

DOKI-DOKI FILMS presents in association with ARTS + LABOR and SIXTH STREET FILMS

a film by
CHRIS ESKA

Starring
TISHUAN SCOTT ASHTON SANDERS
KESTON JOHN BILL OBERST JR. CHRISTINE HORN ALFONSO FREEMAN

the Retrieval

“Eloquently insightful, distinctive filmmaking... A skillfully wrought feature with appreciable emotional and historical resonance.”—THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER

“Equal parts suspenseful road movie, persuasively detailed period drama and emotionally resonant coming-of-age story, ‘The Retrieval’ is an outstanding example of regional indie filmmaking accomplished with limited resources and an abundance of skill.”—VARIETY

“The production quality of The Retrieval is damn near flawless. Speaking of flawless, that just about describes Ashton Sanders, Keston John and Tishuan Scott’s performances as well.”—FILM THREAT

“a powerful rite-of-passage tale”—THE CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

“a quietly stirring journey... The Retrieval” is the best-looking film I’ve seen while at SXSW... the most saliently impressive quality in the film is its gorgeous mounting of period.”--INDIEWIRE

“An impressive drama....extremely strong performances by its leads”—THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE

“An absolutely gorgeous movie... The Retrieval is a hypnotic and meticulously shot period drama”—FILM PULSE
“the style of Cormac McCarthy’s Blood Meridian and the themes in Django: Unchained fused together into one movie... chilling battle scenes, suspenseful dialogue exchanges and a poignant, yet tragic message”—PHOENIX NEW TIMES

“In a word, The Retrieval is outstanding. It’s as close to perfect as a movie can be...visually beautiful and thematically poetic, it’s a quiet film that speaks volumes.”--SLACKERWOOD

“Chris Eska’s sophomore feature film is a well-researched and relevant drama with instinctual and gripping performances; This resonant, gem of a film deserves no less than a ‘sleeper hit’ status”—INDIEWIRE/SHADOW AND ACT

WINNER, Special Jury Prize for Acting, SXSW

WINNER, International Critics Prize, Festival du Cinéma Américain de Deauville

WINNER, Audience Award, Mill Valley Film Festival

WINNER, Audience Award, Phoenix Film Festival

WINNER, Audience Award, New Orleans Film Festival

WINNER, Audience Award, Omaha Film Festival

WINNER, Best Film, Ashland Independent Film Festival

WINNER, Best Director, Phoenix Film Festival

WINNER, Grand Jury Award, White Sands Film Festival

WINNER, Best Acting Ensemble, Phoenix Film Festival

WINNER, Best Film, Montreal International Black Film Festival

WINNER, Best Film and Audience Award, BronzeLens Film Festival

WINNER, Best Film, Santa Cruz Film Festival

Color, 94 minutes, DCP, English

publicity@TheRetrieval.com

www.TheRetrieval.com

DOKI-DOKI FILMS in association with ARTS + LABOR and SIXTH STREET FILMS present THE RETRIEVAL
ASHTON SANDERS TISHUAN SCOTT KESTON JOHN CHRISTINE HORN ALFONSO FREEMAN and BILL OBERST JR
costume designer LILY WALKER production designer CAROLINE KARLEN director of photography YASU TANIDA original music YELLOW6
original score MATTHEW WIEDEMANN executive producers ALAN BERG TOM BORDERS SIBYL AVERY JACKSON produced by JACOB ESQUIVEL JASON WEHLING
written directed and edited by CHRIS ESKA
www.THERETRIEVAL.com

CAST

Nate	TISHUAN SCOTT
Will	ASHTON SANDERS
Marcus	KESTON JOHN
Burrell	BILL OBERST JR.
Rachel	CHRISTINE HORN
Isaac	ALFONSO FREEMAN
Royce	JONATHAN BROOKS
Abby	RAVEN LEDEATTE

CREW

Director, Writer, Editor	CHRIS ESKA
Producers	JACOB ESQUIVEL JASON WEHLING
Executive Producers	ALAN BERG TOM BORDERS SIBYL AVERY JACKSON
Associate Producers	SCOTT COLQUITT JEFF MAROW
Director of Photography	YASU TANIDA
Production Designer	CAROLINE KARLEN
Costumes	LILY WALKER
Original Music	YELLOW6
Original Score	MATTHEW WIEDEMANN

Short Synopsis

On the outskirts of the Civil War, a boy is sent north by a bounty hunter gang to retrieve a wanted man.

Long Synopsis

On the outskirts of the Civil War, *The Retrieval* follows a fatherless 13 year-old boy sent north by his bounty hunter gang on a dangerous mission to retrieve a wanted man under false pretense. During their journey towards the unwitting man's reckoning, the initially distant pair develops unexpected bonds. As his feelings grow, the boy is consumed by conflicting emotions and a gut-wrenching ultimate decision: betray the father figure he's finally found or risk being killed by his gang for insubordination.

From the program guide of The Gene Siskel Film Center of Chicago

This provocative, deeply involving second feature by director Chris Eska (AUGUST EVENING) created a buzz at the SXSW Festival, where Tishuan Scott won the Best Acting award. Set on the fringes of the Civil War, the story centers on Will (Sanders), a 13-year-old black boy who is used by Southern slave-hunters and his manipulative uncle (John) to lure runaways back to captivity. One such mission sends him up north to entrap Nate (Scott), a freed slave with a large price on his head. The suspense builds as Will finds a surrogate father in the proud man whom he is compelled to betray. Eska makes expert use of reenactors, Texas landscapes, and occasional digital effects to create a convincing Civil War background on a tight budget.

Director's Statement

The original seed for the idea of *The Retrieval* came a few years ago as we were approaching the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. I read stories of the tragedy and bravery and sacrifice that led to that point in our history when slavery was finally abolished. But then I thought, "What happened the day after January 1, 1863? And what about the year after that, and the almost 100 years after that which were in many ways in limbo between slavery and true freedom?" I felt I'd rarely seen that portrayed on film.

I was raised in a tiny picturesque village of fewer than 100 people called Ottine, Texas, within walking distance of a beautiful swampland state park. We spent most of our time as children forging trails and exploring the wilderness, and as a result, nature and landscape have become important elements in my projects. My thoughts again turned to my childhood home when searching for the raw and primeval environments on the outskirts of the U.S. Civil War. Yet *The Retrieval* is less of a war film and more of an emotional drama with elements of the western, road movie, coming of age, and suspense genres. I've always been drawn to genre films and their inherent hooks and pleasures, but I didn't want to feel constrained within their limitations and expectations.

All my films originate from themes that are important in my life, and then I search for the setting and characters that will most highlight the emotions. I find that by writing characters who might not seem exactly like me on paper but who are facing similar emotions, I'm able to gain distance from the material in order to focus on the aspects of the story that will resonate with the audience. It might sound naïve, but I think film can demonstrate the universality of the human experience and connect us through a shared catharsis. With *The Retrieval*, I initially considered setting the story on the contemporary Texas border or in 1970's southern India before realizing that this historical rural setting would best draw out the emotions. War, slavery, desolate locations, and the lack of technology all combined to tear apart families and cause displacement and isolation that required difficult choices in order to find one's place in the world.

As with my previous films, *The Retrieval* explores the themes of surrogate families, finding ways to make connections in an increasingly isolated world, and the reexamination of our path in life. At the heart of the film's story is a crucial question for all of us: "Have you fully evaluated your life to discover if you're truly doing what's best for you and those you care about, or are you just adhering to societal norms without proper consideration?"

-Chris Eska

Production Notes

After traveling for over a year in support of his first feature (the Independent Spirit Award-winning *August Evening*), Chris Eska returned to his rural Texas hometown in search of inspiration for his next project. As the 150th anniversary of the Civil War approached, he was intrigued and moved by his research and the historical tales of bravery and sacrifice.

In June of 2010, Eska assembled a team and began his extensive casting search in Texas and California, eventually auditioning over 1000 actors. Recalling impressive results from working with non-actors in previous films, Eska decided to leave no stone unturned. The casting team went so far as to travel to every school within 100 miles of Austin to search through yearbooks for potential discoveries for the role of thirteen year-old Will, holding on-campus auditions and mailing parents information about upcoming casting sessions. In the end, the role was cast through conventional auditions in Los Angeles, but newcomer Ashton Sanders (Will) would still be performing for the first time on screen. Co-lead Tishuan Scott (Nate) was discovered out of Houston, but it was later revealed that he and his director unknowingly shared a brief tenure together at UCLA's graduate School of Theater, Film, and Television.

Throughout 2010, the preproduction team scouted isolated Texas ranches, authentic historical sites, and remote National Forests and State Parks to depict a variety of beautiful and desolate landscapes throughout the characters' journey. By the end of the year, producers Jacob Esquivel and Jason Wehling moved down to Gonzales, Texas, to set up headquarters in a large rented Victorian house undergoing renovations. Early in 2011, cast and crew begin joining what would become a homey mixture of production office and filmmaking commune—when not building historical sets, distressing costumes, or shooting tests, the cast and crew slept on air mattresses, cooked together, and played Guitar Hero. Working again with cinematographer Yasu Tanida, Eska concentrated on capturing the stark beauty of the Texas winter while grounding the visuals in a gritty realism. Despite the limited budget for production design and costumes, the team was able to create convincing period detail through their ingenuity and the help of Civil War re-enactors who provided realistic weaponry, uniforms, horses, extras, and more.

From summer of 2011 through summer of 2012, Eska sifted through almost 70 hours of footage to give shape to the story. He worked both in person with Austin composer Matthew Wiedemann and via internet with UK musician Jon Attwood (Yellow6) to craft a soundtrack that elicits emotion through both traditional and modern elements. As soon as a rough cut was complete, *The Retrieval* was invited to several top film festivals. The team decided to wait to premiere at the 2013 SXSW Film Festival, where lead actor Tishuan Scott received the Special Jury Prize for Best Acting.

Crew Biographies

CHRIS ESKA - *Writer/Director/Editor*

Chris Eska was raised in the village of Ottine, Texas (pop. 98). He studied sociology and art at Rice University before attending UCLA's MFA film directing program. His short films have screened on PBS, at the Coca-Cola Refreshing Filmmaker's Competition, the Texas Filmmaker's Showcase, and at film festivals worldwide. *Doki-Doki*, his UCLA master's thesis film, premiered on the national PBS series *Independent Lens* with an introduction by Susan Sarandon. His first feature, *August Evening*, won the \$50,000 Target Filmmaker Award and was nominated for two 2008 Independent Spirit Awards, where it took home the Cassavetes Award.

JACOB ESQUIVEL - *Producer*

Jacob Esquivel grew up in San Antonio, Texas and attended The University of Texas at Austin, earning his BS in Radio/Television/Film in 2005. Along with a few other members of The Retrieval crew, he worked on Eska's first feature, *August Evening*, as the film's location sound recordist. Currently based out of Los Angeles, Jacob has worked on the production side of commercials, music videos and independent features.

JASON WEHLING - *Producer*

Jason's producing credits include: *August Evening*, awarded top prizes at the Los Angeles and Woodstock Film Festivals and winner of an Independent Spirit John Cassavetes Award; the PBS doc, *A Place to Dance*; Paul Gordon's 2010 SXSW and Venice Film Fest standout, *The Happy Poet*; Jonny Mars' 2012 SXSW premiere *America's Parking Lot*; and Spencer Parson's 2012 Los Angeles Film Festival premiere *Saturday Morning Massacre*. He also produced the feature anthology film *Fourplay*, currently playing a national theatrical tour. From 2002–2005, he served as a programmer on PBS' *Independent Lens* series and he current works as a senior producer with Austin's innovative Arts + Labor creative community production company.

ALAN BERG - *Executive Producer*

An award-winning documentary filmmaker and native Texan, Alan co-founded Arts+Labor in 2004 with his wife, Kristin Johansen-Berg. His films have screened at *Cannes*, *SXSW*, and *The Los Angeles Film Festival*, and he's had two documentaries nationally distributed by PBS. He has won more than twenty state and national awards for his reporting and worked on the PBS *Best Practices in Journalism* project. Alan has also taught reporting and long-form narrative storytelling at the University of Texas.

TOM BORDERS - *Executive Producer*

Tom Borders received his B.A. from the University of Notre Dame and an M.A. from the University of Michigan. He was co-founder and former CEO of Borders Books Shop, Inc. He is currently President of Sixth Street Films Inc. Borders is a Director of the Bank of Ann Arbor and is on the Board of Directors of the Tapestry Foundation. He is former Chair of the Harry Ransom Center Advisory Council, and has been a member of the Council for ten years.

SIBYL AVERY JACKSON - *Executive Producer*

Sibyl Avery Jackson is an author/screenwriter and a member of the Writers Guild of America West. She has vast experience as a writer, editor, researcher, public and media relations specialist in the corporate/private sectors, as well as in public television and radio. Her background also includes being a researcher and editor at the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library in Austin, Texas, and a spokesperson for one of the largest wireless service providers where, in addition to public and media relations, she also developed and managed government relations and corporate giving. The latter experience inspired Sibyl to write an award-winning suspense/thriller novel, *Degree of Caution*. She has been active for many years in securing funding for various projects and has served on several boards, including the Houston Museum of African American Culture. Sibyl has a B.A. in English from Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia, and currently lives in Houston, Texas, with her husband, Alfred.

YASU TANIDA - *Director of Photography*

Named in the 2010 International Cinematographer Guild's Generation Next 5 DP's Under 35 and Variety's 2008 Top 10 Cinematographers to Watch lists, Yasu Tanida brings his unique style to every production. Yasu shot two seasons of the single camera style TV series "The Wannabes Starring Savvy" for the Starz Network. He also just wrapped the A&E pilot directed by Joe Carnahan, "Those Who Kill" starring Chloe Sevigny, a coming of age film with director Quentin Lee, "White Frog", and his feature starring Zoe Saldana, "The Heart Specialist" just came out on over 500 screens. He is currently shooting his second collaboration with Joe Carnahan on the NBC pilot, "The Blacklist" in New York.

CAROLINE KARLEN - *Production Designer*

Caroline Karlen has worked as a costume designer and production designer on numerous feature films (GRETCHEN, THE HAPPY POET, LOVERS OF HATE, FOURPLAY, SATURDAY MORNING MASSACRE, THE BOUNCEBACK) and music videos (ARCADE FIRE, HERMAN DUNE). She has a BFA from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design and an MFA from the University of Texas at Austin.

MATTHEW WIEDEMANN - *Original Score*

Matthew Wiedemann is an Austin, Texas based composer. He has a degree in music composition from The University of Texas, and has written three full-length feature film scores, music for national ad campaigns (Schick, Toyota), underscores for TV shows on Fox and MTV, and instrumental tracks with Lloyd Maines (Dixie Chicks, The Flatlanders). In the music technology arena, he has written articles in Keyboard Magazine and worked with artists ranging from Stevie Wonder to The Smashing Pumpkins. He continues to perform with Austin-based singer-songwriters and compose for visual media.

JON ATTWOOD (YELLOW6) - *Original Music*

Guitarist, keyboardist, composer and programmer originally from Essex (UK), now living in Leicestershire (UK). He started as a punk musician, and in 1996 he started to record solo work under the name Yellow6 with his first release in 1998. Till now he is still composing minimal atmospheric music.

Cast Biographies

TISHUAN SCOTT as *Nate*

Tishuan was born October 27, 1979 in Shreveport, Louisiana. He attended Morehouse College in Atlanta, GA where he matriculated towards earning his Bachelor of Arts in Drama and Psychology. He then attended the University of California - Los Angeles School of Theater, Film & Television where he received his Master of Fine Arts in Acting. Tishuan can currently be seen in Andrew Bujalski's film *COMPUTER CHESS*, and in his SXSW 2013 Special Jury Recognition for Acting performance in Chris Eska's Civil War Western, *THE RETRIEVAL*.

ASHTON SANDERS as *Will*

Ashton has performed in the theatre since the age of eight years old. His experience includes lead roles at the Los Angeles Theater, Nate Holden Performing arts Center and Central Los Angeles High School of performing Arts. Ashton continues to receive professional training in acting, voice and dance at Amazing Grace Conservatory under Wendy Raquel Robinson and Central Los Angeles High School of Visual and performing Arts.

KESTON JOHN as *Marcus*

Keston John trained at the University Of Central Florida Conservatory Theatre, where he graduated in 2006 with a Bachelor of Fine Art in Acting. John is based in Los Angeles, where he works in the film, television, and commercial worlds – including recurring roles on “24” and “Lincoln Heights”.

BILL OBERST JR. as *Burrell*

Bill Oberst Jr. has been a working actor for 16 years, the first 12 on the east coast stage. Since moving to LA in 2008 he has amassed 96 film and TV credits including lead roles in the award-winning docudrama *Sherman's March*, The Hallmark Channel movie *The Shunning* and a multitude of independent films. In 2012 Bill's performances were recognized with a Daytime Emmy Award, a Golden Cob Award for Best Rising B-Movie Actor and the Shockfest International Film Festival's Best Actor Award.

CHRISTINE HORN as *Rachel*

Christine Horn is actress, producer, director and singer/songwriter. She has performed with the Broadway, Las Vegas and both US National Touring companies of Disney's “The Lion King” and has extensive regional theatre credits. Most recent film credits include: “Blood Done Sign My Name” and “Stomp The Yard.” In addition to acting, Christine runs her own record label and production company, (Chocolate Superstar Productions) and is currently working on her 3rd studio CD release and a children's cooking show.

ALFONSO FREEMAN as *Isaac*

Alfonso Freeman is an accomplished actor, singer, and voiceover artist with twenty years in the industry. He is known for his starring role in the cult film, *Ten 'til Noon*. He has also starred in a number of films and television shows, most notably, his starring role alongside Jack Nicholson and Alfonso's father, Morgan Freeman in *The Bucket List*. Currently you can hear Alfonso as the international voice of the Uncle Ben's products. He can also be seen in a number of and high profile commercials across America.