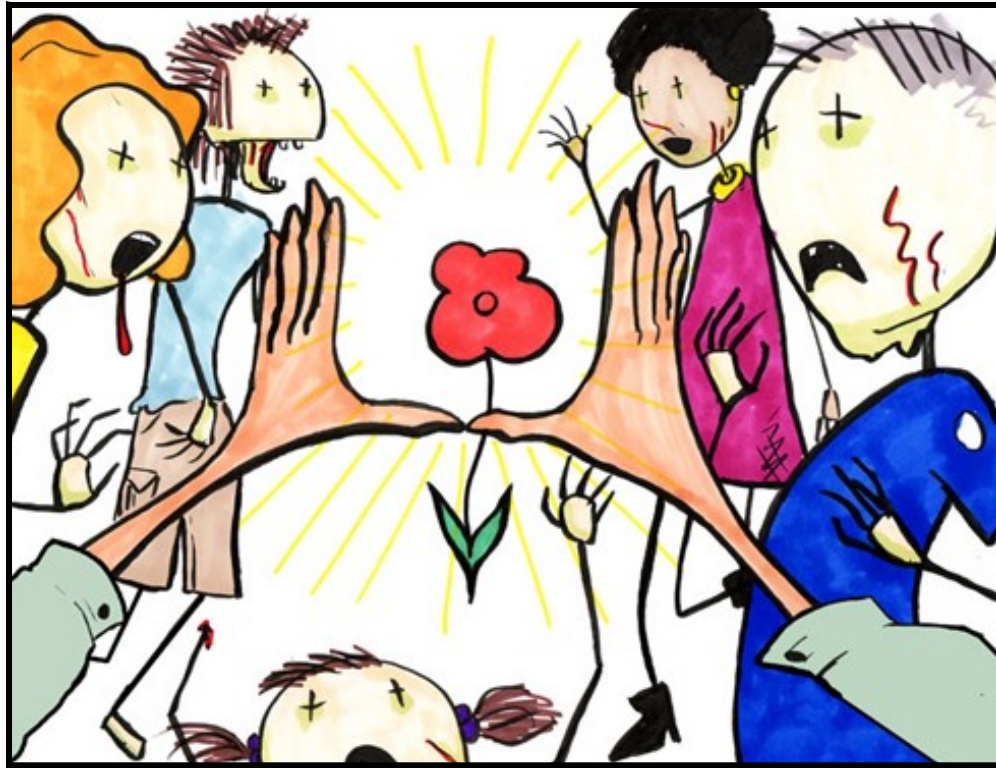


# Pushin' Up Daisies



*Reality is what you make it.*



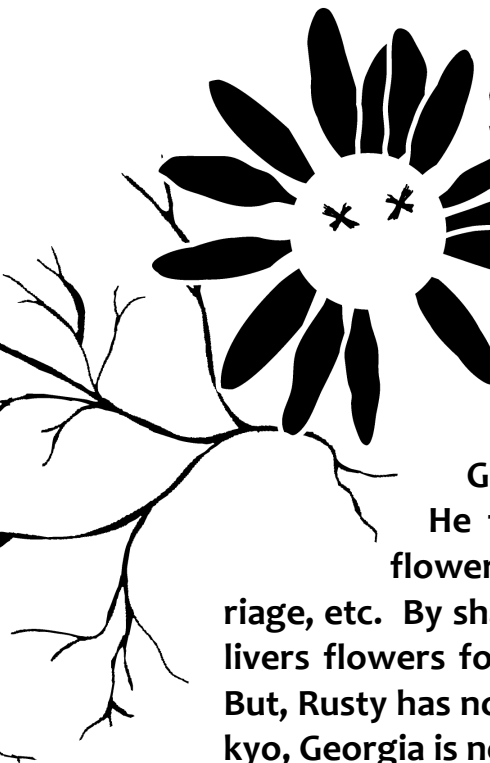
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# pushin' daisies

## THE STORY

Darren (Sheehan O'Heron), an ambitious young would-be filmmaker, leaves Hollywood and returns to his small Georgia hometown to make a documentary about flowers. He thinks there is genius in highlighting the significance of flowers at the major stages of human life: birth, death, marriage, etc. By shadowing his older brother Rusty (Simon Sorrells), who delivers flowers for a living, Darren hopes to capture raw truth and reality. But, Rusty has no desire to be filmed, and finding a professional crew in Tokyo, Georgia is no easy task. Darren, however, soon finds that these are the least of his problems when zombies (yes, zombies!) begin taking over the world and threatening his artistic vision. Despite these challenges, Darren vows to finish his documentary as he envisioned it by filming around the zombies and pretending that nothing out of the ordinary is actually happening. In other words, his method for capturing reality becomes more a matter of manipulating it. Zombies, death, and mayhem all get spun and sometimes scripted into something of Darren's own making until he ultimately loses any sense of reality at all.

*Pushin' Up Daisies* is not a horror movie. It is not even actually a zombie movie; it just happens to have zombies in it. You might call the film a mockumentary, but even that is misleading. In essence, this is about boundaries; it is about how much can be excluded and how much an industry can shape reality. The preoccupation here is not with a particular genre or a reinvention thereof but rather with the idea of genre itself -- the notion that we as audience members are accustomed to certain boundaries that shape our expectations every time we enter the movie theatre. Deciding what we accept in movies is not that much different from making choices about what we believe and don't believe in our daily lives.



## ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

*Pushin' Up Daisies* is a feature film by first-time writer/director Patrick Franklin. A former film critic for *Flagpole Magazine* in Athens, GA, and longtime film hobbyist, Franklin had been eager to make his first feature film since childhood. The idea for *Pushin' Up Daisies* came to him while he and a friend were on a road trip shooting footage for a documentary about trivia tournaments. As they drove through an eerie small town one evening, he was struck by the sudden almost unreal cinematic quality of their surroundings in contrast to the more mundane subject of their documentary. This immediately inspired a more exaggerative image, that of a stubborn documentary filmmaker surrounded by some inexplicable supernatural phenomenon but refusing to film anything because it simply doesn't comply with his idea of reality. The absurdity of such a premise immediately appealed to Franklin's sense of humor. Vampires? Aliens? Zombies? It didn't matter. What was interesting was the character, and he liked how the idea naturally resonated with commentary on the age of "reality" television. He went on to develop the story with his friend Robert J. Wagstaff before setting off to write the script. Together they settled on zombies thinking the inherent Hollywood mythology would lend itself to great visual and comic possibilities.



When Franklin finished the screenplay, he shared it with another friend, Andy Rusk, a trained stuntman and genuine jack-of-all-trades. Originally hoping only to get feedback on the feasibility of certain stunts and special effects, he was surprised when Rusk's one sentence review was "Let's make it." And that is exactly what they did.

Prior to production, the script for *Pushin' Up Daisies* was a finalist for the Southeastern Media Award sponsored by IMAGE Film & Video and the Atlanta Film Festival. An honor previously given to David Gordon Green's critically



acclaimed debut feature *George Washington* and Ray McKinnon's Academy Award-winning short film *The Accountant*, the winner receives a generous donation of production services from prominent businesses and individual specialists in the Atlanta film community. Although *Pushin' Up Daisies* did not ultimately take home the big prize, being nominated for this well known, highly respected award brought a great deal of momentum to the project. As part of the Atlanta Film Festival that year, there was a live performance of a portion of the script using local Screen Actors Guild members. Producers were also granted private meetings with top industry professionals, including Eric Besner, the then vice president of programming at NetFilx. At the same time, co-producers Franklin and Rusk were further spotlighted as emerging Georgia filmmakers when they won the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Perfect Pitch Contest with another feature-length script entitled *Plaster Man*. As winners of that contest, they traveled to Los Angeles to pitch their script to Hollywood executives and were welcomed as special guests at the annual celebration "Georgia Night in L.A."

Based out of Athens, the production crew filmed at a number of North Georgia locations, particularly in small towns like Crawfordville, Washington, and other surrounding communities. The level of support found in these communities was tremendous, particularly in terms of the hundreds of extras who enthusiastically volunteered to be a part of the film's more spectacular scenes. In this regard, *Pushin' Up Daisies* represents something of a technical achievement. In keeping with a "caught-on-tape" mockumentary style, very nearly every scene in the film is a single take, some takes being upwards of six minutes in length. A challenge for both cast and crew, each scene had to be carefully choreographed, timed, and executed to successfully create the illusion that what we see in the movie is actually happening--no small task considering that the film also boasts one of the rare instances in which a blind actor is playing a significant on-camera role. Real-life blind voice-over artist, Ken Osbourn, plays fictional blind voice-over artist, Mr. Emerson, and brings incomparable authenticity to the part. He even does his own stunts!

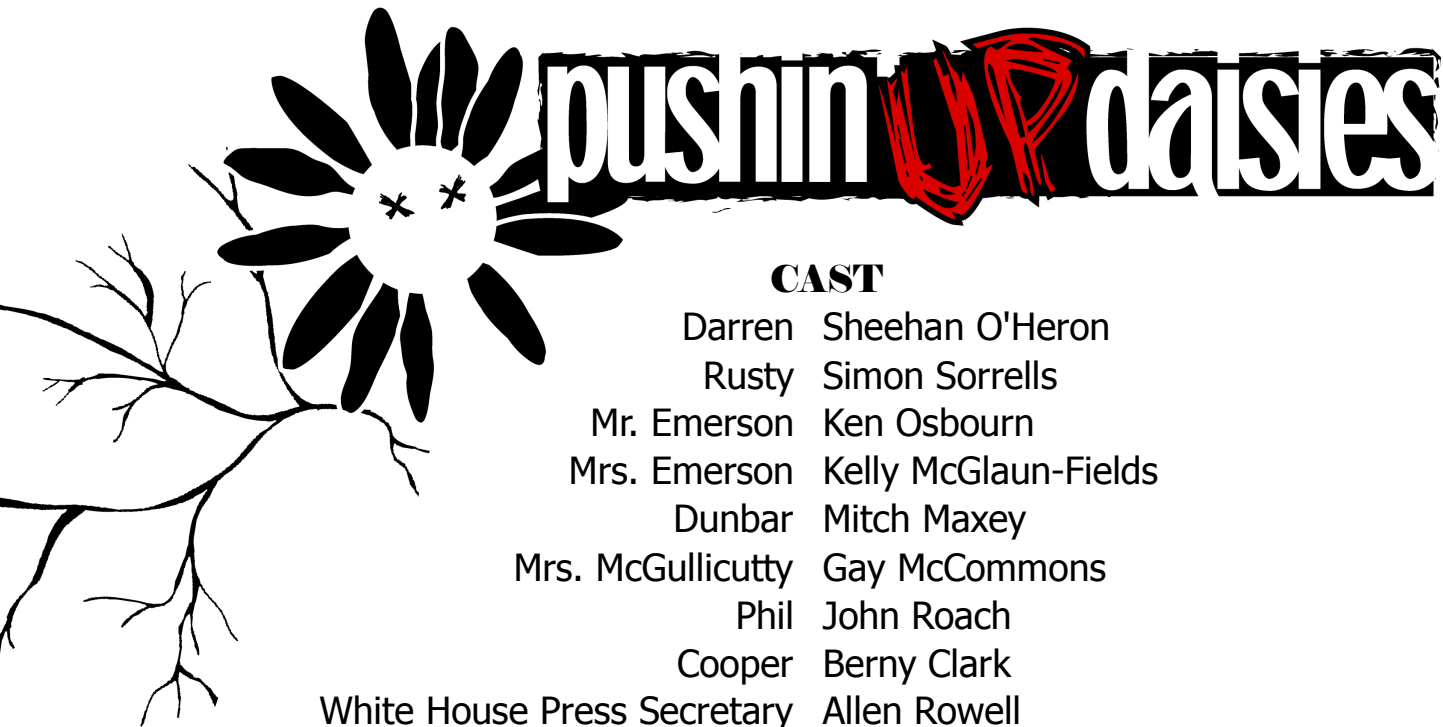


## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

One of the most important aesthetic principles behind *Pushin' Up Daisies* is the emphasis on a contradiction between reality and cinematic fantasy. To achieve this, the crew and I felt it essential to forego some of the usual conventions of film language, particularly in the editing. By adhering to a caught-on-tape narrative style to exaggerate the notion of make-believe clashing with the "real" world, we were faced with the challenge of capturing nearly every scene in a single shot. From the beginning of each scene to the end, we were constantly aware that we would not have the luxury of editing out any mistakes. Each scene thus became like a mini-play and those of us with theatre backgrounds were thankful to be able to draw on that experience. This commitment to long takes became the source of not only our most difficult moments but our most joyous ones as well. Sometimes these moments were one and the same as was the case when we needed to coordinate a car crash, a horseback stunt, a multi-character dialogue, and a hundred costumed, panic-stricken extras for a single take encompassing a nearly 360-degree perspective. In the studio world, such a scenario might not be anything out of the ordinary, but for a small crew operating in rural Georgia on a limited budget, this was the ultimate test to see if ambition and diligence could meet at the top of the mountain. We did five takes of that particular scene, each time shorter and shorter of breath but closer and closer to perfection, and what that scene represents for us personally is not only an artifact of achievement but a thrilling reminder of how making this movie was really a process of living it. For a first-time director whose childhood ambitions began as a simple desire to be in the movies -- not as an actor but literally to be inside them, living them -- *Pushin' Up Daisies* couldn't have provided a better opportunity.



Patrick Franklin



## CAST

Darren Sheehan O'Heron  
Rusty Simon Sorrells  
Mr. Emerson Ken Osbourn  
Mrs. Emerson Kelly McGlaun-Fields  
Dunbar Mitch Maxey  
Mrs. McGullicutty Gay McCommons  
Phil John Roach  
Cooper Berny Clark  
White House Press Secretary Allen Rowell  
Vance Andre Barbic  
Coy Rich Ransom  
Reverend James Keith Kelly  
Henry Boone Lukich  
Kayleigh Sarah Clayton  
Danielle Weston Susanna Lewis  
Anthony Orlando Vicente

## CREW

written, produced, & directed by Patrick Franklin  
story by Patrick Franklin, Robert J. Wagstaff  
co-producer Andy Rusk  
executive producers Cory Archibald, Isaiah Ellison,  
Erin Espelie, Joe Hart  
director of photography Tom Pritchard  
production designer Andy Rusk  
editors Patrick Franklin, Josh Borger  
special effects makeup Toby Sells Creature Makeup FX Shop  
sound design Patrick Weise  
production sound mixer Matt Burgette  
boom operator Paul Sorohan  
final mix Paris Hollins at Studio House North  
stunt coordinator Andy Rusk  
associate producers Kamala Lyons, Patric Ryan  
production managers Margaret Bellamy, Shannon Juhan  
extras coordinator Kathryn Kyker



## **SHEEHAN O'HERON**

(Darren)

Sheehan Isaac O' Heron was born in Toronto and lived in Texas and Georgia before moving to Los Angeles to study Acting at UCLA's School of Theater, Film, and Television. He was heavily involved in theater and independent filmmaking during high school and carried that passion and experience into college, participating in projects that utilized every form of expression from Graphic Design to Radio, from Internet to TV, from Theater to Film. He gives his deepest thanks and love to his family, friends, and all the cast and crew of Pushin' Up Daisies.

***What did you gain from working on this film, both as an actor and personally?***

"I learned what being an actor truly means and what a village of artists pulsing towards a common goal feels like. I clarified my process and developed some helpful tricks and tools for the future. My all-around appreciation and love for people and production solidified. Personally, I'm not sure how to separate what I gained as an actor from what I gained personally. They seem to be one and the same. For the sake of not ducking the response, I'll add that I surprised myself at times and let myself down at times. I gained a deeper understanding of my strengths and weaknesses on and off the set. Thank you, Patrick!"

## **SIMON SORRELLS (Rusty)**

Simon Sorrells is an actor and writer living in Los Angeles. He moved to L.A. shortly after graduating from the University of Georgia to pursue acting. His television credits include appearances on "Criminal Minds" and "Make It or Break It." He recently co-wrote and starred in an award winning short film entitled, Refrigerator, which has been in several film festivals. His stage credits include An Inspector Calls, The Knights of Mary Phagan, A New War, and Bill W. and Dr. Bob.



***What did you gain from working on this film, both as an actor and personally?***

"On this film, I gained a great deal of respect for what goes into something like this. With the zombies, stunts, many, many extras. With so many components to orchestrate, it's a real challenge and I think we pulled it off. Personally, I gained a lot of good friends from the production. Patrick, Mitch, Sheehan, just to name a few. We had the best cast and crew imaginable. A lot of great people, and we had a lot of fun."



## **KEN OSBOURN (Mr. Emerson)**

Ken Osbourn has been a voice-over talent for almost twenty-six years. Blind since birth, he developed a passion for audio at an early age and found voice-work to be a natural fit for him. His clients have included Foxx5 WNYW in New York, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey's Circus, and numerous cable channels like Spike TV and Encore.

He currently can be heard on promos for the popular Ultimate Fighting Championship, but some may remember him as the voice of TNT's "Movies For Guys Who Like Movies". His deep distinctive voice and versatile talent has earned him many nicknames including "The Voice of God" and "The Voice For All Reasons". When he's not working, he enjoys playing the drums for his church in Birmingham, AL and spending time with friends and family.

He and his wife Charlotte met at a school for the blind when they were children. They like to joke about the fact they didn't like each other at first, but many years and several grandkids later, they've come along way since their first impressions.



### ***What did you gain from working on this film, both as an actor and personally?***

"For starters, my on camera confidence got a tremendous boost. I truly understand now the importance of just being yourself when you are on camera. I also have a true appreciation for what professional actors and actresses have to go through to earn their living. What did I gain from it personally? I gained the satisfaction of knowing that a "real blind guy" can actually star in a movie when given a chance by an adventurous director to play the part of a blind guy! It was also a dream come true for me."



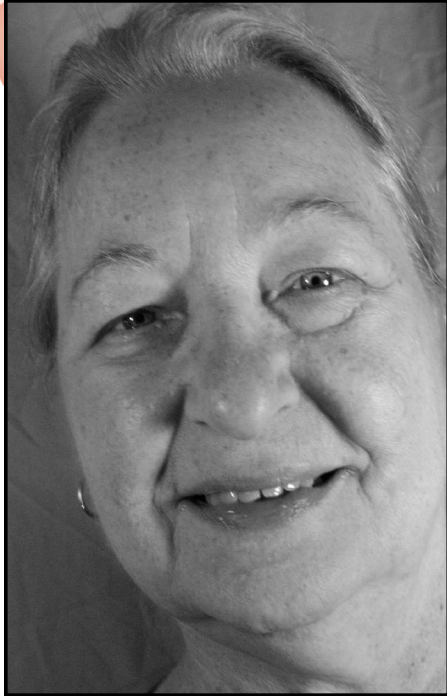
## **MITCH MAXEY**

(Dunbar)

Mitch lives in Athens, GA where he works as an actor and volunteers at the United States Postal Service. He is an avid Tennis watcher, is very bad at pool, and wishes he hadn't played football in high school. He loves you... you think he smells good... 'nuff said.

### ***What did you gain from working on this film, both as an actor and personally?***

"Working on PUD taught me to, in addition to the camera, trust the Director. Vision is a beautiful and powerful creature and the Director is it's owner. I developed lasting relationships from the project that will be cherished. I also realized that small towns aren't always "quaint". Sometimes they are hysterical."



## **KELLY MCGLAUN-FIELDS**

(Mrs. Emerson)

Kelly has been acting most of her life, mostly on stage. Pushin' Up Daisies is her first full-length film. Her professional credits include Appletree Theatre, a summer stock company, Highlands Playhouse, Georgia Renaissance Festival, and she is also a storyteller. As her other persona, Grandmother Goose, she has told professionally all over Georgia. In Athens where she lives, Kelly is a member of the Town and Gown Players, Stitching Stars Storytelling Festival, and So They Say, a local storytelling group. She has made films and commercials for CASA, Loren Smith Cancer Center, Adair Roofing, and several projects for the University of Georgia. Kelly is also involved with ALPS, a local children's theatre where she does summer camps and works with a group of child actors called ALPS Traveling Troupe.

### ***What did you gain from working on this film, both as an actor and personally?***

"This film gave me great insight into the filmmaking process and has opened up a new part-time career for me. I have done most of my film work since Pushin' Up Daisies and the work keeps coming. Shortly after I was cast in Pushin' Up Daisies, I was diagnosed with ovarian and uterine cancer. The prospect of working on the film and my family and friends helped me through a very rough period of my life. I finished chemo in March and we made the film in May while I was still very bald and recovering from months of surgery and chemotherapy. I had a wonderful experience with the cast and crew of the film, made new friends and got reacquainted with old friends. Thank you for helping me get my life back."

### **CONTACT THE ACTORS**

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Mitch Maxey  
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## **PATRICK FRANKLIN**

(writer/director/producer)

Patrick Franklin makes his directorial debut with "Pushin' Up Daisies", a film that encapsulates his love of cinema, his taste for the absurd, and his commitment to challenging convention. He was born in Kingsport, TN but has lived most of his life in Athens, GA where he attended the University of Georgia. After graduating with degrees in Sociology and Telecommunications, he worked in the film industry in a variety of capacities, most notably as assistant director to Hadji for the hit indie-comedy "Somebodies". As a film critic, he has written for *Flagpole Magazine* and has blogged for Roger Ebert's Overlooked Film Festival. Living in Athens, Patrick involved himself deeply in its rich musical tradition, playing trombone and drums in countless ensembles of all varieties and contributing to a handful of recordings including the debut album by The Whigs. Patrick credits his first directing opportunities to the stage where he developed a special place in his heart for the live theatre. Directing plays like "The Bald Soprano" and "True West" also helped to solidify his interest in the unconventional. He recently directed the premiere of "Reception", a new play by Matthew Smith, for the Annex Theater in Baltimore. Nevertheless, Patrick has always maintained that his first love is cinema. Prior to production for "Pushin' Up Daisies", the screenplay was a finalist for the Southeastern Media Award, an honor that helped propel the project to completion. At the same time, Patrick and his PUD co-producer, Andy Rusk, also won the Perfect Pitch contest for their script "Plaster Man". They are grateful to the Atlanta film community for its continued support.

## **ANDY RUSK**

(co-producer/production-designer/stunt-coordinator)

A graduate of the University of Georgia's school of Drama, and the International Stuntman's Association Stunt School in Seattle, Andy has worked in film since 2004. Primarily a scenic carpenter and set dresser, "Pushin' Up Daisies" marks Andy's first foray into production and the second of many collaborations with his good buddy, Patrick Franklin. Patrick and Andy won the Atlanta Film Festival Perfect Pitch Competition for their original screenplay, "Plaster Man." Andy lives, works, writes, and falls down stairs in Athens, GA, and just recently completed a teaser trailer for his exploitation spoof "Inglorious Vampires".

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