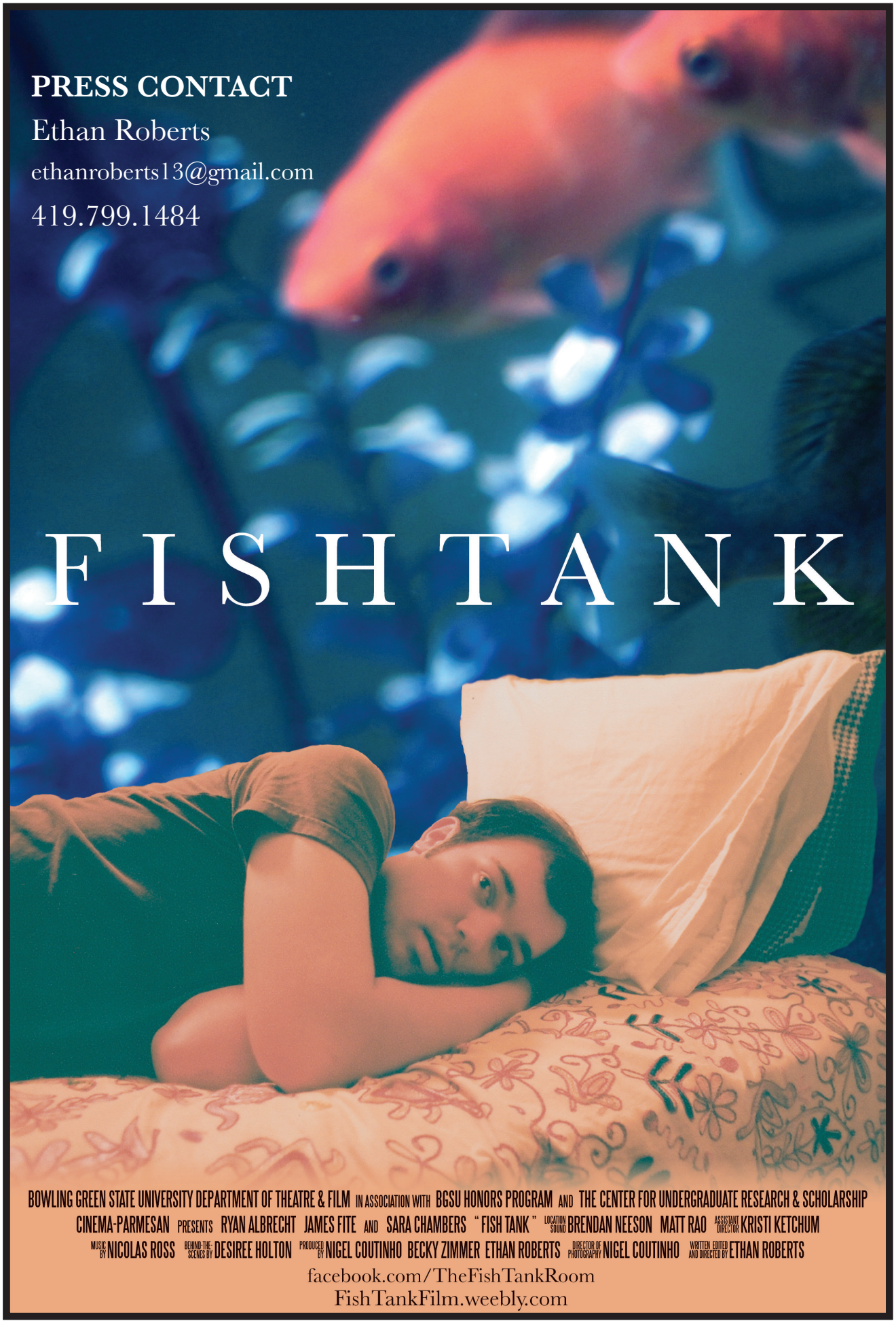
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FISHTANK
BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE & FILM IN ASSOCIATION WITH BGSU HONORS PROGRAM AND THE CENTER FOR UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH & SCHOLARSHIP
CINEMA-PARMESAN PRESENTS RYAN ALBRECHT JAMES FITE AND SARA CHAMBERS "FISH TANK" LOCATION SOUND BRENDAN NEESON MATT RAO ASSISTANT DIRECTOR KRISTI KETCHUM
MUSIC BY NICOLAS ROSS BEHIND THE SCENES BY DESIREE HOLTON PRODUCED BY NIGEL COUTINHO BECKY ZIMMER ETHAN ROBERTS DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY NIGEL COUTINHO WRITTEN, EDITED AND DIRECTED BY ETHAN ROBERTS
facebook.com/TheFishTankRoom
FishTankFilm.weebly.com

LOGLINE

Over a shared soda can of pilfered vodka, two isolated teenagers drift through moments of awkwardness and intimate conversation.

SYNOPSIS

Feeling suffocated at a house party, shy 15-year-old Rowan escapes into a secluded bedroom. He is inadvertently joined by Andrew, a fellow classmate whom Rowan secretly harbors feelings for. Over a shared soda can filled with pilfered vodka, the two young men drift through awkward and intimate conversation, unintentionally forming the connection that they both subconsciously yearn for. Both an honest coming-of-age story and a cinematic meditation on social alienation, *Fish Tank* reflects on the painful, silent oblivion that consumes teenagers who cannot submit to the high school status quo.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Fish Tank was born in the spring of 2011 in an undergraduate screenwriting course at Bowling Green State University. Pre-production for the film began after a successful Kickstarter campaign, which raised roughly a third of the project's budget. The project was also partially funded by grants from The Center for Undergraduate Research and Scholarship, as well as a generous contribution from the Bowling Green State University Honors Program.

Production was completed over the course of 7 days in the fall of 2012. *Fish Tank* was shot on-location in two residential homes in Northwest Ohio with a crew entirely made up of BGSU students. Using the Arriflex 16SR, over 5,000 feet of 16mm film was shot.

The film received a regional screening in April 2013 at Bowling Green State University's Wolfe Center for the Arts. It was the first film to be shown in the university's 400-seat Donnell Theatre, which opened in 2011. *Fish Tank* also served as writer-director Ethan Roberts' senior Honors Project.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Coming of age in small town Ohio, I became well acquainted with what sociologist Emile Durkheim referred to as "the normal majority;" i.e. the presiding social environment. Christianity and heterosexuality were two identities crucial to the normal majority of my high school, and those who did not or could not fit into these norms found themselves socially isolated. During adolescence, the pressure to conform is heightened to an astronomical level, and my teenaged self longed for any kind of escape or relief. The closest thing to comfort I could find was in the occasional, often fleeting interactions with similarly isolated youth. In *Fish Tank,* I aspired to illustrate one such ephemeral connection between teenaged young men; a seemingly trivial meeting that proves to be so much more for the two main characters.

Rowan and Andrew find themselves alienated from the dominant societal group: their high school peers. Rowan is isolated because he cannot conform to the imposed heterosexual role, while Andrew is isolated because he desires a deeper meaning to life than that provided to him by his girlfriend, church, and soccer teammates. Their deviance from high school norms in turn pulls them toward each other. Without initially attempting to, Rowan and Andrew become antidotes to each other's emptiness through an interaction that's not strictly platonic, romantic, or sexual. It was my artistic objective to portray that stilted, halting intimacy that erupts between two young men when the triangulation of loneliness, inebriation, and the need for human connection is just right. Though the negative pull of society eventually takes its predictable toll, something quietly monumental takes place. Nothing has changed for these two boys, but neither of them will be the same.

ETHAN ROBERTS recently graduated with a B.A. in film production and arts management. His work has screened at student film festivals and on public television. As a burgeoning filmmaker, he hopes to continue digging deeper into ideas often untouched by mainstream cinema.

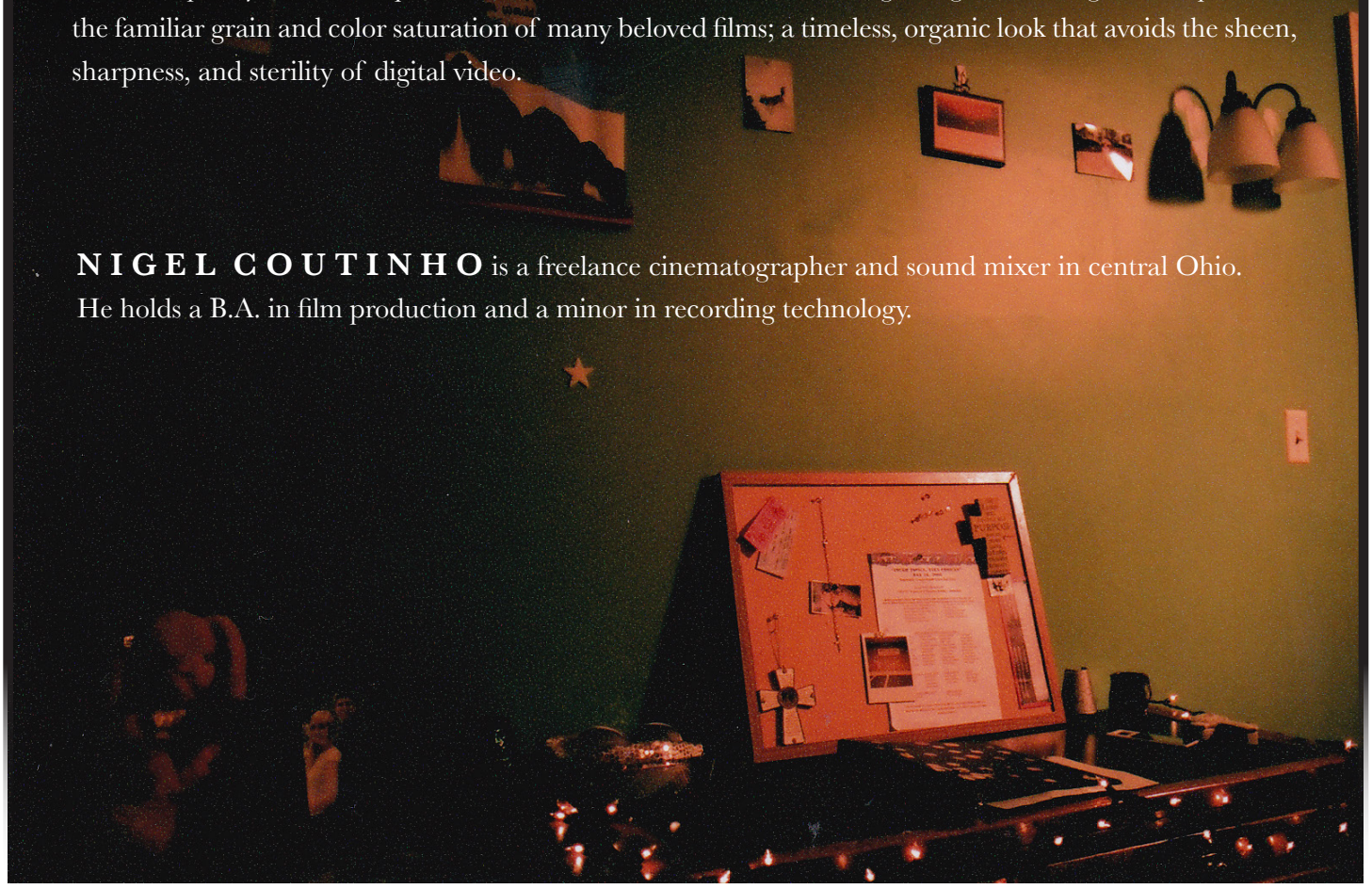
CINEMATOGRAPHER'S STATEMENT

I have always been compelled by stories of heartbroken youth. Reflecting on my own adolescence, it is certainly a time of unfading emotional uneasiness. In reading the *Fish Tank* script, I was reminded of this reality again. The story's bleak honesty and universal qualities prompted me to take on the project as director of photography.

The visual style of *Fish Tank* was informed by the screenplay's key thematic idea: that the main characters discover a passage from alienation to intimacy. Setting the story in the confined space of Tonya's bedroom, with its shut windows and drawn blinds, we endeavored to create a closed environment for the characters to interact in. It was important to keep the 'outside world' unseen, as though the house existed in an inescapable void.

Though the space is decorated with girlish décor and religious iconography, the bedroom proves to be an inviting and intimate atmosphere that promises comfort and quiet. Compared to other locations in the script—the claustrophobic living room and the off-limits kitchen—the bedroom is a safe place for Andrew and Rowan to open up to each other, while simultaneously exhibiting the dimness of a place otherworldly and forbidden. The room washes the characters in amber hues and pools of light while the blue glow of the fish tank draws them in.

The choice to shoot on film as our capture medium came from our collective desire to achieve a distinct aesthetic quality; one that separates it from most student films of the digital age. The image is stamped with the familiar grain and color saturation of many beloved films; a timeless, organic look that avoids the sheen, sharpness, and sterility of digital video.



NIGEL COUTINHO is a freelance cinematographer and sound mixer in central Ohio. He holds a B.A. in film production and a minor in recording technology.

CAST

ROWAN
Ryan Albrecht

ANDREW
James Fite

TONYA'S MOTHER
Sara Chambers

TONYA
Natalie Thompson

CREW

Ethan Roberts	**Writer/Director/Editor**
Nigel Coutinho	**Director of Photography**
Becky Zimmer	**Producer/Still Photography**
Kristi Ketchum	**Assistant Director**
Nicolas Ross	**Music**
Chris Ilse	**Gaffer/Assistant Camera**
Brendan Neeson	**Location Sound**
Matthew Rao	**Boom Operator**
Desiree Holton	**Behind-the-Scenes Videographer**
Roman Buetel	**Grip**
Ian Charland	**Grip**
Marisa Vallejo	**Location Manager**
Dorothy Johnson	**Production Designer**

TECHNICAL SPECS

32 mins. 1.78. Color.
Production Format: Super 16mm
Exhibition Formats: BluRay/DVD