



presents

## The Automatic Hate

A film by Justin Lerner

“nothing short of brilliant” – Alexander Lowe, *We Got This Covered*

“...arresting, skillfully directed...” – Dennis Harvey, *Variety*

“Justin Lerner is a director worth keeping an eye on.” – David Lewis, *San Francisco Chronicle*



**United States / 2015 / Drama / English**  
**97 min / 2.35:1 / Stereo and 5.1 Surround Sound**

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## **FULL SYNOPSIS**

When Davis Green's alluring young cousin Alexis appears on his doorstep one night, he discovers that a side of his family has been kept secret from him. Against his father's wishes, Davis travels to rural, upstate New York to meet his other cousins. While wrestling with a taboo attraction to one another, he and Alexis attempt to reunite their families, uncovering the reasons behind a long-standing rift and the shocking secret that tore their fathers apart. Together, their discoveries force them to confront the temptation to keep their familial grudge going rather than end it.

## **SHORT SYNOPSIS**

When Davis Green's alluring young cousin Alexis shows up on his doorstep, he discovers a side of his family has been kept secret from him for his entire life. While wrestling with a taboo attraction to each other, the pair tries to uncover the grudge that tore their family apart.

## **LOGLINE**

Davis and his newly-discovered cousin Alexis try to uncover the source of the grudge that tore their family apart, while wrestling with a taboo attraction to each other.

## **ASSETS**

Official Trailer: TBD

Downloadable hi-res images:

<http://www.filmmovement.com/libraries/index.asp?MerchandiseID=451>



## DIRECTOR'S Q&A

### How did THE AUTOMATIC HATE come together?

**JUSTIN LERNER:** It started back in 2007, during my final year of film school. While editing my thesis short film and finishing up my degree, I was interning at The Weinstein Co., where I met Katharine O'Brien, who interned the same days as I did. Over the course of that year we realized that we shared a very similar taste in films and that we should write something together, THE AUTOMATIC HATE was what eventually became our first script.

After a chance run-in at Sundance Film Festival '09, I met a few producers who became interested in financing something of mine. Over the next year I wrote, directed, and produced (with these two other producers) a small indie feature that became GIRLFRIEND, putting THE AUTOMATIC HATE in the drawer for the time being.

At their core, though, these two films are similar in that they both explore a relationship considered by many to be "taboo" – in GIRLFRIEND's case, it was a young man with Down Syndrome and a young, single mother. GIRLFRIEND was invited to World Premiere at Toronto International Film Festival in 2010, followed by a brief stint of festivals through Europe. And at the tail end of our run, we were nominated for (and won) a Gotham Award.

One of the first people to watch GIRLFRIEND and get in touch with me after the Gotham Awards was Alix Madigan of Anonymous Content, who also produced WINTER'S BONE. When Alix and I met, she told me that she loved GIRLFRIEND and wanted to produce THE AUTOMATIC HATE. Of course, I told her immediately that I'd love to work with her on it, and about a year later we had raised the money and put together most of the cast. Alix also brought in producer Lacey Leavitt, who worked with her on Lynn Shelton's LAGGIES, and in September of 2013 we went to upstate New York to shoot the film.

### What are the fundamental elements/themes of the film in your opinion?

**JL:** The ideas of both a taboo or "forbidden love" and also a "family grudge" being discovered, and then passed down from the older generation to the younger one.

The film also examines the choice between living a life of conformity to the rules of a civilization, and a life of constant disobedience of those rules, and the possible dangers of both. The two different sides of this family stand on either end of the argument, with Davis and Alexis stuck in the middle. They are being pulled back and forth between these two, opposing lifestyle philosophies.

We all have taboo desires, some of us are just better than others at hiding them and carrying on like normal. Ultimately, I think the fundamental obstacle faced in the film is the decision of which path to take in life: **The Wilderness:** where laws don't always apply and we can act on our most basic desires; and **The Sidewalk:** the man-made spaces where we must abide by laws, rules, and the constant worry of people judging our behavior...

And though I never set out to really say any one thing in the making of a film, this one could be seen, in many parts, as an argument for, or at least a proposal for, indulging our desires, especially our most taboo ones. Or at the very least, being honest with ourselves, and our loved ones, that we all have them.

### **How did you cast the film and what led you to choose the cast that you did?**

**JL:** The role of “Alexis Green” was a very tough one to cast. I had met with dozens of talented young women for the role, but for one reason or another couldn’t make it work with anyone. We then began to have our casting director put people on tape and for an entire month, Alix had been bringing up the name of Adelaide Clemens – who she met with for previous project. I was familiar with Adelaide from a few things, and thought she was very talented, but I openly admit that she was not the first person that jumped to mind for the role.

This all changed, however, roughly thirty seconds into her audition tape. She took the scenes (and the character) in directions neither Katharine nor I had thought of. It was as if, for the first time in all my readings and meetings, I felt like I was actually watching the movie. The audition tape stopped and I knew we had found Alexis.

Joseph Cross read for the role of “Davis Green,” along with many others, and he was just simply the best out of anyone who came in. He possessed this complex mix of vulnerability, sweetness and darkness that was needed for the character. When we met, I told Joe that I needed someone who was okay being a “bad guy” – that he was going to do things in the film that at least some people weren’t going to like, and that I didn’t want him to worry about it. We needed to be able to see him slowly descend into his morally-grey behavior. And Joe totally got that, perhaps more than anyone else I met with.

I had been a fan of Deborah Ann Woll for many years and when I learned that she was friendly with Alix, I was excited to offer her the role of “Cassie.” Deborah Ann is one of the most disciplined, hardest working, and delightful people I’ve ever worked with. And she’s so, so smart. I found myself learning a lot from our work together.

### **What made you want to make this film?**

**JL:** I’m stealing this from both Robert Bresson, and then Harmony Korine, who quoted Bresson, but with any project I do, I’m looking to put at least one or two things on screen that haven’t been filmed before. Or, at the very least, something that I haven’t seen before.

With GIRLFRIEND, I had never before seen a film about a person with Down Syndrome having both a romantic and physical relationship with someone without Down Syndrome. So that was the spark that ignited my writing that film.

With *THE AUTOMATIC HATE*, I had similar goals. Though I'd read many novels and seen many European and Asian films that explored this type of taboo relationship, neither Katharine nor I had seen much of it in American cinema – and it is this connection between Davis and Alexis has always been the first thing that excited me about making it.

### **How has making this film changed you?**

**JL:** I've never believed more than I do now, after working with Adelaide Clemens, in the idea that an actor can accept a role in your film and, without changing any words, they can totally re-write your script, in the very best possible way. For the first time in my career as a filmmaker, I truly understand the advantages of working with someone as both a performer and creative partner, and what it can do for a film. Adelaide is working on a different level than most other artists I've seen. In rooms that most of us are only able to peek inside, she is able to run and dance around in them freely. It's not something you can learn. It's rare, and ephemeral, what she has... working with her felt almost once in a lifetime.

Every film ages you, makes you grow. But this one, given how long it took to make, has made me realize how long it can take to bring one, single idea into existence. So making this film has reinforced my belief that you need to choose your projects wisely – because they are marathons, not sprints. In order to sustain for years that early spark and excitement you had for something in the beginning, I see no other alternative in selecting projects than first making sure you are obsessed with them.

### **What do you hope audiences take away from this film?**

**JL:** In both of my feature films so far, as well as in a third that I'm currently writing, I want to present the viewer with a relationship between two people that could be seen by some as “troubling,” “offensive,” “wrong” or “taboo.” And then, I hope to add to that relationship a complex set of circumstances, a compelling story, and performances that are all strong enough to allow us to root for them to get together. I want my work to find those who are against the idea of a relationship between these two people, and I want them to re-evaluate their moral judgment of them being together.

This film hints at this idea of every person being “part civilized and part animal.” You can see it in the dichotomy between Davis' father – a strict, law-abiding professor who lives in a house with a property-line, a sidewalk and clearly marked, man-made laws and regulations; and his Uncle Josh – a pot-growing pig farmer who lives in the wilderness, where he can do mostly what he likes, with his nudist wife and rambunctious, hedonistic children.

I believe all human beings have both of these potentials – to be wild, and to be civilized – living inside of us. The former is a primal urge to run around and curse out who we want to, eat what we want to, say what we want to and fuck who we want to. The latter is a desire to conform and submit to a group of man-made laws in a polite, conscientious (and fearful) society. I believe we are all born with the former impulse, and the latter we have to be taught.

## **What were some of the challenges you faced while making this film?**

**JL:** One of the biggest challenges in making this is something that I try to put into everything I write and direct – a morally ambiguous central character. Though my taste is such that I actually seek out films with protagonists that “do bad things,” it is certainly a challenge to keep an audience engaged with such a character. That is my self-imposed challenge, most of the time.

Years ago, around the time PALINDROMES came out, I read an amazing interview with the director, Todd Solondz, where he explained his view that far too many American films indulge our narcissistic sides by presenting us with virtuous, perfect protagonists that can do no wrong, which in turn creates a passive audience member.

That interview, and Solondz’ strategy, has always stuck with me. I think if we want to grow at all from a film, and if a film is going to hang around in our memories for a bit, it should challenge us in some way. It could challenge us thematically, by asking us to identify with a morally-flawed character; it could be formally, by asking us to sit, for example, through very long takes, or disallowing us to hear or see certain key story elements; or narratively, by refusing to provide us with closure or a clear-cut, wrapped up ending. In THE AUTOMATIC HATE, I try to do all three of these things.

## **How would you describe THE AUTOMATIC HATE to a person you just met on the street?**

**JL:** It's a mystery film about two sides of a broken family. Davis Green meets an alluring young woman named Alexis Green, who turns out to be his estranged first cousin. The two of them quickly become close and try to reunite their family, though it proves difficult, as their dads haven't spoken for thirty years due to an unknown incident. It's a story about unearthing a hidden family grudge, and two young people trying not to let a rivalry from a previous generation get passed down to them. It examines questions about human morality, faithfulness, desire, and taboo.

## **FESTIVALS**

Winner – Silver Audience Award, Mill Valley Film Festival

Official Selection - SXSW Film Festival (World Premiere)

Official Selection - Seattle International Film Festival

Official Selection - Woodstock Film Festival

Official Selection - Busan International Film Festival (International Premiere), in Flash Forward Competition for Best 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> Feature

Official Selection - Mar del Plata International Film Festival

Official Selection - Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival, Main Competition

# CREDITS

## CAST

(IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

<b>Cassie</b>	Deborah Ann Woll
<b>Davis Green</b>	Joseph Cross
<b>Todd</b>	Travis Quentin Young
<b>Bartender</b>	Rathani Khan
<b>Alexis Green</b>	Adelaide Clemens
<b>Dr. Ronald Green</b>	Richard Schiff
<b>Dr. Marsha Green</b>	Caitlin O'Connell
<b>Male Nurse</b>	Craig Wesley Divino
<b>Grandpa Howard</b>	George Riddle
<b>Stoner Kid</b>	Sea McHale
<b>Uncle Josh</b>	Ricky Jay
<b>Aunt Sarah</b>	Catherine Carlen
<b>Annie Green</b>	Yvonne Zima
<b>Amanda Green</b>	Vanessa Zima
<b>Teddy</b>	Darren MacDonald
<b>Bus Boy</b>	Mark Andrews



## **CREW**

<b>Director</b>	Justin Lerner
<b>Executive Producer</b>	Lucas Akoskin, Alex Garcia, Gabriela Revilla Lugo, Kerianne Flynn, Daniel Alexander, John Alexander
<b>Producer</b>	Lacey Leavitt, Justin Lerner, Alix Madigan-Yorkin
<b>Screenwriter</b>	Justin Lerner, Katharine O'Brien
<b>Cinematographer</b>	Quyen Tran
<b>Editor</b>	Jeffrey J. Castelluccio
<b>Production Designer</b>	Alexandra Regazzoni
<b>Sound Designer</b>	Jeffery Alan Jones
<b>Music</b>	Hunter Brown
<b>Costume Designer</b>	June Suepunpuck
<b>Casting Director</b>	Brad Gilmore, CSA
<b>Unit Production Manager</b>	Andrew Haynes
<b>First Assistant Director</b>	Michael Whitecar
<b>Second Assistant Director</b>	Niles Compau
<b>Line Producer</b>	Ty Walker
<b>Stunt Coordinator</b>	Anthony Vincent
<b>Stunts</b>	Matthew Triplett, Jon Trosky
<b>First Assistant Camera</b>	Alex Cason
<b>Second Assistant Camera</b>	Vanessa Ward
<b>Additional Assistant Camera</b>	Kim Herman
<b>Media Manager</b>	Brandon Kelley
<b>Camera Intern</b>	Brian Doran
<b>Script Supervisor</b>	Sasha Vitelli
<b>Additional Script Supervisor</b>	Corrinne Kassor
<b>Production Coordinator</b>	Christina Tellez
<b>Gaffer</b>	Pete Milmoe
<b>Best Boy Electric</b>	Stephen Troy
<b>Company Grips</b>	Mark Anderson, Justin Amorusi
<b>Sound Mixer</b>	Eric Bautista
<b>Additional Sound Mixers</b>	Jarrett Depasquale, Gabriel Cyr
<b>Supervising Art Director</b>	Katharine O'Brien
<b>Set Decorator</b>	Rayna Savrosa

## **Justin Lerner, Director**

Justin Lerner is an Emmy and Gotham Award-winning writer/director born in State College, Pennsylvania, USA to two developmental psychologists, one Catholic and one Jewish, who compromised by sending him to Quaker school until the age of eleven. He studied Theatre Arts and Film at Cornell University, where he graduated cum laude for his honors thesis on the films and philosophy of Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky.

In 2007, he received his MFA in Directing at UCLA Film School, where his thesis film *THE REPLACEMENT CHILD* was awarded two student Emmys, one for Best Drama and the other for Best Director. *THE REPLACEMENT CHILD* made its World Premiere at Telluride Film Festival, and it went on to play in over forty other festivals internationally.



*Director Justin Lerner*

His first feature film, *GIRLFRIEND*, made its World Premiere at the 2010 Toronto Int'l Film Festival and went on to win three other festivals and the 2011 Gotham Independent Film Audience Award. It was released by Strand Releasing. Lerner's second feature film, *THE AUTOMATIC HATE* stars Joseph Cross (*LINCOLN*, *MILK*, *RUNNING WITH SCISSORS*), Adelaide Clemens (*THE GREAT GATSBY*), Deborah Ann Woll (*True Blood*), Ricky Jay, and Richard Schiff. The indie drama was produced by Alix Madigan, an Oscar nominee for the hit indie *WINTER'S BONE*. The film made its World Premiere at the 2015 SXSW Film Festival and is the second in an informal trilogy of films that depict taboo, or "impossible" relationships. He currently lives in Los Angeles and is represented by WME.

## **Joseph Cross as Davis Green**

Joseph Cross is an American-born film and theater actor who has appeared in over a dozen films including: Stephen Spielberg's *LINCOLN*; Gus Van Sant's *MILK*; Clint Eastwood's *FLAGS OF OUR FATHERS*; Arnaud Desplechin's *JIMMY P.*; and Ryan Murphy's *RUNNING WITH SCISSORS*, which won him the 2006 Satellite Award for Best Actor in a Motion Picture, Comedy or Musical. His theater credits include "Breakfast at Tiffany's" at the Theatre Royal Haymarket; Eugene O'Neil's "Mourning Becomes Electra" at the New Group; and John Guare's "Landscape of the Body" directed by Michael Grief at the Williamstown Theater Festival. He is currently working on the independent drama *EVERYTHING BEAUTIFUL IS FAR AWAY*.

## **Adelaide Clemens as Alexis Green**

Adelaide Clemens began working as an actress in Australian television and first came to prominence when she was featured as 'Harper' in the critically acclaimed series "Love My Way," earning her a Graham Kennedy Award Nomination for Most Outstanding New Talent in 2008. Since then, Adelaide has quickly established herself as one of today's most exciting new faces on the small and big screen.

Her credits include the Australian thriller *WASTED ON THE YOUNG* (TIFF2010); *VAMPIRE* (Sundance 2011); *NO ONE LIVES*; *CAMILLA DICKINSON*; *GENERATION UM*, alongside Keanu Reeves and *X-MEN ORIGINS: WOLVERINE* starring Hugh Jackman. She also led the successful franchise thriller, *SILENT HILL: REVELATION 3D* for director Michael J. Bassett and was in a supporting role in Baz Luhrmann's adaptation of *THE GREAT GATSBY*.

On the small screen, she is currently filming the second series of "Rectify," which is the first wholly-owned Sundance Channel scripted production. She was in an episode in the Emmy-winning *Tom* [www.FilmMovement.com](http://www.FilmMovement.com)

Hanks and Steven Spielberg produced miniseries "The Pacific" for HBO, as well as the BBC miniseries "Parade's End" which was also on HBO. She played opposite Benedict Cumberbatch and Rebecca Hall in the role of 'Valentine.'

### **Deborah Ann Woll as Cassie**

Deborah Ann Woll grew up in Brooklyn, New York and studied at the University of Southern California's prestigious School of Theatre and an intensive Shakespeare program at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts in London. For seven seasons, Woll starred as the wildly popular baby-vamp, 'Jessica Hamby' in HBO's "True Blood." Originally cast as a recurring guest star role in the first season, her character was so admired by fans that by the second season she was offered a series regular contract. The series finale aired on August 24, 2014.

During her hiatus from the highly-acclaimed vampire drama, she was cast in such films as MOTHERS DAY (2010), LITTLE MURDER (2011), SEVEN DAYS IN UTOPIA (2011), SOMEDAY THIS PAIN WILL BE USEFUL TO YOU (2011), CATCH .44 (2011), RUBY SPARKS (2012), HIGHLAND PARK (2013), MEET ME IN MONTENEGRO (2014), and FOREVER (2015). She recently starred as "Karen Page" in Marvel's highly anticipated new series new Netflix action-drama Daredevil opposite Charlie Cox and Vincent D'Onofrio. Other television credits include guest-starring roles in acclaimed shows such as "The Mentalist" and "My Name is Earl."

### **Richard Schiff as Dr. Ronald Green**

Richard Schiff is perhaps best known for his career-defining portrayal of Communication Director Toby Ziegler on the acclaimed NBC series "The West Wing." He won an Emmy for the role and received three nominations in total, in addition to winning two SAG Awards. Schiff has more recently recurred on multiple television series, including "Murder in the First," "Manhattan," "House of Lies," "Once Upon A Time," "Rogue," and "Ballers."

Schiff has repeatedly won critical acclaim for his mesmerizing performances on stage. These have included the one-man show "Underneath the Lintel" on London's West End; the title role in Eugene O'Neill's "Hughie" at the Shakespeare Theatre Company in Washington, D.C.; "The Chosen" at Barrington Stage Company; a Broadway run opposite Al Pacino in "Glengarry Glen Ross"; and "Parfumerie" at the Annenberg Center in Beverly Hills. He has been the recipient of both an Ovation Theater Award and a Dramalogue Award.

Schiff has also managed to squeeze in work for the big screen, appearing in the blockbuster Superman film, MAN OF STEEL, as well as SXSW 2014 Audience Award-winner BEFORE I DISAPPEAR. He has also appeared in independent films TAKE ME TO THE RIVER, FIRE WITH FIRE, DECODING ANNIE PARKER, MADE IN DAGENHAM and the British comedy hit THE INFIDEL. Other films include his turn as Walter Pincus in KILL THE MESSENGER, THE GAMBLER opposite Mark Wahlberg, and as himself in the feature film version of HBO's "Entourage."

### **Ricky Jay as Uncle Josh**

While Ricky Jay has long been considered one of the world’s great sleight of hand artists, his career is further distinguished by the remarkable variety of his accomplishments as an author, actor, historian, and consultant. He is the subject of the new documentary DECEPTIVE PRACTICE: THE MYSTERIES AND MENTORS OF RICKY JAY. He has acted in many films, including HOUSE OF GAMES, BOOGIE NIGHTS, MAGNOLIA, THE PRESTIGE, and TOMORROW NEVER DIES. He is the author of “Learned Pigs & Fireproof Women” and “Jay’s Journal of Anomalies,” both New York Times Notable Books. Among his other works are “Dice: Deception, Fate and Rotten Luck” with photographs by Rosamond Purcell; “Extraordinary Exhibitions;” and “Celebrations of Curious Characters.”



### **About Film Movement**

Launched in 2002, Film Movement is a full-service North American distributor of award-winning independent and foreign films, based in New York City. Film Movement has released more than 250 feature films and shorts from 50 countries on six continents, including top prize winners from Sundance, Cannes, Venice, Toronto, Berlin, Tribeca, and other prestigious festivals. Film Movement releases its films through numerous distribution channels, including thousands of art-house cinemas; universities and libraries; home video; television outlets; Cable Video on Demand (including its very own branded cable VOD platform—Film Festival on Demand—available in over 40 million US homes); In-flight Entertainment; and broadband outlets. For more information, please visit [www.filmmovement.com](http://www.filmmovement.com).