

LUCID

Directed by Sean Garrity

Canada 2005
Colour, 35mm, 92 minutes

www.lucidthemovie.com

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SHORT SYNOPSIS

Joel Rothman is an insomniac.

Maybe it's because his wife just left him. Maybe it's because his young daughter has become despondent and detached. Maybe it's because he's just been assigned three psychotherapy patients, all exhibiting extremely dangerous symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Maybe it's because Joel is their last hope for help.

As he starts to learn his patients' secrets, he begins to discover that the key to helping them could be the key to helping himself. Now if only he could stay awake behind the wheel of his car...

LONG SYNOPSIS

Joel Rothman is an insomniac. Every part of his life is affected – his boss wants him suspended, dizziness and exhaustion make the simplest tasks impossible, and getting behind the wheel of his car could be fatal.

He struggles to communicate with his young daughter, who has not been the same since his wife left them. While Jenny sleeps, Joel obsessively replays his wife's final answering machine message – a bitter, angry good-bye.

With his job security dangling by a thread, he is assigned three psychotherapy patients; all showing extreme symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Victor Koblinsky is angry, violent and unpredictable, and clings to the paranoid conspiracy theory that the government is out to get him. Chandra Mergulhao is timid, soft-spoken and unassuming; spending all of her time caring for her nonexistent comatose sister and forming theories that the entire city is mysteriously shrinking. Sophie Winters is sarcastic, disillusioned and unaffected. After her repeated suicide attempts fail miserably, she starts to believe she is immortal. As therapy progresses, the three desperate patients begin to share each other's delusions and hallucinations. They begin to see repeated versions of themselves – doppelgangers – around every corner. As they grow closer, they become increasingly convinced that their delusions are, in fact, reality.

Joel's determination to help his last three patients is met with frustrating resistance, and soon, they begin to complicate his life. Chandra becomes attracted to Joel and visits him at his house, with amorous intentions, while his daughter sleeps upstairs. Sophie tries to prove her immortality by forcing Joel into witness her suicide attempt. Victor becomes increasingly paranoid, hell-bent on getting a message to the head of the CSIS. He corners Joel in a crowded shopping mall food court, flashing his gun and threatening to use violence if Joel doesn't cooperate.

Things with Jenny, Joel's nine-year-old daughter, aren't any better. Unforgiving of her father, she becomes increasingly despondent and angry. Her torment begins to surface at night, when her sleepwalking leads her out into the streets and into oncoming traffic. As he desperately tries to get through to her, the sleep clinic insists that Joel's insomnia is dangerous to himself and those around him. His boss suspends him, and his patients are left to fend for themselves.

In their desperation, Joel's patients take an innocent man hostage. Unable to leave Jenny alone, he is forced to bring her to the scene of the crime, where he must miraculously defuse the situation and rescue the hostage. Just as it looks like he has things under control, Jenny flees the scene. Joel runs after her into the night, where she is violently struck down by a speeding car. She is rushed to the hospital in critical condition.

Victor, Chandra and Sophie convince themselves that they have discovered a way to rid themselves of their delusions and hallucinations. They must take Joel back to the scene of their original trauma and kill him, effectively breaking the spell and setting things right. Finally, the group of four returns to Joel's office building for a final therapy session, where the turmoil comes full circle and the truth is revealed.

CAST

Jonas Chernick as Joel
Callum Keith Rennie as Victor
Michelle Nolden as Chandra
Lindy Booth as Sophie
and introducing
Brianna Williams as Jenny

CREW

Director	Sean Garrity
Producers	Sean Garrity Jamie Brown
Writers	Sean Garrity Jonas Chernick
Director of Photography	Michael Marshall
Production Designer	Rejean LaBrie
Editor	John Gurdebeke
Music Composer	Richard Moody
Sound Coordinator	Russ Dyck
Executive Producer	Jamie Brown
Line Producer	Mark Reid
Casting Director	Kathy Driscoll
First Assistant Director	Dave Antoniuk
Camera Operator	Bryan Sanders
Gaffer	Laurence Mardon
Costume Designer	Meg McMillan
Visual Effects	Frantic Films

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

“Joel Rothman” (32) – played by Jonas Chernick

“Joel Rothman” is a psychotherapist with an impossible case of insomnia. He is forgetful, disorganized and eternally weary. He makes the wrong choices, despite his heartfelt attempts to be a good father and a competent doctor.

Ever since his wife and nine-year-old daughter Jenny caught him in bed with another woman, Joel has become obsessed with his terrible mistake and the consequent unraveling of his family. Haunted by his own guilt, he punishes himself by obsessively replaying his wife’s angry final message left on his answering machine. Left alone to raise his daughter, his substandard fathering skills are challenged by Jenny’s unpredictable, dangerous behavior, which starts to occur after Joel informs her of their imminent relocation to Gimli, the cottage town where the infidelity occurred.

Joel’s methods as a psychotherapist are just as questionable. His job security at the private HMO where he works is threatened when, in an attempt to thwart his transfer to Gimli, he refuses to release his final three patients; a group who all suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. In a desperate attempt to gain personal redemption, Joel dedicates himself to helping these patients whose delusions, acts of violence and suicidal tendencies seem to be worsening every day.

Joel Rothman is a man seeking deliverance in the eyes of his daughter, his patients, and himself. Painfully aware of how much his mistakes have cost those around him, Joel is making one final attempt to set things right. Now if he can only stay awake behind the wheel of his car...

“Victor Koblinsky” (45) – played by Callum Keith Rennie

“Victor Koblinsky” is unpredictable. His anger and frustration are slowly bubbling up to the surface, threatening to explode. Disenchanted with his white-collar lifestyle, his unhappy marriage and relationship with his teenage son, Victor re-defines the term “mid-life crisis.”

Following a domestic dispute, Victor is sentenced to group therapy as a condition of his probation. Initially resistant to therapy of any kind, his mental condition worsens as therapy progresses, and his violent eruptions and conspiracy theories become increasingly grandiose.

As Victor becomes more paranoid, he starts to carry a gun - searching non-stop for a man whom he believes is coordinating a government experiment and using him as its subject. Victor’s intelligence and keen intellect assist him in uniting his fellow group patients in thwarting Joel’s attempts at therapy and trying to convince Joel that their shared hallucinations are real.

“Chandra Mergulhao” (30) – played by Michelle Nolden

“Chandra Mergulhao” is soft-spoken, timid and low in self-esteem, which makes her susceptible to periods of depression. Easily swayed, Chandra struggles with identity disassociation, a symptom of PTSD. This is greatly magnified by her witnessing a terrible car accident where her sister was struck down and left in a coma.

Chandra acts as nurse and caretaker for her sister who now lies in a bed in Chandra’s apartment. Chandra seeks affection from the men around her; Victor, whom she bonds with during therapy after realizing he shares her delusions, and Joel; who she sees as a possible savior. Therapy continues and Chandra begins to observe strange patterns in her world, convinced that the city is shrinking in size with each passing day.

Chandra uses her emotional sensitivity to identify Joel’s personal demons, and helps him to solve some of his own mysteries.

“Sophie Winters” (21) – played by Lindy Booth

“Sophie Winters” is disenchanted, sarcastic and unaffected. Her addiction to prescription drugs underscores her every move. Without any visible family or friends, and detesting her job at a local coffee shop, Sophie lives her life in a constant haze of apathy.

Sophie is unable to differentiate between dream and reality, and often flits between both with no warning or indication whatsoever. This complicated psychological condition leads Sophie to attempt suicide. After multiple failed attempts, Sophie comes to the conclusion that she is immortal. These beliefs are challenged through continuous exposure to group therapy, where it is discovered that she and the two other patients share some curious similarities.

Despite a crippling fear of the elevator in the lobby of Joel’s office building, Sophie initially returns to therapy in hopes of scoring prescription drugs, but is eventually convinced of Joel’s commitment to help her “get better”. With this new support in place, Sophie finds the courage to face her greatest fears – culminating in her showdown with the mysterious elevator.

CAST & CREW BIOS

Sean Garrity – Writer, Producer, Director

Sean Garrity's first feature film, *INerTia*, shot on 35mm, was awarded the **City TV Award for Best First Feature Film** at the 2001 Toronto International Film Festival, and earned him **Best Director** at the 2001 FilmCan Festival. The Globe & Mail named him one of three "Canadian Filmmakers to Watch" in 2002.

Sean returned to Winnipeg after an 11-year absence to begin a career as a filmmaker and musician in 1997, quickly creating award-winning music videos for Winnipeg artists, including the Wyrd Sisters, Mark Reeves and Richard Moody. He also completed a number of documentaries and short films, including *Middle*, which won awards at film festivals in Toronto and Vancouver, and *How Much for a Half Kilo?*, which won **Best Film** at the Calgary Independent Film Festival, was nominated for a 2001 Blizzard Award and was later sold to television. *Buenos Aires Souvenir*, which premiered at the Vancouver International Film Festival in 2001, was an official selection in competition at the prestigious Clermond-Ferrand Short Film Festival in 2002. The film was sold for broadcast in Canada, France, Portugal and Germany.

Sean first studied film production and theory at Toronto's York University and continued his studies at the Instituto de Arte Cinematografico de Avellaneda in Buenos Aires. There he produced and directed an experimental collage film which was played at film festivals in Avellaneda and Santa Fe, Argentina. After three years of living in Japan and traveling through Asia, Sean made a short abstract collage video in Japanese called *Departure* in 1996.

Sean lives in Winnipeg where he is in perpetual development on new films, and works as a musician to pay rent.

Jamie Brown – Executive Producer, Producer

Jamie Brown joined Frantic Films as a partner in November 2000. Since then, Frantic has won many awards including being named one of Profit Magazine's "Hottest Start-ups" in 2001 and one of the Profit 100 "Fastest Growing Companies" in Canada in 2004.

Jamie is the creator, producer and executive producer of many highly successful programs including the "Quest" series. *Quest for the Bay* was the highest-rated documentary series on History Television in 2001/02 and *Klondike: The Quest for Gold* was its highest rated new series. Jamie's work extends to other genres such as the CTV movie *Zeyda and the Hitman*, and a new prime time series for Global Television, *Last Chance for Romance*. In the fall of 2004 Brown began production on three projects: *Bomber Boys* and *Ken Leishman: The Flying Bandit* for History Television, as well as *The First Year* for the Life Network.

Prior to joining Frantic, Jamie was an Executive Producer at Credo Entertainment, where he created, produced and executive produced *Pioneer Quest*, the first "living-history" project made in North America. Before joining Credo, Jamie was part of the Business & Legal Affairs team at Nelvana Limited, and Director of Business and Legal Affairs at Sullivan Entertainment. He began his career as a lawyer with the prominent Toronto law firm McMillan Binch, where he worked in corporate finance and entertainment law.

Named one of Canada's **Top 40 Under 40** in 2003, Jamie received the **Lions Gate Innovative Producer Award** that same year, and the I.H. Asper **Broadcast Entrepreneur of the Future Award** in 2002.

Jonas Chernick – Co-Writer, “Joel”

Jonas Chernick co-wrote the screenplay for *Lucid* along with Sean Garrity, as a follow-up to *Inertia*. In September 2001, they appeared at the Toronto International Film Festival in support of *Inertia* – in which Jonas plays the lead role of Joseph Schrieber. Along with writer-director Garrity, Jonas spearheaded the collaborative process, which involved elaborate improvisation and work-shopping. For his role in *Inertia*, Jonas was awarded **Best Performance by a Leading Actor** at the 2002 Blizzard Awards.

As an actor, Jonas’ film credits include a co-starring role opposite Kevin Pollak and Liane Balaban in *Seven Times Lucky*, a feature that premiered at the 2004 Sundance Film Festival. In FX’s *The Pentagon Papers*, Jonas plays real-life journalist Neil Sheehan who won the Pulitzer Prize after exposing a government scandal in the New York Times in 1971. Other film credits include *Mayday* (CBS), *Eloise at the Plaza* (Disney), *The Crooked E: the Unshredded Truth about Enron* (CBS), supernatural thriller *The Glow* (Fox), *Cowboys and Indians: The Killing of J.J. Harper* (CBC), *Defending Our Kids: The Julie Posey Story*, *A Woman Is A Helluva Thing*, *Nostradamus*, and many others.

Television credits include a regular role during the first season of the Alliance Atlantis/CTV series *The Eleventh Hour*, which won the Gemini Award for **Best Dramatic Series** in 2003. Television guest appearances include *Queer as Folk* (Showtime), *The Adventures of Shirley Holmes* (YTV and Fox), Gene Rodenberry’s *Earth: Final Conflict* (Sci-Fi Network/Space Channel), *Mutant X* (Fireworks) and *Doc* (PAX).

Jonas is currently in development on two other feature film screenplays. *Teenland* is a high concept teen comedy, co-written and produced by Corey Marr (producer of the upcoming feature film *Summer Babe*). *Highball* is a psychological thriller, co-written with Elan Mastai (*Alone in the Dark*, *MVP 2*) and produced by Kim Todd (Global TV’s *Falcon Beach*, *Leaving Metropolis*, *The Adventures of Shirley Holmes*).

Callum Keith Rennie – “Victor”

Callum Keith Rennie was born in Sunderland, England, raised in Alberta, Canada, and currently resides in Vancouver. He was first struck with the passion to act while living in Edmonton. Starting out in university radio and working his way to the renowned Shaw Festival, Callum moved to Vancouver and quickly caught the eye of producers and directors.

Further to his many television appearances, Callum landed his first independent feature film role in director Mina Shum’s *Double Happiness* for which he garnered a Genie Award nomination for **Best Supporting Actor**. He continued to star in many Canadian films including *Curtis’s Charm*, *Men With Guns*, and Bruce MacDonald’s critically acclaimed *Hardcore Logo*. He concurrently starred on several television series including *My Life As A Dog* (winning a **Best Actor** Gemini Award), *Twitch City* and *Due South*.

Callum went on to star in many other features including *Flower & Garnet*, *Falling Angels*, Christopher Nolan’s *Memento*, David Cronenberg’s *eXistenz*, Lynne Stopkewich’s *Suspicious River*, Bruce McDonald’s *Picture Claire*, and Don McKellar’s *Last Night*, which earned Callum a **Best Supporting Actor** Genie Award.

Callum recently wrapped work in South Africa on Harry Hooks’ *Whiskey Echo*, and on Keoni Waxman’s *Pool Hall Prophets* in New Orleans. Other recent projects include Daniel MacIvor’s *Wilby Wonderful*, Stephen King’s mini series *Kingdom Hospital*, and David Goyer’s *Blade Trinity*. He will also be seen opposite Jon Voight in the mini-series *Five People You Meet In Heaven*.

Michelle Nolden – “Chandra”

Michelle Nolden is definitely an emerging talent to watch out for. She joined Colm Feore and Earl Pastko as the femme fatale “Eloise” in David Weaver’s feature debut *Century Hotel*. She shared the screen with Lou Gossett Jr. and Judd Nelson in Cloud Ten Productions’ *Deceived*, and again co-starred with Nelson in Animal Tale Productions’ *Cybermutt*.

Her lengthy list of feature film credits include Universal’s *The Perfect Man*, Red Plush Films’ *Show Me*, OMDC Calling Card’s *Safe, Whoa Man* by Zark Entertainment, and the hit comedy *Men with Brooms* by Serendipity Point Films.

In 2005, she began filming the much-anticipated Columbia Tristar/Showtime series *Street Time* with Rob Morrow and Scott Cohen. Other lead roles include “Anna” in Hfilms short *Alter*, “Alice” in David Weaver’s *Moon Palace*, and “Clare” in Defiant Entertainment’s *Minor Adjustments*.

In television, Michelle guest starred on A&E’s *Nero Wolfe*, Paramount’s *Largo*, Gene Rodenberry’s *Earth Final Conflict*, YTV’s *The Zack Files*, as well as *The Relic Hunter*, *Twice in a Lifetime*, *Powerplay*, and *La Femme Nikita*. Television movies include *Who Killed Atlanta’s Children?*, *You Belong To Me*, and Ken Finkelman’s *Foreign Objects*. She also played a young war-bride in the CBC National special *We Will Not Forget*, which won the Governor General’s award of appreciation.

Michelle studied acting at the Ryerson Theatre School, and also studied with Uta Hagen, David Rotenberg, Miriam Lawrence, The Actor’s Network, Bruce Clayton, Actraworks, and Equity Showcase. Michelle grew up in Brantford, Ontario, and currently resides in Toronto.

Lindy Booth – “Sophie”

Lucid marks the latest big screen project in Lindy Booth’s busy film career, coming after *Cry Wolf* (Focus Features/Universal) in which she plays “Dodger,” and the hit re-make of the classic cult film *Dawn of the Dead* (Universal).

Lindy has enjoyed high profile appearances at three consecutive Toronto International Film Festivals; featured in 2003 in *Hollywood North* (First Look), in 2002 with *Rub & Tug* (Seville Pictures), and in the 2001 release *The Century Hotel*. Lindy won **Best Supporting Actress** in the 2002 DVD-Premiere Awards for her work in *Skulls II* (Universal). Other film roles include “Lea” in *Wrong Turn*, “Lara” in *Fairytales & Pornography*, and “Cassandra” in *American Psycho 2*.

On television, Lindy starred in the CBS pilot *Cooking Lessons*, and has recently appeared on the UPN series *Platinum* and *Twilight Zone*. She had recurring roles on Showtime Network’s sci-fi series *Odyssey 5*, and A&E’s *Nero Wolfe*. Lindy is well known for her work in the popular Disney Channel series *The Famous Jett Jackson* where she starred in dual roles of “Hawk” and “Riley,” and the series *Relic Hunter* where she played “Claudia.”

Television movies include *Her Best Friends Husband* (Lifetime) opposite Cheryl Ladd, *Life with Judy Garland: Me and My Shadows* (ABC) where she played “Lana Turner,” and *Strange Justice* (Showtime).

Lindy is a multiple winner at the annual Sears Drama Festival, where she received the **Individual Merit Award** for her work in the 1997 play *Forget Me Not*. A native of Oakville, Ontario, Lindy splits her time today between Toronto and Los Angeles.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Lucid tells the enticing tale of one man's search for redemption in the eyes of his nine-year-old daughter, and in the minds of three psychotherapy patients. Laced with an alluring and ambitious plot and complex characters, *Lucid* is packed with surprises.

It's the second feature for Sean Garrity, who co-wrote the script with long-time friend and colleague Jonas Chernick. In addition to directing, Garrity found himself producing this time around, which was a new challenge.

"One of the main difficulties of being a producer is that it's been difficult to focus on directing," said Garrity, who co-produced *Lucid* along with Jamie Brown of Frantic Films. "As a producer, you're constantly dousing fires. Everything is always on fire – it's like the whole show is constantly sinking into the drink!

"As a producer, I end up getting drawn into all those discussions, so it's been challenging. To focus on what I should be focusing on as a director has become a sort of a mind trick."

One of Garrity's greatest strengths is that he is capable of successfully taking on multiple creative tasks, which is evident in his everyday life. He alternates between careers as a filmmaker and musician, some days penning screenplays, other days performing music.

"When Sean brought the script to me two years ago, I was immediately interested," said Jamie Brown, *Lucid*'s Executive Producer and Co-producer. "The script is complex and intelligent, but also quite accessible. I also think Sean is one of Canada's best young directors and had a very clear vision of how the story would be brought to the screen.

"Sean wore a lot of hats on this project but kept everything together and delivered a great film. He's quite amazing, and I enjoyed working with him very much."

Garrity's first feature, *Inertia*, which also starred Jonas Chernick, was awarded **Best Canadian First Feature Film** at the 2001 Toronto International Film Festival. Garrity received the **Best Director** award at the FilmCan Film Festival later that year, while Chernick took home a 2003 Blizzard Award for **Best Actor**.

Inertia definitely established itself as a hard act to follow. Now, the award-winning team of Garrity and Chernick has come together again for *Lucid* – and it's been another great match up.

"The film is interesting because of the very high level of involvement of Sean and Jonas," said Brown. "They co-wrote the script, Sean directed, and Jonas played the lead character. It's really come together well, because they are both such talented guys."

For Jonas Chernick, working with Garrity again has been a tremendous experience. Even if it means that Garrity has to ruse him from time-to-time.

"Sean tricked me last night," said Chernick, who plays "Joel" in *Lucid*. "I had to do a scene that was difficult for me, and I wanted to do it a certain way. So Sean let me do it my way, and we did the scene two or three times. He directed me in such a clever way, that I didn't even realize until afterwards that I had ended up doing it the way he wanted.

"He let me do it my way, and shot it, and directed me at how to do it right – in hindsight, I don't know if that was more for me, or for him. But the point is, he tricked me, and I love him! No one knows me better than Sean does, and no one directs me better than he does."

Garrity impressed other cast members as well, including Callum Keith Rennie, who plays “Victor” in the film: “I was attracted to this project because the writing was really good, and the story was quite funny and dark. I’d seen *Inertia* and liked it a lot – there were some stunning shots in that movie. I liked the way that Sean framed things, and liked the way he informed the viewer. He did it so well and so delicately for a Canadian movie.”

Michelle Nolden, who plays “Chandra,” found something magical in working on *Lucid*: “Sometimes you come to a project and everybody comes with an open heart and trust – not every film is like that, but when it does happen, it’s a truly magical thing. From the moment that I got here it was like that, and you just know it’s going to be great. The work is always better because of it, because everybody is in a trusting place, and you have that friendship and respect.

“*Lucid* is a different film from anything else I’ve ever done – I’ve been so comfortable to put my trust in Sean, the person at the helm. Putting that trust is sometimes a difficult thing to do, but I think we’ve all been able to do it, and that’s part of the reason that we’ve all clicked so well.”

What struck Lindy Booth, who plays “Sophie” in the film, was the challenge and uniqueness of *Lucid*: “I read a lot of scripts, and for the most part, they are all similar and unimaginative. This one really stuck out to me, and is really different. I saw *Inertia* and was really intrigued by that process, and by what Sean wanted to do with *Lucid* – I saw it as a really challenging part, and challenging film, and I really wanted to be part of it. The challenge is the reward.

“There are so many layers in this script and the character development – where we are coming from, where we are at, what we are conscious of, what’s in our subconscious, what we let out, what we don’t want to let out, what we’re hiding, what we don’t know yet... There really are a hundred million ways to play out every scene, and Sean has been very kind in letting us play around with that.

“I truly think that audiences can expect a really enjoyable film, because it’s an interesting story and an interesting way of telling a story. It looks amazing, and has an intriguing storyline. I think audiences will have something really different.”

Jamie Brown believes this is a film capable of breaking through the long-standing stereotypes attached to made-in-Canada movies: “Some say that Canadian films tend to be inaccessible, but *Lucid* has broad appeal and could do very well at the box office. It would be wonderful to get Canadian audiences into the theatres in real numbers. We had an incredible cast and crew who were able to pull it together. The film has a great look with production values of a movie with ten times the budget. So many people sacrificed to make this film and delivered tremendously.

“I’d love to see their work recognized by audiences.”

Interview with Writer / Director / Producer Sean Garrity

Why LUCID?

I was struck by the first draft of the script, that Jonas Chernick brought me, which was rife with issues surrounding sleep: sleep disorders, sleep imagery, dreams, all with a kind of liquid, dreamy tone. I'd never read anything like it, and I was immediately excited about the project.

And yet, both Jonas and yourself are credited as writers.

While I was reading the first draft, I imagined a different ending for it than what he had written, so he brought me on to write it. This is the ending the movie has now. We traded drafts back and forth for 6 years. The script went 17 drafts. I think we were both so in love with the puzzle of it, that we neglected to give it an emotional core, so it kept not working, until we started really focusing on the protagonist's emotional journey - at about draft 12. That took the script in a radically different direction. As is, we could probably produce the first draft as a totally different film, there's really nothing left but the character names.

How does this film grow out of your first feature, INERTIA?

While it's not the easiest movie to classify, I guess you'd call LUCID a psychological thriller. Usually films in this genre are heavy, self-important and border on horror. I wanted to make it light, like INERTIA, almost a comedy at times, and then dive into the really twisted stuff in the last act. So, I'm trying to do something new with LUCID. Also like INERTIA, LUCID is a character-driven film with very realistic, sometimes improvised dialogue. I really hate the overwritten style of dialogue most commercial films have. We added some really high-concept plot twists to that character-driven structure, to create a kind of genre-crossing hybrid. I feel like it's much more accomplished than INERTIA, and it looks like we had ten million dollars to make it, whereas INERTIA at times feels like we had ... less than that.

So, did you use improvisation in LUCID like you did on INERTIA?

Not in the same way. On INERTIA we completely improvised the rehearsals, crafted the script from them, then used that script for as a base for more improv on set. For LUCID, we had a script that we stuck to more or less, but in rehearsals, as the guys were lighting, we would often make stuff up and change the scene around. I was very lucky that all of my main actors were down with improvising now and then. The camera folks didn't like it very much, but I really love the results of a scene when the actors feel like they can change things to suit the moment, or when they're not quite sure what's going to happen next. It creates an energy and a spontaneity that spewing memorized lines can't touch.

You've always used no-name Winnipeg actors for your films, on LUCID, you had a chance to work with Canadian stars. What was that like?

Intimidating, at first. There's a weird imbalance with someone like Callum, for example, because he's such a great actor, and a really well-known great actor. When we first meet, he doesn't know me from Adam, but I feel like I've shared these very intimate moments with him, because I've seen FLOWER AND GARNET, HARD CORE LOGO and FALLING ANGELS. So, I had to kind of separate the guy in front of me, who's here to work on my movie, and these characters that I feel like I've been on journeys with, because I've seen and enjoyed his movies. Same with Lindy and Michelle. It was a real relief to discover that they're all no-ego actors, here to work hard and give their best for my little Winnipeg movie. All three of them were willing to collaborate creatively with me on set, and have added wonderful new dimensions to the characters that I never could have imagined.

How about Jonas Chernick? This is the third time you've made him the main character in one of your movies.

Jonas is the perfect actor to play Joel Rothman. He has a charisma and a sensitivity that makes you want to root for him, no matter what his character does. As the project developed, I really began to explore how bad we could make this guy, and still expect the audience to forgive him. The investors kept saying "what are you doing? The audience is going to hate Joel Rothman!" and I kept responding that they wouldn't be able to, once he had Jonas Chernick's face. It raises some questions that I find very interesting about what we look for in people in order to forgive them. I've known Jonas for so long – I carried the Chuppah at his wedding! We have a kind of shorthand on set, where we speak in half sentences, know exactly what the other person is saying, and he gives me just what I want. I know how far he can go, so I know when he can do a better take, and he *knows* I know. There's a deep mutual trust between us – which took seven years to build - that has resulted in a fabulous performance by him in this film. It doesn't hurt that he wrote the script with me either.

In addition to writing and directing, you also produced LUCID. Why did you do that?

Because I enjoy pain.

No seriously. Why did you do that?

At film school, and at the Winnipeg Film Group [Winnipeg's film cooperative], I learned how to do it all myself. This is the way I learned how to make films: you get the idea, you write the script, you get the money, make the movie, edit it and then sell it. This is why I think of myself more as a filmmaker than a director. I have produced all my previous work myself, except for INERTIA. On LUCID, I convinced Jamie Brown of Frantic Films to produce it with me. I'm really glad I did, because Frantic helped a lot. Without them, I would have lost all my hair on this project.