

VOLVO

Drama/Short
Color/Stereo
Running Time: 9 Minutes
Shooting Format: Mini-DV
Projection Formats:
BetaSP
Digibeta
Mini-DV
DVD
VHS

Directed by: Justin L. Smith
Aaron Butler
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VOLVO

Logline –

Are you headed in the right direction?

SYNOPSIS –

Volvo is about the simultaneous dissolution and creation of relationships. A husband and wife's relationship is strained by an infidelity, which threatens to tear them apart. Meanwhile, their son meets a young girl and, for perhaps the first time, feels a connection to someone he desperately needs. These couples share only two things: their desire to be someplace else and their mode of transportation. The story takes place entirely inside the family Volvo as the couples find themselves bound together by the inexplicable pull and irreversible push of fate.



Characters travel down a long, lonely road in “Volvo”

VOLVO

The Car:



About the Car:

The script for “Volvo” was written years before the vehicle used in the film was made available. After writing the script, Director Justin Smith searched for the “perfect car” for approximately two years. Eventually, other opportunities arose and the project was put aside. In an unforeseen but fortunate coincidence, a friend began dating a young woman who just happened to drive a 1984 Volvo, exactly the type Justin was searching for. After a brief negotiation (which consisted of Justin claiming, “Oh my God! You have to lend me this car!”), the kind young woman, Evann Gastaldo, lent her vehicle to the production for the shoot. Completely authentic in every way, the vehicle ran very smoothly over a demanding shooting period. Because of the low budget of the production, Stewart Skelton (“Man”) and Bryce Blue (“Boy”) had to actually drive the Volvo while performing in some scenes. Scenes in which the passenger was shot while the vehicle was moving were achieved through dedicated teamwork. Director Justin drove the vehicle while cinematographer Aaron Butler held the camera from the rear seat on the driver’s side and both performers sat next to them.



CHARACTERS –

Boy:

Bryce Blue wonderfully portrays the moral anchor of all the characters, the Boy. Heavily steeped in teenage angst, the boy still has a certain idealistic view of the world around him and, like most of us, takes comfort in the idea of karma. “I really liked playing this kid,” actor Bryce Blue notes. “It was a chance to talk like an actual teenager. Many roles I look at have teenagers that sound like thirty year olds.”

Fun Fact:

“Boy” is the only character named in the film. For those paying attention, you’ll hear the father call him “Michael” in the driveway of their home.

If you could go anywhere, where would you go?

“I don’t know. Somewhere in the Midwest, I guess. Somewhere quiet where I could fish.” – Bryce Blue

Girl:

Played by a smoldering Amanda Thorp, the Girl is the most emotionally developed character in the film. She has the job of opening the boy up and getting him to choose his own fate, all with only understanding looks and kind words. Of course, it’s not hard to convince anyone to do *anything* when you look like Amanda. “She has these eyes that are just...wow,” Director Justin Smith notes.

Fun Fact:

“Amanda had the part of the girl before she read her first line. She just walked in and owned the role completely.” – Producer America Young

If you could go anywhere, where would you go?

“Hmmm. Probably not Canada. Too cold up there. I don’t know what this girl was thinking.” – Amanda Thorp



THE WAY, WAY BACK

CHARACTERS –

Husband:

“The Husband is basically there to get yelled at,” actor Stewart Skelton laughs. “He did something bad and has to spend the entire film paying for it.” Caught in an infidelity, the husband has to endure the emotional turmoil that comes with such an ordeal. “I just saw this guy as a tired, empty shell of his former self,” Stewart shares. “As someone who plays a lot of cops, doctors and lawyers, it was nice to just sit back and play a real, flawed person.”

Fun Fact:

Stewart actually has many more lines that had to be cut because of an abandoned “thieves” story. His lines wouldn’t have made any sense without the missing footage, so they had to be cut, shortening his performance.

If you could go anywhere, where would you go?

“I would say, as the Husband, anywhere but in that car.” - Stewart Skelton

Wife:

“This is not a woman who uses those words,” Teri Deaver comments of the Wife’s scathing critique of her husband. “When she starts using those descriptive terms, she’s not only embarrassing her husband, she’s embarrassing herself. That’s what drew me to this part,” Teri relates. “She’s pretty conflicted. It’s fun to play her, but I certainly wouldn’t want to be her.”

Fun Fact:

With the exception of The Boy, none of the characters have names. Why? “Because would it really make a difference if the husband were named Bob and the wife were named Marge? People this familiar with each other don’t use one another’s names very often. If they don’t say them naturally, then we don’t need to know.” – Writer Justin Smith

If you could go anywhere, where would you go?

“Somewhere you can’t drive. Maybe the next film can be called *Delta*.” - Teri Deaver



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VOLVO ACTORS

Amanda Thorp:



Girl



Amanda Thorp in "Volvo"

Bio:

Amanda has shot modeling features for "Neu Mode" and "HEK" as well as the very prestigious fashion magazine, "V." She has performed in a variety of roles, most notably guest starring on "The Gilmore Girls" and "Medium." Amanda is also an unbelievably talented skateboarder, and is able to expertly handle ramps and tricks that most boys in her age group could never begin to attempt. She is also a top-ranked cross-country runner, scoring highest in her age division in every local and regional race. Beyond Amanda's excellent sports ability, she is a straight A honors student in a extremely competitive school district, even after skipping a grade.

Bryce Blue:



Boy



Bryce Blue in "Volvo"

Bio:

Raised in Arroyo Grande, California, Bryce began acting during his middle school years, when he appeared on stage as Winthrop, in "The Music Man." He continued in musicals including "You're a Good Man Charlie Brown," "Annie Get Your Gun" and "Les Miserable." At the age of 15, Bryce performed as Tom in "Tom Sawyer" at the Great American Melodrama in Oceano. Bryce then decided to pursue his love of acting in Hollywood and booked his first film role in Larry Clark's "Wassup Rockers." He co-starred in "The Unit" this past spring and played the part of Rhett in the new musical, "Teen Witch."

VOLVO

ACTORS

Teri Deaver:



Wife



Teri Deaver in "Volvo"

Bio:

Teri has worked extensively in regional theatre including the Guthrie in Minneapolis, Creede Repertory in Colorado and Lamb's Players Theatre San Diego. She holds a BFA in Theatre Arts/Acting from the U.S. International University, formerly in San Diego and London. Since relocating to Los Angeles, she has had the pleasure of working on a number of graduate level student and independent films. Other creative pursuits include writing, photography and culinary arts.

Stuart Skelton:



Husband



Stewart Skelton in "Volvo"

Bio:

Stewart's film and television career began long ago with the role of a de-spined alien in the hard-to-find video release, "Timesweep." You can catch him on the tube occasionally (most recently "Lucky Louie," "Monk" and "Big Love"), and be sure to look for him in the upcoming indie feature, "The Lutefisk Wars." Incidentally, Stewart is also a writer, so gifts of Scotch, cigars and literary representation are much appreciated.



Crew:

Written and Directed by: Justin L. Smith



Justin L. Smith, a bona-fide Air Force brat, grew up all over the United States. He graduated from James Madison University with a Bachelor's Degree of Social Work and a minor in Theatre before moving to California to pursue acting and writing. He performed in a variety of roles, including a mentally ill teenager in the independent film "Butterflies Die" and a suave nerd in the television pilot "The Up and Comers," before creating Reel Kid Productions as a forum to experiment with different theatrical mediums. Smith's first film, "Thomas Grey's Rainy Day," went to several film festivals, including the Cinequest festival in 2004. "Volvo" is Reel Kid's 9th project. Justin currently works in the Story Department of MTV's anchor show, "The Real World."

Directed and Edited by: Aaron Butler

Aaron Butler has almost a decade of award-winning professional experience directing, shooting and editing. His roster of clients includes MTV, VHI, PBS, the Discovery Channel, Independent Film Channel and Interscope Records. He joined up with Justin Smith to create Reel Kid Productions in 2004 and the duo has completed several projects together. Aaron is currently editing the hit MTV show "Laguna Beach."



Produced by: America Young

America has been involved in the film industry in a number of ways, most notably as a performer. She has performed in a number of different productions, including the recently released "Evil's City," "Dreamkiller" and the upcoming "Bad Mojo." In addition to being a performer, America is consummate producer. She has produced three short films and one feature in the past year and currently has two feature films (one horror and one comedy) and three shorts to be completed in 2007. Other capacities she has worked in include stunt coordinator, distribution, casting and writing. She is thrilled to work on Volvo and has championed the project ever since she first read the script years ago.

VOILVO

FULL CREDITS LIST

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY
JUSTIN L. SMITH

DIRECTED AND EDITED BY
AARON BUTLER

PRODUCED BY
DANIELLE AMERICA YOUNG

STARRING:
BRYCE BLUE
TERI DEAVER
STEWART SKELTON
AMANDA THORP

CINEMATOGRAPHY:
AARON BUTLER
JUSTIN SMITH

SOUND:
MIKE WILLIAMS

PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS:
GABRIEL EDWARDS
MARIANO SANCHEZ
MARCUS TUCKER

CATERING PROVIDED BY:
ARACELY CATERING

ORIGINAL MUSIC BY:
LOVELY DAY

VEHICLE PROVIDED BY:
EVANN GASTALDO

ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY:
VICTOR PADILLA

ADDITIONAL PERFORMANCE:
JUSTIN ZSEBE

ADDITIONAL SOUND DESIGN:
CYRUS BUTLER
MAY PESCANTE

CO-PRODUCER/WEB DESIGN
RUSS EMMANUEL

SPECIAL THANKS:
SUSAN DENISON
J.T. SMITH

VOLVO

PRODUCTION NOTES:



Justin Smith in pre-production on "Volvo"

Pre-production on "Volvo" lasted three months. "Everyone has other jobs, of course," Director Justin Smith notes, "so all the planning had to be done at night and on weekends. It took several weeks to find and secure all the locations we needed and to coordinate everyone's schedules, since we're all working for free. Also, we knew from past experience that a shoot like this has to be done all in one push. No taking weeks off and just shooting when you can. It would never get done that way." "The pre-production period was never-ending," Producer America Young agrees, "but we were extremely organized and that helped us get through the shooting days with minimum interference. We planned for a lot of problems but, fortunately, didn't have very many."



Justin Smith and Aaron Butler prepare a hood-mount shot in "Volvo"

"We actually shot an entire third story," Director and Editor Aaron Butler informs. "In the original script, a pair of thieves steal the car in the beginning and we follow them throughout the piece as they come to terms with their own tenuous relationship. The entire first night of shooting was that story, but when we pieced it together it just didn't seem to fit as well as it read. So we dropped it entirely." "The bummer part about that is," Director Justin Smith adds, "I actually played one of the thieves. Have you ever heard of a director cutting himself out of his own film?" "Actually," Aaron corrects, "the bummer part is that we shot until very late that night. That long, cold, windy night."



Justin Smith and Aaron Butler shoot simultaneously on "Volvo"

To achieve the most coverage in the shortest amount of time, Directors Justin Smith and Aaron Butler opted to shoot simultaneously. "Aaron did all of the A camera stuff, so that we knew we had everything," Justin explains, "but during takes I would frequently be shooting from a different angle, just to give us more choices." "We wound up with way more footage than we needed," Aaron notes, "but when you're editing, you always want more. And because of the size of the shoot, we could afford to get twice the coverage in half the time." "Those guys were machines," Producer America Young adds. "Six actors, nine locations, a moving set and three complete stories all shot in three days. They're a very talented filmmaking team."

VOLVO

PRODUCTION NOTES:



The famous Hillside Smiley Face in Simi Valley

“Volvo” was shot entirely on location in the Simi Valley and Oxnard areas of California. “I moved up to Simi recently because I just got married and that’s where my wife is from,” Director Justin Smith explains. “It reminds me of a lot of the little communities I grew up in. Very quiet. Very safe. Almost too safe.” “We really wanted it to look as if it could be anywhere, and Simi can pass for a lot of American landscapes, unlike Los Angeles,” Director Aaron Butler adds. “Of course, the house from *Poltergeist* is located in Simi Valley and, although we tried to get permission to use it as the Girl’s home, the owners never responded to our offers,” Producer America Young laments. “But we managed to get the Ronald Reagan Library, Jerry’s Coffee Shop and, of course, the Hillside Happy Face, all of which are unique to Simi Valley.”



“Volvo” was shot on location in Simi Valley

“Volvo proves that you don’t need hundreds of thousands of dollars to make a good film,” Producer America Young explains. “We shot this entire project for less than \$1,500. Everything you see is practical. The actors are really driving. The sound was recorded on set. There is no ADR. There are no effects. There is just a great story with solid performances to back it up.”

“We had to be quick about it,” Director Justin Smith adds, “because it was entirely too dangerous to stop and think about what we were doing.”

Justin Smith’s dog, Roxann, helps scout locations for “Volvo”



VOLVO

YOU ARE HEADED IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

Lucky Numbers: 4, 8, 15, 16, 23, 42

The History of the Fortune Cookie

by Borgna Brunner

The first fortune cookies reached Chinese shores in 1992. They were imported from Brooklyn and were proudly advertised as "genuine American fortune cookies."

Like chop suey, fortune cookies are an American invention. They originated in California, but who the actual inventor was, and which city in California is the true home of the fortune cookie, have continued to be matters of debate. Unequivocally not Chinese, the fortune cookie may in fact not even be Chinese American.

One history of the fortune cookie claims that David Jung, a Chinese immigrant living in Los Angeles and founder of the Hong Kong Noodle Company, invented the cookie in 1918. Concerned about the poor he saw wandering near his shop, he created the cookie and passed them out free on the streets. Each cookie contained a strip of paper with an inspirational Bible scripture on it, written for Jung by a Presbyterian minister.

Another history claims that the fortune cookie was invented in San Francisco by a Japanese immigrant named Makoto Hagiwara. Hagiwara was a gardener who designed the famous Japanese Tea Garden in Golden Gate Park. An anti-Japanese mayor fired him from his job around the turn of the century, but later a new mayor reinstated him. Grateful to those who had stood by him during his period of hardship, Hagiwara created a cookie in 1914 that included a thank you note inside. He passed them out at the Japanese Tea Garden, and began serving them there regularly. In 1915, they were displayed at the Panama-Pacific Exhibition, San Francisco's world fair.

Fortune cookies became common in Chinese restaurants after World War II. Desserts were not traditionally part of Chinese cuisine, and the cookies thus offered Americans something familiar with an exotic flair.

Although there have been a few cases reported of individuals actually *liking* the texture and flavor of fortune cookies, most consider the fortune to be the essence of the cookie. Early fortunes featured Biblical sayings or aphorisms from Confucius, Aesop or Ben Franklin. Later, fortunes included recommended lottery numbers, smiley faces, jokes, and sage, if hackneyed, advice. Politicians have used them in campaigns, and fortunes have been customized for weddings and birthday parties. Today messages are variously cryptic, nonsensical, feel-good, hectoring, bland or mystifying.



reel kid productions.



History:

Reel Kid Productions was created by Justin L. Smith in 2003 as a platform to experiment with different theatrical mediums. Under the Reel Kid moniker, Justin created and wrote *Ninety %* and *Agent Minor*, two animated episodics geared towards a young adult demographic. While writing numerous short scripts commissioned by a local theatre group, Smith directed and co-wrote *Restaurant*, which featured one-acts originally published in *Zoetrope: All Story*. *Thomas Grey's Rainy Day* was Smith's first foray into film directing and was an official selection of several film festivals, including the Cinequest Film Festival. In 2004, Aaron Butler became a member of the Reel Kid family and the two have cut their teeth with *Peanut Butter*, *Ninja Monkey*, *The Arizona Project*, *Fragments* and *Volvo* as well as several music videos and corporate advertisements.

Current Projects:

Currently, Reel Kid is working on two more shorts for 2007. *Notes* is a hugely expansive project incorporating over sixty speaking parts. It explores the mysterious death of an even more mysterious man and the journal he left behind. Afterwards, the duo plans to complete the dark comedy *Charleston's Finger*, originally written by Sean Michael Welch. The play-turned-film tells the story of what happens to a dysfunctional family when one of its members develops a horrible, and hilarious, ailment at the dinner table. Afterwards, Reel Kid is set to focus on feature length material and work-for-hire projects.

Other Works:

Reel Kid has completed several music videos, including projects for *Lovely Day*, *Colorland* and *Innocence Mission* as well as several short films including *Peanut Butter*, *The Couch* and *Ninja Monkey*. Commissioned by Arizona State University in 2004, the duo shot and edited an avant-garde thesis project entitled *The Arizona Project: A Surreal Portrait of the Arizona Landscape* before moving on to create a short documentary about holistic medicine for the Dr. Charles Rogers Medical Treatment Clinic. Currently, Aaron works full-time as an editor on MTV's hit show, "Laguna Beach" while Justin toils away in the Story Department of MTV anchor show, "The Real World."