***STUCK*  -- a film by Jenni Tooley**

**Concept*:*** What would it be like to be STUCK in the mind of a woman who has Alzheimer’s but not know it?

**Synopsis:** A ballerina with a baby and a coke habit. A regret-filled sister caught between her head and her heart. A country singer hiding out in her hometown. And at the center - one woman struggling to remember them all through the veil of her fading memories.

**Project Description**: My favorite movies are the ones that truly move me. Darren Arronofsky’s *Pi* gave me a headache. *Requiem for a Dream* gave me a stomachache. Wong Kar Wai’s *Fallen Angels* made me tipsy. Susanne Bier’s *After the Wedding* left me exhausted but hopeful. The common thread among these films is that each one made me *feel.* This type of visceral filmmaking is what I aspire to with ***STUCK****.*

When I wrote ***STUCK*** In 2002, my first grandparent was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s. I wanted to know what was going on in my grandmother’s mind. How do we process our lives as they come to a close? What happens when our dreams, regrets, and choices get stuck in our heads? I was unaware at the time that, through writing this script, I was also processing my codependent relationship with an active addict and my loss of self. Today I continue to be motivated to make this film by the many people who share their own stories with me—whether about themselves or their experiences living with loved ones who suffer from these diseases.

***STUCK*** is foremost about Alzheimer’s - a destructive, degenerative disease that devastates both its victims and those who watch their loved ones slip away. It explores a haunting question that can’t be answered by those left behind: what is it like to be trapped in the Alzheimer’s mind? However, ***STUCK*** isn’t all dark and gritty – it’s also about friendship, dreams and hope. Although it’s in no way autobiographical, there are many elements that speak to me and mirror some of my life experiences.

At the center of the story is Mimi, a bartender who draws beautiful pieces of art on napkins but undervalues them as doodles, and her circle of friends. It is not until the very end of the film that we come to understand that the jagged swirl of tales we have been following all took place in Mimi’s mind while she is nearing the end of her life in a nursing home. She winds the women’s stories together through the veil of decades of memory:

* *Frannie*, a country singer on the brink of fame, who hides in a small town working as a diner waitress. She lives in her parents’ home that has been empty since her mother’s death and father’s incarceration.
* *Melanie*, a fading ballet dancer who is lost in the pit of cocaine addiction and struggling to parent her 6-month-old baby.
* *Jo*, Melanie’s sister, whose painful memory of a health-related abortion 10 years prior is triggered when she realizes that her sister is endangering her own child. She struggles to decide whether or not to take Melanie’s baby from her.
* And *Tanya*, Jo’s boss, a recovering alcoholic who is desperate to regain custody of her first child, legally taken by her mother while Tanya was in the throes of her addiction.

The women’s stories are wound together in Mimi’s ailing mind by using semi-linear storytelling, multiple camera formats, a real-time element and by employing striking choices in visuals, sound and editing. For cohesion, the late night TV lineup will play at various points in each of the women’s stories. The entire film spans the time it takes for the late night line-up to run in real time from beginning to end.

To mirror the Alzheimer’s mind, the script is structured with scenes that repeat themselves, with broken narratives, sound bridges, audio interrupts, and with visions that appear unwarranted.

In the closing scene, as Mimi’s caregivers get her settled in for the night, we realize that events occurring in her room (and the very setting itself) have triggered these remembrances:

* In Mimi’s room we see elements from earlier scenes like Melanie’s broken saucer, pictures of Frannie and Mimi together, Jo’s music box, and Frannie’s music albums.
* Disconnected voiced lines bleed into scenes: questions actually asked of Elder Mimi are heard in Young Mimi scenes. Bleed-through also happens in the crowd scenes where we hear bits of conversations between nurses and family/friends that are out of context.
* Set dressing and props from various time periods will appear throughout the stories, creating a feeling of the last 80 years of Mimi’s life jumbled into the ever-present.
* Some double casting creates “character hangover.” For example, the same actor plays Young Mimi’s husband and Nursing Home Mimi’s grandson, and Susan from the diner is also a nursing home nurse.

Each character has a signature color. Jo wears warm red sweaters and shirts in her sister Melanie’s blue-gray world. Tanya’s world is made of cold marble and stainless steel. These colors are reflected in Mimi’s red nursing home robe and steel walker, safety bars and medical cart.

**Plan, Team and Status*:*** After writing ***STUCK*** in 2001, I raised funds and shot one storyline. However, life took a turn soon after that, and I shelved the project. A decade later,I returned to my native state of Texas and reconnected to the theater and film communities here. My role as Ethan Hawk’s second wife in *Boyhood* brought me attention as an actor. My filmmaking muscles are now developed enough that I can take on this challenge. And I have been fundraising for a non-profit for the past two years, which has provided me with new tools that I did not have before.

In November 2015, we raised funds to cover our business expenses, to make a new teaser/pitch video that would allows us to run a larger crowdfunding campaign, to do camera tests, and create some custom props that were used for production. During that time we were selected for Indiewire’s Project of the Day, then Project of the Week, and were nominated for Project of the Month. In the spring of 2016 we successfully raised $24,000 for production through a two-fold approach: a crowdfunding patnership with Hatchfund and backer parties. We also implemented an Amazon wishlist campaign that raised over $2000 in goods for craft services. In October 2016, Jenni decided to proceed with production with $24,000—our 100 person cast and crew all worked pro-bono over a period of four months (20 shoot days). With the support of partnerships with local art and theatre groups, generous business owners, schools and individuals, and small sponsorship opportunities, we wrapped production with $2000 left in the bank. Post-production will take place during 2017 and we will begin submitting to festivals that fall. STUCK is already building an audience with over 200 backers and supporters and a strong social media following.

Our team thus far has been 99% locally sourced with Dallas’s best talent—both established and up and coming. **Robert Winn**, production designer, has been committed since the project’s inception. Veteran costumer Leila Heise and a team of wardrobe supervisors worked endlessly to dress our cast and extra pool over over 100 people. **Russell Blair** shot the teaser, while Karissa Leicht, Eric Phelan, Maximo Contreras, and Jake Guy were our DP team during production. **Laurel Hoitsma** and **Jenny Maguire**, strong producers with whom I have long-standing relationships, assisted in production. I joined acclaimed local actors like **Jeffrey Schmidt**, **Joanna Schellenberg**, **Robert McCollum**, **Stormi Demerson**, **Larry Jack Dotson** and **Tony Ramirez** in playing lead roles. **Stephen Goodson** and **East Dallas Overdub** will supply the score and original music.

**Target Audience and Distribution:** Although this is an art film, I believe its universal themes will speak to a larger audience, such as combating conflicting cultural/media messages while staying true to our authentic selves, and handling the pain of addiction—of both the addicted and the family member. The target audience - women, the over-40 crowd and Baby Boomers - spends money at the box office. We believe **STUCK** will appeal to:

* Mature audiences who appreciate character-driven, relationship-based storylines that don’t rely on high budget special effects.
* Women, because of the strong, sympathetic female leads in a story written, directed, edited and produced by a female artist.
* Families affected by Alzheimer’s, a disease affecting 5.3 million Americans.
* Art film lovers, because ***STUCK*** integrates a unique set of age-old techniques, cutting edge technologies and an emotionally charged script.

We will consult with advisors to create a reasonable festival plan that will best support marketing and distribution efforts and that includes targeted regional and foreign festivals including, but not limited to, Toronto, South By Southwest, Tribeca, Sundance and Cannes. The film distribution landscape has been changing rapidly over the past few years so our plan will evolve as it does. We will employ other lines of out-of-the-box thinking as we explore how best to reach audiences with this film. One of our goals through crowdfunding and social media has been to create a sustained awareness that will continue to increase exponentially during our process so that we have a built in audience once the film is ready for exhibition.

**Fundraising:** We have embraced STUCK as an art film and are pursuing donors rather than investors. As of June 29, 2016, we have raised $34,000 from two crowdfunding efforts. The first was a Kickstarter campaign for development/pre-production funds. The next was a production campaign which offered full tax-deductions to backers through Hatchfund. Part of our strategy for donors is inclusion and accessibility, so we are hosting quarterly events, such as a ***STUCK*** night at Shakespeare Dallas where our donors get in free. Our strategic marketing and development plan includes but is not limited to:

* 2017 Post-production/distribution crowdfunding (platform TBD)
* Post-production grant submissions: Women in Film Dallas Post Production Grant, Women in Film Finishing Funds, Office of Cultural Affairs CPP Individual Artist Grant (2017 Cycle), Stuck On On DCP In-Kind Grant, Nancy Malone Marketing and Promotion Grant
* Post-production In-kind solicitation. Major donor campaign.

Our current supporter base (since October 2015) consists of more than 700 Facebook followers, 125 crowdfunding backers, three major donors, and another 75 supporters in our community who have committed to helping with various tasks and budget lines.

We understand this project may sound ambitious – maybe even audacious. But we have confidence in our experienced production team, growing network of supporters and the friendly and supportive arts community here in Dallas. We’re also flexible, nimble and adaptable, willing and able to adjust our strategies as needed.