



Bartoli Filmworks presents

# ***The Thickness of Delirium***

Written and Directed by Brian James McGuire



## SYNOPSIS

*The Thickness of Delirium* is a story told in the simplest terms and deals with the unthinkable complex concept of one man's real desire to kill one of his parents.

Shawn, a thirty-year old man whose mother just passed away, was expecting to see his father at the funeral. When his father doesn't show up, Shawn is overcome with sadness and despair. Desperate to bring closure to what he feels is maddening torture that has built up throughout the majority of his life; he believes that he has no other options but to take the long drive from his home in Wisconsin to his father's home in Utah...to kill him.

A snowstorm closes the freeway and Shawn is forced to stay in a motel until the following morning. Here he meets Ronnie, a naïve and carefree woman on her way west to pursue her dreams of becoming a country western singer. In the morning, Shawn begrudgingly agrees to let Ronnie ride along as far as Utah. The two form a connection that might bring Shawn to rethink his mission.

**Despite its minimalist plot, *The Thickness of Delirium's* main character, Shawn, is not a man who has simply decided to take the life of his father. He is one who has embarked on a quest; focused on carrying out his decision, but also searching for something else.**

In *The Thickness of Delirium*, Brian shows a great deal of restraint in his storytelling and a strong sense of visual style.

THE THICKNESS OF DELIRIUM is written and directed by Brian James McGuire. The producer is Dan Wilson. The music is performed by Pepe Deluxe. The cast includes Leann Slaby, Brian McGuire, Dani Nardi, Kat Berlik, Tim McGuire, James McGuire, Candace McGuire.



## PRINCIPAL CAST

Shawn Brian James McGuire  
Ronnie Leann Slaby  
Sereya Dani Nardi  
          Kat Berlik  
Brother Tim McGuire  
Father James E. McGuire



## CREW

Writer/Director Brian James McGuire  
Producer Dan Wilson  
Director of Photography Brian James McGuire  
Sound Dan Wilson  
Music Pepe Deluxe  
Editor Brian James McGuire



## PRODUCTION NOTES

Bartoli Filmworks  
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In January 2006, writer-director Brian James McGuire and Producer Dan Wilson met for lunch to talk about what to do after an unsuccessful attempt to raising money for \$1.6M feature film titled "Not This Girl". Dan asked Brian if he had any money to make a film and Brian replied, "No, but I have an idea and some location ideas scattered on the other side of the country." Dan said, "Let's do it."

Brian began to write a story which had been on his mind for quite some time. He knew that he wouldn't have the money to pay anyone to play the lead in the film therefore, he wrote the part for himself. "I was going to be there anyway," he laughed. Brian approached Leann Slaby, who was attached to play the lead in "Not This Girl", to find out if she'd be interested in this very low budget film. Leann was already interested in Brian's unique style and agreed to play the role of the unknown character.

As he worked on the script, Pepe Deluxe's *Beatitude* was on Brian's mind. Their infectious music started to feel like it was made for this story and Brian asked Dan to contact the band in Finland to get permission to use their music.

Brian knew exactly the story he wanted to tell and how he wanted to tell it. He was never concerned about the lack of money or the shoot, which would span over 1,400 miles and include a snow storm.

In order to fund the film, Dan and Brian decided to have a fundraising party at Milwaukee's ArtBar. Friends and family donated money, pre-ordered Special Fundraiser Edition DVDs as well as purchased t-shirts and generated excitement about the film. The entire cast and crew comprised of Brian McGuire, Dan Wilson, Leann Slaby and Kat Berlik. Their fundraising provided just enough money to pay for production expenses and before they knew it, they were driving down I-80 into Iowa for their first shot of the film, shooting between Milwaukee, WI and Ogden, Utah over twelve days in March of 2006.

The shoot started in Milwaukee, WI and continued through Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Wyoming and ended in Utah where the majority of the film was shot. In the beginning, the group would stop, set up for a shot, shoot, break it down and drive again for sometimes hours before the next shot. During this time, Dan, Brian, Leann and Kat encountered many wonderful people who allowed them access to their businesses, gave them food and cheered them on. Though the actual production was hectic, extremely challenging and a lot more tiring than anyone had really expected, they were fortunate not to be turned down for any request as they went from location to location. "Everyone was really helpful and genuinely wanted us to succeed," said Dan about the trip. "We called ahead to the Cheyenne Historical Foundation to ask about the giant boots that were scattered around the city. When we got there, they gave us t-shirts, a tour, the history...everything. They were very warm and inviting."

Upon arriving in Utah, they finally got a chance to settle into a base camp. The shoot started to take shape and everyone knew their role. Brian kept a strong focus as director, actor and cinematographer while Dan kept the production moving in a well organized fashion as he wore the producer, production manager, sound recorder and camera operator hats. Leann and Kat helped out as production assistants and grips when they were not acting or preparing for a scene.



Leann Slaby researched her character to great depths and came to the production with real professionalism despite having to 'help out' with many other production elements. Commenting on Leann's contribution to production, Brian says, "The conditions were very difficult, but she stayed focused on her character and was always ready when called upon. She never forgot her character's purpose and she was very insightful when it came to her movements, interactions and reactions. You have to though, under these conditions, and I don't think most actors would have handled it the way she did. She'd never been involved in such a low-budget production before."

Experiencing *The Thickness of Delirium* is an all-encompassing experience. Thank you for sharing your time, your energy, your eyes, ears, and souls with us.



## ABOUT THE CAST

### *Leann Slaby*

Possessed with an approachable sensuality, infectious charm and sharp wit, Leann Slaby landed her first feature film role in the Milwaukee feature *Love and Fate* (2002). She studied acting in Milwaukee and was cast as Ronnie in *The Thickness of Delirium*, her second feature film. She has since moved to Los Angeles where she was quickly cast in the feature *Unwelcome Strangers* (in Post-production), *The Chronicles of a Love Unfound* (In production) along with a number of short films. She continues to study acting at the Howard Fine Acting Studio.

### *Brian James McGuire*

*The Thickness of Delirium* is Brian's acting debut.

### *Dani Nardi*

*The Thickness of Delirium* is Dani's acting debut. She models for various companies around Milwaukee and the Midwest.

### *Kat Berlik*

*The Thickness of Delirium* is Kat Berlik's acting debut.



## FILMMAKERS

### ***Brian James McGuire***

Writer/Director/Director of Photography

Brian James McGuire studied film at the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee.

### ***Dan Wilson***

Producer

Dan Wilson studied film at the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee, graduating in 1991. He has since worked on various feature films and commercials across the country, and currently splits his time between still photography and freelance production work. He is passionate about storytelling and is influenced by independent and global cinema. Some of his favorite films are from France, Italy and India.





## Production highlights

- Funded entirely by DVD presales, a fundraiser party and donations collected over the web.
- Shot between Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Ogden, Utah over twelve days, 1400 miles, with four people and two vehicles.
- Photographed in HDV on Canon XL-H1.
- Used Brian's childhood home, photos and parents.
- Used, with permission, another film's set (while they were setting up to shoot their scene) to shoot two scenes at the Union Station in Ogden.
- Lost an entire day of shooting to a snowstorm that closed I-80 in Nebraska for over 24 hours.
- Selected songs from Pepe Deluxe's 2003 album, *Beatitude* used, with permission, as film's soundtrack.



## Q & A with writer/director Brian James McGuire

**Q:** What inspired you to write this story?

**BJM:** Well, this story definitely comes from my own feelings about my father and my ridiculous fear that somehow I will treat my daughters the same way. I certainly didn't have an abusive father and there can really be no complaints as far as there being any mental torture or physical abuse, but the issue around my relationship with my father is sad and it had affected my daily living. Once I became a father myself, it seemed to affect me even more. The fact that I was never physically abused or verbally abused and that fact that he actually was around if I wanted to visit him or the old neighborhood, didn't change how I felt about our relationship and how sad I was that he was never actually there for me. He never offered any guidance or...anything really. I stumbled across quote from Jean-Paul Sartre that really hit me hard: "Freedom is what you do with what's been done to you". That quote really rang true to me and I realized that I wasn't free...That I was actually being held hostage by my own wishes and dreams of the past, which, obviously, you can't change. The past was burying me alive. That one quote really opened up my eyes to how I was living my life and allowed me the freedom I had been looking for. I never got to a point where my thoughts and feelings began to overpower me, but I started to think about what could happen if I had gotten to that point. If my mind stepped into that quicksand and struggled to get out, what could happen? I knew right away that that was the film I wanted to make.

**Q:** Was it difficult to separate yourself from Shawn or did you simply embrace Shawn as another side of yourself?

**BJM:** At first it was all Shawn and I was focused on creating a fictional character using everything physical that I could get my hands on for free, which meant my car, my clothes, my dad's house, my mom's house, my brother and so on. If we had a budget that allowed it, I don't think I would have used my actual childhood house or my actual mother and father. As an actor, you need to embrace the character as a stand-alone person, but you also need to bring yourself into the role. You need to add elements of yourself to bring that character to life. You can't simply say "I'm gonna be this guy now" and turn it on and off. You need to find a place where you're creating a living, breathing human that isn't you, but you can't escape the truth of your being, your existence. There is always a blurry line there between yourself and the character you're creating. When we rolled into town, into my old neighborhood and drove past my father's house for the first time, it was very powerful to me. That's when I realized there was a lot more of me in Shawn than I had thought.

**Q:** Was shooting the film difficult for you emotionally?

**BJM:** No. After that initial shock of driving past my father's house for the first time, it was all about filmmaking. I needed to use the emotion I felt at that moment, but I was wearing so many hats during production, that it was impossible for me to stop and think about how this process was affecting me personally. So, no, not difficult at all, really.

**Q:** What about wearing all those hats? Directing, acting and cinematography? Was that difficult?

**BJM:** [Laughs] Funny, I never really thought about it at the time. It didn't feel difficult. I know that there were times when I was really tired. In Cheyenne, when we were shooting the scene where Shawn and



Ronnie are looking for one of Ronnie's friend's house, that was very difficult. I was driving, operating the camera, directing and acting all at the same time. That scene really took a long time to shoot, because there were cops all over the place, so we had to stop and start a lot, plus I wasn't familiar with the roads and there were a lot of one way streets. Then we still had to get to Laramie to shoot before the sun went down. There was a lot of pressure, but I really didn't realize it until we stopped for the night – somewhere in Wyoming. I can't remember where. I was freakin' tired. As everyone was that night.

**Q:** How was it working with Leann?

**BJM:** It was very easy. She made it easy for me by coming to the production prepared. She had a lot of ideas and was willing to do all the hard work that was needed to get the job done. I've worked with a number of actors before who don't put the effort in until they arrive on set. Leann had worked hard on her character and built a very believable, likeable character that's easy to understand. Ronnie slowly glides both physically and psychologically through the story in a way that transforms from simple to complex in her understanding of Shawn's situation. We were very fortunate to have Leann play Ronnie.

**Q:** How did you choose the music for the film?

**BJM:** I was listening to Pepe Deluxe's *Beatitude* constantly just prior to and during the writing process of *Delirium*. In my head, their album was the only music going through each scene, but I never really thought about being able to actually use any of it. One day I was casually reading about Pepe Deluxe and one of the reviews had mentioned that the album sounds like a soundtrack for a film. That comment got me thinking more and more about just how much their music fit the feel of the film. I talked to Dan about it and he emailed the band. I really was expecting either no response or something like "yeah, I don't think so...who the hell are you again?" But it was the complete opposite and the film is that much better because of the music.

**Q:** You and Dan have worked together for a number of years. How would you describe your relationship?

**BJM:** Dan is an exceptionally professional person who is very organized. He and I like the same types of cinema and generally get along very well. I consider Dan to be a very good friend. We do a really good job of not letting an argument we have over business affect our friendship. I don't know how we do it, it just happens. Dan and I could have a drag out fight, and I'd turn around and help him tile his bathroom.

During production, Dan and I have a working relationship where we can get information across to each other easily and quickly without any confusion. We know each other's train of thought and we can see each other's point of view. If for some reason we don't, we can work things through quickly and easily because we don't let ego get in the way. It is always about doing what's best for the film.

**Q:** What are your influences as a writer and filmmaker?

**BJM:** Well, as a filmmaker, I look a lot to the French New Wave with films like *Breathless*, *The 400 Blows*, *Jules et Jim*, *Bande a part...* I mean, who doesn't? When you see those films for the first time, it's impossible to not feel it deep in your soul. Other films like, *Downhill Racer*, *Taste of Cherry*, *The Parallax View...*man, there's so many. As a writer, there have been many different influences on me....pieces here and there that have really moved me. Scott Bradfield's *The History of Luminous Motion* is one that quickly comes to mind as a work that has really affected my art.



There have been other works and artists who have influenced me in one way or another, but I think the most influential of all was The Cure. Robert Smith's *Faith* and *Seventeen Seconds* really guided my early education of art and cinema. Oddly, I was never interested in becoming a musician as I listened to those albums over and over in my bedroom, but rather I feel it really drew me closer to film. When I get ready to start a new piece, whether it's a painting, a poem, a film, or a script, I still look to those albums for influence and guidance.

**Interview Date: June 1, 2007**