

A Team Juicebox Project

## Documentary Film Proposal:



### **Whimsy: The Life and Work of Scot Augustson** Written by Cory Kelley and Sean Roach

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<http://www.documbase.com/Documentary-Funding-Proposal.pdf>



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The overview is a description of storyline/ synopsis of the documentary. It tells us the purpose of documentary. It briefly talks about themes and styles that the production team plan to portray in the documentary.

## I. OVERVIEW

*Whimsy* is a stylized and playfully constructed feature-length documentary about the life and work of one of Seattle's most loved playwrights, Scot Augustson. His shadow puppet theater is whimsical, irreverent, and naughty, with a sense of childlike heart and naivety. With magical realism and unconventional storytelling, *Whimsy* draws the viewer into Scot's imaginative world, where they discover that self-doubt and regret are the companions to his life based on passion and vision.

*Whimsy* documents the production of Scot's latest shadow puppet creation, "Where the River Styx Meets Route 66," a hilarious adaptation of Homer's *Odyssey* performed in a circus tent. By blending elements of performance and fiction, the documentary evokes curiosity and creates an atmosphere of spectacle. It follows the linear story of the play's production through writing and rehearsal to opening night. Scot's interesting life comes into focus through interviews with his tight-knit group of performers, theater critics, and fans. Dramatic moments in his life are animated with shadow puppets and theatrical reenactments in Scot's unique style of storytelling.

The story culminates in the opening night of the play where tension and excitement fill the air. As the audience arrives, all of the participants in the documentary are there to see Scot's newest work. We see Scot in his element and understand that this is why he lives the life he does. The lights dim and Scot's hilarious, bizarre, and unique world reveals itself on the walls of the circus tent. Once again his audiences are dazzled and entertained by his genius.



This part is communicating how the documentary will be structured. I the description of the various acts (1/2/3) give us an idea of what emotions will be portrayed during.

## II. OUTLINE

*Whimsy* opens in a darkly lit room where nuns and priests are engaged in very unholy acts – images of guns, sex, and betrayal are played out in a grainy grind house style. As an audience watches in amazement and as laughter erupts, it becomes evident that the scene is taking place in a theater. The actors take a bow and the enthusiastic audience roars.

The title sequence begins with a man walking down the streets of Seattle. He is tall and barrel-chested. When he talks his speech cadence is a little awkward. He explains that he is on his way to the first day of rehearsal for his new shadow puppet play. As he travels throughout Seattle on bus and foot, the cut-out shadow of a large comical shrimp comes out of the darkness to follow him. Shadows of a chicken, poodle, and then an anatomically exaggerated zebra appear on surfaces of the walls, windows, and buildings around him. They bounce along as though being controlled by some handheld stick. He turns to see who is following him but they duck and hide in the shadows.

### **ACT I: Boy in the Beastly City**

Act one opens on a stage with an ornate golden arch, red velvet curtain, and bright theatrical lighting. An actor delivers an energetic solo performance from one of Scot's plays. The clever, witty lines unveil the story of a young boy who travels to the city to find his large-balled pet monkey. The boy must overcome his fears and face the beastly city. The monologue sets up Scot's journey to Seattle and demonstrates his childlike view of life though he is surrounded by a nasty, dangerous world.



The film follows Scot through Seattle to the theater, where it is the first day of rehearsals for his new play. We meet Scot's longtime friends and collaborators Jennifer Jasper and Stephen Hando. Their interviews set up Scot's character and explain that we will be following the production of the play through rehearsal to opening night.

A man sits in front of a make-up mirror in his dressing room. As he begins applying make-up, he talks about Scot's unique sense of humor and originality. Before our eyes Kevin transforms into his drag queen persona Cookie. A circus atmosphere with bright lights and vivid colors reveals the flamboyant drag queen persona of Kevin Kent as he performs a monologue from one of Scot's plays. The language and performance of the monologue are audaciously funny.

Acrobats come twirling down ropes in sequined tights and a man in a tuxedo juggles as he dances across the stage. Intercut with this spectacle is Scot traveling throughout Seattle. Scot's view of the world comes to life as characters from his plays appear in the real world. The letters on a billboard rearrange themselves to one of the lines being performed by Cookie. A nun sitting next to him at the bus stop smokes a cigarette and lifts her habit to reveal a sexy garter belt. From the bus he passes a retail store where people with large animal heads dance a pagan dance.

**ACT II: Why, Why, Why**

Scot takes us to the site of his first production in Seattle where he tells us about coming to the city, wide-eyed and naïve. With archival video and photos, he and Stephen recount some of their first productions and failures. Friend Keri Healy tells about Scot's transformation from a shy, lighting operator to a bombastic storyteller.

Paul Mullen, a notable Seattle playwright and longtime fan of Scot, gives a blunt, honest appraisal of the local theater scene and Scot's formative role in it. He explains how the underground theater scene in Seattle grew and changed during Scot's time. Describing the challenges of making a living in theater leads to Scot's story of participating in experimental trials for extra income. The hilarious story is reenacted on a cloth screen with shadow puppets and the comedic voices of Stephen and Kari.

At his home, Scot sits with his puppets spread across a table. He constructs new puppets and repairs a few of the old ones for use in the new play. The puppets are comically simple. They are cut out from construction paper glued to a long stick and often repaired with small piece of masking tape. Scot talks about his characters and why he chooses puppets. He holds up the ex-prostitute Chicken Jenny and the ornery Randy Zebra, explaining their characters.



Paul and Jennifer talk about why Scot's blending of adult themes with such a childish and naive style of storytelling makes for great theater. They elaborate on how Scot's plays have a sense of heart that catches the audiences off guard, especially when they find themselves caring for silly and debaucherous cardboard cutouts. They discuss the meaning behind interventionist gods that show up in most of Scot's plays and what it means.

Another comedic monologue performed on an ornate, brightly lit stage uses Scot's play "Why, Why, Why" to paint the picture of two gods conspiring to keep the character from getting what he needs. As the monologue closes, we see Tom Keogh sitting at his desk. He is a Seattle theater critic and tells us about the struggling independent theater scene.

Tom goes to a show put on by Stephen Hando. We see how independent actors react to being reviewed and judged. Scot tells us about his former role as a reviewer, and what it means to judge other's work and to be judged.

Back at the rehearsal, Scot's cast and crew do a final run-through of the play to work out the details. Stephen, Jennifer and the other cast members are nervous, but feel that they are ready. As he closes up the theater the night before opening night, Scot reveals his insecurities and anxieties. He admits that he doesn't know if he would choose this life again.

### **ACT III: A Terrible Price for Whimsy**

A combative monologue about children who will be sacrificed for a town's perverse ritual leads the film into the tense moments of opening night. All of the people we have met through interviews are in the audience, eagerly awaiting Scot's newest creation. Backstage, Scot slowly transforms into Sgt. Rigsby, donning his trademark garb. All of his inhibitions are thrown to the wind and the puppeteer takes control of his creation.



Scot is in full character, orchestrating behind the scenes as the audience watches in amazement. The film ends with Stephen Hando singing an emotional rendition of "La Vie En Rose" made popular in one of Scot's plays. While the song goes on, we see Scot undress from his Sgt. Rigsby costume, transforming back into his mild-mannered self as he turns off the theater's lights and walks home.

This whole section tells us the historical background and context of the story.

This part of a proposal is to show the research that has been put into the process of this documentary idea. Having the correct research and a good amount of research is the best way to know your documentary is portraying reliable and truthful information.

### III. HISTORY

In 1988, an awkward, shy Scot Augustson moved from New Mexico to Seattle to start his career in theater. Fresh out of college, Scot arrived in Seattle to discover a dismal theater scene dominated by large production companies and very little in the way of underground theater. During the 1990's, under the influence of grunge music and Microsoft money, Seattle saw a surge in its arts culture. Riding this wave in creativity, the independent theater scene grew and thrived, creating spaces for new young playwrights to express their unique views of the world. During this time Scot became one of Seattle's most loved and prolific underground playwrights with his taboo, bawdy, and blunt form of shadow puppetry and live-action plays.

Over the years, Augustson has conspired with Seattle's best independent actors and writers to form a tight-knit group of colleagues. His evolving group of collaborators include what some newspapers have termed, Seattle's funniest man (Stephen Hando), the Northwest's most bellicose independent theater advocate (Paul Mullen) and Seattle's most popular drag queen (Kevin Kent), along with countless others.

In the face of a national recession, large funding cuts for the arts, and a shifting theater landscape, the independent theater scene in Seattle is in desperate times. Several theaters have closed and others are on shaky ground with increasing expenses and decreasing revenues. Scot has managed to make ends meet and scrape out a modest living with his playwriting, but as he gets older he questions the choices he has made. Looking back on his life, Scot often wonders what would have happened if he used his talents in a different way. His future is unclear as he moves from an inspired young man unconcerned about his future into an aging adult with no financial security.



This is a list of who will be involved in the documentary and why they are participating in this documentary. The character description allows us to know what part they play in the life of the main subject who's documentary this is about.

## **IV. MAIN CHARACTERS**

### **SCOT AUGUSTSON**

Scot is one of Seattle's most prolific, dark-humored playwrights. He is a 20-year veteran of the Seattle independent theater scene where he has produced over 20 full-length plays, 100 short plays and worked with some of the best talent in Seattle. He has a dedicated following for his unique plays that range from dirty shadow puppets to gun-toting nuns.

### **STEPHEN HANDO**

Stephen Hando is a talented and hilarious performer who has worked with Scot from the beginning. Hando and Scot met at a gay pride event in the late 90s and quickly started working together. Scot's transformation into a playwright began when he quit his job and began working with Stephen. Together they made names for themselves in the Seattle theater scene with risqué, boundary pushing late-night theater. Stephen is an inseparable part of Scot's best work and brings character and comedy to the story of his life.

### **JENNIFER JASPER**

One of Scot's oldest friends, Jennifer, went to high school with him in New Mexico. In the 1980's, they moved to Seattle to join the growing theater scene. She is the director of Scot's new play "The River Styx Meets Route 66." She is a notable artist who regularly works with Scot, directing his plays and appearing in many other local productions. As the director of the play, she will be a central character who can shed light on Scot's development as a playwright.

### **PAUL MULLIN**

As a champion of the Seattle theater scene, Paul Mullin is known for writing bellicose letters to artistic directors and critics. His blog about independent Seattle theater is tough and smart, but unforgiving. Scot and Paul have built a sturdy friendship over the years based on their similar views on writing and surviving in independent theater. Paul brings a historical and knowledgeable perspective to the documentary.

### **TOM KEOGH**

Tom writes for the Seattle Times, the city's only remaining daily paper where he is the one of a few paid Seattle theater critics. As a critic, he spends most of his time reviewing the large theatrical productions of the big theater companies. When he finds the column space to review independent theater, he cuts straight to the bone of its artistic merits, often making or breaking a production's success. Artists have love/hate relationships with critics, and he embodies the challenges that Scot faces in his attempts to be successful.

This gives us a break down of the main themes the whole documentary will be based or built upon. The themes broken down into 3 gives us great incite of the main subjects personal story/ feeling & emotions.

## **V. THEMES**

The story of Scot Augustson's life and work is rooted in Seattle, Washington where he has made his mark, but the themes are universal and can appeal to a much larger, national audience.

### **WE ALL HAD A DREAM ONCE**

At some point most of us have dreamt of a life where we followed our passions to success and happiness. Some of us have followed our passions, but most have not. As we grow older, those often passions turn out to be less glamorous than we first thought they would. With age, life becomes more complicated and our future security and responsibilities tend to take over. Staying true to a life with vision is hard, especially when the traps of society and consumerism are so pervasive. Those that do are special people with a unique vision of the world and have a great deal to show the rest of us.

### **HARD ECONOMIC TIMES FOR ALL**

The financial hardships that Scot and other artists endure for their passions have always been challenging, but in the face of a large global recession, times are even harder. People across the country and world have lost their jobs and face uncertain futures; because of this they can relate to the financial challenges that Scot faces more than ever. What will become of these talented, dedicated storytellers as we are faced with hard financial decisions as a society?

### **MASTER OF THE PUPPETS OR PUPPET OF THE MASTER**

In most of Scot's plays there are characters and gods that intervene in the lives of the protagonist. At times they inspire the characters with genius and at times they fill their path with obstacles. In Scot's play, "Where the River Styx Meets Route 66," which is based on Homer's *Odyssey*, gods conspire to keep the hero from getting home. This theme parallels Scot's role as a playwright and as a character in the documentary. As Scot rules over the lives of his shadow puppets, we see a parallel intervening power that both serves as his muse and throws obstacles on to his path.

This section of the proposal lists the people who will be involved in the production of the documentary. Listing who will be working on the project is usually the key element in securing that your production team has credibility.

## **VI. FILMMAKERS**

### **DIRECTOR / PRODUCER**

Cory Kelley is an Emmy-nominated director with a passion for storytelling. Cory "pays the bills" as a motion graphics artist and editor. He has a degree in Motion Picture/Video Production from Montana State and has photography and graphic design training. Since leaving his job as Associate Creative Director at an advertising agency in Seattle, he has taken on filmmaking fulltime with two feature-length documentaries in different stages of production and several short films. More of Cory's work can be seen at [www.corykelleycreative.com](http://www.corykelleycreative.com)

### **PRODUCER**

Sean Roach is an Emmy-nominated producer, award-winning video editor and experienced multimedia journalist. He currently works as a video editor at AOL and the head of the Video Strategy Team for the Patch Media company. His work has been published in the United Kingdom, France and Egypt. His writing has garnered recognition, most recently from the Washington Newspaper Publishers Association.

### **DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY**

Tim Boyd is an award-winning cinematographer specializing in documentary and commercial productions. He has worked regularly with Ford, Microsoft, advertising agencies, and is a frequent collaborator with Team Juicebox. He has a long history working with high-definition formats, including three-years of experience working with the Red One camera. He is a managing partner of Royal Galactic Media, the co-producers for *Whimsy*.

By creating a schedule it keeps everything running smoothly. It is always important to create one so that your production team is able to follow it at all times, as well as the characters involved in your documentary. It is important that they know what time period the shooting is being done so that they have plenty of notice before the time comes to shoot the doc.

## VII. SCHEDULE

### **PRE-PRODUCTION: October 2010 – June 2011**

In October, Cory Kelley and Sean Roach confirmed Scot Augustson's interest in the project. Since then, the project has been in creative development and fundraising. Royal Galactic Media has agreed to come on board as a producing partner. Art direction, location scouting, and scripting will be completed by June 2011.

### **PRODUCTION: July 2011 – October 2011**

Shooting begins in the summer of 2011, with the performance and reenactment scenes that require a large amount of production and art direction. The theater rehearsal starts mid-September and continues until opening night on October 14. Shooting will wrap when the play is finished on November 10.

### **POST-PRODUCTION: December 2011 – April 2012**

In December of 2011, logging, digitizing and preparation for post-production will begin. January 2012 transcripts will be completed, and editing will begin. Post-production, including final edit, original music, sound design, motion graphics compositing, and color will be completed by April 2012.

The information of pre-production/ production & post-production is great to have as a breakdown of what needs doing and when so that the whole documentary is completed in the time needed. It is good for pre-planning what material/ equipment/ techniques and programs you and your team will be using throughout the making of the documentary.

One of the important things this proposal does not include is a Budget. Most proposals are accompanied by a budget, as well as a section on the distribution of the documentary and its target audience which this proposal does not seem to include.