



SAINT VEGAS

NARRATIVE SHORT

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY SAMANTHA HERRERA

SYNOPSIS

A young aimless woman, **ANASTASIA**, escapes far from home to work as a **non-sexual escort** in **Las Vegas** in an attempt to suppress her feelings after **losing her mother**.

On one particular night she meets an older woman, **CARMEN**, who tests her emotional boundaries and opens the floodgates to Anastasia's grief. In the face of her deepest fears, Anastasia decides to head back home to **confront all she's left behind**.

WHY THIS FILM NOW?

This story germinated from two core memories: The **fear of one day losing my mom** and my own **mental health journey with battling depression**. Living in a world where there is no handbook on how to take care of oneself, I wanted to explore the deep healing that takes place between The Self and other strangers passing through life with a compassionate lens. While this film is fictitious, it takes roots from a very real place. I'm not alone in struggling with mental health issues and I want to further normalize the conversation. It's not a surprise that LGBTQIA+ Youth (18-29) experience higher rates of anxiety and depression.

I was deeply inspired by Teri Polo's performance in The Fosters as she experiences a full blown panic attack. I wanted to pay homage to the vulnerable and raw moments in life and put them onscreen. With SAINT VEGAS, this happens when the main character's inner life is finally unleashed during her encounter with a client. I hope these precious moments can be a point of **transformation, growth and deep discovery**.

My hope is that SAINT VEGAS like its name, can be a spiritual guide of sorts. As Anastasia navigates life, she figures out how to take care of herself in times she needs it most and builds trust within & with the world around her. All the characters in this story are bound by their connection to their struggle with **identity and desire to find a home within themselves**.

FILMMAKER STATEMENT

I'm a collaborator at heart and working on a creative team to bring wild visions to life is what fuels my love of directing. As a Filipina-American and queer woman, I aim to create wholesome and innovative workspaces in which all departments have the freedom to explore and express to their greatest ability.

My personal mental health journey and queer identity are inextricably intertwined and the reason I created this short film: Saint Vegas. I envision normalizing LGBTQ+ characters in the media with undertones of self-care, dark humor and genre-bending worlds.

-SAMANTHA HERRERA
Director / Writer *'SAINT VEGAS'*

KEY CAST



**SAMANTHA HERRERA
ANASTASIA (LEAD)**

In Mariele's recent theater debut in Letters to Kamala/Dandelion Peace, she played Patsy Takemoto Mink. Other theatrical credits include: Five Faces Oil on Canvas (Fishwive Productions & The Larking House Theatre), American Beauty (Bridge Production Showcase), UCB Improv (Upright Citizens Brigade), Angels in America (UCLA Theatre), and The Nutcracker (Placer Community Theatre). Mariele will be appearing in "Movie Star" which will be premiering at the Cannes Short Film Festival later this year. Further film credits include "Knowing You" (Lead/Short film), "In, On, At" (Lead/Indie Feature), "Super Mephitic" (Lead/Short); "Lion Eater" (Supporting/Short); "Swim Free" (Supporting, CSUN Film).

Samantha (she/her) was born & raised in New York City and began studying drama as an actor at LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts. Her parents immigrated from the Philippines both as accountants and settled in Queens, New York. While attending the City University of Hunter College, she worked as a Production Stage Manager along with performing in countless productions. Her theater training continued at the Neighborhood Playhouse School of the Theatre ('16) and London Academy of Music & Dramatic Art (Summer Shakespeare Course, '18).

**MARIELE ATIENZA
CARMEN (SUPPORTING)**



KEY CREW



ELLIN ALDANA
CINEMATOGRAPHER

Ellin is a LA based Guatemalan-American cinematographer. I lens story first narratives. Using color, emotionality, and character specific world building to bring the viewer into the film. I'm a huge fan of deep dive prepro and camera testing with my directors to build the visual storytelling before getting on set. I received my Master's degree in cinematography from AFI. I'm a '23 Altitude Award Winner for my cinematography work. A '24 WIF Cinematography Fellow. My films have gone on to screen in various festivals like Austin Film Festival, Cucalorus, NYLFF, and AFI Fest.

Samantha is a Queer, Filipina-American filmmaker based in NYC. Tales of a Shadowboxer marks her directorial debut in collaboration with producer/writer Sharif McFadden which won Best TV Pilot and Best Woman Short at Independent Shorts Award (Los Angeles). In 2023, she co-directed Heights along with writer/creator, Lucy Sarasin. She is interested in telling queer stories with cross generational storytelling and genre bending worlds.

SAMANTHA HERRERA
DIRECTOR / WRITER





MELISSA OLGUIN
PRODUCTION DESIGNER

Melissa Olguin is a creative artist born and raised in Los Angeles, CA currently residing in New York City, NY. interior design, and acting. Melissa's diverse skill set encompasses professional photography, prop/interior/set styling, interior design, production design, and acting. She also helped to produce and style a tv show segment called "Styled by Anya" for two years in Los Angeles, CA. Her interest in interior and prop styling started with when she would capture photos of the finished homes, but then grew when she started styling the set for the tv shows. Creating sets for photoshoots, doing production design for a short film in 2023, and starting to do a house in Vermont. With a lifelong passion for art and a heart for acting, Melissa strives to evoke feelings in every project she undertakes.



TRISH MANANSALA
AD / PRODUCER



ALANNA MURRAY
EDITOR

SAINT VEGAS TEAM



SAMANTHA HERRERA
DIRECTOR / WRITER



HELEN ROMEU COOMBES
PRODUCER



NANCY KATHERYN GOMEZ
FUNDRAISING + PR



MELISSA OLGUIN
PRODUCTION DESIGNER



MEEJA RICHARDS
KEY PA



TRISH MANANSALA
COSTUME DESIGNER



DEEBA MONTAZERI
COMPOSER



MEGAN CAMPISI
ACTING COACH



ALESSIA FALVO
CASTING COORDINATOR



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