



custody

a film by James Lapine



LOGLINE:

Three unlikely women are brought together in NYC Family Court when one of them, a single mother, unexpectedly ends up losing custody of her children.

STORY SUMMARY:

CUSTODY follows the story of three unlikely women are brought together in NYC Family Court when one of them, a single mother, unexpectedly ends up losing custody of her children.

After a long shift at work, Sara Diaz, a single mother of two, comes home to discover her eleven-year old son David is hanging out with some of the rougher and older kids in the neighborhood. Sarah goes to a nearby apartment and yanks her spirited son from a party and pulls the boy back up to their place, upbraiding him for his behavior. As they enter their apartment, the boy pulls away and trips, falling and hitting his head on the coffee table.

The next day, David's teacher is alarmed by his black eye and through a series of events, David and his sister are taken into custody by the Administration for Children's Services as a precautionary measure until the circumstances of his injuries can be investigated.

Her case comes before Martha Schulman, a venerable judge who as it turns out is going through some unexpected family issues of her own. Sara is assigned to a novice court appointed attorney, Ally Fisher, fresh out of Yale Law School whose own life and circumstances couldn't be more foreign to those of Sara.

Sara quickly falls down the rabbit hole that can be the Family Court system. Her children are placed into a foster home and as she fights to get them back, she is forced to come to terms with a past from which she has been running for years. The vagaries and bureaucracy of the court system brings these three complicated women together at a pivotal time in each of their lives just as the court system unexpectedly comes under public scrutiny.





DIRECTORS STATEMENT:

Over the last couple of decades I occasionally drop out for a few months. As a writer/director I find the need to get away from the "entertainment business" and immerse myself in other worlds. One of these outings led me to NYC Family Court to watch a casual friend and judge preside over a day's cases. I was unprepared for what I experienced.

Family Court in New York is a place where people from all walks of life are thrown together to sort out the most complicated, personal and emotional issues a person could face. The pace of the stories that pass before the bench is fast. The drama is non-stop. Sometimes surreal, sometimes hilarious, and often heart wrenching. I found myself returning to the court to follow some of these cases, and became fascinated by a setting that offered the fundamental questions:

What does it mean to be a good parent and who has the right to make that judgment? How do race and class and money dictate justice? And what does this imperfect system do to all the hardworking people who are engaged in its emotionally difficult proceedings day after day?

Unexpectedly, I felt compelled to write a fictional story about these people and this court. And at the end of the day I also wanted to write about messy lives – all of our messy lives where love and happiness is not a daily constant and the people we hold dear can slip away from us without warning.

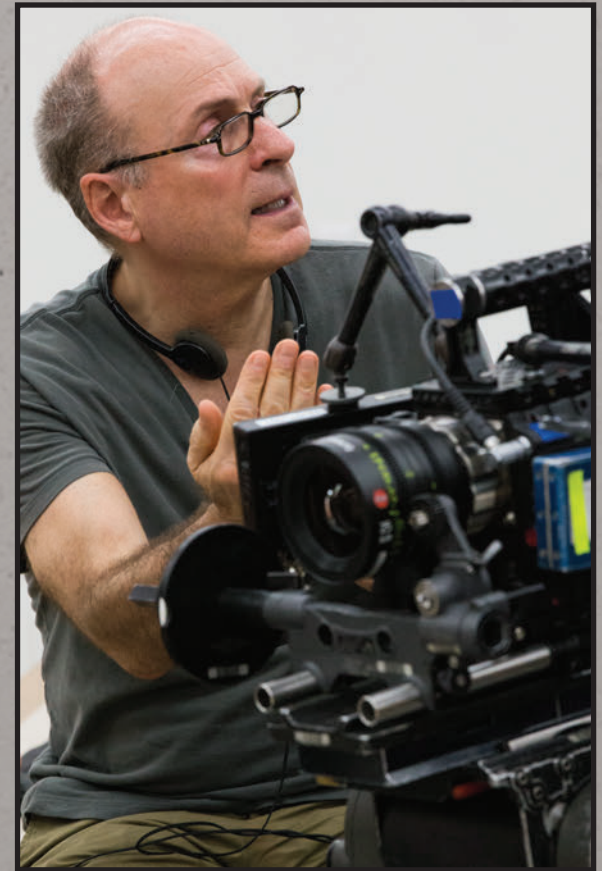




CUSTODY is the first film I have directed and also written; my first dramatic film; and the first film I have shot digitally. I found the speed and freedom shooting digitally enabled me to work in a similar fashion to how I work in the theatre: much freer; shorter time for setups; the ability to do long takes and to let the actors repeat an entire scene over and over; and the freedom to change course and be more improvisational. It was a totally invigorating experience.

In many ways I would characterize CUSTODY as something of a psychological thriller in which good and bad behavior is not always explicable. I hope that I have succeeded in telling a thought provoking and entertaining story that shines a light on a part of life in New York City that those of us who live here rarely see. And perhaps this story might also shine a light on us.

James Lapine



DIRECTOR'S BIO:

James Lapine is a playwright, screenwriter and a director of plays, musicals and films. After beginning his career as a photographer and graphic designer, he has gone on to work on over a dozen Broadway shows as well as a myriad of work off-Broadway including three Shakespeare productions for the NY Shakespeare Festival. He has collaborated frequently with Stephen Sondheim and has received three Tony Awards and the Pulitzer Prize. He has directed the films *IMPROMPTU*, *LIFE WITH MIKEY* and *EARTHLY POSSESSIONS* and recently wrote the screenplay for *INTO THE WOODS*. He was nominated for an Emmy Award for his documentary *SIX BY SONDHEIM* for which he also received a Peabody Award.



PRODUCERS BIOS:

LAUREN VERSEL

Lauren Versel has over 30 years of experience in film, television and theater as a writer, director, editor, producer and financier. Since founding Lucky Monkey Pictures, Lauren has produced several award winning films including "City Island" (2009) Audience Award winner at the 2009 Tribeca Film Festival as well as Executive Producing the Golden Globe nominated "Arbitrage" (2012).

In 2012 Lauren reunited Alicia Silverstone and her Clueless writer / director Amy Heckerling in the dark comedy "Vamps." In 2014, Lauren Produced Richard LaGravenese's adaptation of "The Last 5 Years" based on the musical by the Tony Award winning composer Jason Robert Brown, starring Anna Kendrick and Broadway favorite Jeremy Jordan.

She is currently in production on "Nobody's Watching" by Argentine writer / director Julia Solomonoff as well as teaming up with her "City Island" writer / director Raymond de Felitta on his latest projects "The Lucky Sperm Club" and "Married and Cheating." Lauren splits her time between New York City and Garrison NY.



KATIE MUSTARD

Named as one of Variety's Top 10 Producers in 2015, Katie Mustard has an impressive resume for a young producer. An Honors graduate of the USC film school, Katie has overseen the production of 35 movies, 20 short films, 3 feature documentaries and dozens of commercials in just under a decade.

Last year, Katie Produced 5 films including Simon Helberg's WE'LL NEVER HAVE PARIS (SXSW 2014) with Alfred Molina and Maggie Grace; Paul Bettany's directorial debut SHELTER (TIFF 2014) with Jennifer Connelly and Anthony Mackie; & the Documentary feature THE CONSOLE WARS with Scott Rudin and Seth Rogen.

In January 2014, Katie had her Ninth film premiere at the Sundance Film Festival with Desiree Akhavan's debut APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR. Other past Sundance premieres include Andrew Dosunmu's RESTLESS CITY; THE GREATEST (Pierce Brosnan, Carey Mulligan, Susan Sarandon); NIGHT CATCHES US (Kerry Washington and Anthony Mackie) which went onto be nominated for an Independent Spirit Award; & the highly acclaimed short IN THE MORNING which screened before the US Congress on Human Rights.

As a physical producer, her credits include MADE IN CHINA (winner Best Feature at SXSW 2009); Natalie Portman's short film EVE (Venice FF 2008 starring Lauren Bacall, Ben Gazzara, and Olivia Thirlby); THE SON OF NO ONE (Sundance 2010 with Al Pacino, Katie Holmes, & Channing Tatum); THE MISSING PERSON (Sundance 2009 with Michael Shannon & Amy Ryan); & A CASE OF YOU (Tribeca 2013 with Evan Rachel Wood, Justin Long, Sam Rockwell, & Vince Vaughn). Katie has also worked in the Studio space with Paramount Pictures on films such as THE DEVIL INSIDE which top'd the box office scales as the largest grossing genre film of its time.

Most recently, Katie is producing CUSTODY starring Viola Davis, and Ellen Burstyn, & STICKY NOTES with Ray Liotta, Rose Leslie and Justin Bartha. Currently, Katie is producing Katie Holme's director debut, ALL WE HAD.

Katie is represented by UTA.

