

LIMINAL EPK

Key Statistics:

Completed: September, 2008, TRT: 14 minutes, Shooting Format: 35mm, b&w,
Exhibition Formats: 35mm (Composite print), DVD (NTSC/Region 0), 1255 feet, 383
meters, 1 roll, Aspect Ratio: 1:85, Origin: USA

Key Credits:

Director/Writer/Executive Producer: Stephen Keep Mills, Editor: Tamera Martin,
Director of Photography: Michael Alba, Production Design: Rachel Myers, Sound
Design: Wagner Fulco, Producers: Patrick Cunningham, Tamera Martin
Cast: Tonya Cornelisse, Alejandra Gollas

Tagline:

Think it's a dream?

Synopsis: (short—under 30 words)

INA and JOY are naked and locked in a battle of elimination. INA must reverse the
power to survive. Are they lovers or is JOY the “killer-within”?

Synopsis: (medium—under 50 words)

INA and JOY are naked and locked in a battle of elimination—all over a sweater which
INA thinks makes her look good and JOY thinks makes her look too good. INA must
reverse the power to survive. Are they lovers or is JOY the “killer-within”?

Description: (long—over 50 words)

A woman, her body, and the destructive voice that controls her. The story is about
individual power in the wrong hands. INA needs to get her power back from JOY who
has taken it. This intense and raw confrontation is shot in 35mm, entirely in black and
white, with both players naked. The nudity is non-erotic and allows the audience to
experience the characters' extreme circumstances of primitive vulnerability and privacy.

Filmmaker Bio:

Stephen Keep Mills (Writer/Director/Executive Producer) started out as an actor. A
graduate of the Yale Drama School, he has performed with leading repertory companies,
On and Off-Broadway, on TV and film. A sample of his resume can be found on IMDb
by searching for Stephen Keep. Mills opted for directing and producing his own written
works on stage before centering himself as a filmmaker. LIMINAL follows his award-
winning short A Cigar at the Beach.

Filmography:

Hotel Lobby (2003) Feature—Writer-Actor-Producer
A Cigar at the Beach (2005) Short—Writer-Director-Producer
Gift for Reba (2006) Short—Writer-Director-Producer
LIMINAL (2008) Short—Writer-Director-Producer

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Film Bio:

LIMINAL was shot in one week at BenKitay Studios in Hollywood, CA. There was also a day on location in the warehouse district, downtown Los Angeles, and some aerial photography one Sunday morning. The actors rehearsed approximately 50 hours prior to shooting. All casting was the result of postings on NowCasting, LACasting, and SAGIndie websites. The contract is SAG Ultra Low Budget. Two 35mm Panavision cameras were used to shoot on Fuji color film which was then desaturated into black and white. The film, completed in September, 2008, has a running time of 14 minutes.

THEY'RE NAKED! "Removing the Taboo"—Director's Statement:

The most obvious element of this film is that both players are naked. Completely and throughout. I had in my mind that it should be played this way. Not for erotic reasons since there is nothing erotic about the story. Not for a gimmick since gimmicks quickly lose dramatic relevance. I thought they should be naked because the story operated on three levels: the logical, the primitive, and the unexpected. The "logical" is the argument or the dialogue; the "unexpected" is the intuitive or the liminal factor; and the "primitive" is the naked. This short tale has a very raw mood and I felt that's how the audience should experience it. Raw is vulnerable, unhidden, exposed. Raw is also powerful since it's honest and pure. Raw is also uncivilized and I set this story just below the surface of civilization. The nakedness is a reflection not of how we are in our day-to-day encounters, but how we are when only we can see ourselves. Naked to our own naked "inner" eye.

Nakedness bears a negative burden in American culture. Usually nakedness is connected with sex and, of course, the verdict on sex is: guilty! Nakedness connotes the forbidden and carries with it the weight of a curse. After all, our two most famous forbears were cast out of the Garden for choosing to play their roles naked. We are prejudiced against nakedness. If a man or a woman is naked, they are marked with sin. There is no nobility in nakedness, only condemnation. In the museums, all the naked paintings and statues seem acceptable, but only from an emotional distance. Stone is not flesh. Neither is paint. Naked flesh is taboo.

So I put this nakedness before you. Without apology. With full intention and pride. I want to see if you can watch naked players and still follow the story. I want to present nakedness in a way no-one has seen it before. I want to relieve us all of the judgment we have against nakedness. I want to separate nakedness from its usual context of prurience, of eroticism, of voyeuristic-ness. I want to take nakedness out of the elementary school cloakroom. I want nakedness to become natural, mature, noble, normal, and beside the point. I want us all to crawl just a little higher up the evolutionary scale.

Nakedness also carries with it the whisper of a wish. On some level we want to be naked again. If only it were safe. If only we could escape judgment. If only we had the courage. Tonya Cornelisse (JOY) had appeared naked in several plays onstage, though never on film. Alejandra Gollas (INA) saw the nakedness as an experiment. Lucky for me they both liked the script. They are the carriers of this experiment and they make our wish come true.

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PRODUCTION HISTORY—When the concept changes:

As casting began, I was looking for ROY and INA. When all was said and done, I was looking at INA and JOY. How did a tale exploring a deadly domestic dispute between two heterosexual lovers become an equally deadly but psychological war between a woman and her same-sex Shadow? Well, one issue (nudity) oddly led to the other (concept change) and I'm going to trace the genesis of this transformation back to two 8X10 resume stills, one of Tonya Cornelisse and the other of Alejandra Gollas.

In the course of auditioning, two actors were offered the role of ROY and turned it down through their managers. The deal-breaker for each was the issue of nudity. For the role of INA, I had just the opposite situation: two candidates—equally fabulous—ready to have at it. I wasn't looking forward to selecting just one as I knew the other would be just as good. Two more ROY's declined (different managers, same issue) and I found myself looking again at the two photos—the two actresses—and I went to the Muse with the magic question: "What if?"

At the extended final callbacks (I still had some excellent guys—this is LA, after all, and I had gotten over 1500 submissions from the sites of NowCasting, LACasting, and SAGIndie), I asked Tonya and Alejandra to stay just a little longer. I let loose my idea: "what if" INA was in a battle with a negative part of herself that prevents her growth; "what if" this force represented the voice within which always diminished her; "what if" this wasn't a domestic contest at all, but a psychological war of the interior? They read the script together and it became clear the course we would follow. This conflict would turn inward. The set design would have to change, the cinematography would have to change, the dialogue, too—not much, but slightly—and Presto! JOY sprang fresh from the rib of ROY. From a violent, lost, and insecure male, JOY blossomed into an uncompromising, relentless Fury of a woman—a shadow not a lover—the anti-Self whose sole aim was to starve INA forever on the ropes of defeat. A vicious inner villain.

So, this is how the story was waiting to be told—not as first conceived, but as now discovered, and for this I have my two fearless and gifted leading ladies to thank. Their talent transcended elimination.