

HOW TO BE HUMAN: A MUSICAL WITH NO SONGS — PROJECT BRIEF

Format

Feature Film

Genre / Tone

Sci-Fi Satire / Absurdist Comedy

The Lobster meets *Severance*, with the visual precision of *Playtime* and the rhythmic propulsion of *Baby Driver*.

Recognition

Honorable Mention — Finish Line Script Competition

Strong reader feedback — Slamdance

Budget / Buyer Lane

Low-to-mid / design-driven satire with choreographed sound and movement

A24, NEON, MUBI, Searchlight, Topic lane

Core Hook

A “musical” with no songs, where the score is built entirely from environmental sound: toaster springs, shoe squeaks, keyboards, car doors, pipes, marbles, and the accidental percussion of people trying not to make noise.

One-Sentence Pitch

In a silent, color-coded future where every gesture is regulated, a rule-bound technical writer discovers a vibrating anomaly that teaches him rhythm, forcing him to choose between staying safely calibrated and waking his world to the chaos of being alive.

Why It’s Timely

It satirizes corporate conformity, emotional suppression, optimization culture, comfort-as-control, and the way systems train people to fear mess, noise, instinct, and unpredictability.

Main Characters

David — A technical writer who believes clarity is safety because the world has taught him ambiguity is danger. His journey is from instruction to instinct.

Sarah — David’s wife, terrified of variance because she has mistaken control for security. Her arc is learning that imperfection does not mean collapse.

Irene — A former Quality Assurance inspector exiled for making noise. She understands both the comfort of order and the necessity of the curve.

The Supervisor — The face of Lifestyle Solutions. He believes manuals protect people from pain, awkwardness, choice, and disorder.

Product X / The Heart — A defective Spherical Comfort Unit that emits a forbidden rhythm and awakens the human impulse the system has spent years suppressing.

Story Snapshot

1. David lives in a perfectly regulated world where even toast consumption, conversation, clothing, and movement are governed by manuals.
2. At work, he discovers Product X, a melted defective object that emits a rhythmic thump and causes him to tap, sway, and syncopate.

3. David begins violating the system in small ways: eating with his hands, moving off-beat, and writing an unauthorized manual called *How to Be Human*.
4. After failing calibration, David is Recalled — his ID is voided, his car shuts down, and his existence is erased.
5. In the Unplanned District, Irene teaches him that Product X is not defective. It contains a Heart, and David breaks back into Lifestyle Solutions to broadcast its rhythm through the town.

Ending / Final Image

The Heartbeat spreads through offices, kitchens, cars, sidewalks, and bedrooms. Dogs bark. Neighbors move. Sarah allows a stain, a tear, and a sound to become something other than failure. The perfect grid breaks, not into anarchy, but into life.

Theme in One Line

A life without disorder is not peace. It is obedience.

Positioning

It's an absurdist sci-fi satire about a world that has eliminated music, mess, and instinct — until one man discovers that being human starts with losing the beat everyone else is marching to.

Materials Available

One-pager and full screenplay available upon request or through the private script library.

RYAN CLARKE

Screenwriter & Playwright | Albuquerque, NM

Dark Comedy | Satire | Character Drama | Social Thriller

Ryan Clarke is an Albuquerque-based screenwriter and playwright whose work blends dark comedy, social satire, and intimate character drama. Across a slate of 20+ feature scripts, his stories often follow deeply flawed people pushed into impossible situations, finding humor, tension, and humanity in characters who are entirely in over their heads.

His screenwriting recognition includes Grand Prize Winner, 30th Annual Fade In Awards Comedy Competition (*#FightForNoah*); Semifinalist, 30th Annual Fade In Awards Comedy Competition (*The Trencherman*); 2026 Top 10 Finalist, ISA Table Read My Screenplay at Cannes (*A Walking Shadow*); 2026 Quarterfinalist, Finish Line Script Competition (*#FightForNoah*); two-time Semifinalist, ISA Emerging Screenwriters Competition (*Flashbang* and *Ghost of the Highway*); and four additional 2026 Honorable Mentions from Finish Line (*The Finalists*, *How to Be a Human: A Musical with No Songs*, *Ghost of the Highway*, and *Dead Signals*).

As a playwright, Ryan is a three-time winner of FUSION Theatre Company's short works festival, "The SEVEN", in 2024, 2025, and 2026. The stage version of *A Walking Shadow* was also selected in 2026 for The Road Theatre Company's 17th Summer Playwrights Festival.

CONTACT

Ryan Clarke

Albuquerque, NM

(505) 917-0065

ryanclarke@gmail.com

www.thisisryanclarke.com

Instagram: @thisisryanclarke

FilmFreeway: <https://filmfreeway.com/RyanClarke848>

ISA: <https://www.networkisa.org/profile/ryan-clarke>