



Earth Mama



A COMCAST COMPANY

Press Notes

Synopsis ₄

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The Cast ₁₃

The Crew ₂₀

Credits ₂₆

97 minutes

USA

English

Color

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Synopsis

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Synopsis

A pregnant single mother, with two children in foster care, embraces her Bay Area community as she fights to reclaim her family.

Q&A with writer-director Savanah Leaf

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Q: Earth Mama has a unique feel to it, combining elements of clear-eyed social realism with sudden moments of whimsical magical realism, and yet it also feels personal. What was the inspiration behind wanting to tell this story of a single, pregnant mother in the Bay Area?

Savanah Leaf: The inspiration was all the mothers who have made a big impact on my own life—and they take many different shapes and forms.

The film for me is about maternity, not just in the sense of pregnancy, but about all these different types of maternal figures who appear in your life whether it be your best friend or a teacher or maybe a mother who isn't your mother by blood, but they are there for you in that way. I grew up in quite a small family of almost all women. I never knew my father. So, I surrounded myself with people who created a larger family around me. I thought of this film as an ode to all those people. They are reflected in each of the characters. And parts of me in different phases of my life are also reflected in the characters. I haven't personally been through this specific instance that Gia is going through, but I feel very connected to her journey in many ways.

Another big influence was a short documentary I made with Taylor Russell, "The Heart Still Hums," which is about single mothers who are fighting to be with their kids in the foster care system, or who have recently given up their children to adoption. From that experience, I knew I wanted to create a film that does not ever judge a mother in a tough situation but gives her a fully layered story and humanity. When it comes to Black women and Black mothers, you have to take into consideration that it often feels that society is expecting you to make mistakes, and the system is ready to close doors off to you. I wanted to go inside these conflicting feelings of Black

women—the desire for motherhood, the fear of motherhood, the differing social and personal expectations of motherhood.

Q: We are pulled into the lush inner life of Gia beyond her struggles with the child welfare and foster systems because of these beautiful, shimmering glimpses we get into her imagination and daydreams. What compelled you to break out in moments from the conventional structure of social realism?

SL: From the beginning I posed a question to myself: is there a way an audience can empathize with a person who took drugs while she was pregnant—and not come to a snap judgment of who she is? How do you build a deeper picture of this person, a picture of her joys, her fears, and her longings? To really get to all that Gia feels inside, it just seemed to call for a more surreal perspective.

Early on in the writing, I was thinking a lot about the umbilical cord, this physical attachment to your mother that is like the root of a tree, and what that means, so that became an image I started to play with. And I also wanted to bring in the natural world surrounding the Bay Area—the ocean and the forest—which can relate to innate maternal feelings.

Q: And then you have Gia working in the Photo Magic store in the mall where she's setting up perfect life moments all day long—young couples, graduates, families with new babies—which becomes another kind of portal into her inner life.

SL: Her job is working with all these different ideas of family and providing these mementos of perfect happiness. She's arranging people's dresses or telling them how to pose or how to look nice as a family and all those things create an image or idea of family that she doesn't have but she yearns for. So that naturally felt like it could become a window into her unseen desires.

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Q: It seems the only place Gia feels any agency over her life is in these private moments of contemplation or imagination. She's really caught in a Catch-22. She can't get through this alone but relying on others goes against all her gut instincts and life experiences. Yet, we see her starting to reach out, exploring the idea of trust.

SL: The system has really failed Gia, so I don't know how it's possible for her to trust in that system. She's found so little support and people seem so quick to turn on her. She's had to build a tough exterior and she holds onto that. But I think she is learning to trust, with her friend Mel in particular and even with the social worker Miss Carmen, she wants to trust her even if something is telling her to be careful. It's something that's a big part of Gia—and it's a big part of a lot of Black women I know. Who have we been able to trust? How do we learn to trust? Even with someone like Miss Carmen there's always that question in the back of Gia's mind of 'is she really here for me?' or 'are there ulterior motives here?' There are questions of trust for all the characters and that's something I was very interested in exploring.

Q: It feels like you did a lot of research not only into the institutions of child welfare and foster care—all the rules and rigid structures of those life-altering bureaucracies—but into the people inside those worlds and what they experience.

SL: That was really important to me. I worked with a researcher, read a lot, but also just talked to many, many people. I dove in as deep as I could. I was really fascinated by how even the paperwork that social workers do in order to say someone is fit to parent is so bureaucratic and full of checklists and doesn't seem to respond to what being a parent is about. It's such a clinical and dehumanizing way of evaluating motherhood—and I was interested in how that makes people feel on both sides of the equation.

We also worked with several organizations including Black Mothers United, Chicks in Crisis, and a Black doula organization. And a lot of the non-actors who we cast in the film were people connected to these organizations, as well as people we randomly met on the streets who had stories that related to this. You'd give them a prompt and they would just tell you these incredibly moving tales from their own lives. It was amazing and sad and frustrating to realize how many people have been a part of these systems.

Q: You feature women who have children in the system but also the voices of men who grew up in the foster system, which is another side of this story.

SL: The two guys in the film who talk about growing up in the foster care system really helped to guide me with their own authentic stories. They were so keen to share these parts of themselves because they really want people to understand. The children that the mothers give birth to are a natural extension of the mothers' stories.

Q: Were there any specific films that you were thinking about while writing?

SL: A film that really stood out to me was Ken Loach's *Ladybird*, *Ladybird*. It has some similarities to *Earth Mama* but it's also very different. I also looked at Pedro Costa's *Ossos*, which explores different sides of motherhood, including the darker sides. And then I also did a lot of research into the traditions of Black mothers in folk tales and artwork throughout history. Those influences aren't in the film in a way that I can point to specifically, but I think it's all present somehow in the fabric of it.

Q: The Oakland rapper Tia Nomore gives such a bold debut performance as Gia. She is able to lend a revealing transparency to a woman who is anything but transparent in how she

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presents herself to the world. How did you end up casting a first-time actor?

SL: We were searching for quite a while for Gia, in part because we were looking at both actors and non-actors. I liked the idea of having a performer, a rapper or a poet, someone who has that ability to hold your attention because Gia is in almost every second of the film. It was also important to me to find someone from the Bay Area and someone who felt a deep relationship to motherhood in some form. I also knew we needed someone who could show all the layers Gia is holding within her.

Our casting directors went out to a lot of different people, and one of them was Tia. When I saw her audition tape, I felt I'd found Gia. Tia had just had a child a year prior, so she was still tapped into the emotional weight of that, and she had that physical familiarity with how you carry yourself when you're pregnant. She'd also been training to become a doula to Black families, so she brought a lot of personal connections to the film's story.

Once we cast her, Tia and I spent a lot of time together breaking down each of Gia's different relationships. And that's when I discovered she also has a crazy work ethic. She worked so hard and really wanted to put herself out there in the most uncomfortable positions. I'm truly grateful to her for being so daring and committed.

Q: Her portrait is at times very guarded and at others utterly exposed.

SL: One thing I think makes her so powerful is that Tia is really not like Gia. Tia is way more talkative and outgoing than her character, and that creates a wonderful tension. You sense that Tia is always wanting to speak, wanting to move, but she stops herself. You see her eyes constantly darting around, and

you get the feeling of someone who has this strong desire to act, but holds back, which is who Gia is.

Q: The rest of the cast is an unusual mix of non-actors, experienced actors, and people from the music world like the rapper DoeChii. How did you put this group together?

SL: Everyone came out and brought so much of themselves which was very gratifying. DoeChii was incredible for someone who has never acted at all before. She plays Gia's friend Trina, who is such a specific character with her own sense of humor and has a strong edge. Trina is that best friend we all have who constantly makes you laugh but also sometimes really annoys you. And DoeChii is naturally funny, she has a gift for lightening the tone, and she will riff off dialogue and make it feel natural and alive.

By contrast, there is Erika Alexander, who brought so much experience to Miss Carmen, which works because her character is a mother figure to mothers, and she had that maternal essence on set. She's a very strong actor, yet someone who never hesitated to collaborate with non-actors and jump in with a different kind of cast. Erika really opened up her heart to this story and to exploring the whole nature of social work.

Then we have Keta Price playing Mel, who becomes Gia's best friend. Keta is another non-actor who works in advocacy in the Bay Area and is very synched into that community. I always saw Mel as a side of myself and as soon as I met Keta, she reminded me of that. She's an athlete like I was [Leaf was a 2012 Olympian in the sport of volleyball but also played basketball]. At first, we asked Keta to just help us with casting the role, but it quickly became clear she was our Mel.

Dominic Fike is known for Euphoria, but he's another person who can mix it up with anyone on set, actors or non-actors, and was always having fun conversations with people and

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making everyone feel really comfortable. His character is almost a brother to Gia, and he brings a touch of comic relief.

Sharon Duncan-Brewster I really loved in *Dune* and in shows like "Top Boy." As Monica, the would-be adoptive mother, she does so much without saying a word. There are moments where Monica is just listening to a heartbeat, and you see a whole world in Sharon's face that connects you to this character.

Bokeem Woodbine is another great actor but here he didn't mind not being in the spotlight and really letting Black women shine through. He plays the only father figure in the film, and he plays it with warmth and love.

Their daughter is played by Kamaya Jones, who sent in a self-taped audition that caught my attention. I wanted a real basketball player for the role, and Kamaya is one, but I also really love how she played the role. She's very subtle in everything she does, and she's strong, sensitive and sweet at the same time.

Q: How did you work with the actors? Did you do a lot of rehearsal or other kinds of preparation?

SL: We mainly did a lot of relationship-based exercises. So, for example Doechii and Tia wore their bellies and went shopping at a mall in the Bay Area just playing pregnant best friends for a day, trying on clothes, going to Starbucks, doing all the things friends would do and having a lot of fun with it. We did a similar one with Tia and Keta going to Ikea to buy a crib to dig deeper into that dynamic. We didn't rehearse the scenes themselves, except for some scene work I did with Tia to hit on the deeper emotional moments.

Q: The film has an elegant, very cinematic beauty to it that also defies the expected hard-edged realism. You worked with cinematographer Jody Lee Lipes (*Manchester By The Sea*, *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood*, *I Know This Much Is True*). What kind of conversations did you two have about the look?

SL: Jody and I have done a couple of projects together, so we already had that familiarity with each other, and he was very open to my ideas. I knew I wanted to go the opposite way from most social dramas. I definitely didn't want that handheld, shaky look but something much warmer and not designed to shock. I wanted to shoot Gia in a matter of fact but heroic way. I really felt that just because she's broke, we don't have to shoot her like she's broke. The approach is still realistic, but everything is either on a dolly or static. And Jody does such a great job of never imposing himself. You don't feel his presence as a cinematographer, which I really love about his work. Instead, you feel the characters driving the visual language.

My favorite shot in the film is when you first see Tia with her two children and there's this really long dolly. Jody had the idea of doing it as a one-shot on a track and it became a great way of adding visual tension to the scene. You barely notice it, but it gives you the feeling that you're with the family in real time, and we're not breaking that time or restructuring it. It was a really beautiful way of capturing it and that became the visual stepping-stone for the rest of the film.

Our production designer Juliana Barreto Barreto also did amazing work. She made that photo studio completely from scratch. And she also did a really great job of creating a color palette that's specific to the early 2000s. In general, I wanted a lot of color to Gia's world. Color is so vital to her dreams and her ideas of escape.

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Q: You mentioned earlier it was important to you to have a connection to the natural world in the film. It's intriguing to have this mythic sense of ocean and forest as an undercurrent in what is otherwise a city-oriented film. What kind of locations were you looking for to create Gia's Bay Area?

SL: We did a lot of shooting in Treasure Island, which is kind of interesting because the ocean is everywhere but it's also this weird, man-made island. We also shot a lot in Vallejo, where there's a long stretch of water and the forest is very close, and yet it seems that no one ever goes there. I'm really grateful to the whole Bay Area and very excited that we were able to film in so many locations that have never been shot before.

Q: How was the shoot for you overall, especially as your first feature film?

SL: The toughest part was feeling such a big responsibility to Gia, to sharing her story in the best way. Of course, I also felt a responsibility to the cast and crew and producers, but everyone really put their heart and soul into this, and we pushed through all the problems that come up on a first feature. I couldn't have done it without the devotion of everyone involved.

Q: You also worked with editor George Cragg who edited the acclaimed documentary *Collective*. What was that process like?

SL: George has great ideas and a very visual mind. It was really nice to have someone experienced in fiction and documentary, because this film has a bit of both. We developed a nice push-pull relationship but what we were both attached to was finding the most authentic performance moments and to creating the fullest spectrum of who Tia is.

Q: Another evocative layer in the film is the score, which is minimalist at times but has a dreamlike feeling at others, and the sound design. What made you choose singer/songwriter/cellist Kelsey Lu (they/them) to compose the music?

SL: Kelsey Lu is just really talented, and their style of sound is something I haven't experienced before. I knew I wanted a mix of elements, something that would feel like an old, soulful jazz record your mom might have played but with a contemporary electronic ambience. That's why Lu made so much sense. How Lu plays the cello has so much depth and emotion, and there's an added layer of complexity with the synths and sounds they use with it. Additionally, they brought in amazing musicians who improvised over key moments—sometimes the piano just flutters over scenes—and give the film more fluidity.

Joakim Sundstrom, our supervising sound editor, was equally important. He brought focused attention to every element of the film's sound. We're in quiet spaces a lot so he zeroed in on lots of subtle sounds, down to the bumps in the road when Gia is driving, to create tension. We play a lot with heartbeats throughout the film and that blends in with the score. It also lends itself to the magical realism side of the story and the way deep inside herself Gia can't stop thinking about the one thing she doesn't want to think about.

Q: Now that *Earth Mama* is going out into the world, what kind of conversations do you hope that the film might start?

SL: Mostly, I hope people might begin to question their initial judgments of these characters and of women who are in situations like them. Maybe if they judge Gia at one moment in the film, later they might begin to see she is more than what they thought. It's not a film about stamping this person or that thing as wrong. If anything's wrong, it's a system that disadvantages

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and harms women in general and Black women in particular. But even that is complicated because there are so many multi-layered, very human people within that system. Hopefully, one day we'll come up with a better solution for mothers and children than what we are doing now. But I think as far as this film is concerned, I'd like people to see things from Gia's side and let her, in her own way, be the hero of her story.

The Cast

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The Cast

Tia Nomore

Coming up in cypher circles and freestyle battle arenas, Tia Nomore forced her entry into hip-hop's boys club. The 28-year-old's claim as Oakland rap's little sister started as a teenager when she would jump into her older brother's rap circles and ditch class to record G-funk- inspired hyphy music. Now a fully realized artist and experienced Oakland emcee with three records under her belt — 2019's *Level*, 2018's *Gooney Tunes* (alongside Bruh from *Last Night* and *MVCK*) and 2016 *Halloween*— Tia's fiery wits, lyrical dismantling and command for respect, continue to bring her to new bold artistic territory. The past two years have seen her sharing stages with Princess Nokia and Smino, and releasing singles "DRIP" and "Skirmish," two addictive collaborations with fellow Town girl and rapper Stoni.

Erika Alexander

Erika Alexander is beloved for her iconic acting roles as Maxine Shaw ("Living Single"; garnering two NAACP Image Awards for Outstanding Actress/Comedy Series), "Detective Latoya" (*Get Out*), "Cousin Pam" ("The Cosby Show"), "Perenna" (*Black Lightning*), "Linda Diggs" (*Wutang: An American Saga*), "Barb Ballard" (*Run The World*; nominated for NAACP Best Guest Actor), and most recently as "Meredith Lockhart" in ("*Swimming with Sharks*"), the critically acclaimed Apple+ series starring Elisabeth Moss, "Shining Girls" as "Abby Keegan." Upcoming projects for Alexander include the independent films *Wildflower* (Toronto Film Festival, starring alongside Jean Smart, Kiernan Shipka and Alexandra Daddario), *Earth Mama* (Sundance 2023) for A24, and T-Street / MRC's *The Untitled Novelist* project, directed by Cord Jefferson; with Jeffrey Wright, Tracy Ross, Sterling K. Williams and Issa Rae.

Erika wears many hats; actress, trailblazing activist, entrepreneur, creator, producer and director -- and is one of the country's boldest, most daring, and powerful voices. As a creator, she recognizes the power of storytelling and believes that though content must be entertaining, stories have tremendous capacity to create impact and meaningful social change. As co-founder of Color Farm Media, with partner Ben Arnon, she is on a mission to bring greater equity, inclusion, and diverse representation to both media and electoral politics.

Erika has boldly stepped into the arena of film director, with her debut film *The Big Payback*, co-directed with Whitney Dow. The film debuted at Tribeca Festival and premieres on PBS January 16, 2023 MLK Jr. Day. The documentary chronicles the story of the first reparations bill in American history for African Americans.

The Cast

Erika Alexander (cont.)

A critical thought leader on racial and gender equity and leadership, she serves as a board member for One Fair Wage and is highly involved with social and racial justice orgs; The Poor People's Campaign, Color of Change, NAACP, UNCF, and others.

She is also creator/writer/producer of 2022 Audible Original's Best True Crime Series, and DuPont Columbia award nominee, "Finding Tamika", and producer of three time, EMMY nominated Best Documentary and winner NAACP Best Documentary, "John Lewis: Good Trouble." "Sharon

Doechii

Doechii hit the ground running this year, and with her EP she / her / black bitch the Tampa native cements herself as a distinct voice whose versatile talents range from quick-fire bars to seductive singing. On the EP Doechii outlines different layers of her life experience: from villainous to confident to soft and sad, and to overall proving that she matters. As NPR stated "Doechii reclaims and spits back at anyone who dares to diminish her power."

The self-proclaimed 'Swamp Princess' received a standing ovation on her very first BET performance this year, of which Vulture said, "While everyone in L.A.'s Microsoft Theater rose to their feet, I felt invigorated, like I could kick someone's ass...Doechii's fiery performance didn't just snatch her own wig: It snatched everybody's."

She also performed at the prestigious Essence Festival in New Orleans, was nabbed as the RADAR US Cover Artist at Spotify, the VEVO DSCVR Artist for June, the BET Artist of the Month for June, named a Billboard Queer Game-Changer for Pride, and MTV's Push Artist.

Rolling Stone and The LA Times named "Persuasive" as one of the 'Best Songs Of 2022' while Complex listed "Crazy" as one of the 'Best Songs of 2022' and NPR picked her as an artist to watch, stating "and "Crazy" lets us know she's coming in swinging."

"Persuasive" and "Crazy" and are testament to the breadth of Doechii's sound and talents. Doechii has dominated the internet since the release of her unwaveringly original EPs— 2020's Oh the Places You'll Go and 2021's BRA-LESS—and the single "Yucky Blucky Fruitcake." In addition to featuring on Isaiah Rashad's "Wat U Sed," she was named one of Spotify's "Most Necessary Artists to Watch in 2022", was the cover star of the Los Angeles Times fall preview, and tipped as an Artist To Watch by Complex, XXL, Rolling Stone, Pigeons & Planes, and Hiphopdx.

Doechii's acclaimed EP she / her / black bitch features an alternate version of her song "Persuasive", featuring SZA, named as one of the best songs of 2022. The upbeat R&B anthem showcases Doechii's impressive ability to flex her signature versatile flows into Grammy-winner SZA's immaculate vibes.

The Cast

Keta Price

Marquita Price, who plays the role of Mel, is extremely excited for her debut in the new feature film, Earth Mama. Marquita is a native and current resident of deep East Oakland, CA. She is a former athlete, middle school rowing coach, visionary, dancer and culture keeper. Her positivity and high energy is infectious. As a youth, Marquita always appreciated musicals and the theater, yet spent most of her extracurricular time playing sports and being with family.

One of Marquita's biggest visions is for low income communities to reimagine, plan and design their 'hoods for them, by them. From leveraging trending Tik Tok challenges, hosting backyard events to cultivating resident leadership cohorts, Keta has committed the past five years to seeking the most organic ways to engage low-income Black and POC residents in neighborhood planning and development processes. Early 2022, Marquita developed a social enterprise, Hood Planning Group to further this work as a community centered consultant.

Marquita looks forward to expanding her career in acting and merging this new passion of film with her community development and planning goals. She most enjoys afro-futuristic, sci-fi, action and suspense genres.

Sharon Duncan Brewster

Duncan-Brewster's outstanding skills as an actress are reflected in the diverse range of theater, television and film credits she has acquired over the years. Most recently, she was seen in the blockbuster film Dune for Warner Bros, playing the role of Dr Liet Kynes as well as in the Netflix film Enola Holmes. Up next, Sharon will star alongside Sterling K. Brown in the Hulu limited series "Washington Black" which follows an 11-year-old boy who embarks on a globe-trotting journey of identity after fleeing a Barbados sugar plantation aboard a flying machine in the company of his master's eccentric inventor brother.

Prior to this, Sharon is perhaps most recognized by audiences for her starring role as Lisa Smith in the Netflix crime drama "Top Boy: Summerhouse" and her current recurring role as Roz Marchetti on "Sex Education" for Netflix. Sharon was also the first Black Female character with a speaking role in the Star Wars Cinematic universe with her role in Rogue One.

Her theater credits include: Victory Condition (Royal Court Theater), Meet Me At Dawn (The Traverse Theater), The Almighty Sometimes (Manchester Royal Exchange), Swallow (Traverse Theater), A Midsummer Night's Dream (Liverpool Everyman) and The Not Black and White Season (The Tricycle Theater)."

The Cast

Dominic Fike

The attention on Dominic Fike has steadily grown since the release of his EP *Don't Forget About Me, Demos* via Columbia Records in 2018. From that initial release, he's continued to rise as one of his generation's most enigmatic pop stars, releasing his debut album *What Could Possibly Go Wrong* and most recently starring as Elliot, a breakout star in the second season of HBO's hit series *Euphoria*. With his sold out *Out Of Order* tour at the close of 2022, he debuted his most ambitious live show to date while giving fans a preview of material from his forthcoming sophomore album, due in 2023.

Bokeem Woodbine

At age 19, Harlem native Bokeem Woodbine secured the lead role in HBO's "Strapped," Forrest Whitaker's directorial debut. He moved to Los Angeles shortly after completing the film *Jason's Lyric*, with Jada Pinkett Smith. Since then, Woodbine has pursued a dream of becoming a noteworthy film actor while balancing a passion for music and martial arts. Along the way, he has worked alongside Oscar winning actors and with many of today's top directors, producers and networks.

Woodbine has appeared in films of all genres, including *RAY*, with Jamie Foxx; *LIFE*, with Eddie Murphy; M. Night Shyamalan's *Devil*; *Riddick*, with Vin Diesel; Sony/Marvel's *Spider-Man: Homecoming*, directed by Jon Watts; and Bad Robot's science fiction/horror film, *Overlord*.

Woodbine's other selected credits include Len Wisemen's remake of the cult classic *Total Recall*, opposite Colin Farrell; Scott Sanders' *Black Dynamite*; Lena Waithe's *Queen & Slim*; Netflix's *In The Shadow of the Moon*; Netflix's *Spencer Confidential* from Peter Berg; Sony's *Ghostbusters: Afterlife* from Jason Reitman; as well as Bill Burr's upcoming directing debut *Old Dads* for Miramax.

Woodbine has also appeared in numerous television series, including FX's Emmy and Golden Globe winning series "Fargo," in which he was nominated for an Emmy for his role as "Mike Milligan". Other roles include starring on TNT's "Saving Grace"; a recurring role on WGN's well received Misha Green series "Underground," directed by Anthony Hemingway; and a starring role in USA's limited series, "Unsolved," also directed by Hemingway. He is currently a series regular in Paramount+'s series "Halo," based on the popular video game of the same name.

The Crew

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The Crew

Savanah Leaf
Director/ Writer

Savanah Leaf is an Olympian and award-winning filmmaker, whose work weaves magical realism with poignant social commentary. Her latest film *The Heart Still Hums* (2020) is a short documentary following the stories of five women as they fight for their children through the cycle of homelessness, drug addiction and neglect from their own parents. The film won Best Documentary Short at the Palm Springs International ShortFest, BlackStar Film Festival and Nashville Film Festival and was released with Fox Searchlight Shorts. Her music video 'This Land' for Gary Clark Jr. was nominated for Best Music Video at the 2020 Grammys. Other recent films include: 'What's Going On', a film made for Marvin Gaye's 1971 hit song, commissioned by Universal Music's 'Never Made' series, 'Dream', a film set to Nikki Giovanni's poem and Flying Lotus' music, commissioned by the 2020 Biden/Harris campaign; 'We Matter Too', a Webby and Shots award-winning animated visualization of phone calls she conducted with incarcerated people during the COVID-19 Pandemic, commissioned by rapper Common, the ARC and ACLU.

Cody Ryder
Producer

For over 15 years, Cody Ryder has been producing award-winning films, commercials, and music videos independently, and has recently joined Park Pictures as their Co-Head of Film and Television/Executive Producer. Her most recent feature, *Earth Mama*, directed by Savanah Leaf, will premiere at Sundance 2023 and be distributed by A24 and Film4. She produced 2019 feature release *The Art Of Self-Defense*, a dark comedy starring Jessie Eisenberg which premiered at SXSW and released by Bleecker Street. *The Clovehitch Killer*, starring Dylan McDermott premiered at LAFF in 2018 and was released by IFC to critical acclaim. Several of her films with Park Pictures have premiered at Sundance Film Festival, including indie thriller *Cop Car*, starring Kevin Bacon, *Other People*, starring Jesse Plemons and Molly Shannon, and *Robot and Frank*, starring Frank Langella and Susan Sarandon. Her first theatre endeavor, *Skittles Commercial: The Broadway Musical*, opened in February 2019 starring Michael C. Hall and broke ground for advertising, winning gold at Cannes, One Show, Andys, and Clio awards. In music videos, she's collaborated with artists such as Kendrick Lamar, Francis and the Lights, LCD Soundsystem, Common, and Benny Blanco. She has a passion for working with directors on their debut feature films and is currently developing first features with several emerging directors.

The Crew

Medb Riordan Producer

Medb Riordan is a producer with 15 years experience in short form production, and is the co-owner and managing director of Academy Films in London. She has produced commercials and music videos for Nike, Alexander McQueen, Radiohead, Rolling Stones and more. She has produced short films such as Jonathan Glazer's "The Fall" (2019), "Strasbourg 1518" (2020), "First Light" (2020), and "Us" (2016). Earth Mama, written and directed by Savannah Leaf, is her first feature film.

Sam Bisbee Producer

Sam Bisbee is an Emmy Award-winning and Independent Spirit and Peabody Award-nominated producer and founding partner of Park Pictures Features, the feature film division of acclaimed commercial production company Park Pictures. In 2009, Sam produced "The New Tenants" which won the Academy Award in 2010 for best Live Action Short. For over a decade Bisbee and Park Pictures have brought 13 films to premiere at the Sundance Film Festival including 2012's Sloan Award-winner Robot and Frank, 2013's Golden Globe nominated Infinitely Polar Bear (distributed by Sony Pictures Classics), 2016's Independent Spirit Award-winner (Molly Shannon) and four-time nominee Other People (distributed by Netflix), 2018's Sundance Audience Award-winner The Sentence (HBO) which went on to win the 2019 Primetime Emmy for Exceptional Merit in Documentary Filmmaking, 2020's Criterion Collection film Farewell Amor (IFC) and DGA award-winner The Truffle Hunters (Sony Pictures Classics). In 2021 Sam served as Executive Producer on the Peabody and Emmy nominated documentary Storm Lake (Independent Lens) and SXSW Audience Award-winning documentary Not Going Quietly (P.O.V). Sam is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Shirley O'Connor Producer

Shirley O'Connor's career at Pulse Films spanned close to a decade, producing short films, music videos, branded content and commercials as well as the development of several features on their slate. During this time, she worked with multiple award-winning directors including Michael Pearce, Amma Asante, Dylan Southern & Will Lovelace and Kahlil Joseph. Shirley is now a freelance producer working with companies such as Academy, Caviar, Smuggler and MJZ as well as running a slate of independent projects. Earth Mama is her debut feature as a producer. Shirley is currently packaging Louis Paxton's The Incomer with the support of Creative Scotland under her own Pilea Pictures company banner.

The Crew

Jody Lee Lipes
Director of Photography

Jody Lee Lipes (ASC) is an Independent Spirit Award nominated cinematographer with diverse experience in film, television, commercials and music videos.

In film, he has worked with numerous acclaimed directors including: Derek Cianfrance on his Emmy-winning HBO mini series "I Know This Much Is True" starring Mark Ruffalo; Kenneth Lonergan on the Oscar-winning Manchester by the Sea; Marielle Heller on the Oscar-nominated A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood starring Tom Hanks; and Sean Durkin on Martha Marcy May Marlene, winner of the Best Director Award at the Sundance Film Festival.

In commercials and music videos, he has worked with (among others) Mark Romanek, Savannah Leaf, Grant Singer, and Miles Jay.

Jody directed and shot Magnolia Pictures release Ballet 422, an Official Selection at the Tribeca Film Festival, and directed episodic series such as Antonio Campos' "The Sinner" and Lena Dunham's "Girls."

His most recent work can be seen in "The Good Nurse" starring Eddie Redmayne and Jessica Chastain, and the forthcoming A24 film Earth Mama directed by Savannah Leaf.

Juliana Barreto Barreto
Production Designer

Juliana Barreto Barreto is a Colombian production designer whose recent credits include Jeff Rutherford's 2022 Locarno premier A Perfect Day for Caribou, Max Walker-Silverman's critically acclaimed 2022 Sundance premier A Love Song, as well as David Moragas' A Stormy Night, an official closing night selection of the 2020 D'A Film Festival Barcelona.

Her work will next be seen in Raven Jackson's highly anticipated All Dirt Roads Taste of Salt and Savannah Leaf's Earth Mama, both premiering at the 2023 Sundance Film Festival and produced by A24.

George Cragg
Editor

George Cragg is an award winning editor of both drama and documentary.

George has worked extensively in Europe and the UK on a wide range of productions from Rugano Nyoni's BAFTA winning I Am Not a Witch to Alexander Nanau's double Oscar nominated Collective. He recently completed work on Savannah Leaf's Earth Mama for A24.

In television he worked with Clio Barnard's on "The Essex Serpent" for Apple TV, starring Clare Danes and Tom Hiddleston and is currently heading up the edit team for Måns Månsson's eight part series "Estonia."

The Crew

Natasha Hester
Costume Designer

Natasha Hester is a costume designer based in New York City. With an extensive background in production - commercials, live events, editorials and music videos, Natasha has worked for the likes of Nile Rodgers and Solange, the latter earned her a design credit on her iconic visual album "When I Get Home." The recent exploration of her long time passion for narrative storytelling has resulted in back-to-back festival premieres, with "Magic Ring" (NYFF60) for Topic Studios, now "Earth Mama" for A24 (Sundance 2023) as well as "Bone Black: Midwives vs The South" for Tribeca Studios coming to Tribeca Film Festival in 2023.

Geraldine Barón, Salome
Oggenfuss, & Abby Harri
Casting Directors

Geraldine Barón is a casting director and filmmaker. Born in Argentina and based in NYC, Geraldine holds an MFA in Film from Columbia University and a BA from UCLA. She's been working in casting for over a decade. She started out as a casting associate working on projects such as Good Time (Safdie Brothers, A24), "Euphoria" (HBO), "Honey Boy" (Alma Ha'arel) and "Funny Pages" (A24). Five years ago, she began working as a casting director duo alongside Salome Oggenfuss, specializing in casting "real people," as well as actors, for film, tv, theater and other media. They share a passion for discovering unique people and stories, as well as a love for the collaborative creative process. Their shared credits include, Never Rarely Sometimes Always (Eliza Hitman, Pastel, Focus), I Saw The TV Glow (Jane Schoenbrun, A24), Earth Mama (Savanah Leaf, A24), and Manodrome (Felix Culpa), amongst others. Geraldine and Salome are part of the Casting Mafia, a casting collective that also includes casting directors Abby Harri and Eleonore Hendricks. Together, they are currently collaborating on Jane's Schoenbrun's new feature film Nevada (Jane Schoenbrun, Tango).

Salome Oggenfuss is a casting director and filmmaker working across disciplines. Born in Switzerland, she lives and works in NYC and operates as Casting Double together with Geraldine Baron.

Kelsey Lu
Music by

Kelsey Lu is a classically-trained cellist. Lu recorded their debut EP, Church, in a church in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, and released it in 2016. During this time, they toured with the band Wet.

They released their debut album, Blood, in 2019. Earth Mama is their first feature film score.

Sunny Kapoor
Music Supervision by

Sunny Kapoor is an Emmy nominated Music Supervisor based in London. He is the founder of Curation Music, a multi award winning creative music company. Working on global creative campaigns for brands such as Nike, Google and Meta, he has also collaborated on projects with esteemed directors Spike Lee and Melina Matsoukas.

Credits

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Credits

Crew

Written & Directed by	Savanah Leaf
Based on the short film	"The Heart Still Hums" by Savanah Leaf and Taylor Russell
Produced by	Cody Ryder Shirley O'Connor Medb Riorda Sam Bisbee Savanah Leaf
Photographed by	Jody Lee Lipes, ASC
Production Designer	Juliana Barreto Barreto
Editor	George Cragg
Costume Designer	Natasha Hester
Casting by	Geraldine Barón, Salome Oggenfuss, and Abby Harri
Music by	Kelsey Lu
Music Supervision by	Sunny Kapoor
Executive Producers	James Wilson Jackie Kelman Bisbee Lance Acord Simon Cooper

Credits

Executive Producers

Cameron Washington
Christine D'Souza Gelb
David Kimbangi
Ben Coren

Co-Producer

Danielle Massie

Credits

Cast (in order of appearance)

Gia	Tia Nomore
Miss Carmen	Erika Alexander
Mel	Keta Price
Trina	Doechii
Monica	Sharon Duncan-Brewster
Paul	Bokeem Woodbine
Amber	Kamaya Jones
Ari	Slim Yani
Miles	Dominic Fike
Earl	Bruhfromlastnight
Short	Marley Thompson
James	James Allen
Alexis	Olivia Luccardi
Talia	Amber Ramsey
Jasmine	Tina D'Elia
Shaynah	Alexis Rivas
Trey	Ca'Ron Coleman
Photographer	Harry Chen

Credits

Cashier	Tina Robinson
Store Clerk	Nathan Hunter
Woman 1	Anankha Pereira
Woman 2	La Keisha Fuller
Woman 3	Tavia Percia
Woman 4	Cheyann Orusa
Woman 5	Tiffany Garner
Man 1	Qeashaun Thompson
Man 2	Mike Bigasan
Nurse 1	Marsai Jackson
Nurse 2	Davina Countee
Grandmother	Cynthia Mosby
Best Friend 1	Dede Patterson
Young Man	Joseph Nu'u Taugavau
Sister 1	Clenetta Mars
Young Woman	Tia Taugavau
Sibling	Kenneth Woodward
Doctor	Autumn Mirassou
Radiology Tech	Vianca Turner
Miss Toni	Toni Johnson