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A MAGNET RELEASE

# INDEMNITY

A film by Travis Taute

124 minutes / South Africa

**Official Selection**

2021 Fantasia Festival – World Premiere

<http://www.magnetreleasing.com/indemnity/>

## FINAL PRESS NOTES

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## SYNOPSIS

INDEMNITY is a high-octane action thriller written and directed by South African filmmaker Travis Taute (Netflix's BLOOD & WATER) that follows an ex-Cape Town fireman (Jarrid Geduld) whose world is rocked when he wakes up next to his wife's dead body with no recollection of what transpired and all evidence pointing to him as the killer. Labeled the prime suspect, Theo quickly finds himself hunted by sinister forces and a notoriously ruthless deputy chief of police and embarks on a breakneck mission to uncover the truth behind his wife's death before a terrifying conspiracy changes the course of a nation forever.

INDEMNITY is the latest from Cape Town production studio Gambit Films, producers of BLOOD & WATER and instrumental in bringing South African genre cinema into the mainstream. The film marks the feature debut of writer/director Taute, co-writer of Nosipho Dumisa's award-winning NUMBER 37 and co-director of the short that preceded it by the same name, as well as a writer and director on BLOOD & WATER. Reaching a whole new scale of production for South African action films, INDEMNITY's lead, Jarrid Geduld, spent three months training with stunt masters Vernon Willemse and Grant Powell (MAD MAX: FURY ROAD, TOMB RAIDER) and performed all his own stunts, including a record-breaking hanging suspension stunt performed from the 21st floor.

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## ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

A nonstop thrill ride packed with stylishly choreographed fights, car crashes, explosions, daring fire rescues and a heart-stopping drop out of a 21<sup>st</sup>-story window, *Indemnity* is perhaps South Africa's most ambitious homegrown action film. Adding to the fun, lead actor Jarrid Geduld, a newcomer to the genre, performs all of his own spectacular stunts.

Writer-director Travis Taute began dreaming of making an action thriller that would raise the bar for local feature production nearly eight years ago. "It's my favorite genre to watch," he explains, "especially the kind of films that were produced in the late '90s and early 2000s. Films that really had heart, great characters, and a strong message."

As Taute worked with producers Bradley Joshua and Benjamin Overmeyer through their Cape Town-based Gambit Films to get *Indemnity* in front of the cameras, Geduld was always the director's top choice to play protagonist Theo Abrams, a firefighter on the run after his wife is killed and he is accused of the murder. "He was one of the first people I saw and I just knew he was going to be the character," says Taute. "He brought such vulnerability and an empathetic nature that you can't help but feel for him. He conveys so much emotion with just his eyes. At the end of the day there was no one else we wanted for the role."

Geduld loved the film's concept and welcomed its potential to showcase his home country's abundant filmmaking talent. "I thought it was an epic opportunity for the South African film industry to really test itself with this genre," says the actor. "We have some of the best people to pull off these kinds of things, but we don't usually have the budgets."

He says he was initially surprised to be considered for the role. "I thought there were other South African actors who had more of the look and feel I pictured for Theo. But once I took some time to dissect the character and understand the subject matter and the message behind it, I really wanted to do it. So I was just guns-blazing, strongly advocating to be a part of the project."

Geduld and the filmmakers agreed that having him do his own stunt work would give *Indemnity* an added level of excitement. "When you use a stunt double, you always have to cut away," he observes. "Growing up, when I watched action films I could always see that it wasn't the actual actor."

But Geduld, best known for his performances in the 2018 true-crime drama *Ellen: The Story of Ellen Pakkies*, in which he stars as a young man suffering from drug addiction, and the quirky drama series "Dwaalster," had never headlined an action thriller, let alone one in which he jumps out a high-rise window. Fortunately, he has always been athletic.

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“I grew up playing rugby, I did gymnastics, I did ballet. Then I went on to do break dancing and, without any formal training, I eventually delved into boxing and MMA. So I had a strong physical background with things that really tested my body.”

## **And...Action**

Overseeing *Indemnity*'s copious action sequences were stunt coordinator Vernon Willemse and fight choreographer Grant Powell, co-founders of Cape Town-based Stunteam, whose recent combined credits include *Tomb Raider*, *The Mauritanian*, *The Mummy* and *Mad Max: Fury Road*.

As it happened, both had known Geduld since he was a child actor. In fact, Powell had served as his stunt double on his first two films: 2004's *Boy Called Twist* and 2005's *The Flyer*. “I was the shortest stuntman at the time so I was hired to double this kid,” he recalls. “Years later I worked with him again on *10,000 B.C.* So I had known Jarrid for many years and I knew he was physically inclined.”

It's one thing to be naturally athletic and quite another to be prepared for the types of physicality required of Geduld in *Indemnity*. So within days of his signing on to star in the film, Willemse and Powell immersed the actor in a more than three-month-long intensive training regime aided by a personal trainer, a jiu jitsu instructor, a boxing coach, a physiotherapist and a nutritionist. At the same time he worked daily with Willemse and Powell and their team to learn the fight choreography and prepare for the various stunts.

“They put me through a very strict plan, starting with baby steps and then eventually making things quite difficult toward the end,” says Geduld. “So by the time we got onto set, I was familiar with whatever I was going to be doing on any given day, whether it be hand-to-hand combat or using a firearm or being blown out of a car or whatever. I was really privileged to be able to live and be treated like a stuntman through Vernon and Grant's guidance.”

The Stunteam pair designed and staged *Indemnity*'s carefully crafted mayhem based on conversations with Taute about the film's dramatic and emotional elements. “I had ideas of how I wanted it to look, but these guys are the experts in that field,” says the director. “They know how to create something that's incredibly believable. Grant was very focused on the fight choreography of the film while Vernon looked after pretty much all the stunts. I would even go so far as to say he was kind of an action director.”

For the fights, Powell filmed “pre-viz” sequences using professional stunt people standing in for the actors, which he then gave to Taute to review. “Then we'd have a conversation about whether it fit with the language of the film,” Powell explains. “He'd look at it and either say great, or no, that's a bit too over-the-top or this character maybe wouldn't have done that, how about something more like this?”

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## **Playing with Fire**

*Indemnity*'s explosive opening sequence depicts the origin of Theo's PTSD, one of the film's central plot elements. As he and his fellow firefighters attempt a daring rescue, tragedy strikes and two of his colleagues are killed.

The scene was filmed with actual fire, which required Geduld to go through specialized training. "I did various firefighter workshops to learn about the equipment and got experience playing with fire," says Geduld. "That scene was one of the coolest things for me. Literally walking through flames. What a rush!"

Under his firefighter suit, the actor wore cotton long johns and a layer of Nomex, a fire-retardant material used by racecar drivers that is capable of withstanding temperatures of up to almost 700 degrees Fahrenheit. Fire-retardant gel was applied to any areas of skin that might become exposed, such as where his sleeves and gloves met. "We prepped him like he was going to be set on fire," says Willemse, "even though he was just walking through the fire."

Filming took place at a fire station training facility and used gas flames operated by the film's special effects department. "We could control how long the flames stayed up, meaning that it would be on for two seconds, and then it would be gone," explains Willemse. "The compression and force inside the shack was immense, but we tested it substantially."

It was one of the most difficult scenes to film, says Powell, who plays one of the firefighters who is burned to death. "It's all in camera. There was no way we could cheat it because the firemen's visors are clear, so you can see their faces. That was one of the scenes that, if it went wrong, would generally go very wrong. There's no middle with that. But I knew Jarrid was in full protective gear so would be able to perform the stunt safely."

## **A Leap of Faith**

In the film's most spectacular stunt, Theo climbs out a 21<sup>st</sup>-story window, drops down one floor and crashes through the window below in order to evade his pursuers. Not surprisingly, the sequence, which was filmed at an abandoned luxury hotel, required extensive preparation on the part of both the stunt professionals and Geduld.

"Just the thought of putting an actor out of this window and dropping him a full story was a bit harrowing," says Powell. "But we've been in the game a long time and we knew it was totally possible and could be done safely. First, though, we had to approach Jarrid and ask him if he had any fears of heights and wire work."

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Geduld admits he didn't really know the answer to that question, having never been put to the test. To find out, they put the actor in a harness and suspended him at incrementally increasing heights. "They showed me how to hang, how to walk down walls," he says. "By day four or five they said it was time for me to go and try it out of the actual window. That was the first day when I felt, oh my, I'm really going to do this. I remember feeling jittery but never scared. I guess I'm a bit of an adrenaline junkie."

Responsibility for installing the cable that supported Geduld at that dizzying height was key rigger Leander Lacey, a former circus acrobat turned stunt coordinator and performer with South Africa's Stunt Network. "We've got a very longstanding working relationship," says Willemse. "Leander himself hung out the rig. We tested it multiple times. Jarrid was excited to get in the harness, but we took it slow. We let him sit there, we let him drop a little bit, very slowly, and then we worked up to the performance speed you see in the movie."

Taute says he never considered having Geduld perform the stunt closer to the ground and altering it digitally to appear to be taking place nearly 200 feet in the air. "Any film I've watched with stunts that have been performed for real has always given me more entertainment value and a more immersive experience," he says. "That's exactly what I wanted for the audience with that scene."

Geduld believes filming the stunt at that towering height paid off dramatically. "I feel like it captured a moment of pure desperation and survival on the part of Theo," he says. "It's a literal leap of faith. And that's what survival is, doing something without knowing if it's going to go right or wrong."

Willemse agrees that when it comes to stunts, there's nothing like the real thing. "The audience will know what is real and what's not, and the key point for me on everything — the flames, the house, the car stuff, the heights — it adds an element of realism," he says. "And we want the audience to go on a journey with this character and feel like they could be in a situation like that. It's not a green screen or blue screen. It's absolutely real."

## **Safe as Houses**

Although the filmmakers' goal was to create a thrilling action experience, Taute says the top priority on set was maintaining the safety of the cast and crew. "We had extremely experienced people heading each department. In addition to Vernon and Grant, we had an amazing team of riggers and SFX coordinators, all guys who had been working in the industry many years. So we knew we were never going to take any shortcuts when it came to safety. And it was also important for me that Jarrid — and all of the actors — felt like there was always the option of pulling out if they didn't feel safe in any given moment, which thankfully never occurred."

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Geduld concurs that safety precautions on *Indemnity* were second to none. “Every precaution was meticulously mapped out,” says the actor. “A lot of action went down, but it never went down if everybody from the cast to the crew to the security guards didn’t feel it was safe. We had a medic on set 24/7 and there were maybe 10 stunties with the stunt coordinator just keeping an eye on everything. There were also fire and rescue safety people if there was fire involved. I never felt unsafe, and I can wholeheartedly say I never saw anyone feeling unsafe at any point.”



## **ABOUT THE FILMMAKER**

### **TRAVIS TAUTE – Director, Writer**

Travis Taute is a writer, director, and producer whose body of work spans across multiple mediums in film and television. As a co-founder of Gambit Films in 2009, Travis's drive for creative excellence through genre-defining entertainment is wired into his DNA, forming a key component that enables the continued growth and success of Gambit Films. A wildly ambitious storyteller, his love for the medium and need to push boundaries has seen some of his work win numerous awards. He's the co-writer of Nosipho Dumisa's award-winning NUMBER 37 (SXSW 2017), and co-director of the originating short for which, he won the 2015 SAFTA. He's also a producer on the popular local soap drama, SUIDOOSTER, which has already aired over 10 000 hours on broadcast television. As well as being a writer and director on the hit Netflix series, BLOOD & WATER, Travis's debut feature film, INDEMNITY, a subversive high-octane action thriller which has its world premiere at Fantasia Film Festival in August 2020, is set to debut in US theatres in February 2022.



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## ABOUT THE CAST

### **JARRID GEDULD – Theo Abrams**

My name is JARRID DONOVAN GEDULD, I was born on 13 JANUARY 1990 at Panorama Hospital in Cape Town South Africa to parents NORMA and DONOVAN Geduld and my siblings KEERAN and NICHOLA Geduld.

I grew up on the CAPE FLATS in areas known as BELHAR and EERSTERIVER, I attended Belhar Primary, and then did my high School career at MALIBU HIGH in EERSTERIVER.

In 2003, while in grade 7 attending BELHAR PRIMARY I was scouted by a production company by the name of MONKEY FILMS, who were looking for a young boy to play the TITLE ROLE in their film called "A BOY CALLED TWIST" which was based on the CHARLES DICKENS NOVEL "OLIVER TWIST". After months of back and forth auditions I eventually got cast as the iconic OLIVER TWIST in SOUTH AFRICAN ADAPTATION of the DICKENS CLASSIC, and so my acting career kicked off.

I then found myself thrust into the entertainment industry, not knowing anything about the industry at the time was a difficult task. By 2004 I landed my next LEAD role in a feature film called THE FLYER. I found myself juggling with school, and the demands of the film industry.

by 2018 I won my FIRST major award as BEST ACTOR IN A FEATURE FILM at THE SOUTH AFRICAN FILM AND TELEVISION AWARDS for my portrayal of ABIE PAKKIES in the film "DIE ELLEN PAKKIES STORIE" based on the life of ELLEN PAKKIES and her son ABIE PAKKIES, which was masterfully Directed by Daryne Joshua.

In 2020 I LANDED another LEAD role in the film INDEMNITY produced by GAMBIT FILMS and DIRECTED by Travis Taute, SOUTH AFRICA'S FIRST EVER ACTION MOVIE. This is one of the greatest achievements of my life being able to say that we, a group of creatives on the AFRICAN CONTINENT so often overlooked and undermined, did something that will forever be written in our history.

I crossed over from actor to DIRECTOR IN 2019. I am currently one of 2 DIRECTORS on a very popular South African SOAP OPERA called ARENDSVLEI. As a director I hope to eventually one day direct my first feature film in the coming years.

2022 marks my 20 years as an ACTOR now 32 years old and a credible body of work and numerous awards both local and international. I look forward to the next 20 years.

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## **CREDITS**

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY **TRAVIS TAUTE**

PRODUCED BY **BENJAMIN OVERMEYER AND BRADLEY JOSHUA**

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER **HELENA SPRING**

MUSIC BY **KYLE SHEPHERD**

PRODUCTION DESIGN BY **CHRISTIAN JOUBERT**

EDITOR **SIMON BEESLEY**

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY **ZENN VAN ZYL, S.A.S.C.**

### **CAST:**

**JARRID GEDULD**

**GAIL MABALANE**

**ANDRE JACOBS**

**NICOLE FORTUIN**

**ABDU ADAMS**

**HANNES VAN WYK**

**LOUW VENTE**