

THE ODDS



A Film by Simon Davidson

CANADA / 2011 / 92 minutes / Colour / 2.35:1 / 5.1 Surround



OFFICIAL SELECTION 2011



16th **BUSAN**
International Film Festival
6-14 October, 2011

"A neat caper around some surprising young talent"

Metro

"Periodically recalls Rian Johnson's 2006 *Brick* as its tenacious high-school protagonist plays detective to uncover a classmate's killer."

Variety

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THEODDSMOVIE.COM

SYNOPSIS

Log Line:

Set in a suburban world of underground teenage gambling, a high school student must find his best friend's killer before the game is exposed.

Short Synopsis:

In an idyllic suburban community, the local teens have begun an illicit gambling ring that wagers on everything from high school sports matches to late night poker games. When 17 year-old Desson's best friend is found dead of an apparent suicide, he realizes that there may be more happening in this town than even he was aware of. Searching for the truth, he uncovers a possible murder and the existence of a much bigger game than he had imagined existed. As he delves deeper, Desson unwittingly becomes implicated in his own investigation and may have sacrificed his new girlfriend to the game.

Long Synopsis:

Desson Orr is a gambler, a card shark, a ladies man. And he's just seventeen. He likes the competition of poker, the thrill a dice game, even the buzz he gets from betting on high-school wrestling. Things are just more exciting when there's something at stake.

When his best friend Barry turns up dead of an apparent suicide, Desson knows that can't be the real cause, and he is compelled to uncover the truth. Working alone, he plunges into the dark and dangerous underbelly of an affluent neighbourhood where his search leads him to the tough bookie Paul, fallen wrestling star Sam, brutal gangster Terry, and the mysterious place known only as Wang's.

As he delves deeper into this world Desson must also come face to face with the dark secrets of his own complicity in Barry's death, which is more tangible than anyone imagines. Driven by guilt, he needs to know what really went down, even though it means he won't come out clean.

Tight, quick and charged, **THE ODDS** is a murder mystery that casts an eye on the action surrounding an illegal gambling ring run by teenagers.

CAST

Desson	TYLER JOHNSTON
Colleen	JULIA MAXWELL
Barry	CALUM WORTHY
Paul	JAREN BRANT BARTLETT
Bruce	ROBERT MOLONEY
Benson	SCOTT PATEY
Sam	JULIAN DOMINGUEZ
Heather	TESS ATKINS
Coach	HROTHGAR MATTHEWS

FILMMAKERS

Writer / Director	SIMON DAVIDSON
Executive Producers	KIRSTEN NEWLANDS SIMON DAVIDSON
Producers	KIRSTEN NEWLANDS OLIVER LINSLEY
Photography	NORM LI
Editing	GREG NG
Original Score	PATRIC CAIRD
Sound Designer/Mixer	MIGUEL NUNESS
Production Design	SCOTT MOULTON
Costumes	KATHI MOORE
Casting	LYNNE CARROW
Make-Up/Hair	BRIANNA SCOTT
Still Photography	LYLE STAFFORD

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Running Time:	92 minutes
Genre:	Murder mystery
Shooting Format:	RED CAMERA
Screening Formats:	DCP and HD CAM SR
Aspect Ratio:	2.35:1
Sound:	5.1 Surround
Production Company:	Kaos Productions Inc.
Canadian Distributor:	Kinosmith
Country of Production:	Canada
Completion date:	March 2011

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

It was Sunday afternoon and I was in deep shit. My brother had just picked me up from the police station. I sat in the living room and waited for my parents to come home from a weekend away. Saturday night I had drunk too much and broke into every car in an entire neighbourhood with a couple friends. This is something we'd done before. We were looking for thrills, or we thought we were being rebellious. Really, we were just idiots. Very quickly the police had swarmed down on us and an hour later we were in lock-up doing interviews and giving finger-prints. We were going to be charged. As I sat there on the sofa I remember wondering where my life would go from here. I was worried.

I wound up doing community hours at the hospital all summer, a pretty light sentence when you think about it, but that moment has stuck with me, forever crystallized in my imagination. In a way it has informed most of the work I've done, my short films, short stories, and especially THE ODDS, all have to do with people at a cross roads in their lives. People who have a decision to make about who they are going to be.

When I started writing THE ODDS all I knew was that I wanted to tell the story of what happens when someone, who is no angel, comes to a critical point in his life, a place where things can go from bad to worse. What makes him choose right or left?

Early in the process I opened the newspaper and came across a short article about a teenage kid in Singapore who essentially became a bookie for some of his classmates, who would all bet on NBA basketball with him. He had figured out how to use the vig and how to lay off bets and he started making a killing off of his friends. I remember this kid being so unapologetic, he just said, "I see it as doing a favour for my friends." But he knew he couldn't lose, and he didn't. The problem was that his friends did, and after a while they owed him a lot of money, thousands of dollars. Suddenly this wasn't a game anymore, he expected to be paid and he wanted all of it. He actually sent friends of his to the house of one kid to threaten his parents to pay up what their kid owed. It was seventeen thousand dollars.

This ignited something in me and I knew I wanted to use this world for my story.

I knew some gamblers in high school, but I didn't gamble much, so I went out and did research. I interviewed with youth gambling experts, read a lot, managed to talk my way into a Gamblers Anonymous meeting where I was able to interview some problem gamblers who started in their teens.

I started playing poker, mostly online, then just happened to meet a woman while I was on vacation, who waitressed at illegal underground casinos and poker rooms in restaurants all over Toronto. These games move from spot to spot, going for weeks at one location then suddenly vanishing only to resurface a week later somewhere else.

She made okay money, but said the tips were lousy. She and I talked a lot and I based much of the inspiration for the gambling rooms in the film on her description.

Despite all of the research and personal experience I kept reminding myself that a fictional story must be true to itself and the reality of the characters is what makes it real and exciting.

- Simon Davidson, 2011

Q & A WITH SIMON DAVIDSON

Do you feel that is better for up and coming directors or filmmakers to make short films first before making full-length feature films?

I think it's probably a good idea to have at least one short under your belt. There are a lot of things going on every day on set, a lot of crew, cast, equipment, not to mention a lot of decisions that have to be made every second of the day. Doing a short can get you somewhat prepared for that. They also let you figure out the types of things you like to do and don't like to do, the kind of performances that you like, camera movements, editing. Some people start with music videos and commercials. That's a good training ground too.

*When making *The Odds*, what did you find the biggest difference in making a full-length feature as opposed to making a short film?*

There were a lot of similarities, actually. The biggest difference for me was preparing for so many more scenes, sets, locations, characters and action. Another big change is remembering where you are in the script. We shot for 20 days and had something like a hundred scenes, all shot out of order. So we could be shooting a fun scene from the beginning of the movie in the morning and an emotional scene from the end in the afternoon and I'd constantly have to remind myself of where we were emotionally in the story. On a short you shoot the whole thing in a weekend and that kind of story mapping isn't as difficult. Fortunately I worked with the actors, mainly Tyler, to prepare an emotional story map beforehand, which really helped keep us on track.

With all the gambling that is exposed in the media today, do you find that illegal teenage gambling is at an all time high?

I think there are more kids with disposable cash and time these days and if they want to find a game they can do it. To do illegal gambling you simply need a provider and I know that in Vancouver for example, several gangs are big into it. A lot of the gang members themselves are teens so it stands to reason that some of the gamblers are teens too. That said, I did quite a lot of research for the movie, interviewed with youth gambling experts, read a lot, I managed to talk my way into a Gamblers Anonymous meeting where I was able to interview some problem gamblers who started in their teens. I agree that poker is hot on TV and the internet right now and I really don't know the numbers, but from these conversations it became clear that gambling has been pretty big for a long time. I spoke to one guy in his 60's now that started going to the race track when he was seventeen and used fake ID to bet. That was in the 1960's.

After putting together this film, do you feel that today's youth have "nerves of steel" and what are some of your thoughts towards this?

I don't think today's youth are more nervy than any other generation to be honest.

Certain kids just want thrills; want to compete, for whatever reason. It seems to me that when you're young you don't think of consequences as much. The future really doesn't come into your thought process; you haven't calibrated your own personal moral compass yet, no matter what parents might think. I don't think it's just this generation. When I was young I used to run around breaking into cars, not for the bounty, but for the thrill. It was a rush, not to mention the fact that my group of friends was doing it and I wanted to be part of the group. I think that's why I understood these characters and wanted to write about them.

Was it difficult to cast for this film...can you briefly tell us your thoughts with this experience for this film?

Casting was something I was quite concerned about when I was writing the movie. I thought it was going to be very difficult to find the lead, Desson, especially, he's in every scene and the movie hangs on him. But when I had an early draft ready, we put together a read through at the Beaumont theatre and the guy who just happened to come in and read for Desson was a kid named Tyler Johnston. He read from the script cold and at the end I turned to my producer, Kirsten, and said, "Wow." He'd managed to breathe a lot of life into the character just by reading the lines like that. So I went away to make changes to the script and he was definitely on my mind. Fast forward to a month before we got the official green light to shoot the movie, Kirsten and I went to a casting workshop that Telefilm Canada put on. As luck would have it Tyler was one of the actors brought in to do an audition. He blew everyone away, including the people at Telefilm who were making the money decisions. We all knew he was the guy. So in essence the most difficult role in the film was cast for us, he just showed up out of the blue.

For the rest of the roles we relied heavily on our casting director Lynne Carrow who had just cast a couple of films involving young people and knew exactly who to call.

Do you feel the odds are for you or against you with this film showing at TIFF?

The Odds are definitely for us...oh wait, did you say George Clooney and Brad Pitt are coming to TIFF this year? Ok, no problem. Oh and Nicolas Winding Refn and David Cronenberg too? Um, alright...

Just kidding. I would say The Odds are stacked against any low-budget Canadian movie with a new director and no name brand stars, but at TIFF I hope and think that the playing field is slightly more balanced because the festival puts a lot of time and effort into spotlighting the Canadian films they program. I also think that the general public has much bigger appetite for an English Canadian film here than maybe at the regular box office, I'm not sure why but it just seems that way. We also have a great Canadian Distributor behind us, Kinosmith, who is working hard to get The Odds out there.

Can you tell us what's in store for you right after TIFF? Any future projects?

I'm right now working with two writers on a couple of very different scripts. One is an offbeat comedy that is also quite dramatic. The other is a very personal project based on the true story on one of my friends who was murdered in a nothing argument in a restaurant. The police weren't working the case or looking for the killer so one of his friends took it upon himself to seek out the killer, who was just a troubled kid in his early 20's, and found him pretty easily. The story is about what happened next.

ABOUT THE CAST

TYLER JOHNSTON

Tyler is currently filming the independent feature *Redwood* by Writer/Director Jesse James Miller; he plays the role of Josh.

He just wrapped the lead role of the young Don Cherry in the mini series *Keep Your Head up Kid: The Don Cherry Story*. He was ecstatic to be able to play hockey every day as he is an avid hockey player at a Junior A level. Another hockey movie he starred in was the feature *Slap Shot: The Junior League*.

Tyler may best be known for his lead role in the series *Grand Star*, after an extensive search in both Europe & North America, they found Tyler for the lead role of Cal in the sci-fi series which he spent half a year filming just north of Paris.

Tyler will be seen this fall on the Gemini Award winning series for HBO Canada, *Less Than Kind*, he has played the lovable but neurotic Danny Lubbe for two seasons now.

Tyler is excited his recent project *The Odds* with Director Simon Davidson was chosen to premiere at the 2011 Toronto International Film Festival. His other recent feature *Pressed* with Director Justin Donnelly is due to premiere in late 2011.

Tyler's other television experience had him in recurring roles on series: *Smallville*, *Zixx*, *Godiva's*, and *Reunion*. And has had guest starring roles on: *Flashpoint*, *Blood Ties*, *Haunting Hour*, *Supernatural* and *Romeo*.

He has had leading roles movies of the week, *Desperate Hours*, *Polar Shift* and *Ogre* and a leading role in the feature *Decoy's 2*.

Tyler has an orange belt in Karate and enjoys playing lacrosse, hockey, baseball and soccer. He also kayaks in the summer, enjoys rollerblading and playing golf. Tyler is also an accomplished guitar player and singer.

He has trained with Actress/teacher Kate Twa at Kate Twa Studios and Matthew Harrison at the Actors Foundry as of late.

JULIA MAXWELL

Julia first appeared on the stage as Marta von Trapp in the Sound of Music. She continued and played several different roles including Annie in "Annie", Rafiki in "The Lion King", The Fairy Godmother in "Cinderella", Lucy in "The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe", Anita in "West Side Story" and the lead in the emotional "Playing With Angels." She has acted in the film and television world with some highly regarded

writers and directors including Steve Pink (High Fidelity, Hot Tub Time Machine), Burr Steers (Igby Goes Down, 17 Again), Michael Rymer (Queen of the Damned, Battlestar Galactica), Jason Priestley (Beverly Hills, 90210), Oliver Dommenges, Damon Santostefano, Michael Damian, W.D. Hogan, Michael Rohl, Jeffery Lando, Pascal Franchot and Bronwen Hughes. She lives in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada and believes, above all, in peace, Love & happiness.

CALUM WORTHY

Born in Victoria, British Columbia in 1991, Calum Worthy made his film debut at the age of 9 with Bill Pullman in "Night Visions". He subsequently landed the starring role in the BBC-Canadian award-winning mini-series, "I Was A Rat", opposite Oscar winner Brenda Fricker, Tom Conti, Ned Beattie and Sir Edward Fox. This busy young Canadian Actor has been fortunate to work in 40 different film and television productions in the past ten years, including a regular on HBO's "Out of Order" (with Felicity Huffman, William H. Macy and Eric Stoltz), recurring roles in "The Days", "Reunion", and "Psych" and Guest Starring roles in "Stargate Atlantis" and "Kyle XY". Feature credits include: "National Lampoon's Holiday Reunion" (for which he won a Young Artist Award for "Best Performance in a TV Movie"), "Dr.Dolittle 3", "Crossroads: A Story of Forgiveness", and "Second Sight". Calum is a 2008 Young Artist Award of Hollywood nominee for the "Best Performance in a TV Series, recurring Young Actor for NBC's "Psych".

Calum spent most of 2008 in Australia and Singapore shooting 26 episodes of the series "Stormworld", which recently premiered on the Sci Fi Network. Calum also filmed an episode of "Supernatural" and had a Guest Starring role on "Smallville" as the superhero – Lightning Lad.

In 2009 Calum ventured to Toronto where he was the Guest Star on "Flashpoint", a role he describes as his most challenging role to date. Followed by Guest Starring roles on the pilot "Prepped"; and "Caprica" as well as roles on "Freshman Father"; "The Best Player" and the role of Craig on "Daydream Nation".

In the past six months Calum enjoyed shooting in the Yukon on The Big Year (with Steve Martin, Jack Black and Owen Wilson) followed quickly by the pilot Regular Joe (with Ed Asner and Tom Arnold). Most recently Calum worked on the indie film The Odds; a great guest star role on the series The Haunting; and recently booked Good Luck Charlie and Zeke & Luther.

JAREN BRANDT BARTLETT

Jaren has been climbing through the entertainment industry for over a decade now. His overwhelming curiosity for acting developed at a very early age. After scoring an agent by the time he was nine, Jaren went on to appear in a large number of national

commercials. A few years following that, he began to pursue television and film acting. He soon landed a recurring role in the criminally short-lived television series "Cold Feet." Not too long afterwards, he booked parts in various projects such as "Dark Angel", "The Twilight Zone", and the CBS mini series "Living with the Dead", starring opposite Ted Danson and Jack Palance.

Jaren has since appeared in many productions including "The Dead Zone", "The 4400", "DaVinci's Cityhall", "Da Vinci's Inquest", "Aliens in America", the MOW "Augusta, Gone" and the independent film "Sheltered Life", which was one of the only Canadian films at the Cannes Film Market in 2008. More recently, Jaren can be seen in a recurring role on the Nickelodeon show "The Troop" and starring opposite Stone Cold Steve Austin in the family film "The Boxer and the Kid."

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

SIMON DAVIDSON, WRITER & DIRECTOR

Simon Davidson lives in Vancouver, but grew up in a small town in central Alberta called Wetaskiwin.

At the University of Calgary he majored in English Literature, and was a DJ and News Director at CJSW, the campus radio station. Following university he attended the Vancouver Film School and got his first job in the industry as a producer's assistant. While, at the time, he hated this job enthusiastically, the skills and connections he made there were invaluable in getting his first short film made.

"Moon in the Afternoon" was the story of a teenager's first sexual experience and was his first foray into 35mm film production with a professional crew and cast. The film premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival.

For his next short he chose to adapt a narrative poem by Governor General's Award winner, Don McKay, called "Sometimes a Voice." It premiered at the Montreal World Film Festival and went on to screen at many other national and international festivals, including TIFF. It was purchased by three programs on CBC and was nominated for Best Short of Moving Pictures: Canadian Films on Tour.

He conceived his next short film "What's up with the Kids?" as a melodrama based around two children's conflict with their real dad and their step dad. It premiered in the Official Competition at the Dresden International Shorts Festival, had its Canadian premier at TIFF, and went on to screen at many other festivals.

To support his writing and directing habit, he has worked as an editor and assistant editor on film and television projects in Vancouver including being an Editor on the SyFy series "Flash Gordon" for Reunion Pictures.

He is currently developing several feature film projects as writer/co-writer and director.

Filmography:

THE ODDS (2011) *feature*

Toronto International Film Festival, WORLD PREMIERE

Busan International Film Festival, FLASH FORWARD COMPETITION

WHAT'S UP WITH THE KIDS? (2005) *short*

Dresden International Film Festival - Premiere - Official Competition

Toronto International Film Festival

Vancouver International Film Festival

Cinefest Sudbury International Film Festival
Whistler International Film Festival
Broadcasters: Bravo Canada & CBC Reflections

SOMETIMES A VOICE (2003) *short*

Premiere - Montreal World Film Festival
Toronto International Film Festival
Fajr Film Festival, Iran
Vancouver International Film Festival
Victoria International Film Festival
NSI – FilmExchange Festival, Winnipeg
Moving Pictures: Canadian Films on Tour
Film Circuit: Volkswagen Canadian Short Film Showcase
Dawson City Film Festival
Broadcasters: Bravo Canada, CBC Reflections, CBC Zed & CBC
Country Canada

MOON IN THE AFTERNOON (2002) *short*

Premiere - Toronto International Film Festival
Moving Pictures: Canadian Films on Tour
Reel Island Film Festival

KIRSTEN NEWLANDS, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER & PRODUCER

Kirsten Newlands has over 15 years of experience working in film and television. She has produced several award winning TV series, music videos and a number of short films and has Associate and Co-Produced a handful of feature films. THE ODDS is her feature film Executive Producer and Producer debut.

In addition to producing independent features, Kirsten is also Vice-President of DHX Vancouver, where she is responsible for all production activities. She currently oversees 5 series and is the executive responsible for DHX's slate of all service and equity projects.

She is a former board member of Women in Film and Video Vancouver, a graduate of the University of Western Ontario and of the Canadian Film Centre's Producer's Lab.

She lives in Vancouver with her husband and 7 month old daughter.

OLIVER LINSLEY, PRODUCER

Founder of Doghouse Films, Oliver Linsley has been Producing in Vancouver for the past decade. His experience now ranges from feature films & commercials to music videos. Currently he has just completed three feature films: "MACHOTAILDROP", a

Corey Adams and Alex Craig film, a dark comedy set in the world of skateboarding, "A Gun to the Head" the latest Blaine Thurier film, in addition to "Beyond the Black Rainbow", a film by Panos Cosmartos.

Formerly, Oliver was an accountant and before that a painter. He holds a degree in Art History with a minor in Visual Arts as well as a Diploma in Accounting. For some reason, film is more fun than that other stuff.

NORM LI, DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Norm Li is a Director of Photography based out of Vancouver, BC. Mainly shooting feature films, commercials, and music videos, he loves to collaborate with Directors on unique projects that create bold cinematic visuals. Heavily influenced by independent cinema, his style is a fusion of European, Asian, and North American films. Norm's work has garnered international recognition and has been featured at many film festivals around the world.

PATRIC CAIRD, COMPOSER

Patric Caird is an award winning Canadian film and television composer now working from Los Angeles. He has composed the music for over 30 films, 300 episodes of television, video games and live theater. Patric was awarded Canada's top film music honour with the Genie award for his score to "Here's to Life" and has received the "Socan International Television Series Music Award" twice. A true lover of film music he has written in all styles from full orchestra, big band, latin, jazz, pop, folk to techno, hip hop and country.

GREG NG, EDITOR

Greg is an editing ninja from Vancouver, B.C. He is an alumnus of the UBC Film Program and the Canadian Film Centre. He has cut an astonishing number of short films, a whole bunch of commercials, and six feature films. Most recently, Greg finished working with director Aaron Houston on his feature mockumentary, SUNFLOWER HOUR, about a group of puppeteers auditioning for a part on a children's television show.

SCOTT MOULTON, PRODUCTION DESIGNER

As a Production Designer and Art Director, Scott Moulton began his career in the entertainment arts. He has worked in various mediums including TV, Commercials and Music Videos, print ads and independent film. Scott has had films premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival and various other festivals throughout North America. Scott lives in Vancouver with his wife and two boys as he continues his journey in the arts.