

SELECTION OF OVER 30 INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVALS

RORY
Culkin ★

ROBERT
Sheehan ★

ISABELLE
McNally ★

MARY BETH
Peil ★

ELIZABETH
Peña ★

JACK
Falakee

the
Song
of *Sway*
Lake



"A stunning film." - *Independent Magazine*

A FILM BY ARI GOLD
WITH VOCAL PERFORMANCES BY

BRIAN DENNEHY · JOHN GRANT · THE STAVES

GRACK FILMS Presents
In association with Act Zero
& Social Construct

T H E S O N G O F
SWAY LAKE

A young man's plot to steal a valuable jazz record from his grandmother's lake house is derailed when his accomplice falls for the matriarch.

Featuring a sparkling soundtrack of classic songs - as well as the stunning titular original - "The Song of Sway Lake" is a romantic drama about the vanished grace of America, and the spell cast by lost time.



Cast

RORY CULKIN as Ollie Sway

ROBERT SHEEHAN as Nikolai

ISABELLE MCNALLY as Isadora

MARY BETH PEIL as Charlie Sway

ELIZABETH PEÑA as Marlena

JACK FALAHEE as Jimmy

with

Voice Performances by

BRIAN DENNEHY as Hal Sway

JOHN GRANT as Tweed McKay

THE STAVES as The Eden Sisters





SYNOPSIS

It's summer on Sway Lake, former playground of the jazz-age New York aristocracy. Young music collector Ollie Sway (Rory Culkin) recruits his only friend, a rowdy Russian drifter (Robert Sheehan), to help him steal a one-of-a-kind vintage record from his own family's glamorous lake house. Ollie believes that possessing the secret recording of the WW2-era hit, "Sway Lake," will magically boost his confidence with women - and redeem his father, who committed suicide on the lake.

But the arrival of Ollie's beguiling grandmother, Charlie Sway, changes everything. The vision of the matriarch transfixes the young Russian - and Charlie has her own plans for the mysterious music, which hasn't been heard in half a century. For this song may possess the answer to the deepest riddles about love, passion, death, and memory - for whichever lost soul is first to find it.

Featuring a sparkling soundtrack of classic songs - as well as the stunning original of the title - "The Song of Sway Lake" is a romantic drama about the vanished grace of America, and the spells cast by the melodies of lost time.

Opening Night Film at 7 International Film Festivals

Official Selection of 30 Film Festivals

Munich International Film Festival, Los Angeles Film Festival, Norwegian International Film Festival, and many others

Winner of 8 Festival Prizes including Best Picture (Vancouver GIFF)

VARIETY

"Writer/director Ari Gold's engaging new film "The Song Of Sway Lake" focuses on a young man (played by Rory Culkin) coming to terms with his father's suicide. In the course of trying to find a rare, valuable record album his father kept at their old lake house, the young man encounters varying depths of nostalgia, family dysfunctions, romance, and embraces the power of letting go."

**FILM
THREAT**

"Tony Award nominated actress Mary Beth Peil... will break your heart. Her antagonistic relationship with Culkin's character brings out the best performance I've seen from the actor... The reveal of the titular track is amazing and Ari Gold's twin brother, Ethan, deserves praise for his musical contributions... Strong performances, music, and aesthetics all bring to life a wonderful film you won't want to miss."

"A stunning film... Will appeal to fans of quiet, breathtaking dramas."

- INDEPENDENT MAGAZINE

"Robert Sheehan steals the show as a carefree Russian who eventually falls for Charlie... Viewers are in for a real treat. Ari Gold's direction is a thing of absolute beauty... Singer-songwriter John Grant provides some awesomely authentic vocals, transporting the audience to the 1930s."

-UNGER THE RADAR

"There is much here of the nostalgia for a vanished age captured in Woody Allen's *Midnight In Paris*... the darker side of the Jazz Age, a landscape of prejudice and loneliness behind all that dazzling privilege. Mary Beth Peil... dominates the film as Charlie [Sway], bringing dignity, humanity and sheer force of personality."

- EYE FOR FILM (UK)



Directed by **ARI GOLD**
Written by **ARI GOLD & ELIZABETH BULL**
Produced by **MICHAEL BEDERMAN, ZAK KILBERG,
ALLISON ROSE CARTER, ARI GOLD**
Executive Producers **ANNE BERNSTEIN, GARRETT FENNELLY**
Co-Producers **ELIZABETH BULL, BRAD PAYNE**
Cinematography by **ERIC LIN**
Original Music and Songs by **ETHAN GOLD**
Production Designer **ADA SMITH**
Costume Designer **STACEY BERMAN**
Edited by **TODD HOLMES, GABRIEL WRYE**
Sound Design **ELI COHN**
Casting **JESSICA KELLY, SUZANNE SMITH CROWLEY**

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Spending summers in the mountains to the far north of New York as a kid, I became fascinated by this giant swath of wilderness that seemed to exist outside of time. In the lakes was the history of the great American royalty, now in decline and often in conflict with year-round residents. My grandparents, while not members of this royalty, aspired to it. But the present was always catching up to them, as it was to all whose nostalgia gave even the sunny days a tinge of melancholy. The real sway was always out of reach.

When Elizabeth Bull and I embarked on the screenplay, we had our own kind of nostalgia, for the intimate French and Swedish summer movies that made us want to write. We decided to take on nostalgia through three characters who cannot tolerate the present: Ollie Sway, a collector of old music, hoping to erase his father's suicide with the perfect song and the perfect girl; Nikolai, an immigrant whose adoration of a heroic fabled America meets reality in the Sway family; and the matriarch Charlie Sway, longing for a past which—in her memory—was just so.

For the character of Ollie, we needed an actor who carried the shock of recent loss on his face, and found it in the immensely sensitive Rory Culkin. My Russian director friend Serguie Bassine helped us select Robert Sheehan to play Nikolai, recognizing in him the bombastic, exaggerated “Russianness” that some immigrants use to charm gullible Americans. And for the essential role of the matriarch Charlie Sway, which required a radiant and natural beauty in her seventies—icy and loving simultaneously—we were lucky to find the magnificent Tony-nominated Mary Beth Peil.

One of the great experiences of my life was working with Elizabeth Peña, an actor of such fierce intelligence that she suggested making the character of Marlina almost silent, due to the secrets and burdens she carries. What a rare actor, asking the director to remove lines! She was right, and I will never forget rowing across the lake for midnight conversation with Elizabeth, to plot these secrets and silences. Her loss is a huge one.

We filmed on Blue Mountain Lake, New York, a public lake, selectively editing to create the sense of a glamorous once-private estate. Despite the intimate cast and crew, the schedule was in constant flux as we worked with the ever-changing weather, dancing to the piano when the power was sometimes knocked out for real. And as with the weather on the water, music was an integral part of the theme of an uncatchable, idealized reality. My twin brother Ethan Gold (with singers John Grant and The Staves channeling the era) created two versions of a song, to round out the lost world. The past reaches to us in rain, in water, in memory, in melody, and in death. But the past does not really exist. Only this exists: what's outside our windows and in our hearts at this moment.

The story within the film, and in the making of it, is a story of meeting the present. Dance with what is: that's the real sway.

THE

This is a story of the melody of a lost generation.
The unmatched grace of a lost America.
The noble but impossible quest for perfection, and its collateral victims.

SONG

No medicine awakens memory like a song.
A song promises that we can return to a world we once knew, or only wanted to know.
We dance to the melodies of the dead.

OF

Three characters crave memories that aren't theirs. An impossible possession.
Ollie wants to change the past, Nikolai wants to borrow Charlie's past, Charlie wants to stop time itself.
They believe if they can possess a thing, a moment, another person, they can rewrite their own song.

SWAY

I also want to control the flow, but when I have the guts to ease up, the sway is graceful, easy, exquisite.
Only in a dance, the sway of a boat, does the present return to life.
Ice to water. Tears to love.
I let go of what's not mine and the water becomes truth.

LAKE

The deep is always below our boats.
Longing, passion, death, life. Each word ripples against the other.
This is what I'll wise up to - every day -
"Dance with what is. That's the real sway."

—Ari Gold

CAST

Rory Culkin • “Ollie Sway”

Known for his roles in SIGNS and SCREAM 4, Rory Culkin has also played in acclaimed indies such as Ben Howe’s GABRIEL, which landed him a Breakthrough Actor nomination at the 2015 Gotham Independent Film Awards. Other film credits include JACK GOES HOME, INTRUDER, THE ZODIAC, DOWN IN THE VALLEY, LYMELYFE, TWELVE, HICK, IGBY GOES DOWN and ELECTRICK CHILDREN. Rory was nominated for a Spirit Award for Best Supporting Young Actor for his role in YOU CAN COUNT ON ME and he was part of the cast of MEAN CREEK which won a Spirit Award for Best Ensemble Cast.

Rory will next be seen in COLUMBUS opposite Parker Posey and John Cho for Kogonada which premiered at the 2017 Sundance Film Festival. He’s just wrapped LORDS OF CHAOS where he plays the lead opposite Emory Cohen and Jack Kilmer for Jonas Åkerlund and UNCHAINED opposite Adrien Brody, John Malkovich and Antonio Banderas for Paul Solet and Millennium Films. Rory is currently shooting The Weinstein Company/Paramount Network series Waco opposite Michael Shannon and Taylor Kitsch where he portrays David Thibodeau.

Robert Sheehan • “Nikolai”

Robert shot to fame in the BAFTA award winning MISFITS (for which he was also BAFTA nominated for Best Supporting Actor), and is now starring in the epic MORTAL ENGINES (2018) for MRC/Universal, with Peter Jackson producing.

He has recently completed GEOSTORM for Warner Bros. and BAD SAMARITAN for Electric Entertainment. He made his acting debut in Aisling Walsh’s acclaimed feature film Song For A Raggy Boy. Since then, features include Ghostwood (Maxim Pictures), Summer of the Flying Saucer (Magma), Season of the Witch (Atlas Entertainment), Cherrybomb (Generator Entertainment), Killing Bono (Cinema Three), The Mortal Instruments: City of Bones (Constantin Film), The Road Within (Amasia Entertainment), Anita B (Jean Vigo Italia), The Messenger (Gateway Films), Moonwalkers (Partizan), Jet Trash (Aimimage). Television includes Foreign Exchange (Magma Film/9 Network Australia), Young Blades (Insight/PAX TV), Bittersweet (RTE), all three films in the BAFTA award winning Red Riding trilogy (Revolution Films/Channel 4), multi IFTA award winning Love Hate (for which he was twice nominated for Best Actor) for RTE/Octagon Films, The Borrowers for Working Title/BBC, Me and Mrs Jones for BBC/Hartwood Films, The Accused for BBC and, most recently Fortitude for Fifty Fathoms/Sky Atlantic. On stage he has appeared at the Old Vic Theatre in the title role in The Playboy of the Western World, directed by John Crowley and as Richard III in Trevor Nunn’s The Wars of the Roses.

Mary Beth Peil • “Charlie Sway”

Mary Beth Peil is was nominated for a Tony this year for her performance on Broadway in ANASTASIA (Tony, Drama Desk, & Outer Critics Award Nominations). Her additional Broadway credits include *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*; *The Visit*; *Follies*; *Women on the Verge...*; *Sunday in the Park...*; *Nine*; *The King and I* (Tony nomination). Her Off-Broadway work include many productions with Atlantic Theater (ensemble member and Obie winner); *Cheever Evening*, *Later Life* (Playwrights Horizon); *First Ladies Suite* (Transport Group); *Sylvia* (MTC); *Hedda Gabler* (NYTW). Regional: Hartford Stage, La Jolla Playhouse, Arena Stage, About Face, Long Wharf, Yale Rep, Kennedy Center. TV: “The Good Wife” (Jackie); “Dawson’s Creek” (Grams); “Law & Order: SVU”; “The Fringe.” Film: *The Contest*, *Mirrors*, *Plagues of Our Fathers*, *The Reagans*, *Stepford Wives II*, *Odd Couple II*.

Isabelle McNally • “Isadora”

Isabelle McNally is an actress, known for *Frances Ha*, *Before I Disappear* and *The Disappearance of Eleanor Rigby: Him*. She has most recently been seen as the character Madeleine Loomis in *Bates Motel* on A & E, and in the indie films *Amnesia* and *The Big Spoon*. She has also appeared on Netflix’s *House of Cards*.

Elizabeth Peña • “Marlena”

Elizabeth’s love for the arts came naturally, as her father was a well-known playwright, actor, director and novelist, so it’s not hard to understand that by the time she was 8, Cuban-American Elizabeth Pena already had designs to become an actress. Born in New Jersey, raised in New York, Elizabeth’s, and her sister, sister, Tania’s parents, Mario and Estella Margarita Peña, had opened off-Broadway’s Latin American Theatre Ensemble, and were more than encouraging. Elizabeth attended New York City’s High School of the Performing Arts, now the Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music and Art and Performing Arts, and found occasional work in repertory theatre and in television commercials. Her film debut in the independent Spanish-speaking feature, *El Super* (1979), and started her on a long line of independent and rebellious characters which showed plenty of independence. During the early 80s, she played everything - from a knife-threatening waitress to a disco queen, as she waited for her big break. The big break came in the 1990’s form of 2 hugely successful films of different genres; one was the hugely popular comedy, *Down and Out in Beverly Hills* (1986), co-starring Bette Midler, Richard Dreyfuss and Nick Nolte, in which she stole many scenes as the sultry, politically-minded maid, “Carmen”, who lusts for Nolte, and the other was the mystery, drama, *Jacob’s Ladder* (1990) This propelled her to move to Los Angeles, where she continued to spice up both the big and small screen, including the part of Ritchie Valens’ stepsister-in-law, in the well-received biopic, *La Bamba* (1987). Honors also came by Elizabeth’s way, when she received the “Independent Spirit” and “Bravo” awards for the film, *Lone Star* (1996), and the “ALMA Award” for *Tortilla Soup* (2001). On TV, Elizabeth never found the one series role which could showcase her abilities fully. Co-starring roles in *Tough Cookies* (1986), *I Married Dora* (1987) and *Shannon’s Deal* (1990) were short-lived. Elizabeth was married since 1994 married to Hans Rolla. The couple had 2 children; a son, Kaelan, and a daughter, Fiona . She passed away after a brief illness.

Jack Falahee • “Jimmy”

Jack Falahee appeared in films and television shows before his breakout role as Connor Walsh in the Shonda Rhimes-produced ABC series “How to Get Away with Murder.” He was born and raised in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and graduated New York University's Tisch School of the Arts where he performed in the several stage productions.

Brian Dennehy • Voice of “Hal Sway”

Brian Dennehy is a Tony- and Golden Globe-winning actor, well respected on both screen and stage whose breakout role in the box-office smash First Blood (1982) as a bigoted sheriff escalated him to world fame. He starred in the Cold War thriller Gorky Park (1983), as a benevolent alien in Cocoon (1985), a corrupt sheriff in the western Silverado (1985), a tough but smart cop in F/X (1986) and a cop-turned-writer alongside hit man James Woods in Best Seller (1987). In 1987, Dennehy turned in one of his finest performances as cancer-ridden architect “Stourley Kracklite” in Peter Greenaway's superb The Belly of an Architect (1987), for which he won the Best Actor Award at the 1987 Chicago Film Festival. More strong performances followed. He reprised prior roles for Cocoon: The Return (1988) and F/X2 (1991), and turned in gripping performances in three made-for-TV films: a sadistic small-town bully who gets his grisly comeuppance in In Broad Daylight (1991), real-life serial killer John Wayne Gacy in the chilling To Catch a Killer (1992) and a corrupt union boss in Teamster Boss: The Jackie Presser Story (1992). In 1993, Dennehy appeared in the role of police “Sgt. Jack Reed” in the telemovie Jack Reed: Badge of Honor (1993), and reprised the role in four sequels, which saw him for the first time become involved in co-producing, directing and writing screen productions! Demand for his services showed no signs of abating, and he has put in further memorable performances in Romeo + Juliet (1996), as bad-luck-ridden “Willy Loman” in Death of a Salesman (2000) (which earned him a Golden Globe Award), he popped up in the uneven Spike Lee film She Hate Me (2004) and appears in the remake Assault on Precinct 13 (2005). The multi-talented Dennehy has also had a rich theatrical career and has appeared both in the United States and internationally in dynamic stage productions including “Death of a Salesman” (for which he picked up the 1999 Best Actor Tony Award and a Drama Desk Award), “A Touch of the Poet”, “Long Day's Journey into Night” (for which he picked up another Tony Award in 2003) and in Eugene O'Neill's heart-wrenching “The Iceman Cometh”.

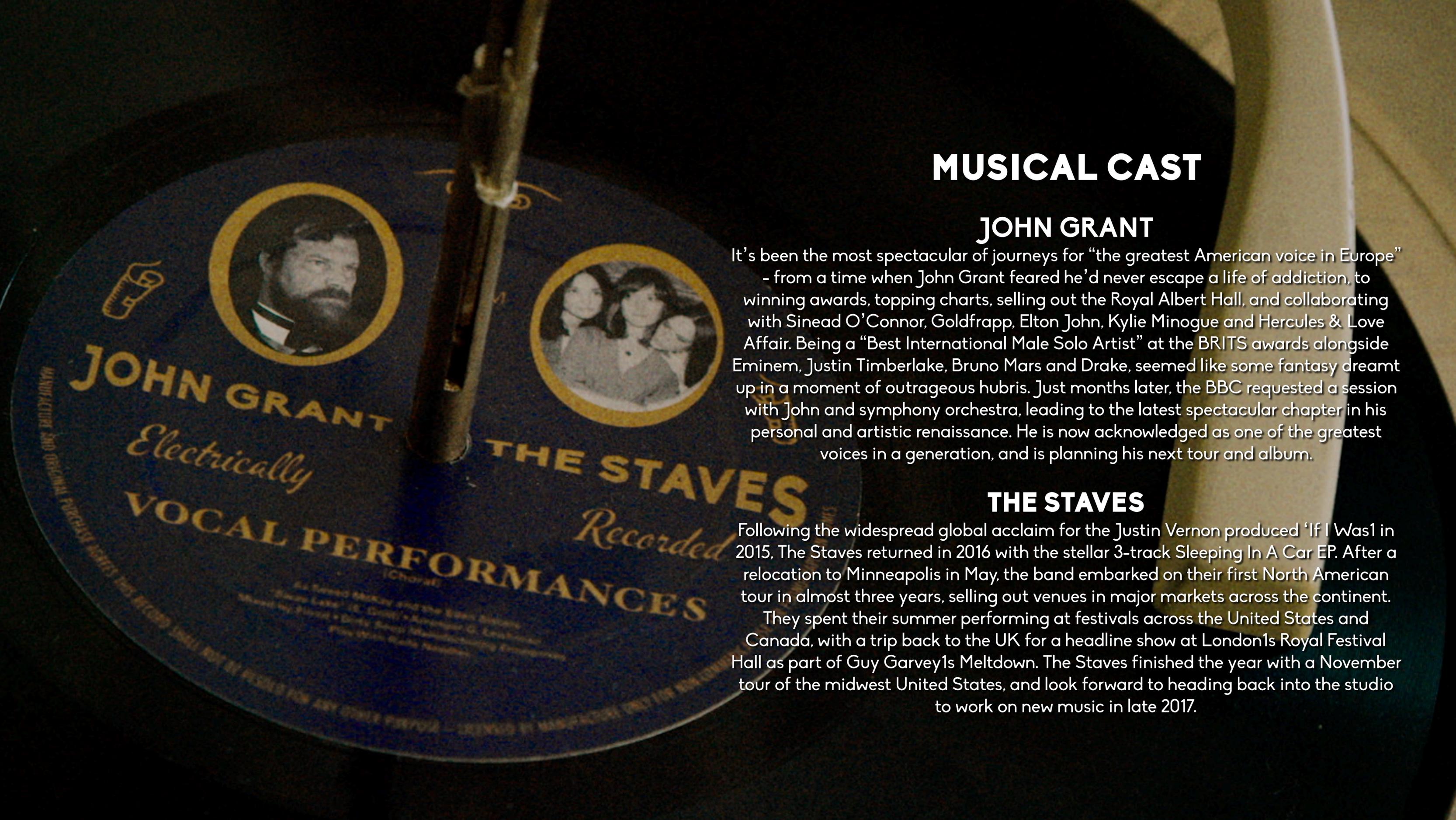
MUSICAL CAST

JOHN GRANT

It's been the most spectacular of journeys for "the greatest American voice in Europe" - from a time when John Grant feared he'd never escape a life of addiction, to winning awards, topping charts, selling out the Royal Albert Hall, and collaborating with Sinéad O'Connor, Goldfrapp, Elton John, Kylie Minogue and Hercules & Love Affair. Being a "Best International Male Solo Artist" at the BRITS awards alongside Eminem, Justin Timberlake, Bruno Mars and Drake, seemed like some fantasy dreamt up in a moment of outrageous hubris. Just months later, the BBC requested a session with John and symphony orchestra, leading to the latest spectacular chapter in his personal and artistic renaissance. He is now acknowledged as one of the greatest voices in a generation, and is planning his next tour and album.

THE STAVES

Following the widespread global acclaim for the Justin Vernon produced 'If I Was' in 2015, The Staves returned in 2016 with the stellar 3-track *Sleeping In A Car* EP. After a relocation to Minneapolis in May, the band embarked on their first North American tour in almost three years, selling out venues in major markets across the continent. They spent their summer performing at festivals across the United States and Canada, with a trip back to the UK for a headline show at London's Royal Festival Hall as part of Guy Garvey's *Meltdown*. The Staves finished the year with a November tour of the midwest United States, and look forward to heading back into the studio to work on new music in late 2017.





DIRECTOR

ARI GOLD

Ari Gold is an internationally-acclaimed writer/director, and winner of a student Oscar. He directed the cult comedy "Adventures of Power" and dozens of award-winning shorts and videos that have played festivals from Sundance to Karlovy-Vary to Bangkok. He is currently directing an expansion of his student-Oscar winning "Helicopter" under the command of Alejandro Jodorowsky. He also founded Power Saves the Music, which provides free music education for disadvantaged children. As an actor, he has appeared in films such as "Another Earth" and his music has been featured in numerous films. He is also in the Guinness Book of World Records for air-drumming.



PRODUCERS

MICHAEL BEDERMAN

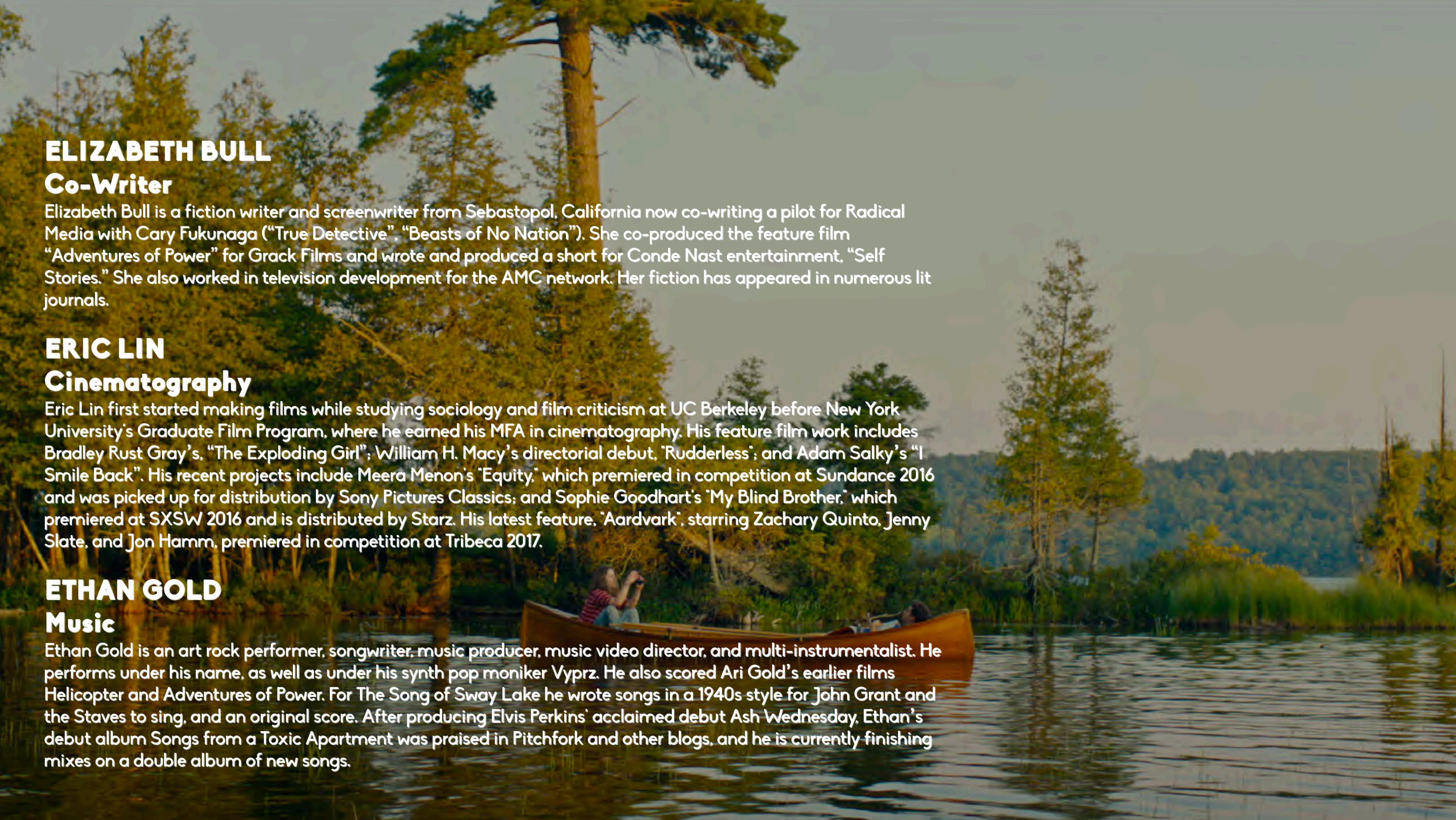
Michael Bederman has worked alongside accomplished directors including Niels Arden Oplev, David Frankel, George Nolfi, Michael Cuesta, Drake Doremus, Ari Gold, Joel Schumacher, Ben Lewin, and Miguel Arteta. Michael was instrumental in the making of Tom McCarthy's film SPOTLIGHT starring Mark Ruffalo, Michael Keaton, Rachel McAdams, and Liev Schreiber, which was nominated for 6 Academy Awards and won Best Original Screenplay and Best Picture of the Year. He is a member of the PGA, DGA, and Directors Guild of Canada, and a frequent guest lecturer at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts.

ZAK KILBERG

Zak Kilberg is a Producer and founder of Social Construct Films, which handles the creative development, financing, production and worldwide sales for a slate of feature films and television series. Kilberg's projects have won awards at major film festivals including Sundance and have been acquired by top distributors worldwide including Lionsgate, Universal, HBO, IFC, Tribeca and more. Zak is currently producing the Buena Vista Social Club follow up documentary w/ 2x Oscar nominated director Lucy Walker, set for theatrical release w/ Broad Green Pictures in summer 2017, and developing the NY Times best selling memoir Guantanamo Diary, w/ Benedict Cumberbatch and his company Sunny March on board to produce.

ALLISON ROSE CARTER

Allison Rose Carter has produced over 15 feature films including Eyad Zahra's THE TAQWACORES, which took part in the inaugural NEXT category at the 2010 Sundance Film Festival. Ira Sachs' LOVE IS STRANGE, Matt Ross' FRANK & LOLA, and Dustin Guy Defa's PERSON TO PERSON also had their premiere at the Sundance Film Festival and went on to worldwide distribution. She works all over the world, but resides in Brooklyn, NY.



ELIZABETH BULL

Co-Writer

Elizabeth Bull is a fiction writer and screenwriter from Sebastopol, California now co-writing a pilot for Radical Media with Cary Fukunaga (“True Detective”, “Beasts of No Nation”). She co-produced the feature film “Adventures of Power” for Grack Films and wrote and produced a short for Conde Nast entertainment, “Self Stories.” She also worked in television development for the AMC network. Her fiction has appeared in numerous lit journals.

ERIC LIN

Cinematography

Eric Lin first started making films while studying sociology and film criticism at UC Berkeley before New York University’s Graduate Film Program, where he earned his MFA in cinematography. His feature film work includes Bradley Rust Gray’s, “The Exploding Girl”; William H. Macy’s directorial debut, “Rudderless”; and Adam Salky’s “I Smile Back”. His recent projects include Meera Menon’s “Equity,” which premiered in competition at Sundance 2016 and was picked up for distribution by Sony Pictures Classics; and Sophie Goodhart’s “My Blind Brother,” which premiered at SXSW 2016 and is distributed by Starz. His latest feature, “Aardvark”, starring Zachary Quinto, Jenny Slate, and Jon Hamm, premiered in competition at Tribeca 2017.

ETHAN GOLD

Music

Ethan Gold is an art rock performer, songwriter, music producer, music video director, and multi-instrumentalist. He performs under his name, as well as under his synth pop moniker Vyprz. He also scored Ari Gold’s earlier films Helicopter and Adventures of Power. For The Song of Sway Lake he wrote songs in a 1940s style for John Grant and the Staves to sing, and an original score. After producing Elvis Perkins’ acclaimed debut Ash Wednesday, Ethan’s debut album Songs from a Toxic Apartment was praised in Pitchfork and other blogs, and he is currently finishing mixes on a double album of new songs.

THE SONG OF SWAY LAKE

[Reviews](#)

International Sales : Jonathan Ford, [Kew International Media Group](#)

U.S. Sales : Derek Kigongo, [Paradigm Agency](#)

Official Site: [SwayLake.com](#)

Producer Contact : [Zak Kilberg](#)

Director Contact : [Ari Gold](#)