

An Anthropoid, Ontario Inc. & MEMORY Production

# MIDNIGHT CONFESSION

*Manny Jumpcannon wants your sympathy*

A short film by Maxwell McCabe-Lokos  
Starring Maxwell McCabe-Lokos, August Diehl and Breeda Wool

Contact:

[rrd@memory.is](mailto:rrd@memory.is)

[maxwellmccabelokos@gmail.com](mailto:maxwellmccabelokos@gmail.com)

[www.AnthropoidOntarioInc.com](http://www.AnthropoidOntarioInc.com)

[www.memory.is](http://www.memory.is)

## SHORT SYNOPSIS

West Berlin, 1989. Manny Jumpcannon prowls his dingy apartment, phoning various degenerates from his past. He's hoping for some uncertain vindication but the ensuing conversations only reveal his own sordid history of deceit.

## LONG SYNOPSIS

West Berlin, 1989. It's midnight, and Manny Jumpcannon is waiting for an answer. Dressed in a top hat and tuxedo, he paces his grimy squat with the ringing telephone at his ear amid a clutter of ashtrays, empty bottles, and other human detritus.



Finally, his call is answered by “Grass.” Manny extends a greeting in a terrible Cockney accent, reviving long-forgotten jokes in an attempt at making a connection. Grass, however, doesn’t seem impressed. Manny tries to explain: he’s calling people from his past as part of effort to “work on himself” and “rebuild bridges.” But Grass isn’t interested, and almost immediately hangs up.

Disappointed but determined to get somebody’s attention, Manny begins peeling off his bizarre garb while placing another call, this time to “Donna Donna”. Loafing in her own squalid apartment, Donna Donna’s recollection of the past is dim, but she seems delighted at receiving the call. Manny (or “Tiger,” as he refers to himself, invoking an old quasi-nickname) outlines his professed yearning to make amends and come clean about his past lies – in particular, lying to his friends that he had AIDS. Donna says she can relate to his experience — she’s got her own unsavoury past and now “two kids, one of whom is the most important thing in my life.”

However, it quickly becomes clear that Manny isn’t interested in ‘fessing up to any past mistakes. His only desire is to feed his rapacious persecution complex and further a self-serving narrative about being the victim of “some pretty heinous stuff.” As Donna babbles, veering further into recounting her own meandering

history, Manny's frustration mounts. Eventually he can't take it anymore, and slams the phone down.

With rising agitation, Manny stalks the apartment. Now dressed in grubby rags and wearing a cast on his arm, he drinks from a bottle of aftershave, paces and readies himself for another call.

On the line this time is Kurt. Manny attempts the same confession, reminding Kurt of his past lies and the horrible mistreatment he believes he's suffered. But Kurt recalls their past differently: even at the time he doubted Manny's pitiful stories, and is skeptical of his intentions in digging up the past now. Kurt sees Manny's purported confession for what it really is: another expression of his desperate need for recognition. Despite Manny's pleas for sympathy, Kurt refuses, and hangs up with a decisive farewell.

Manny is left to stare into the bathroom mirror, gazing at his own reflection, now dressed fully in the costume of a tramp. He wallows in false despair, crying to himself in deep, feigned sobs.

But then: a knock at the door. Manny abruptly ceases his sobbing and hurries to answer its summon.

#### DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Maxwell McCabe-Lokos is an actor, writer and director from Toronto, Canada. After a heady decade of touring and recording in a garage-rock band he bailed on that scene to concentrate on an equally erratic career in film. An accomplished and award-nominated character actor, McCabe-Lokos has dozens of heavy roles to his name - including supporting parts in movies like *Lars and the Real Girl*, *Land of the Dead*, *The Tracey Fragments*, *Antibirth* as well as the upcoming Doug Liman film *Chaos Walking*. He's also had recurring roles on several TV shows including the new Sky Atlantic series *Tin Star*, starring Tim Roth and Christina Hendricks.

In 2012 he expanded his career into writing, and his first screenplay, *The Husband* (2013), which he also starred in, premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival to critical acclaim and 4 sold-out screenings. Since then Maxwell has moved into directing. Alumnae of both TIFF Talent Lab and TIFF Studio, his first short film, *Ape Sodom*, premiered at TIFF '16. *Ape Sodom* screened at over 20 festivals worldwide (TIFF, Fantastic Fest, Maryland International Film Festival,

Night Visions [Helsinki, Finland], Cucalorus, Filmfest Dresden...), garnering Jury Prizes from Slamdance and Calgary Underground Film Festival. *Midnight Confession* is his second short film in as many years and premiered at TIFF '17.



### DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

*Midnight Confession*, though set in West Berlin in 1989, just before the fall of the Berlin Wall, was inspired by what I see as quintessential 21st century traits. There are two specific behaviours I intended to satirize in the film. First, the attempt of apologizing one's way out of culpability. We are all familiar with widely broadcast public apologies from politicians like Anthony Weiner and Toronto mayor Rob Ford, or from celebrities like Mel Gibson and Chris Brown. For these bad actors, saying the magic words "I'm sorry" almost successfully wiped their slates clean and repaired any damage done. But more often than not the admission of guilt is cravenly insincere, and in my opinion enables the very behaviour they are copping to.



Running in tandem with this phenomenon is another that I find equally strange, one I refer to as “the currency of victimhood.” As the individual aspires to be unique, they reach further into whatever is available to distinguish themselves — even if it may compromise their former status in society. The ends justify the means, pity is as valuable as praise, and the only goal is attention. Unsolicited tell-all autobiographies and warts-and-all reality television that rewards celebrity bad behaviour has resulted in perhaps the strangest phenomenon of our era: the election of TV star and serial liar Donald Trump. Trump’s portrayal of himself as victim — treated unfairly, lied about in the media, always embattled — was integral to his popularity.

On a less spectacular level, the currency of victimhood is widely displayed over social media. Corporations like Facebook convinced people to willingly hand over any semblance of privacy with apparent ease. The result is a deluge of confessional personal information (very useful as market research) available for anyone bored enough to look.

Manny Jumpcannon is a self-obsessed, insufferable liar. He is unable to take his gaze off his own reflection, even as the world around him is about to change drastically. He is a charlatan who masquerades as both aristocrat and tramp —

whichever serves his present purposes. He doesn't care about telling the truth or adhering to any code of ethics, and doesn't think about contrition or compensation. All Manny cares about is attention.

In style and aesthetics, the film is clearly influenced by R.W. Fassbinder, particularly *Fox and his Friends*. Scorsese's *After Hours*, and *The King of Comedy* are also good references for the film.



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TRAILER: <https://vimeo.com/227641845>

SOCIAL MEDIA: Twitter @MaxMcCabeLokos

Maxwell McCabe-Lokos  
[maxwellmccabelokos@gmail.com](mailto:maxwellmccabelokos@gmail.com)  
+1 416 826 8939