

PAUL SPARKS SUSAN KENT LONDON LIBOIRON NICHOLAS CAMPBELL WILL OLDHAM BRUCE DERN



HANDS THAT BIND

HIRED HANDS PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS A FILM BY KYLE ARMSTRONG

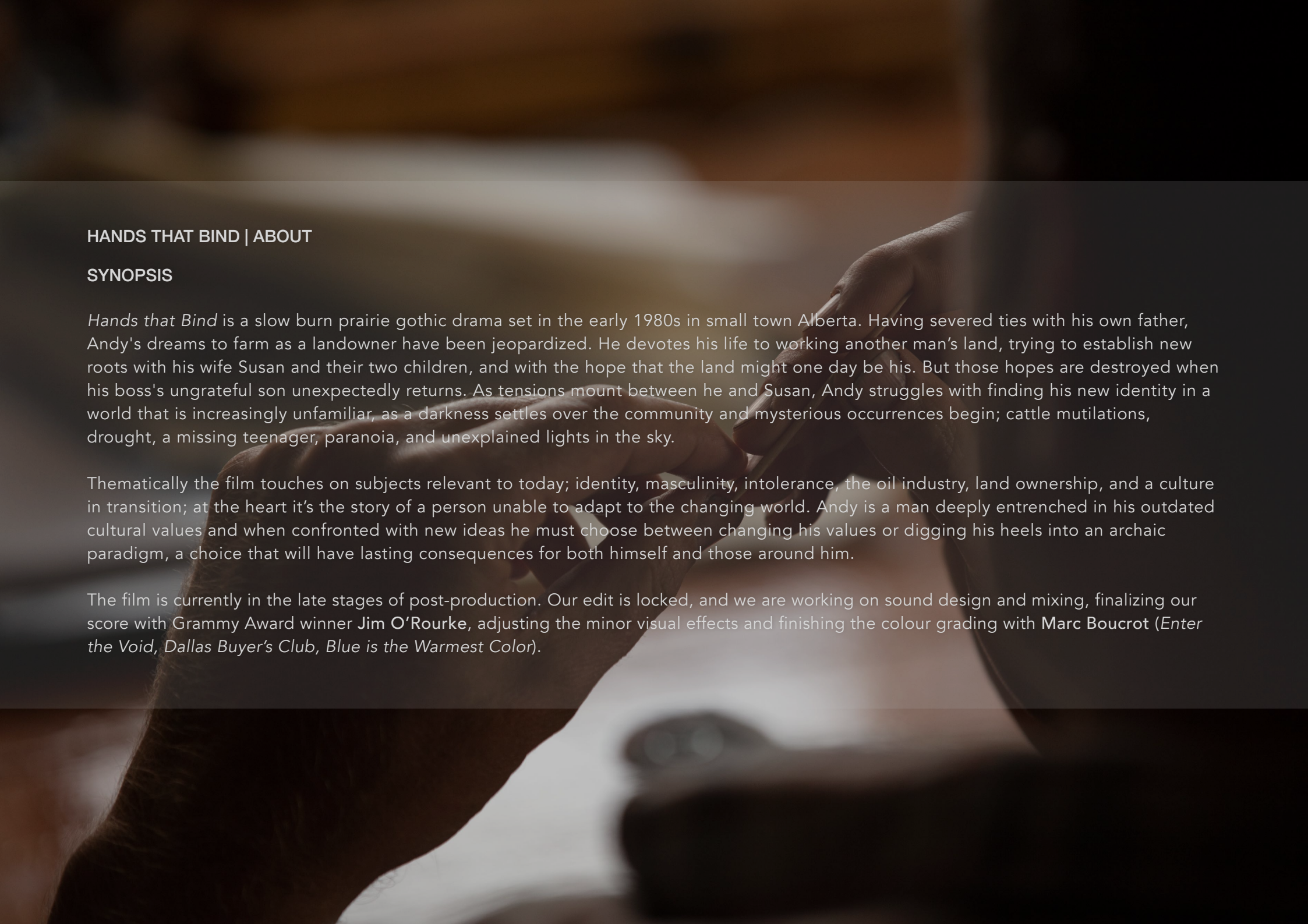
PRODUCED BY BLAKE MCWILLIAM AND KYLE ARMSTRONG CASTING BY EBCASTING COMPOSER JIM O'ROURKE EDITOR MARC BOUCROT

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY MICHAEL ROBERT MCLAUGHLIN PRODUCTION DESIGN MALORIE SHMYR

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS JEFFREY BARON SHERI KLASSEN WADE KOBERSTEIN GLYNIS KOBERSTEIN

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY KYLE ARMSTRONG

HANDTHATBIND.COM



HANDS THAT BIND | ABOUT

SYNOPSIS

Hands that Bind is a slow burn prairie gothic drama set in the early 1980s in small town Alberta. Having severed ties with his own father, Andy's dreams to farm as a landowner have been jeopardized. He devotes his life to working another man's land, trying to establish new roots with his wife Susan and their two children, and with the hope that the land might one day be his. But those hopes are destroyed when his boss's ungrateful son unexpectedly returns. As tensions mount between he and Susan, Andy struggles with finding his new identity in a world that is increasingly unfamiliar, as a darkness settles over the community and mysterious occurrences begin; cattle mutilations, drought, a missing teenager, paranoia, and unexplained lights in the sky.

Thematically the film touches on subjects relevant to today; identity, masculinity, intolerance, the oil industry, land ownership, and a culture in transition; at the heart it's the story of a person unable to adapt to the changing world. Andy is a man deeply entrenched in his outdated cultural values and when confronted with new ideas he must choose between changing his values or digging his heels into an archaic paradigm, a choice that will have lasting consequences for both himself and those around him.

The film is currently in the late stages of post-production. Our edit is locked, and we are working on sound design and mixing, finalizing our score with Grammy Award winner Jim O'Rourke, adjusting the minor visual effects and finishing the colour grading with Marc Boucrot (*Enter the Void*, *Dallas Buyer's Club*, *Blue is the Warmest Color*).



CAST AND CREW

Paul Sparks - (*Waco, House of Cards, the Lovebirds*)
Susan Kent - (*Trailer Park Boys, 22 Minutes, Spinster*)
Landon Liboiron - (*Hemlock Grove, Frontier*)
Nicholas Campbell - (*Davinci's Inquest, Heartland*)
Will Oldham - (*A Ghost Story, Old Joy, AKA Bonnie Prince Billy*)
Bruce Dern - (*Nebraska, Posse, Once Upon A Time in Hollywood*)

Cinematographer - Mike McLaughlin - (*The New Romantics, The Kid Detective*)
Editor + Colorist - Marc Boucrot (*Enter the Void, Dallas Buyer's Club, Big Little Lies*)
Original Score - Jim O'Rourke (*Sonic Youth, Wilco, Love Liza, Herzog's Grizzly Man*)
Writer/Director - Kyle Armstrong (*Until First Light, Magnetic Reconnection*)
Producer - Blake McWilliam (*The Little Deputy, Timberwood*)



PAUL SPARKS



SUSAN KENT



BRUCE DERN




WILL OLDHAM



LANDON LIBOIRON



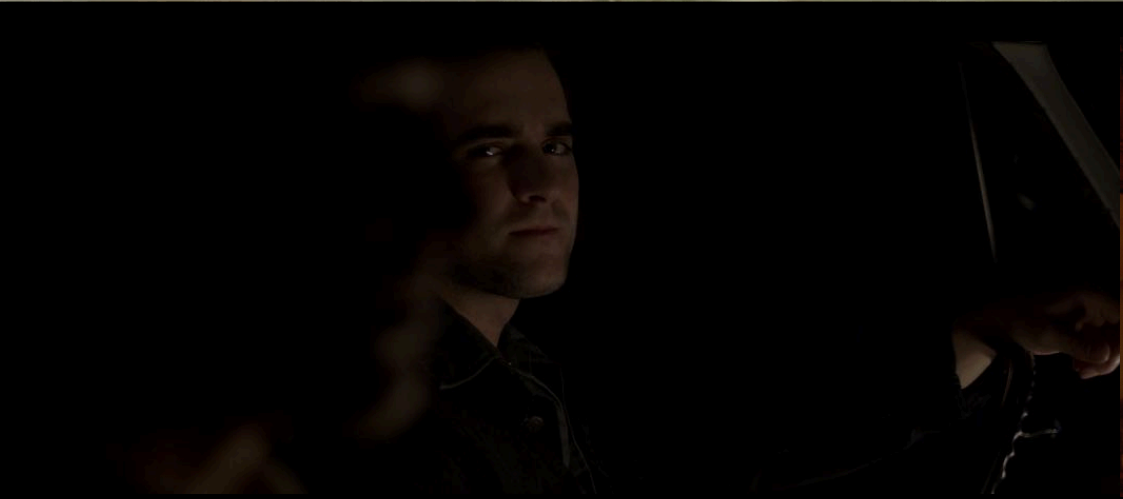
NICHOLAS CAMPBELL



REFERENCE FILMS

Wake in Fright by Ted Kotcheff 1971, **The Reflecting Skin** by Philip Ridley 1990, **Take Shelter** by Jeff Nichols 2011, **Days of Heaven** by Terrence Malick 1978, **No Country for Old Men** by Joel and Ethan Coen 2007, **Silent Light** by Carlos Reygadas 2007, **Un Lac** by Philippe Grandrieux 2008, **Gerry** by Gus Vant Sant 2004, **Blue Ruin** by Jeremy Saulnier, 2013, A Ghost Story by David Lowery 2017, **Take Shelter** by Jeff Nichols, 2011, **The Reflecting Skin** (1991, Philip Ridley), **Days of Heaven** by Terrence Malick, 1978, **The Field** by Jim Sheridan, 1990, **Upstream Color** by Shane Carruth, 2013, **Blood Simple** by Joel and Ethan Coen, 1984, **Martha Marcy May Marlene** by Sean Durkin, 2011









KYLE ARMSTRONG | WRITER/DIRECTOR

Kyle is a Canadian filmmaker and artist. His early career was focused on creating short, non-narrative films, which have been screened at various galleries, during live performances and in traditional cinemas around the globe. Armstrong's 2012 short film *Magnetic Reconnection* received its world premiere at AFI Fest 2012, and was selected for dozens of festivals including SxSW 2013, Ann Arbor Film Festival, Raindance, Guanajuato International Film Festival, CPH:DOX, RIDM, Rooftop Films, Seattle International Film Festival, True/ False Documentary Film Festival screening publicly more than 130 times worldwide. In 2012 he was a recipient of the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta Emerging Artist Award. In the last 5 years Armstrong co- produced Hans Olson's feature film *Figurine*, premiered his dramatic short *Abandoned* at the Cannes Short Film Corner as part of Telefilm's "Not Short On Talent" program, performed at Sled Island as a collaboration with Mark Templeton, completed a video for Bonnie "Prince" Billy, directed and produced the short film *Classic Camera*, finished his first feature film *Until First Light*, and wrote, directed and co-produced *Hands That Bind*.



BLAKE MCWILLIAM | PRODUCER

Blake McWilliam is a director and producer based in Edmonton, Canada. With an official selection at the 2015 Sundance Film Festival, a Canadian Screen Award Nomination in 2016, and multiple AMPIA and CCMA nominations and awards along the way, Blake is quickly establishing himself at the forefront of the Canadian film industry. He recently completed production on the feature film *Hands that Bind* starring Paul Sparks, Landon Liboiron, and two-time academy award nominee Bruce Dern, and is next set to produce and direct a new series called *Timberwood*, the feature film *Saltwater*, and the limited series *Glory River*.





WRITER/DIRECTOR STATEMENT | KYLE ARMSTRONG

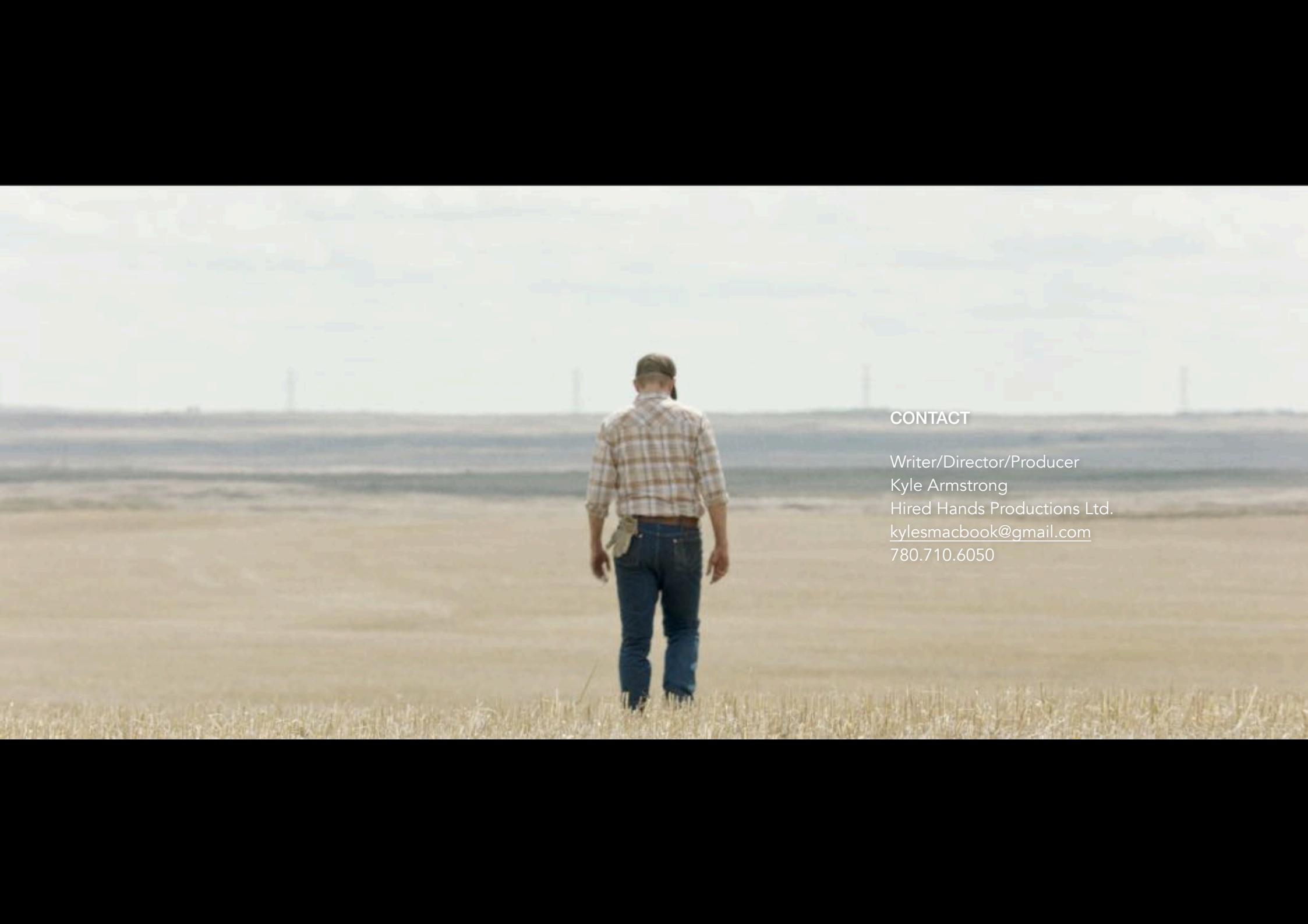
Youngstown, Alberta in 1981 bore the cultural values of past generations, representing a people slow to adapt to the changes happening in much of the rest of the world. When it was originally settled, this dry country was inhabited by practical people, farmers focussed on providing for their families, on building a community. These people had grown to take care of their own, left to fend for themselves while feeding the rest of the country. As time went on resilience grew, but so did a sense of alienation. In this time and place men were providers, women nurturers; these were people bound by traditional gender roles. Governments were perceived as out of touch. The strong traditional religious values of the people grew even stronger and became embedded in the culture, further alienating themselves from progressive cultural shifts. And around this time, a new generation of farmers were emerging, ones focussed less on subsistence and more on building empires.

Hands That Bind pays tribute in part to this farming resilience but sheds light on its darker side; on first glance it's a simple story, a familiar one of family business, jealousy and betrayal; but it is ultimately a subversive film about alienation in the west, masculinity, land ownership, identity and place, and our inability to recognize ideas beyond our own experience. Andy is at odds with his circumstances, his role being displaced by a returning (and ungrateful) son. Andy finds himself caught in a world which is at odds with what he knows. Easy solutions to Andy's work dilemma, such as Susan's decision to go back to work as a nurse and provide a stable income are rejected not for logic but for unquestioned gender roles and Andy's skewed sense of masculinity. Andy's best chance at owning his own farm means returning to his father's farm a province away, but he's unwilling to do so due to unresolved bad blood with his father. The cattle mutilations and other strange and unexplainable happenings parallel this experience of a changing world.

The hired hand is a tragic figure; he's a farmer at heart, but without land ownership his identity and self worth as a "man" is directly challenged. This is directly juxtaposed with the absurdity of land ownership; the indigenous people never regarded this land as a possession, something one person could own. As the barkeep asks, "How can a man own land?" How can a man extract oil and claim himself the rightful owner? How can a man make decisions for his married partner? Andy's thoughtless discarding of the arrowhead in the opening moments establishes the unquestioned entitled mindset for the film.

This film is personal. I wrote the film in an attempt to reconcile my past and present lives. The film was shot in the very community where I was raised, sometimes just a stone's throw from where my family homesteaded for over 80 years. As a young man I worked this land, as did my father, as did his father, and his. It is a dry and barren place, deemed "uninhabitable" by John Palliser in the late 1800s. These are my roots; making this film helped me unpack what it means to be from somewhere. I wanted to respectfully convey the subtleties and complexities of rural culture less often shown on film, without glossing over the troubling social aspects of intolerance; the sexism, racism, homophobia and other ugly remnants of colonization pervasive to this day. Thematically and visually, I have a deep debt to films already made like Ted Kotcheff's 1971 film Wake in Fright, Philip Ridley's debut The Reflecting Skin, Jeff Nichols' apocalyptic thriller Take Shelter and Terrence Malick's masterpiece Days of Heaven. Incidentally, Both Days of Heaven and The Reflecting Skin were also shot in southern Alberta and are influences on the film's visual style.

Andy is a dying breed of man; emotionally unavailable, with an unwavering adherence to his own sense of masculinity, unwilling to adapt to the changing world. This is a story for 2020.



CONTACT

Writer/Director/Producer
Kyle Armstrong
Hired Hands Productions Ltd.
kylesmacbook@gmail.com
780.710.6050

