



THE FUTURE

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY MIRANDA JULY



RAZOR FILM, GNK PRODUCTIONS and FILM4 present
in association with THE MATCH FACTORY and HAUT ET COURT
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FILMFÖRDERUNGSANSTALT



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GERMANY/USA - 2011 - COLOR - 35mm - 1.1:85 - DOLBY SRD - 91MIN



synopsis

Sophie and Jason are strange the way all couples are strange when they're alone. They live in a small LA apartment, have jobs they hate, and in one month they'll adopt a stray cat named Paw Paw. Like a newborn baby, he'll need around-the-clock care – he may die in six months, or it may take five years. Despite their good intentions, Sophie and Jason are terrified of their looming loss of freedom. So with just one month left, they quit their jobs, and the Internet, to pursue their dreams – Sophie wants to create a dance, Jason wants simply to be guided by fate. But as the month slips away, Sophie becomes increasingly, humiliatingly paralyzed. In a moment of desperation, she calls a stranger, Marshall – a square, fifty-year-old man who lives in the Valley. In his suburban world she doesn't have to be herself; as long as she stays there, she'll never have to try (and fail) again. Living in two terrifyingly vacant and different realities, Sophie and Jason must reunite with time, space and their own souls in order to come home.

director's statement

When I was a kid I had a folder labeled “Ways to go back in time/enter other worlds.” I never actually put anything in it, but I still have the folder, and the feeling that there might be a way. And meanwhile, moving forward through time, minute by minute, day by day, has turned out to be its own challenge – no less science fictional, and in moments, almost as impossible. This movie is about that.

It seemed to me, a woman in her thirties, that time had suddenly become the protagonist of my life; I was stunned by a new awareness of mortality, of life being finite. I suppose this marks the beginning of adulthood. Or, if you are not quite ready for adulthood, it marks the beginning of a problem.

Jason responds to this predicament like an artist should; he isn't making anything, but his decision to be led by mistakes and coincidences is the creative process. He's not without doubt, but he keeps his faith, which leads him somewhere new. I wanted to show the side of creativity that is spiritual, even a bit mystical, and more about surviving life than about performance or production.

Meanwhile, with no less determination, my character, Sophie, attempts to create a YouTube dance – this is the other end of creativity, the entirely goal-oriented desire for attention. I try to keep that craving in my blind spot, and go about life as Jason does. This was easier ten years ago, when wanting attention was still shameful, and getting it was hard for most of us. The Internet has both exposed and created a more acute awareness of our need to be reacted to. You only have to unplug it and bam – you are in a profound crisis, facing the empty void without distractions. As a writer, I have to make my way through this crisis on a daily basis. But what if I couldn't?

It would be like a horror movie. I would be so disappointed in myself that I would literally break up with myself, and then (because this is a fantasy) I would be completely taken care of, like a child. This would take place in a very clean house in the suburbs; a house with nice sheets. But there are two big flaws in this fantasy: 1) I would have to leave my soul mate. And 2) no one would have time to watch me every second. And it would really have to be every second, because I know that if I had even a moment alone, my true self would haunt me, and this would be a nightmare. It was very painful to act all of this out.

And even if you flee your life, I think you still end up in the same place in the end. You still have to be you, you still have to make the dance. It's just much harder, and some important things are lost along the way. So this story is also told from the point of view of what was lost – a cat. Paw Paw tells the truth simply and is completely exposed, like someone just born or someone very old. He was the only way I could describe the bittersweet vertigo of true love. Which is the thing that got me thinking about mortality in the first place.





in conversation with miranda july

Where did the idea for this second film originate?

After my first feature I had no interest in making another movie immediately. I finished writing a book of short stories and then wrote a performance called Things We Don't Understand and Definitely Are Not Going To Talk About. Like The Future, which evolved out of it, this performance was about an affair, but the couple was played by a real couple I chose from the audience. I didn't tour with it because ultimately it was really hair-raising to pull off each night. I'd been lucky so far, but there was so much that could go wrong. Also, I was ready to think about writing a script again and hungry to tell the story in a more intricate way.

The finished script evolved from the original concept. It became real, like the difference between Pinocchio the puppet and the real boy. Everything that was symbolic had to be fully realized. Maybe most importantly, I began to understand that the affair wasn't about love or lust, it was her desire to flee her own dimensionality, as if it might be possible to live in 2D, or without a soul. I think this is kind of what fame seems to promise – you will be entirely lit up by other people's gazes, and you won't have to face the difficult task of igniting yourself ever again.

The working title for the script was Satisfaction, and yet you ended up calling the film The Future. Why did you think this was a more appropriate title, in the end, and how do you feel like the film addresses the subject of the future?

I was thinking of satisfaction in a pretty dark way, like how we never stop craving until we die. But over time the word started to feel more glib and easy than I meant it. I knew I wanted one familiar word so I did an Internet search for the most common words – the past, the present, and the future were among the search results. There is nothing more complicated and full of hopes and fears than the future. We think about it more than anything else, we never quite get there. It's always new, but we're always older when it happens. And the idea of a young couple's future is so inherently fraught -- but the actual practice of it, of growing old together, is pretty profound.

You have also published a book of stories and been active in the art and performance worlds. How is the process of writing a film script different from conceiving projects in these other mediums?

Writing a script is like you're the first person in a game of telephone and you don't want to say something in such a complicated way that it will get contorted as it's repeated. The feelings and ideas can still be complex, but there's not this smart narrator person who gets to say all the smart ideas, like there is in fiction. You have to demonstrate everything you want to say with the people and places and props from this particular world you're making. You don't get the shared experience of NOW that you have with a performance, but a gazillion people get to see it, so it's more democratic in the end. Of course the essential task is the same in all the mediums – to express something true, to remember you are free, to make a needed space that didn't exist before.

What led you to make the jump towards surrealism in this film? Were there any literary or artistic influences for this?

It will seem out of the blue to people who have only seen my last movie, but Me and You and Everyone We Know is actually one of the few things I've made that hasn't had "unreal" elements in it. Most of my videos, short stories and performances have used abstract or slightly sci-fi elements to convey emotional states. It's like when you're telling a true story and you have to exaggerate because the truth doesn't convey the depth or heights of what happened. The way that Sophie feels haunted by her former life is so piercing and real for her that it can't just be a look on her face, it needs some real mass, it actually crawls towards her, pitifully forsaken and unrelenting.

The Internet and the way it affects human relationships are major themes in both your films. How do you deal with the struggle with "constant connectedness" faced by Sophie and Jason in The Future?

Remembering that I can exist at all without being online is a daily challenge. It's interesting to me because it's so new. How often is there a brand new daily challenge shared by almost every person you know? But as an artist who has always tried to find new ways to feel intimacy with the audience, it also seems useful. Part of me will always be the twenty-year-old who tried to create revolutions through fanzines and VHS tapes and the US postal service. So that girl is pretty wowed by the fact that she can write a tweet and get instant responses. And yet (and this is the thing that really dates me) I hate to do anything that might make it even harder to have long thoughts that take a long time to unravel. So I use Twitter, Facebook, and my website in my own slow way, which is not all that effective, from a networking standpoint.

A lot of online culture is about being watched and reacted to, which is something I think women and girls have a special relationship to. Teenage girls often discover their power through being looked at. If you have the usual

“mom/dad didn’t really see me” issues, then it’s easy to get pretty caught up in being seen. (Type “me dancing in my room” into a YouTube search and you’ll see what I mean.) Being watched kind of takes away the burden of living; you almost don’t have to exist while you’re being watched. In the movie I kind of reverse-engineer this aspect of the Internet, bring it back to its origins. Sophie wants to make a YouTube dance before becoming responsible – essentially it is her last chance to be watched like a child. So when she can’t do it, when she’s paralyzed, this is a real crisis. She has to find another way to be watched, and she does. Only when she’s faced with a real child in need does she give up, and giving up allows her to transform into a grown up, through the shirt dance. Did I know all this when I was writing it? Uh, no. But I write from the unconscious, and these were a lot of the issues I was wrestling with after the last movie.

Why did you decide to make a cat the catalyst for the dread of impending responsibility, rather than, say, a baby?

One day I was making myself write and it wasn’t working. I just felt so incapable, barely even human, much less brilliant. So I told myself “OK, write from there. What does Incapable sound like?” I wrote a long, plaintive monologue in this halting voice, without even knowing who it was. The next day there was a bizarre accident wherein our dog ran into the street, causing a car to swerve and hit a cat. My producer, Gina Kwon, was actually there when it happened. As we put the dead cat in a bag I remember saying something to her like “We must redeem this cat.” Somehow this event merged with the voice and became Paw Paw.

How close are you to the characters in your films? Do you project yourself differently in the roles you write for yourself than in those written for other actors?

Since I didn’t know who would be playing the other roles when I was writing both movies, knowing Sophie would be played by me gave me a starting point – kind of like the free spot at the center of a bingo card. I created everything around that one known point, which helped me set the tone, cast and build the world. There are moments of Sophie that feel like me, but what I most relate to is the movie as a whole. I think a completed movie, with all the music done, can be a pretty good portrait of one person. But just one character in a movie has more in common with a photo of a person than a person.

The artist struggling with personal insecurities is a recurring theme in your work – from the video art of *Me and You and Everyone We Know* to the dances in *The Future*. Is there ever a victory over the obstacles, or is the process itself the point?

The process is pretty interesting, and the victories are kind of ephemeral because it never ends. Each thing I make just brings me to the door of the next project. One could easily show the same struggle without the art-making,





because it's really just the normal struggle of living – filled with paralyzed moments, shrinking and expanding time, doubt, and breakthroughs. But at this particular age in my life I am surrounded by very smart women who aren't doing exactly what they wanted to do, career-wise, and now they are faced with the choice of getting pregnant and giving up, or trying to make all their dreams come true in the few years and risking not being able to get pregnant at forty. Of course it's not this simple, but I think it can feel like this. This is not exactly my plight, but it resonates with me. Which is why Sophie is a dance teacher for toddlers, and later, after quitting to focus on her own dance, she can't even get her old shitty job back and is demoted. (Remember this is a horror story.)

How do you see filmmaking as fitting into your overall body of work as an artist?

The plan is to keep doing all of it – writing books, making art, performing, and making movies. Usually I'm working on a few things at the same time. This means that *The Future* is not really the follow-up to *Me and You* and *Everyone We Know*, but rather to my book of short stories, or maybe the interactive sculpture I made for the Yokohama Biennial, *The Hallway*, which is very much about time. Of course I know only the most die-hard fans are going to follow this strange path, so the evolution becomes mostly a personal thing.

How did you go about casting your actors? Did you set out to cast experienced actors like Hamish Linklater, David Warshofsky and even the little girl, Isabella Acres, with non-professionals?

I worked with Jeanne McCarthy on the casting, and Hamish and David were two people we talked about from day one. I met both of them, and experienced that eerie sensation of rightness that tells you your search is over. This didn't stop me from considering and meeting with almost every single actor in their respective age groups before finally pulling the trigger (this is why having more options is not always helpful). Casting Joe was a different story altogether. I was doing an unrelated project wherein I called up people who were selling things in the *PennySaver* (classifieds newspaper) and asked if I could come interview and photograph them. Joe Putterlik was one of the many fascinating people I met through this project. Meanwhile I was writing this script which involved a man selling trees and I was trying to figure out some way for him to get inside the homes of strangers – out of his small world and in to another. Suddenly it was obvious that he could do what I was doing. I thought maybe I could even cast all the *PennySaver* people to play themselves, but in the end Joe was the only one who passed the screen test. I came over with a video camera and asked him to re-enact our first meeting – he ad-libbed, came up with amazing lines, often forgot we were filming, and was relentlessly willing to try it again. But more than that, he was an incredible person, the kind of person who inspires you to not only write him into the movie, but actually change the story in light of what he's taught you. He made all the cards (with the dirty limericks) for his wife over the last sixty years and that is just one tiny example of his bawdy, generous, tough spirit. He died on Thanksgiving, the day after I finished the movie.

Miranda July (Sophie)

Miranda July is a filmmaker, artist, and writer. Her videos, performances, and web-based projects have been presented at sites such as the Museum of Modern Art, the Guggenheim Museum and in two Whitney Biennials. July wrote, directed and starred in her first feature-length film, *Me and You and Everyone We Know* (2005), which won a special jury prize at the Sundance Film Festival and four prizes at the Cannes Film Festival, including the *Caméra d'Or*. Her fiction has appeared in *The Paris Review*, *Harper's*, and *The New Yorker*; her collection of stories, *No One Belongs Here More Than You* (Scribner, 2007), won the Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award and has been published in twenty countries. July created the participatory website, *learningtoloveyoumore*, with artist Harrell Fletcher and a companion book was published in 2007 (Prestel); the work is now in the collection of The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. *Eleven Heavy Things*, an interactive sculpture garden she designed for the 2009 Venice Biennale, was on view in Union Square in New York in the summer of 2010. Raised in Berkeley, California, she currently lives in Los Angeles. Her new movie, *The Future*, premieres this year at the Sundance and Berlin Film Festivals.



Hamish Linklater (Jason)

Hamish Linklater is an acclaimed film, television, and theatre actor. He just wrapped shooting on *Battleship* for director Peter Berg for Universal Pictures. His other film credits include *Fantastic Four*, *Final Draft* and *Groove* (Sundance 2000). Previously, he could be seen as Matthew in the CBS hit comedy *The New Adventures of Old Christine* opposite Julia Louis Dreyfus (*Seinfeld*). In summer 2010, Linklater appeared with Al Pacino in *The Merchant of Venice* at the Delacourt Theatre, where he was nominated for a Drama Desk Award for *Twelfth Night* the summer previous. Other New York theater credits include *Good Thing* at The New Group (also in L.A.); *Romeo* in *Romeo and Juliet* for the Acting Company; *Laertes* opposite Liev Schreiber in *Hamlet*, *The Square* and *Love's Fire*, all three at The Public. Notable regional credits include starring in the world premiere of Richard Greenberg's *The Violet Hour* at South Coast Rep, where he also played the title role in *Hamlet*; *The Singing Forest* at Long Wharf; and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Measure for Measure*, directed by Sir Peter Hall, at The Ahmanson. Linklater's other TV credits include *Ugly Betty*, *Pushing Daisies*, *American Dreams*, *Gideon's Crossing* (series regular) and the television movies *Five Days to Midnight* and *Live from Baghdad*. He also co-wrote and produced the pilot *Prince of Motor City* for ABC with his wife Jessica Goldberg.



David Warshofsky (Marshall)

David Warshofsky is a graduate of the MFA program at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. He has been working as an actor in film, television, on Broadway and in theatre since 1989. His latest feature film credits include *Unstoppable* starring Denzel Washington and directed by Tony Scott, and *Fair Game* directed by Doug Liman. (Cannes Competition 2010). Among his other feature film credits are *There Will Be Blood*, *Public Enemies*, *The Best Thief in the World* (Sundance 2004), *Personal Velocity* (Sundance Best Film 2002), *Welcome To Collinwood* (Cannes 2002), *Last Exit to Brooklyn*, Oliver Stone's *Born on the Fourth of July*, and Ridley Scott's *G.I. Jane*. On Broadway, he has appeared in *Biloxi Blues*, *Carousel* and *On the Waterfront*. Other stage credits include *Henry V* at the New York Shakespeare Festival, *Blue Window* at Manhattan Theatre Club, *Romance Language* at Playwright's Horizons, and the national tours of *Biloxi Blues* and *South Pacific*. He originated the role of Swetts in the world premiere of Tony Kushner's *A Bright Room Called Day* directed by Oskar Eustis at the Eureka Theatre. He currently lives in Los Angeles with his wife, Kristina Lear, their daughter Helen, and his son, Macgee.



Isabella Acres (Gabriella)

Isabella Acres discovered her love of acting at age 3 while participating in various children's theatre productions. Her professional acting career began in 2006 when she landed the part of Rose Crisp on ABC's critically acclaimed office comedy *Better Off Ted*. Isabella has also done extensive voice over work, lending her voice to animated shows such as *Phineas and Ferb*, *Scooby-Doo Mystery Inc.*, and *Adventure Time*. Her favorite hobbies include singing, swimming, dancing, Tae Kwon Do, Hap Ki Do, writing stories, and designing clothes for her dolls.



Joe Putterlik (Joe, The Moon)

Joe Putterlik was born in 1929 and grew up in Chicago, Illinois. He and his wife, Carolyn, lived in North Hollywood, California for 40 years where he worked as a painting contractor and real estate manager. Director Miranda July first met Joe while writing the screenplay for *The Future*, and then wrote a character based on him into the film. He improvised much of his dialogue, and his scenes take place in his own home and make use of his belongings – including the holiday cards he made for Carolyn nine times a year. Joe passed away in November 2010.



Jon Brion (Composer)

In a decade, Jon Brion's film and music career has developed in exponential proportions. Brion is a singer, songwriter, composer, music producer and instrumentalist. As a film composer, he recently scored the hit comedy *The Other Guys* (2010) starring Will Ferrell and Mark Wahlberg, along with films such as *Synecdoche, New York* (2008), *Step Brothers* (2008), *The Break-Up* (2006), *I Heart Huckabees* (2004), *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004), *Punch-Drunk Love* (2002) and *Magnolia* (1999). High in demand as a producer and studio musician, Brion has worked with artists that include Kanye West, Dido, Macy Gray, Rufus Wainwright, The Crystal Method, Jude Cole, Susanna Hoffs, Sam Phillips and the Eels. Brion contributed much of the sound on Aimee Mann's two solo albums, and also produced Fiona Apple's debut album *Tidal*, as well as much of her second album. In addition to his collaboration with top artists, Brion as a performer released his first solo album, *Meaningless*, in 2001.



Andrew Bird (Editor)

Andrew Bird is a British-born film editor who lives and works in Hamburg editing feature films as well as documentaries. Since the mid-nineties, he has collaborated regularly with Fatih Akin, and has also worked with directors including Sebastian Schipper, Monika Truet and Uli Gaulke. He has received a number of awards for his work, most recently the Deutsche Filmpreis 2008, the 2008 German Film Critics Award and the 2008 German Editing Award for *The Edge of Heaven* by Fatih Akin. He had also worked internationally with directors such as Xiaolu Guo and Julie Delpy, among others before meeting Miranda July in Los Angeles in the summer of 2010. Selected credits include *She, A Chinese* (Xiaolu Guo, 2008), *The Countess* (Julie Delpy, 2006), *Comrades In Dreams* (Uli Gaulke, 2003), *Head-On* (Fatih Akin, 2002), *Warrior Of Light* (Monika Truet, 1999), and *Absolute Giganten* (Sebastian Schipper, 1998).

Nikolai Von Graevenitz (DOP)

Nikolai Von Graevenitz was born in 1972 in Berlin where he still resides today. He began his career in film as a camera assistant before shooting his first film as Director of Photography in 2001 - a very successful film school project that went to festivals all over the world and won the "Prix Regards Neufs" at Nyon International Documentary Film Festival. He has since worked with several prominent young German directors on feature films including *The Forest in the Trees* by Maren Ade (Special Jury Award, Sundance Film Festival 2005) and *Hotel Very Welcome* by Sonja Heiss (Dialogue en Perspective Prize, Berlinale Perspektive Deutsches Kino 2007.) He has also shot a number of short films, commercials and documentaries, and enjoys the diverse challenges of working between a variety of genres and projects.

producers

Gnk Productions

Gina Kwon is an award-winning film producer and recipient of the 2004 Mark Silverman/Sundance Fellowship for Producers and the 2005 Bravo/American Express Independent Spirit Producer's Award honoring "emerging producers who demonstrate the creativity, tenacity, and vision required to produce quality independent films." In 2004, she produced *Me and You and Everyone We Know*, by artist and filmmaker Miranda July, which won a SPECIAL JURY PRIZE at the Sundance Film Festival for "Originality of Vision" and four awards at the Cannes Film Festival, including the prestigious *Caméra d'Or* for Best First Feature Film.

Kwon started her producing career working on the critically acclaimed features of director Miguel Arteta, co-producing *The Good Girl* (starring Jennifer Aniston, Jake Gyllenhaal, John C. Reilly) and associate producing *Chuck & Buck* (starring Mike White and Chris Weitz). She produced Sundance Humanitas Prize winner *The Motel*, a film by Michael Kang, which was nominated for a 2007 Indie Spirit Award for Best First Feature. In the spring of 2011, Kwon is slated to produce the feature comedy *It Is What It Is*, by writer/director Susanna Fogel (*What Was I Thinking*, *Super 8*), which will star Evan Rachel Wood, Olivia Thirlby, and Ari Graynor.

Prior to producing features, Kwon worked with Academy Award-nominated documentary producer R.J. Cutler, as a Co-Producer on his TNT series *The Residents* and a Story Producer on his Fox series *American High* (winner of a 2001 Emmy Award for Outstanding Non-Fiction Program). She also has a background in international film sales and acquisitions, serving as VP of Myriad Pictures from 1996 to 1999. Kwon has served as advisor and mentor to numerous Sundance, and Film Independent Fellows, and in 2006 she taught Film Independent's annual Producers Lab. She lives in Los Angeles with her husband and son.

Razor Film

RAZOR FILM was founded in 2002 by producer Gerhard Meixner and former acquisitions executive Roman Paul in Berlin. Together they produce national and international feature films from arthouse to crossover, focusing on new talent and high quality.

Their producing credits include Golden Globe-winning and Academy Award-nominated films *Paradise Now* by Hany Abu-Assad and *Waltz With Bashir* by Ari Folman. Razor Film's co-productions *The Wind's Journeys* by Columbian *Ciro Guerra* and *Independencia* by Philippine *Raya Martin*, premiered in 2009 at Cannes' Official Selection: *Un Certain Regard*. In 2010, *Benedek Fliegauf's Womb*, starring *Eva Green*, and *Danis Tanovic's Cirkus Columbia* were screened in *Locarno*, *Sarajevo*, *Venice*, *Toronto* and *London*.

Currently in post-production is French-German co-production *Un Amour de Jeunesse* by *Mia Hansen-Løve*, scheduled to be finished in April 2011. The next project moving into production will be *Haifaa Al Mansour's Wajda*, currently scheduled to start spring 2011.

crew

written and directed by
produced by

executive producer
co-producer
director of photography
production designer
editor
music
casting
costume designer
key makeup artist
music supervisor
sound mixer
sound designer
re-recording mixer

MIRANDA JULY
GINA KWON
ROMAN PAUL
GERHARD MEIXNER
SUE BRUCE-SMITH
CHRIS STINSON
NIKOLAI VON GRAEVENITZ
ELLIOTT HOSTETTER
ANDREW BIRD
JON BRION
JEANNE MCCARTHY & NICOLE ABELLERA
CHRISTIE WITTENBORN
SABINE SCHUMANN
MARGARET YEN
PATRICK VEIGEL
RAINER HEESCH
LARS GINZEL

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cast

HAMISH LINKLATER
MIRANDA JULY
DAVID WARSHOFSKY
ISABELLA ACRES
JOE PUTTERLIK

jason
sophie
marshall
gabriella
joe, the moon

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