

# **Four Boxes**

**A Film By Wyatt McDill & Megan Huber**

85minutes, Aspect Ratio 1.78

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## Synopsis:

Trevor Grainger (Justin Kirk), Amber Croft (Terryn Westbrook) and Rob Rankus (Sam Rosen) are three, like, average dudes who run Go Time Liquidators – an eBay auction business. Trevor likes Stephen King, Amber wants to be a singer-songwriter, and Rob's into the Chili Peppers. Oh, and Amber used to date Trevor but now she's gonna marry Rob. So anyway, they read the obits and find dead loners whose stuff they can turn into bling on the internet. Pretty soon they end up in the destroyed house of a dead dude named Bill Zill, and they're also seriously obsessing over - or wasting their time - watching a surveillance-cam website called fourboxes.tv. Fourboxes.tv is a dusty, digital window into the wacked-out world of a creep they call Havoc. Havoc didn't know his apartment was set up for voyeur when he moved in. And he's weird. He sleeps in a bat-cage, builds bombs in a dungeon, and looks like he's planning to kill people on a seriously massive scale. Trevor, Amber and Rob decide they have to do something to find and stop Havoc, wherever he is, maybe. Or...maybe not - they could just keep watching, 'cause, as Rob says, "That's what the internet's for." Havoc's dirty, wrecked world couldn't affect them – right? - safe, alone, deep in the dark, clean, American suburbs.

## Director's Statement

Our increasingly internet-based lives inspired many of the themes of this story. People spend more time than ever watching computers, and the resulting segmentation of the culture makes us more isolated, paranoid and fearful, more susceptible to messages about security, and threat – than ever before. (In this story “terrorism” is equal to, and the inverse of, ennui – fear of terror is a luxury affordable only to those free from other, more real worries, like disease, war, poverty, political turmoil, famine.)

Reality itself is bent on the web: it has no recognizable authority, no known time, no discernible place: we watch things on the web that we wouldn't watch anywhere else, either because they're too base, too private, or most often, too poor a use of our time. The monsters in “Four Boxes” - Havoc and Ziploc – *do* personify evil in the internet age, but not because they are killers – it's because they aren't quite real, just like the internet world they inhabit.

*Film gris* is the movement “Four Boxes” would subscribe to, if such a movement existed. If *film noir* describes evil in the world as a darkness that surrounds and pervades us, in *film gris*, there is no evil. In fact there is neither good nor evil, black nor white, progress nor regress. There is only gray – the grayness of moral ambiguity - a kind of world-wide existential fog that, according to this film, we all breathe like air.

## Production Notes

Minneapolis filmmakers Megan Huber and Wyatt McDill live and work together. And they are married and have a five year-old son named Ford. When not parenting and working, they have produced, written and directed music videos, short films and Megan's popular lip-sync musicals. "Four Boxes" is their first feature film.

"Four Boxes" was written in Minneapolis in January, 2006 and was originally called "Apartment 39.com." After a difficult year attempting to sell another, bigger script ("Snowbird"), Megan and Wyatt turned back to their earlier script, the one "made to be made," the one that started with a simple, cheap, conceit: "'Rear Window' on the internet." The story was adapted from its earlier, rural setting, to the suburbs, and up until the time of filming, was ever-changing, so that it fit the filmmakers' shape-shifting budget, setting, cast, props, babysitting schedule, etc. The goal of the filmmakers was a script so simple, smart and feasible that it couldn't be made, or remade, better - even for more money.

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Justin Kirk read the script for "Four Boxes" in New York, while he was wrapping filming on "See You in September" and just beginning filming on "Against the Current," both due out this year. Getting the script to this Showtime star was easy, since he and Wyatt have known each other since they were twelve years old. They met at The Children's Theater Company School in Minneapolis in 1982, both liked to play "Yar's Revenge," sing Beatles songs, have sleepovers, talk about the Twins, etc. etc. So they became friends. Twenty... whatever, years later, everything in their lives has changed except that they're still close friends.

"Four Boxes" was filmed in Rosemount, Minnesota – an exurb twenty miles south of the Twin Cities – during 19 days in October and November, 2007. Like the characters in our film, we were looking for a big, suburban house – them to make money, us to film a movie. The only difference was they were looking in the

obituaries and we were looking on Craig's List! Finally Megan found not only an empty house that fit the bill, but one with owners who would lease for one month to a twenty-five person film crew!

To successfully make a decent film with a small cash budget one must train oneself to see the accomplished film amongst the elements at one's disposal. For this reason, we tailored our story, sets, costumes, and even film-look to match our primary location – Bill Zill's house. The storyboards were changed so that our exterior shots would take place in Rosemount and Apple Valley – the towns nearest to our location. When our characters ate Subway, we were eating Subway, too, because that actually *was* the closest "restaurant" to our film and our characters' story. By keeping the algorithm between our film and our film's production in close harmony, we got a better, more authentic, film, for less money.

"Four Boxes" was filmed on standard definition Mini-DV on a Panasonic SDX 900 with a 35mm lens adapter and prime lenses to achieve a filmic look. Since the lighting in the house was primarily from above, so was our lighting plan. We wanted to give the film an austere, grim look, both because it was authentic, and because it fit our lighting "budget."

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## **Bios**

### **Wyatt McDill**

*Writer/Director*

Wyatt McDill has been a Minnesota-based filmmaker for ten years. "Garbage Man" - his most recent short - won a Jerome Foundation Grant and a Minnesota State Arts Board grant. Earlier shorts "Shortwave" and "Have You Seen Me?" showed respectively at Slamdance, on the Independent Film Channel and at the Walker Art Center, among other places. He has written television scripts for "FilmFinds" and helped to found The Central Standard Film Festival. He wrote and directed "Four Boxes," starring Justin Kirk, and is currently in pre-production on two more features, "Pinky's Buffet" and "Snowbird."

### **Megan Huber**

*Producer*

Megan Huber is a Minnesota-based, commercial, film and television producer. She production managed one season of "Let's Bowl" for Comedy Central as well as the recent South by Southwest doc, "Dirty Country." She most recently produced "Four Boxes," a social thriller starring Justin Kirk ("Angels in America," "Weeds"), Terryn Westbrook and Sam Rosen. She currently produces television ads for Peterson Milla Hooks in Minneapolis and is in preproduction on two features: "Pinky's Buffet," and "Snowbird."

### **Justin Kirk**

*Trevor Grainger*

Justin Kirk is best known for his Emmy Award-nominated role as 'Prior Walter' in the television mini-series "Angels In America," opposite his "Weeds" costar Mary-Louise Parker. Kirk won the Obie Award for "Love! Valour! Compassion!" and went on to star in the film version of the play. His role in Jon Robin Baitz's "Ten Unknowns" at Lincoln Center won him a Lucille Lortel Award, plus Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle nominations. His other film credits include "Outpatient," "Teddy Bears' Picnic," "Chapter Zero" and "The Eden Myth." He has starred on television in the series "Jack & Jill" and guest-starred in "The Pretender," "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation" and "Law & Order: Special Victims Unit."

### **Terryn Westbrook**

*Amber Croft*

Terryn Westbrook has acted in a long list of films, television shows, national commercials, and music videos, and has also worked with such notable directors as Roman Coppola, and Gail Mancuso. She appeared in David Lynch's 2006 film "Inland Empire," and in the 2007 feature "Sweetzer." She has been seen in over three dozen national commercials and in music videos for Christina Aguilera, Smashing Pumpkins, Tori Amos and the Counting Crows. Westbrook is also an accomplished d.j. – d.j. Lady Lyric – who plays at numerous Los Angeles clubs.

**Sam Rosen**

*Rob Rankrus*

Sam Rosen is a long-time veteran of Twin Cities theater who now makes his home in New York. His one-man play, "Ham Lake," received critical raves during a run Off-Broadway and the play is currently being adapted for the screen with long-time pal Josh Hartnett. Sam also played opposite Justin Kirk in Wyatt McDill's "Four Boxes," and stars in Rob Perez's upcoming comedy, "Nobody."

**Brett Astor**

*Editor*

Brett Astor has been a commercial editor in Minneapolis for the past twelve years helping the acclaimed Target account. In addition to Target, she has cut spots for Budweiser, Avon, Lee Jeans, USA Network, Best Buy, the Partnership for a Drug-Free America, Marshall Field's, AirTouch Cellular, Dain Raucher, and Hormel. She received the New York Festivals International Advertising Awards, the RAC Awards, and the Minneapolis Show Awards.

**Brian Lundy**

*Director of Photography*

Brian is a Minnesota-based director of photography whose cinematography credits include VH1's "Ultimate Albums: Metallica" episode, "Who Wants To Be a Millionaire" promos, a Fugees music video, ESPN's "Dream Job," numerous MN State Lottery spots, CBS's "60 Minutes," ABC's "Missing Persons," and national Volvo ads. He also photographed "The Ballad of Little Roger Mead," which won the 2001 Spirit of Slamdance Award in the short film category.

## Cast & Crew

### Cast

Trevor Grainger.....	Justin Kirk
Amber Croft.....	Terryn Westbrook
Rob Rankrus.....	Sam Rosen
Neighbor.....	Bain Boehlke
Bill Zill .....	David Tufford

### Crew

Writer-Director .....	Wyatt McDill
Producer .....	Megan Huber
Associate Producer .....	John Allen
Director of Photography .....	Brian Lundy
Editor .....	Brett Astor
Music .....	Ken Brahmstedt
Titles .....	Kelly English
	Dan Ibarra
Additional Photography .....	Mike Welckle
Line Producer.....	Brady Kiernan
Production Manager.....	Amy Thompson
Wardrobe.....	Kiersten Ronning
Music Supervisor.....	Virgil McDill
Production Designer.....	Heather Keena

## **Press:**

*The Blair Witch Project* meets YouTube.

-- **Brian Miller, Seattle Weekly**

Will the housebound trio watch the events unfold or do something about it? Clues can be found in each of the four rooms that may lead to a physical address. Of course, that's when any clear-headed person would make the right choice, but therein lies the root of the tension that makes this simple thriller so effective. And once you think you have it all figured out, you don't. This is the beauty of *Four Boxes*, it keeps you watching much like the web show entrancing the characters in the film... or is this about... us? The millions of internet viewers easily entertained by gruesome events not affecting themselves. More thrillers like this one please!

-- **Chris Gore, ChinaShop Mag**

'*Four Boxes*' explores the permeable boundaries between real life and events being shown on the Web. This one's interesting, folks.

-- **Charles Ealy, Austin 360**

This is writer/director Wyatt McDill's first film and he's come up with a unique script and paired it with a talented and charismatic cast. Half the fun of *Four Boxes* is in figuring out what it's about. Maybe it's a relationship drama. Two buddies have their friendship tested when one steals the other's girl, gets engaged to her, and then invites over to rub his pal's nose in it. Or maybe it's a thriller. Three people are trapped in a dead guy's house and in the process of going through his junk discover really creepy stuff. Or maybe it's a movie about internet obsession. A guy can't take his eyes off a voyeuristic website showing a bomb maker who doesn't know he's being watched.

-- **Josh Tyler, Cinema Blend**

*Four Boxes* toys with the "there's-someone-in-the-house!" genre in appealing, inventive ways.

-- **Paul Constant, The Stranger**

