

“A black security guard hired to check IDs at a company entrance endures increasing scrutiny from bosses and coworkers in this wry, complex look at race relations and corporate rigidity...Kevin Jackson gives a humane, dignified performance as the beleaguered guard, who comes to realize the absurdity of the power game.”
– Ted Shen, Chicago Reader



**The first rule of
being a security
guard:**

**Pretend that you
have power.**

ON GUARD

A short film
directed by Kevin Lee

WINNER: Third Prize, 72 Hour Film Festival

16 minutes / Digital Video / Color / 1:33 / Stereo

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Log-line

A black security guard endures the mind-numbing routine of his job, condescension from other workers and constant surveillance from above, until a mysterious act of vandalism helps him regain dignity and control.

Synopsis

Robert, a security guard, reports to his first day of work in the lobby of a Manhattan office building. Davis, his supervisor, gives him a key piece of advice: "You want to pretend that you have power, even though you don't necessarily have it." Robert thus begins his first day on the job where the greatest dangers turn out to be boredom with the mind-numbing routine, condescension from the building's white collar workers, and constant surveillance from above.

When the corporate logo next to his security desk is mysteriously defaced with obscene graffiti, Robert becomes the prime suspect and is suddenly in danger of losing his job. As confusion spreads through the building and his supervisors try to cover up the situation, Robert manages to gain a sense of control and maintain his dignity.

Production Notes

In its first incarnation, ON GUARD was a 70-minute movie created for the 72 Hour Feature Film Project in Chicago. Under the rules of the festival, all footage was shot and edited to completion over a period of three days. This version debuted at the 72 Hour Film Festival, June 20 in Chicago, where it took third prize.

Following the festival, producers Karin Chien, Kevin Lee and Will Comerford decided to edit the film into a 16-minute short, focusing on the dynamic performances of stars Kevin Jackson and Ron Domingo, and enhanced by the music of Will Calhoun from the acclaimed rock group Living Colour.

Every aspect of this movie was created to be consistent with the concept of speed filmmaking as put forth by the 72 Hour Feature Project. Speed filmmaking pushes the digital video revolution to the next step; immediacy, explosiveness and raw energy are at the root of the production, as well as the final product:

Statistics that defy the laws of film production:

Shot 35 pages per 12-hour day for two days

Edited the completed feature in a 24 hour period on 3 editing systems

How did we do it?

The script boils down its drama to a single room and single day, echoing the compact intensity of the production itself. The rigors of the long day of shooting is reflected in the rigors of the long day of work that the movie portrays.

The dialogue was developed by the actors throughout a week of improvisational rehearsals, and was further improvised and developed as the cameras rolled.

Director of photography Leland Krane proposed a three-camera setup, to record the long takes, simultaneously, allowing for easy cutting and continuity in the editing room.

The single set was lit from above to avoid timely setups.

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Kevin Lee is a filmmaker based in New York City. His documentary "Take a Look: Chinatown, NYC Post 9/11" showed the effects of 9/11 on the Chinatown community; it was broadcast on PBS and played to film festivals across the nation. Mr. Lee's credits include "Banana" a 30 minute short about a Chinese immigrant who thinks his son is literally a banana, which aired on PBS Thirteen in New York; and "World Tourism Center", a documentary short that explores the former World Trade Center in its new incarnation as a major tourist attraction. Mr. Lee is currently working on two feature-length screenplays.

FILMOGRAPHY

**"On Guard" (2003) Narrative short
Director, co-Producer, co-Writer.**

A black security guard hired to check IDs at a company entrance endures increasing scrutiny from bosses and coworkers.

**"On Guard" (2003) Narrative feature
Director, co-Producer, co-Writer.**

A black security guard hired to check IDs at a company entrance endures increasing scrutiny from bosses and coworkers.
2003 72 Hour Film Festival -- Chicago, IL.
Winner, Third Prize.

**"Take a Look: New York City Chinatown Post 9/11" (2001) Documentary short
Director, Producer, Editor.**

Documentary about the effects of September 11, 2001 on the Chinatown community.
- Screened at Museum of Modern Art Media Call to Action, December 12, 2001.
Sponsored by Third World Newsreel.
- Aired on "Reel New York" -- Channel Thirteen, New York City PBS Affiliate
- Featured on asianamericanfilm.com One Minute Movies
- 2002 VC Film Fest -- Los Angeles Asian American Film Festival
- 2003 North Carolina Asian American Film Festival, Chapel Hill, NC
- 2002 San Diego Asian Film Festival
- 2002 DC Asian Pacific American Film Festival
- 2002 Dallas Asian Film Festival
- 2002 Salt Lake City Asian Pacific Film Festival

**"Banana" (2001) Documentary short
Director, Producer, Writer, Editor.**

Narrative short about a Chinese immigrant who thinks his baby is literally a banana.
- Aired on "Reel New York" -- PBS Channel Thirteen, Summer 2003
- 2003 Georgetown Indy Film Festival -- awarded **Best Original Screenplay**
- 2002 New York Asian American Film Festival
- 2002 Asian Film Festival of Dallas
- 2002 Salt Lake City Asian Pacific American Film Festival.

**"World Tourism Center" (2002).
Documentary short
Director, Producer, Editor.**

Documentary capturing the site of the former World Trade Center in its new incarnation as a major tourist area.
- 2003 Georgetown Indy Film Festival
- 2003 VC Film Fest -- Los Angeles Asian American Film Festival
- 2003 DC Asian Pacific American Film Festival

**"East Broadway" (2002) Experimental short
Co-Director, co-Producer, co-Writer.**

Experimental short explores the rhythms and spaces of New York City's east Chinatown by following a man and a woman who unwittingly cross paths morning, noon and night.
- 2003 Georgetown Indy Film Festival
- 2003 DC APA Film Festival
- 2003 Salt Lake City Asian Pacific Film Festival

PRINCIPAL CREW**WILL COMERFORD (Writer, Producer)**

Will Comerford has worked as a writer for MTV Interactive and the Seattle Weekly. He is the author of numerous short stories.

**KARIN CHIEN (Producer)**

Karin Chien is an independent feature film producer based in New York City. Ms. Chien's most recent feature is "Robot Stories" (Slamdance '03), directed by Greg Pak. Ms. Chien is currently producing the feature film "The Motel," directed by Michael Kang, whose screenplay for the feature won the Sundance / NHK International Filmmaker's Award. She is also finishing work on the upcoming feature, "MVP" and is developing the independent feature "Rio Chino," to shoot in spring/summer 2003. Other recent feature film work includes production credits on "Made" (starring Vince Vaughn and Sean Combs, Artisan Entertainment), "Jump Tomorrow" (IFC Films), and "Brooklyn Babylon" (starring The Roots, Artisan Entertainment).

**LELAND KRANE (Director of Photography)**

Leland Krane has been Director of Photography on over ten feature films, including most recently "Giving it up", a romantic comedy with Amy Redford, Mark Fierstein, and Dabney Coleman, "Under Hellgate Bridge," With Vincent Pastore, Dominic Chianese, Micheal Roderick, Frank Vicent and Jonathon Lapaglia-video distribution from Lion's Gate and "Macbeth in Manhattan" with Gloria Reuben, John Glover, and Harold Perrinau. Leland's television projects have included, NBC Show's "The Mentalist", "The Restaurant," "Upright Citizens Brigade," "Women Docs," And "Truama Life in the ER." Leland has aslo shot numerous Music Video, and Commercials.

**WILL CALHOUN (Music)**

Will Calhoun was the recipient of the prestigious Buddy Rich Jazz Masters Award for outstanding performance by a drummer. As a member of Living Colour, Will received a Grammy Award in 1989 for Best Hard Rock Performance by a group and another Grammy in 1990 for Best Hard Rock Performance. Living Colour also won an International Rock Award In 1991 for Best Rock Band. Will was voted Number One Progressive Drummer by Modern Drummer Magazine's Readers Poll three times (1989, 1991 & 1992) and Best Drummer Of 1990 by Rolling Stone Magazine's Critics Poll. Will has recorded and/or toured with diverse artists including B.B. King, Mick Jagger, Harry Belafonte, Dr. John, Carly Simon, Herb Alpert, Wayne Shorter (on the Grammy-winning CD "High Life"), and recorded with rappers Run-DMC and Public Enemy. Will has recorded two solo projects "Housework" and "Drum Wave", and has released his first solo jazz CD as a leader: "The Will Calhoun Quintet: Live at the Blue Note".



**QUESTIONS for KEVIN LEE and WILL COMERFORD,
director and co-writers of ON GUARD**

What is the 72 Hour Feature Project?

Will: It is a competition run by Artvamp, an organization based in Chicago. Once the judges select your idea, you have a month to wonder why you agreed to do this, and then three days to shoot, edit and complete a feature length movie, at least 70 minutes long. So if we shot one really good minute for every hour, we'd still have two hours to spare. We weren't worried.

If you say so. What is the significance of shooting a movie in 72 hours?

Kevin: Artvamp's idea is that the technology that is now available to the low-budget independent filmmaker, i.e. DV camcorders and desktop editing software, makes it more convenient than ever for someone to make a movie with a limited amount of time and resources. I think they really wanted to take this idea of convenience and put it to the test, by imposing some extreme limitations on it. The logic being, and I would agree based on my own experience, that the more convenient things are, the lazier and less creative one gets, whereas limitations are what inspire innovation and creativity. I hope ON GUARD demonstrates how we took the "problem" of making a movie in 72 hours and came up with an interesting set of solutions, leading to a great movie.

How did you come to participate in the 72 Hour Feature Project? What was the inspiration for the story of ON GUARD?

Kevin: We found an announcement for the project online – the idea intrigued us. What kind of movie can be made in 72 hours? I asked Will, who is a writer, if he had any story ideas that could conceivably be filmed in these conditions. My thoughts were that I wanted a story that was set in a single controllable area that would be easy to film with minimal set-up, and would still be fascinating to watch.

Will: As the project was in part about the process, I felt it was appropriate to make something self-reflexive. I had an idea of having the audience watch a security guard, who is watching a lobby and at the same time being watched by a security camera. A sense of real time was important to this, as if we were spying on someone doing his boring old job.

The idea of security also opened up exciting dramatic possibilities. We were fascinated by the question, "What is security?" Is it just a cosmetic feature to reassure people of their safety? Could anyone tolerate a security system that was actually tight enough to be effective? How has 9-11 affected our fears and perception of threats in terms of our sense of individual freedom? And why is such a supposedly important job given little respect and less pay?

Kevin: That's why I think the key line in this movie is what Davis tells Robert at the beginning, "You want to make pretend like you have the power, but you don't necessarily have it." What Robert learns on his first day of the job is just how powerless he is in his role in the company,

how much he is a captive as much as he is a guardian. But then something happens which shakes things up...

How did you come up with the idea of the graffiti?

Will: It has to do with the idea of appearances that we set up in the film, making pretend that you have the power, giving everyone in the building the impression of security. We wanted something that had an ambiguous threat level: It could be interpreted as a threat or as a meaningless absurdity. Everyone has his or her own take on it. I was also thinking, to some degree, about the theories of Rudy Giuliani when he was mayor of New York, about how vandalism contributes to an "environment of crime"? I wondered, is vandalism the cause of crime and social unrest, or is it a symptom?

How did the 72-hour schedule affect your production strategy?

Kevin: We basically had to start from scratch, as we had very few contacts to hire as cast or crew. We auditioned dozens of people for the main roles, and interviewed candidates for director of photography, sound person and assistant director. We didn't start our rehearsals until a week before shooting. This definitely added a sense of urgency and energy to the process. It was very stressful, but also as invigorating as anything I've done.

Will: As far as how it affected the script, we decided to structure the narrative around scenes that would be shot in one take. We figured that this would make the editing a lot easier, since we wouldn't have to cut a lot of takes. We also decided to use ellipses in our story structure, so that each scene represents a moment from each hour of the workday, and what happens in between is left to the viewer to piece together. I like to think that these gaps in the story work with the idea of gaps in security, since both have to do with how what's missing or unseen affects our sense of power and control, whether it's the story or our lives.

Kevin: The director of photography we hired, Leland Krane, came up with a strategy to run three cameras simultaneously. This allowed us to get the different angles we wanted for each scene without having to do a lot of takes. But this technique really saved us in the editing stage, which ended up taking half of the 72 hour period. Because we used the same take for the different angles, it was easy for us to synch up the footage in Final Cut Pro and cut from angle to angle.

How did you work with the actors in preparing for the extraordinary shooting schedule?

Kevin: Will had written a script but it was mostly to give a sense of structure to each scene. We didn't want the actors to take the lines too literally – it would be too difficult for them to try to memorize lines within the short amount of time, and we didn't have enough time within the 72 hours to do a lot of takes if they missed a line. So we told them to look for key dramatic points with each scene and stay in character no matter what happened. Of course it takes a certain kind of actor to be comfortable with this level of freeness and spontaneity, so when we cast our actors we looked for people with improvisational experience.

Will: We also hired a lot of extras as office workers, some of which you see in the short version of ON GUARD. For the long version we had close to 50 extras who came through the lobby and had various interactions with Robert. For these people we also gave them a set of stage directions to follow.

Kevin: Above all, we were really trying to capture the sense of human behavior in a professional office building. We didn't want our actors to "act", we just wanted them to be natural.

Will: I think the intensity of the shooting schedule did a lot to help create that effect. Our actors were rushed from scene to scene so they didn't have a lot of time to plot out what they were going to say and do. They just did their best to stay in character so that whatever words came out registered as true.

ABOUT THE CAST

Kevin Jackson (Robert). Kevin Jackson's film credits include *Hero*, *The Walking Dead*, *Spy Hard*, *Bogus*, *Rosewood*, *Conspiracy Theory*, *A Thin Line Between Love and Hate*, *Brown's Requiem*, *Cement*, *Stanley's Gig*, *Sin Kitchen*, and the upcoming *MVP* and *Brother to Brother*. He has appeared on Broadway in *Topdog/Underdog*, *Mule Bone* and *Fences*. Other New York credits include *References to Salvador Dali Make Me Hot*, *Macbeth*, *Dancing on Moonlight*, *The Caucasian*

Chalk Circle and *Spunk* (Obie Award) for The Public Theater/NYSF. His regional credits include *The Piano Lesson* at Denver Center Theatre Company, *Playboy of the West Indies* at Yale Repertory Theatre, *Spunk* and *The Cider House Rules* (Garland Award, Ovation nomination) at Mark Taper Forum, and *The Tempest* and *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* at Baltimore's Center Stage. His television credits include *The Colored Museum*, "ER," "Will and Grace," "Chicago Hope," "Living Single," "One Life to Live," "Loving" and a recurring role on "Hangin' with Mr. Cooper." Mr. Jackson's film credits include *Hero*, *The Walking Dead*, *Spy Hard*, *Bogus*, *Rosewood*, *Conspiracy Theory*, *A Thin Line Between Love and Hate*, *Brown's Requiem*, *Cement*, *Stanley's Gig*, *Sin Kitchen*, and the upcoming *MVP* and *Brother to Brother*.



Ron Domingo (Davis). Ron Domingo is an OBIE Award winning actor and has been a veteran of New York stage, film and television for the past twelve years. Film: *The Motel*, *Slow Jam King*, *Robot Stories*, *On Guard*, *Avenue of the Asian Americas*. Television: *Law & Order*, *Law & Order: SVU*, *Law & Order: CI*. Theater: Cleveland Playhouse, Lincoln Center, Ma-Yi Theatre Company, NATCO, New York Theater Workshop, Pan Asian Repertory, Public Theater

and the WPA Theater. Also the OBIE Award winning *Hot Keys* and *Richard III* with Austin Pendleton. Awards: OBIE Award (*The Romance of Magno Rubio*), Off-Off Broadway Review Award (*A Private Recital*). He has also directed two short films, ANNIVERSARY and CHOCOLATE, which have screened at several film festivals throughout the country.

Gabriele Schafer (Marge). Gabriele Schafer has appeared in numerous independent films as well as in New York, regional and international theater productions, including in her native Germany. She is co-artistic director of Thieves Theatre since 1981 and a founding member of RAT, an international coalition of theater workers dedicated to sharing ways of working, whose next annual conference will take place in December 2003 in Rosario, Argentina. She is a regular broadcaster at New York based In-Touch (radio) Network. She is a graduate of the Yale School of Drama and lives in Brooklyn with her husband and creative partner Nick Fracaro.

FULL CAST CREDITS

Kevin Jackson as ROBERT
Ron Domingo as DAVIS
Gabrielle Schafer as MARGE

Additional Cast:

John Krisiukenas
Mark Manolo
Jane Aquilina
Eric C. Bailey
Russell E. Johnson
Monica Zane
Michael Alexis Palmer
Izzy Ruiz
Richie Clark

CREW LIST/CREDITS

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|---------------------------|--|
| Producers | Karin Chien William Comerford |
| Director | Kevin Lee |
| Writers | Kevin Lee William Comerford |
| Director of Photography | Kevin Lee |
| First Assistant Director | Leland Krane |
| Unit Manager | Craig Greene |
| Editor | Julie Petrie |
| Camera Operator / Gaffer | Matthew Ludvino |
| Sound Mixer | Christopher Weck |
| Set and Prop Design | Brian Fish |
| Second Assistant Director | Eric Sommerfeld |
| Production Coordinator | Janet Lin |
| Still Photographer | Joyce Chow |
| Assistant Editor | Odin Wright |
| Production Assistants | Cheryl B Engelhart Mark Manolo Meghan Fallon Angela Wei |

ON GUARD

16 minutes, DV, color, 2003

ON GUARD LINKS

On Guard website on Also Like Life Productions:
www.alsolikelife.com/Filminformation/onguard.html

ON GUARD website on 72 Hour Feature Project site
<http://69.51.6.16/72HFP/onguard.html>

ON GUARD production diary:
www.livejournal.com/users/onguard

Also Like Life Productions:
www.alsolikelife.com

The 72 Hour Feature Project site:
www.72hfp.com