

Val Emmich Anna Moore Halley Feiffer

Fighting Fish

an Annette Apitz film



PRESS KIT

www.fightingfishfilm.com

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FIGHTING FISH PRESS KIT

84 minutes, color, 2010

Tag Line

Sometimes you have to return home before you can leave home.

Synopsis

"Fighting Fish" is a drama about a brother and a sister in their early twenties who must overcome their tempestuous past in order to have a chance at real happiness.

Putting his dreams of traveling on hold, 21-year-old David still lives at home, taking care of his little brother and sister. When his wild and beautiful sister Alice returns after a long absence, their complicated past comes back to haunt them. As David falls in love with the new girl in town, Chris, Alice is driven to desperate measures to keep her brother close, and her world intact.

About the Film

"A tremendous achievement in storytelling, and it has left an indelible mark on me. Characters come first, allowing for a very human story to unfold almost effortlessly. The film reminds me of "You Can Count On Me," another excellent film dealing with siblings at opposite ends of the personality spectrum."

--Josh Mandel, head programmer of Slamdance

"Fighting Fish" is the first feature to come from Producer Bertha Pan's newly launched Slew Pictures production company. It is the award-winning writer/director Annette Apitz's feature-film debut, and the script was a Sundance Finalist (top 25). The film was shot on a RED camera over 17 days in upstate New York.

The talented cast includes Val Emmich, an actor and musician who has had recurring roles on "Ugly Betty" and "30 Rock," Halley Feiffer ("The Messenger," "Margot at the Wedding"), Anna Moore ("The Life Before her Eyes"), and Haviland Morris ("Sixteen Candles"). Three of Val Emmich's songs are on the film's soundtrack. Other soundtrack artists who supported this project include Elf Power, Imperial Teen, Chris Trapper, KaiserCartel, and Mark McAdams.

Festivals

2010 Nashville Film Festival: New Directors Competition

2010 Talking Pictures Film Festival, Chicago

2010 Rhode Island International Film Festival

2011 Visionfest, New York – BEST ACTRESS Anna Moore

2011 Toronto Independent Film Festival

2011 LA Femme Film Festival, Los Angeles – BEST FEATURE

Director's Statement

The script for Fighting Fish grew out of a script I was writing about an unhappy love affair between a man and a woman who shouldn't be together. At the same time I was exploring stories about families, and was becoming more and more aware of how greatly our upbringing can influence our behavior for the long term. These two interests became the script for Fighting Fish.

Fighting Fish explores some very troubling behavior. But to me, more than anything, the film is a story about family—in this case a very broken one. The damage that is done is just one symptom of a fractured family. The film shows us what happens when there is nothing left to hold onto in your world, and when your only chance of emotional survival is to create a substitute family.

One of my main challenges when making a film which contains a taboo element was not to have the viewer walk out of the theater feeling in any way soiled. Instead, I wanted people to walk out with a bittersweet smile on their face. So we made a film that is not just about a dark subject, but that is also about love, that's a romance, a coming of age tale, and a story about forgiveness. As a viewer you are torn—can you root for the characters caught in this disturbing relationship? You shouldn't, of course—but you almost want to. Which, of course, creates an unease of its own.

This is where the idea of empathy comes into play. As viewers, hopefully we understand how these characters come to behave the way they do. We feel their pain, and we see what motivates them. I hope this understanding and compassion stays with the viewer. I hope Fighting Fish gives everyone who sees the film a new perspective on previously held assumptions, because life is messy and things are never black and white. My hope is that the viewer will leave the theater stronger, having found compassion for these characters as they struggle to attain their freedom.

B i o s

Cast: Val Emmich (David)

Val Emmich has had recurring roles on "Ugly Betty," "30 Rock," "Cashmere Mafia," "Hope and Faith," "Third Watch," and "Ed." His feature film credits include "Bringing Rain," directed by Noah Bushel. He is also a musician and has released six solo LPs, including Slow Down Kid for Epic Records. He has toured with Dashboard Confessional, Better Than Ezra, and Gavin Degraw, among many others, and he was the first unsigned artist to be featured on MTV's Total Request Live. Val is also an author, and has just finished his debut novel, A Break in the Weathers. He is currently writing his second novel. His latest album, Aide Memoire, was released in October 2011.

Cast: Halley Feiffer (Chris)

Halley Feiffer's TV and film credits include HBO's "Mildred Pierce," "Law & Order," HBO's "Flight of the Conchords," "Bored to Death" and "The Wonderful Maladys," the Sundance-award winning films "You Can Count on Me," "Stephanie Daley," and Noah Baumbach's "The Squid and the Whale," as well as his most recent film "Margot at the Wedding;" recent films include "The Messenger," "Twelve Thirty," and Jared Hess' "Gentlemen Broncos." She made her Broadway debut in the current "The House of Blue Leaves" with Ben Stiller and Edie Falco. Her off-Broadway credits include "Tigers Be Still" (Roundabout), Second Stage's productions of "subURbia," "Election Day," and "Some Americans Abroad;" "None of the Above" (Lion Theatre), "Urgent Fury" (Cherry Lane Theatre), and "Feiffer's People" (Backhouse Productions). Regional credits include "Third" (Huntington Theatre Company), "Knock, Knock!" (Vineyard Playhouse) and "Jules' Blues" (NY Stage & Film.) Halley's work as a playwright has been produced at the Cherry Lane Theatre (Young Playwrights' Festival XXII) and the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. BA: Wesleyan University.

Cast: Anna Moore (Alice)

Originally from Berkeley, CA, Anna Moore moved to New York City to study acting when she was 17 years old.

Anna will next be seen acting in an episode of CBS's "Criminal Minds," in which she plays kidnap victim Mary Newsome. She has also appeared on NBC's "Law & Order: Criminal Intent", and starred in LOGO TV's short film "Not Gay" (Director Tony Wei). She was recently selected as the face of the MTV ad campaign for "Love Coach", and as a host of the third season of Director Jon Nash's "Venice Basketball League".

Anna made her feature film debut acting opposite Uma Thurman in "The Life Before Her Eyes" (Director Vadim Perelman's second feature). Anna will be appearing opposite Ellen Barkin in Director Cam Archer's upcoming feature film "Shit Year" (due for release in 2010). She also starred in the short film "Sam and Ben" (AZN TV), for which she was nominated as "Best Actress" at the 2008 International Asian American Film Festival in New York City.

Anna recently graduated from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, where she studied at The Atlantic Theater Company Acting School, The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, The Experimental Theatre Wing, as well as The International Theatre Workshop. During her time at NYU, Anna starred in productions of "Poe in April" (NYU Mainstage, New York, NY), "The Merchant of Venice" (RADA, London, UK), and "The Rimers of Eldrich" (Atlantic Theatre Company, New York, NY).

Cast: Haviland Morris (Lucy)

Haviland Morris has appeared in the films *Sixteen Candles*, *Who's That Girl?*, *Reckless*, *Love or Money*, *A Shock To The System*, *Gremlins 2: The New Batch*, *The Last Supper*, *Dear Diary*, *Home Alone 3*, *Rick*, *The Baxter*, *Joshua*, *Cherry Crush*, *Calling It Quits* and *Adam*. Television viewers have seen her in "Army Wives," "One Tree Hill," "One Life To Live," "Canterbury's Law," "Homicide: Life on the Street," "Sex and the City," "Cosby" "Diagnosis Murder," "Family Ties," the PBS American Playhouse films, *Andre's Mother*, *Life Under Water* and *Love and Other Sorrows*, and three different "Law and Order" franchises. Her Broadway credits include *Ring 'Round The Moon* and *Arcadia* (Lincoln Center Theater) and *Tartuffe: Born Again* (Circle in the Square). Off-Broadway, she has performed at Playwrights Horizons, Second Stage, Naked Angels, Manhattan Theatre Club, WPA, and Theatre Off-Park. She lives in NYC with her husband and two children, where she sells residential real estate for Halstead Property.

Cast: Nicole Ehinger (Dee)

Nicole Ehinger plays Abigail Williams in Disney's upcoming feature film "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" (2010 release). Other film credits include "Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs," "Tara," "Proud American;" and for TV, "Kidnapped."

Cast: Maximillian Sherer (Jeffrey)

Maximillian Sherer's Film and TV credits include NBC's "Saturday Night Live," "David Letterman," "Law and Order," "Law and Order: CI/SVU" and the film "No Plan." He is currently shooting the film, "Under the Influence," in which he plays 'Brian,' a major character. He appeared on Broadway in "The Coast of Utopia: Shipwreck." Max is also a regional chess champion.

Director/Writer: Annette Apitz

"Fighting Fish" is Annette's Apitz's feature film debut.

Annette received her B.A. at McGill University in Montreal. She then moved to Berlin, Germany, where she worked as an editor and producer's assistant. She returned to New

York to attend film school at Columbia University, where she got her M.F.A. in Film Directing.

Her short films have screened at the 2007 Tribeca Film Festival, the 2008 and 2007 Hamptons Film Festival, the Palm Springs International Film Festival, the Karlovy Vary Film Festival, the BBC British Short Film Festival, the Florida Film Festival, PBS, HBO, and MoMA, among many others. For her short "A River in India," Annette received the New Line Cinema Award at Columbia and won awards at the Austin Film Festival, the Crested Butte Reel Fest, and Film Fest New Haven. Her film "Alaska" won a Rosebud award, and her experimental short "The Visit" won a Director's Citation Award from the Black Maria Film Festival. Her script for "Fighting Fish" was in the Top 50 at Chesterfield Paramount and was a Sundance Finalist.

Annette is currently working as a producer, and just completed her documentary on the artist Kit Keith, which screened at the William Shearburn gallery in St. Louis. She is also writing the screenplay adaptation of the novel "The Homemaker", which she is attached to direct.

Producer: Bertha Bay-Sa Pan

Bertha Bay-Sa Pan received her M.F.A. from the Columbia University Graduate Film School in 1997 while working as an International Sales Executive in film distribution. Pan's directorial feature film debut "Face," starring Bai Ling, Treach, Kristy Wu, Kieu Chinh, Ken Leung, Tina Chen, and Will Yun Lee, co-written with Oscar-nominee Oren Moverman, and co-produced with Derrick Tseng and Jonathan Shoemaker, featuring a score composed by Leonard Nelson Hubbard of the Grammy Award winning hip hop band The Roots, premiered at the 2002 Sundance Film Festival in Dramatic Competition. During its festival run, "Face" received the Audience Award at the GenArt Film Festival, the Critics Award at the CineVegas Film Festival, and the Grand Jury Award at the Urbanworld Film Festival. Pan was nominated for the prestigious Open Palm at the Gotham Awards, and received the Premio Speciale Prize at the International Women's Film Festival in Torino. "Face" was released in theaters in 2005, receiving good reviews from major publications including The New York Times, Entertainment Weekly, The Hollywood Reporter, TV Guide, The San Francisco Chronicle, The Chicago Tribune, The Star-Ledger, and the BBC. Pan is a partner of Slew Pictures who produced, in addition to "Fighting Fish," "Almost Perfect," her sophomore directorial feature, starring Kelly Hu, Edison Chen, Ivan Shaw, Christina Chang, Tina Chen, and Roger Rees, which premiered at the 2011 San Francisco Asian American Film Festival, as well as "Norman Pinski Come Home," currently in development. Pan has also served as producer, line producer, associate producer, or production coordinator to numerous films, music videos, industrials, concerts and television programs.

Producer: Derrick Tseng

Derrick Tseng has co-produced or line produced numerous feature films, including Adrienne Shelly's "Sudden Manhattan," Kevin Smith's "Chasing Amy," Katherine Dieckmann's "A Good Baby," Brad Anderson's "Happy Accidents," Peter Lauer's "Cry Baby Lane," Patrick Stettner's "The Business of Strangers," Bertha Pan's "Face," David Gordon Green's "All the Real Girls" and "Snow Angels," Fenton Bailey and Randy Barbato's "Party Monster," Steve Buscemi's "Lonesome Jim," Robert Altman's "Tanner on Tanner," and David Wain's "The Ten."

Tseng has produced Todd Solondz's "Life During Wartime" and "Palindromes"; Bertha Pan's "Almost Perfect"; Clark Gregg's "Choke"; Randy Sharp's "Henry May Long"; the first season of Comedy Central's "Stella"; and "The Difference," a pilot for Nickelodeon. He is currently producing, among other projects, Alex Steyermark's "Reagan Youth," Nate Meyer's "Frat Girl," Art Jones's "Everything Must Go," and Michael Tully's "Ping Pong Summer."

He has also worked extensively on other feature films as the 1st AD or Production Manager,

and, formerly, as an IATSE Electrician. He has assisted on, or helped develop, projects with Kimberly Peirce, Lodge Kerrigan, Maggie Greenwald, Steve Buscemi, Stanley Tucci, Jonathan Nossiter, Jay Chandrasekhar, and Jim McKay. Tseng attended NYU's Graduate Film Program, and holds an M.A. in English and Comparative Literature from NYU and a B.A. in English and Art History from Columbia University.

Credits

Slew Pictures presents
in association with Cineric Inc.
Val Emmich
Anna Moore
Halley Feiffer
Haviland Morris
in an Annette Apitz film

Cast

| | |
|---------------|--------------------|
| David | Val Emmich |
| Alice | Anna Moore |
| Chris | Halley Feiffer |
| Lucy | Haviland Morris |
| Jeffrey | Maximillian Sherer |
| Dee | Nicole Ehinger |
| John | Ryan Metcalf |
| Will | Patrick Cohen |
| Bartender | David Forman |
| Nurse #1 | Nikki E. Walker |
| Jean | Kimberley Wurster |
| Pet Store Boy | Ryan Looney |
| Mary | Peggy Gormley |
| Teenage Boy | Xander Johnson |
| Weatherman | Jim Chu |

Crew

| | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| Written & Directed by | Annette Apitz |
| Produced by | Bertha Bay-Sa Pan |
| Produced by | Derrick Tseng, Annette Apitz |
| Executive Producer | Jim Chu |
| Co-Producers | Caroline Axelrod, Lauren Lillie, Riva Marker, Balazs Nyari |
| Director of Photography | Doug Emmett |
| Editors | Sheri Bylander, Rachel Kittner |
| Production Designer | Molly Page |
| Music by | André Fratto |
| Music Supervisor | Sherry Beth Mounce |
| Costume Designer | Monica Noh |
| Casting by | Antonia Dauphin and Kathleen Backel |
| Location Consultants | Bill Stitt and Joan Knight |
| Location Managers | Daniel Bisbing, Barbara Sebring-Forman |
| Co-Location Manager | Andy Paluselli |
| 2nd Assistant Director | Andy Paluselli |
| Set PA's | Ace Desiena, Courtney Hope, Dianna Scolaro |
| Script Supervisor | Justin Reichman |

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Add'l Script Supervisor | Biljana Ilic |
| Art Director | Bobbi Jo Gonzales |
| Leadman | Jesse Cain |
| Props | Stacey Wei |
| Graphic Artist | Brian Cunningham |
| 1st Assistant Camera | Johnny Sousa |
| Additional 1st AC | Patrick Ng |
| Stills Photographers | Dianna Scolaro, Stacey Wei |
| Gaffer | Matthew Kehoe |
| Key Grip | Rawle Stapleton |
| Grip | Keith Hopkins |
| Location Sound Mixer | Marco Leavitt |
| Additional Sound Mixer | Rawle Stapleton |
| Ass't Costume Designer | Arielle Silva |
| Wardrobe Supervisor | Alice Garland |
| Hair & Make-Up Artist | Nicole Wodowski |
| Stunt Coordinator | Jared Burke |
| Fight Coordinator | Rawle Stapleton |
| Bird Wrangler | Gary Newkirk |
| Chef | Xina Lewis |
| Pastry & Assistant Chef | Angela Fucich |
| Extras Casting | Barbara Sebring-Forman |
| Post Production Supervisor | Riva Marker |
| First Assistant Editor | Dylan Correll |
| Assistant Editor | Eugene Yi |
| Post Production PA | Zana Lawrence |
| Dialogue Editor | Abigail Savage |
| Sound FX Editor | Abigail Savage, Jake Aron |
| Re-recording Mixer | Ian Stynes |
| Foley Artist | Shaun Brennan |
| Foley Engineer | Jake Aron |
| ADR Supervisor | Ian Stynes and Britt Myers |

S o u n d t r a c k

"Undone"

Performed by Imperial Teen

Written by Roddy Bottum, Lynn Truell, Will Schwartz, Joan Stebbins

From the album On

"Time To Forgive"

Written and Performed by Chris Trapper

From the album Songs From The Middle of the World, Solo/Acoustic Rarities Vol. 1

"Weightless"

Written and Performed by Chris Trapper

From the album Songs From The Drive-In

"Down"

Written and Performed by Val Emmich

From the album Little Daggers

"Sugar"

Performed by Imperial Teen

Written by Roddy Bottum, Lynn Truell, Will Schwartz, Joan Stebbins
From the album On

"Darling Denise"

Written and Performed by Val Emmich
From the album Little Daggers

"Quiver and Quake"

Performed by Elf Power
Written by Andrew Rieger

"Ded"

Written and Performed by Paul Hsu

"Old School vs. Liberty Girls"

Performed by The Weather Machines
Written by Jason Ward

"High Noon"

Written and Performed by Val Emmich
From the album Sunlight Searchparty

"Okay"

Performed by KasierCartel
Written by Courtney Kaiser and Benjamin Cartel
From the album March Forth

"Never Stay Around Too Long"

Performed by This Car Up
From the album Smile When You're Alone

"Ten Bells"

Performed by Landlord
Written by Esfand, Andre Bella, and Justin Squezello

"2 O'Clock in the A.M."

Performed by Swati
Written by Swati Sharma

"Drunken Waltz"

Performed by Mark McAdam & Rain Phoenix
Music by Mark McAdam and Rod Sherwood, Lyrics by McAdam

"Dinosaur Yard"

Written and Performed by John Ross

"Avalanche"

Written and Performed by Chris Trapper
From the album Songs From The Middle of the
World, Solo/Acoustic Rarities Vol. 1

HOLLYWOOD REPORTER

CLIPS

A GIGANTIC 'DEATH'

New York-based Gigantic Releasing has acquired all North American and English-speaking territory rights to Morgan Dews' documentary "Must Read After My Death," which will have its U.S. premiere today at the Los Angeles Film Festival. The film, which spans 10 years in the lives of a

Hartford, Conn., couple and their four children, will be released theatrically this year.

SEALED WITH A KISS

What's a kiss from 007 worth? James Bond film producer Barbara Broccoli has paid \$38,000 for a kiss from **Daniel Craig**, who plays the British spy onscreen. Broccoli also will get



kisses from Hugh Grant and Robbie Coltrane for her winning bid at the Great British Movie

Event benefit for the National Film and Television School.

FIRST IN A SLEW

Director Bertha Bay-Sa Pan is forming a New York-based

production shingle, Slew Pictures, and will direct one of the banner's nascent projects, the romantic comedy "Almost Perfect," with Will Yun Lee attached to star. The company also is producing the family drama "Fighting Fish," with Annette Apitz directing from her own script.

CRISP UPPED AT SONY

Grover Crisp has been upped to senior vp asset management, film restoration and digital mastering at Sony Pictures Entertainment. Crisp, who was a vp, will oversee all facets of the restoration, preservation and mastering program for the Columbia and TriStar Pictures feature film and TV libraries.

lot about yourself.

Are you concerned that you're going to get typecast as a pretty boy romantic lead?

Well, I might have been scared of that before this film but this guy is a regular Joe. He's not good with women. I changed my look for it. I think it will go against any kind of type that I've been. But yeah, let's put it this way: I don't need to play anymore "cute guy seductress" roles.

What are the rewards of acting?

One of the rewards is getting into someone else's shoes. I had to learn how to drive a stick [for the film]. I like the idea that potentially you could learn how to ride a horse, climb a mountain, or shoot a rifle. You could learn different languages. You really get to expand yourself.

What are the challenges of acting compared to playing music?

It's different. You have to find a way to say the line that is written. It's an interpretation and then a performance. In film, it's even less about what you are saying. The slightest move can say a lot. Both are very physical, both are visual. I finally learned technical stuff like hitting your mark. I think my music career has helped with that. I've done several videos. I'm not surprised by a camera.

How does your music influence your acting and vice versa?

Probably just in the trust in yourself. When I write a song I'm trusting that a person will get the feeling that I'm having. It's all about relating a story. But it comes down to trusting that I know what human emotion is. The difference is, is it a line in a song or is it a thing that I'm doing physically on camera? So being in tune with that is the common thread.

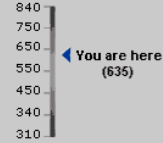
Do you find that acting is a break from the demands of music?

When I get to play music again, I really appreciate it. In our society, it is so compartmentalized. I went back to my college and met an old professor. They are having me at career night which is a tremendous thrill because it validates me in a weird way. My major was American Studies and English and Philosophy. But I didn't compartmentalize—I never wanted to be just one thing. And I bet most people are like that, but it's hard to do all those things and make a living. So I feel lucky.

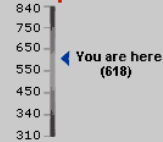
Do you fear that a successful acting career might leave no time for music?

You always make time for things you love. And if I go through a period where it's not in my life

Experian



Equifax



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Val Emmich proves himself as a multi-talented artist by recording and penning his own songs as well as taking roles on TV series, 'Ugly Betty', and indie movie, 'Fighting Fish'.

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MOBILE



Val Emmich's sixth studio album "[Little Daggers](#)" has been released since September 23 in the U.S. under [New York](#) indie label Bluehammock Music. Bringing "shorter and more concise" songs, the effort was produced by himself and aimed to "pack a lot of punch in a little space and have plenty of ear candy for people to catch on

multiple listens."

Beside producing the album, Emmich also penned almost all the new singles off the record. "I really do care about every word that goes into them and I really like artists that do the same," Emmich commented on his songwriting credit. "I do this because I like it, and I work hard at it and I keep trying to get there."

Outside his activity of making music, Emmich also tries his hand at the acting scene. He will be playing Jesse, Betty's love interest, in several upcoming episodes of ABC's [television](#) comedy-drama series, "[Ugly Betty](#)". "It's a daunting task and in some ways winless, because those two characters were really loved," he told AceShowbiz on [an exclusive interview](#).

On top of all his singing and acting exploration, Emmich will also star on an independent movie titled "Fighting Fish". He will land the part as a "twenty-one year old guy who is forced to take care of his young step-brother and step-sister because his mother is in a mental hospital and his father is dead."

Admitting that taking roles on the movie is "an amazing thrill and a great challenge," Emmich revealed his desire to do more films. "I want to take roles that are far away from what I am in my normal life. That's what an actor wants. He doesn't want to play himself. I want to test my limits as an actor and as a human," he stated.

WOMEN AND HOLLYWOOD

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Women and Hollywood

Melissa Silverstein is a writer, blogger and marketing consultant with an expertise in the area of social media regarding women and Hollywood. She is the founder and editor of Women and Hollywood, one of the most respected sites for issues related to women and film as well as other areas of pop culture. She is the Artistic Director and co-founder of the Athena Film Festival – A Celebration of Women and Leadership at Barnard College in NYC. The second annual festival will take place from February 9-12, 2012.

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Guest Post: Fighting Fish - The Story of Making an Ultra-Low-Budget Indie by Annette Apitz



A very wise woman said to me after I finished my first feature film, "Congratulations. With independent films, you really have to will them into existence."

Making my first feature film was definitely a matter of both persistence and desire. It took about 6 years to get "[Fighting Fish](#)" made, but it was worth it—I always say the year I made

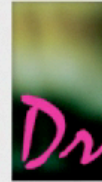
"[Fighting Fish](#)" was the best year of my life. I couldn't have done it without my collaborators, of course, or my husband, who took care of our 1 1/2 year old twin daughters while I was shooting.

As for the desire part: I HAD to make this film. The story was a personal one, and not making the film was like talking with nobody listening. I wanted to be heard.

The thesis short that I made at Columbia University led me to getting some meetings and sending out the script for "Fighting Fish." Jean Doumanian Productions ended up optioning the script. I think they would have rather had me on board as just the writer (I had previously directed only short films), but I insisted on being attached as

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- + Arts Meme
- + Awards Daily
- + Bird's Eye View Blog
- + Blogger
- + Change.org-Women's Rights
- + Chicken & Egg Pictures
- + Critical Women in Film
- + Deadline Hollywood
- + Echidne of the Snakes
- + Everyday Goddess
- + Feministe
- + Feministing
- + Film Essent
- + Flickrrrl
- + Power Up
- + Global Sister
- + indieWIRE
- + In the Trenches Productions
- + Jezebel
- + Mama at the Movies
- + Movie Lovers Only
- + Ms. Magazine
- + No Meaner Place
- + New York Women in Film & TV
- + Paradigm Shift
- + Pop Candy
- + Project Lifesize
- + Reel Women
- + Shakesville
- + Sunset Gun
- + Sydney's Buzz

the director. The company was unable to raise the financing, but I did have the opportunity to work with the production company's fantastic development team, and together we got the script into really good shape.

After two more years of my trying to find producers, a close friend from film school, Bertha Pan, turned to me and said, "Why don't I help you make this film?" She was a director and a producer, and was getting her production company off the ground. We worked on the screenplay some more, knowing that the script was all we had in our corner. The script was one reason people came on board. The other reason were the people involved with the film. Having experienced producers assured those who joined the team that they were in good hands. A good cast further elevated the film.

Two more years of us trying to get financing passed. Being a working mother of two who was trying to get her film made definitely had its challenges, but it also served me in that I had to steal time where I could, which kept me connected to the project over this long period of time. I had been saving money that I made working as a writer, putting away a little bit each month for the movie. And I had some savings. I bit the bullet and said to Bertha, "I have some money I can invest." One of our producers rightly did not think we could shoot this film on location for that amount. Another investor then came on board, and with an under \$100,000 production budget we were ready to shoot. I believe my first cash investment gave our second investor the confidence to invest. It also gave everyone the psychological push that this was really going to happen.

Once we had our budget, our first and biggest hire was our casting directors. We hired SAG actors under the SAG ultra-low budget (at the time, less than \$200,000) agreement. The producers then put together a great crew, who worked on a stipend or for free. What the crew got was a step up on their resume, or a clip for their reel. Though, there were quite a few people involved who didn't need to do this for their resume, but who gave their time, knowledge and talent because they love making films. This is probably one of the most exciting things about low-budget films—no one's in it for the money! It sounds sarcastic, but there really is a purity about working this way.

We were lucky, we got to shoot on a RED, since our DP was able to get an affordable camera rental. I had always wanted to shoot on Super 16, but seeing what the Red could do, I had complete confidence we could achieve the look we wanted. We shot for 17 days in Woodstock, and drove the film down to New York City to the editor.

- + Tennessee Guerilla Women
- + Women in Film
- + Thompson on Hollywood
- + Women in Film and TV
- London
- + Women in Media & News
- + Women Make Movies
- + Women's Voices for Change
- + Women's Media Center
- + Women Film Critics Circle
- + Zelda Lily
- + Variety

Tweets

Women and Hollywood Weekly Update of Women's Films for August 26, 2011
<http://t.co/qdDYokR>
 #constantcontact about 2 hours ago

New at Women and Hollywood: Interview with Circumstance Writer and Director Maryam Keshavarz <http://ow.ly/6duxG> about 3 hours ago

Check out this great piece on the Burton sisters - filmmakers who work and support each other <http://ow.ly/6dACk> about 3 hours ago

New at Women and Hollywood: Zoe Saldana

She edited out of her home on Final Cut Pro.

We did not have a budget for post-production. The producers cobbled together a post budget out of equity and deferrals so we could finish the film properly. Still, our post-budget is more than twice the production budget. You have to have a professional sound edit and mix, color correction, and conforms. There is no way around that.

I feel like everybody can make this kind of film maybe once in their life—I certainly would not want to ask people to work for like this again. And today, every person who worked on “Fighting Fish” definitely gets money from me for their Kickstarter campaign. Which goes a little bit further than my undying gratitude.

We are continuing our festival screenings, and with our sales agent (who contacted us after our premiere at Nashville) are working on getting the film out to the public. That is a whole different journey.

Making a film like this truly is like having a baby. You can't just carry your story around inside you. You have to show it to the world. And the labor and commitment involved is intense. Everybody on low-budget films does so much more than their job description. If you don't have the deep desire to make your film, it could probably be a pretty harrowing experience. And remember you can't make a film on your own. In my corner I had actors, a crew, producers, and a supportive husband.

Now, several years after shooting, I'm finally feeling like an artist again, as cheesy as that may sound. I'm taking things in, looking for inspiration and writing. All that too takes a while to get back. But I can't wait to do it all again. I hope to have the opportunity.

“Fighting Fish” has its New York premiere on June 22nd as the Opening Night Film of the [NY Visionfest](#). Annette Apitz is a writer and director who lives in Brooklyn with her family.

Melissa Silverstein posted to [Festivals](#), [Women Directors](#), [Women Writers](#) at 8:21 am on June 14, 2011 | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#)