

TRUE DETECTIVE

Opening Title Sequence Concept

DIR. PATRICK CLAIR  
ELASTIC

*elastic*

Thank-you sincerely for inviting us to contribute ideas to this process.

Since first reading the scripts some weeks ago, True Detective has gotten under my skin. The dilemmas of the characters are compelling and authentic, and I have great respect for the way the place and time of the events in the story echo and amplify the emotional lives of the characters that inhabit it.

This link - the relationship between broken landscapes and broken people - has been central to all our thinking.

We've striven to find original and striking ways to reveal this relationship between characters and location - and to compose this in a way that can capture the internal struggles and divisions that plague these men and those around them.

This isn't the zombie plague. This isn't vampires and warlocks. The phrase that has been echoing in my head since our first discussions on the project is that we are witnessing a "personal apocalypse".

This emotional "end of days", with its use of religious iconography feels fresh, nuanced and expressive. I hope we've folded in these symbolic elements with restraint and respect for the material.

There is a burning intensity to this time in the lead characters' lives - a legacy that will define them for the rest of their time on Earth. Our sequence will begin with landscape and character portraits, but it will end in fire - grabbing our audience, and drawing them into this dark and intense vision of two men on the edge of apocalypse.

These characters hold contradictions. They are at war within themselves.

We've worked to capture this sense of division and opposing forces. This conflict is both compelling and relatable, and capturing this is at the core of our approach.

We would feel honored to produce a sequence for this story, and we look forward to sharing our ideas with your team.

-Patrick Clair, Director, Elastic.

These are some of the key elements that we've focused on representing in the visuals, they strike us as the fundamentals at the center of the story.

## PETROCHEMICAL AMERICA

A polluted landscape, a wasteland of unfulfilled hopes and material exploitation. This is the physical location of the show, and reflects the lives of its inhabitants.

## SYMBOLISM

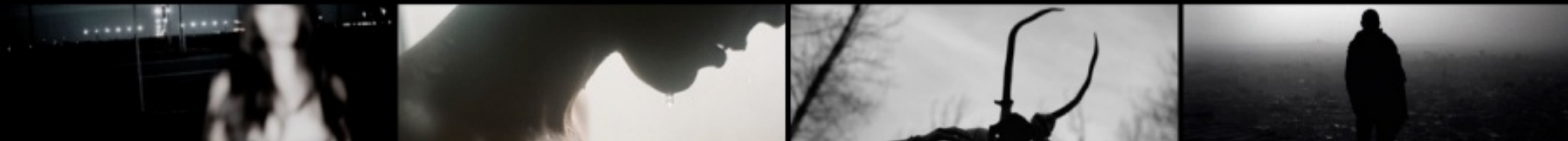
A hunger for meaning. Be it existential symbolism, religion, family or just belonging. The characters are haunted by a desperate need to understand their place in relation to the people and world around us.

## VICE

Human failings, vice and temptation. This world is inhabited by people that traffic in sexual and chemical gratification. These are people making compromises where they feel they must, just to sustain their survival.

## INTERNAL DIVISION

Broken men, struggling to be good, struggling to be whole.



As the sequence progresses, we'll fold in more conflict, drama and division. The sequence will become visually darker, more literal and more intense. Landscape and social decline will give way to...

**RELIGIOUS ICONOGRAPHY**  
**OPPOSING FORCES**  
**THE STRUGGLE TO BE WHOLE**  
**APOCALYPSE AND DESTRUCTION**  
**BURNING FIRE**

VISUAL INSPIRATIONS... Partial portraits and double exposures.



Our story is about broken characters, struggling to be whole.



We've zoned in on the idea of **personal geographies**.

These references demonstrate a visual mechanism for **revealing emotional landscapes through physical topography**.

These double exposure style photographic collages build portraits through shards of interlocking imagery and clever compositions.



The surreal nature of these images gives us license to explore metaphor and situations of heightened reality.

We can be expressive, playful, shocking or literal.

**Crucially, we can reveal character through places and symbols.**

We can reveal drama and conflict through composition, symbolism and juxtaposition.

## - THE SEQUENCE -

Our title sequence will blend haunting and evocative imagery of True Detective's world into striking and graphic portraits of our leads.

Photographs will blend together to create broken and partial images that capture the essence of men torn apart on the inside - divided by internal struggles and weighed down by internal contradictions.

The imagery building these portraits will create the world of True Detective - the girls, the churches, the truck stops, the refineries, the decay. Both literally and figuratively, we'll find people and places ravaged by exploitation and pollution.

Muted colours and dirty textures will give way to the burning intensity of fire and destruction. As our source material morphs to include the killer's iconography of death, animalistic urges and the apocalypse, the designs will get darker. High contrast oppositions between light and dark will build portraits of men divided and haunted - men facing their own apocalypse.

As the song reaches it's zenith, fire will overcome the cane fields and the title will emerge from the burning crosses of our layouts.

Insightful character portraits and striking photo/graphic compositions will draw our audience into the dark, compelling and nuanced world of True Detective.

## A word on animation...


There may be some footage, or none at all. This is something we can evolve with the production as the episodes take shape. Our sense is that the early design frames could be separated by full-motion shots of the countryside and travel. As the sequence moves into it's darker second act, images of licking flames and burning cane fields could be used to great effect.

There will always be movement in the frame. Images will be layered at varying depth to camera, and elegant virtual moves will emphasize texture and parallax. The dominant forms - usually silhouettes and portraits, will always be still. The core of our compositions will be constructed from frozen moments in time.

## The design frames...

We've assembled this presentation from various images of the actors, screenshots from the trailer, found photos and striking imagery from Petrochemical America. For the final sequence, we'll construct new frames more specific to these characters and their world.

We'll make these choices taking into account the entire arc of the story, and input from the production. The full extent of the story should inform the images used in the sequence, so that as viewers progress through the series, the titles reveal a depth and sophistication that is enhanced by repeat viewings and full knowledge of the character's journey.



CREDIT ROLE  
FIRST-NAME SURNAME

We begin with images of American landscapes. We've explored the stunning photographs of Petrochemical America, and will draw on similar images to set the initial tone. These will be striking combinations of rural landscapes, big skies and petrochemical infrastructure - augmented by muted grades and elegant design elements.





Before long, we draw back to reveal these outdoor vistas framed through striking silhouettes and character profiles.



While some of these landscapes are of agricultural fields, others betray the grime and murky pollution endemic to this industrialized landscape.



People. Landscape. Infrastructure.


The early frames of our montage focus on simple (but striking) juxtapositions of the personal and the physical.

We see the clash of modern technology against timeless symbols of belief and humanity.

We see people under pressure.



Materialism and broken economies are emblematic of this place. Our compositions will play with layout and visual relationships. Here, two close ups of actors interlock to create a strange and impressionistic portrait of them both.



JOB TITLE


A. B. SMITHSON

Before long, we begin to wield these photographic elements in a more incisive way. Partial portraits are sliced and split by industrial elements. High contrast melded images sketch out the forms of people in turmoil.



STARRING  
ACTORS NAME

The most important frames in our sequence will present our main characters as complex, divided and broken men. Their faces will be revealed over time, seen through a prism of industrial landscapes, maps and silhouettes.

A composite image where a handprint is superimposed over a photograph of an industrial facility. The handprint is a light, semi-transparent shape that frames the central part of the image. Inside the handprint, the industrial facility is visible, featuring a tall, dark, cylindrical tower with a ladder on its side, and a large, white, spherical storage tank to the left. The facility is surrounded by a complex network of pipes, walkways, and structural steel. The background of the handprint is a light, textured, off-white color. The overall image has a slightly grainy, vintage aesthetic.

STARRING  
ACTORS NAME

We'll never see their whole faces but we will get flashes of facial detail, giving us a moment to meet their gaze or see their mouth set in a revealing pose.

The early shots of our title sequence are focused on setting and character.

Sustainability. Pollution.

These words have become so pervasive, they've nearly lost their impact. They've become marketing tools and political weapons.


But they can have personal resonance as well.

In TRUE DETECTIVE, the people echo the landscape they inhabit.

This world has been exploited and ravaged to fuel an economy we can not sustain.

Now, it is poisoned - broken and polluted.

This has happened to its people too. It's inhabitants struggle to find the energy... the will... just to sustain their own survival.



CREDITED ROLE

JOHN CITIZEN

Landscapes from Louisiana and the gulf meld into the forms of our characters faces, simultaneously obscuring and revealing them in different ways.

PRODUCED BY  
LOREM IPSUM



Disconnected source imagery will reveal varying parts of an image. While the church fills in the body, a coastal map lets us glimpse the eyes. These compositions show characters that are broken apart inside, men struggling to be whole.

PRODUCED BY  
LOREM IPSUM



The images we choose will be a mix of literal and metaphor. Graphic forms within a photo will become powerful elements in the composition. Here, the slashes of an electricity line show a man divided.



There needs to be some moments of utter strangeness, some that will make more sense as the season progresses - and we'll design these to reflect events in later scripts. This test features sea creatures (from the gulf?) sweeping through the abstracted line of a woman's hair. We'll fold religious, environmental and human aspects into these lyrical and abstract compositions. They'll give the audience brief respite from the industrial landscape and constructed portraits.



Vice is a powerful part of the story and the landscape. Strippers, prostitutes, flesh and exploitation will be mined for visual impact. Meanwhile, inside these forms, we glimpse an America on the edge, laced with apocalyptic forms of decay and dark skies.

As the titles continue, we explore more daring imagery evocative of the story....

Adultery. Abuse. Criminality. Vice.

People strive to be good, while knowing that some of their actions hurt the ones they love, and that some are hopelessly self-destructive.

Like all of us, they struggle to find a framework. Some way to see their decisions in context - a way to live with themselves, a way to define the boundary between their own choices and the monsters they investigate. They fail to find the simple answers. There is no moral framework, no Bible passage, no ideology that will bring us peace.

We must live with the contradictions, because there is no other way.



In many scenes from the show, dirty glamour collides with a landscape of economic decline. We want to capture this as the sequence unfolds - and we can use imagery evocative of real locations from the show.



This is one of our favourite test frames. The curves of the stripper's body seem almost abstract and ethereal, while the glowing strip club environment seamless blends into cane fields and smoke stacks. This style of convergence is an excellent balance for our broken portraits and shattered character imagery.



As our sequence builds into its final act, our imagery gets darker and more religious.

Our focus shifts to images with connotations of hunting and killer/prey relationships.

Antlers reach skyward, like a flame, hinting at the incendiary fire to come.

Are these girls the hunted? Are we? Animalistic urges pave the way for us to introduce images of nature, beasts and the great outdoors.

At first, this is lyrical and beautiful - stags, deer and game ...with haunting eyes and majestic antlers - framed by the stark iconography of the gunsights and their crosshairs.

Something more is bubbling underneath, something... Biblical.

At first, the fire just creeps into the frames in minor details. A candle, a cigarette butt. Soon though, the burning begins to permeate the world, threatening to engulf us.

This could be the end of days.

But it's an apocalypse on a personal scale.

In some frames, the fire is static - frozen in arcs of striking composition, splitting our characters in two. Quite literally, framing their self-destruction and inner turmoil.

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Entering this new, darker chapter will allow us to play with imagery from the killer's plotline, and draw connections between this and the internal struggles of our detectives. Animalistic urges come to life through religious symbols, which seem extra macabre in the context of our serial killer tale. Subtle star fields in the background reinforce heavenly connotations and sweeping perspectives.







Elements of burning and fire begin to creep into our frames. Sometimes they just cast glows from offscreen, some embers float through our gaze. They are subtle at first, but catch the eye by injecting the compositions with movement and colour.



*As the themes of salvation and personal apocalypse become more prominent, fire permeates our pictures. Details recede as burning flames visually slash our characters into pieces.*



As the music builds towards crescendo, the visuals pointedly illustrate the character's inner turmoil.



Walking on water was mentioned in one of our discussions. As the title sequence reaches it's zenith, we can strike out with religious imagery this bold and literal. The symmetry of human faces crashes headlong into high contrast turbulent imagery, while licking flames and glowing embers burn hot and vibrant orange against the monochrome backdrop.



CREDIT LINE

JOHN SMITH



CREATED BY  
NIC PIZZOLATTO

Eventually, crucifixes and gun sights merge to form a block crosslike window into our world. The fire burns and expands, as we see shots of the cane field glowing red hot. Final credits are written in stark, thin white across this backdrop. The music is at it's most intense, and the cross squeezes tighter and tighter towards center of screen, focusing us on the flames.

The image shows the title card for the TV series 'True Detective'. The title 'TRUE DETECTIVE' is centered in a bold, orange, sans-serif font. A thin, glowing orange crosshair is superimposed over the text, with the vertical line passing through the middle of the word 'DETECTIVE'. The background is a dark, smoky, orange-brown gradient, suggesting a fire or a hazy, atmospheric setting. The overall aesthetic is gritty and mysterious.

# TRUE DETECTIVE


The cross squeezes tighter and tighter as the background burns out to pure fire. The letter forms of our title emerge from the shrinking boundaries of the central cross, being slowly revealed as it reduces to fine lines of broken orange. The title is bisected by the graphic form of the cross. This is True Detective.

## In summary...

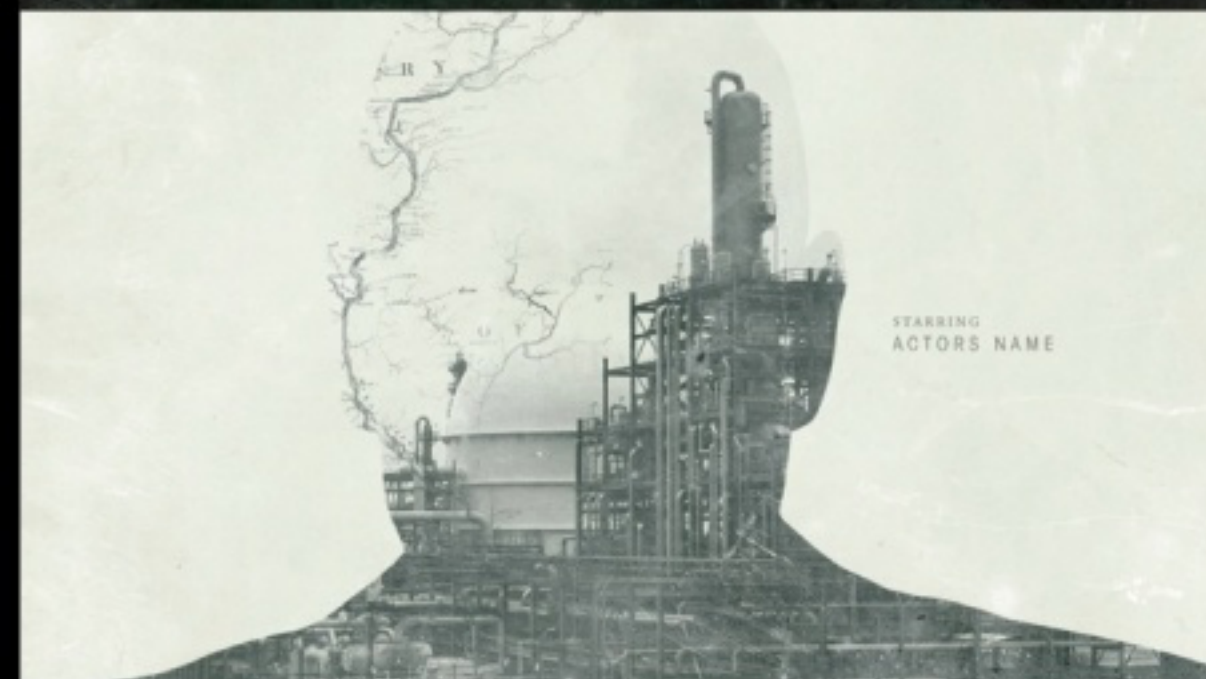
Evocative photographs will reveal character portraits through bold and striking graphic compositions.

Rich in character and symbolism, the titles will be steeped in imagery from our story.

Personal geographies will link themes, people and places in a sequence that journeys from a poisoned landscape into a intense and incendiary personal apocalypse for both of these broken men.



CREDIT ROLE  
FIRST-NAME SURNAME



STARRING  
ACTORS NAME



JOB TITLE  
A.B. SMITHSON


PRODUCED BY  
LOREM IPSUM







CREATED BY  
NIC PIZZOLATTO



TRUE DETECTIVE



The end.

Thank-you.

elastic