



writer's
BLOCK

a film by ray spivey and jeff kerr

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*A struggling writer accepts an offer to collaborate with a
reclusive, best-selling novelist at his remote Texas ranch.*

Synopsis

It's another lightly attended book signing in yet another dingy book store when Skip Larson receives the offer of a lifetime: collaborate on a novel with best-selling author Chester Everett McGraw. The catch? Skip must cut off contact with the outside world for six months while writing at McGraw's remote Texas ranch.

Skip accompanies McGraw's right-hand man Digger Haskell to the famous man's compound, where he meets Catalina, the mysterious housekeeper, and Kara, sexy and smart, whose job it is to keep Skip entertained.

Skip can't believe his good fortune and, at first, all goes well. But Chester is a stern taskmaster. And when Kara disappears, Skip suspects that all is not as it seems. Catalina's efforts to comfort him lead to romance, but when Skip urges her to flee with him she rebuffs him. An escape attempt is foiled by Digger and Skip realizes he is a prisoner.

Skip appears to accept his fate, especially when Chester sweetens the deal by dangling a larger payday. As the novel progresses, Chester becomes jealous of Skip's writing ability. A fight ensues; Skip is beaten and bound before managing a desperate escape.

Hiding in Montana, Skip finally pieces together the awful truth of Chester's success. He must return to the ranch not only to seek justice, but to free himself from the deadly threat posed by his one-time hero.



CHARACTERS

SKIP LARSON - Author Skip Larson has lost his family, his professional reputation, and now, with a book signing in a run-down, second-rate bookstore, his dignity. Suddenly, a mysterious man appears with an unbelievable offer – a chance to collaborate with best-selling novelist Chester Everett McGraw. All Skip must do is cut off contact with the outside world for six months to focus on his one passion in life: writing. When told he won't regret his decision to accept, Skip notes, "That would be a first for me."

CHESTER EVERETT MCGRAW - His best-selling debut novel was followed by a string of disappointments but, after retreating to his remote Texas ranch, the reclusive Chester rediscovered his touch with one smash hit after another. Facing a six-month deadline to complete his latest novel, he recruits the talented, but struggling Skip Larson with the promise of fame and fortune. He has but one rule for Skip: his word is final . . . on everything.

CATALINA -- Chester's young, beautiful housekeeper befriends Skip before he realizes she harbors secrets of her own. Skip is smitten, but can he trust her?

DIGGER HASKELL - Digger owes everything to Chester, whom he reveres as a father figure. He tells Skip there is nothing he would not do for the man he deems his savior. Skip learns too late just how much truth is contained in those words.





DIRECTORS

Ray Spivey



Ray Spivey is a self-taught artist. One of his earliest paintings was used in the cult comedy movie *Waiting For Guffman*. He is known as the Texas Capitol artist and has developed paintings for the Texas Peace Officers Memorial and several Texas Black Tie & Boots Inaugural Balls in Washington, D.C. He is also a writer and filmmaker; his documentary films include *The Last of the Moonlight Towers* with Jeff Kerr.

Director's statement

Archer City, home of *The Last Picture Show*, rises from the dust of Nowhere, West Texas. On the town square are Larry McMurtry's used-book warehouses. I was the only customer that afternoon and wondered how many days it would take to find me if a bookcase toppled over. That sense of desperation and loneliness made me wonder: "What if a world-famous author never wrote his books? What if he lured talented, young writers to this wilderness?"

All of us reach career points in which sacrifices must be made. We wanted this film to show the incremental choices we make that lead us to either total disaster or final triumph.

Writer's Block has roots in old tales of heroes venturing alone to dangerous, faraway places. Maybe like *Dracula* meets *Misery*.

Our set locations were crucial to the cinematography. A small dam blocking a flooding Blanco River. A trophy room of the world's greatest hunter. The rocky scrub of the Texas Hill Country. We were inspired by *No Country for Old Men* and had to get a shot like Hitchcock's *North by Northwest* (a drone instead of a crop duster). We hope audiences enjoy the twists and turns and how the characters try to achieve justice on their own terms.

Jeff Kerr

Prior to taking up the challenge of making a feature film, Jeff Kerr has been a pediatric neurologist, award-winning author, and co-producer of the documentary film *The Last of the Moonlight Towers*. He is currently testing the competition waters with several screenplays, including *The Republic of Jack*, a political farce that was a two-time top 10% Nicholl Fellowship finisher as well as a 2017 Screencraft quarterfinalist. He lives with his wife Sharon in Austin.



Director's statement

I'm old enough to have seen *The Sting* when it first hit theaters in the seventies. I'll never forget how awed I was when Robert Redford, supposedly lying dead in a pool of blood, opened his eyes and spit out the blood capsule in his mouth. Then Paul Newman, also shot dead, woke up and casually wiped fake blood from his hands. Oh my God, they're alive!

That ending thrilled me. Ever since, I've been partial to movies with surprises. *Memento*, *The Usual Suspects*, and the original *Planet of the Apes* come to mind. For me, nothing satisfies like an unforeseen, but plausible twist that keeps me thinking for days. One of my goals when Ray and I set out to create *Writer's Block* was to create this sensation for viewers of the film. I hope we've come close.





CAST

Craig Nigh

As Skip Larson



Craig Nigh hails from Bryan, TX. His film and TV credits include *Breaking Bad*, *The Leftovers*, *Men, Women and Children*, *From Dusk Till Dawn*, and *Frasier*. After spending more than a decade in Los Angeles studying both his craft and the film business, he returned to Austin to continue pursuing his dream of acting, directing, and producing awesome projects that contribute to the incredibly rich film community thriving in the Texas capital. He is excited to team up with Jeff Kerr and Ray Spivey to create an epic indie thriller.

Mike Gassaway

As Chester Everett McGraw



Mike Gassaway is an Emmy award-winning actor who has worn many hats, including professional fighter, professional race car driver, and attorney. He is an inductee in the Professional Karate Magazine Hall of Fame and The United States Martial Arts Hall of Fame as a world land speed record holder and has been inducted onto the Rosa Parks Wall of Tolerance for his exemplary work in the courtroom representing and defending the civil rights of others. He was also ranked #28 on Sports Fitness Magazine's Hottest Men Over 50 list. Mike has worked with many well-known actors including Clint Eastwood, John Travolta, Hugh Jackman, Josh Brolin, Viola Davis, Denzel Washington, Ethan Hawke, Mel Gibson, and Richard Dreyfuss.

Jeannie Carter Cruz

As Catalina



Born and raised in Laredo, Texas, Jeannie Carter Cruz always dreamed of becoming an actor. It all started at age five when she landed a part for a school play. After relocating to Austin, her dream slowly transformed into reality. It was also in that city that she met and fell in love with a talented musician. They married in 2008. Jeannie began seeking acting roles in 2010. In 2013, she took a leap of faith and, with the support of her husband, quit her job as a medical assistant to devote herself full-time to her craft. She signed with Acclaim Talent Agency and within two weeks landed her first commercial. Since then she has established herself as a strong and talented actor working in film, voice over, music video, commercials, and industrial work. Jeannie is proficient in English and Spanish. She is very passionate about Spanish-speaking roles and especially loves playing strong female multi-dimensional characters. Having found a passion for acting, she intends never to give it up.

Chris Warner has been described as the kid in the candy store and the bull in the china shop rolled into one. Equal parts the Hulk and Winnie The Pooh, he is nothing less than a lovable teddy bear with an undeniable personality! From the second people meet him, they realize he was born to entertain. Armed with an intense wit and a commanding presence, Chris grabs the attention of any crowd . . . so hold on tight! Chris began acting over two decades ago in Austin, Texas. After achieving success in film and commercials, he took one last role in Texas opposite Academy Award winner Kevin Spacey in *The Life of David Gale* before departing for the bright lights of Hollywood. Subsequently, he gained rave notices for strong supporting performances opposite Tommy Lee Jones in the Academy Award-winning film *No Country for Old Men* and Benicio Del Toro in Frank Miller's ground-breaking *Sin City*. His credits also include appearances on hit television shows *Prison Break*, *Criminal Minds*, *Friday Night Lights*, *The Event*, *NCIS: Los Angeles*, *Justified* and *Shut Eye*. As one of the most respected character actors of his generation, Chris has cemented himself as an edgy, intense artist who leaves nothing to chance on-screen.

Chris Warner

As Digger Haskell





Robert Twaddell is best known for his work in musical theater as Jesus in *The Promise*, but his love for film and classic theater keeps him from restricting himself to just one medium. His recent work includes the roles Claudio in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Marius in *Les Miserables*, and Vasseli Soleni in *Three Sisters*. He and his wife Haley live and work in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area.

Robert Twaddell

As Rudy

Born in Russia, Katusha Robert moved to the US when she was 10. She immediately involved herself in acting, singing, dancing, and art. Over the past several years she has worked to perfect her craft under the tutelage of multiple coaches, her current mentor being Carol Hickey of the Carol Hickey Acting Studio in Austin. She was recently cast in two Investigation Discovery shows (filmed in New York and Dallas) and has enjoyed roles in numerous feature films, short films, web series, commercials, industrials, and voice overs throughout Texas. Her goals are to continue working on herself as an actor and human being, move those that watch her work, and simply live truthfully under imaginary circumstances



Katusha Robert

As Jillian Larson



Bobbie Grace is best known for her chilling performance in *Silken Luna* filmed in Paris, France. This film earned her the Best Principal Actress Award by the *Los Angeles Film Review*. The up and coming actress has already appeared in thirty-plus films playing a variety of complex characters, all of which possess diverse emotions.

Bobbie Grace

As Trishia

Ashley Rollins is a personal trainer and health/wellness blogger living in Austin, Texas. A self-proclaimed nutrition nerd and avid marathoner, Ashley spends the majority of her days working up a sweat. Writer's Block is her first foray into acting. The experience having whetted her appetite, it likely will not be her last.



Ashley Rollins

As Kara



Nora Hunter is a lifelong Texan who, after enjoying a twenty-year career in corporate retail with Academy Sports & Outdoors, moved to Austin to accept a role as Campaign Manager with Dell Computers. Nora has a 22-year-old son Harrison, whom she adores. In her spare time, she loves traveling and listening to live country music.

Nora Hunter

As Elaine

Avery Lewis was born in Houston, Texas. He is a radio, television, and film major at the University of Texas at Austin who has loved movies since childhood and always wanted to be a part of the industry. His short term goal is to establish himself as an actor. He dreams of starring in a blockbuster movie and someday hopes to produce his own films as well.



Avery Lewis

As Lance





BEHIND

THE SCENES



Director Ray Spivey confers with
drone operator Jamie Brown



Craig Nigh, as seen by one of Jamie's drones



L-R: Assistant cinematographer Jacob Berardi,
Craig Nigh, and cinematographer Alex Walker



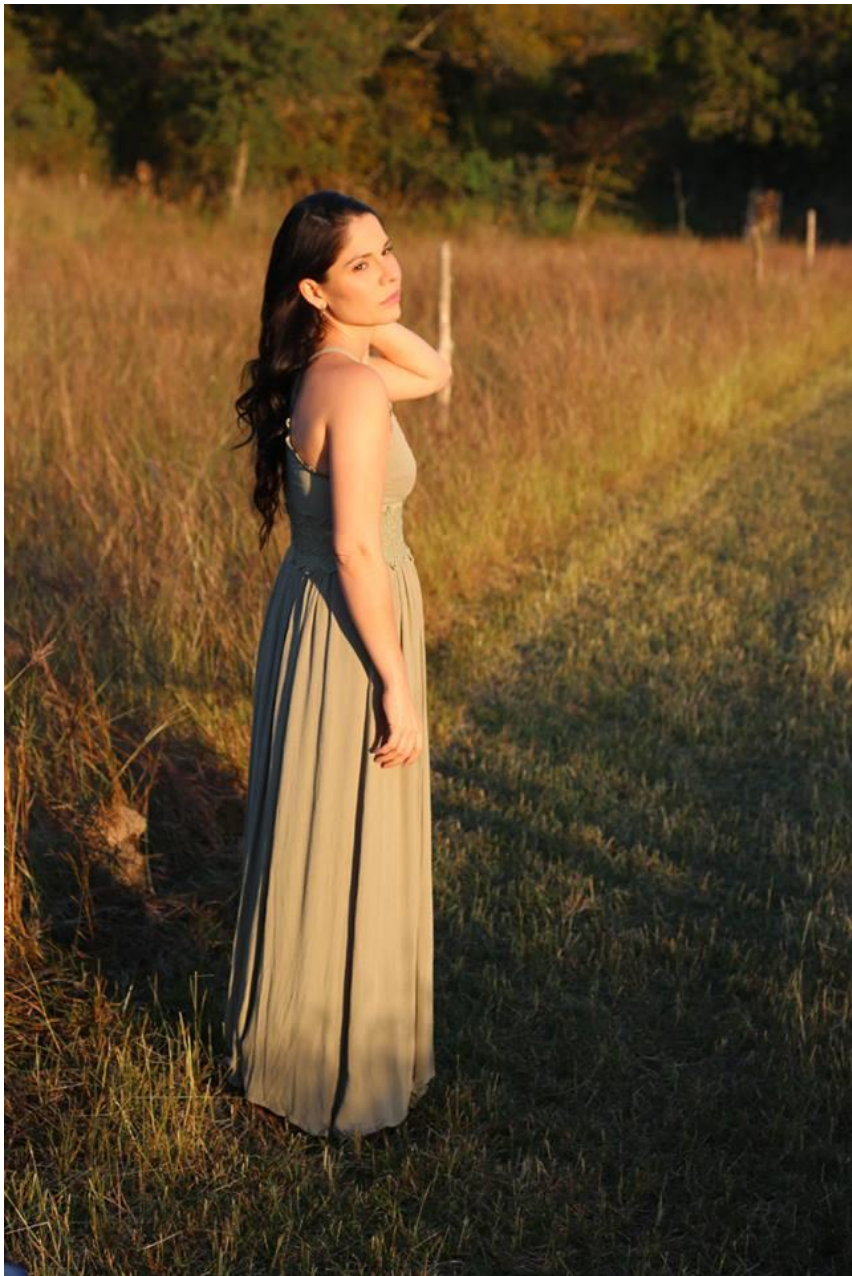
Chris Warner



Mike Gassaway as Chester stalking his prey



Jeannie Carter Cruz waiting to enter a scene



Jeannie Carter Cruz as Catalina



Co-director Jeff Kerr explains a scene to Craig Nigh



Nora Hunter



Ashley Rollins between takes



Mike Gassaway



Mike Gassaway and Craig Nigh rehearsing a fight scene under Justin Hall's supervision



Cinematographer Alex Walker and his assistant Jacob Berardi



Co-directors Ray Spivey and Jeff Kerr on a frigid night shoot



Head gaffer Greg Edwards



Set photographer Steve Houston with Nora Hunter



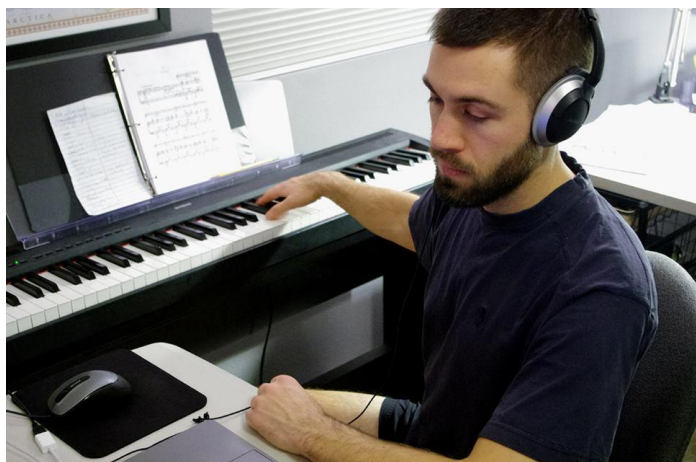
Storyboard art by Ray Spivey



C. J. Roberts readying his sound equipment



Filming on the Blanco River



Composer David Kerr at work



Chris Warner and Mike Gassaway



Green screen scene with Ron Oliveira



Wiley the Wonder Dog



Avery Lewis contemplates his next scene



Wrap party at Star Hill Ranch with Chris Warner, Bobbie Grace, and Fritz Reinig



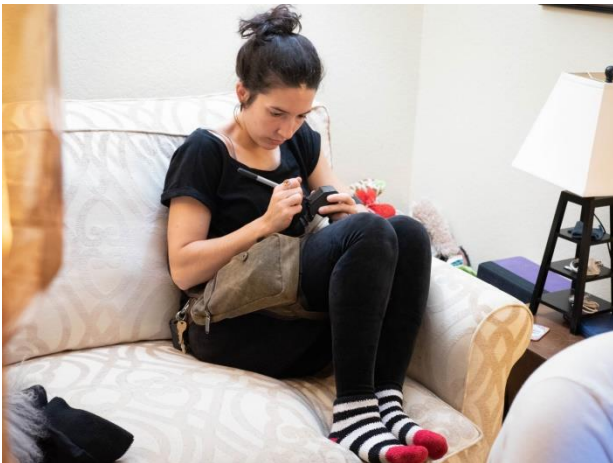
Our team of "gangsters" - Trey Josenberger, Mike Holmes, Natasha Buffington, Ross Fischer, and Robert Twaddell



Robert Twaddell



Bobbie Grace enjoys a moment of relaxation



Kellie Penna working yet another last-minute prop miracle



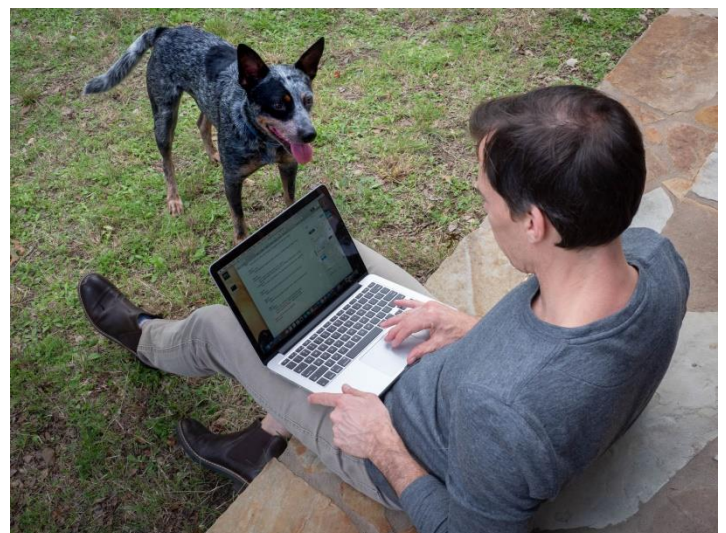
Kevin Cooper's scenes were shot in his downtown Austin office



Kathryn Marin in character



Co-director Jeff Kerr and lead actor Craig Nigh



Wiley and Craig Nigh run their lines



Filming at Austin's Book People



**Kyle Williams, Evan Papadakis, and Anton Savenko
on location in Blanco County**



Jeannie Carter Cruz studies her lines



Mike Gassaway having some fun



Jeannie Carter Cruz conferring with co-director Jeff Kerr



Craig Nigh and Jamie Brown





CREDITS

CAST

CRAIG NIGH – Skip Larson
MIKE GASSAWAY – Chester Everett McGraw
JEANNIE CARTER CRUZ – Catalina
CHRIS WARNER – Digger Haskell
BOBBIE GRACE – Trishia
KATUSHA ROBERT – Jillian Larson
ROBERT TWADDELL – Rudy
ASHLEY ROLLINS – Kara
NORA HUNTER – Elaine
FRITZ REINIG – Sheriff Harley Young
KEVIN COOPER – Michael Walden
AVERY LEWIS – Lance
NATASHA BUFFINGTON – The Hammer
BRIAN JAMMER – Bookstore Owner
RON OLIVEIRA – News Anchor
MARION DOUGLAS – Angry Woman
MANDEEP CHATHA HOMER – News Anchor
DON WILLIAMS – News Anchor
KATHRYN MARIN – TV Salesperson
CINDY HOWARD – Nurse
CHELCY GONZALES – Legal Assistant
VALERIE CHANDLER – Bookstore Assistant
ALEC WILLRODT – Homeless Man
MIKE HOLMES – Van Driver
MARC SALVATO – Bookstore Security Guard
GARRETT RANSOM – Paramedic
KALI ROURKE – Bookstore Shopper
TREY JOSENBARGER – Gang Member
DENISE ROSE – Bookstore Shopper
ANTON SAVENKO – Bookstore Shopper
ROSS FISCHER – Gang Member
MEREDYTH FOWLER – Bookstore Fan

CREW

DIRECTED, WRITTEN, AND PRODUCED BY
Ray Spivey
Jeff Kerr
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER
Brian Jammer
CINEMATOGRAPHER
Alex Walker
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
Christine Chen
SECOND ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
Christopher Lee Herod
Teresa Seale
EDITOR
Ryan Kelley
MUSIC
David Kerr
SOUND
C.J. Roberts
SOUND CONSULTANT
Kini Kay
ART DIRECTOR
Kellie Penna
MAKEUP
Shay Yo
STUNT COORDINATOR
Justin Hall
Jeff Schwan
CHIEF GAFFER
Greg Edwards
FIRST ASSISTANT CAMERA
Jacob Berardi
SECOND ASSISTANT CAMERA
Boston Stephens

DRONE OPERATOR, CAMERA
Jamie Brown
DIGITAL IMAGING TECHNICIAN
Robert Burns
SET PHOTOGRAPHER
Steve Houston
ELECTRICIANS
Anton Savenko
Evan Papadakis
GRIP
Kyle Williams
WARDROBE
Rachel Acosta
SCRIPT SUPERVISOR
Larissa Garcia-Baab
PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS
Adam Rani
Brad Vaughn
CATERING SUPERVISORS
Sharon Kerr
Michele Worrel
PROPS
Richard Talbot
HUNTING CONSULTANT
David Wilkinson
SCRIPT CONSULTANTS
Hannah Siemens – Luthy
David Lykes Keenan
SPECIAL THANKS TO
Nancy Talbot
Ana Worrel



FAQ

How did you share the writing of the screenplay? We created a beat sheet with eight plot points. Jeff initially wrote the odd numbers; Ray handled the evens. The script then went through dozens of revisions, with each of us pitching ideas and edits, until we both were satisfied with the result.

How did your partnership come about? We knew each other in high school, but not well. Years later, Ray's step-daughter gave him one of Jeff's books for Christmas. Ray brought it to Jeff's office for a signature, which led to Ray illustrating Jeff's next book. That in turn led to a team effort for the documentary *The Last of the Moonlight Towers*, a project which whetted our appetite for making a feature film.

How did you find your cast and crew? Entirely through word of mouth. Each time we added somebody to the production we asked that person for recommendations regarding unfilled positions and roles. Many of these suggestions paid off. With the exception of Chris Warner, a Texas boy living his Hollywood dream, everyone involved with the film lives in or near Austin.

What type of camera was used to shoot the film? Arri Alexa Mini with Vintage Schneider lenses.

Where was the film shot? About two-thirds of the film was shot in Austin, with most of the rest in Blanco County. Ex-Texas Speaker of the House Gib Lewis kindly allowed us access to his private trophy room. The shoot lasted seventeen days.

Were there any problems during the shoot? We had envisioned the outdoor action taking place in arid Texas wilderness and, as our shoot approached, the land we had in mind looked perfect. Then it rained and the countryside turned green and the rivers and creeks filled up. In hindsight we think that worked to our advantage, as it made the scene at the dam on the Blanco River much more dramatic.

What was the most challenging scene to shoot? There were two. For the scene of Digger and Skip riding in the truck at night on a highway we knew we couldn't safely film on an actual highway with the resources at hand but, fortunately, lighting wizard Greg Edwards was able to recreate nighttime driving in a barn on the Blanco County property that served as our location. And we initially planned to shoot the dam scene from the road with Craig advancing across the water toward the camera. After the first take, though, cinematographer Alex Walker turned to Jeff and said, "I gotta get across the river." Our hearts were pounding as we watched Alex carry our rented camera, the financial equivalent of a small house, through knee deep water over slippery rocks to reach the other side. But he made it and the results proved Alex right.