

TRUE LOVE WAITS

A FILM BY
ERIN DOYLE COOPER

STARRING
SOPHIA PSIAKIS
HENRY J

MUSIC BY JESSICA RAE HUBER EDITED BY NIKA BURNETT AND LUKE DELAHANTY PRODUCED BY RYAN PATRICK WELSH DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY DEMI WALDRON
SOPHIA PSIAKIS HENRY J "TRUE LOVE WAITS" WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY ERIN DOYLE COOPER

PRESS KIT

LOG LINE

When two freshman art students sneak into a studio classroom to practice figure drawing on one another, they must grapple with their budding sexuality and whether they can stick to the "True Love Waits" pledges they signed in their youth.

SYNOPSIS

We hear freshman art students Viv and Cameron sneak into a university art classroom, followed by a dreamy sequence as Viv removes her clothing. Cam watches hungrily, and then we see... oh. It's not sex. Cam is drawing Viv nude.

She grows fidgety and impatient - this was far sexier in concept. Finally, Cameron finishes his drawing, and Viv rushes to see it. Satisfied with his rendering, she kisses him deeply... and then tells him to take off his clothes. It's her turn to draw.

Cam is a more nervous model, and Viv a more serious artist. Where Cameron drew several gesture drawings of her boobs, Viv draws every part of Cam before settling into her final drawing. She brings it over to him on the table, and he is impressed with her work. The art done, Viv tosses the painting on the ground and kisses Cam. He pauses, suggesting he put his underwear back on, "so we're not tempted." He dresses, pulled Viv toward him, and things escalate quickly. They are both awkward and inexperienced, but their bodies take over. It would be so easy to.... NO! Cam leaps off of Viv, "I need a minute." She nods and studies her True Love Waits ring as he grips the table and repeats a religious mantra to himself, "Sex is not an accident, it doesn't just happen, you are strong enough." Finally, he is recovered. He looks to Viv, and says, "He will lead us out of temptation 100% of the time." She replies, "That's what they say." The air thickens as they look at one another, and slowly lean in for a kiss. And then - the door bursts open as an angry janitor yells at them. Were they indeed led out of temptation? Or were they just irresponsible kids?



SPECS

TOTAL RUNNING TIME: **6 minutes 9 seconds**

ASPECT RATIO: **2:1**

AUDIO: **5.1 Stereo**

LANGUAGE: **English**

FORMAT: **Digital**

SHOT ON: **ARRI Alexa Amira with Cooke Panchro Classic Lenses**

CONTACT

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FILMMAKING TEAM



ERIN DOYLE COOPER

WRITER/DIRECTOR

Erin Doyle Cooper is an award-winning filmmaker and creative director whose career has spanned indie film, experiential production design, and advertising. She made her first short film *Vlog* in 2009, and that same year, recorded an EP of indie rock for kids to compliment her puppet-musical-pilot *Princess Elleanora and the Muddy Sneakers*.

As a Creative Director, she's overseen award-winning work for brands including MasterCard, Budweiser, and Pepsi, where she led creative for the promotion of Lady Gaga's Halftime Show and the 2018 Super Bowl spot starring Cindy Crawford. She's also directed spots for major brands including Midol and Nature Made.

As a filmmaker, Erin focuses on stories that challenge people's ingrained perceptions, and loves using genre as a tool. Her most recent film *Believe Her*, starring Allison Tolman, premiered at the SCAD Savannah Film Festival, where it won Best Global Short: Narrative. In addition to *True Love Waits*, Erin has made three other shorts in the past year: two as a producer for first time female directors titled *Big Sur* (Dir: Lila Dupree) and *Pick Me Up* (Dir: Allison Tolman), and one as a writer/director, a Western Horror titled *The Invaders*. Erin holds a BFA in Acting from SUNY Buffalo, a post-graduate certificate from the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts (LAMDA), and studied improv and sketch at UCB. She lives in LA, where she recently completed the Women in Film Mentoring Program as a multi-hyphenate, with mentors Rose Catherine Pickney, Melissa Darmon, and Ramaa Mosley.



RYAN PATRICK WELSH

PRODUCER

Ryan Welsh earned his MFA from the University of California, Irvine. He has worked professionally as an actor, director, and writer in Los Angeles for nearly a decade. His films have been showcased at festivals around the world and distributed with Gaiam TV, and Gunpowder & Sky's network, Dust.

One of his recent films, *It's Okay*, has been showcased at multiple international film festivals including Pasadena International Film Festival, Woods Hole FF, and Vail International Film Festival. His first film, *This Is Normal*, received the Best of Festival award at the Seattle Deaf Film Festival, as well as acclaim from the Deaf/HoH community for the film's nuanced approach to living with hearing loss. As an actor, Ryan most recently worked with Center Theatre Group (Los Angeles) at the Kirk Douglas Theatre. He was awarded Best Lead Actor for his work on *Outpost* at the FilmQuest International Film Festival. He was also a series regular for two seasons on the Lionsgate Entertainment show *Bite Me* which earned him a nomination for a Streamy for Best Lead Actor in a Comedy. Additionally, he has appeared in numerous commercials both at home and abroad. As a writer, he had several screenplays produced, and several commissioned with companies like Lunacy Productions, Epic Level Entertainment, and Baby Under The Moon Productions. His plays have been featured at The Road Theatre (Los Angeles) and the Activate Midwest New Play Festival.

FILMMAKING TEAM



DEMI WALDRON
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Demi is a cinematographer currently based in Los Angeles. She began her career shooting short films and documentaries, where she developed her sensitivity to character and story, as well as her aptitude for collaboration. She works primarily in narrative and documentary spaces, with a special interest in how the two genres can overlap visually and emotionally.

Most recently, she lensed an upcoming episode of Hulu's *Taste the Nation*. Narrative films lensed by Demi have played at Outfest LA, Cannes Lions, Florida Film Festival, Savannah Film Festival, Athena Film Festival, Sarasota Film Festival, and more. Her short documentary "[CINEMATOGRAPHER](#)," was awarded a Vimeo Staff Pick in 2019. She is an alumni of the Savannah College of Art and Design, AFI's Cinematography Intensive for Women, and the Television Academy Foundation.



CLAIRE WILCHER
INTIMACY COORDINATOR

Claire is a trained Intimacy Choreographer with IDC Professionals (Intimacy Directors and Coordinators), where she also works as a teaching artist, advocating for consent-based creative spaces and bodily autonomy for actors.

Her intimacy choreo has been seen on stages throughout the midwest, including Indiana Repertory Theatre and the Phoenix Cultural Center. Claire holds an MFA in Theatre from Michigan State University and is a member of Actor's Equity Association.

CAST



SOPHIA PSIAKIS

“VIV”

Sophia is in her final year at Michigan State University pursuing a BFA in Acting for Stage, Screen, and New Media, as well as a minor in Musical Theatre. Some of her recent roles on stage are Pamela in *“Head Over Heels”* as well as Michelle in *“For the Love of.”* She also enjoys being on camera and got the opportunity to play Viv in *“True Love Waits.”* Sophia loves to spend her time working and performing with kids! You can catch her carrying around a huge cat puppet named Wilhelmina in the new touring musical *“What if Wilhelmina.”*



HENRY J

“CAMERON”

Henry J is a current Michigan State University student pursuing a BFA in Acting for Stage, Screen, and New Media. Recent stage credits include Guerchy in *Monsieur D’eon Is A Woman* and Mother in *A Hatful of Rain*. He's had a love for film since he was young. In addition to *True Love Waits*, he has shot two other films that will be released soon: the lead in *Free Run*, and a supporting role in *Citrus Twist Triad’s Deadly Dance With The Pink Punch Bunch*.

Full Credit List

Written & Directed by

Erin Doyle Cooper

Executive Producer
Producer
Associate Producer

**Erin Doyle Cooper
Ryan Patrick Welsh
Will Cooper**

CAST:

Viv
Cameron
Janitor

**Sophia Psiakis
Henry J
Will Cooper**

Director of Photography

Demi Waldron

First Assistant Camera
Second Assistant Camera
Second Assistant Camera
Gaffer
Gaffer
Key Grip
Key Grip
Sound Mixer
Intimacy Coordinator

**Connor Foley
Mary Claire Zael
Harrison Orwig
Mary-Elizabeth Anger
Daniel Isabella
Mary Telly
Naomi Perkins
Justin Hailer
Claire Wilcher**

Editor

**Nika Burnett
Luke Delahanty
Calvin Bellas
Christina Wen**

Colorist
Re-Recording Mixer

Music by

Jessica Rae Huber

"Don't Stop"
Written & Performed by

Razorbraids

Filmed on Location in

East Lansing, MI

Special Thanks

**Michigan State University
Evil Twin Digital
Braincell Camera
Lowing Light & Grip
Wrapbook
Max Vilenchik
Jamie Welsh**

Q&A WITH THE DIRECTOR

Q: WHAT INSPIRED THIS FILM?

Erin Doyle Cooper: This is a vulnerable thing to talk about, but here goes. I lost my virginity at 28. By choice.

It started as a religious thing, after signing a True Love Waits pledge at youth group. As I aged, I no longer planned to wait until marriage, but wanted to hold out for a person I trusted, and it took a long time. Years later, I'm only beginning to process this choice, and how it impacted my sexuality.

Q: SO THIS IS PERSONAL?

EDC: Oh yeah. One of things that fascinates me most about purity culture is the lengths you'll go to maintain your "virginity." *True Love Waits* is inspired by an experience I had with my first boyfriend, an art student who also planned to wait for marriage. We wanted each other so badly, and constantly pushed the boundaries of sexual behavior without actually "going all the way." My intention is to capture a raw, honest look at this behavior, because for all of our recent conversations about consent, I've never seen a story like mine on film. Virginity storylines fall into two categories: the horny teen desperate to lose it, or the outcast who can't get it. The truth is so much more nuanced, the behavior so much more interesting, and this is what I wanted to explore on film.



Q: DO YOU HAVE PLANS FOR THE STORY BEYOND THE SHORT?

EDC: Yes! The short is adapted from the cold open of a pilot I wrote called *Pure*. After this scene, it jumps ahead seven years, and we follow Viv as a mid-20's creative professional in New York. She's not ashamed of her virginity, but she dreads telling people because they treat her like a pariah once they find out, and it impacts her dating life, her relationships, even office banter. Meanwhile, Cameron married right out of school so that he could have sex, then became a well known artist, and is struggling to stay committed. I have so much to say about this topic, it could also easily be a feature.

Q: HOW DID YOU END UP FILMING AT MICHIGAN STATE?



EDC: Ryan Welsh is an Assistant Professor of Media Acting at MSU, and he's also a close friend who co-starred in my last film, *Believe Her*. In summer 2021, he told me that he wanted to bring in some outside filmmakers to work with his students, and I jumped at it: mentoring was my favorite part of my job as a Creative Director. I had just written the pilot, so I let him know I had something for two college-aged actors that could easily be adapted into a short. I sent him the script, we workshopped it, and decided to shoot it at the end of the fall semester. In addition to him serving as producer, we hired Claire Wilcher as our intimacy coordinator, and flew in Demi Waldron to DP. Demi and I met at the 2018 SCAD Savannah Film Festival, where we both won awards for our respective films, and I was so excited that she was down to work in a mentorship capacity. Everybody else who worked on it was either a current MSU student, or a recent grad that was still local to Lansing.

Q: HOW DID YOU HANDLE THE INTIMACY ON SET?

EDC: As a classically trained actor, my first concern on set is always the comfort of the actors. That is especially true when dealing with intimacy. I shot a traumatic rape scene on my film *Believe Her*, before intimacy coordinators were common, and I used my actor instincts to create a safe set: actors had a say in the blocking, the set and monitors were closed to anybody who wasn't critical to get the shot, actors wore modesty garments, robes were on hand for the second I called "cut," and we checked in between takes to make sure everybody was feeling okay. It was a relief to have Claire this time around to be a neutral party and take care of the actors, especially because they were students.

Sophie and Henry were absolute stars. They were so open from rehearsal all the way through wrap, and they went for it on every take, even when the camera was right up in their business for those close ups.

I also have to give a big shout out to the crew for creating this level of safety. We were small in number, but we didn't even have to tell people to leave the room or turn around when they robes came off, they were all so respectful. I think their being Gen Z had a lot to do with that, they're already so aware of these things. I'm excited to see how these considerations continue to evolve as Gen Z enters the production workforce in larger numbers.



Q: WHAT WERE YOUR VISUAL REFERENCES?

EDC: The show *Normal People* cracked my brain open the first time I watched it, from the lighting to the production design to the brutally honest way they handled intimacy. It was a huge reference for us, along with the cringe comedy of *Pen15*.



Q: HOW DID YOU BRING THAT TO LIFE?

EDC: The first thing Demi asked me when we started planning was, "who is the camera?" I immediately replied, "Jesus." In Youth Group I was told that Jesus is the third member of your relationship, and he is always there, which is something that is impossible to unthink once it's in your brain. So in a lot of the wides, and especially in the close up intimacy, that's the camera's perspective, and it's a both loving and judgmental. Lighting wise, we wanted to create a dreamy look with "pillowy" light, and picked Cooke Panchro Classic lenses for the softness.

The exception is the drawing sequences, which were shot from Viv and Cam's perspectives. When Cam studies Viv, it's the first time he's seen a woman fully naked, and he lingers. We used the 40mm lens for these shots, and got really close. Viv's POV is different. She goes right into work mode, and views his body more objectively as an artist. These shots are more critical, less sexual.

And then we planned for an enormous amount of coverage, to ensure we'd be able to find the cringe in the edit. I hope you feel it when you watch!

Q: WHO DID THE DRAWINGS?

EDC: That would be Ryan again. Dude is a Renaissance man. All of the art in the film is his, and a lot of it actually came from his college portfolio. It was great because he was also able to work with Henry and Sophie on set, showing them how to hold the charcoal, how to sharpen the pencil, how to relax their arms and sketch like real artists.

It is very important to note here that he did NOT draw Henry and Sophie nude. We took some (clothed) reference photos during rehearsal so he could draw their faces, and then he used his figure drawing experience to create the actual art. My husband Will and his wife Jamie also posed for him as he was sketching... again, clothed. We talked a lot about the difference between Viv and Cam's styles: Viv is very focused on the technical, and creates a classic piece. Cam is more fast and loose, using big bold charcoal strokes. I love that he was able to create two distinctly different pieces.



Q: THE CHORAL MUSIC OVER THE TITLE AND THE PUNK SONG OVER THE END ARE SUCH BIG CHOICES. CAN YOU TALK ABOUT THE MUSIC?

EDC: The score was the hardest part to nail. This was my second time collaborating with composer Jessica Rae Huber, who is brilliant. I knew we had to bring in some element of Christianity through sound, but if we went too far toward church music, it felt too judgmental, and not sexy enough. Jess also grew up in purity culture, so she understood what I was going for. She suggested we take inspiration from 80's praise music, which really unlocked the right vibe.

I always knew I wanted to end the film with an abrupt riot grrrrl-style chorus. That music was formative for me, and it underlines the conflict of the situation in a hilarious way. "Violet" by Hole was the reference. I was so excited when I discovered "Don't Stop" by Razor Braids. It's perfect.