

A woman with dark hair, wearing a floral-patterned dress, is smiling and looking towards the camera. She is holding a red plastic cup in her right hand. The background is a dark, out-of-focus party scene with warm lights. The entire image is overlaid with a dense, dark mosaic of many small, diverse human faces.

# THE STRANGERS WE KNOW

**PRESS  
KIT**

**2019**





## *Brief Synopsis*

A seemingly perfect woman has what appears to be a happy 30<sup>th</sup> birthday party with the ones she loves. But under her perfect façade lies a hidden life full of secrets, tragedy, and unfinished business. When tragedy strikes, it is those closest to her that are caught the most off guard, begging the question, can you ever truly know someone?

## *Long Synopsis*

A seemingly perfect woman, Rebecca, writes what looks like an innocent letter to her sister, Sam. Later that night we see Rebecca, her husband Elliot, and other friends and family gather for a 30<sup>th</sup> birthday party. Rebecca and Elliot share a private moment, Rebecca gives Sam a prized possession, and shares some laughs with a worried best friend. But when all seems to be going well, Rebecca reveals that all is not as it seems. *The Strangers We Know* challenges the audience to look back at the subtle clues throughout the film that beg the question, can you ever truly know someone?

## *Director's Statement*

I wrote this film as a way to look at suicide a bit differently than I had seen it portrayed on film and TV. I have unfortunately been touched by suicide several times throughout my life with a few friends choosing to end their lives early. What struck me about one friend's suicide in particular was that she had decided on the date and the way she was going to die, according to her diary, and then became happier and more settled in the last few weeks of her life. Her decision was not one filled with tears and regrets in a moment of weakness. It was her way out of what she had felt was an

endless road of pain ahead of her. As suicide becomes more and more discussed in our daily lives because of the increased number of adults choosing to end their lives, I wanted to make a film that stressed how subtle the signs of suicide



can be as well as how it is not always a decision made in a single moment. There are often small changes in personality, the giving away of sentimental objects, or the discussion of a larger change ahead. These changes are easily missed, but it is my hope that by spotlighting them we can more easily see the signs in others and maybe help them to see that there are other options. There are many reasons people feel that they have no other choice, but if we make it more normal to ask for help or pay attention to those we love and the smaller changes they make on a daily basis, maybe we can prevent a tragedy like that shown in this film.









*The Team*

### **ALANA GRACE- WRITER/DIRECTOR/PRODUCER**

After growing up in Nashville, TN, Alana became both a songwriter and actress taking part in multiple plays with the Tennessee Repertory theater since the age of 8. At 15, she signed a record deal with Columbia Records for her solo project, coming out with the song “Black Roses Red” on the soundtrack of The Sisterhood of the Travelling Pants in 2005. Writing, recording, and performing music with many of the best in the business, Alana toured nationally for both her first and second albums before meeting her future bandmates for her last music project, THIS IS SHE, in 2009 on the Vans Warped Tour. With the release of their EP on Adamant Records in 2012, the group did two tours to the Middle East performing for troops before touring internationally with bands including Lacuna Coil, Adam Lambert, and One Republic.

Since the band broke up in 2013, Alana has shifted her focus to acting, writing, and directing. Having taken acting lessons since moving to Los Angeles in 2008, Alana made it through the improv and sketch programs at UCB as well as finished her degree from USC before securing a spot in the 2018 CBS Diversity Sketch Showcase as a writer. Her first short film went to several independent film festivals including the Nashville Film Festival, and after writing and producing over one hundred comedy videos for social media, Alana has decided to make her first foray into directing drama with The Strangers We Know.

### **STEPHEN ST. PETER- CINEMATOGRAPHER**

Stephen was born to a Norwegian mother and an American father and cherishes citizenship in both countries. He grew up in the cold north of Norway, surrounded by spiky mountains and Northern lights which became the backdrop of his creative and personal development.

In 2014, he graduated from the American Film Institute with an MFA in Cinematography. Stephen believes that cinema provides a unique window into the human condition that can ultimately unite us through a greater understanding. He is the two-time winner of Best Cinematography for the short film, *Utopia*, at the Monthly Film Festival and the LGBT Film Festival in Los Angeles. His narrative shorts and documentaries have traveled to numerous festivals around the world, including Raindance, Oxford Film Festival, Indy Shorts, Toronto International Film Festival, Philly Film Fest, and many more.



# An Interview with the Director

## Why make a film about suicide?

Suicide was unfortunately a part of my life from a young age. Each death was different and brought with it its own challenges and levels of grief, but it never seemed to be how the media depicted. It's quiet. It happens for many reasons other mental illness, and it often is preceded by subtle signs. It's only by talking about suicide and its many different forms that we can try to prevent it in the future.



## The Strangers We Know is your directorial debut. how long have you wanted to be a director?

When I was doing music, I was always the creative force behind promotional materials, music videos, and other aspects of being an artist. So when I started focusing on acting, I always had a hard time with not having that kind of creative control. After watching other directors, doing some smaller shoots of my own, and producing multiple shorts, I just felt ready to take on directing as a natural progression in my career.

## Why did you choose to set it at a 30<sup>th</sup> birthday?

I chose a 30<sup>th</sup> birthday party because it is an emotional time for many people. Thirty seems to be a milestone by which you can compare where you are with where you wanted to be. I always considered thirty to be the age where you are fully an adult. You can no longer hide behind your twenties for experimentation, it is time to settle into who you are. I feel like a lot of lifelong and bigger decisions are made at at thirty making suicide that much more heartbreaking.

## What was the biggest challenge you had in making this film?

The rooftop scene was by far the most challenging. We had to deal with sound issues (a rogue cricket to be specific), a strict time deadline, and making sure the stunt was done safely. While no one was ever in danger, it was my first time doing any kind of a stunt work so the first few takes were a bit scary! My boyfriend filmed me jumping off of the landing before anyone else arrived on set just so I could see what it looked like when I faltered on jumping. It wasn't far, but there was always that sickening feeling as my head went below where my feet had been. I don't think you can escape that!

## How has your history in music helped you make this film?

Well, first off, I was able to use a lot of the music from my band, This Is She, throughout the film. I wanted that to be included just because it was such a large part of my life. Really, though, I think music taught me to trust myself in the things I could do and to know when let others be great at what they do. In this sense, the film was a true collaboration between Stephen and I. As much as I saw the overall picture and shot structure, he had a magic eye for storytelling that elevated every scene.









## *Technical Info*

Runtime: 12 minutes 48 seconds

Sound Mix: Stereo

Aspect Ratio: 24:1

Camera: ARRI Alexa Mini

## *Full Cast*

Rebecca	Alana Grace
Elliot	John Fairbairn
Sam	Rachel McGuinness
Taylor	Staci Pratt
Garrett	Rob Parks

## **Partygoers**

Tami Alfasi, Alexander Agent, Tim Blackwood, Hayden Daylz, Greg Essig, Maria Essig, Shary Essig, Codi Georges, Leigha Gilson, Rex Howell, Sarah Randall Hunt, Lindsey Hutchinson, Carlos Lopez Jr., Nova Hope Mahle, Joseph Martinez, Ian McQuown, Sarah Uplinger



# *Full Crew*

<b>Director</b>	Alana Grace
<b>Screenwriter</b>	Alana Grace
<b>Director of Photography</b>	Stephen St. Peter
<b>Executive Producers</b>	Alana Grace Rod Essig
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Assistant Director</b>	Jeff Newman
<b>Music by</b>	Jesse Billson
<b>Colorist</b>	Clifford C. Corigliano
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Assistant Camera</b>	Allen Chodakowski
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Assistant Camera</b>	Tim Blackwood
<b>Sound Mixer</b>	Darren Augustus
<b>Add'l Sound Mixer</b>	Micah Sudduth
<b>Chief Lighting Technician</b>	Kevin Kim
<b>G&amp;E Swing</b>	Bergen Johnson Walter Orsini Eduardo Zamora
<b>Set Decorator</b>	Joseph Martinez
<b>Hair &amp; Make-up</b>	Jessica Ophelia Lewis
<b>Assistant MUA</b>	Hayden Daylz
<b>On-Set Photographer</b>	Audrey Matos
<b>Craft Services</b>	Shary Essig
<b>Titles</b>	The Wow Factory L.A.
<b>Edited By</b>	Alana Grace
<b>Post Production Sound By</b>	Jesse Billson



