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# Synopsis:

"The Living Wake" is a dark comedy set in a timeless storybook universe. Self-proclaimed artist and genius, K. Roth Binew, has one day to live.





Binew sets out to hand out invitations to his final party, a living wake. He has enlisted his best and only friend, Mills Joaquin, to take him around on a bicycle powered rickshaw. In a final attempt to probe life's deepest mysteries, Binew endures one Ridiculous trial after the next.

He concludes his day with a final performance at his living wake. On a makeshift stage in an open field, Binew's friends and enemies gather to witness his madness one final time.



# Bios of Cast & Crew:



## Mike O'Connell: "K. Roth Binew", Writer, Producer

Mike O'Connell is an unforgettable performer who combines cerebral absurdist comedy with a virtuoso's mastery of electric guitar. Hailing from Chicago, Mike grew up reading Woody Allen's short fiction, as well as listening to cassette tapes of Emo Phillips and Jackie "Moms" Mabley. Mike first gained notice at The Chicago Comedy Festival where he impressed several managers and was lured to Los Angeles. For the last eight years Mike has lived in LA where he has graced many of the premier clubs and attracted a sizable fan base. Rolling Stone Magazine called Mike the hot comedian to watch in 2004. Variety singled Mike out in their February 2007 "Ten Comics to Watch" profile. Mike has appeared on The Jimmy Kimmel Show, The Late Show and Comedy Central's "The World Stands Up." In 2007 Mike developed a series entitled "Conrad Besselheimer: The Internet Life Coach" for HBO's comedy online site, This Just In.

Mike was also cast in Fox's sketch comedy pilot, "The Right Now! Show" in 2007. He was part of Judd Apatow's show: "Apatow for Destruction." Mike is co-writing and attached to star in "Million Dollar Strong" with Todd Phillips ("Old School", "Starsky and Hutch", and "The Hangover"). Mike has recently completed four comedic music videos that he wrote and will star in. The videos are being produced by Will Ferrel's company "FunnyorDie" and will air on HBO in the summer of 2010. Most recently, Mike appeared in Judd Apatow's film, "Funny People".

# Jesse Eisenberg: "Mills Foaquin"

Jesse Eisenberg began his career in musical theater, performing in a variety of shows in New Jersey and New York City. In 2002, at the age of 19, Jesse appeared in "Roger Dodger" opposite Campell Scott, garnering much critical praise for his performance. Since then Jesse has appeared in M. Night Shyamalon's "The Village", won awards for his role in Noah Baumbach's indie hit, "The Squid and the Whale", and appeared opposite Terrance Howard and Richard Gere in "The Hunting Party". Jesse's is best known for his starring or supporting roles in "The Education of Charlie Banks" and Mirimax's "Adventureland" which was directed by Greg Mottola ("Superbad"), and a leading role in Reuben Fleischer's "Zombieland" for Columbia. Jesse's additional upcoming 2010 May releases are "Solitary Man" opposite Michael Douglas and Susan Sarandon, and the Sundance selection, "Holy Rollers", directed by Kevin Asch. Jesse will also star in a David Fincher's 2010 October release, "The Social Network", with Justin Timberlake. He was nominated for the 2010 BAFTA Rising Star Award.





# Jim Gaffigan: "Lampert Binew"

Jim Gaffigan has been performing stand-up for over a decade. With an ever-increasing fanbase, Jim performs to sold out audiences across the nation. Jim has appeared on late night television with David Letterman, Conan O'Brien and Carson Daly. His sitcom, "Welcome to New York", which he created and starred in, aired on CBS from 2000-2001. Jim has appeared in over thirty films, among them, "Igby Goes Down", "Super Troopers" and "Three Kings". He currently stars in the TBS hit series, "My Boys" and was most recently seen in the Mike Meyers comedy, "Love Guru". Upcoming releases include the action-western, "Shoot First and Pray You Live" and Comedy Central Live Presents: Jim Gaffigan: "The Sexy Tour".

### Sol Tryon: Director, Producer

Sol received his Associates of Arts Degree from The International Film and TV Workshops in Rockport, Maine in 1998. Following his degree, he moved to New York City and began learning the art of independent filmmaking from the ground up. In 2000, he started working with Shirin Neshat on her video installations and artwork. This experience gave him the unique opportunity to travel around the world, while helping to bring about Neshat's distinctly beautiful work. In 2002, he produced his first narrative feature film, "Bomb The System", which premiered at The Tribeca Film Festival in 2003 and earned him an Independent Spirit Award nomination for "Best First Feature". In 2005, Sol worked in Morocco with Neshat on her first feature film, "Women Without Men" (Silver Lion Award at Venice Film Festival 2010), and began production on his next two projects, "Weapons" (Executive Producer) and "The Living Wake" (Director/Producer). "Weapons" premiered in competition and was



sold to Lionsgate at Sundance. "The Living Wake", Starring Mike O'Connell, Jesse Eisenberg and Jim Gaffigan was Sol's directorial debut and premiered at the Cinevegas Film Festival where he received the Red Star Director's Award for originality, creativity and vision. "The Living Wake" is being released theatrically in the spring of 2010. During that time, he also produced Mark Webber's directorial debut film, "Explicit Ills", starring Paul Dano, Rosario Dawson, Naomie Harris and executive produced by Jim Jarmusch. "Explicit Ills" garnered several awards at festivals and was released theatrically in early 2009. Sol is currently producing two documentaries, "2012: Time For Change" (featuring Daniel Pinchbeck, Sting, Ellen Page, David Lynch and Gilberto Gil) and "Being In The World" (Directed by Tao Ruspoli). He is also in preproduction on his next film as director, "Kick The Can". Based on the best selling novel by newsman Jim Lehrer, "Kick The Can" is a coming of age comedy that takes place in Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas during the early 1950's. Sol lives in Brooklyn, NY and is committed to bringing original stories with an artistic vision to audiences around the world.



## Peter Kline: Writer, Producer

Peter Kline is a screenwriter and director who lives in Los Angeles. Peter Kline co-wrote "Coin Locker Babies", an adaptation of the acclaimed Japanese novel by Ryu Murakami. Producer Don Murphy (Natural Born Killers, Bully, The Transformers) and foreign sales outfit Wild Bunch (Pan's Labyrinth) are producing. In 2006, Peter co-wrote and produced, "The Living Wake" with Mike O'Connell, which was directed by Sol Tryon. In 2007, Peter co-wrote and directed, "Conrad Besselheimer: The Internet Life Coach", for HBO's comedy web channel "This Just In". In 2008, Peter wrote an adaptation of Aleksander Hemon's critically acclaimed novel, "Nowhere Man", with commercial director Michael Karbelnikoff attached to direct. In 2009, Peter co-wrote "Million Dollar Strong" with Mike O'Connell. Todd Phillips ("The Hangover", "Old School") is attached to produce the project with Essential Entertainment. Peter directed a series of comedic music videos produced by Will Ferrell's FunnyorDie banner, which

will air on HBO on the show "FunnyorDie Presents" in February 2010. Currently, Peter is co-writing a comedy entitled, "The Knuckler" for Warner Brothers. Todd Phillips is producing.

# Mangusta Productions: Production Company

Mangusta Productions is a New York based production company specializing in independent film financing, production and distribution. The goal is to provide a sustainable environment for independent filmmakers to complete their work and show it to the world, while retaining creative and financial control. *Explicit Ills*, a Mangusta produced film, was released theatrically and on DVD nationwide in 2009. The company currently has four films in different phases of distribution (*Fix*, *The Living Wake*, *Guy and Madeline on a Park Bench* and 2012: Time for Change) and one documentary in production (*Being in the World*). Believing in the creative process while understanding the challenging state of the independent film industry, Mangusta Productions is committed to bringing important work to audiences worldwide.



#### Ami Ankin: Producer

Ami is the co-founder of the newly formed entertainment company, AnkinRowen Productions, which was launched in conjunction with the World Premiere of the hit Off-Broadway play, A Perfect Couple by Brooke Berman. AnkinRowen collaborated with the non-profit production company WET (Women's Expressive Theater, (www.wetweb.org). Prior to AnkinRowen, Ms. Ankin founded MonAmi Productions (www.monamiproductions.com), a New York based entertainment production company which, in association with Original Media (Squid and the Whale, Half Nelson and Guide to Recognizing Your Saints), is responsible for producing the award-winning independent feature The Living Wake. Ami is the lead producer for this venture. In addition, MonAmi Productions was responsible for a revival of the hit stage play, Women of Manhattan, by John Patrick Shanley, which was met with critical acclaim during its limited engagement run in Manhattan. Ankin began her production career under the tutelage of Alec Baldwin in his El Dorado Pictures production, The Devil and Daniel Webster. Currently, Ami and creative partner, Azizah Rowen, are in development with several projects, including an adaptation of a notable short story by James Frey, which they workshopped at Bay Street Theater this past summer, as well as mounting a new Broadway show set to open Fall 2010. visit www.ankinrowen.com for Ami's current and future projects for stage and screen.

# Scott Miller: Cinematographer

Scott Miller is a New York City based cinematographer. Scott began his career working as a gaffer, collaborating with a number of talented cinematographers on severally critically acclaimed projects, among them, "Boys Don't Cry" with Jim Denault, "Raising Victor Vargas" with Tim Orr, and "Tooba" with Darius Khondjii. Scott was the cinematographer on Michael Almereyda's "Tonight at Noon" starring Ethan Hawke, Rutger Hauer and Lauren Ambrose as well as Cory McAbee's "Stingray Sam". He also recently completed a documentary on the famous fashion designer Halston, which is aptly entitled, "Halston". He is currently slated to shoot Sol Tryon's next film "Kick the Can".

# Chadwick Clough: Producer

Since launching Script Pipeline [aka Script Pimp], a screenwriting resource and consulting company, in 2000, Chadwick Clough has gone on to produce feature films, shorts, and television specials. Through his company, Chadwick has linked scores of writers with proper representation and production contacts, and has played a vital role in the funding of a handful of independent features including Operation Endgame [aka Rogues Gallery] (2010). Chadwick served as executive producer on 'Endgame' with Infinity Media producing and starring an ensemble cast including Zach Galifianakis, Rob Cordrry and Ving Rhames. The project was originally submitted through Script Pipeline's Writers Workshop.

Beyond producing, Chadwick has lectured on screenwriting and entrepreneurship at the University of Southern California and various writing expos over the past decade. Currently Chadwick has a number of projects in development including "Totaled" which he's producing with Darko Entertainment's Richard Kelly and Sean McKittrick.

## Joe Klotz: Editor

Joe has cut dramas, comedies, and documentaries. He was an editor on the Comedy Central hit "Chappelle's Show", as well as "The Upright Citizen Brigade". He also edited JUNEBUG for director Phil Morrison, which was released by Sony Pictures Classics. The film premiered at the 2005 Sundance Film Festival and won a Special Jury Prize for Amy Adams' outstanding performance

He edited THE LIVING WAKE, starring Jesse Eisenberg, for director Sol Tryon, PATRITVILLE for director Talmage Cooley and GRACE IS GONE, starring John Cusack, for director James Strauss. Joe also edited CHOKE, starring Sam Rockwell and Anjelica Houston, for director Clark Gregg.

He recently edited PRECIOUS directed by Lee Daniels and THE WINING SEASON directed by James Strouse, both premiered at Sundance 2009. PRECIOUS won the audience and jury awards and went on to be nominated for six Academy Awards, including Best Editing.

Joe has just completed 'Rabbit Hole' directed by John Cameron Mitchell, starring Nicole Kidman, Aaron Eckhart and Dianne Wiest.

# Director's Comments:







From the first moment the script hit my hand until my end of days, my life has changed because of *The Living Wake*. Through forged friendships and a raw creative force, this little movie has truly taken on a spirit unto itself.

Mike O'Connell birthed the concept, Peter Kline harnessed and translated it to the page and I visualized a world where K. Roth Binew is king. I envisioned the storybook-like feel, taking place in a beautifully isolated environment. A world that could feel like its own universe yet at the same time strangely familiar. For me, that place was my home state of Maine. The vibrant fall foliage matched with the rustic architecture of the area fit my vision perfectly. I wanted the film to be funny and sad, but also strikingly beautiful. Shaping the dramatic and emotional elements of the story to enhance the comedic wit of the script was of utmost importance to me. K. Roth Binew is such an overwhelming personality that I felt that the audience needed to feel sympathy for him even if they disliked him.

Much of that sympathy captured through the nuanced portrayal of Mills Joquin by Jesse Eisenberg. Working with Jesse was an awesome experience. His impeccable comedic timing and emotional sensibilities combined with Mike's hysterically heroic portrayal of K. Roth Binew enabled this bizarre little world to come to life. Having these two supremely talented actors forming the nucleus for this strange universe was a wonderful gift. While their two energies were very different, their essence and spirit was the same and because of their integrity and willingness to believe in the absurd they created something magical together.

The odd little world we created in the film has bled into the reality of our everyday lives. The demarcations of art and life have blurred into one collective experience. Everyone has become the colorful characters in our story, like we were the film and *The Living Wake* was the film within the film. I suppose this symbiotic relationship is what makes the art of film making a true privilege. I only hope that every subsequent project can dust my life with as much enchantment.

# How it Happened:

Peter Kline had been telling me of his stand up comedian friend, Mike O'Connell, for quite some time when he first handed me the script for *The Living Wake*. At that time it was a script for a twenty minute long one-man show. I was blown away by the originality of the character and the overall concept of the piece and immediately discussed the idea of making it into a film. Peter and Mike had already been thinking along those lines and a partnership was instantly formed. Creatively, the three of us made a perfect team, each with different skills to enrich the world of *The Living Wake*. I speak of the "world" of *The Living Wake* because we intended to create a world that was similar, but very different from your average reality.

We decided to make a short film based on some of the characters from the feature and use that to help us finance the film. The *Reeducation of Mills Joquin* gave us more than a tool to use for financing; it gave us an opportunity to work together, fine-tune many of the creative directions and get a feel for what it would be like to make the feature.

Armed with seed money of \$20,000, our script and our short, we went to Maine to make *The Living Wake* by any means necessary. Within a month we had secured most of our cast, crew and locations, as well as an additional \$100,000 of financing. The final missing piece was the casting of Mills Joquin. This is when Jesse Eisenberg was dropped in our laps by two lovely angels floating over our heads. We actually sent him the script, but he responded with such quick determination that it felt like angels had escorted him to us. And with that, we were off and running...

As production began, it was immediately apparent that the movie gods were on our side. First, there was the rain that toyed with us by falling on all of our off days, keeping us on edge at all times. Amazingly, it would always clear up exactly when it had to in order to continue shooting. Then, just when we were heading into our exterior night shoots, with the entire cast on hand, the temperature dropped twenty degrees. I found myself standing in a field with thirty freezing actors—who had to go back to New York in the morning—and a frozen camera. Feeling a bit like the Pied Piper, I grabbed a Super 8 camera and tried to keep the show rolling. Yet again at the last possible moment when the world seemed to be crashing in, a mystical spark was generated and our camera began to work. The biggest challenge of all was having minimal rehearsal time with the supporting cast. They would arrive on set the night before they were scheduled to shoot and rehearse at the end of our day's work. Since we were making a very distinct film, ensuring that the cast could identify with and see themselves in this universe was essential. In every case our actors embraced the opportunity and our rehearsal sessions were one of the most creative environments of which I've ever been a part. Each of the many challenges we faced built a strong foundation for dealing with the next. Fortunately, our entire cast and crew were open to wherever these adversities lead us.

Once we had the film in the can, we had to do more fundraising in order to finish it. We had been able to raise \$350,000 during production, which was in line with our best-case scenario. We had set a sliding budget for our film, with the high end being \$500,000. Luckily, we were able to reach each financing benchmark at precisely the most necessary moment to allow us to continue making the film the way we had hoped. Using the footage we had shot and the growing excitement for the film, we were quickly able to raise the remainder of the completion budget to make that "best-case" scenario come to fruition.

This short break couldn't have been more perfectly timed. I had just enough "downtime" to get married and actually give the proper energy to that production. Numerous members of the cast and crew from *The Living Wake* made the journey down to Mexico to support my union with Rebecca Comerford (who plays the Gypsy Psychic in the film). It was a magical time for all of us as the energy and love from the shoot carried over into the full expression of true love in life. There were actually numerous romantic relationships formed and developed out of the production of *The Living Wake*, only adding to its lore...

Our fantastic festival run began by winning the Red Star Award at the Cinevegas Film Festival for innovation, originality and vision in filmmaking. We followed that up with the Audience Award at Woodstock, the Creative Vision Award at the Austin Film Festival and an official selection with multiple sold out screenings at the Hollywood Arc Light during the AFI Fest.

Despite our festival success and incredible reception from audiences and press alike, finding a distribution deal was hard. There were several close calls, but in the end, the bottom had fallen out on the independent film industry and traditional distribution companies basically wanted it for free. With everything we had put into this film already, we couldn't swallow just giving it away to someone and hope they do a good job with it. So, after much deliberation and research, we decided to take matters into our own hands and release it ourselves.

Sticking with what has become the theme of this production, life has chosen to imitate art once again. As I prepared to birth my first film to the world, Rebecca gave birth to our first child. The creation of life puts everything into perspective, but also allows me to see the achievements we have all made creatively. From that first moment I read the script until today it is remarkable to see the transformation I have gone through. I went from a very single aspiring filmmaker to a married professional with a child.

Now, as we are set to release the film, I can't help but be filled with an immense amount of pride. I am not only proud of the film, but also of the entire journey that went along with it. The relationships formed and the experiences gained turned the process of making a film into a way of life. My hope is that as many people as possible are fortunate enough to be touched by the force that is *THE LIVING WAKE*.

- Sol Tryon (director/producer)

# Press Excerpts:

... "one of the funniest, most creative and beyond ridiculous (in a good way) films I've ever seen...a refreshing blast... Funny, touching, insane, ridiculous and brilliant are just a few words I would use to describe "The Living Wake." Films like this need to be seen so seek it out, you'll be glad you did."

-Film Threat by Don R. Lewis

http://www.filmthreat.com/index.php? section=reviews&Id=10085

"Set inside the daft world of its eccentric hero, "The Living Wake" could be termed anything from a black comedy to an absurdist/existentialist literary tale. In the end, however, pic defies all categorization, joining a small pantheon of pics including "Withnail & I" and Peter Greenaway's "Drowning by Numbers" that whistle past the graveyard with aplomb. Marking a stunning feature debut by lead actor and co-writer Mike O'Connell, pic is certain to set tongues wagging at fests and looks primed to do well in theatrical niches and tony ancillary havens."

-Variety by Robert Koehler

http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117933902.html? categoryid=31&cs=1

"If the members of Monty Python scripted an adaptation of Don Quixote and Guy Maddin directed it, it might look something like first-time director Sol Tryon's willfully absurd tragicomedy...played with euphoric abandon by stand-up comic Mike O'Connell..."

-LA Weekly by Scott Foundas

http://www.laweekly.com/film+tv/film/afi-the-rest-of-the-fest/17640/

"Starring comic Mike O'Connell in...a star-making role...near-Shakespearean levels of woe...The culmination of his "living wake" is one of the great comedic set pieces of the last decade, a sublimely art-directed and choreographed dirge gone wrong... If it's not bought by the end of the year, I'm taking out a loan of my own."

-The Reeler by S.T. Van Airsdale

http://www.thereeler.com/features/ from woodstock with love.php "The kind of movie "Saturday Night Live" regulars have been trying unsuccessfully to make for years now, this absurdist character-driven comedy is a guaranteed future cult classic."

-Metromix by Geoff Berkshire

http://losangeles.metromix.com/movies/article/best-bets-at-the/243352/content

"Fans of John Kennedy Toole's A Confederacy of Dunces and the novels of John Irving (particularly The World According to Garp) will find a kindred mindset in director Sol Tryon's exceptionally quirky *The Living Wake....* any friend of independent comedy should revel in the absurdities springing forth from the mind of cowriter-star Mike O'Connell,...It's the kind of go forbroke performance Jim Carrey might have given early in his career, but with more intellect and less mugging. O'Connell's work could carry this film through its winding path of final-day truth-seeking. But thanks to some nice details in a town that has slipped out of place and time, it doesn't have to. One of these is the perfectly cast Jesse Eisenberg... *The Living Wake* is the kind of whimsical material from which cult classics are built...

-All Movie Guide by Derek Armstrong

http://movies.msn.com/movies/movie-critic-reviews/ the-living-wake/

Personal choice for Best Leading Actor of 2007: Mike O'Connell, *The Living Wake*. Unless you attended the 2007 CineVegas or AFI Film Festivals, you didn't have a chance to see one of the best performances of the decade. K. Roth Binew is one of the best fictional characters created since Ignatius J. Reilly, and would make O'Connell one of Hollywood's busiest character actors if any distributor took a chance on this beautifully twisted comedy.

-Filmferk.com by Edward Havens

http://www.filmjerk.com/news/article.php?id\_new=542

# Festivals and Awards:

# Cinevegas

Heineken Red Star Award for Innovation and Originality - Director Award

#### Austin Film Festival

Comedic Vision Award

#### Woodstock Film Festival

Audience Award

## AFI Los Angeles

Official Selection

# Spirit Awards

Short Listed for the Acura Someone To Watch Award - Sol Tryon

#### Marfa Film Festival

Official Selection

#### Vail Film Festival

Rising Star Award - Jesse Eisenberg

# Gen Art Chicago Film Festival

Official Selection

### TriMedia Film Festival - Fort Collins, Colorado

Colorado State Graduate Students Best of the Fest Award

## Off Camera Film Festival - Krakow, Poland

Official Section

# The Big Apple Film Festival

Best Film







# The Living Wake

#### Cast

K. Roth Binew Mike O'Connell Jesse Eisenberg Mills Foaquin Jim Gaffigan Lampert Binew Ann Dowd Librarian Reginald Eddie Pepitone Alma Binew Jill Larson Moustache Man Clay Allen Mother Ami Ankin Dr. Schoenberg Harlan Baker Bryan Brown Frank Gypsy Psychic Rebecca Comerford Mossman Matthew Cowles Rutger Paul D'amato Ben Duhl Liquorsmith Christian Man #1 Matt Dwyer Clyde Kurt Haas Prostitute Colombe Jacobsen-Derstine Stepen Brian Jones Farmer Marla Diane Kagan Christian Man #2 Patrick Keane Ling Jun Kim Landlord Michael Mandel Passerby Man Mike O'Connell Old Man Aaron J. Paton Clock Maker Peter Paton Waylon Stuart Rudin

Ron Lee Savin

Karl Binew

### Crew

Directed by Sol Tryon

Written by Mike O'Connell

Peter Kline

Produced by Ami Ankin

Producers Chadwick Clough

Peter Kline Mike O'Connell Sol Tryon

Executive Producers Charlie Corwin

Clara Markowitz
Justin Leitstein
Rob Bethge
Andy Cappuccino
Helen Cappuccino

Co-Producers Gabe Polsky

Giancarlo Cavanesio

Liz Destro

Associated Producer Alex Orlovsky

Michael Cappuccino

Line Producer Chadwick Clough

Photographed by Scott Miller

Edited by Joe Klotz

Production Design by Michael Grasley

Set Decoration by Rafaela Stacheter

Costume Designer Negar Ali

Hair & Make-up Blair Jaffer

Sound Design by John Moros

Sound by Anthony Viera

Re-recording Mixer Cory Melious

Music by Carter Little

Mike O'Connell

Assistant Director Christopher Joy

Second Unit Camera Ray Flynn

Casting by Caroline Sinclair