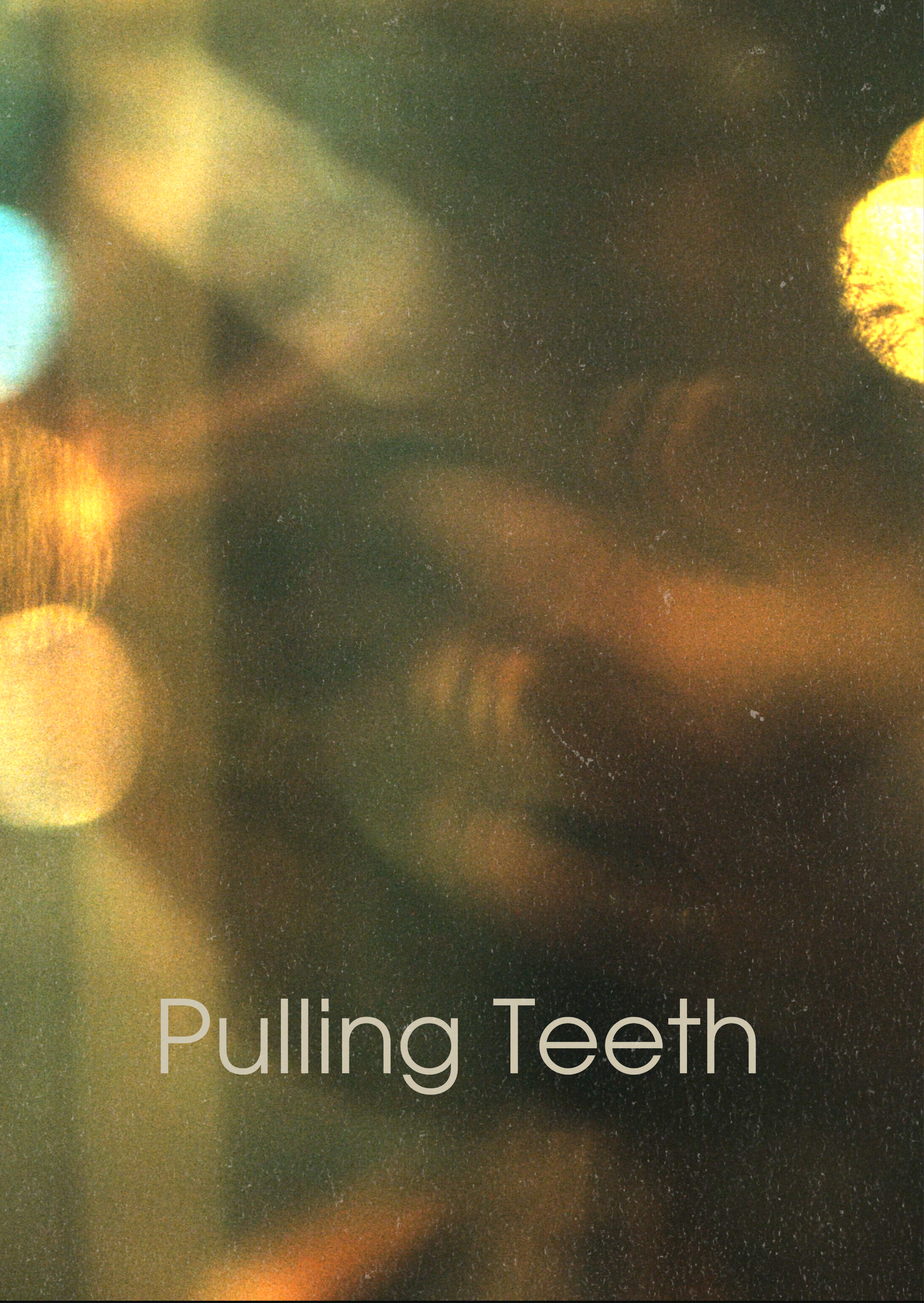




Pulling Teeth



Synopsis

Pulling Teeth is a hybrid documentary-fiction feature that renders an intimate, uncompromising portrait of working-class survival in a city hollowed out by growing inequality.

Co-created with non-actors and their lived experiences, the film follows Damian, a resourceful hustler living in the shadows of London, scraping together a livelihood through long days of precarious labour and nights spent doing petty crime.

The only constants in Damian’s life are his dog and his backpack as he traverses neighbourhoods he no longer recognises. Damian’s estranged partner, and their daughter, Lola, linger at the edge of his world. Economic survival has carved a gulf between them that sporadic phone calls and brief meetings cannot bridge.

Pulling Teeth is a story of endurance, a study in texture and time, that captures the friction between a city’s future and those left behind in its past. It resists easy answers or moral judgement, instead, it captures something more layered: a community under pressure, fractured relationships, and a quiet resistance in a landscape being erased one day at a time.

Title: Pulling teeth
Genre: Drama
Country: UK
Production Year: 2025
Language: English
Duration: 78 Minutes
Aspect Ratio: 1.33:1
Frame Rate: 24 fps
Shooting Format: Digital
Exhibition Format: DCP



Director’s Statement

I work amidst one of Europe’s largest "urban renewal" projects in London’s Elephant and Castle. The renewal involved a mass demolition of thousands of homes and shops, in effect removing the multi-ethnic, heterogenous communities that had been living there for generations- and replacing them with a much more homogenous group of people, that have no roots or connections to the city. It is an emptying out of all the things that make London unique and specific, and replacing it with formulaic, corporate ideas of “place-making” resulting in identikit, dull cities. I wanted to make a film that explored this topic through the prism of people trying to live amidst these mass changes.

This film emerged not from a traditional idea development to screenplay model, but from a chance encounter with non-actor and lead character Damian Smith, a real-life barrow boy who pulls carts around at East Street Market, one of London's oldest surviving street markets. Working with non-actors playing versions of themselves, we co-created a narrative that blurs the line between fiction and documentary, crafted using our non-actors real lived experience as the basis for scenes.

We shot in the actual locations that the scenes happened in and our micro-crew moved through external locations in Walworth Road and Elephant and Castle with nimble cameras, staging fictional scenes within and amongst locations that were not cordoned off or altered by us in anyway. This approach gives the film its raw, documentary-like urgency, and scenes that feel both intentionally observed yet spontaneous and alive.

Damian's daily existence unfolds as an exhausting sixteen-hour cycle of constant hustles. The film reveals how his tireless entrepreneurial spirit and resourcefulness—qualities typically celebrated by our economic systems—ironically illuminate a central theme of the film: modern disempowerment isn't the inability to act, but the reality that action (and having agency) doesn’t always affect one's circumstances.

Rather than making an overtly "political film," I sought to create a work deeply informed by politics. What makes London extraordinary is its stubborn resistance to complete segregation—despite centuries of attempts to create spatial divisions, the city has maintained a geography where lives of different classes remain somewhat intertwined. Yet new urban developments are methodically engineering more homogeneous, divided spaces. Most concerning is the quiet transfer of public land to private control, transforming what were once "commons"—the physical spaces where citizenship could be expressed and where British democracy took root—into pseudo-public areas governed by corporate interests rather than civic rights.

The film speaks to our present moment: the cost-of-living crisis, a hand-to-mouth existence, and staggering wealth disparities in one of the world's great cities. It examines how our society creates a disenfranchised class—particularly those who work with their bodies and hands—for whom knowledge economies remain inaccessible. These are the conditions that fuel resurgent masculinities and right-wing politics that channel legitimate economic grievances into division and hate.

In our polarized political landscapes, I wanted to create a work that honours the nuances of lived experience beyond reductive categorizations. What does it feel like to hustle relentlessly yet remain financially precarious? How does one navigate broken relationships without time or resources to repair them? What is the experience of becoming a stranger in the city of your birth?

This film offers no easy answers, only an unflinching portrait of resilience in the face of systematic erasure—both of people and the public spaces that once belonged to everyone.



Director

David Alamouti

David is an award winning director (and ex producer) specialising in documentary, fiction and the creative spaces in-between. His documentaries - funded by the BBC, BFI and the Wellcome Trust- have garnered recognition at prestigious festivals including London international doc fest, Sheffield doc fest, Krakow and Utah, while his fiction work has earned nominations at Palm Springs (Best international Film and Jury award) and best film at Cypress international film festival. His fiction films are made using co-creation methods, working closely with non-actors (and their communities) to transform their lived experience into compelling fictional narratives. This results in a heightened sense of authenticity- but also gives his films a poetry that is both aesthetically distinct and socially grounded.



Sound Designer

Rob Szeliga

Rob Szeliga is a London-based sound designer working across film, radio and sound art. After spending several years studying traditional and contemporary music in Indonesia and Japan, he returned to the UK in 2012 to study post-production sound at the National Film and Television School.

In 2015 he worked as a sound designer on the BIFA-nominated film *Balcony* (2015) that in 2016 went on to win the Berlin Crystal Bear and Iris Prize. That same year he received a MPSE Golden Reel Sound Editing nomination for his work on the animation short *Chhaya* (2015). His interests are film sound, photochemical filmmaking and experimental music.

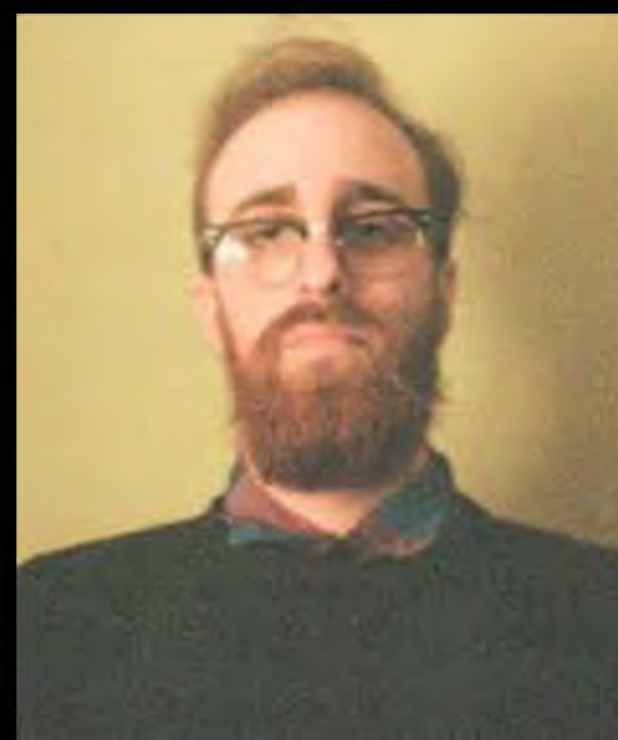


DOP

Nic Nazari

Nic is an award winning filmmaker. A London Film School alumnus in cinematography. His LFS graduation project was selected by major UK festivals including the London Short Film Festival, Manchester International Film Festival, Aesthetica Film Festival and was nominated for Best Short and Best Cinematography by the British Independent Film Awards (BIFA).

Since then, projects he worked on have gone on to screen and win awards at major international film festivals including Cannes Cinéfondation (where a project he shot in 2016 was awarded Second Prize), Sundance, Toronto's TIFF, Rotterdam's IFFR and many others.



Editor

Julien Testa

Julien Testa is a Canadian editor and filmmaker living in the UK. In 2014 he graduated from the University of Calgary, Alberta, with an Honours Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts, majoring in Film Studies. In 2014, he moved to London to attend the London Film School, and in 2017 graduated with a Master's in Film Making. He works as an editor and director, and his work has been featured in festivals such as IDFA, Cannes, and Palm Springs.

