



HARPIES

DOCUMENTARY PITCH - VERSION 2

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HARPIES

AN UNPRECEDENTED, EXCLUSIVE AND INTIMATE ACCESS TO A HIDDEN WORLD THAT IS AUTHENTICALLY RESHAPING SOCIETY'S PERCEPTION OF LUST AND GENDER. HARPIES - THE UK'S FIRST EVER TRANS-INCLUSIVE STRIP CLUB. A HEDONISTIC, SOCIALIST UTOPIA.

A ONCE IN A GENERATION MOVEMENT.
A DOCUMENTARY MADE ABOUT, BY AND FOR QUEER PEOPLE.



THE STORY SO FAR

When I first started getting to know the Harpies, and shooting at their club, it was a ripple in the sea of London's nightlife scene - a haphazard, home-made project, dreamt up by Lucia Blayke - a passionate trans rights activist.

Today, it's a fully-fledged phenomenon that is set to take the whole country by storm and redefine how we view the entire trans community, in a time of true change.



THE BROADER CONTEXT

The sex work industry is almost entirely unregulated - and shockingly corrupt.

A typical strip club charge dancers extortiate 'house fees' for the privilege of performing on their stage, meaning that a slow month's takings can leave exotic dancers and sex workers (often vulnerable members of society) financially indebted and tethered to their employers.

It is this imbalanced system that Harpies set out to challenge, seeking a utopian set up that charges its dancers nothing and allows them to keep their own earnings through a system of 'tipping dollars' that can be purchased by punters at the venue and exchanged by the performers for actual cash.

But Lucia didn't just stop there. Not content with merely holding the title of Europe's first-ever trans-inclusive strip club, nor with dramatically changing the ethical standards of one of London's busiest erotic venues; Harpies have decided to take their manifesto across the nation, revolutionising the UK's sex industry.



WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW?

With the help of her mentor and friend Rachel (a cisgender stripper who has been working in the industry for nearly 10 years), Lucia is now in the process of arranging Harpies nights at other straight venues across the country (including The Spearmint Rhino and Fantasy Palace Edinburgh) to show the broader industry both the benefits of granting strippers fair working conditions and the incredible artistry and skill of trans & queer dancers.

And real change is already happening. Metropolis (the venue at which Harpies takes place every Friday, which is ordinarily a cis/het strip club), having witnessed the success of Harpies' mode, is now employing trans girls for its non-LGBT nights and has even started to adopt its social values and business practices, including ending house fees. But the Harpies aren't stopping there...



FORMAT

I propose a film that is a combination of two key visual styles:



THE CORE NARRATIVE



SCRIPTED CUTAWAYS



CORE NARRATIVE

This is an obs doc in which my DOP and I will be embedded with the Harpies, tracking the conflicts, difficulties and successes of their endeavours. Depending on access, this will likely be a mixture of UGC from the harpies themselves, my own camcorder footage, and whatever performance shots we can reasonably get from the venues. Lucia is currently in conversation with said venues about the extent of this access.

A really strong part of this story will be the organisation itself - showing that the Harpies have managed to get Metropolis on-side and that they are taking this momentum to demonstrate to another straight venue the value of hosting a trans night.

We will then blend this with 'off duty' footage of the harpies - backstage, having dinner, taking care of each other as a family.

While it is difficult to be overly prescriptive about an emotional/narrative climax at this point, our the aim is to show the central conflict of the Harpies trying - and succeeding - in both creating more inclusive spaces for trans dancers, and challenging typically straight strip clubs on the hiring of trans talent.



SCRIPTED CUTAWAYS

My instinct tells me that, although there is scope for lots of great story in this piece, in order to stop it from feeling like a film that 'gawks' at trans people and their struggles (which, let's face it - all of the mainstream documentaries about them do) we should also create something art directed and elevated to cut in tandem with the slightly more 'rough and ready' storyline components.

And, because we have the incredible art director & set designer Samuel Pidgen on board (for free!), it seems mad not to create something really beautiful that juxtaposes with the core story.

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TO SEE
SAM'S WORK](#)



(VISUAL REFS)



IN THIS FILM, CHARACTER IS KEY. AS SUCH, WE HAVE PLACED A HUGE LEVEL OF CARE INTO HOW WE INTRODUCE THE MAIN VOICES ON SCREEN FOR THE FIRST TIME.

THE MAIN VISUAL METAPHOR IS THAT OF A TEAM OF TRAILBLAZERS - REBELS, BOHEMIANS, WARRIORS, AVENGING ANGELS - AND WE WILL USE STYLING AND ART DIRECTION TO DRIVE THIS MESSAGE HOME. HERE'S HOW WE WOULD DO IT...

HOLDING COURT

Taking stylistic inspiration from surreal queer work like Blood Orange's [Benzo music video](#), [films like Holy Mountain](#) and [Querelle](#) I want to create a scene that is a single set up revealed incrementally across the course of the film and intercut with the main storyline. Shot as a slow track out, starting from an extreme close up of Lucia's face, we would reveal her and all the harpies composed in a tableau, styled like a medieval court.

I'd love to style Lucia like a modern-day Joan of Arc - dressed in a suit of armour, a long sword in one hand, her trusty chihuahua Timmy under the other. The other Harpies could be arranged about the space in various costumes that are a hybrid of grandiose period garb and hyper-erotic garments - jacobian ruffs paired with diamante thongs, PVC pleasers and hoop skirts.





Or we could style each of the harpies as literal angels, sitting atop greek style pillars, surrounded by fluffy pink clouds. We could give them props like harps, wings and halos, softly lit like a 1970's perfume ad. The Harpies could be placed at various positions around a pole on which we shoot them performing, in a pink haze of diffused light, glitter and starbursts.

THE LIVES THAT THESE CHARACTERS LEAD ARE ABOUT SUBVERTING EXPECTATIONS AND CHALLENGING THE NORM. THESE INTRO SHOTS WILL AMPLIFY THAT VERY IDEA.

CHOREO

The Harpies themselves are - and it is impossible to stress this enough - incredible dancers. Sakeema, Taboo & Glam especially work as full-time dancers, voguers and choreographers (Sakeema having recently featured in Holly Blakey's 'Cowpuncher My Ass' at the Southbank Centre). Meaning that for any set up we end up agreeing on for this section, there is absolutely scope for some truly breathtaking choreography - from voguing to pole and contemporary.

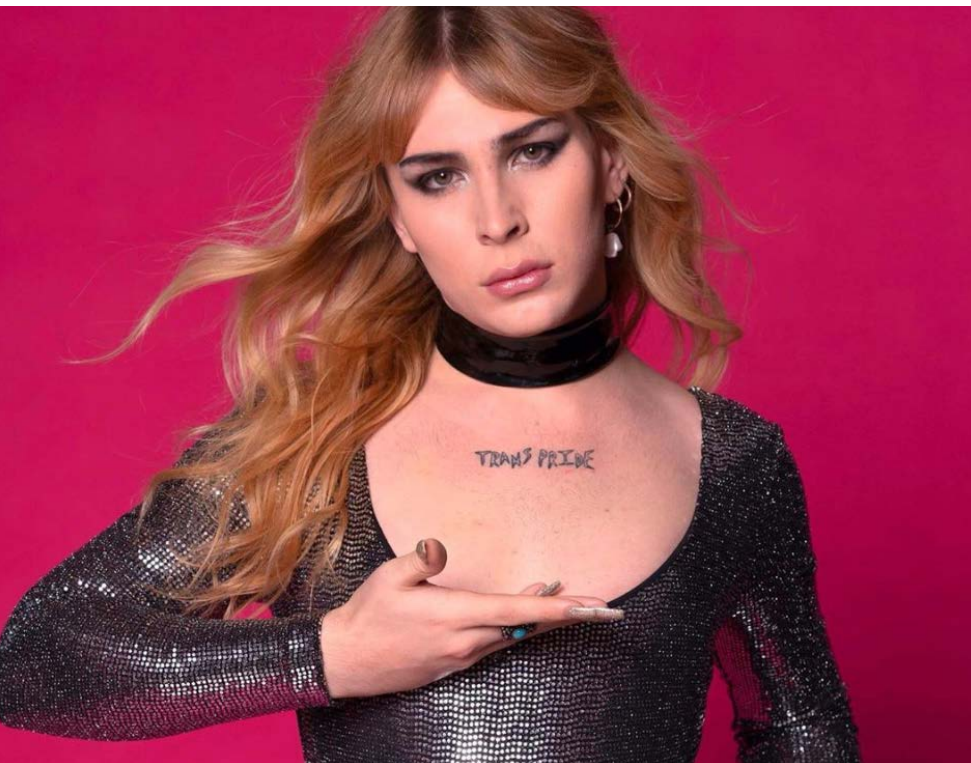


CHARACTERS - LUCIA

THE LEADER, THE FIGHTER.

A scouse powerhouse & the mother of the Harpies Family, Lucia is known for her iconic devil horns and oversees Harpies every single Friday. She single-handedly organised London's first ever trans pride whilst sofa-surfing around the city, and now manages arguably the most exciting and popular strip night in the whole of London.

Lucia is a powerful mix of eloquence and fire - the quintessential activist, and the perfect protagonist.





CHARACTERS - RACHEL

THE MENTOR, THE AUTHORITY

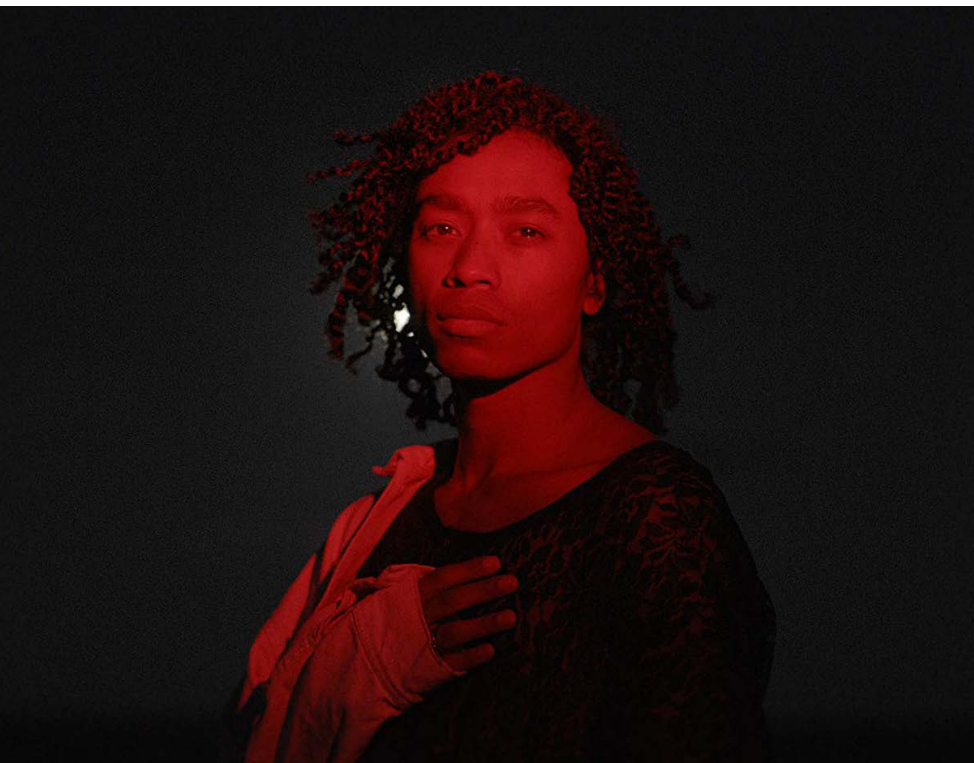
Rachel is a Northern Irish Stripper with 10 years of experience in the industry. She is something of a mentor to Lucia, and has been instrumental in creating the day-to-day operations and sustainable structure of Harpies. She is a warm, beautiful human and the definition of a trans ally. Interestingly, however, coming from Northern Ireland (where strip clubs are illegal) her work life is a complete secret from her family back home.

This may mean that we need to anonymise her, but we've already had some talks about some sexy/interesting ways we could do this using voiceover and silhouettes.



CHARACTERS - SAKEEMA ***THE YOUNG INGENUE***

Sakeema has been dancing for years but has only just begun her transition. She is a sultry, nimble dancer with incredible grace and poise, and an eloquent turn of phrase in everything she says.





CHARACTERS - GLAM CLAM

THE WILD CARD

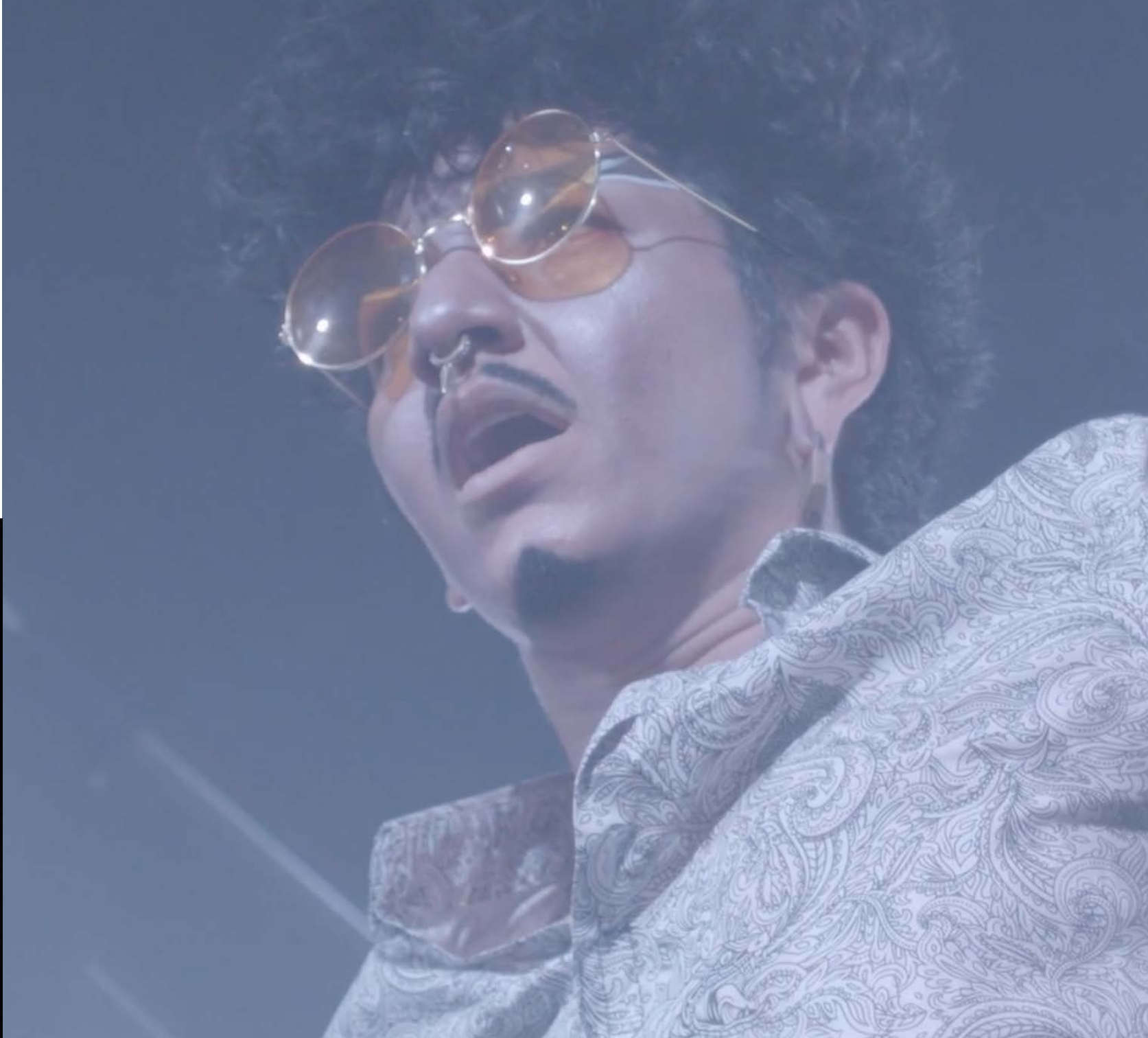
Glam is a tornado of a human being with a heart of gold, she's a gutsy northern stripper who is (to put it mildly) a sight to behold. She almost exclusively dances to Marilyn Manson & Nine Inch Nails in leopard print diamante, loves a cocktail and is never shy of voicing her opinion. I'm obsessed with her.

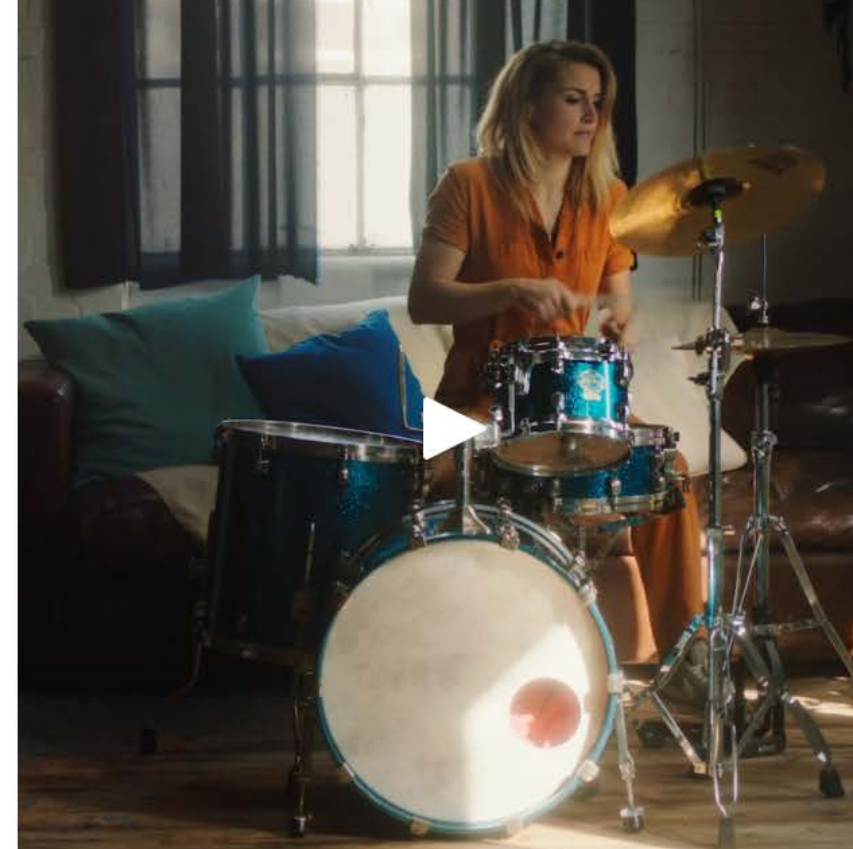
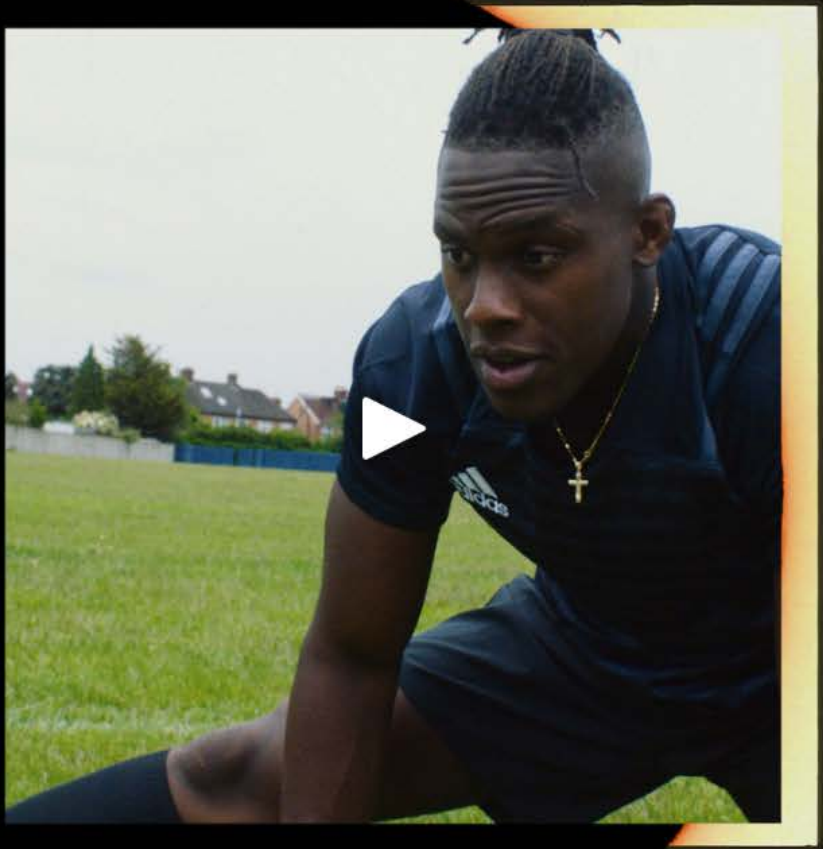


CHARACTERS - CHIYO

THE MAN OF THE HOUSE

Chiyo is a Latinx Trans Boy who has (to his absolute delight) just self-funded and received his top surgery. His performances are steeped in politics around race and gender, and his stage presence is electric.





PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

I realise that this all sounds incredibly ambitious, but the wonderful thing about making a film that is about, by, and for queer people is that we can call upon the incredible host of designers, stylists art directors, editors and film crew-members within the community to contribute their work towards the film in-kind.

Everyone in the community knows & loves Lucia, and I have already had countless confirmations from amazing creatives that they would be happy to provide us with whatever we need. I'm confident that we can pull off something incredible using our collective community - all we need is a budget to cover things like studio fees and below the line costs.

We are also lucky enough to have Objekt films on board to produce this free of charge and can call upon their extensive resources and expertise to make

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FOR OBJEKT
FILMS' WORK](#)



OUR WORK

We're Tom & Drew - a Director & DOP duo from North Wales and NYC. Between us, we have just under a decade's worth of experience in branded content, long-form narrative, documentary, and creative production.

We specialize in form-pushing music videos and docs, with a focus on inclusivity and diversity. We endeavour to make all parts of our process, from crew through to post-production, as inclusive to women, POC & LGBTQIA+ people as possible.

We have worked with brands & clients ranging from Jaguar Land Rover to HBO, are adept at producing and managing our own jobs and work with artists, clients & studios to craft creative that pushes briefs to places that meet the demands of being attention-grabbing in a digital age, whilst maintaining a social conscience.



[CLICK HERE TO WATCH OUR REEL](#)

[CLICK HERE FOR MY WEBSITE](#)

A FINAL NOTE

THIS FILM WILL BE MADE WITH A CREW MADE UP ENTIRELY OF QUEER AND TRANS PEOPLE. YOU HAVE THE POWER TO HELP US MAKE SOMETHING THAT IS TRULY AND AUTHENTICALLY;

ABOUT US
FOR US,
AND MADE BY US.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME.

**CLICK HERE TO WATCH
THE SIZZLE FILM**

TOM & DREW