

ABOUT SUNNY

Written and directed by Bryan Wizemann



Lauren Ambrose - 2012
Independent Spirit Award
Nominee Best Female Lead



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DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

“This film has no prescribed agenda, no singular insights to any given truth, but by remaining invested in a kind of emotional truth, it does aim to reveal something of the human condition. Poverty is the actual antagonist in this film, the ghost in the machine, and I wanted to allude to that constant pressure visually and dramatically. It's also a very personal project. Though I set out to create a work of fiction, I'm constantly surprised by how much of my own early adolescence found its way into the script. I ended up exorcising a few demons in its making, and though it took a lot out of me, I'm better for it.”

Bryan Wizemann

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Beneath the neon glow of Las Vegas, Angela is a single mother struggling to make ends meet for her daughter, Sunny. When her life hits a breaking point, she is faced with an impossible choice: keep trying to make things work, or let it all go for the promise of something better.

EXTENDED SYNOPSIS

About Sunny is the heartrending story of a woman on the brink. Angela Jacobs (Lauren Ambrose), a single mother in Las Vegas, is one paycheck away from complete desperation. Living with her eight-year-old daughter Sunny (Audrey Scott) is a day-to-day struggle to keep from going under. They have a dog named Casey, Sunny needs some new shoes, and they never have any money.

Angela is soon presented with an opportunity. Her boss, Ted (David Conrad), invites her to participate in a real estate investment deal, promising that if she gives him two-grand she can triple it. Angela has a crush on Ted, and struggles to find a way to raise the cash. She calls her absent ex-husband and makes a deal with him: wire the money and she won't come after any unpaid child-support. He obliges, and Angela picks up the wire.

Meanwhile, Angela strikes up a friendship with Max (Dylan Baker), a co-worker at the call-center where she works. Max is a part-time photographer at Sears and offers to take free portraits of Sunny for her upcoming birthday. Max tells Angela about his sister, Louise (Penelope Ann Miller), a childless woman who has been trying in vain to adopt. Angela invites Max to Sunny's birthday party; Max invites Louise. At the party, Louise spends time with Sunny and really falls for her. She offers to baby-sit her, to tutor her, to help her. Angela, desperate for assistance, reluctantly agrees.

When Sunny's party ends, Angela's two thousand dollars is gone. She panics, blames Sunny, calls the police. The money is nowhere to be found. The next day Angela tells Ted that the money has been stolen, but he takes her for a liar and fires her. In a last-ditch effort Angela rushes home and tries to convince the next door neighbor's son to steal her car so she can collect the insurance, but he refuses. Angela has run out of options. She has nowhere to turn.

But another opportunity arises: Max takes her and Sunny out to dinner and tells her of how much his sister wants to help Sunny. Louise cares for Sunny very much. She and her husband want to give her all the opportunities that Angela cannot. They want to help Sunny, where they live, with people they know. Louise and her husband have money; they want to give it to Angela. Twenty thousand dollars for a better life for all. Angela takes Sunny and rushes out of the restaurant.

A frantic Angela takes Sunny out into the night. They try to track down the shoes Sunny badly needs, but nothing is open. Angela takes them to the Ponderosa Motel and gets a room with the last of their money. She calls Max. Max arrives at the motel with an envelope. Angela tells Max and Louise to meet them at a spot by the side of the highway.

Angela takes Sunny to a remote spot on the Boulder Highway. Max and Louise are there. Angela tells Sunny that she is going to visit Louise in Canada for a while. Sunny does not understand why. Angela tries to get Sunny into her jacket, preparing her for the trip. Her heart is torn apart. Max and Louise are waiting. Angela struggles to find the courage to give away her child...

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

ABOUT SUNNY was previously titled THINK OF ME during its festival run.

About Sunny is a personal project for its writer/director Bryan Wizemann. Raised in Las Vegas with a younger brother by a single mother, his father abandoned his family after their divorce. They were left with nothing. After years of hardship, his mother eventually opened and ran a successful real estate business, only to suffer an embezzlement that forced her into bankruptcy. Her economic plight helped spur a four-year gambling addiction, which inspired Bryan's previous feature film *Losing Ground*. *About Sunny* revisits some of that childhood where emotional volatility and always just scraping by was the norm.

Las Vegas has always been a strange, artificial place, built for dreaming and scheming; its permanent residents share a peculiar kind of character, each one starring in their own personal movie. For decades it was the fastest growing city in the country, until the 2008 recession decimated both the gaming industry and the construction boom. The housing vacancy rate quickly rose from 4.5 percent to 7 percent, and now thousands of newly built condos sit empty, baking in the desert sun. On December 17th, 2010, the

week *About Sunny* wrapped production, the *New York Times* reported that Nevada had registered the highest unemployment rate in the nation.

About Sunny is a film about Las Vegas that never visits the Strip; its characters live in other parts of town, occasionally feeding some quarters into a video poker machine at the grocery store but only ever venturing into a Casino for a cheap breakfast. The city and its decay is a backdrop for a universal story about how hard it is to get by and how easy it sometimes seems to just give up.

Production began in November 2010 in and around downtown and “old Vegas.” The director of photography, Mark Schwartzbard, had worked with Mr. Wizemann on over five film projects, including the feature *Losing Ground*; he, like most of the crew, was based in New York and Los Angeles and came to Nevada for the film. A series of adjacent apartments were rented that contained the main sets, dressing rooms, production office and edit suite; occasionally visiting crew members would sleep in one of the upstairs bedrooms. The film was shot in 20 days on the Canon 5D and 7D cameras.

The challenge was going to be finding a girl to play “Sunny,” the eight year old daughter of Lauren’s character in the film – without the perfect actress, the movie would never work. Audrey Scott, a Houston native who had appeared briefly in *Secretariat*, was the very first tape that Mr. Wizemann watched. He emailed producer Mike S. Ryan that night: “we can stop looking.”

The shoot was emotional and arduous. Wizemann collaborated heavily with his DP Schwartzbard, Producer Ryan and editor Michael Taylor. Deneka Hobby Scott, Audrey’s mother, was often too overwhelmed to watch the monitor as Audrey performed in wrenching scenes where Ambrose’s character struggled to take care of her daughter.

Shooting was completed just before Christmas, and editing continued in New York through the spring. In July 2011, *About Sunny* was invited to the Toronto International Film Festival for its world premiere.

CREDITS

Writer / Director **Bryan Wizemann**
Executive Producers **Peter C. Selig, Brent Stiefel**
Producers **Mike S. Ryan, Blythe Robertson, Lauren Ambrose**
Co-Producer **Alicia Van Couvering**
Casting **Ellen Novack**
Las Vegas Casting **Jorina King**
Cinematographer **Mark Schwartzbard**
Gaffer **John Schwartz**
Production Designer **Brandon Tonner-Connelly**
Props **Alexandrea Egan**
Costume Designer **Deborah Newhall**
Makeup **Dawn Tunnell**
Production Manager **Michael Bowes**
Prod Coordinator **Claire Bernard**
Location Manager **Christopher Ramirez**
Production Services **Lola Pictures**
Editor **Michael Taylor**
Sound Designer **Eric Offin**
Composer **Jeff Grace**
Colorist **Sam Daley / Technicolor Labs NY**

CAST

Angela **Lauren Ambrose**
Sunny **Audrey Scott**
Max **Dylan Baker**
Louise **Penelope Ann Miller**
Ted **David Conrad**
Cheryl **Adina Porter**
Policeman **Dajuan Johnson**
Thomas **Keith Harris**
Teacher **Eileen O'Connell**

PRODUCTION

Copyright **On The Line Productions, LLC**
Presented By **Votiv** In Association With **Greystack Films**
Location **Las Vegas, Nevada**
Filming Dates **November 2010**
Format **Digital / Canon HDSLR**
Sound **Stereo**
Running Time **103 minutes**

CREW BIOGRAPHIES

BRYAN WIZEMANN, Writer / Director

Bryan Wizemann's short film work includes **BUTTON SOUP** (Johnson Museum, Cinema Village NY), **THE MORNING SUN** (Rooftop Films, IFC), the television pilot **COOKLYN**, and **FILM MAKES US HAPPY**, which documents the last fight he will ever have with his wife about making films (Hamptons, IFF Boston, Rooftop Films, DocPoint, Wholphin).

His feature film **LOSING GROUND** (Cinequest, CineVegas, Santa Fe) was adapted from his critically acclaimed New York stage play and features the original cast. It was called "fascinating filmmaking that gets to the core of humanity" by Film Threat and is available from Netflix. His film **ABOUT SUNNY**, with Lauren Ambrose, Audrey Scott, Dylan Baker, and Penelope Ann Miller, premiered at the 2011 Toronto International Film Festival where Rex Reed called it a "wrenching but admirably unsentimental film about the bravery of the human condition." It went on to win the Grand Jury Prize at IFF Boston and earned Ambrose an Independent Spirit Award nomination for best female lead. **HUMOR ME**, a romantic comedy written with Andrew Semans, was optioned out of the IFF Independent Film Week and is currently in development. Bryan lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

MIKE S. RYAN, Producer

Mike S. Ryan is an Independent Spirit "Producer of the Year Award" Nominee and one of Variety's 2007 "10 Producers to Watch." His films have garnered nominations and prizes from the Academy Awards, Independent Spirit Awards, Gotham Awards and many more. **JUNEBUG**, starring Amy Adams, made its international premiere at Cannes in 2005 and went on to be the lowest-budgeted feature film ever nominated for an Oscar (Best Supporting Actress, 2005.) His credits include Todd Solondz's **LIFE DURING WARTIME** and **PALINDROMES**, Kelly Reichardt's **MEEK'S CUTOFF** and **OLD JOY** (winner, Rotterdam IFF 2006), Hal Hartley's **FAY GRIM**, starring Parker Posey and Jeff Goldblum, Clark Gregg's **CHOKES** (2008 Sundance Award Winner) and Ira Sachs' **FORTY SHADES OF BLUE** (best film Sundance 2005). This year will see the premieres of five news films produced by Ryan, including **LOSERS TAKE ALL**, **BETWEEN US**, **THE COMEDY** with comedians Tim & Eric, and Bela Tarr's **THE TURIN HORSE**.

BLYTHE ROBERTSON, Producer

Blythe Robertson is an independent producer based in Boston, MA. Most recently, she line-produced two segments of the PBS series, **GOD IN AMERICA**, an American Experience/Frontline co-production. Prior to that, she was production manager for the historical documentary, **THE PEOPLE V LEO FRANK**, winner of the Special Jury Award at History Makers 2010. Blythe started out in the business as a production coordinator,

involved in feature films and documentaries, such as Lionsgates' MY BEST FRIEND'S GIRL, starring Kate Hudson, THE GOLDEN BOYS, with Bruce Dern, Rip Torn and David Carradine, and The History Channel's Emmy-nominated, DESPERATE CROSSING: THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE MAYFLOWER.

ALICIA VAN COUVERING, Co-Producer

Van Couvering's first film as a producer, TINY FURNITURE, won the SXSW Film Festival in 2010 as well as accolades from the Independent Spirit Awards, Gotham Awards, New York Film Critics Awards and many more. Her latest, Joe Swanberg's DRINKING BUDDIES, stars Olivia Wilde and Anna Kendrick; Ry Russo-Young's NOBODY WALKS will be released by Magnolia Pictures in 2012. Other production credits include Whit Stillman's DAMSELS IN DISTRESS, Barbara Kopple's MY GENERATION, Phil Morrison's JUNEBUG, Todd Solondz's PALINDROMES and LIFE DURING WARTIME, Steve Kessler's PAUL WILLIAMS: STILL ALIVE. She is a contributing editor to Filmmaker Magazine, a 2010 Creative Producing Fellow of the Sundance Institute and has been named a 'Producer to Watch' by numerous magazines and websites.

MARK SCHWARTZBARD, Director of Photography

Schwartzbard studied film at Ithaca College, then moved to New York and spent a decade working as a camera assistant on films including Woody Allen's HOLLYWOOD ENDING, and Martin Scorsese's The Departed, as well as LITTLE CHILDREN, RENT, HITCH, POLLOCK, and, the most fun of all, BORAT, which led to work as a camera operator on director Larry Charles' next few projects, including RELIGULOUS and BRUNO. He has a vague memory of working on a pile of music videos for artists he can't remember and on dozens and dozens of commercials he'd mostly rather forget. As DP Mark has shot eight narrative feature films, including Alison Bagnall's THE DISH & THE SPOON with Greta Gerwig and Rick Alverson's THE COMEDY with Tim & Eric, three documentary features, a healthy pile of shorts, and the Showtime series "La La Land." His documentary work has taken him to Israel, England, Holland, Italy, Jordan, Romania, Mexico, Honduras, Hungary, and Los Angeles. He's worked with every film format from Super-8 to VistaVision. He used to say he'd worked with every video format available but these days they're popping up so quickly that by the time you read this sentence there's probably a new one.

BRANDON TONNER CONNELLY, Production Designer

Brandon Tonner-Connolly is a production designer and New York City native. After graduating from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts with a degree in Cinema Studies, he worked with youth media NGO's in Brazil exploring the intersection between human rights and photography before beginning his career as a prop master for music video and film (including Tribeca award winning feature MONOGAMY). In the past year, he's designed music videos for artists such as Interpol, the Roots, and The Beets as well as several shorts and features, including Joe Swanberg's DRINKING BUDDIES. He currently lives and maintains his design studio in Brooklyn.

DEBORAH NEWHALL, Costume Designer

Deborah designs Costumes for Film, Television, Commercials, Dance, Regional Theater, Broadway and Off-Broadway. Some of her favorite credits include the *Radio City Rockettes* on Broadway, *Love Song*, dir. John Kolvenbach at 59e59 Theatre, and *The Ruby Sunrise*, dir. Oscar Eustis at the Public Theatre, which received a Lucille Lortel nomination. Feature films include *LIBERAL ARTS*, w/ Josh Radnor, Lizzie Olsen, Allison Janney, Richard Jenkins, Zac Efron; Lasse Hallstrom's *HACHIKO* w/Richard Gere, Joan Allen; *THE GOLDEN BOYS* w/Bruce Dern, David Carradine, Charles Durning, Mariel Hemingway; *MONUMENT AVENUE* w/ Denis Leary, Famke Janssen; *AMERICAN BUFFALO* with Dustin Hoffman. Television credits include Showtime's *Brotherhood* (winner of the Peabody Award); six seasons of the Emmy Nominated *ZOOM*, and Frontline's *God In America*. Deborah has a BFA, Illustration, RI School of Design, MFA Costume Design, and UNC. She has been a book illustrator currently teaches design at Brown/Trinity Graduate Consortium and RI School of Design.

MICHAEL TAYLOR, Editor

Michael Taylor edited Julia Loktev's *THE LONELIEST PLANET*, starring Gael Garcia Bernal, winner, Best Narrative Film, AFI Fest, as well as *DAY NIGHT DAY NIGHT*, winner, Prix de la Jeunesse, Cannes. He also cut Rick Alverson's *THE COMEDY*, starring Tim Heidicker, Michael Walker's *THE MAID'S ROOM*, starring Annabella Sciorra, and Walker's *PRICE CHECK*, starring Parker Posey.

Other credits include Ron Eyal and Eleanor Burke's *STRANGER THINGS*, winner, Best Narrative Film, Woodstock and Slamdance Film Festivals, Zeina Durra's *THE IMPERIALISTS ARE STILL ALIVE!*, winner, Best Narrative Film, Asian-American Film Festival, George LaVoo's *A DOG YEAR*, starring Jeff Bridges, and two films for Margaret Brown, the Peabody Award-winning *THE ORDER OF MYTHS* and *BE HERE TO LOVE ME*.

JEFF GRACE, Composer

Jeff Grace is an award-winning composer who has scored films with appearances at the Toronto, Sundance, Venice, TriBeCa, New York and South by Southwest film festivals. Jeff's past scores include Kelly Reichardt's *MEEK'S CUTOFF*, Jim Mickle's *STAKE LAND* (2010 TIFF Midnight Madness Winner), Ti West's *THE INNKEEPERS* and *THE HOUSE OF THE DEVIL*, and Larry Fessenden's *THE LAST WINTER*. Active as a composer for concert and stage, Jeff was selected for American Opera Projects' Composers and the Voice Series where he was awarded the Tobias Picker Chair, entailing a mentorship with the celebrated composer. Jeff is also active as an orchestrator and arranger with credits including Angelo Badalamenti, Lady Gaga, Lucia Micarelli (HBO's *Treme*), and numerous films.

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

LAUREN AMBROSE / Angela

Ambrose is most known for her critically acclaimed work on the HBO series “Six Feet Under” as Claire Fisher. In the five seasons the show was on the air, Ambrose received two Emmy nominations for Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Drama Series (2002 and 2003). Other film credits include *WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE*, by Spike Jonze, *LOVE AND OTHER POSSIBLE PURSUITS* directed by Don Roos and starring Natalie Portman, *Cold Souls* opposite Paul Giamatti, Emily Watson and David Strathairn, *A DOG YEAR*, opposite Jeff Bridges, *STARTING OUT IN THE EVENING*, opposite Frank Langella and Lili Taylor, *DIGGERS*, opposite Paul Rudd, and *Can't Hardly Wait*. Ambrose won the OutFest L.A. Grand Jury Award for Outstanding Actress for her lead performances in both *SWIMMING* and *PSYCHO BEACH PARTY*. On Broadway she has appeared in “Exit the King,” opposite Susan Sarandon and Geoffrey Rush, Clifford Odets “Awake and Sing!” opposite Mark Ruffalo and the London National Theatre production of Sam Shepard’s “Buried Child.” Ambrose can currently be seen on the critically acclaimed Starz series *Torchwood: Miracle Day*. This fall, Ambrose will be seen in David Wain’s *Wanderlust* with Paul Rudd and Jennifer Aniston. She currently resides in New York City with her husband and son.

AUDREY SCOTT / Sunny

Audrey Scott’s feature film debut in 2010 in Disney’s *SECRETARIAT* as Young Penny Chenery, sharing screen time with veteran actor Scott Glenn, who played her father, Christopher Chenery. That same year television viewers saw her in the ABC Family movie-of-the-week *REVENGE OF THE BRIDESMAIDS* where she played Young Caitlyn.

Although born in South Carolina, Audrey is proud to call herself a Texan. You might say her film career is blossoming like Texas Bluebonnets in springtime. She recently wrapped another lead role as Clementine in *THE MAN WHO SHOOK THE HAND OF VICENTE FERNANDEZ* starring opposite Oscar award-winner, Ernest Borgnine (*MARTY*) and Dale Dickey (*WINTER’S BONE*). She also had a blast entering the action film world as well with Jean Claude Van Damme in the upcoming *UNIVERSAL SOLIDER: A NEW DIMENSION*. Both films are due out in 2012.

When she’s not on set, this gifted and talented student writes, directs and edits her own movie shorts. Outside of acting and filmmaking, she stays busy rollerblading, swimming, reading and playing with her dog Porter.

DYLAN BAKER / Max

Dylan Baker was born in Syracuse, New York. He spent his childhood in Lynchburg, Virginia. He attended William and Mary College, where his interest in the theater was born. He earned a B.F.A. at Southern Methodist University and his M.F.A. at the Yale

School of Drama. Baker was honored with an IFP Gotham Award and an IFP West Independent Spirit Award nomination for HAPPINESS, directed by Todd Solondz. Additional film credits include SECRETARIAT, REVOLUTIONARY ROAD, HIDE AND SEEK, RICK, SPIDERMAN II & III, HEAD OF STATE, HOW TO DEAL, ROAD TO PERDITION, CHANGING LANES, THE CELL, ALONG CAME A SPIDER, RANDOM HEARTS, REQUIEM FOR A DREAM, CELEBRITY, SIMPLY IRRESISTABLE, DISCLOSURE, PLANES, TRAINS, AND AUTOMOBILES, THE LONG WALK HOME, DELIRIOUS, ACROSS THE UNIVERSE and THE STONE ANGEL. Baker's television credits include FROM THE EARTH TO THE MOON, MURDER ONE, BOOK OF DANIEL, FEDS, THE LARAMIE PROJECT, KINGS, and recurring roles on UGLY BETTY and BURN NOTICE.

Last season he was nominated for an Emmy for a guest appearance on THE GOOD WIFE. He can be seen this season on DAMAGES. Baker earned Tony Award and Drama Desk Award nominations for the Broadway production of LA BÊTE and an Obie Award for his performance in the Off-Broadway production NOT ABOUT HEROES. Other theatre credits include, "Sea of Tranquility," "Homebody / Kabul," "Mauritius," "November" and "God of Carnage."

PENELOPE ANN MILLER / Louise

Penelope Ann Miller has shared the screen with some of the most notable and renowned leading men and directors in Hollywood. This distinguished list includes Al Pacino and Sean Penn in director Brian de Palma's CARLITO'S WAY for which she received a Golden Globe nomination; Marlon Brando and Matthew Broderick in THE FRESHMAN directed by Andrew Bergman; Robert De Niro and Robin Williams in Penny Marshall's AWAKENINGS; Robert Downey Jr. in Sir Richard Attenborough's CHAPLIN; Danny DeVito and Gregory Peck in Norman Jewison's OTHER PEOPLE'S MONEY; Matthew Broderick & Christopher Walken in Mike Nichols' BILOXI BLUES; and Arnold Schwarzenegger in Ivan Reitman's KINDERGARTEN COP. Miller can next be seen in Michael Hazanavicius' silent feature THE ARTIST which premiered to rave reviews at this year's Cannes and Telluride Film Festivals and will also be seen at the 2011 Toronto Film Festival alongside ABOUT SUNNY. Upcoming films include ROBOSAPIAN, SAVING GRACE B. JONES and Mary Todd Lincoln in the SAVING LINCOLN, as well as Rob Reiner's FLIPPED and Sam Raimi's THE MESSENGERS, opposite Kristen Stewart.

Miller was named "Star of Tomorrow" by the Motion Picture Bookers Club and "Most Promising Actress" by the Chicago Film Critics Association. She received a special jury award for Best Performance at the Hollywood Film Festival for RHAPSODY IN BLOOM, and a Tony Award nomination for her portrayal of 'Emily' in Broadway's Tony-winning revival of "Our Town."

DAVID CONRAD / Ted

Conrad has appeared opposite Vince Vaughn and Rachel McAdams in **THE WEDDING CRASHERS** and Joaquin Phoenix and Anne Heche in **RETURN TO PARADISE**. On Television, he has been a series regular on “Boston Public,” “Roswell,” “Miss Match,” “The Ghost Whisperer,” “CSI: Miami,” among many others.

ADINA PORTER / Cheryl

Established actress, Adina Porter is most recognized for her portrayal of “Lettie Mae Thornton” in **TRUE BLOOD**, her fifth venture with HBO. She is also known for memorable performances in highly acclaimed HBO films, **LACKAWANNA BLUES** and **GIA**. This summer, Porter wrapped Aaron Sorkin’s new HBO pilot **MORE AS THIS STORY DEVELOPS**. She was last seen in Oscar-nominated **THE SOCIAL NETWORK**, directed by David Fincher. Other notable directors with whom she has worked include: Michael Mann, Michael Cristofer, Mimi Leder, and Hal Hartley.

Porter has recurred on many television series: **PRISON BREAK**, **SAVING GRACE**, **N.Y.P.D. BLUE**, and **LAW & ORDER**. She worked two seasons on NBC’s **AMERICAN DREAMS**. Porter was cast as a Series Regular in the pilot **KATRINA**, and as a Series Regular in the pilot **SECOND OPINION** for CBS. In addition, she has worked as a Guest Star on over 30 TV series, including **AMERICAN HORROR STORY**, **PRIVATE PRACTICE**, **CSI**, **HOUSE**, **CRIMINAL MINDS: SB**, **HAWTHORNE**, **THE SHIELD**, **LAW & ORDER: SVU**, **CSI: NY**, and **ER**.

In addition to several works by Scott Elliot, Porter has worked with some of the best stage directors: George C. Wolfe, Lisa Peterson, Mark Wing-Davey, Richard Foreman, Don Scardino, Michael Grief, and Risa Bramon Garcia. Other theatre credits include Beth Henley’s “The Debutante Ball,” at Manhattan Theatre Club, numerous plays at the NY Shakespeare Festival, and, most notably, her Obie Award-winning performance in “Venus,” written by Suzan-Lori Parks.