



PRESS KIT

Tag Line

A film about sex, betrayal, friendship, jealousy, love, hate, death, and coffee

Log Line

Forced to work an extra shift, two young baristas must come to terms with their own relationship while being bombarded by the very different issues of their diverse customers.

Short Synopsis

BARRY and ABBY are two baristas in a Chicago coffeehouse. Barry is passionately and blindly in love with Abby. She knows this all too well, but is hardly ready to move into any kind of formal relationship with him. This does not stop Barry, though, who has decided that the best way to win her over is to propose to her in front of the largest group possible. This evening will be his opportunity. It is Abby's birthday and her friends are planning a surprise birthday party for her. Barry is planning an even bigger surprise.

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The coffeehouse has been quiet all day. Late in their shift, Abby receives a call from the Bobby, the evening barista. He and Ashleigh, his night shift workmate, have decided to get married that evening. Forced to pick up the shift, there is little that Barry and Abby can do but work that evening. Abby is desperate to get out at exactly 10:00 so that she can meet up with her friends to celebrate her birthday. Barry is also looking forward to closing the shop so that he can accomplish his ambush. Then, at 9:00, the doors open and so begins a steady stream of customers, any one of which can become an unknowing monkey wrench hurled into the separate plans of the two baristas.

Cast and Crew

Joe Rosengarten (Executive Producer/Co-Producer) is president of Nefarious Productions, LLC; a film production company dedicated to the promotion of the Chicago indie film movement. Last year, Rosengarten served as executive producer on *Typing*, a comic short directed by Jack C. Newell and written by Ron Falzone. He likes to recycle aluminum.

Jack C. Newell (Director/Co-Producer) is the director/writer/producer of *Typing* as well as several other award winning short films that have screened across the United States and abroad, including the 2007 and 2010 Cannes Film Festival Short Film Corner, Chicago International Film Festival, Friars Club Comedy Film Festival, LA Shorts Festival, Chicago Outdoor Film Festival, and the Indianapolis International Film Festival. He sits on the Education Committee board for Cinema/Chicago and currently teaches film directing and production at Columbia College Chicago, Chicago Filmmakers, and The iO Theater. *Close Quarters* is his first feature film.

Ron Falzone (Screenwriter/Co-Producer) is an award-winning screenwriter and associate professor in the Film & Video Department of Columbia College Chicago. Ron is an eleven-time Artist in Residence at The Ragdale Foundation and a recipient of a 2000 Illinois Arts Council Artist Fellowship in Screenwriting as well as IAC Finalist Awards for his screenplays *Hope's Dash* and *Unity in Love*. His short screenplay, *Typing*, was made into a film by Jack C. Newell that has received screenings at various festivals including Chicago International Film Festival, Cannes Film Festival Short Film Corner, and Friars Club Comedy Film Festival. *Close Quarters* is his first produced feature script.

Jill DiBiase (Editor) has worked on numerous short films, but *Close Quarters* is her first feature-length project. After graduating from Columbia College Chicago's Film and Video program in 2008, DiBiase began her career with Optimus, one of Chicago's most highly regarded post houses, where she continues to work as Senior Assistant Editor. Most recently, DiBiase's work has screened at Cannes Film Festival, Chicago

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International Film Festival, and LA Shorts Fest, among others. In the future, DiBiase hopes to work again with the crew of *Close Quarters*, and eventually have the opportunity to create work that is widely viewed, even beyond the world of film festivals.

Stephanie Dufford (Director of Photography) graduated from Columbia College Chicago in 2007 with a Bachelor's degree in cinematography. She has shot countless short films and is gearing up to shoot her fifth feature film. Over the past two years, she has continued her learning by mentoring with cinematographer Seamus McGarvey, BSC, ASC and she recently worked alongside him as the Digital Utility on Marvel's *The Avengers*. Her undergraduate thesis project, *The Fantastic Magnifico* earned her an Honorable Mention for the 2007 ASC Laszlo Kovacs Heritage Award for Outstanding Cinematography. For the same film, she was a 2010 recipient of the ICG Emerging Cinematographers Award.

Mary Margaret Bartley (Production Designer) is an Emmy and Peabody Award-winning scenic designer whose work has been seen in venues as diverse as Radio City Music Hall, the Disney/MGM Studios and the 1996 Democratic National Convention. Among her designs are the sets for Siskel/Ebert, WMAQ Studio 5, CLTV News, Soundstage, the short film *Typing* as well as numerous theatrical productions including "Jesse and the Bandit Queen," "Ain't Misbehavin'," "Clue: The Musical," and "Amadeus." She is a partner with Mickey Loewenstein in the scenic design firm, M & M Designs.

Marina Bacci (Sound Designer, Mixer) is a graduate of DePaul University's Sound Recording Technology department. She has mixed records with several up and coming bands, and has been an assistant engineer at Optimus for the past two years. She has worked on a number of short films that have screened at the Chicago International Film Festival, Cannes Film Festival, and the LA Shorts Fest among others.

John Michaels (Motion Graphics) is the founder of Protokulture, a motion graphics and titling firm in Chicago where he is both Chief Creative Director and Lead Animator. Last year, he created the inspired title sequence for Jack C. Newell's *Typing*.

Cast

Bill Arnett is a fixture in the Chicago improv community performing and teaching at the iO Theater. He plays in the weekly *Armando Diaz* show as well as the late night smash hot 3033. He can also be seen with the award-winning sketch group Maximum Party Zone.

Mark Belden is an actor and director who got his start at Chicago's renowned Second

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City theater. When not working, he enjoys the indoors. Hobbies include cooking and attempting to sing jazz standards.

Jim Carlson is an performer, writer and director for the Second City. He also performs at i.O. Chicago in Middle Age Comeback and the Armando Diaz Experience. Jimmy grew up in the Chicago area and graduated from Iowa.

Colleen Doyle is an actor, writer and comedian. She has performed in festivals and venues all over the United States, floating in the Atlantic Ocean, and that one place in Europe with the cobblestones. Colleen teaches improv at iO Chicago where she also performs with the ensembles Dummy and Ringo Starr.

Kate Duffy has been writing and performing comedy in Chicago for the last 15 years. Kate performed with Children of a Lesser God, a troupe critic's called, the best all-female improv group in Chicago, Schnuffly, Otis, The Signatures, and FELT, a critically acclaimed puppet show. Kate spent 2 years performing for The Second City on cruise ships, with their National Touring Company, and for their online network. Currently, Kate performs with Deep Schwa, Playboys, and the Mary Kay Letourneau Players. She teaches n at iO and The Second City and for companies around the country.

Erica Elam Is an actress/improviser with a long history of performance. Stage credits include roles at the Goodman Theatre, Court Theatre, Peninsula Players, Steppenwolf and Remy Bumpo. As an improviser, she has appeared at iO Theatre, Annoyance Theatre, Donny's Skybox and Second City unhinged.

Jet Eveleth is a member of "The Reckoning" and tours in the original show "Ted & Melanie" and "Touched". She has performed in the Andy Kaufman Awards, "The Best Of Chicago's Stand-Up" at The Lincoln Lodge and was listed as New City's "Top 50 Players" in Chicago. Her film work includes the comedies, American Legacy and One-Small Hitch.

Noah Gregoropoulos has been performing, directing and teaching in Chicago for decades, at iO Chicago, The Annoyance, Second City and other venues as well as in numerous television and film productions. He was a staff writer on the ABC sitcom "Dharma and Greg". He is currently performing in "Armando Diaz" and "Carl and the Passions" at iO Chicago, "Chicagoland" at The Annoyance, and "Almost Atlanta: Act, Too" at Chicago Dramatists.

Lyndsay Hailey does comedy and is often happy about it. She has written, directed, and produced two critically acclaimed one woman shows, 30% Chance of Hailey, and 40% Chance of Hailey, at Chicago's iO Theatre and in New York at The Upright Citizens Brigade Theater. She recently produced two music video's under the alias Cap'n Juggles. Check out her material at www.youtube.com/chanceofhailey. Lyndsay tours

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with her one woman shows, The Second City National Touring Company, the iO Road Show and The Deltones, iO's fully improvised musical.

Gregory Hollimon is a native of Chicago and a veteran of Second City Theatre. He's best known for his work as Principal Onyx Blackman on Comedy Central's cult hit "STRANGERS WITH CANDY."

TJ Jagodowski has been an improviser and director in Chicago for the last fifteen years. He improvises weekly with Dave Pasquesi in the show "TJ and Dave."

Bruce Jarchow started out at The Second City in 1977 and opened mainstage shows until 1982. His Chicago theater credits include *Lakeboat*, *The Water Engine*, and *Chicago Conspiracy Trial*. He also appeared Off-Broadway in *Edmund*, *True West*, and *Sills & Co.* His movie credits include *Ghost*, *Outbreak*, *Sour Grapes*, *Continental Divide*, *The Weatherman*, and about 20 more. His TV credits include *Seinfeld*, *Desperate Housewives*, *E.R.*, *According To Jim*, *Weird Science*, *Honey*, *I Shrunk The Kids*, *The Playboy Club*, and about 40 more.

Tim Kazurinsky is a screenwriter/actor who went from Second City to Saturday Night Live to acting in a bunch of movies then writing a bunch of movies. He's the luckiest guy in show biz because he never had to leave Chicago (for very long.)

Sherra Lasley can currently be seen performing in *Bye Bye Liver; The Chicago Drinking Play* which is going on it's 5th year and recently did her last performance with two man sketch group, *Jablonski!*. She has been performing, writing, and producing sketch and improv for over 8 years at The Pub Theater, iO, and Second City.

Holly Laurent is a member of the improv comedy group "The Reckoning" and is currently on the main stage at Second City in the show "South Side of Heaven."

Nicky Margolis is a proud alum of the Second City Etc and Touring Company. She has been performing improv and sketch comedy in Chicago for over 13 years, but is currently taking a break to raise her adorable son (who also appears in this movie, in the form of a belly bump).

Susan Messing has been an improviser and comedian for over 24 years. She teaches comedy @ DePaul University, The Second City, the iO, The Annoyance, and all over the country. You can see Susan perform every Thursday night @ The Annoyance in her critically acclaimed show, *Messing with a Friend*, and every third Sunday @ Second City with the Playboys.

Danny Mora is a veteran comic performer in the Chicago area for over twelve years. He has worked with the Second City, the Annoyance theater and currently performs weekly

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at the iO theater. On the internet, he has a presence with sketch comedy group Maximum Party Zone.

Linda Orr has been performing on stage for the last 8 years at the iO Theatre, most notably with Carl and the Passions. She has written and directed throughout the city of Chicago, including 3 one person shows. She can be seen performing weekly throughout the city and in her spare time, she likes to hang out at her cottage in Door County, WI. *Close Quarters* is Linda's third independent feature.

Dave Pasquesi is a well-known Chicago improviser and actor. On film he has appeared in *Groundhog Day*, *Ice Harvest*, *The Fugitive*, *Year One* and will be seen in the next Woody Allen project. He appears weekly with T.J. Jagodowski in the show "TJ and Dave."

Erica Unger has appeared onstage at Northlight Theatre, The Vittum Theatre, Infamous Commonwealth Theatre, About Face Theatre Collective and Defiant Theatre Company. Film credits include the principal role in Jack C. Newell's short, *Requiem*.

Seth Unger has been seen onstage at The Goodman, Steppenwolf and Second City among others. He has worked with Jack C. Newell on several films, most recently appearing in the YouTube sensation, "Creative Types". Having said that, he retired from acting in 2008 and now works in the design field at Gensler.

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Interview with *Close Quarters* co-producer/director Jack C. Newell

INTERVIEWER: Where did the idea for *Close Quarters* come from?

JACK C. NEWELL (JCN): The title came from an improv form, *Close Quarters*, that is essentially what it sounds like; a disparate group of people in a defined space who have parallel, but not intersecting storylines, except where there is events that affect everyone in the group and change their storylines.

The funny thing is that I've just described the plot in loose terms to you, but that wasn't the name of the film until editing. We had another name for the film before, more of a placeholder than anything because from the moment we set out to make the film we knew that it would be made in the edit.

So, we intentionally did not get wrapped up in titles, because we needed to really see what we were going to have before titling it.

INTERVIEWER: The process for creating the story was quite unique. Can you talk about how it was developed both before and after shooting?

JCN: Like most stories about feature films, this one starts about two-and-a-half years ago when Joe (Rosengarten) and I were meeting at different coffee shops around the city. We knew we wanted to work together on something, and an idea came up to do a web series that took place in coffee shops.

We actually started bringing writers into the process, getting them to write short scenes that we would then film. After we had about ten scripts, each about ten pages long we looked at putting them into production.

I remember Joe saying he wanted to do it all as one production because of the economy of scale you get for one fourteen-day shoot as opposed to fourteen, one-day shoots. We were essentially shooting a feature film from a production standpoint. That idea, coupled with the dead-end that still is a web series lead us to think about shooting a feature that took place in a coffee shop.

Well, then I shot *Typing* with Ron (Falzone) in May and that took all of my attention. Joe came in as a late Executive Producer after seeing how Ron and I worked together. We then brought Ron in as a single writer for the film, because juggling the ten writers of the web series was creating problems.

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Joe and I knew there were some storylines we needed to have - the baristas for one were always going to be the center of the universe - and we knew we wanted people coming, going, and living their lives in this coffee shop.

INTERVIEWER: Why a coffee shop?

JCN: Coffee shops are like modern-day Roman bathhouses. People do incredibly private things in coffee shops, which is essentially a public place. People break up, they fall in love, they gather to celebrate or grieve, they do business, or just come in as a brief interlude in their day.

There's this blurry line between public and private that we are dealing with right now in our society as a whole and we felt the coffee shop was the ideal location to explore it.

INTERVIEWER: When did the idea of improvising enter the picture?

JCN: The idea to improvise most of it was there from the beginning, but we hadn't figured out how to frame it / present it in a way that worked. With Ron creating the scenarios for the different groups that came in and left, we had that framing device.

Then, it was just a matter of selecting which storylines we felt dramatized what I wanted to talk about. That idea of these two people who come into the coffee shop, what I want to explore with them is THIS (fill in the blank), we just had to then get the right improvisers and then I had to direct them that way on set.

That kind of leads into the question of the editing – essentially editing was just “cutting out the bad bits” as Walter Murch says. We just eliminated everything that wasn't doing what I needed each scene to do. Talking it out here makes it seem like it was a walk in the park, and that's certainly not the case.

INTERVIEWER: Most actors are very dependent on the script. Did you have any difficulties with getting them into the process?

JCN: Well, I cast based on avoiding that problem before it was one. I either knew personally, had worked with before, or was familiar with about 95% of the cast member's work before bringing them on board. Roles were somewhat custom-fitted for each individual actor, to either play to their strengths, or put them in a role we hadn't seen before.

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Tim Kazurinsky is an example of someone I wanted to see something different from. I knew he was capable of being just a very good actor be it dramatic or comedic. I had seen a film he wrote, *Strange Relations*, that dealt with some very ‘real’ and dramatic subject matter that was dealt with incredibly well.

But, you rarely get to see Tim in a role that isn’t straight comedic. So, in that case it was taking someone who is talented and multi-faceted and taking a gamble.

To answer the question more directly, the actor’s were excited and very energized by the process I was putting forward for the film. It’s not like there was a script and we changed the lines. For every person in the film (except Seth and Erica, the Baristas) I didn’t even tell them anything until the day of filming, and what I did tell them was incredibly limited.

I picked people who I knew would be game for that and they were brave enough to give complete trust over to me. What I intended by working like that was to get a style of performance that was fearless in that way true improvisation is. No one knew what was going to happen – and that’s very exciting.

INTERVIEWER: The use of improvisers, though, must carry different dangers. What if they went too far or not far enough? How did you direct them toward what you were looking for?

JCN: All actors, from your favorite actor ever, to a no-name actor in an Italian Neo-Realist film, you run into the danger of them either not going far enough or going too far. Improvisers are no different than that.

I think where you’re coming from in that question is that you don’t KNOW what the improviser is going to say. It’s like being in a cage with a lion, the lion is supposed to respond to the commands; sit, beg, roar, eat a huge chunk of meat. End of show. Bows and applause. What if the lion this one time decides to eat me?

Too far or not far enough is a conversation that needs a qualifier. For whom? I don’t know if I believe in too far or not far enough because I find the terms too open to interpretation to give a confident answer.

In my experience in this film specifically, it wasn’t about too far or not far enough, but instead WHERE they went.

We did have an entire improvisation that we filmed for one-and-a-half hours with incredibly talented folks. We had to cut that scene, reshoot it, and in some cases we had to recast because of where that group took us. Going back to the thing I said before about

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knowing what each group was doing in the larger narrative and then executing that – essentially, we did not execute what was needed for the film to work.

Luckily, we created a production schedule that was ... improvisational (Boo) and were able to reshoot that scene and it turned out very well. It was a learning experience.

So, I think always, it's just about going to the right place with performance. Sometimes getting someone to go too far is actually the right choice. I don't think you really know until the edit.

INTERVIEWER: How do you shoot a film like this? Doesn't the freedom given the actors make the editing process that much more difficult?

JCN: There's this thing David Mamet says in his book "On Directing" that is (and I'm paraphrasing, much to Mamet's horror, I'm sure. He's rolling in his grave...) that the decisions you make on set are the tip of an iceberg. The iceberg being all the prep you've done. So, why do you know that's where the camera should go in this scene? Because you've done the work and you just know. That's the simple version of what he said.

Like I said before, this film was in my brain and in the air between Joe and I for years before we made it. We almost shot it in August, 2010 and then pushed it back to November, 2010. So, I had almost gone there three months prior. I think being with a project for a longish gestation period helps you shoot a film like this.

I had also tried to get an improvised film, based on loose scenarios, off the ground in 2006. I had been in rehearsals with improvisers and was weeks away from shooting when we lost our funding and the whole project failed spectacularly. The process of that film was similar to what happened for *Close Quarters*. I kind of KNEW it would work, having planned one film before like it. Even though the film didn't happen, I was confident my plan was good.

In a specific way, to answer HOW, like – technically how? One of the things I didn't have in 2006, and one of the things that makes films like this possible is technology. For the improvisations we were able to shoot them with three Canon 5D cameras. These low-cost, high quality cameras really allowed us to capture the improvisation in the only way feasible.

If we had to shoot one side of the conversation, that was improvised and then shoot the other side, like a traditional one camera shoot, this film wouldn't exist. It would not be possible, and if we could have do it, it would have been so unwatchably dumb to be not worth it at all.

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The trick is not just hosing it down to make sure you got everything, but come up with a concept and a plan that allowed us to film the scenes cinematically, not shoot scenes like a reality TV show. Each frame is composed deliberately and the actors just had to play within those limitations.

I am really hard on actors and acting. If your film is beautifully shot, wonderfully scripted, miraculously financed, etc. but the acting is bad I don't care about your film. Until we make films that star non-personified inanimate objects, actors will be our principal metaphor to deliver story and theme. If I don't believe your actors, I don't believe your film and I don't care about your characters.

It's funny because we think that letting the actors make up their lines that they have freedom. It would be interesting to see what they would say about that. I think they all knew there was a fairly small zone I was looking for what they had to hit. I hope what they say is that they knew if they were doing what I liked.

One of the weirdnesses about the 5D is that you can't just run takes forever. You have about twelve to fifteen minutes before you have to stop rolling and then you can roll again. It's not that it runs out of space, but I heard it was because it's not technically a video camera, but a still camera that takes video, so it had this stop-gap measure in place.

For each improvisation we went for 90 minutes, and I decided we'd stop every ten minutes to play it safe. Every ten-ish minutes, I'd let ideas or thoughts play out, then call cut. We'd all get water (I was camera operating on 95% of the improvisations) and I would also give them some direction. One thing I never did was call cut in the middle of a take. It was always all ten minutes at a time. If I didn't get what I wanted, we'd go again.

So, to answer your first question again, how do you shoot a film like this? Patience.

INTERVIEWER: Did anything happen on the set that was particularly difficult or funny? Any happy accidents?

JCN: Shooting the bathroom scene was particularly difficult. It was Dave Pasquesi, Holly Laurent the improvisers, and Stephanie Dufford (the DP), and myself each on a camera. We had two tripods, two light stands, two cameras on long lenses and four people in a very small bathroom with the door closed.

It was hot, Stephanie and I were twisted in weird ways to monitor the shots during takes. The scene covered some pretty nasty territory. Without giving anything away, the improvisation involved a fight, and since I was going ten minutes at a time and there

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were certain things I was looking for in the fight, we spent about 40 minutes straight in a very tight space with two people trying to rip their heads off.

For that part, I also didn't allow them to leave the bathroom to get air because I really wanted to use the environment to inform their performance. I think it worked pretty well, but that was hard. I was in a terrible mood for the rest of the day and probably into the next. It just really affected me more than I expected it to. Hopefully, it will affect the audience as well.

INTERVIEWER: How do you see *Close Quarters* as an indigenously Chicago production?

JCN: The simple answer to that is this film could not be made anywhere else in the world. Period. End of story. Next question.

There are improvisers elsewhere, but not at the level here in Chicago. 'Improv' is like the 6th sports team here (Bears, Bulls, Cubs, Sox, Hawks). This city draws people who are serious about the craft, because they want to play with the best.

We had a crew of alumni from Columbia College Chicago and DePaul University, which worked incredibly well together. The film schools here really enable smaller productions to crew up with talented, eager, and serious people.

INTERVIEWER: This film is very different from your short, *Typing*. Can you talk a little about that difference and what each brought to you?

JCN: *Typing* was great. Up until filming *Typing*, I had done a lot of shorts on shoestring budgets, scrapping together crew, film, gear, actors, etc. to get it done. For a lot of my shorts, we literally only had one shoestring... that we had to fight over, like in Chaplin's *Gold Rush*, we were just there eating shoes like turkeys and shoestrings like spaghetti to feed the crew.

What that experience taught me was that limitations are good, creativity will get you out of problems for cheap AND will probably yield a better result too. So, the challenge with *Typing* was doing a film that actually had a budget, to make a film "the right way"; we created a company, we shot in an actual studio, collaborated with literally the best DP and Production Designer in town - Pete Biagi and Mary Margaret Bartley, respectively - and hired amazingly talented actors in Tim Kazurinsky, Francis Guinan, and Jason Chin.

I see *Typing* as a super-charged short. The biggest little short. It's not that it was THAT expensive, but it made me work at a level that I hadn't yet, at least as Producer / Director.

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Asking for money, having deliverables, executing action items, etc. it was like directing a real film.

Typing was in May, the film was done by Oct, and we shot *Close Quarters* in November. I believe that directing *Typing* really got me ready to direct a feature. I learned so many of the unquantifiables on that production, and the culmination of my other shorts, that I finally felt ready to take on a feature film.

So, without *Typing*, *Close Quarters* would not have happened.

Having now completed *Close Quarters*, I feel a great sense of happiness because I finally have directed a feature film, something I have been working towards for years. The biggest change is now I want to only direct more feature films.

INTERVIEWER: You're involved in a number of projects – shorts, a documentary, this feature, etc. as well as teaching. How do you manage to juggle it all?

JCN: With varying levels of success.

INTERVIEWER: What's next?

JCN: Gonna focus on getting this film out to festivals. I have a documentary on Haiti that is an ongoing, long term project. Ron and I are working on getting one of his feature scripts through the final stages of financing and into production hopefully next year or the following depending on our cast availability.

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Read or hear what others are saying about *Close Quarters*:

WBEZ Radio:

<http://www.wbez.org/blogs/onstagebackstage/2012-05/don%E2%80%99t-miss-list-may-31-june-5-chicago-film-one-night-stand-99627>

Nick Digilio on WGN Radio:

<http://www.wgnradio.com/shows/nickd/wgnam-nickdshow-120505d,0,4233511.mp3file>

Hollywoodchicago.com:

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/18431/interview-jack-c-newell-ron-falzone-chat-up-chicago-indie-close-quarters>

Time Out/Chicago:

<http://timeoutchicago.com/arts-culture/comedy/15324446/close-quarters-movie-debuts>

The Chicago Reader:

<http://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/close-quarters/Film?oid=4879329>

The Gene Siskel Film Center:

<http://www.siskelfilmcenter.org/closequarters>

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