



this is your song

a film by Hassan Said

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BRIANA WALSH JORDAN POTCH JOANNA KAY *with* EDWARD HIGHTOWER L. JEFFREY MOORE LUKE MYERS

130 MIN • COLOR • 2.39 • 4K — 2K • DOLBY 5.1 • USA

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A man and a woman are shown in profile, looking out towards the ocean at sunset. The woman is in the foreground, wearing a dark jacket and a colorful patterned headscarf. The man is behind her, also in a dark jacket. The background shows the ocean and a cloudy sky with soft light from the setting sun.

Logline

On the night of their wedding anniversary, a bohemian theatre actress and a beatnik inspired writer confront the strife of their relationship, dreams, and the city they once loved.

Synopsis

Set in contemporary San Francisco, Jules, a dedicated bohemian theatre actress struggles and confronts what seems to be an unhappy stifled marriage, a dead end theatre industry, and a city that is outgrowing her. Jules realizes she needs to escape her current life. On a beautiful winter night of their seven year anniversary, James, her husband, an inspired beatnik writer, surprises Jules with a well prepared romantic dinner, yet Jules had forgotten all about it. Later on that cold evening, James hands Jules a letter that is addressed from New York, she realizes it has been opened. Jules reads it anxiously and discovers that she has been accepted into an off-Broadway show and they look forward to having her in the Spring. As the night progresses, their marriage unravels secrets they both kept from each other. James confesses about a one-night stand admitting infidelity. Jules' response is unexpectedly forgiving and gentle. The truth of how they feel for each other spills out intensely through quarrel after quarrel revealing a false reality of their union. Jules and James realize that their marriage has become a place unrecognizable to what they had always imagined as their future together is put to the test. Will their love in the end conquer all?





the inspiration

The idea originally sprouted in the fall of 2017, when suddenly, I was faced with one of the toughest years of my life: from a roller coaster emotional divorce, to being diagnosed with high blood pressure, to suffering a concussion, to my father, who had to undergo numerous surgeries, as well as my mother, who suffered a heart attack overseas while I wasn't there. For the past seven years, all I did was hustle between freelance work, keeping my marriage afloat and debts, all the while attempting to get one out of six feature films off the ground one way or another. Writing one screenplay after another in order to craft the simplest, smallest and most intimate story.

The result was that I lost my home, went broke and ended up living out of my car. I relinquished all sense of hope at that time, caving into a very dark place of mental and emotional disintegration. I contemplated my previous relationships and felt that maybe I was desperate for love. It has always been such a big part of my life. Because a lot of people are frightened to death of love. I was in a quandary, a philosophical quandary, because I thought that if I am not my brother's keeper, who am I? Where does my life end and my sense of responsibility to other lives begin? This is how this picture came to life.

Inspiration and desire to tell an authentic relationship film came from the films of Ingmar Bergman, John Cassavetes, Mike Nichols, and the writings of Jack Kerouac and Henry Miller .

Determined and with over 13 years of experience in making short films, 40 festival selections, 30 countries, and many awards later, I set out to co-write this film with one of my best friends and an extremely talented poet, Lourdes Figueroa. I wanted this film to have a strong female voice given that the main character is a strong female. I had been dabbling with some ideas in my head about a film that takes place in mostly one location with two characters, in one take and it all started to piece together making it hard to turn around on such a concept.

We finished the first draft of the screenplay in two weeks, keeping in mind the technical feat of timing and executing this whole story in one single take from beginning to end; seeing how a long term marriage can simply be put to the test in the course of a night. To experiment further, I decided to send the screenplay not only to fellow master screenwriters and filmmakers, but also regular friends and acquaintances who knew nothing about the craft of screenwriting.

The reaction of readers was overwhelmingly positive. We knew we were creating something honest, relatable and special, striking major chords with readers. Some cried, others sided with Jules over James and vice versa, creating a confirmed realization that the story affects people in an intimate, personal way.

Shortly after, the team started to assemble and the film took a life of its own. I drove up to San Francisco in my car which became my contemporary definition of home and set up times to meet a number of theatre companies/houses who welcomed me with open arms, offering any form of help, hungry for a unique story to shoot in their beloved city, resulting in me being engorged in my excitement to push forward into doing everything i can to bring this motion picture to life in my favorite city in the world.

- Hassan Said



director's statement

THIS IS YOUR SONG is a story about love, not a love story.

The goal was to create an immersive raw experience, in one single take fashion, of a contemporary psychological drama, set in San Francisco, unfolding over the course of one night. A deep portrayal of a married young lovers surviving in the ever changing modern American landscape. Jules and James confront their secrets, trust, future, matrimony, and a city that once engulfed them with warmth. The story is constructed in the vein of a theatre play with mostly theatre actors. We successfully executed a 97 minute one single take shot in the film, setting a record for the longest single shot in American film history.

The film touches upon, if not embraces the ever changing nature of our behavior in a romantic intimate union. Examining the “I vs ME vs US” dynamic through psychological and behavioral exploration of challenges, and love in way of softness but also through brutal truth and at times manipulation. Jules questions any existence of independent identity outside of her relationship to James, her goals as a theatre actress, her future in San Francisco — while James questions his confidence that Jules was enamored in, his procrastination as a writer, and his ego in realizing that he is slowly losing the love of his life.

My primary focus while manifesting the film was starting with the audience in mind - creating an archetype of a play backdrop, foreshadowing the entire story. The first Act of the film was shot in a 20min plus single take and the second and third act of the film in a continuous 97min take, with no edits or cuts, unveiling the secrets and layers of the characters who struggle to reveal their true self to one another. The audience becomes one with the characters in real time, unable to look away from the tension brewing in front of their eyes, placing them directly in the center of the events that unfold between the ill-fated lovers.

The hardship of maintaining a relationship, goals, aspirations, power struggle, absence of love, and socio-economic inequality which is universal themes we all relate to in various instances of our lives are explored in the film. Jules and James are two lions in a cage, honestly and brutally - battling each other for one another, while fearful of the power of the very love they are battling for. They struggle to find their place in the world and achieve what they set out to do together. As their relationship is put to the test, their self identity seems to disintegrate as they question the simple truths they thought were eternal - "till death do us part". The very existence of their love comes into question in a multilayered, multi dimensional portrayal of a character driven story, on the night of their wedding anniversary.

This motion picture contributes and uplifts filmmaking in the Bay Area community, as well as Immigrants and LGBTQ community who are large part of the cast and crew of the film. An original story, told in real time, in a singular take fashion, with a skeleton crew and love for the craft is a very rare combination of elements to birth a film to life in this day and time. It was pure magic. Our crew is mostly made up of minorities and immigrant women of the finest talent, who worked tirelessly to bring this film to life. Furthermore, as a filmmaker, I was conscious of seeking collaboration with a diverse group of artists, especially women in top leadership positions, that I knew would contribute the kind of depth and perspective that would be impossible to achieve with a standard, homogenized crew. Through this film, I have built my tribe.

The cast and crew came from different walks of life, connected personally to the screenplay and brought the passion and artistry forward to making an almost impossible film to life. We all grew personally and as filmmakers in creating a heart-felt tale that is universal and old as time. The goal was the create an authentic, raw, and empathetic motion picture — and we are very proud of this achievement.

Cinema is the language of empathy and This Is Your Song is a passion project that has a lot heart poured into it as well as literal sweat, blood, and tears. This is not just another feature film, its a sense of closure to a painful reality I lived through and many others as well through trauma, love gained, love lost, and at times out worldly circumstances putting us to the test. To me personally it's a way to make sense to a failed marriage as well as nostalgic relationships. A sense of maturity and healing to some of life hardest challenges I ever had to face- losing the one I loved and pushing myself to make this feat of a film. As a director, I cannot simply sit by a monitor - I need to move, to touch, to create, to be involved in every aspect of making my films from conceptualizing the character arcs to picking the color of a fixture. Most importantly, I yearn to direct to open up the soul of the talent in front of the camera and let the actors step out of themselves and melt into their characters to become one, inseparable and grow to be part of their being through the rest of their lives. It is hard work, will always be hard work, and this film is a true testament to that. Actors are the most delicate and beautiful piece of the vast canvas of the film— they are my children, my extension, my love. In the end, everything that I create - I create it authentically from the heart. Make it alive. Make it tangible and approachable. Always finding the truth of the moment.

The audience will laugh, cry, be angry, nostalgic and sentimental in moments, and be relieved in others, inside this small intimate magnum opus of hypnotic moments and intertwining emotions. A universal story that is understood in any language will touch the heart of anyone, in any age group, who cared or loved for another deeply at one point in their lives. Anyone who struggled with their place in the world. Jules and James love each other ever so madly and whether or not their roots will propel their love to conquer all is the central question we pose in the film. We were also blessed by the legendary Lawrence Ferlinghetti's support and usage of his poem "The Changing Light of San Francisco" in the film.

Thank you for all who helped us along the way and still do, for believing in this film, for standing behind minority and immigrant artists alike. Thank you for supporting the arts and bringing voices of storytelling to life. Thank you for keeping true independent films alive. Thank you for sharing the journey with us all.



the production

After a year of pre-production and three plus months of casting and call backs, we hit the ground running as the goal to shoot during the winter in San Francisco was essential. Our pre-production goals started with crewing up, locking locations, crowdfunding online, and beginning the rehearsal process.

The actors worked on a seven week schedule of rehearsals every day, six days a week, for at least 10 hours a day. From table reads, blocking rehearsals, dress rehearsals, improv exercises - the process was a constant workout to build a new level of deep breath to authentically undertake massive amounts of dialogue, emotional arcs, and physically demanding scenes. To flow fluidly, no matter the presented challenge. In addition, the director would set up exercises and meetups for the two leads to engage on a personal level outside of the production realm.

Four weeks into the rehearsals, the crew began to come in as they had to pull off the entire dance/blocking with the actors. Our cinematographer and boom operators had to memorize the choreography of each single scene ahead of time to understand exactly where they needed at any given moment and how to move gracefully through the intricate timing and blocking of the entire cast, background, interiors, and exteriors.

The visual aesthetic for the film is unique, to say the least. We are approaching the composition in a floating POV feel of shooting the entire story in ONE CONTINUOUS TAKE and handheld, to keep the tension building. The main color used in foreshadowing the important story beats is purple, carrying through in all the visuals. We were shooting on an ARRI Alexa, wide angle prime lens that distorts the image slightly on the edges, creating a claustrophobic effect when framing closeups. The camera's performance is choreographed around Jules and James blocking and was rehearsed with actors for three weeks.

In cinematographer Peggy Peralta's own words - "The story of 'This is Your Song' unfolds within the last two hours of a marriage breaking down. The director wanted to capture the drama as a oner, so I needed a camera light enough to carry around for hours, take after take. I needed to tuck into small spaces, get really close to the actors and move like the camera was an extension of my body. We both love the ALEXA's look, that's why the Mini became our obvious choice. Paired with an ARRI/ ZEISS 18mm Master Prime, we were able to capture the film's main act in a 97-minute take. No cuts. The experience of pulling that off was exhilarating."







the players

Briana Walsh as "Jules"

Briana Walsh is a New Jersey native who had planted her heart in San Francisco for the last decade. Under the tutelage of Robert Keats, Briana studied with original SNL writer Anne Beatts and Cheers writer Ken Estin, and many more. After receiving her BFA in Writing for Film, Television & Digital Media, she joined Shelton Studios repertoire under Matt Shelton- local theater owner, mentor and son of the acclaimed drama legend, Jean Shelton. Briana's breakout theater role came in 2016 as former Southern belle, Stella Kowalski, in Julie Dimas-Lockfeld's Theater Bay Area (TBA) Award nominated rendition of Tennessee Williams' A Streetcar Named Desire. After the run, Briana travelled to England and performed sold out shows in The Swindon UK Fringe Festival and The Etcetera Theatre in Camden Town, London. Her biggest theater role came in 2018 as the lead titular character in the TBA Recommended production of another Tennessee Williams' play Baby Doll, directed by Bay Area renowned Will Marchetti. Her latest theater work includes: Funny But Mean's Rent Control and The Christmas Carol 2: Scrooge Strikes Back. Briana also recently starred in the short film Tears of San Lorenzo (2020), and co-wrote the short film, Room Service (2020). Briana now lives in Los Angeles, and is the Associate Creative Director & Producer at Strange Prescription. Look out for her upcoming films and sketches this SUMMER 2021!rant, independent & underground cinema culture. This Is Your Song marks her feature film debut.



Jordan Potch as "James"

Jordan Potch is an actor from Sacramento, California. He started out acting on stage before venturing off into film. Jordan prides himself on being able to play a wide range of characters each built with their own personalities, subtleties and nuances. Besides This Is Your Song, some of Jordan's more notable roles include playing Marcus in The Inbetween, Bruce in the crime comedy short "Criminally Challenged" and his work on portraying an original incarnation of The Joker in The Batman fan film "Batman The First Laugh" which won him best actor awards at several festivals. Jordan is so proud to have been apart of This Is Your Song bringing his own fully embodied take on the character of James.



the co-players



Joanna Kay as "Penny"



Edward Hightower as "Daniel"



L. Jeffrey Moore as "Zeus"



Luke Myers as "Cary"





director, writer, & producer Hassan Said

Hassan Said is a multi-lingual, Egyptian born, award winning Director as well as Producer, Writer - with over decade plus experience in motion pictures, commercials, music videos, documentary and web content. Furthermore, Hassan is also a member of the Screen Actors Guild of America. He has created content in English, Arabic, Spanish, Portuguese and French.

Upon graduating film school, Hassan traveled to Angola with the sponsorship of ministry of culture to produce and mentor a Portuguese speaking film *Alambamento* which went on to win multiple awards and gain distribution in over 40+ countries as well as platforms like Amazon, iTunes and more. Fast forward several years later, his work has won multiple awards, screened in over 50 festivals in over 40 countries with write-ups by independent critics as well as international magazine outlets globally. Later he moved to Los Angeles working on multiple projects from commercials to television to narrative with prominent clients like Warner Bros., Universal, Paramount, MJZ, Biscuit Filmworks, Focus Features, NBC and more in multiple capacities. He has directed over ten award winning narrative short films, as well as a number of commercials, music videos, web series and documentary content. Currently he is developing over five feature films, music videos and other projects in the United States and abroad.

Recently, Hassan embarked on making his feature film debut *THIS IS YOUR SONG*. An ambitious tour-de-force project set in San Francisco, that incorporates a 97 minute one single take shot, making it the longest running shot in US film cinema. He hopes to continue to tell stories of self-awareness and vivid realities. His poetic use of striking characters and imagery explores the psychological impact of both life's shocking and heartwarming moments.

When he's not working, you can find Hassan hammering at his typewriter working on his five features in development for US and abroad; maybe wandering the streets of Los Angeles or San Francisco taking pictures with his old Hasselblad or showcasing his photography in various galleries and exhibitions locally and globally. He holds a dual AMERICAN and EGYPTIAN citizenships.

Selected filmography: Black Swan (2016) • Sal y Limon (2015) • Death Will Tremble (2012) • Alambamento (2011) • It's A Strange World (2010) • Mute (2009).

Selected Awards and Accolades: WINNER German Independence Award for Best foreign film at the Oldenburg International Film Festival - MUTE • WINNER Best Actor, Best Actress & Best Cinematography at International Euro Film Festival - SAL Y LIMON • WINNER Award of Merit for Short film and Direction - The Accolade Film Awards - MUTE • WINNER Best Short Film at Luanda International Film Festival - ALAMBAMENTO • WINNER Silver Palm award at Mexico Int. Film Festival - IT'S A STRANGE WORLD • WINNER Best Experimental at Epidemic Film Festival - INFAMY • WINNER Best Film at GSP Film Festival - ALAMBAMENTO • WINNER Achievement in Cinematography at AVA Awards - BITCH • WINNER Jury Award for Best Editing at the Big Easy Film Festival - MUTE • WINNER Best Score at Los Angeles Live Score Film Festival - DEATH WILL TREMBLE • Official Selection ReelHeart International Film Festival - MUTE • Official Selection Queens Film Festival - MUTE



cinematographer Peggy Peralta

Born and raised in the Philippines, Peggy at age 23, migrated to San Francisco in pursuit of living a creative life. There she earned an MFA in Motion Pictures from the Academy of Art University, fell more deeply in love with cinema and discovered her love for flying cameras. She is now a certified Steadicam Operator, one of the very few women practitioners in the industry world-wide. As a cinematographer, her work is distinct for its heart, energy and perspective. Every project she dives into becomes an opportunity to discover, create and inspire. She was awarded Best Emerging Filmmaker by SF International Women's Film Festival in 2005. Since then, she has continued to be a trusted collaborator of many directors, shooting projects funded by organizations like San Francisco Film Society, Danish Arts Council and French National Center of Fine Arts.

Her works have screened in film festivals around the globe including the Rotterdam International Film Festival & Busan International Film Festival among others. In 2013, she received a Cinematography Special Jury Award from the LA Asian Pacific Film Fest for lensing the documentary *Harana. A New Color*, her 2nd feature documentary, premiered at the 2015 Mill Valley Film Festival. Both feature documentaries won Audience Awards in various film festivals and have aired on PBS. She is passionate about telling stories that amplify alternative voices. She believes in the power of cinema to not only entertain but to also challenge our ways of seeing, thinking and feeling. She continues to thrive as an artist in San Francisco, a city she's proud to call her second home.



producer Masha Karpoukhina

Masha Karpoukhina was born and grew up in Moscow, Russia in a family of filmmakers and visual artists. She came to the United States in 1994 and received a Bachelors for Film & Television at Academy of Art University in San Francisco. She is a founding member at Colorfool Films and a Senior Shooter and Editing Manager at Micro-Documentaries where she helps produce authentic & actionable films to help advance the missions of hundreds of non-profits across the globe.

She has also been producing in the Bay Area for 7 years. As both Writer/Director and Producer, Masha approaches film as an experience that needs to both inform and transform. Her work has been accepted into numerous Film Festivals (Napa Valley Film Festival, Bay Area Global Film Festival and Chicago International Social Change Film Festival among others) and screened across the Bay Area (including Dissilience San Francisco, The Stanford University, Ark221 and more) where she has been an active participant in the vibrant, independent & underground cinema culture.

screenwriter Lourdes Figueroa

Lourdes Figueroa is a poet based in San Francisco. She received her MFA in creative writing with an emphasis in poetry from the University of San Francisco. Her work has appeared in *Something Worth Revising*, *eleven eleven*, *Backwords Press*, *Night Music Literary journal*, *SF Poets' Eleven* a poetry anthology of poems selected by Jack Hirschman, *Generations Literary journal*, her first chapbook *yolotl* was published by bay area press *Spooky Actions Books*, and some of her work is upcoming in *elderly* a journal of poetry. She has been featured in readings with current SF Poet Laureate Kim Shuck and past SF Poet Laureates Alejandro Murjia and Jack Hirschman. She has collaborated on different mediums and different forms of writing with artists of the SF community. In 2017 in collaboration with two other writers she worked as a playwright for *Detour Dance Company* that produced the play *Fugue*, dedicated to the queer history of San Francisco. Lourdes believes the poem must be active in all aspects of the work whether in sentence, photograph, story, or film. Lourdes is committed to her community working as an interpreter, translator and advocate.







credits

Briana Walsh..... Jules
Jordan Potch..... James
Joanna Kay..... Penny
Edward Hightower..... Daniel
L. Jeffrey Moore..... Zeus
Luke Myers..... Cary

Directed by
Written by
Produced by
Co-Producers
Cinematography by
Production and Costume Design by
Edited by
Original Music by
Makeup and Special Effects by
Casting by
Sound Mixer
Sound Re-Recording Mixer
Unit Production Manager
1st Assistant Director

Hassan Said
Hassan Said & Lourdes Figueroa
Masha Karpoukhina & Hassan Said
Judy Lewis, Peggy Peralta, & Jamie Metzger
Peggy Peralta
Jasmine Nicholes
Mitch Martin
Brad Fischer
Margaret Caragan
Jacob Hayman
Steven Lagosh
Quinn Cooper
Cole Winokur
Jeremiah Kelleher







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