

Sunflower Girl

PRESS KIT

CONTACT

sunflowergirlfilm@gmail.com

sunflowergirlfilm.com





Film Info

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Film Title: Sunflower Girl

Country of Origin: USA

Date of Completion: Oct 2023

Shooting Format: Color - Digital (ARRI AMIRA), Analog (8mm)

Exhibition Format: DCP, HD Digital File

Aspect Ratio: 4:3 - 1.33 Flat

Sound: 5.1

Duration: 13 Minutes, 8 Seconds

Genre: Drama, Family, Youth, Coming-of-Age

Languages: English, Cantonese (with English subtitles)

English Closed Captioning, Spanish (Latin America), French (Canada), Chinese (Simplified), and Swedish subtitles available

Lead Actor Malea Emma Tjandrawidjaja as main character, Rosie. Photo by Luna Cristales

CONTACT

Sunflower Girl LLC
sunflowergirlfilm@gmail.com
sunflowergirlfilm.com

Holly M. Kaplan
(Writer/Director/Producer)
hollymkaplan@gmail.com

Sebastián Nadilo
(Festival Distributor)
affdistribution@gmail.com

Nice Dissolve - MakeDCP
(DCP - Print Source)
support@makedcp.com

Watch/Download Trailer:
vimeo.com/sunflowergirl/trailer

Still Photos & More:
sunflowergirlfilm.com



Story



Fanny Lawren as Rosie's Mother, Kim, with Malea Emma Tjandrawidjaja as Rosie. Photo by Luna Cristales

LOGLINE

When a 13-year-old Chinese-American girl has the opportunity to go skateboarding with her crush, it comes at the cost of abandoning her little sister.

(150 Characters)

SYNOPSIS

Rosie, a 13-year-old Chinese-American skater girl in New York City, stops by her mother's dry cleaners one afternoon and is tasked to pick up her younger sister, Amy, and deliver her forgotten lunchbox. Upon arriving at Amy's school, Rosie runs into two boys skateboarding, her crush Skylar, and his best friend Cooper. As the boys welcome her in, Rosie is confronted with a choice - whether to prioritize her familial duties or join her new skate crew on an escapade.

(468 Characters)

About

Director's Statement

Innocence, young love, complicated beliefs about oneself, and relationships with family are all budding issues that tend to feel larger than life growing up. When writing "Sunflower Girl," I drew inspiration from memories of my past as a young teen in New York City, and from my family history as Cantonese immigrants who owned a Chinese laundry storefront in Brooklyn during the 1970s. I wrote "Sunflower Girl" while the COVID-19 pandemic swept the country, and American news was inundated with stories of discrimination and violence against Asians. Wanting to steer clear of showcasing hate and suffering, I felt moved to tell an uplifting and personal coming-of-age story that explored the universal experience of growing pains from the perspective of a young Chinese-American girl in New York City. Americanism coming in contact with the Asian American experience is the greater theme that I'm exploring. Where Americanism seeks to devour the other, "Sunflower Girl" offers a tender, yet complex slice of Asian American life through the lens of the female gaze.



“Wanting to steer clear of showcasing hate and suffering, I felt moved to tell an uplifting and personal coming-of-age story.”

– Holly M. Kaplan (Writer/Director/Producer)

Malea Emma Tjandrawidjaja as Rosie with her mother, Kim, played by Fanny Lawren. Photo by Luna Cristales.



FAQ

With Holly M. Kaplan, Writer/Director of *SUNFLOWER GIRL*



Q: What does skateboarding mean to Rosie?

I believe that Rosie genuinely enjoys skating as a vehicle for her expression of freedom. For her, it's the only time she has to collect her thoughts and feel at peace with herself. At the same time, the choice of skateboarding can also be interpreted as a symbol of assimilation since it's traditionally an American pastime. Her way to relate with the boys is through skating, while it fosters this connection, she still suppresses who she is to fit in with them.

Q: What were your inspirations for the visuals of *SUNFLOWER GIRL*?

A large portion of visual inspiration for me comes from Japanese animation and manga. When I was young, I felt drawn to this media because it was the only outlet I had for consuming coming-of-age stories that were told from a perspective I could relate to. I also found visual inspiration by revisiting some of my favorite coming-of-age films including those by Gus Van Sant, Sofia Coppola, and Hou Hsiao-Hsien.

Q: What's unique about *SUNFLOWER GIRL* as a coming-of-age story?

One of the biggest sentiments I've heard while making this film is how deeply connected the cast and crew felt to the heart of *SUNFLOWER GIRL*. To showcase not only a young female protagonist, but an Asian-American one, was a perspective that we longed to see in stories when we were growing up. We have the unique privilege of taking a peek inside the mind of a preteen Chinese-American girl who comes from an immigrant family in New York City and observing a slice of her life. The authenticity of the Asian American experience and female lens is what sets this story apart, especially having it crafted by filmmakers who share similar life experiences.

Q: How did this diverse team behind the film come together?

The team behind the film came together incredibly organically. I'm grateful for the support of NALIP for their financial assistance, resources, and mentorship from industry veterans. Most of the crew are my own friends who came together from all over the world. Being able to create such a personal film with friends who are women and filmmakers of color, lends to the ethos of this film and created a meaningful environment for this story to come to life.

Q: How personal is the story to you as the writer & director?

SUNFLOWER GIRL is reminiscent of my life growing up in the city, as well as the experiences of my mother and her siblings growing up as immigrants from Hong Kong in New York; the story draws from a collective well of memories from my own life and my family history. I think in many immigrant families there's a depth of bonds that are formed generationally through survival and love, and can end up creating the tension of "family" vs. "freedom." I have personally felt this pressure in my life, and this became Rosie's internal conflict that drives the story.

Cairo Zion on upper left; Malea Emma Tjandrawidjaja below. Photos by Luna Cristales





Lead actor Malea Emma Tjandrawidjaja as Rosie. Photo by Luna Cristales

MALEA EMMA TJANDRAWIDJAJA (AFTER YANG) • ROSIE/KUI

Malea Emma Tjandrawidjaja is an Indonesian American actress who lives in Los Angeles. Her acting in A24's feature film ***After Yang*** (2022) opposite Colin Farrell gains rave reviews from critics such as Awards Watch, The Hollywood Reporter and Indie Wire. She is also known for her recurring guest star roles on ***iCarly*** (2021) and on Disney Channel shows, ***Coop and Cami Ask the World*** (2018) and ***Raven's Home*** (2017).

Malea is also a singer. Her National Anthem video in LA Galaxy game went viral in 2018 and was included in Google Year in Search in 2018. She was cast as Molly in the star studded Annie musical at the Hollywood Bowl in July 2018 and her performance gained great reviews from media such as LA Times, Times Squares Chronicles and Broadway World. She was invited to sing "And I Am Telling You I'm Not Going" with Tony and Grammy awards winner, Jennifer Holliday, on Good Morning America and was invited to audition on ***American Idol*** and was awarded with golden ticket even though she was too young to compete.

Also Starring:

Daniel Girdo, Abigail Lopez (SESAME STREET), Fanny Lawren (LUCKY FISH).

Cast



Cairo Zion as Skylar with Daniel Girdo as Cooper

Photo by Luna Cristales

CAIRO ZION (AMERICAN NINJA WARRIOR JR.) • SKYLAR

Cairo Zion is a SAG AFTRA-e teen actor, model, and athlete. But, he is most known for his athletic ability, and uncanny balance. Whistle Sports filmed a mini-documentary about Cairo for their series "No Days Off," and he was the lead in a series by "Got Milk," ft. Spice Adams. He is also well-known as a competitor on ***American Ninja Warrior Jr.*** Cairo was the recipient of the 2022 "Global Child Prodigy Award" in Dubai for his athleticism. The prestigious event was hosted by his Highness, Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, who heads the United Arab Emirates Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Social Development. He earned the title of Costa Rican "Grom of the Year" for Skimboarding in 2018, but he is also known for doing extreme sports such as surfing, skateboarding, wake-boarding, unicycle stunts and freeline skates.

Diagnosed with dyslexia at age 7, he began making vlogs about his struggles and became very passionate about telling his story. His advocacy has reached classrooms as far as India and Costa Rica. Because of this, Cairo was highlighted at the Asia Pacific Dyslexia Forum 2021 in Japan. He was born in New York City's West Village, to parents who instilled a passion for travel at a very young age. His heritage is a mix of European, Puerto Rican, West African, and even Native American (Comanche, and Taino).

Team

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER **NALIP** / SPONSORED BY **NETFLIX**

WRITER/DIRECTOR/PRODUCER • **Holly M. Kaplan** (she/her)



Holly Mai-Kin Kaplan is a Chinese-American filmmaker, born and raised in New York City. She received her BA in Film & Media Arts from American University and completed a filmmaking program at FAMU International Prague, where she filmed her first short, "THE LESSON," on 16mm. A former fine art student and anthropology major, Holly approaches storytelling through a cultural and artistic lens centered on femme perspectives. Inspired and driven by ties to her mixed Cantonese heritage, Holly is invested in bringing narratives about diversity and the Asian diaspora to the forefront. She has served as an apprentice to the late Independent Producer & Director Ben Barenholtz, and went on to assist Executive Producer/Director Lisa Soper, and Director Alex Pillai on "PRETTY LITTLE LIARS: ORIGINAL SIN" (HBO Max). In 2022, Holly was chosen for NALIP & NETFLIX's "Latino Lens: Narrative Short Incubator for Women of Color" to fund her first solo-directing project, "SUNFLOWER GIRL."

PRODUCER • **Seika Paradeis** (she/her)

Raised in New York City and formerly a pre-professional ballet dancer trained with the American Ballet Theater, Seika found her joy in filmmaking and collaborating with interdisciplinary artists while completing her Bachelor of Arts at Hunter College (CUNY) as a Combined Media Studio Arts major. Seika has worked on staff at award-winning production companies like 1stAveMachine making commercials and branded content as well as Ummah Chroma Creative Partners a Production Company and creative agency making work for Art Institutions like the Guggenheim & The Metropolitan Museum of Art. She currently freelances on branded and both scripted and unscripted short form content. Most recently she has worked on projects for EOS (Evolution of Smooth), the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Sesame Street, and Google.



Holly M. Kaplan with Cairo Zion & Malea Emma Tjandrawidjaja

Photos by Luna Cristales



Team



Michael Cong with Holly M. Kaplan. Photo by Luna Cristales.

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY • Michael Cong (he/him)

Born in Xinyu and raised in Weihai, China, Michael Cong is a filmmaker based in New York City. With a mixed background of Chinese and American culture, Michael focuses on the common ground where differences converge. His work is often centered around the passengers who are on the verge of leaving or staying somewhere, or with someone. He thinks of cinema as a form of expression that goes beyond language, and he makes films for people all around the world. Since he graduated from Tisch School of the Arts with a concentration on cinematography, Michael has worked on numerous commercials and music videos. His narrative works are screened at multiple international film festivals. Michael enjoys experimenting with images and sound. His patience behind the camera makes the magic happen and curiosity drives him deeper. He is currently an MFA student at Columbia University where he keeps experimenting with cinema with friends.



PRODUCTION DESIGNER • Mischelle Moy (she/her)

Mischelle Moy is a Brooklyn-based digital artist and photographer, with a focus on vibrant sets and post-production. As a lifelong fine arts major, she chose to graduate from the School of Visual Arts with a BFA in Photography, and has been freelancing and producing since. Her digital artwork has been featured by B0000000M!, Featureshoot, Fubiz, and Instagram, with commissions by Apple and Adobe. Her commercial photography clients are majority Asian-American brands within the local community including Wing on Wo & Co., Omsom, Cirque Colors, Umamicart, and Junzi. Mischelle's visual style is now branching into film, having most recently done production design for "Ronnie Chieng Takes Chinatown" Netflix comedy special.

Credits

EDITOR • Hailey Choi (she/her)

Hailey Choi is a Brooklyn-based filmmaker from Los Angeles. She began her career as an art director for film & tv before shifting her focus to video editing in 2017. Since then she has worked on projects for Complex Networks, TIME, P&G, eBay, and more. With a passion for storytelling, she edits short films whenever she can, most notably “Thistle Creek” and “Children of the Dust,” both of which she received Faculty Commendations for Editing at New York University’s First Run Film Festival in 2021. When she’s not in the editing suite, she dabbles in graphic design, illustration, and loves making things with her hands.



Daniel Girdo as Cooper behind-the-scenes.



Cairo Zion, Malea Emma Tjandrawidjaja, and Daniel Girdo. Photos by Luna Cristales

SOUND DESIGNER - Delu Duan (he/they)

COSTUME DESIGNER - Dan Wang (she/her)

CASTING by Sunny Chen (they/she)

STUNT COORDINATOR - Leana Gardella **ASSOCIATE PRODUCER** - Sunny Chen **ASSISTANT DIRECTOR** - Janira Natalie Hernandez **LOCATION MANAGER** - Donovan Tolloo
ART ASSISTANTS - Jason Chang, Andy Lee **FIRST ASSISTANT CAMERA** - Serena Hodges **SECOND ASSISTANT CAMERA** - Yihua Chen **SCRIPT SUPERVISOR** - Akshata Honnovar
STILL PHOTOGRAPHER - Luna Cristales **KEY GRIP** - Mario Riquelme **GAFFER** - Emmet Luciano **HMU** - Kaia Shi **PRODUCTION SOUND MIXER** - Veralucia Quispe Chirinos
C19 COMPLIANCE SUPERVISOR - Alicia Herder **SET TEACHER** - Donna Belsky **SET MEDIC** - Nour Husseini **SKATER CASTING** - Andrew Gelles
PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS - Jessica Cochran, Crispin Tan, Eleanor De Fer, Lil Rhee, Andre Wells, Judicia Lee
CATERING - Kimbap Lab, Little Mo, Market Bar & Café, Pio Bagels, Potluck Club, Yaya Tea
SPECIAL THANKS - ARRI, 11th St. Laundry & Cleaners, Carlos Garza, Dahing Plants, Eastman Kodak Company, Grand Tea Imports, Ligiah Villabolos, Meghan McDonald, NYC Parks Department, NHS Inc. & Santa Cruz Skateboards, Pete Corona, Robin Rice Gallery, Stephanie Adams-Santos, Substance Skatepark, Vero Kompalic.

SOUND SERVICES by ICING MEDIA SOUND DESIGNER & RE-RECORDING MIXER - Delu Duan **ADDITIONAL POST PRODUCTION SOUND by DOGBOTIC SOUND & FOLEY DESIGNER** - Kirk Pearson
PRODUCER Lydia Froncek. **COLOR SERVICES by COMPANY 3 COLORIST** - Jenny Montgomery **MUSIC SUPERVISOR** - Max Ship **VO & SONG ENGINEER** - Dylan Gardner
MUSIC COORDINATOR - Meghan McDonald **ORIGINAL SONG** “Better Off This Way” **WRITTEN & PERFORMED** by Malea Emma Tjandrawidjaja. **SCORE PRODUCED** by Kristine Bernabe,
STRINGS - Cindy Lan. **POSTER** by Jee Kim **LEGAL SERVICES** The Filmmakers Legal Clinic at Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law Director, Michelle Greenberg-Kobrin Lawyers and Interns,
Liza Schaeffer, Isaac Gamoa, Carly Rothstein, Lauren Phillips, Myles Ganther (and any such other legal interns as may work on the project) **ACCOUNTING** - Financial Services Center, Inc.
PAYROLL - NPI Entertainment Payroll Inc. **FESTIVAL DISTRIBUTION** - Sebastián Nadilo (AsianFilmFestivals). Supported by **PANO NETWORK MICROGRANT 2023. SAG-AFTRA SPA.**

Festivals

- 2023 UPPSALA SHORT FILM FESTIVAL - SWEDEN
- 2023 CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S FILM FESTIVAL - USA
- 2023 VANCOUVER ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL - CANADA
- 2024 MINT CHINESE FILM FESTIVAL - UK
- 2024 DISORIENT ASIAN AMERICAN FILM FESTIVAL OF OREGON - USA
- 2024 REGARD - SAGUENAY INTERNATIONAL SHORT FILM FESTIVAL - CANADA
- 2024 REEL 2 REAL INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL FOR YOUTH - CANADA
- 2024 SMILE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH - INDIA
- 2024 BIG EYES, BIG MINDS - SINGAPORE INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S FILM FESTIVAL - SINGAPORE
- 2024 KINOLUB - INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH - POLAND
- 2024 OAKVILLE FESTIVALS OF FILM AND ART - CANADA
- 2024 SUNRISE FILM FESTIVAL - UK / NOMINATED: BEST INTERNATIONAL SHORT
- 2024 ASIAN AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL - USA
- 2024 SIDEWALK FILM FESTIVAL - USA
- 2024 SEOUL INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S FILM FESTIVAL - S. KOREA
- 2024 HOBNOBBEN FILM FESTIVAL - USA
- 2024 ODYSSEY FILM FESTIVAL - UK
- 2024 CINEMIRA FILM FESTIVAL FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH - HUNGARY
- 2024 SILICON VALLEY ASIAN PACIFIC FILM FESTIVAL - USA
- 2024 TACOMA FILM FESTIVAL - USA
- 2024 BUFFALO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL - USA
- 2024 WOODSTOCK FILM FESTIVAL - USA / NOMINATED: MARK BRAUNSTEIN AWARD
- 2024 REEL SISTERS OF THE DIASPORA FILM FESTIVAL & LECTURE SERIES - USA
- 2024 HOF INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL - GERMANY
- 2024 GALWAY FILM FLEADH - GENERATION FLEADH - IRELAND
- 2024 CINEMAGIC FILM FESTIVAL - UK
- 2024 MIRADA CORTA - MEXICO
- 2024 BOSTON INTERNATIONAL KIDS FILM FESTIVAL - USA
- 2024 ANCHORAGE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL - USA
- 2025 FESTIVAL CINÉ JUNIOR - FRANCE / WINNER: PRIX DU PUBLIC 7+
- 2025 FESTIVAL PLAY - PORTUGAL / WINNER: MEO JUNIOR JURY AWARD
- 2025 FARGO FILM FESTIVAL - USA
- 2025 NEPAL INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL - NEPAL
- 2025 PSAROLOCO INTL CHILDREN'S & YOUNG PEOPLE'S FILM FESTIVAL - GREECE
- 2025 PHOENIX FILM FESTIVAL - USA
- 2025 FILMFEST DRESDEN - GERMANY
- 2025 NEWFILMMAKERS LOS ANGELES - USA
- 2025 LOS ANGELES INTL CHILDREN'S FILM FESTIVAL - USA



Reviews

Cairo Zion with Malea Emma Tjandrawidjaja. Photo by Luna Cristales



“Sunflower Girl is a standout short film on the festival circuit this year, blending youthful innocence with deeper cultural reflections. Holly M. Kaplan crafts a heartfelt, visually stunning exploration of adolescence, first love and identity. With strong performances, especially from Malea Emma Tjandrawidjaja, and striking cinematography, this film leaves a lasting impression, offering a beautiful and nostalgic viewing experience. A must-watch for anyone seeking a thoughtful, emotional journey on screen. - Battle Royale With Cheese

“One of the best you can watch when you are having a bad day.”

“Despite the sorrowful undertones of the message, Kaplan manages to transmit through **SUNFLOWER GIRL** a very positive and upbeat message of hope. The narrative doesn’t dwell on the sadness, but rather on the adventure of finding your place in the world and discovering who you are, who you want to be. One of the best you can watch when you are having a bad day.”

- Cut To The Take

“An emotionally resonant coming-of-age story perfect for fans of THE FLORIDA PROJECT.”

“With intimate hand-held camera work and nuanced performances from the lead actors, Kaplan tells an emotionally resonant coming-of-age story perfect for fans of **THE FLORIDA PROJECT**. The film is vibrant and inventive, whilst always being entrenched in the world of a teenager.” - Rebys J. Hynes (UK Reviewer)

Contact

Writer/Director/Producer • Holly M. Kaplan

hollymkaplan@gmail.com

Producer • Seika Paradeis

seikaparadeis@gmail.com

SUNFLOWERGIRLFILM.COM

sunflowergirlfilm@gmail.com

Instagram: @sunflowergirlfilm

Twitter: @sunflowergrl_mov

TikTok: @sunflowergirlfilm



Still Photographs by Luna Cristales. Poster by Jee Kim

Funding for the Latino Lens: Narrative Short

Incubator for Women of Color 2022

was provided by

NALIP & Latino Lens Incubators

Sponsored by Netflix

Festival Distribution by

AFF Distribution

Sebastián Nadilo

affdistribution@gmail.com

AsianFilmFestivals.com/distribution

NALIP
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
LATINO INDEPENDENT PRODUCERS

SPONSORED BY
NETFLIX

MALEA EMMA TJANDRAWIDJAJA

Sunflower Girl

A FILM BY
HOLLY M. KAPLAN
李美娟

葵花女

NALIP AND LATINO LENS PRESENT | SPONSORED BY NETFLIX | A COLOR OUTSIDE THE LINE FILMS CO-PRODUCTION | A HOLLY M. KAPLAN FILM "SUNFLOWER GIRL"
MALEA EMMA TJANDRAWIDJAJA CAIRO ZION ABIGAIL LOPEZ DANIEL GIRDO FANNY LAWREN | COSTUMES DESIGNED BY DAN WANG
MUSIC BY KRISTINE BERNABE | EDITOR HAILEY CHOI | PRODUCTION DESIGNER MISHELLE MOY | DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY ZHEJIAN MICHAEL CONG
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER NALIP | WRITTEN BY HOLLY M. KAPLAN | PRODUCED BY SEIKA PARADEIS, HOLLY M. KAPLAN | DIRECTED BY HOLLY M. KAPLAN

NALIP
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
LATINO FILMMAKERS

SPONSORED BY
NETFLIX