



REMINDE ME

a film
by eric johnson

“Love is so short,

forgetting is so long...”

- Pablo Neruda



Cold February winds blow across a frozen pond. A jeep sits half submerged. Red patches of blood litter Remy's yard as fresh snow tries to cover the bodies and erase the events of the night before. A scoop full of dog food in hand, Remy just remembered his dog died. Three years ago.

LOGLINE: Remy, an ex-pro hockey player with early hints of concussion-based dementia, fears he may be responsible for putting his wife in a coma. Awash in guilt, he must face his estranged daughter. But when a criminal gang lays siege to his farm, he's forced to struggle towards clarity on what violence he's done - both seconds and decades ago - while an elephant patiently waits.

SYNOPSIS: REMY [50], alone on a winter weekend at his farmstead, is at a dark and rutted crossroads in his life. His only child - SALLY [28] - lives in Australia. His wife - CARLA [48] - is in hospital in a coma, following a blow to the head. And Remy doesn't know if he's responsible, though many suspect he is. His brain is misfiring. He's 10 years retired from a journeyman career in hockey's professional sub-leagues, a skill-player who never made it to the NHL, and took far too many headshots along the way. His memory now jumps between comfort and curse.

His one seeming support is WAYNE [48], Remy's bruising linemate in his prime playing years. When Wayne needs to store stuff in Remy's barn, Remy obliges. But Wayne is disturbed to find a noose present - evidence of Remy's depressive/self-destructive state. Sally arrives from overseas, coming on the news of Carla's "accident." She's wary of Remy, not knowing if he might have assaulted her mother, and frustrated by his obsession with a supposed circus-life he had before her birth, which she takes to be a fantasy. Realizing that he's a risk to himself and has no medical oversight, Sarah arranges a consult with a high-school friend - now a doctor. The main concern is possible CTE - Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy - early onset-dementia brought on - typically in athletes - by exposure to repeated blows to the head. But Remy's impatience with the interview further irritates Sally and they separate on cool terms.

Remy returns to his farm, only to find a gang searching for Wayne and something he's hidden. Upset by their menacing intrusion, Remy accidentally wounds one gang member, then kills another - this time with intent. Sally reaches out by phone to mend their broken bridge, to Remy's joy, but he does not reveal his immediate dilemma. Unaware of the danger Remy poses, the gang leader - TIM - is initially amused by Remy's careless disregard for their authority, but grows impatient as the night wears on. The gang locates Wayne and brings him back to the farm, but Wayne can't persuade Remy to remember the location of a critical envelope that Wayne stashed there. Tim executes Wayne, and isolates Remy in his house, while the gang continues the search. But Remy escapes through the second-floor window, walking a wire over a hockey rink - as he may have in a vaguely-remembered past as a 20-year-old circus performer in Europe. He makes it through the woods to the road but can't remember why. Sally is driving towards the farm, concerned about his disorientation, when she finds Remy at roadside, smoking. He rebuffs her attempts to drive him home, and insults her in the process. Offended, she leaves. Remy returns in the direction he came, but is staggered by surreal memory fragments - of his beloved grandfather and a tragic childhood accident. Returning to his home, Remy further irks Tim with his belligerence. When Tim finally realizes the risk Remy poses, he goes after Remy. Problem is that Remy, after decades bearing the brunt of violence, has finally learned the language. On his homemade rink - with pucks and a literally deadly slapshot - he's game. With dawn, Remy sits - lifeblood ebbing away - surrounded by carnage, where Sally finds him... and an elephant.

DIRECTORS NOTES:

From the moment Andrew Rai Berzins first shared his brilliant script with me, I knew this story needed to be seen on the big screen. I was completely engrossed by the tragic heroes journey, the black comedy and the incredibly unique voice that leaped off the page. It charmed and captured my imagination.

I first read the script over looking St. John's harbor on a drizzly foggy late spring day. From that moment, this story had found its champion and its home.



REMIND ME is a story of love and regrets, all encased in Remy's failing mind during a brutal home invasion.

Remy our broken hero, struggles to keep his thoughts together as memories and love from long ago take hold. The past is present and the present is past. And it all gets muddled together in the Newfoundland fog.



REMIND ME is centered around putting pieces together. For the criminals in Remy's house they try to put the puzzle pieces together of their missing package, located somewhere on Remy's farm. Remy tries to put together the fragments of the present day, while old memories flood his mind. Sally, his daughter, wants to put it all together to know whether she can love her father or forever hate him for putting her mother into a coma.

Sally is the harsh reality to Remy's dream state. Never one to see eye to eye with her father, Remy's stubborn streak drove her away. With her dear mother in the hospital comatose, potentially at the hands of her father, it's almost too much for her to bear. Unaware at how far he father's condition has progressed, Sally is left struggling to understand a man who speaks of elephants and a long dead lover he once abandoned them for.

A fractured mind, fractured family and fractured skulls.

The mind may not always remember but the heart never forgets.

This film, while dressed up as a dark comedic thriller, to me is really about love and regrets. The crux of it being the relationship between Remy and his daughter Sally.

There is tremendous heart to this story, with a touch of wonder.

It is truly a one of a kind.





TONE

Leaping off the page with every word is a very distinct tone of this film. With hints of Coen brother's classics like FARGO or BARTON FINK mixed with Martin McDonagh's IN BRUGE - REMIND ME is a black comedy with laugh out loud moments, coupled with bursts of extreme violence, tragic love and an escaped elephant.

By taking the film and making it unapologetic about its uniqueness and placing it in remote Newfoundland, the full charm of this script can shine through. By centering the film and making it specific to this region, I feel it only furthers the international intrigue and appeal. A quaint and charming pin point on an unknown piece of the map, where a tragic story of love, regret, memory and violence plays out.

MUSIC AND SOUND

A sparse score that is a mixture of traditional maritime instruments but distorted, discordant and hollow. Like Remy's memory, all parts of the song don't quite work. It hints at a time before and tones reminiscent of the big top circus.

The crunch of the snow and the insulating quiet of the fog will add to a claustrophobic soundscape of creaking ice, snaps and crackles from the wood fire and muffled gunshots that echo into the night.



LOOK

This film consists of world as it is and the world as Remy sees it.

Remy's versions of events might not always be completely accurate or factual, but they are nothing if not colourful. Juxtaposing that is the stark and bleak landscape of a a Newfoundland winter. Cold and unforgiving. It's almost as if things are frozen in time.

All of Remy's reminiscing and POV's will have a bold and rich colour palette. Offering cues to what we're seeing whether it's real life or fantasy.

Remy is isolated and trapped in his own fractured head. With that in mind I want to continue on with that isolation with the camera and have Remy feel like he's on his own island in a sea of chaos.















NOTES FROM THE WRITER

The Genesis of "Remind Me" - by Andrew Rai Berzins

As a kid, like many across this great spectral nation, I played hockey at every opportunity. Credit to my dad, we grew up in a tiny Niagara bungalow with a backyard rink big as the house. All other seasons, road hockey ruled. I knew a couple guys who almost made pro.

In the late 70s, as a university student, I returned home to the shabby 7-bedroom house I was solo/summer-renting in Kingston to find it occupied by 3 menacing shitheads I knew from my janitor job at the Northern Telecom cable factory. They were waiting for a transient guy from Winnipeg to whom I'd provided a free room, and who'd sold them shitty weed. The next 5 hours were kinda tense till the cops arrived.

A decade later I was working as a nursing aide at the psychiatric Clarke Institute in Toronto. Amongst the hundreds of patients I worked with over five years, two stuck with me. One was a mid-50s Niagara farmer with early-onset dementia. Within a year he'd gone from sweet solid man to one made erratic and violent by the confusion happening within. The other was a kid barely 20 with a rare brain syndrome that had wrenched coherent language from him - he talked in soft sing-song utter gibberish - and was fated to take his life soon after.

A year later - 1989 - I fully fell for Pere Ubu's mournful circus song - "The Wire" - while holding my first child.

"Baby, you worry too much about me - you know I get by.

I know all of the tricks of the trade and I love the high wire.

Walking in air, it's suited to me.

Walking in air is suited to me.

Bye bye, baby, goodbye."