

# JESUS FISH

USA, Dramatic Narrative, 22 minutes

Written and Directed by Bryce James McGuire

## One-Line Description:

A Southern short film about a would-be religious con artist and his adopted brother who are pitted against aquatic folklore incarnate.

(21 words)

## Short Synopsis:

On the shores of "Tennessee's only bio-luminescent lake," the line between myth and reality is blurred. Would-be con artist, Timothy West, will walk this line, improvising one elaborate scheme after another to keep the money he stole from the church and pass himself off as a repentant miracle worker. With his adopted brother, Light, reluctantly at his side, Timothy seems bound to make a clean getaway, unless a certain legend turns out to be real.

(75 words)

## Director's Statement:

"What if Flannery O'Connor made a monster movie?" The combination of that question and an unnatural obsession with *Night of the Hunter* led to the making of *Jesus Fish*.

Nowadays in the South we've traded the demented preacher, murdering on the whim of God, for a more ubiquitous but equally sinister phenomenon. Holy theft. In plain sight, glorified on kitchen TV sets, and justified by the Bible. It's easy to say that only simple-minded people would be taken in by such a scam.

But the "simple-minded" people of East Tennessee turned out to be not so simple. They opened up their homes, churches, and BBQ stands to help us tell this story. Because, like the film's protagonist, Light West, many of them have been betrayed by someone in the name of God. They connect to the pain, even the absurd humor of it all. And in the end, in spite of logic and their own experiences, they connected with the impossibility of love.

This is a movie for believers. In myth. In magic. In the death of our worst selves.

Soli Deo Gloria,

Bryce James McGuire

(186 words)

**Cast List:**

Timothy West—Tomas Pais  
Light West—Uland Cunningham  
Narrator—Cheyenne Walker  
Pastor—Tony McCuiston  
Caroline West—Lesley Warren

**Crew List:**

Writer/Director—Bryce James McGuire  
Producer/Cinematographer—Colton Davie  
Production Coordinator—Amy Stephenson  
Production Designer—Sophie Kosofsky  
Composer—Philip Charos

*Complete credits available on IMDb:*

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2403734/fullcredits>

**Director's Bio, Short:**

Born and raised in the South, Bryce has a deep connection to American folklore. He now lives in Los Angeles where he is completing his second year at the American Film Institute. He is currently finishing a feature script called *Swimming with Monsters*, a murder mystery about an aging horror-movie star who is blamed for the death of a teenage girl in a small Florida lake town.

*(67 words)*

**Director's Bio, Long:**

I was born and raised in Florida. I lived in Tennessee throughout college and worked in Alabama after that. Now my wife and I live in Los Angeles, where I'm getting my MFA in screenwriting at the American Film Institute.

Belief in the unknown was a fundamental part of my upbringing, through both my religious family and the surrounding culture. I have seen this belief used for good and evil. I think that's why I have an emotional affinity for monster stories. It could be a creature who is feared because of its physical abnormality, or a person who isolates himself because of his own dark impulses. *Jesus Fish* deals with both types of monsters. A mythical lake-creature, whose name is synonymous with death, and a troubled older brother who believes he is damned to live bad and die young. The story is told through the perspective of a child, because this child, Light West, has the trusting ability to see through the way both monsters have been trapped in false perception.

Some people think a writer only has one story to tell. So far, that has been true for me. I am working on a feature script at AFI called *Swimming with Monsters*, about a horror movie star who is invisible outside of his identity as the titular role in *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*. This script placed in the top 10% in the Nicholl

Fellowship and I am continuing to get it ready to show as *Jesus Fish* travels the festival circuit.  
(255 words)

### **Producer's Bio:**

Colton was born in Dallas, Texas and during his childhood migrated across Florida, up to Alabama, and finally to Dayton, Tennessee, where he graduated from Bryan College. Passionate about telling stories with cameras and light, he recently wrapped his first feature as cinematographer, and now lives with his wife in Los Angeles, California.  
(53 words)

### **Actors' Bios:**

#### **Tomas Pais (Timothy West)**

Los Angeles-based actor Tomas had never been to the South prior to shooting *Jesus Fish*. After a week and a half of fireflies, heat lightning, church potlucks, and rail side bars, however, you would think he had been doomed to making trouble in a small town his whole life. He has acted in a number of short films and recently appeared on the TV series *Touch*.  
(66 words)

#### **Uland Cunningham (Light West)**

Uland first encountered the myth of the Jesus Fish in 2010 when he was cast to play Light in a proof of concept short used to raise money for the full production. Uland's Mississippi charm had such an impact that after auditioning dozens of other kids for the longer film, Bryce realized that Uland was the only one that could play the part.  
(63 words)

*Additional Cast & Crew information can be found at:*  
<http://jesusfishthemovie.com/castandcrew.shtml>

### **Production Notes:**

#### **The Perfect Pickup (written by Bryce James McGuire)**

In Tennessee, a dude is only as badass as the truck he drives. Choosing the right truck for our lead, Timothy West, was a decision that we viewed with religious importance.

Colton and I obsessively scanned the roads anywhere we drove, flipping u-turns and leaving notes on hundreds of windshields. I had my opening line down like a master pick up artist: "That's a good looking truck you got there." "You looking to haul something?" "No, actually we're--" "Cause I'll haul anything legal for cheap and anything that ain't for a little more." The guy was the non-ironically named

"Shorty," a five-foot Vietnam vet with muscles like steal cables. I explained we needed a pickup for a movie we were shooting. He said if we liked this girl, we should come over and take a look at her sisters.

We parked and approached his little house hesitantly. I stopped short and called from the driveway, "Mr. Short--" Before I could finish, he stepped onto the porch, smiled, and put the Colt .45 back in his belt. "I saw you come up on the security camera. Thought you were one of them meth-folk. Got a lot of meth-folk 'round here." I shook my head. "You wanna see the girls?"

He led us around to "the family room," his back yard, where his beautiful daughters rested in varying degrees of undress.

(231 words)

## **Photo Info:**

### **Headshots**

BryceMcGuireHeadshot.jpg

Caption: Bryce McGuire, writer/director.

Photo Credit: Colton Davie

### **Film Stills**

brothers.jpg

Caption: Timothy (Tomas Pais) and Light West (Uland Cunningham) chat about the local lake monster.

Photo Credit: Colton Davie

lightdock.jpg

Caption: Light West (Uland Cunningham) pleads to his brother Timothy.

Photo Credit: Colton Davie

timothychurch.jpg

Caption: Timothy West (Tomas Pais) attempts to prove his redemption.

Photo Credit: Colton Davie

### **Behind the Scenes Stills**

backoftruck.jpg

Caption: Capturing an angle from the back of the truck. Director Bryce McGuire far right.

Photo Credit: Alexandra Davie

crowdeddock.jpg

Caption: Crowded at the end of the dock.

Photo Credit: Alexandra Davie

crewphoto.jpg

Caption: The *Jesus Fish* crew. Top row from left: Rob Hall (Safety Diver), Boyd Hobbs (Underwater Camera Operator), Glenn Stegall (Best Boy), Scott Arick (Key PA), Cameron Lane (1st AD), Colton Davie (Cinematographer), Tommy Wooldridge (2nd AC), Alice McGown (1st AC), Josh Bermudez (Gaffer), Brandon McGuire (Grip), Daniel Montgomery (Sound Mixer), and Tomas Pais

(Timothy West). Bottom row from left: Alana Ackerman (Art Director), Bryce McGuire (Director), and Kelly Davie (Scenic Artist).  
Photo Credit: Alexandra Davie

*More images can be found at: <http://jesusfishthemovie.com/media.shtml>*

**Screenings:**

2013 Indie Grits Film Festival—April 20th, Columbia, SC  
Cast & Crew Screening —April 22nd, Dayton, TN  
2013 Independent Film Festival Boston—April 26th, Boston, MA  
AFI Screening—June 23rd, Los Angeles, CA  
2013 Sidewalk Film Festival—August 24th, Birmingham, AL  
2014 Emerging Filmmakers Forum—February 22nd, Beverly Hills, CA

**Contact Information:**

Please don't hesitate to contact us with any questions or requests.

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phone: 323-919-2559

Additional information and material regarding *Jesus Fish* can be found online at the following websites:

Official Website: <http://jesusfishthemovie.com>

IMDb Page: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2403734/>

Production Company Facebook: <http://facebook.com/openlightpictures/>