

## **Road less traveled**

by Gillian - Thursday, January 01, 2015

<http://3storymagazine.com/darious-britt/>

**Arizona filmmaker Darius Brit** is taking a different and controversial route to finding an audience for his first feature film. By Herb Stratford

Photo of and by Darius Brit taken in Brooklyn, New York with a gopro camera as he was heading to the New Voices in Black Cinema film festival.

Filmmaking in 2015 is dramatically different than ever before, and the filmmakers who are engaged in the craft are cut from a different cloth. With the changes in technology and distribution coming nearly every year, one has to stay nimble and adaptive as well as creative in order to find audiences for their stories. [Darius Brit](#) is a filmmaker on a mission that is timely and important, and his way of getting the film in front of audiences is quite innovative.

Darius went to high school in the Phoenix area, but grew up in Jacksonville, North Carolina and is a 2012 graduate of the University of Arizona School of Theatre, Film and Television. He came to the UA program later in life than many students, following a stint in the Air Force. His collaboration with fellow UA student Damon Mosier has led to the creation of a personal story that is eminently relatable and looks at an issue from a perspective that has not been seen before.

Poster courtesy of Darius Brit

As writer, director and actor in his short film *Seafood Tester*, Darius examined the difficult relationship he has with his mother, who suffers from schizophrenia. The 10-minute film screened at the annual [I Dream in Widescreen](#) University of Arizona student film showcase in May of 2012. It since led to the feature film *Unsound*, which is a much more in-depth look at the issues family members have when dealing with the established system of care. The film is a brutally honest examination of the stress, strains and obstacles that are encountered in cases like Darius's mother. In addition to Darius, local artist/actress To-ree-nee Wolf delivers a nuanced portrayal of a woman struggling with a disease and pushing her caregivers away as hard as she can.

What makes *Unsound* a compelling watch for audiences is both the honesty of the portrayal as well as its sophisticated presentation, from the cinematography to the editing and writing. This is a mature, well-thought-out depiction of a family in crisis like we have not seen before.

A scene from *Unsound*. Photo by Damon Mosier

But how will this film find an audience? Darious is not naïve. He realized right away that this story will resonate best with both people dealing with the issue at hand, as well as caregivers who have not had their story told before on screen. But he also believes that the film has "mainstream appeal", based on the feedback he's received from screenings. He said he was told that the film "perfectly illustrated the world that many live with."

Most recently the film screened at Tucson's Loft Cinema and was warmly received. But the task of marketing it was difficult given the limited resources Darious was able to contribute. After a run at 13 different film festivals, where the film was given awards three times and "loved by audiences", Darious is now wrestling with a unique distribution model to continue to tell the story.

A scene from *Unsound*. Photo by Damon Mosier

A scene from *Unsound*. Photo by Damon Mosier

It's often said that making a film is less than half the battle, as films need an audience. While there are

certainly more ways than ever to discover content, this exploding universe of options often results in a great deal of white noise and interesting, compelling films being lost in the shuffle. A film like *Unsound* is best seen by audiences who are primed for it - that is, they are aware of it and word of mouth has prepared them for the experience. According to Darius, he is exploring “the on-line, free download to build audience, and then to do targeted screenings in places where the political and economic climate has impacted those most at risk, in cities like Chicago, and in states like North Carolina and California.” This would be followed by a targeted fundraising campaign that offered “additional content and materials once the viewers have been engaged” says Darius.

This is, of course, a leap of faith on his part as there is no guarantee that it will enable him to pay off the debt he shouldered almost exclusively in producing *Unsound* (he used credit cards and his own funds.) It is an innovative and interesting experiment in turning crowd-source funding on its ear. Normally when a project is funded by small donors, on websites like Kickstarter, the onus is on the project initiator to find the lion’s share of donors via their own network, lest the project get lost in the buzz of tens of thousands of other worthy ideas. Darius’s notion of utilizing word of mouth to build awareness and audience may take longer to recoup his investment, but his model also will potentially find a more appreciative audience.

To-ree-nee Wolf (left) and Darius Britt star in *Unsound*. Photo by Damon Mosier

His aim of creating a “highly sharable” experience that brings an honest, well-liked film to audiences who are primed to appreciate and like the film and hope for the best is obviously a gamble. But for the right film and audience it might be successful. Darius is a savvy marketer as well, and his [YouTube](#)

[channel](#), where he chronicled the film festival experience, has more than 9,000 followers.

He sees the importance of “building a brand” as a huge part of the job for filmmakers, not just creating work and expecting audiences to find it. He’s a passionate believer in his job to “find an audience,” and that the real craft of successful filmmakers is not only to tell a story but to have it seen by audiences. Darius says there is “no reason to charge for content until there is a perceived value to the content.” He sees this as a long-term marketing plan, as opposed to the short term - a way to "stay prolific and deliver content to build an audience over time.”

Darius on the set of *Unsound*. Photo by Damon Mosier

Darius's plans for the future are still in development, as they say. He’s working on a few concepts and loglines to pitch to funders now that a few doors have been opened thanks to the reception of *Unsound*. Like any good filmmaker, he’s keeping specifics under wraps until he’s ready. But you can bet he’ll continue to impress audiences with both his storytelling ability and his innovative way of getting the finished project in front of an audience as he moves forward in 2015.

**\* To see the trailer for *Unsound* and for more information on Darius’ projects check out his YouTube channel [D4Darius](#).**

**\* Herb Stratford is a Tucson-based film critic and writer.**