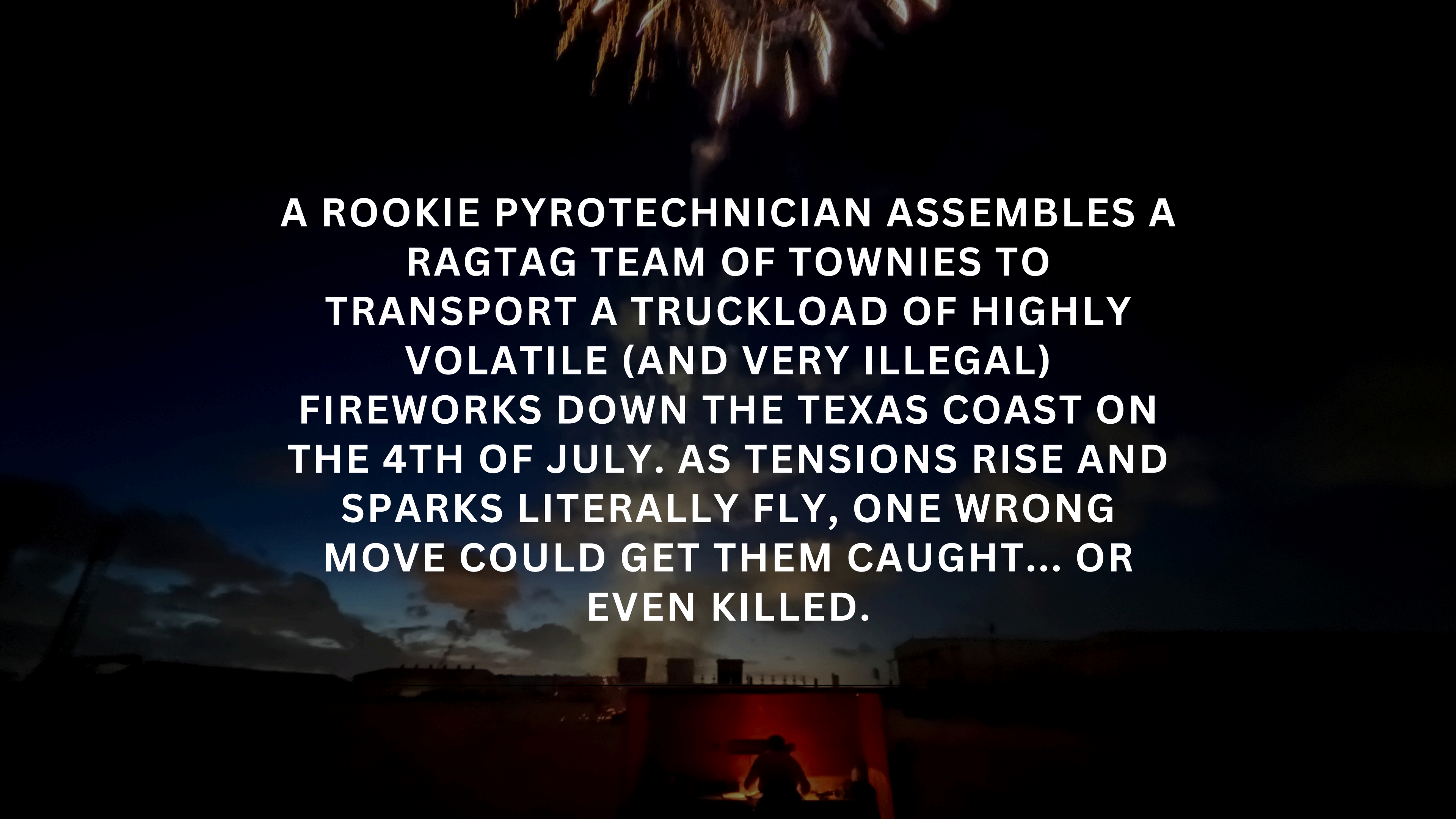




THE DIRECT LINE PRESENTS

# COHETES





**A ROOKIE PYROTECHNICIAN ASSEMBLES A  
RAGTAG TEAM OF TOWNIES TO  
TRANSPORT A TRUCKLOAD OF HIGHLY  
VOLATILE (AND VERY ILLEGAL)  
FIREWORKS DOWN THE TEXAS COAST ON  
THE 4TH OF JULY. AS TENSIONS RISE AND  
SPARKS LITERALLY FLY, ONE WRONG  
MOVE COULD GET THEM CAUGHT... OR  
EVEN KILLED.**



# **THE GIST**

## **SEEKING INVESTORS**

**We are seeking investors in order to launch preproduction April 7th 2025. Potential returns are anticipated Q1 2026.**

## **UNIQUE, COMPELLING STORYTELLING**

**A grounded, explosive story inspired by the director's family in the fireworks industry, exploring themes of leadership. Visually nostalgic, with real explosions, on-location actors, and precise execution.**


## **INNOVATIVE PROVEN EQUITY MODEL**

**Our unique profit-sharing equity model makes cast and crew equity partners, reducing risk and cost and aligning incentives. With comparable case studies active in the market.**

## **ATTACHED CAST, CREW, AND PARTNERS**

**Notable cast attached, with additional offers pending. Veteran crew on board, motivated by the equity model to excel. Strong partnerships with top grantors and filmmaking/pyrotechnics businesses.**





# DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

[CLICK FOR DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT VIDEO](#)



# REAL TEXANS. REAL PYRO.

Inspired by the real-life legacy of the Ochoa family, who have been lighting up the skies of the Coastal Bend since 2008, *Cohetes* (Spanish for fireworks) captures the raw drive behind America's most iconic celebration. Director/Co-writer Drew Saplin started working with his then-girlfriend (now wife), Allie Ochoa, helping her family, The PyrOchoas, with their large-scale fireworks displays. Led by Allie's father Charlie, the Ochoas have made a name for themselves with their work for major cities, corporations, and events like WWE, PBR, and Disney on Ice. Their craft demands brutal 14-hour days in the Texas heat, all for a few moments of a sky filled with color and chaos. As Charlie puts it, "You have to love it to do it." *Cohetes* is about the grit, sacrifice, and dedication of a family that's spent years making moments unforgettable—one firework at a time.





# SYNOPSIS

**ARI GUZMÁN** (late 20s, Mex-Am) is from a family that loves to blow shit up. Professionally, it's fireworks, but sometimes, it means relationships.

After failing to establish herself in the big city and falling into debt, Ari returns to her Texas hometown to assist her father, **MANUEL**, with the annual July 4th fireworks show sponsored by a very wealthy man. A tragic explosion involving the sponsor's son leaves her uninsured father critically injured. Desperate to cover medical expenses, and against the wishes of her uncle, **MEMO**, Ari strikes a deal with the sponsor to transport illegal, and highly dangerous fireworks in exchange for a huge payday. She assembles an unlikely group of locals, including friends, family, and strangers who rarely see eye-to-eye, to execute the dangerous task - all while evading law enforcement who are hot on their trail.

Timely, tense, and entertaining as hell, our story explores common ground among people from contrasting backgrounds as they navigate the challenges and risks that come with the pursuit of the American dream.



# ATTACHED TALENT

You may know Victoria as the lead in feature film, Plan B; from Never Have I Ever (Hulu); or on the new Bosch/Renee Ballard series. Fun fact: Victoria grew up in the town where our story takes place!

THE LEADER



**VICTORIA MOROLES**  
**ARI**

Ari isn't the first (or even the second) person you'd want to lead a team, but she's determined and will do anything for her family.

Jesse was the lead in Flamin Hot (2023). For our production he'll be fresh off of Christopher Nolan's The Odyssey.

THE HEART



**JESSE GARCIA**  
**MEMO**

Always the mediator, a bit superstitious, and underappreciated by his family, Memo is Ari's close-in-age uncle who was supposed to be in charge... until Ari showed up.

You'll recognize Steven Quezada for his role as Agent Steven Gomez in Breaking Bad and Better Call Saul.

THE ROCK



**STEVEN MICHAEL QUEZADA**  
**MANEUL**

Ari's amiable and hardworking father. After the death of his wife, Ari cleared out of town leaving him and his much younger brother, Memo, to pick up the pieces.

Thalia currently plays Mai on Avatar: The Last Airbender (Netflix); was Little Noi in Raya and the Last Dragon (Disney); and Raina from Little, starring Issa Rae.

THE KID



**THALIA TRAN**  
**MICHELLE**

Michelle is jacked and loves cars. When she's not helping her mom take care of their donut shop, she's out back lifting weights and customizing her prized car. Or she used to...before it was stolen.



# ADDITIONAL CHARACTERS AND CASTING IDEAS

## THE VETERAN



**BRIAN VILLALOBOS**

### TYLER

Tyler is his own worst enemy. A veteran with PTSD with trouble holding a job and even more trouble accessing the help he needs. He loves his little girl and would do anything to make her life better.

## THE KAREN



**ADRIANNE PALICKI**

### TAMMY

Being the rich wife of the County Sheriff, she usually gets what she wants, but recently, as in yesterday, her situation changed.

## THE WEIRDO



**ALANNA UBACH**  
**PAIGE**

A tugboat captain, Paige is a mess and the closest thing to comic relief this film has. Though resourceful and enthusiastic, when she isn't pounding coney islanders, she's feeding seagulls.





# THE LOOK

[CLICK TO SEE VISUAL REEL](#)



**BRIGHT SHADOWLESS DAYS**



**SICARIO**



**LONG GRADIENT EVENINGS**



**MANHUNTER**



**INDUSTRIAL BACKLIT NIGHTS**



**SORCERER**





# THE TONE

[CLICK TO SEE TONE REEL](#)



**VISUALLY STRIKING AMERICANA**



**HELL OR HIGH WATER**



**HIGH STAKES TENSION**



**TWISTER**



**BICKERING IN CARS**



**LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE**



# THE TEAM





# DIRECTOR | CO-WRITER

## DREW SAPLIN



Drew Saplin (he/they) is a director with deep roots in the evolving landscape of American cinema. Drew's work channels the raw, daring spirit of the New Hollywood movement, blending grounded human stories with surrealism.

Their career began under the mentorship of legendary filmmaker Terrence Malick, where Drew gained a foundation in crafting visually poetic narratives. After nearly a decade as a writer and director at Warner Discovery's Rooster Teeth, where he created content that amassed millions of views, Drew's heart remained firmly planted in cinematic storytelling, pushing him to explore more avant-garde, narrative-driven projects.

A recipient of the prestigious Austin Film Society Grant for this film, Drew is the co-founder of the production company, The Direct Line, a collective known to champion innovative, out-of-the-box storytelling. Their podcast, How to Texas, provides a raw, behind-the-scenes look at filmmaking in the state, helping other creatives navigate the ever-changing industry.

Drew is a graduate of UT Austin; teaches directing at the Austin School of Film; and is the Safety Coordinator for the University of Texas' film department. A high-output creative, Drew is known for his kindness, punctuality, and commitment to quality.

## THE DIRECT LINE





# THE PRODUCING TEAM

CONSULTING PRODUCER



**STEVEN J. BERGER**

Steven Berger (he/him) is the co-founder of Number 19, Inc. He serves as the co-creator and Executive Producer of the acclaimed Hulu series SASQUATCH, which premiered at the SXSW Film Festival. Previously, he co-created and Executive Produced the four-part Amazon Prime documentary series LORENA, alongside Jordan Peele, premiering at the 2019 Sundance Film Festival. He also produced the Netflix Original Documentary BOB ROSS: Happy Accidents, Betrayal, and Greed with Melissa McCarthy. Berger's narrative projects include the Black List script THE PRETTY ONE, sold to Sony Pictures, and THE FEELS starring Constance Wu. He currently has forthcoming projects in production with Netflix, HBO, Hulu, and others.

PRODUCER



**MORGAN POLLITT**

Morgan Pollitt (she/her) began her journey as the assistant to Academy-Award nominated producer Sarah Green on Terrence Malick's visionary THE TREE OF LIFE and Jeff Nichols' emotionally charged TAKE SHELTER. Morgan continued her career Associate Producing projects like Jorge Perrugoria's AMOR CRONICO, Nichols' MUD, and multiple Terrence Malick productions including TO THE WONDER, VOYAGE OF TIME and KNIGHT OF CUPS. Beyond traditional cinema, Morgan's work extends to television, contributing to ABC/Shondaland's THE CATCH, project development with immersive art installations like Meow Wolf and audio with the immersive science fiction project EMINENT DOMAIN for Audible Originals. Morgan's upcoming projects include films by the Holden Brothers and Kyle Smith.

PRODUCER



**VIA BIA**

Via Bia (she/her) was raised in a multi-generational Puerto Rican and Jewish family. A NALIP member. She is the proud Producer of La Juana (dir: Anayamel); Bridge. (dir: Cristina Wolf); and Development (dir: Chloe Caudillo) - a selected project for the 2023 LALIFF/Netflix Inclusion Fellowship, starring Haskiri Velazquez ("Saved By The Bell" reboot; The 40-Year-Old Version). As a Writer/Director, her screenplays have been selected for labs at Sundance, Stowe, and Cine Qua Non, with her first film, These Colors Don't Run, finding distribution with HBO/MAX. Via resides in Los Angeles and loves working on projects about cursey Latinas who say they don't give a shit... yet totally do.

PRODUCER



**FRANCIS ROMÁN**

Francis Román (she/they) is a second generation Ecuadorian-American director, writer, and producer. She is the Senior Film & TV Festival Programming Manager at SXSW and leads their Shorts Programming curation. She is also a NALIP and AFS member. Her experience has led her to serve as a jury member and panelist for various Film Festivals. As a creative, she co-founded The Direct Line production company. She also co-hosts and produces How to Texas, a podcast spotlighting crew in the Texas film industry. Making art with friends and watching films brings her immense joy and she would love to do it forever.

PRODUCER | CO - WRITER



**SAMANTHA BENNETT**

Samantha Bennett (she/her), Producer, Co-founder of the Direct Line, Sam is a jack-of-all-trades filmmaker concentrating on writing, directing, and producing with a passion for queer stories. She spent many years as a script supervisor, an editor, and motion graphics artist, currently working at Austin Community College. Sam is co-host/co-producer of the podcast How to Texas. Her creative work has screened at SXSW, Hill Country, Deep In the Heart, and Rockport Film Festivals. Originally from the SF Bay Area, she's a graduate of UC Berkeley, and now resides in Austin.

CASTING | PRODUCER



**ALAN LUNA**

Alan Luna (he/him) is a first-gen Mexican-American Casting Director and Producer for TV, Film, and Animation. Alan is a partner with ABL Casting, founded by him and fellow Casting Directors Michelle Adams & Natalie Ballesteros. With over a decade of casting and development experience, Alan has collaborated on projects with Netflix, HBO Max, Disney, Nickelodeon, Hulu, Marvel Studios, Amazon, and more. Some of his recent projects are Jenni (dir: Gigi Saul Guerrero) about the iconic Mexican-American singer and activist, Jenni Rivera; The Long Game (dir: Julio Quintana), which premiered at SXSW in 2023; and Aristotle & Dante Discover The Secrets of the Universe by Aitch Alberto, which was produced by Lin Manuel Miranda, and premiered at TIFF in 2022.



# ATTACHED CREW

## CINEMATOGRAPHER



**CARMEN HILLBERT**

Carmen Hilbert (she/ her) is a Cinematographer based in Brooklyn, NY and Austin, TX. Her documentary work has been featured in New York Magazine and PBS, and her most recent feature, *Lousy Carter*, premiered at Locarno in 2023. Her commercial projects include clients such as Southwest Airlines, Starbucks, Toyota, and New York Fashion Week. Carmen has been the Director of Photography for numerous shorts and music videos that have screened at festivals across the globe

## SPECIAL EFFECT SUPERVISOR



**BOB TREVINO**

Bob Trevino (he/him) is a Emmy nominated special effects supervisor and technician who has worked on such films as *Alita: Battle Angel*; *Predators*; *Open Range*; *Shanghai Noon*; and televisions shows “From Dusk Till Dawn”; "The Good Guys", and "Walker, Texas Ranger," to name a few. Bob's degree in electronic engineering and experience in mechanical engineering/robotics made him an important part of an established Dallas special effects group that was led by FX veteran, Jack Bennett. Many television shows, commercials, and features later, Bob has built a career that utilizes invaluable experience from film and trades craftsmen alike.

## STUNT COORDINATOR



**JEFF SCHWAN**

Jeffrey P Schwan, (he/him) has worked on over 150+ films as a Stuntman, Stunt Coordinator, Actor, Driver and Leadman in the art department. His credits include; *Miss Congeniality*, *The Alamo*, *Sin City*, *We are Heroes*, and “Queen of the South.” Jeff was nominated for an Emmy for his work on the NBC series “Friday Night Lights.” He is currently working on his fifth screenplay.

## COMPOSER



**CHUKWUDI HODGE**

Chukwudi Hodge (he/him) is a multi-discipline performer and producer. Originally from Oakland, his African-influenced, Bay-area-bred tastes inform his contemporary take on music production, creating scores that are undeniably unique and relevant. Kwudi's credits include *Black Panther* as well as collaborations with Daveed Diggs, Childish Gambino, Kyle, Logic, Watsky and more. While he'd rather be fishing or riding motorcycles too fast, music will do for now. Kwudi is based in Los Angeles.



# PARTNERS



AUSTIN FILM SOCIETY

The prestigious Austin Film Society grant has awarded over 2 million dollars in grant to Texas Filmmakers. This team is proud to be a recipient of the 2025 feature grant cycle.



STRING LIGHT GROUP

String Light Group is a turn key LA-based production services company, providing the SAG bond, contracts, agreements, and payroll.



FILM INDEPENDENT

This film has been granted Fiscal Sponsorship through Film Independent. This coveted sponsorship ensures that anyone who wants to donate can do so tax-free.



ADURO GRIP AND LIGHTING

Aduro Grip and Lighting is partnering with the film to provide discounted rental rates on grip, lighting and cameras.



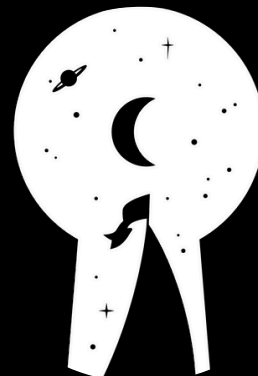
VISIT CORPUS CHRISTI

Visit Corpus Christi, and their film commission will help production secure discounted housing, locations, and offer an additional 5% rebate and crew. On top of the 12.5% rebate from the state.



WESTERN ENTERPRISES

Western Enterprises is a 75 year old pyrotechnics display company. Western has committed to providing monetary and pyrotechnics support in order to make this film a reality.



STRAY VISTA STUDIOS

Stray Vista Studios is the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest LED volume wall in the state. They have committed to a discounted rate on their studio space that allows us to shoot our car interiors with much greater precision and control.



# CONSULTING TEAM



PYROCHESA: BLOWING STUFF UP SINCE 2008





# MISSION & EQUITY MODEL



# **THE MISSION**

**MAKE SUSTAINABLE,  
EQUITABLE ART**

**CAST AND CREW RECEIVE 40%  
AND INVESTORS RECEIVE 60% OF  
NET REVENUE IN PARALLEL UNTIL  
INVESTORS REACH 120%. AT  
THAT TIME IT GOES TO AN EVEN  
SPLIT.**

**CAST AND CREW ARE  
PAID THE SAME.  
SAG SCALE FOR  
EVERYONE.  
THERE ARE NO SIDE  
DEALS.**

**CAST/CREW EQUITY IS  
DISTRIBUTED BASED ON  
WHEN THE PROJECT IS  
JOINED.**

**WE WORK 10 HOUR  
DAYS,  
5 DAY WEEKS,  
THAT'S IT**

**A RADICALLY  
TRANSPARENT BUDGET  
KEEPS ALL  
STAKEHOLDERS  
INFORMED.**



# THE EQUITY MODEL

## CASE STUDIES



BLACK BEAR

Our equity model has precedents. We consulted directly with Clint Bentley and Greg Kwedar, an Austin filmmaking duo who have used this model for their last two films.



*Jockey*, their first foray into this model, starring Molly Parker and Clifton Collins Jr., was purchased by Sony Pictures Classics at Sundance in 2021.

Their follow up film, *Sing Sing*, had a 1.2M budget and was financed by Black Bear Pictures, who also produced *The Imitation Game*. This film stars Coleman Domingo and was purchased by A24 at the 2023 Toronto Film Festival. It has gone onto received critical acclaim with 177 nominations (including 3 Oscar noms), and 55 wins thus far.



Ben Affleck and Matt Damon have adopted a similar equity model for their company, Artist's Equity, implementing their version on the film, *Air*.





A person stands in the foreground, silhouetted against a bright firework explosion. The firework is a large, cascading fountain of sparks and light, reaching high into the dark night sky. In the background, there are industrial buildings and other structures, all illuminated by the firework's glow. The overall scene is festive and celebratory.

# THANK YOU.

**ADDITIONAL MATERIALS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST**

- **TRADITIONAL BUDGET**
- **EQUITY MODEL BUDGET**
- **SCRIPT**
- **PRODUCTION SCHEDULE**

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**INFO@THEDIRECTLINELLC.COM**