
PRESIDENTIAL PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS
LIFE COACH
INTRODUCING MARK BALE
A SHORT FILM BY JAMES CUNNINGHAM
PRESS KIT



Opening title of *Life Coach* © Presidential Productions

PRESS KIT

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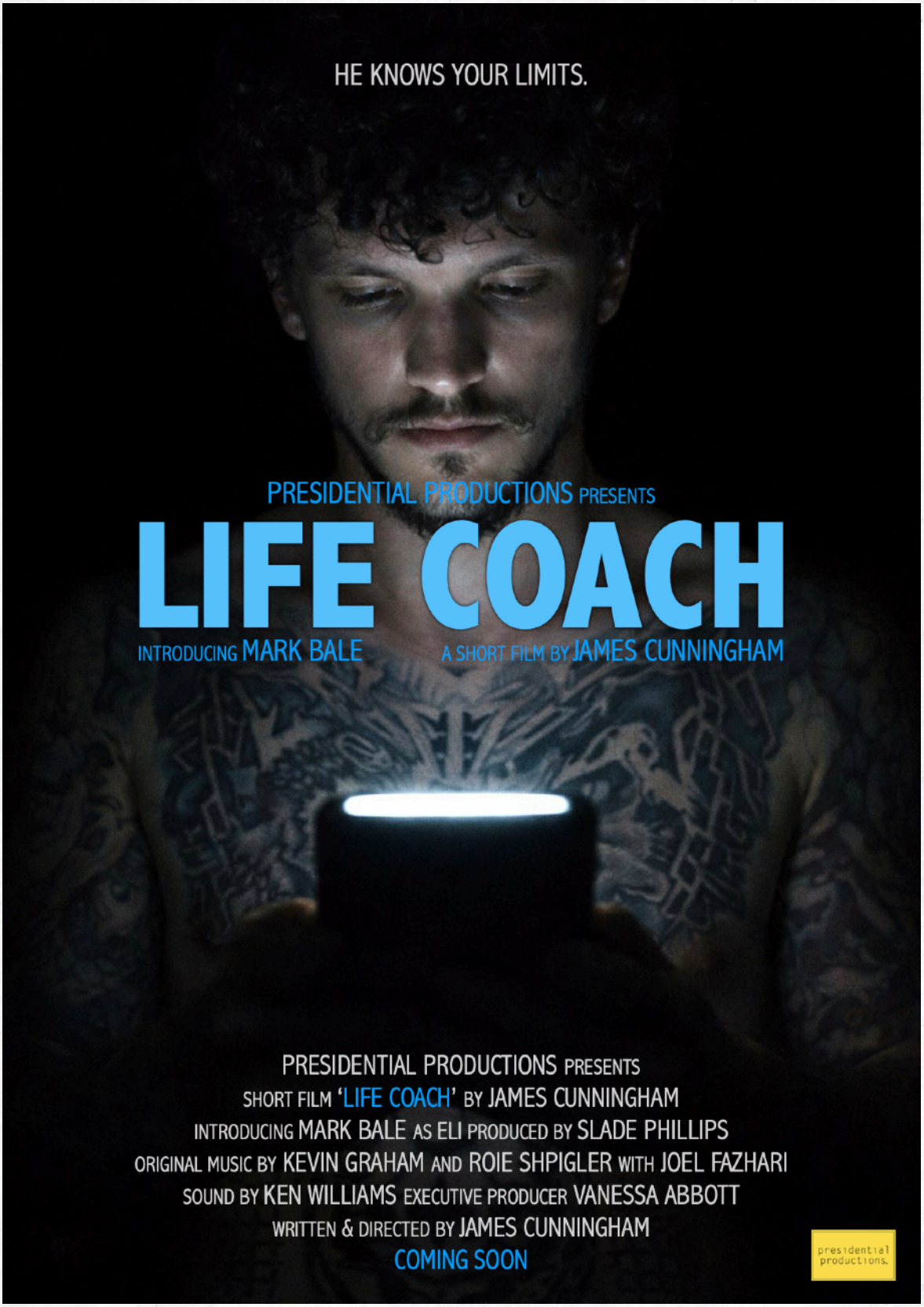
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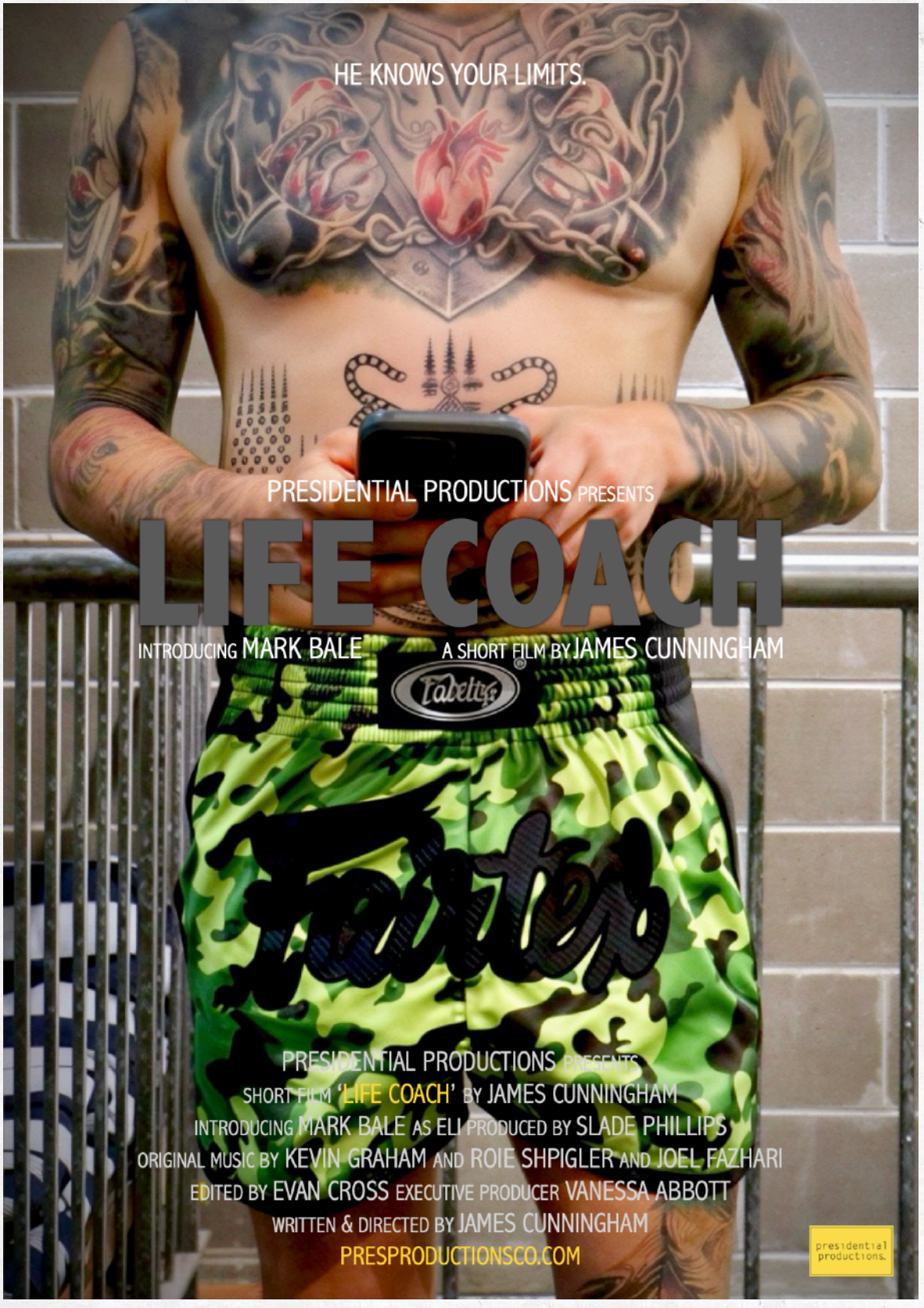
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Theatrical Release Poster © Presidential Productions



Festival/Director's Cut Poster © Presidential Productions

TAGLINE

He knows your limits.

LOGLINE

A lonely man seeking self-confidence through an online life-coaching app gradually surrenders control to an unseen mentor, until he reclaims his power in a radical and public act of self-ownership.

SYNOPSIS

Life Coach follows Eli, a 29-year-old Muay Thai instructor living alone in Sydney, whose life is defined by routine, isolation and quiet dissatisfaction with his body and self-worth. When Eli signs up for an online life-coaching service, he begins communicating with his unseen 'coach' entirely through text messages.

What starts as benign goal-setting and fitness advice slowly escalates as his coach begins to probe deeper into Eli's insecurities, reframing trust as progress. As part of the Life Coach programme, Eli is encouraged to share increasingly personal information framed as tools for confidence-building and self-acceptance. What follows is a subtle but unmistakable pivot from innocent encouragement to subtle coercion.

Faced with a looming threat, Eli makes a decisive choice, removing the coach's power entirely. In doing so, Eli confronts his shame and redefines his confidence to turn manipulation into true self-control.



Mark Bale as Eli in *Life Coach* © Presidential Productions



Eli (Mark Bale) in a scene from *Life Coach* © Presidential Productions

CONCEPT

The decision to present a dramatic narrative entirely through on-screen text is intentional. Digital messages, apps and social media have become ways many now form relationships with friends, with complete strangers, with systems and with online algorithms.

The filmmakers were interested in telling a story where the antagonist is never seen, never named, and never violent. Danger lies entirely in language.

DEVELOPMENT

Life Coach developed from an interest in the culture of self-improvement, but also the growing authority of digital guidance in personal and private areas of life.

The story was born from a fascination with social media and self-optimisation, intersecting with technology, loneliness and power. Apps promise unachievable goals and transformation, often blurring the line between guidance and manipulation.

Fitness apps, coaching platforms and wellness programmes increasingly position themselves as trusted companions, offering structure and affirmation, often without any transparency.

ARTISTIC STATEMENT

Short film *Life Coach* is conceived as an intimate psychological chamber piece; a film that traps the audience inside one man's private world and refuses to let them look away. We were drawn to the idea of telling a story entirely through digital communication, where intimacy and danger coexist in the same glowing screen we all know and use every day.

Eli's apartment becomes a psychological arena, a place where shame and pride collide, and the audience is positioned as an unseen witness to his slow unravelling. Exposing Eli physically as well as emotionally is deliberate; vulnerability isn't simply emotional in the story, it is physical also. As Eli gives himself away, the line between empowerment and exploitation becomes dangerously blurred.

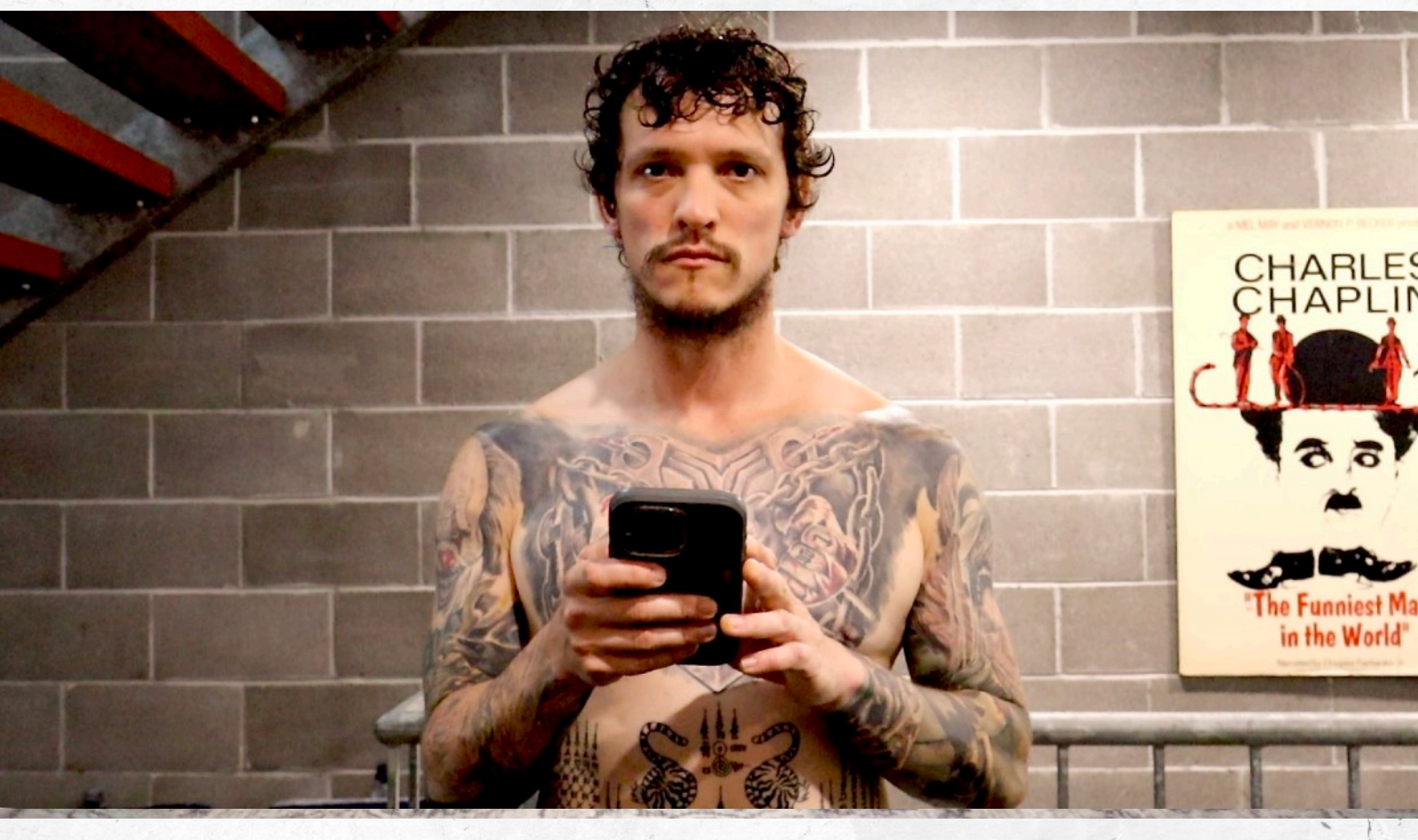
Ultimately, *Life Coach* is not about technology itself, but about the human hunger it feeds. The tragedy of Eli's journey is that his need for connection becomes the very thing that is used against him. Our hope is that the film leaves audiences unsettled not because of what they see, but because of how familiar it feels.

WRITER & DIRECTOR

James Cunningham is an award-winning Australian filmmaker and producer. His film works, including *Beneath the Waves* (2018), *The Assignment* (2022) and *Savage Sands* (2024), frequently explore masculinity and the psychological fractures hidden beneath our ordinary lives.



Mark Bale as Eli in *Life Coach* © Presidential Productions



Eli (Mark Bale) in a scene from *Life Coach* © Presidential Productions

CHARACTER STUDY

Eli is defined by his quiet dissatisfaction. He is functional, disciplined and physically active, yet deeply disconnected from any sense of self-worth. The character's insecurity stems from an internalised belief that his self-confidence must be earned externally rather than developed internally.

Throughout the film, Eli's behaviour reveals a pattern of compliance rather than desire. He agrees easily, hesitates silently and seeks reassurance before asserting himself. His vulnerability lies not in weakness, but in his willingness to trust systems that promise personal gain without questioning their authority.

Eli's arc is subtle and internal. His transformation does not come through physical change, but through a recalibration of agency. *Life Coach* also observes how Eli's relationship to his own body shifts.

MARK BALE AS ELI

Mark Bale is a professional personal trainer and Muay Thai hobbyist from beautiful rural New South Wales, Australia. Drawing on drama training in high school, Bale delivers a restrained and deeply personal performance as Eli, grounding the film's psychological tension in a brave and bold physical presence rather than dialogue.

Because *Life Coach* unfolds entirely through text, Bale's performance relies on micro-expressions, posture, routine and physical vulnerability. Bale's tattooed physique, particularly in scenes involving nudity, is presented without sensationalism. The actor's body becomes the site of the film's central conflict; a physique where shame and pride collide.

Transformation is a key theme explored in the film, with the actor required to shave his own head and body during key scenes in *Life Coach*.

Bale's performance as Eli demands an extraordinary level of courage, both emotionally and physically. The actor's willingness to fearlessly expose both his character's psychological and physical journey, including undressing for the film's required nude scenes, speaks volumes about Bale's commitment to truth, character and performance.



Before/After: Actor Mark Bale shaves his head for key scenes in short film *Life Coach* © Presidential Productions



Mark Bale performs as Eli in *Life Coach* © Presidential Productions

CINEMATOGRAPHY

Camerawork in *Life Coach* remains observational and restrained, often static, favouring composed, voyeuristic frames which position the audience as a quiet witness to Eli's private world. Shots are held for longer than typical; allowing behaviour, silence and hesitation to accumulate meaning. This deliberate stillness creates a sense of uneasy intrusion when text messages appear, with digital conversation physically entering the frame and disrupting the calm of Eli's environment. This compositional strategy ensures that technology never feels like a separate layer but instead becomes an invasive presence within the visual language of the film, mirroring the erosion of Eli's personal boundaries.

Lighting evolves subtly across the film in parallel with Eli's psychological and physical exposure. Early scenes are lit in a cooler, flatter palette, emphasising emotional distance and routine. As the relationship intensifies and Eli becomes more vulnerable, the light grows warmer and more open, revealing texture.

Life Coach was filmed on Canon lenses, selected for their naturalistic colour rendition and controlled contrast. This technical choice supports the film's commitment to realism and intimacy, avoiding stylisation which might distance the viewer from Eli's experience. Images remain grounded and unembellished, allowing Bale's performance and the intrusion of text to carry dramatic weight, rather than relying on overt visual effects or heightened cinematic devices.

PRODUCTION

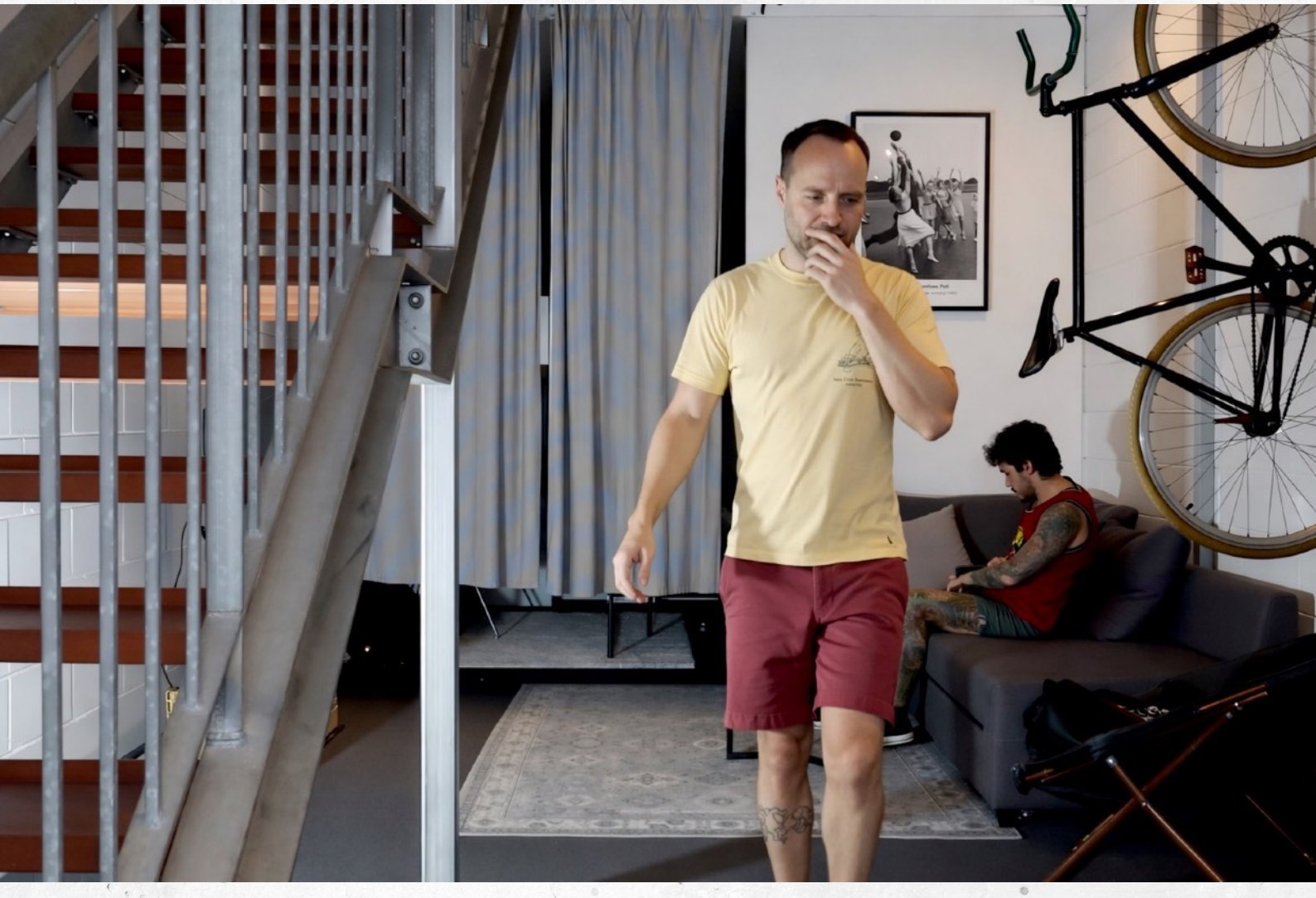
Life Coach is produced as a tightly controlled, minimalist short, filmed entirely within a single loft apartment located in Sydney. This deliberate limitation reinforces Eli's isolation and creates visuals that mirror the repetition of digital communication.

Production design emphasises neutrality and routine — cinder-block walls, clean surfaces, muted tones with industrial and domestic mundanity — allowing the escalating text exchanges to drive the drama. The film's choreography of everyday actions (cleaning, exercising, showering) become a counterpoint to the increasingly invasive drama.

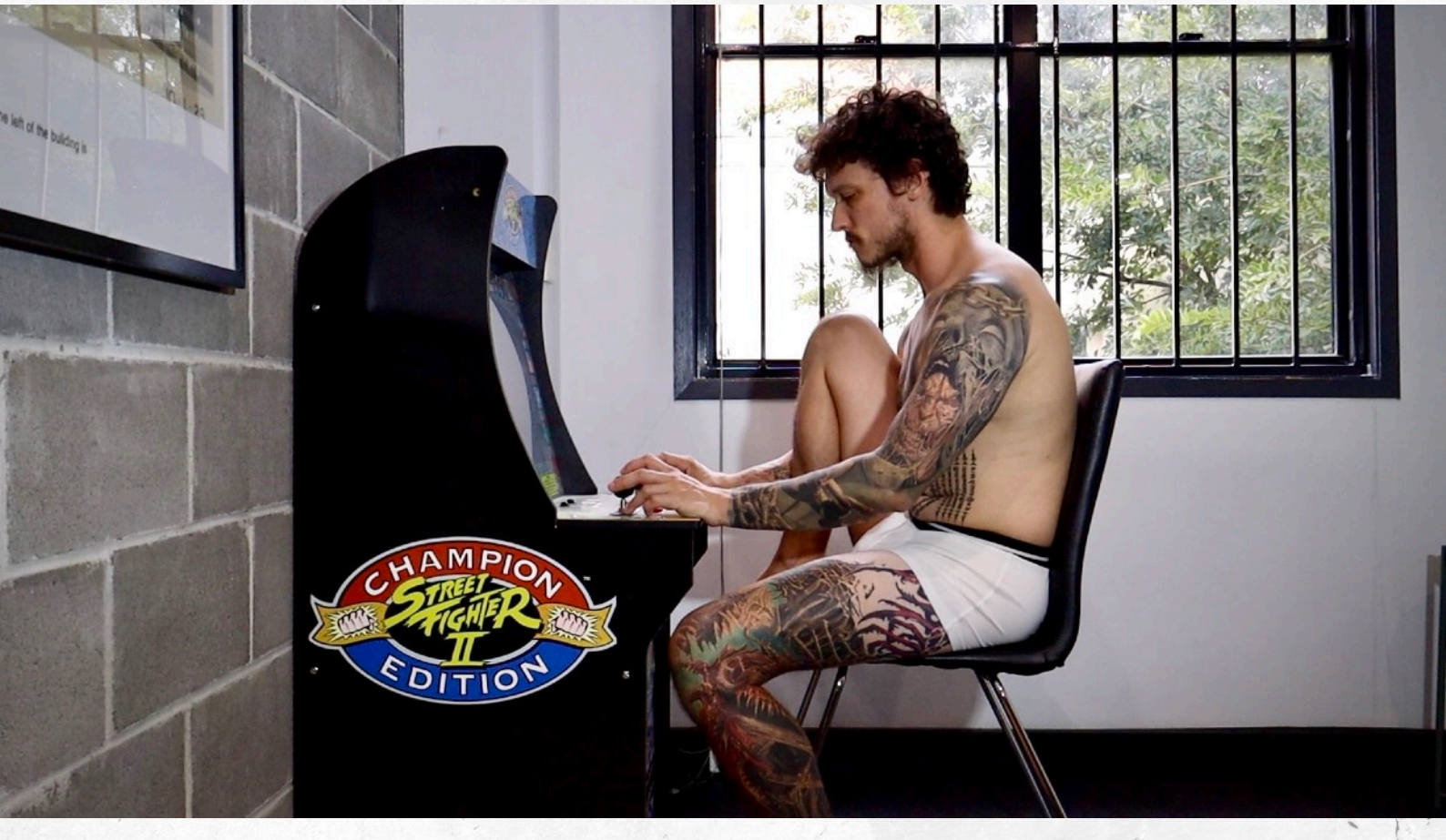
Cunningham's direction embraces restraint and observation, allowing tension to emerge through duration, repetition and the smallest of behavioural shifts. Rather than relying on overt dramatic moments, the film invites the audience into Eli's private routines, where ordinary actions gradually become charged with anxiety and unease. The camera remains an unobtrusive observer, reinforcing the idea that modern loneliness often unfolds quietly, behind screens and within seemingly mundane spaces.

'COACH'

The unseen Coach was never recorded, voiced or visualised, preserving ambiguity and allowing the audience to project their own assumptions onto the character, its location and intentions.



Behind-the-scenes: Director James Cunningham and actor Mark Bale between takes on short film *Life Coach* © Presidential Productions



Mark Bale as Eli in a scene from *Life Coach* © Presidential Productions

SOUND & SCORE

The soundscape of *Life Coach* is minimal and atmospheric, designed to sit beneath the text rather than dictate emotion. Audio effects used sparingly, often giving way entirely to silence, reinforcing Eli's isolation and the intimacy of his digital exchanges.

Rather than signalling danger; the pings of Eli's phone, the music of a retro video game, the sound of running water in the shower, *Life Coach* maintains a neutral, almost therapeutic tone deliberately mirroring the Coach's language, and Eli's sense of security.

ORIGINAL MUSIC

The work of three artists is blended seamlessly into an overarching score, highlighting creative collaboration with singular intention and vision.

Kevin Graham specialises in cinematic, ambient, and orchestral music. His unique and powerful approach to film scores has evolved throughout his career, creating a rich sonic environment that dramatically enhances the intimate visuals of *Life Coach*.

Roie Shpigler is a singer-songwriter, pianist, composer, arranger and musical producer. His music is filled with harmony and emotion that reflects his love for peaceful nature and has been featured in cinema, theatre, animation and commercial videos.

Joel Fazhari is a composer and sound designer, author of the Cold Mind Enigma music collections.

VISUAL LANGUAGE

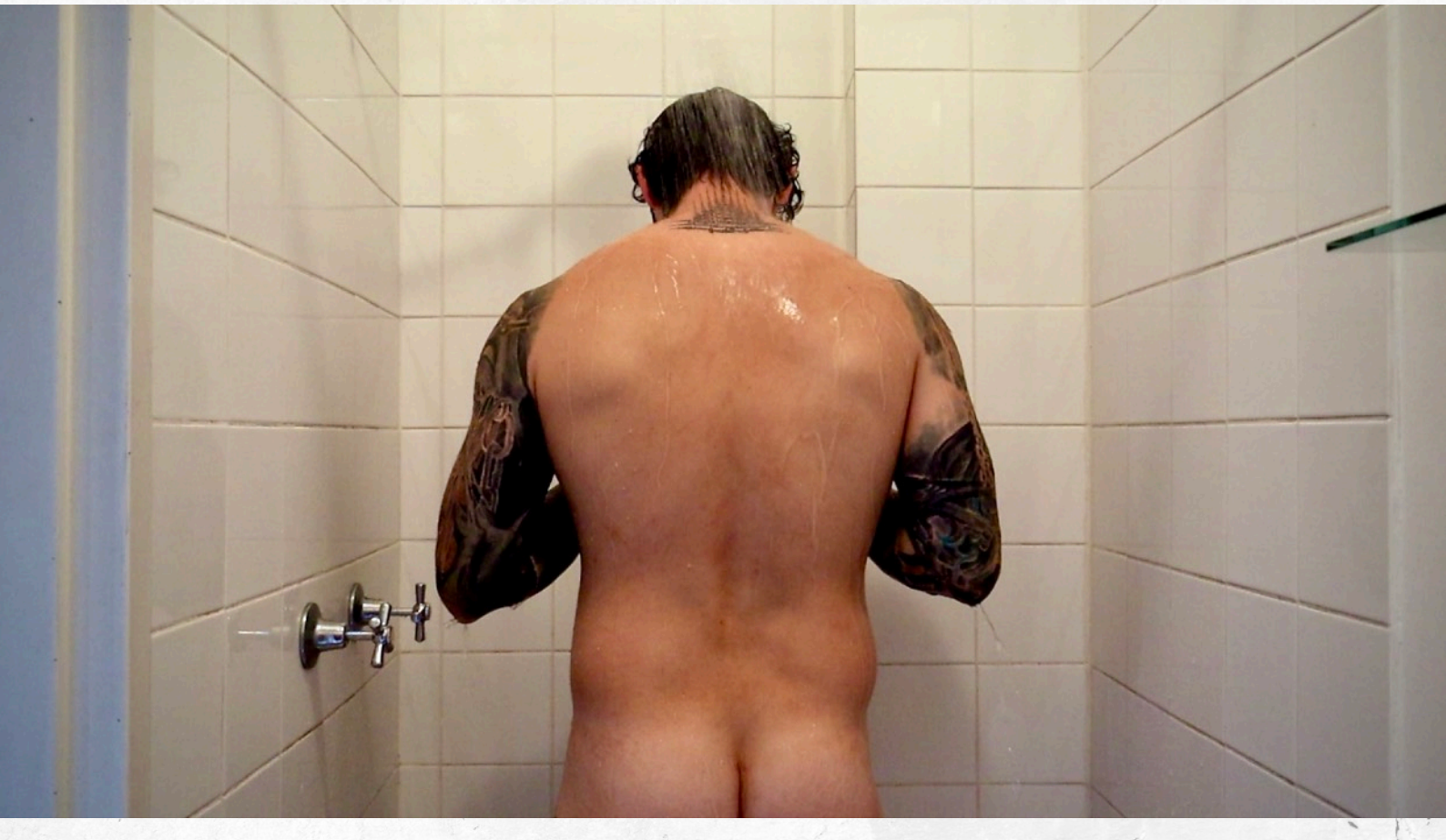
Life Coach explores how intimacy is increasingly mediated through our screens; where emotional closeness can be established rapidly without physical or mutual presence. Digital messages, private, constant and immediate, can create the illusion of confidentiality, often bypassing traditional safeguards.

On-screen text messages are integrated into the frame as a narrative device, with each character's written language carefully differentiated to express unique individual tone, control and intent.

By confining all interaction in *Life Coach* to text, the short film asks the audience to confront their own assumptions about digital communication. Without faces or voices to read, intention becomes ambiguous, and power operates almost invisibly.



Mark Bale as Eli in *Life Coach* © Presidential Productions



Eli (Mark Bale) in a scene from *Life Coach* © Presidential Productions

MASCULINITY

At its core, *Life Coach* examines male body image outside the traditional narratives of aggression, dominance or spectacle. Eli's insecurity is private and unperformed; his relationship to his body is shaped more by shame and self-surveillance than by vanity.

Life Coach reframes masculinity as something performed not only with strength or confidence, but by susceptibility to influence and exploitation.

NUDITY

Full-frontal male nudity in *Life Coach* is essential, not gratuitous. The film includes nudity specifically as a narrative device to explore vulnerability, body image and power. As the story progresses, Eli's physique shifts in meaning; from clinical and naked discomfort, to exposure and empowerment, and finally to joy.

By the film's conclusion, Eli's body is no longer a source of shame but a symbol of celebration and reclaimed agency. The producers specifically thank actor Mark Bale for his dedication to the role of Eli, his physical representation of the character through on-screen nudity and self-pleasure, and to his commitment to the bold vision behind *Life Coach*.

LIFE COACH (2026)

Drama / Short
Running Time 25:30

Contains mature themes, psychological drama,
mild coarse language, nudity and sexual activity.

Introducing Make Bale as Eli.

Written and Directed by James Cunningham.
Produced by Vanessa Abbott and Slade Phillips.

Original Music by Kevin Graham,
Roie Shpigler and Joel Fazhari.

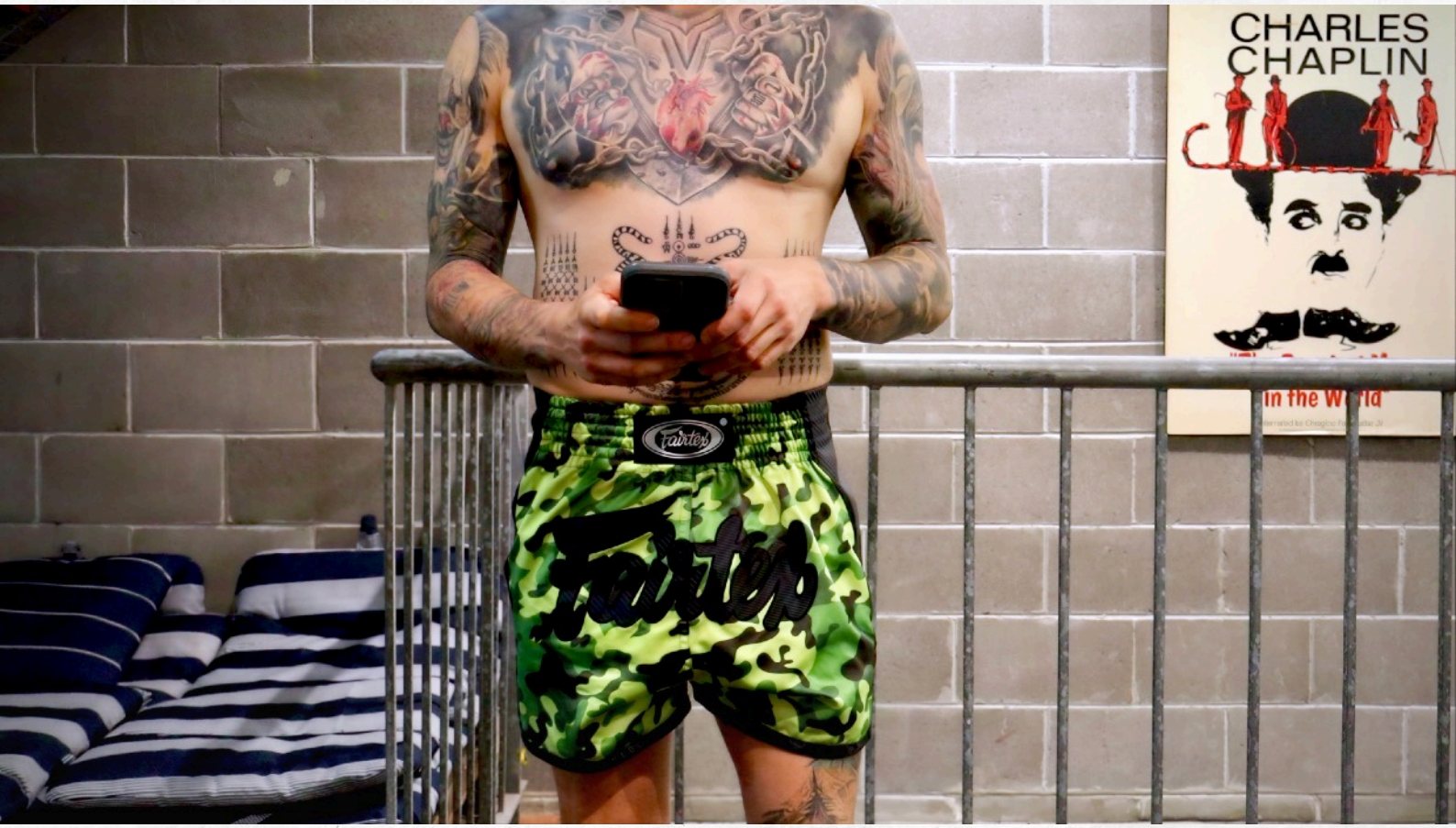
Sound Design by Ken Williams and EVG Sound.

Produced by Presidential Productions.
Filmed on location in Sydney, Australia.

Special thanks to Arlec Australia, Canon Australia,
Garth Cecil, Linda Cunningham, Fabio Ignacio Junior,
Freesound Community, Ron Johanson OAM ACS,
KomoSpace, Dante Pragier, Peter Unicomb and Dash Wilson.

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Mark Bale as Eli in short film *Life Coach* © Presidential Productions



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