

# HOT IN THE CITY

Queen's Mile is a new short film about love and loss, was written and directed by Martin Delaney and shot entirely on location in and around London's South Bank



year, after winning a place on their 'Build your audience' scheme for feature films. I learned so much working with the team over there and found the course invaluable. The overriding theme was the idea of reverse engineering a project and focusing on audiences. I felt like LGBT content didn't normalise these characters' position in the world they inhabit. This meant I was left with a strong desire to tell a simple love story, that in effect could be told in any gender and any sexuality. I also wanted to tell it in a unique way, whilst tackling a mental health issue... but giving that mental health issue a valid and justified position in the film. It sounds like a lot to get in 9 minutes but, actually, there's a subtlety to it and I think it works."

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**April Kelley, actress and producer at Mini Productions, is always quick off the mark when it comes to keeping us updated with their latest projects and, just recently, got in touch to unveil no less than three new films.** The first is Queen's Mile, which is a short that was created in and around London, most notably on London's South Bank. It was written and directed by filmmaker Martin Delaney, who's helped to join up the dots about how this project got off the starting line. "I wrote the project a little while back," he says. "Last summer I raised some finances and used my own funds to produce and direct it myself. Doing this combination of roles in such a small project with limited resources means, in reality, I'm doing around 6 or 7 jobs. I'm used to working on larger budget projects as an actor but the work I've done over the years allows me to understand where there's opportunity to get things done

using less spend. I had to look at what I could do myself, where I could utilise the favours of friends and at what point I had to throw out budget restricted ideas."

### Different strokes

"It came about from the desire to make a diverse project of some kind," adds Martin. "I wanted to contribute to an area of film that I felt needed more content. I worked with Film London last

As Martin says, the overall run time of the film is less than 10 minutes, which is not much of a window to capture the essence of what sounds like a challenging subject area... "The story is about a girl wandering the Queen's Walk along London's Southbank," furthers the filmmaker. "She's taking pictures on an old Polaroid camera of moments along the journey but, clearly she's troubled. In a sentence, it's an LGBT themed story of love and





professional actors and teams. I linked up with Tom Cullingham, a young photographer who was still studying at film school. Between us we handpicked VeeMsen Lama, as well as Nicholas Collins to work on the sound department. VeeMsen is already well on his way to becoming a fantastic filmmaker and Nick is still working towards completing his study. Simon Pearce is a good friend and a wonderful director. Simon came on board as associate producer and editor on the project... he's been a



loss, about a young woman finding her courage to cope, in her own unique way."

**Short but sweet**

Naturally with the time restraints imposed by a short Martin had to cut his filmmaking cloth accordingly and the reasons behind this are the usual sort of issues that many moviemakers encounter during production. "It's about a number of factors really," he says. "But mainly about resources and time. The truth is, there's a lot to learn making a short film and it's all useful learning. I'm not the kind of person who likes to go into something unprepared, and I feel like you are able to add a huge amount of knowledge on a smaller project. For me, it's about stepping

stones. I'm satisfied that I'm on the path to making the type of art that I want to make going forward. There's no plans to direct a feature until I have my next two short films in the can. We shot with a skeleton crew, as it were, and they really were fantastic! One of my remits with the project, was to be diverse in the content as well as behind the camera. We wanted to give an opportunity to filmmakers who were starting out and provide them with a chance to work with



wonderful help and great team mate. I love working with him! Sam Norman also did a fantastic job for us, as our colourist. There's others I should mention, but I'd be here all day!"

**Smooth operator**

Martin is sufficiently experienced to have got all of the building blocks in place before production got underway, including making his camera selection after careful consideration.

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"We shot the film on the Blackmagic camera, the 2k version," he says. "We had a number of externals as well as some great kit. You'll see from the film, that we start handheld, as if you are a fly on the wall, getting an insight into our protagonist's world. As the film settles, we settle along with it and use more sweeping shots,

on track and sliders. We actually factored in an extra day to the shoot, knowing that I wanted to spend more time with certain crew who were less experienced. There were challenges in filming near to Borough Market I guess, actually we really struggled with the shots around there. It was just so busy and therefore hard to get the correct continuity in place. We also tried to do pickup shots there the next day, but faced challenges getting it to match. I did get chatting to a chap who lived around there and he allowed us to get a high shot looking out from his upstairs window. That was kind of unexpected



and happened in a bit of a whirlwind moment, ha! This older gentleman was watching from the window, I just thought, 'Well, what's the harm in asking?' The shot is no longer in our final edit, but it was so kind of him to allow us to grab it. I now know him as Michael, he's an artist... a fantastic one at that. I don't pass that flat without looking up at that window and saying 'Hi' to him when he's about."

**Location challenge**

While most things did go to plan with the production schedule it's the fact that the team shot on location in one of the busiest

spots in London that meant they were pushed to the limit when getting final footage that worked. "As I mentioned, the real issues were simply around continuity," reckons Martin. "We had the permits to film around there, so that wasn't the problem, but you have to be fair to everyone going about their business, you can't be a problem for them. Granted, there were times that we wanted people out of our way, but I felt the impact of being in their space. I tried to minimise that as best as possible. You just need to be patient. There was a particularly busy part of the Southbank where we had quite a complex long



shot to choreograph and get in the can. Tom felt the pressure that day, from what I remember. Any shot with movement is tough, but movement in a busy area, with members of the public around, is a true challenge. Having said that, it's this kind of photography that contributes to the authenticity of our piece, so it's entirely worth the stress."

**Tough budgets**

On top of the location challenges, money was obviously tight throughout the production and costs continue to mount up... "I'll tell you the final cost when it's all done and dusted," laughs Martin. "There's still money going out all the time. We have a final cut done, and music signed off. We may tinker with the edit one more time before we hit our festival run, but it depends on my level of self control! So, we're now about ready



those wishing to support an important film and get themselves a professional credit in the process. Overall, I think it looks great! I mean, there's always things you want to change. Always. But I'm very proud of the team and extremely happy with the way we tell, what is essentially a simple, yet heartfelt and relevant short story."

*"It's a love story. Plain and simple. Placed firmly in a part of London familiar to all"*

Made all the more effective by his choice of actors it seems... "I'd worked with both actresses before," says Martin. "They're simply marvellous! Emerald and I worked on a TV show as fellow actors. Ami and I had worked together a couple of times. Most recently in feature Amar Akbar & Tony, that I associate produced. I actually wrote the piece with Emerald in mind because she has this wonderful vulnerability and yet great strength, which was crucial for the role. Ami brought this great fun energy, which comes

to start hitting festivals but we're currently trying to raise some funds for that. Along with Mini Productions, who we're working in association with, we're trying to raise that last chunk to promote the film and get its festival schedule in place. We've had some wonderful support from backers already. We're offering perks from as small as £2, right through to producer credits for larger sums. Which is great for



so naturally to her. She's the perfect match for Emerald! They had such beautiful chemistry and you completely buy into all their relationship history. I was very fortunate to have a good friend of mine, Rez Kempton, offer up his services too. In reality, what he did for us was such a minor role and vastly below his ability level, but he still did me that favour and I have a huge amount of gratitude for that. Top fella!"

**More to do**

Since finishing up this project, Martin has been busying himself preparing others, some of which are already in the production pipeline... "Well, I have a couple of feature films coming out that I'm in," adds the filmmaker. "One is a classic British gangster movie, where I play a real guy Malcolm Walsh, and I believe that's out in January. I'm also playing an American role in Now

You See Me: The Second Act, which is out later next year. Then I want to get my next short film made, which is a non-fiction piece. As for the Queen's Mile, I'd sum it up as a love story about a young woman learning to cope in her own unique way. It's LGBT-themed, but to sum it up as simply an LGBT film would go against everything I set out to do when making this short film.



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Martin seems to be making good progress with this film and his other projects, which

is all the more impressive considering he started out as an actor and subsequently picked up production skills along the way. "I first got in to the world of filmmaking at the age of 16," he says. "I was hired to appear in a film made by Hallmark films and Disney. I was appearing on screen with great British actors Paul Scofield and Malcolm McDowell. They were both very inspiring performers. To date, my career is made up largely of acting roles, but in 2006 I co-produced a documentary with actor Gerard Butler. It was an industry film about the making of film Beowulf and Grendel, entitled Wrath of Gods and directed by the talented Jon Gustafson. Acting is my full-time job these days, but being behind the camera is not something I do as regularly. Queen's Mile, in fact, is my debut short film. Though I've written and directed for TV, and produced film projects, this is the first time I've written and directed a short film. Anyone interested in becoming a backer for Queen's Mile should take a look at our campaign at <http://igg.me/at/queensmile> ■

