

WONDER VALLEY

A FEATURE FILM





SYNOPSIS

Part psychological thriller, part horror film, *Wonder Valley* is an arthouse-style film that tells the tale of four young women caught up in the aftermath of a psychotropic drug trip gone wrong. Karian (Jade Fusco), a loner with few friends, has an unhealthy obsession with her free-spirited friend, Cloudy. Still mourning the death of her beloved aunt, she invites Cloudy out to her desert house, hoping to have time alone with her to deepen their friendship. When Cloudy shows up with two friends– the social media loving, light-hearted Jessie (Kella Birch) and the bitter, has-been TV star Sasha (Malia Scharf), Karian's disappointment is palpable. Instantly getting off on the wrong foot with the other girls, Sasha quickly becomes Karian's nemesis as their fight for Cloudy's attention turns into a fight to the death.

Troubled and in trouble with her managers, ridiculed by the press, Sasha decides Cloudy's new friend Karian is not good for her. After bickering back and forth, Sasha has a change of heart and suggests they all try DATURAS, a psychotropic drug. After some peer pressure from Cloudy and the other girls, Karian finally agrees to try it– against her better judgement.

After a drug-fueled night, Karian wakes up with a slightly altered view of reality. When they decide to go for a hike to shake off the after effects of the drugs, Karian finds she can no longer tell the difference between what is real and what is her drug-addled mind playing tricks on her. The hallucinations worsen as she gets separated from the group and discovers the dead body of a girl lying on the rocks.

Karian gradually makes her way back to her house, where she tells the others what she saw– only they don't believe her. Karian finally convinces Cloudy to go with her to look for the body, and the two set off across the hot desert just as the sun is about to go down. Meanwhile, Sasha and Jessie argue over their friendship with Cloudy, to the point that Sasha gets physically violent with Jessie. Infuriated, and not willing to wait around for Cloudy and Karian to return, Jessie sets off after them with only a flashlight to guide her.

When Jessie finally finds Karian, Cloudy is missing and Karian is covered in blood– and claims to not remember what happened. Not convinced, and afraid for Cloudy's safety, Jessie attempts to leave in search of her, but fate has other things in store for her....

Color 2.35:1

72 min

Not Rated

Shot on location in Joshua Tree, CA.



CAST

KARIAN..... Jade Fusco

CLOUDY..... Lucy Engelman

SASHA..... Malia Scharf

JESSICA..... Kella Birch



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Our film examines four beautiful, misunderstood women. At a time in life when moods constantly change and feelings of loneliness and isolation circle your mind. Wonder Valley shows the viewer just how unraveling and dark twenty-something can actually be, through the use of slow camera movements which become increasingly more chaotic with the state of the girls' minds, a soundtrack carefully composed to the mystic and sinister landscape of the desert, and atmospheric performances which will haunt us.

As the camera increasingly adopts the perspective of our protagonist Karian's mental state, this seemingly innocent girl feels the effects of the heat, drugs, and delusions– unveiling an entirely different side to her personality.

Through the intimacy of the shooting style, this film exposes the dangerous obsessiveness and desperate loneliness Karian feels trying to be accepted. The backdrop of Joshua Tree brings to life the place where meaning collapses and the personalities of these women gets lost to the desert forever.

— HEIDI HARTWIG



TEAM

DIRECTOR-- HEIDI HARTWIG

After graduating from Emerson with a degree in film studies, Heidi Hartwig spent the first 15 years of her career working as a fashion, music and celebrity photographer. She has been working as a director internationally for the past 11 years, building an impressive and distinct portfolio of music, art and fashion videos. She is home to global brand contents of her clients such as Suzuki, Nikon, and Panasonic. Fashion films include work for Elyse Roy, a Madison Harding fashion series featuring Charlotte Ronson and Mara Hoffman, and Zappos spot starring fashion legend Andre Leon Talley.

Taking a nuanced and cinematic approach, Heidi creates veiled narratives within the frame, sensual, and inspired imagery. She consistently places woman as the focus of her films, combining beauty, sensuality and emotion with the hand of darkness and psychological tension.

WRITER/PRODUCER-- RHIANON JONES

Rhianon Jones is an independent filmmaker living and working in Los Angeles and New York. After studying film theory and literature at Vassar and Reed Colleges, she went on to earn a Masters in Screenwriting from the American Film Institute. She has written, directed, shot and produced several films, and is currently in development on a follow-up feature to Wonder Valley, called Lake Sorrow. Her short film, Parker, which she wrote and directed, premiered at last year's Outfest and a music video she shot for performance artist Uhuru recently premiered on Dazed Magazine.

Her production company, Neon Heart Productions, specializes in working with other female directors to help them get their films made. She is developing projects with Haroula Rose (Once Upon a River), Emma Tillman (History of Caves), Ryan Simpkins (Brigsby Bear), and Nicolaia Rips (Trying to Float).



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heart
productions



CONTACT

rhianonjonez@gmail.com

info@neonheartproductions.com

www.neonheartproductions.com