



A Short Film

By Matt Balcerek



A teenage swimmer obsessed with perfection is torn between two women who see him as a reflection of their own desires — until the pressure to control every breath finally breaks him.



Negative Split is a psychological sports drama about Josh Wilson, a 17-year-old swimming prodigy chasing a state record that has come to define him.

The pool is his sanctuary — and his prison. Every stroke is control. Every breath, a risk.

When his longtime coach leaves, Coach Ally arrives — sharp, composed, a woman who measures power in precision. She sees in Josh not a boy, but a machine she can tune to perfection.

At the same time, Olivia, Josh's girlfriend, films and posts every moment of their life together — capturing him not as he is, but as he appears. One woman wants to refine him. The other wants to display him. Both demand his performance.

What begins as ambition slowly corrodes into obsession. As Josh's sense of self dissolves under water and under gaze, the race becomes less about winning and more about survival — the moment he stops holding his breath and finally exhales.

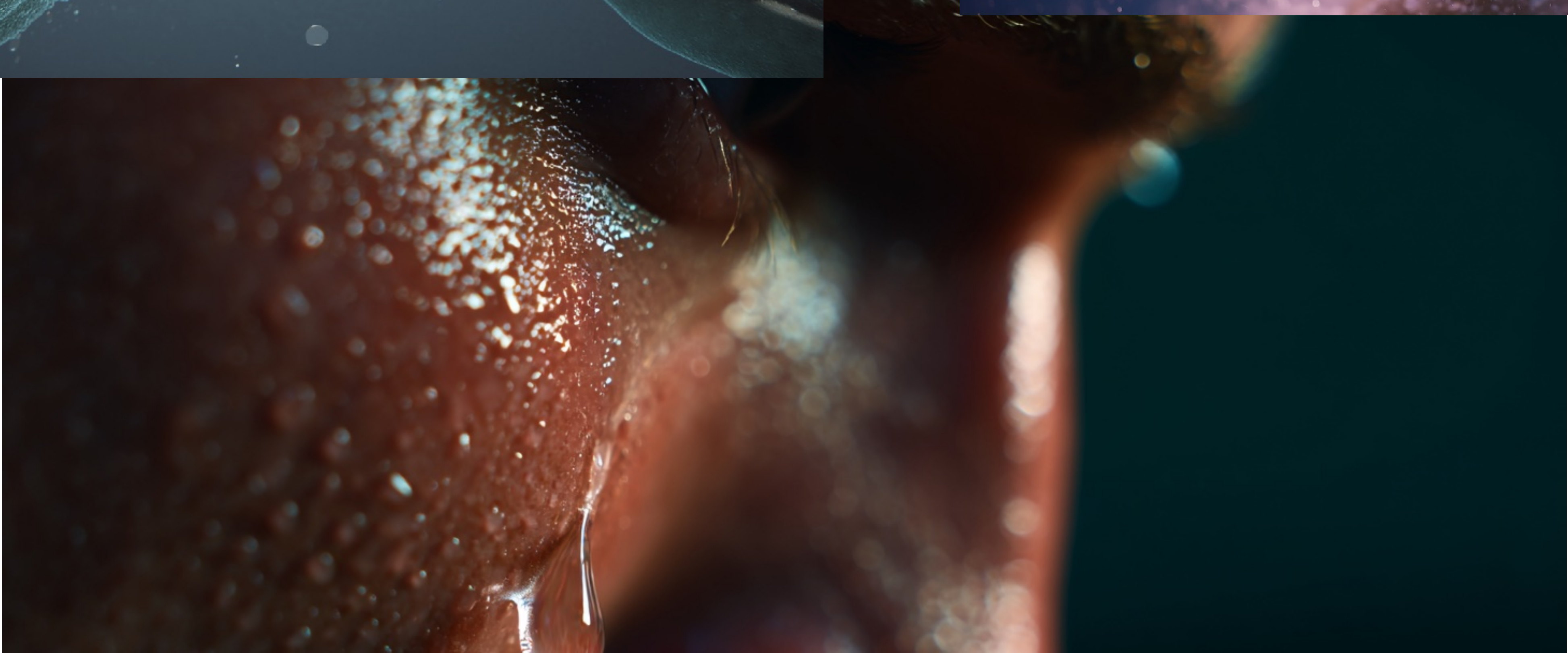
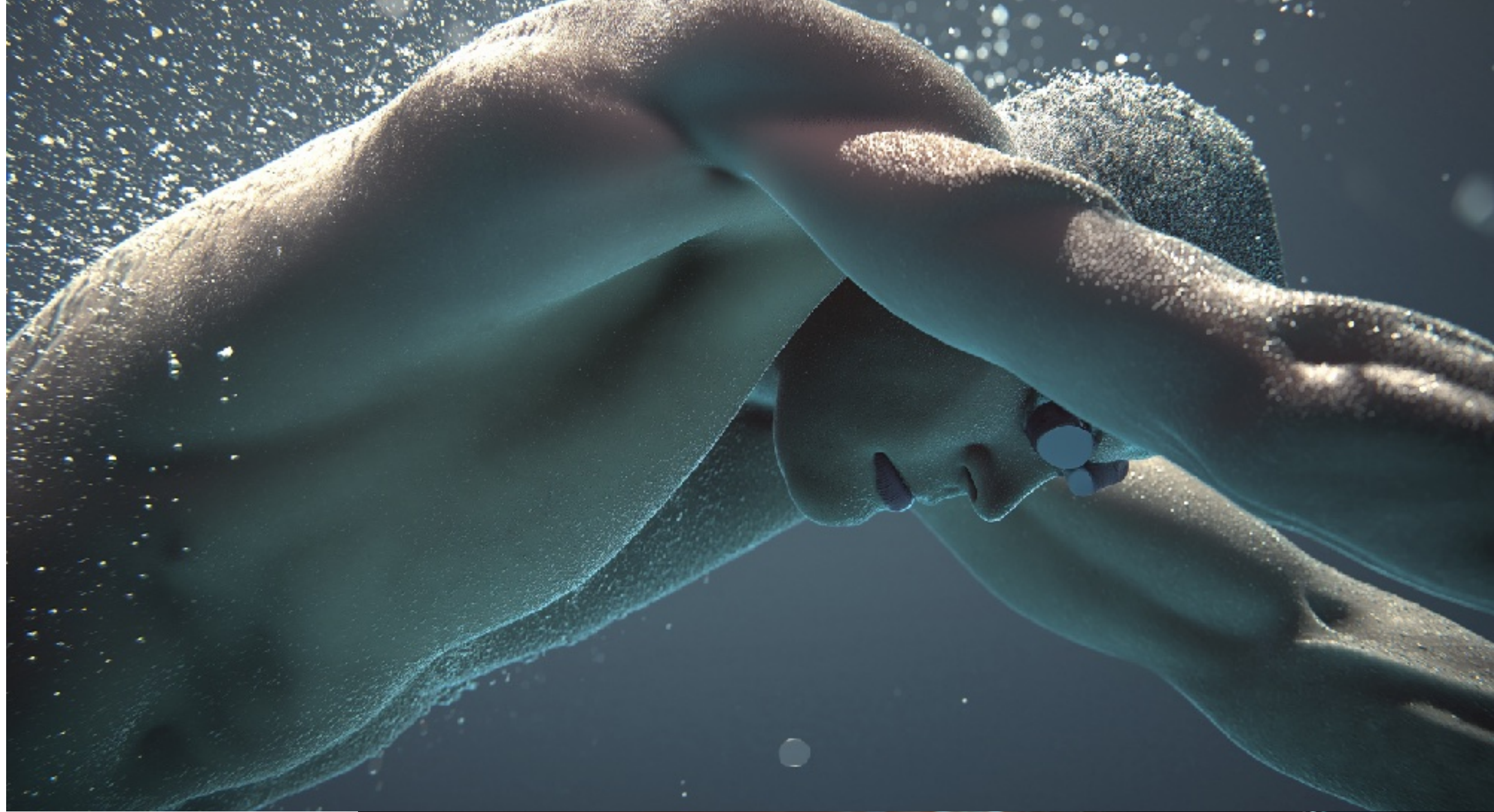


JOSH

Seventeen. Discipline etched into his body.
A swimmer trained to erase feeling in pursuit of precision.
He wins, but never breathes. His story isn't about
competition — it's about learning to be human again.

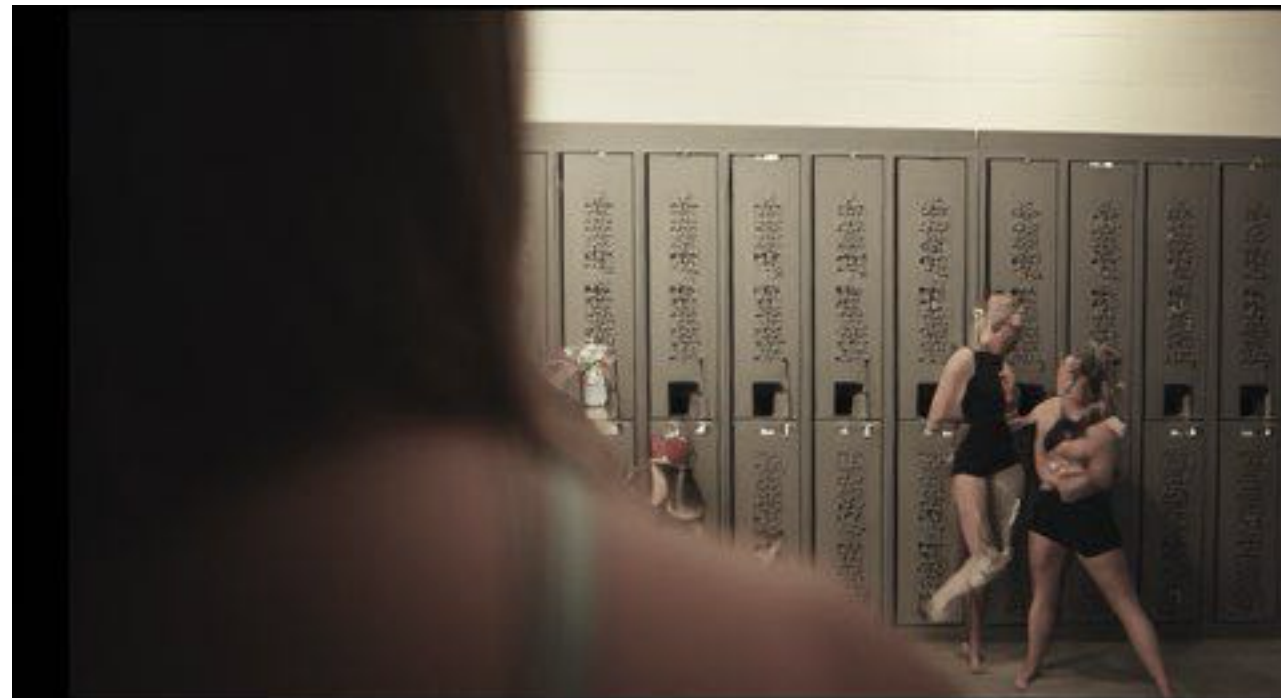






OLIVIA

She glows in public light.
Lives through her phone.
Josh gives her something
to film, to frame, to prove.
She loves how he looks,
not who he is.
Her world is warm,
performative, fleeting.





COACH ALLY

Composed, calculating, quietly predatory.

She doesn't coach — she dissects.

Her authority is seductive; her approval, addictive.

For Josh, she becomes both the path to victory
and the voice of suffocation.





What happens when achievement replaces identity?
When perfection becomes punishment?
When the only way to win... is to finally stop racing?

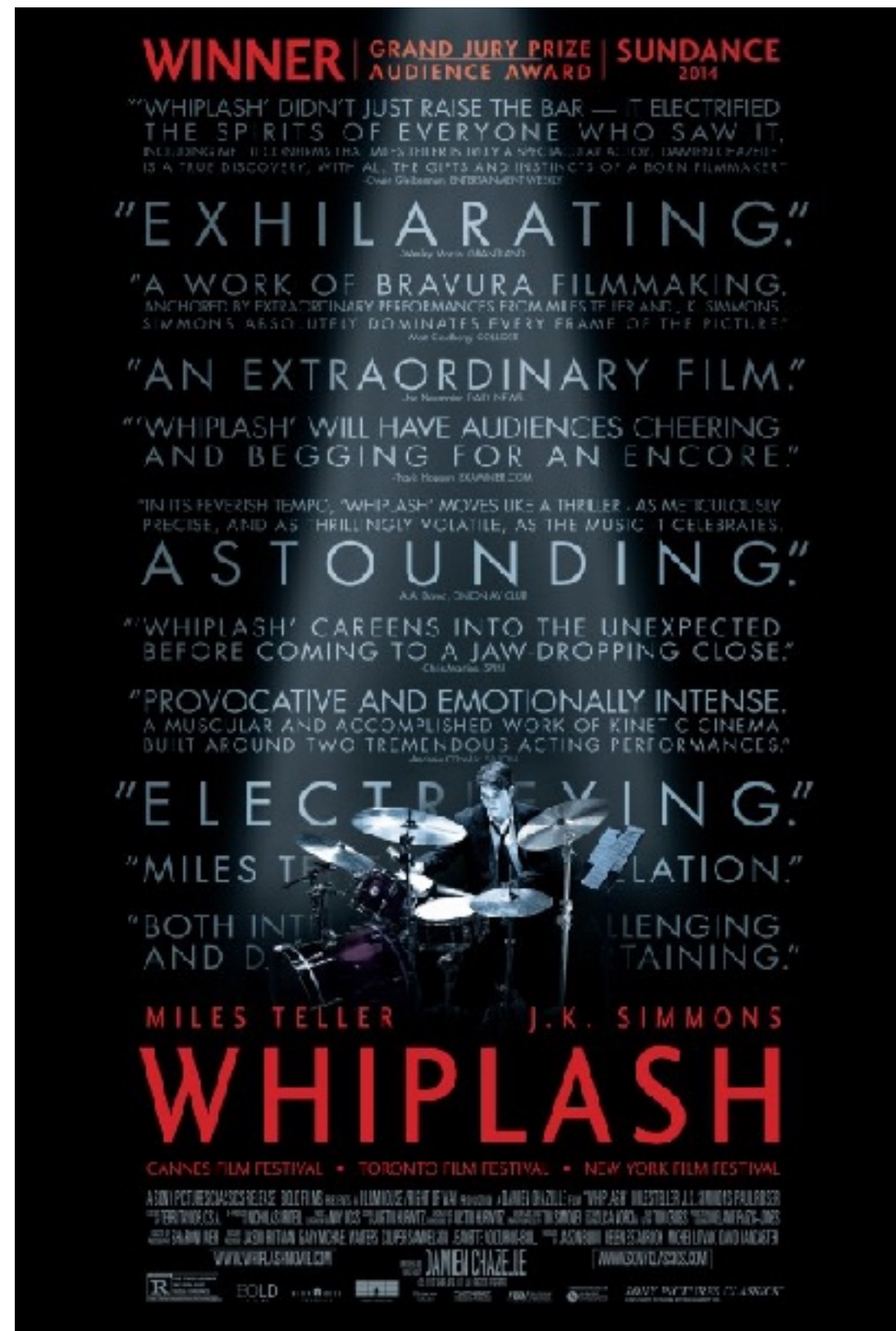


At its core, **Negative Split** is about a boy suffocating under the **expectations of others** — until he chooses to breathe for himself.

It's a coming-of-age story disguised as a sports film, a study of control and the loss of innocence told through the physical language of swimming.



Control vs. Release — the line between discipline and self-destruction.
Performance & Gaze — how masculinity is shaped by being watched.
Desire & Power — love as ownership; mentorship as manipulation.
Breath as Freedom — repression embodied through the act of not breathing.



Negative Split merges the obsessive precision of **Whiplash** and **The Novice** with the erotic control of **TÁR** and the psychological rupture of **Black Swan** — a film about power, desire, and the suffocating beauty of perfection. Its world is all water, reflection, and breath — a story that looks like victory but feels like drowning.



I breathe when I want.

NEGATIVE SPLIT

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