

sista*

A short film by Chantelle Burgoyne



PRESS KIT



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Log line: A betrayal of trust between two sisters on the cusp of adolescence sets off a chain of events that has the potential to shatter their relationship forever.

Country of Production: New Zealand

Date of Completion: 2020

Genre: Drama

Languages: English, Samoan

Shooting Format: Digital, 23.98fps, 1920 x 1080p,

Screening Format: ProRes 422 HQ, DCP

Ratio: 2.39:1 LB in 16:9 frame

Sound: Dolby Digital 5.1

Duration: 16 mins 8 secs

Director/ Writer: Chantelle Burgoyne

Writer: Leilani Tamu

Producer: Marina McCartney

Production Company: Manusina Productions Limited

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Synopsis (200 words)

Sista is a coming of age story about Tiana (13) and Isabelle (11), two New Zealand/ Samoan sisters on the cusp of adolescence. As Tiana is drawn into the world of teenagerhood and seduced by the pressures it forces upon her, Isabelle feels left behind.

When Isabelle witnesses Tiana being handed a condom at school and then sees her take off with her older boyfriend TJ, she immediately jumps to conclusions and betrays Tiana's trust by telling their strict Samoan mother, Ava. That evening when Tiana returns home an explosive argument results in Tiana taking off in the middle of the night.

Isabelle is left to deal with the guilt of betraying her sister, her fears for Tiana's safety whilst on the run and also for when she returns home. Tiana, alone, afraid and trying to figure out how to survive goes to TJ as a last resort only to learn the harsh reality behind his true intentions towards her.

When Tiana decides to return home, she faces the inevitable consequences from her mother who cuts off her beautiful hair as a mark of shame. In the end Isabelle and Tiana are reunited and find strength in each other.



Director's Notes - Concept

Sista is inspired by events that occurred in my life at a time when I was still too young to really understand them but that have nonetheless left an imprint. I was eleven when my older sister Leilani ran away from home three times over the course of two months causing a lot of heartache within our family.

At the time I was in the same position as Isabelle, at home seeing the pain inflicted on my parents and feeling resentment laced with worry. I remember the overwhelming sense of relief I felt when she finally returned home which was marred by the shock of seeing her with her hair half cut off, a common punishment in Samoan culture to shame girls for their promiscuity.

At the time I never asked her where she had gone or what she had done when she ran away and it was only a few years ago that we finally talked about it.

After that the idea for *Sista* was born.

Director's Notes - Approach

Sista was filmed over 5 & ½ days in and around Auckland.

With it being such a personal story, I wanted the film to have a sense of authenticity and realness. It was shot handheld to give it a tactile and somewhat gritty feel to help convey some of the heavy themes and subject matter.

I'm drawn to finding beauty in the mundane which influenced how I approached the film's visual style. This can be seen in the exterior locations outside the family home particularly with the pylons that appear throughout the film.

The film is set in the 90s but I didn't want it to feel like a period piece so whilst there are elements from that time that are part of the fabric of the story, like Tiana's Walkman, they are not too overt which allows for a universal and timeless quality.

As the story is so intensely female about two New Zealand/Samoan sisters, it was important to have as many female and Pasifika key creatives involved in making the film as possible. I'm proud to say that this was achieved, we had a wonderful cast and crew who were all integral to bringing *Sista* to life.



Director - Chantelle Burgoyne

Chantelle is an Auckland-based filmmaker of Samoan, Tongan and European heritage with a first-class MA in Screen Production specialising in directing drama from the University of Auckland. Her thesis film *Tatau* won the Geoff Evans Prize for Excellence in Screen Production and screened at festivals in NZ and internationally, winning Best Student Short Film at the 2012 CineQuest Film Festival.

Since graduating Chantelle found success working as a contractor in the NZ film industry having worked for the NZ Film Commission as the Fresh Shorts Assistant before working in production on major Hollywood films. Most notably, Chantelle was the executive assistant to Barrie Osborne ONZM on Warner Brother's *The Meg* and the Cast and Script Coordinator on Disney's live-action *Mulan*.



She participated in the 2017 Script to Screen Film Up Mentorship programme receiving mentoring from Tusi Tamasese and in 2018 she was selected for the DEGNZ Women Filmmakers Incubator. In 2019 Chantelle guest directed a short film called *Ocean* for Toi Whakaari NZ Drama School featuring acting students in their final year and was also selected as one of the directors for the Ngā Pouwhenua/ Cook joint indigenous anthology feature film initiative between the NZFC and Screen Australia which will go into production in late 2020.

Currently, Chantelle is collaborating with NZ Poet Laureate Selina Tusitala Marsh on a short film called *Moving Earth* and is developing two feature films entitled *Le Va (The Space Between)* and *Tavaluga*. Most recently she has become attached as the director of *Halatau*, written by Aroha Awarau and produced by Ngaire Fuata of SunPix, which will be her debut feature film.



Writers - Leilani Tamu & Chantelle Burgoyne

Leilani and Chantelle are sisters and writing partners. *Sista* is their first creative collaboration and inspired by true events.

Leilani is a former New Zealand diplomat, published poet, Fulbright alumna and the current Manager of Pacific Policy at the NZ Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment.

She has a first-class Masters in Pacific History from the University of Auckland and was recently nominated as one of their Top 40 under

40 alumna. Leilani is a published author and was the 2013 Creative New Zealand/ Fulbright Pacific Writer in Residence at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Her first book of poetry *The Art of Excavation* was long-listed in the 2015 Ockham NZ book awards.

She delivers monthly book reviews on RadioNZ's Nine to Noon programme, edits an online Pasifika book blog 'Nuanua', and in her spare time writes the odd essay for The Spinoff.

Her ancestral and marital connections are to the islands of Samoa, Tonga and Niue, and, most importantly, she is the proud mother of Kahlei (10) and Luka (6).



Producer – Marina Alofagia McCartney

(Pito Nui, Satupa'itea, Savai'i - Samoa and Vailoa, Palauli, Savai'i - Samoa/ Geordie - England)

Marina Alofagia McCartney was born and raised in New Zealand. From a Geordie Father, Samoan Mother and Cook Islands Step-Mother, she is powerfully aware of her cultural heritage, how this shapes our worldview and the way we are viewed by others.

Marina has a MA (First Class Honours) in film from the University of Auckland and is an award-winning filmmaker with films featured in over 30 festivals including Palm Springs ShortFest, the NZ International Film Festival, ImagiNATIVE and Hawai'i International Film Festival. Her latest film *VAI* screened at the 2019 Berlinale, SXSW and Maoriland.

Marina is an academic formally based at the University of Auckland and her academic areas of expertise are Pacific Studies, Pacific filmmaking, Pacific representation on screen and representations of the Pacific woman. She is a PhD candidate exploring Oceanic filmmaking, proud mother to her daughter, Alena Sevai, and is developing her next feature film, *The Return*.



CAST

TIANA	Lizzie Overhoff
ISABELLE	Daniela Mika
AVA	Katerina Fatupaito
TJ	Lively Nili
SAM	Deijah Tuigamala
NAI	Manuevaha Latu
MARIA	Toreka Tele'a

KEY PRODUCTION CREDITS

Production Company	Manusina Productions
Director	Chantelle Burgoyne
Writers	Leilani Tamu & Chantelle Burgoyne
Producer	Marina McCartney
Director of Photography	Tammy Williams
Editor	Annie Collins
Production Designers	Emily & Ve'a Mafile'o
Costume Designer	Deahne Lakatani



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