



# DEMENTIA

A Short Film by David Tappan



**DEMENTIA** is a 20-minute short film which takes the audience on a surreal journey through a dying man's mind as he is battling dementia and must reflect upon and confront the regrets of a life misspent.



# WHY

## **BECAUSE DEMENTIA WILL BE UNLIKE ANYTHING YOU'VE SEEN BEFORE**

*Dementia* is the view of a man's soul seen through the cloudy lens of mental illness and old age. Part brooding film noir, part mysterious character study, and part surrealist horror film - *Dementia* takes the audience on a rollercoaster through time and memory. By the end of the film, viewers should feel like they themselves have been on a journey and returned with insights into their own lives.

## **A STORY NEEDED FOR OUR TIME**

*Dementia* is the story of Elliott Foster Turner, a man who achieves his dreams at the expense of every meaningful relationship in his life. In today's fast-paced world where ambition for success can be all-consuming, *Dementia* is an important reminder for all of us to find a balance in our lives between career and relationships... while we still can.

## **BRING AWARENESS TO A TRAGIC DISEASE**

Dementia is a terrifying disease which robs people of their dignity, their memories, and their identity. By showing the world through the eyes of a man dying of this disease, the audience will experience first-hand the confusion, panic, and horror that consumes our protagonist's life. Our hope is to spread awareness on the realities of this destructive disease and impel audiences to action.

## **SUPPORT DETROIT & MICHIGAN FILM**

Detroit and Michigan is home to an underground, independent film revolution and arts scene. Filmmakers who have stayed in the state after the film incentive left are also a passionate group dedicated to keeping the industry alive and relevant. But without the financial support of an established studio system many of these projects rely on independent investors like you.

## **JOIN US IN MAKING THIS FILM A REALITY**

*Dementia* is an innovative and ambitious project which we believe has the potential to gain notice from the largest and most prestigious film festivals in the world. After reading the script and reviewing this proposal we know you will too.

# THE STORY

*Dementia* opens on a mysterious doorway standing alone in the middle of a barren snowy wilderness. Out of the door (as if from another dimension) runs Elliott, chased by three mysterious gunmen who wear strange nightmarish masks. But what starts as a simple chase, then turns into a complex and surreal journey through Elliott's mind and his memories.

After stumbling upon a mysterious farmhouse in the wilderness, Elliott is caught by the gunmen and killed, only to reawaken in present day as an old businessman dying of dementia. He has been reduced to a vegetable state and his memories are failing him. In his hospital room is an antique TV which plays an old western film set in winter. The film is strangely similar to *Dementia's* opening chase sequence through the snowy wilderness implying that what he sees on the TV could possibly be creating memories (similar to how a TV playing in the background while we're sleeping can influence our dreams). When the TV channel changes, this triggers a memory from Elliott's childhood and sends him down a complex, winding path through the formative memories from his life. We learn how he grew up in an abusive household and then went on to build a business empire in adulthood. As his empire rises he becomes increasingly closed-off, untrusting, and paranoid, ultimately alienating himself from every meaningful person in his life.

At the climax of the film, Elliott uncovers a deeply repressed memory from his childhood, which occurred at the farmhouse from the opening chase sequence: the discovery of his mother's suicide, which shaped him into the detached, cold person he became by the end of his life. Back in present day, the film concludes with an emotional confrontation between Old Elliott in the hospital room and his now middle-aged son who has come to see his father one last time. But before his son gains closure, Old Elliott begins to have a stroke which sets into motion a surreal turn of events.

Time has suddenly frozen. Old Elliott and his son inexplicably wear the nightmarish masks of the gunmen. Young Elliott from the opening stands in the hospital doorway watching them. He runs for his life and is chased after by other characters from other memories who all wear the sinister masks. Elliott escapes them through a door, but suddenly finds himself teleported back to the snowy wilderness from the beginning of the film. As before, Elliott is chased by the gunmen through the wilderness and the cycle starts all over again... into eternity.

# THEMES

## DEMENTIA IS ABOUT CONTROL.

Elliott is a man who must be in control. He keeps people at arm's length, unwilling (or unable) to show any weakness or vulnerability. After growing up helpless in an abusive household he is hardened and driven to be beholden to no one but himself. So he builds a wall around himself, an empire over which he has complete authority. But in his obsession to stand alone he drives away every relationship which ever held any meaning to him. On his deathbed he realizes the emptiness of his existence, but it is too late. He is trapped in a prison of memories he can't change and stuck in a failing mind he can't control. He lived his life to have everything, but ends it where he began - with nothing.

## ELLIOTT'S STORY IS THE STORY OF US ALL.

We are all running from the demons of our past and heading towards the same inescapable fate - our deaths. But on our deathbeds, what do we want our memories to be? Who do we want to be there with us? What do we want to leave behind?  
What life do we want to have lived?

But are we in control of our fate? Are there forces greater than us which control our destinies? Are we controlled by the scars of our past and the demons inside of us we don't want to face?

## WHO AM I? WHY AM I WHO I AM? WHERE AM I GOING?

All of these questions are at the core of *Dementia*, but for every viewer the answer will be different.



LOOK



&



FEEL



# STYLE

The journey we take through Elliott's mind is extraordinarily fractured by his dementia. To reflect this, the film will transition between many different tones and cinematic styles from surrealist horror to haunting melancholy and gritty realism. By the end of the film, the audience should feel like they have gone on a journey and experienced emotional extremes in parallel with Elliott.

To further place the audience in Elliott's perspective, *Dementia* will be filmed entirely in gorgeous black and white cinemascope. The authenticity of Elliott's memories are questionable - are they real or are they a fever dream created by Elliott's failing mind? Black and white will help underscore this feeling by the dreamy, out-of-time-and-place feeling that black and white cinematography gives to its subjects. Black and white has the ability to imbue images with a beautiful poetry and timelessness that places the audience in a no-man's-land between reality and fantasy.

There are many films which influenced the cinematic journey that the audience will be taken on - too many to list here - but 4 films in particular illustrate how *Dementia* will look and feel. And while *Dementia* is influenced by these films, they will be seen as creative jumping off points rather than limitations.



# CITIZEN KANE

## REFERENCE FILM 1

In a way, *Dementia* is a modern, surrealist retelling of *Citizen Kane*: a man is driven by his ambition to create an empire, but finds when he is at the peak of his mountain that only loneliness awaits him. Both films search through the fragments of the protagonist's memories, trying to make sense of why they became the men they became.



# ERASERHEAD

## REFERENCE FILM 2

The surrealist horror of David Lynch is at the heart of *Dementia*. Like the style of David Lynch, *Dementia*'s story doesn't adhere to the logic of our everyday lives - it follows a logic of its own: the logic of dreams (and nightmares). Lynch's *Eraserhead* gets under your skin, creating a feeling of growing unease and horror in the audience by playing upon their subconscious fears, transporting them into a waking nightmare.

# 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY

REFERENCE FILM 3

The operatic, larger-than-life feeling created by Stanley Kubrick in his masterpiece 2001: A Space Odyssey is a large influence for *Dementia*. The use of classical music in 2001 elevates the meaning of its images and gives them otherworldly, all-powerful significance. His shots are deliberately and meticulously framed, giving a sense of importance to everything we see. It is also a bold and surreal film which takes the audience on a journey from the birth of the universe to the rebirth of mankind.



# STARDUST MEMORIES

REFERENCE FILM 4

While much of *Dementia* takes the audience on a rollercoaster through surreal nightmares and fantasies, the film is grounded with several hard-hitting, real-to-life scenes. These realistic scenes provide insight into Elliott's character and give us a protagonist to feel for. Woody Allen's *Stardust Memories* also combines this unique mix of realism and surrealism. Conversational dialogue scenes are juxtaposed with strange, surreal sequences of rabid fans swarming Woody's character.



# OUR TEAM

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## WORK

Over the past year, the producing team behind *Dementia* has been creating innovative, original content. They recently completed two short films, *Chocolate and Cigarettes* and *Detroit Diamond*, which are at the beginning of their festival runs where they've already begun to receive awards and acclaim.

Below are links to the films' teaser trailers. Please contact one of the film's producers for access to a private link to the films.

### **Chocolate and Cigarettes**

Written, Directed, and  
Produced by David Tappan  
Teaser: <https://vimeo.com/221669949>

### **Detroit Diamond**

Directed by Hamoody Jaafar  
Produced by Dave Maxwell  
Teaser: <https://vimeo.com/219787534>