

INTERVIEW WITH ELIAS STERN '19, WRITER AND DIRECTOR OF "WHISKEY SOUR", CO-WINNER OF THE UCHV SHORT MOVIE PRIZE 2017



UCHV: Where are you from, and what is your major?

ES: I'm from sunny Los Angeles, California and I'm an intended Economics Major with a certificate in Creative Writing and HPD (History and the Practice of Diplomacy).

UCHV: When did you start making movies and how did you come to make "Whiskey Sour"?

ES: I started making movies basically as early as I could hold a camera. Of course, these weren't actually movies, mostly just fight scenes between me and my friends. One birthday party we even shot a music video for Michael Jackson's Thriller. I started writing seriously (or at least, what I thought was seriously) when I was about 16 or 17. My first real venture into filmmaking came after that when I shot my first short at 17. As for "Whiskey Sour", I'd had the idea for a while before it actualized. I had a family connection to a wonderful writer/producer by the name of Tony Spiridakis who ran this summer "institute" for filmmakers called Manhattan Film Institute. It really was a platform for filmmakers to get shorts made, as they hired professional actors and cinematographers to work with us and help us film our movie. I wouldn't have been able to do this without them and the team over at MFI.

UCHV: What was your budget?

ES: Our budget was slight, to say the least. We spent about \$300 in props and other than that there were fixed costs that my crew already had: the camera, the lighting rigs, etc. So, out of pocket, it was close to 0.

UCHV: Could you briefly describe the process you went through/difficulties you had in making “Whiskey Sour”?

ES: The difficulty with a project like “Whiskey Sour” was twofold. First, trying to convince people it *made sense*. When you watch it, it’s confusing, but it’s easier to follow visually. On paper, people could barely make sense of the plot. My actors, both truly talented, had trouble creating characters because they didn’t really understand what was going on. We had a lot of late nights talking through motivations, character exercises, and just trying to understand the story of the thing. After that, the production itself was grueling. We had just 5 hours to shoot all our footage. I got selfish and forced the crew to shoot 21 different camera set-ups. They were incredible and did it without blinking, but looking back I don’t think we could’ve pulled it off again. I rarely got two takes of the same shot and when you get in the editing room that can often turn out to be a problem. We got lucky, though, and the stars aligned.

UCHV: Any final thoughts?

ES: I’m very thankful for the UCHV and their panel of judges for recognizing our team and what we created. I hope “Whiskey Sour” does what I think it can do and make people think just a little bit more.