

the summer of lexi & dawn



a Moreno Drive Production
directed by Genevieve Diaz
written by Carolyn Mazanec
produced by Tiajha Nakahara
USA, 11 Minutes

the story



logline

When their parents get together, Lexi and Dawn find themselves suddenly living under one roof, struggling to navigate the awkwardness of a new family and the fragile beginnings of a middle-school friendship.

synopsis

When their parents embark on a new life together, Lexi and Dawn find themselves helplessly along for the ride, forced to make friends —and share a room— with a complete stranger. Told in a series of snapshots, *The Summer of Lexi & Dawn* catalogs the beginning, middle and end of a middle school friendship, and the unique heartbreak that comes with your first friend breakup.

Their story begins where many friendships were forged in the mid-2000s: on the Dance-Dance Revolution mat. Lexi first breaks the ice by teaching Dawn how to get the highest scores in their favorite video game. This becomes the entry point for their budding friendship, leading into a "honeymoon phase" filled with mac 'n' cheese, hair dye, and lots of laughter. However, as the summer comes to an end and their parents leave their own honeymoon phase behind, Lexi and Dawn find themselves doing the same.

Feelings come to a head when Lexi and her friends from school play a prank on Dawn that goes wrong – leaving Dawn in tears at their summer pool party. In the aftermath, Lexi and Dawn are forced to face the fact that they both – and their parents – are growing apart. *The Summer of Lexi and Dawn* is ultimately a love story told to our middle school best friends.

the why



director's statement

I was drawn to this story because it reminded me of something I have carried quietly for a long time: the tax of girlhood. The awkwardness of trying to make a friend. The heartbreak of losing one. Lexi and Dawn's friendship does not begin with instant connection. It begins with proximity. That felt true for me. Many of my own friendships started simply because we shared space for a long time—school, summer camp, the neighborhood. From there, something tender began to grow. What I wanted to capture in this film is that fragile space in between. The clumsy beginnings of friendship, the uncertainty of how to belong to each other, and the ache when it all unravels. When Carolyn first shared this story with Tiajha and me, it felt like she had put words to a feeling I did not know how to name, but had lived through deeply. I have always wondered why movies and media make so much room for romantic love and breakups, yet rarely for the stories of friendship, especially the ones that end. For me, those losses have been some of the most devastating. They have shaped me just as much as love stories. This film is my way of honoring that truth.

writer's statement

When I was in eighth grade, I met, befriended, and grew apart from my middle school bestie, all within the span of a few months. At the age of thirteen, feelings are BIG. And the end of a friendship, even a short-lived one, can feel devastating.

Fast forward to 2018, when Tiajha, Genevieve and I discussed our long lost middle school besties over post-work cocktails. While barraging the souls of our younger selves, we discovered that we didn't really have the words to describe this seemingly universal experience. Are "breakups" just for romantic relationships? And if so, how come these friendship breakups hurt so much? *The Summer of Lexi & Dawn* became our answer — our attempt at defining this rite of passage that many face on their path to adulthood.

As young women, we're often told to rein in our emotions. "Don't be so dramatic," is a phrase frequently thrown around when you're in middle school. *The Summer of Lexi & Dawn* is ultimately our long overdue comeback, meant to validate these feelings and honor these heartbreaks. They happened, we felt them, they hurt us and they shaped us, all at once.

the creators



director | genevieve diaz

Genevieve Diaz lives and plays in San Francisco, California. By what feels like both a happy accident and fate, she has built a career and art practice around one central question: What is worth remembering? She began her career at MasterClass in Post Production, where she first met Carolyn and Tiajha. From there, she joined Even/Odd, contributing to projects such as *1-800 Happy Birthday*, a voicemail project and exhibition honoring Black and Brown people killed by police. The work was presented physically in New York City and featured in *The New York Times* and *Vogue*. Genevieve is now part of the Steve Jobs Archive, where she continues exploring memory, legacy, and storytelling in digital form. *The Summer of Lexi & Dawn* is her directorial debut. Her work as a filmmaker continues this exploration, creating space for stories that honor the fragility and resilience of human connection.



writer | carolyn mazanec

Carolyn Mazanec grew up in Chagrin Falls, Ohio, where her sleepy suburban upbringing inspired the backdrop of *The Summer of Lexi & Dawn*. In high school, she published a novel called *A Pink House*, which similarly explored themes of self discovery and the critical role friendships play in this coming-of-age story. Carolyn then went on to study Communications, English and Film at Northwestern University, where she found her love for screenwriting. Her script, *Casey Blatt*, placed as a semi-finalist in the 2018 ScreenCraft TV Pilot Script Competition. After graduating, Carolyn met Tiajha and Genevieve in the post production department at MasterClass, and they quickly started working on *The Summer of Lexi & Dawn* (on weekends and lunch breaks). The script placed as a quarter-finalist in the 2019 ScreenCraft Short Film Screenplay Competition. While working on this project, Carolyn also began a web comic called *Debbie's Dry Cleaning*, which follows the escapades of a magical seamstress in San Francisco. Carolyn now resides in Oakland, where she works at Pixar and goes on many hikes with her dog, Gary.



producer | tiajha nakahara

Born and raised in Okinawa, Japan, Tiajha Nakahara moved to the United States to study Design Media Arts and Film at UCLA. She has since worked across post production at Copeland, MasterClass, and Pixar—roles united by a mission to provide easy access to online education. As a producer, her film *GAMERS* played at more than 40 festivals, including Frameline43, CAAMFest, Outfest Fusion, and the Pan African Film Festival. Additional credits include *All Men Are Flowers* (Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival), *The Caterpillar Trail* (Best Drama Short, North Hollywood CineFest), and *Love Light* (Best Cinematography, Campus Movie Fest; official selection, Cannes Short Film Corner). Outside of filmmaking, she's happily "directed" by her three-year-old daughter, explores new restaurants and cafés, plays tennis, and is currently learning to crochet.



editor | annie erickson

Annie Erickson is an editor and post production operations supervisor at MasterClass based in San Francisco, California. A Wisconsin native who began college pursuing genetic engineering, she found her true calling when she was assigned to create a documentary about the university labs. The experience of discovering a compelling narrative hidden within all of the raw footage became an irresistible creative challenge. Since relocating to San Francisco in 2018, Annie has worked on 40+ projects at MasterClass.

cast & crew

directed by
Genevieve Diaz

written by
Carolyn Mazanec

produced by
Tiajha Nakahara

executive produced by
Margie Mazanec
Mark Mazanec
Laura Rushton

as dawn
Sophie Rae
(aka Sophie Hughes)

as lexi
Candace Tsay

as marcy
Connie Chen

as david
Brian Cohen

as jenna
Olivia Benzanson

as margaret
Alexandra Baird-Doughty

as michelle
Kana Gehrman

director of photography
Max Mak

production designer
Kevin Lin

editor
Annie Erickson

associate producer
Tiffany Taira

1st ad
Searit Kahsay Huluf

production assistants
Bram Draper
Kenry Lin

casting assistants
Kevin Lin
Kelly Lin
Justin Malunay

1st ac
Jessica Le

2nd ac & b cam
Jonathan Jung

2nd ac
Vincent Vole

script supervisor
India Nemer

gaffer
Jessica Schlegel

key grip
Calvin Ferniza

grip
Domonik Hernandez

electric
Adam Rosenberg

electric & swing
Irene Peng

swing
Mark Reyes

production sound mixer
Wiley John Wright II

dit
Annie Erickson

costume designer
Stephanie Torres

hair & mu artist
Kelley Choi

hair & mu assistant
Judith Angulo

art production assistants
Stephen Dam
Maxwell Gibbard
Cole Mak

motion gfx designer
Miasha Nakahara

bts photographer
Nino Ellington
James Spencer

wrap crew
Derek Meng
Alex Chen
Justin Malunay

re-recording mixer & sfx editor
Bijan Sharifi

dialogue & sfx editor
Cheyanne Bachmeyer

colorist
Kevin Lin

catering
Daphne Wu