



THIS IS NOT ABOUT SWIMMING

A film by Marni Van Dyk

11 mins, Canada, 2023

Language: English

a PENNY DROP PICTURES and WILDLING PICTURES production
in association with YOU AND ME ENTERTINAMENT

JESSICA ALLEN
EMMA HUNTER
DANIEL JUN

Costume Designer WILLIAM NG

Original Music by VIRGINA KILBERTUS

Production Designer MERCEDES COYLE

Editor BAUN MAH

Director of Photography NICHOLAS GRGURIC

Executive Producers
MATT CODE
NATALIE URQUHART
JULIE STRIFLER

Executive Producer
MARNI VAN DYK

Executive Producer
EMILY REID

Produced by
JENNIFER DE LUCIA
DANIEL STOLFI

Written and Directed by
MARNI VAN DYK



LOGLINE

After her mother's death, Kyle attempts to learn to swim in spite of her sister's quest to sabotage her plan.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In 2019, as I was about to embark on filming *This Is Not About Swimming*, my own life completely fell apart, and then the world shut down because of Covid. It was my own personal sink or swim moment set against the backdrop of a global one. It's been a long journey through grief (for me, for all of us) from then until now. But ultimately, the thing that set me free and made me buoyant again, to my surprise, was laughter.

I wanted to explore the internal and external obstacles we face when we dare to confront our greatest fears, and what motivates us to do so. So when a truly great fear became my reality, I dug deeper into this story. I looked hard at the laughter. How did I get there?

What I discovered while moving through the waves of grief, was if you turn inward, it can put you at odds with those you love the most. I also learned that if you allow yourself to take your truth outward, there is a ripple effect to those around you. Change and growth can be contagious. Just like laughter.

There is an inherent tension that exists in that space— a duality in pressing forward toward a brave new world versus looking back on what was. Bridging these oppositions became the

visual foundation in how I approached this story on screen. Specifically, the internal and external world of our protagonist Kyle— her bold physical drive to get in the water versus her quiet panic in doing so.

I wanted to marry the cold decay of the external world of late autumn, with the perpetually bright, blue, alluring world of a humid pool deck. We all hold opposites and contain contradictions, and visually I reflect this through both perspective— how Kyle sees the world (close, claustrophobic— captured hand-held) with how Kyle lives in it (a teeny figure in an expansive frame, a red blemish in a blue world) and tone— the mood on the pool deck, versus off. The film asks: what is scarier— the world inside the pool or the world outside? Kyle ping-pongs, unsure— at every turn, a desire and an obstacle. There is tension between sinking and floating, doing and not doing, love and anger, the visual chaos of memory versus the stillness of the present, the heaviness of being versus the buoyancy of letting go.

The addition of a playful, mischievous and at times menacing score further injects a layer of tension against the cool palette of the film. It arrives to stir the pot, add heat, and remind us what we are seeing on the surface— what these characters are saying and doing, belies how they truly feel. This is not about what you think it is, this is not about swimming. The score drives us forward until the inevitable breaking point, which I hope to your surprise, is laughter.

As a filmmaker, my prerogative is also to elbow my way into the comedic boys club. Women process grief (and life in general really) through humour, and I so rarely see that experience reflected in cinema. These stories are the ones I am determined to tell on screen. For me, laughter has always been a life raft, and I hope the gift of this story for audiences is simply that. A tiny bit of joy and hope to buoy us on the journey ahead, after a few truly challenging years.

KEY CAST

JESSICA ALLEN

is the correspondent on *The Social*, the Canadian Screen Award-winning talk show now in its 10th season on CTV. Previously, she was a national columnist at *Metro* and an assistant editor covering the arts-the-culture beat at *Maclean's* magazine, where she was nominated for a National Magazine Award for her TIFF coverage. Jess went on to host that very award show, along with other charity, literary, film, and design events. The variety of her work has given Jess the chance to interview notable people from Trevor Noah and Greta Gerwig to an archaeologist who recreates ancient beers and an award-winning translator of *The Iliad*. Jess has a Masters of Art in Art History from the University of Toronto. She currently lives in Hamilton, Ontario with her partner, Simon. While she is honoured to have played the parts of both Tiny Tim in *A Christmas Carol* and Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* some 40 years ago in her hometown of St. Thomas, Ontario, Jess considers this her first role.

EMMA HUNTER

EMMA HUNTER is an award winning actor whose film credits include: *Bloody Hell* and *Mary Goes Round* (Dir. Molly McGlynn), and *The Broken Hearts Gallery* (Dir. Natalie Krinsky). Her television credits include: *Moonshine* (CBC/CW), *Workin' Moms* (CBC/Netflix), *Children Ruin Everything* (CTV), *The Beaverton* (CTV), *Mr D* (CBC), *Letterkenny* (Crave), *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* (CBC), *The Royal Canadian Air Farce* (CBC), *Canada's Drag Race* (Crave), *Match Game* (Comedy), *The LA Complex* (CTV/CW), *Gary and His Demons* (Amazon), and *Degrassi* (CTV).

Emma has been a feature performer for *Just For Laughs All Access*, and won Canadian Screen Awards for her performances in *Save Me* (CBC Gem) and the International Emmy-winning *How To Buy A Baby* (CBC Gem).

DANIEL JUN

Daniel Jun is a Korean Canadian actor/writer with an eclectic cultural background - he was born in Taipei and grew up in China, New Zealand, Korea, and Canada. He is also a former Marine Corps sergeant, a professional dancer having worked with the likes of Cirque du Soleil, and is a member of the Canadian street dance collective "Symbiotic Monsters". He is an alumnus of McGill University and the 2018/2019 CBC Actors Conservatory at the Canadian Film Centre.

In the world of film and television, he has played opposite Salma Hayek in Kim Nguyen's *The Hummingbird Project* (TIFF 2018) and can be seen in the TV adaptations of Neil Gaiman's *American Gods* and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, as well as in the final seasons of *The Expanse* and *Workin' Moms*. Upcoming projects include Mike Flanagan's *The Fall of The House of Usher* and Steve Barnett's debut feature *Valiant One*. In this year's TIFF, Daniel Jun can be seen in Marni Van Dyk's *This Is Not About Swimming*.

KEY CREATIVES

MARNI VAN DYK (Writer & Director)

Marni is a screenwriter and director based in Toronto. Marni's first feature-length film *Learn to Swim*, written with Director Thyron Tommy, had its World Premiere at the 2021 Toronto International Film Festival and was selected for TIFF Canada's Top Ten. It is distributed by ARRAY Releasing on Netflix in the US, UK, AUS/NZ, and by Mongrel Media in Canada.

She wrote the short films *I Am Not A Weird Person* (Dir. Molly McGlynn) and *We Three Queens* (Dir. Chris Agoston). *This is Not About Swimming* is her first film as both writer and director.

She has served as Head Writer for television event specials for ABC, CBS, CBC, and CTV, as Story Editor and Writer for numerous film and television projects including *I Hate People, People Hate Me* (Tribeca), and *Late Bloomer* (Crave), and as a Producer on award winning series including *The Beaverton* (CTV), and *Still Standing* (CBC).

JENNIFER DE LUCIA (Producer)

Jennifer is an award-winning actress and producer from Toronto, Ontario. Jennifer has been producing and acting in theatre, TV, film and digital media for the better part of 15 years.

Jennifer and her creative partner, Daniel Stolfi, currently produce creative content through their production company, **You & Me Entertainment**. The company is best known for the award-winning one-person show, "Cancer Can't Dance Like This." The production toured for 10 years and helped raise over one-hundred thousand dollars for cancer research. Their short film, "Everyone's Leaving Us," premiered at the Canadian Film Festival in 2020 and later spent two years streaming on Super Channel. Their web series, "Calm Down Paul," premiered at the LA Comedy Fest in 2018. Most recently, Jennifer and Daniel produced Marni Van Dyk's short film, "This Is Not About Swimming," in conjunction with Wildling Pictures Inc. Daniel and Jennifer are currently in development on their next short film, "Maybe, Just Maybe," which Jennifer will serve as writer and director.

As an actress, Jennifer can be seen in Hallmark's "Holiday Heritage" and "Christmas Homecoming," Reel One Entertainment's "10 Truths About Love," Netflix's "Jupiter's Legacy" and CBC's "Murdoch Mysteries." For the stage, Jennifer played one of her favourite characters, Ernestine, in the 25th Anniversary production of *The Anger in Ernest and Ernestine*." Jennifer currently sits on the Board of Directors for POV, a youth film and television training program. Jennifer is an alumni of the University of Guelph theatre program. Jennifer lives in Toronto with her husband, daughter and dog... in no particular order.

DANIEL STOLFI (Producer)

Daniel Stolfi is a versatile producer, writer, actor and comedian who has achieved notable success across various creative realms. As co-founder of You & Me Entertainment with his wife and creative partner, Jennifer De Lucia, Daniel has produced projects for digital platforms and a number of short films such as "Everyone's Leaving Us," "The Dishes" and the latest collaboration "This is Not About Swimming" with Wildling Productions Inc. Daniel's talents extend to the stage as well, where he has written and produced a number of acclaimed comedic plays. His eagerly anticipated comedy Album, "I'm Doing my Very Best," is currently in post-production, set to be released late August of this year. Recognized for his unforgettable performance in the solo show, "Cancer Can't Dance Like This," Daniel's work has garnered widespread praise and attention as well as the Canadian Comedy Award for best solo show.

Daniel is a graduate of the University of Guelph theatre program and the Second City conservatory program and his acting skills can be seen for television and film on ABC, CBC, BBC America and the USA Network.

WILDLING PICTURES

Since 2014, Wildling Pictures has been committed to developing and producing bold filmmaker-driven films for the international marketplace while offering production services to clients both domestic and international.

Wildling's recent original productions include the comedy SUZE, from Linsey Stewart & Dane Clark, starring Michaela Watkins and Charles Gillespie. In 2022, Wildling's hit thriller SEE FOR ME from award-winning director Randall Okita and introducing visually impaired actor Skyler Davenport, was released in 25+ territories, including by IFC Midnight in the US after its World Premiere at the 2021 Tribeca Film Festival. Previously, Wildling co-produced the David Bowie biopic, STARDUST, with Salon Pictures of the United Kingdom, starring Johnny Flynn, Jena Malone and Marc Maron. Stardust premiered at the 2020 Tribeca Film Festival. I. Wildling also produced 2017 Toronto International Film Festival Official Selections, MARY GOES ROUND from Molly McGlynn and starring Aya Cash and CARDINALS from Grayson Moore and Aidan Shipley; the TIFF 2018 premiere FIRECRACKERS from Jasmin Mozaffari; and the 2018 Berlinale selection and Hot Docs Canadian Feature Prize winner, WHAT WALAA WANTS. In 2019, the company had EASY LAND from Sanja Zivkovic at TIFF, and executive produced LEARN TO SWIM from Thyrone Tommy which played TIFF in 2021.

Wildling is actively engaging in children's television with PROFESSOR GOOSE, a new animated children's series based on the upcoming children's book written by Paulette Bourgeois, the author of *Franklin the Turtle*.

Wildling's recent service productions include Netflix's WEDDING SEASON and Peter Huang's series NINE FILMS ABOUT TECHNOLOGY produced in association with FX Network and based on Huang's Sundance debut short film. Wildling founder, Matt Code, has also recently produced two television series for major studios in the past two years: MOST DANGEROUS GAME starring Christoph Waltz and David Castañeda and ACCUSED adapted from a British format for FOX by HOMELAND AND 24 executive producer, Howard Gordon, and featuring an all star cast including Abigail Breslin, Michael Chiklis, Margot Martindale, Molly Parker, Rachel Bilson, Wendell Pierce and Rhea Pearlman.. Wildling was previously the service producer for THE SILENCING starring Nikolaj Coster-Waldau and Annabelle Wallis for XYZ and Anova Pictures. And in 2019, Pippa Bianco's SHARE, a Wildling service production for A24 and Loveless Media, won multiple awards at the 2019 Sundance Film Festival and was a special presentation at the 2019 Cannes Film Festival. Wildling has also serviced a number of Canadian titles including RANDOM ACTS OF VIOLENCE directed by Jay Baruchel and Sony release, RUN THIS TOWN starring Ben Platt, Nina Dobrev, Jennifer Ehle and Damian Lewis.

Wildling's productions have earned them multiple wins across twenty-seven Canadian Screen Award nominations and an International Emmy nomination. The company is based in Ontario, Canada.