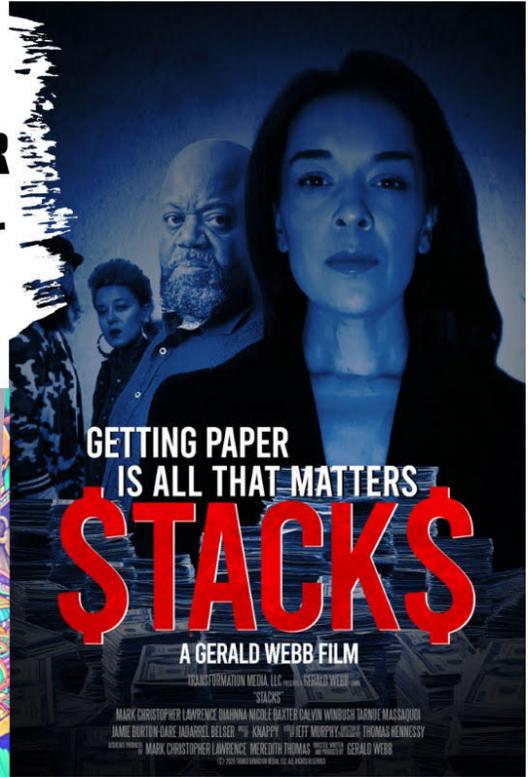




TINSEL & TINE

5 QUESTIONS FOR Indie Filmmaker GERALD WEBB



Synopsis: \$STACK\$ – Unprecedented times force two fierce rivals to come face to face, for the first time in over a decade, to close a deal for the most valuable substance on earth. – \$STACK\$, at its core, is a film that holds a mirror up to every viewer, offering them the opportunity to see the best and the worst in themselves. Upon first view almost everyone misses the stinging social commentary and myriad of clues teasing the audience as to what assumptions in their own minds. What judgments will you make and how will they affect your views of Magdalena, Hector, Ty, Rube, Momo and Jordan? In the end what do those judgments reflect within you?

T&T: In a nutshell what was the main inspiration and/or the theme that is the heart of your film?

Gerald Webb: \$STACK\$ is my sarcastically angry plea for every viewer to be responsible for the attitudes, assumptions and judgments buried deep inside themselves. It’s timely message taunts, teases and dares the audience to discover hidden twists and clues before their own biases and assumptions lead them down the wrong path. It was inspired when I went to a Costco in Burbank, Ca in early March 2020 and witnessed a woman hoarding flatbed carts full supplies. The selfishness and disregard for other human beings I saw on display combined with the rapid rise of racism, stereotypes and hatred made me want to scream. I couldn’t believe that just as our country faced a massive pandemic many were allowing the worst in themselves to come out. Rather than berate the woman, I went home and poured my outrage onto the pages of \$STACK\$. It was equal parts a therapeutic and creative outlet for me to challenge the audience and our society as a whole to look in the mirror and see what we have become.

T&T: Tell us a bit about the music (Who did you work with? What did you want to convey? Or any other tidbits):

WEBB: Delaware based producer and remixer **Knappy** (Knappy.com) composed “\$STACK\$” score and produced the “Dropping Deuces” song in \$STACK\$ end credits. Knappy and I have been friends and have worked together for over two decades and were once in the rap group ONE a.d. together. I really trust him and sent him a rough cut of \$STACK\$ with some temporary place holding music we borrowed from the *Bad Boys 2* score to help set the tone. Knappy used that as a baseline but really flipped it and made the entire score his own. When he sent it back I had just a couple of notes. His score really helps drive the tension that is one of the main threads that makes \$STACK\$ work.

The song “Dropping Deuces” was an afterthought and wasn’t part of my original plans. I was sitting on quarantine lockdown in March of 2020 and waiting for the second cut of \$STACK\$ from the editor and thought, what if I write a Will Smith style rap to play during the end credits to punch home the true message behind \$STACK\$. I started writing and told Knappy I needed a beat and a few days later the song was ready to record. Since we were all on quarantine, with me in Los Angeles and Knappy in Dover, DE we recorded the vocal remotely via my living room and Knappy’s studio.

The song came out so good, I couldn't resist doing a music video and the cinematographer, Thomas Hennessy and I got together and shot it in about two hours with he and I as the two-man crew and of course with me wearing a ridiculous outfit in front of the camera! I had zero plans to ever rap again, let alone make a music video or have another song released but "Dropping Deuces" really was the perfect complement to \$STACK\$ and fits perfectly in the end credits as a bonus for the audience. The crazy things we do for art!

T&T: Was there a point where you almost didn't finish? And if so, what pushed you forward? AND/OR What's been the most memorable response you've received thus far from anyone after seeing your film?

WEBB: YES! Our window was ridiculously tight from the start. I wrote \$STACK\$ on a Saturday and Los Angeles went into mandatory just six days later. It was literally a shoot now or it never happens situation! Late that Saturday night I sent the script to Mark Christopher Lawrence and the cinematographer Thomas Hennessy. They both got back to me immediately and said the same exact thing: "When are we shooting?" This put me on the spot to take this idea and script and make it a reality. I have the support of a team and I need to make it happen! I got on the phone and put the rest of the cast and crew in place quickly. Sixty-eight hours later I called "action" on the first shot of \$STACK\$. We shot the entire film in one nine-hour night and wrapped shooting forty-six hours before Los Angeles' mandatory Covid-19 quarantine went into effect. If Thomas and Mark didn't immediately say let's do it, \$STACK\$ would have never happened.

So many film festivals were forced to go virtual over the last two years, I am so happy that we are finally getting to see audiences' responses to the film in person. I cherish each of those opportunities to hear and see how they are impacted by and react to \$STACK\$. I can't wait to hear what Philly thinks about this jawn when we make our Philadelphia theatrical premiere at PIFF this week.

T&T: Give a quick shout out to your creative team and anyone who helped get your film from an idea to Philadelphia Independent Film Festival 2022:

WEBB: The entire team at \$STACK\$ showed out! Everyone brought their A game. It really takes an amazing team to complete a film and #teamstacks crushed it. The DP **Thomas Hennessy** really understood the feel of the script and crafted the perfect look for \$STACK\$ by utilizing vintage lenses to get a gritty film feel. **Jeff Murphy** the film editor is such a professional and masterfully covered up some things I would approach and shoot differently the next time. His team at Quest Pacifica also handled all our sound design, color correction and post-delivery making it all pretty seamless. **Ken Prieto** really got the tone of Dropping Deuces and edited the music video portion with the fun, sarcasm and lightness that was the perfect counterbalance to \$STACK\$' inherent grittiness. **Meredith Thomas** our supervising producer was instrumental in crafting our film festival presence and strategy—something a lot of filmmakers start to think about much later than they should. To have that level of professionals share their amazing talents and support made my inaugural directing experience a dream. I hope I lived up to my responsibility to each of them and to the \$STACK\$ audience.

T&T: Name 5 of your favorite films which influenced your desire to be a filmmaker?

WEBB:

1. *12 Angry Men*
2. *O Brother Where Art Thou?*
3. *Shawshank Redemption*
4. *Antoine Fuqua's Equalizer*
5. *Gladiator*

More recently, the creativity of *Everything Everywhere All At Once* blew me away and I honestly loved the new *Top Gun Maverick* movie. They did such a good job of reviving a classic staying true to the original film's feel but while still breaking new ground. BTW: the poster for \$STACK\$ was inspired by the poster for the classic movie JUICE.

\$STACK\$ is the directorial debut of Philadelphia and South Jersey native and Daytime Emmy Award nominee, Gerald Webb (HBO's *Barry*, *Sharknado*). In 2012, Gerald co-founded production company, DeInstitutionalized, LLC, with Christopher Ray. The company has produced and delivered films to partners including Netflix, Paramount, Syfy Network, Lifetime Network, ION Television, Saban, and Cinedigm. Gerald is also executive producing DeInstitutionalized's new scripted digital series, *FraXtur*.

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