

EXALTATION

Will Schwarz

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Starring

James Altschul

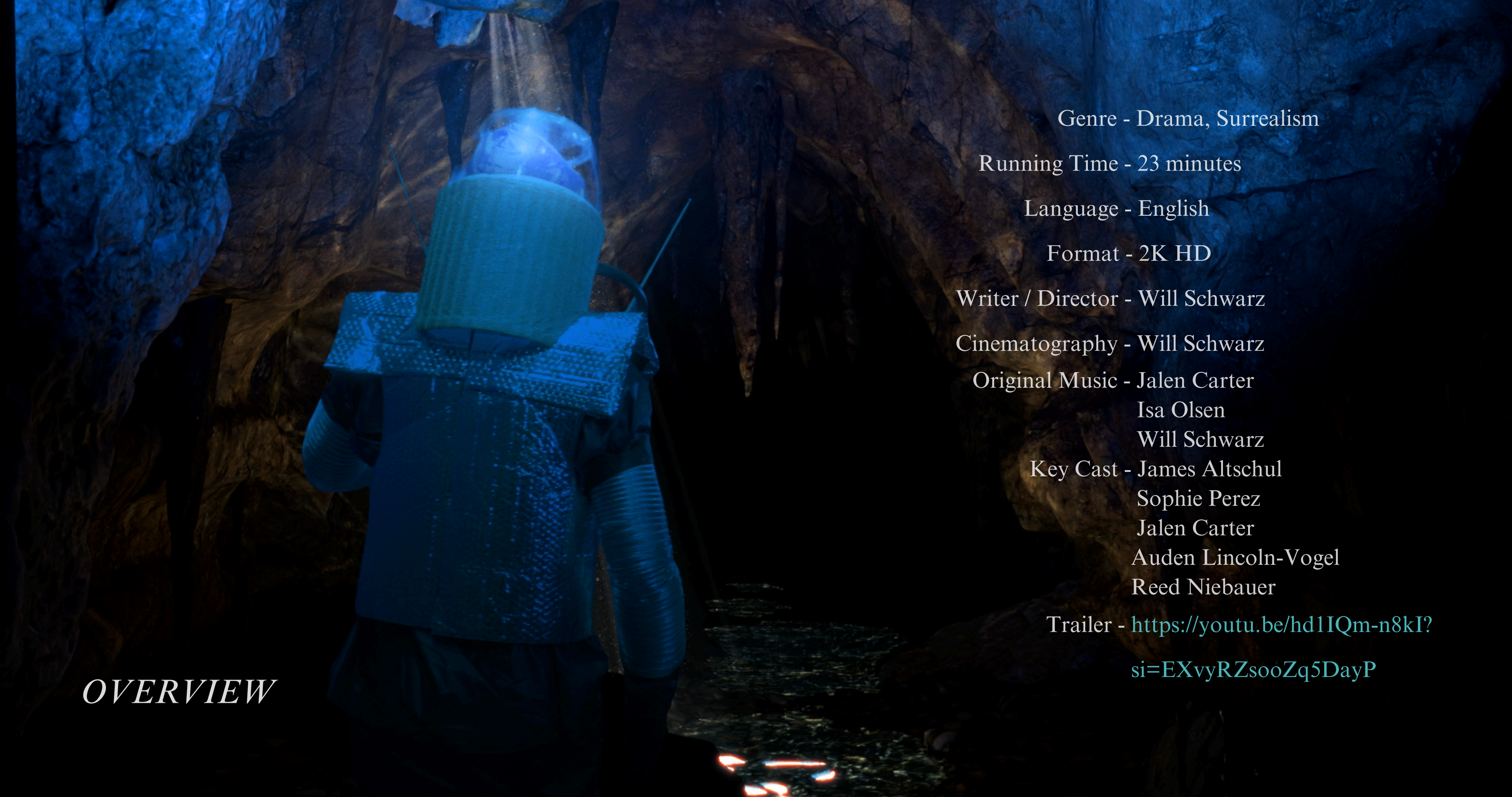
Written and Directed by

Will Schwarz

Featuring Music by

Jalen Carter and Isa Olsen

2025



Genre - Drama, Surrealism

Running Time - 23 minutes

Language - English

Format - 2K HD

Writer / Director - Will Schwarz

Cinematography - Will Schwarz

Original Music - Jalen Carter

Isa Olsen

Will Schwarz

Key Cast - James Altschul

Sophie Perez

Jalen Carter

Auden Lincoln-Vogel

Reed Niebauer

Trailer - [https://youtu.be/hd1IQm-n8kI?](https://youtu.be/hd1IQm-n8kI?si=EXvyRZsooZq5DayP)

[si=EXvyRZsooZq5DayP](https://youtu.be/hd1IQm-n8kI?si=EXvyRZsooZq5DayP)

OVERVIEW

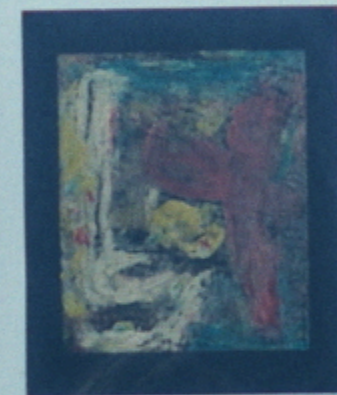
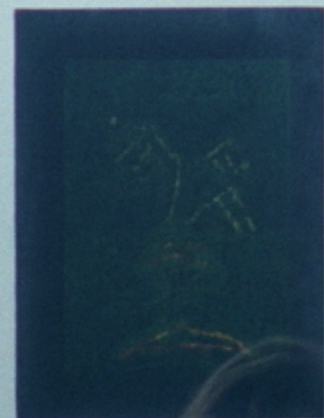
Logline



What do you believe?

Synopsis

A young artist's struggle with faith and self-identity
clash in this eldritch horror short film.





Director's Statement

Exaltation began as dream-images attached to personal identity. What does it mean to lose the things that made you who you are? This film is a far cry longer than the standard festival short, and more technically complicated than a student work probably should be. I chose to tackle such an ambitious project nearly solo to teach myself production arts I was not fully acquainted with: sound design, CGI & VFX, color grading, music production, among others. The spacewalk sequence accompanied by original gothic music which concludes the film took over a year to produce on its own. Much like October changes and finds new meaning through the film, I found myself and my perception of this project's themes changing drastically over the nearly 3 year production.





Cast

James Altschul

“October”

Sophie Perez

“Mabel”

Jalen Carter

“John”

Auden Lincoln-vogel

“Ben”

Reed Niebauer

“Evangelist”

Crew

Kayla Laird

Asst. Director, Asst. Cinematographer

Caitlin Lens

Asst. Cinematographer, Asst. Director

Production Assistants

Davy Behm

Ashley Cimarolli

Grace McCabe

Sophie Schwarz

Lilly Kueter

Music By

Jalen Carter

Isa Olsen

Will Schwarz





Will Schwarz

Writer, Director, DOP

Will Schwarz is an American artist and filmmaker working in the heartland. He has a background in ceramics and graphite art, having studied under master potter of the Bauhaus lineage Dean Schwarz, his grandfather. Will has been making films since he was old enough to hold a camera, now having completed 2 feature films and dozens of shorts. He is drawn to a surrealist style, taking inspiration from David Lynch and Mya Deren. His debut narrative feature *HOW TO MAKE MONEY* is set to release in fall 2025.

IG: @willschwarz_





James Altschul

October

James Altschul is a filmmaker from the Chicago suburbs. He's a long-time actor, writer, and the Co-Director of the upcoming feature film
HOW TO MAKE MONEY
set to release in 2025.

IG: [@jamesaltschul.mp4](https://www.instagram.com/jamesaltschul.mp4)





Kayla Laird

*Asst. Director,
Asst. Cinematographer*

Kayla Laird is a Midwest cinematographer and technical engineer from Dubuque, Iowa. She graduated from the University of Iowa in 2023 with a degree in Cinematic Arts and Communications. Kayla now works in Cedar Rapids, Iowa as a Chief Broadcast Engineer.

IG: @kaylalaidd





Caitlin Lenz

*Asst. Cinematographer,
Asst. Director*

Caitlin Lenz is an American filmmaker known for her experimental mixed-media shorts *I Think About My Body Too Much* (2024) published in TriQuarterly and *Misophonia* (2023) which recently screened at the Chicago International Film Festival.

IG: @digital1lenz



How many alien abductions took place during production?

None, to my knowledge. But that's just what they want me to think.

How did you come up with this madness?

I had a strange series of dreams during the pandemic when I was spending about 24 hours a day alone in my dorm room listening to the choral music of Estonian composer Arvo Pärt. The ending is as close an actualization of those images as I could create.

Exaltation, to me, is a reflection on body dysmorphia, queer identity, the role of artists, and what it means to dream of worlds other than the one we inhabit.

FAQ

Where did it all go wrong for you?

Probably when my parents failed to mention that “Cinema isn’t a real degree” and “you’ll never make it in the real world.” I could have been a doctor.

What was the best part of production?

Spending nearly a year learning computer animation for just 3 minutes of footage was a lot of fun, to say the least.

What do you hope audiences take away?

I hope audiences are intrigued by the visuals and find meaning in the more experimental aspects. Surreal films always excite me as a viewer because they leave so much open to interpretation; no reading is more or less interesting than another - whatever they take away is fantastic and I’d love to hear their thoughts.



Will & James

Will and James began making films together the moment they met at UIowa's Cinematic Arts department in 2022. Collaborative projects between the two include *DON'T LOOK* (2022), *LOVE OR SURVIVAL* (2022), *EXALTATION* (2025), and their upcoming feature film *HOW TO MAKE MONEY* (2025).





Technical Info

Shooting Format - Digital Video

Aspect Ratio - Full Container 1.90:1

Running Time - 23 minutes

Audio Format - Stereo

Framerate - 24 FPS

Language - English

Year - 2025

Production Location - Iowa City, IA

Produced by Will Schwarz



