

PRIMARY

PRESS NOTES



"SO ACT AS TO TREAT HUMANITY... IN EVERY CASE AS AN END...
NEVER AS A MEANS ONLY."

- Immanuel Kant

"LIFE ITSELF IS ESSENTIALLY APPROPRIATION... EXPLOITATION.
IT IS THE PRIMORDIAL FACT OF ALL HISTORY."

- Friedrich Nietzsche

LOGLINE

An insurance executive, seen simultaneously in the future and in the present, is betrayed and left penniless and then must battle his closest friends to try to gain back his life.

SYNOPSIS—SHORT

An Arthouse-Thriller in which an Insurance Executive, seen simultaneously in the future and in the present, is betrayed and left penniless and then must battle his closest friends to try to gain back his life. After ambitious Nicholas Gray becomes a whistleblower his world begins to crumble. A charismatic drifter then introduces him to acts of theft and “wealth redistribution” and Nicholas’s life spirals further out of control. Simultaneously, in the future, a now penniless Nicholas is released from prison and wrestles with his moral choices as he becomes determined to take back his life from those who cheated him. A murder, frame and police investigation follow in which no one is what he seemed to be.

SYNOPSIS—MEDIUM

Nicholas Gray, a hard-charging insurance executive has it all. In the near future he’ll have nothing. The future CEO of Jaspar Insurance, Nicholas becomes a whistleblower and starts down a path to losing both his job and an engagement to the boss’s daughter. His downfall is aided by his best friend and archrival at the company, Mitchell, who’s in competition for the same prizes and a charismatic drifter, Harry, who counsels Nicholas while introducing him to acts of theft and “wealth redistribution”. Nicholas begins questioning his life’s purpose, starts a relationship with a soulful artist, Andrea, and then at his most vulnerable is cheated out of everything he owns.

In flash-forwards to the future, inserted into the present-day action, Nicholas is released from a prison then begins a quest to live a morally pure, yet penniless life on the streets. But he fails and is left beaten and humiliated. He decides he will take back his old life and battle his closest friends, then a murder is carried out—with both the victim and murderer unidentified. Nicholas’s new love, Andrea, is framed for the crime and police investigate.

As the story unfolds further, no one is what he seemed to be and when Nicholas’s present and future stories meet, what emerges is a complex portrait of one man’s character.

SYNOPSIS—LONG

PRIMARY is a provocative story about a man who sets out to find morality in the world but instead discovers his true nature.

NICHOLAS GRAY (Dustin Milligan) a competitive, over-achiever is up for a promotion that would ensure a golden future at Jaspar Insurance Corp. And he plans to marry the boss’ daughter, SARA. Equally interested in both prizes is Nicholas’ best friend/archrival MITCHELL (Andrew Francis). When Nicholas learns that Mitchell has been cheating clients in order to make his bottom-line look good, including an elderly woman left homeless after a fire, Nicholas secretly alerts the clients, causing a revolt. Mitchell is admonished and Nicholas wins the promotion. But the firm soon suspects a whistle-blower and when found out, Nicholas will surely be fired. Then Nicholas’ marriage proposal to Sara is turned down and his world begins spinning out of control.

He meets a charismatic drifter, HARRY (Michael Eklund), who suggests that Nicholas could win back Sara if he evolved into a more worldly, “moral” person. Guided by formal notions of morality, Nicholas begins questioning the darker side of capitalism.

In FLASH-FORWARD, Nicholas—now bearded and longhaired—is released from prison after serving a year for an unknown crime. Entering society again, he sets out on a quest to live a purely moral life, despite being homeless and penniless.

Back in PRESENT DAY, Nicholas’ attempts to win back Sara fail. Then he learns Harry has been engaging in Robin-Hood-like acts of theft and “wealth redistribution”. Nicholas escapes into Harry’s world and begins participating in the thefts. Then he starts a relationship with ANDREA (Katharine Isabelle), an ever-altruistic soul despite her place at the bottom of society’s economic ladder. When Mitchell taunts Nicholas with news of a relationship with Sara, Nicholas and Harry hatch a plan to defraud Jaspar Insurance.

SYNOPSIS—LONG (continued)

In FLASH-FORWARD, Nicholas' life on the street ends with him beaten, humiliated and unable to shake his competitive drive. Then a murder is carried out with both the victim and murderer unidentified. It is suggested that Mitchell has killed Nicholas or Nicholas has killed Mitchell. Police begin an investigation.

Back in PRESENT DAY, the attempted fraud does not go as planned and it is Nicholas who gets duped, loses everything and is sent to prison.

As the story unravels no one is what he seemed to be and as the fractured timelines converge what emerges is a complex portrait of one man's character.

TEAM

ROSS FERGUSON—Writer/Director/Producer

Ross Ferguson is an award-winning Writer & Director based in Vancouver, Canada. Ross's short films have played at international film festivals in 10 countries, been broadcast on television in Canada and the U.S.A. and been nominated for several Leo awards. "Primary" is his first feature-length film. Ross studied at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver where he earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree (Film).

VINCE PROKOP—Producer

An award-winning Producer, Vince has produced music videos and web content in addition to his first feature film, "Primary". His video "Jitters" by Madchild & Matt Brevner (featuring Dutch Robinson) was nominated for Hip Hop Video of the year at the 2013 Much Music Video awards and won the Leo award for Best Music Video in 2013. Vince is currently developing new projects through Deeply Scarred Productions. Vince studied at Vancouver Film School.

MARY ANNE WATERHOUSE—Executive Producer

Mary Anne is a two time Gemini award winning producer, with a resume that includes over 50 film and television productions. Her most recent films include The Steps starring Christine Lahti and Jason Ritter and Donovan's Echo starring Danny Glover and Bruce Greenwood. Prior to that, Mary Anne produced the award winning zombie comedy Fido. Directed and co-written by Anagram partner Andrew Currie and starring Carrie-Anne Moss, Billy Connolly, Dylan Baker, and Tim Blake Nelson, Fido garnered great reviews and played worldwide, including theatrical releases in five countries.

Other feature producing credits include The Thaw starring Val Kilmer and Desolation Sound, starring Jennifer Beals. TV credits include the CTV movies 100 Days in the Jungle, shot on location in the jungles of Costa Rica, and Elijah. Both projects garnered her Geminis for Best TV Movie. In addition to her work in independent production, Mary Anne has extensive production service credits, notably Joss Whedon's feature Cabin in the Woods and Neill Blomkamp's Elysium. Mary Anne is developing several feature and television projects through Quadrant Motion Pictures.

LOU WEBSTER—Executive Producer

Lou Webster is a Lawyer practicing in Victoria, Canada. With an interest in film, Lou joined the team in an Executive Producer role bringing a myriad of resources to Primary, his first feature film. He is currently developing new projects through Deeply Scarred Productions. Lou studied at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver and law at the University of Victoria.

ALAIN MAYRAND—Composer

Alain Mayrand is a composer and orchestrator based in Burnaby B.C. In addition to composing local independent films such as "Primary" and "Numb", Alain has worked on international productions from the U.S., China, Australia and Norway.

Alain composed for the animated feature film "The Legend of Silk Boy", starring Jackie Chan, which won him international acclaim. He also served as orchestrator on Neill Blomkamp's "Elysium" (Matt Damon, Jodie Foster) and "Ender's Game" (Harrison Ford).

Classically trained, Alain was composer-in-residence with the Vancouver Metropolitan Orchestra for four years.

CAST

DUSTIN MILLIGAN—Nicholas

Dustin Milligan was born in Yellowknife, Canada and cast in the challenging lead role of Nicholas Gray in Primary. He also served as a Producer on the film.

Since relocating to Vancouver and then Los Angeles, Dustin has built a diverse body of work in both film and television, most recently in X Company and Schitt's Creek, a hilarious turn in Mike Judge's Extract opposite Jason Bateman, Ben Affleck and Kristen Wiig, a starring role in Shark Night 3D, a lead role on The CW's 90210, as well as a starring role in Sequoia, which premiered at the 2014 SxSW Film Festival.

Dustin can also be seen starring in the recent features Demonic, Me Him Her and Bad City, which he also co-wrote.



MICHAEL EKLUND—Harry

A busy and extremely diverse actor, often known for playing dark and edgy roles, Michael Eklund was cast as the enigmatic Harry Price in Primary for which he earned a Leo nomination for Best Performance in a Supporting Role.

Michael has also recently starred in Mr. Right, Eadward, The Call with Halle Berry and Abigail Breslin, Errors Of The Human Body, 3 Days in Havana with Gil Bellows, alongside Dustin Milligan in Ferocious and in The Divide with Rosanna Arquette.

Michael also has an impressive list of supporting roles in feature films, including The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus with Heath Ledger, Johnny Depp and Jude Law, Gunless with Paul Gross and 88 Minutes with Al Pacino.

Michael has been nominated for Leo awards 12 times, winning 4, including for Lead Performance in Errors of the Human Body. He also picked up a UBCP award for his performance in Eadward.

Michael is a native of Saskatoon, Canada.

CAST continued

KATHARINE ISABELLE—Andrea

A talented Vancouver native, Katharine jumped into acting at an early age with a role in *Cousins*, starring Ted Danson and Isabella Rossellini and has been busy ever since. Cast in the off-beat but moral-center-role of Andrea in *Primary*, Katharine earned a Leo nomination for her performance. She also recently starred as Mary in the horror hit *American Mary* and in the independent films *How to Plan an Orgy in a Small Town*, *Lawrence & Holloman* and *Cinemanovels* with Jennifer Beals.

Katharine can also be seen in the TV series *Hannibal* in addition to countless appearances in TV shows such as *Psych*, *Flashpoint* and *The L Word*. Katharine has starred or had supporting roles in a number of other films including Douglas Coupland's *Everything's Gone Green*, *Insomnia* with Al Pacino and the independent hit *Ginger Snaps*.

Katharine won a Gemini award for Best Performance by an Actress in a Featured Supporting Role in a Dramatic Program or Mini-Series for her work in *The Englishman's Boy* (2008).



ANDREW FRANCIS—Mitchell

With a natural magnetism, Andrew Francis plays the role of Nicholas's best friend/arch-enemy Mitchell, in *Primary*. This performance earned him a Leo nomination for Best Performance in a Supporting Role.

Andrew was also nominated for a Gemini award in 2011 for his lead role in the film *Fakers* and has also appeared in such films as *The Invisible* with Marcia Gay Harden and Justin Chatwin and in *Final Destination 3*.

Andrew has made countless appearances in TV series and movies including *Flashpoint*, *Supernatural*, *Psych*, *The L Word* and *Smallville*. He is also a busy voice actor and has earned a number of nominations for his work in various animated series.

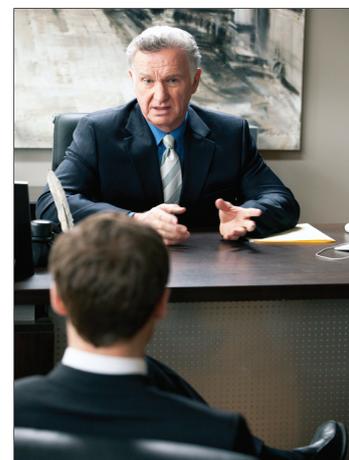


TOM BUTLER—Karl Jaspar

A 30 year veteran of stage and screen, Tom was cast as the heavyweight and ethically dubious Karl Jaspar in *Primary*.

He has most recently appeared in *Fifty Shades of Grey*, *The Dick Knost Show* and in other films such as *Shooter* with Mark Wahlberg, Douglas Coupland's *Everything's Gone Green*, *Snakes on a Plane* with Samuel L. Jackson and *Renegades* with Kiefer Sutherland.

Tom's long list of TV appearances include two seasons playing Mayor Lesley Adams on *The Killing*, as well as *Minority Report*, *The Flash*, *Cedar Cove*, *Supernatural*, *Fringe*, *Highlander: The Series*, *Sliders*, *The Commish*, *The Outer Limits*, *Stargate SG-1* and *Smallville*.



CAST continued

TRACY WATERHOUSE—Detective Bell

Vancouver's Tracy Waterhouse was cast as the no nonsense yet empathetic lead detective in Primary. Tracy's numerous TV credits include Rush, Continuum, Fringe, Shattered, Kevin Hill, Instant Star and Missing. Tracy's film credits include Against the Ropes with Meg Ryan, Brian DePalma's Mission to Mars and Elysium starring Matt Damon. In 2004 Tracy was nominated for a Gemini Award for Best Actress in the crime drama Blue Murder.



NOEL JOHANSEN—Detective Marsh

Film and stage actor Noel Johansen hails originally from Montreal and was cast as inquisitive and frustrated Detective Marsh in Primary. Past TV roles include Betsy Brandt's (Breaking Bad) husband in USA Networks' Fairly Legal, CW's Arrow and CBS's Chaos. Most recently, Noel acted opposite Blake Lively in the Harrison Ford feature film, The Age of Adaline, was cast in a principal role in Bloodlines the new spin-off from Supernatural and played an emotional accountant in the feature film remake of Lonesome Dove. Stage roles of note include "White Hot" an edgy New York play in which Noel played Bri, a dark and disturbing character who stopped at nothing to find satisfaction.



MERRITT PATTERSON—Sara

Merritt Patterson was cast as Sara, the reluctant Boss's daughter and Nicholas' would-be fiancée, in PRIMARY. Growing up in Whistler, Canada, Merritt won the 2006 "Canadian Herbal Essences Teen Model Search", made her debut with a recurring role on ABC's Kyle XY, then went on to appear in numerous other TV series and TV movies such as Supernatural, Disney's Radio Rebel and a recurring role in ABC's Ravenswood. Recently she had a starring role in the TV movie The Royals with Elizabeth Hurley. Merritt was also cast in the feature films Kid Cannabis with Ron Perlman, Wolves with Jason Momoa, Rufus with Kim Coates and The Hole with Bruce Dem.



AMITAI MARMORSTEIN—Jesse

Vancouver-based Film, Television and Theatre actor Amitai Marmorstein plays scrappy, street-wise Jesse in Primary. Some of Amitai's many TV appearances include Wayward Pines, Delete, Backstrom, Psych, Supernatural and Fringe. He also had a starring role in the indie comedy Sunflower Hour which won several awards including the Independent Camera at the Karlovy Vary Film International Film Festival and Best Ensemble Cast at the Vancouver International Film Festival. He also appeared in Donovan's Echo starring Danny Glover and Bruce Greenwood.



DIRECTOR NOTES

THE STORY

PRIMARY is a mystery story that explores morality, competition and human nature. It might fit into the puzzle category of films such as MEMENTO or SYRIANA, the disillusionment-plot category with CRIMES AND MISDEMEANORS, THE GREAT GATSBY or MATCH POINT or due to its slow-burn thematic investigation perhaps might be comparable to a film like CACHE. It is a thriller/drama but if PRIMARY were also to be described as an unapologetic Art Film I would not argue.

While information tends to come at us rapidly, PRIMARY takes an older-school approach and asks for an investment from the viewer. Within the layers, I believe there is thematic and character arc meaning that is relevant to the times in which we live. Ultimately, my hope in making the film was to try to create a unique work that is both entertaining and thought provoking perhaps in a way as to invite multiple viewings.

My desire to write this story came from an interest in philosophical ideas that exist mostly as academic what-if's? Formal ideas that, despite their value, for the most part, continue to be at odds with the way society has been constructed—a disconnect that can only be explained by human nature. The protagonist, Nicholas Gray, is tested in a Kant vs. Nietzsche journey of philosophical interpretations of life. While Immanuel Kant tells us to always treat humanity as an end never as a means to an end, Friedrich Nietzsche argues that life is an exercise in appropriation and exploitation of the weak—a primordial fact of all history.

PRIMARY is a story about Alpha Males, set against a backdrop of today's socio-economic debate with regard to the "Have's" and the "Have-Nots". The 1% vs. the 99%. As the story slowly builds, the shifting timelines allow us to simultaneously see Nicholas in vastly different circumstances in his life: with everything and with nothing. On his journey, he explores both philosophical interpretations—confronting his rawest emotions along the way, starting as an empathetic character and finishing as a provocative one. While he is tested under different circumstances, it is always the same instincts with which Nicholas wrestles. And his drive, overwhelmingly strong, remains a mystery to Nicholas himself until the fractured timelines finally merge at the end of the film and complete the full picture of Nicholas' nature.

While the initial drafts of PRIMARY were written some years ago, by the time we went to camera much of the thematic material in the story had come into full-bloom in the real world. "Occupy" movements had sprung up across North America in response to perceived corporate dominance and, in the United States, heated ethical debates were underway about extending healthcare to uninsured citizens. We have since seen the same themes further amplified during the primaries of the 2016 U.S. election campaign—most notably by candidate Bernie Sanders.

THE PRODUCTION

PRIMARY is a true independent film, self-financed and shot in 20 days on a micro-budget. While we did not have the money to shoot the script we had, we—my fellow Producer Vince Prokop and I—decided that we weren't going to compromise either. So we had to close this gap through hard work, will and pulling in every favour we had (or didn't have).

As we could not afford crew with a great deal of experience, we instead hired on raw talent and learned that there is new talent available if you do the extra work to unearth it. We put faith in our Keys who, despite having shorter resumes, came through for us in a big, big way—not only bringing a wealth of talent and ideas to the table but also an enormous amount of passion and energy. Our (Identical Twin) Cinematographers Nelson and Graham Talbot, Co-Editor/VFX whiz Dave McDonald, Art Director/Associate Producer Catherine Gunn—all working on PRIMARY as their first feature films—should be singled out for going far beyond the call of duty, investing a great deal of time and energy into the project.

Executive Producer Mary Anne Waterhouse put us in touch with Casting agent Candice Elzinga who, after reading the script, jumped on board and along with her staff did a superb job of finding us an amazing cast—led by Dustin Milligan, Michael Eklund, Katharine Isabelle, Andrew Francis and Tom Butler. It would not be the same film without Candice and the amazing actors—both starring and support—who all worked well below their normal pay scale to make the film happen.

In casting Nicholas, played by Dustin Milligan, I was looking for someone who could offer a somewhat innocent appeal as well

DIRECTOR NOTES continued

as an ability to go dark. The Nicholas character is relatively young and not self-aware in the same way that both the Harry and Mitchell characters are—but at the same time there is a burning in him. Dustin did a fantastic job with a challenging arc and was a consummate pro with whom to work. Michael Eklund, not surprisingly, owned the character of Harry, while Katharine Isabelle, Andrew Francis and Tom Butler were also fantastic.

With suppliers and prospective locations, we also found that by explaining our circumstance and what we were trying to achieve, most everyone was willing to help—a testament to the good people of Vancouver. Executive Producer Lou Webster cashed in many favours as well, from locations to picture cars to make the film happen.

For the score we hired Alain Mayrand. A veteran composer of chamber music, Alain did not have a wealth of film scoring credits but his depth of talent proved to be outstanding. A pleasure to work with, he was able to dial into Nicholas's journey and express his soul musically in a way that was better than for what I could've hoped. To handle the Sound Design and Mix we were able to get Miguel Nunes—an award-winning and busy designer who did a wonderful job and who was also a great pleasure with whom to work.

To make PRIMARY was a hard but worthwhile fight and I am extremely proud of every member of our wonderful team for their invaluable contributions and the can-do spirit brought to set each and every day. Given our budget, no one really came to set for the paycheques, which gave the production a unique spirit—the likes of which I don't expect to see again, soon. I consider it a great achievement for PRIMARY to have maintained the professional production values, strong performances and overall artistic integrity that it does.

- Ross Ferguson, Writer/Director/Producer—PRIMARY

KEY CREW

Executive Producers

Lou Webster
Mary Anne Waterhouse

Producers

Vince Prokop
Ross Ferguson
Dustin Milligan

Associate Producers

Candice Elzinga
Catherine Gunn
Andria Spring

Writer/Director

Ross Ferguson

Directors of Photography

Graham Talbot
Nelson Talbot

Editors

Ross Ferguson
David McDonald

Music

Alain Mayrand

Sound Design

Miguel Nunes

Production Designer

Joshua Plaw

Art Director

Catherine Gunn

MAIN CAST

Nicholas Gray

Dustin Milligan

Harry Price

Michael Eklund

Andrea Bialy

Katharine Isabelle

Mitchell Getz

Andrew Francis

Karl Jaspar

Tom Butler

Sara Jaspar

Merritt Patterson

Detective Bell

Tracy Waterhouse

Detective Marsh

Noel Johansen

Jesse

Amitai Marmorstein

**DUSTIN MILLIGAN
MICHAEL EKLUND
KATHARINE ISABELLE
ANDREW FRANCIS
TOM BUTLER**

A FILM BY ROSS FERGUSON

PRIMARY

91 mins/Canada/2014/Thriller

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CINEMATOGRAPHY GRAHAM TALBOT & NELSON TALBOT CASTING CANDICE ELZINGA EDITORS ROSS FERGUSON & DAVID MCDONALD

MUSIC ALAIN MAYRAND SOUND DESIGN MIGUEL NUNES PRODUCTION DESIGN JOSH PLAW COSTUME DESIGNER LIZ HENDERSON

ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS CANDICE ELZINGA CATHERINE GUNN ANDRIA SPRING EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS LOU WEBSTER MARY ANNE WATERHOUSE

PRODUCERS VINCE PROKOP ROSS FERGUSON DUSTIN MILLIGAN WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY ROSS FERGUSON

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