

# ISHUES

A FEATURE DOCUMENTARY

A 20 year old kid from Kansas City gets on a bus bound for  
Los Angeles.

**It doesn't go well.**

Homeless for seven years in Hollywood,  
he answers a Craigslist ad.

*This is where our story starts.*

## S Y N O P S I S

### The Film

Bluesy, raw singer Ish, fresh out of Kansas City foster care, jumps off the Greyhound bus in Hollywood ready to become a star. With only a backpack and a few bucks, he lives on the streets.

While Ish believes in his own exceptional vocal talent, the skill to manage daily life eludes him. Ish's Cinderella story starts when he answers a Craig's List ad for a singer, and musician PM Romero immediately wants to collaborate with this extraordinary performer.

Romero takes him under his wing to create music together. Once he discovers that Ish is homeless, Romero's role evolves from bandmate to mentor, teacher, and father figure.

As the newly formed band William Pilgrim, the pair go on to write and record over 40 songs, but the group struggles under Ish's inability to cope. He remains unable to shake the effects of his horrifying childhood, including abuse in several foster homes.

This documentary covers six years of the journey of William Pilgrim and explores if the concern and action of a new friend can provide the path to a better life for Ish.

***"Give people the power to do the healing. That's when we get to change the world."***

***-DMC***

# THE ISHUES PROJECT



## The Webisodes

A series of short webisodes, The ISHUES Project, sprung from the film's collaborators PM Romero, Scott Montgomery and Kevin Neynaber, as a means to promote those who wish to improve our world with their activism and heart. The ISHUES Project profiles both individuals and organizations that strive to make positive change in our neighborhoods.

# ISHUES

T H E S O U N D T R A C K



## The Soundtrack

Includes 15 tracks by **William Pilgrim** as well as special performances with Punk Rock legend **Exene Cervenka** Grammy winning **Blind Boys of Alabama** and '60s R&B star **Brenton Wood**

***“William Pilgrim is about two people from totally different walks of life who came together to create music under totally false pretenses.” -PM Romero***

# **Q&A With PM Romero, Musician/Co-Director**

**Q: Ish is an extraordinary singer you found through a Craig's List ad. How did you discover he was homeless?**

**A:** I caught on over time. There was various mounting evidence. He was evasive about where he lived, it was hard to contact him by phone, he did not drive.

**Q: When did he open up about his rough childhood?**

**A:** Well, his behaviors represented something much bigger than homelessness. Basic stuff many of us take for granted was challenging to Ish. Social interaction, how to order off a menu in a restaurant, and he acted younger than a man in his mid-twenties.

Naive and innocent. The more time we spent together, writing, recording, eating, he obviously began to trust me and was willing to reveal both his past and current situation.

**Q: How were his skills musically?**

**A:** I was taken aback when I first heard him sing. Unbelievable. A natural. But I was surprised that he lacked certain know-how you'd expect from a performer, from someone who called himself a session singer. Music fundamentals, even something considered easy, like understanding a four count in. But he was a quick learner.

**Q: What motivated you to make this film?**

**A:** It's kind of like most creative ideas. You start with a kernel, and as you go, it starts to take shape. I initially wanted to capture the process of taking this clearly talented, unknown singer and helping him find success. I thought, I can't wait for the world to meet him. And it wasn't just that he had skills, it was the emotion, realness, authenticity that comes through when he sings. Especially on the songs we co-wrote that have real social substance.

But as we worked together more, and we learned of his interesting backstory, the film evolved into a story of Ish becoming a success story for himself. Not just a 'Star is Born' narrative, but could he, with some help, pull away from life on the Hollywood streets?

**Q: How did this experience with Ish change you?**

**A:** Many ways. One, acknowledging what my expectations were for him, and eventually accepting Ish's world.

**Q: What is your hope for this film?**

**A:** That viewers receive a clearer understanding of the struggles facing others, and maybe they'll be motivated to increase their involvement. Maybe a large gesture or something simple and doable, like voting in all elections, big and small.

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## Co-Directors

Leasing spaces in a renovated 100-year old ice house in Southern California brought them together physically, but it was their shared passion for social issues that brought about the meeting of their minds.



The creative energy of the space filled with artists prompted guitarist/songwriter PM Romero and advertising photographer Scott Montgomery to collaborate on pieces to affect positive change. Romero wrote songs about current social ills, and Ish's gritty voice worked as the vehicle to send the message. With his camera, Montgomery began to document this process of converting activism into music. Later, filmmaker Kevin Neynaber, who has created documentaries on human rights around the world, joined them on directing the trio's documentary ISHUES.



(from top: PM Romero, Scott Montgomery, Kevin Neynaber)

Take action. Get involved. Connect with people.

***Make a difference.***

### Directed by

PM Romero,  
Scott Montgomery  
and Kevin Neynaber



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