

INVESTMENT OVERVIEW

ROOM ZERO

An uncanny, high-stakes night for fans of Weapons, Backrooms, and Green Room.

Written by Clifton Highfield

Short film proof-of-concept · Austin, TX

THE STORY

One night. One suitcase. One very bad decision.

A broke touring comic is so easy to overlook that when he vanishes into a room that isn't supposed to exist, nobody comes looking. One night chasing down a stranger's lost suitcase spirals into a fight just to be seen at all · a motel mix-up, a flashback to being trapped and forgotten in a walk-in fridge, a chaotic apartment confrontation, a train, a bus, and the back of a squad car. He escapes it all only to land the biggest break of his career · the one thing that might finally make him impossible to overlook.

FORMAT

Short film proof-of-concept, festival/pilot potential

TONE

Two tones, one trick Weapons pulled: horror dread drives the present-night motel thread, dry comedy drives the flashback odyssey

SETTING

One night, Austin-adjacent comedy-club-and-motel circuit

THE HOOK

"I'm easy to overlook." He says it about himself before the story ever has to prove it. Every room he enters treats him as replaceable · right up until it can't.

A contained, single-night structure that reads small on the page but moves through comedy club, motel, restaurant, apartment, train, bus, and squad car · built to scale from a lean proof-of-concept up to a fully incentivized production.

THE CHARACTER

Nobody misses him. That's the whole engine.

The Comic is never named on the page. He's identified only by a pair of black Converse Chuck Taylors · the camera follows the shoes through every location before it ever needs to follow a face. He tells us who he is before anything happens to him:

"We're about fifteen hundred miles from anyone I'd call a friend."

"I'm easy to overlook."

"I have one of those forgettable faces, my superpower."

Then the story spends 19 pages proving him right · and making the audience sit with how wrong that is.

"IT HAPPENS SOMETIMES."

The film's refrain · said by three different people, explaining away three different violations against him:

Motel Manager: waves off comics who never come back for things left in Room Zero: "sometimes sits in here a year til they make it back, if they make it back."

Host: says it to comfort him right after the Motel Manager locks him in the back office · complicit, not cruel.

Sheriff: says it while locking him alone in the back of the squad car and walking away.

Nobody in his life is cruel to him. They're indifferent · and indifference, repeated three times, is the real antagonist of this film.

WHY THIS TEAM

Twenty years of building rooms that work.



Performer & Writer

20+ years in improvisational theater as performer, teacher, coach, director, and producer.



Recognized Craft

Two-time B. Iden Payne Award winner · Austin's highest honor for live theater.



Teaching Pedigree

Teaches at Upright Citizens Brigade, training the ensemble-based instincts that carry into directing actors on set.

This is a writer-director who has spent two decades directing live ensembles under pressure · the exact skill set a contained, one-night, high-turnover shoot demands.

Full resume: improv.cliftonhighfield.com/CHighfieldResume

THE ASK

A staged investment: prove it lean, then scale it.

TIER 1 · NOW

Proof of Concept

\$4,000–\$6,000

- Script pages 1–3: Comedy Club → Motel
- One-day shoot, two locations covering every needed environment
- Lean crew, existing camera/production equipment
- Delivers a polished, fundable proof-of-concept reel

TIER 2 · NEXT

Full Production

Scaled, incentive-backed

- Full script: 13 speaking roles, one continuous night
- Austin-based production, qualifying for Texas's TMIIP rebate
- 5–25%+ cash rebate on qualifying in-state spend, stacking with Austin's local incentive
- Budget modeled once proof-of-concept locks the approach

Small footprint, built to feel bigger than it is.

CAST & LOCATIONS

- 3 principal roles, 4 featured, ~15–20 background
- 2 locations cover every environment: a comedy club/bar (stage, hallway, kitchen, office, exterior lot) and a motel (exterior, Room Zero, office)
- Achievable as a one-day shoot
- Sound design carries scale · crowd, traffic, and ambience read larger on the track than on camera

KEY WATCH-OUT

Night exteriors (parking lot, motel walkway) drive most of the lighting and crew cost · the single biggest scheduling variable on this shoot.

BUDGET RANGES

Ultra-ultra-low <i>Donated locations</i>	\$1,000–\$1,500
Ultra-low <i>Minimal paid crew</i>	\$3,000–\$5,000
Lean professional <i>Full paid crew</i>	\$6,000–\$10,000
Fully crewed / polished <i>Full department heads</i>	\$12,000+

Recommended target: \$4,000–\$6,000 · strategic low-budget approach, existing camera/equipment, limited crew combinations, minimized company moves.

One script. Three standalone micro-movies.

The single continuous night already breaks at its own scene boundaries into three self-contained pieces · each a complete story with its own hook, sharing one character and one visual throughline (the Chuck Taylors). That makes Room Zero a fit for a vertical/micro-form buyer like Shutter Network, not just a festival short.

DROP 1 · HORROR-THRILLER TONE

Room Zero

~8–10 min

A comic returns a stranger's suitcase, gets accused of stealing it, and gets locked in the back office of a motel that swears his room doesn't exist.

The film's present-night thread. Contained, dread-driven, a clean twist ending on its own.

DROP 2 · DARK COMEDY TONE

The Walk-In

~4–5 min

Fired down to an opening slot, a comic fakes being trapped in a restaurant walk-in fridge for sympathy · and nobody checks on him for far longer than he planned.

Single-location, driest laugh in the script. Tightest, most shareable cut.

DROP 3 · DARK COMEDY TONE

Headlining

~8–10 min

Locked out of his own bedroom by his roommate's parents, a broke comic treks across the city on foot, by train, and by late bus just to make the opening slot we watch him leave in Room Zero.

Comedic companion piece to Room Zero · same night, opposite tone, same shoes.

Flexible for the buyer: release as three standalone drops, a connected three-part event series, or recut as a single festival short · same footage, three go-to-market paths.

FUNDING · THE PROOF OF CONCEPT

Every dollar gets you something back.

Six ways in · from a thank-you email to executive producer credit.

GOAL: \$7,500 · covers the entire three-page proof-of-concept shoot · **Venmo @RoomZeroFilmFund**

\$5

THANK YOU

A personal thank-you email.

\$25

NEWSLETTER

Ongoing updates on the film as it's made and released.

\$50

VIDEO THANKS

A personal video thank-you.

\$100

GROUP COACHING

A 2-hour coaching session for up to 5 people.

\$150

PERSONAL COACHING

A 2-hour coaching session, one-on-one — plus a hug.

\$1,000

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

EP credit, your \$1,000 back, plus 0.1% of profits (\$10k profit returns \$1,010).

IN-KIND DONATIONS

Vehicles, time as an extra, or a location (comedy club, motel, kitchen, walk-in freezer) — the big-ticket items that cut the cash budget directly. Tracked item-by-item on the Donatables sheet as things get requested, confirmed, and received.

The full script is bigger · and Texas pays you back for shooting it here.

Contained on the page

13 speaking roles across a single continuous night · tight for a one/two-day shoot.

3 vehicle interiors

Train, bus, and police car scenes consolidate into one static-build unit day rather than three separate practical rentals.

Clustered night exteriors

Parking lot, motel walkway, and transit scenes group into one geographic, consecutive-night block.

One practical, close-quarters fight

The Host/Motel Manager scuffle plays in the Green Room tradition · real, physical, and confined, on a consult-level choreography day rather than a full stunt day.

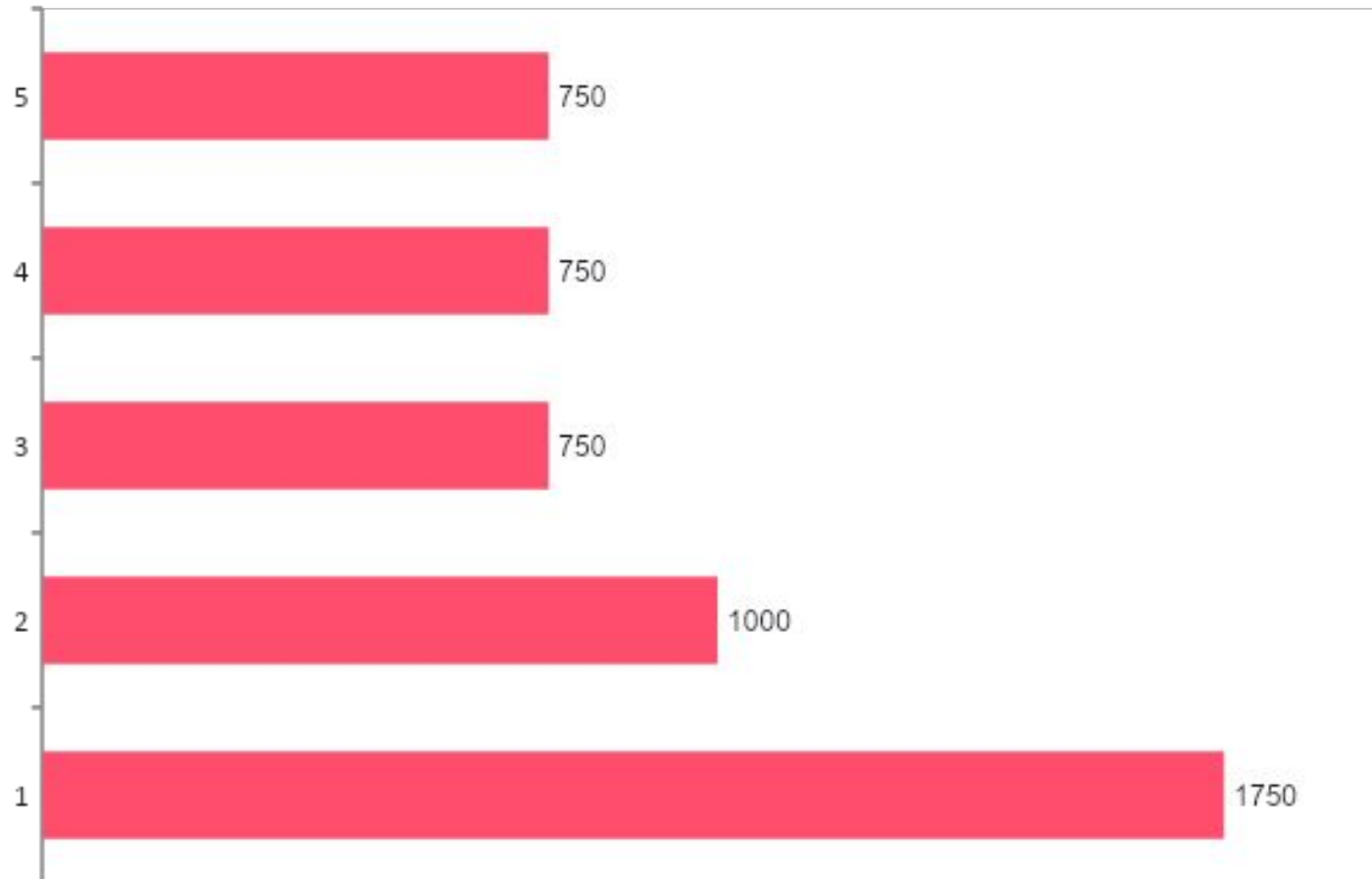
THE TEXAS ADVANTAGE

- TMIIIP rebate: 5–25%+ cash rebate on qualifying in-state spend, tiered by total budget, stackable with 1–2.5% bonus awards
- Austin's local Creative Content Incentive Program stacks on top of the state program
- Austin Film Society crew network and IATSE Local 484 for department heads
- Austin Studios (AFS) available for the vehicle-interior stage builds
- Local crew, local extras, and stage rental all qualify as Texas spend · exactly what the rebate rewards

USE OF FUNDS

Where the Tier 1 budget goes.

Illustrative allocation at the \$5,000 midpoint · refined during pre-production.



WHY THIS SPLIT

Crew and labor lead the budget because the plan runs a lean, combined-role crew rather than a full department roster. Locations stay low by securing two properties that each cover multiple script environments. Sound and post carry real weight · ambience and mix are doing the work of scale that a bigger location budget would otherwise buy.

Let's shoot Room Zero.

A lean, fundable proof of concept now · a Texas-incentivized production next.

Clifton Highfield

Writer / Director · Room Zero

WANT IN SOONER?

Fund a piece of the proof of concept today.

Every dollar goes directly toward the Tier 1 budget on the Use of Funds slide · crew, locations, equipment, and sound. Scan the code to send any amount straight to the fund.

Room Zero Film

@RoomZeroFilmFund on Venmo

No amount is too small. Every contribution moves the proof-of-concept target closer and gets a thank-you when the short is finished.

Room Zero Film

@RoomZeroFilmFund



venmo

Scan to pay · @RoomZeroFilmFund