

# Subway Stops

A black and white photograph of a subway platform. The scene is viewed through a series of vertical rectangular openings, likely between train cars or platform pillars. The lighting is dramatic, with bright highlights from overhead lights and deep shadows. Several people are visible, mostly in silhouette or high-contrast lighting. In the center-right opening, a person stands with their back to the camera, looking towards the platform. To their left, another person is partially visible. In the leftmost opening, a person is walking away. The overall mood is quiet and observational.

press kit

written and directed by  
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A film about bodies moving through space

A cinematic experience of the New York subways, featuring the commuters, panhandlers, and performers passing through



shot on Arri 16-S, Bolex H-16, Nikon FM  
16mm Motion & 35mm Stills  
Mix: 5.1 Surround Sound  
Aspect: 1.37:1 (16mm), 1.5:1 (35mm)  
Black & White/Color  
18 mins

## *synopsis:*

A documentary/narrative hybrid featuring visual poetry of subway movement, character vignettes, performance art, and more, *Subway Stops* straddles the line between several types of films. At times a concert film featuring icons of the underground like Larry Wright (the original bucket drummer) and Mike Yung (*America's Got Talent*), at others a purely formal experience studying rhythm and movement, time and space, light and shadow.

The film starts pre-pandemic and takes the audience through the height of quarantine and the slow return to normalcy that followed. Along the way we hone in on a handful of characters, among them a claustrophobic commuter, a trio of showtime dancers, and a panhandler for whom each step is a struggle.



Bashir Berkley Brown

## *director's statement:*

Since moving to New York, I've been enamored by the underground: the hypnotic flickering of passing trains, the chaos of the noise, the characters that populate it. It seemed like a microcosm of the whole world, with all of us thrown together, forced to move through it. Uncertain of shooting a verite film on the subways with no permits and real people in the parts, I started shooting tests on my bolex. And then covid happened.

The handful of rolls I shot formed the basis of a pre-pandemic prologue. The filming was very intimate, 90% of the shots done with just me, the camera, and the talent. We would scramble somewhere else when cops would descend on us, or grab one take before dispersing (one shot of cops passing is a good example, they were there expressly to kick us out).

The talent was recruited bit by bit, most of the cast locked in before the script was written. Bashir panhandled in an area I walked through a lot, and every time I would pass him I'd get to know him a little until it became clear he'd make a great main character in all this, and was very lucky when he agreed. I was also lucky that subway performers like Larry Wright, Mike Yung, and the rest would exchange numbers with me when I came across them in the stations, allowing me to write them into a constantly evolving script.

This is a film about movement, about how movement links all of us as we carry our own private struggles, but it's also a film about cinematic language, each sequence a different idea of a pure cinema. There's always been a link between trains and cinema, going back to 1896, and I hope this film shows that the magic of a train approaching a camera endures a century on.



from L to R: Charlie Tidmarsh, Bashir Berkley Brown, and cinematographer Mitch Perrin



from L to R: Ferdinand Montalvo, Dash Starr, Tre Bucks, Charlie Tidmarsh, and Joe Zakko (*photo by Misho Kozmava*)



Joe Zakko filming Dash Starr (photo by Misho Kozmava)

## the cast

Bashir Berkley Brown



Berkley took on the name Bashir in 1968 when he converted to Islam in his early 20s. Since then his faith has been an important part of his life. Through thick and thin including bouts of homelessness and the occasional larcenous skateboarder, Bashir has kept moving forward.

Larry Wright



Larry is credited as the first major drummer to use five gallon plastic buckets instead of a normal drum kit and has been performing in the subways for nearly 30 years. He has appeared in commercials (including one for Levis by Spike Lee), music videos, and the film *Green Card*. He met his wife Sonia while performing underground, and she has accompanied him ever since.

Courtney Mentzel



Courtney is an actor and puppeteer based in New York City. Some of her recent projects include the short film, *Call Me Grizby*, the podcast, *Stella Maris*, *An Entertainment*, and Warners Brother's production of *The Polar Express* in Whippany, NJ. Prior to moving to New York, she worked in Texas with Undermain Theatre, The Classics Theatre Project, Prism Movement Theatre, and Hip Pocket Theatre.

Ferdinand Montalvo



Ferdinand, who mostly goes by Taz, has been dancing for about a decade, crediting it as the thing that saved his life. When he's not managing his streetwear brand calinY, he can be found on the trains dancing, mostly in the litemeet style. Taz is accompanied by fellow showtime dancers Dash Starr and Tre Bucks.

Travis "Da-GoldMan" Hartfield



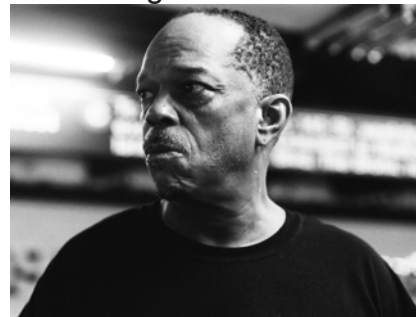
Always getting in trouble back in Jersey, Travis moved to New York 25 years ago. A lifelong dancer, he first started miming underground, before donning the gold bodypaint he's known for today.

Charlie Tidmarsh



Charlie is a freelance writer/editor from San Francisco. He moved to New York in 2019 after graduating from UC Berkeley. Most recently, he worked as an editorial assistant at *The New Yorker*; currently he writes freelance copy, and just finished ghost-writing a book. Having known Joe for years, he was coerced into his first onscreen appearance.

Mike Yung



Mike is a legendary busker who's been performing on the subways for over 40 years after quitting the Parks & Recreation Department. He appeared on *America's Got Talent* and made it all the way to the semi-finals in season 12. Mike's performance is accompanied by musicians Tyrone "Tyheem" Smalls on bass and his brother James "Jameel" Yung on drums.



from L to R: Tyheem Smalls on bass, Mike Yung, David Earle Chorowski holding the mic, Omar Nasr holding the camera



## the crew

Joe Zakko

Writer/Director/Cinematographer/Editor/Producer



Joe is from Fort Lauderdale and attended NYU Tisch from 2012 where he studied Film & TV. He has shot stills for the short films *Nettles*, *Perfect as Cats*, and the Oscar-nominated *My Nephew Emmett*. His photography has been featured by publications such as *The Hollywood Reporter* and *American Cinematographer*. This is his first short film.

Skyler Johnson

Co-Editor



Skyler has been editing professionally since she graduated from NYU Tisch with a degree in Film & Television. She has worked with notable production companies like RadicalMedia and Library Films. She also has edited music videos and short films with debuts at Cannes and Tribeca. Skyler has just finished editing her second scripted feature film.

Omar Nasr

Co-Cinematographer



Omar is a New York based cinematographer. He has shot 13 short films and worked on another 80, predominately in the electric department. His credits include *I'm Thinking of Ending Things*, *You Were Never Really Here*, and *Orange is the New Black*.

Christopher Woll

Sound Designer



Christopher is a Brooklyn and Culver City based sound designer and re-recording mixer. He designed the sound on shorts such as *Rizo* and *Hoar*, and features such as *Tape* and *Snakeeater*. Chris is the proprietor of Downmix Post in Culver City.

Mitch Perrin

Co-Cinematographer



Mitch is a New York based cinematographer. His work includes 2 features, 5 narrative shorts, and over 60 commercials since 2016. His credits include *I'm Thinking of Ending Things* (alongside Omar), *Mare of Easttown*, and *Jessica Jones*.

Sami Jano

Composer



Sami is a New York based composer and multi-instrumentalist. In 2018, he scored his first feature film, *Dads*, directed by Bryce Dallas Howard and went on to score Ron Howard's upcoming documentary, *We Feed People*. Other feature credits include *Above and Beyond* by the Reynaud Brothers, indie crime thriller *Snakeeater* and art-house documentary, *We Are All Angels*.



# Subway Stops

featuring

BASHIR BERKLEY BROWN - TRE BUCKS - TRAVIS HARTFIELD - COURTNEY MENTZEL  
FERDINAND MONTALVO - DASH STARR - CHARLIE TIDMARSH - LARRY WRIGHT - MIKE YUNG

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