



Manhabe

Introduction

"Wannabe is a laugh-out-loud hilarious, insightful, and poignant coming-of-age paean to a time of tremendous socio-political strife, and its subject matter is more relevant now than ever."

- Graham Moore, Oscar winning screenwriter, *The Imitation Game*

NYC, 1991: Daniel, a neurotic twelve-year-old Jewish boy from Manhattan, dreams of becoming a man. Unfortunately, there are major stumbling blocks in his way - he's woefully unprepared for his upcoming Bar Mitzvah, his parents' marriage is disintegrating, and he's bullied by his former best friend, an Israeli hip-hop poseur.

At summer school, he becomes quick friends with Emefa, a brash fifteen-year-old Jamaican girl from Brooklyn. Like Daniel, she's having a tough time - struggling to accept her recently outed father's new relationship, and acting out by setting fires in his apartment. Eventually, Daniel falls in love with Emefa, but what he doesn't know is that she is being pursued by the handsome Teven - a *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* lookalike.

One night, after catching Teven and Emefa together, an argument leads the three of them into the midst of the Crown Heights Riots, a brutal protest between the African-American and Jewish communities. As fires rage around them, Daniel finds himself barely saved by the compassionate embrace of Emefa's father.

As the riots rage, Daniel and Emefa must find a way to stick together, as everything - their families, their community, and their friendship - falls apart around them.

Director's Statement

Back in the day...in the early 90s, I was having a pretty rough time: I was diagnosed with a learning disability, taken out of my cushy private school, skipped ahead a grade, and placed in a school for kids with learning issues. Needless to say, being a nerdy Jewish boy a year or two younger than everyone else in my class made me an around-the-clock target for bullies. This is where my film *Wannabe* begins.

At my new school, I was surprised to meet one Caribbean girl, who - despite my utter dorkiness - deigned to hang out with me. (The character Emefa is based on her). She and I would get pizza together and as I got to know her better, I learned that she had severe dyslexia and struggled with her weight. Despite that, she was self-confident and never bullied. It was amazing to me: She was who she was, and made no bones about it.

At the time, New York City was reeling in the aftermath of the Crown Heights Riots. Racial tensions were high as the Jewish and Black communities were at odds. I recall being spit on and called "kike." It was a scary time that seemed to bring out the worst in all of us.

She and I continued to hang out, never allowing what was going on in the outside world affect our little bubble. The friendship withstood the tension because we accepted each other for who we were: two kids who liked grabbing pizza together after school. Friends.

When I look back, I realize she taught me an important lesson. Once you get past the exterior - the shape of your body, the color of your skin - and look inward, you can find something truly special. Something lasting. Something that stays with you for decades.

It's hard to believe it's been almost a quarter of a century since our friendship, and harder still to believe that the intolerance that surrounded us is as virulent now - if not more so - as it was then. What the world needs now are more Emefas.

Characters



DANIEL

Daniel Schmerin is at that uncomfortable age between childhood and adolescence; the age in which everything you do is somehow more awkward and wrong than any other time in your life. He's a kid with a good heart, but the odds are stacked against him. He's recently been diagnosed with a learning disability - which wreaks havoc on his self-esteem. Additionally, his parents' marriage is crumbling - which is equivalent to his world ending. As a result of this, he's a nervous kid with enough anxiety to fill ten Woody Allens. He may as well have a target painted on his back so that bullies know where to aim. As the film closes, Daniel realizes how important it is to find your inner confidence.



EMEFA

Emefa is struggling; working hard to find solace in a world where things seem stacked against her. She wants happiness but is conflicted: she loves her dad, but hates him for chasing her mother away. She cares about Daniel, but rejects him when he tries to get closer. She wants Teven, but knows deep inside he doesn't want her. All of this makes her a lonely and depressed girl who masks her feelings with a forced self-confidence. By the end of *Wannabe*, she realizes that the conflict she's been struggling with is self-made. At that point, she understands that she must learn to accept those who accept her.

Characters



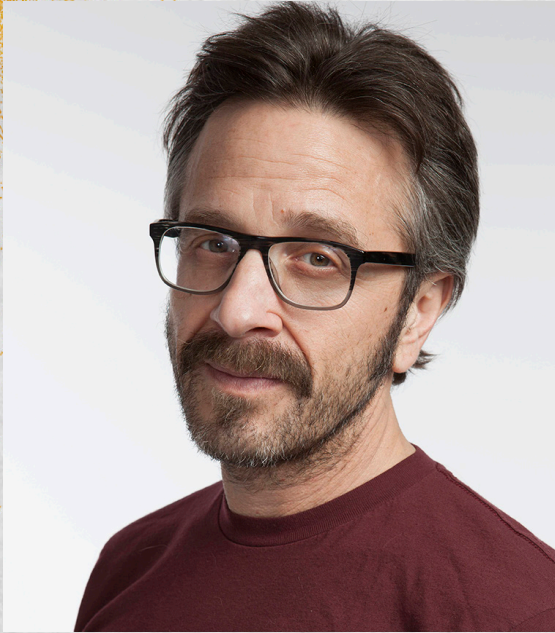
BELLE - Daniel's Mother

Belle is a healer; a woman who has dedicated her life to making sure that people get the help they deserve. Professionally, she's a psychologist who works on a sliding scale in order to assist kids who can't afford therapy. Personally, she considers herself the ultimate mom, someone who sees a problem that her boys are facing and will stop at nothing to fix it. She's someone who cares, not because of any hyperbolically altruistic reason, but because she genuinely feels that it's the right thing to do.

When her marriage starts to fall apart and her kids begin drifting away from her, she's at a loss. Where does a caretaker turn to receive care? Belle's story in *Wannabe* is one of realization. She starts the film angry, bitter at the life she is forced to leave behind. By the end, she's come to terms with her fate, while cautiously looking forward to a middle-age rebirth. There's a new life ahead for the caretaker who has finally experienced what it means to need help.

Kyra Sedgwick is currently attached to the film as "Belle."

Characters



MORRIS - Daniel's Father

Morris Schmerin is earnest to a fault. He lives his life by the quixotic belief that if you put enough effort into something, it will work out. Personally, he's frustrated because he's put everything he can into his marriage with Belle, but that hasn't stopped it from crumbling. Professionally, he fashions himself an entrepreneur, but his naïveté and blind optimism have led to a myriad of failed businesses. Because of this, he has a permanent air of melancholy about him.

Morris's major conflict is between being satisfied with the life he has and striving for the life he wants, no matter what the cost. His one-night stand with Belle and his starry-eyed attempt at running a modem company are final, desperate attempts at creating the success that's eluded him for years. However, in the end, he realizes that success will never happen. This is a triumphant moment for Morris - for the first time in his life, he's able to let go and find happiness in failure.

Characters



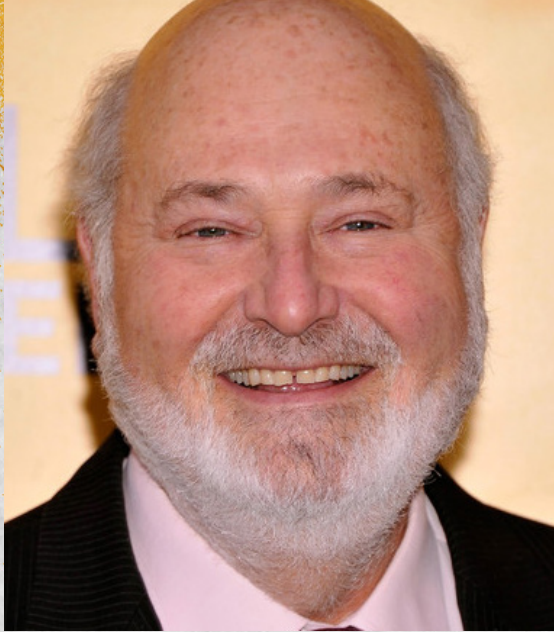
LUTHER - Emefa's Father

Luther is the one character that gets it. He is a man who has spent years struggling to forge an identity of his own, and now that he's accomplished that, no one can take it away from him. Luther wasn't always this strong. From his poverty stricken childhood in Jamaica to his tumultuous marriage to Emefa's mother, he always had the feeling that he was an outsider.

He was unhappy and isolated, and didn't know what to do for himself. It wasn't until late in life that he began to understand where those feelings originated. It was a slow revelation, but he knew that he had to come to terms with his sexuality.

Unfortunately, Luther's self-actualization has come with a price; Emefa blames him for the disappearance of her mother. It's a wound the two share that takes the entire film to heal. In *Wannabe*, Luther is an honest man fighting against everything - society, his daughter, even his boyfriend - to live his own life, no matter what. He knows who he is, and is happy because of it.

C h a r a c t e r s



CANTOR MERTZKY

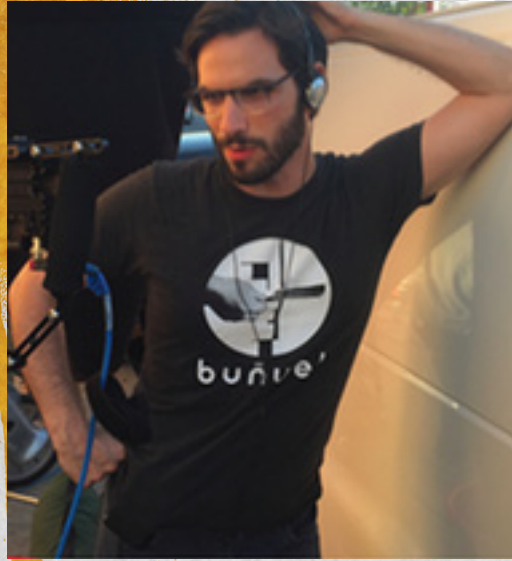
A loud and boisterous Jewish Cantor who, like any emphatic New Yorker, talks with his hands (and sometimes with his mouth full). Wise and occasionally arrogant, his resoluteness can make him seem uncaring, but he masks that with a Borscht Belt sense of humor. Considering his self-made "learn your Torah portion" cassette tapes to be the best thing since Pastrami on Rye, he's a man who finds joy in his job, his life, and the world around him.

Rob Reiner has shown serious interest in playing the part of "Cantor Mertzky"

FILMMAKERS

MATT MANSON - Writer/Director

Born and raised in Manhattan, Matt began his career as a photographer. By the time he was a teenager, his work was showcased and sold at galleries in New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey – as well as featured in such magazines as *The Village Voice*. After writing and directing an award-winning play in high school, Matthew enrolled in NYU with a major in Film & TV. His thesis film, *Spandex: A Father's Tale* played at film festivals worldwide and won several awards, including the Audience Award For Best Short at the Tribeca Film Festival.



After moving to Los Angeles, Matthew worked at a production company founded by the creator of MySpace. While there, he wrote and directed content viewed by over 10 million people. He ran a creative team, and developed and/or wrote shows for such performers as William Shatner, Cedric the Entertainer, Casey Wilson, and Joe Rogan. He created, wrote, and directed 200 episodes of a webseries that was consistently in the top ten most downloaded iTunes video podcasts, as well as the top downloaded torrent on Bittorrent.

Since then, Matthew has conceived, directed and/or written commercials for Butterfinger, IHOP, Remington, Dell, Intel, and Zappos. His work has won various awards, placed at the top of Ad Age's Viral Charts (the box office of advertising), and have screened at Cannes.

Matthew's recent feature film script, *Wannabe*, chronicles his experience growing up in New York during the Crown Heights Riots. It won the Richard Vague/Chris Columbus grant, which awarded a cash prize towards production, was a finalist for the Sundance Writers Lab, and was a semi-finalist for the Nicholl Fellowship in Screenwriting.

Filmmakers



TOBY LOUIE - Producer

Toby is a Los Angeles based filmmaker, who recently produced *Night Owls*, a feature film that had its premiere at SXSW in 2015 and sold to MGM/Orion. He has also directed and written a number of short film projects including a music video for Alekesam's *All is Forgiven*, a short film called *Premium Harmony*, based on a Stephen King story, which won Best US Short at the Laughlin International Film Festival, and *A Border Story*, which premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival in 2010.

Toby's experience extends to the commercial world as well, where he has most notably post-produced for David Fincher on a number of projects including a Calvin Klein ad, Justin Timberlake's *Suit and Tie* music video, the most recent iWatch commercials for Apple, and promos for the hit Netflix series *House of Cards*. Most recently he produced the *Wannabe* short film playing Tribeca this year.



JOHN RAMOS - Producer

John has three narrative and two documentary feature films to his credit. His most recent narrative was the dramedy *The Trouble With Bliss*, which starred Michael C. Hall, Brie Larson, Lucy Liu, Peter Fonda, and Chris Messina. Following that, he produced the documentary *Terms and Conditions May Apply*. The film premiered at Slamdance, played theatrically in over 40 cities, and was a New York Times Critic's Pick. His last documentary is *What Lies Upstream*, a film that serves both expose and case study on the state of water rights in the US, with which he participated in the Film Independent Documentary Lab. Recently, he went through the Film Independent Producer's Lab with the *Wannabe* feature.

The Short Film

With buzz surrounding the award-winning feature script for *Wannabe*, interest from actors, production companies, and top agencies, we set out to create a proof-of-concept short to showcase how we would recreate 1990s New York City.

We were overwhelmed with how well the finished film came out. A mix of camera techniques, production design, and deft costume choices lend an authentic throwback flare, reminiscent of the 90s New York films which inspired us so greatly. As for performances, we were incredibly lucky to have some of Hollywood's top young talent on board, including David Bloom (*Wet Hot American Summer: First Day of Camp*) and Donis Leonard Jr. (*House of Lies*), as well as up-and-coming native New Yorker Chaize Macklin. Their performances were grounded, realistic, and they handled the dialogue with ease. With a little help from Malcolm-Jamal Warner - a veteran star known to millions - the cast catapulted the short into a **Tribeca Film Festival** premiere and what Indiewire called "a coming-of-age story that will make you swoon."



The Marketplace

The independent film marketplace has changed rapidly over the past 10-15 years. New technologies have made it easier and faster to make a movie. Filmmakers no longer need a major studio to greenlight their vision. Now they can craft their own stories, assemble their own crews, rent their own equipment, and produce their own movies more cheaply and efficiently than ever before.

Film festivals have been a gateway into Hollywood for many young directors, writers, producers, and actors. They are a great way to find an audience for a movie in order to attract distribution.

Distribution is coming in all forms as well. Of course theatrical release is always a goal, but with a number of new outlets popping up in unexpected ways, it is now more accessible to get distribution and make money doing it. Video On Demand providers, Netflix, Hulu, Amazon, and iTunes are all looking for the next great movie to add to their growing list of titles.

Below are examples of movies that have a similar budget and business model as *Wannabe* and have seen great success in both the domestic and international marketplace.



THE SPECTACULAR NOW

Budget: \$2.5 Million

Gross: \$6.9 million (Box Office Only)

Cast: Miles Teller, Shailene Woodley

Distribution: A24

Film Festivals Premiere: Sundance

The Spectacular Now is a great example of an independent film that had a great deal of success. The film was released in 2013 after it played at a number of film festivals. The film was eventually picked up by A24 and grossed \$6.9 million at the box office alone. Like *Wannabe*, this film is similar in scope and focuses on a young unexpected romance.

The Marketplace



OBVIOUS CHILD

Budget: \$1 Million

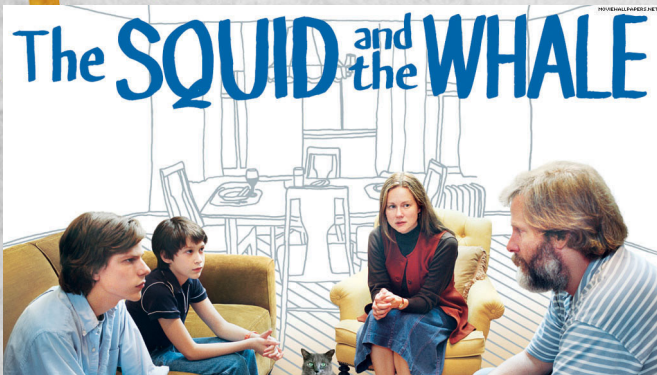
Gross: \$3.2 million (Box Office Only)

Cast: Jenny Slate, Jake Lacy

Distribution: A24

Film Festivals Premiere: Sundance

Obvious Child captured a unique part of the marketplace after its release in 2014. Like *Wannabe*, the film started as a short before the feature was produced and similarly, tells the story of an unexpected pairing. The film was also shot entirely in New York City, which would also be the case for *Wannabe*.



THE SQUID AND THE WHALE

Budget: \$1.5 Million

Gross: \$11 million (Box Office Only)

Cast: Jeff Daniels, Laura Linney, Jesse Eisenberg

Distribution: Samuel Goldwyn Films

Film Festivals Premiere: Sundance

The Squid and the Whale is a great example of a movie right in our budget range that had an impressive release with \$11 million at the box office. This movie went on to win a number of awards and did well on DVD and SVOD. Similar to *Wannabe*, this movie also takes place in NYC and is a period piece about family.

Contact Info

Please inquire for more details and information.

Toby Louie, Producer

310.845.5830

tobylouie@gmail.com

- OR -

John Ramos, Producer

212.920.1224

john@hyraxfilms.com

