

A FILM BY ABBEY GEORGE

JESUS WOULD HAVE LOVED PUNK ROCK

RUNNING TIME: 11 MINUTES 36 SECONDS | YEAR: 2022

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jesuspunkrockfilm.com



STARRING

Sammie Williams

Maddie Lucas

Tommy Schrider

Ellen Lancaster

Zoë Bowen Smith

James Lynch

Meredith Handerhan

Abigail Choi Arader

Jesse Castellanos

DIRECTED BY

Abbey George

PRODUCED BY

Zeus Kontoyannis

Abbey George

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

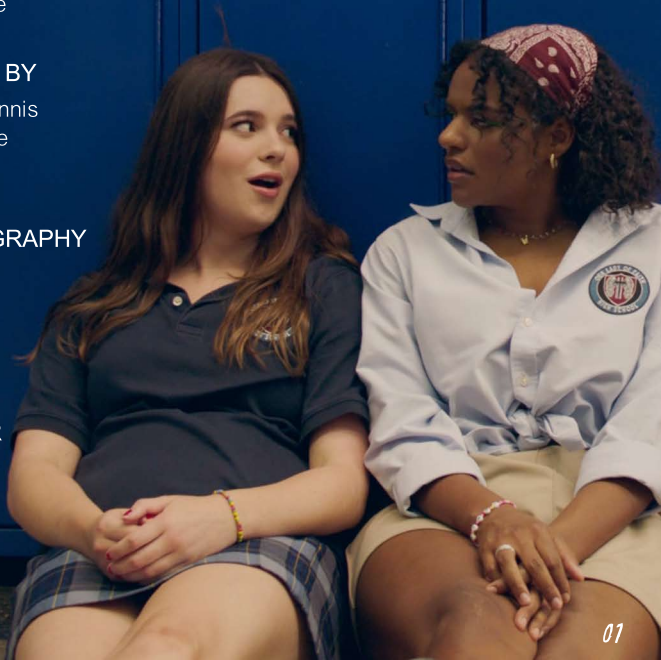
Cathy Ye

EDITED BY

Sarah Tang

COMPOSER

Rolando Gori



LOGLINE

One oppressive institution, two rebellious teens, and an uprising that will change everything.

SYNOPSIS

Veronica and Annie are fed up with the oppressive and corrupt nature of their Catholic high school, determined to make authoritarian teachers answer for their crimes and right the moral compass of the student body.



Abbey George

director, producer

Abbey George is a filmmaker, producer, and actor based in New York City. JESUS WOULD HAVE LOVED PUNK ROCK is her directorial debut. Picked up by independent production company Zeus Pictures, the short is set to premiere in 2023. The feature film is currently in development.

Abbey has produced dozens of indie projects, including music videos for The Neverends and an up-and-coming web series called QUARTER LIFE CRISIS. Abbey is the founder of Abbey George Productions, a production company that aims to develop new and exciting works that give voice to complex female driven narratives.

As an actor she has developed work with Ensemble Studio Theatre, Powerhouse + New York Stage & Film, and The 24 Hour Plays. Abbey holds a BFA in Acting from Montclair University and enjoys analog photography and thrifting in her free time.

Cathy Ye

director of photography

Cathy Ye is a Director of Photography who translates bold visions into visual experiences. In her last 3 years working in NYC and LA, she has collaborated with some of North America's top creatives, including Unit 9 (Campaign's 2021 Tech Company of the Year). Her short film, FEVER, world premiered at the British Film Institute this Spring. Cathy believes that cinema is a powerful psychological medium capable of building empathy and influencing change, and is passionate about mentorship and community building within the film industry.



Zeus Kontoyannis

producer

Zeus Kontoyannis is a producer and writer with more than a decade of experience in the film industry. He began his career at Cinetic Media, working on the Banksy documentary "Exit Through the Gift Shop." After a short time at Cinetic, he got an opportunity to work under veteran Hollywood and Broadway producer Scott Rudin. During his time at SRP, Zeus worked on films including "The Social Network," "True Grit," "The Dictator," and the original theater production of "Book of Mormon." He's also boarded projects produced by Terry Leonard, Mynette Louie, Peter Berg, and Academy Award Winning director Ross Kauffman.

As an independent producer, he develops new, compelling projects under his company Zeus Pictures. His films have screened at Sitges, SXSW, Tribeca, Fantastic Fest, Cleveland International, Sarasota, Tallgrass, L.A. Shorts, Athens International Film and Video Festival, Santa Barbara, Fantaspoa, and many others. As he continues to write, produce, and acquire feature length projects, he is also developing his first television series with a veteran TV writer/showrunner and Sundance Film Festival adviser, and he has partnered with Animetropolis on two adult-animation T.V series.





Sammie Williams

Veronica Montana

A Texas native, Sammie Williams made her Broadway debut in the Tony Award-winning hit musical *Dear Evan Hansen* playing the principal role of Alana Beck when she was in her junior year at Pace University. Now a recent graduate, she is honored to be sharing a story so close to her heart as she returns to Broadway as Emmie in *Caroline, or Change*. Most recently, Samantha was seen reprising the role of Alana Beck on the national tour of *Dear Evan Hansen*. *Jesus Would Have Loved Punk Rock* is Sammie's screen debut.



Maddie Lucas

Annie

Maddie made her LA debut in *COMFORT WOMEN* at the LA Theatre Center in August of 2019, at age 18 just after graduating the High School for the Performing and Visual Arts in Houston, TX. She then decided to permanently move to Los Angeles and continue her Acting career. Maddie shot her first "Guest Star" role in 2020. Maddie and Abbey have been friends for over 10 years.

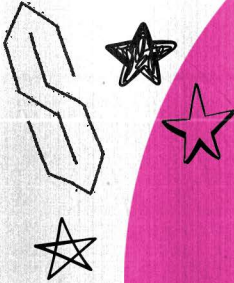
Skills



Q&A

Tell us about working on the film?

Jesus Would Have Loved Punk Rock is the most challenging and demanding project I've worked on to date. When I started developing the story back in 2021 with writers Charlotte Martin and Isabella Jarosz, I had two goals: to celebrate authentic women driven narratives and to explore the idea of religious trauma. I went to a Christian high school from sophomore to senior year and consider myself to have narrowly avoided religious indoctrination. An exaggeration? Maybe. But the misogyny and hypocrisy that takes place in religious institutions has always infuriated me. Throughout my college career I found myself coming back to themes of religion, isolation, and rites of passage. I wrote a short story called *One Inch Too Short* about a school uniform skirt deemed too short by the dean of girls, which went on to inspire much of the world that is *Jesus Would Have Loved Punk Rock*.



What did you learn about directing films?

The biggest takeaway from directing and producing films is that you need a strong support system to get you through it. I owe a lot of the success of this film to our production coordinator Michelle Edmond, associate producer Maddie Lucas, and of course Zeus Kontoyannis, who generously mentored me throughout this process. It feels taboo to address, but the film industry is gatekept and intimidating starting out, especially for women and POC. It takes a little bit of time, but you will find your people. And if you encounter anyone unwelcoming along the way, then you probably weren't meant to work with them in the first place.

You started off as an actor. Did you find the transition to directing difficult in any way?

I come from a heavy background in acting. Before *Jesus Would Have Loved Punk Rock*, everything I had learned about directing was from being in front of the camera in dozens of indie films. I learned a lot just from observing on set, watching movies, and asking a shit ton of questions. Making the transition to directing was challenging but nothing that I wasn't up for. At the end of the day, I think my background in acting is my superpower because I know exactly how actors think. For some people who come from the more technical side, working with actors can be dreadful. But for me, collaborating with actors is the most exciting part. Scene analysis, characterization, beats, tactics, actions, I love working through all of it. Especially when you have a talented cast like JWHLP did.

How did you get two Broadway veterans to star in your film?

Sammie Williams (Veronica) and I are both from Houston, Texas and we had always been loosely connected through friends of friends. When I pitched the idea to Maddie Lucas (Annie) she told me that Sammie would be perfect for the part. She was right! Their chemistry on screen is so tangible. Sometimes I forget that this was Sammie's screen debut. You'll be seeing a lot more from her on screen soon. And then Tommy Schrider (Father Ron) was my acting professor in college. He was such an important figure throughout my college career, and he just happened to fit the antagonist type very well. Tommy is a beyond talented actor and just such a generous person. I'm so lucky to have worked with both of them.

What was it like working with such experienced actors?

Working with the actors was such a gift. They're all so talented and experienced, so we were able to quickly hop into scenes and get to work. When we got to the editing room we were like, 'I can't choose!' There were so many great takes that all told a different story.

Because the actors were so experienced, we were also able to do some improv on set, much of which made the final cut. The entire neck brace boy character was actually Maddie's idea. We thought it was so funny because in high school someone always inexplicably had some sort of cast on. The scene at the end where the neck brace boy passes out was like this really electric moment where everyone just went with it. That was one of those magical moments on set that people make movies for.



What was the most challenging scene?

The most challenging scene to shoot was probably the classroom scene. It was beyond hot that day, and our background actors were itching to be released. Thankfully Maddie and Sammie were just flying through scenes with one or two takes, and so we were able to wrap on time.

Who are your influences?

I have so many! Greta Gerwig, Ava DuVerney, Celine Sciamma, Clare Barron, Charlotte Day Wilson, Tierra Whack, and Rico Nasty just to name a few. Specifically for this project I listened to a lot of artists from the 90s Riot Grrrl movement: Sleater-Kinney, Bratmobile, L7, and of course Bikini Kill. I listened to this song by Bikini Kill called "F*ck Twin Peaks" on repeat during pre-production. That was pretty much my anthem for this project.

If you had to do it over again, what would you do differently?

Nothing, it was such a great learning experience! Just kidding. I would probably have spent way more time on pre-production, and I would have found a smaller church to shoot the first scene in. That church was such a beast to light and very stressful for that reason. Shout out to our Director of Photography Cathy Ye for still making it look amazing. Don't even get me started on Cathy. I am truly her biggest fan.

What makes your short different than other coming of age films?

I think that this film is unique in that it deals with sensitive subject matter without drowning in the drama and heaviness of it. It touches on the hypocrisy of the Christian church without shoving an opinion down your throat, and it also lets you watch two young women being their authentic selves, without them necessarily having to be sexy or polite or however society wants to see women behave. The project was also almost entirely led by women, which most productions can't say.

Anything last words you'd like to leave us with?

I hope that this film can inspire other women to stop waiting for permission and just go ahead and make that movie. Because for every one woman who is unsure that they can pull it off or thinks they're not ready, ten guys are already shooting their really mid movie. So just go for it.

"punk teaches the same
inversion of power as
the Gospel you learn
that the coolest thing
about having a
microphone is turning
it away from your own
mouth"

Julien Baker