

The Hemingway Night

a film by Gary Mairs



World Premiere:

Palm Springs International ShortsFest 2009

further screenings:

Bronx Independent Film Festival 2010

contact:

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website and high resolution images:

<http://www.imagists.org/hemingwaynightmovie/>

cast

David Nordstrom.....Terry
Jan L. Johnson.....Leon

crew

Gary Mairs.....director, editor
Tom Block.....screenwriter
J.R. Hughto.....producer, assistant director
Jay Keitel.....director of photography
Brian Sowell.....gaffer
E.B. Brooks.....art director
Devin McNulty.....production sound
Vinny Golia.....music
Theron Patterson.....post-production sound
Jerry Summers.....sound mix
David Fenster.....color correction
Heather Hernandez.....script supervisor, catering
Paul Hernandez.....grip, catering, website design

music performed by

Vinny Golia.....saxophone
Steve Blum.....piano
Brandon Schmidt.....bass
Tina Raymond.....drums

Synopsis

One man's spirited argument is another man's ruined marriage: it's been five years, and they both remember that night very differently.

Long synopsis

Years ago, Leon's house was the place to go - good conversation, excellent weed, good barbeque. Terry and his friends spent a lot of time there, drinking and arguing and fighting over girls.

That was a very long time ago. Leon and his wife divorced last year after 25 years together, and he's nursing grudges and drinking too much. Terry's reeling from a busted relationship, not getting as much done on his novel as he should.

Terry comes by, after years without seeing his old friend, for a night of drinking and reminiscing. As the night wears on, Terry sees that a night he barely remembers is the night that Leon thinks destroyed his life.

Cast

Jan L. Johnson (Leon)

Actor, Film maker (Alderfilms.com), MFA CalArts.



David Nordstrom (Terry)

David's feature debut as director/writer/editor/actor, *Sawdust City*, debuted in competition at the Los Angeles International Film Festival in 2011. He graduated from CalArts with an MFA in Film. Nordstrom's other acting credits include *Pincus* (2012) and *Trona* (2004), both directed by David Fenster. He has edited the internationally lauded films *Bad Milo* (2013), *Pearblossom Highway* (2012) and *Littlerock* (2010).



Crew

Gary Mairs Director, editor

Gary Mairs has been teaching in the School of Film/Video at the California Institute of the Arts since 1997. In 2005 he became Co-Head of the newly revamped Film Directing Program.

All That She Surveys is the third in a series of interrelated shorts that, when screened together, tell a feature length story. *Say It* (2008) was written by Theron Patterson (*Dark Cloud*, Toronto International Film Festival 2010) and stars Amy Seimetz (*The Off Hours*, Sundance 2011) and David Nordstrom (*Sawdust City*, Los Angeles International Film Festival 2011). *The Hemingway Night* (2009) was written by Tom Block and stars Nordstrom and Jan Johnson. *All That She Surveys* (2011) stars Seimetz, was written by James Benning (*Small Roads*, International Film Festival Rotterdam 2012). *The Hemingway Night* premiered at the 2009 Palm Springs International Shortsfest. *All That She Surveys* premiered at the 2012 International Film Festival Rotterdam.



Tom Block Screenwriter

Tom Block hails from Texas but is a longtime resident of San Francisco. A lifelong film buff, he's particularly interested in the ways that documentary techniques can enliven narrative fiction films. He's currently engaged in various writing projects. His blog can be found at <http://www.jumano.com/tomblog/>.

J.R. Hughto Producer

J.R. Hughto is a filmmaker, photographer, and film tech expert. His feature debut *Diamond On Vinyl* debuted at Slamdance 2013 and has been shown internationally. Hughto has produced several feature films and shorts which have screened at festivals and galleries internationally, including the Los Angeles Film Festival, the Viennale and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Jay Keitel Director of photography

Jay Keitel was born in Northern California, and raised in the Pacific Northwest. He Attended the Northwest Film Center in Portland, Oregon and holds a BFA in Film/Video from CalArts. He made his first super 8 movie in 1988, and since then has continued to explore the world with a camera in hand - following the good light. His western *Black Dragon Canyon* screened at the 2005 Viennale and his second feature *Despedida* is currently in post-production.

Vinny Golia Music

As a composer Vinny Golia fuses the rich heritage of Jazz, contemporary classical and world music into his own unique compositions. Also a bandleader, Golia has presented his music to concert audiences in Europe, Canada, Mexico, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and the United States in ensembles varying dramatically in size and instrumentation. Mr. Golia has won numerous awards as a composer, including grants from The National Endowment of the Arts, The Lila Wallace Commissioning Program, The California Arts Council, Meet the Composer, Clausen Foundation of the Arts, Funds for U.S. Artists and the American Composers Forum. In 1982 he created the on-going 50 piece Vinny Golia Large Ensemble to perform his compositions for chamber orchestra and jazz ensembles.

E.B. Brooks Art director

E.B. Brooks has been designing costumes professionally for ten years. She got an early start in Chevy Chase, MD by turning her siblings and friends into paper dolls. She would lay them down on the floor, trace them, cut the clothes out, color the outfits, and then tape them on their bodies. She then moved at a tender young age to Los Angeles to receive her masters degree. To this day, she still makes her clothes and costumes exactly the same way she did as a kid. Her favorite materials are silk jersey, tracing paper, and cellophane. She enjoys long walks on the beach in soft focus, diesel cars, toast, puppies that sing, and reading palms to score free drinks. (www.ebbrooks.com)

from The Desert Sun (June 25, 2009)

by Bruce Fessier

5 stars out of 5.

Mairs, interim dean of the school of film/video at Cal Arts, brilliantly takes a wordy screenplay best suited for an intimate play and gives it the pacing and structure of great drama. Jan Johnson, as Leon, and David Nordstrom, as Terry, seem as rehearsed as Broadway actors, using nuances to keep the dialogue interesting until the conflict produces sparks, and Tom Block's screenplay unfolds like great literature. This is one of those rare intelligent films that is easily embraced.

Screengrab Review: The Hemingway Night

by Hayden Childs

(<http://www.nerve.com/archived/blogs/screengrab-review-the-hemingway-night>)

The Hemingway Night is a short film about the interplay of ego, friendship, and regret. The plot is fairly simple, but the interactions are anything but. Terry, a young man in his 20s, goes to visit his old friend Leon, an older guy still reeling from his recent divorce. The two decide to have a few drinks before going for dinner, and turn to remembrances of times past, as such events often do. Eventually Leon gets drunk enough to spill that he more or less blames Terry and one of Terry's old friends for his divorce. But Terry's version of the story reveals just how little Leon understands himself or his ex-wife.

That's the high-level summary, but I want to talk a little more about the details, plus a few other things. So if there's a chance that you'll see this micro-budget indie short and you want to remain unspoiled about the details, please proceed with caution. Otherwise, let me start with the admission that I consider both the director, Gary Mairs, and the screenwriter, Tom Block, to be great friends, the kind where you break out the high-dollar single-malt and shoot the shit until the wee hours on those rare occasions you get to spend time together. So you can consider me utterly biased, especially if you're the type who believes that a movie critic is a journalist and should be held to J-school standards. I don't, because criticism is about aesthetics, and no one alive can be objective about their own aesthetic sense. I pledge to you now that not only am I never objective about movies, but I never will be, and what's more, anyone who tells you different is fooling themselves. That's my personal caveat. You still with me?

Anyway, although I'm definitely biased towards a movie made by friends, I'm happy to report that *The Hemingway Night* is the kind of movie made by friends that anyone would be happy to recommend. A great short movie is like a great short story, capturing a complicated and perhaps ineffable emotion, providing a moment of catharsis, all without belaboring the character or plot necessary to sustain a feature-length film. If only the movie distribution biz made it easier for short films to reach audiences. I applaud the all-too-few mass media outlets for short films, like *The Believer's* offshoot video magazine *Wholphin* or the block of short films that IFC airs periodically. But for the most part, the only opportunities for an audience are at film festivals.

So in *The Hemingway Night*, Terry (David Nordstrom), a character from Mairs's last short film *Say It*, is clearly an intellectual with disdain for work that doesn't meet his standards. As soon as he sits down at Leon's place (Leon is played by Jan Johnson), he picks up a book, Steinbeck's *Travels With Charley*, with a questioning look. "Don't start," Leon says. In the course of their conversation, it becomes clear that Terry's outlook was formed partially at the home of Leon and his ex Susie. Terry was one of a group of younger friends who would come over to get drunk and high and talk about culture. And Leon holds them all responsible for his wife losing respect for him, but especially Terry. At the point of catharsis, we learn that Leon once mentioned that he liked *A Moveable Feast*, and the younger men mocked him mercilessly for that. Afterwards, he says, his wife wouldn't touch him and eventually left, his children in tow. Terry, however, points out that Leon obviously thought of himself as a mentor to the younger guys, but he wasn't fooling anybody, not even his wife. On the night that Leon thought himself unmanned by the younger guys over the Hemingway book, Terry tells him that his ex brought all the younger guys into the kitchen to ask them to go easy on Leon. "He tries so hard," she told them.

This is fantastic stuff, the type of reversal that rips off a character's ego like an old band-aid. Leon is clearly devastated and more sour than ever, and Terry can't understand. Leon wanted to blame the younger guys, and he wanted to be able to forgive them because he saw himself as a guy with the wisdom and largesse to forgive youth for being young. But Terry's story reveals that Leon's wife didn't even consider him the intellectual equal of the younger men. There's no one to blame but himself. Terry doesn't understand why this revelation is more sour to Leon, because Terry is at least capable of blaming himself for his own mistakes. But Leon has built his whole identity, the narrative that allows him to sleep at night, around this lie.

Terry leaves, promising to return although Leon makes it clear that he doesn't want to see Terry again. As Terry sits in his car, he watches a father take his tired daughter out of a car and carry her inside. It's a wonderfully enigmatic ending. Terry could be thinking about Leon's torn family or the fragility of love or just marveling at the excellent parking spot they found, but I think he's considering the role that fathers play. Despite how the two men see themselves, Leon is definitely a father figure to Terry, and Terry played no small role in tearing Leon down. It may be necessary to

kill any Buddhas you happen to meet on the road, even Buddhas that aren't so wise, but that doesn't mean that it's easy to live with yourself afterwards.

That's a heavy dose of wisdom for 19 minutes. And that's how the best short stories work.