

Behind the ' Dear Brother ' ad

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Dear Brother: Behind the Brilliant Johnnie Walker Ad Made by Students

After landing as the top link on Reddit's front page, the heartbreaking new **Johnnie Walker branded** short film has rocketed to over 1.7 million views on **YouTube**. "[Didn't know you could cry over a liquor ad](#)" remains the top comment on Reddit about the **Johnnie Walker** short film, "Dear Brother."



It's a huge win for the **Johnnie Walker brand**, except that it was not made by the **Johnnie Walker brand**. In fact, it's a spec commercial for the Diageo-owned Scotch whisky that was created by a pair of young German students and aspiring commercial directors: [Dorian Lebherz](#) and [Daniel Titz](#), who have created spec commercials and **branded** entertainment (long-form ads, or short films) for other **brands** under their Dorian & Daniel banner.

The directing duo's [YouTube](#) and [Vimeo](#) channels feature spec films for [Sony](#), [Mustang jeans](#), [Black & Decker](#) and [Nivea](#) that prove that the emotionally connective storytelling—visual and

written, not to mention those performances—skills evident in the **Johnnie Walker** film are not a fluke.

Indeed, the duo are producing work as good as anything being produced by any agency, studio or **branded** content firm we've seen.

<https://youtu.be/h2caT4q4Nbs>

We emailed the young duo, currently at the [Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg](#) in Ludwigsburg, a few questions about “Dear Brother,” which has already inspired a body language expert to [break down](#) the excellent performances, too. (And did we mention that it was only posted on [YouTube](#) on Dec. 13th?)

Here's what they told us (and no, **Johnnie Walker** has not yet bought the film outright from them to run as a bona fide ad campaign, which they'd be crazy not to do).

brandchannel: Where did the idea for “Dear Brother” come from?

D&D: We wanted to tell a story that captures the audience emotionally in a very short period of time. We came about the idea to tell the journey of two brothers who return to the places of their youth for one last time. We love to connect emotional storytelling with cinematic imagery. The **brand Johnnie Walker** which originates in the breathtaking beauty of the Scottish countryside naturally found its place in the story without appearing insincere.

We really liked the (**Johnny Walker brand** tagline), “[Keep Walking](#).” It stands for the effort and struggles one must overcome to reach one's goal. It is also very motivating: Don't give up, try again and find your path. Which is exactly what we are aiming for with the ending of our spot, despite all the melancholy there is always some optimistic outlook.

Just very recently **Johnnie Walker** changed its claim to “[Joy will take you further](#)” and released a new [campaign](#) that's more suitable to the masses and focuses on prominent testimonies. We believe a cinematic story that creates emotions is always stronger than a rich assembly of different settings without storytelling.



bc: Did you have help?

D&D: Since this spot focuses much more on character than on plot the casting process was very important to us. We had amazing support from the London-based agency [Ashton Hinkinson](#). We went through a lot of candidates but once we came across (actors) [Mathew Lewis Carter](#) and [Robin Guiver](#) we knew we found the brothers.

They portrayed that sensible authenticity we were looking for and when they met for the first time it really seemed as if they'd known each other their whole life. They had an inner connection that stood out to all of us.

bc: Has Johnnie Walker contacted you about the film?

D&D: We did not get in touch with **Johnnie Walker** yet. But we're guessing that they have discovered it by now.



Actor [Mathew Lewis-Carter](#) (above right) also shared with us his experience working with Dorian and Daniel as the “Dear Brother” who the short film’s narrator is addressing:

Their level of professionalism for what they wanted to achieve was evident from the outset. They showed us a storyboard on our arrival and we got to work straight away. Although they had a clear idea of what they wanted, they gave me and Robin the freedom to try out different approaches whilst filming. I think everyone has been overwhelmed by the response to the ad. In the space of 90 seconds they have managed to create such a powerful piece that will resonate with everyone. On an emotional level, they have managed to tug on everyone’s heart strings. To achieve what they have done on the budget they had speaks wonders of Daniel and Dorian’s talents as film makers. To create such an emotional connection in such a short time frame speaks wonders of their abilities. I think they have achieved something quite special with this piece.

Of course, despite the duo’s name, others were involved in their productions. In “Dear Brother,” credit also goes to the producers (Madlen Folk and Johann Valentinitich), director of photography (Jan David Günther), editor (Raquel Caro Nunez), composer (Renée Andre Abe), sound **designer** (Marvin H. Keil) and voiceover artist/[poet](#) Johnny “B.A.N.G.” Reilly.

Visual effects were handled by Titz and Lebherz, who contributed to what they acknowledge was Reilly’s poem (in their words, “It was written by voice actor John ‘Bang’ Reilly in collaboration with us” — Bang [says](#) it was all his). The script:

Walking the roads of our youth through the land of our childhood, our home and our truth / Be near me, guide me always, stay beside me so I can be free, free / Let’s roam this place familiar and vast our playground of green frames, our past / We were wanderers never lost, always home / When every place was fenceless and time was endless our ways were always the same / Cool my demons and walk with me brother

until our roads lead us away from each other / And if your heart's full of sorrow, keep walking / Don't rest / And promise me from heart to chest to never let your memories die / Never / I will always be alive and by your side in your mind / I'm free.

Also, the duo are technically not amateurs, as they have a professional credit. Last year they created a unique and official spot ("Lichtblicke; Glimmers of Light," below) for APM, Germany's anti-counterfeiting organization. To paraphrase the **Johnnie Walker** tagline that inspired "Dear Brother," we hope they keep directing—and elevating the art of **brand** storytelling.

<https://youtu.be/q5rYHUcdxHc>

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