

# **MEATS**

**Written & Directed by:**  
Ashley Williams

**Starring:**  
Ashley Williams  
Giancarlo Sbarbaro

**Produced by:**  
Neal Dodson  
Ashley Williams

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For **HIGHER-RES** still photos & more information please visit:

**[www.ashleywilliams.work](http://www.ashleywilliams.work)**

# MEATS

## SYNOPSIS

Director-writer Ashley Williams also stars in **MEATS** -- a short film about a pregnant vegan who wrestles with her newfound craving for meat. The film is produced by Williams and her husband, Independent Spirit Award winner and Sundance alum Neal Dodson (*Margin Call*). **MEATS** is an exploration of the ethics of meat-eating and the fears inherent with becoming a parent.

In the short film, Williams plays Lane, who has hired a whole-animal butcher named Chris (played by real-life master butcher Giancarlo Sbarbaro), to educate her on how to responsibly break down a lamb and use every part. Upon arrival, Lane is simultaneously disgusted and mesmerized by the carcass in front of her. As Lane liberates the meat from the bone, she also frees a whole new side of herself, revealing humor, pain, connection, and a newfound mother-to-be.

CounterNarrative Films presents **MEATS**. The cinematographer is Roman Vasyanov (*Triple Frontier, Fury*, Sundance alum with *The East* and *Charlie Countryman*). The editor is Cecilia Delgado. Color is by Roman Hankewycz (Sundance alum with *Sound of Silence* and *Equity*, among others) from Harbor Picture Company. Sound design is by three-time Academy-Award nominee Steve Boeddeker (*All Is Lost, Black Panther*, Sundance alum with *I Origins*, among others) at Skywalker Sound. The music is composed by John Kaefer. Music supervisor is Philip Quinaz (Sundance alum with *Before You Know It*). Produced by Neal Dodson and Ashley Williams. Written and directed by Ashley Williams.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTES – Ashley Williams

My choice to write, direct, produce, and star in **MEATS**, came about because I wanted to explore how the relationship between humans and their meat-based food is affected if you stare your food in the face. Does it deepen? How does it change? I wanted to use a character with a very emotional connection to meat to raise the stakes for that story, which is why I play a vegan. I wanted to use humor and drama, language and silence, tears and laughter, to make it soar.

In some countries the relationship is very direct between consumers and their food, in others, not as direct. In the United States right now most people are very disconnected from their food and from meat especially. Slaughterhouses are kept secret and hidden. Most people have never killed an animal, despite eating more meat per capita than almost anywhere else on earth. Very few people grow their own produce let alone animals to eat. Myself certainly included! It is hard in the United States to find meat that you can trace to its source, to know that it was treated humanely, and to choose to use every part of the animal for a purpose. To be clear – I eat meat. I love meat. And it is also richly complicated.

I was inspired by an Israeli friend who is a lifelong vegan but ate meat only during her pregnancy. I was also inspired by a brilliant female butcher and “meat thinker” named Camas Davis from her memoir called **KILLING IT** about her time learning whole animal, seed-to-sausage butchery in Gascony, France before returning to Portland, Oregon to start a meat collective. I’m working right now with Camas and television director-producer Pamela Fryman to turn that book into a television series.

And lastly, as a female director/writer with all that it encompasses, I wanted to take a look at the ethical dilemmas and the pathos that happens when raising children, in relationship to food and meat sources. None of this is simple. All of it is dramatic and compelling to me. I’m proud to share it, and I am honored to World Premiere my first film at Sundance.

- Ashley Williams, writer-director of “**MEATS**”

## **FILM PRODUCTION CONTEXT -**

The butchery and the lamb carcass in the film are real — the actor playing Chris is a master butcher named Giancarlo Sbarbaro. The actors carved up the lamb together. After the shoot was over, Giancarlo vacuum-sealed the lamb meat, and writer-director Ashley Williams took the full lamb home to her freezer. She is trying to consume the entire animal with her husband, producer Neal Dodson, and their sons. It is slow going... Ashley got a job as an intern at the butcher shop location months before shooting to prepare for the short film as a director – to understand how the shop worked, how animals are carved up, and literally how the sausage gets made -- but also to get more comfortable with the meat.

The film was shot in New York City over one short six-hour night at Dickson's Butcher shop in Chelsea Market. Our cinematographer, Roman Vasyanov, wanted to shoot Ashley's first film and only requested that we have great gear to do it. He shot it at night, while during the day he was color-correcting J.C. Chandor's movie *Triple Frontier* for Netflix. The film was captured on an Arri Alexa Mini with beautiful Kowa anamorphic lenses. Ashley and Roman wanted the scope image to have as much richness as it could for the more visual sequence, and crystal clarity for the more intimate sections. Roman's experience on huge tentpole \$100 million+ films with all the toys in the world didn't prevent him from crafting amazing visuals with a three-person crew on a quick shoot. Roman also operated the camera himself, on a slider and on an easy-rig. Colorist Roman Hankewicz and friends at the Harbor Picture Company handled the digital intermediate with Ashley as well as post-production output. The producers self-financed the project. Post-production happened in Brooklyn and lower Manhattan, score in New Jersey, and sound mix in northern California.

Recording clean sound was a challenge in an active butcher shop, even overnight, with the hums of fridges and freezers and coolers and air conditioning, but the experienced on-set sound mixer T.R. Boyce, Jr. was patient and flexible. He had worked with Williams on the HBO series *Girls*, (as had hair & makeup head Cory McKutcheon). And then three-time Academy-Award-nominated sound designer/sound editor/re-recording mixer Steve Boeddeker at Skywalker Sound in California cleaned and balanced the sound and gave it a reality and clarity that really sings.

The live lambs in the field were filmed on an active sheep farm just outside of Nashville, Tennessee. It's actually a teaching farm that trains sheepdogs to herd, so the animals are actively being controlled by an extremely smart dog in the footage.

## **ABOUT THE FILMMAKER**

### **ASHLEY WILLIAMS** *(Director, Writer, Producer, Actor)*

Ashley Williams is an American director, writer, producer, and most prominently -- an actor. She has done over 150 episodes of television, more than a dozen tv pilots, many movies and television movies, and Broadway and Off-Broadway theatre. She wrote, directed, produced, and stars in **MEATS**, which is her first film. A detailed biography is below.

Social media links:

- Instagram (60k+): <https://www.instagram.com/ashleywilliamsandcompany/>
  - Twitter (20k+): <https://twitter.com/imthesmash>
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## **BIOGRAPHY**

Ashley Williams directed, wrote, produced, and starred in MEATS, a short film that premieres at The Sundance Film Festival in January of 2020. It was shot by Roman Vasyanov (the cinematographer for TRIPLE FRONTIER, SUICIDE SQUAD, and FURY). Ashley also wrote and starred in the short film STUD BOOB which is in post-production with director Shaina Feinberg. She's shadowed major television directors, including Seth Gordon, and is developing a television series called KILLING IT alongside HOW I MET YOUR MOTHER director-executive producer Pamela Fryman. She is developing a handful of television projects for herself to direct, as well as continuing to produce projects for Hallmark, where she conceived of, developed, executive produced, and starred in LOVE ON A LIMB. At Hallmark, Williams has three other development projects with writers writing, and she has a deal to direct a movie for them later next year. She is also in early pre-production on a Lifetime television movie that she is directing in early 2020.

Ashley is best known as an actor in film, television, and theatre. She's shot over 150 episodes of prime-time television, a dozen tv pilots, and more than a dozen films and television movies. She starred in THE JIM GAFFIGAN SHOW on Comedy Central for two seasons, playing Jeannie Gaffigan, based on comedian Jim Gaffigan's real-life wife. Among other films, Ashley appeared alongside Jessica Chastain and Oscar Issac in the critically-lauded film A MOST VIOLENT YEAR. She also starred in the Warner Brothers comedy film SOMETHING BORROWED with Kate Hudson and John Krasinski. Other films

include *BAD HURT* with Theo Rossi, J.C. Chandor's Oscar-nominated *MARGIN CALL*, which debuted at the Sundance Film Festival, and starring opposite Anna Camp in *SEQUIN RAZE*, the short film by Sarah Gertrude Shapiro that became the tv series *UnREAL* after winning South by Southwest and playing New Directors/New Films at MoMA.

As a teenager Ashley played Meg Ryan's daughter, Dani Andropolous, on *AS THE WORLD TURNS*. She later starred alongside Mark Feuerstein in the NBC television series *GOOD MORNING MIAMI* and in Lifetime's *MONTANA SKY* with John Corbett. Ashley also had a memorable, longtime recurring role on the CBS comedy *HOW I MET YOUR MOTHER*, as Victoria, "the baker that got away" for Ted (Josh Radnor). She was so popular on the show that she won a major online poll as to whom fans would most like to see the as "the mother." Her other television credits include recurring roles on the Holly Hunter TNT series *SAVING GRACE*, SyFy's *WAREHOUSE 13*, Lifetime's *SIDE ORDER OF LIFE*, and Showtime's award-winning *HUFF*, as well as guest-starring roles on *THE NEW ADVENTURES OF OLD CHRISTINE*, *CSI*, *INSTINCT*, *MONK*, *THE MENTALIST*, *FBI*, *THE GOOD WIFE*, *PSYCH*, *LAW & ORDER: SVU*, and on the final season of HBO's *GIRLS*, to name a few.

Ashley has starred in many television movies for Hallmark, including *OCTOBER KISS*, *HOLIDAY HEARTS*, *NORTHERN LIGHTS OF CHRISTMAS*, *CHRISTMAS IN EVERGREEN* and its two sequels. She starred opposite Tom Cavanagh in *SNOW* and *SNOW 2: BRAIN FREEZE* for ABC Family, and for Lifetime with Andie McDowell in *AT RISK* and *THE FRONT* and with Brooke Smith in *CHRIS WATTS*.

Born in Westchester, New York, to journalist parents, Ashley studied at Boston University's School of Theatre Arts and spent a year abroad at RADA in London. She was a member of the acting company at the Williamstown Theatre Festival. Her first job out of drama school was understudying both Rachel Weisz and Gretchen Mol in the hit Off-Broadway play *THE SHAPE OF THINGS*, written and directed by Neil LaBute. During the run of the play, Ashley performed both roles multiple times opposite Paul Rudd. She starred alongside Wendie Malick in the Off-Broadway flop *BURLEIGH GRIMES* and starred in a Broadway flop opposite Tom Skerritt and Sebastian Arcelus in *A TIME TO KILL*, based on the John Grisham novel.

Outside of her work in entertainment, Ashley is also a semi-retired doula. A doula offers emotional, physical, and informational support leading up to labor, through childbirth, and post-partum. She's attended over 50 births. She currently splits her time between Los Angeles and New York with her husband, producer Neal Dodson, and their two sons.

**NEAL DODSON** (*Producer*)

Neal Dodson produced writer-director J.C. Chandor's Netflix tentpole film *TRIPLE FRONTIER*, starring Ben Affleck, Oscar Isaac, Charlie Hunnam, Garrett Hedlund, Pedro Pascal, and Adria Arjona. He executive produced *RUN THIS TOWN* starring Ben Platt, which premiered at South By Southwest. He also released the film *VIPER CLUB* starring Susan Sarandon and Matt Bomer as well as *JONATHAN* starring Ansel Elgort. Other recent films include *AARDVARK* starring Zachary Quinto, Jenny Slate, and Jon Hamm, as well as *NEVER HERE* starring Mireille Enos and Sam Shepard in his final role.

Dodson produced J.C. Chandor's first three award-winning films as well: the critically-acclaimed *A MOST VIOLENT YEAR* starring Oscar Isaac and Jessica Chastain for A24 and Participant, the Robert Redford solo adventure *ALL IS LOST* which premiered at Cannes and Telluride, and the Academy-Award-nominated *MARGIN CALL*, which was Dodson's first producing effort, premiered at Sundance and the Berlinale, and for which he won an Independent Spirit Award.

Past projects include *HATESHIP LOVESHIP* starring Kristin Wiig for IFC, Victor Quinaz's *BREAKUP AT A WEDDING*, *THE BANSHEE CHAPTER* for XLRator, Anna Martemucci's *HOLLIDAYSBURG* for Starz, *PERIODS* for Oscilloscope, *LOVE ON A LIMB* for Hallmark, *ANOTHER CINDERELLA STORY* starring Selena Gomez and Jane Lynch for Warner Brothers, and the award-winning documentary television series *THE CHAIR* for Starz. Over the years he's setup television projects at The CW, TNT, USA, Legendary, MTV, Gaumont, Showtime, FX, Amazon, and Keshet. CounterNarrative Films, his company with producing partners J.C. Chandor and Anna Gerb, has dozens of projects in development, including films with Paramount, Warner Brothers, Amazon, Participant, A24, and others.

As an actor, in addition to work in television, independent film, and at regional theaters (Lincoln Center Theatre, Mark Taper Forum, Yale Repertory Theatre, Utah Shakespearean Festival), Dodson appeared on Broadway in Tom Stoppard's *The Invention of Love*, which won two Tony Awards. He earned a BFA from Carnegie Mellon University's School of Drama. Dodson is a reformed actor and is married to television-film actor-director-writer Ashley Williams. They split their time between New York and Los Angeles with their two young sons.

**ROMAN VASYANOV** (*Director of Photography*)

Roman is a world-class cinematographer, born in Russia, whose films include J.C. Chandor's TRIPLE FRONTIER with Oscar Isaac and Ben Affleck, Doug Liman's THE WALL, Jason Hall's THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE with Miles Teller, Fredrik Bond's CHARLIE COUNTRYMAN with Shia Labeouf and Evan Rachel Wood, Zal Batmanglij's THE EAST with Ellen Page and Brit Marling, and four of David Ayer's films: SUICIDE SQUAD for D.C. and Warner Brothers, BRIGHT with Will Smith for Netflix, FURY with Brad Pitt, and END OF WATCH with Jake Gyllenhaal.

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**STEVE BOEDDEKER** (*Sound Designer, Re-Recording Mixer, Supervising Sound Editor*)

Steve Boeddeker is a sound designer, mixer, and composer based mainly out of Skywalker Sound in Marin County, California, and his own studio in San Francisco. He has worked extensively in the Bay Area, Los Angeles, New York, and London, collaborating with many big-name directors.

Boeddeker's mixing and sound design work can be heard in numerous movies including: *All Is Lost* (Academy Award nomination), *A Most Violent Year*, *Triple Frontier*, *Black Panther* (two Academy Award nominations), *I Origins*, *Now You See Me*, *The Company You Keep*, *Killer Joe*, *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, *Lincoln*, *Tron: Legacy*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Bug*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Hellboy*, *Daredevil*, *Rules of Engagement*, *Fight Club*, and *Contact*. His original music can be heard in *The Exorcist* (re-release), *Se7en* and *The Prophecy 3: The Ascent*, as well as in the work of his band, Dogs of Distortion.



**MEATS – Key End Credits**

Written and Directed by  
ASHLEY WILLIAMS

Produced by  
NEAL DODSON  
ASHLEY WILLIAMS

Cinematographer  
ROMAN VASYANOV, RSC

Sound Design & Mixing by  
STEVE BOEDDEKER  
SKYWALKER SOUND

Color by  
ROMAN HANKEWYCZ  
HARBOR PICTURE COMPANY

Editor  
CECILIA DELGADO

Composer  
JOHN KAEFER

Music Supervisor  
PHILIP QUINAZ

Hair & Makeup  
CORY MCKUTCHEON

Publicity  
ERIK BRIGHT  
PRODIGY PUBLIC RELATIONS

Starring  
ASHLEY WILLIAMS  
GIANCARLO SBARBARO

A CounterNarrative Films Production

## Special Thanks

J.C. CHANDOR	CHASE PALMER
ANNA GERB	AILEEN ABERCROMBIE
GURNEY WILLIAMS III	JON DELBENE
KIMBERLY WILLIAMS-PAISLEY	AMANDA DELBENE
GUS DODSON	SUSAN LEBER
ODIE DODSON	ANNA HOLBROOK
JANE DODSON	CAMAS DAVIS
NELSON DODSON	EMMA PARRY
SUZANA PERIC	MARK KIRBY
KAMI PUTNAM-HEIST	ERIN OWENS
KATHLEEN ANTONELLI	ANNA MARTEMUCCI
PAUL ROSICKER	LAURA RISTER
HARLEY NEUMAN	CASSIAN ELWES
ANONYMOUS CONTENT	JENNIFER WESTFELDT
SIMRAN SETHI	ANDRE COUTU
SETH GORDON	BEN GRUND
PAMELA FRYMAN	BETHANY ROONEY
ALAN GROSSBARD	MICHAEL NANKIN
JAKE DICKSON	TANYA LOPEZ
AIMIE BILLON	AMANDA PALLEY
ERIK PATTERSON	DANA SEACH
SIAN HEDER	THE SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL
VICTOR QUINAZ	EMILY DOE
SARAH GERTRUDE SHAPIRO	DOREEN KALFUS
ERIN SIMMS	TERRY CHI
BILL HOLDERMAN	

MEATS was shot in Dickson's Butcher Shop located in Chelsea Market, New York City.

MEATS was shot on Arri Alexa Mini and edited on Adobe Premiere.

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