

SALVATION COMES



A webseries by David Mahler

Produced by Studio Rin

Starring Rachael Besselink, Lee Mason & Francesca Waters

2019 - Mystery, Thriller, Drama - Australia - Colour - English

<https://www.facebook.com/salvationcomeswebseries/>

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Logline:

Three members of a cult find a mysterious box in their empty mansion. Taking it as a sign from their unseen masters they begin debating the purpose of their 'gift', slowly descending into rivalry, chaos and madness.

Synopsis:

Three members of a cult go about their daily lives in an empty mansion with seemingly no purpose. One morning a curious box arrives, containing a letter and an object which spark a paranoid descent into the nature of human connection and the power of unfounded belief. Dynamics form and collapse as the three individuals struggle to understand what is wanted of them, and what the ultimate purpose of the mysterious object may be.

Written and directed by award-winning Australian filmmaker David Mahler, *Salvation Comes* presents a subtle yet complex exploration of humanity's reliance on faith, and how a seemingly meaningless event may be interpreted through the right mind as holy. Presenting a contained narrative brought to life by three powerful performances, this webseries slowly brings the viewer into the twisted minds of its pro(?)tagonists before fully devolving into a horrific climax.

Director's statement:

The story uses a MacGuffin, a mysterious box which appears without explanation, to explore blind faith and the human impulse to give meaning. At first the gift brings them together, but soon the lack of concrete answers leads the cultists to form alliances and stoke suspicion about one another. Their existence slowly descends into chaos and ultimately horror as their contrasting faiths and values are tested. I see the box as an allegory for a holy book, and the individual's rash assumptions and forming of new 'rules' reflects how many holy leaders warp religious texts to serve their own needs.



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Production notes:

The story was conceived in a burst of inspiration; at the start of 2015 the filmmakers found they had access to a very unique and inspiring location, a vacant, gated, nineteenth century mansion. Having access to the property before the new owners moved in, David and Mark Day - a collaborator from the University of Melbourne's Victorian College of the Art's film school - began pitching ideas to one another for what was intended to be their feature-length debut, but limited time and resources suggested something small and contained. A fan of Brit Marling's lo-fi collaborations with Mike Cahill and Zal Batmanglij, in particular *Sound of my Voice*, David proposed a film centred around a cult, and the idea took off. Writing the film solo, David drew on a number of other films as inspiration, modest productions with minimal settings and cast such as Yorgos Lanthimos' *Dogtooth*, Lars Von Trier's *Antichrist*, Hiroshi Teshigahara's *Woman in the Dunes* and Roman Polanski's *Knife in the Water*.

Consciously setting restrictions and limitations, the plot was developed with three specific actors in mind, past collaborators trusted to perform under the pressure of a tight shoot with the minimum of pre-production. David had directed Rachael in a shelved feature film project, and Francesca in his university graduate film *Splendor Solis*. Mark brought Lee on board, whom he'd directed in his graduate film *The Suburbs Go On Forever*. The cast was assembled from their student shoots, including sound recordist Alex Wakefield and frequent collaborator cameraman Brendan Cherry.



Filmed over eleven days, the production went off without a hitch. Nearly every room in the house was utilised, including the tower with its breathtaking view of the city of Melbourne. Shifting crew availability throughout the week and weekend meant some days only David, Mark and Alex were on set, but this stripped back mode of working ensured everyone remained focused, and combined with the bare-minimum lighting and camera gear - one kino, two redheads, a dolly, jib and tripod - everything progressed smoothly. Once the proper shoot wrapped David went back and spent three days filming empty shots around the house by himself, nooks and crannies which were invaluable in the edit to transform the house into a sinister living character in its own right.

Editing took the longest amount of time. Originally Mark cut the film, but after a test-screening decided to step back from the project. Clocking in at only 65 minutes, David realised pickups were necessary. An entirely new beginning was written and filmed with Rachael, set months before the events of the rest of the film. By establishing and following a single character the narrative became more focused, and the flow of the story suddenly fell into place.

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Over the next year David produced Mark's debut feature-length film *The Age of Imitation*, happy to put *Salvation Comes* on hold. Finally in 2018, after a considerable break, David was at last able to find the time and resources to completely recut the film into a three part webseries, focusing all he'd learned producing *The Age of Imitation* and working as a film reviewer for the blog *4000 Feet of Film* into crafting an intricately structured and thrilling production. At last, nearly four years since script development, *Salvation Comes* was complete.

The cast:



RACHAEL BESSELINK

Rachael Besselink has performed in a number of stage and screen productions since graduating from the University of Melbourne, including the self-written and produced 'PARLEY!' which was staged during the 2016 Melbourne Fringe Festival. Screen credits include *The Age of Imitation* produced by David Mahler and Mark Day.



FRANCESCA WATERS

Francesca has worked extensively in Europe, the U.S. and Australasia since the age of 16. Credits include Lyndsey in *Some Girls* by Neil LaBute, Mrs. Palmet in *No Names No Pack Drill*, Gertrude in *Hamlet* New Zealand tour, *Meet the Darlings* at La Mama, The Duchess of York in *Richard the Third* at The Athenaeum and Marge in *Hotel Sorrento* (nominated Best-Actor-Equity Guild Awards 2005), Flo in *Bed* (Winner - Best Actor Equity Guild Awards 2004). Screen and TV credits include *Hercules* and *Shortland St*, the *Underbelly* movie *Tell Them Lucifer Was Here* as well as numerous TV pilots.

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LEE MASON

Lee most recently completed the lead role of Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment* for Apocalypse Films with long time collaborator and friend Andrew O'Keefe, who he worked with on his directorial and writing debut *Mothers Day* and the critically acclaimed feature film *The Independent*. Stage credits include Steven Berkoff's *East* with Blackwater Theatre, *Glengarry Glenross*, *Mojo* and *The Late Henry Moss* all with H.S.T. the latter directed by David Myles who also directed Lee in *Reading Beckett*, *A Hole in the Ground*, *Shakespeare Sung* and *Other Women*. TV credits include *Underbelly: Squizzy*, *Thank God You're Here*, *City Homicide*, *Blue Heelers*, *Satisfaction* and others.

The filmmakers:



DAVID MAHLER (Director, writer, editor, animator, production design)

David Mahler is a Canadian/Australian filmmaker and visual artist based in Melbourne and Vancouver. A graduate from the University of Melbourne's Victorian College of the Arts, his short films have screened at international film festivals from LA to Croatia. He was one of six artists selected by the City of Melbourne to partake in the 2017 Signal Screen Arts Commission, and has most recently been screening his animated short film *One Day My Waste Will Consume My Home* at international film festivals. *Salvation Comes*, a three part webseries, is his long-form debut.

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MARK DAY (Cinematographer)

Mark Day is a filmmaker from Brisbane, Australia. His VCA graduate film *The Suburbs Go On Forever* screened at a number of film festivals, as has his debut feature film *The Age of Imitation*.

TIM DOLAN/HOORAtaki (Score)

Tim Dolan is a musician and composer performing under the moniker HOORAtaki. Mixing discordant noise with melodic interjections, Dolan has released a number of digital albums and EPs available on his Bandcamp and Soundcloud. *Salvation Comes* is his first film score.

BRENDAN CHERRY (Camera)

Brendan Cherry is a cinematographer and camera operator from Melbourne, Australia. A graduate of Swinburne University's Bachelor of Film and Television, Brendan was the 2016 winner of the 'Lemac Best Cinematographer' award for his work on *Phuong Hoang* and the reenactment documentary *Mister Herschell*.

Credits:

Produced, directed, written by: David Mahler

Story and editing by: David Mahler, Mark Day

Cinematography: Mark Day

Original score by: Tom Dolan/HOORAtaki

Camera assistant: Brendan Cherry

Sound recordist: Alex Wakefield

Gaffer: Niels Gabriels

Grip: Trent Cliffe

Animation, production design and costumes by: David Mahler

Visual effects: Pete Grayson

Production assistant: Sean Miranda

Stills photography: Maëva Spyropoulos

Story consultant: Megan Rennie

Music consultants: Tim Danks, David William Murray

Colour and sound design: David Mahler