

**Fancy Garage Productions
in association with
Four a Minute Productions**

Presents

GET ACTION

Written & Directed by Elaine Strutz

Starring

Christine Ng
Elaine Strutz

(2016, 8mins, USA)

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www.elainestrutz.com/get-action-photos

GET ACTION

LOGLINE

A woman's attempt to cheer up her grieving friend goes wrong when she drags her out onto the unpredictable streets of Brooklyn.

SYNOPSIS

Christine (Christine Ng), a cool and aloof young woman, looms over the buzzer of a Brooklyn apartment building, unable to press it. There, handwritten in cursive, are the names Michelle & Jim. She promptly walks away, figuring a quick game of Candy Crush is far more inviting than a visit to a friend whose husband had recently died.

Swiping across lines of lollypops and green circles on an iPhone screen, she ignores the bus pulling up to the stop where she's sitting. The driver honks to get Christine's attention, and in the action of waving him along, she knocks her sunglasses into the gutter.

So begins a serious streak of bad luck, as she finally makes it inside the apartment of an inconsolable Michelle (Elaine Strutz), in worse condition than she feared. Christine feels awkward and helpless as Michelle sobs and shoves wads of tissue beneath sunglasses of her own. In a snap decision to get them out of the stuffy apartment, Christine suggests they get the endorphins kickin' by going for a quick walk. Ten easy blocks.

It's not long before they run into trouble. Together, these old friends must navigate an angry driver, dead pigeons, flying soccer balls and an intensely creepy dude on the unpredictable and unsympathetic streets of Brooklyn.

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DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Get Action is about will power and taking risks. Christine stalls her visit to a grieving Michelle because it's hard, but the moment she presses that buzzer begins a series of decisive moments that snap their lives into action – for better or worse. Unlike the empty promise of a motivational poster, the film attempts to show that even good intentions can lead to worst-case scenarios. It explores the question – is good luck vs. bad luck just a matter of perspective?

I've lived in New York City for eleven years; the last eight of which were amazing and the first three complete shit. Much like the plot of **Get Action**, everything seemed to go wrong: a terrible car accident involving my musician friend nearly severing his fret hand (spoiler alert – he's the composer of **Get Action**), an autoimmune disease from the stress, and an eventual windowless apartment that had particularly jumpy cockroaches crawling up the walls. But the NYU Film application that a grumbling junkyard worker helped me crowbar out of the trunk got me into film school. Therein the heartache and risk started to pay off (let's not talk about the student loan debt, though). Eventually, I got back on my feet and found myself in the best city in the world, with amazing friends that I get the bonus of making movies with, including my husband and fellow producer of **Get Action**, Tim Young.

I guess PTSD is pretty powerful since over a decade later, every time Tim walks out the door, I tell him to be careful. From there the basis of **Get Action** sprung – what would I do if I lost the greatest thing to ever happen to me? In exploring that question in the story, I took inspiration from Tim's positivity and proactive approach to life. The title for **Get Action** comes from a Teddy Roosevelt quote he has posted above his desk.

Though **Get Action** does have that positive outlook, it is also rooted in an unfair and sad reality. It is my hope that it reflects the complexity of the real world, and with enough irony to really earn a smile from the audience and possibly even impart some positivity, just like the wonderful people – friends, family, cast and crew – who inspired and helped me make this film.

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PRODUCTION NOTES

Get Action was independently financed by writer/director/producer Elaine Strutz. As with most short filmmakers, Strutz was short on cash and faced challenges, but no budget is too small for her and fellow producer, Tim Young. “Running around on the streets of Brooklyn to make **Get Action** was certainly an adventure, but we thrive on the challenge of a run and gun shoot,” explains Young. “It's not just that we didn't have the budget, but it's an intimate movie with two non-actors in the lead roles, so it was important that we had a flexible and creative environment on set. That means a very small crew, often in tight locations. It also meant that on day one, I was holding a boom in one hand and pushing record on the camera with the other, while Elaine cried her eyes out and directed herself at the same time.”

Directing, acting, producing and juggling at the same time...

Just kidding about the juggling – there was no actual juggling on set. However, the many metaphorical balls in the air that director Elaine Strutz took on, including producing, acting and editing, were managed with a great deal of pre-production and an experienced cast and crew. Strutz explains, “Taking a hiatus from full-time editing to get back to writing and directing personal projects, **Get Action** was what I immediately wanted to shoot because it was ripe for a resourceful auteur style of filmmaking. This is the style that got me into making movies in the first place, back when I was just a kid with a video camera wanting to be the next Ed Burns. Having to be on both sides of the camera in numerous roles is easier said than done, especially if you want quality work, but it helps to have one producer who's also a writer/director *and* your husband, and another producer/co-star who's an experienced DP *and* your best friend. For example, when I was unable to look at a camera move because I was acting in the scene, Tim was there to communicate with cinematographer Jason Margaca on exactly how I'd envisioned it since we spent that extra time going through the shot list together. That pre-production was essential so Christine and I could focus on our performance first and foremost.”

This of course, raises the question: why put your super talented director of photography best friend in front of the camera rather than behind it? “How personal the project is for me is perhaps why I went out on a limb to cast myself and fellow producer, Christine Ng, in **Get Action**,” says Strutz. “Neither of us had much acting experience, but I wanted a realness to pull off something that could easily veer toward corniness, and I thought the chemistry between us would translate to screen.”

Ng adds, “I was super nervous to act, but I was flattered by Elaine's confidence in me and I mean, the character's name is *Christine*... come on, I had to do it! The truth is, Elaine's the only person I would do this for, and it didn't hurt that I loved the script,” says Ng. The first day of shooting was dedicated to the most emotional scene, a decision Strutz made to ease into performing for the first time. Remarks Ng, “Maybe she just wanted to see if I could pull it off!”

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“It was to see if I could pull it off, not Christine,” recalls Strutz. “She has a fun and lovable charisma that’s addictive to be around. At the same time, I’d worked with her on sets as a DP and saw how sharp her instincts are for storytelling, so I knew this could be channeled with the same intensity that she gives every project she commits to.”

Ultimately, the unconventional choice proved to be a wise one. Strutz explains, “It took some time for us to find a flow as performers, but once we did, we were able to be our natural selves on camera, and I think it adds immensely to the film.

One day, one scene, and a one man crew...

While any film’s budget requires a balance of artistic luxuries with an efficient schedule, **Get Action** had a unique opportunity to marry style with shooting strategy. Strutz explains that the scene where Christine visits Michelle’s stuffy apartment and learns that she’s a wreck, “needed to feel claustrophobic and stagnant, like you’re stuck on that couch with Michelle as she feels paralyzed by the death of her husband, and stuck with Christine as she’s unsure how to comfort her friend. So I knew I wanted this scene static in contrast to the rest of the film once they get outside. That worked out perfectly, because shooting with a tripod meant Tim’s hand were freed up so he could be a one man crew. It also allowed for the flexibility so that I could dress the set and decide on shot composition with him before we were rolling, so Christine and I could have as much time as needed to feel out the characters. In addition, having the rest of the crew stay at home meant saving most of the budget for the monster that was day two.”

Shooting on the streets of Brooklyn... fudgetaboutit!

Day two of shooting **Get Action** involved a full day of six outdoor locations in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, many more talent and crew members, and anything but a controlled set. Between coordinating the schedules of busy New Yorkers with uncooperative weather, amateur car stunts at a crowded intersection, and shooting in the streets of a crowded city, the crew was kept on their toes.

“The only day that worked for all of the cast and crew was smack dab in the middle of a full week of forecasted rain, and we had an entirely outdoor shoot for day two,” Strutz recalls. “We decided to keep our fingers crossed and hope we didn’t have to cancel, because rescheduling would have meant waiting a month or recasting. I loved our cast and crew and didn’t want to lose anyone.”

A couple days before the shoot, the forecast shifted to a quick early afternoon shower. “Once we saw that, we moved the scene where Christine and Michelle are almost hit by a car to that time,” recalls Young, “since we knew we wanted to film under the BQE [Brooklyn Queens Expressway] anyway. It did rain, but we were thankfully dry.”

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Get Action's crew also had to deal with a surprisingly busy intersection during this scene and a lesson in scouting that producers Strutz and Young will never forget. Young recalls, "We scouted that location during the weekend, and it was dead. Then here comes the day of the shoot on a Thursday and it's crazy with activity. Luis Moreno, the actor playing the angry driver, was impressively cool under pressure with actual angry New Yorker drivers honking behind him."

Shooting on the streets of New York City without permits can be challenging, but just like the first day of filming **Get Action**, Strutz's vision lined up with shooting strategy since handheld camera requires no permit. In order to achieve the smooth, gliding look, cinematographer Jason Margaca used a Ronin stabilizer. This also allowed the crew the flexibility to speedily hop from one location to the next. Strutz explains, "With fewer breaks for setting up, we were able to cram a lot of coverage into one day. It was also fun to shoot so adventurously and while keeping the action going most of the time."

The production team of **Get Action** also knew that contingencies upon contingencies is the only way shooting without permits in Brooklyn was going to succeed. Young explains, "For the scene where Michelle gets hit in the head with a ball, we needed two whole volleyball teams worth of extras, and we didn't have that in the budget." Instead, Strutz scouted which local parks usually had games going and what time. She explains, "In the locations we were shooting, which was conveniently my neighborhood, there are three parks within walking distance of each other. We had both a prop volleyball and basketball on hand because I knew if the volleyball players weren't in their usual spot, we could go ask the basketball players down the block to be in our scene."

That same philosophy applied to another scene that needed to be shot in front of a convenience store. Strutz says that "if the deli we planned to shoot in front of said no to filming, our plan was to walk to our second or third choice and ask them." Luckily, all of Strutz's first choice options were generous and willing participants. "That's the beauty of New York and how I hope it comes across in **Get Action**," says Strutz. "While it can be unpredictable and unforgiving in some instances, it can give a hundred times over in other ways."

Composing full circles ...

Get Action was in part inspired by Strutz's painful, but ultimately rewarding transition to New York after moving from Detroit. A big part of that initial transition was childhood friend and musician Darren Will, so it was only appropriate that he compose the original music for the film.

Strutz and Will both attended Dearborn High School, where they collaborated on their first films together in a video program financed and run by Detroit concert promoter Russ Gibb. Gibb is best known for his role in the "Paul is Dead phenomenon" and more locally for making his students yell out the window like Howard Beale in *Network*, "I'm mad as hell, and I'm not going to take it anymore!" Most importantly, he fostered a creative and often rebellious environment for students to find their artistic voices.

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Since high school, Strutz and Will have collaborated on TV projects, shorts, and documentary films. Will is currently a performer and recording artist for the band Mothxr. He's also collaborated with Soko, the French author and performer of **Get Action's** opening track, "First Love Never Die."

Strutz describes Will as a composer who, "you tell the tone you're after and he always nails it better than you imagined in the first place, even if it's unusual. I told him that I thought the music for **Get Action** needed to be a combination of sweetness and grit, and of course he came up with something perfect and beautiful."

Film Family!

Get Action marks one of several collaborations for producers Strutz, Young and Ng. Most recently, the three crewed up for Young's short, *Bonding*, but have also worked together on music videos, web series, and other shorts. Strutz explains, "We're more than friends, because making movies together is the ultimate bonding experience." Ng agrees, "We have such respect and trust for one another and hope to continue being a film family, supporting one another in work and you know, life!"

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THE FILMMAKERS

Elaine Strutz | Writer, Director, Producer, Actor, Editor

Elaine is a Detroit-born filmmaker currently living in Los Angeles. She made her first films in high school, winning an Emmy at the age of seventeen for a PSA.

Since graduating NYU's film program, she has edited for TV shows such as Discovery's *Killing Fields*, TLC's *Say Yes to the Dress*, and PBS's *e² series*. She edits both narrative and documentary, currently cutting Academy Award winner Zana Briski's upcoming film, *Reverence*.

In addition to filmmaking, Elaine is a writer, children's book author/illustrator and a painter.

Christine Ng | Actor, Producer

Christine Ng is a New York based director of photography. Christine has shot various commercials, music videos, and independent film projects, both documentary and narrative.

The first commercial she shot, Honda's *50 states* aired during *Super Bowl XLVI*. The web series, *The Better Half*, which she co-created, executive produced and DP'ed garnered rave reviews in *IndieWire* and *the Huffington Post*. Her first narrative feature, *The Widowers*, premiered at the *San Antonio Film Festival* and her first feature-length documentary, the Emmy nominated *Everything is Copy: Nora Ephron Scripted and Unscripted*, which she co DP'ed with Bradford Young premiered on HBO. She recently shot a series for Morgan Spurlock's company, *Warrior Poets* called "*What We Teach Girls*". She is currently shooting a Food Network series with Hannah Hart.

She first fell in love with filmmaking when she was 9 after stumbling onto a film set during a summer night on the neon lit streets of Hong Kong. This experience opened her eyes to a whole world she never knew about.

She's been fortunate enough to cultivate her interest in photography through various summer programs including the prestigious Future Filmmakers Workshop at NYU's Tisch which she completed in high school. This led to her successful career as a student filmmaker, making valuable connections and friendships while exploring various aspects of the filmmaking process.

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Tim Young | Producer, Camera

Tim Young is a filmmaker whose work has been featured by the Wall Street Journal, Gawker, and the Huffington Post. He has written and directed several projects for the web, including an episode of the *Broad City* webseries, now a hit show on Comedy Central, and the short film *Nature Boys*, starring Ilana Glazer.

He also writes, improvises, and cooks.

Jason Margaca | Director of Cinematography

Jason Margaza is a director of photography based in both Boston and New York City. He was DP for the Emmy Award winning television show, *Style Boston* and for WeWork and Owlchemy Labs.

He is the lead cinematographer and director for his production company, V-Neck Media and is also a music composer and audio engineer. He enjoys public speaking and stand up comedy.

Darren Will | Composer

Darren Will is a musician and artist. As a composer his work has been part of gallery installations in several cities including New York, Paris and Chicago, as well as featured in documentaries, web series, and most recently commercials for jaguar/Land Rover.

As a performer and recording artist he has been a member of The World Without Magic, Rathborne and currently, Mothxr.

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CAST

Christine	Christine Ng
Michelle	Elaine Strutz
Driver	Luis Moreno
Creepy Dude	Steve Arons
Stroller Mom	Chloe Hall
Kid 1	Dashiel Hall
Kid 2	Zuzu Hall

CREW

Writer, Director, Producer	Elaine Strutz
Producer, Camera	Tim Young
Producer	Christine Ng
Director of Photography	Jason Margaca
Music	Darren Will
Sound Recordist	Henry Myers
Script Supervisor	Whitley Watson
Sound Mixer	Matt Rocker
Color	Michael Feldman
Editor	Elaine Strutz

“First Love Never Die”
Arranged and Performed by Soko
Words & Music by Soko

“Jim Jams Jass”
Arranged and Performed by Milan Latin Jazz Quartet
Words & Music by Milan Latin Jazz Quartet

“Tiny Times 3”
Arranged and Performed by Fish N Chips
Words & Music by Fish N Chips

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