

Director's Statement:

Fantasyland is an intimate film about a family torn apart by something none of them can understand; and for me the story is personal. Philip's confusion, Mary's striving for normalcy, and most of all young Jimmy's wild swings between admiration and overwhelming fear for his father are all scenes that have played out, not just in my head, but in my own home. I have seen firsthand the ravages but also the brilliance of a life lived at the extremes.

Although this is an adult story, I have chosen to write the story largely from the child's point of view. I have seen how European films, also made on a small budget, create an incredible amount of tension from the observations of an "innocent". This is a film in which the outward manifestation of emotions is present and not hidden. Both Philip and Mary "act out" in front of their son; and I want the startling, uncomfortable and gritty feel of these encounters to come through.

When Philip is enjoying the high of his mania, I will visualize his point of view with the colors and shapes of images distorted by a kaleidoscope — literally integrated into the story in the form of a side trip to a famous New York tourist destination. In this way, Jimmy, like the audience, comes to identify Phillip's mental shifts with the real experience of seeing through a prism. Through this lens, the manic high does indeed appear to be very beautiful and infinitely fascinating.

In contrast, Jimmy sees his mother as the "normal" parent. He knows that her goal is to keep their life stable although, like any pre-teen, he feels smothered by the control she exerts. The idea of "freedom" is clearly reflected in the illicit road trip undertaken by the Carol men and the openness of the road must be shot so that it is as compelling for the audience as it is to young Jimmy.

If character defines the emotional landscape of the film, it also defines the physical landscape. I have imagined this film in various specific locales in upstate New York, where drab and depressed mill towns dot a landscape that is both civilized and raw. What first attracts Mary to Philip, is the boldness with which he paints their surroundings - seeming to translate the banal, almost somber tones of their grey factory town - into broad swathes of color. The stark contrast between Philip's transforming vision and her dull existence is Jimmy's revelation and the empathy he comes to feel for his father's vision is the ultimate gift from father to son.

Music will play a key role in the project and I've enlisted the collaboration of legendary indie-rocker, Paul Westerberg. Paul's music crackles with conflicting emotions and kamikaze rock & roll fire. His music has a haunting clarity, lonely when Philip stares into eternal darkness, and sympathetic not just for the poor devil on the ledge but also for the witnesses below.