

KINO LORBER

experience cinema



LIKE ME

A film by Robert Mockler

Starring: Addison Timlin, Ian Nelson, Larry Fessenden, Jeremy Gardner

2017

Running Time: 80 minutes

U.S.A.

English

Press Materials

<https://www.kinolorber.com/film/likeme>

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Cast

Kiya – Addison Timlin
Burt – Ian Nelson
Marshall – Larry Fessenden
Freddie – Jeremy Gardner

Crew

Director – Robert Mockler
Screenplay – Robert Mockler
Cinematography – James Siewert
Editing – Jessalyn Abbott, Robert Mockler
Production Design – Colin O'Brien
Producers – Jessalyn Abbott, James Belfer, Robert Mockler, Jenn Wexler and Larry Fessenden
Associate Producers – Rebekah Brown, Chris Skotchdopole, Michelle Soffen
Executive Producers – Anthony Gentile, John Gentile, Anya Joseph, Leo Joseph, Peter Phok
Production Companies – Dogfish Pictures, Glass Eye Pix, Go Infect Films, Lankn Partners

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SYNOPSIS

A reckless loner (Addison Timlin, *Little Sister*) sets out on a crime spree that she broadcasts on social media. After releasing a video of herself robbing a convenience store, she amasses a huge following. While traveling along the coast, she encounters a drifter, an Internet troll, and a paint huffing outsider who are all pulled into her circle of chaos, junk food, and drugs. Robert Mockler's visually arresting debut feature, produced by indie horror veteran Larry Fessenden, takes the viewer into a world of fabricated personalities and offers a thought-provoking portrait of isolation in our increasingly digital world.

FILM FESTIVAL SCREENINGS

South by Southwest Film Festival 2017 – World Premiere

The Overlook Film Festival 2017

Indianapolis International Film Festival 2017

Bucheon International Fantastic Film Festival 2017

Indie Street Film Festival 2017

Sidewalk Film Festival 2017

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INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT MOCKLER

What was the genesis of this film? Did you start out hoping to make a feature film and circled around this idea? Or did you have a certain concept in mind and built the film around that?

It started with an image that popped into my head. I saw someone holding up a convenience store with a gun and a smartphone. I thought that image raised a lot of interesting questions. I wanted to make a film that explored loneliness in some way. I'd also been fascinated by America's obsession with the outlaw for quite some time. Those thoughts all started to converge in a way that I thought could be intriguing territory.

The experimental nature of the visuals in the film gives it a distinctive edge, and yet the images and techniques you use have a definite lineage. What influences, cinematic or otherwise, can you point to in the making of Like Me?

There were so many. I'm not sure how directly these influences came through. I can try to name some. I love Věra Chytilová's DAISES. That was a strong influence. My editing partner, Jessalyn Abbott, and I watched that a lot during post. Her imagery, use of color, and editing techniques were especially inspiring. She created a uniquely affecting and intoxicating language.

I was heavily influenced by a lot of films that explore loneliness in some way; films like Scorsese's TAXI DRIVER, Coppola's THE CONVERSATION, and Romanek's ONE HOUR PHOTO.

I've always been fascinated with the surreal. I love films that have their own world. I'm interested when that world feels like it may be emanating directly from the main character's brain. Terry Gilliam, Tim Burton, Alejandro Jodorowsky, and Jean Cocteau are all important to me in that sense.

The white mask that appears in the beginning of the film was certainly influenced by John Carpenter. I was losing my mind trying to find the right mask. The clock was running out and I happened to pass through a communal office building where this 3D printing startup was working. I saw an orange mask that was recently printed. It wasn't quite right, but its blocky pixelated design gave it a cold digital surface that seemed to make perfect sense. We could modify the design to get it closer to what I was aiming for. I wanted to keep the facial features neutral and paint the mask white in the hope that it would be unsettlingly devoid of emotion, like the Michael Myer's mask, so that viewers might project their own thoughts and feelings onto it.

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It's also no surprise that I'm obsessed with Stanley Kubrick; so many of us are. I've always loved his use of wide angle lenses, both to capture moments of stillness and motion. The extreme wide shot of Addison swinging from the hammock in the motel room was a moment when I was trying to steal from Kubrick in some ways. I don't know that that influence could be seen directly, but I suppose that's sort of the strange thing about influences: they often mutate into their own thing, for better or worse.

There were a lot of artists I discovered through Tumblr that were influential as well. I was lucky enough to collaborate a little with one of those artists on this film. Her name is Kyttenjanae and her work is fantastic. I also encountered a kind of GIF that inspired some of the ways we manipulated the images that were looped into those short chaotic bursts. There was a novelty camera released in the 1980s called the Nishika N8000 that took "3-D photographs" by taking a quick series of photos with four different lenses. When you string them together and loop them back and forth there's a strange faux 3D effect that occurs. There's a small community of people on Tumblr who use that camera and make that style of GIF. It creates a different effect than the one we landed on, but looking at those images sparked some ideas for us.

Musically, I wanted to use a mix of traditional organic instruments combined with electronic music. I wanted those two styles to sometimes exist separately and sometimes merge or violently collide. It felt right in the sense that our organic world seems to be quickly folding into a digital one. The more traditional parts of the score were influenced by Bernard Hermann and Toru Takemitsu. Hermann and Takemitsu's music were both used heavily in the temp score. The electronic side of the film was influenced by Tangerine Dream, Carpenter, Goblin, and Vangelis. Christmas music also played an important role. I think Christmas music has a strange fairytale quality. And, for me, that fairytale quality is paired with contemporary connections of toxic consumerism or overconsumption that I thought were thematically relevant.

At what state of the process did Larry come on board, and what was the nature of that collaboration?

Before I get to Larry, I have to take a few steps back. Originally, it was just my filmmaking partner and I, Jessalyn Abbott, who is a producer and editor on the film. We went to the same school and when I told her this idea she was all in. We had no connections to the film world and neither of us came from wealth. We didn't know where to begin to try to get the film financed. We were both just obsessively in pursuit of making this film a reality.

We decided to shoot a concept trailer. I tweeted that concept trailer to a producer, James Belfer, who had recently worked on COMPLIANCE and PRINCE AVALANCHE. He immediately replied and we were talking over coffee in a cafe a few days later. He was very intrigued by the trailer and the film's potential. He was in the process of launching an accelerator program for filmmakers. It was a program that offered \$18,000 in seed financing and a supportive

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infrastructure to help get films off the ground. Fortunately, we were asked to participate during its inaugural year. James would later introduce Jessalyn and I to the Glass Eye Pix team.

I had already written several drafts of the script and we were looking for producers that connected with the material and whose filmmaking philosophies aligned with ours. James introduced me to Jenn Wexler over at Glass Eye. They have a “by any means necessary” approach. In a low-budget world commitment, resourcefulness, and resilience are key. The Glass Eye team has those qualities while also having a uniquely supportive and collaborative culture. Jenn responded to the script and I trusted her sensibilities. She introduced me to Larry.

Larry originally became involved singularly as a producer. When we started the casting process Larry’s film HABI was released on Blu-ray. I revisited that film and I was taken by his performance. In some ways, I saw a lot of his character Sam, in Marshall. I thought he could bring a complexity to the character. I asked him if he would take on the role and fortunately, he agreed.

Larry eventually became a mentor in many ways. This was my first feature, so it was invaluable to be able to constantly pester someone like him with all sorts of questions. He was very generous with his time and someone I could always rely on.

How did casting Addison come about?

My casting directors, Sig De Miguel and Stephen Vincent, put me in contact with Addison. We grabbed coffee and there seemed to be an immediate ease of communication. I think it would have been easy to read this character as completely vapid and one dimensional, but Addison didn’t. She makes so many interesting choices, works incredibly hard, and has brilliant instincts. My hope was to find someone who connected with and understood the material while bringing something entirely fresh to the character and making it their own. Luckily, I found that in Addison.

What was your writing process like, and how much did your blueprint of the film change once Larry and Addison were on board? In other words, what kind of give and take was there in terms of following your initial script and allowing your performers to experiment during filming?

We were on an incredibly tight schedule, so there wasn’t a whole lot of room to deviate from the overall structure and general dialogue of the script in a way that wouldn’t have had disastrous repercussions. That said, there’s the version of the characters that existed on the page and then there was the version that we were discovering in the moment. Addison and Larry have a wonderful sense of curiosity that allows them to uncover a range of powerful moments.

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On a similar note, what was the filming process like from a technical standpoint? What was the nature of your collaboration with cinematographer James Siewert?

I had been interested in shooting a feature with a Sony A7SII, which is a camera that is very compact and extremely sensitive to light. It allowed us to get away with some shots that would have been near impossible with any other camera. Also, I wanted to shoot in 4K and finish in 2K, so that we would be able to reframe images in post. The compositions I was hoping to achieve were aggressive and in some cases required a level precision that I knew we wouldn't always have time for, so the flexibility to adjust the image in post was important.

James and I both come from DIY backgrounds, we're both gearheads, and it was the first time either of us had worked on a feature-length film. Anything I had ever worked on previously I had shot myself, so I was a little nervous about what collaborating with a DP would be like. We both had a lot to learn in a very compressed time window.

I saw a short of his called THE PAST INSIDE THE PRESENT, which I thought was brilliant. His visual style aligned with my own and I connected with his self-taught background as well as his unconventional approach. We also shared a lot of the same influences. All of that put some anxieties to rest.

He moved in with me during pre-production. The walls of my apartment were completely covered with photo references that I had been gathering over the years. We could walk through and start breaking things down while also running around Brooklyn and collecting all sorts of props and outdated electronics as production quickly approached. We started to figure out what sort of strange rigs we could assemble to pull off these technically aggressive shots without killing anyone. Luckily, James is incredibly resourceful and a mastermind at building things.

I'd like to take a moment to talk about our colorist, Blase Theodore. Color is such an important element to help unlock the desired mood as well as a valuable tool in reflecting a character's emotional state. I wasn't sure if we'd be able to technically achieve what I was after especially because the format we shot on was somewhat limited, but Blase applied some serious color science to these images and offered so many wonderful ideas. He played a crucial role in bringing a lot of the imagery together.

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Robert Mockler – Director / Writer / Editor

Robert Mockler is a writer, director, editor, and producer. His first feature film, LIKE ME, had its world premiere at the 2017 SXSW film festival where it was nominated for a grand jury award.

Addison Timlin – Kiya

Addison Timlin can most recently be seen starring opposite Adam Brody and Martin Freeman on Season 2 of the Crackle web series, STARTUP. She most recently wrapped production on the independent feature SLEEPING IN PLASTIC. Last year, Richard Brody of the New Yorker named Timlin one of the best actresses of 2016 for her performance in Zach Clark's independent feature, LITTLE SISTER. She also recently starred as the lead of Lotus Entertainment's FALLEN opposite Jeremy Irvine and in the independent feature BLUE ANGEL opposite Stanley Tucci. Addison also had flashy supporting roles in Showtime's CALIFORNICATION, in Lakeshore's STAND UP GUYS starring opposite Al Pacino, Alan Arkin, and Christopher Walken, as well as in the independent feature, LUMPY, starring opposite Justin Long, and MGM's thriller, THE TOWN THAT DREADED SUNDOWN for Ryan Murphy, Jason Blum, and Alfonso Gomez-Rejon. In 2013, Addison was seen in the Independent film, LOVE & AIR SEX, which premiered to rave reviews at South By Southwest and Stephen Sommers' supernatural thriller ODD THOMAS starring opposite Anton Yelchin.

Larry Fessenden – Marshall / Producer

Larry Fessenden is an actor and producer and the director of the art-horror movies NO TELLING, HABIT, WENDIGO and THE LAST WINTER, as well as the TV films SKIN AND BONES and BENEATH. He has produced dozens of movies including THE HOUSE OF THE DEVIL, STAKE LAND, WENDY AND LUCY and THE COMEDY and acted in TV and Film including LOUIE, THE STRAIN, BROKEN FLOWERS and THE BRAVE ONE. Fessenden has operated the production shingle Glass Eye Pix since 1985 with the mission of supporting individual voices in the arts.

Ian Nelson – Burt

Ian Nelson currently stars on Hulu's THERE'S... JOHNNY! opposite Tony Danza. The show premiered on November 16th, 2017 and follows Nelson's character, Andy, in the year 1972 as he lands his dream job on "The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson." Ian's past television credits include Fullscreen's THE DELETED, CBS's CRIMINAL MINDS, TNT's LEGENDS, IFC's COMEDY BANG BANG, and NBC's LAW & ORDER: SVU.

Nelson was first seen on screen in the blockbuster hit THE HUNGER GAMES, before going on to star in Universal/ Blumhouse's thriller THE BOY NEXT DOOR opposite Jennifer Lopez, Relativity's THE BEST OF ME, David Dobkin's Warner Bros. feature THE JUDGE opposite Robert Downey Jr., and the independent film MEDEAS which premiered at the Venice Film Festival.

Nelson will next be seen this January in the highly anticipated IFC feature FREAKSHOW opposite Bette Midler and Laverne Cox, and in the twisted coming-of-age Robert Mockler film,

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James Siewert – Cinematographer

James Siewert is or has been a director, cinematographer and visual effects artist. You might find him building a camera rig, drawing storyboards, coding a website or having a nervous breakdown depending on the day. His short film THE PAST INSIDE THE PRESENT has been shown at over 30 film festivals including Slamdance Film Festival and Fantastic Fest. LIKE ME is his first feature film as a cinematographer. He lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

Jenn Wexler – Producer

Jenn Wexler is a writer/director and producer for NYC's fierce indie production outfit, Glass Eye Pix. She produced Robert Mockler's LIKE ME which premiered at the 2017 SXSW Film Festival. She also produced Mickey Keating's DARLING (2015, Fantastic Fest), Keating's PSYCHOPATHS (2017, Tribeca Film Festival), and SXSW Grand Jury Prize winner, Ana Asensio's MOST BEAUTIFUL ISLAND, a John Cassavetes Award nominee in the 2018 Film Independent Spirit Awards. Her directorial debut, THE RANGER, is currently in post-production.

James Belfer – Producer

James Belfer is an indie producer and the founder of Cartuna - a digital media brand focused on animated comedy for adults. Cartuna is currently producing over 40 animated series and the R-rated animated comedy The Adventures of Drunky starring Sam Rockwell, Steve Coogan, Nina Arianda, Dave Attell, and Tyler The Creator. The company's first project, NUTS!, won a Special Jury Prize at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival and was acquired by Amazon Studios. Producing credits include Like Crazy (Paramount Vantage, 2011 Sundance Grand Jury Prize Winner), Prince Avalanche (Magnolia Pictures, Sundance 2013, 2013 Berlinale Best Director Winner), Compliance (Magnolia Pictures, Sundance NEXT 2012), Sylvio (Factory 25, SXSW 2017), and Like Me (Kino Lorber, SXSW 2017). In 2013, James received his MBA from NYU Stern and is currently an Adjunct Professor at NYU Tisch.

Jessalyn Abbott – Producer/Editor

Jessalyn Abbott is a producer and editor. She produced and edited Robert Mockler's LIKE ME which premiered at the 2017 SXSW Film Festival and was nominated for a grand jury award.