



# A RODEO FILM

FILM LOOKBOOK

DARIUS D. DAWSON

## CONTENTS.

---

- V. THE STORY
- VII. DIRECTOR'S NOTE
- VIII. THE SHORT FILM
- IX. CASTING
- XII. TONE
- XIII. STYLE
- XIV. THE WORLD
- XVII. REFERENCES
- XXIII. MOOD BOARD

BOOT (V.O.)  
(whispered)  
Quiet as a cotton field. Sharp as a  
knife.

The sound of a horses' hooves hitting the pavement can be heard somewhere in the dark.

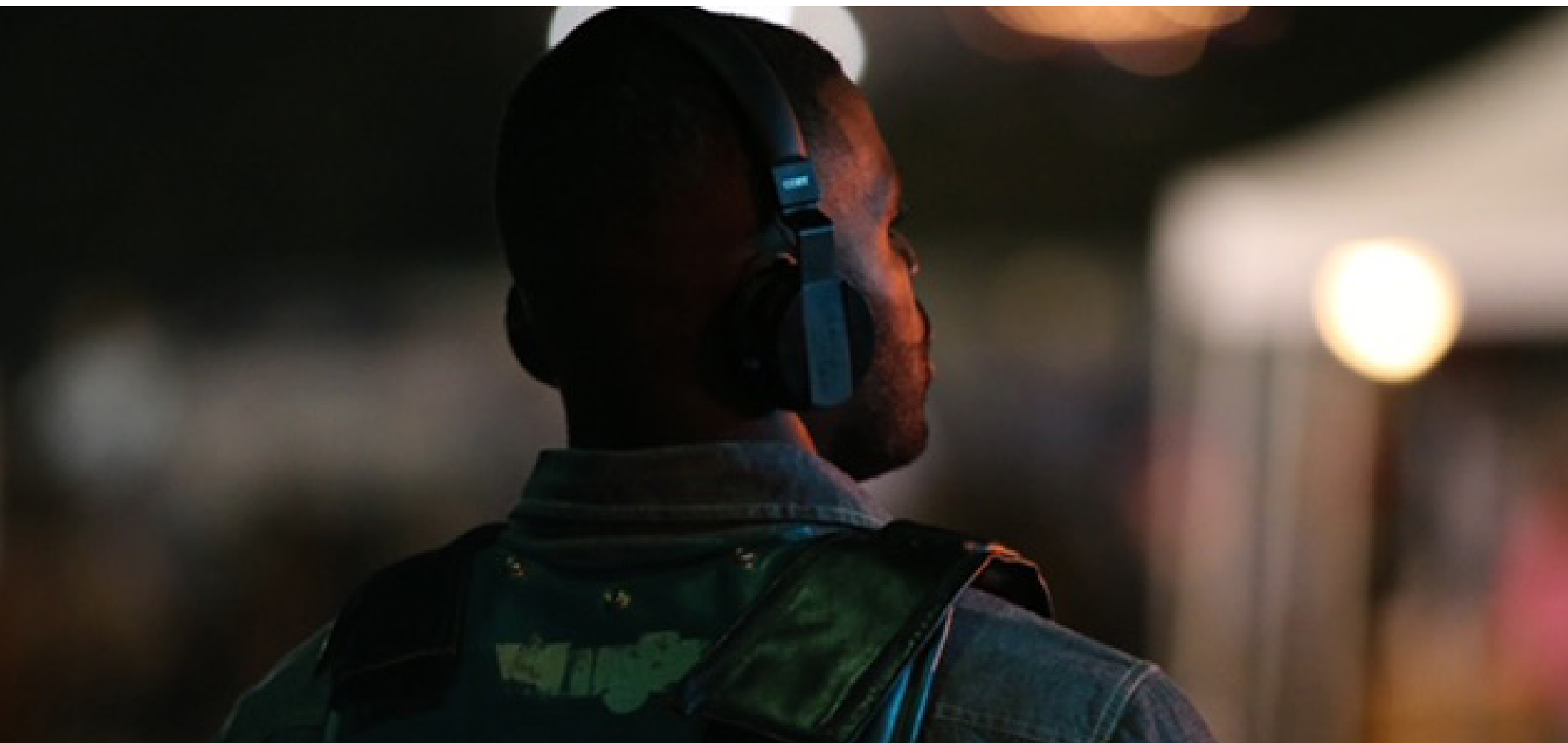
FADE IN:

EXT. DARK COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

Rolling plains veiled by night stretch out in either direction of a winding two-lane country road.

A face, half-masked by a bandana, fills the screen. The man is AVERILL "BOOT" HUNTER, 28, African American male. He has tattoos across his exposed arms and a small cross tattooed under his eye.

Boot bounces in his saddle as he rides. He's got a snubbed nose revolver in one hand that hangs loosely from the reigns.





## THE STORY.

A story about how the bonds of family can easily  
become bondage.

---

A Rodeo Film is a story of deceit, crime and passion all set in the world of black cowboys in rural Oklahoma. Boot, the youngest of the two Hunter brothers is a conflicted man. He's torn between his passion for bull riding and his brother, JR's, reckless desire to get their late father's ranch back. JR will stop at nothing and stoop to any low in his quest for his father's land; even as low as theft. The brothers are ranch hands by day and rustlers by night taking anything they can sell to buy the land back.

JR's convinced that the only way to honor the legacy of their father is to regain his land, while Boot has his own connection to that legacy: and that's through bullriding. Something JR can no longer do since taking a serious injury riding years ago.

Boot would walk away from it all if it weren't for the guilt that he feels from a secret affair that he's been having with his brother's woman, Peanut. He feels trapped. His only solace is when he's riding or in Peanut's company and though she knows it's wrong, Peanut can't help but see the man that she once fell in love with in Boot, a reflection of what JR used to be. Boot must decide whether he'll start to live his life for himself or be swept down the destructive path that JR has set them on.

It can only be a matter of time before Boot's luck runs out. The rustling will get him killed or the affair will eventually be revealed to JR. With the date of the ranch's looming auction coinciding with the end of the rodeo season things are bound to unravel.



## DIRECTOR'S NOTE.

It's probably been about eight years now since I first saw the images of black rodeo athletes competing. It was something that had a profound effect on me. I knew about black cowboys, the buffalo soldiers and black folks' part in taming the West, but I knew almost nothing about rodeos made up entirely of black athletes. Since then I can't seem to get enough of this world. I've been fortunate that many cowboys have taken me under their wing and introduced me to their way of living. The Bill Pickett Invitational, the only all-black touring rodeo in the USA, has been especially crucial in giving me access to their way of life. They even showed my short film on the subject right before one of their rodeos; way scarier than showing at any film festival I assure you.

My vision for the film is to work with both professional and non-professional actors; actual black ranchers and cowboy that I've met and become friends with, to be exact. The film is my love letter to these people. I love this world because it's filled with beautiful black people, people who look like me, but are doing things that are completely unexpected. In a way I covet the comradery that they have with one another. I want to celebrate this culture, celebrate the western lifestyle and celebrate blackness in this ultra-unique form.

This film is also very personal to me because it is about family, but more specifically about the love between two brothers. I can't help but include some of my brother's and my won traits into the characters. My brother and I have been jealous of one another, we've competed with each other and when I moved to Singapore to attend NYU we grew distant. For three years we barely spoke and we never saw each other even when I came back to America. However, the great equalizer and the thing that rekindle our relationship was film. It brought us back together. The shared experience and love of making and watching films always reminds us that we're connected and that we have an ally that will always be there. There's nothing like the sense of competition that exists between brothers, but there's also nothing like the love between them either. That's what A Rodeo Film is to me. It's about love, lust and familial bonds. It's about what goes unsaid, about what's left undone and how those things can unite us or destroy us.

DARIUS D. DAWSON



THE SHORT.



CASTING.



Y'LAN NOEL.

NNAMDI ASOMUGHA.

TREVANTE RHODES.

BOOT.

---

*reserved. skilled. cunning.*

Boot is the quiet brother. He's a natural at everything he does whether it's bull riding, being a ranchhand and even rustling. He has local fame because of his success as a bull rider but he is constantly torn between his career in rodeo and his brother's criminal activity. He's a loyal man, some would say a bit of a follower. He's definitely not without his vices. He covets his brother's woman, Peanut. Perhaps that's what keeps him enslaved to his brother JR's will; the guilt he has over his feelings for a woman that's not his.



AJA NAOMI KING.

EBONI OBSIDIAN.

NICOLE BEHAIRE.

PEANUT.

---

*gracious. sharp. passionate.*

Peanut's a strong, but nurturing woman. She's got to be, especially to deal with JR and his ambitions. She hasn't always been close with the Hunter family, but she grew up in a similar way to JR and Boot and has been with JR for several years now. Her and JR even have a daughter together, Junebug. But she's always played second fiddle in their relationship. Second to whatever it is that JR's got his mind set to. The cattle rustling isn't talked about openly, but she knows about it. She condones it mainly because JR's like a dog with a bone when it comes to these things. Plus he's got a temper. Peanut wants to be seen, heard and loved. Maybe that explains her attraction to Boot, the younger brother.





STEPHEN HILL.

YAHYA ABDUL-MATEEN II.

PHREDERIC SEMAJ.

JR.

---

*headstrong. prideful. determined.*

JR is the older of the two Hunter brothers. His career as a bronco rider was cut short by an injury that he suffered during a ride. He's a man that has a blind devotion to the legacy of his father and he believes that everything he and his younger brother do should be to protect that legacy. Before he died, the Hunter's father lost the family ranch through gambling and the mismanaging of funds. JR is determined to get it back.

Even if that means hurting some people along the way.

TONE.



HEIST.



DRAMA.

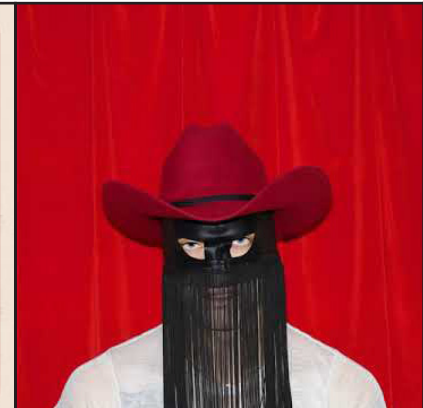


LOVE.

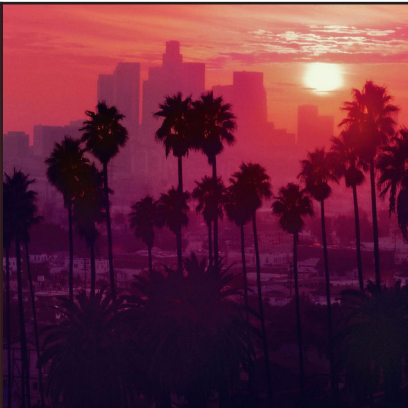
MUSICAL MUSINGS.



Leon Bridges.  
Coming Home.



Orville Peck.  
Dead of Night.

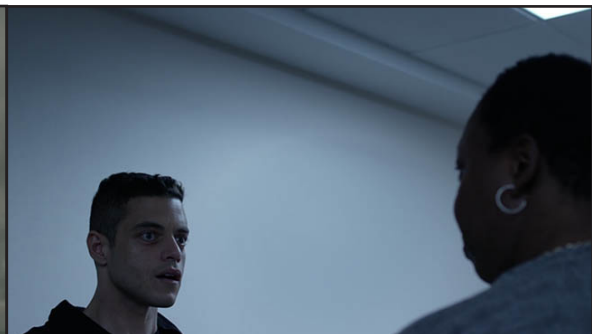


Chromatics  
Tick of the Clock.

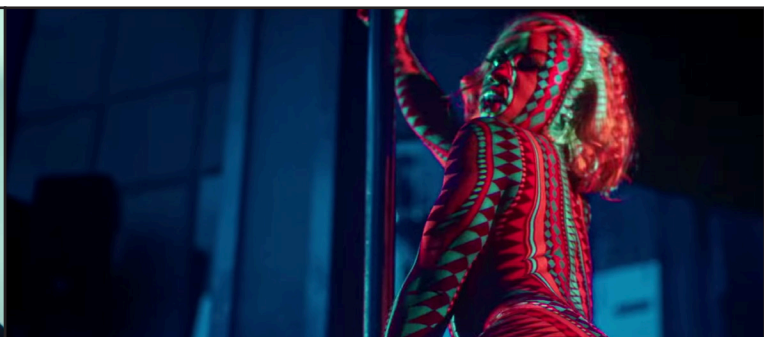
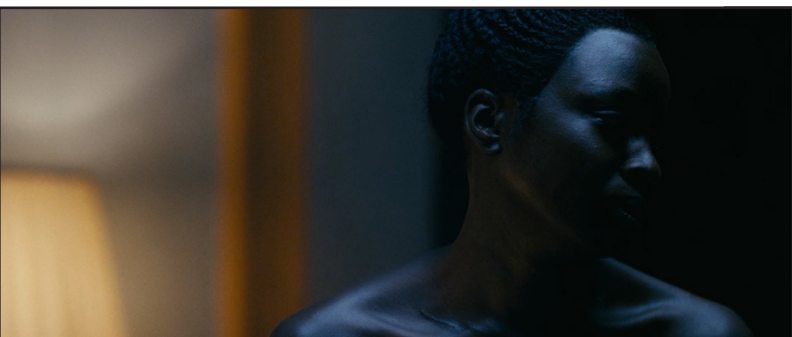


Jeremih.  
Planez.





FRAMING.



LIGHTING.

STYLE.



THE WORLD.





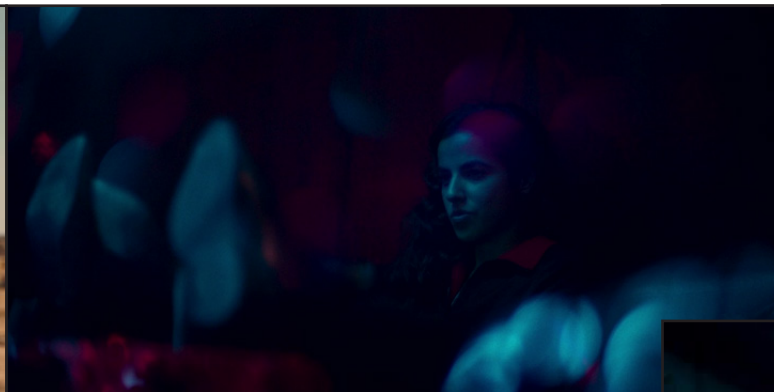
THE WORLD.





THE WORLD.

## REFERENCES .

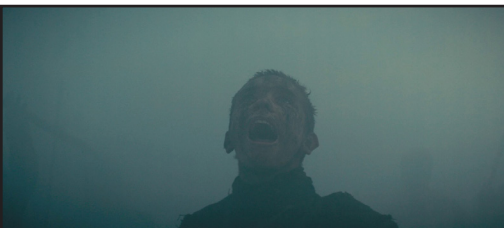


TOO OLD TO DIE YOUNG.





A GHOST STORY.

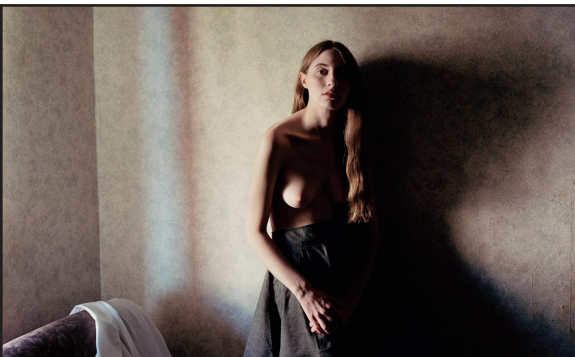


MACBETH.



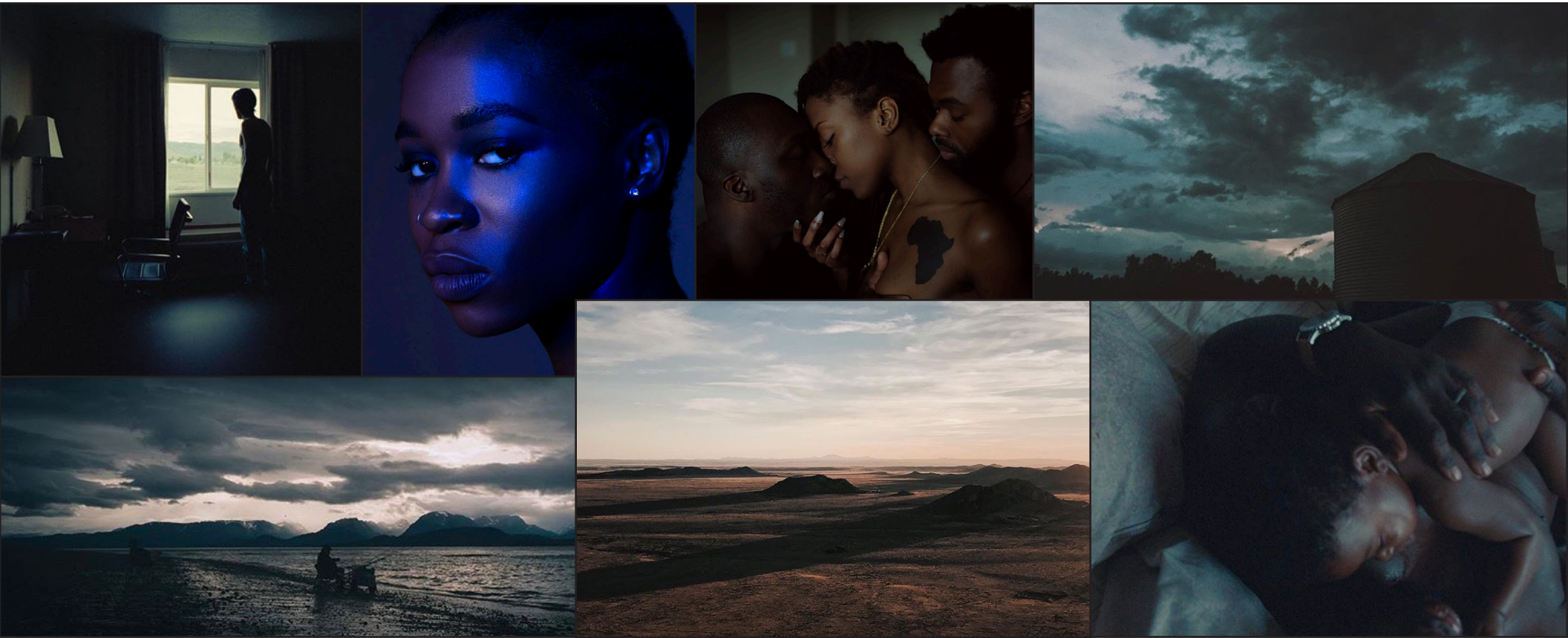


THE PLACE BEYOND THE PINES.

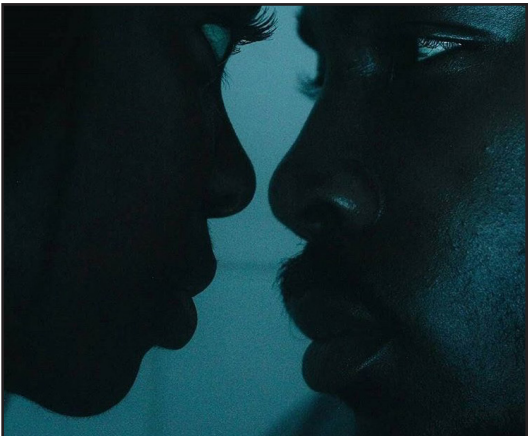


TODD HIDO.





MOOD BOARD .



MOOD BOARD .

BOOT (V.O.)  
(whispered)  
Quiet as a cotton field. Sharp as a  
knife.

The sound of a horses' hooves hitting the pavement can be heard somewhere in the dark.

FADE IN:

EXT. DARK COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

Rolling plains veiled by night stretch out in either direction of a winding two-lane country road.

A face, half-masked by a bandana, fills the screen. The man is AVERILL "BOOT" HUNTER, 28, African American male. He has tattoos across his exposed arms and a small cross tattooed under his eye.

Boot bounces in his saddle as he rides. He's got a snubbed nose revolver in one hand that hangs loosely from the reigns.

She walks over to him. He has a cheeky smirk on his face. It fades away as she climbs onto the back of the ATV.

Peanut puts her hands around his torso and clings on tight.

Boot looks down at her hands around his waist then back up to the road stretching in front of them.

VRRMM.

They speed away.

The world whips by. Peanut stares back down the road as the boys and their ATVs shrink behind them.

PEANUT (V.O.)  
(whispered)  
I've missed you.

BOOT (V.O.)  
(quiet)  
I've been right here.

PEANUT (V.O.)  
You hardly come around.

Boot's face is set with determination as he lays into the throttle. A smile slowly spreads across Peanut's face. She laughs and looks back in the direction they're heading.

INT. SMALL STABLE - DAY

The stolen mare mills around in her pin. Boot enters the stables and leads her out.

EXT. OPEN ROAD - DAY

JR's truck drives down the road with a horse transport hitched to it.

EXT. OPEN FIELDS - DAY

The horse meanders through an open field feeding on the tall grass. She's been left out there to fend for herself.

EXT. LARGE RODEO STADIUM - EVENING

Boot stands silhouetted against the stadium. The athletes make their laps around the stadium carrying the flags and hyping up the crowd.

SINGER

...Sing a song full of the hope  
that the present has brought us...

Boot has his vest and chaps on. His helmet is tucked under his arm.

We push in on him from behind.

The crowd is filled with proud black folks standing with their hats in their hands as a SINGER, black woman, sings the NEGRO NATIONAL ANTHEM in the middle of the arena.



## WRITER | DIRECTOR

Darius Dawson is an award-winning filmmaker from North Carolina. He attended NYU Tisch School of the Arts and then the AFI Conservatory for MFAs in Cinematography and Directing respectively.

As a cinematographer Darius spent the majority of his time in South-east Asia and China lensing short films and commercials. Living and working in Singapore for three years put him at a crossroads of culture in the region and opened him up to a world of opportunity in film. Darius' state side clients for commercials and branded content include Hershey, The US Coast Guard, the New York Giants and Quest Diagnostics to name a few.

As a director his two latest short films, A Rodeo Film and Mi Amigo, have shown at numerous international festivals and won several awards including the Student Grand Prize for A Rodeo Film at the 2019 DGA Awards. A Rodeo Film was also selected by HBO as one of five films to compete in their 2020 short film competition in Miami. Most recently he has directed an episode of Peter and Bob Farrelly's new Quibi show, The Now, and Octavia Spencer in her latest ad campaign to increase the inclusion of disabled actors in film and television. He is currently prepping to director second unit for Peter Farrelly's latest feature set to shoot in New Orleans and Thailand.

Darius' experience as a cinematographer directly informs his sensibilities as a director. He is always looking to communicate relationships and relate values using visual language.



THANK YOU.

Darius D. Dawson  
e: [dariusdawson89@gmail.com](mailto:dariusdawson89@gmail.com)  
t: 717.712.7190

MANGEMENT  
Michael McConnell  
Zero Gravity Management  
1110 Ohio Ave. CA 90025  
[mmcconnell@zerogravitymanagement.com](mailto:mmcconnell@zerogravitymanagement.com)