



MISTRUST

"Closer than Expected"

Group Name: Freshman Co.

Victoria Yu (Freshman @ Stern), Santiago Garza (Freshman @ Stern), Sophia Gong (Freshman @ Steinhardt)

Feature Film

Producer: Ken Kao (Waypoint Entertainment)

"CLOSER THAN EXPECTED"

FEATURE FILM: 135 MINUTES



A local physician is drawn into a twisted investigation after the town's wealthiest resident is shockingly murdered, unaware that the truth may implicate someone closer than anyone suspects.

SYNOPSIS

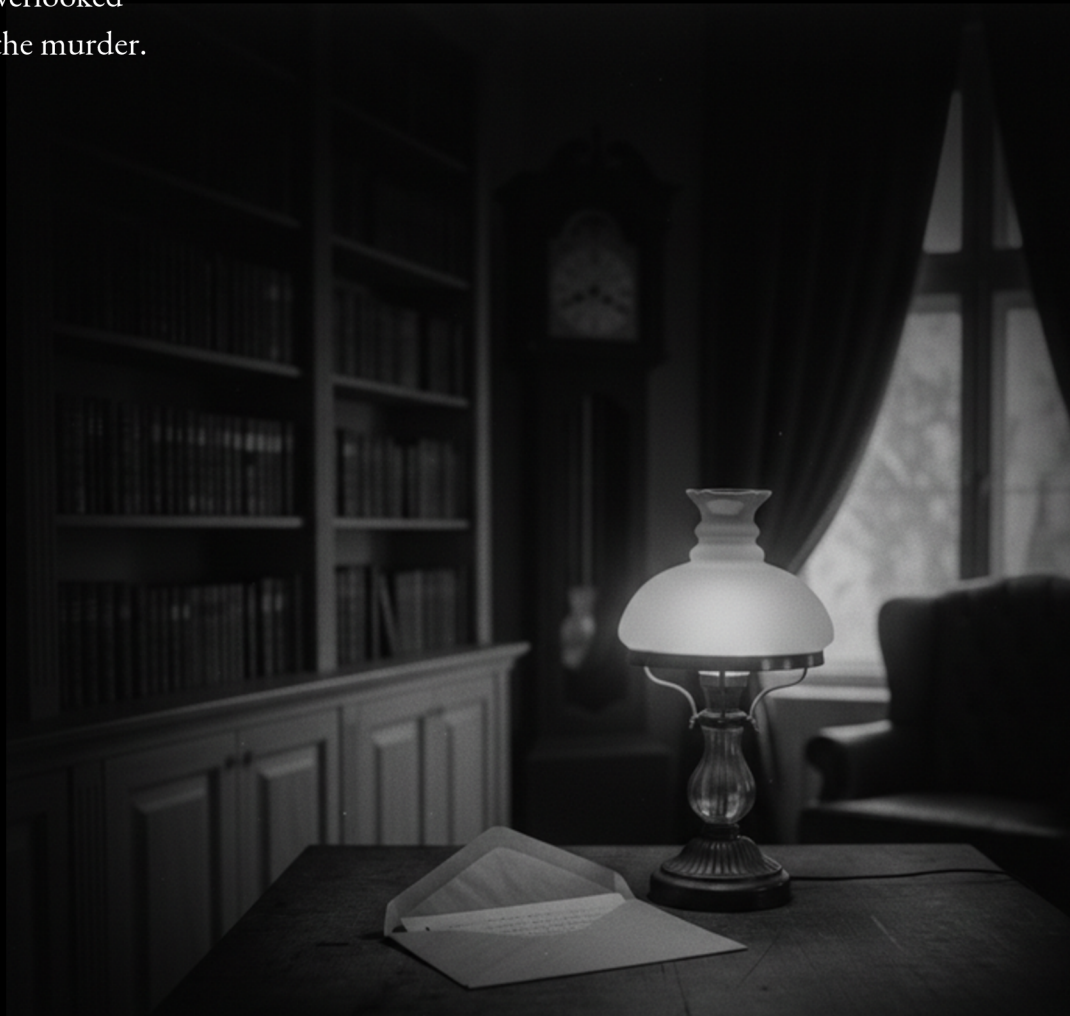
Dr. James Sheppard records a series of tragic events beginning with the suicide of a wealthy widow, Mrs. Ferrars. The local gossip, led by the doctor's sister Caroline, suggests the widow was haunted by the secret poisoning of her husband a year prior. The mystery deepens when Roger Ackroyd, a prominent local figure and suitor to the late Mrs. Ferrars, confides in Dr. Sheppard that the widow was being blackmailed. Just as Ackroyd receives a letter that promises to name the extortionist, he is found murdered in his locked study, the letter missing and the windows left ajar.

Suspicion immediately falls upon Ralph Paton, Ackroyd's estranged stepson, whose footprints are discovered at the scene and who vanished shortly after the crime. Desperate to clear Ralph's name, his fiancée Flora Ackroyd enlists the help of her new neighbor: the eccentric, recently retired Belgian detective Hercule Poirot. Accompanied by Dr. Sheppard, who acts as a faithful assistant and chronicler of the investigation, Poirot begins to peel back the layers of the Ackroyd household, finding that nearly everyone, from the nervous butler to the tight-lipped parlor maid, has something to hide.

As Poirot meticulously examines the physical evidence, he becomes obsessed with seemingly insignificant details, such as a moved chair and a dictaphone in the study. He uncovers a tangled web of secret marriages, financial desperation, and unrequited love among the guests at Fernly Park. While the police remain convinced of Ralph's

guilt, Poirot insists that the truth lies within the "little grey cells" and a single, overlooked discrepancy in the timeline of the murder.

The search for the blackmailer and the killer converges as Poirot prepares to reveal a truth that will shock the entire village.





Budget: \$80 million
Global Box Office: \$295 million
ROI Multiple: 3.69x
Hook: unreliable narrator

While Martin Scorsese's *Shutter Island* budget and scope are much grander than *Mistrust*'s, it similarly uses an unreliable narrator to heighten suspense and deliver an unforgettable ending that's still talked about years after.



Budget: \$40 million
Global Box Office: \$312 million
ROI Multiple: 7.8x
Hook: whodunnit genre

Out of all current projects, *Knives Out* is the most similar in terms of an estate-centered mystery, character dynamics, and tight narrative structure. Despite the similarities, *Mistrust* differs in tone and reliance on spectacle.



Budget: \$10million
Global Box Office: \$127 million
ROI Multiple: 12.7x
Hook: niche thriller

Longlegs particularly showcases the power of atmosphere building and tension, similar to what *Mistrust* hopes to achieve. Its moody visuals and environment highlight how tone can generate suspense, though *Mistrust* will be less psychologically heavy.

ORIGINS

SUCCESS: *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* is widely considered one of the best crime novels of all time, consistently topping lists such as the Crime Writers' Association ranking of the best crime novels. Its groundbreaking use of an unreliable narrator and twist ending made it an immediate critical and commercial success in its 1926 release.

OUR VISION: While there have been other short-format adaptations of the novel, *MISTRUST* reimagines the story as a feature-length film - a first for the novel. Even though the key central plots and characters from the film will remain intact, our vision reimagines the story in a darker tone and a new setting in the Hudson Valley, where the fall foliage would become an unforgettable backdrop that amplifies suspense and isolation.



PACKAGE



Jared Harris as Roger Ackroyd

Wagner Moura
as
Hercule Poirot



Nicholas Hoult
as
Dr. Sheppard



Roger Ackroyd

A wealthy and respected gentleman is known for his generosity and strong sense of order. His murder kicks off the mystery.

Harris has previously appeared in productions of *Sherlock Holmes*, making him the perfect candidate to kick off this complicated detective story.

Hercule Poirot

A retired Belgian detective living in the countryside is meticulous, observant, and confident in his intellect and detective ability.

Moura's film background includes work produced by Waypoint Entertainment, and his action-movie skills make him a compelling choice for the role of a gritty detective. His distinctive presence also emphasizes Poirot's outsider status in the village

Dr. Sheppard

The village doctor, is rational and attentive, serving as both witness and narrator of the investigation.

Hoult has a strong background in thrillers, often playing eccentric characters, making him the perfect candidate for a tense murder-mystery. He has also previously collaborated with Ken Kao.



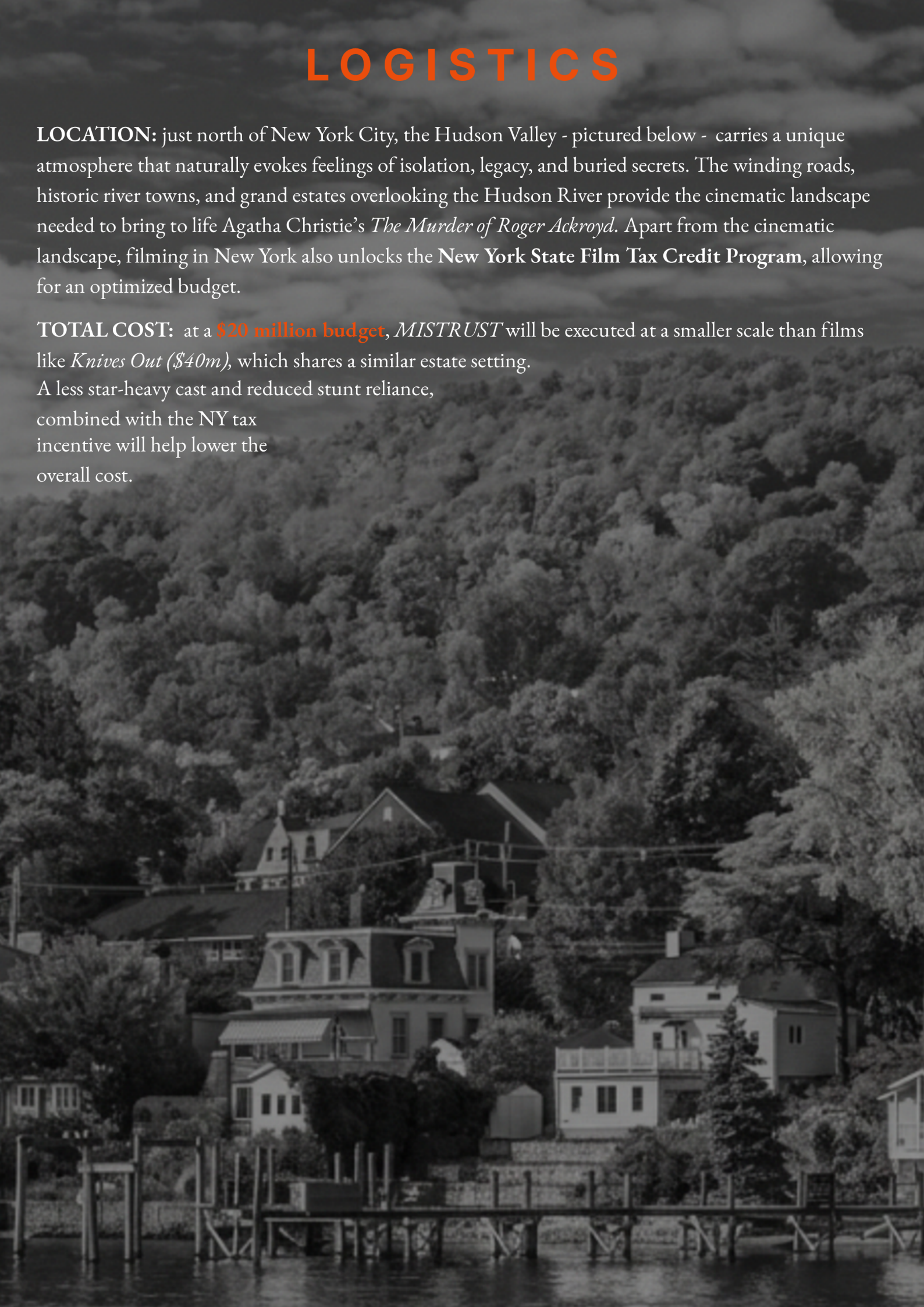
DIRECTOR: Park Chan-Wook has previously worked on thrillers like *No Other Choice* (also produced by Waypoint Entertainment) and has experience working with similar budgets.

LEAD WRITER: Michael Green has previously written for *Death of the Nile* and the *Hercule Poirot* film series, which are all under the Agatha Christie brand.

LOGISTICS

LOCATION: just north of New York City, the Hudson Valley - pictured below - carries a unique atmosphere that naturally evokes feelings of isolation, legacy, and buried secrets. The winding roads, historic river towns, and grand estates overlooking the Hudson River provide the cinematic landscape needed to bring to life Agatha Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*. Apart from the cinematic landscape, filming in New York also unlocks the **New York State Film Tax Credit Program**, allowing for an optimized budget.

TOTAL COST: at a **\$20 million budget**, *MISTRUST* will be executed at a smaller scale than films like *Knives Out* (\$40m), which shares a similar estate setting. A less star-heavy cast and reduced stunt reliance, combined with the NY tax incentive will help lower the overall cost.



APPEAL

MARKET APPEAL: *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* by Agatha Christie is one of the **most famous** detective novels ever written, and is known for one of the most shocking twists in literary history. The adaptation of the film embodies both commercial and awards potential.

Past films of Christie adaptations have shown **strong total worldwide gross**, with *Murder on the Orient Express* with **\$352.8 M**, and *Death on the Nile* with **\$137.3 M**, filmed during COVID-19, which proves the endurance of brand recognition of Christie's cinematic universe.

WAYPOINT'S NICHE

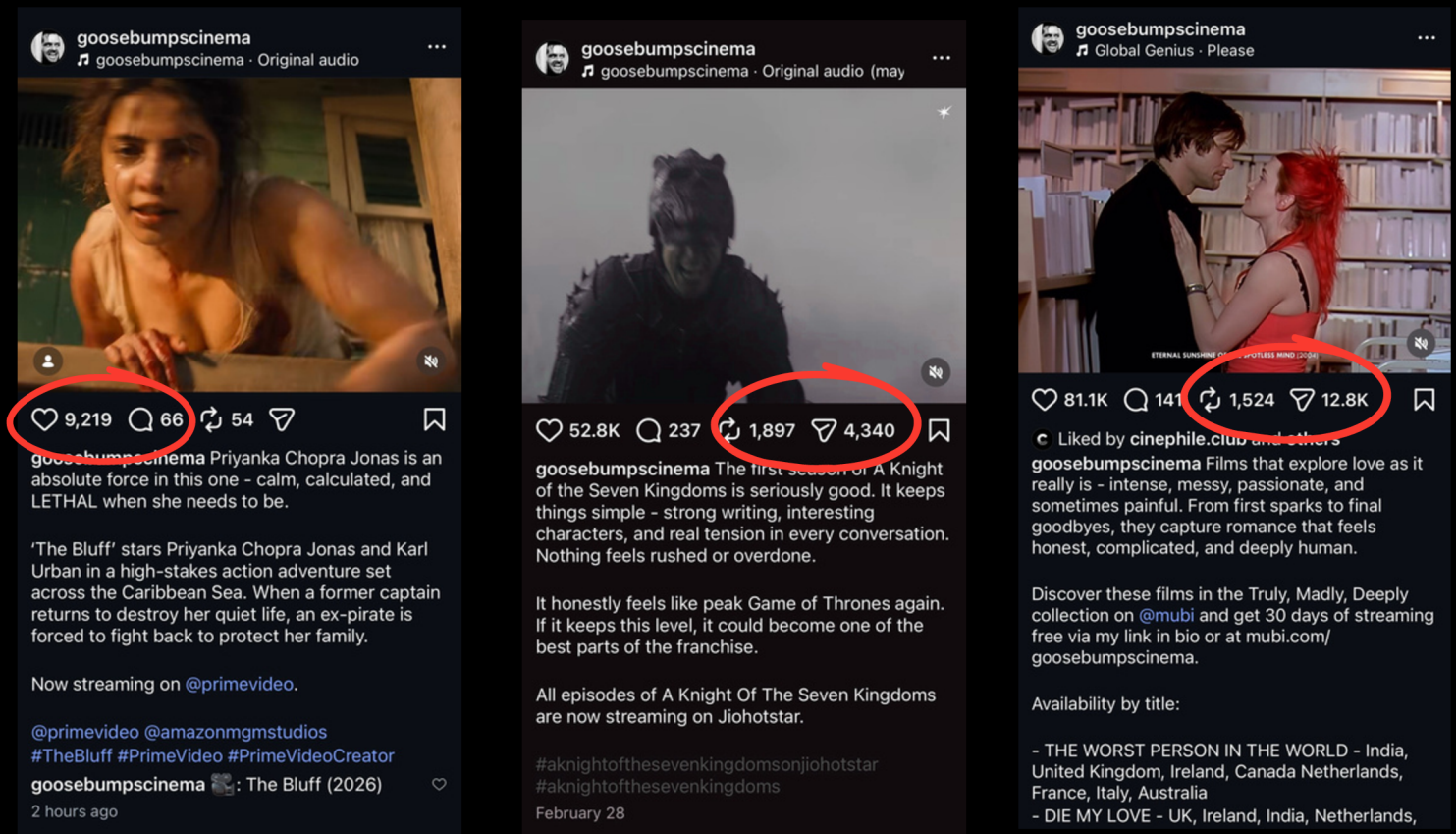
Waypoint Entertainment's prior projects include *Silence*, *Longlegs*, and *No Other Choice*, all of which share the same target audience as *MISTRUST*.

Additionally, Waypoint announced Cweature Features in 2024, a genre label that pushes storytelling boundaries among the horror genre, which further aligns with our ambitions of exploring suspense and psychological tension through the project's ending twist.



STRATEGY

MARKETING: The marketing campaign should highlight the **legendary** status of this work, namely that it is one of the most astonishing detective stories ever written. The promotion should focus on the quiet setting, and our main marketing strategy should lie within our target audience. Similar to projects such as *Longlegs*, utilizing social media -specifically movie-centered accounts- creates **organic** and community-driven engagement while placing the film directly in front of our target audience, all for a cost-effective price.



RISK: Adapting *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* risks a significant portion of the target audience already being aware of the ending, which reduces the shocking twist. If the script fails to effectively guide the audience towards the plot twist, then such a turn might be perceived as too unexpected, thereby damaging the viewing experience.

CONTACT INFO



SANTIAGO GARZA

was born and raised in Monterrey, Mexico, and is currently an undergraduate at NYU Stern's School of Business, where he is pursuing a B.S. in Business with concentrations in Finance and Data Science. His personal projects showcase his analytical and storytelling skills.



VICTORIA YU

was born in Iowa and raised in Virginia Beach, VA, and is currently an undergraduate at NYU Stern's School of Business pursuing a B.S. in Business and concentrating in Finance and Marketing. In her free time, she enjoys learning more about cinematography and telling stories through her personal video work.



SOPHIA GONG

was born and raised in Shanghai, China, and is currently an undergraduate at NYU Steinhardt's Applied Psychology major. She is a published researcher with a background in art and music, hoping to bring a thoughtful, psychology-informed perspective to storytelling.

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I'm passionate about this project because *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* is one of Agatha Christie's finest novels, featuring a unique twist ending and an intimate, tension-filled setting. Having read the novel four years ago in a setting strikingly similar to the novel's, I believe the story has the potential to achieve modern cult status.

I am passionate about this project because it is based in a classic mystery novel by Christie and changed how the genre was explored by future authors, expanding the bounds of what is possible through storytelling. By bringing it to the silver screen, new generations will be able to enjoy this timeless story once again.

I am passionate about this project because *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* is a novel that can completely change the way of understanding suspense stories. I was deeply attracted by how it utilized the readers' expectations and I hope to bring the same sense of surprise to this new project.