



**OFFICIAL SELECTION**

40TH INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL ROTTERDAM

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# A LITTLE CLOSER

a film by **MATTHEW PETOCK**

## PRESS KIT

COACH14  
29, Rue Boissy d'Anglas  
75008 Paris - France  
t +33 1 40 21 72 79  
f +33 1 58 18 64 70

COACH14  
5, Calle de la Granja. Bajos  
08024 Barcelona - Spain  
t +34 93 368 25 81  
f +34 93 280 40 94

Flies  
wetheflies.com  
info@wetheflies.com

Armian Pictures  
874 Broadway #807  
New York, NY 10003  
212-226-6178

A Little Closer, LLC  
360 Washington Ave. #1  
Brooklyn, NY 11238  
804-304-7753  
alittlecloserfilm@gmail.



# CREDITS

sheryl  
marc  
stephen  
gabe  
joanna  
ms. moss  
anastasia  
don  
stephen's friend  
stephen's friend  
stephen's friend  
doctor

**SAYRA PLAYER**  
**PARKER LUTZ**  
**ERIC BASKERVILLE**  
**CHRIS KIES**  
**CATHERINE ANDRE**  
**STEPHANIE PARROTT**  
**NATALIE RACOOSIN**  
**ROLLAND COLELLA**  
**CJ DOSS**  
**RYAN LYLE**  
**PETER DEMPSY**  
**DOUGLAS NELSON**

executive producers  
**NEDA ARMIAN**  
**PASCAL LEVENSOHN**

producers  
**MATTHEW PETOCK**  
**RACHAEL KLIMAN**

co-producers  
**HOLLY CLARKE**  
**ZACHARY SHEDD**

associate producer  
**ALLISON NIEDERMEIER**

director of photography  
**DANIEL PATRICK CARBONE**

casting  
**HENRY JADERLUND**  
**ATLEY LOUGHRIDGE**

first assistant director  
second assistant director  
script supervisor

**ZACHARY SHEDD**  
**JORDAN BAILEY-HOOVER**  
**JESSICA MEYER**

production designer  
sound recordist  
boom operator  
assistant camera  
gaffer  
grip

**HOLLY CLARKE**  
**GILLIAN ARTHUR**  
**MICHAEL KOEHLER**  
**ZACH KUPERSTEIN**  
**ERIC YUE**  
**GREGORY ANTONOPOULUS**

sound editor & re-recording mixer  
**CHRISTOPHER FOSTER**

editor  
co-editor

**MATTHEW PETOCK**  
**ANTHONY RIPOLI**

## **A LITTLE CLOSER**

Dir: Matthew Petock

TRT: 73 Min

Screening Format: HD CAM | 1.78:1 (16x9) | Color | Lt/Rt (prologic)

### **SYNOPSIS**

In the forgotten corners of rural Virginia, Sheryl struggles to balance her work as a housekeeper and raising her two sons, fifteen year-old Marc and eleven year-old Stephen. Hoping to meet the love of her life and bring home a father for her boys, she frequents a depressing, weekly mixer for the towns aging singles set. Meanwhile, Marc is desperate to lose his virginity, and spends his days working at a used car lot. And his brother Stephen, in the throes of sexual discovery, becomes infatuated with his school teacher while hoping to win the approval of a group of peers who adamantly detest her.

As we journey with the family through their stagnant summer days, *A LITTLE CLOSER* examines the disparate and nuanced states of sexuality as well as the role familial influence can play within a disconnected emotional landscape of rural America. Director Matthew Petock offers a lyrical portrait of both small-town woes and a fragmented family, delivering a startlingly honest film that captures, at once, the singularities and similarities of adolescent and middle-aged sexual urges.

###

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

This project began as something I could actually make, near where I grew up, and with some close friends from film school. The budget (or lack of budget) informed every scene and essentially every element of the film, most of all the narrative -- the more I whittled it down, the more manageable it became.

I had been watching a lot of neorealist movies from the Iranian new wave, like the work of Abbas Kiarostami, and I'd also been moved by Charles Burnett's *KILLER OF SHEEP*, Lynn Ramsay's *RATCATCHER* and Hou Hsiao-hsien's *THREE TIMES*. I wanted to observe real people in everyday situations, and most importantly, focus on small moments and glimpses.

The script went through several vastly different incarnations. The stuff coming out wasn't autobiographical, but was certainly inspired by memories of mine, people I'd known and stories I'd heard. The intent was to examine what sexuality means to us at different points in our lives. Like *THREE TIMES*, it was structured in three distinct chapters, like a collection of short stories. We shot the film this way too. It wasn't until the edit that the stories were woven together.

I once asked a mentor "How do I know what I'm supposed to say, as an artist?" and she responded, "You shouldn't say anything, you should ask questions." I didn't want to give any clear-cut answers or say anything about sex or love or kinship, partly because I just wanted to *watch*, but also in part because I didn't think I had any answers to give. I was, in a way, searching for answers myself.

The way each of my actors responded to the material was fascinating to me. Sayra will always inspire me. She was immediately excited by the challenges, and it was no doubt challenging, but she's a very eager artist. Parker didn't even want to talk about it. In fact, we didn't discuss his sex scenes much at all until about an hour before we shot them (though when he performed, it became clear that he had a lot of his own thoughts and feelings about the subject and the situations). Eric, the young one, almost laughed at what I asked of him. He was utterly professional every single day, but when we weren't rolling he would giggle and blush from embarrassment when I gave direction. To me, this meant that it was working. The movie's *about* these exact differences. An adult struggling to find love and intimacy is going to experience a kiss far differently than a teenager who's kissing for the first time.

And it's my hope that the film will continue to evolve for me, too. I'm sure I'll have different feelings and questions in another few years, or later in life, and for me, it's this perpetual evolution that makes this story exciting.

Matt Petock  
December 2010





## **SAYRA PLAYER** *Sheryl*

As a member of the Actors Studio, Sayra has shared the stage with Ellen Burstyn, Harvey Keitel and Estelle Parsons among many others. She spent some time in Italy and Poland with the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards. Sayra's film and television work includes: *PAPER COVERS ROCK* (IFC/ SXSW), *EUPHORIA*, *DUANE HOPWOOD* (Sundance), *TROOPER*, *OFF DUTY*, *HOW I GOT LOST*, and *LAW AND ORDER*. She has extensive downtown theatre credits, and she also recently wrote and produced two films, *BRAMBLE BUSH* and *FLICKING FROGS*.

[www.sayraplayer.com](http://www.sayraplayer.com)

## **PARKER LUTZ** *Marc*

A Virginia native, Parker has performed in local and school productions for several years. He currently lives in Suffolk, Virginia. *A LITTLE CLOSER* is his first feature film credit.

## **ERIC BASKERVILLE** *Stephen*

Also a Virginia native, Eric's acting career started at the Hurrah Players Family Theater in Norfolk, Virginia at age seven where he studied musical theater and tap. He's performed in numerous stage plays and operas, most recently appearing in *The Secret Garden* as Colin at the Little Theater of Virginia Beach, and portraying Young Pete in the film *ATLANTIS DOWN*.

## CATHERINE ANDRE *Marc's Girlfriend*

A *LITTLE CLOSER* is Catherine Andre's first feature credit. A Washington DC native, Catherine grew up performing music, dance and drama. Cat most recently starred in the teen drama *FRIENEMIES*. As a filmmaker, Catherine wrote and directed the comedic short, *NOT SO LONG LASTING*, an Official Selection of the 2010 YoungCuts Film Festival (Montreal). Cat has trained at the Shakespeare Theatre Company, and professionally, she's performed in lead roles with the Washington Revels and the Alden Theatre Company. Catherine was honored with a 2010 CARE Award from the BizParentz Foundation, sponsored by Universal Studios and the SAG Foundation. She currently attends Interlochen Center for the Arts, the most prestigious fine arts boarding high school in the United States.

## CHRIS KIES *Gabe*

Chris, a native of Massachusetts, has appeared in many television shows and films, most recently *MY ONE AND ONLY* (2010), *PAST LIFE* (FOX) and *THE WIRE* (HBO). He's also the voice of Bruce Spade in the popular video game series *Grand Theft Auto*. Chris will shoot the feature film *HORRORCON* early March. Chris currently lives in New York City with his wife and two year old son.

[www.chriskies.com](http://www.chriskies.com)

## STEPHANIE PARROTT *Ms. Moss*

Originally from Kentucky, Stephanie recently moved to Los Angeles after living in New York for the past four years. She's appeared in several New York theatre productions, independent films and has been branded the face of Dr. Miracle's skin care products by starring in the national ad campaign for print and TV. In addition to acting, Stephanie also wrote and produced an independent web series titled *ON THE STOOP*, and she currently works in development for BBC Worldwide Productions.

[www.stephanieparrott.com](http://www.stephanieparrott.com)





## MATTHEW PETOCK *Writer / Director*

Matt grew up in Richmond, Virginia and moved to New York in 2003 to study film at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. His short film *JACKSON WARD* screened at festivals throughout North America, including the Independent Film Festival of Boston, the Ojai Film Festival, the True West Cinema Festival, and the YoungCuts Film Festival, an annual Montreal festival celebrating the work of international filmmakers under the age of 25, where Matt was given the Avid© Award for Best Director. Throughout film school and for several years thereafter, Matt worked for Martin Scorsese, where he was able to observe post-production on films like *THE DEPARTED* and *SHUTTER ISLAND*, and work on documentaries *SHINE A LIGHT* and *PUBLIC SPEAKING*. *A LITTLE CLOSER* is his first feature film, and he has several projects currently in development.

## NEDA ARMIAN *Executive Producer*

Neda is a New York based producer with a varied roster of projects from feature films to documentaries. Her films include *RACHEL GETTING MARRIED* (6 Spirit© Award nominations, Best Actress Oscar© nomination, Venice and Toronto International Film Festivals), *THE BETRAYAL* (Oscar© nominated, Emmy© Award, Sundance and Berlin Film Festivals), *JIMMY CARTER: MAN FROM PLAINS* (Venice and Toronto International Film Festivals), *THE SITUATION*, *BEAH: A BLACK WOMAN SPEAKS* (Peabody© Award, Emmy© nominated) and *THE TRUTH ABOUT CHARLIE*. Her company, Armian Pictures is in post-production on an original short film for AMC titled *TRIVIAL PURSUITS* with Adam Goldberg and Jeffrey Tambor, and Nancy Savoca's *UNION SQUARE* with Mira Sorvino and Tammy Blanchard. She's currently in pre-production on Philip Dorling's *PREDISPOSED* with Jesse Eisenberg, Melissa Leo and Tracy Morgan, and Peter Glanz's *THE LONGEST WEEK* with Mila Kunis.

## DANIEL PATRICK CARBONE *DP*

A graduate of New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, Daniel has written and directed a number of short films, both narrative and documentary, which have been showcased at various film and arts festivals internationally, including New Orleans, Marfa (Texas) and Seoul (South Korea). His short *BEING* was showcased at Lincoln Center and was honored with a screenwriting award at NYU's First Run Film Festival in 2007. In 2008, he received the Warner Bros. Film Award (among many others) for his most recent short, *FERAL*, including honors for directing, editing, and NYU's Wasserman/King Award for filmmaking. Daniel is currently in production on the feature length documentary *PHANTOM COWBOYS* and in pre-production on the narrative feature *HIDE YOU'RE SMILING FACES*.

## **ZACHARY SHEDD** *Co-Producer / AD*

Zach is a filmmaker born and raised in San Francisco. He attended New York University's Tisch School of the Arts and has worked in commercial production since graduating four years ago. Zach served as a producer during the pre-production process of *A LITTLE CLOSER* and took on the role of Assistant Director during production. He currently works as a commercial Locations Manager and is in development on his first feature film. He lives in Brooklyn.

## **HOLLY CLARKE** *Co-Producer / Designer*

Holly grew up in Richmond, Virginia and studied crafts and furniture design at Virginia Commonwealth University. She previously collaborated with Matt on the short film *JACKSON WARD* (2008). *A LITTLE CLOSER* is her first feature credit -- among other roles, she worked as the Production Designer, the primary Locations Manager, and served as the Co-Producer on the ground in Richmond. She currently lives in New England with her fiancé.

## **ANTHONY RIPOLI** *Co-Editor*

Anthony is a New York based editor and filmmaker. His short film *SEX ED* screened throughout the United States and won awards at the Back East Picture Show, the Film Fest of New Haven, and the First Run Film Festival. After graduating from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, Anthony worked under editors David Tedeschi, Jake Pushinsky and Christopher Tellefsen. The first feature film he cut was the award-winning *POUNDCAKE*, directed by Rafael Monserrate. Anthony has also served as an editor on films by Leon Ichaso (*EL CANTANTE*), Dito Montiel (*FIGHTING*), Martin Scorsese (*SHINE A LIGHT* featurette) and Kenneth Lonergan (*MARGARET*).



<http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117944478>

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## A Little Closer

**A single mom negotiates the shores of loneliness while her adolescent sons discover their sexual urges in Matthew Petock's unpretentious debut "A Little Closer."**

By JAY WEISSBERG

**A single mom negotiates the shores of loneliness while her adolescent sons discover their sexual urges in Matthew Petock's unpretentious debut, "A Little Closer." Solidly made with a minuscule budget whose limitations are ably overcome, the pic is obviously made from the heart, covering well-worn themes with more honesty than originality, generating a deja-vu feel that rarely diminishes. Perhaps best seen as a sort of well-done thesis film which proves the young helmer's capabilities, "A Little Closer" is likely to see more traffic over streaming sites than in cinemas, though smaller fests may offer a welcome.**

Petock sets his story in rural Virginia, the kind of place where connections between strangers are limited. Sheryl (Sayra Player) tries hard to make ends meet as a house cleaner, struggling to afford a home she knows will never meet even her most modest desires. Between work and raising two sons on her own, she barely has time for herself, though her yearning for companionship leads her to try out a depressingly bleak community mixer each week.

Older son Marc (Parker Lutz), 15, works a summer job at a car lot where an older colleague gives him tips on how to get a girl into bed. Meanwhile, 11-year-old brother Stephen (Eric Baskerville) is at summer school, since Sayra can't afford any other option to keep him busy. Both boys are coping with chaos-inducing hormones: Marc gets a g.f. (Catherine Andre) who he pressures into "proving she loves him," and Stephen has a crush on teacher Ms. Moss (Stephanie Parrott).

Petock and his flawless cast get everything right: Sheryl's nervous ticks while hoping for a decent-looking guy to ask her to dance, her exhaustion from bearing so much responsibility alone, and her frazzled but loving rapport with her kids. The boys are age-appropriate, with Marc completely in thrall to his testosterone while younger Stephen is on the cusp between innocence and knowledge. Dialogue is real, situations are believable, and the pic nicely captures the circumscribed options available to nontraditional families in this kind of community.

A few scenes are memorable, foremost a series of extended closeups of Sayra dancing with a guy (Chris Kies) she meets at the mixer. The tight shots and Player's complex emotions, all stemming from the overwhelming sensation of being held close, baldly convey her loneliness and need for physical contact. Despite other nice moments, there's just not enough here to make the pic stand out from other sincere slice-of-life indie productions. Modesty is no fault, yet in a

crowded market, viewers are likely to demand more than a mirror of reality.

Visuals are sharp, benefiting from confident handheld lensing by Daniel Patrick Carbone and a proper appreciation for natural light. Editing, too, also by Petock, is sure-handed, nicely overlaying conversations onto silent montages.

Contact the variety newsroom at [news@variety.com](mailto:news@variety.com)

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