

# REEL SUSPECTS

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## TEST

A film by CHRIS MASON JOHNSON

89 min, USA, 2013, Colour, 16:9, HD

### SYNOPSIS

Frankie is the newest member of San Francisco's most exciting contemporary dance company. The year is 1985. As six muscular male dancers tumble their way through athletic choreography, Frankie stands on the sidelines, mirroring the movement and looking a little weak.



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When the choreographer stops the music and mocks Frankie mercilessly, the other guys laugh – except for Todd. Todd is a veteran dancer in the same company and the bad boy to Frankie’s innocent. They are friends – opposites attract.

For Frankie, the city offers no relief from the bullying at work: a newspaper headline asks “Should Gays Be Quarantined?” while fresh graffiti screams “AIDS Faggot Die!” Frankie turns away and, with his bright yellow Walkman clipped on his belt, retreats into a music-filled trance.

When one of the male dancers is injured Frankie must perform in his place. It is the classic test of skill and character. Outside of work, Frankie and Todd's friendship deepens – Todd’s wild persona turns out to be something of an act and Frankie is less naive than he seems – and they each face a different kind of test: the newly-named disease is spreading fast and no one seems to know anything about it, except who it targets. Together the friends navigate a world full of risk that is also, now and then, full of promise.

## THE STORY OF TEST

TEST is a poignant, powerful story of friendship and hope in a time of crisis, set in the San Francisco modern dance scene of 1985 in the early years of the AIDS epidemic: when headlines threatened a gay quarantine, when nobody knew for certain how the disease spread, when dancers were afraid to touch each other because they might get it from sweat...



From the trauma of the AIDS epidemic there were stories of suffering and death, and political activism, that needed to be told first. But the early history of the epidemic is big and complicated,

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and there are untold stories that frame the subject in a different light and need to be heard now as well. TEST is one of these. It's a very personal movie with universal appeal: protagonist Frankie is a classic underdog who faces homophobic bullying at work and the newly named AIDS epidemic outside of it. His courage and resilience are tested.

## DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

### ***Chris Mason Johnson***

#### ***Writer, Director, Producer***

Chris Mason Johnson began his career as a dancer in ballet and modern companies throughout the U.S. and Europe, including the Frankfurt Ballet and White Oak Dance Project with Mikhail Baryshnikov. Since his transition to film he has worked as Head of Development at Open City Films; as Script Editor and Analyst for Miramax, Dimension, Disney, ABC Family and Fine Line; and has taught dance at UCLA as well as screenwriting and film production at Amherst College.

After making several short films that played at festivals nationwide, Chris co-wrote (with Ishmael Chawla), directed and produced (with Aina Abiodun) his first feature film, *The New Twenty* (2009), which won multiple festival awards, was purchased for broadcast by MTV Logo; for DVD/Internet by Warner Home Video, Wolfe Video and Netflix; and had a limited theatrical release to strong reviews: "An impressive feature debut. Smart and stylish. Fine acting. Excellent cinematography." (Box Office Magazine).

Chris's current project as writer, director and producer, *Test*, is set in the San Francisco dance world of 1985 and received production grants from the Horizons Foundation under their LGBT Community Outreach Program and from the San Francisco Film Society/Kenneth Rainin Foundation.

## CREW

### ***Chris Martin***

#### ***Producer***

Chris Martin is a San Francisco-based producer with over eight years producing experience in film, television, commercials and the web. Film and television production credits include Peter and Benjamin Bratt's *La Mission*, *The Heartbreak Kid*, *Mistress of Spices*, *I (Almost) Got Away With It*, *Big Ideas for a Small Planet*, and others. Commercial clients include Digital Kitchen, The Orphanage, BSSP, and Goodby-Silverstein. In 2009-10, he was operating producer for the online short film festival IndieRoar.com. A former freelance journalist (SF Chronicle, Philadelphia Inquirer), he has a degree in Dramatic Writing from NYU.

### ***Jenni Olson***

#### ***Executive Producer***

San Francisco movie maven Jenni Olson has been an advisor and production consultant to dozens of filmmakers and is one of the world's leading experts on LGBT cinema history. She is director of e-commerce at WolfeVideo.com, a co-founder of PlanetOut.com and sits on the advisory board of Outfest's Legacy Project. Her producing credits include the Sundance and SXSW hit, *By Hook or By Crook* and Guinevere Turner's recent short, *Late*, as well as her own work as writer/director: Jenni's debut feature, *The Joy of Life*, premiered at Sundance 2005 and her latest short, *575 Castro Street*, premiered at Sundance 2009.

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## ***Daniel Marks***

### ***Director of Photography***

Daniel Marks received his master's degree in cinematography from the American Film Institute in June 2012. He is a graduate of Amherst College, where he pursued his love of cinematography by studying physics and photography. He wrote, shot, and directed the short film *Milked*, which was selected to play the Queens International Film Festival and the New York City Downtown Shorts Film Festival. He has shot short films, music videos, and commercials including a viral advertisement for Sony and a commercial by American History X director Tony Kaye. In addition to film, Daniel is passionate about music. He currently lives in Los Angeles.

## ***Sidra Bell***

### ***Choreographer***

Sidra Bell, Artistic Director of SBDNY, is currently a Master Lecturer at University of the Arts (Philadelphia), was Adjunct Professor at Barnard College (Columbia University), and has a degree in history from Yale University and an MFA in Choreography from Purchase College Conservatory of Dance. She has been awarded a 1st Place Award for Choreography by the 15th Internationales Solo Tanz Theater Festival in Stuttgart Germany (2011).

Her critically acclaimed company and work has been seen through the United States and internationally in Denmark, France, Austria, Germany, China, Canada, Aruba, Korea, and Greece. She has received many commissions for new work from internationally renowned companies and institutions. She is a sought after master teacher and has taught her unique approach to movement, improvisation, and technique at major institutions for dance and theater throughout Canada, Europe, South America, and the United States

## ***Cieri Torjussen***

### ***Composer***

Cieri Torjussen's music was described by the Los Angeles Times as a "sudden bolt of creative lightning", and he was hailed in a UK newspaper as one of the brightest British musical talents in recent history. Based in Los Angeles, his credits run the gamut of independent films, documentaries, network TV, animation and numerous large-budget studio films.

Among Torjussen's recent projects was the 2011 *Slamdance*, London Film Fest and HBO hit documentary, *Superheroes*. He composed additional music for *Repo Men* starring Jude Law and Forrest Whitaker, heart-thumping action music for blockbuster *Live Free or Die Hard*, starring Bruce Willis and full orchestral action comedy music for *Scary Movie II*.

He received a 2007 Daytime Emmy Nomination for Best Original Score for his work on animated series *Dive Olly Dive*. Torjussen is also an accomplished composer of concert music, having been commissioned by groups such as the BBC National Orchestra, The Arts Council of Wales, The Vale of Glamorgan Festival and the Henry Mancini Institute. His work has been recorded and released commercially and performed worldwide, including the USA, UK, Germany, France and India.

## ***Kristen McCullough***

### ***Costume Design***

Kristen McCullough is a Tennessee native that graduated from American InterContinental University in Los Angeles in 2004. Since then, she has worked on numerous professional projects for The Atlanta Opera (GA), Nike (GA), The Woodruff Arts Center (GA), *7 For All Mankind* (CA), West Elm (CA) and Pottery Barn Teen (CA). Her last position was as a seamstress for Cirque du Soleil's *Ovo*, where she

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toured nationally. She has worked as a seamstress, stylist, designer and freelance consultant on numerous additional projects. She is currently the Wardrobe Stylist for Indigo Films, styling for nationally airing TV shows, such as I (Almost) Got Away With It, Nightmare Christmas and is currently shooting Wives with Knives, all airing on The Discovery ID channel.

Test was Kristen's first feature length film.

## CAST BIOGRAPHY



### ***Scott Marlowe***

#### ***Frankie***

Scott Marlowe is the Artistic Associate of San Francisco based LEVY dance and has been creating and performing with the company since 2005. He began his dance training at Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts in Dallas and received his Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance from the University of Texas at Austin. Test is Scott's first feature film.

### ***Matthew Risch***

#### ***Todd***

Matthew Risch comes direct from Broadway where he was starring in Jon Robin Baitz's Other Desert Cities, playing the role of Trip Wyeth. Prior to that he starred as Joey Evans in the Broadway revival of Pal Joey at Studio 54 alongside Stockard Channing, for which he received an Astaire Award nomination. He has also originated the role of Carlos in Legally Blonde the musical and was also

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featured in the long time running Chicago on Broadway. His TV/Film credits include Sex and the City 2, Gossip Girl, Blue Bloods, and Lipstick Jungle.

## ***Kristoffer Cusick***

### ***Walt***

Kristoffer Cusick is originally from Los Angeles California. He made his professional debut as a teen dance champion on Star Search. It didn't take long before he joined the 1st National Tour of Rent where he played the role of Angel and understudied the role of Mark. A member of the original company of Saturday Night Fever on Broadway as well as an original company member of the Broadway cast of Wicked where he portrayed the role of Fiyero opposite Kristin Chenoweth and Idina Menzel. Kristoffer also opened the Chicago company of Wicked starring as Fiyero opposite SNL star Ana Gastayer and Mike and Molly star Rondi Reed as well as the Los Angeles company of Wicked opposite NBC's Smash star Megan Hilty and Academy Award nominee Carol Kane. Film and Television credits include guest-starring roles in HBO's Pretty Cool, Comedy Central's After Hours and ABC's Ugly Betty.

## ***Rory Hohenstein***

### ***Tommy***

Rory Hohenstein was born in Washington DC. After training in jazz, tap, and modern he then began studying at the Kirov Academy of Ballet in Washington DC. At 17, he joined the company Le Jeune Ballet de France in Paris. In 2000 he became a member of the San Francisco Ballet being promoted to soloist in 2006. In 2008 he joined Christopher Wheeldon's new company Morphoses in New York City.

Rory became a freelance artist in 2010 with residencies in NY and London and with tours including the Sydney Festival in Australia. After a season with Lar Lubovitch Dance Company, he then moved to Chicago and took a contract with The Joffrey Ballet, where he recently finished his first season.

Rory has worked with such choreographers as Wayne McGregor, Christopher Wheeldon, Lar Lubovitch, Val Caniparoli, William Forsythe, Mark Morris, Debbie Allen and Wayne Robson from TV's So You Think You Can Dance. This is Rory's first film.

## ***Damon Sperber***

### ***Dr. Corbett***

Damon Sperber has worked as an actor for over twenty years. A graduate of UCLA (BA in World Arts and Cultures-Theater) and the American Conservatory Theater (MFA), Damon has appeared in theater, television, film, commercials and on radio. In addition to acting professionally, Damon's experience working with casting directors in New York and Los Angeles to develop and cast talent for Broadway, Off-Broadway, and regional theater, has informed his techniques for honing the tools required of the working actor. "The journey of the actor is a rewarding and challenging process. It requires total commitment and focus. Combined with a meticulous attention to detail and technical proficiency, the actor must also bring honesty, integrity and a childlike freedom to utilize and develop their imaginations fully." Damon is also a proud member of the Screen Actor's Guild, Actor's Equity Association and AFTRA.

## ***James Sofranko***

### ***David***

James Sofranko is originally from Cincinnati, Ohio, and received his dance training at The Harid Conservatory in Florida and later at The Juilliard School in New York City, where he received his BFA in dance. Upon graduation, he joined San Francisco Ballet, and was promoted to soloist in 2007. He has danced in numerous works and world premieres by choreographers such as Helgi Tomasson, Val

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Caniparoli, William Forsythe, Lar Lubovitch, Wayne Macgregor, Mark Morris, Jorma Elo, Julia Adam, Yuri Possokhov, Christopher Wheeldon, Paul Taylor, Hans Van Manen, Jiri Kylian, Alexi Ratmansky, Kenneth Macmillan, George Balanchine, and Jerome Robbins. Some of his favorite roles include Mercutio in Tomasson's Romeo and Juliet Eros in Mark Morris' Sylvia, Bugle Boy in Taylor's Company B and the second sailor in Jerome Robbins' Fancy Free. James was featured in the principal role of Eddie in the Broadway touring company of Movin' Out, a musical choreographed by Twyla Tharp to the songs of Billy Joel. He also enjoys choreographing and has created many original works.



## CREDIT

PRODUCERS: Chris Martin, Chris Mason Johnson  
EXEC PRODUCERS: Elizabeth Pang Fullerton, Nelson Gonzalez, Jenni Olson, Ian Reinhard  
CO-PRODUCER: Laura Heberton  
ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS: Abigail Hunter, Maia Rosal, Garen Scribner  
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: Daniel Marks  
PRODUCTION DESIGN: Rollin Hunt  
CHOREOGRAPHY: Sidra Bell  
ORIGINAL MUSIC: Ceiri Torjussen  
EDITOR: Adam Raponi  
COSTUME DESIGN: Kristen McCullough

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**CAST:**

FRANKIE: Scott Marlowe

TODD: Matthew Risch

MOLLY: Katherine Wells

TOMMY: Rory Hohenstein

SAM: Myles Thatcher

SERGIO: Sergio Benvindo

DAVID: James Sofranko

TYLER: Evan Boomer

DR. CORBETT: Damon Sperber

BILL: Kevin Clarke

WALT: Kristoffer Cusick

JENNIFER: Madison Keesler