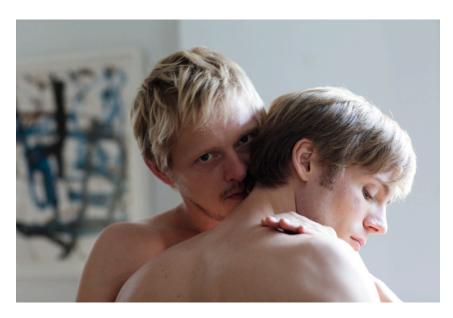




Keep the Lights On

A FILM BY Ira Sachs



Starring Thure Lindhardt, Zachary Booth Julianne Nicholson, Souléymane Sy Savané and Paprika Steen

102 min. | U.S.A. | color

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Synopsis

Keep the Lights On chronicles an emotionally and sexually charged journey of two men in New York City through love, friendship, and addiction. Documentary filmmaker Erik (acclaimed Danish actor Thure Lindhardt in his first leading role in a U.S. film) and closeted lawyer Paul (Zachary Booth, Damages) meet through a casual encounter, but soon find a deeper connection and become a couple. Individually and together, they are risk takers—compulsive, and fueled by drugs and sex. In an almost decade-long relationship defined by highs, lows, and dysfunctional patterns, Erik struggles to negotiate his own boundaries and dignity while being true to himself.

Keep the Lights On is shot with a grainy beauty that resonates with the texture of New York City, accentuated by disco beats and a mournful cello, both from musician Arthur Russell's eclectic catalog. Director Ira Sachs's fearlessly personal screenplay is anchored by Lindhardt, who embodies Erik's isolation and vulnerability with a gentle presence. Harrowing and romantic, visceral and layered, Keep the Lights On is a film that looks at love and all of its manifestations, taking it to dark depths and bringing it back to a place of grace.

About the Film

Examining the volatile trajectory of a relationship spanning nearly a decade of love and heartbreak in New York City, the heartfelt and emotionally frank *Keep the Lights On* displays a grounded intimacy and emotional rawness that's rarely depicted in contemporary film. It should come as no surprise that the project has its origins in a real-life romance and break-up.

Director Ira Sachs saw the first sparks of what would become *Keep the Lights On* in the dissolution of his own long-term relationship, which spanned several years in New York City around the turn of the century. Sachs became convinced as this intense union came to a close that there was something that could be translated to the screen and made to feel universal. In particular, Sachs was fascinated by what his own experience revealed about two people staying together in the face of the many things that could (and did) pull them apart — including everything from demanding careers, non-monogamous temptations, and the substance abuse and addiction that deeply affected the real-life couple's decade-long bond. "I was aware so succinctly that there had been a first day and a last day. And there was such an incredible story between the two ends," Sachs says of the searing experience that shaped and defined his fourth feature film. "The course of that experience was so clear in my mind in terms of its narrative power."

From the furtive sexual explorations of *The Delta* to the unlikely pairing at the heart of *Forty Shades of Blue* to the period-piece domestic intrigues of *Married Life*, Sachs has established himself as a devoted and sensitive observer of romantic connection. To craft the screenplay for *Keep the Lights On*, Sachs first assembled a chronology of his former relationship from hundreds of pages of emails, journals, notes and assorted memorabilia, working with co-writer Mauricio Zacharias (of Karim Ainouz's *Madame Satã* and *Love for Sale*) to find a structure and through-line in the tumultuous saga of Erik, an award-winning documentary filmmaker of Danish descent, and Paul, a lawyer in the publishing world whose previous relationship with a woman proves only a minor hurdle in comparison to what we learn about him over the course of the relationship.

Inspired by films like Lisa Cholodenko's *The Kids Are All Right*, Bill Sherwood's seminal indie *Parting Glances* and Jacques Nolot's confessional autobiography *Before I Forget*, Sachs set out to convey the details of his experience as a gay man in New York without sparing the details. At the same time, Sachs was keenly aware of the universal qualities inherent in the tumultuous but tender love story at the heart of *Keep the Lights On*. "In the end, it's a film about a relationship," Sachs admits. "I didn't necessarily approach it as a film about gay life per se — I approached it as a film about a relationship in New York at this specific time that happens to be between two men." Rather than examining sexuality as a topic unto itself, *Keep the Lights On* is a character study filled with frank details about the realities and challenges faced by its central couple as they navigate urban life in a mixed community of gays and straights, artists and writers, Americans and foreigners.

In a film focused on the story of one central relationship, the casting of Erik and Paul became crucially important to the film during pre-production. A screenwriter friend referred Sachs to Thure Lindhardt (*Brotherhood, Flame and Citron*), one of the great young actors of his generation in Denmark and abroad, and one known for his fearless choices in material — essential for a part that would require risks both physical and emotional. Lindhardt helped shape Erik by amplifying the vulnerability and neediness at Erik's core, delivering a masterfully fraught performance that the actor himself describes as a coming-of-age story, a struggle of one individual, through his experiences in a relationship, to become a complete human being. "This is a guy who is codependent, always trying to please everyone, to fix everyone else's life," Lindhardt explains. "How he goes about learning to love himself — I thought that was a very beautiful aspect to the story."

Different challenges emerged in the search to cast the role of Paul, who tries to balance a buttoned-down professional life with a spiraling drug addiction; the character's habit leads him down increasingly murky and unpleasant paths, and eventually he begins to disappear for days on end during increasingly frenzied crack cocaine binges. When Sachs met Zachary Booth, best known for his role as Michael Hewes on the television show *Damages*, he found they had a rapport. "He blew us all away when he auditioned," says Sachs. "Zachary possesses a very human quality that audiences can feel when they watch him." Booth's most accomplished triumph in *Keep the Lights* On lies in his ability to help flesh out and make unique a character that began as someone real from Sachs's own life.

"Ira's a true collaborator," says Booth. "He really gave me the freedom to explore my own choices and decisions inside the construct of the script." The actor describes his unique approach to developing and defining Paul: "I did my best not to comment on his behavior — only to try and understand why he made the decisions he was making. I had to find the most sympathetic, understandable story for Paul inside myself."

The cast of Erik's eclectic and varied group of friends was rounded out by Julianne Nicholson (*Boardwalk Empire, Tully*) in the role of Claire, Souléymane Sy Savané (*Goodbye Solo*) as Alassane, and Paprika Steen (*Applause, The Celebration*) as Karen.

To create the warm look and feel of *Keep the Lights On*, Sachs turned to the talented cinematographer Thimios Bakatakis, whose distinctive camera work has shaped several films from the Greek New Wave, including Giorgos Lanthimos' Academy Award-nominated *Dogtooth* and Babis Makridis' *L*, premiering in the World Dramatic Competition at the 2012 Sundance Film Festival. Sachs has a long interest in the new realism of European cinema and felt that bringing a non-American visual sensibility to the film would be an important element in the tone and texture of the film. "Thimios shoots film almost like a painter, both in his framing, his use of natural light, and his distinct approach to filming the human form." Bakatakis's trip to New York to shoot *Keep the Lights On* marked his first visit to the city. "It was an amazing experience because everything was new," Bakatakis says. "I found New York to be very photogenic. Everywhere you put the camera, you have something nice in the frame."

The lush score of *Keep the Lights On*, drawn from the *sui generis* music of composer and cellist Arthur Russell, guides the film forward as it moves from gently prosaic to emotionally wrenching, ultimately providing the beating heart at the film's core. The score bears the unique distinction of feeling at once joyful and heartbreaking, in keeping with the delicate trajectory of Erik and Paul's pairing and dissolution over the course of a decade. In the same way that Cat Stevens's songs were used in *Harold and Maude*, and Aimee Mann's in *Magnolia*, Russell's work emerges as an element on par with the human characters in the film — indeed *Keep the Lights On* was designed with Russell's work in mind.

Sachs was moved enough by the late composer's story, as well as by his passing at age 40 from AIDS, to conceive the short documentary *Last Address*, about a group of New York artists who also died of AIDS — much in the same way that Erik conceives his own nonfiction film inside *Keep the Lights On* about the forgotten true-life photographer and filmmaker Avery Willard, a chronicler of queer life in New York City through much of the 20th century. It's this pattern of portraiture, legacy, biography and autobiography that continues outside *Keep the Lights On* at the vibrant web site KeepTheLightsOnFilm.com, where contributors can submit personal stories about the complexities of their own viewpoints and day-to-day struggles, creating a rich mosaic of life in New York City and far beyond, adding an extra facet to the honest, open, and confessional world at the heart of the film.

IRA SACHS (Writer / Director) is a writer and director based in New York City. His films include *Married Life* (2007), *The Delta* (1997) and the 2005 Sundance Grand Jury Prize-winning *Forty Shades of Blue*. His most recent film, *Last Address*, a short work honoring a group of NYC artists who died of AIDS, has been added to the permanent collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art and MoMA and played at the 2011 Venice Biennale. Sachs teaches in the Graduate Film department at NYU and is a fellow at both the MacDowell Colony and Yaddo. He is also the founder and co-curator of Queer/Art/Film, a monthly series held at the IFC Center in New York, as well as the newly established Queer/Art/Mentorship, a program that pairs and supports mentorship between queer working artists in NYC.

THURE LINDHARDT ("Erik") is considered one of the biggest contemporary Danish dramatic talents and one of his generation's most versatile and acclaimed actors. As a child, he had a part in Bille August's *Pelle the Conqueror*, which won the Palme d'Or at Cannes and the Academy Award for Best Foreign Film in 1988. His breakthrough came with Kaspar Rostrup's *A Place Nearby* (2000) after which he was presented with a Shooting Star Award at the Berlin International Film Festival. In the critically acclaimed *Flame & Citron* (2008), Lindhardt starred with Mads Mikkelsen as as real-life World War II resistance fighters, receiving a European Film Award nominations for Best Actor. Lindhardt also starred in Nicolo Donato's *Brotherhood*, which won the jury award for Best Film and the Golden Butterfly at the Rome Film Festival in 2009, and *The Island*, which was chosen for Director's Fortnight at Cannes Film Festival 2011. Thure's U.S. films include Ron Howard's *Angels & Demons* (2009) with Tom Hanks, Ewan McGregor and Stellan Skarsgard, and Sean Penn's *Into the Wild* (2008), starring Emile Hirsch.

ZACHARY BOOTH ("Paul") is a New York-based actor best known for playing Michael, the son of lawyer Patty Hewes (Glenn Close), on the Emmy- and Golden Globe Award-winning drama *Damages*. Zachary's film roles include *The Beaver* (2011), *White Irish Drinkers* (2010), *Taking Woodstock* (2009), *Nick and Norah's Infinite Playlist* (2008) and *Assassination of a High School President* (2008). He will also appear in three upcoming films: *The Blue Eyes, Recalled* and *Dark Horse*. Zachary has also starred in such Off-Broadway productions as Edward Albee's *Me, Myself & I* and Craig Lucas' *Prayer for My Enemy* at Playwrights Horizons. Zachary is a member of the Actors Center Workshop Company, the Barrow Group theatre community and Peterborough Players community. His TV guest credits include *Royal Pains, Law & Order: SVU* and *New Amsterdam*.

JULIANNE NICHOLSON ("Claire"), a Massachusetts native, attended Hunter College and modeled in Paris before pursuing a career in acting. She starred in Dick Wolf's *Conviction* and *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*, Steven Spielberg's paranormal TV drama *The Other* and David E. Kelley's comedy *Ally McBeal*. In addition to playing Esther Randolph on HBO's *Boardwalk Empire*, Julianne has made notable appearances on *Royal Pains*, *ER* and *Law & Order*. Her U.S. films include *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men* (2009), *Flannel Pajamas*(2006), *Puccini For Beginners* (2006), *Kinsey* (2004) and *Tully* (2000) for which she received an Independent Spirit Award nomination. She is married to British actor Jonathan Cake, and has enjoyed working with international directors Peter Chan (*The Love Letter*), Alain Berliner (*Passion of Mind*) and Nick Hurran (*Little Black Book*).

PAPRIKA STEEN was born in Denmark to musician and conductor Niels Jørgen Steen and actress Avi Sagild. As a teen, she started her career performing on stage in various contemporary stage productions and has been associated with the Royal Danish Theatre since 1997. That same year, she wrote and performed in the satirical television series "Lex og Klatten," which became a TV and music classic in Denmark. In 1998, Steen became an active participant in the internationally acclaimed Dogme 95 film movement as the only performer to appear in the first three movies: Lars Von Trier's "The Idiots," Thomas Vinterberg's "The Celebration," and Søren Kragh-Jacobsen's "Mifune's Last Song." Often referred to as the "Dogme Oueen," she most recently appeared in Susanne Bier's "Open Hearts," for which she won a Bodil Award and a Robert Award (Oscar equivalent of Denmark) as Best Supporting Actress. Steen won her first Bodil Award as the Best Supporting Actress in 2000 for "The One and Only." In 2002, she won the Bodil Award, the Robert Award, and American Film Institute's Grand Jury Prize for her leading role as the controlling loudmouth Nete in "Okay." She made her directorial debut with the award-winning 2004 drama "Aftermath," and followed with the 2007 comedy, "With Your Permission." One of her biggest triumphs on stage was her sensational, critically acclaimed 2008 performance as Martha in Edward Albee's "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?""

SOULEYMANÉ SY SAVANÉ ("Alassane"), born in the Ivory Coast and raised in both Paris and West Africa, won a modeling contest in the mid-90s and soon became a regular face at Paris Fashion Week, working with such legends as Jean-Paul Gaultier, Dries Van Noten and Kenzo. In 2009, Souléymane landed his first feature film role as the lead in Ramin Bahrani's critically acclaimed *Goodbye Solo* for which he received a Best Actor nomination from the Independent Spirit Awards and won Best Breakthrough Performance at the Gotham Awards. Souléymane followed up the film with a supporting role opposite Glenn Close and Campbell Scott on the Emmy-winning show *Damages*. He was most recently seen last fall starring alongside Gerard Butler in Marc Forster's *Machine Gun Preacher*.

MIGUEL DEL TORO ("Igor"), a native of Mexico, played semi-professional soccer as a teen before a drama teacher persuaded him to audition for the role of Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet*. After playing the part, he knew he wanted to become an actor. He then moved to Ohio to study film and drama at Kenyon College after receiving an academic scholarship and recruitment to play soccer. While visiting his brother in New York, Miguel attended an extras casting call for *Keep the Lights On* where Ira Sachs asked him to read for the part of Igor. After a series of auditions, Miguel won the part. He says making the film "has been one of the best experiences of my life."

JUSTIN REINSILBER ("Dan") is a member of LAByrinth Theater Company in New York City and is known for several stage productions, including working with Arthur Penn and Al Pacino at the Actors Studio. Justin also has many national commercials under his belt, including the much-loved Volkswagen ad in which he licks the car. Justin wrote the award winning show *Fucking Love*, which opened the HBO U.S. Comedy Arts Festival in Aspen, Colorado and just played at the Comedy Central Stage in Los Angeles. Justin has also appeared in several films and television series, most recently *Supernatural* on the CW Network. He has work-shopped several of his own plays at the Public Theater in NYC, produced new works by John Patrick Shanley and produced the biggest artistic theatrical event in NYC last spring, "Tenn 99: around-the-clock readings of Tennessee Williams' plays, one-acts, short stories and other works."

LUCAS JOAQUIN (Producer) has produced several acclaimed short films including *Last Address* (dir. Ira Sachs), which screened at the 2010 Sundance and Berlin International Film Festivals, the 2011 Venice Biennale, and has been added to the permanent collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art and MoMa. In collaboration with Parts and Labor he has produced several music videos for artists like the Apples In Stereo and Trentemøller. He was the 2nd Unit Producer on the feature *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (dir. Benh Zeitlin) which will be premiering in the US Dramatic Competition at the 2012 Sundance Film Festival.

MARIE THERESE GUIRGIS (Producer) is a talent manager in New York City representing film directors, a business that she launched in 2008. She is a producer of Julia Loktev's upcoming *The Loneliest Planet* starring Gael Garcia Bernal. She was executive producer of Jonathan Caouette's *Tarnation* and Rupert Murray's *Unknown White Male*. In addition she is a development, marketing and distribution consultant for MPI (Producer and distributor of Ti West's *House of the Devil* and *The Innkeepers*, Jim Mickle's *Stakeland* and DVD distributor for IFC Films). She was Senior Vice President of Wellspring- a leading independent distributor of arthouse films. She ran acquisitions and distribution and helped launch Wellspring's theatrical releasing initiative in 1999, acquiring over 400 titles, both classic films and new releases, to create a large and notable library sold to The Weinstein Company in 2006.

JAWAL NGA (Tiny Dancer Films – Executive Producer) founded New York City-based production company Tiny Dancer Films in 2003. He most recently executive produced *Howl* with James Franco, John Hamm and Mary Louise Parker. The film was selected as the opening night film of the 2010 Sundance Film Festival. Before that he executive produced *Last Chance Harvey* starring Dustin Hoffman and Emma Thompson. He previously produced two films for director Ira Sachs: *Married Life*, starring Pierce Brosnan, Rachel McAdams, Chris Cooper, Patricia Clarkson and *Forty Shades of Blue*, winner of the 2005 Sundance Grand Jury Prize.

THIMIOS BAKATAKIS (Cinematographer), cinematographer of the highly provocative Academy Award-nominated film *Dogtooth* and festival-favorite *Attenberg*, has lensed several commercials for Audi, Amaretti, Kapatos, Karamolegos, Lacte, Miele and Pavlides. He was born in Athens in 1970. He studied film in the Stavrakos School in Athens (graduated in 1997, and he immediately started working as a DOP shooting music videos and commercials. He quickly became one of the leading photographers of his generation. He has shot about 100 video clips, 1000 commercials, 10 short films and six feature films. He received the Award for Best Photography in the Greek Advertising Awards for an Audi A2 commercial, which was also broadcast in the States. He has also worked in the theater as Lighting Designer and his credits include *DDD*, *Natura Morta in un fosso* (Amore Theater, Athens), *Blaubart* (Porta Theater) and Chekhov's *Platonov* for the National Theater of Greece, all directed by Yorgos Lanthimos.

AVY KAUFMAN (Casting Director) is a casting director in New York City. She has worked with an array of talented directors such as Ang Lee, Steven Spielberg, Jim Sheridan, Ridley Scott, Robert Redford, Michael Mann, Norman Jewison, Jodie Foster, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Edward Norton and Wong Kar Wai, and on such acclaimed films as *The Ice Storm, Capote, Brokeback Mountain, The Sixth Sense, Garden State, Searching for Bobby Fischer, Dancer in the Dark, Syriana* and *Public Enemies*. Her upcoming features include Spielberg's *Lincoln*, Ridley Scott's new *Alien* film and Ang Lee's *Life of Pi*. Avy was honored in 2005 as the Casting Director of the year at the Hollywood Film Festival. She was awarded an Emmy in 2008 for her work on the pilot of FX's *Damages* and received another Emmy nomination for the HBO mini-series *Empire Falls*. She has also been the recipient of several Artios awards from her colleagues and is featured in Helena Lumme's book *Great Women of Film*.

AMY WILLIAMS (Production Designer) began her career in New York managing and curating galleries, including Phillis Lucas Print Gallery, Stephan Stux and Leo Koenig. Her film credits include *White Irish Drinkers, Holy Rollers, Someday This Pain Will Be Useful To You* and *Grand Street*. She has served as production designer and set decorator for feature and short films, music videos, commercials, TV and print fashion. Williams' proudest achievement is running the art department for the Festival of Light in Guyana.

ELIZABETH VASTOLA (Costume Designer) most recently worked as a costume stylist for select acts in Cirque Du Soleil's world premiere production of *Zarkana* at Radio City Music Hall. She has designed Ti West's upcoming feature *The Innkeepers, Stake Land* (2010 TIFF Midnight Madness Award) and *Gun Hill Road* (Grand Jury Nominee, 2011 Sundance Film Festival), among other titles. In addition to working for both the costume and art departments of the Oscarnominated film *127 Hours*, she is also the costume designer for the ongoing Off-Broadway and Toronto productions of *Angelina Ballerina the Musical*.

Parts and Labor Post Factory^{NY} Films Tiny Dancer Films Alarum Pictures and Film 50 Present

Casting AVY KAUFMAN

Sound Designer DAMIAN VOLPE

Music Supervisor SUSAN JACOBS

Music Editor SUZANA PERIĆ

Music by ARTHUR RUSSELL

Costume Designer ELISABETH VASTOLA

Editor AFFONSO GONÇALVES

Production Designer AMY WILLIAMS

Director of Photography THIMIOS BAKATAKIS

Associate Producers IDDO PATT ALEX SCHARFMAN

Executive Producers
LARS KNUDSEN
JAY VAN HOY

Executive Producers JAWAL NGA ALI BETIL ADAM HOHENBERG

Produced by MARIE THERESE GUIRGIS LUCAS JOAQUIN IRA SACHS

Written by IRA SACHS & MAURICIO ZACHARIAS

Directed by IRA SACHS

Cast

Erik Thure Lindhardt Paul **Zachary Booth** Herself Marilyn Neimark Karen Paprika Steen Russ Sebastian La Cause Julianne Nicholson Claire Katie

Sarah Hess

Katie's Mom Roberta Kirshbaum Katie's Cousin **Jamie Petrone** Vivian Maria Dizzia Esther Stella Schnabel Jill Jodie Markell Dan Justin Reinsilber Himself James Bidgood

Alassane Souléymane Sy Savané Himself John Michael Cox, Jr. Himself Henry Arango Himself Agosto Machado Thomas Ed Vassallo Miguel Del Toro Igor

Club Kid Calder Kusmierski Singer

Luca Shane Stackpole Hustler Chris Lenk

Selected Crew

Title Paintings by **Boris Torres**

Line Producer Tory Lenosky

First Assistant Director Urs Hirschbiegel

Second Assistant Director Keith Marlin

Laura Miller Art Director Assistant Art Director Luke T. Green Set Decorator Amilia Tybinka Lead Woman Melina Greene **On-Set Dresser** Ashley Lehrer

Assistant Costume Designer Krystle Harrington Costume Supervisor Amanda Williams

Key Hair and Make Up **Emily Ansel** Assistant Hair and Make Up Artist Liliana Meyrick Hair Consultant Darlene Martinez

> First Assistant Camera David Regan

Second Assistant Camera John David Devirgilis

Camera Intern Olivia Kimmel

Script Supervisors Veronica Lupu

Heather Quick

Sound Mixer Brett Van Deusen Boom Operator Jon Bozeman

Location Managers Mandy Ward

Permits Coordinator

Locations Assistants

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Locations Intern Christina Fontaness

Gaffer Daniel Choy Boyar
Best Boy Electric Matt Kessler
Electric Seth Coleman
Electric Interns Olivia Owen

Jeremy Sam

Key Grips Scott Templeton

Stephen Long

Best Boy Grip David Palestine

Property Master Mariaclara Zazzaro

Additional Property Master Lee Clayton
Assistant Property Master Mitch Moore
Props Assistant Property Master
Props Intern Nola Denett

Art Department Coordinator Erin Fenton

Production Coordinator Yara Caubet Assistant Production Coordinator Kelly Spall

Production Accountant Misha Turner

Production Secretary Andrew Schaeffer

Still Photographer Jean Christophe Husson

Storyboard Artist Jonah Bleicher

Dialect Coach Beth McGuire

Title Sequence Photography Kirsten Johnson
Title Sequence 1st Assistant Camera Alvah Holmes
Title Sequence Production Assistant Brian Yankou

Process Trailer Driver Steve Richardson
Process Trailer provided by Runnin' Shot

Parking Coordinator David Laurentin

Casting Associates Charles Gariepy

Jon Goracy

Casting Office Assistant Leeba Zakharov

Background Casting by Jason Klorfein

Background Casting Assistant Paola Lappicy Lemos Gomes

Background Casting Crew Gabrielle Demeestere

Onur Karaoglu Seamus Moran

Assistant Editor Martin Burga
Post Production Assistant Ben Cawiezell

Re-Recording Mixers Dominick Tavella

Damian Volpe

Dialogue Supervisor Dave Ellinwood
Sound Designer Mariusz Glabinski
Rerecordist Brian Lagace
ADR Mixers Brian Gallagher
Bobby Johanson

Michael Rivera Ryan Collison

Jay Peck

Post Production Audio Facility Sound One Corp.

ADR Facility, Denmark Nordisk Film Audio

ADR Recordist, Denmark Bo Asdal Andersen; Lyddynastiet

Digital Intermediate Finishing Services Goldcrest Post

ADR Recordist

Foley Mixer Foley Walker

DI Colorist John J. Dowdell III
DI Finishing Artist Katie Hinsen
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Joseph Borges

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Laboratory Services by Deluxe, New York

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Title Design Jin Pak

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Caterer Something's Cooking
Stage Facility St. John's Center
Lighting Equipment Directed Lighting

Grip Equipment Xeno

Camera Equipment Panavision NY

Film Provided By Kodak

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Keep the Lights On Includes Original Films By Avery Willard

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