



"Dance into the void..."

Messages

ALL HE WANTED WAS TO BE LEFT ALONE...
BUT THAT WAS THE LAST THING THAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN

northern lights
MOTION PICTURE COMPANY



SHORT SYNOPSIS

A man living an ordinary, anonymous life finds he is being stalked by an unknown assailant. With the help of a young woman fighting demons of her own, he must track down and stop his tormenter...only to discover that the most important question he's facing isn't *who*, but *why*...



250-WORD SYNOPSIS

Greg is an ordinary man living an anonymous life, with no family, no friends, and a dead-end job as a mail-order receptionist. And yet...to his dismay, he finds that someone out there *does* know him...and is out to destroy his life: an unknown assailant filing complaints with Greg's employer, canceling his credit cards, leaving taunting messages on his answering machine, and posting notices identifying him as a sexual predator.

These events bring Claire, a young woman fighting demons of her own, into his life. At her urging, Greg sets out to track down his tormenter. Their search leads them to a phone booth outside a run-down motel; staking it out, they observe a workman, Kartuli, making a phone call. Returning to Greg's apartment, they find another message from the stalker. They've found their man, and retaliate by placing a "police notice" under his door.

But Greg finds his assailant can't be shaken that easily; another message to Greg's employer costs Greg his job. That evening, Greg and Claire return to the motel to confront Kartuli. But this confrontation leads only to proof that Kartuli *wasn't* the one they were looking for...and a tragedy leaving Greg himself with blood on his hands.

The next morning, Greg's assailant makes his final move, summoning Greg to a face-to-face showdown at an abandoned lake estate. Greg sets out to face his enemy, only to discover answers he wasn't expecting...and that the most important question was never *who* was doing this to him, but *why*...



CAST

GREG	James Wirth
CLAIRE	Elizabeth Ammann
SEAN	Ryan Cloutier
MARK	Will Sexton
HARRIS	Robert Heath
HOSPITAL CASHIER	J Maki
LEVAN KARTULI	Bob Yount
GROCERY CASHIER	Mike Grimshaw
JOE	Tom Fraser
COPY-STORE CLERK	Andy Evans
SEAN'S MOTHER	Margaret O'Malley
DRUNK	James L. Tinsley
MAN ON PHONE	Anthony Silas
DRIVER	Miranda Burrell
ACCIDENT WITNESS	Kevin Claussen
MALE BYSTANDER	Sunny Randhawa
FEMALE BYSTANDER	Jolene Tyler
NEWSANCHOR	Anne Backus
POLICE DEPARTMENT VOICE MAIL	Brian Stampfl
SUPERINTENDENT	Craig Forsloff
PATIENTS IN HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM	Cynthia Edwards, Dianne Jones
VIGILANTES	Ryan Rutkowski, Sheena Billings, Tyler Russell, Greg Barnett
GROCERY CUSTOMER	Abdul Surur
LARGE GUY	James David Walley

CREW

PRODUCERS	Kelly Abbott, Albert Warren Schlosser, James David Walley
CO-PRODUCER	Greg Barnett
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER	James Wirth
WRITER-DIRECTOR	James David Walley
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY	Albert Warren Schlosser
CAMERA OPERATOR	Greg Barnett
SOUND	Davis Priestly, Kevin Malin
SOUND EDITOR	Craig Utterback
EDITOR	E. Goran Ammoch
COMPOSER	Christopher Barker
LOCATIONS MANAGER	Kelly Abbott
STUNT COORDINATORS	Craig Forsloff, James Wirth
WATER STUNT SUPERVISOR	Derek Wenzel
FIREARMS SUPERVISOR	Greg Barnett
GRAFFITI ARTIST	Matt Talkington
SKETCH ARTIST	Kelly Abbott
MATTE GRAPHICS	James David Walley

THE PRODUCTION

Messages began shooting on August 8th, 2003, and wrapped on September 27th.



As with many “no-budget” features, arranging for locations was one of the biggest challenges, particularly since the script called for everything from a rundown apartment/motel to a deserted lake estate. During the two weeks prior to the start date, no fewer than six locations for the main character’s apartment fell through, and we had to wind up using an apartment belonging

to one of the producers. This turned out to be an advantage, though, as the director had, two decades beforehand, lived in not only the same complex, but a unit with the same floor plan. So, pre-visualizing the action, choosing camera angles, and so on, were relatively simple.

It should probably be pointed out that there are hazards of posting “community notification” posters concerning a fictitious sex-predator (particularly one with a striking resemblance to the lead actor on it) around an apartment complex – namely, that you need to keep crew members in the vicinity of each of the posters to assure any residents passing by that, no, this is only for a movie, and there *really* isn’t a serial rapist living among them.



But even that experience didn’t prepare the cast and crew for what happened shortly after the scene where outraged residents throw rocks at Greg’s apartment. As we were setting up for the next shot (in which Greg, on the phone, complains to the police, “Look, they’re throwing rocks at the building!”), someone threw a *real* rock at the apartment...smashing the

rear sliding-glass door. Amazingly, it turned out not to be neither a would-be vigilante nor a “copycat,” but merely a couple of three-year-olds who were having fun throwing rocks at buildings, and hadn’t even seen the rock-throwing scene from the film. Nonetheless, it took some time for nerves to settle among the production members.

Another challenge was the phone booth. When *Messages* was first written, it was assumed that there would be no shortage of phone booths in neighborhoods with apartment buildings. But, during the years the script took form, the rise of the cell phone and concerns about drug dealing caused the disappearance of most of the traditional “Superman-style” phone booths in the greater Seattle area. It took several days of scouting trips by the producers to find even a handful of such booths. Fortunately, one of the few survivors was outside the 50’s era motel pressed into service as the residential apartment for Levan Kartuli.



Just as much energy went into finding a suitable lake for the film’s finale. Offut Lake was finally chosen, and a pier was reserved as a base for the on-the-water scenes that conclude *Messages*. Unfortunately, due to a series of miscommunications at the site, the reservation was not posted, and by the time the cast and crew arrived, the pier was already occupied by a cadre of

rather feisty fishermen who were not at all happy to have to move, and who retaliated by moving one pier over and making enough of a racket each time the camera rolled that the production eventually had to give up and find another site on the lake from which to shoot. Director Walley claims he learned something from this experience: “Whatever you do, *never* mess with fishermen. They’re the Teamsters of sportsmen.”

BIOGRAPHIES



JAMES WIRTH
(Greg)

Born in 1973, James Wirth's acting abilities lay dormant until his teen years when his natural ability was discovered while participating in various local theatre performances. After a hiatus of more than ten years, Wirth has focused again on his acting career, securing lead roles in theatre and film alike.

Wirth's emphasis on building a real-world understanding of the emotions his characters experience creates a presence on stage and in film that is paralleled by only a few. The creative energy that Wirth brings to each project is nothing short of inspiring.



ELIZABETH AMMANN
(Claire)

Elizabeth is originally from Michigan, where she went to school at the University of Michigan, receiving a degree in mechanical engineering. She moved to Washington with a job at Boeing and now works at their Long Beach plant as a stress engineer. Elizabeth has acted in a number of independent films as well as local theater productions. She was also a member of the Seattle sketch comedy troupe, *The Night Shift*. In addition to acting, Elizabeth is also a

dancer and martial artist. After six years in the Seattle acting scene, Elizabeth has recently relocated to the Los Angeles area to take her acting career to the next level.



RYAN CLOUTIER
(Sean)

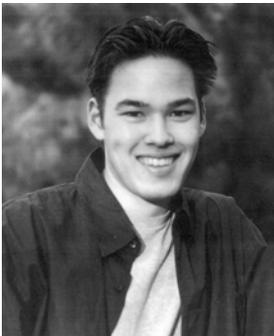
Originally from Southern Maine, Ryan Cloutier has performed in various theatres and independent films since he was nine years old. After graduating high school, he joined the Marine Corps as a bassoonist. After a four year stint in Hawaii, he headed to Portland, Oregon where he both acted in and worked crew for various independent productions in the Northwest. Ryan is currently working on

the script for his first short film, which he hopes to produce next spring.



ROBERT HEATH (Harris)

Robert started acting in 1981 while serving in the US Army in Germany. Since retiring from the service in 1996, Bob has been steadily working in film and stage productions and has provided narration and character voices for numerous training films and CD Rom games. He has appeared in over twenty stage productions, over twenty-seven independent feature and short films and numerous local and national television and radio commercials. He has portrayed a wide variety of characters during his career including but not limited to: 1950's game show host John Daly in the Lifetime Channel Movie *Take My Advice the Ann and Abby Story*, FBI Agent Webster Frye in *The Fall of Jimmy Ritz*, Tom Demont, TV pilot *Possession Point*, a womanizing businessman in *Streets of Blood*, God in *Gambling Divinity*, a Pastor in *Counseling Day*, and Roman Senator Anteros Andronicus in *All That Remains*.



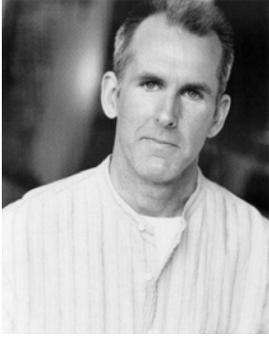
WILL SEXTON (Mark)

Will Sexton took an interest in acting in his 7th grade drama class. He has always had an avid interest in film, whether it was in front of or behind the camera. He has worn many hats in the art of film, including gaffer, camera operator, assistant director, and production assistant. He started taking acting seriously within recent years. In the past few years, he has appeared in commercials, shorts, and feature-length films. He aspires to become a producer and make it in the everyday struggle of the Hollywood shuffle.



J MAKI (Hospital Cashier)

J Arja Maki has done numerous Indie films. She has watched others murdered, been murdered, and been the murderer. She has been a therapist, a performance artist, a sports fan, a doctor, a mother, a TV chef, a receptionist, and an assortment of odd women. She does theatre as well as voice-overs.



TOM FRASER
(Joe)

Tom broke into acting in the late 80s. His first major role was at the New City Theater's Playwrights & Directors Festival in *The Writing on the Wall*, which later went on for a short run at that theater. Favorite projects include the critically-acclaimed and audience favorites *Flynn*, *Black Irish*, *The Day They Shot John Lennon*, and the role of the tough-talking Capt. McQuigg in *The Racket at the Union Garage*. On screen, he has been in a number of local projects: *Even Angels Cry*, *The Waiting Room*, *Leave-It*, and in the recent past on the small screen you may have seen him as the lone surfer swimming with sharks in a D.A. Davidson Investment commercial.



ANDY EVANS
(Copy-Store Clerk)

A current student at Western Washington University with a major in Theatre Arts and focus on acting. Although the interest began in theatre/stage, the love and dedication has shifted onto film/television. Plans are to go to graduate school at USC for film acting, followed by a pursuit of dreams in acting on film. Keep a lookout. He's a good one...and modest, too.



JAMES L. TINSLEY
(Drunk)

A graduate of DeAnza College, James Tinsley is a founding partner in Bursting Universe, an indie film production company. His in-front-of-the-camera work includes roles in *Last Stop*, *Cons*, *Going Straight*, and *Therapy*, as well as an F.B.I. training video.



KEVIN CLAUSSEN
(Accident Witness)

Moved to Seattle in 2002 from Austin, Texas and began promptly getting into local indie flicks "for kicks." Loves a good stout and has an insatiable chocolate addiction. Prefers character acting, where he can put on an accent or greatly alter his appearance so as to portray someone far removed from himself. Claussen is also a writer, sometimes graphic artist, and occasional singer. Lives with his young daughter on Capitol Hill.



MARGARET O'MALLEY
(Sean's Mother)

Margaret O'Malley is a professional actress who has been living in the Seattle area since 1996. Favorite stage roles include Chick in *Crimes of the Heart* and Capulet in an all-female *Romeo and Juliet*. Film credits include *Counseling Day* and *Since You Were Gone*, directed by David Schwimmer.



JAMES DAVID WALLEY
(Writer-Producer-Director)

James David Walley's destiny was clear from the start, as, arriving prematurely, he was nearly born in Grauman's Chinese Theatre during a screening of *The King and I*. Like so many others, Walley was first drawn to filmmaking during the "golden era" of the early 70s. When his first short film, made in two days as a high-school class project, was selected by Continental Cablevision for statewide broadcast, Walley had found his vocation. Following graduation from St. John's College (while producing and directing short films during vacations), Walley enrolled at California Institute of the Arts, earning an M.F.A. with his half-hour Super-8 drama, *Almost Home*.

But life after film school was a far different story. "Breaking into the industry was every bit as hard as my family and friends had told me it would be," Walley now says, "and it was a shock to realize that I could no longer afford to make even a Super-8 short." Further industry rejection, increasing financial difficulties, and a devastating split from his personal and creative partner eventually resulted in Walley selling vacuum cleaners door-to-door, and sleeping in his 1980 Toyota in vacant parking lots and highway rest stops. Finally, Walley set aside his filmmaking dreams, taught himself computer programming, and began a career as a game developer (ironically, often designing and programming the computer-game versions of popular films and television series).

But dreams never die completely, and Walley's were reawakened by an unexpected technological breakthrough, digital video. "I was so far out of touch, I only learned about DV years after it was introduced," Walley says, "I suddenly realized that it was now possible to make motion pictures – even features – for a cost I could pay out of my own pocket. All the dreams of twenty years before came flooding back. As soon as I could, I started setting down on paper the story that had been drifting in and out of my mind for years, the story that became *Messages*."

Not wanting to plunge directly into a feature after twenty years of inactivity, Walley first wrote and directed the short "unauthorized sequel" *Titanic II*, which played to enthusiastic audiences in Seattle and New York. With that experience under his belt, Walley was ready to move ahead with *Messages*, making him probably the oldest first-time feature director of 2004. According to Walley, it was all for the best. "Had I gone into feature filmmaking earlier in life," he says, "I probably would have gone on to imitate whatever was trendy at the time, like so many young filmmakers do. The advantage to being older is that it's hopeless to try to be fashionable, so I might as well just do things my own way."



KELLY ABBOTT
(Producer)

Kelly Abbott is a director of the Digital Revolution. She took up movie making in 1999 and currently writes/directs/produces comedies in Seattle, Washington. Her credits to date include the movies *Last Stop, Cons* and *Going Straight*, and the shorts *Lighthouse* and *Therapy*.



ALBERT WARREN SCHLOSSER
(Producer – Director of Photography)

Upturning decayed leaves and damp rocks of some dingy, unusual location, one might notice the appearance of a certain Albert Warren Schlosser. As a native resident of Seattle, Schlosser took an early liking to visual forms of stimulation, beginning with arts and crafts in grade school. As a teen, he began to study drawing with pencil and pen and ink. Meanwhile, at the age of 15, Schlosser took up writing. We would later discover that his ambitions in writing drove him to achieve a degree in Composition at Western Washington University. After high school he began a self-study in cinema, browsing the works of directors like Luis Buñuel, Ingmar Bergman, Mario Bava, Dario Argento, Martin Scorsese, Lars Von Trier, Enzo Castellari, among dozens of others. At another time, he spent full-time hours every week lighting subjects, snapping photos, and perfecting developing and printing techniques. Ultimately, strong interests in writing, cinema, and photography led Albert Schlosser to his goal as a filmmaker.



GREG BARNETT
(Co-Producer)

Greg Barnett is a software developer who includes photography, cinematography and editing among his hobbies. More of his photography can be seen on the [Not Quite Right Photography](http://irgth.com/) (<http://irgth.com/>) site.



CHRISTOPHER BARKER (Composer)

Christopher D. Barker, B.Mus, M.A., is an award-winning composer whose twenty-eight soundtracks have been performed on tens of thousands of home and corporate computers on this continent and abroad. This, plus his background as university music theory and piano instructor, professional violinist and baritone hornist, orchestra and choir director, and long-time professional colleague, made him the clear choice to compose the soundtrack for James David

Walley's 2002 short film *Titanic II* and, in 2004, his feature-length *Messages*.

Chris composes, orchestrates, performs, records, engineers and produces live-performance-quality music in a home studio centered around Tascam's GigaStudio, in a penthouse condo with a stunning panoramic view of idyllic Auburn Valley, south of Seattle. He still holds out a faint hope that he will turn out to be a child prodigy after all.



CRAIG UTTERBACK (Sound Editor)

Craig Utterback is a composer/sound designer/audio developer who grew up in the musical Eden (or Inferno) of New Orleans during the '50s and '60s, where he picked up his first guitar and a passion for music of all styles. Upon graduation from high school, he received a reel-to-reel tape recorder, which launched his never-ending consumption of recording media and music/audio technologies. In the mid '70s (as an Apollo 17 mission team member), he met his first computer at the Johnson Space Center in

Houston, Texas. After more than twelve years as a computer hardware professional, while becoming educated in music theory (along with participating in numerous music and recording projects), Craig made a transition to software development in the computer game industry. Since 1990 he has designed, produced and composed music and created sound effects, voice content, and integration schemes for more than thirty computer games as well as numerous music, independent film, and other products related to electronic entertainment. He is currently Director of Audio Creation, Corrections & Rehabilitation at the TCS Memorial Sound Abuse Clinic & Mental Health Spa in Kent, Washington. Craig plays, builds, and restores guitars, basses, and audio tube amps when he gets the opportunity.



E. GORAN AMMOCH (Editor)

Ammoch is a close personal friend of the director. *Messages* is his first feature editing assignment.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Messages was a long time in gestation: eighteen years, to be precise. By the time the process was over, the story was far from what I had envisioned at the start.

Originally, *Messages* was to be a study of paranoia – a tale of a man who believed that random signs and events, street graffiti, etc., were somehow malevolent communications intended specifically for him. Eventually, the story changed into one in which the protagonist was no longer merely imagining that he was being communicated with, but was actually the target of another character's relentless and malicious mind-games and "practical jokes."

While this shift brought new energy to the storytelling, the end result quickly turned into a rather formulaic action-mystery thriller with the clichéd confrontation with the "psychotic evil mastermind" at its climax. (This being Seattle, the aforementioned evil mastermind also bore a striking resemblance to the billionaire founder of a certain local software empire.) Finally, I realized that the only way to create a satisfying ending was to go against the expectations of that genre, subverting rather than reiterating it.

Looking back, what strikes me about *Messages* is that, while I had no interest at the outset in making a film with a specific "theme" or "moral" (something I generally find intolerably heavy-handed), and merely set out to create an interesting and entertaining story, I can look at the final result and see it contains all sorts of observations about guilt and innocence, retribution and reconciliation, and the nature of justice in the world, that were among the issues I was wrestling with during the time the script took shape, but which I never imagined would appear in the story being created, let alone permeate it.

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MOTION PICTURE COMPANY

21639 S.E. 266th PLACE • MAPLE VALLEY, WASHINGTON • 98038 • (425) 830-7874
northernlightsfilms@yahoo.com • www.northern-lights-films.com