

**“MIGHT JUST BE THE KINKIEST, FLINCH-CAUSING, GENDER-FUCKING
FLICK OF THE YEAR.”** – Brandon Judell, indieWIRE

A Vladimir Vitkin Film

Jamie Harrold Melissa Murphy

X, Y

Based on the Novel by Michael Blumlein

Produced by Helmut Gausterer

Written for the Screen and Directed by Vladimir Vitkin

The lives of a young woman and her boyfriend spiral out of control after she loses her memory and becomes inexplicably convinced that she is a man.

Based on the cult novel by acclaimed author Michael Blumlein, X, Y is the dark love story of Frankie and Terry. Frankie dances topless in a sleazy little strip joint and drinks – it’s the only way to get through the night. But then a mysterious man comes into the club, a piercing siren screams, and Frankie’s world crumbles. In the morning, she isn’t Frankie anymore. She doesn’t remember who she is. She knows for certain only one solid truth: that she is a man. As for her boyfriend Terry, he cannot understand what his beautiful girl is trying to tell him.... Frankie and Terry journey together through their private hell and transcend to the other side, both of them changed forever. X, Y is a hip and sexy modern New York story of obsession and extreme identity crisis which takes us to places we’ve never been.

Screenings: Slamdance, Philadelphia International, Rhode Island, Temecula Valley, Oldenburg, New Haven, Sidewalk, Rehoboth Beach film festivals in 2004.
San Francisco Independent, Florida, Palm Beach, Melbourne Underground, Atlanta Underground, ShockerFest, Idaho International, Hollywood Horror in 2005.

Awards: Best Drama – Atlanta Underground Film Festival 2005,
Best Actress Horror Feature – Melissa Murphy – ShockerFest 2005.

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90 minutes, color.

QUOTES

“...an exceedingly interesting ride...this isn't viewing for those who love cookie cutter movies...perhaps one of the greatest identity crisis films ever...one hell of a journey to take...a perfect date movie.”

- Eric Campos, Film Threat

“It succeeds early on and concludes smartly. The kind of body switch film that this current tattooed, pierced generation could really warm to. "X,Y" looks good and flows well moving the story along briskly...shot choices and pacing builds significant tension.”

- Jonathan W. Hickman, Entertainment Insiders

"It's truly a bit of a mindfuck. It balances squirm-in-your-seat gore and arthouse drama, nicely creating a flick that can rival recent fare like In My Skin. Very reminiscent of Cronenberg at times, Vladimir should be proud of his little fucked up, psychotic gem. Someone needs to pick up this low budget movie god damnit, I really want to bring a copy home to my friends that love a good horror/drama."

- RAV, Ain't It Cool News

“Gradually, X, Y pushes its exploration of male/female polarities to a terrifying if logical conclusion.”

- David Lamble, Bay Area Reporter

“A female stripper becomes convinced she's actually a man in this surreal and disturbing science-fiction allegory of gender confusion and sadomasochism. An unsettling dissection of male-female power struggles in the guise of an experimental minimalist science-fiction saga, X,Y is a consistently surprising and inventive debut for director Vladimir Vitkin...X,Y stands as hypnotic, thought-provoking viewing, simultaneously erotic and unnerving.”

- Travis Crawford, Philadelphia International Film Festival

“In his digi-feature debut, Vladimir Vitkin pushes together all the best aspects of indie filming. ...the acting is impressive.”

- Marcelle Perks, The International Journal of Erotica

“Vitkin's film is a brooding and intimate journey into the realm of sexual identity, trying out the borders of gender conventions. This film evokes uncomfortable questions about the unstable nature of sexual desires and the suppressed sides of our own lust. An intelligent script and a remarkable knowledge of the craft promise great things for this young director.”

- Oldenburg International Film Festival

“A complicated film about the uncertainties of redefining one's sexuality.”

- Diabolo

“One of the highlights of this year's Oldenburg festival was Vladimir Vitkin's 'X, Y'.”

- filmfuchs

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

X, Y is based on the novel by Michael Blumlein whose work has been praised by such authors as William Gibson and Katherine Dunn. Originally published as literary horror, the book is really too unique to fit neatly into any genre. While the narrative deals with such staple horror themes as extreme identity crisis, body switch, and amnesia, it does so in a way that is totally unconventional. X, Y can be considered a horror film only if the genre is defined broadly to include films like DEAD RINGERS and LOST HIGHWAY.

In refusing to provide neat explanations for its central mysteries, X, Y becomes on one level an examination of the conventions of the fantasy thriller genre as well as of movie reality as a whole. Why do we believe anything we see on screen in any film, all of which is always ultimately completely unreal? And how far can this unreality be pushed – in the absence of comforting genre tropes and “explanations” - without destroying the implicit contract which allows us to process emotionally the experiences represented on screen? Aside from the characters and the story itself, these are some of the larger questions that drew me to the novel and made me want to film it.

X, Y attempts to explore the realm of the mysterious without relying on fantasy movie conventions. It's a dark love story that asks us to go on an emotionally charged journey, some details of which are essentially unreal and remain unexplained and inexplicable. Of course, it's difficult to preserve real mystery in a film because it means leaving some questions unanswered, always a dangerous strategy. I've tried to deal with this to some extent by restricting the point-of-view of the film to the subjective perspectives of Terry and Frankie. The film never gives the audience greater knowledge than what is collectively known by the main characters. The hope is that as a result, we view the mystery of what happens to Frankie through their eyes and share their predicament.

We shot X, Y in New York City on a very low budget in twenty days, with a Panasonic 24P mini DV camera. The emotional intensity of the piece as well as the many production complexities - such as the special effects makeup which took as long as eight hours to put on - made it a very challenging experience. Although we tried to create a somewhat stylized world for the film, my approach was also to work against the unreality of the material and to avoid the temptation to overstylize, especially when it came to the acting. The two lead roles in the film were extremely demanding, and we were lucky to find Jamie Harrold and Melissa Murphy who were not only brave enough to take on the challenge, but did a great job of grounding the strangeness of the story in concrete reality.

In addition to its unique examination of identity, relationship dynamics, gender issues, and male-female power struggles, I feel that the story is also teeming with a wealth of other subtexts which give it a richness and a complexity that attracted me to the material in the first place. For me, this film remains a mysterious journey, an enigmatic exploration of the precarious nature of existence and love.

SYNOPSIS

A medical school dropout, Terry Connor (Jamie Harrold) works in a used bookstore. His girlfriend Frankie De Leon (Melissa Murphy) drinks and dances topless. They live together and have each other. On his way to pick up Frankie at the rundown club where she dances, Terry drops in on his friend Marcus (Thomas Jefferson Byrd) who is a janitor at the hospital where Terry worked when he was a medical student. Marcus is also a musician. They smoke weed and Terry continues on his way. Frankie is harassed by an annoying customer at the club, but the bouncer Jerry Cox (Brian Anthony Wilson) throws him out. By the time Terry shows up, Frankie is loaded. As the night winds down, a mysterious older man sits at the stage watching Frankie gyrate drunkenly. Suddenly a powerful siren – which seems to affect only Frankie and the older man - rushes into the club. Their eyes lock as they both grab their ears, trying to block out the screaming siren. Unaware of the siren, Terry looks on, confused. When the siren stops, both Frankie and the older man pass out. Terry carries Frankie to the dressing room where she goes into a seizure. When the seizure stops, Frankie seems okay, if silent and unresponsive. Terry gets her home.

The next morning Frankie wakes up in a strange new world. Unable to remember anything of the past, Frankie is only certain of one thing: that she is a man. The new Frankie doesn't recognize Terry or anything of their life together. Growing frustrated with this bizarre behavior, Terry storms out. Left alone, Frankie struggles to make sense of this new reality. Frankie's mother Edna (Barbara Spiegel) calls and makes a lunch date with the very confused Frankie. When Terry returns, Frankie asks him for help. This time Terry decides to pretend to take her seriously. He tells Frankie what happened the night before and Frankie concludes that she must've somehow switched bodies with the older man at the club. Agreeing to look for this man, Terry manages to discover that his name is Mr. Jones and that he's been in the hospital since that night. Impatient, Frankie ventures out to the club to talk to Cox who feeds Frankie cocaine and booze, then rips her clothes off and forces her on stage. After calling home, Terry shows up at the club in time to see the confused and loaded Frankie collapse on stage.

The next morning Terry and Frankie find the comatose Mr. Jones in the hospital. Frankie insists on staying and waiting for something to happen. Terry becomes increasingly frustrated as Frankie continues to hold vigil at the hospital. Each day Mr. Jones gets worse and then he dies, leaving Frankie with nothing, a dead end. For his part, Terry can't take it any more. When Frankie insists that nothing's changed, Terry gets drunk and rapes her. The next morning Frankie's mother shows up, stood up for lunch by Frankie. Finding her daughter in bad shape, Edna takes her to their nice suburban house. At first Frankie withdraws and refuses to speak to Edna who takes her to see a psychiatrist. Frankie stays silent there too, but the silence soon gives way to tears back at the house, and tears lead to a new resolve as Frankie determines to get revenge against Terry. Utterly miserable without Frankie, Terry keeps desperately calling Edna's house. By the time Frankie finally speaks to him, Terry is ready for anything to get her back and atone for what he did.

The new Frankie agrees to come back, but things are going to be different now. Frankie soon turns Terry into her slave, making him get a second job as well as clean and

eventually paint and redecorate their apartment. His friend Marcus helps Terry get a job as a janitor at the hospital where he worked while in medical school. Terry now works all the time, getting little sleep, increasingly exhausted. But he is also thrilled to have Frankie with him, convinced that he is earning her back.

Continuing to tighten the noose, Frankie starts tying Terry's hands with embroidered ribbons and gets the idea to sew charms onto his chest. Interpreting this as the ultimate sign of her love, Terry eagerly submits, glad to endure the pain. Although successfully maintaining a facade when it comes to dealing with Terry, Frankie is still a confused mess underneath, barely sustaining the will to live. In fact, the only thing keeping Frankie going is the revenge against Terry, an excuse to stay alive. But the revenge project is also taking on a life of its own, evolving as Frankie evolves, growing more comfortable in a woman's skin. Frankie soon decorates Terry's entire chest. The last trinket is a large silver boar who stands on all fours, staring at Frankie from her new vanity table. The boar is the jewel in the crown and Frankie needs a special place to put it. As Frankie tries it against Terry's neck, the needy look on Terry's face repulses her. Frankie flees to the bedroom, ignores Terry for a week. Desperate to feel Frankie's touch again, Terry gets a tattoo of an ornate boar on his shoulder blade, Frankie's name scrolled inside it. Frankie is revolted and almost leaves. But then she relents, sews on the boar at the center of Terry's chest. Then she sews his lips together.

Even more helpless now, Terry stays at home, shrinks away. Frankie is nice to him one day, indifferent the next, cruel on others. She gets him a large mirror so that now he'll never be alone, but have himself to live with. Unable to eat, Terry subsists on orange juice and loses a lot of weight. Thinking that she's pushed Terry far enough, Frankie invites Marcus for a visit. When she tells Terry, he panics, begs Frankie to cancel. Frankie seems to agree, but she changes her mind again. When Marcus shows up, Terry hides in bed. Frankie promises him again to get rid of Marcus but instead brings him into the bedroom and exposes Terry, putting on a bizarre performance for their guest. Shocked by Terry's appearance and their strange behavior, Marcus leaves. Frankie gets a large kitchen knife, goes into the bedroom. She pulls up Terry, hands him the knife, offers her chest. But Terry dares one last act of defiance. He stabs himself in the stomach instead. Horrified, Frankie calls the ambulance in panic.

Days later, she sits in a hospital room at Terry's side, holding her unconscious boyfriend's hand.

CAST BIOS

JAMIE HARROLD (Terry Connor)

Jamie was born and raised in Taylorville, Illinois. He Graduated from The Chicago High School for the Performing Arts and received his B.F.A. from The Goodman Theatre School at DePaul University. Among Jamie's co-starring credits are *Erin Brockovich*, *Swimming*, *The Score*, *The Sum Of All Fears*, *I Shot Andy Warhol*, and Steven King's *Kingdom Hospital*. He has co-starred in many award winning television movies including *Family Pictures* opposite Anjelica Huston, *A Glimpse of Hell* opposite Robert Sean Leonard and *Darrow* opposite Kevin Spacey.

MELISSA MURPHY (Frankie De Leon)

Melissa was born in Buffalo, NY and, after surviving many a blizzard, graduated from Rutgers University's Mason Gross School of the Arts under William Esper. Following graduation she moved to NYC where stage credits include *The Lion in Winter* at the Roundabout Theatre Company, *Richard II* and *Hedda Gabbler* at Expanded Arts, and productions for Ringe Park and The Interborough Repertory Theatre. Television credits include *One Life to Live* and *The Great Gatsby*. She recently completed a production of *Picnic* for the Denver Center Theatre Company.

THOMAS JEFFERSON BYRD (Marcus)

Born in Georgia, Tom holds an M.F.A. degree in dance from California Institute of the Arts. He has starred in numerous regional stage productions including the San Diego Repertory Theater's award winning performance of *Spunk*. He has also starred in *Two Trains Running* and *The Piano Lesson* at the Alliance Theater, *Flyin' West*, *Hamlet* and *Miss Evers' Boys* at the Indiana Repertory, *Flyin' West* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, and *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* on Broadway with Whoopi Goldberg and Charles Dutton. Byrd has appeared in such films as *Ray*, *Bulworth*, *Set It Off*, and *Spike Lee's Bamboozled*, *He Got Game* and *Clockers*.

BARBARA SPIEGEL (Edna De Leon)

Barbara recently appeared in *The Diary of Anne Frank* at the Pioneer Theatre in Salt Lake City. Currently and since its inception Barbara plays Judge Harriet Doremus on *Law & Order*. Among her film appearances are *Tootsie*, *The Werewolf Of Washington* and *Made For Each Other*. Among her numerous New York and Regional stage appearances are a National Tour of *Funny Girl* as Debbie Gibson's mother and *The Food Chain* with Hope Davis.

BRIAN ANTHONY WILSON (Jerry Cox)

Brian began his acting career with classes at the Freedom Theatre in Philadelphia. Favorite theatre roles include leads in *King Hedley II*, *Othello* and *Les Trois Dumas*. Film credits include *The Postman* with Kevin Costner, *Keeping the Faith* with Ed Norton and Ben Stiller, and *Animal Factory* with Steve Buscemi and Willem DaFoe. On television Brian has guest-starred on *As The World Turns*, *Hack*, and *The Sopranos*, and plays a recurring role as Detective Holley on HBO's *The Wire*.

CREW BIOS

VLADIMIR VITKIN (Writer/Director)

Vladimir grew up in Leningrad, Russia. He is a graduate of Harvard University and was a directing fellow at the American Film Institute. Described by Film Threat as "... perhaps one of the greatest identity crisis films ever," Vladimir's feature film directing debut *X, Y* had its world premiere at the 2004 Slamdance Film Festival. Vladimir is developing several new films, including *STREET RAISED*, based on the soon to be published crime noir novel by first time novelist Pearce Hansen and *THE MAN UPSTAIRS*, based on the acclaimed psychosexual thriller novel by T. L. Parkinson.

HELMUT GAUSTERER aka JACK SCOPE (Producer/Editor)

Helmut/Jack is a freelance producer, editor and motion graphics designer. He has worked for clients such as ABC, MTV, VH1, FOX, Cadillac and Louis Vuitton, among others. *X, Y* is his first venture into feature filmmaking. Originally from Austria, he currently lives in Los Angeles.

MICHAEL BLUMLEIN (Writer)

Michael is the author of two novels, *X, Y* and *The Movement of Mountains*, and the award-winning story collection, *The Brains of Rats*. His stories have been widely reprinted and anthologized, and his work has been translated into more than a dozen languages. He wrote the screenplay for the highly acclaimed independent film *Decodings*, which among its many awards was selected to show at the Whitney Museum Bicentennial. In addition to writing, Dr. Blumlein is on the staff of the University of California at San Francisco, where he works as a practicing physician.

RICK LOPEZ (Director of Photography)

Rick has shot more than 50 features, shorts, commercials, and documentaries. His work has screened at numerous festivals including Berlin, Sundance, Clermont-Ferrand and the Hamptons Film Festival. Experienced in almost every format from Super 35 to Super 8, López has embraced the digital revolution in filmmaking. He is also an Adjunct Assistant Professor of Cinematography in the Graduate Film Division of Columbia University.

KELLY MCGEHEE (Production Designer)

Kelly's Production Designer credits include *Suture* and *The Deep End*, starring Tilda Swinton, both of which won Cinematography Awards at Sundance. She was also the Production Designer on *Book of Love* which was in competition at Sundance 2004 and on *Bee Season*, starring Richard Gere and Juliette Binoche.

DAVID SHEA (Composer)

Best known for his work with John Zorn's ensembles, David's composing and performance projects have included the Monte Carlo Ballet, the Brooklyn Academy, the Spoleto Festival and the Florence Opera Ballet. He has performed the gamut of festivals and spaces including Tokyo Summer Festival, Lincoln Center's Walter Reed, Symphony Space, The Knitting Factory, CBGB'S gallery, Festival dei Popoli, the Centre Pompidou, and Cinesonic in Melbourne. His first recorded work was released in '92 and has been followed by over twenty recordings.

CREDITS

A Vladimir Vitkin Film

Jamie Harrold

Melissa Murphy

X, Y

Thomas Jefferson Byrd

Barbara Spiegel

Brian Anthony Wilson

David Vadim

Casting Director
Andrea Shane

Costume Designer
Tere Duncan

Composer
David Shea

Editor
Jack Scope

Production Designer
Kelly McGehee

Director of Photography
Rick Lopez

Co-Producer
Sarah Beth Nelson

Based on the Novel by
Michael Blumlein

Screenplay by
Vladimir Vitkin

Produced by
Helmut Gausterer

Directed by
Vladimir Vitkin

Cast

Terry.....Jamie Harrold
Frankie.....Melissa Murphy
Marcus.....Thomas Jefferson Byrd
Edna.....Barbara Spiegel
Cox.....Brian Anthony Wilson
Dispatcher.....David Vadim
Psychiatrist.....Dina Pearlman
Mr. Jones.....Robert Haufrecht
Fifty-something Man.....Vinny DeVingo
Doorman.....Mariano Mederos
Angela.....Shelita Birchett
Daggoo.....Bernard Furmansky
Delivery Guy.....Sean Dougherty
Friend of Mr. Jones.....Alexander Platt

First Assistant Director
Laura Myers

Second Assistant Director
Beatriz Sari Montserrat

Script Supervisor
Susan Chun

Main Titles Animation and Digital Effects
Jack Scope

Special Make-up Effects
Vincent Guastini

Wardrobe Supervisor
Selina M. Van Den Brink

Wardrobe Assistant
Cydney Webb

Key Hair and Make-up
Lorraine Godfrey

Hair and Make-up

Brian Abbott

Art Director
Corinne Merrell

Assistant Art Director
Anna Butwell

Art Department Coordinator
Stephen Jensen

Set Decorator
Abraham Kemmis

On Set Dresser
Ben Willson

Prop Master and Tattoo Design
Seth Kessler

Scenics
Andrea N. Haynes, Tommaso Ortino

Gaffer
Jae Song

Electrics
Tetsuya Shindo, Zach Sullivan

Key Grip
Nick Olson

Grips
Deegan Moreno, Benjamin Jackendoff

Location Recordist
Jonathan Parham

Boom Operators
Eric Welsh, Christopher Slicks, Tony Leonardo, Levon Manoukian

Sound Editor
Stick Larson

Sound Designer
Jack Scope

Additional Sound Effects
p.iet

Still Photographer
Andrew Walker

Production Assistants
Chris Harding, Miles Rush

Casting Assistant
Marla Trilling

Catering
Peter S. Brauer