a traditional method of creating a noir sensibility and this too can be found in the *City* screenplay to help define it as a film noir. *Out of the Past* (1947) and *The Asphalt Jungle* (1950) are two notable examples of film noirs that use the presence of the ‘outside’ rural landscape as the antithesis of the city. The countryside is a place that represents a more honest environment in film noir, the place that the protagonist can escape to or the place that he can project his dreams; “Leaving the contaminating city for salvation in the country is a recurrent noir pattern,” (Hirsch, 1981: 83). In *Out of the Past*, Robert Mitchum plays Jeff, a man who has turned his back on his dark past in the city for the safer escape of small town living. Dix Handley (Sterling Hayden) in *The Asphalt Jungle* dreams of returning to and buying the ranch he grew up on; “I’m gonna head for home. First thing I do when I get there is take a bath in the creek and get this city dirt off

me.” (Quote: Dix Handley – *The Asphalt Jungle*, 1950). Cinema on the whole creates a paradox of the countryside. The Horror genre, for example, uses its wide-open spaces, inescapable woodlands, and backwater residents frequently as a source of fear. A place where hip city dwellers often meet their untimely deaths; *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), *The Evil Dead* (1981), *Wrong Turn* (2003) et al. *City* however is influenced by the expectations of a very specific countryside, a place the viewer now automatically understands as a bastion of hope in film noir. Max, like Dix Handley in *The Asphalt Jungle*, dreams of having a house in the country, a place where he can escape from the evils of the city. He explains how he would rather, “get a place in the country” (*City* Screenplay, 2012: 33) when buying a house with his wife; even though she repudiates the idea as unrealistic. Max is of course faced by his dream later in the plot when he finds his way to Melissa again, everything that he truly wants – the perfect house in the country, a woman that loves him, and the children that he so desires (*City* Screenplay, 2012: 82-3). This brief glimpse of an uncomplicated life masquerades as hope and it must be seen in order for it, in the truest of film noir and crime film traditions; *The Killers* (1946), *Witness* (1986), *Children of Men* (2006), to turn into an unattainable utopia that is corrupted by the protagonist’s very presence there. The bad guys eventually probe out from the city like tendrils, bringing with them their violence and corruption, and pulling their escapee back into the ghastly clutches of the city. The city, as Hirsch suggests, is a “throbbing presence” and “never merely neutral” (Hirsch, 1981: 78-9) and the noir protagonist’s foe is often a part of the furniture there, and in some way protected by it. That is the case for Max in *City* as the irresistible force of his arch nemesis, Trent, a mainstay of the city, is only fallible when removed from his urban surroundings. This narrative device can also be seen in *Out of the Past* (1947) and *Marathon Man* (1976). The final showdown between Max and Trent takes place in a sawmill (*City* Screenplay, 2012: 88-92), a place that harks back to Max’s criminal past. The sawmill is more familiar to Max than Trent and it is in effect a representation of a level playing field, a place where Max’s insurmountable chances of defeating Trent are afforded that critical moment of luck that will swing things in his favour. Max attains victory over his adversary, but in keeping with the very darkest of noir pessimism, it still happens in a location that metaphorically represents the destruction of Max’s dream of living in the countryside; a place that functionally destroys the rural image and is festooned with fallen trees.

As noted earlier in this thesis, it remains a key desire or principle of the screenwriter to maintain a fresh approach for any new film that conforms to a genre. *City* could be seen, in a sense, as burdened by the necessary use of the expected formal markers and narrative devices for film noir, but it also attempts to use recognised elements for the purpose of subversion and unforeseen plot outcomes. Nowhere in the screenplay is this more evident than in the writing and representation of the two key female characters, *Lisa* and *Melissa*. Tuska (1984) gives an overview of a general film noir doctrine when he suggests that traditionally there are two types of women that most frequently appear in film noir—femme fatales and the loving wife/mother:

The femmes fatales are interesting, intelligent and often powerful, whereas the wives and mothers are dull and insipid....the femme fatale is best characterized by her self-interest, while her opposite is capable of total devotion to a man. (Tuska, 1984: 202).

These characters have become clichés of the genre, so it was important to avoid the crass stereotypes and bring a fresher approach for a contemporary film noir screenplay with *City*, otherwise there is a danger of alienating the reader or audience with a dated approach to female representation. Lisa is Max's wife, and though she clearly has a sense of loyalty to Max, she is represented as a character focused on her career, with more interest in buying the house that will bolster her social status, than being wholly devoted to Max's life. Their life together is hugely dysfunctional right from the outset as they struggle to agree on anything, but ultimately their feelings for each other are enough to hold them together in the end. Melissa in contrast to Lisa, is Max's ex-girlfriend and clearly harbours some feelings for Max. She like the traditional femme fatale is able to manipulate Max with her sexuality and her predicament, but she also embodies elements of Tuska's alternative and she fails to fit either noir stereotype. Melissa is of a lower social class than Lisa, but later in the screenplay she is able to offer Max a more devoted companionship with the house in the country and her two kids; "We can be together...I know it's what you have always wanted...They need a father, Max," (Melissa dialogue, *City* Screenplay, 2012: 88). Both Lisa and Melissa embody various elements of the two traditional film noir women that Tuska describes, but they both work through self-interest and are created to fundamentally represent a challenge to Max's masculinity. Lisa and Melissa still embody several stereotypical elements of cinematic characters generally, but the blurring of the two-dimensional stereotypical female character boundaries of film noir is used to increase the intrigue of the characters, but without losing a sense of film noir characterisation. In this case, it also enhances the dilemma for the viewer

or reader because they are unable to easily separate the motivations of Lisa and Melissa and pigeon-hole them into the archetypes that have grown out of the genre. Traditionally in noir, it was clear which woman offered the sensible or risqué choice for the protagonist, but neither Melissa or Lisa seem to hold any sort of happy solution for Max in *City*. Max and Lisa ultimately end up continuing their partnership, but once again, that is designed to leave the reader with a deep uncertainty regarding how happy the alliance will be; an uncertainty that builds on the pessimistic film noir tone. Breaking the traditional two-dimensional representations of female characters was crucial for bringing a stronger contemporary attitude to my film, not a new phenomenon in film noir by any means, but a creative decision that creates an enduring final question in the screenplay, and ultimately delivers a stronger thematic for the story generally.

Another formal marker that was employed to clearly identify *City* as a noir film is its use of inextricable violence. Max's quest to find an abducted child is fraught with danger, in keeping with the gunplay and cruel deaths that historically constitute parts of the noir landscape. Borde and Chaumeton, from the inception of the noir debate commented on the consistent use of violence in the noir film; "An unprecedented panoply of cruelties and sufferings unfolds in film noir," (Borde & Chaumeton, 1955. Trans. Hammond, 2002: 10). Borde and Chaumeton described the wickedness of the deaths as a standout quality of film noir and *City* solicits that imperative. There is an incredibly violent scene during the climax of the screenplay (p.91) when Max and Trent's battle ends with the latter mutilated on a industrial circular saw blade, and throughout, several violent beatings are administered, with no fewer than five principle characters meeting their untimely demise at the hands of a gun. These decisions are informed by Borde and Chaumeton's belief that the, "Film noir is a film of death, in all senses of the word" (1955. Trans. Hammond, 2002: 5), and that the films were built upon moral confusion, criminal violence, and essentially created a sense of dread and anxiety among the viewers (Borde & Chaumeton, 1955: 5-13. Trans. Hammond, 2002). Guns do not feature as prominently in British, or British-set, film noir traditionally primarily due to the fact that British gun culture is minimal compared to the USA. *City* very much adopts the American influence here however, and it uses a hypothetical near future of gun wielding police officers both as a thematic strand and a more pronounced noir genre convention; very similar to the manner in which *Children of Men* (2006) and *Welcome to the Punch* (2013) utilise guns in their near future British Noir settings. Dickos (2002: 6-8) offers a useful list of

conventional additives that are “distinctive, yet not exclusive” to the film noir. In that list he covers many of the elements already discussed here, such as; the urban setting, a denial of social or domestic happiness for the protagonist, femmes fatales, and guns. He also adds several other devices that have been worked in to feature prominently in *City*. Those are: telephones that ring with bad news, cars as indispensable devices of escape, apartments and bungalows as character dwellings, bars, pool halls, and smart fashion. Dickos also, along with most other film noir commentators, raises the importance of voice-over and flashback in the recognition of the genre, but these core functional cinematic devices were already considered at an early stage of the screenplay development with *City*.

### **Exclusion of Voice-Over and the Necessity for the Oneiric**

I purposefully decided not to use the key film noir narrative device of voiceover in *City* from the outset for several functional reasons. While an abundance of traditional noir films embrace the device, and there are several inventive and distinctive styles of voice-over, there is also a quality to voice-over narration that is not fundamentally useful for the contemporary film noir. Robert McKee is one of the strictest and most critical commentators on the processes of writing voice-over narration generally in film. He does inflate his argument against voice-over by suggesting that, “the trend toward using telling narration throughout a film threatens the future of our art” (McKee, 1998: 344), a rather odd position to take considering it has been a staple expositional device in cinema since the inception of the ‘talkie’. It is, however, as McKee points out, often used to reveal exposition in most instances. McKee’s distaste for voice-over is not wholly legitimate if we consider swathes of films that continue to use the device successfully, but in the case of film noir, voice-over has become a core focus of parody in the genre; see *Gumshoe* (1971) and *Dead Men Don’t Wear Plaid* (1982). Kerr (1979) suggests that voice-over became prominent in early film noir because of the functional industry limitations of the early years and the influence of the novels from which many early noirs sprang. Restricted funding in the stronghold of early noir ‘B-pictures’ meant that many of these films were more than likely forced to use the shorthand method of voice-over to fill in critical plot holes in the scripts that were hurriedly shot in limited locations. Likewise the novel adaptation frequently resorts to voice-over as a

means to perpetuate the first person narrative across cinema. While cinema has widely embraced its use as a narrative device, and film noirs especially so, a decision was made with *City* very early in the development process that it was a device that was clichéd and would ultimately hinder the cinematic integrity of a contemporary film noir. Voice-over can of course be used in a more inventive counterpoint style now, and often is, but one of the desired creative elements of *City* was to construct an introverted and enigmatic protagonist. External or internal voice-over would not have helped functionally in such an enterprise; take for example the increased esoteric nature of *Deckard's* (Harrison Ford) character in *Bladerunner* (1982), after the director's cut was released in 1992 with the voice-over removed.

Omission of a key structural film noir narrative device like voice-over in *City* does establish a necessary requirement to enhance other core noir conventions in order to avoid a shaky genre distinction however. Several instances of flashback are applied in the screenplay as a method with which to reveal crucial elements of Max's past instead, and on a few occasions, dream sequences are also employed. Flashback is still routinely used in cinema generally, and it grew as a cinematic device alongside the history of early noir films as Dickos points out; "Apart from voice-over, no other device claims as much importance in the film noir with quite the aesthetic, psychological, and moral value as the flashback does," (Dickos, 2002: 235). Gaining a general understanding of the protagonist's back-story is critical to the plot development in *City*, and Sanders (2006) advises that film noir typically "offers us a compelling look at the sources of constraint on human choice, with particular emphasis on the fatalistic reach of the past," (Sanders, 2006: 97). In the *City* screenplay Max's past is a burden on the present, he is haunted and agitated by his memories and they are a compelling precursor for understanding his introverted persona. A dark secret that Max cannot talk about eats away at him from the inside, and his past is revealed throughout *City* in a series of fractured flashbacks. Only through assimilating all of these flashbacks can we piece together the entirety of the past that so relentlessly affects him. Several film noirs have used this method of character development and three particular noir films that heavily impact upon *City*, as mentioned earlier, *Out of the Past* (1947), *The Conversation* (1974), *Narc* (2002), all use flashback to reveal a burning internal anguish and complex investigation for the protagonist. *The Conversation* in particular, and *Midnight Cowboy* (1969) provide prominent influential frameworks for the fractured flashback style in *City*. *Midnight Cowboy* is not a film noir, but it certainly adopts the flashback infrastructure to create a haunting past for its

protagonist Joe Buck (Jon Voigt), and as discussed, this was very much a hallmark of the film noir mould. Additionally, I also have a tendency to agree with McKee that voice-over used as exposition is distinctly un-cinematic. There is of course an argument that I could have designed a voice-over that subverted the usual functions of exposition, but personally as a filmmaker and writer I am drawn to the skill of revealing exposition visually.

Adding to *City*'s film noir formal markers and the notion of Max being a haunted protagonist, are the stylistic, intertextual and critically influenced dream sequences in *City*. Cinematic style has often been described as *oneiric*, and as something that can be read in a similar way to the psychoanalytical critique of dreams (Eberwein, 1984). Woolfolk links Freudian psychology to film noir in his essay, 'The Horizon of Disenchantment' (Woolfolk, 2002: 107-123). There he cites Freud's work on "the dark, inaccessible part of our personality" (Woolfolk, 2002: 119) as a fundamental influence over the film noir genre. Silver (2002) agrees that noir characters are "mired in existential despair," but he is clear to point out that there are several "sundry influences" which also include German expressionism and the hard-boiled tradition; these simply function in creating a dynamic for "character perspectives to create dramatic tension", and that in effect contributes to film noir's "transcontextual expressive code" (Silver, 2002: 224). Nevertheless, the use of dreamlike imagery or specific dream sequences in film noir certainly adds to its oneiric feel. These influences are no more readily observed than in the Salvador Dali designed dream sequences and psychoanalytical narrative functions of *Spellbound* (1945), but they also continued to be used in later noirs. Consider the more subtle use of the disconcerting dreams that seem to suggest that Harry Caul has opened that "dark, inaccessible" (Woolfolk, 2002) part of his mind in *The Conversation* (1974); a symbol perhaps that he has stepped beyond his conscious self into a dark inescapable sub-reality. *City* uses two dream sequences for similar effect. The first is when Max dreams that a gruesome corpse that he has recently seen is still alive (*City* Screenplay, 2012: 60). It is a moment that begins to show that he potentially feels that Whitton, the dead former detective, blames him for her death, but is also a sign that Max is becoming paranoid and stuck inside his own head. Max's second dream is altogether more sinister (*City* Screenplay, 2012: 81), as while it seems, on the surface, like a harmless memory of him with his deceased parents, it is created to act, through psychoanalytical suggestion, as a moment of premonition. Max is not yet functionally aware why he might be dreaming about his parents, but it is in actual fact a metaphorical representation of his subconscious

knowledge that the parents he idolises in his dream are in effect a lie; a moment that coalesces when Kerr tells Max that he was in fact the first in a long line of children that were removed from their real parents in order to give them better lives (*City* Screenplay, 2012: 94). The dreams within the screenplay are arranged in a manner similar to that of the flashbacks and together with the other formal markers they work as instructions for creating a film noir protagonist who is expected by his audience to be obsessed in his quest, but fractured from his surroundings. All of these elements combined to create a finalised film noir screenplay that has been influenced by the three elements on the overriding cyclical model. The market demands a clear genre distinction for commercial purposes, and creativity has been used to pick and choose the noir elements that were informed by the critical and theoretical contexts of film noir.

### **Understanding the Screenplay Form**

As touched upon earlier in this chapter, an additional area of research that has resulted from my practice, and subsequently influenced my artefact production, is the question of how a writer uses the screenplay in both a theoretical and an industrial context once a draft is completed. Igelström (2013) for example points out that researchers in the screenwriting field are divided into those who view the screenplay document, and each concurrent draft, as something that can be studied as an individual document, whereas others deem the screenplay as only a part of an overall film development process. Through the processes discussed in this chapter, it seems apt to suggest that the screenplay fulfils both possibilities and can be viewed under several different distinctions. The film industry or market place for example seems unconcerned about finding a definition for the screenplay because it is simply a means to an end, or a document that can be published for monetary gain after the release of a film. Key screenwriting theorists like Maras (2009), Price (2010), Nelmes (2011) et al. have recently begun to consider the autonomous nature of the screenplay, by suggesting an increasing awareness of the screenplay as an entity that is a distinct and separate literary work that functions within the field of film criticism. The screenplay has historically received little critical attention because the completed films usually take precedence. Price furthers this point when he notes that critics had a “tendency to regard them as mere pre-texts for movies,

which kill or erase them on completion,” (Price, 2010: xii). Price also discusses a “lack of visibility” for the screenplay that is a consequence of the uneasy relationship between film practitioners and academics (Price, 2010: 43), again tying back into the core practice/research divide that stimulates this thesis. It is certainly the case that historically, film criticism has given little attention to the screenplay as a source artefact in the debate that concerns film noir and genre for example, so Price certainly makes an important observation. The relatively new and growing field of study surrounding the screenplay’s position across the spectrum of film criticism has more recently bolstered a suggestion of autonomy for the screenplay and the craft, but critical attention is not a singular reason for such progress. Over the past few decades the gradual increase of screenwriting classes, purpose built degrees in screenwriting, ‘how to’ screenwriting manuals, various screenwriting software, and websites specialising in screenwriting, have all contributed to an elevated awareness of screenwriting as a distinct discipline in the process of filmmaking. When O’Thomas (2011) reflects that “The evolution of the screenplay form has been one that has paralleled the development of cinema,” and that “the form has become enshrined in screenwriting software, such as Final Draft, which has itself become established as the industry format standard” (O’Thomas, 2011: 237), he is suggesting that ‘screenwriting’ now has its own functional industry. There is now an exploitation of hopeful writers, whereby people are convinced to invest significant monetary resources into the process of becoming a knowledgeable writer of screenplays. Buying software, purchasing subscriptions for training, or paying for entry fees to screenwriting competitions have all contributed to the screenplay, and the craft of writing one, becoming a self-sufficient working industry. In reality, the methods of screenwriting have not changed significantly since the 1940s, and while Millard (2011) refers to screenplays as a “prototype” that should not be restricted by conventions, she also suggests that the industry has a strong tendency to define how screenwriters should present their work. It is certainly the case that the industry has, as O’Thomas (2011) points out, accepted screenwriting software formatting as an industry standard, but it is important to remember that not every screenplay that results in the production of an associated screen work has followed the same fundamental rules. Much of the discussion surrounding formatting conventions is based upon how industry producers expect to receive spec-scripts and not upon the realities of the day-to-day pressures and functionality of an industry where screenplays are being turned into films in an extensive variety of ways. If we take a particular example of a formatting convention, or ‘rule’ of

screenwriting, the current BBC guide for screenplay formatting states in the opening page that, “Scene action should only deal with what is happening on screen and must never stray into superfluous novelistic text related to character thoughts or back-story” (BBC Writers’ Room, 2004). This in fact is a generally perceived rule across the screenwriting community, but again it is not always the case that these rules are followed religiously and exceptions to these rules can always be found in successful screenplays. In an excerpt from the screenplay for *Heat* (1995)<sup>15</sup>, written by Michael Mann, it is clear that he did not adhere to this particular ‘rule’ of screenwriting when introducing *McCauley*’s character to the reader;

EXT. CEDARS-SINAI - WIDE - DAY

A monolith with alienating foregrounds. A bus pulls in on Beverly. NEIL McCAULEY and a nurse get off. Neil carries a paper bag and wears white pants like a hospital attendant. Neil is an ice-cold professional: very big, very tough. At 42 his short black hair is graying. He spent eight years in McNeil and three in San Quentin. He got out and hit the street in 1987. Four of the McNeil years were spent in the hole. Neil's voice is street, but his language is precise like an engineer's. He's very careful and very good. Neil runs a professional crew that pulls down high line, high number scores and does it anyway the score has to be taken down: if on the prowl (a burglary), that's fine; if they have to go in strong (armed), that's fine too. And if you get in their way, that's got to be your problem. His lifestyle is obsessively functional. There's no steady woman or any encumbrance. Neil McCauley keeps it so there's nothing he couldn't walk from in 30 seconds flat.

ANGLE

Right now, he enters the big double doors and pulls a white intern's coat from his paper bag.|

CUT TO:

**Figure 3.4: Excerpt from the *Heat* screenplay (Mann, 1994: 1 [Online])**

Mann clearly breaks a core implied industry rule by reverting to expansive character exposition in the description, which the audience of the film could not possibly know by looking at McCauley onscreen. However, consideration must of course be made for the writer’s reputation. Mann had already written and directed four feature films and created a hit US TV show by the time he brought *Heat* to Warner Brothers in 1994. What may well have

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<sup>15</sup> See figure 3.4 (p.157)

stood out like an amateur's mistake in the eyes of producers, was more than likely interpreted as 'artistic license' in the hands of an experienced and successful writer like Mann. This example calls much of the craft or rules of screenwriting into question and *City* has also been affected by industry pressure at times to break from similar conventions.

The process of how these breaks from convention came about has great significance upon the notion of the screenplay format as something that is "outdated" (Millard, 2011). *City* as a screenplay was (and is), through its creation and subsequent re-writes, in a constant state of flux, which is of course expected during the writing process leading up to when a film is actually made. It is also fully understood that the screenplay presented in this thesis will probably not be the version of the script that will move forward to production. For the moment it is a 'spec script', a speculative screenplay used in the open market place as opposed to one that is commissioned and already paid for (Act Four Screenplays, n.d.: Online). The screenplay presented in chapter one will only stop evolving in an effectual way once the camera stops rolling on the production of the film and is likely to go through several more drafts if the film development goes forward. The current draft of *City* is affected by a continuing development process that has involved the writer, three producers: Naysun Alae-Carew, Nic Crum, and Sarah Radcliffe, and additional notes given by several readers who have made comments and suggested changes throughout the writing process. The script has also been through two table reads with professional actors during the screenplay development process, followed by open discussions about development ideas. All of these influences have impacted upon the screenplay as an artefact, but are routinely conventional modes of development. One crucial point to be made here is that the final decision making process of what is removed or added to the screenplay has always stayed with the writer to this point, but this could conceivably change if the rights to the screenplay were sold or a new director was attached.

As is usual in the film industry, other documents such as the expected synopsis and treatment have been used to surround the screenplay in the industry forum<sup>16</sup>, but of particular interest were many of the suggestions that were made throughout the development process that relate directly to the breaking of expected codes within a screenplay format. This notion of how to present a screenplay to the industry, and the competition to get a screenplay read by a producer and agents has grown in prominence to the extent that several basics are now the

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<sup>16</sup> See Green-light Pack: Appendix N (p.300-310)

functional norm in the industry; often to the point of absurd indicators of the writer's experience. In Hollywood for example, not only do spec scripts have to be formatted to industry expectation on the page, but scripts have to be three-hole-punched (an American hole-punch format), and binded by brass brads in the top and bottom holes—put one in the middle hole and the reader will instantly know you are an amateur, and producers or executives will be less enthused about reading your script<sup>17</sup>.

These type of pedantic rules seem a little more relaxed in the UK industry, but there are still a plethora of rules concerning formatting and sending a spec script out into the marketplace. In opposition with an understanding of what one can and cannot do within the pages of a screenplay, one of the producers made a suggestion to include the *City Map*<sup>18</sup> as a visual reference for the reader inside the front cover of the screenplay. A suggestion was made, that it may allow the reader to flip back in order to understand where they were placed geographically as they read through the scenes and locations of the script. This of course is a feature that is used to good effect in fantasy novels, such as Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* (1954) and Garner's *The Weirdestone of Brisingamen* (1960), and it was initially an intriguing concept to consider. However, it became a difficult step to take for a new writer like myself, as it could have been a risk to present something that could be seen as a bold challenge to the formatting conventions expected across the industry, and I, unlike Michael Mann with the *Heat* screenplay could hardly be regarded as having the status to take such a bold step. It was also decided among the producers that the very idea could suggest that the writer had failed to successfully orientate the reader, and that it may be seen as a diversionary tactic to cover that fact. The idea of including the map in the screenplay has, at least to this point, been resisted and may well enhance Millard's (2011) notion that the market defines how screenwriters must present their screenplays.

There was, however, one break from convention that was added to the script, and one which I added after the producers suggested that the script did not represent the characters clearly enough. Crum and Radclyffe were concerned that the screenplay assumed too much responsibility on the performance of actors and that there was often a lack of character expression on the page and in the dialogue. This placed more emphasis on the reader's

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<sup>17</sup> I learned this first hand when working as a production intern at New Line Cinema in Los Angeles in 2003, and also from the 434 graduate screenwriting class (see Hunter, 1994: 13) at the University of California, Los Angeles.

<sup>18</sup> See Figure 3.2 (p.146)

cinematic and screenplay knowledge, and it was suggested that this might prove to be a problem when potential private investors read the script. As I had already added extra dialogue for clarity in the development of the script, it was important for me personally to avoid more and more expositional speeches for the characters, so I began a process of adding small internal or novelistic moments throughout the screenplay in an attempt to enhance the feeling of who the characters were at certain key moments in the screenplay. One such example:

MAX

He just wants his kid back.

LISA

I'm not sure he deserves a kid.

Max looks at Lisa curiously – Sometimes he feels like he doesn't know her at all.

*City* Screenplay (Murray, 2012: 28)

In the action of this particular moment, what Max is thinking is revealed with the line, “Sometimes he feels like he doesn't know her at all”. Once again this breaks the fundamental rule that action should not contain anything that cannot be seen or heard, and it contradicts Price's statement that the screenwriter doesn't have access to the common methods of characterisation exploited by the novelist. The screenwriter as far as Price is concerned is not afforded the luxury to “describe inner thought and the broader possibilities of omniscient narration” (Price, 2011: 203), but driven by the need to bring out some of the internalised feelings of the characters on the page, something that would not be necessary when an actor portrays the character on screen, *City* uses the same principles as Mann uses in the screenplay for *Heat*. These ‘cheats’, as I began to refer to them with the producers, do in some way bring a brooding quality to the page for the characters, something that upon reflection brings an added film noir quality in the absence of the genres conventional voice-over. Fundamentally, I am aware that they break the conventions of screenwriting, but they are used to negate the need for extraneous dialogue and were seen as a way to help a less experienced screenplay reader connect to the protagonist's internal feelings.

The screenplay presented in this thesis in some ways resembles a hybrid screenplay that may be seen to have some unusual dimensions to it if we consider the general industry expectations. Firstly, scene numbers would often denote a shooting script, but I was asked to add these during the development process by exec producer Sarah Radclyffe for the purposes of working out some preliminary scheduling and budgeting forecasts. Additionally, the novelistic approach to some of the writing is a direct result of producer pressure to add descriptions of the world of the screenplay for clarity because this script is aimed at financiers and acting talent. Crum through discussion with Radclyffe suggested in a development email that, “[Private] Financiers are, on the whole, not visual people – you need to make the read as clear as possible...” (Crum, 2011: Email)<sup>19</sup>. Indeed, through further discussion with Tore Schmidt a Los Angeles based producer, who has just joined our production team as lead development producer, he revealed that the existing screenplay did have some added descriptive writing, but that it was something that he believes is natural and not problematic,

In my experience, overwriting is generally more common (and thus perhaps acceptable) in European screenplays. As part of non-action sequences, writers also tend to overwrite more in certain genres such as drama...it is also my experience that certain aspects of overwriting (especially visual directions and/or more detailed descriptions - not unnecessarily long scenes) don't have to stand in the way of the positive reception of a screenplay, provided that the quality of story, dialogue and character holds up. One of the most well received screenplays I've worked on, which has since been made into a highly regarded feature, could have been argued to contain some elements of overwriting. Some (especially European) feedback even pointed out the "beautifully prosaic writing." (Schmidt, 2015: Email)<sup>20</sup>

The screenplay presented in this thesis is the most up-to-date and only draft in use at the moment. It is not yet at shooting script stage, but it is the only version of the script that is currently in use for development purposes. Older drafts of the script do of course exist, but they are significantly less developed in several aspects and have been discarded from a production point of view. Maras explains that screenplays often have to meet various expectations in an attempt to be successful in the marketplace and that the functional necessities of the industry frequently contradict many of the ‘rules’ for screenplay drafts. Maras continues by suggesting that the historical suggestion that screenplays are written to be realised rather than written to be read is now completely inaccurate in the modern

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<sup>19</sup> See email: Appendix G (p.259)

<sup>20</sup> See email: Appendix H (p.261)

marketplace (Maras, 2009: 52-64). Being encouraged to use some small elements of novelistic descriptiveness in *City* potentially proves how uncertain any so-called rules of screenwriting are. When the writer is faced with the evolving realities of the film industry and the reality of working with different producers with differing understandings of what a screenplay should look like, the screenplay form often varies. As the screenplay writer, I have often been faced by the quandary of deviating from what I believed to be accepted rules of screenwriting due to various suggestions from the producers. My experiences of taking the *City* screenplay through development in the market place is reflected by Price (2010) when he points out that,

The screenplay is not so much a blueprint as an enabling document, necessary for the production but transformed by directors, actors, vagaries of the weather, and a multitude of other factors that occasion the rewrites that are the bane of the screenwriter's craft. (Price, 2010: x).

It has often been described as 'development hell' and although my overall creative vision has not been compromised generally, I have discovered that the 'rules' of screenplay formatting and writing can more aptly be described as 'guidelines'. In this case, I was often at the behest of the producers who are more experienced in the art of doing what it takes to get a screenplay funded and the screenplay presented here does not necessarily reflect my own purest writing style as a screenwriter. Further developments of the screenplay are inevitable and a new draft will also be written now that Tore Schmidt is on board as lead development producer. Schmidt is very enthusiastic about the screenplay and has had no adverse reaction to any of the quirks of writing style in the screenplay and that suggests once again that deviation from certain screenwriting rules is not an uppermost concern for producers.

## **Conclusion**

The examples of divergence and adherence to accepted screenplay 'rules' in this chapter have been used to evidence how the act of writing of a screenplay creates an altogether different perspective on how we define the screenplay form. O'Thomas (2011) describes the screenplay as a "blueprint", Millard (2011) and Ganz (2013) favour the definition, "prototype", however, the fundamental problem is that a pure definition relies upon all screenplays having the same literary intention and value. Every screenplay that is written is

affected, in a given moment of time, by the needs, aspirations, experience, and reputation of the individual writer, just as the genre needs of the individual are exploited in the creative endeavour. The market forces also set certain demands on the writer too however, and ultimately a fuller definition that progresses beyond that of ‘screenplay’ is problematic because of the bespoke nature of the form. Nannincelli cites Noel Coward’s proposal that, “we need not have a working definition of art (or literature) at our disposal in order to successfully identify individual works or practices ...” (Coward in Nannincelli, 2013: 5), and that notion is certainly relevant to the process of writing the screenplay as far as *City* and the marketplace is concerned. Only through a need to bring a theoretical understanding of where the screenplay as an artefact is positioned in film criticism am I drawn to the theoretical nature and definition of the work. There is relevance in this fuller investigation into the screenplay as a literary form because the screenplay for *City* has not yet been usurped by a film version and the publication here and the related research allows it to exist without the artefact that it aspires to become. The screenplay for *City* is an individual work regardless of its adherence to or removal of various forms of conventional formatting, industry requirements and genre markers. And while it can also be seen as a procedural document with the purpose of enabling me to progress into the realisation of a feature film, there is no guarantee that it will fulfil that purpose. However, while screenwriting may be regarded as a defined pursuit, the screenplay itself can often be difficult to consider as an autonomous artefact if we consider that it exists as a document that is subject to this variety of associated industry pressures. As Maras (2009) argues, the screenplay is either a finished work definitively associated with an existing screen work or it is a work in transition that can be written in various modes across different forms of filmmaking. Additionally, I would argue that a screenplay can be written to fulfil or straddle all or some of three core purposes that are in direct alliance with the three point cyclical process discussed throughout this thesis. The screenplay as an artefact can be written as, a basis for theoretical critique, it can be evidence of a writer (or writing team’s) creative endeavour and process, or it can be seen as a document that has the sole purpose of being viewed in the marketplace. It can also serve any combination of those purposes. The *City* screenplay currently exists within all three purposes because of the nature of this thesis, and therefore relating it to similar works, and/or finding a definition for it beyond the blanket term ‘screenplay’ becomes hugely problematic.

Returning to the earlier discussions in this chapter about the importance of the genre distinction over the screenplay, Dudley Andrew claims that, “Some of the differences amongst genres and films can be catalogued as functions of the imagination,” (Andrew, 1984: 46). I take Andrew’s suggestion to mean that the theoretical understanding of a genre is, as posited in this chapter, something that is ultimately understood by the individual. It seems clear that film noir offers the writer, whether attached to direct their own script or not, a rich historical backdrop that will ultimately benefit the process of developing a screenplay. Hirsch suggests that film noir endures, surviving because of the “flexible ways it has been able to remould its basic motifs” (Hirsch, 1981: viii) concluding that “Noir connotes an aroma, an essence, that is ‘cool’, chic, and a little dangerous,” (Hirsch, 1981: ix). If the screenplay is to be viewed as an autonomous artefact that can show others how skilled the practitioner or writer is, then film noir is in effect a dream genre for a first-time screenwriter because of what Krutnik describes as a “bankable and seductive mystique,” (Krutnik, 1991: 16). Film noir continues to appeal to both critics and audiences in equal part because of its rich historical context. Cameron adds that “lack of sentimentality, their willingness to probe the darker areas of sexuality, their rich subversive subtexts, [and] the emotional force of the downbeat” ensures that “film noir as a phenomenon continues to fascinate,” (Cameron, 1992: 8). As discussed in the following chapter, the first time feature film writer or director is, in some ways, constrained by the mechanisms of the industry, and while the writer must prepare for that eventuality, several historical factors and narrative expectation contribute to the film noir and offer greater artistic license to the screenwriter. Kerr (1979) discussed the history of film noir in cinema in relation to its status as a ‘B-movie’ format. A status that ensured the noir filmmakers of the classical era had, in effect, a freer reign over the content of their films than the more mainstream, star-studded, ‘A features’:

The paucity of ‘production values’ (sets, stars and so forth) may even have encouraged low budget production units to compensate with complicated plots and convoluted atmosphere ... [filmmakers] were accorded a degree of autonomy which would never have been sanctioned for more expensive studio productions (Kerr, 1979: 115-6).

The tradition of film noir as a B-movie restricts the feature film writer in some instances because it is a genre where industry and producers expect low-budgets and particular narrative devices. But due to critical and theoretical grappling with definitions of film noir, and a historical backdrop of practical reinvention, it is also a genre where producers and investors expect artistic license and unconventional storytelling. Using film noir as a genre,

like any other, does create certain narrative restrictions, but even coupled with the expectancy placed upon the screenplay form by the marketplace, there is a sense from my own experience of developing *City* that the industry, and those in it, understand that the film noir genre offers the writer an opportunity to write something seated in a hypothetical reality—something that can be inventive and grotesque, and something, that is probably just that little bit dark and different.

Individuals in the marketplace and industry of film have always seemed happy enough to accept my creative vision as a writer, and I have had an extremely positive experience developing my script with three extremely passionate producers, several other practitioners, and actors that have given up their time based on their enthusiasm for my project. The big stumbling block for getting *City* into production is not necessarily a lack of quality in the writing, disinterest in the project, or certain elements of ‘overwriting’ as discussed by Schmidt<sup>21</sup>, but rather a marketplace that has limited investment and funding opportunities. The business side of the industry is focused on overcoming difficult profit margins and is constantly on the lookout for the next ‘sure thing’ or project with a pre-existing market interest, and it is those pressures that have the most definitive effect for the screenwriter and director who aspire to get a film into production. Chapter four therefore focuses on my research into the financial and market pressures that govern the development and writing process for *City* and better explains how my project is situated in the marketplace for film in the UK.

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<sup>21</sup> See email: Appendix H (p.261)

## CHAPTER FOUR

### BUDGET CRITERIA, UK FILM ECONOMY, AND THE ‘PACKAGE’ FOR CITY.



**“Money. You know what that is? The stuff you never have enough of.”**

Figure 4.1: *Al* (Tom Neal), *Detour* (1945).

#### Introduction: Market Forces

This chapter investigates how the third element of the defining cyclical process in this thesis, the *market forces*, affects the progression of *City* as a practice-led research project. As discussed briefly in the previous chapter, the market has often dictated and influenced many of the creative decisions that have been made with *City*. Primarily, these market forces are the business concerns of a film production, its ability to raise enough capital for the budget, and its projected ability to make a financial return on the investment of the budget. William Goldman (1986) pointed out in the most simplistic terms that money is the most important factor for any screenplay that will advance to film production; “*the crucial problem for every film...is what will it cost*” (Goldman, 1986: 195). When I, and the producers of *City*, put together a plan for budgeting our film, the package<sup>22</sup> became a significant factor in the development of the screenplay and ultimately in the attempt to finance the film. To define the package succinctly is to think of it as, all of the elements that are in place on a film

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<sup>22</sup> See: Brown, C (2013: Online) ‘*Know What You’ve Got: How to Package Any Movie for Financing*’.

project when it is taken to the marketplace; the screenplay, the attached producers and director, attached acting and production talent—effectively it is all of the commodities that the proposed film has in its favour. Jeff Ulin points out that “film investors risk capital on a product whose initial value is rooted in subjective judgement” (Ulin, 2013: 42), meaning that financial partners in film production can only respond to the proposal placed in front of them (the package). These investors really have no guarantee in advance of the potential success of a film product. There are however various parameters and patterns that exist through the independent marketplace in the UK that can be deduced from statistical data and from the experience of other filmmakers. At this point it would seem relevant to point out that there are elements of film production that are rarely recorded because they are functional processes that are not often subject to critical or theoretical attention. It is the intention of this chapter, however, to document the considerations that *City* has faced with regards to the business approach of the film. Evidence supplied from the British Film Institute’s statistical yearbooks (BFI, n.d.: Online) will be referred to throughout this chapter, and will focus specifically on various patterns that are relevant to independent British film production. The use of statistics collated by the BFI are used here as a guide to recent trends. For example, cinema release and box-office figures are a useful point of entry to the research for a new film, and can aid planning and development for film projects, even if they cannot be considered a guide to financial success. First-hand experience of taking *City* through a BFI funding application will also be cited to better explain the process of taking the screenplay to market. Accounts from other filmmakers who have taken first time feature films to the market in the UK will also be used as comparison to expose how the industry affects the practitioners’ journeys. These accounts will include reference to the interviews that I conducted with Naysun Alae-Carew and Nicholas Crum<sup>23</sup>, the producers of *City*, and interviews with David Griffith<sup>24</sup> and Barnaby Southcombe<sup>25</sup>; two first time feature filmmakers who have made noir films for their debut films with contrasting budgets. *City* is fundamentally a low-budget, British independent feature film production in development, and as argued throughout this thesis, film production is a complex vocation whereby creativity, business and theory intertwine. A significant part of the process of making a film is driven by the objectivity of statistics and the amount of money a film needs in order to go

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<sup>23</sup> See Appendix A: Interview transcript with Alae-Carew & Crum. (p225)

<sup>24</sup> See Appendix C: Interview transcript with David Griffith. (p.243)

<sup>25</sup> See Appendix B: Interview transcript with Barnaby Southcombe. (p.234)

into production, or be ‘green-lit’ (to use industry terminology). How inventive, artistic or creative a specific film is can be complicated by the way the filmmaker balances the creative and business elements of a film. This balance is hugely difficult to judge for filmmakers, as the referenced interviews confirm. By bringing market research and practical considerations that have influenced and shaped the development of *City* to attention in this chapter however, we can begin to bring a more general understanding of the marketplace for independent film in the UK.

### **Low-budget vs. Micro-budget: Deciding the Budget for CITY**

Without exception, there are two recognised budget levels of filmmaking available to a writer/director who does not have a track record in the UK or international film industry; low-budget and micro-budget. Low-budget is a term that is used for films that are being produced outside of the studio system in the independent film sector, but that are using significantly smaller budgets than the studio film. They use independent or co-production methods for raising finance through recognised models for producing films, and the budgets can vary considerably between a few hundred thousand pounds up to several million depending on the territory and genre specifics of a film. A film such as *The King’s Speech* (2012) for example, even with a budget of \$15million (IMDb, n.d.: Online), can be considered at the higher end of ‘low-budget’ because it is working in the independent marketplace as a co-production, and operating on a budget that is considerably lower than the hundreds of millions of dollars that the Hollywood studio system is spending on their flagship titles. Micro-budget, by comparison, is a term that is associated with films that are shot with miniscule budgets whereby the crew and cast are often working for free or outside of the pay scales recommended by various industry unions. A relevant high profile example of a film that operated under these principles would be *El Mariachi* (1992), which was made for \$7,000 (IMDb, n.d.: Online).

David Griffith and Barnaby Southcombe are two directors who have written and directed debut film noir feature films in the past two years. David Griffith’s film, *Timelock* (2013) was a micro-budget film made for approximately £40,000 (Griffith, 2013: Interview), and Barnaby Southcombe’s debut feature as writer/director was *I, Anna* (2012), a low-budget

feature made for £3million (Southcombe, 2014: Interview). The circumstances that surrounded the making of these two films were fundamentally different, but both were written and driven by a similar desire to that of *City*. They were the screenwriter's own attempt to break into the UK independent feature film market as a director. Griffith, had built a career for himself as a screenwriter and producer in Scotland prior to directing *Timelock*, but he reflects; "I knew I was pigeon-holed as either a writer or a producer because that is what I had done in the past, and therefore the idea of anyone giving me any money to direct was not going to happen." (Griffith, 2013: Interview). His decision was to make a majority self-funded micro-budget film because he had enough money at that specific point in his life to do so. Griffith also felt that it would be his last opportunity to direct due to a perception that he may be too old to segue into the position of director on a film. Restricted by a minimal budget, Griffith developed *Timelock*, a film that he shot in little more than a week with a crew made up principally of film production trainees and a cast from a professional theatre background. Griffith carefully planned and executed his screenplay and development to coincide with a micro-budget strategy. Southcombe's personal approach to budgeting his production was somewhat different because, in the first instance, he had substantial experience directing in British television; his titles include *As If* (2001-2004), *Top Buzzer* (2004) and *Harley Street* (2008). Southcombe states that; "having done TV, my journey wasn't the micro-budget route. I had a very clear visual ambition for the film and I couldn't do it with a DV camera running around the streets ... I needed a certain amount of money ..." (Southcombe, 2014: Interview). These discussed principles are essentially where the distinction between micro-budget and low-budget begins to open out. Griffith suggests that academics have not as yet given enough attention to the interesting developments that are occurring in micro-budget feature filmmaking and that the established industry and marketplace in the UK has been slow in recognising the importance of micro-budget filmmaking; "everyone still wants the old paradigm of film financing and distribution to come back ... which isn't going to happen," (Griffith, 2013: Interview). Griffith is under no illusion that his film *Timelock*, in the current field of film production, is a film that is designed for his own personal development however. He sees it as a film that will hopefully accrue enough interest and help him successfully build a stronger package for his next film production. Griffith certainly makes a strong argument that the industry, marketplace and critical side of film show a certain apathy towards the micro-budget feature, but if we

continue to consider that the marketplace has a core fundamental effect over the development of film, micro-budget films ultimately need to bring with them a model for financial viability as well as critical interest before they will begin to get the attention that Griffith alludes to. Southcombe inadvertently confirms this when he talks of having a “clear visual ambition” for *I, Anna* which required a “certain amount of money,” (Southcombe, 2014: Interview). Southcombe is essentially arguing that a filmmaker has difficulty reaching a high level of production value or recognition in the micro-budget form. That is unless it becomes a break-out success like *El Mariachi* and gets a subsequent ‘shot in the arm’ with a critically acclaimed festival run or a distribution deal.

Both Griffith and Southcombe’s filmmaking journeys on their first feature films also reflect a fundamental concern that affected *City* at the development stage because it was of course necessary to define what a realistic budget for *City* was in the first instance. When writing the screenplay, *City* had the possibility of being a film that could be made on a hugely variant budget because it contains, various thriller elements, several locations, the potential for a host of special effects, and the potential of attracting high profile talent. The question—‘What is a realistic approach to budgeting *City* as a feature film?’—arose through discussion with the producers, and it was decided that the initial projected budget of *City* should be around the £800,000 - £1million mark. This figure was arrived at for various reasons: Alae-Carew, Crum and Radclyffe had discussed the proposal for budgeting *City* and agreed that this was a realistic figure for the production based upon their industry knowledge. It was a budget amount that effectively suited them as producers and was a similar budget to the finance on films that Alae-Carew had been involved with previously as an assistant producer with *Black Camel* productions in Glasgow:

It becomes more of a question of—What is it that we actually expect that we can get?—and how would we piece together that budget?—to make it the most effective film and to give it a value in the marketplace. So a film like *City* from a new director and new producers might not have that high a value in the distribution market, so we have to think fairly clearly about what the film’s value is when we put it to that market ... a million, just recently has become the kind of budget that makes sense for these kind of films and ... we understand how to achieve production value on that kind of budget. (Alae-Carew, 2012: Interview)

A component that Alae-Carew mentions here is the potential for value in the marketplace and in the distribution market, and these essentially become the key considerations for producers from the outset on a film production. These concerns begin to effect the production on all

levels because the budget decision is based on the projected value of the product in the marketplace. The budget choice also affects the screenwriting process. A specific example of this can be noted in the development of the *City* screenplay as the latest draft had an elaborate car chase sequence with multiple police cars removed. All that exists in the draft presented as chapter one is a suggestion of a car chase off screen (*City* Screenplay: 44-5). The inevitable cost of staging a multiple car chase becomes completely unrealistic when working with the proposed budget that *City* would be working with, and as a team, the producers understood that it was unrealistic to raise the budget to allow for that. However, what Alae-Carew's statement also confirms is that, as a team, it is important to try and attract a certain level of budget because, like Southcombe's film *I, Anna*, there is a level of ambition for *City* in terms of visual quality and announcing the filmmakers to the marketplace. The screenplay, in some ways, was also a story that would be difficult to realise in micro-budget terms because it has a scope that fundamentally needs multiple locations and a large cast to best represent the themes of city corruption and a mood of cultural apathy and disillusionment. The producers of *City* would be pitching the film product between what Griffith and Southcombe achieved financially because as a team we wanted to show a certain level of ability in terms of visual realisation. A budget as high as £3million was an unrealistic target for the project considering our package, but the screenplay for *City* had not been developed to be a film for micro-budget structures in the same manner as Griffith's film *Timelock*. To go down the micro-budget route, the film would need to have had minimal locations, a restricted aesthetic, and a modest schedule that would restrict the amount of time spent filming. As Griffith points out, the personal restrictions placed on him in the micro-budget form were that he was "not going to have a huge amount of coverage ... to make it work because that is going to be one of the restrictions of filming. Where the ratio of a normal feature film might be 7:1, we were shooting at 3 or 4:1," (Griffith, 2013: Interview).

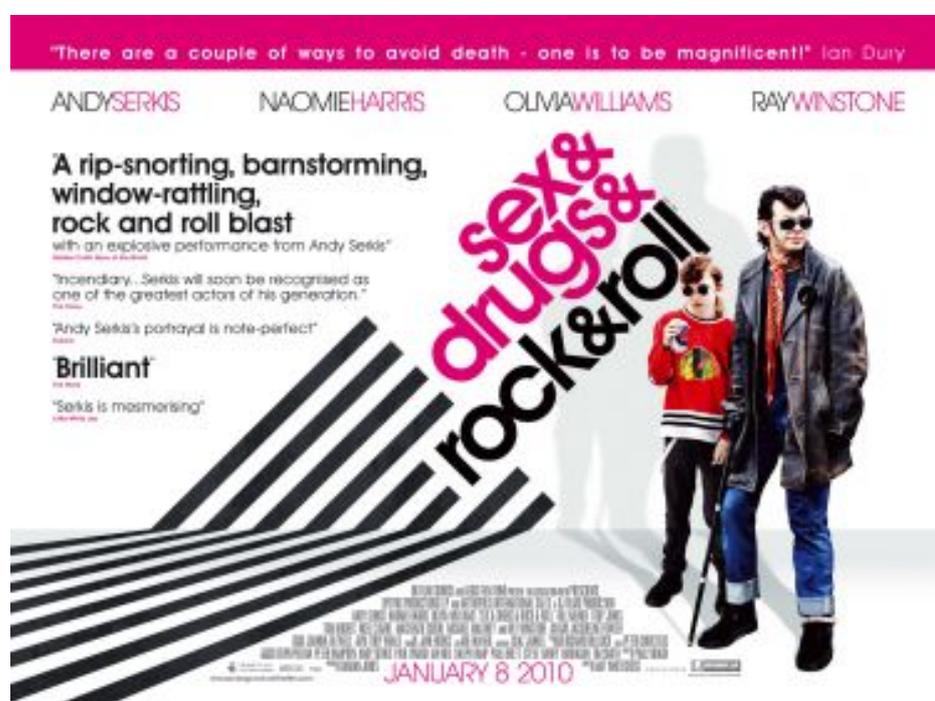
*Timelock* and *I, Anna* comparatively explain the difference between low-budget and micro-budget and ultimately bring the proposed budget for *City* into perspective. *Timelock*'s working budget of £40,000 was slightly less than Griffith and his producer hoped to initially work with, but with personal finance, one additional financial backer, and a grant of £5,000 from a public financing body in Scotland, that was the figure that the production could piece together in order to make the film. Griffith admits to being "quite relaxed" about marketing and distributing his film because the film, in his eyes, is a 'calling card' to convince others

that he has the ambition and wherewithal to direct a feature length film. Griffith self-promotes and is selling the film himself for now, with an eye on selling the film to distributors later if he can get other films financed and made (Griffith, 2013: Interview). *I, Anna* is, as might be expected, was a much more complex film financially. It had eleven financing partners contributing to a larger budget of £3million (Southcomb, 2013: Interview). *I, Anna* was working under the auspices of ‘low-budget’ terminology in film industry terms, but that was still a significantly high amount of money for a first-time feature film director in the marketplace. With a film production of this type of budget, more consideration must be taken to sell the film to the industry through relevant distribution structures before production can take place. Ulin (2013) describes the independent film finance market in a nutshell when he explains that “The common thread is that: (1) money is sought to actually pay for production, requiring that cash is advanced before the project starts; and (2) that the source of funding is, at least in part, from a party other than the distributor,” (Ulin, 2013: 218). *City* set out to be a film that would actively attempt to be a ‘calling card’ film for its production team too, but it still needed to actively engage with the industry processes for creating a low-budget feature because the producers are also trying to build a package that will allow them greater access to the industry through its production, and gain experience in the marketplace that will benefit them in the future. Through this research, working with producers, and communicating with other filmmakers, it becomes apparent that it is problematic to pre-sell a micro-budget film that has a less attractive package in the first place. In effect, raising the first £50,000 for a low-budget film that has a more sellable package for the consumer could potentially be easier than raising the full £50,000 for a micro-budget film without a marketable package. As a team we do not have the personal funds that Griffith had in place, so it then becomes a pay-off, as Alae-Carew states (2012: Interview), of what you think is genuinely achievable with the package.

### **Relevant Budget frameworks from the UK Film Industry**

Evidence visible in the BFI statistical yearbooks, can suggest that *City*’s proposed budget of around £1million reflects a trend for independent film budgets in the UK. *Monsters* (2010) and *Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll* (2010) are two feature films that had first

time directors in the shape of Gareth Edwards and Matt Whitecross, and they too worked with a budget of around £1million (BFI, 2011: Online). These two films would, in hindsight, seem to be representative of an appropriate model for *City* in this instance, and a closer inspection of the two will attempt to reveal some of the important directives for the production of *City*. *Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll* is a biopic, a film about the musician Ian Dury, that brings with it an initial cult audience with an interest. Before the film, Matt Whitecross was an up and coming director with a reputation for bold music video content, but most prominent in the package of *Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll* is the presence of the star, Andy Serkis, in the casting<sup>26</sup>.



**Figure 4.2: *Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll* theatrical poster (2010).**

The casting of Serkis is geared towards creating a strong package for this film and Serkis was the first member of the cast attached. He was also an executive producer on the film and he had a strong hand in developing the film and the package overall (Saito, 2010: Online). His presence helps to expand the audience for this film, as he is a globally recognised name since *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy and his subsequent appearances in both British and American

<sup>26</sup> See figure 4.2 (p.173)

cinema. There is no doubt that once Serkis became involved with this film, it became easier to attach other successful talent and tie up finance. It also creates an understanding for distributors and financiers that the film will be easier to sell and have value in the marketplace, as discussed previously. The highly positive quotes that are prominent in the marketing are all designed to enhance the lure of the film and raise the profile to the paying public. Many of the chosen critical quotes highlighting the star’s performance as a key reason to see the film and are a crucial marketing strategy for this particular film; “Andy Serkis’s recreation of Dury gave me goosepimples” (Bradshaw, 2010: Online). The film itself received an above average critical response – *Empire* and *Total Film* the UK’s leading film review publications both rating it a 3 star film, and online, Rotten Tomatoes average rating is 6.4 out of 10, and IMDb at 6.3 (Online). While it might seem obvious to suggest that the critical response can create a huge impact over how well a film performs financially, the smaller film that does not have a huge marketing budget is often wholly dependent on critical response and word-of-mouth. *Monsters* (2010)<sup>27</sup>, for example, received 5 star reviews in both *Empire* and *Total Film*.



Figure 4.3: Poster image for *Monsters* (2010).

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<sup>27</sup> See Figure 4.3 (p.174)

Also made for under £1million (BFI, 2011: Online), its ability to be a stand out film (from a marketing perspective) was potentially restricted by many factors in the overall package. These included, a limited marketing budget, a first-time director, and with due respect to Scoot McNairy and Whitney Able, the two leading actors were relatively unknown at the time. The ‘star’ of *Monsters*, or the ‘hook’, was the combination of impressive writing, and eye-catching visual effects that contradict the low budget. Writer/director Gareth Edwards created the effects himself and the film was made with consumer equipment. Film critic Jason Solomons probably best describes the film’s international appeal by suggesting that “The story of how the film was made is just as exciting as the film itself,” (Solomons, 2010: Online). Empire magazine has a readership of nearly 200,000 per month in the UK, by far the largest film specific critical publication in the UK, and it also has a substantial online following. A five-star review in Empire, like the one received by *Monsters*, is essential to create a buzz for any low-budget feature in the UK that does not have the marketing budget to compete with ‘marquee films’ from the UK or Hollywood. Ulin points out the reason *Monsters* became such a success when he suggests that “word of mouth is the mother of all external signals ... it is positive recommendations that marketers so covet,” (Ulin, 2013: 197). Gareth Edwards however puts an alternative spin on creating a financially viable film when he states “All you can do is make the film you think you’d enjoy watching, and just cross your fingers that other people are like you,” (Edwards in Lambie, 2010: Online). Edwards thoughts here would suggest that he thinks that trying to ‘read’ the market is no guarantee of financial success, and perhaps a little pointless when producing a film at the lower end of the production budget scale. Indeed, an intention or desire for financial return on a film made for less than £1 million can sometimes hamper the creative endeavour of the filmmaker. Alae-Carew comments, “When you are working with £100million you can make a great film and not make any money back – when you are working with £1million the key is making it good,” (Alae-Carew, 2013: Interview). Alae-Carew is suggesting that if a low-budget film with a £1 million budget is creatively interesting, then it will likely be a calculated gamble. While producing a feature length film with that budget is still an expensive enterprise, and investors are entitled to demand a project proposal that is financially viable in the first instance, Gareth Edwards also points out that the first time feature filmmaker working on a budget under £1million is working within a different set of constraints to those working with significantly higher budgets:

Once you start going over a million pounds for a movie, you've got to perform at the cinema. If your film just does an average take at the cinema, it just dies off and goes straight to DVD and, if you've spent more than a million or so, you're in quite a bit of trouble. So, as long as you can make a film for under a million, then you can basically do whatever you want, to an extent, because it's very hard to fail. (Edwards in Radish, 2010: Online)

It becomes clear then that films are budgeted depending on certain other factors than solely the markets that they are aiming towards. To take the example of *Made in Dagenham* (2010), it is the story of women striking for equal pay and it is a period film that is culturally very 'British.' It potentially took a risk with a budget of £5million because its appeal in the global marketplace is difficult to gauge. However, the attachment of director Nigel Cole (who had a massive hit with *Calendar Girls* (2003)), and a cast that includes the familiar British faces of Sally Hawkins, Miranda Richardson and Bob Hoskins potentially increased the marketing appeal of the film to ensure audience interest and uptake<sup>28</sup>.



Figure 4.4: *Made in Dagenham* theatrical poster (2010).

<sup>28</sup> See figure 4.4 (p.176)

Interestingly the theatrical poster for *Made in Dagenham* had in bold type, “From the director of *Calendar Girls*” as its most prominent sub-heading. Intertextually it attempts to tap into the success of a previous film, a selling tool to encourage those that saw *Calendar Girls* to expect something similar, and seen as a bigger selling point, as far as the marketing for this film was concerned, than either the director’s name or any of its stars. *Made in Dagenham* went on to gross approximately £8 million at the worldwide box-office (BFI, 2011: Online), significantly less than *Calendar Girls*, but still a success against its initial budget. *Calendar Girls* was based on a previous literary work that was influenced by a sensational true story. It had a bigger pull because it had pre-existing and invested consumers, and also dealt with the slightly more titillating subject matter, for its core audience demographic. However, experienced producers with market knowledge would clearly have understood that *Calendar Girls* was an instantly more appealing product for the consumer as reflected in its initial budget of £10 million, twice that of *Made in Dagenham* and ten times that of *Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll*. *Calendar Girls* grossed nearly \$100 million at the worldwide box-office in 2003/4 (IMDb, n.d.: Online), and that ultimately justifies its initial budget and proves that the market can make an educated guess as to a film’s worth, and how it may perform in the marketplace. The British film industry does have a tendency to bestow cultural capital into its marquee film productions, and in the case of *Made in Dagenham*, those came in the form of tying the film to a previous success and casting the film accordingly. Adaptation of hugely popular literary or existing work has become an understandable trend and regular business model in the global film industry<sup>29</sup> and it has also become an especially prominent trend in the UK market with huge box office successes like the *Bridget Jones* and *Harry Potter* franchises. The promise of a ready-made audience with a vested interest in the source material clearly positions the potential for financial success and the more recent successes of *The Inbetweeners Movie* (2011) and *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (2011) would seem to suggest that the independent UK market continues to tap into this notion of bringing a package for a film that can evidence a pre-existing audience with a vested interest in the material.

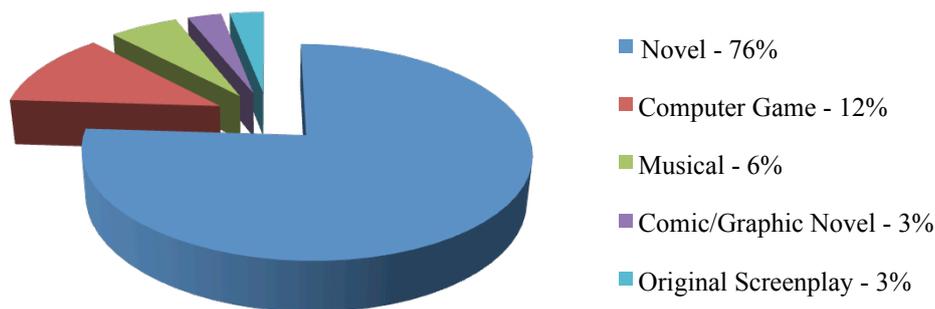
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<sup>29</sup> See Figure 4.5 (p.178)

**Figure 4.5 – 34 of the top 200 grossing global box-office films between 2001-2010 were based on UK source material or by UK writers. The origins of those 34 films break down as follows.**

(BFI, 2011: Online)

## Origins of Story Material



While the statistics in figure 4.5 are only representative of 34 of the top 200 grossing worldwide films over a 10-year period, they do pin-point why an original screenplay does not inspire the allocation of significant budgets in the UK. Thirty-three of those thirty-four films with British source material, were films based on previous works that had an existing market. The only original screenplay by a British writer to break into the top 200 films in this 10-year period was *Inception* (2010), by Christopher Nolan—a writer/director with a huge existing following from the *Batman* franchise and a proven box office track record. This demonstrates that the British screenwriter who is working on an ‘original’ screenplay is forced to write with a more considered and modest budget in mind. More recently, another exception to this trend was *The King’s Speech* (2010), a break-out hit that made over £45million pounds at the UK box-office alone (BFI, 2012: Online). It was an original screenplay written for the independent UK film market by relatively unknown British screenwriter, David Seidler and directed by Tom Hooper, a director with extensive TV experience, but with only one previous feature film under his belt. The film went on to win four Academy Awards and gross nearly \$400 million worldwide (IMDb, n.d.: Online), and proved to be a trend breaker in terms of financial success. However the film did have a cast that featured two Oscar winning actors in the shape of Colin Firth and Geoffrey Rush, and that would have enabled the budget to be increased. The modest budget of under £10 million

still reflects the limits of the UK independent market in terms of backing such a package, but could also be viewed as a calculated business decision because *The Queen* (2006), made \$120 million at the worldwide box-office with a similar budget (IMDb, n.d.: Online), story and genre and in the process scooped an Oscar for its leading actor. *The King's Speech* was a package wholly influenced by the desire to follow up the trend and successes of *The Queen*, and other heritage films. The type of films that have continually been seen as a means for success in the British film industry.

While it is reasonable to suggest that something entirely new or inventive in the film market can become a financial success, a film, like any other business, has a risk versus reward that is underscored by the producers subjective and objective understanding of what is viable in the marketplace:

What does happen is that the market *does* tell you ... [it] starts to shape the nature of the budget, it also confirms ... and if it doesn't confirm it, it at least crystalises what your film is creatively, what its commercial potential is; how broad, how niche, how genre your film is. (Southcombe, 2014: Interview)

Southcombe reiterates here that the marketplace for a film is virtually calculated before the film goes into production. If the production team cannot engineer a package that can attract up front financing and distribution deals, then the film is unlikely to get made, regardless of whether it is creatively exciting.

### **A Hypothetical Theatrical Release for CITY**

Despite the effects of piracy, internet downloads (both legal and illegal) and the popularity of the home video market (including video on demand), UK box office receipts in 2011 reached more than £1 billion for the first time, a 5% increase on the previous year (BFI, 2012: Online). That would suggest that even with continual inflation on the price of cinema seats, that the UK cinema is still a popular means by which to see film in the UK. The cinema also carries with it a kudos factor for the first time filmmaker and getting a film distributed to a cinema audience, while not a financial necessity for the low-budget film, still holds the feeling of having achieved success—especially in terms of getting your film 'noticed'. Jeff Ulin in his book, *The Business of Media Distribution* (2013), acknowledges that, "the success of the box office continues to be an accurate barometer for the success in subsequent release

markets ... the media frenzy surrounding theatrical release drives awareness that is amortized over the life cycle of the product and drives consumption months and even years later,” (Ulin, 2013: 268). *City* producer, Naysun Alae-Carew posits that “Theatrical release in the UK on three-hundred screens would make us our money,” (Alae-Carew, 2012: Interview) but also points out that such an achievement is the “ideal” for independent filmmakers. His honest assumption of a hypothetical cinema release for *City* on three-hundred screens is that “We can’t plan for that. We have to plan for the fact that we won’t make any money out of the film because that is what UK independent producing is like,” planning instead for a film that “gets really good reviews, and is well made, and makes people see Mikey as a real talent, and us having the ability to make great films so they will trust us with a bigger budget in the future ... that is the more likely scenario...” (Alae-Carew, 2013: Interview). Independent British film producer Jonathan Sothcott also suggests why the successful cinema run is so difficult:

Distributors only get a small fraction of box office returns...and the producers even less so. For low budget UK indies, any kind of theatrical release is designed to give the movie a profile for reviews and publicity, it’s all about giving it a platform. There is no marketing spend on the theatrical and if the filmmakers put one up themselves, they invariably lose it” (Sothcott in Roberts, n.d.: Online)

The cinema release can essentially be considered a marketing tool for a low-budget film then, especially one that does not expect to have a big distribution deal for a theatrical release.

Malcolm Ritchie, co-managing director at *Kwerty Films* in his online article ‘Revenue Flow and Making Money out of Film’ for Creative Skillset’s website, points out that the UK has some of the lowest returns for distributors and producers in the global cinema market; “The UK has some of the highest retentions by the exhibitor, averaging around 65 to 70%. The balance remitted to the distributor is termed the ‘Net Theatrical Rentals’,” (Ritchie, n.d.: Online). Ritchie also describes the different types of theatrical distribution deals that are available to UK producers:

- a. Costs off the Top Deal: the distributor recoups their prints and advertising (P&A) spend from the net theatrical rentals. From the balance, the distributor retains a distribution fee of up to 50% and from the remaining balance recoups any advance plus interest before paying the final balance into the pot.
- b. Net Deal: the distributor retains a distribution fee of up to 50% of the net theatrical rentals. From the balance, the distributor recoups P & A expenditure and any advances plus interest. The net receipts after these have been recouped are put into the pot.

- c. Gross Deal: the producer / financier / agent receives an agreed percentage from the net theatrical rentals before any P & A spend or advances have been recouped by the distributor. Out of the balance, the distributor retains their distribution fee and recoups P & A spend, advances and interest. After recoupment, any remaining receipts are paid into the pot. (Richie, n.d.: Online)

The ‘Net Deal’ is the most common deal used in UK cinema, but Ritchie points out once again that, by considering these actualities in the film industry, it is easy to see why film producers rarely see any profit through theatrical distribution. It is frequently the case that “other parties further up the chain will still be unrecouped,” (Richie, n.d.: Online).

Independent producers as a result are generally forced to look at alternative revenue streams to make money out of their films.

BFI’s statistical data once again brings an assured weight to Alae-Carew, Sothcott, and Ritchie’s observations, because their cinema release figures in the UK box-office for 2010 & 2011<sup>30</sup> make it clear that a low-budget independent films need a strong distribution to over two-hundred or three-hundred screens in order to make any significant financial impact through cinema distribution alone. While high budget films need to be distributed to significantly more screens than that. It becomes evident that the number of screens a film shows on is critical in terms of a return at the UK box office, and while being screened on higher numbers of screens is no guarantee of success, the film product needs to be distributed diversely to give it the best chance of any significant financial recoupment in the theatrical marketplace.

**Figure 4.6: Total number of film releases in the UK and average gross by number of screens at the widest point of release, 2010 (BFI, 2011: Online).**

Number of Screens at widest point of release.	Number of films.	% of overall releases	Average box office gross per film (£)
>500	13	2.3	21,183,000
400-499	51	9.2	6,944,000
300-399	48	8.6	2,915,000
200-299	28	5.0	1,079,000
100-199	37	6.6	328,000
10-99	165	29.6	86,000
<10	215	38.6	6,000
<b>Totals---</b>	<b>557</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,837,701</b>

<sup>30</sup> See Figures 4.6 & 4.7 (p.181 & 182)

**Figure 4.7: Total number of film releases in the UK and average gross by number of screens at the widest point of release, 2011 (BFI, 2012: Online).**

Number of Screens at widest point of release.	Number of films.	% of overall releases	Average Box office gross per film (£)
>500	19	3.4	20,475,000
400-499	57	10.2	6,059,000
300-399	44	7.9	1,937,000
200-299	26	4.7	686,000
100-199	41	7.3	223,000
10-99	178	31.9	99,000
<10	193	34.6	5,000
<b>Totals---</b>	<b>558</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2,033,154</b>

In 2010, nearly 39% of films released in the UK were distributed to fewer than ten screens and over 68% of films released at the UK box office went out on fewer than ninety-nine screens. Again in 2011, nearly 67% were released on fewer than ninety-nine screens. Films released to less than ninety-nine screens in the UK averaged a gross of approximately £41,000 at the UK box office in 2010 and £50,000 in 2011. These figures have remained fairly consistent since 2006 (BFI, 2012: 12).

On the gross figures alone, it would seem that distributing to more than two-hundred screens can bring financial reward for a film made for under £1million, but less than one-hundred screens and the financial returns are insignificant, considering of course that the exhibitor has a 65 to 70% financial retention rate. With such a low return for the distributor, it becomes clear why independent films, that do not have a stand out package and the positive critical response necessary to attract a cinema audience, find it so difficult to secure a cinema distribution deal. From BFI's statistical yearbook (2011: Online)<sup>31</sup> we can once again look at *Monsters* (2010) as a relevant example of how a critically lauded film with an unknown cast performed at the UK box-office. It was the 12<sup>th</sup> highest ranked UK independent film at the UK Box office in 2010:

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<sup>31</sup> See Figure 4.8 (p.183)

**Figure 4.8: Top 20 UK independents in 2010 at the UK box-office (BFI, 2011: Online)**

	Title	Country of Origin	UK Box-office (£millions)	Estimated Budget (£millions)*
1	StreetDance 3D	UK	11.62	3.5
2	Kick-Ass	UK/USA(non-studio)	11.60	18.75
3	The Ghost	UK/Fra/Ger	4.09	28.125
4	Made in Dagenham	UK	3.67	5.0
5	Four Lions	UK	2.93	n/a
6	Tamara Drewe	UK	2.58	n/a
7	Burke and Hare	UK	2.63	6.25
8	London Boulevard	UK/USA (non studio)	1.36	8.0
9	Solomon Kane	UK/France/Czech	1.32	28.125
10	It's a Wonderful Afterlife	UK	1.02	6.25
11	4.3.2.1	UK	0.99	2.875
12	Monsters	UK	0.95	0.8
13	The Illusionist	UK/France	0.92	6.875
14	Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll	UK	0.89	1.5
15	Wild Target	UK	0.80	5.0
16	Mr. Nice	UK	0.77	n/a
17	Housefull	UK/India	0.68	5.0
18	Africa United	UK	0.68	n/a
19	The Infidel	UK	0.59	n/a
20	Shank	UK	0.55	0.385

(\*some additional estimated budgets and US box office figures collated from IMDb: Online)

How an individual film performs financially at the UK box-office is put into perspective here, as it is a fact that the UK industry is a very small market in comparison to the US. With the exception of the top two performers in *figure 4.8*, none of the films in the chart are taking in the millions of dollars worth of gross theatrical profits that people have come to associate with Hollywood and ‘success.’ If we look more closely at the budgets of the films however, it is clear that some UK films are doing exceptionally astute business in the home market. Some of these *Top 20* grossing independent films appear to have performed poorly compared to their budgets, but many of these rely heavily on the home video markets and sales in other territories across the world. *Kick-Ass* (2010), for example, grossed over \$100million at the worldwide box office (IMDb, n.d.: Online), and with an initial budget of nearly £20million

pounds it is clear that the package was aimed at the global market (it being a US/UK independent co-production is testament to that). Another film in this chart with a diverse international distribution deal was *The Ghost* (2010)—once again a tri-country co-production with an attractive package that features Oscar winning director Roman Polanski, two marquee stars in Ewan McGregor and Pierce Brosnan, and bold thriller elements about the universal themes of government conspiracy. It was released in over twenty-five countries worldwide and grossed \$75million (IMDb, n.d.: Online) before reaching the home video and on demand market place. These were massive worldwide figure, even though it performed modestly at the UK box office and once again bring perspective to the market for a films package. *Monsters* (2010) proved to be a minor box-office success as a low-budget independent, it grossed nearly £1million at the UK box-office and also made \$250,000 from a limited US release (IMDb, n.d.: Online), and while that doesn't really equate to massive back end profits for the distributor and the producers, it does help to set the film up to succeed in the home retail, rental, TV, and foreign sales markets.

There is also evidence in this particular set of statistics, however, that cinema audiences can be fickle and that film producers still do get their budget projections and packages completely wrong. *Solomon Kane* (2009), a tri-country co-production between the UK, France and the Czech Republic was clearly designed for the worldwide market with a budget of nearly £30 million. And although it was the ninth most popular UK independent film at the UK cinema in 2010 it grossed less than half of its budget at the worldwide box-office and just over £1 million at the UK box office after failing to secure a distribution deal for theatrical release in the US (Young, 2010: Online). Clearly US cinema distributors were unconvinced by the films package and as a result it was destined for the home video market in the US. Once again, here is a true insight into why independent film producers covet the cinematic release. It is the first-most important means by which to announce your film to the marketplace, even if it is not a guarantee of significant financial return.

### **Building a Package for *CITY***

During the course of developing the screenplay for *City*, there was also the concern of building a suitable package for the film generally. Essentially that is something that happens

from the bottom up, and *City* started out as a screenplay with the writer also attached to direct. Through a process of networking and sending producers the script, the first people to attach themselves to the project were producers Naysun Alae-Carew and Nic Crum. Initially the working relationship with Alae-Carew and Crum started by planning an unrelated short film as a team, but the desire to make a feature film began to take over; “I think it was a natural development of ‘We want to make a feature instead of a short. Why don’t we make a feature?’” (Crum, 2012: Interview). The package was then strengthened when Sarah Radclyffe, a producer with significant industry experience, joined the team as an executive producer after she had mentored Crum. As it currently stands, *City* as a package has those three producers and the writer/director attached, but the road to production is continually faced with the problem of raising finance and tapping into the market in order to push towards production.

Southcombe (2014: Interview) puts into words many of the same issues that *City* has faced during the process when he describes how his film *I, Anna* (2013) was produced without the support of a UK funding body, which *City* has also failed to secure at this juncture. Southcombe points to the importance of getting cast in place first in order to get finance upfront. The importance of finding a lead cast member to bolster the attraction of a film package is no secret in the functional world of the independent film industry. However, it is often overlooked by the critical theory that is mainly concerned with discussing films after their completion. Southcombe discusses the importance of the attached talent when he states “... as with any funding, it is really cast dependent. Being a first time director you are kind of an irrelevance and so it is very much about who your partners are ... the route to market for that is cast,” (Southcombe, 2014: Interview). Southcombe also points out the difficulty that all filmmakers face when they start to piece together their film package and approach the market and talent agents in order to attach cast:

Agents don’t want to talk to you until you have financing in place, and of course you can’t get financing in place if you don’t have cast ... The ideal obviously is getting a letter of interest, that is the Holy Grail, and if you can get that you are in a really good place. But that tends not to happen because they wouldn’t be entertaining you if you hadn’t got your partners in place already. (Southcombe, 2014: Interview)

Southcombe took his film package to the industry in the first instance with his mother, Charlotte Rampling attached, and with her involvement he was also able to approach and get Gabriel Byrne attached to his production. Both Rampling and Byrne have a significant back

catalogue of impressive credits, and along with his producer Felix Vossen, Southcombe pieced together a strong package for his film that included several other experienced producers. With their package, they ultimately managed to raise the finance to produce *I, Anna*. *City* has a similar strategy in terms of attaching cast, but first it was decided to approach the BFI through their development fund in an attempt to get the support of the UK's most prominent public funding body. Our proposal was turned down however because BFI felt our package wasn't strong enough, as the following email correspondence confirms:

With *CITY*, we felt that there was an intriguing concept at play but one that was very challenging both creatively and in terms of the film finding finance with a first-time director, making it into production and ultimately successful theatrical distribution. It would be fair to say that this achievability question played a significant part in our thinking. We did also have some reservations about the script and whether it and the previous work of the filmmakers gave enough confidence that this would successfully stand out in a theatrical space which is ordinarily dominated by studio fare. It's always a question of degree and there were certain elements which gave comfort to these concerns (eg: particular strengths to the writing or the attachment of an Exec Producer for instance), but ultimately not quite enough for us to feel it was a top priority for development support. (Segal-Hamilton, 2014: Email)<sup>32</sup>.

Interestingly, Segal-Hamilton's email expresses some strengths in the writing, and mainly the attachment of Sarah Radclyffe as the strongest package elements, but the weakest elements for the production were the reservations about the script standing out against "studio fare" and the filmmakers not having a strong enough back catalogue.

This reaction from BFI ultimately changed the progression of the process significantly. The failure of our application for support through BFI forced a step back and a re-evaluation of the position that the film was in. Having already raised £5,000 for development funding from The South West Scotland Screen Commission, both Alae-Carew and Crum made the suggestion that a short pilot film should be made with that money. A short film would bolster the back catalogue for the director and producers, set up the world of *City* visually, and potentially prove to potential investors that it was a film that would be handled in the right manner by the inexperienced feature filmmakers that were attached.

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<sup>32</sup> See: Appendix E (p.256)

## Conclusion

Throughout the course of this chapter, it has become clear that value in the marketplace is the single most important factor for any film that is reliant upon finding finance from external sources for its creation. Two key decisions in the creation of any feature film is deciding on a proposed budget, and deciding what the creative intention is, a fact that is backed up in all of the interviews conducted and cited here. Of course with any independent film, the proposed budget figure will more than likely change, but at least for the purposes of progressing with some upfront notion of the scale of the production, the filmmakers need to have a figure in mind because it affects every creative element from the screenplay forward. Consideration of market trends is also more important in the decision making approach for the budget than any other singular factor. It should also be pointed out that in this current digital age of independent filmmaking in the UK trends change very quickly, and that makes it extremely difficult to evidence those trends accurately outside of word of mouth and subjectivity. The statistics cited in this chapter for example are already out of date, and the production team on *City* have already begun to consider a variety of alternative ways into the marketplace in light of our failed application through BFI. The support of BFI is not the be-all and end-all of financial options for *City*, but their feedback does indicate that the project is hindered by elements of its package, and while they recognise that the film has strong elements already in place, the package would be strengthened by attaching another producer with a significant track record, or attaching a more experienced director. Attaching an actor with a suitable star quality is also the single most important factor for this project at the moment, and that is a strategy that is critical across all filmmaking levels as clearly expressed by Southcombe (2014: Interview). The consideration of which actor to approach and at what time is ongoing<sup>33</sup>. It is hoped that the vision within the newly finished pilot film<sup>34</sup> will be used to bring more weight to the package and aid our producing team when we attempt to lure an actor with a strong reputation to the role of Max. For the moment, the existing creative team continues to explore avenues of financing and package development through networking with production companies, sales agents and distributors, but attaching a ‘star’ is our biggest need. The named actor is the single biggest commodity that every film

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<sup>33</sup> See Green-light Pack. Appendix N (p.300)

<sup>34</sup> See chapter five a – *The Pilot Film* (p.191)

(independent or otherwise) covets in the road to securing finance and is proof of why the top actors are the highest paid and most influential people in film generally—and why casting and talent agents are often the real power-brokers when it comes to getting a film made.

There are also larger overriding financial factors concerned with distribution that need to be addressed in the UK film industry if small independent films like *City* are to be given a better opportunity to succeed. The cinema is becoming a less viable marketplace for low-budget independent films, and alternative platforms such as iTunes, that allow filmmakers to sell their own product, or Netflix, who have over 50 million subscribers worldwide, can offer a much less complex financial arrangement to filmmakers for the right to stream the films online. The cinematic release still has the kudos factor for filmmakers, but the business and financial situation in the UK means that low and micro budget independent film producers are becoming less inclined to explore the cinema as an option for effective financial return. Alae-Carew<sup>35</sup> demonstrated that when he suggested that we have to plan for the fact that we would not make any money out of *City*. Public and lottery funded avenues for funding independent film in the UK were not traditionally affected by the same constraints for financial success, but they are now increasingly under pressure to invest in more commercially viable productions because otherwise their contributions towards development and budgeting becomes less visible in the cinema environment. Most independent films in the UK at *City*'s low-budget level are funded through several funding partners, a strategy known as 'jigsaw funding'. As a result the importance of a forecasted financial return is prevalent with films, regardless of whether they are budgeted at £1 million or £20 million. That is why the 'package' becomes so vital.

The current system of providing TAX credit for film is critical to the industry in the UK because any film production made in the UK (or classed as a UK film) is entitled to recover 20% of its budget back as a rebate. That inevitably encourages UK film production from abroad and bolsters the production of films across the whole budget spectrum in the UK. This system especially becomes a big incentive for the Hollywood studio system to make their films in the UK. The TAX credit scheme does create many more employment opportunities for skilled film labour in the UK, but what it also means is that the UK government are essentially giving the Hollywood studios a fifth of their money back when

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<sup>35</sup> See Appendix A: Interview transcript with Alae-Carew & Crum. (p.225)

they choose to make a film in the UK. That system ought to be changed so that the government hold back some of that percentage and reinvest it into our independent film sector. Or perhaps they could work out a different system whereby films that are shot in the UK have to reinvest a percentage of any profit to aid the development of independent film in the UK, without reducing the incentive significantly enough to scare Hollywood off.

The widespread production of adaptations, sequels and remakes in the UK are a clear representation of both Hollywood's exploitation of the TAX rebate, and their understanding of box-office success with these pre-engaged audience products. Without doubt these franchise films with pre-invested markets do have a better chance of financial success in the market place because Hollywood also has the finance required for a marketing strategy that enables success beyond any poor critical response. Independent filmmakers in the UK are also making use of adaptations from existing successful material (as discussed previously in this chapter), but there are still filmmakers like myself who want to step into the business by making original films on low budgets for more exclusive markets. The 'package' obsessed mentality in independent UK cinema is still painfully apparent however, and that is a direct affect of the need to justify why a film should be financed or green-lit in the first place. The high financial retention percentage that exhibitors and distributors impose in the UK is the reason why the attractive 'package' is so vital. The tradition of strong independent UK films being exhibited in our cinemas is under considerable threat moving forward because the high financial percentages being withheld by distributors and exhibitors makes low and micro budget film ventures an unrealistic financial venture for the filmmakers. The UK government, the UK film industry and the BFI need to act now to change this if they believe that a cinema release for our independent films is culturally important in the UK for the future. If they believe that it is, then that needs to be a core focus for support in the UK independent film sector. The percentage of box-office revenue that is channeled back to the production companies and investors needs to be increased in this sector to encourage investment in independent film, otherwise UK Independent films will continue to disappear from our cinema screens. It is very difficult to find a simple answer for how the UK independent film sector can overcome this problem because it could be argued that video-on-demand is fast becoming the natural outlet for independent film—Curzon cinemas, for example, now have an on-demand service that allows audiences to watch independent films on the first day of release. If, as I suspect, filmmakers across the UK still want to have an opportunity to screen

their original low and micro budget films at the cinema, then the UK government needs to develop a policy to withhold some of the 20% TAX credit for reinvestment in these films. Or they need to create a system to give better TAX incentives to exhibitors and distributors that are committed to screening British independent films so that there is a reduction on the percentage of the profit that they take from these films. Otherwise video-on-demand is likely to be the future for exhibiting independent films that do not meet the increasing demands of having a sellable industry package.

**CHAPTER FIVE (a)**  
**PILOT FILM for CITY**

*CITY* (2015) – Pilot Film  
9 mins - Colour



**City Pilot Vimeo Link:**

**<https://vimeo.com/120055903>**

**password: citylights**

## **CHAPTER FIVE (b)**

### **PILOT PRODUCTION & RECONSIDERATIONS for CITY**



***“My experience I can give you in a nutshell, and I didn’t dream it in a dream either”***

Figure 5.1: *Sidney Falco* (Tony Curtis), *Sweet Smell of Success* (1957).

#### **Introduction: The Relevance of Personal Experience**

Throughout the business side of making a film, finding money for the production budget is key, as has been discussed in the previous chapter. A film like *City* becomes reliant upon building an impressive package for the film in order to secure the finance to make it. Upon taking the step into the actual physical production of the pilot film for example, a clearer indication of the problematic nature of film practice as research becomes apparent. By discussing thus far how the planning for *City* has been achieved through theoretical, creative, and market based approaches in the development of the screenplay, we can see that research does allow for both theoretical and empirical approaches to practice. The experience of realising the film artefact is also relevant to our understanding of practice, but it relies heavily on the citations of the practitioner throughout their creative endeavour. As pointed out in the introduction, John T. Caldwell (2013) insists that the problematic alliance between practice research and traditional forms of film studies research is the disclosure of the fieldworkers actions, and while I could continue with a discussion similar to chapter three, whereby I

attempt to justify the visual choices I have made in the storyboard and the pilot film, I feel that it becomes more important for the concluding elements of this thesis for me to discuss how the theory, creativity and market influences culminated in the production experience. At this juncture it is important to point out that traditionally, I have been schooled in film practice production chiefly by my own experiences of working on films, either through, writing screenplays, taking screenplays to the market, or by directing short films. It has always seemed logical for me that practice as research, and particularly practice-led research, would in order to retain any relevance, be reliant upon this type of personal report of the production processes. In fact, I have come to believe that it is a core necessity in the overall understanding of film production as a whole. As Caldwell (2013) suggests, practice research is essentially opaque until the scholar can reveal the specific conditions of their own involvement. It is through that methodology that I come to add one final element to my thesis here by discussing some of the production experiences of the *City* pilot film and the ongoing development of *City* as a project. The production experiences that follow are predominantly the occasions whereby the process has informed and brought new light to the procedures of film production for my own personal development as a filmmaker. But through those experiences I will highlight the influential forces that are at work within independent film production, especially those within the parameters of short film and micro-budget.

### **Pilot Production Notes**

As discussed in the previous chapter, developing a pilot film for *City* was something that the producing team and I had pursued after receiving development monies to the value of £5000 from The Southwest Scotland Screen Commission and BFI's reaction to our package. I also received a personal grant of £500 from Arts Trust Scotland that helped finance my travel and personal expense on the project.

Script Magazine's Chad Gervich suggests that pilots can often be problematic because "once something is shot, it feels set in stone," (Gervich, 2011: Online). Gervich also suggests that the writer risks showing the final product in a micro-budget version that cannot live up to the potential of the proposed feature. As a production team, we understood those risks, but we wanted to show how we could take a very small amount of money, turn it into an

effective visual piece, showcase our production acumen, and deliver a short film that belied its minimal budget. Producing a pilot film has also recently become much more common in the marketplace as investors look to avoid as much risk as possible. This has been evidenced in the marketplace because the new NET.WORK scheme (BFI, 2014: Online) created by BFI, in collaboration with Creative England, Creative Scotland, Ffilm Cymru Wales, and Northern Ireland Screen, has a strand that encourages early career filmmakers to apply for funding to aid in the production of a pilot film associated to a feature film project.

The initial difficulty of planning the pilot was that I had to write a short screenplay<sup>36</sup> that would fulfil several functional requirements for the feature film production. The core plan for the pilot was that it would become a short film artefact that represented the look and feel of our proposed feature film. It would also be a short film that could be shown in festivals with a sense of being self-contained. I had seen many shorts that had become feature films in the past, and most of those had been successful self-contained shorts in their own right. *Dog Altogether* (2007) and *Shell* (2007) were Scottish shorts that have now been realised as feature films, and what was of specific interest to me was that those films had pronounced lead characters that were the driving force of the narrative. I wanted a pronounced lead character that would represent the thematic from the feature film screenplay for *City*, and while the producers were sympathetic to those creative wishes, Alae-Carew and Crum also had their own agenda for the short. They suggested that the pilot should have a clear sense of genre and setting, and that it needed to have a choreographed action sequence. These elements would develop the notion of a sellable package and prove how capable we were as a team to create an ambitious visual film on a small budget. Those demands led to a very different experience of developing the pilot screenplay for me, and because of the more commercially led suggestions from Alae-Carew and Crum, the visual needs for the pilot grew very quickly. As with any short film screenplay, my first dilemma was how to keep the film to a select few locations and to restrict the need for cast, but once again Alae-Carew and Crum encouraged me to write an ambitious short in order that the finished product become as impressive as possible. Writing this pilot short film became indicative of the process outlined in the three-point model applied to this thesis because creatively I had decided that I needed to combine the characters of Max and Trent into one person for the pilot. The character created was 'Davis' and he became an amalgamation of the lead and the antagonist so that I could

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<sup>36</sup> City Pilot screenplay (2012) presented in Appendix K (p.282-289)

show the thematic dilemma of the feature film within the performance of a single actor. As a director, I also wanted to show that I had skill in visual storytelling. This need reveals itself in the screenplay as minimal dialogue, and a complex visual story that involves flashback and visual revelation techniques that I learned through my theoretical grounding in the application of film. Finally, I responded to the *market forces* from the producers remit, and wrote a hugely ambitious pilot that had, multiple locations, a cast of thirteen (including extras), crew need of around twenty, and a substantial post-production period. With those requirements in place, we all understood that we would be restricted to a three-day-shoot over a single weekend and the plan for the pilot was in motion. To Alae-Carew and Crum's absolute credit they were able to execute the strategy for the film successfully.

In March 2013, I travelled to Glasgow to begin a three-day shoot on a pilot film for *City*. Between the two producers, and myself, we put together a cast and crew that we felt could collaborate effectively to make this film. Aside from the directorial and writing responsibilities on the film, another key element of work that I took on was the casting. Part of my initial concern with casting the pilot was to try and attach an established and known actor to the film in order to raise the value and profile of the finished artefact. An interview with Jeremy Conway of Conway Van Gelder agency in *The Guerilla Film Makers Handbook* (2000: 76-79) reveals several interesting points from the agent's perspective when they are approached by filmmakers looking to attach actors. He suggests that agents are wary of attaching their clients to projects where they do not know the filmmakers, and that he looks specifically for honesty about the work, and respect towards his clients as key indicators of a producer or director's suitability for working with actors (Conway in Jones & Jolliffe, 2000: 79). He also points out that both he and especially British actors have a tendency to be more interested in the quality of the work, than the financial gain:

There's an awful lot of low-budget films with poor scripts in which I'm not interested, but if there is a wonderful script with absolutely no money, I would much rather an actor did that, than a major movie that's not very good for a lot of money. Certainly I think English actors appreciate that, and would rather do a quality film than rubbish for bucks. (Conway in Jones & Jolliffe, 2000: 76).

The casting of David Hayman as Kerr in the *City* pilot film was ultimately indicative of how casting can often work in the micro-budget form. While *City* to this point had been developed as a low-budget feature film work, as discussed in the previous chapters, the pilot was very much working within the micro-budget model with a budget of £5000 for a three day shoot.

From previous experience of trying to attach ‘recognisable’ actors to shorts that have very little finance in place, I felt that it might not be worth an actor or agent’s time to attach themselves to a project that pays very little, but may still require a three day commitment. From the budget, I had been allocated 10% (£500) for all of the actors and my decision was to use the role of Kerr to attempt to get a named actor. The reason for that was that the role only required a half-day commitment on the final day of the shoot, but it was a role that was massively significant in the feature film screenplay and might therefore make the most logical sense as a role with which to lure an established industry name. Because of the limited funding for actors, I had to find somebody who was locally based in Glasgow, where we were filming, and David Hayman, with his significant on-screen presence and reputation in the British industry was first on my list.

I contacted Hayman’s agency Markam, Froggatt & Irwin<sup>37</sup> to enquire about his availability two weeks prior to the shoot, but within a week, I had not received a clear response from the agent I was dealing with. I therefore began to contact other agencies about alternative actors who I felt would be right for the role, but I had no luck finding any other actor on my shortlist who was available on the date allocated for the shoot. I made one final phone call to Markham, Froggatt & Irwin about David Hayman with less than a week remaining before the shoot, and was at this point passed to Ellie Martin-Sperry, the agent who would now be dealing with my request. Martin-Sperry informed me that David did have an opening on the day that we needed him and that she would forward the information about our project to him. Interestingly during the process of trying to cast the role of Kerr, nearly all of the agents that I contacted were sympathetic to our minimal budget, and were interested in what we were trying to achieve with the pilot short film, particularly Martin-Sperry, who could not have been more insightful about her agency’s own process when confronted with such a request. She made it clear that agents often wait until the last minute to attach their clients to small or micro-budget films, in the event that a bigger or more important project becomes available to their client. She also explained that luck was on our side as David had personally decided to squeeze our film into his busy schedule. She informed me that our existing package for the film was enough to get David on board, because he was interested in the feature film script as a project and was impressed that we had Sarah Radclyffe (who he already knew) attached as an executive producer. David agreed to play the part if we made a

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<sup>37</sup> See email: Appendix F (p.257)

donation to his charity, and he explained that he was personally interested in helping emerging talent by offering his time. We had now achieved a significant recognisable addition to our package in terms of raising our own profile, and David Hayman's inclusion was certainly a big step in raising the production value of the pilot film. Only one agent that I contacted during the casting process gave us a negative response. She was extremely protective of her client's reputation, suggesting that it was an insult to know that I had contacted several agents about other actors in addition to her own client. I had been honest with Martin-Sperry about trying to find other actors in the weeks between my initial approach for David Hayman, but she was wholly understanding of this, expressing that it was a natural process considering the short window to find and attach an actor.

This experience with agents begins to shed light over the casting process and the myth of agents as an obstacle between emerging filmmakers and actors. In the past, agents have been reluctant to communicate with me regarding high profile actors, however, as my work, my profile as a screenwriter, and my film packages have improved in scope and quality, conversations with actors' agents have become a more rewarding prospect. Of course, there are still agents who do not respond to approaches that I have made, and perhaps a simple email to express that they are not interested would save time, but for filmmakers, instances of not getting beyond an agent's assistant on the phone effectively indicates that the project package is not at the level required to interest an agent or their client. Again it becomes very much a case of having a realistic attitude towards what you think you can get, and Martin-Sperry's reaction on this occasion, was an indication that the strengths of our package were at the correct level for our approach. This interaction also confirms Jeremy Conway's suggestion (above) that financial reward is perhaps not always, as many new filmmakers might fear, the first consideration for an established actor and their agent.

The casting process at this level also highlights some of the failings of some theoretical film criticism, because it reflects how film productions are often shaped by uncertainties in the market—not something that is often discussed in film criticism generally. Ultimately without the existing package for the *City* feature film, David Hayman would not have been present in the pilot film, and therefore any theoretical outcome related to his relevance in the project are affected by *market forces*. It might quite easily have been another actor in the role of Kerr had certain forces swung in a different direction or if Hayman had decided not to join our cast. Cast is often discussed in terms of formal theoretical markers,

but the processes of casting and the instances of filmmakers using available actors rather than actors of their own choosing is rarely considered in wider theoretical conversations about film production. What the casting of David Hayman on our pilot film proves is that the market and marketability of a given project is based heavily on its package development, and so the *market forces* have to be understood as holding crucial significance on any theoretical or creative ideal about a film's production.

The pilot film was shot over three consecutive days from Friday 8<sup>th</sup> March to Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> 2013. Both the Friday and Saturday shoot days were scheduled from 6pm to 6am and the Sunday was 4pm to 10pm. The film was broken down into three distinct location shoots; Friday was all of the interior and exterior car shots in various Glasgow street locations with a reduced crew, Saturday was all of the interior and exterior set-ups at the shop location with full crew, and Sunday was the apartment shoot<sup>38</sup>. It was, for me, the most expansive short film shoot that I have directed in terms of locations and crew size. In total we had thirty-six cast and crew and over thirty of those were either on set or at our unit base during the course of the Saturday evening shoot. The pilot was incredibly ambitious for such a small budget and various elements of the production provided a clear indication of the difficulty in working within the micro-budget structure. Micro-budget does not enable filmmakers to pay industry standard rates to all members of the cast and crew, and therefore scheduling the production into as short a timeframe as possible becomes a crucial consideration. As David Griffith confirms from his experience of shooting the micro-budget film, *Timelock* (Griffith, 2013: Interview), less time for filming is one of the principle restrictions for any filmmaker working within those parameters because the budget will simply not allow for extensive days or filming takes. Like Griffith, we found ourselves shooting at a ratio of 3:1 and sometimes as low as 2:1 during the Saturday evening shoot because we had to film so much of the script in one evening. As the crew and cast worked at reduced pay rates or gratis, there was little opportunity for rehearsal with actors and limited scope for pre-production meetings, unless people were prepared to give up their time for free. On a shoot such as the *City* pilot, it is possible to ask friends and professional acquaintances to give you a weekend of their time, but most have day jobs, which would not allow for a shoot to run over into an extra day. In this instance preparation becomes even more paramount, and especially important under the

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<sup>38</sup> See Call Sheets: Appendix M (p.295-299)

micro-budget restraints is a storyboard<sup>39</sup>. Director of Photography, David Lee and I only had the opportunity to discuss the project over the telephone in the lead up to filming, so my storyboard was a critical commodity in helping to show him in advance what I wanted to achieve. A total of fifty-seven shots were created in the storyboard and I knew that if I could cover all of those shots in the shoot that I would at least have the basic necessary components to bring together a pilot film. Storyboard preparation, and a good screenplay also helps to get the best out of the cast and crew, who all know the craft of their own particular jobs, because it gives a structured platform and overall vision from which to work. The collaborations feed from the strength of the preparation and that ultimately results in the quality of the finished artefact.

Occasionally, as director, I did come across moments when my preparation was hindered by an unforeseen situation and that is where the ability to problem solve becomes a director's core skill. An example of this during the pilot production occurred when I did a walk-through of the final scene of the film at the apartment location just days before the shoot. As we were shooting on location throughout the entirety of the pilot, sometimes the real locations threw up a dynamic change to the preceding vision of how a scene would work. In the apartment scene with David Hayman (5:56 in pilot film/frame 10:1 in storyboard) for example, I realised that the way it was storyboarded would not work for the final cut of the film because there would be a timing issue in the scene where Hayman's character Kerr would have to wait for a few moments while Laura collected and returned with the baby. This occurred because the logistics of the apartment we were using were different than I expected. I had to find a solution to create a longer moment for Kerr on screen when the other actor was off screen. I was forced to ask myself—"What would Kerr do in those few seconds?" I made a decision to add a painting to the wall that he could look at before Laura returned, a painting that would metaphorically represent the philosophical nature of the film. Ultimately, this worked dynamically in the edit of the film for timing, but it also added a further layer of intrigue to the character, and brought out a stronger screen moment for the most recognisable commodity in our film—David Hayman. My preparation allowed for this last-minute change because I knew the way that I wanted the scene to play, and it allowed me to recognise where a problem would occur during filming. Interestingly too, I had no lead up time with David Hayman besides twenty minutes or so before the camera rolled and this is a

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<sup>39</sup> See Storyboards: Appendix L (p.290-294)

common occurrence when actors come in for a few hours to act in a single scenes on a micro-budget film. I had not worked with David before, so had no knowledge going into our shoot together of how he would want to work as an actor. As it turned out, he did not want to rehearse the scene beyond a simple physical walk through before the camera rolled, and therefore my own walk through of the scene earlier had allowed me to problem solve the moment before it arrived in a situation where we would only had David for four hours.

The Saturday night shoot also brought with it several problems due simply to the time restrictions of filming all of the shop interiors and exteriors in one night. Some shots had to be merged into one and it was decided that several shots would be covered in as little as two takes in order to allow enough time to get all of the shots that were in the storyboard. The script, storyboard and shot list became the most crucial directorial tools in the turnaround of the film shoot because they gave structure to a shoot that was under heavy time constraints. Working without those tools would not have been a feasible option unless time limitation was not a factor, and this would rarely be the case because time is the most critical element on any micro-budget film production. My experience on the *City* pilot proved that these conventional planning methods (used across generations of film production) still function primarily as streamlining tools for an industry that is wholly effected by cost and time restrictions. Shot lists, storyboards, production schedules, and all of the relevant production documents are a functional priority on all independent film productions.

Financial limitation for the micro-budget film also becomes a hugely relevant factor in post-production. The completion of our pilot film was hugely problematic in the edit because of the reliance on post-production crew who had offered their spare time. Because the pilot film was ambitiously trying to give a distinct feeling of being produced with a higher production budget, it was reliant upon several different post-production collaborators. The particular need of visual effects and audio effects, for example, was not something that could be successfully created by the core production team. Our ambition for the project to look ‘expensive’ and beyond the micro-budget created a need to rely on practitioners that were offering their expertise beyond their regular working hours. This resulted in a drawn out post-production phase and again highlights one of the key problematic concerns of micro and low-budget filmmaking—a fast turnaround for finishing the film is often very difficult if post-production work has to be outsourced with minimal finances. The experience of creating the *City* pilot film has proved that a film can definitely be created and filmed on a minimal

budget, but the scope of the finished film, and the plan to finish it, is restricted by budgeting and the time restrictions faced by the collaborators. A film that is made without the desired financial levels to pay all of the collaborators the full industry rates for their services ultimately becomes a piecemeal event that can roll on over an extended time period. The *City* pilot shoot was completed on March 10<sup>th</sup> 2013, but completion of the edit was not achieved until January 2015, and that is testament to the difficulty of shooting and making a film that relies on so many different individuals working within the micro-budget form. These individuals believed in the project and wanted to contribute, but the basic need to take paid work first is of course a bigger concern, a reality that is discussed more fully in the conclusion of this thesis.

### **Package Enhancement Moving Forward**

Now with the pilot film in hand, the package for our feature film has strengthened again. The visual intentions of the feature film are now represented and can now work in tandem with the script. In the development time of this thesis, I have also personally been involved in creating several other projects in an attempt to bolster my own profile as a filmmaker. As mentioned before, however, I still remain an unknown quantity in the marketplace as a feature film director, and ultimately the director and the screenplay as a draw and creative basis for financing a feature film are still regarded as the core concern for sales agents, producers, and public funding bodies. Having a director attached to *City* who currently has a low value in the marketplace was part of the reason for producing the pilot film, but it is still a key personal dilemma. As the writer of the screenplay, I have throughout its development also wanted to direct the feature film, but as any film package develops the writer of the screenplay does begin to potentially lose creative control over the work. In my case that could result in my losing the opportunity to direct *City*. A standard option agreement for a screenplay for example will usually stipulate that the production company has the right to attach a director of their choice to any screenplay that they have optioned, and while I would consider standing aside from the directing role should the production be more likely to be green-lit under a more experienced director, I have always demanded that I maintain some hand in the decision of who will direct my screenplay. In the case of *City*,

Alae-Carew, Crum and I initially worked under that verbal agreement. At the beginning of 2014 however, Alae-Carew and Crum's company, Haphazard Media Films merged with Blazing Griffin under the Blazing Griffin banner. Blazing Griffin is a company that primarily develops computer games, but through collaboration with Alae-Carew and Crum on a separate project, the company would now operate on multi-platform projects, and the film sector of the company would be headed up by Alae-Carew. This merger required that a new option agreement on the *City* script be drawn up so that Blazing Griffin would hold the rights to produce it. Initially, I was reluctant to sign the new two-year option agreement<sup>40</sup> because Blazing Griffin's merger with Haphazard Media Films meant that there were now various partners that I did not know. Sections 6.1.1, 6.1.3, 6.2, 7.3 and 9.7 of the original option document, while standard option terms, were of concern to me in terms of maintaining a level of control over my own project. Signing the document meant that I was signing over all creative control for the film for a period of two years, in an agreement where I was not being paid as the writer. While I had a long and trusting relationship with Alae-Carew with regard to our verbal agreements about joint creative control, my concern was that if he then left the company for any reason, I could be left frozen out by company directors that I had never met. We had to negotiate further, because as Alae-Carew pointed out "Without the 'moral rights' the company hadn't actually optioned anything" (Alae-Carew, 2014: Email)<sup>41</sup> and potential investors need to see a proper chain of title. It was agreed that a new clause would be entered in the redrafted agreement.<sup>42</sup> Alae-Carew was named on the document as attached producer and the key protection added for me was summed up in the new clause:

1.6 The Producer agrees that in the event that NA-C ceases to be a shareholder or employee of Haphazard or a subsequent company that is assigned the Option rights to the Screenplay, and the Option has not been exercised, the rights will revert to the writer. (*City* Option Agreement - Draft 4, 2013)

This addition to the option agreement effectively allowed my and Alae-Carew's own agreement to stand without the risk of a third party revoking the verbal agreement of rights I had with Alae-Carew. And while Blazing Griffin do indeed retain all of the moral rights of my screenplay for that two year period, there is a level of implicit trust between Alae-Carew and myself that I feel enables me to continue with the project as a full collaboration. This

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<sup>40</sup> See initial option agreement: Appendix I (p.263-71)

<sup>41</sup> See Email: Appendix D (p.255)

<sup>42</sup> See re-drafted option agreement: Appendix J (p.272-81)

situation certainly exposes the difficulties that face screenwriters when they are asked to sign an option agreement on their screenplays. Unfortunately they are not usually afforded any creative rights over their own material for the length of an agreed period once they sign the standard industry option agreement.

As mentioned, both myself and the producers have continued to develop and work on other film projects during the development of *City*, and the package continues to get stronger with every project that develops our profiles in the industry. If we can also attach an impressive lead cast member in the role of Max, it would massively improve our chances of getting a sales agent attached, and such a result subsequently improves the chances of approaching the market for cash advance for production. As a team we started out with a figure of £800k - £1 million in mind for the budget of *City*, but the market shifts quickly and where first time feature filmmakers were able to work with those budgets two or three years ago, the trends have now seen those budgets drop as micro-budget features are becoming more prominent as a staple entry for first time directors in the industry.

In this thesis, I have discussed the historical context of creating a film noir, explained and applied my own creative limitations to the screenplay and film, and tried to give a context to the marketplace through informed research of relevant examples, however, the industry continues to evolve and be shaped by the three points on the cyclical model and that puts new pressures on *City* going forward. Ultimately in the film production industry there is no guarantee of a film being 'green-lit', and as a team we can only endeavour to keep developing our package in the most professional and market informed manner possible, and hope that it attracts enough financial backing to be finished as a project. Continued development is required, and perhaps with a little sprinkling of luck, *City* may well find its way to being realised as a feature film production.

## CONCLUSION



*“C’mon, read my future for me.”*

Figure 6.1: *Quinlan* (Orson Welles), *Touch of Evil* (1958)

The purpose of this thesis was to build a practice-led research study around the development of a commercial, feature-length film production as a writer and director. The development of the film was to act as a progression for my career in the field of professional film production, and the thesis as a whole, including the practice artefacts, were developed to reveal how a practitioner who is also engaged in research can create a clearer understanding of the creative process and the film industry environment. Through using the cyclical model proposed in the introduction, I have shown a level of synthesis between the three elements within the model, *critical theory*, *creative process*, and *market forces*, and I have attempted to prove that each of those elements has an equally valid importance in film production studies as a whole. The process of developing and constructing film artefacts that are industry focused has been used in this instance to show how the three areas of the model are continuously tied to each other, regardless of any suggestion to the contrary. The written element of this thesis is, at times, an individual view of the connection between critical theory and research practice, but it is certainly problematic to suggest that my model is something that is consciously employed by every filmmaker. Filmmakers and screenwriters are not always actively engaged in the theoretical implications of what they are making, even if they have an understanding of the wider contexts within which they are working. However, my thesis attempts to expose that a theoretical basis can be applied to how filmmakers work in the *creative process* of film

production. For example, chapter two in this thesis gives an insight into the film noir criticism that affects the filmmaker, and was key to a fuller understanding of making a film within that genre. To justify the three elements within the cyclical model, I focused, at times, on a description and justification of the creative decisions that were made during the writing of the screenplay and the development of the artefacts. Additionally, I also indicated the constraints placed upon the filmmaker from the marketplace. The screenplay in chapter one, the pilot film, and the related production paperwork in the appendices have a defined industry purpose and are the proof, or practical outcomes, that justify this notion of synthesis between the three core areas in my model.

The finalised pilot film and the screenplay are ‘calling card’ elements that are designed to build a package and improve the public profile for me as a writer, director, and the producers and other collaborators who have chosen to work on, or associate themselves with the project. The pilot film specifically and the associated chapter describing the process represents how a micro-budget film is made within a practice-led research model, and how as a form of filmmaking, micro-budget differentiates from low-budget filmmaking or filmmaking with large budgets. Along with chapter four, the pilot film demonstrates the notion of how emerging filmmakers are judged on their ability to create engaging and attractive films in the micro-budget form before they can be considered a realistic prospect for public funding or investment for more costly film productions. My own progress as a filmmaker also demonstrates how filmmakers are often expected to create multiple films in this form before they will be taken seriously as potential feature film directors, because in my career to date I have made several shorts that have shown at various international festivals and won a BAFTA Scotland New Talent Award as a screenwriter. Chapter four and five in this thesis also reveal the importance of collaboration in film and how the industry needs of the writer, the director, and the producers effect the progression of a film’s development.

Public funding for film development in the UK has also been shown within this thesis to be equally focused on the package for a film, and this notion of a ‘package’ is one that drives the film industry in the UK and beyond. Public funding bodies in the UK are of course looking for creatively interesting projects, but they also demand that strong elements are in place and that the potential for success is apparent. Producer’s in development with any film need to consider this of utmost importance in securing funding. Short film funding in the public funding sector also seems to be shifting towards a package mentality. The new

NET.WORK scheme across the UK is more focused on finding pre-planned short films that can help build the attached talent towards their feature film aspirations. Because this scheme encourages filmmakers to have a clearer notion of how they intend to progress with their film careers, the development money that is available for pilot shorts would appear to be a more effective manifesto than the outdated short film scheme system that were, and still seem to be, designed to make stand-alone short films. The screenplay and pilot artefacts presented here provide the reader with an indication of my feature film aspirations for *City*, but the associated reports do reflect just how difficult it is as a first time feature filmmaker to build a successful feature film package for the UK marketplace generally.

Returning to reflect on my position as a research active filmmaker, it should be noted that much of my research is informed by tacit industry knowledge, and that the *creative process* and *market forces* would seem to be functionally more important than *critical theory* in the endeavour to get a film made. However, it has been suggested throughout this thesis that the third element within the model, *critical theory* has to be addressed before practice-led research is viable. The ongoing question regarding an artefact's ability to 'speak for itself' in a research environment is a difficult position to resolve. All of the forerunners in practice as research suggest it is vital that research includes a write up and encourages a theoretical backdrop of some sort in order to maintain a more cerebral level of approach to film production. While genre theory may seem to be the core element of critical theory that affects the creation of the artefacts in this thesis, other elements of critical theory, such as the discussions concerning the definition of a screenplay and the theoretical considerations of the market in the development of the artefacts are relevant in this thesis. Critical theory has a functional part to play alongside the creative process and market forces within the three-point model because this thesis demonstrates application of critical theory in a more general and practical way. As a filmmaker, I am not convinced that critical theory in the sense of the more formal published theory that comes from the academe has an *equal* part to play in practical filmmaking research. But filmmakers do apply critical theories in their creative decisions when developing and producing their artefacts. For example, the artefacts presented in this thesis are the elements that have driven my research and I firmly believe that they can communicate with the reader through their own forms of language. I am, however, having gone through the process of this practice-led research, still unwilling to suggest that the practice artefacts themselves constitute 'complete' research, because that would suggest that

all filmmakers are actively engaged in theoretical research. The overall research trajectory here does suggest that a written thesis is functionally still required to justify practice-led research, especially at a doctoral level, but there is definitely room for an argument to be developed otherwise, and that is an area of research that ought to be subject to a more in-depth investigation going forward. It may be possible, for example, to explore the notion of revealing the research by means of only a practice artefact, but in the current research environment there would still seem to be a need to document the process of making the artefact; something like a ‘making of’ documentary for example.

Practice as research is becoming widespread in film and what key theorists in the field, such as Biggs (2009), Smith and Dean (2009), Barrett & Bolt (2010) et al. have observed, is that there has been a recent increase of practitioners finding their way into the academic research environment—especially in the arts. I have witnessed this myself throughout the four-year time frame of this research, and ten years within the teaching of film disciplines, and I am personally part of that influx of filmmakers into the academic film environment. This shift is certainly leading to practice as research in film becoming a more prevalent field and there are various pressures in the University environment that can quantify this progression:

- A greater influx of students into the tertiary education system.
- A bigger proportion of students in film disciplines that want vocational training.
- More practice skilled staff gaining jobs in the university sector as a result of student demand.
- University demand that lecturing staff build a research profile to bolster the reputation of the institution.<sup>43</sup>

It seems that *market forces* are driving this shift because finance drives the University sector as much as it does the film industry. Other factors do of course mean that practitioners are being attracted to work in the University sector. Less permanent staff jobs in industry and more outsourcing for staff in television and film could explain why television professionals and filmmakers are shifting sector. From my own personal point of view as a screenwriter

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<sup>43</sup> See: ‘Technicians as Teachers’ (jobs.ac.uk, n.d.: Online) and Smith & Dean (2009)

and director on *City* for example, I have remained unpaid to this point, an altogether familiar situation in the modern marketplace of independent film production. Screenwriters can and do get paid for writing and developing screenplays, but the necessity to find an alternative way to earn a living leads to the need to develop a career or find work in other sectors at times, and the academic sector is the perfect environment for vocational staff who want to continue their progression as filmmakers. The broadening scope of practical film related modules and tuition at an academic level now enables practitioners to stabilise themselves financially. The film and television industries are becoming less stable due to production budgets being cut, and the digital age has brought increased competition from multi-skilled film professionals with their own equipment, who have bypassed traditional industrial apprenticeships. These may be cynical observations, but freelancers often find the ‘pay-check’ in the academic environment fundamentally steadier than the uncertainty of freelance wages. This is not a new phenomenon, but the growing market for film production and practical screenplay tuition at tertiary education levels has naturally led to practitioners joining Universities, and creating a shift in a sector that was more traditionally concerned with television and film theory. Until trends shift again, we can expect Smith and Dean’s (2009) summation that practitioners entering academic establishments will continue in new endeavours to better justify their craft in the research environment. Many practitioners have already converged into the university environment for teaching because their production experience is often seen by students and universities as better placed to give effective vocational instruction in creative practices. Recent developments in screenplay and practice-led research in film also give a strong indication that more of these practitioners are engaging in research that represents what they do. There has of course been crossovers of this type in the past, high profile examples including Truffaut and Schrader in the drama film sector as early as the 1950s prove that individual film theorists and critics have also moved in the other direction and branched out into making films. These crossovers have gradually become much more common place as film research continues to develop in the academe.

Throughout this thesis I have learned that building a career in the feature film marketplace is difficult, but also that the film industry and the academic environment for film should no longer have to be seen as separate forms or professions. Tellingly, I gained a new job as a lecturer and researcher in screenwriting and film production at the University of Lincoln during the process of this thesis. This happened, in part, because of my ongoing

immersion in the practical production of films and screenplays in an industry context, but also because I was engaged in research and teaching. Although I set out to progress my industry career in film and report upon that process with this thesis, I have in fact taken a bigger step in progressing my career in the field of academic film practice and research, and that has become an unforeseen outcome of my research. This personal progression is evidence of the dynamics in film education, and it gives an indication of various market driven pressures in the film production and university environments. It especially emphasises that the current academic sector for film has a demand for practitioners who are engaged in practice as research.

As mentioned in the introduction, problems still arise for practice-led research at times because filmmakers are often not willing to consider giving a more theoretical explanation for their work, and traditional theorists have not yet embraced the individual's personal account of the production process. However in the instances where the two disciplines are bridged or merged, filmmaking research is informative in a wholly different way. A willingness from both sides to embrace new forms of research and filmmaking is gradually becoming more commonplace now that practice as research in film is more recognised, but for the practitioner, it is still difficult to fulfil the demands of traditional research outputs because the creative process and industry does not always allow for hard factual evidence that goes beyond the artefact or the interaction that takes place around their creation. Practitioners can cite emails, interviews, empirical data, and refer to influential research, as is the case in this thesis, but ultimately it is interpretation of these elements as genuine research that will help practice as research to progress. I have in the past, like many other filmmakers, been unresponsive to taking a more theoretical approach to my practice because I also felt that the practice artefact in of itself was explanation enough of my intentions—a hangover perhaps from the experience of reading some page based theorists build models for interpreting film that I never believed best represented what I do as a practitioner. Through participating in this practice-led research endeavour however, I have realised that there is a need to include the personal experience of a film's production alongside elements of page based critical theory that have influenced me during my film's development. Only through this merger can I give evidence of the method, and other filmmakers should also be encouraged to indicate their intentions and processes in the research environment so that follow on research on a films production is privy to the true methods that were employed during production. I can

still fully embrace artefacts that have no attached written research as having a profound effect on our understanding of film production (as the films that led to the inception of the term ‘film noir’ have shown us), but I must conclude that the individual filmmaker’s report on his or her own influence, process, experience, and independent research can reveal crucial added dimensions to our understanding of film production generally.

The final conclusion of my thesis in terms of the production of *City* is cut short in a sense because due to the time restrictions of my hand in and PhD completion, the feature film production is not as yet in production. However, that tells us just as much about the industry marketplace and the ongoing processes of film development. It is likely that as I continue with *City*, new conclusions regarding specific practice elements will arise, however, the development of the existing artefacts and my engagement with industry practitioners has revealed a basis for fulfilling my initial desired outcomes. I have demonstrated that practice-led research can benefit the under researched area of film production, clearly suggested that *critical theory*, *creative process*, and *market forces* each influence filmmakers through a reflexive cycle, and I have enabled, through my own practice and research, a clearer indication of how the independent feature film marketplace in the UK functions. This thesis has also included a reflective journey of self-discovery, and I believe that this uncovers a general need for this to become a core element for the future of prevalent practice-led research in film. Practitioners and filmmakers are very much a part of the academic research environment now, and their influence is changing the notion of research discourse in film. The increasing influx of practitioners into the research environment also seems likely to continue while Universities continue to connect more and more with students’ demands for practice orientated tuition. Pressure on Universities to employ experienced practitioners in film production who can also evidence a research agenda is creating a snowball effect for practice as research in film, and a generation from now, should that current trend continue, practice-led researchers in film will have fully bridged the dichotomy between film production and film research, and that will create a more comfortable alignment between filmmakers and film researchers generally.

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### E-MAIL CORRESPONDANCE

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Crum, N. (2011) *Re: City Notes* [Email] Message to Mikey Murray sent 12<sup>th</sup> August 2011.  
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Schmidt, T. (2015) *Mikey* [Email] Message to Mikey Murray sent 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2015. Appendix H

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## APPENDIX A

TRANSCRIPT: Naysun Alae-Carew & Nicholas Crum Interview - 8<sup>th</sup> September, 2012 (Glasgow).

Naysun Alae-Carew and Nicholas Crum are two film producers working in Glasgow. Naysun won the Scottish New Talent BAFTA for best first time producer in 2011, and both he and Nic now work under the banner of *Blazing Griffin*. They are attached to produce Mikey Murray's debut feature film.

MM: What first attracted you to working with Writer/Director Mikey Murray?

NA-C: I met Mikey with a couple of other people from Haphazard Media when we went to a film event in Dundee that was connected to doing film work with kids. We just got talking at the networking event after the session as it turned out that the session we were there for turned out to be a bit of a non-event. It was at a time when we had just started our company professionally and we were trying to make money doing corporate films and that kind of thing which was why we were at the event. But we were still looking to find the creative direction of our company. We only really had one director at the time that we were working with and who we are still working with, Ryan McHendry and we will be shooting a film with him at the start of next year. I think for me I was just always looking for, what is it that we want to make? And who do we want to make these things with from the creative angle? I'm not really interested and never really have been that interested in corporate kind of things. So just through chatting with Mikey we just hit it off in terms of liking each other from a personal perspective and I've always put a lot of stock in that. I'm not interested in making films and putting myself through the incredibly hard work that making any film is if I'm not doing it with people that I like, and who I share a certain perspective with on the films that we are making. It's such a difficult industry and to do any one project takes so long that if you are not certain that you can be friends as well as colleagues with the people that are in your core creative team then there is just no point. That's what I think anyway. So we hit it off very well just on a personal level and after we left, Mikey sent us through a few different projects that he had. So he sent us through three features over the course of the next few months and one short which was called Natalie which was of immediate interest to us, partly because of the talent that Mikey had access to. Kate Dickie was interested in the lead role and that was of interest to us because we wanted to do something that was of higher value, a bit more grown up and the subject was really interesting too, it was transgender and I thought it would be nice to make a film that had a reason to make it. More than just a great story, but a great story with something behind it as well. Mikey showed us his short which he won a new talent BAFTA for and it just showed that Mikey understood actors, he understood a script and I think the important thing for me was that he understood the composition of each shot. Breaking, the short that he showed us was stylized. It was low-budget, the camera and the stuff it was shot with unfortunately makes it look like, these days, something anyone could do, but a few years ago not that many people had access to, but looking beyond the quality of the camera, the signature that was in the lighting and that was in the composition of the shots really interested me and made me want to keep pursuing the possibilities of making a short film with Mikey.

NC: For me it was a case of Naysun had met Mikey at this event and basically gave me a call and said, I've met this director who's got a great short, I'll send it through to you. So Naysun sent through the script and I had a read, instantly loved it to be fair. It was very well written, it was a really interesting story and the subject matter was very different. At the time we were reading quite a lot of short films or I was reading quite a lot of short films and it was very different to everything else that I had read. And Naysun is usually a very good judge of character and had met Mikey already so it was a case of, shall we produce this? Yes lets go. So I came up to Dundee for a meeting – the first meeting we had and again we hit it off fairly quickly in that meeting.

MM: We'd initially planned to make this short together but then we moved off of that. What were the key factors that made you guys decide that we should move off of that idea and make a feature film instead?

NC: There was a lot of to-ing and fro-ing about it. I think it was a case of we really wanted to make the short because it was a great short and we really wanted to work with Mikey and make that work but at the same time we were getting to a stage where we were less interested in making shorts, we didn't want to make a short and be done, we were looking already to making features. Features was where we wanted to be, what we really wanted to make, and so we were always thinking what is the next stage. And given that Mikey already had three feature scripts that he had sent through to us. We had a good read of them and all of them had their own merits and all of them were good in their own ways and I think it was a natural development of; we want to make a feature instead of a short, why don't we make a feature? Let's just go straight for it.

NA-C: I think in terms of our development we met Mikey at a really interesting time. He was quite instrumental in the finishing of a short that we shot in spring of 2010. We shot a short called *Zombie Musical*. Mikey came down to Dumfries and we spent one entire night editing the film, not going to sleep at all, and giggling a lot and it ended up making the film really good – which I probably haven't thanked Mikey enough for. And out of that short film we were noticed by a few companies, but we signed a co-production deal with the production company Black Camel Pictures in Glasgow and it just put us on the map in terms of the Scottish industry and in terms of us thinking maybe this journey towards making feature films doesn't have to be as long or as arduous as we thought. It's still long and arduous, absolutely it still has been, but I think that just made us think, well at this point, with this having happened, what's the most effective, the quickest, most efficient method for us to make feature films, because that's the goal, that's what we want to do for the next 40 years, 50 years whatever and that's what Mikey wants to do as well. And while Natalie was such a good story, and we thought for a while, as Nic said we were to-ing and fro-ing. We were thinking, is there a Natalie feature film in there? Or is there a short out of one of the feature scripts of Mikey's that we could make instead that would get Mikey on the map in terms of the festival circuit for us to then make the feature? We just in the end though, there is nothing really stopping us at this point from just going for it; we have a strong script, we now understand the industry, and during the development of *City* as a script we were developing and getting to understand the international film industry and our place as virgining film producers within it and the two just sort of coincided.

NC: It was just a case of the timing made sense for us to make a feature, not a short essentially.

NA-C: And we have got *City* to such a stage that we are just about to shoot *Zombie Musical* the feature that came out of our short film and by the time *City* has passed through the next few stages of its development in terms of attaching cast and looking for HOD's, and just getting a full package together for investors it'll be the perfect time to do *City*, so it has ended up working very well from my perspective anyway.

MM: When you first got the screenplay, what were your first impressions? What were your initial concerns about what would have to change with it?

NC: My first impressions were that it was another interesting world that Mikey had created. I think it's funny because we had three of his feature scripts to read at the one time to compare each of them. *City* for me was a combination of a really interesting story, a really interesting world, and it made sense for us at the time of what we were doing and where we wanted to go. There were lots of avenues that we had already thought we could do and all the other kind of transmedia things that could come out of this project. We instantly saw a package with that film, that screenplay. I think the opportunity to kinda go down something that's as stylized as *City* can be and will be something that is really interesting, very different to any of the other things we were planning. I think that's what really drew me to the script.

NA-C: I just really like Noir. I just have always loved it.

MM: But it wasn't really a Noir when you got it.

NA-C: Well it was, but it wasn't.

MM: It kinda was. I guess fundamentally it was.

NA-C: It was more of a kinda straight thriller, drama, if that's something, at the time when we first got the *City* script. But it already had, at its core, this moral ambiguity of the hero and of what the villains are doing, and I just like that. I like it when things are not clear cut, when your heroes and villains...it leaves it...the audience has to make a decision while they are watching and after they have watched whether they think what occurred is right or wrong. To me that is interesting, that's what film...that's where a lot of power comes from film, making us question ourselves and I could see that within it. I could see, having seen Mikey's previous shorts, how his style to me fit better with that script than it did with *The Golden Road* which was a road movie, and it was a lot of comedy, and I wasn't necessarily entirely sure how Mikey would handle comedy...I mean maybe he would handle it fine – we'll see (laughs). And *Across the Water*, which in some ways would have been easier to do. We could have made that much more manageable. It was a thriller, action, revenge kind of film, but just a bit less interesting for me as a story because I found it a bit less involving. *City* stood out, as Nic says. To me it was still finding its place when we first got it because Mikey had transposed it from being set in America, to being in the UK and that meant it didn't quite know what world it was set in yet and that's where I felt the most work was required, in really understanding its identity, visually and as a world where we set what is happening. I think that is where most of the development has actually happened in the past couple of years. The

story has remained very much the same, with the characters being fleshed out and everyone has different opinions on how we do that, but to me I wanted to be sure that we could create something interesting with that world. It was definitely there as a seed in that script, but it needed to be brought out.

MM: Initially you came to me and said it needs to be more of a genre film. Sci-Fi was discussed initially, but ultimately I came back to you and said this is a Film Noir. What is it about Film Noir that makes you think, that is a feasible option? What is it about Noir that makes you think, yes, that's what it needs to be?

NC: I think it is just a really interesting genre. I think every now and then it is nice to do something darker. There is so much you can do with Noir while staying within its constraints....You know what I mean? I know what I mean (laughs). That's the important thing, I know what I mean. It's a really interesting genre and it's something that I have always wanted to kind of play with. There is a lot of Noir lacking in Britain and the thing that interested me is that you've got this kind of crime, thriller and this kinda cop drama, if you will, but Britain had kinda gone this way of...it's all very gritty. I hate gritty.

NA-C: Yeah. Gritty, London-centric crime. Action Crime drama stuff which just...I mean it can be fun, but I just have no interest in and its frustrating that that's really the only kind of crime films that are coming out of the UK when I think we're capable of a lot more and doing something which is much more original as opposed to thinking that the British audience is only going to consume one kind of crime film. I mean that's not even true, I don't know why it's that way because we consume so much American crime and I think...not that we are making an American film, but I think that there's a lot the UK film industry can learn from the stories and the way some of those stories are being told in the American industry. Like I say, I don't want to make an American film, but there is something about forging something new, doing something new and different in the UK for this kind of film. It's quite exciting.

NC: I agree. It was an interesting choice and I think as soon as you said Film Noir with the script, it instantly made sense. You know there were still elements where we were thinking we'd make it noirish with a kind of Sci-Fi element and you know we'd kinda play around with these things, but as the development went on it become more and more obvious that it is a Noir, the script was always Noir at its core, so I think that was where it needed to go. I think it was just one of those moments, one of those things where somebody says something and you go, well of course it is – that's what it should be, it's what it always was and I dunno why we didn't think of that in the first place.

NA-C: From a practical perspective Noir makes a lot of sense as well. I mean we, as Mikey says, we initially thought we've got to make this more genre, basically for the reason that we're new film makers that have to show that people will want to watch the films that we make, so that people will trust us with their money and the easiest path of least resistance to doing that is making something that falls fairly neatly within genre film. Of course there's lots of other ways of getting films made, but just in terms of the path that I could see - we could see as being the easiest way to making film a sustainable business for us as opposed to one passion project after the next where we're struggling really hard to generate the budget and make sure people want to watch it and all of that, it was let's get in this door first. So that was why initially we thought let's try and not put it in a box, but give it that identity so that

both financiers and audience could both grab at it and say, cool this is the kinda film that I wanna watch. Noir has that. Noir has a passionate audience, it may not be that large the audience, but it can expand beyond its core audience as well as has been shown by a lot of films recently that are doing things, not necessarily strictly Noir, but are doing it in a Noir style visually. We've talked about *The Town*. *Drive* is one that has been really successful recently and one of the constant references we've always had is *Children of Men*, again it's not strictly Noir, but it has these visual elements which audiences...it appeals to an audience and I think we can do the same thing with *City*. From a practical point of view, in terms of making the film, Noir is really good as well because you can create an amazing image with almost nothing (laughs) apart from lights, and a wall, and a character. And so you can get this production value out of it without needing a thousand extras and cars exploding or anything like that. You can make it look incredible with very little and I think that is key for us knowing how we are going to use the budget that we manage to get in the end.

MM: Is Film Noir a genre?

NA-C: (Laughs) Do we really need to come in on that discussion?

MM: What is the projected budget? What made you decide that was the budget we should be going for? Perhaps you can discuss Sarah's Radclyffe's involvement.

NC: As *City* was developing we were looking at the different avenues that *City* could go down to push the film as far forward as possible. The North West was organising a support scheme for emerging producers in the area called 'Produced By'. It was run by *North West Vision and Media* and the mentors on it were Kate Myers and Tracy Broom from *Forward Films* and essentially the idea was to support six emerging producers from the North West with the development of their first feature film. So we went in with *City* and got on, which was brilliant. And through that, *City* developed in terms of the strategy of how to put the film out there and how to reach the market with the script as opposed to specifically script development. Through that we got a mentor who was Sarah Radclyffe. I sent the script down to her before our initial meeting and it was one of those things where you kinda wish that something will happen, you dream something will happen, and it kinda did which was very strange. But anyway we got down there and she essentially loved the script, thought it was brilliant and was instantly like, I'll come on board as Executive Producer, which we were like – Okay, sounds good, why not? And so Sarah came on board and instantly starting helping with the development of the whole project, you know working closely with Mikey and us with the script and kinda helped us really work out what's the best way to do the script; what's the kinda budget that we should be aiming for? Discussions were going back and forth and we were hitting all sorts of different numbers. We started off quite low and we were talking about a couple of hundred thousand, really trying to do it as low budget as possible given that we were so new. I think we saw that as a number that was manageable for us and that would really push the limits of the script but that it was something we could do. But then we were talking about a bit higher, like a couple of million to try and do it. It all came around and through discussions with Sarah it was a case of around a million pounds was where we kind of settled as a budget for *City*. On the back of her experience saying, I think that was something that would work and the way the script was developing it was a number that was working. But I also think that the projects Naysun was working on with *Black Camel* were around a similar sort of level which means we were getting experience of working at that

kinda million pound level... A) We thought it was achievable for us. B) More importantly we thought it was achievable for the script.

NA-C: Yeah. I think that's it. For me I was getting experience at that level – understanding that you can achieve a lot of films on a million pounds and the difference between two hundred thousand and two million is actually not that much in terms of what you can actually achieve on screen, so it becomes more of a question of, what is it that we actually expect we can get and how would we piece together that budget to make it the most effective film and also to give it a value in the marketplace. So a film like *City* with new producers and a new director might not have that high a value in the distribution market, so we have to think fairly clearly about what the film's value is when we put it to that market, and if we make it for two million there would easily be a chance that we would never see a penny from having sold the film. Hopefully that wouldn't be the case (laughs), but at a million, just recently it's become, in the past couple of years, it's the budget in the UK that just makes sense for these kind of films. And as Nic says we understand how to achieve production value on that kind of budget. It's achievable, ideally with support from the *BFI*, from *Creative Scotland* after we have made *Zombie Musical*, and through getting a sales agent attached, which is our next big thing once we have put together our whole investment package. We will want to be taking it to the market and talking to sales agents, some of which we already know, we have worked with before and getting possibly some pre-sales on it. Getting a sales advance and Sarah Radclyffe helping a lot with that; amazingly she has said you can use me as much as you like to get finance which is for us incredible because she is a name, she founded *Working Title*, you know – she's big. So that helps us incredibly in terms of being trusted to be able to have pre-sales in the film market and then on top of that you've got your 20% tax credit from the UK government which is very helpful for British film; which this is. And potentially if required some gap financing, cash flow and VAT from a co-producer type in the UK, which I'd rather avoid personally. I mean the fees involved in that are probably about one hundred thousand pounds out of your budget, so if we can piece together 850,000 pounds without needing gap financing I would take that over trying to get 1.2 with some...it wouldn't make any sense the pain involved and then the split required for revenue at the end is not worth it.

MM: You've mentioned how you aim to piece together the package, but is there anything else you would like to say about how we make our money back as filmmakers?

NC/NA-C: How we make our money back?

MM: What do we need to do to make back the budget of this film?

NC: I think in terms of us making the money back, our main focus with it will be to get a UK distributor. That is number one on our list of what we will need essentially. Again that is something we are starting thinking about now and is something that you kind of push straight away in terms of getting a sales agent attached.

NA-C: Hypothetically, in the UK market these days we are unlikely to get an advance from a UK distributor that's more than...150,000 pounds is probably pushing it. They used to pay a lot more for this stuff, but as a result of the economy we're unlikely to get that. Unless there is a feeding frenzy for it, which you never know, there might be, but we can't bank on that. Actually making money from the UK probably wouldn't be that hard (Laughs). Well I mean,

yeah...you don't have to push that many units to make back your 150,000 pounds and plus your P and A (Press and Advertising), but what is harder to do is raise the finance in the first place. We'd be aiming for, around about, in terms of global sales, you'd want to achieve direct sales to distributors for about two and a half million dollars which means that we probably would see anything out of that, but it is probably the most that we could expect as producers in terms of sales to distributors unless we have a break-out hit. Out of that we'd probably see fifty to one hundred thousand pounds, its not for us that much but it does still leave the possibility of getting some profit from sales themselves.

NC: I think again it comes back to the strength of choosing to make it a genre film. In terms of recouping those monies, genre films do tend to sell well to DVD. The problem is it is very speculative saying where you might make your money back.

NA-C: I'll tell you what the ideal is. The ideal is that we wouldn't pre-sale to the UK. That we pre-sale to a few other markets; Germany, Scandinavia, not the States, Middle-East, Russia maybe. These kinda quite big ones, but not that big. We pre-sale to them, we keep back the UK and we keep back the US and we make an amazing movie – which we will do - that when people watch, when distributors see it they understand the value and they'll pay us after we've made it. That is how we *really* make money back. There is no guarantee that that's how we do it, but that's the ideal, because with a US and a UK sale on a high value film without needing to have any advance, so we're not paying any fees on top of it or anything like that, it's straight money in the bank we could have made back two thirds, probably half of the budget just from those two sales. And with the real distinct possibility of, because they like it, putting a good P & A spend on it and then actually getting some money back from a theatrical release. A theatrical release in the UK on 300 screens would make us our money. After that it would be brilliant, if we had more screens than that, so much the better. That would be the ideal. We can't plan for that. We have to plan for the fact that we won't make any money out of the film because that is what UK independent producing is like...and it is a film that gets really good reviews, and is well made, and makes people see Mikey as a real talent, and us having the ability to make great films so they will trust us with a bigger budget in the future and we'll get Mikey an agent in LA or whatever he desires...to do something bigger and better, that is the more likely scenario I would have thought. If we make a great film – which we will.

MM: Do you want to say anything about Marketing?

NA-C: BFI asked us about marketing. We're not in the business of marketing (laughs). I mean its annoyingly...not annoyingly, but in some ways it is great...the rise of social media and all of this stuff has meant that producers can have more control over the brand of their film, but you know it's powerful, but not all that powerful for non-established brands. The stuff that social media marketing and all distributors and all these kind of guys are all looking at this and they are thinking, how do we get our numbers up on facebook. But really, I think people are beginning to realise after these past four or five years of getting really excited by this that social media is only really effective when you've got people interested by a product in the first place. There's a real product or a real name that people engage with in real life or in other sources, then they like it on *Facebook* or start talking about it on *Twitter*. Nothing else can be relied upon...of course there are exceptions to these but that's not a business model for marketing at all. So I know that a lot of agencies are interested to see what kind of

numbers we are generating online and how we are going to push forward the brand, and it's not that we are not thinking about that, but I think for us, for me, the most important thing is making the product good enough for people to start talking about it and that's really the thing that matters. It's not changed that much from ten years ago; people thought it had, but I really don't think it has for this kind of product.

MM: How important is it to get a star attached?

NC: I think it is one of those things that is very up and down in terms of attaching a star. In terms of star power there's not really anyone other than someone like Will Smith and we're not going to cast him, sadly. So in terms of casting a bankable star, I don't think you can put everything on that anymore. At the same time I think attaching a name is more important in terms of the industry now as opposed to the market. In terms of getting our financing it's really important for us to attach a star or a name.

NA-C: But it in no way guarantees sales after that.

NC: Exactly.

MM: It helps massively doesn't it? If you have a sellable commodity that you can put on the poster...that is your main anchor?

NA-C: Absolutely. But it isn't a guarantee of success. Also you don't necessarily need it because audiences sometimes do go and see things without a star. But yeah, it lowers the risk, which is what the market is interested in. It lowers the risk of no one going to see it (laughs). So getting a star that is...just a good actor fits well.

NC: I think that's the key though. I think that's the shift. I think that the market are looking for the better actors and recognise the better actors. I think because the market is responding to better performances, they are looking for the real immersion into the world as opposed to, that's a Tom Cruise movie, I'm gonna go and watch that. It's not about that anymore, it's about the fantastic performances that you get, it's about the James McAvoy's that are you know constantly different and are creating a name for themselves and very much a bankable name in the industry as well as the market.

NA-C: As far as you can get bankable.

NC: People are less interested in watching another generic star movie. It is because the market has reverted back to a real interest in story, everything comes down to story. It means that getting a star, as Naysun says, mitigates the risk. You can try to put numbers against it, but it comes down to story, there are plenty of examples.

NA-C: I'll be really interested to see how the new *Dredd* film does. It is an action film, sci-fi universe that's all stunts and action and the star of the film doesn't take his helmet off; that was a big thing when they made it in the 90s. They made the new *Dredd* for 40 million dollars which is really cheap. I feel that one of the reasons they felt they could do it is because audiences are changing. They don't need Sly Stallone to take off his helmet; I don't know if they ever did (laughs). But it's only 40 million dollars, yeah that's a lot of money but

there is way more chance of making your money back on that than a 250 million dollar movie and you can afford to be truer to the story and the characters. I think that is the same thing for us. We are looking for a million pounds, we can go for someone like Cillian Murphy who we think would be amazing for it – we get him and that is incredible for us. He's not the biggest star, but in terms of what we can make the film for, he could be a real asset. Instead of making 2 million dollars in sales he could make us 3 or 4 million dollars. It's all about cost/benefit, making a product that on the one hand is a good product because it maintains its artistic integrity, and people respond really well to that, it maintains its focus on story and character, all of that kind of stuff at the same time as making a product that you understand is made for the right value, and is made for people to want to actually go and watch, to consume. An interesting balance of business and art, which is why film is awesome.

MM: It's going to be a good film.

NA-C: I really think that's the key. Honestly, when you are working with a million pounds. When you are working with 100 million, it can be a great film and not make its money back. But with a million pounds the key is just making it good.

MM: Is the key, getting a good critical response?

NA-C: Yes. Then worldwide you are going to make your money. If it is a shit film, which is what most of them are at a million pounds, it's not going to make its money. It's not that hard...

MM: But it's strange how at the top end of the budget scale you can make a shit film and still make money.

NA-C: Yes. That's a completely different market.

## APPENDIX B

TRANSCRIPT: Barnaby Southcombe Interview – 21<sup>st</sup> February, 2014 (London).

Barnaby Southcombe's debut feature film as a writer/director was *I, Anna* (2012) which was made with a budget of £3million. Barnaby was an experienced television director in the UK, before making this film and his London based production company, Embargo Films continues to develop feature film productions.

MM: I'm interested in *I, Anna* because it was sold as a Noir.

BS: Was it miss-sold?

MM: No I don't think so. Perhaps we can discuss that later. Can you tell me a bit about how the project started and why this story in particular?

BS: Stories happen to you I think, and very much in the case of this one. I was developing something with my producer (Peter Vossen) completely different and we were struggling with the adaptation and it was getting worse instead of better. With every draft it was getting more and more confused so he gave me this book that was out of print; he had remembered reading it as a teenager. He is German and he remembers it from Germany, it had created a bit of a buzz and was quite controversial at the time. He plonked it on my desk and said, "Have a look at this, and see if there is anything in there that you like". And then it was really this woman that became the real focus for me. She is the focus of the novel, the novel is an internal monologue and it is hers. Also there is the cop, and the sidekick and this teenager; each one is kind of talking their point of view. But it was really the story of this woman that I felt was intriguing and it spoke to me from an emotional point of view. I thought it was interesting this idea of having to go back into the marketplace of love as an older woman, and that kind of feeling of vulnerability. And then what I liked about that straightforward drama was that it was framed in this murder investigation, and that is how she meets the man that she should have met before.

MM: Can you tell me a bit about how the process developed? So what happened when you decided to adapt this book into a screenplay, and how did you get the budget together?

BS: Well with any adaptation, you need to start with the rights, and with this being our first film we didn't do it the right way around. They always say don't engage emotionally with it because one, you are kind of doomed at a negotiating stage because you are too involved emotionally. You have to be prepared to walk away. And two, What is the point in starting on something if somebody else has the rights? The rights were available...it had been made as a German TV movie and so the novel rights were held by the German production company and they held all rights and remake rights. We didn't want to do a remake, we wanted to go back to the novel; the German film focused very much on the cop and I felt that wasn't really the focus of the story. It had been a passion project for this German producer and she was very slow in getting to the rights. Originally I hadn't planned to write it, we were going to get somebody to do that, but it would have been crazy to have hired a writer to do it when we

didn't have the rights. The process took so long, that out of frustration I started to do some of the leg-work, i.e. breaking down the novel into scenes, and because it was more or less a monologue, I started pulling all of the action out of the novel and saw where that left me. And then we still didn't have the rights, so I thought, I'll do a treatment on it. This was in-between doing TV; I've done quite a lot of TV and I was doing this in between going off and doing TV gigs. So over the process of about two years, I did more and more work on this. I did a treatment and then I did a beat sheet and we still couldn't negotiate on the rights, so I thought fuck it, I'll just write the script. I thought at least that is something, and then a writer could still come in...but I wrote the script and still didn't have the rights. Then we all had a look at it and thought, well actually it is quite good, we quite like it and finally we did get the rights. We had a screenplay and a second draft and I felt that I was emotionally invested in the subject matter and I wanted to continue writing it. We certainly paid for it in the long run because by the time we were ready to play hard-ball at the negotiating table, we were so invested in it that we ended up giving in to everything and paying over the odds for the rights to the novel, you know for something that was out of print and doesn't have great commercial value except for us. Again, that was a hard lesson, learnt the hard way.

MM: And how did you progress into raising the finance?

BS: Well first, as with any funding, it is really cast dependent. Being a first time director you are kind of an irrelevance and so it is very much about who your partners are and we developed this without the support of a funding body. We didn't have that industry support, so the route to market for that is cast and so I had written it with my mother (Charlotte Rampling) and Gabriel Byrne in mind. I sent a treatment early on to my mother which she didn't like; she turned it down. I was a bit surprised and a bit hurt obviously, but I was convinced that she wasn't seeing the right side of it so it took writing the script for her to understand what it was. I came back with a script and sent it to her agent, to try and get *her* on side. Jean read it and thought it was great, so she officially submitted it with a note of support from her. Then she read it, saw what it was, and agreed to be in it. Then it was a process of approaching Gabriel and seeing how he felt about it and that took almost nine months. There was a great interest from him and certainly a desire to work with Charlotte but he was very busy, so his availability wasn't very good. I just thought, the way this is going to happen is that they've got to meet. We have got to get the two of them sitting down face to face, because this could just go on forever otherwise. I said to mum, just let me know when you are in New York, because Gabriel lives in New York. I said, when you are in New York for whatever reason, give me some lead-time and I'm going to set up a meeting. So she was doing a documentary there and so I called the agent and said, "Oh, Charlotte is in New York shooting, and I'm going to be there too. It would be great for the three of us to have coffee". So we organised that and I basically booked a plane and went off hoping that this wasn't going to be cancelled last minute. But we did meet the three of us, and it was then you could just see the chemistry already between them. They were very excited and intrigued by each other and I could see that everything that I had in my head was going to play out on screen. And so that really was the moment where we got their full commitment and we could start building. Of course this is not the way things happen in financing because if you waited for all of these things to happen in sequence you would be 25 years down the line. Agents don't want to talk to you until you have financing in place, and of course you can't get financing in place if you don't have cast.

MM: Tell me about it.

BS: (laughs). So what do you do? You lie, that's what you do (laughs). You call up the agent and you say, "Yes we've got financing in place", and so then you kind of have to bluff your way through and convince them that you do. And then and only then will they kind of consider. Then you rush out and try and sort out your funding. Everything is happening at the same time, you've got artists who aren't committing, so you have to gauge everything so that you are talking to agents, you are talking and they are considering and it is not a formal attachment. The ideal obviously is getting a letter of interest, that is the Holy Grail, and if you can get that then you are in a really good place but it tends not to happen because they wouldn't really be entertaining you if you hadn't got your partners in place already. So all these things, a kind of juggling act of going to financiers and going to distributors. I'll go back now; that was the journey to cast.

MM: So you had the two leads, but no other cast attached at that point?

BS: Yeah. No one else at that point, but that is kind of all you need. Depending on the film, but you either need your hero or your romantic pairing. Whatever the defining roles are you kind of need to have at least one or two. If you have Christian Bale for your spec script then you are kind of alright. What tends to happen is that you get one and then you use them to draw for the other. So you start off the process... We've got Charlotte Rampling and we are in talks with Gabriel Byrne, and then depending on how you have weighed it up you start changing your adjectives with the level of attachment for your artists, but you have to be quite cautious with it. Financiers and distributors are very good at sussing out what level of commitment you have. Having been on the other side of things now you tend to know when people have a genuine in, or if it is just complete pie in the sky. Do they love Daniel Day Lewis for the part or are they actually talking to the agent, has the actor even read the script, have they had a meeting? There are all kinds of levels where we can start to stress test the bullshit monitor. So then the process... Felix Vossen, who was the producer who gave me the novel and started to develop the project with me, we were both working full-time. I was doing a lot of TV stuff and he was working in financial markets and we had got it to the stage where we were starting to have a little bit of traction, but it would keep falling apart because I would go away and start doing a gig for three or four months and any momentum we had built up would just disappear. It got to a stage where one of us was going to have to go full-time, just commit to it and take the leap of faith. And we decided it would be me just because I had been doing most of the development work. So what happened was that I...and a good way in if you haven't got support of funding bodies like *BFI* or *Creative Scotland* or whatever is to go to these co-production markets. In this case there were opportunities of elements that we could use with other countries, we had cast who were interesting to other countries, so we started looking for partners in France and Germany and Ireland as well to see if there was co-producing opportunities. And what it is quite good at doing is that, you submit to these things and if you get selected, there is only about twenty projects. Attached to festivals they will have side bar things which are talent nurturing campuses and schemes. I think Berlin started it about 10 years ago and that became the biggest one. And so you submit to any funding organisation, you submit your proposal and they whittle it down to twenty. And so the fact that they have whittled you down to twenty means that there are people who have noticed your project out of the sea of stuff out there; there is some kind of curating there. And the brilliant thing is that it gives access to people like us to meet and talk to producers,

distributors and sales agents who come and you can pitch to them. So you have two days of intense pitching, which is very difficult because you have to line up the amount of meetings that might normally take a year. So it is really a good thing, and because they have a 50% hit rate, 50% percent of the films every year have virtually been made, so that means that if your film makes it to a co-production market you have a one in two chance that your film is actually going to get made. So that is very positive and now a lot of the festivals are actually doing it. Rotterdam are doing it, Cannes are doing it and the first one that I got into was the first year of this tiny festival called Les Arcs in France. It was the first year so I guess they were a bit softer on the criteria and the project got selected and I went out because it was a pitching thing and I was better placed to pitch it. At that event I met all of the regional funders in Germany for film funding and I pitched to all of them, and there had been a spotlight on Germany for this first event, so I met a whole bunch of German producers, a few of which took interest in the film and I sent them the script. They said, look we can make this a co-production and I hadn't even thought that we could involve Germany. The good thing was that suddenly the funding bodies were aware of the project, I'd found a German co-producer, we then got in to the Berlin co-production market and we kind of got the most amount of requests for meetings at that market and we made the front page of *Variety* as the hot ticket of the Berlin co-production market. So suddenly there was a bit of a spotlight on the project, there was interest, a bit of heat, and we got some meetings from distributors who had previously gone, "Who?". We had some traction with the project. Before that, we thought that because Charlotte and Gabriel were names in France that it would make for a good UK/French co-production, and so we'd got an experienced producer there already in place, but we were really struggling with pre-selling the film. People just didn't want to take a risk on a first timer, which I'm sure you will find is the greatest obstruction to getting your first film made yourself. So that is what you need to overcome, you need to try and get as many experienced producers, or exec-producers; the package just needs to get stronger and you need to get experienced people, DoPs, whatever it kind of is to show that you are going to be alright and that people are going to be able to hold your hand when things go wrong. So we had a French co-producer but we weren't getting anywhere with pre-sales. And it wasn't until the German producer came in and we applied for and got regional funding from the Hamburg Film Fund and it was quite a lot of money, 500,000 Euros. That became a cornerstone. What you will find is that you'll get people who are interested, but they won't commit. They'll like the script, they'll like you, they'll like the package, but because it is all new nobody wants to jump first. So you'll have a lot of positive feedback but they'll say, come and see us when you have X. Come and see us when you have a sales agent, come and see us when you have a distributor. Whatever it is you don't have, they'll say come and see us when you've got it. Like being able to approach actors without financing, again it is the chicken and egg thing. The tricky thing with financing is that you can't lie about that because you have either got it or you don't. You *can* get to cast because ultimately agents kind of know that you have to go through the whole song and dance, so some of them are quite understanding... well to a limit, some of them aren't understanding at all. But as far as financing is concerned it takes two seconds for them to find out, they are constantly meeting at festivals and fairs and stuff, so you can't really fudge that one. So getting something like regional soft funding is an important one because that is in writing. Then we went to *Benelux*. Benelux is sold as one territory, but in fact it is Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg and they are always sold as a threesome. So the distributors are across the three countries, because they are quite small territories. But, they are actually quite cash rich and they take risks, I don't know why, but they do. Whether it is because they can get their money back over three territories or what I

don't know. They certainly take more risks than UK distributors. And so we then sold Benelux to *ABC distribution*, and they have released some Francois Ozon films, lots of really solid art house stuff, so that was good. Then we approached *Artificial Eye* here, I mean we approached all of the distributors to be honest, but they thought it was too expensive and too arty for them. And of course the actors were too old for most distributors, so then we were looking at really art house distributors who could never give us any money at all, or we were looking at *Artificial Eye*. You said you were going to be talking about how the market shapes things...what does happen, is that the market *does* tell you, and that is kind of interesting. We were thinking okay, we'd love this to be a kind of *Momentum* or *Optimum* type film, although they have been absorbed now into other companies, *Optimum* is now *Studio Canal* and *Momentum* is now *E1*. And we had met all of these guys, we had gone in to pitch to them and it just wasn't for them and we were now starting to see where our film was getting some kind of reaction. So that starts to shape the nature of the budget, it also confirms...and if it doesn't confirm it, at least it crystallises what your film is creatively, what its commercial potential is; how broad, how niche, how genre your film is. When you start to get people like *Artificial Eye*, like *ABC*, the *Hamburg Film Fund*, they are all kind of artsy institutions, so you are starting to *get* where your film is going to sit. So we went to *Artificial Eye* and they said, okay, we will take the film, but we won't pay you for it. And wow, we were like okay that's a nice offer, *but* we did feel that *Artificial Eye* was such a prestigious brand, and that it was a really good thing for the film to be released and what we were struggling with was that in France and the UK we had no support from the industry, so it was starting to look a bit weird that we just had this German film even though it was a very British film with British actors. So getting a pre-sale, German regional funding and now a UK distributor, the package was starting to really take shape. So then we had a little mini moment of kind of a bidding war from sales agents. Suddenly there was interest. We were a marketable commodity and we had three offers from sales agents. The people we decided to go with were a German company and at the time they were called *Bavaria International*, they had done a lot of art house German stuff and were looking to branch out into English language fare. They had good relationships with the festivals, and to digress a little bit, sales agents are not just carpet salesmen, they are actually very important for festival submission. What happens is that in the sea of 3000 films that get submitted to all the big festivals every year, it is very difficult for programmers to see it all and that is the harsh reality. So what they do is they look to people who have taste that they like and know, and sales agents are a very good gauge of that. So then they can go to the sales agents that have the opinion they like, like curators. You will see the sales agents who hit the main festivals, surprise, surprise they will have one, two, three, four, five films in every festival and that's not because they have better films, it's just that they have a relationship with the festival programmers. So they can be like, I've got this Noir film with Charlotte Rampling and Gabriel Byrne, will you have a look at it? It is no guarantee, but what they can do is get it seen, and the hardest thing is getting your film seen. Sales agents are very useful and they tend to only take films that correspond to their slate, but you should be aware of what their catalogue is. It depends on what you feel is the most important journey for your film; is it a festival film, is it a theatrical film, is it a bit of both? And ideally it is, but that tends to be less and less so now. Is it a real genre sell through video, VOD thing, which is probably the thing that makes the most sense commercially, if you have people you know or family investing then that is probably the most sensible market to go for. After you get past the excitement of having someone say that they will take you on, you probably just want to make sure that they understand the type of film that you want to make. If you want to make something really obscure and artsy and they are used to working with

straight to video horror, you don't want them to be stuck with something that they can't shift and you are going to be stuck with something that is never going to get in front of the proper festival selection committees.

We felt that our sales agent had enough pedigree, but because they were also trying to get into English language fare, they were being very aggressive with the amount of money they could forward. And at the time of making the film, sales agents weren't putting up minimum guarantees anymore, so they were saying we will take your film and sell it for you, but we won't give you any money, we will only give you a commission. That's great if you can make the film, but you are getting into a situation where *Artificial Eye* weren't giving us any money for the distribution, so how do you make the film? You can't ask everyone to work for free. And having done TV, my journey wasn't the micro-budget route, I had a very clear visual ambition for the film and I couldn't do it with a DV camera running around the streets. So I needed a certain amount of money, there will never be enough I know, but I needed some presales and this company *Bavaria*...when you have that little flurry of activity, you can push the price up. The first people come in and say, we like it, we'll take it for zero, and we'll give you a commission. But then we say, but these guys like it too, and they are like, oh okay and then you can go back and forth. We managed to get some money together from that. So we had *Artificial Eye*, and we went with them because it kind of benchmarked the quality of the film. If *Artificial Eye* are going for it then you have, wow – they do Haneke, they do Lars Von Trier, they do all the kind of good European stuff, Lynne Ramsay and stuff. So we are saying okay, this is a quality film with quality actors and that is the benchmark. So we have a pre-sale and two distributors, people are taking a risk on this, we have regional funding, things are starting to come in on this. Then you can go to equity, you can go to the city, “Hey do you want to get involved in a film? You'll get to go to the premiere.”, all that kind of stuff. We have all these people in the industry telling us that this film is a viable option and you can start to build it. But, it is still a shaky old thing. I think we had eleven financing partners for *I, Anna*, *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*, the Ken Loach film that won Cannes had twenty-three financing partners and this is Ken Loach at the height of his career; so it is a piece-meal thing. You will spend more on lawyers than anyone else including cast. Lawyers and accountants just because there are so many contracts. We have a thousand pages of contracts on *I, Anna*.

Where does that get us to? That gets us to a sort of critical mass where you just think, okay do we have enough funding partners in this so that we think we are going to be able to close this? And so you get going even though you are still not fully financed and the whole thing could still fall apart, because until everyone has signed the thousand-page document, everyone still reserves the right to leave and give you no money. So you start pre-production and it's like a bullet train and you hope that you can still keep it all together. Don't ever produce your first film because we didn't close all the financing until after we had started shooting, so it is the most monumentally stressful thing you can ever do as a producer, it is bad enough directing. Even with shorts if you have all the planning to do as well as directing, it is crippling, so that is why you need a producer to shield you when you are directing.

So that was the start really. And the great thing is when you have got two cast like I had, you get people wanting to work with them and so the rest of the casting was relatively straightforward.

MM: Yes, you had great people in every role.

BS: In the end, yeah. That's the thing. Your cast sets the tone and the pedigree for a film, because until you have established yourself as a filmmaker, nobody knows. Are you going to be *Basic Instinct* or is it going to be *We Need to Talk about Kevin*? A script can be read in many different ways. Cast is a really helpful mark because you...they can go wrong obviously, but you kind of get a sense for what it is. It became an amazing process, especially with the people that we had access to.

MM: At what point in the process did you decide that your film was a film noir? Was it a conscious decision from the outset?

BS: Yes, from the outset. This idea of a cop that falls for somebody that he is investigating is intrinsically noir for me, and the fact that it is not a happy outcome, and that it is more about human weakness than about intrigue is what kind of classifies noir more for me. So it is less about the plot and more about the characters and that seems to be the element that takes it away from straight drama as the key Noir element to me. I'd always seen it with that hat on. For me the thing that I thought was overly Noir was the environment. New York was a setting that I felt I had seen before in *Sea of Love* and other films. Anyway, I felt that it had been done well so many times that I wanted to bring it out of that and give it a European flavour, but it had always been very much a Noir. I felt that when I started working on it that I liked the character side of things, but I felt more comfortable with a procedural plot to kind of rest it on. I liked that there was an element that needed to be solved, but I also liked the psychological aspect of it. I like a lot of those slightly more convoluted things like *Memento* that plays on memory and memory loss. There were all those elements that made for a slightly more intriguing and playful cocktail. Fundamentally it was still about this woman and her very touching, emotive situation at a time in her life...it was less about, oh my God I've woken up in a murder than it was about how do I deal with my daughter having left me and my husband having shelved me. That was the emotional starting point. Yeah, it was always a Noir for me.

MM: Is Film Noir a legitimate genre? What does the terminology offer you as a feature film director?

BS: Of course it is a legitimate genre. I guess it is slightly marginalised, which is probably part of its attraction and appeal. I think that anything that is slightly off the main path, tends to have stronger support and infatuation from people who love it and are attracted to it. If you look at horror and sci-fi they seem to have more passionate followers than your straight drama snobs who are very difficult to please and I like that. I like also that it deals with broken characters, I find that more interesting really. I struggle a bit with the flawless primitive heroism of mainstream, especially American fare, where the heroes are very heroic and the baddies are very bad, the moral ambiguity in between with Noir is very interesting. *Chinatown* is a noir and is one of the greatest films ever made, and a lot of the French films that inspired me making this film, sit in that area as well.

MM: Did knowing you were going to direct the film change the way that you approached the screenplay?

BS: Yeah, I think directors tend to...like I pre-edited it, which I think was a mistake. I think that directors tend to write more visually and more succinctly, for better or worse. My DoP said he had never worked on a film with so many scenes numbers, I mean I think we had about 180 scenes or something. And what I was doing, having edited a lot of stuff, was I was breaking it up. Writers who are not as familiar with film will tend to bunch more than one scene into one scene, whereas as soon as you kind of go out of one room it is another scene, but they will write that as one sequence. For example with my script, we might be discussing something in here, then we would go into the next room which would be another scene, and then I would go into the kitchen which would be another scene and that kind of fragmented it a lot and part of the reason for that was that I was already starting to edit it in my head. So where it was breaking up, I could have just left long sequences. The scene where *Bernie* is rushing to get to *Anna*'s flat before whatever he thinks is going to happen to her was already broken up into every single intercutting and it didn't need to be because ultimately, as much as you pre-plan that, your cuts don't actually end up where you think they are and your pacing is kind of different. It made for a fast read, but I don't think I needed to intercut anything. Bernie driving one scene, Anna running the bath one scene; you don't need to break it up, she turns the tap, he goes around the corner, he then picks up the phone, cut to – blah, blah, blah. Two scenes are all you need, that was me over visualizing it and it didn't need to be. It was for me, and I don't think it was actually that helpful to anyone else. It gave a sense of pace and urgency to the read I think, but I'm not sure how necessary it was. Maybe it was a lack of confidence and experience, I don't think you need that level of intercutting.

MM: Did anyone respond to the screenplay in a negative way because of that?

BS: No. Well actually, people had trouble understanding the script. I think it was the; what was real, what was imagined, what was flashback, and what was fantasy? There were kind of four realities within the script, so I think some people struggled with that. Whether that was because I'd added more elements, I don't know. But people would struggle with it, and then at test screenings after, people would have the same problems. Some people would either not get stuff and it wouldn't bother them, and when we quizzed them about it, they were confused. I can't remember exactly what those moments were, but there was a lot of stuff around the daughter *Emmy*. I mean a lot of people didn't get that she wasn't there. I simplified it a lot, and some of the criticism I got...I mean it is hard to know retrospectively anything, but I think some of the negative responses that I got from critics who are, by virtue of seeing so much stuff, more cine-literate than a lot of regular punters, and certainly in terms of demographic, I was hoping for a younger demographic, but it was really because of the age of the characters you are going to go for an older demographic who are less into the complexity of plot like the stuff in *Fight Club* and *Memento*; they are just not that aware of that kind of cinema. The script was complex and as a result we test screened it quite a lot. I could have stuck more to my guns and I think that some of the press might've been better. I felt that I was kind of being too obvious with things ultimately, but we still weren't getting through to people, people just weren't getting it. The whole *Emmy* thing was completely going over some people's heads. I was thinking, it can't be more obvious surely. I think some of the flack I got was because the critics were like, I've seen it, I got it half an hour ago, give me something else. Don't get me wrong, I am very proud of the film, I'm very happy with it, but there were things that we pulled back on because we started to understand who the film was really appealing to. We kind of knew...everyone thinks that they are making a four quadrant movie that they think everyone is going to want to go and see, but in reality they are

few and far between. You've got to make Spielberg films for that. And noir is not Spielberg, which is why he doesn't do noir (laughs). The type of people who were responding, and responding really well to the film, were just being really frustrated by the complexity of the plot and so we pulled back on that. Subsequently I did a lot of road-showing with it and I traveled around the UK doing Q & As and it was to a lot of people who aren't really familiar with that format who were coming, and they were really pleasantly surprised by the twists and turns, which they felt they could grapple with and that they hadn't seen before. So you are constantly re-adjusting the film you think you are making, the film you want to make, and the film you have made; three very different things. I met Kevin Spacey who has directed a couple of films and I told him I was about to embark on doing this film, and he said, it won't be the film you think it is going to be – once you have shot the film it will be another film, and once you have edited it will be yet another film. That's very true and I think that hopefully through experience you get closer to what you think it is you are starting off with. I don't think as a filmmaker that you really start to look at yourself from the outside until you start to produce stuff.

## APPENDIX C

TRANSCRIPT: David Griffith Interview – 1<sup>st</sup> November, 2013 (Glasgow).

David Griffith is a screenwriter and producer based in Glasgow. His debut feature film as a writer/director was *Timelock* (2013), which he made for £45,000, most of which was personally financed after he received a lump sum payment for a screenplay he had worked on.

MM: What was the budget for *Timelock*?

DG: I had a core initial budget of about 35,000 pounds, though I had hoped initially that it would be around 60,000 pounds that I would have but it didn't work out that way; we will get to that in a minute. Essentially at the beginning I knew roughly what the budget would be and obviously I had the idea for the film which was to use the vault in the film as a metaphor for something else. I'm always interested in the idea of how peoples' past catches up with them and again that is a big element in the film in terms of who people are and who they think they are. And so I had the basic idea and also by this time written, in tandem with writing the screenplay for *Hardcore Logo 2*, I had also written...not the screenplay for *Timelock*, but I had written a detailed outline. I turned that into a step-outline, revised it and just kept it at step-outline stage and then had storyboarded it before I had written the screenplay. Then I went back and revised the step-outline based on what I had learned about the shots from the storyboard. Then I wrote the screenplay in January in tandem with the other screenplay that I was writing. In February I then handed a first draft of the screenplay to the actors. The lead actor was an actor I had worked with before in a short film called *Head on Backwards* that I had made sometime before. Then he recommended working with a guy who was helping him as a tutor, a guy called John Gilmore who is a well-known acting tutor in Scotland, but had previously only really acted for the stage. And so I handed them the script and asked them to start working on it and to start thinking about the scenes. They had a first draft of the dialogue and I had also shown them some of the storyboards about how I was planning to do it but not anything that would limit their potential.

So then I got the money from this other screenplay, and I now had the personal money and was able to get the actors into more detailed rehearsals. So we started to rehearse the scenes and I would go in with my basic camera and film it; I'd film it not from one place, but would try to work out roughly what the angle would be. This was just on a Nikon Power Shot camera, nothing special. Then I sent these films down to the cinematographer, a guy called Simon Hipkins who used to have a company in Glasgow but now lives in London. I sent him the clips on *Dropbox* so that he could look at them and comment on them too. Then from what the actors had done, because I had allowed them to improvise a bit around the dialogue, I would revise the dialogue and then set what it was going to be and so we developed the subsequent drafts of the screenplay from the first draft on that basis. So it was working with the actors to make sure we got the best out of it, and I had also worked out with the cinematographer what angles we could do even in advance of knowing what the locations would be.

During this time I was also trying to raise money from additional sources. And I had hoped that we would get some money from *Creative Scotland* because about two months before when Phil Parker was up (in Glasgow) at that event that you were at Mikey, Robbie Allen came along and told everyone that there was budget available to make micro-budget films under the short film scheme. But when it came to actually asking, that wasn't true.

MM: I found that out too.

DG: (laughs) So at that point I was thinking, Can it be done for less? So we worked out, yes, it probably could be done for less. We didn't know exactly how much less, but we would just go ahead and shoot it and we would deal with the post-production issue afterwards. I just thought that if it came down to it I could work the post-production level out of my general income if it was required. But as it happens we did manage to get some money from *South West Scotland Screen* through Mark Geddes to go down and shoot there (Dumfries). I think it was one of those situations where they had a bit of budget left over from the end of the year. They were able to offer us a small amount which was great and though it didn't really bring us any extra money because it meant we would be shooting in Dumfries instead of Glasgow; so the transportation and accommodation costs would go up. So it really just covered those expenses to go and shoot there. But that was good because when we went down to see him he had some fabulous locations. They had the former headquarters of the *Bank of Scotland*, their bank vault, and also a hotel that was quite a rambling hotel made out of some town houses in the centre of Dumfries; because it was on so many levels we could make it look bigger. We wanted to make it look like a big hotel and there was enough there so that we could make it look bigger than it was. Because these two locations matched up, the budget was reduced because the look of the place was perfect; I always wanted a place that reflected the Scottish design sense that has grown up since the Victorian period, I mean you could argue how Scottish that is, but the whole idea of the tartan and the paisley and how those kind of fight each other to see which can give you the worst headache (laughs). The range of different colours that give you a sort of psychedelic experience as you walk around some of these hotels. So it was perfect to give us that slightly seedy look that we wanted; and everything matched up and that meant we had much less in terms of production costs. And the safe was always going to be a bit of a white elephant in the sense of trying to find an appropriate safe, and we also wanted a safety deposit vault, and the bank vault... When you see the bit in the film when they open the front of the safe, that is just the door to the vault and the scene in the safety deposit room, that is inside the real safe. It was about the size of a large living room, so it was great and perfect. We manage to get a deal with the hotel where they allowed us to film there just because we were paying to stay there, so there was no location fee for that and we got away with a fairly small location fee for the bank vault. I think it was four or five hundred pounds for the week. The only bit of the set that we had to build was the main CCTV control room, but we did that through the charities that recycle carpets and old office furniture, which gave the look we wanted anyway and kind of fitted in with the look of everything else.

MM: What does the noir genre offer the first time feature filmmaker?

DG: There are a number of reasons for working in the crime drama genre; we called it film noir. The main reason we called it film noir is because there is a literary movement in Scotland called 'tartan noir' and in some senses it adheres to that because it goes back to the

idea of the main character as a protestant person who is perhaps in that idea of feeling that somehow he is one of the elect. The old idea of *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, that somehow if you are a member of the elect that you can't do anything wrong; the idea that social position in society somehow lets people be immoral and get away with it, whereas if you don't have social position you are regarded much more clearly as a criminal. I've been interested in that, and partly because I feel like the crime genre has been going downhill of late. We've seen a lot of reactionary crime drama produced. A lot of the Scandinavian material that everybody raves about as being great, I think is actually very conservative and neo-liberal in its outlook because it shows criminality as something being performed by a group of evil people who are set apart from normal society and it is a very safe fiction for people in terms of presenting that. At the end of it you just find this evil mastermind who is just rotten to the core. And it doesn't go into what I think is more interesting, that we are all capable of being criminals at times. Obviously there have been other moves like the recent success of *Breaking Bad* which go against that, and *Breaking Bad* is a great series. So I wanted more to explore criminality from different levels of how it works, and so it is really a crime drama, probably more than film noir but I thought that might be a good way to sell it. Though subsequently I've heard that everyone who is thinking of calling their films film noir are dropping that from the marketing at the moment because some people say that it is overused as a term and it puts distributors off.

MM: At what point in the progression of your film did you start to think of it as a film noir?

DG: Well right from the point of developing character. Tartan noir I should say, because I think it goes back to *The Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. That is the starting point of Scottish literature as far as I am concerned and it is still one of the most interesting Scottish books ever written. But it is very much about that idea of delusion and I'm very interested in human delusion and that we somehow delude ourselves into an idea that we are somehow better than we are. Particularly in the west and particularly in the middle-class there is a tendency to think that we are somehow better, and I think it goes back to this idea of feeling that we are protestant, even if we are not protestant; the protestant ethos subsumes even Catholics these days. But this notion that if we have a certain position in society that it somehow justifies our behaviour. So I was very interested in that; tartan noir was where I wanted to go, but also because I wanted to make the film in an expressionistic style. I thought that if I am going to make something low budget, you are going to be restricted in the choice of lighting, you are going to be restricted in terms of the camera equipment that you are going to use, in terms of the toys and tracking and cranes so you have got to work in a genre that will allow you to: probably use hand-held, that will allow you to use more expressionistic lighting, because you don't have the ability to do key lighting like you would do in a studio setting, because you don't have as much time for set-ups. And so working in a film noir kind of idea works really well. Our lighting budget turned in at probably about four hundred pounds; we had a couple of Kino Flows and a couple of blondes for the main scene in the CCTV control room where around 50% of the film takes place. Though hopefully the film is broken up enough that you don't notice that so much of it happens in one place. So in terms of those restrictions it kind of required playing to the genre because as you will know from Phil Parker's ideas, genre is the most important part of a film in terms of making sure that a consistency is there. I always knew that the action line was a thriller plot and the relationship line was a romance, or a buddy romance if you like, about two people who find that they have some connection with each other that they don't initially think. There is perhaps a slightly

odd mix of genres in there. So there were a number of reasons for working in that genre due to the initial restrictions I'd placed on the screenwriting process and also in terms of the subject matter. Subject matter and restrictions made this a better genre to work in than something that would require more developed lighting.

MM: Would you say that you see film noir as a legitimate genre?

DG: I think generally that it falls into the thriller; crime thriller, relationship thriller. But I suppose that the problem with genre is that there are a number of ways of looking at it. Personally I do agree with Phil (Parker) that there are four main genres that have a reflection on narrative, I think that from what I've looked at, Phil's notion works. The only time that I ever have any dispute with Phil is that say you are looking at something like a War film...like *300*, just as an example because I've heard him talking about it. He describes that as a personal drama, but I would say that you have an action line in every film and you have a relationship line. The action line in *300* is very much a thriller because it is about war, but the relationship line is a personal drama about how someone changes. And so there is always a competition in a film in terms of genre and it is usually a question of human emotion versus outside forces; the dominant genre is obviously the outside forces and the secondary relationship genre, which always becomes more important in terms of the meaning...the relationship line as some may call it. And so these ideals you'll also find in Linda Aaronson's *21<sup>st</sup> Century Screenplay* which is a very good book if you haven't come across it. I hope that answers the question.

MM: Am I right in assuming that when you wrote this film, you knew you were going to direct it?

DG: Yes. I think that if you are going to make a micro-budget film, I think you kind of need to know that you can deliver it. And I think the best way to do that is to be a writer/director. And also, it seems to be the perfect opportunity to do that, I mean you are not going to get that opportunity in other situations and so micro-budget is the place where you can try it out. I knew that I was pigeonholed as either a writer or a producer because that is what I had done in the past and therefore the idea of anyone giving me any money to direct was not going to happen. So the only way I was ever going to get to do this was to make a micro-budget feature to get out of that stereotype. The whole way of raising money for films is all based on past record as you know and if your past is as a writer/producer, unless you have had a huge hit, you are not going to be given the opportunity to direct. So Simon Beaufoy was given that opportunity after *The Full Monty*. After that he directed a couple of things before he went back to writing because it didn't seem to suit him as well. There are very few people who manage to make the leap under those particular auspices. I think it is easier to move from actor to director than it is from writer to director when you are working within the established paradigm of cinema as it was in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. But within our 21<sup>st</sup> Century paradigm of digital cinema, with our greater number of platforms, why not use it as a testing ground as a platform to see who can do what. Because the investment is relatively low, you can see whether you can do it. I think I made a good enough fist of the directing to want to do it again and also to be allowed to do it again, but that is obviously for other people to judge (laughs). There are a lot of different skills that are required and I learned a lot about directing through making this particular film, things I wasn't aware of as a screenwriter before. Well I

was partially aware of, but I certainly learned a lot more through making the film and so it was a great experience in that sense.

I had wanted to write and direct it for a number of reasons and as I said one of them was that I was pigeonholed, and the other was that it would possibly be my last opportunity to make that jump at the age and stage of my career that I was at. And also that it was a life-long ambition. Perhaps as a screenwriter you are always trying to second guess whether a director is actually going to deliver your vision, so the best way to test that is to do it yourself and see what their problems are. As I say, I learned a lot from doing that.

MM: I'm interested in what a screenplay is, and how we define it. Did directing your screenplay change your opinion of the form?

DG: It did change the way that I thought about it to some degree, yes. What I did, as I mentioned, was that I storyboarded it before I wrote the script to see if the images would work. That was partly to do with the restriction of the budget, because I had contained locations, I wanted to be sure in my mind that it would have enough pictorial flow. I thought that it needed to have enough movement in it. I didn't want to have a long scene like they had in *Hunger* where they basically shot the whole scene from one angle; that was just a little bit too minimalist for my tastes. And while some of the Iranian stuff is interesting to critics, I find it a little boring. These kind of ideas of locked off shots, shooting one thing and lots of things happening off screen, I just think it is a bit up its own arse. I'm not a great fan of that type of cinema and I didn't want to go down that route even though some critics seem to love it, I think that is based largely on the fact that they are illiterate in cinema. I'm sure they would argue the toss (laughs). I am interested in how things move and I think a locked off shot for 15 minutes is kind of a waste of cinema and there are better forums for that kind of thing; plays for example where you have a proscenium arch that you can look through.

I had thought that I would make my film through the storyboarding process to make sure that it worked and I used the *Hitchcockian* way of doing the storyboards before the dialogue. Likewise in terms of the acting, I wanted to make sure that the acting was work-shopped. I wouldn't say that it was improvised dialogue, but there are elements of improvisation in getting to the final dialogue. Part of that was not just saying that this is what the script will be, but also bracketing what I'll be able to edit, so what you will see in the screenplay is that some of the scenes are longer than what you will see in the finished film. What I wanted to do was create a looping dialogue that came back to certain points where I knew that I could edit it. I also thought that when you are shooting in a very restricted time period that it is going to need to perhaps be shortened in different ways and I've got to provide those points should a cut be required because I'm not going to have a huge amount of coverage and to make it work because that is going to be one of the restrictions of filming. Where the ratio of a normal feature film might be 7:1, we were shooting at 3 or 4:1. It is partly being a producer as well that limited how I looked at writing the screenplay, but from a director's point of view having not done it before, I did want to make sure what I could get out of the actors because I may not be able to come into the process straight away and fully know how you approach it from a directorial perspective. My language is perhaps more as a screenwriter from my past; thinking more about structure, meaning and theme, rather than dealing with the questions of getting performance and the processes of how to go about that. Working the rehearsal approach was a very good way of me being able to do that, though perhaps next time I'll take

a different approach because I learned a lot. But on the first film that approach seemed to make sense to me because I planned as much as possible in advance to avoid making any really big cock ups on set. Clearly there were a couple of things that didn't go quite to plan, but generally speaking we were able to plan effectively. With a micro-budget and first time director you need to be as well prepared as possible for all the eventualities; and also prepare exit strategies should things go wrong in terms of delivering certain aspects of scenes. Every film has its widows and orphans and *Timelock* has a few, it doesn't have that many, but there are a few things where I'm like hmmm, we should have been able to tie that up a little better. Things happen in the edit where you lose certain things that explain something, but that is going to be the case in every production. It just meant planning the screenplay in a slightly different way, planning it as a shooting script. As a writer you are normally writing drafts for a director to turn into a shooting script. That doesn't mean to say that a screenplay doesn't need to be visual, of course it does. It needs to suggest it, but the shooting script needs to be incredibly decisive about what is being done.

MM: I noticed that the script is very definitive about how it will work visually, with a lot of camera direction.

DG: Which there wouldn't be in a normal script. You'd be working out how to describe what you see, but because I'm writing it for myself...you see it with writer/directors, they are not always the best scripts to read. People who read a Quentin Tarantino script as a model for what a screenwriter can do would be getting a bum steer because it is very self-referential and he writes in a certain style that isn't suited to handing it to any other director (laughs). The same is true here, it does effect what you are doing to be a writer/director. You're allowed that latitude of knowing what this is going to be because I am writing it to direct it as opposed to suggesting how the scene is supposed to be structured, but leaving room for the director to decide exactly where he wants to place the camera. When you are the director you need to know exactly where you are going to place the camera. I mean not everything was in the screenplay, there was also the storyboards which were revised after writing the screenplay, and what is in those revised storyboards is almost exactly what you see in the finished film. I used storyboard software called *Storyboard Quick* which is like little Action Men in storyboard sets and the advantage of that software is that it doesn't give you any texture. So there is nothing to fall in love with from the quality of the storyboarding. I mean sometimes people look at storyboards and go, "isn't that beautiful, it's great the way it has been realised artistically". The problem with that is that it is a false illusion that a film is going to be good because it is relying on the texture of the drawing, whereas the banality of storyboard software is actually better because they have no expression. So you really are working with the notion of the *Kuleshov effect* because you interpret emotion only in terms of the sequence, as opposed to emotion in the texture of how the storyboard is realised. It was very useful using the storyboard software in that respect. It was very important to think about how the actors would act it and also how it would look in detail, as opposed to working as a screenwriter and being in a place where you can only suggest.

MM: When you were trying to raise additional funding for the film, did anyone in the industry react adversely to the screenplay considering it was a shooting script with directorial specifics in it?

DG: No I don't think so. Well possibly. I was using a screenwriter friend, who did the story editing. So he would comment "Should you write the camera movement in there or describe this?" and I would just say "Yeah, because I'm going to do it". I'd say he just had to overlook that part for this case because it is not fully screenplay form. In terms of Mark Geddes who read it before putting money into it there wasn't a problem, or with the other investor who put some private money into it. Anyway, I don't think camera directions are overly used so that you can't read it because of detail. There are just a few more suggestions about how it will be done.

MM: As a screenwriter initially, would you have used more of a prose style? I notice on page 4 of your screenplay for example that you have written; "Who knows to keep his racist mouth shut in front of the guests". Do you think that is a cheat in terms of writing a screenplay because it is something you can't see? Is that something you use more in a shooting script?

DG: Yes because it basically just a note for the director so that I know where I am. What you often see if you look at a director's script is scribbles all over it. But absolutely you wouldn't write that in a normal screenplay. I just put that there as a reminder so that I wouldn't get lost. Not only did I know that on-set I was going to be directing, but because of the size of the crew which was very small and almost without exception had not worked on a feature film before, that I was going to have to be on top of a lot more things than if I was just the director. I had to be on top of it like a producer as well. I just had to have prompts in the script to remind me of certain key things. I have had experience as a producer of seeing how key things can be forgotten in a scene and if a key thing is forgotten the meaning of a scene can be lost and it becomes almost useless to the point where you have to cut around it. I remember we made a film called *Bye-Child*, which was written and directed by Bernard MacLaverty, and in that there was a scene where we see a character sitting in a wheelchair. Now when we were producing this we knew that it was going to be really important that you could see that this guy was sitting in a wheelchair and so we had sourced an orange wheelchair. Now as it happened in the scheduling, which was obviously our fault in a way as well, we had just followed a move from another location, there was a moment in this scene where the father was to be seen sliding his hand up his daughter's dress. The actress who was playing the daughter hadn't been on the set before and she was going to be there at that time for the first time, so she was a bit nervous. She didn't want so many people on the set for this scene and as a result there were few people on set. One of those people in their wisdom thought, "that wheelchair looks a bit bright", and they threw a blanket over it. As a result the logic later in the film when you see him standing up and realise that this must be happening in the past was lost. That meant that we had to re-cut it and change the structure of the film because of that small detail. So as a director, you need to be on top of essential details, because if I had not written that part that you mentioned about the racist, and he hadn't have had that element, then it might come across as me being racist, or that the intention of the film be something different. It is always difficult when you have something like racism in film, but I did want to show it because there is a casual racism in Scotland that is kind of tolerated but is really rather unacceptable, so I wanted the *Stuart Riley* character to very much embody that idea. Because it is done with a laugh does it make it better? Well no. So I wanted that character to be in there because partly it is also based on one of the influences to the film, which was *The Stranger* by Albert Camus. I don't know if you are familiar with that – it was turned into a song by *The Cure*, *Killing an Arab*. Well it is about another guy who is not really aware of who he is and so he kind of tolerates this racist character around him and in

some sense that is borrowed, or stolen if you like, from Albert Camus. The use of *Stuart's* character is used to reflect on *Mark's* ability to make decisions, which is the key thing in *Mark's* character. He is just kind of zombieing his way through life; he is not a real human being, he is kind of a shadow of a person at the beginning. So I needed to show that through the characters around him, so how he reacts with other people and is not challenging them. As a result if you are not challenging them, you are not really human, you are just a shadow of a human. That's what I needed to say about him because you could argue that in one sense that he is clinically depressed if you want to look at it from that regard, or that he is just morally bankrupt at the beginning. It is about that issue and I think very often that depression is a form of moral bankruptcy or a lack of vision and reason. Medical depression that is based purely on levels in the brain may be something different, but I think a lot of people are depressed because of their lack of reason to be. It's kind of about that side of depression, that's why I put those details in the script. It was so that I had something that reminded me, "Don't forget that". In the heat of the moment don't forget this. So I wrote those things into the script in brackets, things that I wouldn't put into a normal screenplay because that wouldn't be the way to do it. In a comedy, sometimes you might write a little word at the end of a sentence just to make it a little funnier. Sometimes you write extra stuff in a screenplay that is being written for other people just to remind them that this should be done with a smile. Normally when you are doing that in a screenplay you are trying to make it invisible, you do put things on the page that people can interpret, even if it is only to strike them out to a certain point, they would still have read it, and it is important some times to do it. That's why it is important to never look at transcripts of films because they have often had bits of dialogue removed that were essential. Something somebody told me very early in my screenwriting career was, always remember to write the final line in the scene even though it is going to be cut. Write it because if you don't write it the producer won't get it, you won't get funding, and if it does get made the actor won't know what look they are leaving the room on. And even though that line is finally cut from it, it was only ever there to give them the final reference. So I do think as writers that we sometimes do need to direct on the page, but not so clearly as you do if you are a writer/director.

MM: Through development of my screenplay with my producers, I was encouraged to dumb it down a little bit for potential investors. I didn't want to add dialogue, so I added similar reference points like that moment that I pointed out from your script earlier.

DG: Sometimes you need that for a producer. For the money sometimes those people are not used to reading a screenplay, so you need a screenplay that is a little fatter so that they can understand it. As a screenwriter you are always caught between who is going to read it. Sometimes when you are writing drafts, you are working on drafts to fatten up a part for an actor, because they are trying to attract a particular actor or you are trying to get a producer and it needs to be written in a different way, but they are not prepared to pay you for a full outline; which is normally what they would do in Hollywood. And by that I mean a kind of prose treatment that would be maybe 20 pages long and a short story version of the screenplay. So as a screenwriter you are writing different scripts for different people, so the idea of a pure screenplay doesn't exist. And sometimes I think if you do write a pure screenplay...there are so few people who can do it. The purist might say, "Wow - that's a great screenplay", but for those who aren't able to read a screenplay, and there are lots of people in the film business who can't, then they don't get it. And so it doesn't get made even though it is a great screenplay. So sometimes it is a balance. I mean there was a guy I knew

who was very successful, I won't say his name, but he used to write really bad screenplays that read really well, but they were not good writing in terms of formal purity. They had lots of stuff in them that moved along and he got jobs all over the place, so the idea that there is a purity in it is I think, fanciful.

MM: Can you tell me something about how you are taking your film to the market?

Well, it's going to be interesting (laughs). My view of the distribution is that I always looked at this as CVD (CV Development). The film was about developing my career. That means my focus, especially as the main investor, I mean I don't have investors that I need to satisfy in terms of how I do the distribution which is a great advantage. I only had one private investor and that is not a problem because they have had some of their money back already and they were a small investor so I can pay them back fairly quickly. And I don't have to pay any money back to *South West Scotland Screen* because it wasn't an investment, it was a grant for shooting in Dumfries effectively. Because I don't really have any investors to pay back I can be quite relaxed about the marketing and distribution and I can use it primarily as what it was meant to be; a calling card for making the next one. I also think that the distribution system that is in place at the moment hasn't really found its feet in terms of what is possible with this new type of micro-budget film. I think it is partly to do with the old system and how everyone still wants the old paradigm of film financing and distribution to come back... which isn't going to happen. So partly there is this inertia from the film industry in terms of what is going to happen and partly it's that academics have not yet looked enough at what I would call the new aesthetics of micro-budget features. The fact that when you make something at that budget it forces you to look at things in a different way aesthetically. Because a lot of film studies people don't look at budget and context they don't understand fully the context of aesthetics and they can't look at aesthetics in a way that is informative. They tend to look at the text as if the text is the text, which is disingenuous in my view. So on a critical level that is not happening yet, people are not seeing the films for what they are; we don't have a critical evaluation of these films yet and in the distribution systems people aren't necessarily aware of them and they are still in the infancy of how the market deals with micro-budget films. A lot of people are being ripped off, they are selling their films to a distributor and the distributor does nothing with them. It looks like they have got distribution, but they didn't make any money from it. Given all those things, my notion is not to say, "I've got to get distribution", it is more about trying to use it to develop my career. So can I use this to make the next film? That is the primary goal of the distribution, I'm not trying to re-coup my money within a year. What I'm looking for is to get it out to the right people so that I can raise the money for the next film, which is called *Into the Trees* which is another micro-budget film that I'm hoping to make for double or two and a half times the budget of this one. That is the ambition behind my distribution, so I am looking at it more like a novelist than a filmmaker at this point. The only investor is the person with the time, because the money was my poker money effectively, it wasn't real money because I assume that real money is critical money. I don't have to re-coup the money specifically because the recoupment already works in terms of getting other work and so that is more important for the distribution at this level of budget. I may not make a huge amount of money on the distribution of this first film, but if I can make another film and then another film, I may eventually make money on the first film because I might be able to get a better deal on the distribution. If I went out now and tried to find a distributor, they would tend to take it on and say, well we will give you this amount for this territory, a couple of grand or whatever and I

would never see any more money. And even quite big films you hear about making quite a big box office success they never see any more money than the initial fee that they get. So why go into that if you don't have to? I'm not beating myself up trying to get myself a sales agent or someone to distribute DVDs. What I'm looking for is to do it myself, with a view to building the career. At a later date, if because of future success, I can turn around and get a better deal that may be different. You might say that is not entirely fair on everyone involved on the production, because people are on profit share, but I have given a long recoupment period. But they would be served anyway if I sold it on a deal that didn't get them any money, because a lot of people do a deal that doesn't even pay them. Their DVD is on the shelf, but they didn't make any money from it. My view is that we need to see where it is going, so I have gone with systems that are transparent whereby I can learn from it, where I can build an audience. So I've gone with *Distrify* which is the viral distribution platform which I am sure you know about and *Vimeo VOD*. At a later date I'd like to get on places like *Amazon* with DVD sales and on *iTunes* would be great, but the cost of getting on *iTunes* is high and I haven't quite worked out yet the best way to do that. I think I need more publicity first before I can do that, there is no point in putting it out there and thinking that people will come, I've got to do it the other way around. It is out there and available to buy and I am still trying to get TV sales obviously, and we will see how that goes. Some of them may be put off by the fact that it is already available online, but I don't really think so because I think that most people in the business kind of know that no one watches online anyway (laughs). Some people do, but it is quite small at the moment. The problem with the internet is how you find it, and that is where I go back to my previous point; without that critical realisation that among the thousands of micro-budget feature films, some of them are good. And they are interesting cinematically because of the way they are made, and what it allows the filmmakers to do in the way they look at things which you can't do in other types of cinema. It hasn't happened yet...there isn't really a platform that pulls it together. There are attempts to do it and it is much more advanced in America where there are websites to do things like *Film Threat* or whatever it might be. A lot of the things out there are still kind of 'rip-off' the filmmakers attempts. So I'm just taking it easy because I don't have to take any wild gambles and lose. I have the film and I can just see if I can get a steady stream of sales, which we are getting so far, it's by no means a flood (laughs), it's not a complete trickle either, but there is a little flow of money coming in all of the time. And hopefully we can get out to other places that will just increase that flow and I can say well this is a film I made for £45,000. Give me 150 thousand, give me 300 thousand, give 500 thousand and I can do much more than this. That is the ambition in the first instance, so we will see how it goes. I'd like to be able to pull a magic distribution rabbit out of the hat, but I think when you hear people talking about that it is not really true. We are getting more to the stage where we will see pop-up screenings, we have a few things coming including going back to the *Robert Burns Theatre* in Dumfries and I hope to get involved in some more of Scotland's local cinemas and do some pop-up screenings and work them in with film groups around the country who are interested in making things, doing it as a kind of a workshop as well. And that is the process you've got to do at this kind of budget level of filmmaking I think. I think the notion of getting a home run is really unlikely. Things like *Blair Witch* are an exception and it's only because someone somewhere has picked it up and thought we can market this in a certain way. The film itself was probably made for about 12,000 dollars at the time but they had about 8 million for the marketing budget (laughs), so it is not really micro-budget at that point. So a lot of these things that are called micro-budget films have had a shed load of marketing money put into them to make them work, and they tend to be in genres that are very sellable. I'm not saying

that *Blair Witch* isn't a good film because it has a lot of qualities and it is about that aesthetic...there are a number of things that you can talk about with the aesthetic of that film which are interesting in terms of the way I think digital film will develop aesthetics, but I think in terms of what it means as a model for distribution, I think you can learn very little from that. And also I think what we ought to be looking at how, when you are working at a certain budget allows you to do certain things that you could do with other things. *Timelock* does some things that are really quite interesting, it allows me to explore the psychology of why people are doing it, what are the possible motivations, and to be a little more ambiguous about how things happen...to play much more with one of the original conceptions of a double Stockholm syndrome. The idea that it is not just the victim who is effected by the person that kidnaps him, but also vice-versa; how our ability as human beings to remain objective is very difficult. I'm not sure you can make that film in the traditional model because you are having to appeal to a wider audience. Just as the short film was able to explore different subjects in different ways, I think a micro-budget film that is funded in a different fashion also allows us to explore different types of narratives, using different types of narrative techniques which refer to film and the cinematic tradition. That's why I approached it in this novelistic manner and looked at it as part of my career rather than looking at it as a film as a stand-alone project. As a writer/director you can look at it as a career move, as just a writer you would be looking to get it out there as much as possible. I *do* want to get it out there as much as possible but I'm not prepared to lose everything for the level of doing it. It's a difficult one that everyone must face depending on who they owe. I think that everyone who worked on the film got a step up in terms of their own careers and some of them have got much better jobs as a result, so I don't really feel like I owe them. The only person I owe is myself and I am quite happy with what is being done, but you certainly have to think about who you are going to end up owing in the beginning. You could be a cunt about it and screw everyone into the ground in order to make the film you want to make, and some people think that is justified I know. For most people that isn't going to work because you have to be an ego director. Micro-budget filmmaking offers a new aesthetic for a new type of film where people are allowed to make, and I won't say personal stories because that has got a bad rap, but they can make more challenging types of narratives that ask questions. I have been fortunate enough to get the money to do it, but then again I have waited twenty years to get the opportunity. You have to wait a long time, some people think where am I going to get the money, and I have been sitting on a stool watching filmmakers talking about their films for twenty years thinking where am I going to get the money. And then I got the money. All I can say is seize the opportunity when you get the opportunity and just keep working at it. There is no magic bullet because public funders have abdicated their responsibility towards this new cinema because they are intellectually moribund in terms of strategy. In the past the whole point of arts councils was that they should try to fund new movements and for some reason many of the film bodies have abdicated that responsibility to try to and get the old model to work. And because it doesn't they are not funding anything that is new, so you can't even get a finishing fund for micro-budget films in Scotland. *Creative Scotland* have made a real hash of that, it is a disastrous situation up here in Scotland. It's a shame because there are a lot of people making films and they would be making better films if they had a finishing fund. Personally I think that is the best way to do it. Production we can't invest in because you can't get any guarantee of distribution in advance, you can't get any presales because you are new at this, but if you put in a rough cut that shows potential and shows that you have thought about it and has a cohesive vision, we can provide you with up to twenty thousand to help you finish the film and properly market it

and distribute it. I think that would be a fair way and in the remit of what these arts bodies should be doing because in the past that was why they were set up; to support community art. They were not set up to support elite art and yet these days the arts councils generally support elite art. There is a question about why they are putting half a million in to one film that isn't going to make any money, and they are not going to get paid back, instead of half a million into ten films having had some input into the quality of the film. What is the greatest cultural value? But then I would say that wouldn't I?

## APPENDIX D

EMAIL: From Naysun Alae-Carew – 19<sup>th</sup> Feb, 2014.

### **Re: City Option Agreement**

Naysun Alae-Carew  
19/02/2014  
To: Mikey Murray



1 attachment (40.5 KB)

Hey Mikey,

I've attached an amended contract.

I've taken into account your amendments, but the bottom line is that for the option to be legally tight enough for a funder or investor to put money into the film, they need to see a proper Chain of Title. That means that decisions that we may have to hand over to them contractually (changes to Screenplay, choice of additional writers, director etc), we need to be legally able to do so. Without the 'moral rights' for example, Haphazard hasn't actually optioned anything, and we wouldn't have the right to raise funds from the BFI or others. I've added in strengthening clauses around the place, making us legally obligated to work with you on all the clauses you amended, but the final decision has to be with the producer on that stuff in order that any funders, sales agents etc aren't scared off by us not having the power we need in the project.

This also comes down to a question for you, ultimately, as the contract really only exists for the worst case scenario: if someone came to us and said they'd love to fund the project but they want to attach their own director - would you do that? Obviously, we'd fight for you, but in the event that the movie could be made or not, would you rather it isn't made with you or is made without you? Your call.

This is all academic right now, and of course I'm not shopping around for other directors, but it's the big question you need to consider. As I say, it may scare off some if it's contractual at this stage that you're the director, but it may also have no impact whatsoever and never be an issue.

Think about it, look over the contract. Give me a call if you want to discuss it.

Naysun Alae-Carew

APPENDIX E

EMAIL: From David Segal Hamilton – 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2014.

**RE: City Project ref: 2012-** [REDACTED]

David Segal Hamilton  
20/03/2014  
To: 'Mikey Murray'  
Cc: [REDACTED]



Hi Mikey,

[REDACTED]

As with our considering any project for development or production there are always a combination of factors that contribute to a decision. The key thing to get across about us is that since we're in the position of funding requests hugely outweighing what funds we have, our job is really to mark out which projects feel like the highest priority. Us passing on something doesn't mean it's without merit then but that it didn't stand out enough to be one of the very few projects which we get behind with financial support.

With CITY, we felt that there was an intriguing concept at play but one that was very challenging both creatively and in terms of the film finding finance with a first-time director, making it into production and ultimately successful theatrical distribution. It would be fair to say that this achievability question played a significant part in our thinking but we did also have some reservations about the script and whether it and the previous work gave enough confidence that this would successfully stand out in a theatrical space which is ordinarily dominated by studio fare. It's always a question of degree and there were certain elements which gave comfort to these concerns (eg: particular strengths to the writing or the attachment of an Exec Producer for instance), but ultimately not quite enough for us to feel it was a top priority for development support.

[REDACTED]

All best,  
David

## APPENDIX F

EMAIL: From Mikey Murray to Markham Froggatt & Irwin – 13<sup>th</sup> Feb, 2013.

### **Re: David Hayman**

Mikey Murray

13/02/2013

To: johnty@markhamfroggattirwin.com



2 attachments (total 250.8 KB)

Hi,

Re: David Hayman

Further to our conversation toady, please accept these details about our Short film pilot to which we are hoping to attach your client David Hayman.

I am currently developing a British Noir Feature Film which is being executive produced by Sarah Radclyffe and developed by Haphazard Media in Glasgow. The project has also been supported by the 'Produced By' scheme run by Forward Films (*Tormanted*, *Skeletons*) for North West Vision and Media. Additionally we have received development funding from both The South West Scotland Screen Commission and The Arts Trust of Scotland.

Further information: <http://www.middlemanproductions.co.uk/CITY.html>

We are about to shoot a short pilot film in Glasgow over the weekend of 8/9/10 of March and we would like to offer the part of *Kerr* to David.

The role in the pilot requires a small commitment time-wise from David and we would need him for a very short shooting window on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> March in Glasgow in the afternoon.

Although the part is very small in the pilot, I'm sure you'll agree when you read the feature length screenplay that David is the perfect fit for the role. In simply attaching someone of David's renowned

profile to our pilot film and having his on-screen presence, it is our intention to clearly state the ambition for our feature and establish, from the outset, a precedence for what we promise to deliver with the full-length project. David's collaboration would be a fundamental step in achieving our aims, and it is my sincerest hope that he will enjoy reading our feature film project and also commit to joining our production team on the pilot film.

Currently attached to the pilot film project are:

Writer/Director: Mikey Murray. Recipient of Scottish Bafta New Talent Award for Best Writer in 2008 & Runner-up in the British Feature Screenplay competition in 2010.

[http://www.imdb.com/name/nm1677090/?ref=fn\\_al\\_nm\\_1](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm1677090/?ref=fn_al_nm_1)

<http://www.middlemanproductions.co.uk/ASSOCIATES.html>

Producer: Naysun Alae-Carew. Recipient of Scottish Bafta New Talent Award for Best Producer in 2011.

[http://www.imdb.com/name/nm3291594/?ref=fn\\_al\\_nm\\_1](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm3291594/?ref=fn_al_nm_1)

Executive Producer: Sarah Radclyffe – My Beautiful Launderette / The War Zone.

Acting Talent already attached include, Andrew John Tait and Nicola Roy who have both worked in various television productions in Scotland.

Please find both the feature film screenplay and pilot screenplay attached for your convenience.

All the very best and I look forward to hearing from you,

Mikey Murray

## APPENDIX G

EMAIL Excerpt: From Nic Crum to Mikey Murray – 12<sup>th</sup> August, 2011.

### **Re: City notes**

Nic Crum  
12/08/2011

To: Mikey Murray



Hey Mikey

Sorry for the delay with these notes, but here they are for you. Have a look through them all and then obviously let us know your thoughts. Sarah said she is more than happy to do a skype conference to clarify any points or to go through them with you if you want so that's not a problem.

Most of them come down to the same point of clarity in the script for the reader, so don't be too daunted by them.

Speak later

Nic

#### CITY notes

First thing to note is that if the film is set in the future then this needs to be made far more obvious. So, even if it's just a couple of paragraphs here and there with descriptions of the world around us, and how it differs from now to get a true sense of the future, they are necessary for the reader to understand that we are firmly set in a different time.

The other very important thing to note is that the script doesn't always read as obviously as it should. I know that this is done on purpose in places, but it's important that the reader fully understands the picture and the world around us from the very first read. This doesn't mean that it will take anything away from the subtlety of the piece visually; it just means that you need to be more descriptive.

In addition to this, it is probably a good idea to put some sort of introduction paragraph on the page, describing the world, and the differences between the belly and the city. How this

world operates etc. If you also add the map of the city to the front page with this then that will really help the reader get their head into the world, and will make everything more understandable on the first read.

Something more needs to be made of the files and the envelope at the end. Max says he has proof but I don't think its damning evidence, just enough to point to the answer. Something damning needs to link to show that it is Trent's work.

The flash backs need to be made a lot clearer in their descriptions so that they are obviously flash back, or flash backs of audio. At the moment they just read confusingly, and take you out of the story because you're not sure what's going on.

Trent's motivation for his overwhelming need to get Dexter isn't as clear as it could be. I'm sure that it's because Dexter is a drug dealer, and thus is blamed for Trent's sister's end, but this needs to be made much more apparent. Also the reason for Trent's dislike towards Max also needs to be boosted. Is this just an extension of his relationship with Dexter, or the fact that Kerr shows him so much positive attention that Trent feels he might no longer be the golden boy. Whatever it is, it needs to be much clearer.

Max's obsession with kids needs to be explored more. Why is he so keen to adopt now? Why does he get so obsessed with Carl's case, and why does Lisa feel the need to flag up the fact that his obsession over the case is because it's a child, not because its Dexters child? We also need to get an idea of why Lisa is so reluctant to have kids. We need to see more of her high flying corporate life in comparison to Max's work earlier to have the comparison between her world and his, and to understand Lisa's point of view and her need to move. This will also help to boost the future elements in the film.

Also, the dialogue in places doesn't really work, and is too jarring to read. It will be a good idea after the next draft to get the whole thing read through by actors to get a feel of how it flows and what works.

\*\*\*\*\***Individual page notes removed**\*\*\*\*\*

Essentially, the main point is that the script needs to be clarified for the reader. Financiers are, on the whole, not visual people – you have to make the read as clear as possible for them. I had all the answers to Sarah's questions about the script, but only because I have read it several times and spoken to you about it. The financiers won't give it that much time and effort. Once that is sorted, then the story will naturally start to come together nicely.

## APPENDIX H

EMAIL: From Tore Schmidt – 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2015.

**Mikey**

Tore Schmidt  
01/08/2015

To: Mikey Murray



Hey Mikey,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Since you've written, I've received the notes from Naysun, so I will compile them now and send to you soon. As part of that, I'll be looking at the screenplay again, so if there's no pressure, I'll respond to the first and last questions and specifics about CITY after that, as it'll be more present on my mind. If you need it urgently, let me know.

Generally speaking, here's what I would say is generally considered standards within the industry on the second and third question:

By standards of the US film industry, prosaic or extensively descriptive writing is part of what's usually referred to as "overwritten" (other parts being an overly explanatory or expositional plot, getting into scenes too early and leaving them too late etc.). It is generally considered to be something to avoid in the "ideal" screenplay, with the goal being to keep the description to a minimum. (A notable exception are extensive action sequences, which can sometimes lead to long paragraphs or even entire pages of description/action.)

In my experience, overwriting is generally more common (and thus perhaps acceptable) in European screenplays. As part of non-action sequences, writers also tend to overwrite more in certain genres such as drama. It also seems to be more common among screenwriters who feel less secure in their craft, possibly in early stages of their career, as they either don't trust that their characters' action and dialogue reflect their intentions, or don't know how to integrate them into them and thus resort to description to emphasize, explain or repeat those.

It can also often be found in screenplays written by directors. In these cases, it is often less so prosaic writing than the inclusion of visual notes and camera directions. Few exceptions aside, strict conventions would require for those to be almost entirely absent from the screenplay, the idea being that the screenplay's task is solely to reflect the story of the film; with nothing to distract from it or the evaluation of its quality. Some writer/directors seem to compartmentalize the two parts more clearly as they advance in their career.

All this being said, it is also my experiences that certain aspects of overwriting (especially visual directions and/or more detailed descriptions - not unnecessarily long scenes) don't have to stand in the way of the positive reception of a screenplay, provided that the quality of story, dialogue and character holds up. One of the most well-received screenplays I've worked on, which has since been made into a highly regarded feature, could have been argued to contain some elements of overwriting. Some (especially European) feedback even pointed out the "beautifully prosaic writing."

Cheers,

Tore

**DATE**                      **2013**

APPENDIX I

1.     **HAPHAZARD MEDIA LTD**
2.     **MIKEY MURRAY**

**OPTION AGREEMENT**

**“CITY”**

DRAFT (1)

DATE

2013

## PARTIES

1. Haphazard Media Ltd ( [REDACTED] ) whose registered office is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] (“Haphazard”, “Producer”); and
2. Mikey Murray of \_\_\_\_\_ (“MM”, “Writer”).

## RECITALS

1. The Writer is the author and owns all rights with respect to a screenplay provisionally entitled “City” (“Screenplay”); and
2. The Producer wishes to produce a narrative feature film (“Film”) or other media based on or inspired by all or part of the Screenplay; and
3. The Producer wishes to option certain rights in the Screenplay as more particularly set out in this Agreement.

## OPTION AND REPRESENTATION

### 1. Option

- 1.1 The Writer grants to the Producer at any time during:
  - i) the period of two (2) years from date of signature of this Agreement (“Option Period”); and
  - ii) subject to a fee to be agreed in good faith payable prior to expiry of the Option Period, a further period of 12 months (“Renewal Period”),the exclusive option to purchase the entire copyright and all other rights in the Screenplay “Rights” (as further described in Clause 5.1) on the terms set out therein.
- 1.2 The Producer may exercise the Option by giving notice in writing to the Writer at any time before the end of the Option Period and/or Extended Option Period, provided the Production is in paid development and/or has significant partners attached, including but not limited to co-producers, sales agents and distributors (“Industry Partners”).
- 1.3 Within 30 days of receipt of notice of exercise of the Option, the Writer shall execute the Assignment and deliver it to the Producer. In the event that the Writer shall have failed, following 14 days’ notice from the Producer, to do any such matters the Producer shall

have the right to do so in the place of the Writer.

- 1.4 Nothing in this Agreement shall impose upon the Producer any obligation to exercise the Option.
- 1.5 The Writer shall be entitled upon written notice to the Producer to re-acquire the rights in the Screenplay (not including any elements contributed to the Screenplay by Producer) assigned to the Producer as set out in the Assignment if the Production has no significant partners attached as outlined in 1.2 within 12 months of Producer's exercise of the Option.

## **2. Option Price**

- 2.1 In consideration for the granting of the Option, the Writer shall be paid the sum of one pound (£1) (the "Option Price") on the execution of this Agreement (the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged).

## **3. Preproduction Activities**

- 3.1 During the Option Period or the Renewal Period the Writer acknowledges that the Producer may undertake preproduction activities in connection with any of the rights to be acquired under this Agreement, including, without limitation, the preparation and distribution of the Screenplay and proposals, treatments, and/or outlines based on the Screenplay.
- 3.2 The Writer hereby agrees that the Producer may exclusively represent, advise and solicit offers for the rights to produce the Screenplay and to pitch it to Industry Partners for the purposes of commissioning a Production during the Option Period (and, if applicable, the Renewal Period) to which the Writer agrees to provide reasonable assistance.
- 3.3 The Producer shall be entitled to produce presentation documents and other such materials as it deems necessary for pitching to Industry Partners ("Producer Materials"). The rights in the Producer Materials shall be owned by the Producer at all times and no licence is hereby granted or intended to be granted in relation to the same.
- 3.4 If any such preproduction activities are prevented or interrupted due to epidemic, fire, action of the elements, strikes, labour disputes, governmental action or order, court order, act of God, public enemy, wars, riots or civil commotion, the Option Period or Renewal Period, as the case may be, shall be extended for the number of days such an event existed.

## **4. Exercise of Option**

- 4.1 The Producer may exercise the Option, at any time during the Option Period or the Renewal Period and on or before the first day of principal photography of the Film by

payment to the Writer of the sum of five thousand pounds (£5,000) (the “Purchase Price”) less any amounts pursuant to Section 2.1 and/or any writing fees that may be subsequently agreed and paid.

- 4.2 The Producer agrees that the Writer shall receive an amount equal to 5% of the Producer’s share of net profits received by the Producer.
- 4.3 No further compensation shall be paid to the Writer for any of the rights in connection with the Screenplay.

## **5. Grant of Rights**

- 5.1 Upon the exercise of the Option, the Writer hereby assigns to the Producer with full title guarantee the entire copyright and all other rights of whatsoever kind and nature in and to the Screenplay and in all the products of the Writer’s services and contributions in connection with the Screenplay (including without limitation the so-called rental and lending rights), in all media throughout the Universe for the full period of such rights and thereafter (so far as may be possible) in perpetuity to hold unto the Producer absolutely and, to the extent that the Screenplay shall not as at the date of signature of this Agreement have been completed, as an assignment of future copyright.
- 5.2 The Writer and the Producer agree that if the Option is exercised, this document shall constitute a valid assignment, grant and conveyance of the Rights. If, however, the Producer in its sole discretion determines that further documents are required or desired to evidence or effect such assignment, grant and conveyance, the Writer shall execute such further documents within 10 days of such request by the Producer, failing receipt thereof the Writer hereby grants to the Producer a power, coupled with an interest, to execute and deliver such documents as the Writer’s legal authority in fact.

## **6. Additional Rights**

- 6.1 The Writer hereby grants to the Producer the following additional Rights, effective as of the date of this Agreement:
  - 6.1.1 the right in its sole discretion to adapt, revise, modify, rearrange, change the sequence of events, add to and/or delete any and all material in respect of the Screenplay and all of its component elements including without limitation, the structure, format, concept, characters, and setting in adapting it for any of the uses provided for under this Agreement;
  - 6.1.2 the right to prepare and use excerpts, synopses and summaries from the Screenplay for the purpose of advertising, publicising, and/or promoting the exploitation of the Film;
  - 6.1.3 the right to select and use, in Producer’s sole discretion, any title, including but not limited to, the title of the Screenplay as the title or sub-title in connection with

the Productions; and

6.1.4 the right to use and display the name, voice, likeness and biographical material of the Writer for the purpose of promoting, publicising and advertising the Screenplay, provided that no commercial tie-ups, merchandising or endorsements shall be made by the Producer using such name, voice, likeness or biographical material without the Writer's written consent.

6.1.5 the exclusive right to secure copyright registration in the Producer's own name or otherwise, and to renew such copyrights whenever permitted;

6.2 The Writer hereby waives all moral rights in the Screenplay, including without limitation the right to prevent modifications, adaptations, additions, deletions, or any other distortions to the Screenplay.

## **7. Credits**

7.1 The Writer shall be accorded the following credits:-

7.1.1 a credit on screen on a single card in the main titles of the Film as the author of the Screenplay in a size of type no smaller than the average size of type used to accord credit to any individual producer, executive producer and any writer on all copies of the Film made by or to the order of the Producer; and

7.1.2 subject to distributors' and financiers' customary exclusions and restrictions and in particular those imposed on the Producer, but in any event wherever and whenever any other writers, individual producers and, executive producers is credited including in excluded advertising, save for award, nomination or congratulatory ads featuring the honourees:-

7.1.2.1a credit as the author of the Screenplay in like form as the credit specified in clause 5.1.1 in the full and regular billing block portion of all paid advertising and publicity relating to the Film issued by or under the direct control of the Producer in a size of type no smaller than the average size of type used to accord credit to any writers, individual producers, and executive producers; and

7.1.2.2a credit in like form and on the same basis as specified in clause 5.1.2.1 on the cover of the soundtrack album, DVD, video and any other derivative products relating to the Film if the full and regular billing block appears thereon issued by or under the direct control of the Producer.

7.2 The Writer shall be accorded the credit set out in clause 7.1 if the Writer is not in default of any material term of this Agreement, if the Writer has complied with the Writer's material obligations under this Agreement and if the Producer produces the Film based wholly or substantially on the Screenplay.

7.3 If the Producer commissions other writer(s) to develop the format, the Writer may be required

to share the Writer's credit with any other writer(s) who is engaged by the Producer in the writing of the Screenplay. Any dispute as to the Writer's credit shall be determined by the arbitration provisions contained in the Screenwriting Credits Agreement provided the arbitration can be resolved within four (4) weeks of notifying in writing the relevant body in accordance with the provisions of the Screenwriting Credits Agreement. Otherwise, the final say with respect to any dispute shall be retained by the financiers of the Film.

7.4 The Producer shall endeavour to procure that the distributors and licensees of the Film with whom the Producer contracts directly shall accord the Writer's credit in accordance with this Agreement on all copies of the Film issued or exhibited by the distributors or licensees of the Film and will notify third parties with whom it contracts of the credit provisions. However, the Producer shall not be liable for the neglect or default of any such distributors or licensees and no failure to accord the Writer's credit shall constitute a breach of this Agreement by the Producer. However, the Producer shall endeavour, without any obligation to incur costs and without making any guarantee of success, to prospectively cure any failure to accord the Writer's credit within a reasonable time following receipt of written notice of the failure from the Writer.

7.5 Main titles shall mean that portion of the Film's credits where the "directed by" credit appears. All other matters relating to credit including size of type and placement and including the form of the credit shall be determined by the Producer.

## **8. Representations and Warranties**

8.1 The Writer represents, warrants and covenants that:

8.1.1 the Writer is the sole creator of the Screenplay and the sole and exclusive owners of the Rights and have the full right and authority to enter into this Agreement and to grant the Producer the Rights;

8.1.2 the Writer has not assigned or licensed to any other person, firm or corporation, or in any such manner encumbered, any of the Rights;

8.1.3 the Writer has not and will not at any time enter into any agreement which conflicts in any way with this Agreement or undertake or permit activities which will interfere with, diminish or compete with the exercise of any of the Rights, or attempt to sell, license, assign, dispose of or encumber any of the Rights;

8.1.4 the Screenplay is wholly original and contains no matter which infringes the copyrights, right of privacy or publicity, or any other right of any person or which appropriates the personality of any person;

8.1.5 the Screenplay contains no matter which is libelous, or in any other way unlawful;

8.1.6 there are no claims, litigation or other proceedings pending or threatened which could impair, limit, diminish or infringe upon the Rights; and

8.1.7 the Writer is and will remain throughout the provision of the Option agreement a "qualifying" person for the purposes of the Act and British citizens and residents of the United Kingdom;

8.2 The Writer will indemnify and hold harmless the Producer, its directors, officers, employees, agents, licensees, and assigns from and against any claims, actions, losses and expenses (including legal expenses) occasioned, either directly or indirectly, by the breach or alleged breach of any of the above representations, warranties or covenants.

## **9. Miscellaneous**

9.1 The Writer may not assign this Agreement or any of its rights or obligations hereunder without the express written consent of the Producer. The Producer may assign this Agreement or any of its rights or obligations hereunder to a financially responsible entity that will assume in writing all obligations contained hereunder, without the consent of the Writer. This Agreement shall be binding upon and enure to the benefit of the parties and their respective successors and permitted assigns.

9.2 The Writer shall not, by any means whatsoever, publish or otherwise disseminate (except to their legal and financial advisors) any information, statements or material regarding this Agreement or the Productions, unless the same is first approved in writing by the Producer.

9.3 The parties agree to execute and deliver such documents and perform and cause to perform such further acts as may be necessary or desirable in order to give full effect to this Agreement.

9.4 This Agreement constitutes the entire agreement between the parties, supersedes all previous agreements, deal memos and negotiations between the parties and their representatives, and may not be modified except by written agreement of the parties.

9.5 This Agreement does not create or infer any rights under the Contracts (Rights of Third Parties) Act 1999 enforceable by any person who is not a party to the agreement.

9.6 The sole remedy of the Writer for any breach or alleged breach of this Agreement by the Producer shall be limited to the right, if any, to the recovery of money damages at law, and the Writer will have no right by reason of any such breach or alleged breach to rescind this Agreement or to any equitable or injunctive relief, and the rights and waivers granted by the Writer under this Agreement shall not terminate by reason of such breach.

9.7 Nothing herein contained shall be construed to create a partnership or joint venture or

employment relationship by or between the parties to this Agreement or to make either of the parties the agent of the other.

- 9.8 The failure at any time to require performance of any provision of this Agreement shall not affect the full right to require such performance at any later time. The waiver of a breach of any provision shall not constitute a waiver of the provision of any succeeding breach. Should any provision of this Agreement be held invalid, the remainder of the Agreement shall be effective as though such invalid provision has not been contained in this Agreement.
- 9.9 This Agreement shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of Scotland and the parties submit to the non-exclusive jurisdiction of the Courts of Scotland.

EXECUTION PAGE OF OPTION AGREEMENT

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have duly executed this Agreement as a deed on the day and year first written above

Executed and Delivered as a Deed by  
Haphazard Media Ltd  
acting by its duly authorised director

\_\_\_\_\_  
Director

In the presence of

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

Executed and Delivered as a Deed by  
Mikey Murray

\_\_\_\_\_  
Writer

In the presence of

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

11<sup>th</sup> February 2013

APPENDIX J

1. HAPHAZARD MEDIA LTD
2. MIKEY MURRAY
3. **NAYSUN ALAE-CAREW**

## OPTION AGREEMENT

“CITY”

DRAFT (4)

DATE

2013

## PARTIES

1. Haphazard Media Ltd ( [REDACTED] ) whose registered office is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] (“Haphazard”, “Producer”); and
2. Mikey Murray of [REDACTED] (“MM”, “Writer”).
3. Naysun Alae-Carew of [REDACTED] (“NAC”)

## RECITALS

1. The Writer is the author and owns all rights with respect to a screenplay provisionally entitled “City” (“Screenplay”); and
2. The Producer wishes to produce a narrative feature film (“Film”) or other media based on or inspired by all or part of the Screenplay; and
3. The Producer wishes to option certain rights in the Screenplay as more particularly set out in this Agreement; and
4. The Producer agrees that best efforts will be made for the Writer to be the assigned Director for any narrative feature film inspired by all or part of the screenplay.

## OPTION AND REPRESENTATION

### 1. Option

- 1.1 The Writer grants to the Producer at any time during:
  - i) the period of two (2) years from date of signature of this Agreement (“Option Period”); and
  - ii) subject to a fee to be agreed in good faith payable prior to expiry of the Option Period, a further period of 12 months (“Renewal Period”),

the exclusive option to purchase the entire copyright and all other rights in the Screenplay “Rights” (as further described in Clause 5.1) on the terms set out therein.

- 1.2 The Producer may exercise the Option by giving notice in writing to the Writer at any time before the end of the Option Period and/or Extended Option Period, provided the

Production is in paid development and/or has significant partners attached, including but not limited to co-producers, sales agents and distributors (“Industry Partners”).

- 1.3 Nothing in this Agreement shall impose upon the Producer any obligation to exercise the Option.
- 1.4 The Writer shall be entitled upon written notice to the Producer to re-acquire the rights in the Screenplay (not including any elements contributed to the Screenplay by Producer) assigned to the Producer as set out in the Assignment if the Production has no significant partners attached as outlined in 1.2 within 12 months of Producer’s exercise of the Option.
- 1.5 The Producer agrees that NAC shall be a named producer of the Screenplay and any Film based on the Screenplay, the terms of which will be negotiated in good faith in a Producer’s Agreement.
- 1.6 The Producer agrees that in the event that NAC ceases to be a shareholder or employee of Haphazard or a subsequent company that is assigned the Option rights to the Screenplay, and the Option has not been exercised, the rights will revert to the Writer.

## **2. Option Price**

- 2.1 In consideration for the granting of the Option, the Writer shall be paid the sum of one pound (£1) (the “Option Price”) on the execution of this Agreement (the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged).

## **3. Preproduction Activities**

- 3.1 During the Option Period or the Renewal Period the Writer acknowledges that the Producer may undertake preproduction activities in connection with any of the rights to be acquired under this Agreement, including, without limitation, the preparation and distribution of the Screenplay and proposals, treatments, and/or outlines based on the Screenplay.
- 3.2 The Writer hereby agrees that the Producer may exclusively represent, advise and solicit offers for the rights to produce the Screenplay and to pitch it to Industry Partners for the purposes of commissioning a Production during the Option Period (and, if applicable, the Renewal Period) to which the Writer agrees to provide reasonable assistance.
- 3.3 The Producer shall be entitled to produce presentation documents and other such materials as it deems necessary for pitching to Industry Partners (“Producer Materials”). The rights in the Producer Materials shall be owned by the Producer at all times and no licence is hereby granted or intended to be granted in relation to the same.

3.4 If any such preproduction activities are prevented or interrupted due to epidemic, fire, action of the elements, strikes, labour disputes, governmental action or order, court order, act of God, public enemy, wars, riots or civil commotion, the Option Period or Renewal Period, as the case may be, shall be extended for the number of days such an event existed.

#### **4. Exercise of Option**

4.1 The Producer may exercise the Option, at any time during the Option Period or the Renewal Period and on or before the first day of principal photography of the Film by payment to the Writer of the sum of five thousand pounds (£5,000) (the "Purchase Price") less any amounts pursuant to Section 2.1 and/or any writing fees that may be subsequently agreed and paid.

4.2 The Producer agrees that the Writer shall receive an amount equal to 5% of the Producer's share of net profits received by the Producer.

4.3 No further compensation shall be paid to the Writer for any of the rights in connection with the Screenplay.

#### **5. Grant of Rights**

5.1 Upon the exercise of the Option, the Writer hereby assigns to the Producer with full title guarantee the entire copyright and all other rights of whatsoever kind and nature in and to the Screenplay and in all the products of the Writer's services and contributions in connection with the Screenplay (including without limitation the so-called rental and lending rights), in all media throughout the Universe for the full period of such rights and thereafter (so far as may be possible) in perpetuity to hold unto the Producer absolutely and, to the extent that the Screenplay shall not as at the date of signature of this Agreement have been completed, as an assignment of future copyright.

5.2 The Writer and the Producer agree that if the Option is exercised, this document shall constitute a valid assignment, grant and conveyance of the Rights. If, however, the Producer in its sole discretion determines that further documents are required or desired to evidence or effect such assignment, grant and conveyance, the Writer shall execute such further documents within 10 days of such request by the Producer, failing receipt thereof the Writer hereby grants to the Producer a power, coupled with an interest, to execute and deliver such documents as the Writer's legal authority in fact.

#### **6. Additional Rights**

6.1 The Writer hereby grants to the Producer the following additional Rights for the duration of the Agreement, effective as of the date of this Agreement:

6.1.1 the right, in collaboration with the Writer, to adapt, revise, modify, rearrange,

change the sequence of events, add to and/or delete any and all material in respect of the Screenplay and all of its component elements including without limitation, the structure, format, concept, characters, and setting in adapting it for any of the uses provided for under this Agreement;

6.1.2 the right to prepare and use excerpts, synopses and summaries from the Screenplay for the purpose of advertising, publicising, and/or promoting the exploitation of the Film;

6.1.3 the right, in collaboration with the Writer to select and use a different title, including but not limited to, the title of the Screenplay as the title or sub-title in connection with the Productions; and

6.1.4 the right to use and display the name, voice, likeness and biographical material of the Writer for the purpose of promoting, publicising and advertising the Screenplay, provided that no commercial tie-ups, merchandising or endorsements shall be made by the Producer using such name, voice, likeness or biographical material without the Writer's written consent.

6.1.5 the exclusive right to secure copyright registration in the Producer's own name or otherwise, and to renew such copyrights whenever permitted;

6.2 The Writer hereby waives all moral rights in the Screenplay, including without limitation the right to prevent modifications, adaptations, additions, deletions, or any other distortions to the Screenplay.

6.3 The Producer and Writer agree that best efforts will be made to make joint decisions in regards to rights in section 6.1.1 and 6.1.3. In the event of a dispute, however, the Producer's decision shall prevail.

## **7. Credits**

7.1 The Writer shall be accorded the following credits:-

7.1.1 a credit on screen on a single card in the main titles of the Film as the author of the Screenplay in a size of type no smaller than the average size of type used to accord credit to any individual producer, executive producer and any writer on all copies of the Film made by or to the order of the Producer; and

7.1.2 subject to distributors' and financiers' customary exclusions and restrictions and in particular those imposed on the Producer, but in any event wherever and whenever any other writers, individual producers and, executive producers is credited including in excluded advertising, save for award, nomination or congratulatory ads featuring the honourees:-

7.1.2.1a credit as the author of the Screenplay in like form as the credit specified in clause 5.1.1 in the full and regular billing block portion of all paid advertising and publicity relating to the Film issued by or under the direct control of the

Producer in a size of type no smaller than the average size of type used to accord credit to any writers, individual producers, and executive producers; and

7.1.2.2a credit in like form and on the same basis as specified in clause 5.1.2.1 on the cover of the soundtrack album, DVD, video and any other derivative products relating to the Film if the full and regular billing block appears thereon issued by or under the direct control of the Producer.

- 7.2 The Writer shall be accorded the credit set out in clause 7.1 if the Writer is not in default of any material term of this Agreement, if the Writer has complied with the Writer's material obligations under this Agreement and if the Producer produces the Film based wholly or substantially on the Screenplay.
- 7.3 The Producer and Writer may, in good faith, jointly commission other writer(s) to develop the Screenplay. In the event of a dispute over the commission of other writer(s), the Producer shall have the final decision.
- 7.4 If the Producer commissions other writer(s) to develop the Screenplay, the Writer may be required to share the Writer's credit with any other writer(s) who is engaged by the Producer in the writing of the Screenplay. Any dispute as to the Writer's credit shall be determined by the arbitration provisions contained in the Screenwriting Credits Agreement provided the arbitration can be resolved within four (4) weeks of notifying in writing the relevant body in accordance with the provisions of the Screenwriting Credits Agreement. Otherwise, the final say with respect to any dispute shall be retained by the financiers of the Film.
- 7.5 The Producer shall endeavour to procure that the distributors and licensees of the Film with whom the Producer contracts directly shall accord the Writer's credit in accordance with this Agreement on all copies of the Film issued or exhibited by the distributors or licensees of the Film and will notify third parties with whom it contracts of the credit provisions. However, the Producer shall not be liable for the neglect or default of any such distributors or licensees and no failure to accord the Writer's credit shall constitute a breach of this Agreement by the Producer. However, the Producer shall endeavour, without any obligation to incur costs and without making any guarantee of success, to prospectively cure any failure to accord the Writer's credit within a reasonable time following receipt of written notice of the failure from the Writer.
- 7.6 Main titles shall mean that portion of the Film's credits where the "directed by" credit appears. All other matters relating to credit including size of type and placement and including the form of the credit shall be determined by the Producer.

## **8. Representations and Warranties**

- 8.1 The Writer represents, warrants and covenants that:

- 8.1.1 the Writer is the sole creator of the Screenplay and the sole and exclusive owners of the Rights and have the full right and authority to enter into this Agreement and to grant the Producer the Rights;
  - 8.1.2 the Writer has not assigned or licensed to any other person, firm or corporation, or in any such manner encumbered, any of the Rights;
  - 8.1.3 the Writer has not and will not at any time enter into any agreement which conflicts in any way with this Agreement or undertake or permit activities which will interfere with, diminish or compete with the exercise of any of the Rights, or attempt to sell, license, assign, dispose of or encumber any of the Rights;
  - 8.1.4 the Screenplay is wholly original and contains no matter which infringes the copyrights, right of privacy or publicity, or any other right of any person or which appropriates the personality of any person;
  - 8.1.5 the Screenplay contains no matter which is libelous, or in any other way unlawful;
  - 8.1.6 there are no claims, litigation or other proceedings pending or threatened which could impair, limit, diminish or infringe upon the Rights; and
  - 8.1.7 the Writer is and will remain throughout the provision of the Option agreement a "qualifying" person for the purposes of the Act and British citizens and residents of the United Kingdom;
- 8.2 The Writer will indemnify and hold harmless the Producer, its directors, officers, employees, agents, licensees, and assigns from and against any claims, actions, losses and expenses (including legal expenses) occasioned, either directly or indirectly, by the breach or alleged breach of any of the above representations, warranties or covenants.

## **9. Miscellaneous**

- 9.1 The Writer may not assign this Agreement or any of its rights or obligations hereunder without the express written consent of the Producer. The Producer may assign this Agreement or any of its rights or obligations hereunder to a financially responsible entity that will assume in writing all obligations contained hereunder, without the consent of the Writer. This Agreement shall be binding upon and enure to the benefit of the parties and their respective successors and permitted assigns.
- 9.2 The Writer shall not, by any means whatsoever, publish or otherwise disseminate (except to their legal and financial advisors) any information, statements or material regarding this Agreement or the Productions, unless the same is first approved in writing by the Producer.
- 9.3 The parties agree to execute and deliver such documents and perform and cause to perform such further acts as may be necessary or desirable in order to give full effect to

this Agreement.

- 9.4 This Agreement constitutes the entire agreement between the parties, supersedes all previous agreements, deal memos and negotiations between the parties and their representatives, and may not be modified except by written agreement of the parties.
- 9.5 This Agreement does not create or infer any rights under the Contracts (Rights of Third Parties) Act 1999 enforceable by any person who is not a party to the agreement.
- 9.6 The sole remedy of the Writer for any breach or alleged breach of this Agreement by the Producer shall be limited to the right, if any, to the recovery of money damages at law, and the Writer will have no right by reason of any such breach or alleged breach to rescind this Agreement or to any equitable or injunctive relief, and the rights and waivers granted by the Writer under this Agreement shall not terminate by reason of such breach.
- 9.7 Nothing herein contained shall be construed to create a partnership or joint venture or employment relationship by or between the parties to this Agreement or to make either of the parties the agent of the other.
- 9.8 The failure at any time to require performance of any provision of this Agreement shall not affect the full right to require such performance at any later time. The waiver of a breach of any provision shall not constitute a waiver of the provision of any succeeding breach. Should any provision of this Agreement be held invalid, the remainder of the Agreement shall be effective as though such invalid provision has not been contained in this Agreement.
- 9.9 This Agreement shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of Scotland and the parties submit to the non-exclusive jurisdiction of the Courts of Scotland.

EXECUTION PAGE OF OPTION AGREEMENT

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have duly executed this Agreement as a deed on the day and year first written above

Executed and Delivered as a Deed by  
Haphazard Media Ltd  
acting by its duly authorised director

\_\_\_\_\_  
Director

In the presence of

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

Executed and Delivered as a Deed by  
Mikey Murray

\_\_\_\_\_  
Writer

In the presence of

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

Executed and Delivered as a Deed by  
Naysun Alae-Carew

\_\_\_\_\_

Producer

In the presence of

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

APPENDIX K

CITY PILOT  
by  
Mikey Murray

30th November, 2012

FADE IN:

EXT. CITY SCAPE - NIGHT

Corporate glass super-structures rise out of the dark haze. Some of the windows are lit up pixels, the face of one particular building a giant advertising screen that bursts out of the night sky.

A riverside apartment complex stands near by, seemingly animated by the reflection of the gigantic advertising screen.

EXT. RIVERSIDE APARTMENT BALCONY - NIGHT

Hunched over the balcony railing and intermittently illuminated by the light spilling from the adverts is DAVIS; mid-thirties and pensive - he sucks on a cigarette.

A holster strap clings to him over his jumper.

A distant SIREN.

Davis peers across the river at the south-side. By contrast, shadows appear to win the battle over the dim lights there.

Behind Davis and on the other side of open patio doors, LAURA enters the room; light cascades into the room with her. She holds a CHILD in a blanket.

Davis is unaware of her presence behind him until she speaks....

LAURA

He's bathed. Think I'll put him to bed.

DAVIS

Whatever you think.

LAURA

Are you heading out?

He jettisons his cigarette butt off the balcony.

RADIO REPORTER

An independent report on the drug and gang turf war in the south side of the city has finally been released today....

INT/EXT. CAR - NIGHT

Davis drives. He peers out of the windscreen. A set of rosary beads and a crucifix swing from his rear view mirror.

The news report plays on the radio as he drives....

RADIO REPORTER

....The report from The Independent Centre for Social Justice has assessed that arresting ring-leaders causes fundamental problems, but also that political commitment to the cause is waning in the face of ever increasing austerity measures....

....Tom Reeves from the I.C.S.J. had this to say--

TOM (RADIO REPORT)

If you just take out the people at the tops of gangs you create a power struggle. Younger members start to compete for supremacy and other gangs see that their rivals are weakened. This leads to street wars.

Davis drives through an area of high rise office glass. It's clean and impressive, but deserted and soulless; a demarcation-zone by night.

The buildings dwarf Davis's car as he drives between them.

A huge billboard advertises new build homes in 'North Hills'.

The car approaches the mouth of a tunnel; the sign above exclaims....

'SOUTH SIDE'

Someone has spray-painted sharp snarling teeth as graffiti around the top edge of the tunnel entrance.

RADIO STATIC and ECHO as the car enters the tunnel and starts to descend on the downward camber.

In the rear view mirror, Davis watches the mouth of the tunnel shrink into the distance.

The flicker of the tunnel lights coming through the windscreen intermittently light up his face.

The radio kicks back in as the car approaches the tunnel exit.

TOM (RADIO REPORT) (CONT'D)

--and I have worked with gang members as young as eight who are brought up with their own set of principles. It is hard to change but we try to give these kids more positive alternatives....

The car exits the tunnel and the ECHO stops.

The south side is dark - misty showers of light from sporadic working street-lamps toil to illuminate rain splashed, deserted pavements. Concrete buildings are slopped with a clutter of hopeful corporate adverts, and the smashed and boarded windows reveal the truth....

RADIO REPORTER

In a statement from the council today, a spokesman said: "Our strategy for ending gang and drug related youth violence makes clear that the problem cannot be tackled through police enforcement alone - that's why we continue to fund projects to help stop the next generation being drawn into gang culture".....

Davis drives through a near-derelict shopping area.

One shop remains open. A fortified pawn-shop offering 'Cash for Gold'. Idle, rust-ridden shutters confirm the demise of the other shop units.

RADIO REPORTER (CONT'D)

The independent report also states that the City's decision to arm the police was a necessary measure in combating these problems....

Davis stops at a red light. He looks at Graffiti on a wall. It reads....

'Welcome to the Belly'.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Davis gets out of his car. He steps across towards a crime scene.

Above a shop that has been cordoned off, a dimly illuminated sign reads 'ALL NIGHT NEEDS'.

A body in a hooded tracksuit lies on the pavement outside of the shop and Davis takes in the scene.

A 'beat officer' approaches Davis.

BEAT OFFICER  
Nothing from the store camera.  
The guy said the recording drive  
is bust.

Davis looks up at a street camera that looms overhead in the blackness.

DAVIS  
You check the eyes?

BEAT OFFICER  
Like the rest around here - a  
long time blind.

Davis looks across at a woman who is being attended to by a medic. She is MELISSA; blonde, thirty-something and heady in a trashy way.

BEAT OFFICER (CONT'D)  
I got her statement.

Davis takes the officer's notebook and starts to read.

He stops momentarily to squint into the dark street that surrounds him.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

On the street by 'All Night Needs', A YOUNG LAD in a hooded tracksuit hangs on the street.

His attention is caught by Melissa as she approaches with a stroller....

She isn't fazed as she advances on him.

In the buggy is CARL; a one-year-old baby with soft red hair - without his mother, he'd be a picture of innocence.

The 'HOODY' steps over to Melissa and she stops to meet him.

He passes her a fat bundle of cash and then makes himself scarce.

END FLASHBACK

CUT TO:

INT. 'ALL NIGHT NEEDS' - NIGHT

A DOOR-OPENING-BUZZER sounds as Davis enters.

He strolls through the store. He looks at some scattered beer cans, and a pool of milk from a broken milk bottle.

There is also an empty stroller.

Milk drips from the half broken bottle

A FORENSICS guy scans the area for prints with a scanner.

CUT TO:

INT. 'ALL NIGHT NEEDS' - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Melissa shops around the aisles; milk and bread.

As she stops to consider a bottle of wine, The DOOR-BUZZER interrupts the hum of the refrigeration units.

A DARK FIGURE, all in black and wearing a balaclava mask, steps into the store.

The CLERK turns to see who has entered, but scuttles under the counter as the intruder points a gun at him.

Melissa is momentarily confused as the ominous figure approaches her. Confronted by the masked man, she stands frozen to the spot; bottle of milk in hand.

MELISSA

What do you want?

He cracks her across the face with his elbow. She clatters into a grocery shelf and plunges to the floor among a pile of beer cans. The milk bottle smashes.

Carl GIGGLE's as he is lifted from his stroller by the man.

Melissa scrambles and clutches at the kidnapper's ankle.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

You're so fucked.

The man struggles to free himself but Melissa has a tight grip and is being dragged.

He directs his gun at her face. Blood has started to run from her nose.

She stares up the barrel before it is pressed into her swollen cheek. A tear rolls from her eye and her powerful grip weakens.

The man breaks free. The BUZZER sounds again as he exits....

EXT. 'ALL NIGHT NEEDS' - CONTINUOUS

Now outside, he pauses momentarily....

A Bullet CRACKS off the wall an inch from his head.

Instinctively, he manages to both hold the child and squeeze off a SHOT of his own that 'wings' the hooded assailant that advances on him.

Carl is now crying uncontrollably as the masked man steps over to the Hooded Dealer who writhes on the ground.

The dealer looks up at the masked man with fear in his eyes - he isn't much older than fourteen.

Under the ever watchful eye of The Belly streets, the masked man hesitates only fleetingly - he levels his assailant with a fatal head shot.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Davis looks down at the Hoody's body.

A BUZZER sounds....

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT.

Laura answers the door.

Revealed as she opens the door is KERR; he is the epitome of calm, but something deep in his soul drives him.

He strolls into the apartment and waits as Laura exits into another room. Kerr scans the minimalist apartment, he has a paper file in his hand.

Laura re-enters with the sleeping Carl in her arms and passes him to Kerr. Kerr affectionately takes Carl; his cool exterior now warmed as he allows himself to fuss over the baby.

KERR

A couple of problems I gather?

LAURA  
Nothing massive.

KERR  
Tell him to give it a week before  
this one.

Kerr passes her the file.

Carl is content in Kerr's arms - oblivious to his upheaval.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - NIGHT

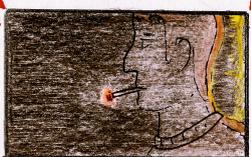
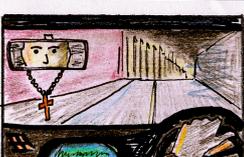
Davis is stopped at a set of traffic lights on a deserted road. The red traffic light reflects on his windscreen.

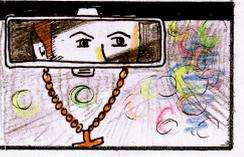
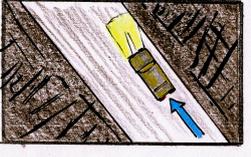
RADIO PRESENTER  
....the report concludes that  
more resources and alternative  
new measures will ultimately be  
required to prevent children from  
being drawn into drugs and gang  
violence.

Davis looks ahead out of the windscreen, he taps his finger impatiently on the steering wheel.

The traffic light turns to red and amber....

CUT TO BLACK.

PROJECT: <b>CITY</b> PILOT		NAME: <b>MIKEY MURRAY</b>	DATE: 8th Feb 2013	PAGE: 1	
1:1		1:3		2:1	
	Roll 180° Static of flats EXTRA SHOT 1:2		CUT TO:	Possible Dutch Angle Slow-push	
ELS: Establishing North-side. Wide/Flat. Cut from Black with Audio sting (Timpani)		ELS: Low trajectory looking up apartment block.		MS: Davis looking out to SouthSide.	
2:2		2:3		3:1	
	Possible Dutch Angle Slow-push		ECU/MLS: Flat space, Davis in foreground. Laura out of focus in background. Dialogue exchange.	MS: Interior car looking out of windscreen. Davis eyes in mirror.	
CU: Wide angle / flat space profile of Davis.					

PROJECT: <b>CITY</b>		NAME: <b>MIKEY MURRAY</b>	DATE: 8th Feb 2013	PAGE: 2	
3:2		3:3		3:4	
	ELS: High angle - low shutter speed of road. (Possible time-lapse)		CUT: Davis in mirror - streets out of focus.	MCU: Profile of Davis driving	
3:5		3:6		3:7	
	ELS: High vertical static of car.		TILT LS: Flat space. Car passes through frame then tilt to advertising screen.	PAN Pan with car as it enters tunnel.	



3:8 MS/ELS: Inside car. Tunnel entrance shrinks in Rear view mirror.



3:9 CU: Dutch angle of Davis driving. Throw background out of focus.



3:10 MOVING SHOT.

MCU: Tunnel lights (filtered). Moving shot - into night blackness. From Sunroof(?).



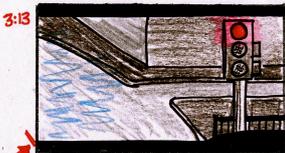
3:11 TRUMBONE / PUSH

LS: Dolly into 'All Night Needs'



3:12 TRACK FROM CAR

LS: Coverage of Belly Streets from car.



3:13 MOVE & STOP

LS: Move and stop for 'Red Light'.



3:14 MCU/LS: Static through passenger side. Car leaves to create LS Static of 'Welcome to the Belly'.



4:1 DOLLY / HAND HELD

VARIOUS: Dolly / Hand-Held with Davis as he exits car and surveys scene & interacts with Beat Officer.

Continuous... →



4:1/4:2 Continued... Roving camera follows actors. Consider any additional cutaway pick ups.



4:3 Moving?

MLS: P.O.V. Cutaway of dead Hoody.



4:4 LS: P.O.V. Security Camera. Low trajectory.



4:5 LS/MLS: P.O.V. of Melissa + Medic. Melissa Looks over.

PROJECT: CITY

NAME: MIKEY MUFFAY

DATE: 13th Feb 2013

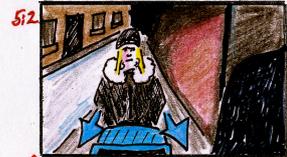
PAGE: 5



LS: P.O.V. Overview of street.



LS: Flat Space Master  
Hoody hangs on the street.



MLS → Dirty of Melissa  
approaching with buggy.

Tilt and track with Carl until  
buggy stops



→ Into MCU of Carl in buggy



MS: Money exchange between  
Melissa + Hoody



LS: Back to Master for  
conclusion of money exchange

PROJECT: CITY

NAME: MIKEY MUFFAY

DATE: 14th Feb 2013

PAGE: 6



MS: Davis enters shop and stops  
at Mark.



HAND HELD

VARIOUS: Roving on Davis's  
Shoulder to take in crime  
scene. Forensic guy - spill  
milk - empty stroller.  
\* Pick-up required for transition.



TRACK - WHIP OUT

MLS: Dolly across aisles with  
Melissa  
- Door buzzer sounds -  
Whip out.



WHIP IN - DOLLY

Whip into MS: Over clerks  
Shoulder as Masked Man enters.  
Reverse dolly with him.



HAND HELD....

VARIOUS: On shoulder of Masked  
Man until he stops in front  
of Melissa

"What do you want?"

Camera moves left into....



HAND HELD....

MS: Two shot as he smacks  
her.

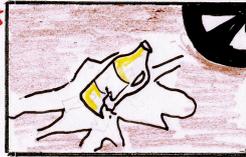
7:4



HAND HELD

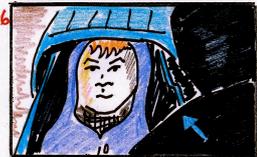
CU: Melissa crashes to floor

7:5



CU: Cutaway of milk scattering

7:6



MCU: On shoulder as Carl is lifted from the stroller.

7:7



MCU: On Melissa as she grabs & holds kidnapper's ankle.

7:8



ECU: P.O.V. Shallow focus on end of gun barrel.

7:9



MCU: Melissa's reaction and 'letting go'.

7:10



LS: Masked man exits with Carl. P.O.V. Melissa.

8:1



MS: Masked Man pauses as he exits - Bullet cracks off wall beside his head. He takes action ...

8:2



MLS: Hoody fires shot and is then winged by Masked Man.

8:3



PUSH

MS → MCU: P.O.V. push on Hoody's reaction.

8:4



ELS: Flat Space - Masked man kills hoody.

9:1



DOLLY

MS: Reverse dolly with Davis as he exits All Night Needs. He stops to look at the body.

9:2



MS: Cutaway of dead hoody from pavement level.

10:1



Dolly

VARIOUS: Dolly with Laura as she answers door and lets Kerr in. Dolly back into apartment with them - staying with Kerr.

Continuous...

10:1



Dolly

Continuous...

Continuous...

10:1



Dolly

Continuous: Kerr reacts when Laura enters with the baby behind him.

\* Possible cutaway required depending on what Kerr does. Look OUT OF WINDOW? # coverage.

10:2



MS: Lisa (dirty) for dialogue exchange & baby hand-over

10:3



MS: Kerr (dirty) for dialogue exchange & baby hand-over

10:4



CU: Dutch angle on Carl.

Dissolve to...

11:1



MCU: Through the windscreen, Davis waits at a red light - it reflects on the glass.

11:2



MS: The lights turn to Red & Amber!

- CUT TO BLACK.

~~APPENDIX M~~

Haphazard Media  
info@haphazardmedia.co.uk

**CITY**

CALL SHEET: 1  
Fri 8<sup>th</sup> March 2013

Prod: Nic Crum  
Prod: Naysun Alae-  
Assoc: Carew  
Prod: Lauren Lamarr  
Director: Mikey Murray

*No plan survives first contact...*

-Field Marshall Rommel (attr.)

Breakfast from 1800  
First Costume 1830  
Call  
First Make Up 1900  
Call  
UNIT CALL: 1830  
Estimated Lunch 2330  
Estimated Wrap: 0530

SUNRISE: 0650 SUNSET: 1806 WEATHER:  
OVERCAST

**TOILETS ARE AVAILABLE AT WATERROW UNIT BASE  
PARKING IS AVAILABLE AT WATERROW UNIT BASE  
PLEASE NOTE: We will shoot out cast first. See shot list for shooting order.**

Unit Base	7 Water Row, Govan, G51 3UW
Location 1:	Riverside at Tradeston
Location 2:	Clyde Arc bridge- South side
Location 3:	Maxim Business Park, Motherwell ML1 4WR
Location 4:	Glasgow Harbour Apartments – Meadowside Quay Walk, G11 6EE
Location 5:	Anniesland Cross/Great Western Road
Location 6:	Clyde Tunnel (A739)
Location 7:	Underpass at Tradeston
Location 8(a):	Skypark 1, 8 Elliot Square, Glasgow G3 8EP (a) from building
Location 9:	Govan Road G51 – by Unit Base

LOC	SC	I/E	SET/ SYNOPSIS	D/N	PGs	CAST	NOTE S
1, 2	1pt	EXT	Cityscape Establishers	N	1/8	-	
3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 8a, 9	3pt	INT/EXT	Car Davis drives to the South Side	N	1 7/8	1	
5	11	INT/EXT	Car Davis is stopped at a red light	N	3/8	1	
				TOTAL	2 3/8		
				L			

**SHOT LIST**

LOC	SHOT	EXT/INT	DESCRIPTION	CAST
1	1.1	Ext	ELS establishing North Side. Wide/Flat	
2	1.2	Ext	Additional establisher	
—SHOOT OUT DAVIS—				
3	3.3b	Int	CU Davis in mirror, streets out of focus	1
3	3.4b	Int	MCU profile of Davis driving	1
3	3.6	Ext	LS flat space, car passes through frame frame then tilt to advertising screen	
8	3.3a	Int	CU Davis in mirror, streets out of focus	1
8	3.4a	Int	MCU profile of Davis driving	1
4	3.1	Int	Car leaving Underground car park at Glasgow Harbour and heading past New Concert Hall: MS interior car, windscreen, eyes in rear view mirror	1
5	11.1	Ext/int	MCU through windscreen, Davis waits at red light – it reflects on glass	1
5	11.2	Ext	MS lights turn from red to amber	
6	3.8	Int	MS/ELS inside car, tunnel shrinks in rear view mirror	1
6	3.9	Int	CU dutch angle Davis, throw background out of focus	1

7	3.14	Ext	MCU/LS static through passenger side window, car leaves to create LS static "Welcome to The Belly"	1
---DAVIS/MAKE UP/COSTUME WRAP---				
8a	3.2	Ext	ELS High angle, city streets, low shutter speed of road, poss time lapse	
8a	3.5	Ext	High vertical static of car	
4	1.3	Ext	ELS low trajectory looking up apartment block	
6	3.7	Ext	Pan with car as it enters tunnel	
6	3.10	Ext	MCU tunnel lights (filtered) moving shot – into night blackness (from windscreen?)	
9	3.13	Int	Traffic lights from backseat of car	
9	3.12	Int	LS coverage of Belly streets from car (with coverage of 4.4 camera cutaway)	

ID	ARTISTE	CHARACTER	CALL	COSTUME	MAKE-UP	PICK UP	ON SET
1	Andrew John Tait	DAVIS	1830	1830	1900	O/T	As req

**ART DEPT** As per the instructions of Ryan Clachrie  
**CAMERA** As per the instructions of David Lee  
**LIGHTING** As per the instructions of Eamonn Jones  
**SOUND** As per the instructions of Alex Ashcroft  
**LOCATIONS** As per the instructions of Lauren Lamarr  
**MAKE UP** As per the instructions of Kayleigh Sutherland  
**COSTUME** As per the instructions of Sarah Michaels  
**RUSHES** To Naysun on wrap  
**CATERING** c/o Angela Waddell  
**HEALTH & SAFETY** First Aider Lauren Lamarr  
**HOSPITAL** Southern General, 1345 Govan Road, G51 4TF 0141 201 1100  
**POLICE** Govan Station, 923 Helen Street, G52 1EE 0141 532 5400

**ADVANCE SCHEDULE 9<sup>th</sup> March 2013**  
 Location – Nithdale Place, Glasgow, G41

SC	I/E	SET/ SYNOPSIS	D/N	PGs	CAST	NOTE S
5	EXT	All Night Needs (Flashback) Hoodie gives Melissa some cash	N	3/8	3, 6, 101	
8	EXT	All Night Needs (Flashback) – continuous Davis shoots the hoodie	N	3/8	1, 6, 101	
7pt	INT	All Night Needs (Flashback) p/u Davis snatching Carl (shoot out Carl)	N	1/8	1, 3, 101	
4	EXT	All Night Needs Davis arrives at the crime scene	N	6/8	1, 3, 5, 6, 9	
Shoot sc. 9 whilst shooting sc. 4						
9	EXT	All Night Needs Davis looks at the hoodie's body	N	1/8	1, 6	
3pt	EXT	All Night Needs Trombone dolly into All Night Needs	N	1/8	1	
7pt	INT	All Night Needs (Flashback) Davis snatches Carl	N	6/8	1, 3, 7	Carl dummy
6	INT	All Night Needs Davis enters All Night Needs, Forensics Guy scans	N	3/8	1, 8	
				<b>Total</b>	<b>3 pgs</b>	

**CONTACTS**

**God** Lauren Lamarr  
**1st AD** The Almighty KK  
**3rd AD** Heather Winship  
**Driver** William Barbour

# CITY

Prod: Nic Crum  
Prod: Naysun Alae-Carew  
Assoc Prod: Lauren Lamarr  
Director: Mikey Murray

*Time is an illusion, lunchtime doubly do*

-Douglas Adams

Breakfast from 1700  
First Costume Call 1730  
First Make Up Call 1750  
**UNIT CALL: 1800**  
Estimated Lunch 2330  
Estimated Wrap: 0530

SUNSET: SUNRISE: WEATHER: OVERCAST

TOILETS ARE AVAILABLE AT UNIT BASE  
PARKING IS AVAILABLE AT UNIT BASE AND LOCATION

Unit Base:  
Church of  
Scotland –  
Church Hall,  
513 Sheilds  
Road,  
G41

Location 1:  
General Store,  
157 Nithdale  
Place, G41

SC	I/E	SET/ SYNOPSIS	D/N	PGs	CAST	NOTES
5	EXT	All Night Needs (Flashback) Hoodie gives Melissa some cash	N	3/8	3, 6, 101	
8	EXT	All Night Needs (Flashback) – continuous Davis shoots the hoodie	N	3/8	1, 6, 101	
7pt	INT	All Night Needs (Flashback) p/u Davis snatching Carl (shoot out Carl)	N	1/8	1, 3, 101	
4	EXT	All Night Needs Davis arrives at the crime scene	N	6/8	1, 3, 5, 6, 9	
Shoot sc. 9 whilst shooting sc. 4						
9	EXT	All Night Needs Davis looks at the hoodie's body	N	1/8	1, 6	
3pt	EXT	All Night Needs Trombone dolly into All Night Needs	N	1/8	1	
7pt	INT	All Night Needs (Flashback) Davis snatches Carl	N	6/8	1, 3, 7	Carl dummy
6	INT	All Night Needs Davis enters All Night Needs, Forensics Guy scans	N	3/8	1, 8	
				Total	3 pgs	

ID	ARTISTE	CHARACTER	CALL	COSTUME	MAKE-UP	PICK UP	ON SET
1	Andrew John Tait	DAVIS	1800	1810	1830		1845
3	Nicola Roy	MELISSA	1730	1730	1750		1845
5	Nicky Elliot	BEAT OFFICER	2100	2100	2120		2220
6	Scott Reid	HOODIE	1745	1750	1810		1845
7	Dave Clarke	CLERK	2100	2140	2200		2220
8	Andrew Murray	FORENSICS	2100	2200	2140		2220

9	Fiona Gunn	MEDIC	2100	2120	2100	2220
101	James Lowe	CARL	1845	1845	1900	1915

ART DEPT	As per the instructions of Ryan Clachrie
CAMERA	As per the instructions of David Lee
LIGHTING	As per the instructions of Eamonn Jones
SOUND	As per the instructions of Alex Ashcroft
LOCATIONS	As per the instructions of Lauren Lamarr
MAKE UP	As per the instructions of Kayleigh Sutherland
COSTUME	As per the instructions of Sarah Michaels
RUSHES	To Naysun on wrap
CATERING	c/o Angela Waddell
HEALTH & SAFETY	First Aider Lauren Lamarr
HOSPITAL	Southern General, 1345 Govan Road, G51 4TF 0141 201 1100
POLICE	POLICE ON SET TODAY Govan Station, 923 Helen Street, G52 1EE 0141 532 5400

#### ADVANCE SCHEDULE 10<sup>th</sup> March 2013

Location –Glasgow Harbour

SC	I/E	SET/ SYNOPSIS	D/N	PGs	CAST	NOTES
10	Int	Riverside Apartment Laura gives Carl to Kerr	N	4/8	2, 4, 101	
2	Ext	Riverside Apartment Balcony Davis is on the balcony, Laura speaks to him	N	6/8	1, 2	

#### CONTACTS

God	Lauren Lamarr
1st AD	The Almighty KK
3rd AD	Heather Winship
Driver	William Barbour

Prod: Nic Crum  
Prod: Naysun Alae-Carew  
Assoc Prod: Lauren Lamarr  
Director: Mikey Murray

"If something cannot go on forever, it will stop!"

- Herbert Stein

Breakfast from 1600  
First Costume Call 1640  
First Make Up Call 1700  
**UNIT CALL: 1700**  
Estimated Wrap: 2300

SUNRISE: 0643 SUNSET: 1813 WEATHER: SNOW!

PLEASE NOTE THIS IS A HALF DAY! WOO!  
SADLY THIS ALSO MEANS THERE WILL BE NO LUNCH – BUT SNACKS WILL BE PROVIDED THROUGHOUT  
TOILETS ARE AVAILABLE AT UNIT BASE AND LOCATION  
PARKING IS AVAILABLE AT UNIT BASE AND LOCATION

MIKEY, THE PRODUCERS AND ALL OF HAPHAZARD MEDIA WOULD LIKE TO SAY HOW MASSIVELY GRATEFUL WE ARE FOR ALL THE  
HARD WORK YOU ALL PUT IN THAT HAS MADE THIS FILM POSSIBLE. THANK YOU!

Unit Base: Flat 1/1, 122 Beith Street, Glasgow, G11 6HD

Location 1: Flat 3/3 334 Meadowside Quay Walk, Glasgow, G11 6AW (ENTRANCE ON RIVERSIDE)

	SC	I/E	SET/ SYNOPSIS	D/N	PGs	CAST	NOTES
1	10	Int	Riverside Apartment Laura gives Carl to Kerr	N	4/8	2, 4, 101	
1	2	Ext	Riverside Apartment Balcony Davis is on the balcony, Laura speaks to him	N	6/8	1, 2	
Total					1 2/8 pgs		

ID	ARTISTE	CHARACTER	CALL	COSTUME	MAKE-UP	PICK UP	ON SET
1	Andrew John Tait	DAVIS	1900	1900	1920		2000
2	Lisa Nicoll	LAURA	1640	1640	1700		1800
4	David Hayman	KERR	1700	1700	1720		1800
101	James Lowe	CARL	1730	1730	1745		1800

ART DEPT As per the instructions of Ryan Clachrie  
CAMERA As per the instructions of David Lee  
LIGHTING As per the instructions of Eamonn Jones  
SOUND As per the instructions of Alex Ashcroft  
LOCATIONS As per the instructions of Lauren Lamarr  
MAKE UP As per the instructions of Kayleigh Sutherland  
COSTUME As per the instructions of Sarah Michaels  
RUSHES To Naysun on wrap  
CATERING c/o Angela Waddell  
HEALTH & SAFETY First Aider Lauren Lamarr  
HOSPITAL Southern General, 1345 Govan Road, G51 4TF 0141 201 1100  
POLICE Partick Police Station, 609-611 Dumbarton Rd, Glasgow G11 6HY 0141 532 3500

#### CONTACTS

God Lauren Lamarr  
1st AD The Almighty KK  
3rd AD Heather Winship  
Driver William Barbour  
Producer Naysun Alae-Carew

APPENDIX N

# CITY



**A Noir, Crime Thriller.  
Written and to be Directed by Mikey Murray**

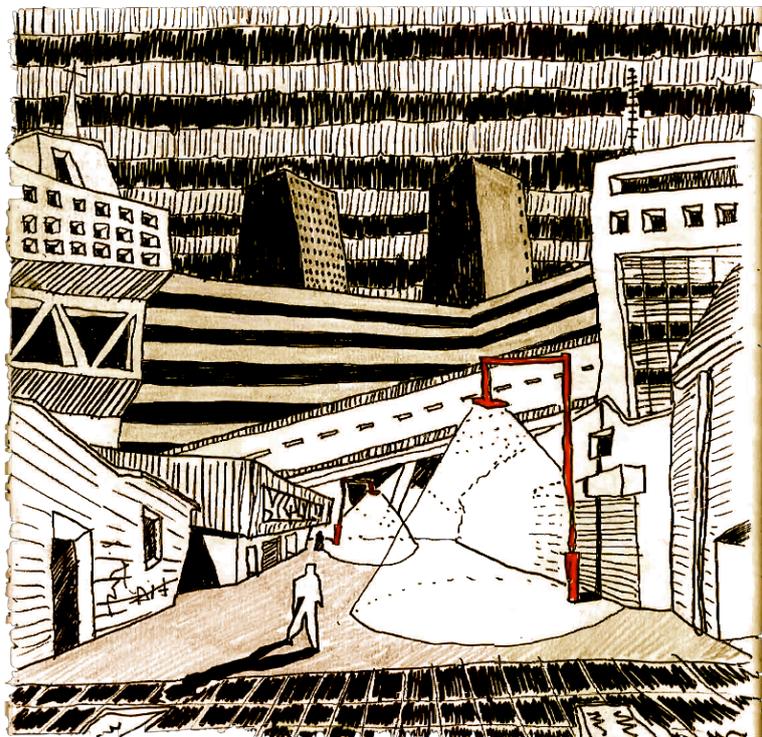


Contact:  
Nicholas Crum & Naysun Alae-Carew  
Haphazard Media

CITY GREEN-LIGHT PACK

Logline

A stoic, young detective's hunt for a stolen baby becomes personal after the father, a childhood friend and now dangerous, wanted criminal, comes to him for help.



Genre: Noir  
Estimated Budget: £800,000  
Writer/Director: Mikey Murray  
Producers: Nicholas Crum & Naysun Alae-Carew  
Executive Producer: Sarah Radclyffe

## One-Page Synopsis

In a city divided by class and the decaying effects of financial crisis, Max Leary, a stoic, working-class detective, moonlights to hunt for a stolen baby after the father, Dexter, a childhood friend and now dangerous criminal, comes to him for help.

Defying the strict instructions of his chief and mentor, Kerr, Max's investigation draws him further from the legal blanket of his job and deeper into the dark underworld. His partner Trent, an irresistible and deadly force has a different agenda however; he is fixed on bringing Dexter to justice and exposing Max's corroboration with a known criminal, regardless of any collateral damage.

Max inadvertently leads Trent to Dexter and a confrontation between all three escalates out of control and Trent's cunning and determination sees him execute Dexter in clinical fashion. Irked by Max's association with criminals, Trent also frames Max by leading 'Internal investigations' to believe that he was an informant for Dexter and responsible for the murder of a fellow police officer. Max begins to suspect that Trent has a bigger agenda for framing him however, and he now believes that his headway into the missing child case parallels Trent's need to undermine him.

Now suspended from his post as a detective, Max investigates off his own back, searching deeper through past missing child cases, and many pieces of the puzzle seemingly have Trent as their common link. Max needs solid proof of Trent's involvement however, and he eventually discovers it upon finding Dexter's child in an up-market suburb of the city; adopted by a young couple who cannot have children of their own. Max snatches the child back and returns him to his real mother, Melissa, before approaching Kerr with the damning information that Trent was the kidnapper all along; Trent's outrageous brand of changing the future. Kerr finally reveals himself as the elder of Trent's philosophy however, and Max's resistance to fall-in with Kerr and Trent leads to a showdown between Max and Trent. Max ultimately escaping death by sheer chance and finally overcoming the seemingly undefeatable Trent.

Finally, Max is left to face Kerr having put the physical battle with Trent behind him. His father figure, Kerr, is an altogether different prospect though and Max is ultimately forced to face his past, his future and his own morality; finally succumbing to Kerr's utilitarian philosophy.

## Treatment

### Act 1

In a city divided by class and the decaying effects of financial crisis, MAX LEARY, a stoic, working-class detective moonlights to begin the hunt for a baby that has been stolen from his neighbourhood. His investigation is personal because the baby's father, DEXTER who is a wanted criminal, is one of Max's childhood friends. Max is also drawn to the case because he is unable to have children himself; he and his career-focused wife LISA have a strained relationship that teeters on the brink of collapse, a tension fuelled by Max's self-depreciation because of his troubled past, his desire to adopt a child, and his inability to be the main 'bread-winner' in their relationship.

Through investigating the child's kidnapping, Max defies the strict instructions of his chief and mentor, KERR, who doesn't want Max drudging up a childhood association with the boy's father and mother. But Max's continued investigation draws him to the child's mother MELISSA, with whom he has a romantic past. Max's naivety in his new role as a detective means that he is completely unaware that he is being tailed by his partner TRENT, a detective who is an urban legend of deadly force, and who has a completely different agenda; he is fixed on bringing Dexter to justice and exposing Max's corroboration with known criminals, regardless of any collateral damage.

Max is no match for Trent, but Dexter who manages to foil Trent and set up a covert meeting with Max in a derelict church. At that meeting, Max agrees to join forces with Dexter in the hunt for the baby, and Max has now entered into an altogether different avenue of detective work having been drawn further from the legal blanket of his job and deeper into the dark underworld of 'The Belly'; a dark area of urban squalor in the City.

### Act 2

Max is now caught between a rock and a hard place, entering into an agreement with Dexter and being warned by his chief, Kerr to remain focused on investigating the assignment he has been given to track down a missing detective. He continues to treat the missing child as his primary focus however, but during his investigation a series of flashbacks begin to reveal that something in his past is the potential source of a deep internal conflict that only shows itself on the surface as a deep loyalty to Dexter and the defiance of his seniors, Kerr and Trent.

Max's personal and professional life is tested further as his investigation into the missing child continues. Max, in order to keep his relationship with Lisa intact, is forced to relent and allow her to start proceedings on the purchase of an extravagant house that he doesn't really want. He also continues to 'pull the wool' over Kerr and Trent's eyes by asking Dexter to help him find information on the case of the missing detective he is supposed to be investigating.

Trent is too clever for both Max and Dexter however and Max inadvertently leads Trent to the allusive Dexter and an action-packed confrontation between all three escalates out of control, with Dexter forced to flee into a school and attempt to take a hostage. Dexter's guile proves no match for Trent's cunning though and while Max does his utmost to intervene, Trent is always ahead of the game and he executes Dexter in clinical fashion.

In the aftermath of Dexter's death, a flashback reveals the extent of Max's obligation to Dexter; Dexter had taken the blame for the killing of a shopkeeper they were both involved in as teenagers. Max visits Melissa to inform her of Dexter's death and it becomes clear that Melissa now sees Max as her only hope of recovering her child. Using Max's deep regret for the death of Dexter, she seduces him and he vows to continue searching for the baby at all cost.

Now suspended from duty and under investigation himself, Max is forced to continue looking for the child from an increasingly precarious position. He now has a vital clue that he received from Dexter before he died however; a piece of information that helps him realise that the missing detective case that he was allocated is potentially linked to the missing baby. The missing detective was also investigating child abduction cases and Max now knows where to find her. He returns to 'The Belly' to seek out the missing detective, but upon entering her darkened apartment he finds her murdered. Trent has managed to get there first, having been privy to the same clue to her whereabouts after Dexter's demise.

Trent corners Max at the apartment in an attempt to frame him for the missing detective's murder, but Max is now able to reveal that he knows that Trent is not only the one behind the child's disappearance, but it is only one in a series of child kidnappings that he has engineered. Trent now decides it is time to eradicate Max as a material witness, but Max is able to narrowly avoid Trent's attempt on his life and escape into the shadows of 'The Belly'. Max is now officially in hiding

and badly needs proof to both clear himself of murder and to finger Trent for the child abductions.

Max turns to RAY, one of Dexter's hot headed associates for help. Now with Ray as his muscle, Max proceeds to use the shadows of 'The Belly' and non-legal means as a way to tail Trent. This reversal of dynamic between Trent and Max works perfectly for Max and he manages to gain a lead that will ultimately bring him to the suburban north of the City, where he finds that Melissa and Dexter's missing child has been rehomed with a middle class family. Instinctively, Max steals the baby back, but his actions raise the alarm of both the baby's new mother and nearby police and in the ensuing chase, Ray is mortally wounded and forced to sacrifice himself in order to help Max escape with the baby.

Now with his proof, Max turns to his wife for help, but Laura betrays his moral position by admitting that she understands Trent's philosophy of giving these children better lives. Left devastated by this admission, Max turns to his mentor and father figure, Kerr for help. He gets a message to Kerr that he is in the process of returning the baby to his mother Melissa and that he should meet him at her house. Max finds that Melissa has upped and left the City however, and he has to travel beyond 'The Belly' and the city limits into the country-side in order to find her.

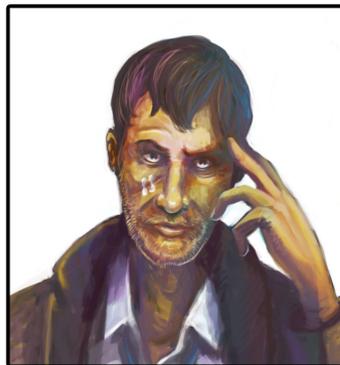
### Act 3

Max reaches Melissa and re-unites her with her baby. Max questions Melissa's decision to move to the country, but when she explains that she had to get "Away from the City", it is clear that Max has also found his ideal and he is enchanted by the picture-book setting and the potential of becoming a permanent fixture in Melissa and the baby's lives.

The approach of a car marks the arrival of Kerr and Max tells him the damning information that Trent was the kidnapper all along; his outrageous brand of changing the future. Kerr has however brought his right-hand man Trent with him and he finally reveals himself as the elder of Trent's philosophy. Max flees with Melissa and her children, but in a moment of revelation, Melissa is also uncovered as a heinous criminal herself, someone who supplies drugs to children. In that moment, any lingering faith that Max had in humanity is shattered. Trent kills Melissa and finally Max's inevitable show down with Trent arrives. Max is on the brink of death himself, when a moment of sheer luck finally affords him the chance to overcome the seemingly undefeatable Trent.

Finally, Max is left to face Kerr having put the physical battle with Trent behind him. His father figure, Kerr is an altogether different prospect though and Max is ultimately forced to face his past, his future and his own morality when Kerr informs him that he was actually the first baby that he re-homed: "It was you, Max. That baby was you".

Now a broken man, Max finally succumbs to Kerr's utilitarian philosophy. Now back in a working relationship with Laura, he is also now the new father to Dexter's baby and set up in the comfort of an extravagant new suburban home. Max has replaced Trent by Kerr's side, and he is now the one stealing children from the dark urban squalor of 'The Belly'.



## CHARACTER BIOG:

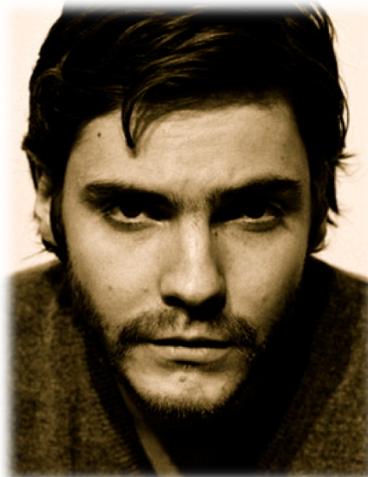
### MAX

A stoic, newly promoted detective in his thirties; his shirt and tie look like they have never been a partnership. Max is deeply affected by his inability to have children and a criminal past that has been covered up by his friend. He is self-depreciating and emotionally very fragile. Everything that Max thinks he knows about his life is missing the key information that he was taken away from his criminal and hugely troubled parents and adopted into the care of the parents from whom he inherited his strong moral compass. Max loved his wife Lisa once, but recently it has become clear that they both want entirely different things. He longs to be a dependable man, live in the country and have a child of his own – all the things that he can't have.

## CAST?



**James McAvoy**



**Daniel Brühl**



**Emun Elliott**

OTHER CHARACTERS & POTENTIAL CASTING:

TRENT

An irrepressible detective and urban legend; something deep down in his soul drives him. Trent is haunted by the memory of finding his younger sister lying dead on the doorstep of his house one morning when he was still a young policeman. Having found out that she over-dosed on a cocktail of drugs, he made it his personal mission to 'clean up the city' by whatever means possible.



Kevin McKidd



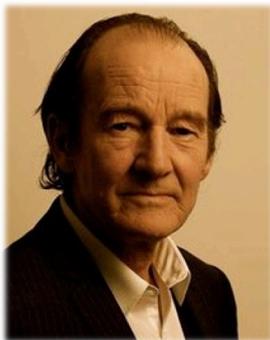
Tony Curran



Douglas Henshall

KERR

The epitome of elder style and sophistication, Detective Chief Constable, Kerr's philosophy on life has leveled off at an unconventional utilitarian method by which to reduce crime in the city. Close to retirement, he feels he must make a bold play in order to bring fresh blood into his master plan.



David Hayman



Timothy Dalton



Ciarán Hinds

## LISA

A refined, and career driven woman that wants to climb the social ladder. Her parents believed that she married beneath herself with Max, but Lisa is strongly devoted to him despite what others may think.



Andrea Riseborough



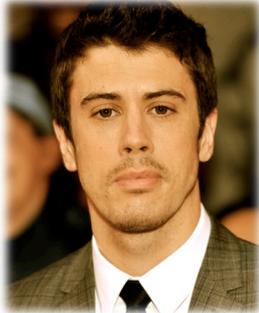
Sophia Myles



Elaine Cassidy

## DEXTER

Born into an infamous criminal family, he took the fall for his best friend Max when they were teenagers and has had a infamous criminal reputation ever since. His street-wise sensibility made him a born leader from a young age.



Tobey Kebell



Richard Madden



Richard Coyle

## MELISSA

As Dexter's wife she was provided for and had security for their children. Now estranged from him, she turned to selling drugs from her in-built desire to provide for her children and maintain her status as untouchable.



MyAnna Buring



Joanna Vanderham



Sonya Cassidy

MIKEY MURRAY: WRITER / DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The idea for *CITY* was initiated by the experience of witnessing a ten-year-old boy assault a disabled man in the street, for no other reason than 'for kicks'. The effect of witnessing such an assault, was such to inspire a genuinely pessimistic outpour of initial screenplay ideas, and while I do live under a certain optimistic hope that people will take the right path when they stop at a moral cross-roads, the real world shows us time and again that: the privileged are few, that the bad guy doesn't always get his comeuppance, and that we all, for the most part, live our lives in fear of our own mortality. *CITY* began as a representation of those cynical feelings, and of the guilt I felt for doing nothing when I witnessed the assault. My confused thoughts at the time are what drive the core ethical questions of intervention that are explored in *CITY*.

The *CITY* is an unnamed British city made up of 'The Belly', a rundown, crime-ridden area that lacks public money, and the suburban haven across the river, a juxtaposition that instinctively creates a geographical and functional dynamic for the film. To truly emphasise the difference, I intend to use concrete 60's architecture as the introverted backdrop for the 'belly', showing it dilapidated and unreplaced and contrast that with the neighbourhood watch plaques and irrigated grassy play-parks of middle-class suburbia.

Film Noir traditionally elicits the perfect thematic and narrative structures with which to represent the city setting with a pessimistic cinematic vision. Noir has proven ripe for a long tradition of British films from *THE THIRD MAN* (1949) through to *CHILDREN OF MEN* (2006) and these films have also frequently explored the ethical and masculine competence of their characters; a thematic that I have developed through from my Scottish BAFTA award winning short film, *BREAKING*. Film Noir offers me, the first time feature filmmaker; "an aroma, an essence, that is 'cool', chic, and a little dangerous" (Hirsch on Film Noir, 1981) because visually there is an expectation of dark and affecting images. *CITY* will maintain a thematic and visual aura that can appeal to both critics and audiences in equal part because of its rich critical and industrial genre context.

My overall aim for *CITY* is to build a character driven film that uses a Noir style traditionally associated with a socially conscious underlying thematic; a film that will leave the viewer to think about the same moral questions that filled my head after I witnessed that mindless assault by a child in the street.