





**Producer Contacts:**

**Jonas Chernick \* (Primary Contact)**

416-505-8803

jonaschernick@rogers.com

**Andrew Bronfman**

416-807-6691

andrew.bronfman@gmail.com

**Run Time** 89 minutes

**Country** Canada

**Genre** Romantic Drama

**THE BURNING SEASON** is presented by Sphere Films International and Northern Banner Releasing, and was produced with financial investment & participation from Telefilm Canada, The Northern Ontario Heritage Fund, CBC Films, the Canada Media Fund and Hollywood Suite Inc.

## DISTRIBUTION

### Canada

Northern Banner Releasing

33 Villiers St., Suite 201, Toronto, ON

<https://northernbanner.com/>

Contact: Andrew Hunt – [ahunt@ravenbanner.ca](mailto:ahunt@ravenbanner.ca) - 416-668-4275

### Worldwide

Sphere Films International

4200 Saint-Laurent Blvd., Suite 1200, Montreal, QC

<https://sphere-media.com/en/distribution-type/film-distribution-international/>

Contact: Sebastien Pigeon – [spigeon@sphere-media.com](mailto:spigeon@sphere-media.com) - 514-717-7241

## BROADCASTERS

CBC (Canada) - 2024 Airdate

Hollywood Suite (Canada) – 2025 Airdate



## DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Why tell a story backwards?

Why throw out a movie's most engaging mechanism; the ability to get the audience to lean in and ask '*and then what happens?*'

THE BURNING SEASON focuses on some people in a very messed up place.

And when we find ourselves in a place of crisis in our lives, we look around and ask ourselves "how did I get here?"

This is the journey on which I want to take the audience.

As opposed to watching a movie to discover what people are going to do, in the backwards narrative we watch to find out why they do those things.

A backwards narrative forces us to look in, to analyse character, to scrutinize the events of a story. When we watch someone make a choice, we already know what the consequences of that choice are going to be, which forces us to see it differently.

Most films are alive with the possibilities of what's going to happen next, bubbling with hope that everything is going to turn out for our main character.

But in a backwards narrative, we know how things are going to turn out. So is this kind of story hopeless?

The movie I made is all about hope – hope of escaping the self-destructive cycles of life by going backwards and facing the things that hold us back.

When my main character, Alena, comes to a fork in the road of her life, she realizes that the only way forward, is to go backwards first.

To confront her trauma, speaking its name and loosening it from its position cemented in her past to cast it in a new role in her life; no longer the thing that will consume her, but rather, the thing she survived.

But more than that, when we get to the end (aka the beginning) of our story, and find ourselves watching the blossoming of new love, even though we know where it all ends up, we can't help but be overcome with hope.

By going backwards, I want to show how unjustifiable hope is, but also how robustly we can't stop hoping.

# SYNOPSIS

Alena and her husband spend a summer up at Luna Lake Resort. JB runs the place. He and Alena begin a dangerous and passionate secret affair. Summers only. That's the rule. Until they break it. A sexy and tragic love story - told backwards.

## CAST



Sara Canning  
"Alena"



Jonas Chernick  
"JB"



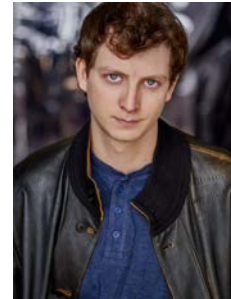
Joe Pingue  
"Tom"



Tanisha Thammavongsa  
"Poppy"



Natalie Jane  
"Young Alena"



Christian Meer  
"Benny"

## KEY CREW

SEAN GARRITY - Director  
JONAS CHERNICK - Writer/Producer  
DIANA FRANCES - Writer/Executive Producer  
ANDREW BRONFMAN - Producer  
ERIC OH, CSC MYSC - Director of Photography  
ALLIE THOMPSON - Production Designer  
KEVON CRONIN - Music  
JOHN GURDEBEKE - Editor  
KATE ADAMS - Costume Designer  
MELISSA A. SMITH, CSA - Casting Director



## ABOUT THE CAST

**SARA CANNING** (“Alena”) Sara Canning’s film and television career spans 15 years. Select credits include *The Vampire Diaries*, *War for the Planet of the Apes*, *Big Sky*, the Emmy nominated *A Series of Unfortunate Events* and *Remedy*, a series for which she won UBCP/ACTRA and Leo Awards. She was also nominated for a Canadian Screen Award for her work in the web series *Hospital Show*. Last spring, she played the role of Annie in *Sexual Misconduct of the Middle Classes* at the Belfry Theatre, and will soon be seen in *Sweetland*, a feature set in her home province of Newfoundland. A frequent director for the Vancouver Film School, Sara is also developing and writing her own scripts, including a feature selected for the Whistler Film Festival Screenwriting Program in 2019.

**JONAS CHERNICK** (“JB”, Writer, Producer) Jonas Chernick recently co-wrote, produced and co-starred in *Ashgrove*, which had its world premiere at the 2022 Glasgow Film Festival, won Best Ensemble Cast and the Reel Indie Award at the Canadian Film Festival, was the Opening Night Gala at the Cinefest Sudbury International Film Festival and was nominated for two Canadian Screen Awards. He also produced, wrote and starred in the hit comedy *My Awkward Sexual Adventure*, which premiered at TIFF 2012, was remade in Lithuania, Ukraine and India, was named one of the TIFF’s Top Ten, won Audience Awards at the Calgary and Whistler Film Festivals, was nominated for six Canadian Comedy Awards (winning two), was nominated for the CMPA Producer’s Award, two ACTRA Awards, and the DGC Award for Best Feature Film. He also wrote, produced, and starred in *Borealis*, which premiered at the Montreal World Film Festival, was the Opening Night Film at the Brooklyn Film Festival, won a Special Jury Award at the Vancouver International Film Festival and won Best Director and Best Actress at the Canadian Film Fest. He wrote, produced, and starred in the sci-fi comedy feature film *James Vs His Future*

*Self*, which was the Opening Night Film at the 2019 Edmonton International Film Festival, won four awards at the Toronto After Dark Film Festival, including Best Canadian Film and Best Sci-Fi Film and was nominated for four Canadian Screen Awards including Best Original Screenplay and Best Supporting Actor. Jonas has starred in dozens of TV series and feature films, winning Canadian Screen Awards for his performances in the CBC series *The Best Laid Plans* and *The Border*. In 2023, he can be seen opposite Emily Hampshire in the comedy feature film *The End of Sex* (which he also wrote), which premiered at TIFF 2022, and the Paramount Plus series *Rabbit Hole* opposite Kiefer Sutherland. His recent film roles include the feature films *Blood Pressure*, *How To Plan an Orgy in A Small Town*, *A Swingers Weekend*, *The Last Mark*, *Boy City*, the upcoming *A Thousand Cuts*, and as Nathan Zuckerman in the adaptation of Philip Roth's *The Prague Orgy* and his recent TV appearances include roles on *Fargo*, *Private Eyes*, *Covert Affairs*, *Dark Matter*, and in the ensemble cast in the fourth season of the Netflix/CBC hit comedy series *Workin' Moms*.

**JOE PINGUE** (“Tom”) Joe Pingue is a Canadian-born, classically trained actor and short-filmmaker. His breakout role was playing the title character in the CBC miniseries *Il Duce Canadese*. Recent on-screen television credits include *Station Eleven*, *TITANS* and *Godless*. Joe's list of feature film credits includes *Blindness*, *Maps to the Stars*, *Pacific Rim*, *Book of Eli* and *Room*, which was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Picture. David Cronenberg, Fernando Meirelles, Nicolas Winding Refn, the Hughes brothers, and Guillermo del Toro are some of the cinema greats he has been cast by. He has been nominated for multiple Canadian Screen Awards and international festival awards for his acting work and short films.

**TANISHA THAMMAVONGSA** (“Poppy”) Tanisha Thammavongsa makes her feature film debut in *The Burning Season*. She's also set to recur in the upcoming Hulu / ABC comedy series *How to Die Alone*, opposite Emmy nominee Natasha Rothwell. Tanisha was recently shortlisted for a 2023 Canadian Screen Award for best supporting actor in a drama for her performance in Lifetime's *Swindler Seduction*, opposite Colton Haynes and Gabrielle Graham. She also appeared in supporting roles in the television romantic comedies *The Love Subscription*, *Twas the Night Before Christmas*, *Christmas Movie Magic* and *The Clue to Love*. Other TV credits include *Transplant* (NBC), *Mrs. America* (FX), *Coroner* (CW), *Workin' Moms* (Netflix, CBC) and *Frankie Drake* (CBC). Off-screen, Tanisha can be found zipping around downtown Toronto on her motorcycle to muay thai and dance classes. Tanisha is also the founder and creative director behind dance apparel brand Studio Spira. She is of Loatian, Thau, Scottish and French ancestry.

**NATALIE JANE** (“Young Alena”) Natalie Jane is a Canadian actor, known for her supporting roles in the Lifetime original movies, *Sinister Switch* and *House of Chains*. Other notable credits include the hit CBC shows, *Coroner* and *Workin' Moms*. Natalie also stars in the upcoming romantic drama, *The Burning Season*, directed by Sean Garrity.

**CHRISTIAN MEER** (“Benny”) Christian Meer is a Canadian actor originally born in Paris, France. Growing up, in his youngest years, Christian had the opportunity to live in multiple countries around the world, and since the age of 7, Christian has called Ottawa, Ontario, Canada home. Christian has had the humbling opportunity to travel the globe visiting amazing places such as Vietnam, Singapore and the Caribbean. In 2021 he graduated from the prestigious Toronto Film School’s Acting for Film, Television and Theatre program and then signed with his current agency SoHo Management. Within a year of signing, Christian Meer booked his debut appearance in a supporting role in the Canadian indie, *The Burning Season*, directed by Sean Garrity, followed by the TIFF-premiered Apple TV feature, *Fingernails*, where he plays the supporting role of “Rob” alongside award-winning and nominated performers Riz Ahmed, Jessie Buckley and Jeremy Allen White, directed by Christos Nikou.





## ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS



**SEAN GARRITY** (Director) Sean Garrity's latest feature film, *The End of Sex*, premiered at TIFF 2022 and went on to play to sold-out crowds at festivals including Dublin, Glasgow, Whistler and Calgary. He directed 2012's *My Awkward Sexual Adventure*, which premiered at TIFF, was selected as one of the TIFF Top Ten, won the People's Choice Award at the Calgary International Film Festival and the Audience Award at the Whistler Film Festival, and was selected at festivals from Taiwan and Mar Del Plata to Santa Barbara and New York. It dominated the 2013 Canadian Comedy Award nominations, getting a nod in almost every category, and netting Sean the Best Feature Direction award. His film *Blood Pressure* was one of only a handful of Canadian films selected for the prestigious Busan International Film Festival, where it was singled out as one of Screen International's 10 Hot Films. It was also an official selection at Beijing, Torino, Sao Paulo and Shanghai. He directed Joey King and Kevin Pollak in 2015's *Borealis*, which won awards at numerous film festivals, including jury awards for Best Actress (Vancouver) and Best Director (Canadian Film Fest), and his other features *Lucid* (2005), *Zoey & Adam* (2009), and *I Propose We Never See Each Other Again After Tonight* (2020) were all award-winning films, which enjoyed international theatrical releases and were selected by prestigious festivals around the world. His feature film debut, *INerTia*, was awarded "Best First Feature" at the 2001 Toronto International Film Festival and netted him "Best Director" at the 2001 FilmCan Festival. The Globe & Mail named him one of three "Canadian Filmmakers to Watch" in 2002 and Northern Life announced: "Sean Garrity is the new wave of Canadian cinema." His newest film is the romantic drama *The Burning Season*, which will be released in 2023.

**JONAS CHERNICK** (Writer/Producer). See bio under About the Cast.

**DIANA FRANCES** (Writer/Executive Producer) Diana Frances is a Canadian Screen Award winning writer who has also been nominated for a Writer's Guild of Canada Award for Best Writing: Comedy. She also won the WGC's prestigious 'Sondra Kelly Award' for her dramedy about her gong show life with adoption called *Given Up*. This project is currently in development with The CW Network with Kristin Kreuk attached to star. Diana has also written for various Canadian TV and award shows such as the 2018 & 2019 *Canadian Screen Awards*, *JFL Galas*, *Corner Gas Animated*, *The Beaverton* and much more.

**ANDREW BRONFMAN** (Producer) Andrew Bronfman is a Toronto based film producer specializing in structuring, financing, and producing domestic and international co-productions. Andrew co-produced several features including *Delia's Gone*, *The Kid Detective*, *Run This Town*, *James VS His Future Self*, *Die in a Gunfight* and *Big Gold Brick*. He also produced *My Animal*, which premiered at Sundance 2023 and *Mustache*, which premiered at SXSW 2023. His upcoming film *The Burning Season* is in post-production. Andrew received his Bachelor of Arts from McGill University before attending the conservatory program at the New York Film Academy.



## ABOUT THE CREW

**ERIC OH, CSC MYSC** (Director of Photography) Eric started working in the film industry in Toronto, Canada in 1993 as a camera assistant while enrolled in the Bachelor of Fine Arts - Film program at Ryerson University. In 2001 he started his career as a cinematographer and steadicam operator, first in music videos, then moving on to tv commercials, and feature films. Eric travelled to Bali, Indonesia in 2008 for a five month project, to shoot a feature length documentary. After the doc was wrapped, he decided to stay on in Asia and moved to Malaysia. While in Asia, he shot commercials throughout the region for clients and agencies in Shanghai, Bangkok, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Ho Chi Minh City, Jakarta, Tokyo. He also lensed several feature films while living in Asia. After a fruitful 8 years in Asia, Eric decided to relocate back to west to focus on his passion of shooting feature films. He now splits his time between his native Toronto and Europe. Eric is an award-winning cinematographer and is a Full Member of the Canadian Society of Cinematographers (CSC) and an Accredited Member of the Malaysian Society of Cinematographers (MYSC).

**ALLIE THOMPSON** (Production Designer) Allie Thompson is a multi-talented Production and Costume Designer who is known for elevating all her projects with her passionate work ethic and vision. She works in all genres from Horror to Musicals to Christmas features, bringing a high production value to each show regardless of budget. Her work can be seen on all major streamers, including films in the top 10 on Netflix, as well as primetime TV. Some of her work includes the smash hit comedy sketch show *Baroness Von Sketch*, the series *The Wedding Planners*, the action-comedy feature from the Butler Brothers, *First Round Down*, which was in the top five at the Canadian Box Office upon release, and the streaming hit *Christmas at Wolf Creek*.

**KEVON CRONIN** (Music) Kevon Cronin is a WCMA-nominated film composer whose recent work includes the "intense musical score" (Hollywood Reporter) for the IFC Midnight feature *Hunter Hunter* (Devon Sawa, Nick Stahl, Camille Sullivan), the "arabesque score" (Deadline) for the indie-drama *Polarized* (Holly Deveaux, Maxine Denis) and the score for Underworld co-creator Kevin Greivoux's upcoming film *King Of Killers* (Frank Grillo, Alain Moussi, Stephen Dorff, Georges St-Pierre). His music can also be heard in such projects as *Momentum* (Morgan Freeman, James Purefoy, Olga Kurylenko), *Rage* (Nicolas Cage, Peter Stormare, Rachel Nichols), the miniseries *The Red Tent* (Minnie Driver, Rebecca Ferguson), Hannibal Pictures' *USS Indianapolis: Men of Courage* (Nicholas Cage, Tom Sizemore, Thomas Jane), the feature-length documentary *Finding Noah* (Gary Sinise), and the U.K. television series *The Missing Evidence* among many others. Kevon also had the honor of orchestrating Hulu's first scripted television series *Battleground* and the Dreamwork's animated short *Madly Madagascar* (Ben Stiller, Chris Rock, David Schwimmer, Jada Pinkett Smith).

**JOHN GURDEBEKE** (Editor) John Gurdebeke is trained as a visual artist, now working in film, both as a picture editor and as a sound designer. His notable credits include several films by world-renowned director Guy Maddin, including *The Forbidden Room* (Best Canadian Feature Film, TIFF 2015), *Keyhole* (Borsos Award for Best Canadian Feature Film, Whistler Film Festival 2011), *My Winnipeg* (Best Canadian Feature Film, TIFF 2007) and *Brand Upon the Brain* (New York Times critics pick, 2006). His other credits as editor include the short film *My Dad is 100 Years Old* (directed by Isabella Rossellini), and several features directed by Sean Garrity, including *My Awkward Sexual Adventure* (TIFF Top Ten 2012), *Borealis* (Special Jury Award, VIFF 2015), *Lucid* (Best Canadian Film, VIFF 2006) and *The End of Sex* (TIFF 2022). John has been nominated for a Canadian Screen Award, an Indiewire Critics Poll Award, a Gemini Award and a Cinema Eye Honors Award for his work in film editing.