



Tim Sutton
**Dark
Night**

Official Selection Venice Film Festival 2016
Orizzonti - Out of Competition



A dark, blue-tinted night scene of a suburban street. Several streetlights are visible, casting a soft glow. In the foreground, a person wearing a dark jacket and a hooded sweatshirt is walking away from the camera, their back to the viewer. The background shows a dark, silhouetted tree and a dark sky.

Synopsis

A suburban landscape plays witness to the inevitable, unfolding events that culminate in a Cineplex massacre. Over the course of one day, from sunrise to midnight, six strangers – the shooter among them – share in the new American nightmare.

A man with dark, curly hair is lying on his back on a teal sofa, looking upwards with his hands clasped behind his head. The room is dimly lit, featuring a large lamp with a cream-colored shade and a white base on a table behind him. A tiger figurine is visible on the table. A tall, thin mirror with a green frame stands against the wall to the right. The overall atmosphere is quiet and contemplative.

Cast

Robert Jumper
Eddie Cacciola
Aaron Purvis
Anna Rose Hopkins
Karina Macias
Rosie Rodriguez



Director's Biography

Tim Sutton is the writer and director of two critically acclaimed feature films. PAVILION (Factory 25) was a New York Times Critic's Pick in 2013 and MEMPHIS (Kino Lorber) was the winner of the inaugural Venice Biennale College-Cinema grant in 2013, had its world premiere at the 70th Venice Film Festival, and international premiere at the 2014 Sundance Film Festival. MEMPHIS was also selected as one of The New Yorker Magazine's Top 10 Films of 2014. Tim teaches film at The New School and lives in Brooklyn with his wife and two sons.

Director's Artistic Statement

Building gradually toward an act of unspeakable violence, *Dark Night* strikes fear in the heart. The film engages with America's gun violence epidemic in subtle, unsettling ways that mix rage and alienation through an observational and expressionistic cinematic language. Sensing dread in every direction, the audience witnesses the lives of isolated Americans with easy access to guns, allowing the film's fragmented narrative to explore in fine detail how a shooting is the product of its people and their environment. When a violent act occurs, the first reaction is horror. Then comes blame. Eventually we're left with apathy – until the next act of violence starts the process over because we've allowed ourselves to look away. *Dark Night* refuses to look away. Instead, we stare deeply into a landscape far from sensationalism, far from data, far from blame, to create an immersive experience illustrating the fragility of life.



Q&A with the Director

DID YOUR INSPIRATION TO WRITE DARK NIGHT STEM DIRECTLY FROM THE AURORA THEATER SHOOTING?

When the actual Aurora shooting happened, like everybody I felt absolutely horrified for the people in the theater and their families, I felt horrified as an American just looking at this tragedy which is now, ultimately, a crisis.

But as a filmmaker who goes to movies, I felt there was something wicked about taking that space away from the public's safety. That place where people go to dream had been completely corrupted. Additionally, the fact that Holmes threw out smoke bombs and yelled out "I am the Joker" and people started clapping because they thought it was part of the spectacle—these movie-goers were there for a version of this horrifying vigilante coming to battle with high-tech weaponry, they were there for entertainment and got the real thing.

DO YOU FEEL FILMS ARE TOO VIOLENT NOW? THAT THERE'S A RESPONSIBILITY OR CULPABILITY ON THE PART OF FILMMAKERS?

Absolutely. I feel that shoot-em-up movies and first-person shooter videos games—I find it an unnerving part of our culture that we put these violent games and movies front and center. We promote violence as a culture, but then we're shocked and saddened when it comes back and happens in real life.

If you look at the cycle of violence in our culture where a violent act happens, then there's horror, then there's finger-pointing, then there's apathy. Dark Night is not a political movie with any kind of message, it's just trying to show the culture for what it is. It's trying to get away from pundits talking about data, or even documentaries. This is a different voice. This is simply an experiential thing to put you in the place of people's lives and show how incredibly fragile we all are. This direct artistic cinematic response to violence had to be produced. This was the film that I was supposed to make.

HOW DID YOU ARRIVE AT THE FILM'S SUBSUMED, SLOW-CRESCENDO SCRIPT?

The idea was to create this tension out of the mundane acts of people's everyday. That's where its power lies. It lies in the fact that any parking lot that you walk through, something could be happening, that's the climate we're in. Someone screams and you don't know if it's a scream because they're shot or if they're just kids messing around.

I wanted to show how close we are to the people who are on the screen, whether they are potential shooters, suspected shooters, or innocents. When you're watching these people, without me telling you too much, you really can just sit with them and experience their day and it becomes your day, and you can wonder "Is he the shooter, is she the shooter, is he or she going to make it?"

YOU DIP INTO WHAT ARE NOW FAMILIAR "MASS SHOOTER" ARCHETYPES. THE DISTURBED WAR VET, THE BULLIED TEENAGER, THE VIDEO GAME ESCAPISTS, PUNKS...

I wanted real archetypes. I knew I wanted a vet because there were a lot of vets in that Aurora movie theater and, almost as a tribute I wanted a vet. Everybody in the audience brings their own prejudices to the movie. They see this vet not getting along with his wife and kids and cleaning his guns and he's obviously a mess and they think "Huh, there's the shooter?"

Then you have the high school student who's smothered by his mother and living in the fantasy world, they'll ask "He's the shooter?" The idea is that there's all these people who could be two years away from shooting. I think unfortunately in this country there's a line of hundreds, maybe thousands of people who seem to be waiting their turn. These things just keep coming. It's not just extreme religious terrorism. There's all sorts of people in this country who have access to guns, who are unstable, and seem to want to make their mark.

YOU INTRODUCE JAMES HOLMES DIRECTLY INTO THE STORY—WE HEAR HIS STORY ON A NEWS REPORT AND KNOW THIS ISN'T A DIRECT RECREATION. WHY?

I wanted the film to be a living document—I wanted it to feel like things were happening. That Aurora had happened and it was part of the movie. I wanted this film to grow in people's minds because this crisis is constantly growing. This movie is not just about Aurora, it's about the country as it is now, as it will be in two years. It's not about a single incident, and so I really wanted to make sure it feels alive in reality. This movie is about Aurora, Newtown, Pulse, it's about the culture that we live in today.

When you see this movie in the theater, and if you are lucky enough to see this in the cineplex, the last ten minutes of the movie you are no longer watching the movie. The screen has disappeared, you are sitting in the theater, you are sitting with the people in the film. You are all in it together. I don't have the answer of how you should feel and what you should say afterward, but the feeling of being unnerved sticks with you.

YOU SET THE FILM IN A FLORIDA SUBURB, AND JUST OVER A WEEK AGO IN ORLANDO WE ONCE AGAIN WITNESSED UNSPEAKABLE VIOLENCE

The relevance of this film grows every minute. I'm not saying my relevance as a director grows at all, but the relevance of this film unfortunately grows every minute. The film is respectful and subtle and tries to show people's lives not in the aftermath—all of our views of these people's lives is always after the fact—this is a movie about before.

I have the utmost respect for the people whose lives were affected in Orlando. This movie is speaking to them. I stand by every frame of the movie. I think it's a movie that everyone in this country should see.

Interview by Scott Heins, in Arts & Entertainment on June 23, 2016

A night street scene with a tall street lamp and a car. The street lamp has three glowing lights. A car is parked on the street, and a person is standing next to it. The background is dark with some palm trees and a red traffic light visible in the distance.

Technical information

World Premiere: Sundance Film Festival 2016

Producer: Alexandra Byer

Executive Producers: John Baker, Andre Des Rochers, Jonathan Gray, Bruce Meyerson

Screenwriter: Tim Sutton

Director of Photography: Hélène Louvart

Editor: Jeanne Applegate

Music: Maica Armata

Drama, English, 85mns, color, DCP



Venice Screening Schedule

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|---------|---------|---------------|--|
| Sept 6 | 11:30am | Sala Giardino | Press & Industry |
| Sept 6 | 5:45pm | Sala Giardino | Official Screening (with Director in attendance) |
| Sept 10 | 9am | Sala Giardino | Public Screening |

Downloads available

Photos: [click here](#)

Trailer: [click here](#) (Password: 205317)

Poster: [English version here](#) / [Italian version here](#)

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