

NANUQ

A short film directed by Jill Jones

Production Notes

Running time: 18 Minutes

Format: 2K Digital Cinema Package (DCP), Blu-Ray, QuickTime (.MOV)

Aspect ratio: 1.85:1

Sound Format: Dolby 5.1 Surround Sound LtRt & Stereo

www.nanuqthefilm.com

*DVD Exhibition Masters and Screeners
Available upon request*

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THE CAST

Rylie Jo Behr.....	JULIE
Moses Wassilie.....	NANUQ
Jacqueline Scislowski.....	DYLAN
Melissa Walker.....	JULIE’S MOTHER
James S. Allen.....	JULIE’S FATHER
Jennifer Young.....	JULIE’S NURSE

THE FILMMAKERS

Directed By.....	JILL JONES
Produced By.....	BRENT YONTZ
Screenplay By.....	JILL JONES BRENT YONTZ
Director of Animation.....	MARINA CAVALLI
Animation Supervisor.....	ASHLEY ARECHIGA
Production Designer.....	DERRICK LIGAS
Director of Photography.....	BRENT YONTZ
Music By.....	FREDERIK WIEDMANN
Sound Design.....	MATT CAVANAUGH
Costume Design By.....	IMOGENE CHAYES HELENA FALANGUS
VFX Compositing Supervisor.....	ERIC REINHARD

SHORT LOG-LINE

A young girl plagued by illness. A cold, unforgiving land. A steadfast protector who will help illuminate her way.

LONG LOG-LINE

Julie loves to run cross-country, but she must give it up to fight cancer in an Alaskan hospital. She bonds with an elderly Eskimo, Nanuq, who is also receiving treatment. Haunted by nightmares of running from death, Julie finds protection in Nanuq and learns to confront her fears.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Inspired by the Eskimo myth, “Why the Stars are in the Sky,” *Nanuq* tells the story of a young girl, Julie, and an elderly Eskimo man, Nanuq, fighting for their lives in a cancer center in Alaska. The night before her life-threatening surgery as Julie wrestles with the idea of dying, Nanuq helps to fend off her nightmares. In their fight to live, Julie and Nanuq strive to understand the passage into the afterlife. A cross-cultural story, *Nanuq* is a visual journey about the heart of the human spirit and what it means to survive.

LONG SYNOPSIS

Director Jill Jones takes you on a dark, yet hopeful re-imagining of the ancient Eskimo myth, “Why the Stars are in the Sky.” The young protagonist, Julie, battles a life-threatening form of cancer in an Anchorage hospital. In her morbid nightmares, Julie runs away from a pack of monstrous dogs across a cold, Arctic landscape. Julie turns to her loyal friend, Nanuq, a Yup’ik Eskimo who is also being treated for cancer. Nanuq and Julie share precious moments together before their impending surgeries. Nanuq gives meaning and comfort to Julie and helps her discover the strength to face her fear. The day of her surgery, Julie finds herself at the mercy of her own body as it battles itself on the operating room table in a final showdown between fear and survival.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT
THE INSPIRATION BEHIND *NANUQ*

Nanuq asks the question: how do we “fight” cancer? Young Julie (Rylie Jo Behr) is the picture of a vulnerable and sick child. Helpless in real life, Julie fights for life in her nightmares, which are filmed in stop-motion clay animation, and set in the Arctic tundra.

The austere, Arctic landscape of Julie’s nightmares parallels the gritty, cold environment of a hospital. I strive to maintain a sense of emotional fluidity between the animation and the live action.

Certain elements of the clay animation are inspired by Julie’s real life, such as Her and Nanuq creating clay figures to pass the time. Julie wears her favorite running cleats around the hospital, and she runs fast from the dogs in her nightmare. A variety of factors like the color palette, sound design and score forge the two mediums into a cohesive whole. Julie’s fear begins in her live action, conscious world. The fear pervades her animated, subconscious mind.

As a young girl, my first conception of death was in the hospital under fluorescent lights. I had a large cyst thought to be cancer and it made no sense to me. I wanted to cut the cyst out myself or squish it like clay. I learned more when my cousin Dillon passed away at the age of six from brain cancer. He seemed to know what our Nanuq (Moses Wassilie) teaches Julie. Dillon looked fear in the face. I have learned that humans must face death alone, but we can conquer fear together. *Nanuq* is a meditation on the chill of fear and the people who can help us find warmth.

Our team has been blessed with a group of dedicated collaborators. The *Nanuq* cast and crew traveled from Illinois, Alaska, Wisconsin, Iowa, California and New York to help create the film. In terms of production, the film has felt very separated. We filmed the live action in snowy Wisconsin and the animation in sunny Burbank, California. Our animators have never met the actors. Even so, the story of *Nanuq* has bonded us together as artists. Our team exists together on an Alaskan landscape in our creative minds.”

ORIGIN OF THE SCREENPLAY

Nanuq began with a concept and first draft screenplay by Brent Yontz on November 15, 2007, while he was a sophomore at Columbia College Chicago. Brent pulled inspiration from his childhood memories growing up in northern Wisconsin and the visual fascination he had with the outdoors. At that point the story focused on the relationship between a young Inuit boy named Irniq and his grandfather. The theme was heavily focused on environmental issues and the rapid digression of the Inuit culture and traditions. The concept was further developed into a fifth draft on February 5, 2008. Following this draft, the concept and story was shelved for about one year.

In August 2008, Brent Yontz met Jill Jones at the Telluride Film Festival Student Symposium. The two filmmakers collaborated on a couple short form projects, one of them being *Sara's Portraits* with Rylie Jo Behr, the young actress from Iowa who would play Julie in *Nanuq*. During the spring of 2009, the two filmmakers reminisced of childhood memories over lunch in Boston. Jill discussed a scary childhood experience. As a young girl, she developed a large tumor in a lymph node under her arm. Throughout the process of surgery, she questioned the existence of heaven for the first time. The tumor was benign, but the questions remained. The topic of human fear of death and our notions of the afterlife intrigued both filmmakers. In the summer of 2009, Brent revisited the *Nanuq* script with the intention of combining Jill's childhood memories into the story. To add an additional element, Brent explored his childhood fascination with stop motion animation. With the bar set high to tell a very human and visually demanding film, Brent Yontz and Jill Jones set out to continue developing *Nanuq*.

On September 11, 2009, the two writers released the sixth draft of the script. Throughout the month of September, the filmmakers worked on draft after draft and aimed to blend the hospital, Eskimo and stop motion elements together into one cohesive story. Drawing inspiration from Joseph Campbell's "The Power of Myth," the writers explored the world of Inuit and Eskimo mythology and discovered the tale "Why the Stars are in the Sky." The legend tells of Nanuq the white bear who is being chased by Eskimo hunting dogs across the Arctic. The bear arrives to the "edge of the earth," which in Eskimo culture represents the edge of the ice cliff. The bear leaps off the cliff and turns into a constellation of stars in the night sky. After reading this very visual myth, the writers believed this would be the perfect piece to blend the clay animation dream state with the Native Alaskan element.

Before finalizing the *Nanuq* screenplay, the filmmakers consulted Ariel Tweto, an Alaska Native best known for her Discovery Channel show, "Flying Wild Alaska," which highlights her family's role in the aerial transportation service for Native Alaskans across the state. Ariel was the perfect person to bring the flavor of cultural authenticity and approval to the story that the filmmakers needed. On September 31st, 2009, the sixteenth and final draft of *Nanuq* was completed and sent to the WGA for registration. Production on the film would commence on March 18th, 2010.

THE PRODUCTION **MIXED MEDIUMS IN *NANUQ***

Nanuq is a cross-cultural and cross-generational story. Inspired by these hybrid elements, the filmmakers set out to create an entirely mixed media, hybrid production to serve the nature of the story. Two-thirds of the overall production was photographed in live action with actors Rylie Jo Behr as Julie and Yup'ik Eskimo actor, Moses Wassilie as Nanuq. The other third of *Nanuq* was photographed in stop motion animation in order to create a surreal environment for Julie's nightmares to manifest. The animation process in itself was mixed media between traditional clay animation for the Nanuq and Julie puppets, and traditional puppet stop motion animation for the polar bear and terrifying dog puppets. Following the animation production, particle effect animations were composited into the production to add more atmosphere and texture. These elements include the aurora borealis lights, snow fall, stars, exploding stars, water and scattered snow elements. Half of these elements were created and animated frame by frame in camera on a down shooter system by Ashley Arechiga. The other half of the elements were created in 3D CGI animation by Digital Effects Supervisor Kevin Cahill, and include digital matte paintings by artists Rasoul Shafeazadeh and J Sara Lee.

Principal photography was captured in both film and digital formats. The live action scenes between Nanuq and Julie and VFX shots were filmed on 35mm with a Panavision G and Super Speed lenses courtesy of Panavision Woodland Hills and the New Filmmakers Grant. The 35mm gave the clean, nostalgic look the filmmakers were aiming to achieve at these story points. For gritty scenes like the hospital operation, S16mm was chosen to contrast the smooth look of 35mm. The animation was captured in 4k Digital Negative (DNG) files and stitched together in Adobe After Effects. Lastly, the music was also a mixed media hybrid. Half of the film's soundtrack showcases the talents of 15 different musicians from strings, woodwind, french horn and ethnic flute. The other half of *Nanuq*'s score is mixed with sampled "digital musicians" for an intense, 5.1 surround sound experience.

LIVE ACTION PRINCIPAL PHOTOGRAPHY

Nanuq live action photography was filmed at Grande Prairie Health and Rehabilitation Center in Wisconsin. The two-unit production crew was 50 members strong over the course of six, twelve to eighteen-hour workdays, with a pre-lighting/pre-rigging day totaling seven production days. Due to the size of a 35mm camera package in small rooms and tight hallways, time had to be carefully accounted for in ensuring the crew accomplished their desired coverage. Eight to ten shots were averaged per day. Two units worked the final day on an Aaton XTR Plus super 16mm camera package for operation scenes while a second unit lead by director of photography Brian Henderson worked on inserts and pickups in another part of the facility.

The lighting in *Nanuq* progresses through an array of different scenarios from green, high contrast fluorescents, warm and nostalgic sunlight, high contrast moonlight complimented by warm lantern light, warm white fluorescents contrasted against cold, blue shafts of sunlight, to the sterile coldness of the operating room lighting. The lighting motivation for *Nanuq* and Julie's scene was inspired from the midnight sun phenomenon that occurs in northern Alaska. During this period the sun hangs on the horizon longer without fully setting. This makes it difficult for people to sleep at night, and it affects Julie's ability to sleep. Additional visual references were drawn from Claude Monet's "Haystack" collection and Norman Rockwell's works from "The Saturday Evening Post."

Due to the varying lighting changes throughout the film, the filmmakers needed to have the option to change from full sunset lighting, full daylight, green screen and moonlight within an hour or less. In order to fully control the lighting changes and consistency, a 12'x12' tent constructed from frames, duvetyne and visqueen was built outside the hospital location. The structure was built and designed by key grip Zander Kroon to withstand rain, snow and high wind speeds, while employing a speed rail lighting grid inside the structure for full lighting control.

Director of photography Brent Yontz chose to photograph *Nanuq* on Kodak's Vision 3 5219 500T stock, finding that the velvety flesh tones and increased latitude in the highlights provided the look that was desired for the story. Vision 2 7205 250D was chosen for the super 16mm scenes of the production in order to add a gritty texture to the look as Julie goes in for surgery. A lensbaby 3G PL was used on the camera package to create a sense of claustrophobia from Julie's point of view before going into surgery. Both film stocks were over exposed in the camera by 2/3rds of a stop and pulled back in the transfer for finer grain and saturated colors. The live action was photographed at a consistent T/4, which was chosen for depth of field and the lens' sweet spot. Brent chose to stick with three primary lenses for the 35mm production, a Panavision Super Speed 35mm for wide shots, 85mm for close-ups and beauty shots and a 135mm for extreme close-ups and rich depth of field.

STOP MOTION PRINCIPAL PHOTOGRAPHY

The stop motion animation of *Nanuq* required a very specific and unique visual aesthetic. Principal stop motion photography took place over the course of seven months in Los Angeles, CA. Two animation stages were constructed, one inside a 2-bedroom apartment 12'x12' and another three stages at Bix Pix Entertainment studios in Burbank. The stop motion crew consisted of fifteen people from animators, animation assistants, puppet fabricators, set builders, and camera and lighting technicians. There was a total of six and a half minutes of stop motion animation captured, which totaled about 9,360 still frames or individual puppet poses. This does not include the thousands of frames used for camera tests and rehearsals. There were a total of 65 principal shots, which in stop motion is 65 individual setups. This means between each shot the set, camera and lighting would be torn down and reset for the next shot. Set up, camera testing and teardown alone would account for approximately eight to ten hours per day. With the additional eight hours of animation time for roughly five seconds on film, working days for one shot would average eighteen hours.

Animation was photographed on a Canon EOS XSi Rebel digital with a 12.2 mega pixel CMOS image sensor. Dragon Stop Motion animation software played a crucial role in assisting the animators and director of photography throughout the whole process. Dragon's digital densitometer and waveform monitoring made the process smooth and efficient. Photographed at 100 ISO at 1/15th of a second shutter, the DP lit each set up to a T/5.6, which provided a nice depth of field for the animators to work with and give the illusion of larger scale photography rather than miniature. Low resolution Jpeg image sequence QuickTime dailies made the offline editing stage move smoothly while the high resolution 4K Digital Negative (DNG) files were composited with 4K matte paintings and CGI effect particles in Adobe After Effects. Two motion control sliders were employed during production. The first was a precision Z, Y and X-axis and pan and tilt motion control designed, built and operated by Dick Kaneshiro. The second was a manual slider operating solely on one axis at a time and manually operated frame by frame by the camera operator.

The puppets averaged eight inches in height and were wire armature with 3D printed skulls. Premo clay was sculpted around the heads and 9mm doll eyes were fabricated into the heads to give them a more life-like appearance. The clay faces were sculpted between each frame for eye blinks, expressions and dialogue. Puppet costumes were hand-made for the Nanuq and Julie puppets by costume designers Imogene Chayes and Helena Falangus. LED battery powered lights were employed inside a fox skull that was constructed with fur and flock for the terrifying dogs.

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The National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences
The Albert P. Weisman Foundation Award
The Columbia College Chicago Department of Film and Video
The Panavision New Filmmakers Grant
The Kodak Motion Picture Film Grant

UPCOMING SCREENINGS, AWARDS AND HISTORY

January 12-15, 2012 – Irvine, CA
IRVINE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

January 5-8, 2012 – Santa Clarita, CA
SANTA CLARITA VALLEY FILM FESTIVAL

December 2-11, 2011 - Anchorage, AK
ANCHORAGE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

November 5, 2011 - Des Moines, IA
WILD ROSE INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL

**Audience Award*

**Best Short Film*

**Best Director*

**Best Animation*

**Best Emerging Actress*

**Best Music*

**Distinctive Achievement in Cinematography*

** Distinctive Achievement in Visual Effects*

** Distinctive Achievement in Sound Design*

** Distinctive Achievement in Screenwriting*

October 15, 2011 - Lubbock, TX
FLATLAND FILM FESTIVAL

**Audience Choice Award*

October 5, 2011 - Los Angeles, CA
SHORTS FOR CHARITY BENEFIT SCREENING

**Benefits to the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society*

August 5, 2011 - Burbank, CA
LOS ANGELES CREW PREMIERE
Bix Pix Entertainment

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

JILL JONES (WRITER / DIRECTOR / PRODUCER)

Jill Jones is an honors graduate of Emerson College with a degree in film production. She has also studied at the School of Visual Arts in New York City and the Boston University Summer Theatre Institute. Jill is a student alumni of the Telluride Film Festival Student Symposium in Telluride, CO and has a background in Children's theatre at the Des Moines Playhouse. She has worked for the Improv Asylum, Massachusetts Film Office, Emerson Productions, and Film Garden Entertainment. Her short film, "Sara's Portraits," featuring Rylie Behr, won Best Student Short Film at the 2009 Wild Rose Independent Film Festival. Jill now works as a casting editor at "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" and is in the works with her new documentary, *Spectrum*, which features Dr. Temple Grandin.

BRENT YONTZ (WRITER / PRODUCER / DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY)

Brent received the John Cannon Memorial Scholarship from the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences to aid in his study of cinematography at Columbia Collage Chicago. *All We Had*, a 35mm film he photographed at Columbia, screened at the 2008 Cannes International Film Festival and 2009 Marbella International Film Festival featuring excellence in cinematography. Brent photographed and produced *WET*, a short film that won the Chicago Award at the 2009 Chicago International Film Festival. A 2008 Alumni of the Telluride Film Festival Student Symposium, Brent was commissioned to document *The 37th Telluride Film Festival Student Symposium*, featuring Ken Burns, Werner Herzog and Alexander Payne. Brent currently works in Los Angeles as a director of photography on commercials and narratives. His most recent commercial work has been for VISINE®. Brent is in the works with Jill Jones on the new documentary on sensory perception, *Spectrum*, featuring Temple Grandin.

MARINA CAVALLI (DIRECTOR OF ANIMATION)

Originally from Buenos Aires, Argentina, Marina Cavalli now resides in Los Angeles, CA. A 2008 graduate of The Academy of Art University, Marina studied 2D and stop motion animation. Shortly after graduating, Marina went to work for Adult Swim's Emmy® Award winning "Robot Chicken" series, where she worked as a puppet fabricator. After her time there, she completed a USC thesis animation film entitled, *Welcome to the Throne Room*. Marina is currently an Imagineer at the Walt Disney company in Los Angeles and teaches animation classes for kids.

ASHLEY ARECHIGA (ANIMATION SUPERVISOR)

Ashley began her studies in 2D and stop-motion animation at the University of Texas in Austin. With an infinite supply of "can-do" energy, she came out to Los Angeles to pursue her passion in stop motion animation. Since moving to Los Angeles, Ashley has worked as a puppet fabricator and animator at Buddy System Studios and Bix Pix Entertainment. She has a hand in several independent projects and takes pleasure in helping artists achieve their visions with efficiency. Ashley just recently wrapped her work as Animator on Adult Swim's 'Frankenhole' series in Los Angeles.

FREDERIK WIEDMANN (COMPOSER)

Frederik Wiedmann began his film music studies in Boston at Berklee College of Music where he earned a BA in Film Scoring (Suma Cum Laude) in 2004, as well as various awards, among them the BMI Film Scoring Award 2004. In 2004 He started to work for established film composer John Frizzell (*Office Space, Alien Resurrection*) as orchestrator, score mixer, arranger, programmer and eventually as co-producer and co-composer of his film scores. Frederik soon began to work in his own studio, and was chosen by many A-list filmmakers as their composer due to his advanced knowledge in music technology and music production, as well as his sensibility to serve the film in the best way possible. Frederik's feature film credits include *Hellraiser: Revelations, Mirrors 2, Whiteout, Legion* and *Return to House on Haunted Hill*.

ABOUT THE CAST

MOSES WASSILIE (NANUQ)

Moses was born in a sod house at Nunapitchuk in Southwest Alaska in 1946; mother is Lucy Jacob, traditional Yupik dancer and subsistence trained woman and father was Wassilie B. Evan, subsistence Hunter and Fisherman and leader from Napapskiak. As a young boy, Moses spent his grade school years at the Moravian Children's Home in Kwethluk and graduated from Mt. Edgecumbe boarding school in 1967 where he started painting portraits using charcoal on Sitka pulp mill paper. Other schools include the Institute of Alaska Native Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico to study painting and the University of Alaska Fairbanks under Ron Senungetuck to study carving. The artist paints with pastel, acrylic and oil; was also trained by Paul Tiulana to produce King Island style drums, driftwood carvings and masks, and self-taught ivory jewelry. Moses was featured in the 1994 film, "On Deadly Ground," as Joseph Ittok.

RYLIE JO BEHR (JULIE)

Rylie Jo Behr was born on the 16th of December 1999, in Mason City, Iowa, USA. Rylie began acting in her local area in Des Moines, IA before signing to her agency in Los Angeles, CA. Rylie has been seen in television shows on local and national levels with the WQPT-PBS series "Get Movin" and the Sci-Fi show "Children of the Corn." She also appeared in "The Crazies" directed by Breck Eisner. Rylie's commercial and industrial work includes McDonalds, Beam Genie, 3M as well as print work in Food & Family Magazine, Midwest Living Magazine and Kohls Magazine. Rylie will star in "Skakey" in 3D, directed by FOX executive Kevin Cooper, producer of "Secondhand Lions."

MELISSA WALKER (JULIE'S MOTHER)

Melissa Anne Walker hails from Michigan and has been residing in Chicago for about 6 years. Her passion for the arts began with a love of dance. No stranger to the stage, Melissa has performed with The Jazz and Spirit Dance Theatre of Detroit, the University of Nevada Las Vegas Dance Company as well as Oxygen Dance Company. Melissa also had the amazing experience of performing with the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in August of 2000. With her recent transition into acting, Melissa has been a part of several independent films in Chicago.

JAMES S. ALLEN (JULIE'S FATHER)

James is a working Chicago actor with a background in theater and improv. He held the title role in "Henry IV" at the Halcyon Theatre Company and has performed in a variety of shows including "Of Mice and Men" and "The Last Days of Judas" at the Steep Theatre Company. James also has experience as a troupe member at Improv Olympic.

JACQUELINE SCISLOWSKI (DYLAN)

Jacqueline has been featured in 13 short films since the age of 6. In addition to acting, she enjoys modeling and has been seen in advertisements for American Girl, Crate and Barrel, Culvers and Leaps and Bounds.

JENNIFER YOUNG (JULIE'S NURSE)

Jennifer is a professional violinist in Chicago. Her acting background includes extensive work at the Theatre Victoria in Texas. Jennifer trained at ActOne Studios, where she studied on camera acting in addition to voice and movement.