

Cliché Break

A Short Film Written/Directed By Jerry Gray



Logline:

- ▶ A young couple meets to celebrate their one year anniversary with a picnic in the park, but pride takes over when they discover the other person wants to breakup.





Synopsis:

- ▶ Danny puts the finishing touches on a picnic in a park. Danny kneels to quickly re-read the instructions in *The Art of Breaking Up*, a book strategically placed behind the picnic basket. Sara enters carrying two coffees. She is surprised by the elaborate picnic spread. Danny and Sara are clearly a couple, but there is an obvious awkwardness between them.
- ▶ After sharing some forced pleasantries, Sara gets right to it. She openly shares that she wants to breakup. Danny is shocked, but refuses to be outdone. He quickly double checks the book for his next “line,” then delivers a cliché break-up excuse.
- ▶ Sara replies with another overused break up line. Then Danny. Then Sara. Then Danny. Then Sara. They exchange every classic break-up line ever spoken.
- ▶ Hurt, Sara jumps up and questions why Danny went to such great lengths on a fancy picnic if he just wanted to break up with her? She even questions the sincerity of their entire relationship.
- ▶ Danny defends himself by saying that he just wanted to make this easier.
- ▶ Suddenly the walls of pride come tumbling down and Danny acknowledges that they really did have some good times together. Sara agrees and they “clink” their coffee cups together to toast their friendship going forward.
- ▶ Danny and Sara awkwardly pack up the picnic and then go their separate ways. When Sara turns back to take one last look at Danny, she sees him handing off the picnic basket to another couple. She smiles at this sweet gesture and maybe even questions her decision to break up with Danny.

Character Description: Sara

- ▶ Sara: is a 21-year-old college student who is sensitive and caring, but also straight-forward. She is not afraid to speak her truth - even if it is confrontational and hard to hear.
- ▶ Sara's conflict between her sadness over breaking up and her sincere love for Danny is especially depicted at the end of the film.



Rachel DeBoer as "Sara"

Character Description: Danny

- ▶ Danny: (22) is an all around nice guy who goes great lengths to avoid confrontation. Danny's efforts might seem disingenuous, but in the end we see his generous spirit and sincere sadness over the breakup.



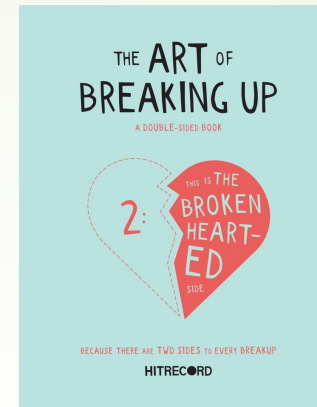
Peder Lindell as "Danny"



Writer/Director's Statement:

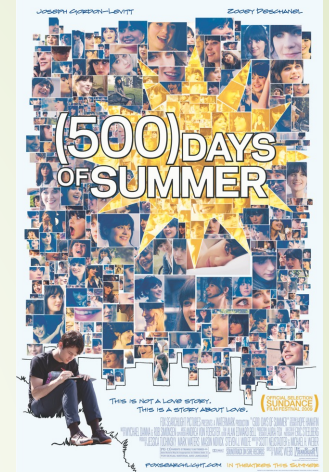
- ▶ I made this movie to portray how pride is not only a powerful emotion, but to also demonstrate how pride can create an actual 'wall' that obstructs genuine relationships and honest expressions of how one feels.
- ▶ As my writing and directing debut, this film is important to me because I wanted to produce something relevant and depict a relationship situation that was real and believable.
- ▶ This film story needs to be seen and heard because it clearly depicts how there's so much more going on beneath the surface in any given relationship. In my film, the lead character's true emotions are in direct contrast with what they are actually saying out loud - until the end of the story when their silence speaks volumes!
- ▶ Too often in life, people choose to sugarcoat the truth to avoid uncomfortable confrontation. Though well-intended, this relationship strategy results in hurt feelings and creates even more conflict. In the end, an open, honest conversation (although difficult) is always best.

Theme:



- *Cliché Break* is a short film about pride and control. It depicts a battle between two complex characters who both want to steer the direction of their conversation.
- Although both characters have the same exact goal (breaking up), the climax reveals that neither one wants to be the one getting dumped.
- This scene includes a roller coaster of emotions including fake pleasantries, playful banter, hurt, and sincere confession. In the end we see that the two characters actually do give a damn and perhaps even still love each other.
- Danny and Sara still go their separate ways, but the viewer is left wondering if this relationship is really over.
- <https://youtu.be/aqm23RMLiGk>
- Steve Carell and Julianne Moore's breakup scene from the (2011) Hit Rom-Com – *Crazy, Stupid, Love*© has thematic similarities.

Visual Style & Tone:



- *Cliché Break* is a contemporary dramedy.
- Cinematic “Invisible Camera” technique: Because this scene is an intimate conversation between two people, I used traditional camera setups and several different shot sizes and angles to effectively tell the story without calling attention to the presence of the camera.
- Multiple pre-production rehearsals and in-person on-location blocking prepared my actors to perform the entire script fully memorized. This focus on pre-production was intentional so that my crew and I could capture the entire scene’s dialogue multiple times from several different camera angles. This provided multiple editorial cutaway B-roll options (EWS; WS; MS; Over-the-shoulder CU’s, etc.) during the post-production process.
- Directing theater students, I provided this familiar, classic musical theater moment as inspiration for the “fun & games” moment in my character’s conversation:
- <https://youtu.be/UB1YAsPD6U>
- “Anything You Can Do I Can Do Better” – from *Annie Get Your Gun*©.

In The Style of: (500) Days of Summer



- <https://youtu.be/PsD0NpFSADM>
- Joseph Gordon-Levitt and Zooey Deschanel in the Hit (2009) Rom-Com – (500) Days of Summer© is in the visual style and tone of *Cliché Break*.

Location/Setting:

- A picnic in the park in Los Angeles, CA. LMU's Westchester Campus bluff (next to the Sacred Heart Chapel) provided an excellent shooting location to stage a park picnic.
- Although not without its challenges, shooting outdoors with available light provided the most realistic setting for this story.



Music:

- ▶ <https://youtu.be/UiQcrFX7sYU>
- ▶ “Love You Anymore” – by Michael Bublé
- ▶ This song about questioning one’s love for another person was the perfect ending to underscore the tension and sadness of a difficult breakup.
- ▶ The introductory instrumental score is “A Story About the Future” – by Michael Giacchino from *Tomorrowland*©.
- ▶ This music sets up the tone of this short film during the opening scenes (with no dialogue).



Filmmaker/Writer Bio:



- With only a few undergraduate student projects on my video reel, I consider *Cliché Break* my film writer/directorial debut. My college career offered limited production opportunities and minimal training in the art and craft of filmmaking, so LMU's "Production Fundamentals for the Screenwriter" course was exactly what I needed to better connect my screenwriting to the production process.
- My passion for screenwriting was discovered almost by accident. In my final semester of college, I was told I needed one more writing credit to graduate. My choices were: Advanced College Writing - or - Screenwriting. This was a no-brainer. The Screenwriting final exam was to complete Act One of a screenplay. As thrilled as I was to finally complete my academic requirements (and proudly graduate *Summa cum laude*), I had this nagging feeling that I wasn't really "done." I had to keep writing the screenplay I started for this class. So I did. Every spare moment from my job as a Cast Member at The Walt Disney Company was spent writing acts two and three. Several drafts later, I was pleased to complete *Drift City*© - my first full-length feature film screenplay. Fast-forward to this time last year - the application deadline for most graduate programs. The pixie-dust had worn off my role at Disney and I was ready to pursue this thing that still "nagged" at me. So, I did. And, although my passion for screenwriting was discovered almost by accident, my acceptance to LMU's Writing for the Screen MFA program is definitely not an accident. It is my mission to make the most of every valuable minute here.
- *Cliché Break* was much more than just an assignment to me. It was a chance for me to write, produce, and direct my first original short. I aimed to make this project professional and polished from first draft to final edit. Because of this I put every ounce of my being into the making of this film.

Bio Continued:



- ▶ The lead characters depicted in *Cliché Break* walk a fine tightrope balancing conscious communication choices with subconscious emotions - ranging from: Disingenuous affection, pride, hurt, honest confession, and sincere sadness. This short film packs a punch when we see that there's still love between Sara and Danny - even after a difficult breakup. As relational beings that have the choice (and ability) to unconditionally love one another is something worth pondering - and perhaps something we need to be reminded of.
- ▶ I would like to give a shout-out to my remarkable actors, Peder Lindell and Rachael DeBoer. I am indebted to these gifted performers and admire their tremendous professionalism, careful preparation, and patient flexibility when we had to pivot on location.
- ▶ The completion of this project would not have been possible without the collaborative efforts of my extraordinary cast and crew. In particular, the time and energy of my editor Brendan Barrow whose skill and commitment contributed greatly to the final piecing together of this film.
- ▶ I also greatly appreciate the SFTV Production Office students and peers. Their generous guidance and constructive feedback has been invaluable throughout my entire production process.
- ▶ Despite the obstacles on the day of my shoot, I am proud of the finished product and look forward to further discovering and developing my craft through LMU's Writing for the Screen M.F.A. program.

Thank you!

