

ALLURE

(a.k.a. A WORTHY COMPANION)

a film by
Carlos & Jason Sanchez

starring
Evan Rachel Wood
Julia Sarah Stone
Denis O'Hare

OFFICIAL SELECTION

tiff

**TORONTO INTERNATIONAL
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synopsis

Allure follows a thirty-year-old woman, troubled by her past and struggling with a dysfunctional relationship with her father, who seeks sexual and emotional fulfillment through a series of failed relationships. Her life changes however, when she befriends and convinces an unhappy sixteen-year-old girl to runaway to her house, under the guise of a confidante who wants to help. Although the arrangement initially works, it soon becomes clear that for the young girl to stay and continue satisfying her needs, the older woman will have to employ immoral tactics. Manipulation, denial and co-dependency fuel what ultimately becomes a fractured dynamic that can only sustain itself for so long.

cast

Laura Drake
Eva
William Drake
Eva's mom
Benjamin Drake

Evan Rachel WOOD
Julia Sarah STONE
Denis O'HARE
Maxim ROY
Joe COBDEN

crew

Writers and Directors
Producers
Associate producers
Line producer

Carlos and Jason SANCHEZ
Luc DÉRY, Kim McCRAW
Elaine HÉBERT, Heidi LEVITT
Jasmyrh LEMOINE

Casting directors

Heidi LEVITT, Rosina BUCCI, Nadia RONA

Cinematographer
Production designer
Art director
Costume designer

Sara MISHARA
Emmanuel FRÉCHETTE
Patrick BINETTE
Valérie BÉLÈGOU

Postproduction supervisor
Editors
Sound recordist
Sound designer
Re-recording mixer
Original score

Erik DANIEL
Jesse RIVIERE, Elisabeth Olga TREMBLAY
Claude LA HAYE
Sylvain BELLEMARE
Bernard GARIÉPY STROBL
Olivier ALARY

Production
Canadian distributor
International sales

micro_scope
Les Films Cristal
Seville International – Anick Poirier

directors' biography

Siblings **CARLOS AND JASON SANCHEZ** have been collaborating together for the past decade. For the majority of that time the brothers have worked in photography, producing large-scale photographic prints reminiscent of film stills; complex mise en scene that explore psychological landscapes. Their work is represented by art galleries in Toronto, San Francisco, and Amsterdam, and has been exhibited throughout Canada, the United States, and Europe. Their images are also included in the art collections of major museums and respected private collectors around the world. In 2003 they created a short film, *Easter Party*, which they produced, directed, shot, and scored. Since 2010 the brothers have been directing music videos and advertisements in Canada. *Allure* is their first feature film.



Carlos & Jason Sanchez interviewed by André Turpin

André Turpin is a renowned cinematographer and director.

The subject matter of your film as well as the majority of your photographic work touches upon the darker side of human nature. Can you comment on this?

C: Until recently I've had difficulty pinpointing why exactly it is that I am drawn to creating works of this nature. The answer for me came while listening to a journalist interview a novelist who had written a lot of really dark short stories. He asked her if she was happier than her stories and she answered that she was so much happier than her stories and that she credited them for getting the darkness out of her. Her writing was a way to explore those themes so she didn't have to carry them around in her body. I think we feel the same way.

We are interested in exploring the darker sides of humanity; we're captivated by the people who society sweeps under the rug, and by the stories that people would rather not talk about. I also believe that the people who are attracted to our work are equally as captivated because we present these people and their stories in a non-judgmental way. For instance in *Allure*, Laura behaves in immoral, violent and irrational ways, but instead of condemning her, the film sets out to understand the source of her actions by shedding light on the pain that consumes her.

Your main characters are both female. For a first film, this angle (very well executed by the way) is risky. How did you proceed so as not to fall into the traps of a masculine point of view on such a delicate and feminine subject?

C: I believe it was all about staying true to the characters and to their stories.

J: We were interesting in making a film about relationships in which the characters found themselves entangled, bound to the other by an invisible leash. Power dynamics, guilt, unresolved issues and deep yearnings for companionship fuelled our characters and we wanted to depict these sentiments from the inside out. We felt we could access a clearer narrative to achieve this by crafting the story between two females. Had Laura's character been a man, we would have been fighting with the realities associated with a film about an older man seducing/manipulating a younger girl to run away to his house. It's not the film we wanted to make.

Did you base your screenplay on real-life cases?

C: No, *Allure* isn't based on a true story. We looked for similar cases but couldn't find anything particularly close.

J: That's likely because such cases, especially ones with an age gap like this in our film, go unreported. There is a stigma associated with the reporting of physical or sexual aggression by a female. Beyond that point though, there are telltale elements in the relationship between Laura and Eva that are found in most abusive relationships.

At one point in the film, two men attack Laura. This part of the story can be seen as a form of "punishment" for her character. It is the only element in the film that could be deemed as moralistic. Is it? How is this element of the script necessary?

J: Although I can see how that particular scene can come across as being there for Laura to get 'punished' for her actions, we never intended it as such. Our film is not about passing judgment on our characters for their actions – instead we tried to show how complex their particular situations were by focusing on the moral grey zone that each find themselves in. The motel scene serves, in a way, as the beginning of the end. Both Laura and her father William are shattered by the aftermath and they begin to unravel. This leads to Laura's revelation to Eva about the abuse she endured in her past and to the argument between Laura and her father that results in his admission to that abuse and his begging for forgiveness. From there, Laura is thrust into reality and realizes that Eva must save herself before she too becomes consumed by darkness. The violence in that scene may seem unnecessary but there needed to be a dramatic and hard hit to send a ripple strong enough to guide us until the film's end.

Your photographic work and that of your mise en scene seem extremely precise. To what extent were things planned and decided on beforehand and did you do any improvising during the shoot? In other words, were most elements of the film determined before they were shot?

C: We didn't storyboard anything in prep but we created an exhaustive document that listed visual references and notes for each scene of the film with our DOP, Sara Mishara. The three of us would also go into the locations alone every morning for an hour with a viewfinder and lenses to plan out the day. Things got more precise once we blocked out the scene with our actors and finalized framing, lighting and camera movements with Sara.

J: On a 25 day shoot one needs to be very prepared but we also left ourselves open to adjusting things along the way if it proved beneficial to the story. For instance, Laura's end sequence was completely rewritten during the shoot. Evan's performance was so strong and her character so damaged that we felt we needed something to better round off her arc and instill a bit of hope that maybe something will improve for her. The decision to rewrite was necessary but also stressful since we only unlocked the essence of what needed to change a couple days before we shot the scene...

The fact that you work as a team forces you to discuss and "defend" all your artistic choices. Is it still possible to leave room for intuition in your filmmaking?

C: Collaborating really helps to refine our ideas and intentions and makes sure that each decision we made is the right one. I don't believe that it affected our intuition as artists though. Every scene, every location, every performance forced us to react and be quick on our toes and make decisions that hadn't been already thought of.

J: I agree. I think it's an asset. We've worked together now for over 15 years, so we trust each other's instinct and intuition.

How do you guys work? Who does what?

C: We don't have set tasks; we both have our paws in everything.

From a photographic point of view, how did you evolved from your photo work to that of your film? How is designing your photos different from that of your moving images and how are the two mediums similar? Do the principles of framing, depth of field, lighting and color timing differ in both cases?

C: Going from photography to film was a natural progression in our artistic career. When we would make a still image we always approached it as though we were making a film; we would build a set, dress it, light it, hire actors etc... All that was missing was movement and we find that that jump came fairly easily. We directed a lot of commercials before making our film so that really helped us in terms of running a set, designing shots, blocking scenes and working with actors.

In terms of the difference between the two mediums, I don't really see them to be very different at all. We constructed every frame in our film as if it was one of our photographs. We were just as focused and critical on every shot as we are with our still work. We never just banged off a shot. Everything was thought out.

J: By having worked for so long tirelessly crafting single images we have definitely found an aesthetic that I think can be seen as unified between our photos and this film. The entire process felt very familiar.

If you were asked to choose "stills" from your film, would they look like your photographs?

C: The wide shots tend to look like our photo work.

J: I think most of it does.

Brothers who make films together is a reality that is well known in the world of cinema. Do other filmmaking brothers inspire you?

C: We thought we were the only brothers making films?

J: I'm inspired by a lot – without preference for how many heads it comes from.

actors' biographies

EVAN RACHEL WOOD is one of the most talented young actresses of her time. She recently gained critical acclaim and was just nominated for the 2017 Emmys for "Lead Actress in a Drama Series" for her role as Delores in HBO's hit series *Westworld*. She also received a Critics Choice Award for "Best Actress in a Drama Series," a Golden Globe Nomination for "Best Performance by an Actress in a TV Series, Drama", and a SAG Nomination for "Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble in a Drama Series" all for her role in *Westworld*. Currently in production for its second season, the series is about the dawn of artificial consciousness and the future of sin. She also received a Golden Globe and Emmy nomination for "Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Miniseries or Movie" for her portrayal of Veda Pierce in the HBO miniseries *Mildred Pierce*. She also earned acclaim for her powerful performance as Stephanie, Mickey Rourke's estranged daughter in Darren Aronofsky's 2008 film, *The Wrestler*.



A working actress since she was five, Wood had her breakout role in 2003 with Catherine Hardwicke's controversial independent film, *Thirteen* (2003), for which she was nominated for a Golden Globe as Best Actress in a Drama as well as a Best Actress SAG Award. In 2010, she was seen in Robert Redford's, *The Conspirator* in which she starred alongside James McAvoy and Robin Wright. She also appeared as Queen Sophie-Ann Leclercq in the critically acclaimed HBO show, *True Blood*. Evan starred in *The Ides of March* directed by and starring George Clooney. Evan was also seen in *Charlie Countryman* alongside Shia LaBeouf and Mads Mikeelsen, in *A Case of You* alongside Justin Long, and opposite Scott Speedman in Andrew Fleming's *Barefoot*.

In 2015, Evan starred alongside Ellen Page in *Into the Forest*, a film based on Jean Hegland's apocalyptic novel about two sisters struggling to survive in the wilderness after society collapses. Other film credits include Joe Berlinger's film adaptation of *Facing the Wind* based on the true-crime story of Bob Rowe, and Gerardo Naranjo's *Viena and the Fantomes* opposite Dakota Fanning and Zoe Kravitz. She also voiced a character in George Lucas' new film *Strange Magic*.



Vancouver actress **JULIA SARAH STONE** is already being recognized for her broad character range and fearless performances that capture the raw essence of humanity. Nylon Magazine noted Julia as an artist “who's about to break out in a big way” in their glowing review of her debut Canadian indie film, *The Year Dolly Parton Was My Mom*. In 2013, Julia captivated audiences as a series regular on AMC’s critically acclaimed series, *The Killing*, playing an emotionally troubled teen living on the streets. She also starred opposite Rachel McAdams and James Franco in Wim Wender’s film, *Everything Will Be Fine*. Her work includes starring as triplet teen boys in Charlie Kaufman’s pilot for F/X, *How and Why*, opposite John Hawkes, Sally Hawkins and Michael Cera.

She also played the lead role in the independent film *Wet Bum*, which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival the same year she was selected to be a part of the film festival’s Rising Star Program in which they honour four up-and-coming Canadian actors.

Stone has had additional roles, such as recurring in the TNT series *Falling Skies*, leading roles Geoff Redknap’s *Unseen*, (Premiered at Vancouver International Film festival), Amy Jo Johnson’s *The Space Between* (premiered at Carmel Film Festival), John Delcher’s feature *Unearthing*, and the starring role in Bruce McDonald’s feature *Weirdos (FKA: Nineteenseventysomething)* which had its World premiere at The 2016 Toronto International Film Festival.

Julia’s leading role in the series called *Aftermath* allowed the fit, active young woman, who holds a Purple belt in Karate, trained in sword fighting and firearms, the opportunity to use all those skills for the action in the series.

DENIS O'HARE was most recently seen in *This Is Us* and on FX's *American Horror Story: Roanoke*. Denis has played in a number of films, including: *Danger One* (Upcoming), *Lizzie*, *The Parting Glass* (Upcoming), *Butterfly in the Typewriter* (Upcoming), *Novitiate* (Upcoming), *Army of One*, *From Nowhere*, *Edgar Allan Poe: Buried Alive*, *The Pyramid*, *The Town That Dreaded Sundown*, *The Normal Heart*, *The Judge*, *Dallas Buyers Club*, *C.O.G.*, *J. Edgar*, *The Ghosts of Los Angeles*, *The Eagle*, *5,000 Feet is the Best*, *Edge of Darkness*, *The Proposal*, *An Englishman in New York*, *Duplicity*, *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men*, *Milk*, *Quarantine*, *Changeling*, *Baby Mama*, *Pretty Bird*, *American Loser*, *Charlie Wilson's War*, *Awake*, *Trainwreck: My Life as an Idiot*, *The Babysitters*, *Michael Clayton*, *A Mighty Heart*, *Rocket Science*, *Half Nelson*, *Stephanie Daley*, *Derailed*, *Heights*, *Garden State*, *21 Grams*, *The Anniversary Party*, *Sweet and Lowdown*, *River Red*, *St. Patrick's Day*.



On television, he has played in: *The Accidental Wolf*, *When We Rise*, *The Good Wife*, *The Comedians*, *Banshee*, *Theater Close-Up*, *Rake*, *American Horror Story*, *Law & Order: SVU*, *True Blood*, *CSI: Miami*, *Dolley Madison*, *American Experience*, *Brothers and Sisters*, *Bored to Death*, *Law & Order* and *100 Centre Street*.

the production company

micro_scope is one of the most important feature film production companies in Canada.

Founded in 2002, the company mainly focuses on the development and production of innovative, relevant and accessible feature films. Led by producers Luc Déry and Kim McCraw, micro_scope strives to make sure each of the company's films reaches its full distribution potential.

A Problem with Fear (2003) by Gary Burns and ***Tiresia*** (2003) by Bertrand Bonello were two co-productions that marked the beginning of micro_scope. *A Problem with Fear* opened the Perspective Canada section at the Toronto International Film Festival and was selected for the Berlin International Film Festival, while *Tiresia* was part of the official competition at the Cannes Film Festival.

Familia (2004), Louise Archambault's first feature film, was presented in the official competition at the Locarno Film Festival and screened at the Toronto International Film Festival where it won the Citytv Award for Best Canadian First Feature Film. *Familia* was also selected in over twenty international film festivals, including those in Gothenburg, São Paulo and Hong Kong.

Congorama (2006) by Philippe Falardeau, stars Paul Ahmarani and Olivier Gourmet. The film premiered at the Cannes Film Festival where it was the Closing Night film for the Directors' Fortnight. *Congorama* also screened at the Toronto International Film Festival as well as those in San Francisco, Pusan, Gothenburg, and at New Directors/New Films (MoMA).

Continental, un film sans fusil / Continental, A Film Without Guns (2007), by Stéphane Lafleur, premiered at the Venice Film Festival in the Venice Days section. It also screened in several of the most important festivals around the world, including those in Thessaloniki, Gothenburg, Rotterdam, Oslo and the AFI Film Festival in Los Angeles. The film also won the Citytv Award at the Toronto International Film Festival.

C'est pas moi, je le jure! / It's Not Me, I Swear! (2008), Philippe Falardeau's third feature film, made its debut at the Toronto International Film Festival. The film was also presented at the Berlinale in the Generation section where it earned a Crystal Bear and the Deutsche Kinderhilfswerk Grand Prize.

Incendies (2010), by Denis Villeneuve, features Lubna Azabal and Mélissa Désormeaux-Poulin. It made its world premiere at the Venice Film Festival in the Venice Days section, where it was named Best Film. After screening at the Telluride Film Festival, *Incendies* was at the Toronto Film Festival where it won the Best Canadian Film Award. It also screened in Sundance, Pusan, Rotterdam (Audience Award), Warsaw (Grand Prize), Namur (Audience Award) and Abu Dhabi (Best Female Actor – Lubna Azabal). *Incendies* was a finalist in the

Best Foreign Language Film category at the 83rd Academy Awards, as well as at the Césars and the BAFTAs.

En terrains connus / Familiar Grounds (2011), by Stéphane Lafleur, earned the Ecumenical Jury Award at the Berlin International Film Festival. It also screened in more than fifteen international film festivals including those in Jeonju, Shanghai, Durban, Melbourne, won the Best Film Award at the Los Angeles Film Festival, as well as the Jury's Grand Prize at the Taipei Festival.

Monsieur Lazhar (2011), by Philippe Falardeau, had its world premiere on the Piazza Grande at the Locarno International Film Festival, where it won the Audience Award and the Variety Piazza Grande Award. The film also earned many awards including Best Canadian Feature Film at the Toronto International Film Festival, and the Audience Awards at the Rotterdam, Copenhagen and Sydney festivals. The film also screened at the Sundance Festival as well as South by Southwest. The film was also nominated for Best Foreign Language Film at the 84th Academy Awards.

Inch'Allah (2012), Anais Barbeau-Lavalette's second feature film, had its world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival. The film was also presented in the Panorama section of the 63rd edition of the Berlin International Film Festival where it won the prestigious FIPRESCI Award as well as the Ecumenical Jury Special Mention.

Whitewash (2013), by director Emanuel Hoss-Desmarais and writer Marc Tulin, premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival where it won Best New Narrative Director Award, and had its European premiere at the Karlovy Vary Festival. The film stars Thomas Haden Church and Canadian actor Marc Labrèche.

Gabrielle (2013), Louise Archambault's second feature, had its world premiere on the Piazza Grande at the Locarno International Film Festival where it won the Audience Award. *Gabrielle* was then presented at the Toronto International Film Festival and opened the Hamburg Film Festival. The film was chosen to represent Canada at the 86th Academy Awards.

Enemy (2013), directed by Denis Villeneuve, is a Canada-Spain coproduction starring Jake Gyllenhaal, Mélanie Laurent, Sarah Gadon and Isabella Rossellini. The film was presented at the Toronto International Film Festival and in San Sebastian in 2013.

Tu dors Nicole / You're Sleeping Nicole (2014), Stéphane Lafleur's third feature film, had its world premiere at the Directors' Fortnight at the Cannes Film Festival and was presented at the Toronto International Film Festival. The film also screened in numerous festivals, notably in Sydney, Athens, Vancouver, the Hamptons, Los Cabos, AFI Fest, Göteborg, Palm Spring, Rotterdam and the prestigious New Directors/New Films presented at MoMA.

Guibord s'en va-t-en guerre / My Internship in Canada (2015), by Philippe Falardeau, had its World Premiere on the Piazza Grande at the Locarno International Film Festival. It also

screened at the Toronto International Film Festival. The film was invited in numerous festivals, including in Kiev and Palm Springs. *My Internship in Canada* also won the People's Choice Award at Canada's Top Ten Film Festival organized by TIFF.

Endorphine (2015), the newest film by André Turpin, had its World premiere in the Vanguard section at the Toronto International Film Festival. The film also screened in competition at the Sitges Film Festival, at the Rotterdam's International Film Festival and in Göteborg.

Allure (a.k.a. A Worthy Companion) (2017) is the first feature written and directed by visual artists Carlos and Jason Sanchez. It stars Evan Rachel Wood, Julia Sara Stone and Denis O'Hare. It will have its world premiere at the TIFF, and was invited to the Pusan Film Festival in October 2017.

Aimez-moi (working title) (2018) is the first feature film directed by Yan Giroux and co-written by Guillaume Corbeil and Yan Giroux. The film is presently in post-production and will be out in 2018. It stars Martin Dubreuil, Céline Bonnier, Henri Picard.