



STRAWBERRY MANSION

A film by Albert Birney & Kentucker Audley



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2021 – USA – Fantasy – 90 Minutes

[OFFICIAL WEBSITE](#)

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STRAWBERRY MANSION | PRESS NOTES

MUSIC
BOX
FILMS



LOGLINE

In the year 2035, a dream auditor working for an all-seeing surveillance state takes a surreal and cosmic journey through an eccentric woman's unconscious archive and begins to fall in love with her younger self.

SYNOPSIS

In 2035, our dreams are no longer our own--they're infused with product placement and auditors assess unpaid taxes on our most private reveries. Beleaguered taxman James Preble (Kentucker Audley) arrives at a run-down house in the countryside for a routine audit and encounters Bella Isadora (Penny Fuller), a lifelong dreamer who remains resolutely analog, circumventing the surveillance state with VHS tapes and homemade headgear. As Preble works his way through Bella's archive of the unconscious, he begins to fall in love with visions of her younger self (Grace Glowicki). But all is not well in dreamland as dangerous family secrets and a rogue's gallery of blue demons and fried chicken pitchmen threaten to set the lovers' paradise ablaze. Can Preble and Bella escape from the modern, monetized dreamscape and find refuge in Strawberry Mansion?

ALBERT BIRNEY

WRITER & DIRECTOR

Albert Birney is a Baltimore based filmmaker. He has directed four feature films, *The Beast Pageant* (co-directed with Jon Moses), *Sylvio* and *Strawberry Mansion* (both co-directed with Kentucker Audley) and *Tux and Fanny*. *Sylvio* was named one of the ten-best films of 2017 by *The New Yorker*. His films have premiered at Sundance, SXSW, the Maryland Film Festival, Slamdance and the Ottawa International Animation Festival. He recently finished making a *Tux and Fanny* video game with Gabriel Koenig. He is currently animating part two of *Tux and Fanny*.

FILMOGRAPHY

FEATURE FILMS

2021 STRAWBERRY MANSION
2019 TUX AND FANNY
2017 SYLVIO
2010 THE BEAST PAGEANT

SHORT FILMS

2018 BUZZER
2018 THE NIGHT FISH
2018 IT FEELS LIKE FOREVER
2017 BONE GYM
2010 22 ACTION NEWS
2004 CACTUS
2002 HICKORY
1993 HOME, FOREVER AND EVER



KENTUCKER AUDLEY

WRITER, DIRECTOR & ACTOR



Kentucker Audley is a filmmaker, film programmer, actor, and movies hat salesman. His latest film, "**Strawberry Mansion**" (co-directed with Albert Birney) premiered at Sundance 2021. His previous directorial effort, "**Sylvio**," (also co-directed with Albert Birney) debuted at SXSW and was named one of the Best 10 Movies of The Year by The New Yorker. He also founded NoBudge, "one of the best places to sample what's happening in low-budget cinema worldwide" (The New York Times) and Movies Brand.

FILMOGRAPHY

DIRECTOR FILMOGRAPHY

2021 STRAWBERRY MANSION
2017 SYLVIO
2012 OPEN FIVE 2
2010 OPEN FIVE
2009 HOLY LAND
2007 TEAM PICTURE

ACTOR FILMOGRAPHY

2021 STRAWBERRY MANSION
2020 SHE DIES TOMORROW
2017 IT HAPPENED IN L.A.
2015 QUEEN OF EARTH
2014 CHRISTMAS AGAIN
2013 THE SACRAMENT
2012 SUN DON'T SHINE
2012 V/H/S
2011 BAD FEVER

FILMMAKER STATEMENT

We set out to make a movie that felt like getting lost in a strange dream. Sometimes you don't know where you are, or where you're headed. The thread you thought you were following disappears behind your back. You turn around and it's nowhere. The film is inspired in some ways by the fantasy movies we saw as kids in the 80's; Hopefully there's a childlike exuberance that can be felt throughout this unpredictable journey, as tension mounts from invented stakes, creating a world all its own. But there are larger themes at play as well: a mistrust of advertising, an uneasiness with mass surveillance, and a fear that our economic systems inspire overconsumption and erode natural ways of life. Time is thrown together into a mystical mixed batch where past and future exist together. Like a dream, not everything makes sense but the moments of vivid curiosity and confusion, flashes of terror, and the potent feelings of love, feel real and linger long after the dream has ended.

– KENTUCKER AUDLEY AND ALBERT BIRNEY





INTERVIEW WITH THE FILMMAKERS

KENTUCKER AUDLEY & ALBERT BIRNEY

On the genesis of the project:

Kentucker Audley: Albert emailed me in 2012 with a script, asking if I'd be interested in acting in it. I didn't know him at the time and wasn't quite sure what to make of the script, so I was a bit non-committal. Over the course of the next couple years, our paths naturally crossed on a couple other film projects, and I got to know him and liked him. At the time, he had gained a big following on the social media app, Vine, with a character called Sylvio. I suggested we could potentially translate the character into a film, so we did. And it was a good experience. So we decided to try it out again, going back to the first script this time, *Strawberry Mansion*.

Albert Birney: The initial spark for the movie came on a five-hour car ride in February of 2008. At the heart of it was the idea of an old farmhouse that contained thousands of VHS tapes. I've always loved the fantasy/adventure/sci fi films, especially *The NeverEnding Story* and *Labyrinth*. Watching those movies as a kid felt like entering a magical portal into someone else's dream. This is where the idea of a house full of recorded dreams came from.

On the practical challenges and joys of shooting on 16mm:

KA: Well, maybe this is where we should tell you we didn't actually shoot on film. We did something a little unusual, which is to shoot digitally and then do a 16mm transfer after the fact. So, it is actual film grain you're seeing (not a digital effect), but that came from just filming the entire movie after it was completely edited, on 16mm film.

We did this for a couple reasons: we're used to shooting digitally and our creative process, for better or worse, has always been characterized by the ability to shoot endless footage, which wasn't possible on our budget had we shot film. But we've always loved the textures and feelings of 16mm, and since it's a movie about a lot of different time periods swirling together, it felt appropriate to do it this way. We talked a lot about the future / past divide. Our story is set in the near future, but there are elements that feel very old-fashioned and analog. VHS tapes are a big element, and we added a quiet record player fuzz under the whole movie, just trying to put as much texture and nostalgia in there as possible.

AB: Since the movie has so many different visual effects and styles (digital, stop motion, miniature, etc.) we knew that flattening it onto 16mm would help all the effects feel more cohesive and part of the same world.

INTERVIEW WITH THE FILMMAKERS

KENTUCKER AUDLEY & ALBERT BIRNEY

On casting, particularly the two version of Penny:

KA: The older version of Bella was incredibly challenging to cast. We spent years imagining who could play that role, who would be the right age and have the right spark and youthful spirit. We didn't feel comfortable moving ahead with the film until we knew we had the right Bella. We brought on a casting director just to cast that one role. Our casting director sent us a dozen or so possibilities for the character. I remember going through the list, growing more and more discouraged, and then all the sudden I click on this link for Penny — it's an interview she did for a play she was in at the time, and it was clear within thirty seconds, this was Bella. She just had so much life and spunk in her, and when you interact with her in real life, it's this surreal effect, like you feel like you're in the room with someone 40 years younger, she's eternally youthful.

The younger version of Bella, played by Grace Glowicki, was a lot easier to cast. We had seen a lot of her previous work, and she's just a brilliant actor and person that we knew we wanted to work with.

On the set design and visual effects:

KA: We tried to do as much practically as we could. We grew up in the 80's where so much was done with costuming and stop motion animation, and we really wanted to tap into that tactile feeling, to make it feel like you were watching something there in the physical space, rather than computer generated animations. Creating realistic masks were also essential and we were able to commission some incredible mask-makers that brought some much creativity and talent to the project.

Albert did some live stop-motion animations while we were filming, and many of the other effects came from talented collaborators who use similar techniques. We weren't trying to make a sci-fi movie that fooled people into thinking we had a 10 million budget. We wanted to embrace that handmade quality.

AB: I've always wanted to work with the animator Lawrence Becker. We first met in 2014 when we were both on Vine and ever since then I knew his style would look great in our movie. He does everything by hand and you can really see this in his work. I love seeing the filmmaker in the animation. It's not perfect and that's the point. And I love how practical effects stand the test of time. I watched Beetlejuice recently and all the animation and miniatures still look amazing. We also worked with some digital VFX artists for the first time and that really opened our eyes on what you can do digitally, especially when you film something practically and then use the digital tools to enhance it.

INTERVIEW WITH THE FILMMAKERS

KENTUCKER AUDLEY & ALBERT BIRNEY

On keeping the dream logic straight:

KA: That's the great thing about dream logic — you don't necessarily have to keep it straight. It's a film about dreams, so it doesn't all have to add up. I wouldn't say everything "makes sense" in our film, and that's where it gets fun.

AB: One thing I'd always say when crew members were worried about continuity or wardrobe matching was that it really didn't matter since it's all a dream.





CREW

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY	Albert Birney & Kentucker Audley
EDITED BY	Albert Birney & Kentucker Audley
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY	Tyler Davis
MUSIC COMPOSED BY	Dan Deacon
COSTUME DESIGN BY	Mack Reyes
PRODUCTION DESIGN BY	Becca Brooks Morrin
ART DIRECTION BY	Lydia Milano
PROPS DESIGN BY	Marnie Ellen Hertzler
SET DESIGN BY	Paisley Isaacs
HAIR & MAKEUP BY	Liz Spagnolo
SPECIAL EFFECTS BY	Hank Atterbury
STOP MOTION ANIMATION BY	Lawrence Becker
SOUND MIX BY	Chester Gwazda & Zach Trees
PRODUCED BY	Emma Hannaway, Matisse Rifai, Sarah Winshall, Taylor Ava Shung

ABOUT THE CREW

Albert Birney (Writer/Director) is a Baltimore-based filmmaker. He has directed four feature films, *The Beast Pageant* (co-directed with Jon Moses), *Sylvio* and *Strawberry Mansion* (both co-directed with Kentucker Audley) and *Tux and Fanny*. *Sylvio* was named one of the ten-best films of 2017 by *The New Yorker*. His films have premiered at Sundance, SXSW, the Maryland Film Festival, Slamdance and the Ottawa International Animation Festival. He recently finished making a *Tux and Fanny* video game with Gabriel Koenig. He is currently animating part two of *Tux and Fanny*.

Kentucker Audley (Writer/Director) is a filmmaker, film programmer, actor, and movies hat salesman. His latest film, “*Strawberry Mansion*” (co-directed with Albert Birney) premiered at Sundance 2021. His previous directorial effort, “*Sylvio*,” (also co-directed with Albert Birney) debuted at SXSW and was named one of the Best 10 Movies of The Year by *The New Yorker*. He also founded NoBudge, “one of the best places to sample what’s happening in low-budget cinema worldwide” (*The New York Times*) and Movies Brand.

Dan Deacon (Composer) is a Baltimore-based musician and composer renowned for his five studio albums of innovative electronic music, his live performances in both contemporary and classical settings, and his extensive body of work in film. Deacon’s other original scores for film and series include *Twixt* (Francis Ford Coppola, 2011), *Rat Film* (Theo Anthony, 2016), *Well Groomed* (Rebecca Stern, 2019), *Philly D.A.* (Ted Passon and Yoni Brook, 2021), and *All Light, Everywhere* (Theo Anthony, 2021). Deacon has premiered compositions at Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, and collaborated with artists and institutions including Kronos Quartet, Sō Percussion, The Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, the LA Philharmonic, and Justin Peck with the New York City Ballet. He has also toured internationally with popular recording artists including Arcade Fire, Miley Cyrus, Future Islands, and The Flaming Lips. Deacon’s original scores for *Rat Film*, *Time Trial*, and *Well Groomed* have all been released as original soundtrack albums; his recordings have also been licensed for series such as *Dark*, *Limitless*, *Teen Wolf*, and the Vice/HBO production *The Future of Work*. Deacon’s most recent studio album is *Mystic Familiar* (2020, Domino Recording Company).

ABOUT THE CREW

Sarah Winshall (Producer) is an independent producer championing personal films with unique worldviews. She produced Bridey Elliott's feature film debut, *Clara's Ghost*, starring Haley Joel Osment and Chris Elliot, which premiered at Sundance and was released by Orion Classics in 2018. Her award-winning documentary, ¡Las Sandinistas!, directed by Jenny Murray, premiered at SXSW in 2018 and opened theatrically at The Film Forum in New York. Previous films have played at Sundance, SXSW, CPH:DOX, Outfest, Rotterdam, BAM Cinemafest AFI Fest, and on the Criterion Channel. Sarah's most recent efforts will both premiere at the 2021 Sundance film festival: Albert Birney & Kentucker Audley's *Strawberry Mansion*, and Jane Schoenbrun's *We're All Going to the World's Fair*. She is currently in post-production on a documentary about a blind phone hacker who used whistling to hack into the phone system.

Taylor Shung (Producer) is a producer born and raised in New York City. Her most recent film credits include Chloe Zhao's *Nomadland* (2020), Kentucker Audley and Albert Birney's *Strawberry Mansion* (2021), and Annabelle Attanasio's *Mickey and the Bear* (2019). Her short films have played at prestigious festivals around the world, notably Alexa Lim Haas' *Agua Viva*, which won the 2018 SXSW Animated Shorts Grand Jury Prize. She had her Broadway Debut as Video Producer for Ivo Van Hove's revival of *West Side Story*. She is a 2019 Sundance Creative Producing Fellow.

Emma Hannaway (Producer) is a producer living in Baltimore and working wherever the road takes her. She most recently produced the Baltimore feature film *Strawberry Mansion*, directed by Albert Birney and Kentucker Audley, which will premiere at the Sundance Film Festival in 2021. She also co-produced *Omniboat: A Fast Boat Fantasia* which premiered at Sundance in 2020. Other production credits include *Shirley* (Josephine Decker), *Nomadland* (Chloe Zhao), and the upcoming *Macbeth* (Joel Coen).

Matisse Rifai (Producer) is a Lebanese-American filmmaker, born and raised in the desert of El Paso Texas. She started her film journey as a producer in Baltimore. Her recent production credits include Albert Birney and Kentucker Audley's *Strawberry Mansion* (2021) and Jimmy Joe Roche's *Skin of Man* (2019). She has also produced several short narrative and experimental films, as well as commercials. She is currently pursuing a new path in production design and art direction.



CAST

Bella	Penny Fuller
Preble	Kentucker Audley
Young Bella	Grace Glowicki
Peter	Reed Birney
Martha	Constance Shulman
Brian	Ephraim Birney
Buddy	Linus Phillips
Blue Demon/Frog Waiter	Albert Birney
Father	Lawrence Worthington
Richard Rat	Shannon Heartwood
Marcus Rat	Matt Heartwood
Stowaway	Mack Reyes
Sugarbaby	Peanutbutter



ABOUT THE CAST

Penny Fuller (Bella) most recently appeared on Broadway in the musical ANASTASIA and the revival of SUNDAY IN THE PARK WITH GEORGE opposite Jake Gyllenhaal. She began her career starring in BAREFOOT IN THE PARK, three Shakespeare-in-the-Park productions, and the musicals CABARET, REX, (Drama Desk nomination) and APPLAUSE (Tony nomination). Her television work garnered her six EMMY nominations and the Emmy Award for THE ELEPHANT MAN. Additional Broadway credits include Horton Foote's DIVIDING THE ESTATE, Neil Simon's THE DINNER PARTY (Tony nomination) and Wendy Wasserstein's AN AMERICAN DAUGHTER. At Lincoln Center she was in William Finn's NEW BRAIN (Drama Desk nomination), and in regional theaters she played in: WHAT WE MAY BE, STRAWBERRY MANSION, A LITTLE NIGHT MUSIC, THE GLASS MENAGERIE, THE SEAGULL, THE CHERRY ORCHARD, DO I HEAR A WALTZ and A DELICATE BALANCE. In 2001 she was introduced to Barry Kleinbort, composer, lyricist, playwright, and cabaret director. With his encouragement she embarked on a new career phase as a cabaret artist in New York clubs and theaters. Their most recent collaboration, 13 THINGS ABOUT ED CARPOLOTTI, a solo musical commissioned by her with book, music, and lyrics by Mr. Kleinbort had its debut at 59e59 in New York, and most recently at the Broad Theater in Santa Monica.

Kentucker Audley ("Preble") is a filmmaker, film programmer, actor, and movies hat salesman. His latest film, "Strawberry Mansion" (co-directed with Albert Birney) premiered at Sundance 2021. His previous directorial effort, "Sylvio," (also co-directed with Albert Birney) debuted at SXSW and was named one of the Best 10 Movies of The Year by The New Yorker. He also founded NoBudge, "one of the best places to sample what's happening in low-budget cinema worldwide" (The New York Times) and Movies Brand.

ABOUT THE CAST

Grace Glowicki (Young Bella) is an actor and director with a focus on expressionistic dramatic comedies. She has starred in multiple films that have screened at Sundance, SXSW, TIFF, Tribeca, and Slamdance. In 2016, Grace was awarded a Sundance Film Festival Special Jury Award for her performance in Ben Petrie's HER FRIEND ADAM. In 2019 she wrote, directed and starred in TITO, which played at SXSW and won the Adam Yauch Hornblower Award. The New Yorker called the film "an instant classic of acting." She recently acted in Kentucker Audley & Albert Birney's STRAWBERRY MANSION, Ben Petrie's UNTITLED DOG MOVIE, and Sophie Jarvis's INVASIONS.

Reed Birney (Peter) has been working in film, television and theater for decades. Among his earliest credits are Albert Innaurato's Broadway comedy GEMINI in 1974 and Arthur Penn's FOUR FRIENDS in 1981. A celebrated member of the New York theatre community, Reed recently won a Tony Award for THE HUMANS. He has received numerous other awards and nominations for plays including CASA VALENTINA, MAN FROM NEBRASKA, UNCLE VANYA, BLASTED, and CIRCLE MIRROR TRANSFORMATION. On television, he can be seen on current seasons of the Apple series "Home Before Dark" and Hulu's "The Handmaid's Tale", and is also well known as Vice President Donald Blythe in the Netflix series "House of Cards". He will next appear on the upcoming season of HBO's "Succession". In film, he can be seen this season opposite Ann Dowd, Jason Isaacs and Martha Plimpton in the Bleecker Street feature MASS, which debuted at Sundance to rave reviews. He was also recently seen in the Universal/Blumhouse thriller THE HUNT and Netflix's THE FORTY-YEAR-OLD VERSION, and at Sundance in LOST GIRLS and STRAWBERRY MANSION. He most recently completed filming the Searchlight feature THE MENU opposite Anya Taylor-Joy and Ralph Fiennes. Reed lives in New York.



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ABOUT MUSIC BOX FILMS

Music Box Films is the award-winning North American distributor of acclaimed international, independent, and documentary feature films. Recent releases include Rintu Thomas and Sushmit Ghosh's ***Writing With Fire***, Sebastien Lifshitz's ***Little Girl***, and Pablo Larrain's ***Ema***. Upcoming releases include Mark Cousins' ***The Story Of Film: A New Generation***, and Anita Rocha da Silveira's ***Medusa***. Since 2007, Music Box Films has positioned itself as a prestige label for renowned films like ***Ida*** (Academy Award winner for Best Foreign Film), ***Meru*** (from Oscar-winning filmmakers Jimmy Chin and E. Chai Vaserhelyi), and as the North American home for acclaimed foreign films like Christian Petzold's ***Transit***, the popular Swedish comedy ***A Man Called Ove*** and the original ***The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*** starring Noomi Rapace. Music Box Films, along with their OTT platform Music Box Direct, are independently owned and operated by the Southport Music Box Corporation, which also owns and operates the Music Box Theatre, Chicago's premier venue for independent and foreign films. For more information, visit www.musicboxfilms.com.

