



THE CASE OF CONRAD COOPER

EVERYTHING HE LOOKED FORWARD TO HE HAD TO LEAVE BEHIND.

DIRECTED BY VALERIE DORAN DALENA & TAMIKO WASHINGTON

ADAM VENKER, PAUL LOUIS HARRELL, SEAN BURGOS, MELISSA BIETHAN  
WITH WILLOW HALE, PILI VALDES, ALEC VAN OWEN, AVA HARRIS

MUSIC BY JOHN GROVES EDITED BY FLORIAN MENGEL SOUND DESIGN BY MARCUS WAHLEN

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS MIKE FUHRMANN & VALERIE DORAN DALENA

A MAKE ART MAKE A DIFFERENCE PRODUCTION



## CONRAD COOPER ON THE WEB:

[www.thecaseofconradcooper.com](http://www.thecaseofconradcooper.com)



## CONTACT

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„When a man is down and out and on the street, something happens to his spirit which can be observed in the droop of his shoulders, the set of his hat, his walk and his gaze... He finds himself on the street with nowhere to go but just anywhere.

So he walks and walks. He gazes into store windows at luxuries which are not for him and feels inferior. He may be well dressed in the clothes left over from the days when he had a steady job, but the clothes cannot disguise the droop. If he just had a little money, he would be himself again...”

From Francis James Westbrook Pegler (1894–1969), American journalist and writer.  
quoted in *Think and Grow Rich* (1937) by Napoleon Hill – one of the best-selling books of all time.



## EVERYTHING HE LOOKED FORWARD TO HE HAD TO LEAVE BEHIND.

### **Short Synopsis:**

The Case of Conrad Cooper is an emotionally beautiful story about a good man, a family man, a once-successful man, who clings to remnants of his past while he searches for hope for the future.

### **Long Synopsis:**

Conrad Cooper lives in the past...stuck in today, afraid of tomorrow. Like most days, Conrad is on his way somewhere and he has to be on time. If anyone happens to notice, he's just another man, wearing a suit and tie, carrying a briefcase, blending in.

But Conrad's fear of the future follows him like an ever present ghost.

Finally, in his darkest hour, something catches his eye – something so simple, so innocent that he'd completely forgotten, had barely even noticed – at the time. At least for now, he believes there's hope for tomorrow.

### **Release Date:**

Early March 2014

### **Running Time:**

Between 15–20 minutes

### **Camera:**

Red Epic

### **Lenses:**

Cooke miniS4/I Cine Lenses

### **Distribution:**

Selected International Film Festivals

### **Union:**

SAG-AFTRA (Screen Actors Guild – American Federation of Television and Radio Artists)

### **Country of origin:**

USA

# DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT – VALERIE DORAN DALENA

## **Choosing a Director.**

As Producers, Mike and I knew we needed someone who understood the character and story and who could envision the beautiful images of Conrad's silent, emotional journey. Perhaps this was a project for two directors – one to oversee the overall look and feel of the film and a co-director to focus on the subtle, expressive performances. I immediately thought of Tamiko Washington. We had known each other for several years and often talked about collaboration. This was the perfect opportunity. Without hesitation, she said „yes!“ She loved the concept, the script and the challenge of telling a visual story.

## **Tamiko Washington:**

“Working as Co-Director with Director Valerie Dalena was a mixture of excitement, curiosity, and sheer adrenaline. The film gave me a unique glimpse into the world of the neoteric homeless and their struggle not to be forgotten. The actors and crew were exceptional; the experience was rewarding and inspiring. This film will touch hearts and challenge viewers to reevaluate their perceptions about our livelihood and survival in America in the 21st century.”

## **A personal story with global significance.**

One thing that drew us to this story is that it's about something important and timely: men and women, caught in the economic down-turn who find previously open doors now slamming in their faces. As the dapper, but somewhat careworn Conrad Cooper walks through

a bucolic suburban neighborhood and a city street lined with charming shops and busy restaurants, there's something about him, a look in his eyes, that tells us he doesn't really feel a part of that world. The story of thousands becomes one man's personal journey, his struggle with hope and fear, and his search for humanity – in himself and others.

## **Reality can be beautiful.**

Most films about a man down on his luck depict him wandering aimlessly, trying to survive in a gritty, noisy, hostile environment. This is realistic, but we've seen it. For Conrad, I saw beautiful. Beauty draws us in. We fall in love with beauty, it touches us and leaves us open. We know life is fragile and that becoming Conrad Cooper might be closer than we think. But we turn away when we see the devastating results. Often it's easier to comprehend and have compassion for the ugly when we can see the beauty. It is then we can open our hearts. This is how change happens.

## **The look of the film.**

The time is now – cell phones, late model cars – but this could be anytime. The place – any beautiful historic city proud of its heritage. The film has vintage feel from Conrad's morning grooming ritual, to the costumes and locations. The light – how else could we achieve the warm glow of this film other than to shoot it where enormous old trees cover the street like umbrellas, where the red brick and stucco buildings have over time taken on such a rich rose and teal patina?



## **The performances.**

No overacting, no miming, no moving lips. Then, how do you tell the story? I think I can tell you how Adam Venker did it. He became Conrad Cooper. From the time he read an early draft of the script in February 2013, he began to internalize the character, open his heart to him. During filming, in each scene, Adam

was Conrad Cooper – the way he held his head, the way he walked and the way he looked at others and at his own reflection.

Creating Conrad Cooper was and is a beautiful, soul-searching, life-changing experience for so many reasons. I am grateful and proud.



## **PRE-PRODUCTION**

### **A Visual Story:**

The original story idea was conceived in March 2012 by Wendy J. Menara. Mike Fuhrmann and Valerie Dalena joined her as Executive Producers and Valerie collaborated as co-writer. Writing a short silent film requires very different skills than writing a feature length script with dialogue. It's all about visuals, details and subtle performances. Every scene had to tell a story and be intricately constructed.

### **The Locations:**

Early in 2013, Conrad Cooper moved from San Francisco to Los Angeles. The trick was to find a location in the LA area that was truly a city, was beautiful and had a vintage look and feel. It took months to find the right locations in the historic sections of Long Beach and to negotiate permissions and permits, but it was worth it. Each scene sparkles. We are grateful to the many business owners and homeowners who opened their doors to us.



## POST PRODUCTION

Editing the film's footage in Germany began immediately after production wrapped. Valerie, Mike and Paul worked on promotion and music, and Linda Gasser organized the hard drive files. In December, Linda and Valerie met with Mike in Germany to edit the film while

Composer John Groves worked on the music. The team then met with Consulting Editor Florian Mengel and VFX Editor Stephan Hoffman in Cologne. Conrad Cooper will be ready for film festival release in Spring 2014.

# THE CAST OF CONRAD COOPER



## THE CAST

Thirty-one amazing actors, featured and background, adopted their own characters and brought depth and richness to every scene. We discovered Adam Venker (Conrad Cooper) in San Francisco in February 2013. Paul Louis Harrell and Executive Producer Mike Fuhrmann met in Hollywood several years ago. Paul was perfect for the roles of Shadow Man and Street Punk. Paul introduced us to Melissa Biethan and we knew she was

our Stylish Woman. She even fit the vintage suit! At our LA audition, we found Willow Hale (Old Sweet/Wicked Lady), Terr oon Kibwe (Mr. Big Shot), Alec Van Owen (Newspaper Boy), Pili Valdes (Sad-eyed Mother), Ava Harris (Spunky Girl), and Ron McPherson (Door Man). Valerie and Tamiko knew what Sean Burgos brought to any role and cast him as Harmonica Man.

### Featured Cast

Adam Venker – Conrad Cooper  
Paul Louis Harrell –  
Shadow Man/Street Punk  
Sean Burgos – Harmonica Man  
Melissa Biethan – Stylish Lady  
Willow Hale – Old Sweet/Mean Lady  
Terr oon Kibwe – Mr. Big Shot  
Pili Valdes- Sad-eyed Mother  
Ava Harris – Spunky Girl  
Alec Vanowen Nance – Newspaper Boy

### Supporting Cast

Ron McPherson – Door Man  
Leslie Madariaga – Lost Woman  
Bethany W. Gates – Resilient Mother  
Ken Dalena – Man Fixing Car  
Ashley Cohen – Girl Playing Ball  
Jason Cohen – Boy Playing Ball  
Natalie Gelman – Street Guitarist

### Background

Andrew Casteneda – Cool Guy on Phone  
Taber Cross – Tattered Woman  
Tony DeArce – Old Man  
Liberty Elke – Wandering Man  
Doug Kiphut – Tattooed Man  
Janet Langlois – Pink Lady  
Jessica Lenz and Mike Pitts –  
Young Couple in City  
Nick Madison –Delivery Boy  
Chris Sapone – Business Man  
Bill Staggs – Man at Camp Fire  
Deborah Van Duren – Ms. Baubles  
Trina Washington – Business Woman  
Star Dawn Whitaker –  
Woman at Bus Stop



# PRODUCTION



Valerie Doran Dalena –  
Director, Writer, Executive  
Producer, Producer



Mike Fuhrmann –  
Executive Producer,  
Producer



Paul Louis Harrell –  
Producer



Tamiko Washington –  
Co-Director



Ryan Summersett –  
Director of  
Photography

Linda Gasser –  
Editor/2nd Assistant Director  
Florian Mengel – Editor  
Stephan Hoffman – VFX Editor  
Markus Wahlen – Sound Designer  
John Groves – Composer  
Diondra Meravi – Production Manager  
Jono Knepper – Production Designer  
Bethany W. Gates – Associate Producer  
Judith Dan Madison and Valerie Doran  
Dalena – Costumes  
Sarah Rae Chavez –  
Hair/Makeup Designer  
Star Dawn Whitaker –  
Lead Hair/Makeup Artist  
Jose Amaya – Hair Stylist  
Ali Cuevas and Julie Bui –  
Hair/Makeup Assistants  
Susan Varteresian and Lauren Macaluso –  
Wardrobe Supervisors  
Ashley Martini and Andrew Casteneda –  
Wardrobe Assistants  
Morgan Clay – 1st Assistant Director

Brian White – 1st Assistant Cameraman  
Colin McDonald –  
2nd Assistant Cameraman  
Arjun Prakash – Gaffer  
Zach Berg – Key Grip  
Alan Michnoff and Alex Perry –  
Grip/ Electric  
Harrison Hudson –  
Digital Imaging Technician  
Bryant Swanstrom – Steadicam Operator  
Luciano Stalman – Script Supervisor  
Alicia Rius – Photographer  
Saskia Seipp – Public Relations Europe  
Marc Liew – Web Designer  
Natalie Gelman – Promo Video Music  
Scott Toler Collins – Creative Consultant  
JJ Englert – Consultant  
Kiley Vorndran –  
2nd 2nd Assistant Director  
Robert Mai – 2nd 2nd Assistant Director

# Q & A

**Q: What inspired you to make this film?**

**A:** We loved the idea of doing a film that had artistic value and could also make a subtle social statement. The issue of the vanishing middle class was growing worldwide. We became fascinated by the idea of following a formerly successful family man, a man who had done everything by the book, during one specific day in his life. We discovered so much material, like the astounding *Rolling Stone* article, „The Sharp, Sudden Decline of America’s Middle Class.” We began to realize this was happening worldwide. We talked to nonprofit agencies working every day to help people get back on their feet. Then we discovered Francis Pegler’s essay in the best-selling book *Think and Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hill, published in 1937. It was about once-successful men who’d lost their jobs during the depression.

**Q: Why not a documentary and why a silent film?**

**A:** We were primarily interested in Conrad’s inner emotional journey. We also saw this as a visual story and an art film. This meant creating an entire unique world for our hero, including the ambiance of a haunting musical score. We wanted audiences to experience the world as Conrad does and realized that dialogue would be a distraction from his struggle between hope and fear. In the film, you can almost see his thoughts and memories flashing across his face. It’s quite moving.

**Q: Did you meet and talk with people like Conrad Cooper?**

**A:** Many. And the more people we talked to, the more we realized that literally everyone is touched by the reality of losing everything – how quickly it happens, how hard it is to get back,. It became important that our hero and his peers were portrayed as normal and functioning. They had absolutely not lost their dignity, their compassion for others or their humanity.

**Q: What is the mission of MAKE ART MAKE A DIFFERENCE?**

**A:** The creation of *THE CASE OF CONRAD COOPER* made us realize that we wanted to make films and develop other works of art that touch the heart by inspiring the mind. Now we have several projects in the works that meet the goals of that mission, including a live theatre production, a reality series, several gallery exhibitions, a feature film and more.

**Q: This is an international effort. Can you elaborate?**

**A:** Conrad Cooper’s theme is global. Whether you live in the US or in other parts of the world, the middle class is vanishing. The gap between the poor and those few who run the world is widening. Everyone on our team can somehow relate to Conrad. Having an international perspective helped so much as we developed this very universal story. The fact that the film is silent overcomes any language barriers. *MAKE ART MAKE A DIFFERENCE* will continue to collaborate with talents around the world who will become a



part of our growing creative team: filmmakers, writers, composers, musicians, photographers, painters, sculptors, illustrators, etc. It's fun ...

**Q: How hard was it to develop a team when everyone lived so far apart?**

**A:** In a word – passion. The production was in the US but many people, some from other countries, signed on without pay because they truly believed in the project and wanted to bring everything they could to it. Talents like Florian Mengel, Stephan Hoffman, Marcus Wahlen, Linda Gasser, Luciano Stalman, Marc Liew and Alicia Rius have been involved and engaged since 2012. That's dedication.

**Q: How can this project make a difference?**

**A:** We believe that each of us can make a start. Can art change the world? Maybe. It can certainly raise awareness. This film is positive, it's inspirational. This is what we love.

**Q: Who should see this film?**

**A:** Everyone. We all need to really see the faces of people like Conrad Cooper. We need to have some kind of understanding of what it's like to lose it all especially when you've had it all. It's the same all over the world. What we call the „1%“ needs to see this. Millennials need to see it because it's happening to them. Corporations, those with political clout, the people who make decisions about hard-working, motivated people need to see it and start practicing what we call „corporate patriotism.“ Government can't solve our problems.

**Q: How can people support the film?**

**A:** Partner with us – help us to raise enough money to finish the film in the black so that we can support our non-profit partners who develop programs for the Conrad Coopers in the world. This is what we can do instead of looking away. Last but not least, spread the word via your channels. The more noise we make, the more likely we will be heard.

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