

Spot Creative presents

THE HOLE STORY

a film by Alex Karpovsky

83 minutes

www.theholestoryfilm.com

Synopsis



(short - 50 words)

Despite arctic temperatures sheathing Minnesota's lakes in three feet of solid ice, an inexplicable stretch of water surfaces on North Long Lake. Determined to unravel this mystery for a television pilot called 'Provincial Puzzlers', an aspiring director is slowly engulfed in a maniacal search that leads to his own unraveling.

(long - 200 words)

Winter. Brainerd, Minnesota. Despite arctic temperatures sheathing hundreds of surrounding lakes in three feet of solid ice, a massive stretch of water opens up on the surface of North Long Lake. With repeated scientific investigations yielding no answers, the 'Black Hole' captures the heart of the nearby community while attracting national, even international attention.

Convinced this charming story would be perfect for the small town mystery show he's been fervently pitching to cable executives for years, Alex decides to cash in his savings from editing karaoke videos, hire a small crew, and make the pilot episode himself. Upon arrival however, this black hole mystery reveals itself to be much more disturbing and personal than expected, slowly engulfing Alex in an existential search that consumes not only his cherished pilot, but with it the very underpinnings of his sanity.

Witnessing a humanity and desperation that can only reveal itself through the cracks of a fractured dream, the crew's cameraman veers his focus away from the pilot to the tragedy of our unraveling hero. Interweaving real footage intended for the pilot along with private phone calls and journal recordings, *The Hole Story* is a troubling yet hilarious journey into the burden of dreams and the making of American legends.



Director's Statement

The Hole Story began as a challenge to seamlessly and comically interweave a real mystery, in a real community, with a fictionalized hero complete with back-story and character arc. Shooting on video and working without rigid time constraints, I was afforded the freedom to explore this 'hybridization' and develop it, for better or for worse, without much regard for formula or convention. Consisting exclusively of local non-actors, adhering to no formal script, set in a real location and revolving entirely upon a true and factual subject, the final product is neither a narrative film, documentary or mockumentary.

With the advent of cheap digital technology and our growing familiarity with innovative documentary filmmaking and reality television, the time seems ripe for this experimentation between 'truth' and 'fiction'. What I find particularly interesting in all this are the contextual frameworks that accompany these words and how they shape our cinematic sense of judgment and expectation. For example, if a film begins by telling the audience that it is based on a true story, we might be more forgiving of a straightforward plot and, conversely, increasingly suspicious when one plot twist befalls another. If the first few minutes of another film clearly present it as a documentary, then individuals who appear within it will not be judged by the believability of their dramatic 'performance', but rather on a completely different set of standards, like how clearly or accurately they convey certain thoughts or experiences. I know this is somewhat obvious, but what I'm getting at here is that by experimenting with cinematic styles, by interweaving or blurring them for example, one experiments with these contextual frameworks and in so doing the filmmaker gives the audience an opportunity to perceive familiar notions or events or performances in an entirely different light.

Perhaps this sounds like a bunch of diluted academic hooey, but I truly think there's something here. In fact, my enthusiasm for this new-born possibility came to play a central role in the way I chose to approach this film. I wanted *The Hole Story* to be, if nothing else, a sincere (and hopefully funny) attempt to carve a new road to a very old struggle. Specifically, by telling the story of a lost man's maniacal need to matter in a way that intentionally avoids familiar styles and all the conventional frameworks of judgment and expectation that accompany them, I hope the film can provide a fresh perspective on our timeless wonder with the existential void, and all the beautiful fears, humor and dreams it quietly harbors.

Production Notes



In addition to writing and directing this film I have chosen to play its main character. Not seasoned in the art of acting, I thought it might be best to base this character on myself. A lot on myself. As the main 'character' in this film is a karaoke video editor dreaming of creating a television program, I too have been cutting karaoke and corporate videos for the last few years while yearning to make a feature length film. He is a young fellow struggling to balance his love life with his creative endeavors, I was dumped by a long-term girlfriend two weeks into pre-production.

My central goal was to give this character an arc and place him in the middle of a real community hosting a very surreal mystery. We would shoot on location for a week or so and then I would return home to edit the footage, where ideas and logistics for the next shoot would solidify. I wanted the organic dynamic that was to develop between the character and the community to dictate the flow of the story, just as you might see in a documentary. And so in this manner, going back and forth across the country, the first two acts of the film were completed. Needless to say, working with non-actors and the headlights of my journey going only so far into the dark future, obstacles were persistent and widespread. From tonal fluctuations to forced transitions to deep-rooted issues of general believability, my fundamental belief in the project was constantly harassed. Yet it was the slippery overall shape of act three that ultimately did me in.

Everything I tried just didn't sit right – events seemed either too contrived or too hammy; too dark or simply too preposterous. Over and over again I would clutch a desperate 'solution' in the editing room, reconstitute my disillusioned crew, shoot yet another series of scenes, only to realize weeks later, back in front of my computer, that I was no closer to a completed film. With grotesquely diminishing results, this unfortunate pattern repeated itself numerous times until finally, eighteen months later, I found myself severely depressed, my crew and contacts no longer returning my phone calls, and my keyboard smashed into roughly four hundred individual parts.



Prone to drama and mood swings harboring self-destructive behavior, I decided to check myself into a small mental health facility. It was my first venture into such an institution and though I was apprehensive at first, I came to genuinely appreciate the quiet, the routine, and the very necessary need to express my frustrations. Guiding me through this process was a cheery staff doctor named George Thompson, whom I've grown to love and very much respect. Understanding the role my film played in bringing me there as well as its highly

personal and malleable nature, he softly suggested that perhaps I should incorporate some of my experiences at the center, as well as the events leading up to it, into the story of the film itself. I remember him saying something like, “it might be the healthiest and most productive way for you to deal with the issues underlying your hospitalization. Also, get an editor.”

Following a brief and disconcertingly predictable dance with skepticism, I checked myself out and convinced a brilliant young editor (and close friend) to help me implement George’s suggestion. Almost immediately we realized that since the main character of the film and I were so intrinsically connected, it would not only make sense for him to follow in my footsteps but I could also depict this journey with a truth and sincerity previous efforts sorely lacked. In fact, I came to rely upon my experiences at the center so much in the shaping of the film that not only does the main character check himself



into a small mental health center but the doctor assigned to him is played by none other than George himself. Moreover, some of the friends I made during my stay appear in the film as fellow inpatients. Caricaturing specific scenes and practices from the center and placing them in the context of the film, I was able to reflect upon everything I’d gone through with much greater perspective, clarity, and humor - shooting the film and receiving therapy had become one and the same, just as George had quietly predicted.

Thrilled and revitalized, soon after the third act was edited together I got the crew together one last time and assembled the final scenes of the film. It was an upbeat ending where our loveable hero embraces his dream and relishes in the sense of triumph and completion that lies in the wake. At this point the blurry line between my character and myself had virtually disintegrated and in shooting this ending I could not contain the joy and relief that I felt awaited me on the other side of completion. A few days after our martini shot I padded my editor on the back, thanked him repeatedly, bought an expensive bottle of champagne, and then promptly fell into the darkest hole of my life.

When you’ve worked so long on something, sacrificed everything, and wanted it so badly that it’s come to define who are you and what you hope to become, attaining it can be the most terrifying thing in the world. What do I do now? Who am I now? What if I’m still not happy? Panicking, I called George. To my surprise he told me, in a somewhat bemused tone, that he was expecting this call; “it’s a natural, unavoidable, and very very healthy response to the realization of an all-encompassing dream”, he assured me. “But it’s so different from what I expected, from what I... you know, hoped for”, I stammered. “Perhaps you should put that in your movie” he said with a hearty laugh.

To George’s deep dismay I did just that – sort of, anyway. Looking back on the ‘upbeat ending’ I felt disgusted and ashamed. How could I give this character, with whom I’ve been through so much and whose journey so closely and honestly reflected my own, such a cheap finale? It simply wasn’t right and within the contours of the story we had established, it wasn’t believable either. Getting the crew together one last time, I wanted to create an ending that preserved the integrity between my character and myself, yet one which would also allow me to say goodbye to him once and for all. So, though the underlying emotions of my character closely resemble my own personal experiences in this final scene, his response is very different. A fork has emerged in the road and I tried my best to steer him down the other path. It was nice but, after all, we are two different people – I think.



Kind Words

"Equal measures Woody Allen and Werner Herzog, *The Hole Story* is one of the most original American comedies we've seen in a long time."

-- Matthew Ross, FILMMAKER MAGAZINE

"Amazing: hilarious, smart, and surprisingly profound... *The Hole Story* is one of those films that you want to push on people. It's a fine achievement and a wonderful debut."

-- Michael Tully, INDIEWIRE

"I fell in love with it and have not been able to get it out of my head....It was one of my favorite unreleased films of last year and one of the saddest and funniest debuts I've ever seen... I hope it gets a theatrical distributor so that audiences have a chance to discover Karpovsky, a distinctive comic voice and significant American filmmaker."

-- Matt Zoller Seitz, NEW YORK PRESS

"Take note of an important, talented, and original filmmaker in our midst. After weary years as a Boston-based editor of corporate and karaoke videos, Karpovsky achieved this feature, and what a feature! It's a kind of "mockumentary," but so much more, as there's little "mock" in this fictionalized non-fiction work and lots of drive and spiritual-existential ambition... *The Hole Story* can be hilariously funny, but it also dares ask, and seriously, why the hell are we on this earth? Karpovsky's movie needs a distributor. It needs to be shown theatrically."

-- Gerald Peary, THE BOSTON PHOENIX

"★★★ 1/2 (out of four stars) ... very very funny ... Not documentary, not mockumentary, 'The Hole Story' is a clever meld of fact with fiction."

-- Deborah Caulfield Rybak, MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL STAR TRIBUNE

"a hilarious account of Karpovsky's maniacal search for success, meaning, human connection, America, and a 40-foot Paul Bunyan statue... The film has no sex, no violence, and no stars, but it doesn't need them. It's what you could call an "out loud" movie: one sure to leave audiences laughing out loud at its gentle ironies, groaning at Karpovsky's outrageous attempts to save the project, and gasping at least once. Moreover, it combines a good story with a compelling arc and a portrait of a real place, its people, and life's unexpected poignancies... Shot in documentary style, focused on a fictional Alex (but based on and starring the real Karpovsky), and set in real situations with real people who may or may not be acting, *The Hole Story* is neither feature film, documentary, or mockumentary. Perhaps it's time to start talking about ficumentaries."

--Denise Taylor, THE BOSTON GLOBE

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(continued)

“the cutting edge of fringe filmmaking...
a hilarious, Herzog-esque look at one man's
descent into madness.”

-- David Walker, THE WILLAMETTE WEEK
(Portland, OR)



“Alex and his crew do a great job keeping it real yet funny... We laugh at him, with him, yet we are along for the journey. We want Alex to solve the mystery, we care. And this is why the film transcends other films in the genre.”

-- Peter Sciretta, CINEMATICAL

“Performance art, faux-u-mentary and 85-minute cosmic kvetch, Alex Karpovsky’s offbeat “The Hole Story” is also an amusing demonstration of the art of turning nothing into something... The film is a new kind of existential exhibitionism, a “Blair Witch”-like descent into a hole in one man’s head”.

--James, Verniere, THE BOSTON HERALD

“GRADE: A...What makes this film so captivating and hilarious is its unpredictably and off-the-cuff quintessence. Suffice it to say that writer/director Alex Karpovsky is treading thin ice from beginning to end, and following his quaky journey is a priceless experience... Everything about this film is innovative, from the unscripted yet somehow brilliant content, to the haphazard and seemingly incongruous composition. It, of course, though probably unintentionally, comes together by the gratifying finale. The film is so unique, so incomparable, that viewers would be foolish not to champion its ascent to the mainstream.”

-- Abby Weingarten, THE SARASOTA HERALD-TRIBUNE

“You really need to see this film... In a quirky tale of searching for one's dream amid overwhelming obstacles, The Hole Story illustrates the folly of Mankind attempting to outwit Nature and the power of a dream to withstand the most brutal of setbacks without literally killing the dreamer.”

-- Patricia Lacouture, NTW (Newport, RI)

“Karpovsky is hilarious in the role of a narcissistic karaoke-video editor who arrives too late in Paul Bunyanville... Increasingly existential, at once melancholic and gut-busting, this triumphant indie gets more from nothing than any in years.”

-- Rob Nelson, MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL CITY PAGES

“It’s actually pretty funny.”

-- Stephen Hunter, THE WASHINGTON POST



Screenings

Independent Film Festival of Boston 2005 - **Special Sneak Preview**

Northampton Independent Film Festival 2005 - **Directors Choice Award**

Sedona International Film Festival 2006

D.C. Independent Film Festival 2006 - **Grand Jury Prize for Best Narrative Feature**

Fargo Film Festival 2006 - **Opening Night Film**

Boston University Cinematheque Screening Series 2006

Big Muddy Film Festival 2006

Harvard Film Archive 2006

Memphis International Film Festival 2006

Sarasota Film Festival 2006 - **Best of Fest**

Longbaugh Film Festival 2006 - **Best of Fest**

Minneapolis-St. Paul Inter. Film Festival 2006 - **Best of Fest**

Seattle True Independent Film Festival 2006

Rooftop Films Series 2006

Newport International Film Festival 2006

Plymouth Independent Film Festival 2006

Woods Hole Film Festival 2006 - **Emerging Filmmaker Award**

Rhode Island International Film Festival

Kansas International Film Festival

George Eastman House 2006



about Spot Creative

Spot Creative is a New York based film and video production company. Averaging over 50 projects a year in areas of film, commercial, corporate and broadcast production, Spot Creative combines state-of-the-art technology with a dedicated passion for storytelling. In addition to offering creative development, this group of gifted filmmakers also provides end-to-end production services that can accommodate various shooting formats and budgets. Most recently Spot Creative has worked with PBS, Bravo, IFC, Pfizer Pharmaceuticals, Harley Davidson and The Lincoln Center for the Arts. In 2003 Spot Creative produced its first feature-length film, *Cry Funny Happy*, which went on to premiere as an official selection of the Sundance Film Festival and recently aired on the Sundance Channel. With its newest completed film, *The Hole Story*, along with other projects which include a high-definition feature documentary on the legendary glass artist Bill Morris, Spot Creative hopes to deepen its commitment to dynamic and innovative storytelling.

For more information, please visit our website at www.spotcreative.com

THE HOLE STORY

Writer & Director **ALEX KARPOVSKY**

Producers **RICK EDRICH**
ALEX KARPOVSKY

Executive Producer **JOHN ANDRES**

Cinematographer **ROBERT HENRY**

Editor **SAM NEAVE**

Music **JAMES LAVINO**

Sound **BRIAN SPINKS**
DAVID SCHULMAN

Second Camera **DANIEL McKEOWN**
ARIEL BOLES

CAST

Alex Karpovsky **Alex Karpovsky**

Residents of Brainerd, MN **Themselves**

Staff & Residents of the Sunny **Themselves**
Lakes Rehabilitation Center



about the Cast & Crew

Alex Karpovsky – Lead, Director, Writer, Co-Producer

Alex studied documentary filmmaking in the visual ethnography program at Oxford University. A Boston native, Alex enjoys writing monologues and works as a karaoke video editor on the side. *The Hole Story* is his first feature-length film and *Filmmaker Magazine* recently selected him as one of the “New Faces of Independent Film”. He hopes to begin shooting his next film in the bayous of Arkansas later this year. Alex can be contacted at info@theholestoryfilm.com

Rick Edrich – Co-Producer

Rick has spent the last five years producing film and video projects from Spot Creative, which he co-founded with John Andres. Producing a wide variety of media for the commercial, corporate and broadcast markets, Rick’s clients include ABC, IFC, Harley Davidson, Bravo, The Lincoln Center, The United Nations and various Fortune 100 companies.

In 2003 Rick leveraged his work and personal relationships to produce his first feature, *Cry Funny Happy*, an official selection of the Sundance Film Festival. Rick has followed up this year with two new productions, *The Hole Story* and *The Art of Soul of Black Magic: Stories of Black American Magicians*. Recently Rick has also established the production arm of Generation X-cel, an arts based after school program for Manhattan’s inner city youth community.

John Andres - Executive Producer

As co-founder of Spot Creative, John has brought his extensive experience as a producer, director and editor to create film, television and video programming. As a filmmaker, John spent five years producing and directing *Artsbreak*, a documentary series about artists for Bravo: The Film and Arts Network. His broadcast credits also include ABC, CBS, NBC, HBO, ESPN, TNT, TBS and the Independent Film Channel.

John’s talents have been recognized worldwide. In 1997, John was nominated for an Academy Award for editing the documentary film, *The Line King: The Al Hirschfeld Story*.

Robert Henry – Cinematographer

Growing up in Portland, Robert Henry began shooting at the age of ten, composing experimental and narrative shorts with a VHS camcorder and homemade lenses. His interest in filmmaking brought him to New York City where he has worked on numerous short films, music videos and independent features. Most recently, Robert has been working as a cameraman for a reality television program concerning psychics and clairvoyants.

Sam Neave - Editor

Sam has edited numerous award-winning features, both narrative and documentary, including *Unknown Soldier* (dir. Ferenc Toth), for which he received *The Maverick Award for Excellence in Editing* at last year's Woodstock Film Festival, *K* (dir. Shoja Azari), *Crooked Lines* (dir. Harry O'Reilly), and *The Fire Within* (dir. John Andres). He is also the long-time editor for acclaimed visual artist Shirin Neshat.

At the same time Sam has been directing films of his own, including the shorts *Shoot the Piano Tuner* (2001) and *Withdrawal* (2002). In the summer of 2002, Sam made his first feature, *Cry Funny Happy*. The film premiered at the Sundance Film Festival 2003 and played at numerous festivals worldwide. It is currently screening on the Sundance Channel and is available at amazon.com.

Sam is currently working on a new project *Central Park*, which he hopes to begin shooting in the fall of 2006.

James Lavino - Original Music

James Lavino scored Sam Neave's *Cry Funny Happy* and is about to begin working on Steven Grasse's *Bikini Bandits and the Curse of the Pirate's Booty*. In addition to his film and TV work (including songs for Disney's *The Book of Pooh*), he has composed numerous internationally performed choral and concert works. He currently lives in London with his wife and baby girl, Olivia.

You can reach James and learn more about his music at www.jameslavino.com