

HUGGO

Treatment by Katie Harriman

Story

April stacks shelves at the local supermarket in Whitby with a baby carrier strapped to her chest. Inside the carrier comfortably sits Huggo a giant toy bunny.

April lives in a hotel room away from friends, family and judgement. One day, Will (April's partner) tracks her down and expresses concerned that she's still attached to Huggo. As they argue, Huggo falls into the bathwater, causing April to break down. Will calms her and dries Huggo before spending the night. He wakes the next day alone in bed.

April sneaks out with Huggo and heads for the cliffs in the dead of night. She charges for the edge, but her foot gets caught in a rabbit burrow - preventing her demise. She sits on a bench that looks out to sea, watching the sun rise as she clutches Huggo tightly - unable to comprehend her actions. Julia (the Whitby Abbey vicar) sits next to April and tells her she needs to let Huggo go. If she doesn't, she will never move on.

From the distance, Will bolts over fearing the worst. April takes Will by the hand and leads him to the cliff edge. She opens Huggo up by a hidden fastening which reveals a packet of ashes. She scatters her son's remains over the edge.

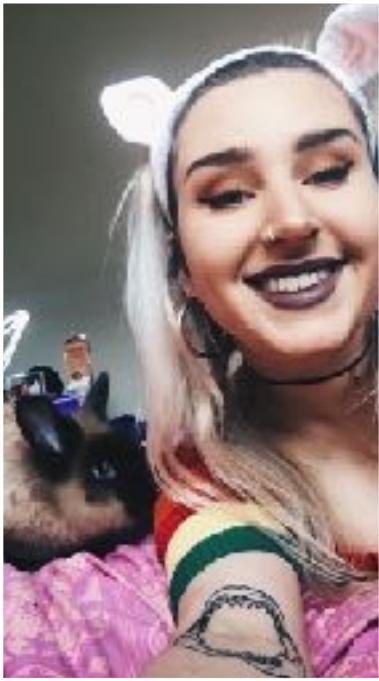


Context

Huggo was written by Rachael Sampson - a 24-year-old Northern screenwriter currently residing in London. Her writing voice is unequivocally Yorkshire, and she is dedicated to telling heartfelt stories about Northern, working-class people.

Huggo was born out of her own grief - when her pet bunny Hugo Stiglitz died (yes, he was named after the character in *Inglourious Basterds*). She had all this pain and she didn't know where to put it or what to do with it, so she wrote this script to soothe her soul. In the midst of grief, the irrational seems rational, so she considered putting the ashes of Hugo into his toy bunny. Rachael thought if she held onto it tight enough, she would be able to feel him. As she slowly came to terms with her loss, she recognised this absurdity and thought it would make an intriguing cinematic image. *Huggo* is her way of healing. Her way of telling her story so people can understand. There is no right way to grieve, and there is nothing to be ashamed of if you struggle to let go.

Rachael is inspired by stylistic and absurd filmmaking, and while writing this script, Wes Anderson, *Lars and the Real Girl* (2007), *Limbo* (2020) and *Gummo* (1997) were at the forefront of her mind. Works such as *The Seventh Seal* (1957) and *Fleabag* (2016) really helped her engage with divine intervention and the atheist-turned-agnostic storyline as she questions faith and religion. She later drew connections to her script and the 1922 children's book *The Velveteen Rabbit* and explored what rabbits represent religiously/symbolically.



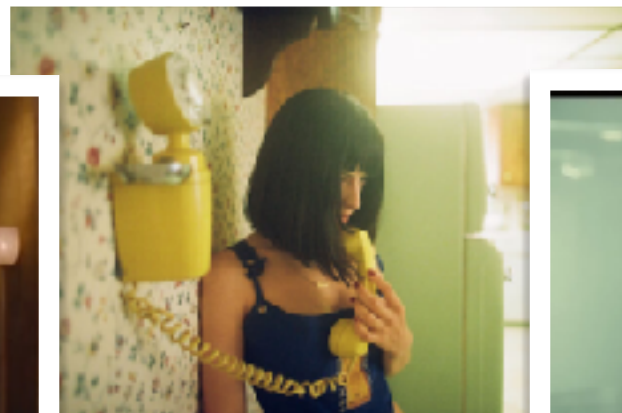


Vision

Hugbo is a difficult subject. A heartfelt, grief-stricken story softly wrapped in humour and eccentricities, reminiscent of *Back to Life* (2019) and *End of the Fucking World* (2017).

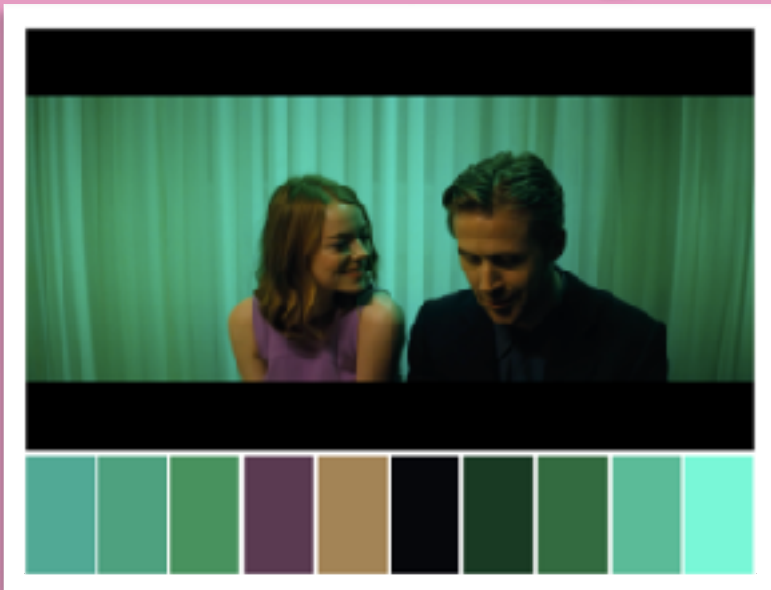
We plan to add a dreamlike, retro vibe to the photography by using a Cinebloom filter, similar to *Inside Llewyn Davis* (2013), teamed with strong, coloured lighting as shown in *Lala Land* (2016), underscored with a soft, 80's/90's inspired soundtrack with the aid of local artists and musicians.

Wes Anderson-esque symmetry will be used to accentuate the understanding and sharing of grief between characters, such as the bench scene between April and Julia, and April and Will's hotel scene.



Colour palette

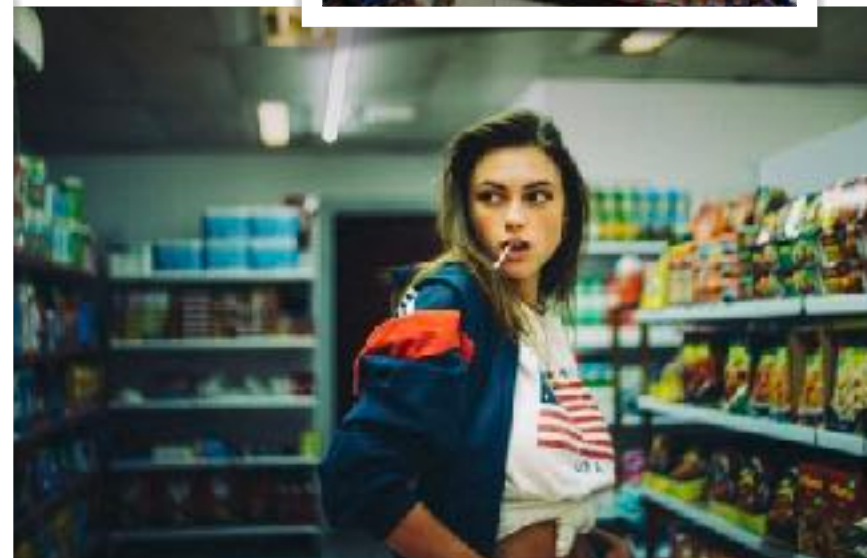
A vintage colour palette paired with...



...a neon wash and deeper colours inspired by *La La Land* (2016), which will be softened with the lens

Supermarket

April and Lydia will be lit with practical, clinical lighting from fridges and freezers to highlight the mundane, closed off world in which April has retreated. The shots will stay fairly tight (mid to close up's) and will linger a beat longer on humorous moments like the little boy's punchline: "I'm Five".



Hotel

The hotel room depicts April's only comfortable surroundings. Here she has solitude from the outside world and from people who know what happened to her.

Similarly to the supermarket, the hotel will be lit with practical lighting (from outside the window/bathroom light/mirror light/table lights/TV etc.) for a clinical, almost 80's horror aesthetic, to set up Huggo's drowning moment. Hard, back lighting will be utilised on Will and April to accentuate the difficult atmosphere between them. The lighting will transform to a warmer hue when Will dries Huggo - this accentuates the change in tone.

The room will be cheap-looking, weathered, retro - forcing her to live in the past in a more literal sense.

Fluid camera movements will help to strengthen the 80s vibe of this scene teamed with the music.



Whitby Abbey and Cliffs



There is a stark contrast between the end scene and the rest of the film; from the clinical supermarket and the grungy hotel room, to the earthy, comforting scenes by Whitby Abbey. The vastness of the sea and cliffs echo's April's emptiness and solitude. We plan to use a drone to capture the vastness of that space, pulling in closer to April from a long shot to a close-up as she empties the ashes, visually signifying this release.



Director's Statement

I read this script whilst pregnant with my little boy Leo. As a mother and expectant mother, the themes in *Huggo* were undeniably raw, heart-warming and relatable. I felt as though April's choices and actions (however irrational and bizarre they may seem at first), were all perfectly unravelled, resulting in a totally different perspective by the end of the script. The story is told with humour and naivety, making this unspoken topic feel much more vivid in my mind. April and her choices feel far more authentic than if the script was centred around a bereaved mother crying non-stop throughout the entire 12 pages (which most people imagine bereaved mothers do). The ending hit me hard. I felt for the mothers who had grieved and were grieving, and I wanted to make this film in honour of them, their choices and their strength.

In a heart-breaking twist of fate, I lost my son Leo at 18 weeks during my pregnancy. Now, making this film means more to me than I could have ever imagined.

Until recently, mothers weren't even able to see their stillborn babies after birth. The death of a child has always been something we don't talk about, something swept under the carpet, something we pretend didn't happen. If that's how we treat the subject, then how are grieving mothers supposed to deal with their emotions? Some experience it in similar ways to April. They don't understand how to process that grief and shut themselves off from the world.

Since losing Leo I've spoken to many mothers who have experienced the same thing and it is a something that's experienced by a lot of people but isn't talked about enough. I hope *Huggo* brings comfort, understanding, hope and a little bit of love to a topic that is still very much taboo.



About the Producer:

Amy Banks



Amy Banks is an award-winning independent producer. Her winning shorts include *Unleaded* (2014): Winner of the Audience Award Watersprite, “Best of the Fest” Seattle Film Festival and Vimeo Short of the Week, *Jamie* (2016); Winner of the Alternative Spirit Award at Rhode Island International Film Festival and selected at the BFI Flare LGBTQ Film Festival as one of their #fiveFilmsforFreedom. Amy has found time to work with Sundance London and the BFI London Film Festival. She has provided filming services for clients including HR Palaces, W11 Opera, Getty Images and East Creative. She further worked as a Sales Associate for Celsius Entertainment on their projects and presentation at Berlinale, FilmArt and Cannes Film Market.

Amy’s latest films include *La Boulangeire* (2017), *The Watcher Her* (2018), *Grasslands* (2018) starring Julia Brown; *Man of the Land* (2018) starring Michael Byrne and *OLVE* (2020) which screened at the London Short Film Festival and Leeds International Film Festival. Amy recently produced an opera length feature film *The Fire of Olympus* (2021) with East View Film and sold online to an international distributor and streaming service MarqueeTV. Amy is currently a member of the 2021 cohort of the prestigious BFI Network x BAFTA Crew programme and is preparing to film her next feature film titled *Lost Seoul* - the true story of Jin Stearns in 2022 in both the US and South Korea.

About the Writer:

Rachael Sampson

Rachael Sampson is an up-and-coming London-based screenwriter from West Yorkshire. She is known for writing gritty, heartfelt screenplays regarding working-class culture and female autonomy through a comedic and dramatic lens. Her quirky, Yorkshire voice landed her a place on Kay Mellor's Think Tank programme in 2018, where she developed a TV series pitched by Rollem Productions to BBC, Channel 4 and ITV. Her texts, scripts and scores have won local competitions and made shortlists, while others have been published and performed in theatres and studios in York and London. She holds a distinction master's degree in writing for the stage and broadcast media from the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (2021), and a first-class bachelor's degree in Theatre Studies (2018). Rachael is also a professional film critic, writing reviews, features and essays for FilmInquiry.com.



About the Director:

Katie Harriman



Katie Harriman is a director and cinematographer from (and living in) Yorkshire. In the early days, Katie gained TV and film experience as a runner (C4), camera assistant (C4) and assistant editor (OR Media). She founded production company Fly Girl Films in 2013 from her tiny flat in Goole, and has worked as a director and cinematographer on music videos, documentaries, art films and community film projects ever since. The start of the pandemic coincided with a big burn out episode which forced Katie to re-evaluate her work life. Narrative film is where she found her true passion, but due to self-doubt and juggling home life as a mother, Katie had previously shied away. So, from 2020 onwards, Katie dived straight in, directing comedy short *Last Orders* (2020) which is currently on the festival circuit and winner of Feel the Reel's audience award, Best Comedy Film at Flicks International Festival and has been shortlisted for finalist in the Kino Short Film Fest.

Katie then worked on a string of short films including BFI *Scratch me*, short *Stupid* (DoP), *Harold Broog't* (DoP), *The Cleverest Thief* (DoP), *Unsilenced*, (Camera Op), *Christmas Wish* (writer/director) and is currently in production with *Bouncy Balls* (writer/director).

Katie is a supporter of Brit Crew Stories and the movement that is sweeping the film and TV industry. She believes in a safer, more inclusive and accessible environment for filmmakers and strives to give opportunities to people who wouldn't usually have access to the industry, due to the often long hours and unfair demands – something that was put to practice on the set of *Last Orders*.

About the Director of Photography:

Aimee Bant

Aimee is a 26-year-old filmmaker and photographer based in East Yorkshire. Graduating from the University in Lincoln with a degree in Media Production in 2016, she went on to work part-time as an usher in an independent cinema, whilst freelancing as a camera assistant. She has assisted for film production companies including Emmerson Films, Fly Girl Films and Tungsten Media on arts, as well as documentary and commercial projects. She has also worked as an AC and as a stills photographer on various independent short films.

Aimee has worked regularly alongside director Katie Harriman in the Fly Girl Films team and together on independent shorts. In 2020, they worked in the camera team for Hull based documentary *Unsilenced*, produced by Spinster Films, which explored the impact of the pandemic on the lives of young women. In October 2019 Aimee took the role of director of photography for her first short film, *Last Orders*, a female fronted comedy drama written by Amy Charles and directed by Katie. It has since had success on its festival round, including awards for best comedy film and best cinematographer at Flicks Film Festival, as well as an honorable mention from LIMFF. Aimee pursued camera operating in 2020 and founded A Cam Visuals - a film production company. Going forward she aims to work on more shorts and independent feature films as a cinematographer, mainly looking for stories that represent women and the LGBTQ+ community.



Thank you for reading