

PLEDGE

FEW GET IN. NONE GET OUT.

STAG PICTURES AND BOULDERLIGHT PICTURES PRESENT "PLEDGE" ZACHERY BYRD AARON DALLA VILLA PHILLIP BOTELLO
JESSE PIMENTEL ZACK WEINER CAMERON COWPERTHWAITTE MUSIC BY JON NACHEZ PRODUCTION DESIGNER CLARISA GARCIA-FRESCO EDITOR NIK VOYTAS
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY WILLIAM BABCOCK EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS CHERIE VOGELSTEIN PRODUCED BY MICHAEL GELFAND PRODUCED BY JD LIFSHTIZ RAPHAEL MARGULES
PRODUCED BY MARK RAPAPORT KEATON HEINRICH AKIVA NEMETSKY WRITTEN BY ZACK WEINER DIRECTED BY DANIEL ROBBINS





LOGLINE

A group of college freshmen pledge an exclusive fraternity but soon realize there's more at stake than they could have ever imagined.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

When a trio of unpopular freshmen are invited to pledge an exclusive fraternity, they jump at the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. But as the hazing process unfolds, they begin to realize the fraternity is not what it seems.

FULL SYNOPSIS

Three nerdy college freshmen, Ethan, David, and Justin, are having a tough time adjusting to college life. Rejected and ridiculed by just about every fraternity on campus, they are prepared to give up all hope. That is, until a beautiful girl invites them off campus to a party at a secluded mansion.

They are not only invited in, but also treated like princes by the resident brothers. The party is everything they dreamed college would be—beautiful women, drinking, and

most importantly, a cool group of guys willing to accept them as one of their own. When the friends are presented with an opportunity to pledge the elite social club, they accept without hesitation. However, as the gruesome, dehumanizing hazing progresses, a more sinister picture of the club emerges.

THE COMPANY

Stag Pictures was founded in 2014 to produce feature-length films that combine elevated genre filmmaking with grounded characters and storytelling.

The company's first feature film, *Uncaged*, was released domestically in February 2016 through RLJ/Image Entertainment and has seen foreign releases in countries around the globe including the UK (as *Beast Within*), South Korea, all of Latin America, and Germany. In April 2016, *Uncaged* was purchased for streaming by Netflix.

Pledge was produced in association with BoulderLight Pictures, who also collaborated with Stag Pictures on *Uncaged*. BoulderLight's other credits include *Contracted* (IFC Films), and *Bad Match* (Gravitas Ventures/Orion Pictures).





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THE TEAM

Director: Daniel Robbins // Writer: Zachary Weiner

Producers: Mark Rapaport, Keaton Heinrichs, Akiva Nemetsky

Exec. Producers: JD Lifshitz, Raphael Margules, Cherie Vogelstein

Co-Producer: Michael Gelfand // Cinematographer: William Babcock

Editor: Nik Voytas // Production Designer: Clarisa Garcia-Fresco

Sound Designer: Kenny Kusiak // Composer: Jon Natchez

CAST

Zachery Byrd, Aaron Dalla Villa, Cameron Cowperthwaite, Jesse Pimentel,
Phillip Botello, Zachary Weiner, Joe Gallagher, Jean-Louis Droulers, Erica Boozer

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Pledge started when Mark (producer), Zack (writer) and I brainstormed ideas for a low-budget film we would love to see. The winning idea: a thriller that explores the dark depths of college fraternity pledging. We'd all been somewhat familiar with this world, not just as fans of Todd Phillips' banned doc *Frat House*, but as former college students who've either experienced it directly (Mark) or spent years desperately pining for it (Zack).

We tried our best to infuse comedy into the film without undermining the stakes. Aside from trying to make audiences laugh and break up the tension, we also hoped to mirror the seesaw feeling one endures during the real-world pledging process. At one moment, a brother can seem like your best friend, cracking jokes and beers, then before you know it—he's back to treating you like garbage. The effectiveness of this choice relies on the comedic and dramatic capabilities of our incredible cast and they all managed to deliver authentic performances.

While the film touches on the textbook themes of a fraternity film—toxic masculinity, tribalism, classism, the desire to belong—it also aims to explore a more nuanced idea: the idea that certain institutions operate best when those in charge develop apathy toward their fellow humans.



..... PRODUCTION NOTES

After completing two features and learning from each one, it seemed we had finally figured out the most reliable recipe for an effective indie: a simple story with one or two central characters, handheld camerawork to speed up production, limited improv to reduce the nightmare of editing single-camera improv, and writing in as many outdoor scenes as possible—to minimize lighting setups.

Somehow, we ignored all of that.

Pledge is an ensemble story. Most of the film consists of 6-8 speaking characters; the camera is generally locked off, with each move calculated; improv was encouraged to help make each scene as authentic as possible; and most of the film takes place indoors, at night. This last choice posed not only a major lighting challenge (shout-out to the camera and G&E teams), but also an overall quality-of-life concern from running on a vampiric 7pm-7am schedule for two straight weeks. Predictably, all of these factors added to the challenge of this production.

Principal photography took place in the summer heat of July/August 2016, over 18 days in New Rochelle and the Bronx. We found our main location through browsing Airbnb. Like our previous two films, this was a mostly New York-based cast and crew (two of our actors, Phillip Botello and Cameron Cowperthwaite, flew out from Los Angeles).

We financed the film mostly through the money recouped from our first ‘real budget’ film, *Uncaged*. We also ran a small Kickstarter campaign, raising over \$15,000 to help fund post-production. This was beyond a pleasant surprise and just goes to show: crowdfunding can actually work pretty well, even for relatively unknown filmmakers.



CONTACT

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