



# SMOTHER ME IN HUGS

"SMOTHER ME IN HUGS" STARRING ROB KRAMER ALEXIA NIZIAK CAROL ANN BELL  
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR TIM O'CONNOR PRODUCTION DESIGNER JULIA DOAK FIELDS SOUND RECORDIST ALISTAIR FARRANT  
CASTING DIRECTOR JUDY BOWMAN SOUND DESIGNER IAN GAFFNEY-ROSENFELD COLORIST JOSEPH MASTANTUONO MUSIC BY TENEMENT  
EDITOR ERIC SCHUMAN CINEMATOGRAPHER BENJAMIN RUTKOSWKI CO-PRODUCER CARVER DISERENS PRODUCER ANNAMARIE FERNANDEZ  
WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY ERIC SCHUMAN

## **SMOTHER ME IN HUGS**

press kit

## LOG LINE

A man starts to get anonymous erotic phone calls at work.

## SYNOPSIS

Garrett is a lonely, overweight middle-aged man. When he's not working as an attendant at a rarely used parking lot, he spends most of his time at home. Lying in bed at night, he makes Siri tell him jokes and cuddles with a body pillow. His only real human contact is with the woman who makes his sandwiches at the deli, Diane. Often, he'll awkwardly try to flirt with her. The most recent highlight of his life was almost choking to death on a Dorito's Chip while home alone. Eventually, he dislodged the evil chip. He laughed about it.

One day at work, he begins getting anonymous erotic phone calls from a woman. At first, he's confused by it, but when the calls keep coming, he gets interested and starts to play along. The calls become his reason for getting up in the morning. Soon, he decides he must meet the woman on the other end of the line. He musters up the courage and asks to meet her in person. Surprisingly, she agrees.

They decide to meet at a frozen yogurt store, and Garrett arrives there early. Wearing a Yankees cap so he'll be recognized, he scopes out the place for who the woman could be. Is it the woman across from him reading *The Goldfinch*? No, it is not. Suddenly, someone sits down across from him. He looks at her. It's a twelve-year-old girl (Fiona), and she's smiling. It was her. She was making the calls.

The rest of the film follows the heart-breaking conversation these two desperate people have over frozen yogurt and its repercussions on Garrett's life.



## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

When I was fifteen I got a call on my cell phone from a woman asking if I knew where Gary was. I didn't know a Gary. When I told her she had the wrong number she said I had sexy voice and started asking me questions.

I told her about myself - including that I was fifteen - and she hung up. It's been more than decade since then, but I still wonder what would've happened if I hadn't revealed my age. Would we have met up? Would we have fallen in love? Would we still be together?

Around the same age I'd spend time in various online adult chat rooms. Sometimes I would be a man, sometimes a girl. But one time I chatted with a girl for a while until she sent me a picture of herself. She was very overweight, and I never messaged her again. I still feel bad about that. Now I am overweight. Now I wonder if the photos I have on OK Cupid make me look too fat. Now I try to hide myself in larger clothes.

What would have happened if I had met either one of these woman in person? Would they have lined up with my fantasy version of them? Of course not. That's delusional thinking. But I still thought it. This is my connection to the story; I'm starting with my own fantasies and lustful thoughts and feelings of self-hatred, and turning it into a sad comedy, in the vein of Punch-Drunk Love, Buffalo '66, and The Heartbreak Kid.

Why comedy? Well, what other way is there to go through life other than laughing at all the shit you've got on your shoes? If I laugh at Garrett, it's because I'm laughing at myself, and I'm always laughing at myself. Often, I laugh at how I look versus how I feel. I feel skinny on the inside yet my belly tells me different. And this year I noticed I have more stretch marks; they used to be just on my shoulders, but now they're on my stomach too. Yet I still order Seamless in the middle of the night.

I don't usually see people who look like me in the leading roles of movies. There aren't too many movies out there about chubby guys and chubby girls who get together. Often, when a movie is about a chubby guy, it's about him accepting himself for who he is. What a bunch of bologna. I believe in this story because I'm embarrassed by it and what it reveals about me.

## CAST

GARRETT Rob Kramer

FIONA Alexa Niziak

DIANE Carol Anne Bell

## CREW

WRITER AND DIRECTOR Eric Schuman

PRODUCER Annamarie Fernandez

CO-PRODUCER Carver Diserens.

CINEMATOGRAPHY Benjamin Rutkowski

PRODUCTION DESIGN Julia Doak Fields

CASTING DIRECTOR Judy Bowman

PRODUCTION SOUND Alistair Farrant

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR Tim O'Connor

2ND ASSISTANT DIRECTOR Kelly Wydryk

ASSISTANT CAMERA Alex Cannon

2ND ASSISTANT CAMERA Raj Trivedi

GAFFER Rommel Genciana

GAFFER Wil Hamlin

BEST BOY Joshua Troxler

KEY GRIP Andres Eyzaguirre

GRIPS Charlie Diserens and Eric Shahinian

COLORIST Joseph Mastantuono

SOUND EDITOR Ian Gaffney-Rosenfeld

ORIGINAL MUSIC Tenement

ACADEMIC ADVISOR Ramin Bahrani



# BIOGRAPHIES

## **WRITER and DIRECTOR Eric Schuman**

Eric Schuman is a writer and director based in NYC. He graduated from Columbia University's MFA Film Program. While there, he won the Emerging Filmmaker award for *Smother Me in Hugs*, and his feature screenplay, *Proxy*, won the Zaki Gordon Memorial Award for Excellence in Screenwriting. His short have played at festivals around the world including TIFF Kids and the Palm Springs International Shortsfest.

## **PRODUCER Annamarie Fernandez**

Annamarie recently graduated from the MFA Creative Producing program at Columbia University. She graduated from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, TX with a degree in Film and Media Arts in 2013, and worked for two years as an Associate Producer for a Dallas-based production company producing commercials, promotional videos, and the Dallas Cowboy's live-taped talk show, "Inside the Huddle." Since starting school at Columbia she has acted as either Writer, Assistant Director, or Producer on a total of 12 films. Annamarie is interested in films that express personal truths, fears, and insecurities through comedy, and, as a producer, aims to support and encourage other artists seeking the same thing. Currently, she works for Alex Gibney.

## **CINEMATOGRAPHER Benjamin Rutkoswki**

Benjamin Rutkoswki is a Los Angeles-based cinematographer and an alumni of the NYU graduate film program. He has shot for clients such as Facebook, Red Bull, Sony, Air France, Salvatore Ferragamo, Maybelleine, GQ and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. His cinematography has been recognized with award nominations from Kodak and ARRI, and appeared at Sundance, SXSW, TriBeCa, LA Film Festival, Cannes Lions, Austin Film Festival, Raindance, Hamptons International Film Festival, BAMCinemaFest and many more national and international festivals. As a director, his short film "Glory Days" was nominated for the Spike Lee Award in Filmmaking at the 2012 Starz Denver Film Festival along with screening at Slamdance, Woodstock and Sarasota Film Festivals.

## **CONTACT INFO**

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