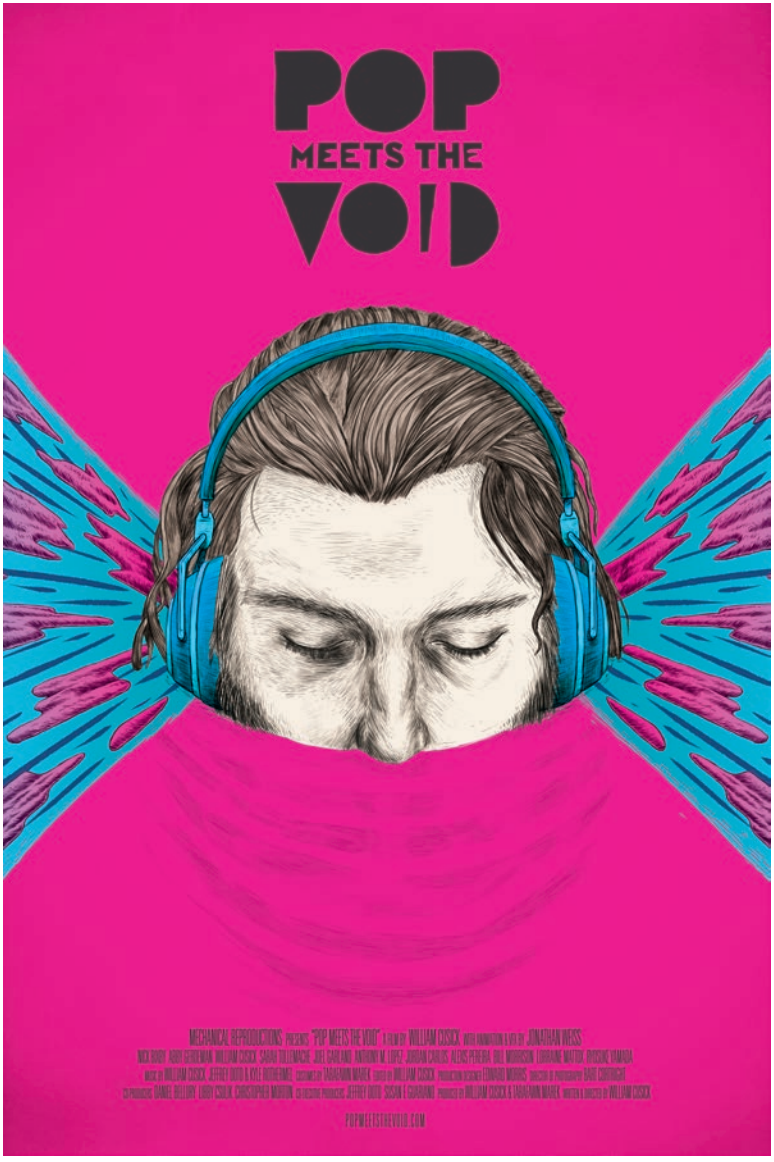
# Pop Meets the Void

narrative feature




In a hyperreal combination of live action and animation, a musician navigates his daydreams in an epic and comedic struggle to release his first album.

**WINNER**

**THE LOWER EAST SIDE FILM FESTIVAL**

**· 2015 ·**

BEST FEATURE FILM

# SYNOPSIS

Walter's daydreams are really getting to him.

Shapeshifting between stardom and anonymity, a musician navigates a hyperreal combination of live action and animation daydreams in a struggle to release his first album. In his mind, he's another musician, making different music for different reasons. And that musician in his head – he's dreaming about being another musician, too. Multiple narratives overlap in a series of interlocking Möbius strips of parallel identities and existential humor, set to an original soundrack by writer/director/actor William Cusick. Features mind-bending psychedelic animation by motion graphics artist Jonathan Weiss.

89 MINUTES // COLOR // 2.39:1 // 5.1 // USA

**Joel Garland** is featured on the hit Netflix Show *Orange is the New Black*. He has appeared in the feature films *Birdman*, *Limitless*, and on *Boardwalk Empire*, *Louie* & *Bored to Death*. He has been waging a successful campaign for Sexiest Man Alive.

**Jordan Carlos** writes and performs for Comedy Central's *The Nightly Show with Larry Wilmore*. He has appeared on HBO's *Girls*, Showtime's *Nurse Jackie*, NBC's *Mercy* and ABC's *Ugly Betty* as well as MTV's *Guy Code*, *Guy Court* and *Girl Code*.

## FEATURING

**Sarah Tollemache** is a popular NYC stand-up comedian who has regularly performed at The Stand, Greenwich Village Comedy Club, and Caroline's on Broadway. She writes and performs with the sketch group *Bullshit Women*.

**Alexis Pereira** is the writer and star of IFC Comedy Crib's *Pantry Boy* web series. He has been featured on *Broad City*, *Late Night with Seth Meyers* and performs regularly at UCB in New York City.

**Bill Morrison** has a filmography of more than thirty works that have been presented in theaters, museums, galleries and concert halls worldwide. He first appeared on-screen in Andrew Bujalski's 2005 classic *Mutual Appreciation.*

**Lorraine Mattox** starred as Rose in the film *Welcome to Nowhere (Bullet Hole Road).* She was the voice of WNYC for seven years and can be heard in *A Christmas Carol* with F. Murray Abraham.

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**Nick Bixby** starred as Hunter in the film *Welcome to Nowhere (Bullet Hole Road).* Feature films include Dan Eberle's *Sole Proprietor,* Kazumi Sunada's *Edible Souls,* and Micki Mihich's *Ship Happens.*

**Tina Balthazar** starred as Darla in the film *Welcome to Nowhere (Bullet Hole Road)* and was featured in award-winning director Bruno Aveillan's global centennial Cinema Spot *Discover Your Light* for Swarovski.

ROGUE moog

# DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT // WILLIAM CUSICK

I'm interested in personal identity and how our choices shape our perceptions of who we are as individuals. Pop Meets the Void investigates the nature of what it means to identify as a musician, known or otherwise. Every day, thousands of people write and record music that may never be heard by anyone else, digital compositions that potentially disappear into oblivion, while a small group of successful musicians have access to an audience of millions. This disparity of exposure and relative artistic satisfaction of artists and critics is at the heart of Pop Meets the Void, and the contrasts and similarities of those musicians at the top and bottom of the music industry.

Pop Meets the Void originally started as a soundtrack collaboration. The film was developed around the songs, and how the music would structure the work, career and fantasies of an independent musician. The myth of the musician, what it means to write songs and perform for an audience, and the creative act of songwriting are all points of investigation and satire within the film. The struggles and successes of the musicians in the film are universal experiences across all art forms. Ultimately, we set out to make a visually striking music film that explores the fantasies and realities of the creative process of all artists and disciplines, while still being lighthearted and funny.

# DIRECTOR'S BIO // WILLIAM CUSICK

William Cusick is a writer, director, designer and composer based in New York City. Cusick wrote and directed the 2012 award-winning film *Welcome to Nowhere (Bullet Hole Road)*. The neo-surrealist road movie premiered as an Official Selection of the 2012 Lower East Side Film Festival in NYC, it received the 2013 Founders' Choice Award at the Queens World Film Festival and screened at the Queens Museum of Art. The film was featured on Kentucker Audley's NoBudge.com in 2013.

## ANIMATOR'S STATEMENT // JONATHAN WEISS

In *Pop Meets the Void* animation is used to explore visual concepts that are beyond reality, places that can't be captured by a camera. Constructing worlds around our characters gives us a high level of creative control and stylization, and also the ability to deconstruct these spaces to whatever extent we wish.

Using mixed media compositing techniques drawn more from motion graphics animation than from traditional cinematic visual effects, ideas of representation and artificiality are drawn into the mix. This offers a way to present complex ideas visually, which to me is the most satisfying, entertaining, and ultimately meaningful way to layer in those theories.

William and I have been collaborating on this concept of using the juxtaposition of media within a composite to manufacture a sort of "hyperreality" for nearly 10 years. Presenting a story in this way allows us to add many layers of subtext to the narrative, and also to make something really aesthetically beautiful by allowing us to be very meticulous in our craftsmanship of each shot, creating composites that have a wonderful, plastic, "animated" quality.

I strive to approach my work in a painterly manner, creating a whole that benefits from the contradictions and juxtapositions within it and makes use of them, rather than trying to hide the brushstrokes and blur the seams.

## PRODUCER'S STATEMENT // TARAFAWN MAEN

I've been making theater and video productions in partnership with William for the last fifteen years. *Pop Meets the Void* is an extension of one of the conversations we started when we first met - how do people cultivate purpose and meaning.

I was overwhelmed by the original screenplay for this film in both intimidating and exciting ways. I was profoundly drawn to its unexpected humor and the opportunities for groundbreaking visuals. It's an ambitious film logistically, with around 20 distinct locations, long-term green screen shooting, and a large cast of characters including a 6-year-old child. I knew we were making a unique music film decidedly about the act of artistic creation.

*Pop Meets the Void* is a truly unique film. I definitely haven't seen anything like it before.

# WELCOME TO NOWHERE

## (Bullet Hole Road)

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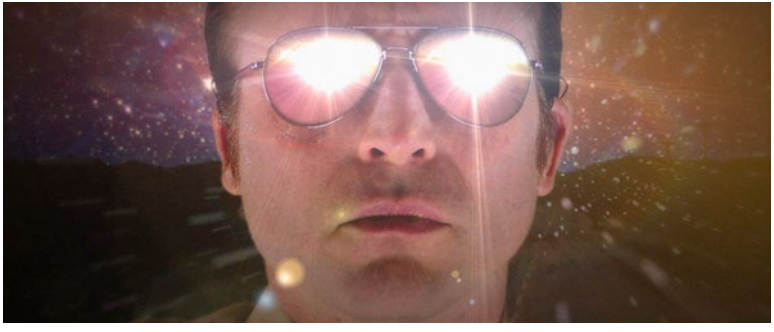
*First Feature Collaboration (2012)*

*Cusick + Weiss + Marek*



# PRESS FOR WELCOME TO NOWHERE (Bullet Hole Road)

"In the illustrious tradition of on-the-road, rambler cinema, *Welcome to Nowhere (Bullet Hole Road)* is a fresh, experimental take. The spirit calls to mind David Lynch, and more recently Calvin Lee Reeder and Cory McAbee."

-Kentucker Audley, NoBudge.com

"The cosmic visual and sonic wizardry achieved by Cusick and his collaborators cast a spell on me."

-Michael Tully, Hammer to Nail

"It's a tone poem, and the result is very refreshing... a fever dream of a road movie."

-366 Weird Movies

"By boldly mashing live action with motion graphics animation, Cusick establishes a universe that falls somewhere between the hyper-real and the unreal. Acknowledges no cinematic boundaries, going wherever it wants to go, whenever it wants to go there."

- Don Simpson, Smells Like Screen Spirit, "8 out of 10"

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Screenings, 2012-2013

Lower East Side Film Festival (New York, New York - World Premiere), Queens Museum of Art (New York, New York), Cinetarium Film Festival (Wasau, Wisconsin), Queens World Film Festival (New York, New York - *Winner of Founders Choice Award*, *Nominated Best Narrative Feature*), Dreamland Film Festival (New Haven, Connecticut - *Winner Best Supporting Actress*, *Cara Francis*), Pollygrind Film Festival (Las Vegas, Nevada), Anthology Film Archives (New York, New York)

popmeetsthevoid.com

Facebook Page - facebook.com/popmeetsthevoid

Twitter - @popmeetsthevoid

# POP MEETS THE VOID // CREW

Written, Directed & Edited by
William Cusick

Produced by
William Cusick
TaraFawn Marek

Animation & Visual Effects by
Jonathan Weiss

Cinematography by
Bart Cortright

Production Design by
Edward T. Morris

Music by
William Cusick, Jeffrey Doto & Kyle Rothermel

Art Directors - T. V. Alexander, Sally Courtois

Lead Carpenter - Sean Gorski

Scenic Charge Artist - Allison M. Jackson

Scenic Painters - Andrew Freeburg, Marguerite Woodward

Jib Operator - Daniel Salazar III

Live Projections Programmer - Matt Mellinger

Choreographer - Leeanne G-Bowley

Assistant Choreographer - Cody Brunelle-Potter

Sound Recordist - Iggy Hung

Post Production Sound - Plush

Supervising Re-Recording Mixer - Michael Levesque

Sound Designer - Nicole Pettigrew

Dialogue & ADR Editor - Daniel Irizarry

Sound Editor - John Nathans

Audio Post-Producer - Jenny Figarola

Color Grade - Nitrous Ltd.

Colorist - Derek M. Brown

Supervising Colorist - Paul C. Rosen

Color Grading Producer - Dorrie Jankowski

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