

Borscht Films and Masha & Aliona

*Present*

**ABBY AND EMILY  
GO TO  
PALM SPRINGS**

A film by **Hellin Kay**

2020 / USA / Color / 14 Minutes / English

*“What a whirlwind! I love the way the conflict is laid over the loving shots. It’s beautiful! Beautifully shot, sexy, funny. So many lovely moments.”*

*-Nina Renata Aron, Author, “Destroyer of Men’s Souls”*



# SYNOPSIS

Abby and Emily are from two different worlds but so badly want to mold them into one. This is a story many of us have lived through; the roller coaster of communication and misunderstandings and trying to speak another person's love language, which sometimes gets lost in translation. And also, trying not to kill the person you love while on a vacation together.

**ABBY AND EMILY GO TO PALM SPRINGS** is a brief glimpse into the lives of two very different women from equally divergent worlds who have just started dating, as they try to navigate their particular language of love on a road trip to Palm Springs.

With the occasional intrusion of friends from both camps, it doesn't attempt to resolve every romantic blunder but instead exposes the raw roller coaster of emotions that rise to the surface even as love starts to set in.

It is at times funny, maddening, confusing, painful, and in the end, very real.

In short, love drives you crazy. But it's worth the ride.



*"I made this film because it makes me feel seen and shows the beauty of surrendering to the messiness of love."*

*-- Nancy Degnan, Producer*



# DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

**ABBY AND EMILY** is a universal story but also one with an obvious personal connection to my own life. It is the story of one woman who recently comes out as Queer and her partner, who has always been confidently gay and out. They come from very different backgrounds, different careers, and different lifestyles, but the one thing they have in common is each other. And the insanity of trying to communicate with someone you love.

My mom and I came to the US from the Soviet Union in 1980 after months of traveling as refugees through Europe. At 15 I fell in love with creating music videos and decided I wanted to make films for the rest of my life, which I've managed to do in one form or another ever since. I also knew I wanted to be with women by the time I was in middle school, but sex and sexuality were not big topics in my household. Russian immigrants are not really known for their skills in communication and it took a lot of effort to unlearn some of that stuff. In the back of my mind I always knew I would eventually end up with a woman as my life partner. One of my first short films, which I made at 21 in New York, centered on a young woman contemplating a marriage proposal from her boyfriend as she struggles with her sexuality and what she wants out of life. Spoiler alert, she says no to the proposal.

I've always tried to tell women's stories in a real, raw and uncompromising way, even when it was scary to expose my own struggles. I have spent a lifetime searching for answers and figuring out what it means to be a woman and who gets to dictate what we say, how we act, who we date and where we belong. And the answer I have come full circle to is no one but US. No one but YOU gets to decide any of that. It's taken me a minute to remember that.

*“The film is so beautiful, such a true and original idea for conveying certain relationship dynamics that are almost never seen on screen. The things unsaid, the subtext, of the simplest conversations. It was such familiar territory but so exquisitely surprising to see it on film!”*

*-- Jardine Libaire, Author, “White Fur”*



# DIRECTOR Q&A

**Why did you make your film?** I really wanted to tell a love story that is not perfect, that doesn't pretend to be all sunshine and roses; a messy story, which a lot of people experience but don't really want to talk about. The fighting, the inability to communicate and the deep felt desire to connect with another human. Regardless of your sexuality or sexual orientation this applies to all relationships.

**Imagine I'm a member of the audience. Why should I watch this film?** I think if you've ever been in any kind of relationship you will relate. It may make you cringe or cry or laugh but it will also make you feel less alone because we all deal with this need to be heard and the deep frustration and even anger when we are not.

**How do personal and universal themes work in your film?** Falling in love is as complicated as the human condition itself. You can feel lonely in a relationship as much as you can also feel ecstatic while basking in someone else's love. Figuring out who we are while also contemplating who we belong with is a lifetime process and whether we are single or coupled it is convoluted and can be equally painful and joyful. Kind of like everything in life.





Canon

Shirin Neshat

WOMEN ON WOMEN





6 FT

5 FT

# CAST



**JESSIE COHEN**

as Abby

Most recently Jessie Cohen (She/Her) appeared in **DAVID FINCHER**'s Oscar nominated feature film **MANK** alongside Gary Oldman, Amanda Seyfried and Charles Dance. You can also see her as a recurring in the Freeform Network's wildly popular hit **GOOD TROUBLE**.

She originally hails from upstate New York, where she studied cinema and theatre at Syracuse University before heading to Hollywood. Since her arrival in Los Angeles she has had the privilege to work with industry standouts such as the Duplass Brothers, Nicole Holofcener and Mike Judge.

Jessie has appeared on HBO's **SILICON VALLEY**, **TOGETHERNESS**, Hulu's **THE MINDY PROJECT** and most recently this short film, which she felt connected to immediately.

# CAST



**VICTORIA VICO ORTIZ**

as Emily

Vico Ortiz ( They/She/Him) is your charismatic gender-fluid Latinx actor hailing from the gorgeous island of Puerto Rico. Most recently they were cast in the HBO Max period pirate comedy **OUR FLAG MEANS DEATH**.

Their focus has been creating visibility for Latinx Queers on Stage, Film and TV. Recently you've seen them on **VIDA**, **AMERICAN HORROR STORY: 1984**, **EVERYTHING'S GONNA BE OKAY** on the Freeform Network, and the YouTube sensation **THESE THEM**s.

In the short narrative category you've seen them in **MISDIRECTION**, **VAMONOS**, and most recently **ABBY AND EMILY GO TO PALM SPRINGS**.

Coming soon is a new Amazon Prime TV series. To follow their Queer ventures go to Instagram: @Puertoricaninja







# CAST



**JESSALYN WANLIM**

as Liz

Originally from Calgary, Alberta, Jessalyn Wanlim (She/Her) pursued dance at the National Ballet School of Canada and furthered her artistic endeavors at The Juilliard School in New York. She can currently be seen in the Canadian (and now North American) hit **WORKIN MOMS**, which just premiered Season 4.

She is widely known for her roles in the CW hit **GOSSIP GIRL, THE CLOSER, PSYCH, MODERN FAMILY, ALEX CROSS, SCOUNDRELS, THE AFFAIR**, as well as her breakout role as Evie Cho in the popular BBC America series **ORPHAN BLACK**, opposite Tatiana Maslany.

Jessalyn currently lives in Los Angeles with her loving husband and new baby boy.

# CAST



**BOB CLENDENIN**

as The Bartender

Bob Clendenin (He/Him) film roles include **PAUL BART, WISH YOU WERE HERE, LA CONFIDENTIAL, DUDE WHERE'S MY CAR** and **STAR TREK**.

He has been a series regular on **COUGAR TOWN** with Courtney Cox, **QUICKDRAW (HULU), 10 ITEMS OR LESS (TBS), SCRUBS, NCIS, GOOD GIRLS, GRIMM, LONGMIRE, THE CLOSER, MYNAME IS EARL, THAT 70S SHOW** with Topher Grace and Laura Prepon, **FELICITY, THE PRACTICE, UGLY BETTY, MONK, NYPD BLUE,** and **WILL AND GRACE** .

He is a founding member of Circle X Theatre and most recently can be seen on **MIXED-ISH** with Tracee Ellis Ross.

He lives in Burbank California with his wife, two sons and a pug named Marge.

# ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS



# DIRECTOR HELLIN KAY



Hellin Kay is a writer, producer and director from New York and Los Angeles.

After emigrating from the Soviet Union to Baltimore Maryland as a kid Hellin picked up her first camera at the age of 14 and has been telling stories with it ever since. She studied at Bard College in New York, where she earned her BA & MFA in film, studying with Adolfo Meks, Carolee Schneemann, and Peter Hutton, while writing and directing seven short films.

Most recently she was a finalist for Ryan Murphy's Half Initiative and wrote, directed and produced the film **ANATOMY**. Her films **BORSHT**, **BARRY PAUL** and **EVERY WOMAN WAS ONCE A LITTLE GIRL WITH DREAMS** were all screened and honored at multiple US film festivals.

She wrote, directed and produced **WAS ONCE A GIRL** on location in Moscow Russia, which screened at festivals including IFFM in New York where it was written up as a "One To Watch" by Amy Taubin in the Village Voice and Filmmaker Magazine. She is developing a feature film on a legendary female music icon and a female centered pilot set in the world of entertainment as well as **INTIMATE LIES**, a scripted series based on British Gossip columnist Sheila Graham's three-year relationship with legendary writer F. Scott Fitzgerald in Hollywood during the 30's and 40's, just before his death.

She is an avid road tripper, music lover, and film fanatic.



# CINEMATOGRAPHER LUDOVICA ISIDORI



Ludovica Isidori holds an MA in Cinema and Television studies from IULM, Milano and an MFA in Cinematography from AFI, Los Angeles; there she received the Olivadotti Scholarship for craftsmanship excellence.

In 2013 Ludovica's graduated from the American Film Institute with a thesis shot on 35mm, **BAMIDBAR**. The short won the Best Short at the LAJFF and screened at numerous film festivals (Shanghai International Film Festival, Hof International Film Festival, Fort Lauderdale International Film Festival, and the Champs-Elysees Film Festival.)

In 2015, Ludovica was selected as a Cinematography Fellow for Project Involve, the diversity program of Film independent. Since then, her projects have premiered at SXSW, Slamdance, HBO, Outfest, Diversity in Cannes and many others.

In October 2017, she won Best Cinematography at the Gary International Black Film Festival for her short, **INTERCEPT**. Other prizes include il Premio Daniele Cipri per la Fotografia at the Movie Valley Film Festival, in Italy, for the short film **PEGGIE**.

## CAITLIN WELL (CASTING DIRECTOR)

Well began her career in casting as an assistant to Casting Director Ronna Kress. She also worked for Bestrop/Yanklewitz Casting before becoming an associate at Warner Bros. in 2011. Caitlin has worked with such esteemed directors as Baz Luhrmann, Ben Affleck, Zack Snyder, George Miller, and the Wachowskis, among others. Some of her film credits include **FRANKENWEENIE**, **THE LUCKY ONE**, **HAPPY FEET 2** and **MAN OF STEEL**. She has also overseen the casting of various Warner Bros. projects, including **ARGO**, **CLOUD ATLAS**, and **WINTER'S TALE**, **FURY ROAD**, **300: RISE OF AN EMPIRE**, **ALL YOU NEED IS KILL**, and **THIS IS WHERE I LEAVE YOU**. Caitlin launched Presser Well Casting with Jennifer Presser in February 2019.

## ELODIE ICHTER (COLORIST)

Elodie began her career at Eclair Laboratoire in Paris, where she worked closely with Yvan Lucas, known widely for his films **SEVEN** (director: David Fincher, 1995) and **AMELIE** (director Jean Pierre Jeunet, 2001). After several years of working in Paris she was invited by Yvan to work with him in Los Angeles, where she arrived ten years ago and has since continued her work as a colorist at Shed in Santa Monica, recently merged with Harbor Pictures. She has worked with Joon-ho Bong on **OKJA**, Francis Lawrence on **THE HUNGER GAMES**, Tommy Lee Jones on **THE HOMESMAN** and Anjelina Jolie on **IN THE LAND OF BLOOD AND HONEY**. Most recently she worked on **ONCE UPON A TIME IN HOLLYWOOD** with Quentin Tarantino and spent six months in New York working with Martin Scorsese on **THE IRISHMAN**.

## JENN PRESSER (CASTING DIRECTOR)

Presser's work as a Casting Associate includes titles **THE HELP** (Emma Stone, Viola Davis, Jessica Chastain), **THE VAMPIRE DIARIES**, **COUNTRY STRONG** (Gwyneth Paltrow), **THE OTHER GUYS** (Will Farrell, Mark Wahlberg, Eva Mendes), **THE SPACE BETWEEN US** (Gary Oldman), **DUMPLIN** (Jennifer Aniston), and many more. Presser launched Presser Well Casting with Caitlin Well in February 2019 where they have worked as the Casting Directors of hit show **CLAWS** (Neicy Nash, Carrie Preston) among other film projects currently in production.



# PRODUCER NANCY DEGNAN

Nancy Degnan began her career in Los Angeles working simultaneously as an actor, an executive assistant for an independent production company, and on television shows such as **RAY DONOVAN** and **WESTWORLD**.

In 2017, Nancy produced **BUCK RUN**, which premiered at the Palm Springs Intl. Film Festival, and has been winning awards around the country. She produced her second feature film this year, **SILENT NOTES**, starring deaf actor Daniel Durant (**SPRING AWAKENING**), now in post-production.

As an Associate Producer, Degnan joined with Director, Jennifer Pepperman for the production of web-series **AFTER FOREVER** starring Kevin Spirtas (**DAYS OF OUR LIVES**) and Mitchell Anderson (**DOOGIE HOWSER, M.D.**), which won five Daytime Emmys, setting a record for the most Emmys won by an LGTBQ series in one year.

# EXECUTIVE PRODUCER MICHELLE L. MORBY

Originally from Buenos Aires, Argentina she is a multi media artist living in San Francisco.

Her work has been exhibited at The Wood Street Galleries in Pittsburgh, Ochi Gallery in Sun Valley and has been shown alongside Dennis Hopper, Andy Goldsworthy, and William Pope L.

She has been an active supporter and producer of cinema including Nao Bustamante's short Film **TABLEAU**.

She is the founder of the "Dinner Party Residency" and this summer was an artist in residence at "The Annex" in Castine, Maine.





***Film Contact:***

Hellin Kay

Masha And Aliona Films

917-678-4407

[hellinkay@gmail.com](mailto:hellinkay@gmail.com)