

The Pacific Northwest filmmaker and actor Kyle Marvin won't marry you at the Aug. 29 SIFF Cinema Uptown screening of his chaotic new romantic comedy film "Splitsville" [à la Lucy Dacus](#). He will, however, offer you a unique alternative: the opportunity to use him as a stand-in to practice a breakup. Not only that, but his co-star and director, Michael Angelo Covino, will also be on hand to assist.

"You can basically break up with me and Mike will help give you direction," Marvin says with a sly smile. "You don't even have to go through with it. If you just want to give it a shot, we're here for you. ... I'm just going to get really depressed by the end of this exercise."

Marvin is no stranger to play-acting being broken up with. "Splitsville" comes right out of the gate with the dorky Carey (Marvin) being dumped by his wife, Ashley (Adria Arjona), after they go from getting frisky while driving to visit their friends Julie (Dakota Johnson) and Paul (Covino) to witnessing a fatal car accident. It only escalates from there, with the film becoming a mirthful romp about the state of modern relationships, infidelity and connection.

The Portland-born and -raised Marvin, whose father was a mountaineer and mother was an outdoor educational teacher, didn't always see a pathway into making movies like this when he was growing up.

"I was born and raised amongst the soggy trees. I loved film, I loved cinema and I loved performing, but it didn't feel like a viable pathway for me when I was younger coming from that environment," Marvin says, recalling how he left to go to New York to work in production. "I sort of had a backdoor into the film industry, it certainly wasn't there right in front of me. But I do think there's a great film scene in Portland, I think there's a thriving Pacific Northwest film scene."

It was in New York where he met Covino, who he's now worked on various projects with, including the similarly chaotic 2019 comedy "[The Climb](#)" that marked them as a duo worth watching. They both up the ante in "Splitsville," including in an extended brawl that'd make John Wick blush after Paul gets angry that Carey slept with Julie, despite the couple supposedly being open. Rehearsals on it took weeks and they shot it over three days with a couple of pick-up days, but Marvin says that the most important thing was just making sure they limbered up for the action.

"Everyone should stretch every day," Marvin says. "We knew what we were doing, we knew what we were going to put our bodies through, and so nothing was surprising. But we certainly got beat up. The way we approached the fight scene was to try to make it feel as real as possible, and sometimes that meant taking away the things that make it safe or — not safe, but that make it not physically damaging. We took hits, Mike fell down a flight of stairs, there's physical things happening in this movie."

It's all part of what Marvin says is a bit of an "unromantic comedy" in which the duo sets out to challenge what we typically expect from the genre and allow them to go their own unique way.

“For us, this movie feels a lot more true to life, which is that things are messy, you make mistakes, you try and repair them; sometimes that works, sometimes it’s too late,” Marvin says. “That sloppiness feels, to us, more romantic because it is more like our experience of life.”

As for what Marvin, who still lives in the Pacific Northwest — which he calls “part of his DNA” — with his family, is doing next, he’s already got his next project lined up: He’s doing a period rock climbing movie based on the real-life story of the late Warren “Batso” Harding that they’re shooting up north in Squamish, B.C.

“We joked about calling it ‘Still Climbing,’ but I don’t think that’s a good title.”

“Splitsville”

The film opens Aug. 29 at SIFF Cinema Uptown. Writer/director/star Michael Angelo Covino and writer/star Kyle Marvin will be in attendance for an intro and Q&A at the 7 p.m. Aug. 29 screening.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VrdSQSLD63Q>