

A photograph of a dense, overgrown garden path leading to a brick building. The path is narrow and covered with various green plants and weeds. The brick building is partially obscured by the foliage. The text "WELCOME TO HAWAII" is overlaid in a stylized, light blue font across the lower portion of the image.

**WELCOME TO HAWAII**

## ABOUT THE FILM

Rita is a retired German academic living in London who, since being widowed many years ago, feels increasingly ignored to the point of being pointless. She doesn't see anyone, she doesn't talk to anyone and she's tired of filling her days with bad television, meals-for-one, red wine, reading and sleeping. She's concluded, logically, that dying is the most attractive option. And since she's annoyingly healthy, she'll have to do it herself.

Josie is a student struggling to connect with her high-achieving, glaringly successful but shallow family. She's trying to pay her way through uni like her brothers did, but can't keep a job down and can't afford rent. She'd rather stick a fork in her eye than ask her parents for help, so she sofa-surfs and/or sleeps with people for a bed for the night and drinks her problems away. She's got herself in a pickle and can't see a way out.

A chance meeting brings these two women (begrudgingly) together. Slowly they show us how easy it is to fall between the gaps, how struggling with mental health and feeling lonely and cut off and ignored can happen to anyone, and how the smallest things can make life worth living again.

## THE WORLD

Welcome To Hawaii is set in modern London, a place where millions of people go about their everyday lives in their own little bubble with little knowledge of the lives of their neighbours. It's very easy to get lost and isolated without anybody noticing. You could literally live next door to a dead person and not realise for months.

Rita's house is in one of London's leafy suburbs such as Herne Hill, Forest Hill, or Camberwell, an area that's gone from unloved to hugely desirable, with the old pound shops, bookies and off licenses battling it out with and hipster coffee shops and artisan butchers. For someone who's lived there for years, it now feels like another planet.

The house is a large semi, one of the only houses in the road not craved up into flats. Its bones are handsome but it's fallen into disrepair. Nothing's been done to it for years. It feels like a sleeping giant on an anthill.

In contrast, Josie is living right inside this anthill environment. She is, in effect, homeless. She sofa surfs, mostly in shared (and often dilapidated) student flats or stays at places of her regularly one night stands. And sometimes, when her plans don't work out, she stays outside all night – in cafes or on night buses or just walking.

The buzzing environment surrounding both Rita and Josie makes their social isolation even more apparent.



# THE CHARACTERS

## RITA

Rita, a retired professor of Anthropology in her early 80s, is bored and tired of her life. In fact everyone seems to be bored and tired of her life.

The only people who ring are window-replacement salesmen or wrong numbers. The only people who write are insurance companies or takeaways offering her 3 pizzas for the price of 1 and 2 litres of Cola. Sometimes she takes them up on her offer, just for something to do.

Her isolated life makes her brittle, surly and impatient. The only warm note is her relationship with the cat.

It's a far cry from her working and married life, where she was successful and relevant and wanted.

Born and bred in Germany, she rode all the way up the academic ladder to head the department of anthropology at a renowned university in the UK - despite constant attempts of her male colleagues trying to dent her confidence with belittling jokes about her gender and German accent.

She found a soulmate in Peter, a fellow academic, who matched her career ambitions perfectly, but he passed away much too early.

Now, long-since widowed and retired and isolated, she's simply waiting to see what will finish her off.

And when nothing seems to be forthcoming, she decides to do it herself. After she's cleared the house and left it tidy, so no one will paw through her clothes and documents, but before Christmas so she doesn't have to listen to another bloody carol singer.

When Josie first comes into her life nothing much changes. If anything, Rita is even more irritated and more surly because her space has been invaded.

But little by little, we see Rita's protective 'shield' crumble. She shows little kindnesses to Josie. She worries about this girl. She likes having her around, even though those words would have to be prised from her lips with a claw hammer.

Rita is intolerant, short with people, rude in her frankness, dismissive, but also funny, empathetic, with a strong sense of justice and injustice.



# THE CHARACTERS

## JOSIE

JOSIE is 19 years old, attractive without being 1 million instagram-likes pretty, and the youngest of three children from a well-off family. There's a big age gap between her and her two older brothers. She guesses she was an accident, but a happy accident would be stretching it.

She has a glamorous mum who gets her calories from Prosecco, a career-obsessed father who's confused by this old wife he has (he's sure he married someone much younger), and the two brothers are successful work-hard, play-hard, be-an-arsehole-hard lawyers who don't really get their little sister, who dresses like a lesbian even though she's pretty and NOT a lesbian.

She feels numb and remote, and uses self harm (in the past) and anonymous sex (in the present) to provoke some sensation of feeling alive.

She goes to uni to study law because it's the family thing and she has no real idea what she wants or what to do and that is a mighty struggle for her. She finds the studying hard, the social side intense, and working through uni nigh on impossible. But she'd rather die than ask her parents for help. Literally. Rather die.

Josie is defensive, prickly, quiet, vulnerable who hides her frailties under a couldn't-care-less veneer. She doesn't seem to trust anyone and absolutely confides in no one.

But as Rita's house becomes the most stable place in her life, she starts to open up and face her demons a little, until she discovers why Rita needs her help and what she's planning.

These two women might be struggling with their lives more than the viewer, but they are not reacting to huge mental trauma or terrible incidents in their pasts. Both characters are entirely relatable. With one or two turns in the road any one of us could feel as lost as these two.



# CAST

## RITA

We wrote this script with the German actress Katharina Thalbach in mind. She's perfect for Rita. She IS Rita, minus the suicidal thoughts and the cat. Katharina has read the script and loves it.

Bearing in mind her cult status in Germany, she will be a massive asset for this film, not only because of her amazing talent, but also as a highly marketable actress in the German territories. She's happy to be coached to have an accent that's authentic to a German who has lived in England for 30 odd years and taught in English speaking countries for most of her adult life.

Katharina is integral to this project. Rita will come alive when inhabited by her. No other actress could match her. We're happy to tell Meryl Streep that to her face.



## JOSIE

This is such an exciting role for a young actor.

We're looking for a fierce and character-strong actor to match Katharina's energy. Jessica Bardem, Dakota Fanning and Shira Haas are all actresses who have the required qualities, but all three are out of the age range.

We also think it's important for the authenticity of the character and her story to cast a native UK actress for this part.



## DIANE - JOSIE'S MUM

Diane's character doesn't have that many on-screen appearances in the film, but they are arguably scene-stealers.

Even though she gives the shrill appearance of everything being perfect in her life, everything is far from perfect. This makes her an important piece in the overall message about loneliness and struggle.

A commanding actress like Keely Hawes or Lena Heady would be amazing for this part. Ronni Ancona also springs to mind.



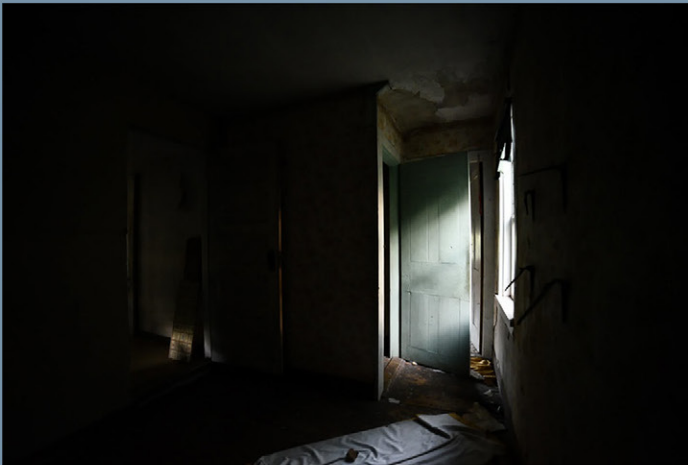
# STYLE AND TONE

The look and feel of this film will go through very subtle changes as the film progresses and the mindset of the characters slowly changes from hopeless/angry/bleak to hopeful/something to live for. This will be achieved through the following:

## PHOTOGRAPHY

The lighting will start off low key, creating a sombre feeling. The colour palette is limited, the camera movements are modest and mainly static or slowly tracked to create a feeling that time doesn't move. The framing will be unbalanced in some shots to reflect the character's state of mind. In populated environments deep space composition will make the world feel detached from our hero, highlighting the contrast between isolation and social connection. The social isolation of the main characters will be as well visualised by filming them through windows, in reflection or as and in shadows.

As the film progresses and the characters start to re-engage with the world around them, all of the above will subtly change to high key lighting, giving a more upbeat feel. Some more colours will be added to the main palette (bear in mind these changes are subtle), the camera movements will be livelier, and the space will flatten to integrate the characters and their environment.



# STYLE AND TONE

## ART DEPARTMENT

Rita's House, the main location, starts off cluttered, dark and dusty, set in the past, and full of memories. Nothing much has been changed or touched since the 80s. During the course of the story the house gets emptied, as Rita doesn't want strangers to rifle through her memories 'like vultures' once she's gone. As a consequence the house will gradually look airier and lighter, mirroring Rita's evolving inner state. The airy and lighter space will be sparsely refurbished throughout the 3rd act of the film, symbolising new beginnings.

The cluttered, dusty garage, holding a splendid old Saab, is the one place that doesn't go through the process of 'memory purge'. It is here where Rita allows her memories to flow. It becomes a sort of emotional womb, a place where Rita lets herself go and allows herself to be somewhat emotional, something she doesn't do much otherwise. The garage in a way is a celebration of memories. The colourful painting that will eventually lift the grey breezeblock wall symbolises and celebrates Rita's past and turns Rita's sacred space into something joyful and uplifting.



# STYLE AND TONE

## COSTUME

### RITA

Rita hasn't bought anything new in the last 10 years, apart from the bare essentials. Why should she? She has nothing or nobody to dress up for.

On the rare occasions Rita goes out and interacts with people (e.g. the doctor), she makes sure she looks correct and 'proper'. She has an outfit for that.

At home she throws on what comes to hand, just choosing the same few things and ignoring the rest of her wardrobe. She prefers dresses to trousers though, and sometimes wears Peter's old cardigans or jumpers over them.

On the day she interviews Josie and realises that her hosting skills have all but disappeared, she becomes conscious of her image and the way she dresses. So she starts overdressing a little, like the hostess of a wake or like she's attending a prestigious function (and her social circle is so non-existent having Josie in the house IS akin to a prestigious function). Gradually she relaxes and slowly starts to show her own considered style. The fabrics of her 'social' outfits gradually give way to softer lines and colours, again mirroring her inner thawing.

### JOSIE

Josie is not totally obsessed with what she wears, as long as she doesn't look like a twat in her own eyes. She prefers blacks and muted colours and quite likes to integrate menswear in her outfits. It's a form of protest/rejection of her family's standards.

She's rejected her mum's purchases for her, but she's pretty broke so her outfits are charity shop purchases, plus one slinky dress she wears when she goes clubbing. She has a very limited selection of outfits.

So as we go into winter, we'll only add layers to an existing base wardrobe.

In the third act, as she embraces her pregnancy and starts to actively plan for her future, her style starts to adapt marking a change in her circumstances (being pregnant). Her style, which used to be pretty regimented and act as a shell, becomes a tad softer and looser.





## SOUND

Incidental sounds play an important part to create the mood and tone of the film. The sound design will convey Rita's situation and state of mind and evolve with her.

To start with, in the solitary silence of her life, every single noise seems to be amplified, be it the ticking of the grandfather clock, the sound of Rita's TV or radio, the sound of running water or the crash of the falling shelf. The volume of sounds emitted by the socialising crowd sounds almost painful in the first half of the film, if it's children on their way to school, traffic, supermarket sounds or cafés. They will clash violently with the deafening silence inside the house. The loud voices at the party are overwhelming for Rita and sound like white noise.

As Josie comes into Rita's life, the lively noises created by her presence will increasingly change the 'solitary tune' of the empty days. Not only aren't those 'silent sounds' (clock, water running, coffee machine working etc) as acutely perceived anymore, they become part of a surrounding carpet of harmonic and lively sounds. As life comes back into the house, so does the sound.

## MUSIC

The most important music to decide on is the tracks that Rita listens to in her car. They will define her as a person, and give an insight into her character and taste, her age (70s), her origin (German) and her past (music she liked when she was young, music that reminds her of her time with Peter etc).

We have certain ideas of tracks I would like to use, but will discuss and consult on this with our chosen 'Rita' in rehearsals, as this is part of defining Rita's voice.

The one piece earmarked as 'her perfect track to die to', is the Cocteau twins 'Heaven or Las Vegas'. This song has all the ethereal qualities to convey her fantasies of release and a happy ever after. We would also like to bring in at least one German 'vintage track', to allude to her roots, something in the line of Reinhard May's 'Gute Nacht Freunde'.

## THEME

More people suffer from mental health issues than ever before. Or at least it's never been more apparent than ever before.

The older you are the more your body lets you down, the more the currency of your looks is devalued, the more you feel cut off from the modern world, like it's not your place anymore. The younger you are the more pressure there is to get likes, to have the body of a Love Islander, to have an exciting project on the go, to be good at 30-second dance routines. It's insane.

The appetite for mental health dramas is there. Silver Linings Playbook, Good Will Hunting, The Father, Still Alice, even The Joker at the extreme end... people want to watch characters that fight with mental health issues and somehow cope as best they can.

Mental struggles can affect anyone from any background. Every single person will know someone suffering, or be suffering themselves. It doesn't always have to be loud and extreme. Little things, drip dripping daily, can push people to the edge. Neither of our characters is poor, neither is plagued by bad health, nothing traumatic in the usual sense has happened to them. But they feel hopeless. 'What have you got to be so unhappy about?'

A lot, as it turns out. The problems may seem trivial on the surface. 'Struggling to connect with anyone' doesn't sound very serious. It might even sound self-pitying and a tad snowflake, as first-world a problem as running out of hummus. But feeling like an underachiever, that you're not 'living your best life' or even your second, third or fourth best life has serious mental health implications that we want to shine a light on.

## DIRECTOR - INA LÜDERS

I've been working in film all my working life. Starting out in Germany I assisted directors like Werner Herzog, Wim Wenders, Detlev Buck and many others. I moved to Madrid in the late eighties to continue my work as an Assistant Director for directors like Carlos Saura, Pilar Miro, Bigas Luna and many more. It was in Spain where I directed my first short film, La Muerte de Filomeno, which was shown at multiple A list festivals and won several awards (Granada, Houston, Algarve).

Since the late 90s, I'm London based and continue to work as a 1st AD, these days mainly in drama. Throughout my career as a 1st AD I have continued to direct my own projects, be it short films, a few commercials and music videos.

I started to investigate the epidemic rise of loneliness in our society in 2019 with the idea to make this the central theme for my first feature film. I was struck with the epidemic rise of loneliness and mental health struggles in our society – how much more it's talked about, how many times it's mentioned in the news, how many books there are on the subject, how many celebrities are opening up about it, how's it's spread Covid-style across class, race, age. It's everywhere.

I really wanted to talk about the way this can affect ANYONE, but I wanted to do it with humour as well as sadness.

As well as drawing on my own experiences, I wanted to make sure I got this right. Between productions, I spent many hours at the British Library reading scientific papers on the issue, as well as countless case studies and tons of fiction dealing with loneliness or 'starring' a lonely hero. The Lonely City by Olivia Laing was a very important find in my research, as well as (strangely enough) Margaret Meade's 'Blackberry Winter'. These all lay foundations for the script.

I'm very passionate and extremely excited about this project. The characters and their stories are partly inspired by my own roots and experiences. I look forward to seeing these two characters coming alive and fighting it out on the big screen. And I think a lot of people will enjoy watching them too.

Hopefully we will feel for these two women, we will empathise with their struggles and understand what women in particular have to put up with, we will cheer their small victories and laugh when they laugh. And we will absolutely not kill ourselves.



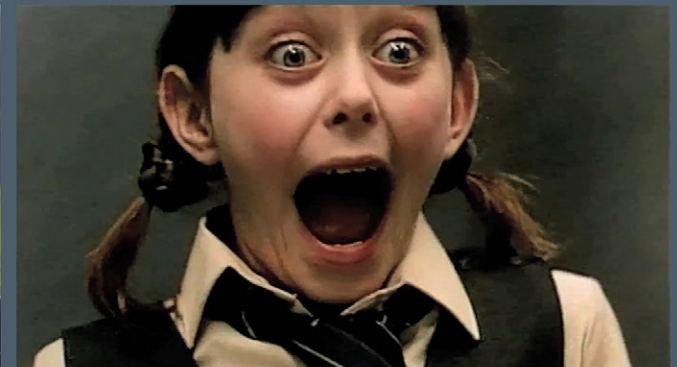
### LINKS (CLICK PIC TO WATCH)



KNOWLEDGE IS POWER



GIMP



SHOWREEL

## SCREENWRITER - DAVID FEDASH

David has worked with Ina on three of her short films.

Her has been working in advertising for 20 odd years as a copywriter, writing campaigns for a whole host of glamorous products such as toilet roll, kitchen cleaner and a book on 101 uses for a lemon (not joking).

He's also worked as a scriptwriter on feature films for commercial directors wanting to make the leap to features, and was hired to write up existing ideas for Screen Partners and Carnaby Films.

This is the first feature he's written that he actually wants to get made.

## PRODUCER - JULIA GURRY

Ina met Julia working on the feature film "Brian & Charles" in 2020, based in Wales, and became good friends whilst sneaking out for drinks and getting lost in Snowdonia; a great way to test a burgeoning producer/director relationship.

They found they not only shared an artistic sensibility and style, but could also understand the life of an expatriate living and working in London. Julia is Australian and arrived in London with as the singer/ songwriter of her band 6 years ago.

Between recording and touring around the world, she developed a strong career in the UK as a Location Supervisor/Manager (BBC, Endemol, Tiger Aspect, Lionsgate, Magnolia Mae) with the prospect of becoming a Film producer.

Julia comes from a vibrant Film & TV background as her father produced and directed various Australian documentaries around the world. She assisted her father across various productions and has also produced several video clips worldwide. With her enormous experience & passion for film, TV and music, Julia is both set and thrilled to be producing "Welcome to Hawaii".