



TOUCHSCREEN

"TOUCHSCREEN" KELLY MILLER JOSE JOAQUIN PEREZ PJ BRENNAN
CASTING BY KARLEE FOMALONT & MARISSA BLAIR MUSIC BY KYLE SCOTT WILSON EDITOR T.J. MISNY PRODUCTION DESIGNER HARRY MAVROMICHALIS
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY RUBEN O'MALLEY PRODUCED BY KELLY MILLER DIRECTED BY ARTHUR HALPERN



TOUCHSCREEN

directed by Arthur Halpern

Narrative Short Film | 15 Minutes | USA

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Production Images:

<https://bit.ly/363k0sr>

TOUCHSCREEN



“Arthur Halpern’s *Touchscreen*, a poetic tale of social and sexual-preference anxiety, is the block’s must-see selection.”

[Orlando Weekly](#)

“Miller delivers the role beautifully, with restraint, quietude and the finesse of a young John Lithgow.”

[Anchorage Press](#)

T O U C H S C R E E N

RUNNING TIME

15 minutes

LOGLINE

After an unusual online encounter, a lonely man is challenged to step out from behind his computer screen and shatter long-lived inhibitions to claim the touch of another human being.

SYNOPSIS - SHORT (55 words)

Brian drifts through life using a computer monitor as his window to the world outside, unable to connect meaningfully with people on the other side of his screen. After an unusual online encounter, Brian is challenged to step out from behind his computer and shatter long-lived inhibitions to claim the touch of another human being.

SYNOPSIS - FULL (127 words)

Brian drifts through life using a computer monitor as his window to the world outside. He hooks up with men online, remotes in to his office, and FaceTimes with family, unable to connect meaningfully with the people on the other side of his screen.

After an online encounter with the charming Dom, Brian is faced with an unusual request: a virtual sleepover. Brian succumbs to Dom's proposition, and is transported (then spooked) by the sweet hints of intimacy that permeate the laptop screen.

Later, when Dom asks to meet him in person, Brian conjures an alternate reality; one in which he shatters his long-lived inhibitions to claim the warm touch of another human being. Dom persists until Brian replies: a small step for man—with momentous implications.

TOUCHSCREEN

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Touchscreen is about one man's self-imposed isolation, and how the technologies and social platforms meant to connect us—to lovers, to family, to work—are misused to reinforce that isolation. (That misuse, by the way, is the only real perversion portrayed in the movie.) It is also about profound loneliness, trauma, and taking action to survive.

While working on the film, I realized that technology and the way it can transform our lives and distance us from life itself has also been an element in my other short films. In *Remote*, a lonely everyman is transported farther and farther away from the comforts of his La-Z-Boy with each subsequent click of his remote control. In *Futures (and Derivatives)*, a corporate PowerPoint presentation transforms the lives of the people who see it, prompting them to connect with the sensory and the sensual world. But these films, and *Touchscreen*, are not just about technology, but about connectivity—in all meanings of the word.



The thing that touched me most (so to speak) in Kelly's script, was the central character's powerful, aching need for physical contact with another human being—the skin hunger (or touch hunger)—that lays in opposition to, and ultimately destabilizes, his isolation. Boy, did I get it. I didn't come out of the closet until the advanced age of 30, and what ultimately drew me out was a profound touch hunger—and the sneaking suspicion that a lack of skin-on-skin contact was slowly driving me crazy.

T O U C H S C R E E N

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT (CONTINUED)

Touch is a funny thing to explore in a movie. Image and story already have to traverse distance, dimension, the fourth wall, and the suspension of disbelief just to reach its audience. So what images and cinematic tools communicate touch? Well, there is plenty of skin in the movie; pale and flushed, drippy with perspiration, real. There are close-ups of monitors that emphasize the screen's cold impermeability. There are close-ups of Brian's (Kelly Miller) hands and large, yearning eyes. Dom (José Joaquín Pérez) has a smile that can melt hearts or a hard drive. Kyle Scott Wilson's stirring music blossoms from chilly electronica into something full bodied and palpable.

In *Touchscreen* the acts of looking and touching are hectic and tender, and they are often intermingled. The depiction of one man's online sexual encounters [with other men] give the film an undeniable specificity, but *Touchscreen* was not developed to be a movie for a gay audience. *Touchscreen* was crafted with the belief that loneliness and touch hunger are universal and pervasive experiences. Indeed, according to *The Atlantic*, "around 40 percent of adults say they're lonely... a major increase over the 20 percent of adults who said the same back in 1980." In 2013, *Psychology Today* declared "a crisis of skin hunger" in our increasingly tech-focused and socially isolated world.

Touchscreen is about isolation, hunger, and trauma. But it is also about possibility and the transformative power of touch. Experts say the antidote to touch hunger is not to abandon our devices and social platforms, but to use them to connect, and then to reach out—literally. *Touchscreen* is a movie that wants to connect with people. I hope, despite the screen via which it will be experienced, that it manages to touch.

Arthur Halpern
Director

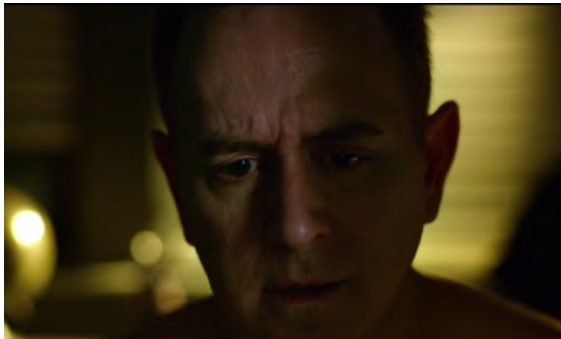
TOUCHSCREEN

PRODUCTION STILLS

Digital files of the production stills below can be downloaded at: <https://bit.ly/363k0sr>



Kelly Miller (left) and José Joaquín Pérez



Kelly Miller



Kelly Miller



Jake Dynabursky

TOUCHSCREEN

PRODUCTION NOTES

CHOOSING OUR PLAYGROUND

We had a lot of conversations about our playground location, knowing that we wanted it to look like a completely different time and place than the rest of the film. And since we were shooting all of the current-day scenes in New York in December, our initial thought was to go someplace warm. We started looking for unique playgrounds in Los Angeles and we happened upon a photo of the Los Arboles Rocketship Park in Torrance. It's a beautiful park on a hill overlooking the city, and at its center are these retro play structures in the shapes of a rocket ship and lunar landing module. We fell in love with it immediately, especially as we had already introduced some space-themed elements in our New York production design. So we threw our energy into securing the location with the City of Torrance and pulling together local cast and crew for the one-day shoot. The City was a great partner, and the location was even better in person. What started as a random find on Google turned out to be an essential part of our film that contributes so much richness and texture to the climax of our story.

THE PERILS OF LIVE VIDEO CHATTING

Our characters spend a lot of time chatting online, so the logistics of shooting a video conversation were a hot topic during pre-production. In some cases it just made sense to record one side of the conversation and play it back for the other side. But for the scenes with Brian and Dom, we wanted to film their chats live so we could capture authentic performances, with both men playing off each other in real time. The challenge was that our location was a small apartment in Queens, with the two actors playing the scene in rooms about 10 feet from each other. We tried a bunch of tricks but just couldn't escape the sound bleed between the two rooms. So we decided to prioritize performance, hoping we could fix any sound issues in post. Luckily we had a real magician (Hunter Berk) for the sound mix who was able to clean up the track and help pull off the conceit (aided by our terrific production designer, Harry Mavromichalis) that these guys were in completely separate apartments.

A COLLABORATION YEARS IN THE MAKING

Director Arthur Halpern and writer/producer/actor Kelly Miller first met 12 years ago when Kelly responded to a Backstage casting call and booked a role in Art's short film *Futures (and Derivatives)*. The two formed an instant connection on set, developing a close friendship that continued beyond the film. The project also featured cinematography by Ruben O'Malley, in a collaboration that the three talked about reprising again in the future. When Kelly completed his screenplay for *Touchscreen* in the summer of 2017 he turned to Art for feedback, who soon came on board to direct. Hoping this might be the opportunity to bring the original gang back together, Art and Kelly sent the script over to Ruben, who agreed to join as the Director of Photography. Their first creative meeting at Ichabod's in Union Square on September 3, 2017 kicked off a production that would start principal photography exactly three months later.

TOUCHSCREEN

KEY CREATIVE TEAM



ARTHUR HALPERN DIRECTOR

Art is a director, writer, producer and actor. His short film *Futures (and Derivatives)* was distributed by Peccadillo Pictures on their omnibus DVD *Boys on Film 2*. He is currently developing a feature length screenplay. Art is a graduate of Wesleyan University. He lives in Brooklyn with his partner and their son.



KELLY MILLER WRITER / PRODUCER / (BRIAN)

Kelly is an actor, writer and producer whose latest on-screen appearances include Steven Spielberg's *The Post*, Tamara Jenkins' *Private Life* and TV shows such as *Homeland*, *House of Cards*, *The Americans*, *The Godfather of Harlem* and *The Enemy Within*. He is currently producing the documentary feature films *Olympia* and *Yankee Restraint*. *Touchscreen* is his first screenplay.



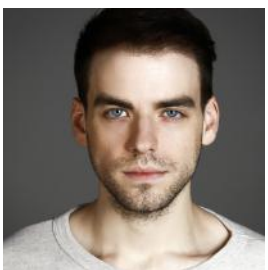
RUBEN O'MALLEY DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Ruben's camerawork has been part of numerous award-winning commercial and narrative projects (*How He Fell in Love*, *All I Want*, *Horace and Pete*). Throughout, he is driven to share human stories of hope and transformation from the inside out. With *Touchscreen*, he continues his collaboration with Art Halpern and Kelly Miller that began in *Futures (and Derivatives)*.



JOSÉ JOAQUÍN PÉREZ (DOM)

José is a Drama Desk and Helen Hayes award-nominated actor whose recent credits include *Where is Kyra?*, *Quédate* and *Taken*. He will next appear in *When They See Us* directed by Ava DuVernay for Netflix. He is a graduate of the Conservatory of Theatre Arts at Webster University and is a member of the 52nd Street Project.



PJ BRENNAN (SETH)

PJ is an actor, singer and songwriter best known for his role as Doug Carter in the British soap opera *Hollyoaks*. In addition to an appearance on *Extras*, he recently released his solo EP, *Pj*.

T O U C H S C R E E N

FULL CREDITS

Directed by	Arthur Halpern
Written and Produced by	Kelly Miller
Director of Photography	Ruben O'Malley
Production Designer	Harry Mavromichalis
Edited by	T.J. Misny
Music by	Kyle Scott Wilson
Casting by	Karlee Fomalont
	Marissa Blair

CAST

Brian	Kelly Miller
Dom	José Joaquín Pérez
Seth	PJ Brennan
Manager	Gameela Wright
Mother	Barbara Christie
Grandmother	Waltrudis Buck
Father	Charles S. Frank
Young Brian	Jake Dynabursky
Boy	Aaron Bradshaw

NEW YORK UNIT

Assistant Director	Ruben Zaccaroni
Production Coordinator	Sandra Manzanares
Assistant Camera	Milton Guanga
Production Sound Mixer	William Pawlowski
Gaffer	Sam Cowan
Electricians	Brian de la Cruz
	Dylan Kiely
Key Grip	Dan White
Additional Key Grip	Zachary Kangas
Grip	Spencer Thielmann
Hair and Make-Up Artist	Elena Ganz
Script Supervisor	Sandra Manzanares
Key Production Assistant	Elizabeth Nicholls
Art Department Assistant	Oleg Parubin

T O U C H S C R E E N

FULL CREDITS (CONTINUED)

LOS ANGELES UNIT

Assistant Director	T. Hunter McCann
First Assistant Camera	Brian Quist
Second Assistant Camera	Carol Kim
Production Sound Mixer	Jason Stare
Key Grip	Sergio Castillo
Grips	Jake Reardon
	Michael Ulmer
	Sarah Winters
Special Effects Supervisor	Roger Matsuo
Special Effects Assistant	Brett Paine
Hair and Make-Up Artist	Chechel Joson
On Set Teacher	Amanda Ragge
Production Assistant	Monica Ebanks

POST-PRODUCTION

Supervising Sound Editor / Re-Recording Mixer	Hunter Berk
Foley Artist	Phil Minard
Visual Effects Producer	Ntropic / Simon Mowbray
Visual Effects Coordinator	T. Hunter McCann
Color and Finishing by	Banana Post
Assistant Editor	Mitchell Shepherd
Online Editor	Daniel Berk