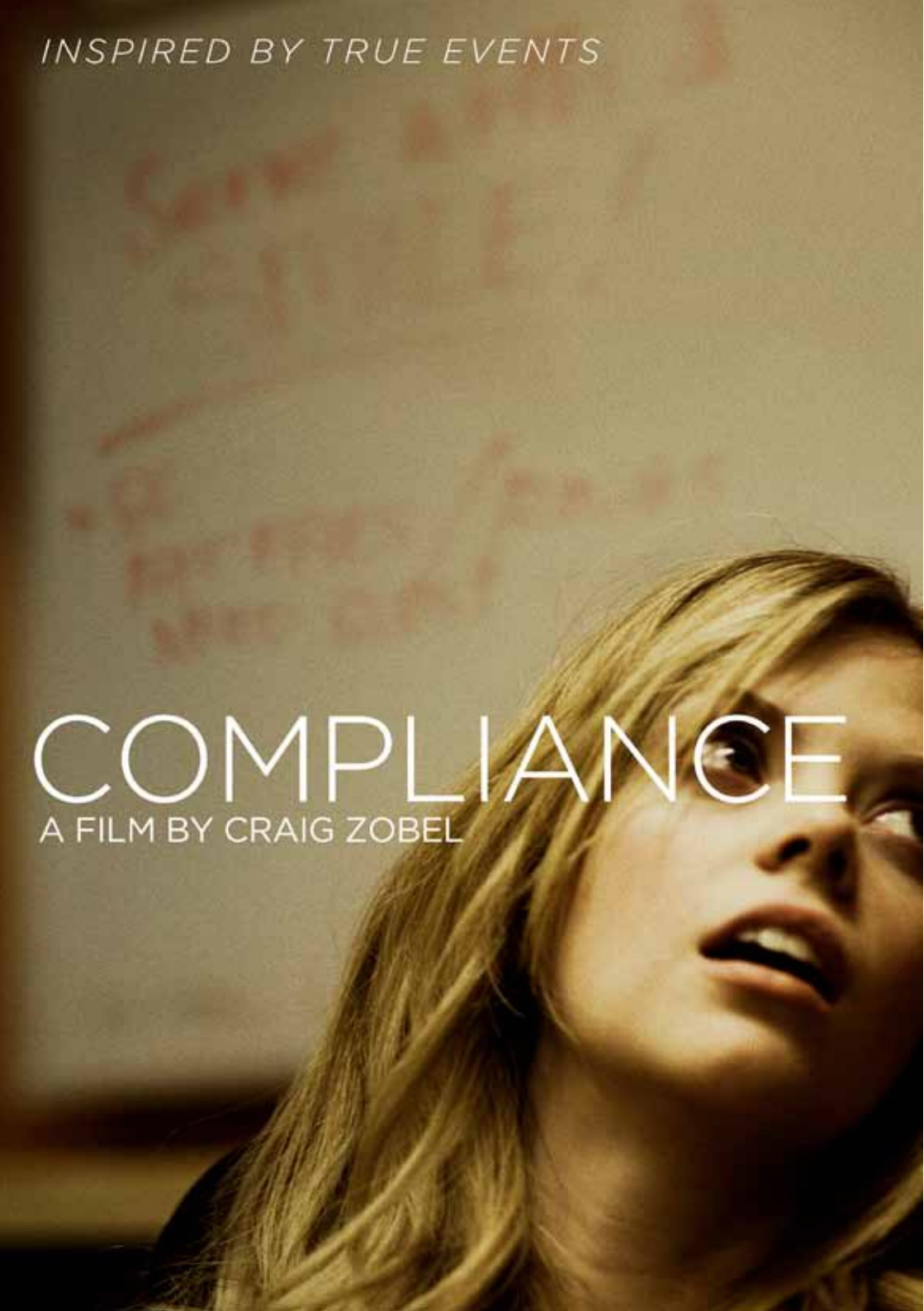


*INSPIRED BY TRUE EVENTS*

# COMPLIANCE

A FILM BY CRAIG ZOBEL





**MAGNOLIA PICTURES**

AND

**DOGFISH PICTURES**

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

**MUSKAT FILMED PROPERTIES**

AND

**LOW SPARK FILMS**

PRESENTS

**A BAD COP / BAD COP**

PRODUCTION

present

# COMPLIANCE

**A FILM BY CRAIG ZOBEL**

USA - 90 min - 2012 - DCP - 2.35 - English

**WORLD SALES & FESTIVAL**

**MEMENTO FILMS INTERNATIONAL**

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## SYNOPSIS

The story of Sandra, an overworked manager at a fast food restaurant, who receives a call from a police officer accusing one of her employees, a teenage girl named Becky, of stealing from a customer. Taking the officer at his word, Sandra detains Becky, setting into motion a nightmarish scenario that quickly spirals out of control.

**INSPIRED BY TRUE EVENTS**

# INTERVIEW WITH CRAIG ZOBEL

*Those who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities. – Voltaire*

## BACKGROUND

This film is based on actual incidents that happened at least 70 times over a 10 year period across different parts of the US. A man would call fast food restaurants saying he was a police officer and convince the restaurant's manager to aid in catching an employee who had stolen from a customer. The caller would lead the manager down a series of events where the employee—usually a teen girl—was held captive in the back of the store while “under suspicion,” often culminating in the teen being strip searched naked, spanked, and in many cases eventually coerced into sexual assault situations. The actual episodes usually lasted for up to four of five hours.

Upon discovering it was a hoax, the victim and other restaurant employees would be shattered. The real police officers investigating one of the cases tracked calling cards back to a security guard hundreds of miles away in a different state. In his apartment they found police equipment, applications for police academies, and a collection of phone calling cards linked to dozens of similar hoax phone calls throughout the country. The suspected caller was brought to trial in that case, but was found not guilty and was not convicted. After this case went to court, there have been no further calls.

In a separate civil suit connected to that same case, the victim partnered with the restaurant manager and shift supervisor to successfully sue the restaurant's international corporation for failing to protect her. Similar—though less severe—hoaxes had been perpetrated at other of

the corporation's restaurants throughout the country, and the lawsuit cited that they didn't sufficiently warn the employees to the threat. The manager and supervisor were awarded their legal fees paid, and the victim was awarded millions of dollars in damages.

## OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH AUTHORITY

My first film, *Great World of Sound* reveals a small-time music industry con which preys on people in suburban America. In it people posed as record producers and convinced songwriters they could make their dreams come true, for a fee. I explored how moral people could rationalize committing unethical acts, especially when convinced to by others: that scammers are also sometimes getting scammed. *Compliance* exists in the same world and shares similar themes, though it approaches these questions with a different tone—one more in line with a psychological thriller.

I encountered the true stories from which this is based at the time I was interested in the work of behavioral psychologist, Dr. Stanley Milgram. He was primarily fascinated in studying people's statements of defense at the Nazi war crime trials. From this interest he created famed social experiments on mankind's willingness to submit to authority.

The experiment concerned having a test subject be instructed to give high-dose electric shocks to another person (who was secretly a confederate of the experimenter, and who was not actually injured, but was performing as if shocked). He did the experiment for years with a wide

range variables: age, gender, race, class, nationality. With small differences his findings tended to be the same.

In Dr. Milgram's experiment 62-70% of the people involved administered what they thought were real electric shocks of lethal dose to others when commanded to with enough force. Two thirds of the population! That's most people. The findings are striking as none of us want to think of ourselves as naïve or overly obedient.

I've never been in a situation as extreme as the one depicted in this film or that Dr. Milgram concocted for his tests. Yet I recognize something familiar; I could identify something universal in the way Milgram's subjects struggled yet ultimately succumbed to an authority figure's wishes at the expense of someone else.

I can't remember a specific time when I've done this—I don't think we are wired to recognize this in ourselves very often—we usually cast ourselves in the role of the hero who could never be duped. However, I know that sometime, somewhere in my life, I've thrown someone under a bus against my values and at another person's command. I was curious about both the revelation that this could be a larger part of human nature, and also how difficult it is to be honest with yourself in recognizing that. It's unsettling to recognize, but ultimately cathartic.

It's also sparked questions in me: How much worse is strongly exerting authority, than unquestioning compliance to authority? Are you still responsible for your participation in a bad event, if you have conceded all decision-making in the event? Can you escape fault or blame if you have fully yielded all individual control?

## THE TONE

I stumbled across the true event from which the story is based and saw an opportunity for a specific genre—the real-time hostage film.

I've always been a devoted fan of *Dog Day Afternoon* and though my script is different, I saw an opportunity for very similar ultra-realistic, semi-improvised character moments. The group power dynamic of José Padilha's *Bus 174* and the immaculate, yet little scene 1967 Larry Peerce film, *The Incident*—where Martin Sheen takes control of a subway car—were huge inspirations as far as plot and structure.

Of course, no one can attempt tension building exercises without studying Hitchcock films, and so I've appropriated certain elements from him. Yet, the realism of Paul Greengrass's *United 93* resonates with me, and I saw an opportunity to build extreme tension out of completely naturalistic performances as he was able to accomplish in that film.





To me, much of the trick of the project was in staying objective and observant, yet bringing a sense of compassion to the story. I involved starting the film with a degree of lackadaisical naturalism, and easing into the more dark material.

In order to best capture the relationship between the caller and his victims in a naturalistic way, I felt that having the actors reading with the caller live on set, and shooting the manager's office and the caller's house scenes simultaneously. This also afforded us the luck of being able to improvise dialogue based on the script – with the right actor playing the caller, this was a valuable resource for adding additional moments of realism, humor, and horror to the call.

## THE POLICE

The element of the police in this film asks a question: In order for society to effectively use police, we must truly think the police will do what's right: we must fully believe they've promised to uphold our values. Since the police

have promised to do what's right, we should obey the police. If the police don't do what's right, that is the fault of the police not meeting their promise, and not our fault as individuals. But what if it's a man in another state just pretending to be police?

Most people are somewhat weary of interactions with these classic examples of authority. It's completely understandable, they are for many the biggest authority figure they'll encounter in their lives. But when casting the role, I realized that I had preconceived notions of how a police officer should "sound."

Most of these preconceptions were based on things I'd seen in movies and TV shows. When really analyzing how police interacted—I watched hours the documentary program COPS—I recognized that there wasn't a signature "voice" of a police officer. Rather, the way they used their language to assert authority and maintain dominance in a situation was key. Together with my actor, we attempted to capture as much of this subtle power assertion via speech patterns as possible.

## THE PLACE

The film is set in the American "edge city" or "exurb"—an unincorporated area outside a larger city's suburbs that isn't quite rural farmland, and whose existence would have been fundamentally impossible without

the automobile. It's a place that would not have been possible even fifteen years ago, yet now is the disconnected world that millions of Americans live in.

In this sense, I attempted to find the abstract beauty in the dead world of corporate stucco. We tried to capture the moments at the end of a day and the beginning of an evening in which the real world's hazy twilight and early nighttime fog sneaks into a commercial setting that had been designed to be ignored.

The restaurant itself was to be like any modern fast food restaurant—devoid of anything offensive to anyone, and therefore just completely vapid beige. Plastic plants, gray-fleck laminate, non-offensive abstract art, brightly colored pleather abound. The back room of the office is more lived-in and a storage closet at the same time—tons of shitty stacks of paperwork share room with half opened cardboard packages containing next month's promotional window cling stickers. In truth, these corporate environments are controlled and controlling over their employees from some headquarters far away—much like the hoax caller in the film.

## THE LOOK

When looking at this film's visual palette, it's obvious that a great deal of time is spent in one location. In that way, it's much like a filmed stage play, so I studied the framing and camera movement in one of the finest translations of a stage play into film—*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* The "Voltaire Scenes" in which Mike Nichols keeps four people blabbing at one another in one living room is truly an art in itself.

One thing that was obvious in discussing this manager's office where half the script takes place, was that production-wise it would be advantageous to build this set on a stage/warehouse. Aside from the general production advantages (complete control of time, space, sound, etc), it also afforded us the ability to play with the look somewhat.

I'd wanted to build the set so it was L or T-shaped—something that could give us multiple "corners" to explore in each subsequent section of the story. Although in real life these rooms rarely contain a view, I wanted to build in some high window or series of glass bricks, so we could use it to motivate daylight lighting, and have lighting changes to more horrid fluorescents as the story descends into darkness.

Also, with a controlled, designed room, we had the advantage of being able to change its size and shape as the film progressed. We were able to make the room physically bigger or smaller to fit the mood I wanted each scene to convey to the audience.



## CRAIG ZOBEL (WRITER / DIRECTOR / PRODUCER)

Craig was awarded the Breakthrough Director award at the 2008 Gotham Awards for "*Great World of*

*Sound*"— his debut feature as a writer/director, which premiered at Sundance 2007 and was distributed by Magnolia Entertainment. The film was selected as one of the Top Ten Independent Films of the Year by The National Board of Review, and was nominated for Best First Film, and Best Supporting Actor in the 2008 Independent Spirit Awards. His new film, *Compliance* was played in Sundance and SXSW 2012.





### ANN DOWD

(SANDRA)

Ann Dowd acting career spans across television, film, and theater. As a an on-stage performer, Dowd has appeared in several Broadway shows including the role of Prossy in *CANDIDA*, for which she received the Clarence Derwent Award for Most Promising B'way Debut.

Her on screen experience is equally impressive, as she has starred in films such as *Marley & Me*, *The Informant*, *Garden State*, *Lorenzo's Oil*, *Philadelphia*, *Manchurian Candidate*, and *The Forgotten*.

Dowd has had reoccurring roles on the Television series *Nothing Sacred*, *Freaks And Geeks*, *The Education Of Max Bickford* and *Third Watch*. She has also appeared multiple times on *Law & Order*, *Law & Order SvU*, *Law & Order Criminal Intent*, and as a guest star on *Pan Am*, *House*, *Nypd Blue*, *The X Files*, *Family Law*, *Touched By An Angel* and many others.



### DREAMA WALKER

(BECKY)

Dreama Walker is rapidly emerging as one of Hollywood's most sought after and engaging young talents. Walker will next star in the new highly-anticipated ABC comedy *Apartment # 23* opposite Krysten Ritter and James Van der Beek; the show premiered in April.

Walker is most known for her recurring character, Hazel Williams, on cult phenomenon *Gossip Girl*. Her other television credits include the Emmy-nominated CBS drama, *The Good Wife*, *Mercy*, *Ugly Betty*, *Royal Pains*, and *Law & Order*. She also played the lead in the Lifetime miniseries, *Seven Deadly Sins* in 2010.

She will also be seen in the comedy *The Kitchen* opposite Bryan Greenberg, Laura Prepon, and Matt Bush which will be released in 2012.



### PAT HEALY

(OFFICER DANIELS)

Pat Healy began his career at Chicago's famed Steppenwolf Theatre Company. As an actor, he has worked with some of the world's most renowned film directors including Paul Thomas Anderson (*Magnolia*), Werner Herzog (*Rescue Dawn*) and David Gordon Green (*Undertow*). He can also be seen in the films *Ghost World*, *Pearl Harbor* and *The Assassination Of Jesse James By The Coward Robert Ford*.

Additionally, he has appeared in over 30 television series including *Six Feet Under*, *24* and *Grey's Anatomy*. He starred in Craig Zobel's 2007 directorial debut *Great World Of Sound* and his own directorial debut *Mullitt* premiered at the 2001 Sundance Film Festival. Healy can be seen in the movie *The Inkeepers*, directed by Ti West.

## CREDITS

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AND  
DOGFISH PICTURES  
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PROPERTIES

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LOW SPARK FILMS  
PRESENTS

A BAD COP /  
BAD COP PRODUCTION

INSPIRED BY TRUE EVENTS

### COMPLIANCE

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED  
BY  
CRAIG ZOBEL

PRODUCED BY  
SOPHIA LIN  
LISA MUSKAT  
TYLER DAVIDSON  
THEO SENA  
CRAIG ZOBEL

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER  
DAVID GORDON GREEN

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS  
JAMES BELFER  
CARINA ALVES

### CO-EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

ANDREW BRICKMAN  
ERIC HOLLENBECK  
ALLAN MARKS  
ALYSON WINICK  
CASTING BY  
KERRY BARDEN  
AND  
PAUL SCHNEE, C.S.A.

### STARRING

ANN DOWD  
DREAMA WALKER  
PAT HEALY  
BILL CAMP  
PHILIP ETTINGER  
JAMES MCCAFREY

### CINEMATOGRAPHY BY

ADAM STONE  
ADDITIONAL  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
SCOTT GARDNER

EDITED BY  
JANE RIZZO

PRODUCTION  
DESIGN BY

MATTHEW MUNN

PRODUCTION SOUND  
MIXER

CHRISTOPHER GEBERT

ORIGINAL SCORE BY  
HEATHER MCLNTOSH

COSTUME DESIGN BY  
KAREN MALECKI



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