



# ALWAYS SHINE

Directed by Sophia Takal  
Written by Lawrence Michael Levine

*85 minutes, Color, English, USA*



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## Synopsis

Two women, both actresses with differing degrees of success, travel north from Los Angeles to Big Sur for a weekend vacation in *Always Shine*, Sophia Takal's twisty, psychological thriller. Both see the trip as an opportunity to reconnect after years of competition and jealousy has driven a wedge between them, but upon arrival to their isolated, forest retreat, the pair discovers that their once intimate friendship has deteriorated into forced conversations, betrayals both real and imagined, petty jealousies, and deep-seated resentment. As the women allow their feelings to fester, each begins to lose their bearings not only on the true nature of their relationship, but on their own identities. Mackenzie Davis (*Halt and Catch Fire*) and Caitlin FitzGerald (*Masters of Sex*) give brave and raw performances as Beth and Anna, two women whose ideas of success are dictated as much by external cultural criterion as their own sense of self-worth. Beautifully photographed and assuredly directed by Takal, *Always Shine* wraps itself in an evocative shroud of dread and paranoia that lingers long after the final frame.

## Director's Statement

Growing up, I constantly struggled with the idea that I was "too much." At school, children would routinely tell me to "calm down" in what now seems like an attempt to force me to conform to a more comfortable and acceptable idea of femininity. Every now and then an adult would reassure me that people wouldn't always be so put off by my outgoing, occasionally confrontational style. As the years passed, however, I remained hard pressed to find companions that embraced me for who I was.

In reaction, I swung wildly between attempting to curb my extroversion by affecting a shy deferential demeanor and rebelliously clinging to my naturally strong personality. Struggling to settle into a suitable identity, I wavered between the desire to self-actualize and the yearning to behave in the "lady-like" manner that I believed others expected from me.

My inability to reconcile my instinctual self with the more "conventional" mode of femininity condoned by our popular culture filled me with a bewildering array of conflicting emotions. On the one hand, I despised the mainstream media that promoted such limited notions of womanhood; on the other, I longed to be a part of that culture. I lashed out at men that seemed to demand a more traditional version of femininity, even as I fervently pined for their approval. I vilified other women that played into these oppressive conceptions, while simultaneously berating myself for not being one of those women.

I'm still sorting out my confusion but I have now resolved to embrace my own particular brand of femininity. I am settling into myself, finding strength through filmmaking.

ALWAYS SHINE is an exploration of these contradictions and confining notions of femininity and the toll it can take on a woman's psyche.

## Cast and Crew Biographies

### **Mackenzie Davis (Anna)**

Mackenzie currently stars in the critically-acclaimed AMC series "Halt & Catch Fire" opposite Lee Pace, Scoot McNairy and Kerry Bishe. Mackenzie also appeared in Ridley Scott's THE MARTIAN, Drake Doremus' BREATHE IN opposite Guy Pearce, Amy Ryan and Felicity Jones; WHAT IF opposite Adam Driver and THAT AWKWARD MOMENT opposite Miles Teller. Mackenzie was born and raised in Vancouver, BC and attended McGill University in Montreal.

### **Caitlin FitzGerald (Beth)**

Caitlin currently appears on the Showtime series MASTERS OF SEX, opposite Michael Sheen and Lizzy Caplan. She just filmed two back to back films: Giancarlo Esposito's film THIS IS YOUR DEATH opposite, Esposito and Famke Janssen and Chris Sparling's MERCY, opposite James Wolk for Netflix. She will next star opposite Mackenzie Davis in the independent film ALWAYS SHINE, directed by Sophia Takal. Caitlin was last seen in Ross Katz's indie comedy ADULT BEGINNERS opposite Nick Kroll, Rose Byrne and Bobby Cannavale for producer Mark Duplass.

Caitlin broke out in Universal's IT'S COMPLICATED opposite Meryl Streep & Alec Baldwin. She also appeared in Whit Stillman's DAMSELS IN DISTRESS for Sony Pictures Classics and Ang Lee's TAKING WOODSTOCK for Focus Features.

### **Sophia Takal (director)**

Sophia Takal wrote, directed and starred in the critically-acclaimed feature film GREEN (SXSW '11), which won the SXSW Emerging Female Director award, was nominated for a Gotham Award and is distributed by Factory 25.

Sophia produced and starred in Lawrence Michael Levine's, WILD CANARIES (SXSW '14), opposite Alia Shawkat, Jason Ritter and Kevin Corrigan. WILD CANARIES is distributed by IFC Films. She also produced, edited and starred in Levine's GABI ON THE ROOF IN JULY opposite Kate Lyn Sheil, Amy Seimetz and Lena Dunham.

Other acting credits include Ti West's V/H/S; Joe Swanberg's ALL THE LIGHT IN THE SKY; Michael Bilandic's HELLAWARE; Dan Schechter's SUPPORTING CHARACTERS and John Slattery's GOD'S POCKET.

Takal attended Vassar College and graduated with a BA in Film Studies from Barnard College.

**Lawrence Michael Levine (writer/producer)**

Lawrence's past films include WILD CANARIES (SXSW '14) distributed by IFC Films, GABI ON THE ROOF IN JULY and TERRITORY. He produced and starred in Sophia Takal's GREEN (SXSW '11) and produced Jay DiPietro's PETER & VANDY (Sundance '09). Levine also acted in V/H/S/2, Joe Swanberg's THE ZONE and Onur Tukel's RICHARD'S WEDDING.

**Mark Schwartzbard (cinematographer)**

Mark Schwartzbard studied film at Ithaca College, then moved to New York and spent a decade working as a camera assistant on films including Woody Allen's HOLLYWOOD ENDING, and Martin Scorsese's THE DEPARTED, as well as LITTLE CHILDREN, RENT, HITCH, POLLOCK, and, the most fun of all, BORAT, which led to work as a camera operator on director Larry Charles' next few projects, including RELIGULOUS and BRÜNO.

As DP, Mark has shot fourteen narrative feature films including Sophia Takal's ALWAYS SHINE, Demetri Martin's DEAN, Lawrence Michael Levine's WILD CANARIES and Rick Alverson's THE COMEDY. He recently shot Aziz Ansari's Netflix series "Master of None," and the Showtime series "La La Land."

**Zach Clark (editor)**

Zach Clark is the writer, director, and editor of MODERN LOVE IS AUTOMATIC, VACATION!, WHITE REINDEER, and LITTLE SISTER. Additional credits as editor includes Kris Swanberg's UNEXPECTED and Caroline Golum's A FEAST OF MAN. His work has screened across the world at festivals including Sundance, SXSW, BAMcinemaFest, Outfest, Edinburgh, and Stockholm. He currently lives in Brooklyn, NY.

## End Credits

Anna	Mackenzie Davis
Beth	Caitlin FitzGerald
Jesse	Lawrence Michael Levine
Paul	Khan Baykal
Matt	Alexander Koch
Vic	Michael Lowry
Sandra	Colleen Camp
Summer	Jane Adams
Jack	Julian Tolentino
Joplin	Mason Foster
Stella	Stella Foster
Violet	Marisa Takal
Producer #1	Robert Longstreet
Producer #2	Simon Barrett
Director	Jordan Kessler
Reader	Noah Gershman
Stunt Coordinator	Eric Jacobus
Additional Photography	Mike Simpson
First Camera Assistant	Jeff Bay Smith
Second Camera Assistant	Joel Fricker
Digital Image Technician	Aaron Peer
Gaffer	Nick Morr
Key Grip	James Sandoval
Location Sound Mixer	Colin Alexander
Script Supervisor	Amy Gelson
Production Coordinator	Andres Rojas
Property Master	Marisa Takal
Costume Designer	Lanie Faith Marie Overton
Wardrobe Assistant	Sessance Fragransi
Hair & Makeup Department Head	Kelly Dresden
Location Manager	Mike Gilson
Location Scout	Nicole Nelch
Catering by	A Moo's Bouche

Legal Services Provided by	George Rush
	Law Offices of George Rush
Production Accountants	Dan Merker
	Brendan Pierson, Inc
Key Production Assistant	Yoshi Alston Machida
Production Assistants	Harvey Mitkas
	Asher Russo
	Charlie Fitzgerald
Post Production Supervisor	Pierce Varous
Assistant Editor	Aaron Peer
Sound Re-Recording Mixer	Gene Park
Assistant Sound Editors	Colin Alexander
	Nate Flaks
	Danny Meltzer
ADR Re-Recording Mixer	Zac Fisher
	Sean O'Malley
ADR Audio Assistant	Kevin McAlpine
ADR Recorded at	Lime Studios LA
	OSO Audio LA
	Toneburst Audio NYC
Mix Stage Provided by	Toneburst Audio NYC
Title Designer	Teddy Blanks
Digital Intermediate and Dailies by	Nice Dissolve
Colorist	Aharon Rothschild
Senior DI Producer	Chris Kenny
Conform Artist	Ben Federman
Music Composed and Arranged by	Michael Montes
Assistant to the Composer	Michael Walz
Cello	Erik Friedlander
Piccolo, Flute, Bass Flute, Nohkan	David Weiss
Extended Piano Techniques	Mario Montes
Peruvian Tarka Flute	Michael Montes