

WE FORGOT TO BREAK UP

SXSW 2018 Festival EPK



Directed by:

Chandler Levack

Written by:

Steven McCarthy & Chandler Levack

Cast:

Sofia Banzhaf, Cara Gee, Grace Glowicki, Steven McCarthy, Mark Rendall, Dov Tiefenbach, Jesse Todd

Producers:

Nicole Hilliard-Forde, Matt Hilliard-Forde

Executive Producer:

Michael Perlmutter

Cinematographer:

Cabot McNenly

Editor:

Bryan Atkinson

Original Song by:

Murray Lightburn

Run Time:

15 min



Press & Film Contact: Motel Pictures –

Press - Nicole Hilliard-Forde / nicole@motelpictures.com / Cell: 416.697.7024

Technical - Matt Hilliard-Forde / mhilliardforde@gmail.com / Cell: 416.890.0648

W: motelpictures.com T: @motelpictures I: motelpicturesinc

SYNOPSIS

After a few years absence, Evan unexpectedly returns one night to face his now-famous former bandmates. The surprise reunion is bittersweet, in this intimate depiction of the knotty complexities of relating to old friends after everything has changed.

LONG SYNOPSIS

We Forgot to Break Up reflects the heartache in encountering the people from your past, while the song remains the same. In this backstage drama, directed by Chandler Levack, written by Levack and Steven McCarthy, and produced by Nicole Hilliard-Forde and Matt Hilliard-Forde of Motel Pictures, Evan Strocker (Jesse Todd) returns to see the band he used to manage after a painful three-year hiatus. Times have changed and the band members of Heidegger have gravitated towards lives in Los Angeles and as new parents. Evan has also undergone a radical change, now proudly living as a trans man. As he encounters each members of the band moments before their sold out show, he'll find a way forward towards self acceptance and love, especially as he encounters his ex-boyfriend Lugh. Adapted from Kayt Burgess' novel Heidegger Stairwell (winner of the 3-Day Writing contest), the film makes new myths out of Canada's indie rock heritage with raw humour and a landmark performance from trans newcomer Jesse Todd.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

When producer Nicole Hilliard-Forde first approached me with the exciting opportunity to adapt Kayt Burgess' novel Heidegger Stairwell into a short film, I was instantly taken in by a love story that blended the backstage drama of a Broken Social Scene memoir with a timely and important trans protagonist in Evan Strocker. During a period where trans lives and identity are at-risk, their need for representation in film is more crucial than ever. Contrary to what President Trump may say, trans people are not a burden. Their lives need to be normalized and it is crucial for audiences to empathize with their stories, especially when trans actors can play themselves on screen. It was a pleasure to work with newcomer Jesse Todd, who brought so much of themselves to the role of Evan and who truly embodies the spirit of this film. I was also honoured to work with a cast of incredible Canadian performers, including Mark Rendall, Dov Tiefenbach, Grace Glowicki, Cara Gee, Sofia Banzhaf, and my co-writer Steven McCarthy. Together, using Kayt's source material as an invaluable foundation, I hope that we found humour and honesty in the many ways being in an indie rock band parallels the dynamics of being in a family.

Cinematographer Cabot McNenly worked harder and more passionately than anyone I know to help develop the candy-coloured look of the film. Together, we took inspiration from classic rock documentaries such as Don't Look Back, as well as backstage dramas All About Eve, Birdman, and Whiplash. It was also an honour to shoot on the stage of the iconic Danforth Music Hall, the most gorgeous venue in Toronto - if not Canada. Production designer Elliot McCabe-Lokos, makeup artist Christina Spina, and costume designer Juliann Wilding all lent their incredible artistry to the film, fleshing out a highly specific world for our characters to inhabit that speaks volumes about who they are. It was also a pleasure to collaborate with Murray Lightburn, of the Montreal indie rock band The Dears, who not only wrote the title track for the song, but came personally down to Toronto to teach our cast of actors how to be rock stars.

As a former music critic-turned-music-video-director, who has long been obsessed with real life stories of rock stars (and whose favourite film of all-time is Almost Famous), it was a great honour to bring *We Forgot to Break Up* to life with this incredible team of collaborators. Heartbreak is a universal experience - and so are the songs that help you survive it. I hope that this short film can be yet tool in the soundtrack to your life.



PRODUCER'S STATEMENT (by Nicole Hilliard-Forde)

As a producer, I had become quite taken by Kayt Burgess' debut novel, Heidegger Stairwell.

The novel is the story of Evie, who lives in small town Northern Ontario and desperately dreams of escaping it. As Evie's awareness grows of being transgender, they befriend a group of hapless teens with a vision of forming a band. They organize the ragtag group and take them from shanty venues to arena super stardom. As readers, we experience the band as it takes shape, explodes and finally implodes, relating to the ephemeral nature of band success. Beginning in the 90's, the story of the band is also the story of the Canadian music scene bubbling up into what it is now.

At its heart is a Romeo and Juliet love story between the protagonist, Evan (fka Evie) and the lead guitarist, Lugh. The story is about the cost of fame and striving for ultimate success. The themes of the film are transformative loss, chaos and dissonance. It is the relationship between Evan and Lugh, buffeted by ambition, success, failure and transformation, that is at the centre of *We Forgot To Break Up*.

Does the world need another complicated love story? If it reveals something truthful about our human condition and says something about the times we live in, I believe, indeed we do.

We chose to make a short adaptation of the work by locating a sequence of scenes in the novel that would introduce us to the world, the characters and create intrigue about the back stories. We asked professional performers – many of them musicians in their own right – to become a band and sing and perform for the piece. We looked for an authentic voice to helm the film and invited Chandler Levack to direct. Her background in music and film journalism, and music videos was something we valued and wanted to see how that would translate to the narrative form. We looked for a trans-identified artist to perform the role of Evan. And assembled a team of artists we respect to come together around a shared goal and common theme of transformative loss.

ABOUT THE CAST

SOFIA BANZHAF "Allison" is a German-born writer, actor and filmmaker based in Toronto. Film and television credits include *Closet Monster*, *Bitten* and *Reign*. Her novella *Pony Castle* won the Metatron Prize for Rising Authors in 2015. She is currently in post-production on her first feature film that she co-wrote and co-directed.

CARA GEE "Isis" is a Canadian film, television and stage actress. Gee was primarily known as a stage actress in Toronto, Ontario, where her acting credits have included productions of Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad*, Daniel Maclvor's *Arigato, Tokyo*, Tomson Highway's *The Rez Sisters*, Cliff Cardinal's *Stitch*, Birdtown and Swanville's *36 Little Plays About Hopeless Girls* and Louise Dupré's *Tout comme elle*. She made her feature film debut in *Empire of Dirt* for which she was nominated for a Canadian Screen Award. For this role, she also won a Special Jury award at the 2013 Toronto International Film Festival as well as an award for Best Actress at the American Indian Film Festival. In 2013, at TIFF, Gee was named one of the festival's annual 'Rising Stars.' Gee has also worked in television, recently playing guest roles in the television series *King* and *Republic of Doyle*. In 2014, she starred as one of the lead characters in the Western drama series *Strange Empire* on CBC Television, for two seasons until it was cancelled in 2015. As of 2016, she stars in the 33-episode web series *Inhuman Condition*, which airs on the KindaTV YouTube channel.

GRACE GLOWICKI "Coco" is an actress, director, and writer, who recently won the Sundance Film Festival's Short Film Special Jury Award for Outstanding Performance for her role in *Her Friend Adam*. Based in Toronto, she recently wrapped shooting Grayson Moore's independent film *Cardinal*, opposite Sheila McCarthy and Katie Boland, and is currently in production on *Suck It Up*, in which she co-stars and co-executive produces based on a story she developed with Erin Carter. Other recent acting credits include the short film *A Teachable Moment*, which recently premiered at the TriBeCa Film Festival, and the short film *Bonfire*, which premiered at the LA Shorts Fest. She is currently in development on her feature directorial debut, *Tito*, in which she will star. In 2016, Glowicki was named one of TIFF's Rising Stars.



STEVEN MCCARTHY “Angus” is an acclaimed actor, director, and musician. The ElastoCitizens, McCarthy’s ten-piece funk band, are cult favourites on the Toronto music scene. His acclaimed theatre productions such as *Bliss*, *Malaria Lullaby*, and *Boblo* combined elements of circus, dance, trapeze, and rock and roll. Best known for roles in *The Strain*, HBO’s *Good God*, the indie hit *Picture Day*, and A&E’s *The Crossing*, he’s had the pleasure of working with such directors as Guillermo del Toro, Ken Finkelman, Kate Melville and Robert Harmon. More recently McCarthy starred in Andrew Currie’s ensemble comedy *The Steps*, sharing the screen with Christine Lahti, James Brolin, Emmanuelle Chriqui and Jason Ritter. In 2015 he wrote and directed his first short film, *O NEGATIVE*. It has played at festivals all over North America including TIFF, RiverRun, Whistler, Cleveland, Palm Springs, and the Portland International Film Festival and was named by TIFF as one of Canada’s Top Ten Short Films of 2015.

MARK RENDALL “Lugh” started acting at the age of ten, when he asked his parents if he could try his hand at acting. Fortunately, around the same time, the Cameron MacIntosh London touring production of the musical *Oliver* was holding auditions for children. Having had no formal training in either acting or singing, he surprised everyone when he was cast in the role of Spider, and as understudy to the lead role, Oliver.

He later starred in several films, including *The Impossible Elephant*, *Tales from the Neverending Story* (for which he received a 2002 Gemini nomination), the multi-award-winning *Touching Wild Horses* (2002) opposite Jane Seymour (for which he received a 2003 Young Artists Award nomination), Disney’s *The Scream Team* with Eric Idle, the Court TV Peabody Award-winning true story, *The Interrogation of Michael Crowe* (for which he received a 2004 ACTRA Award nomination for Outstanding Performance – Male), Don McKellar’s dark comedy *Childstar* (2004), opposite Jennifer Jason Leigh, Eric Stoltz and Dave Foley; the title role in *Spirit Bear: The Simon Jackson Story* (2004) with Ed Begley, Jr. and Graham Greene, NBC’s mini-series *Revelations* (2005) opposite Bill Pullman and Natascha MacElhone, and Francois Girard’s *Silk*. Rendall played supporting roles in the films *30 Days of Night*, opposite Josh Hartnett and Melissa George, and Charlie Bartlett, with Anton Yelchin and Kat Dennings. In 2009, he starred in the films, *Victoria Day*, directed by David Bezmozgis, and *The Exploding Girl*, directed by Bradley Rust Gray.

DOV TIEFENBACH “Will” was born in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. He began his acting career at the age of 12, first starting off in commercials before playing the role of ‘Josh Avery’ in the television series *RoboCop* (1994), and landed his first starring role as ‘Murray Murray’ in the short film *Love Child* (1995) alongside actress Neve Campbell. After those pivotal first projects, Dov was cast as the lead role ‘Nick Burns’ in the 1996 Broadway production *A Thousand Clowns* alongside actor Judd Hirsch. After returning to Toronto, his name started to get around as he worked his way further into the film industry, starring in the lead roles of both *Little Men* and *Cheaters*. And in 2003 he won a Leo Award for Best Supporting Male Performance in *Flower & Garnet* (2002). His most recent roles include the reclusive writer ‘Lucky Carroway’ in the television series *This Space for Rent* (2006), the troubled young ‘Adrian’ in the psychological thriller *The Dark Hours* (2005) and the hippie drug dealer ‘Bradley Thomas’ in the comedy *Harold & Kumar Go to White Castle* (2004). Before he moved to Los Angeles, he was the frontman for the “dirty indie pop” band Theresa’s Sound-World (named after a Sonic-Youth song), based out of Toronto, who performed in various venues around the city.

JESSE TODD “Evan” is a new actor whose first lead role was as Evan Strocker in the short film *We Forgot to Break Up*. Jesse also appeared in the film *Cave Small Cave Big* by Joele Walinga. He has done a number of live comedy performances including Feminist Live Reads Presents: Mean Girls, and Toronto Pride 2016 Stand Up Comedy programming.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

CHANDLER LEVACK (Director, Co-Writer)

Chandler Levack is an award-winning writer and director. After being selected for a screenwriting seminar at the University of Toronto taught by Semi Chellas (*Mad Men*) and Patricia Rozema (*Grey Gardens*, *Into the Forest*), she wrote the coming-of-age comedy *Felt Up*, based on an article written for her college newspaper where she investigated the world of professional pickup artists. A music journalist for *SPIN* and *The Village Voice* whose writing has been nominated for multiple National Magazine Awards, Chandler transitioned into filmmaking after graduating from the CFC Writer’s Lab in 2012, where she wrote the short film *Lunchbox Loser*, which has screened at festivals world-wide including the



Portland Women's Festival, Cannes Short Film Corner, Canadian Film Festival, and the Lahore International Children's Festival. Her music videos have played at the MoMA, Cannes Lions Festival, LA Music Video Festival, and the British Film Institute. In 2015 and 2016, two music videos directed for the Toronto punk band PUP ("Guilt Trip," "Dark Days") were nominated at the UK Video Music Awards (2015), Juno Awards (2015, 2016), Prism Prize (2015, 2016), MuchMusic Video Awards (2016), and were selected for the prestigious 2015 Saatchi and Saatchi New Directors' Showcase, whose alumni includes Michel Gondry, Floria Sigismondi, Jonathan Glazer, and Spike Jonze. Chandler's narrative work includes the sardonic comedy *Idiots in Paradise*, which won "Best Short Film" at the 2016 LA Comedy Festival, and the upcoming BravoFACT *We Forgot to Break Up*, produced by Motel Pictures (*The Other Half*).

Chandler is the creator of the "Feminist Live Read" series, in which she casts an all-female ensemble to perform iconic screenplays (regardless of gender) to raise awareness of the disparity of roles available to women. Past performances in Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal include readings of *Reservoir Dogs*, *Almost Famous*, *Ocean's 11*, *Mean Girls*, and *Entourage* with actors including Sook-Yin Lee, Mia Kirshner, Katharine Isabelle, Kristin Lehmann, Diana Bang, Ali Liebert, Katie Boland, Cara Gee, and Lauren Collins. *The National Post* said it was "helping to push forward the public discourse surrounding issues of gender equality." Chandler is currently developing her first feature as a writer/director, *Anglophone*, a "casual hangout movie" about the Anglophones in the Montreal indie rock scene who can't speak French with Zapruder Films (VICE's *Nirvana the Band the Show*, *Operation Avalanche*). She is the Digital Editor and Staff Writer for the Toronto International Film Festival where she lives and breathes movies.

STEVEN MCCARTHY (Co-Writer) is an acclaimed actor, director, and musician. The ElastoCitizens, McCarthy's ten-piece funk band, are cult favourites on the Toronto music scene. His acclaimed theatre productions such as *Bliss*, *Malaria Lullaby*, and *Boblo* combined elements of circus, dance, trapeze, and rock and roll. Best known for roles in *The Strain*, HBO's *Good God*, the indie hit *Picture Day*, and A&E's *The Crossing*, he's had the pleasure of working with such directors as Guillermo del Toro, Ken Finkelman, Kate Melville and Robert Harmon. More recently McCarthy starred in Andrew Currie's ensemble comedy *The Steps*, sharing the screen with Christine Lahti, James Brolin, Emmanuelle Chriqui and Jason Ritter. In 2015 he wrote and directed his first short film, O NEGATIVE. It has played at festivals all over North America including TIFF, RiverRun, Whistler, Cleveland, Palm Springs, and the Portland International Film Festival and was named by TIFF as one of Canada's Top Ten Short Films of 2015.

NICOLE HILLIARD-FORDE (Producer)

Motel Pictures is a North American, independent production company that produces inspiring, provocative, commercially-viable content with an original voice, aimed at an adult audience. The company is led by Emmy-nominated, co-founder Nicole Hilliard-Forde, CSA who brings over 15 years experience in casting for feature films and television to the company. Nicole is known as a media professional with an eye for the development of new and emerging talent through her previous work as Producer of TIFF Rising Stars – a talent accelerator initiative of the Toronto International Festival. Motel Pictures is thrilled to be returning to Austin, Texas after the world premiere of our feature film, *The Other Half*, written and directed by Joey Klein, starring Tom Cullen (*Downton Abbey*, *Weekend*) and Emmy-nominated actress Tatiana Maslany (*Stronger*, *Orphan Black*), which received excellent critical reception at SXSW Film Festival 2016 where we were in Narrative Competition. The film was theatrically released in Canada in December 2016 (Mongrel Media), in the US in March 2017 (Brainstorm Media), and is being distributed internationally by AMBI Distribution.

Select casting credits include *Antibirth*, written/directed by Danny Perez, starring Chloe Sevigny (*Boys Don't Cry*), Natasha Lyonne (*Orange is the New Black*) and Meg Tilly (*Agnes of God*, *The Big Chill*) which premiered at Sundance 2016; the satirical comedies of *Harold and Kumar go to White Castle*, directed by Danny Leiner for New Line Cinema and *It's a Boy Girl Thing*, directed by Nick Hurran (*Doctor Who*, *Sherlock*, *Little Black Book*), and *Traitor* produced by Overture Films, directed by Jeffrey Nachmanoff (*Homeland*, *Chicago Fire*, *Hostages*) and starring Don Cheadle. Nicole is a member of the Casting Society of America, Television Academy of Arts & Sciences and Canadian Media Production Association.

MATT HILLIARD-FORDE (Producer)



Matt's career in film and TV began in the UK industry, where he worked for a number of TV production companies and completed a two-year film course. He wrote and directed the feature *Long Hot Summer*, co-starring Martin Freeman (*The Hobbit*, UK's *The Office*), as well as short films, including the award-winning *The Hall*. For Motel, Matt co-created and produced *The Side Street Project*, an intimate documentary focusing on the creative process, gathering three musicians together for one day to collaborate, perform and discuss their relationship to their art. *The Side Street Project* was broadcast on Super Channel in Canada and optioned by Google Canada to adapt into a web series. Matt was producer on *Marshall Law*, a bravoFACT short film starring Linda Kash (*Best in Show*) directed by Matt Sadowski (*Pretend We're Kissing*), which premiered at the New York Film and Television Festival. As a writer, Matt has had development deals with a number of production companies, and participated in the *NBC Universal Development Incubator* and *The Female Eye Film Festival Script Development Program*. Matt works as a Program Consultant for the *Ontario Media Development Corporation*, where he is responsible for funding support for magazine media, managing an annual budget of over \$2.5 million. For OMDC, Matt has developed and implemented strategic initiatives, including international business activities and events and been involved in developing and delivering programs for other industries including film and television, interactive/gaming and book publishing.

MICHAEL A. PERLMUTTER (Music Supervisor, Executive Producer)

Michael's company *instinct entertainment* is a music supervision, licensing and creative consultation company based in Toronto, Canada. Michael has placed thousands of songs in tv shows, films and documentaries, seen and heard around the world, most recently in *The Handmaid's Tale*, the Hulu network's smash TV adaptation of Margaret Atwood's 1985 novel. Select TV credits include: *Penny Dreadful*, *Vikings*, *Degrassi*, *Houdini & Doyle*, *Private Eyes*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Cracked*, *Haven*, *Rogue*, and *The I.A. Complex*. Select film credits: *Arbitrage*, *The Other Half*, *Hevn*, *Kiss & Cry*, *Across The Line*, *The Colony*, *A Beginner's Guide to Endings*, & *All The Wrong Reasons*. Select special projects: highlight reels for CTV's Olympic broadcasts (*Vancouver & London*), curating the *Canadian Music Café* during the *Toronto International Film Festival*, and licensing & administration for the *National Music Centre* in *Calgary*. He has been asked to moderate and speak on panels around the world, including: Sweden, Finland, Norway, Miami, New York, Cannes, Calgary, Halifax, and Toronto. Michael is also an avid *Toronto Maple Leafs* fan, loves to travel and will never pass up a long walk on a beach (as he's never near one).

MURRAY LIGHTBURN (Musical Director and composer of *We Forgot To Break Up*)

Murray is a composer, musician, performer, music producer, writer and director who believes uncompromisingly in the power of art and music. Co-founder and lead singer for the Montreal based band *The Dears* he has performed hundreds of concerts globally, including radio (BBC, CBC, KCRW) and has made TV appearances on *The Late Show with David Letterman*, *Jimmy Kimmel Live!*, & *George Stroumboulopoulos Tonight*. In addition to writing and producing eight highly acclaimed albums of his own, Murray continues to hone his craft while helping other musicians and writers realize their own artistic visions. He has received well over a dozen nominations including the Polaris Music Prize, GAMIQ Awards, Canadian Indie Awards, Juno's, and CASBY Awards. Murray and *The Dears* have seen their songs placed and have created original songs for notable feature films like *Zack & Miri Make a Porno* and *Save the Date* and for TV series *Gossip Girl* and *Grey's Anatomy*. He has also written, directed and produced documentary concert performances such as his own *Mass;Light*, *Never Destroy Us*, and *The Gospel According to The Dears*.

DANFORTH MUSIC HALL

Originally constructed as a movie theatre in 1919, the building was first known as the *Allen's Danforth*, after its owner the Allen Theatre Chain. The theatre gained the Music Hall name when it started featuring live acts in the late 1970s. Renamed "The Danforth Music Hall" in 2011 when Impresario Inc. took over ownership, and since remodelled and renovated, the Danforth Music Hall is a now major attraction for concerts featuring international and local artists, and provided a perfect location for *We Forgot To Break Up*. Artists performing at the venue over its long history include James Brown, The Clash, The Police, Tegan & Sara, Rihanna, Hanson, Neil Gaiman, Mogwai, Chromeo, and Arcade Fire.



PRODUCTION STILLS

All photo credits: COLIN MEDLEY.



Mark Rendall "Lugh"



Grace Glowicki "Coco"





Cara Gee "Isis"



Dov Tiefenbach "Will"





Steven McCarthy "Angus"



Sofia Banzhaf "Allison"





Jesse Todd "Evan"



Mark Rendall "Lugh", Steven McCarthy "Angus", Grace Glowicki "Coco", Cara Gee "Isis"





Jesse Todd "Evan Strocker"

APPROVED BILLING BLOCK

a Motel Pictures Inc production a film by Chandler Levack "We Forgot To Break Up"
produced with a grant awarded by bravoFACT (Foundation to Assist Canadian Talent) a Division of Bell Media Inc.
developed with the assistance of the Harold Greenberg Fund Story Option Fund
based on the novel Heidegger Stairwell by Kayt Burgess
Sofia Banzhaf Cara Gee Grace Glowicki Steven McCarthy Mark Rendall Dov Tiefenbach Jesse Todd
Costume Designer Juliann Wilding Original song by Murray Lightburn Editor Bryan Atkinson
Production Designer Elliot McCabe-Lokos Director of Photography Cabot McNenly
Executive Producer Michael Perlmutter Produced by Nicole Hilliard-Forde Matt Hilliard-Forde
Written by Steven McCarthy and Chandler Levack Directed by Chandler Levack

