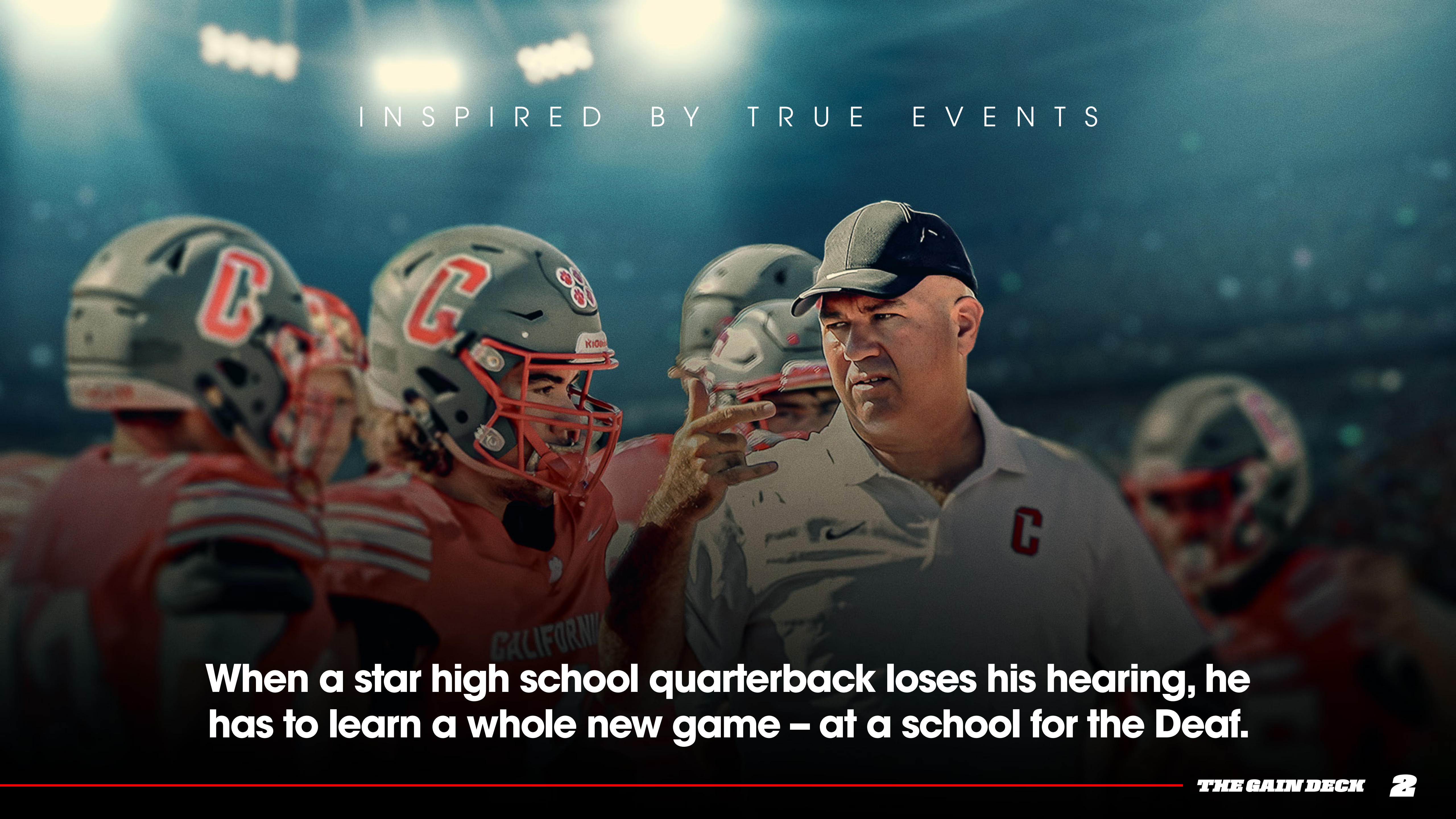


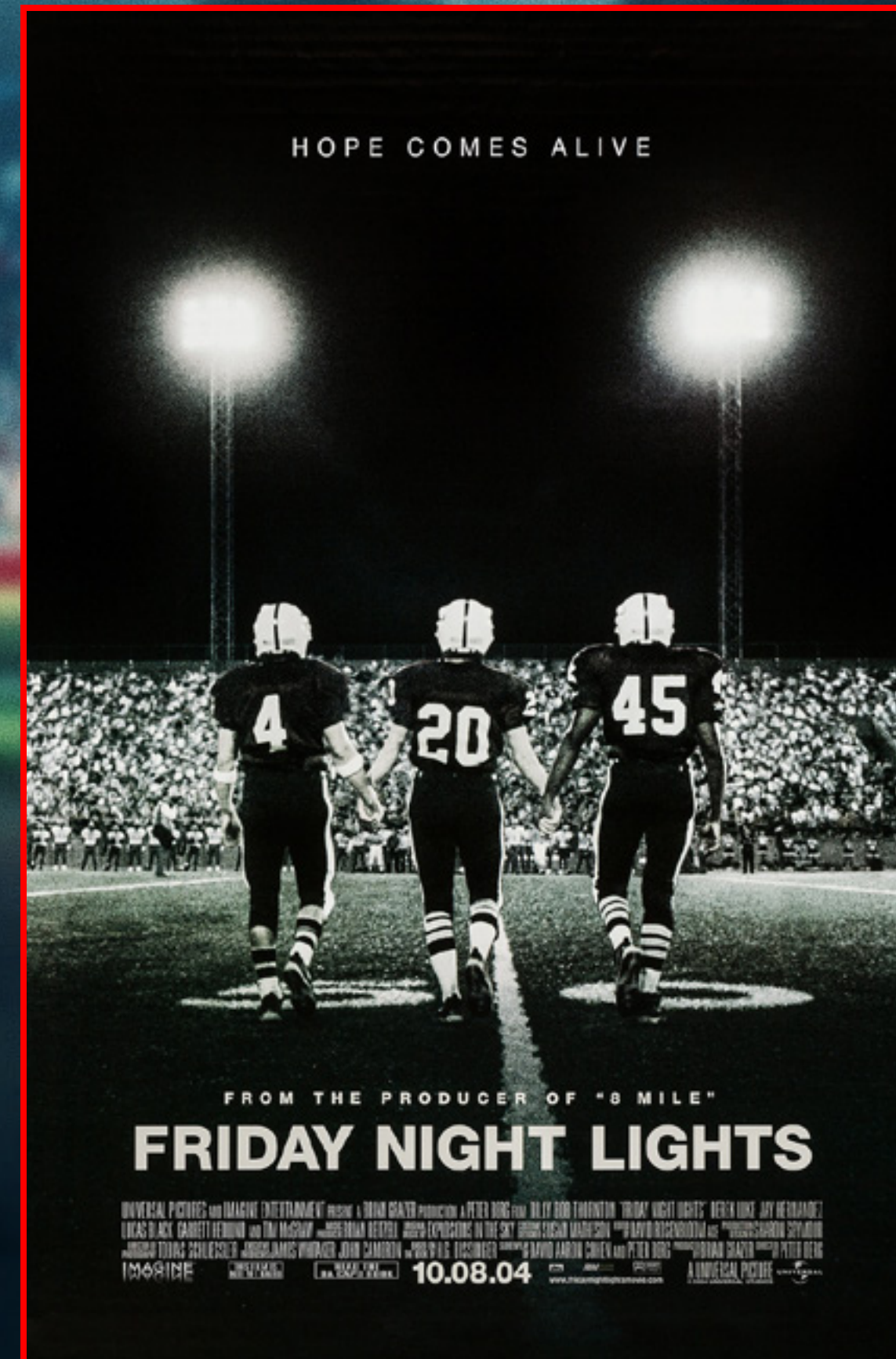
THE GAIN





I N S P I R E D B Y T R U E E V E N T S

When a star high school quarterback loses his hearing, he has to learn a whole new game – at a school for the Deaf.

[illegible]



MATTHEW KOWALCHUK

Director, Co-writer, Producer

Matthew made the Telefilm-financed theatrically released feature *LAWRENCE & HOLLOWMAN*, which garnered him the Canadian Comedy Award for 'Best Feature', the VIFF Emerging Filmmaker Award, and numerous other awards. He's also made shorts, including the NSI Drama Prize winning *THE JANITORS*, *BEDBUGS: A MUSICAL LOVE STORY*, *PENGUINS*, and the personal *HEARING TEST*. He's also directed a music video, a couple commercials, and the web series *GREENISH*.



MARLEE MATLIN

"Principal Davis"

and Executive Producer

Marlee Matlin became the first Deaf performer to win an Academy Award, and youngest performer ever to win Best Actress, when she won for *CHILDREN OF A LESSER GOD*. Since then, she has been in countless projects including *THE WEST WING*, *THE L WORD*, *FAMILY GUY*, *REASONABLE DOUBTS*, *PICKET FENCES*, *SWITCHED AT BIRTH*, *DEAD SILENCE*, *HEAR NO EVIL*, *WHAT THE BLEEP DO WE KNOW* and the Oscar-winning *CODA*. She has Executive Produced projects such as *WHERE THE TRUTH LIES*, *THE DEAF FAMILY*, and the Oscar-nominated narrative short *FEELING THROUGH*.



ANNE TOMASETTI

ASL Consultant

Anne is Deaf and was the ASL consultant on the multiple Oscar-winning *CODA*. She has also held this position on *HOLD YOUR BREATH*, *LAW & ORDER*, *ACCUSED*, and the Netflix series *BLACKRABBIT*. Anne consults on casting, translates the script's English dialogue into ASL, then ensures that ASL is presented accurately, accessibly, and beautifully on screen. She also oversees the team of ASL interpreters needed for projects with Deaf cast or crew.



ALLAN GRAF

2nd Unit Director & Football / Stunt Coordinator

Graf played offensive guard for the undefeated national champion USC Trojans. After a brief experience playing in the NFL, Graf became a stunt man and football coordinator. He was Unit Director & Football / Stunt Coordinator on movies like *FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS*, *ANY GIVEN SUNDAY*, *JERRY MAGUIRE*, *THE WATERBOY*, *GRIDIRON GANG*, *THE PROGRAM*, *THE REPLACEMENTS*, *WHEN THE GAME STANDS TALL*, *THE EXPRESS*, and many others.



DIRECTOR'S STORY

MATTHEW KOWALCHUK

The **Gain** is inspired by my real-life experience.

When I was a teenager, I inexplicably started to lose my hearing. There was no obvious cause, it was a complete mystery – and to this day remains so. All I know for certain is that over a few months, I went from completely normal hearing to waking up and seeing my mom’s lips moving, without hearing any sound.

The next few years were very hard. I was given hearing aids, but often chose not to wear them. And a large part of my survival came from playing football. When I was on the field, it didn’t matter that I couldn’t hear. I could get by on visuals alone.

My struggle has always been about living in between worlds: the hearing world and the Deaf community. I’ve never felt like I truly belonged to either one. So The Gain is in part, a fantasy ‘What If...?’ rewind of my life, which poses the question:

What if I had an opportunity when I was a teenager to become a part of the Deaf community?





SYNOPSIS

Jamie is a genuinely kind and popular kid, and star quarterback, whose ambition is to be the “1 in 5000” high school players who actually go on to play professionally.

So when his hearing inexplicably starts to go ... he tells no one. Until it costs his team the championship, and himself a trip to the hospital. Jamie is forced to rely on hearing aids, and he takes the change in stride ... until even aids don't help. If he wants to continue playing football, he'll have to do so at a school for the Deaf.

The transition is severe: leaving home, team, friends, and entering a new school where he doesn't even know the language - ASL. But eventually he discovers that being Deaf or hard of hearing is not just a disability - it's a distinct and beautiful culture and community. What felt like a loss, might actually be a ... “gain”. He even helps his new team all the way to the regional finals! Where they will play against his old team ...

But in the interim, Jamie is offered cochlear implant surgery to improve his hearing and rejoin his old school. A crisis of identity forces him to decide - and he chooses to stay with his Deaf team. The game is fraught as his two worlds collide. But like a true leader, he synthesizes his duelling realities, leans into his newfound “Deaf Gain”, and - even if not victorious on the field - we know he'll go on to rewrite the game.

CHARACTERS



JAMIE

Genuinely kind and popular, star quarterback, prides himself on independence, but has started to become hard of hearing.



CHANTAL

Hearing. Jamie's mom, a young mother who took a while to find herself and is a now-out lesbian



PRINCIPAL DAVIS (Marlee Matlin attached)
Deaf. The principal at Lakeview; an upbeat, wise owl, who's as welcoming as she is determined



TODD

Hearing. Jamie's dad, a go-get-em businessman who has worked non-stop to provide for his son



MEG

Deaf. The student rep at Lakeview; a non-stereotypical cheerleader, whose boyfriend is stereotypically the Quarterback ...



COACH H

Deaf. Impassioned and fiery football coach at Lakeview; their offense is lacking, but he still makes Jamie earn a place on the team

DIRECTOR'S VISION

IN BETWEEN WORLDS...

When the story begins, we are in the hearing world with Jamie, and he has difficulty hearing - but this is his secret.

I'd like to "share" the secret with the audience by giving them moments of POV - quick flashes - in combination with a sound design that includes what I'd call 'directional sound': if he's not looking directly at it, we simply don't get that audio.

When Jamie begins to investigate the Deaf world, we'll see a sort of inverse of the above. The lack of sound will be striking, not only to Jamie but to our audience. We'll now see and feel his true predicament: he is unable to communicate in either world.

Example #1: In the opening football game, with Jamie down after the play, we'll jump into his POV and experience his silent world, though we can clearly see the coach talking to him from above.

Example #2: When Jamie returns to school, now wearing hearing aids, we'll hang back and observe. The audience should pick up on the nuances, like Jamie in class watching - but not quite hearing - his teacher.

In the Deaf world...

Here we focus on the visual challenge to communicate. Lips moving without sound are now replaced by close-ups of ASL hand movements which are baffling to Jamie.

For our Deaf audience, the world should feel normal. Foot stomps, claps, and flickering lights get another's attention.

For our hearing audience, it's a glimpse into a fascinating world. The liveliest conversations take place in surrounding near-silence.



CASTING

In addition to Marlee Matlin, for other characters who are Deaf/hoh I am committed to engaging people who have that lived experience. Considering our research, community engagement and team so far, I am confident we can do so.

SOUND / MUSIC

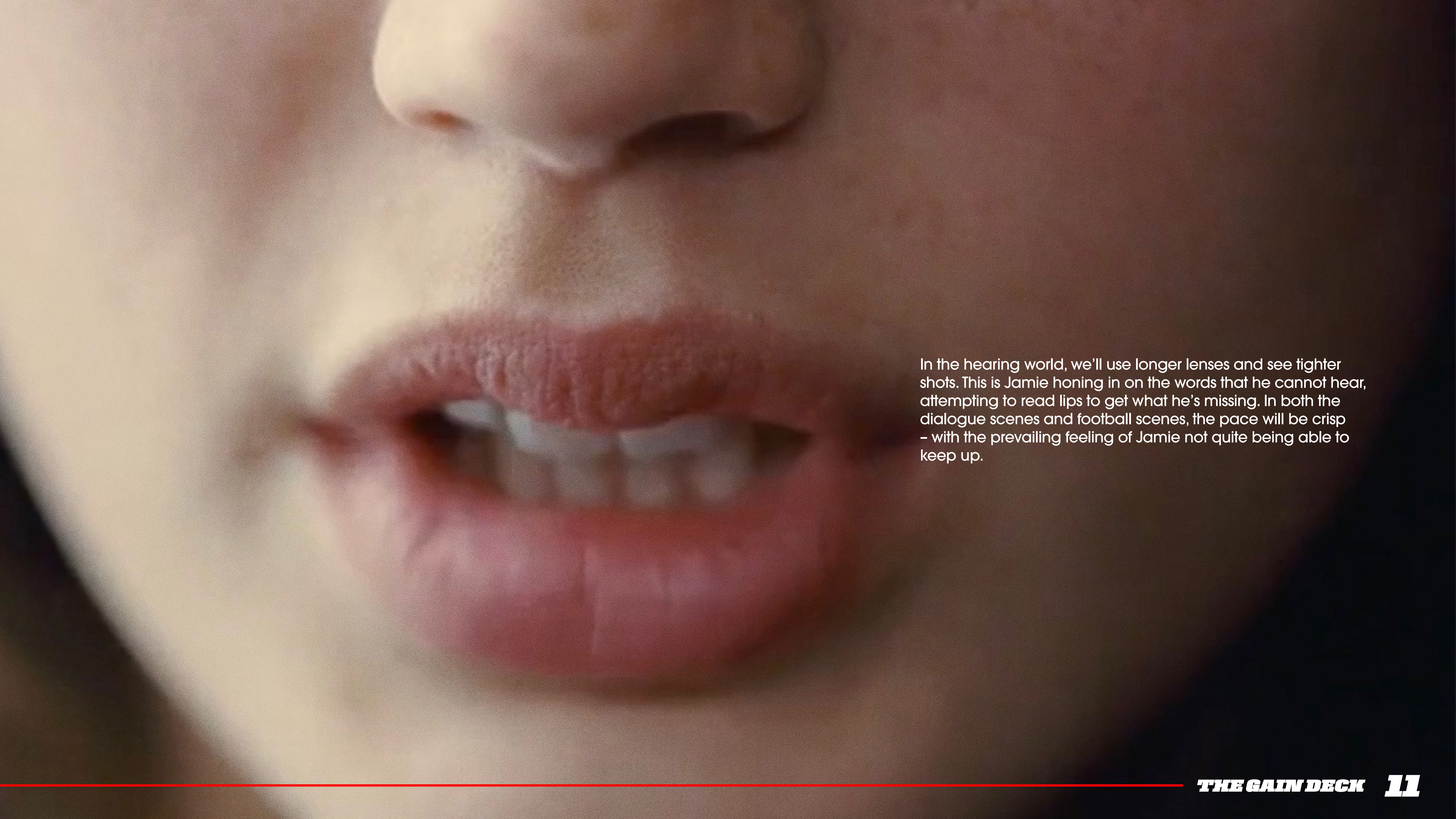
In the hearing world, we'll hear "normally"... with more sounds than in the Deaf world, but not any louder. In contrast, the difference should be striking yet still feel natural. While in the hearing world, part of the sound design is built around what and how Jamie hears.

In the Deaf world, we'll more clearly notice sounds ordinarily covered by the chatter of the hearing world: footsteps, quiet door clicks, pencils put down, etc. My approach would be similar to the soundscape in *Sound of Metal*, in which all is not silent, mirroring my own experience. Instead, we key on sounds as subtle as Jamie's breath, or even his heartbeat. And in the football scenes, we'll still hear the on-field crunch of players colliding, but with no announcer, it should transport us into a new kind of football world.



VISUAL STYLE

We'll be filming Jamie with a subjective camera. What is he seeing and hearing? I love when the filmmaker and cinematographer are able to bring me into the character's world, and it's important to me that the audience has a clear sense of Jamie's experience, as opposed to simply witnessing his story. A nice comp would be the early-mid career work of Darren Aronofsky: *The Wrestler*, *Black Swan* era, in which we get to know the characters as we move with them, both observing them and taking in what they take in, all at once.



In the hearing world, we'll use longer lenses and see tighter shots. This is Jamie honing in on the words that he cannot hear, attempting to read lips to get what he's missing. In both the dialogue scenes and football scenes, the pace will be crisp – with the prevailing feeling of Jamie not quite being able to keep up.

A group of people are seated around a dining table in a restaurant. In the foreground, the back of a person's head and shoulders are visible, looking towards the other diners. The table is set with plates of food, glasses of beer, and condiment bottles. In the background, a woman with a red headband and a man with a beard are engaged in conversation. The lighting is warm and ambient, with a modern pendant light hanging above the table.

In the Deaf world, I envision using wider lenses so that we quite literally SEE more. Longer takes, fewer cuts, following/tracking shots in handheld or steadicam as Jamie investigates his new and unfamiliar world.

COMMUNICATION IN TRANSLATION

It's my intention to make this film with Open Captions, meaning subtitles embedded in the picture for all dialogue (English and ASL) and incidental sound and music, present for all theatrical screenings. When watching at home, viewers would have the choice whether to caption English, ASL, both (Open Captions), or none. The Deaf/hoh community advocates for Open Captions, so I would not make this film without them.

COMPS & FEELS

It's hard for me to get away from CODA. I had such a visceral, emotional reaction to that film, laughed and cried so hard. Though the lead character was hearing, I really related to her caught-between-worlds predicament. So it's the feel of CODA... + football. Not just a high school movie. Not just a sports movie. The story is intensely personal, too, but of course it's not only that. It's the movie I needed when I was young. And, it's also the movie I need now.

We love you!

CREATIVE INTENTIONS

MATTHEW KOWALCHUK

(Writer, Director, Producer)

I love sports movies, and the ones that stay with me have one thing in common: the character's journey outside the game is what ultimately brings them to their cathartic moment in the game. Their triumph (or defeat) transcends the sport itself and, win or lose, we are invested. Cool Runnings, For Love of the Game, Rudy, and Moneyball all come to mind as inspiration; films that are so much more than a sports movie. I want the audience to connect to Jamie in a personal way, to see how football is simply a part of him; feeling it viscerally when he plays.

Ultimately, this is my coming-of-age story. But in Jamie's version, I give him a choice I never had: to become part of the Deaf community. I'm excited to create a film that can affect real change in people's awareness of deafness and of deaf culture. I'm also excited to make a kick ass football movie.

DANIEL SMITH ARNOLD

(Writer, Producer)

Matthew has been talking about a "deaf football movie" for years, ever since we made our first short together in 2005. But he's always struggled to find the right container.

Meanwhile, a large part of my career in theatre has been nurturing and guiding stories from creators whose stories I feel need to be told. One of those recent plays was co-written & performed by a young Deaf woman. And as I commissioned, developed, and premiered that play, Matthew's "deaf football movie" kept coming to mind. So Matthew and I talked about it again, and we finally found a story framework that felt both safe for him - and exciting.

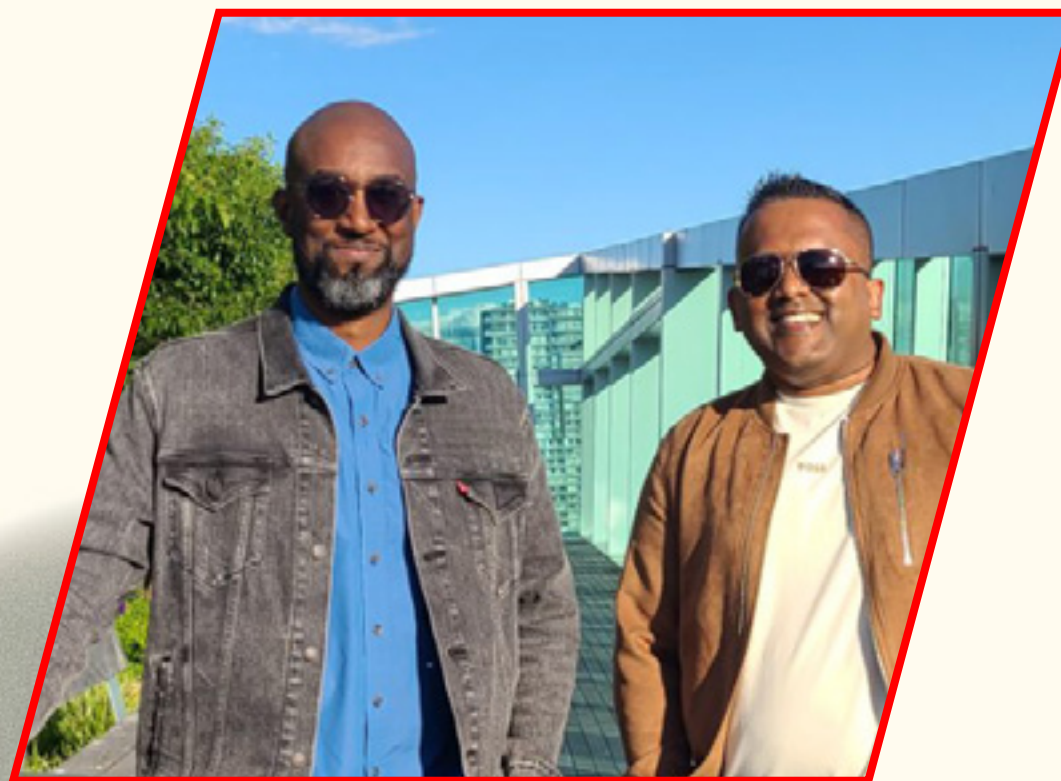
My intentions are to hold space for, and celebrate, Deaf and hard of hearing culture, while inspiring young folks who may be going through something similar. Finding your identity can be hard. But I love this story concept because it's not a trauma story, or a disability story; it's a story that positively bridges boundaries of difference. I'm honored to be a part of that bridge.

THE TEAM



CO-WRITER, PRODUCER / Daniel Smith Arnold

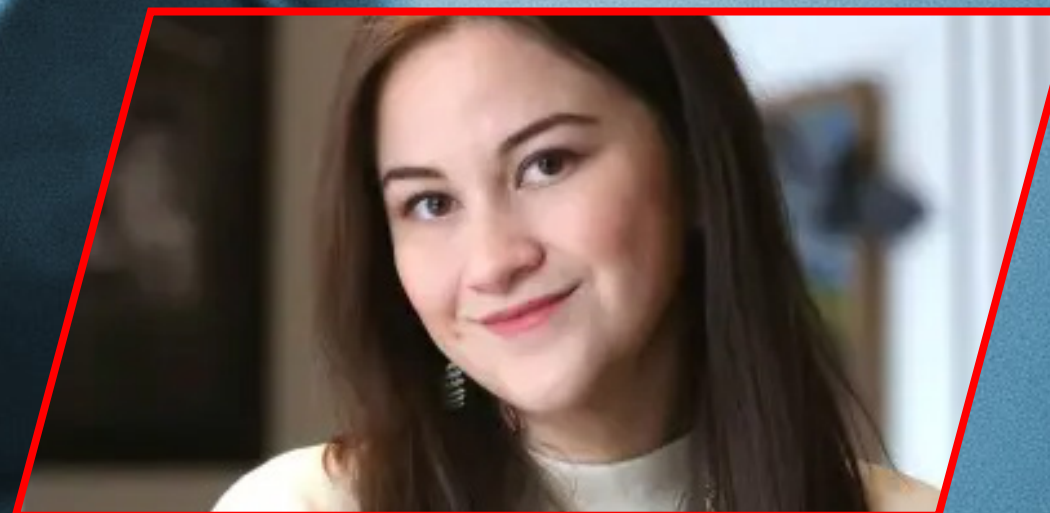
Daniel starred in and co-wrote/produced (with Matthew Kowalchuk) the feature *LAWRENCE & HOLLOMAN*, which won over a dozen awards, including the Canadian Comedy Award for “Best Feature Film”, and was theatrically released in North America before airing on Super Channel, OutTV, and CBC Gem. He is currently in post on his 2nd feature *INHERITANCE*, as co-writer/producer and actor, an Indigenous-led film based on his co-written stage play which was a Finalist for the “Governor General’s Award”. He produced an interactive docu-series *WWW.MRSWARRENS.CA*, and for over a dozen years ran a theatre company whose mandate was “make the invisible visible”, which often meant stewarding the work of equity-deserving creators. He graduated with distinction from the Advanced level of UCLA’s TV Writing program and is a co-protege recipient of “The Siminovitch Prize”.



PRODUCERS / Haydn Wazelle & Richard Raghoo (Dada Ibis Media)

Dada Ibis Media is a full-service Vancouver-based production company which executive produced the feature film *CAN I GET A WITNESS*, starring Sandra Oh, and the stop-motion film *INKWO FOR WHEN THE STARVING RETURN*, from Amanda Strong; both films were named to TIFF Canada’s Top Ten ‘24. Inkwo had its US premiere at Sundance 2025. The company’s current documentary, *MUZIZI*, is now airing on CBC Gem.





STORY CONSULTANT & ASSOCIATE PRODUCER / Katarina Ziervogel

Katarina is a Deaf, Ojibway-Mohawk / German woman and a registered member of Sagkeeng First Nation. She co-wrote the feature *FINALITY OF DUSK* which was Telefilm-financed, premiered at Red Nation FF, and is now on CBC Gem. She played Maya's mom in the Disney / Marvel series *ECHO*. And she has directed an episode of *TAKEN* for Eagle Vision and APTN.



DEAF FOOTBALL ADVISOR / Michael Paulone

Michael Paulone is a Deaf football coach at the Indiana School for the Deaf. He previously was a star quarterback in college, and even caught the eye of legendary NFL coach Dick Vermeil when he was coaching the Philadelphia Eagles.



DIRECTOR MENTOR / Daniel Petrie Jr

Born in Canada and raised in Hollywood, Daniel is the Academy Award-nominated writer of *BEVERLY HILLS COP*. He also wrote *THE BIG EASY*, *TURNER & HOOSH*, and *TOY SOLDIERS*, which was his directorial debut. He also wrote/directed *IN THE ARMY NOW* and produced *THE 6TH DAY*, and has since written, directed or produced numerous projects for film or television. Daniel has been a mentor to Matthew Kowalchuk and Daniel Smith Arnold since their first short film, has had the privilege of directing Marlee Matlin in *DEAD SILENCE*, and is honored to join the team of *THE GAIN*.



ACCESSIBILITY & SUSTAINABILITY PRODUCER / Devon Ellis-Durity

Devon is a mixed race child of black, caucasian, and asian descent. She mentored with director Ann Marie Fleming on her first feature *WINDOW HORSES* and reunited with Fleming to work on her latest feature *CAN I GET A WITNESS* as an associate producer and sustainability coordinator. She is now an associate producer with DADA IBIS MEDIA, where she Sustainability Produced the doc *MUZIZI*. She is fluent in American Sign Language.



DIRECTOR'S PREVIOUS WORK



Lawrence & Holloman
Feature film
(pw: thejestofit)



Bedbugs: A Musical Love Story
Short Film



The Janitors
Short Film

A W A R D S

- Best Feature Film**
Canadian Comedy Awards
- Best Direction**
Canadian Comedy Award nomination
- Best Writing**
Canadian Comedy Award nomination
- Emerging BC Filmmaker Award**
Vancouver IFF
- Best Canadian Feature**
Edmonton IFF
- Rising Star: Filmmaker Award**
Edmonton IFF
- Best Director of a Comedy**
Victoria TX Indie Film Fest
- Best Feature Comedy**
RxSM Self Medicated Film Expo
- Best Canadian Film**
Buffalo Niagara FF

- Canadian Short Film Award**
Edmonton IFF
- Best Short**
Victoria TX Indie FF
- Best Short**
RxSM Self Medicated Film Expo
- Best Short**
BC Leo Award nomination
- Best Direction**
BC Leo Award nomination
- Best Screenwriting**
BC Leo Award
- Best Female Performance**
BC Leo Award
- Best Male Performance**
BC Leo Award Nomination
- Best Picture Editing**
BC Leo Award nomination
- Best Production Design**
BC Leo Award nomination
- Best Costume Design**
BC Leo Award nomination
- Best Musical Score**
BC Leo Award

- National Screen Institute Drama Prize**
Alberta Centennial Award finalist
Calgary IFF
- Short Fiction Discovery finalist**
Hollywood FF
- International Distribution**
interFilm Berlin

***“May very well be the most unique
Canadian film ever made.”***
- Vancouver Presents

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THE
GAIN
RIP REEL

