

Billy and Esperanza had it all together then they had a teenager.

NATALIA NORIEGA

TODD LONG

SOPHIE RHIANNON LONG



TRUSTING CHLOE



A surfing-obsessed, middle-age rock star and his ardent Latina wife scramble to rein in their wacky love life and misbehaving teen daughter in a California central coast comedy.

Synopsis

For years Billy Rome, a surfing-obsessed, middle-age rock star has been coasting through life with Esperanza, his ardent Latina wife, and their daughter Chloe. But dwindling royalties have forced Billy to reunite the band for a reunion tour. Returning home, Billy finds his household in crisis: Esperanza and Chloe are at each other's throats, and rumor has it that Chloe's been *smoking*. Esperanza is irate, and when Chloe doesn't confess, Billy hires Timothy, a mysterious teenager who's been skulking around the Rome estate, to spy on Chloe. Billy breaks Timothy's bad news (now Chloe's *boozing!*) to Esperanza "in the safe confines of a wig mechanic" to their couple's therapist Dr. Cathia, who gets more than she bargained for when her probing love-life questions trigger Esperanza into inappropriate displays of affection. Ashamed, Esperanza seeks spiritual counsel from the family priest, but when Father Jim unknowingly triggers Esperanza *again* ("Is it me, or is it getting *hot* in here?!"), he witnesses a simian marital scene that no seminary could prepare him for. Having blown all attempts at counseling help, Billy and Esperanza drive to the vampire teeth factory to confront Chloe and her misbehaving friends. But an embarrassing surprise awaits them there. At breakfast next morning, commiserating over their utter failure ("we have *ruined* our daughter's life!"), the haggard parents are delighted to find that Chloe is ready to talk. Everything's going to be all right . . . *right?*

"You guys *trust* me now, right? Okay, good, 'cause there's something I need to tell you..."

PERSONNEL



Natalia Noriega as **Esperanza**

Winner of acting awards from IndieEye Film Awards, Boden International Film Festival, Alternative Film Festival, Best Shorts Competition, Sweden Film Awards, & Stockholm City Film Festival, Noriega is also a stage actor & director, with a B.A. in Theatre Arts (Cal Poly). She has worked professionally with Pacific Conservatory Theatre.



Todd Long as **Billy Rome**

Best Actor award winner (Stockholm City Film Festival) and Irene Ryan (national acting) Award nominee, [Long](#) was trained in the University of Southern Mississippi theater program. His first career was in the performing arts as a stage actor, theater director, and rock and roll musician (Mission 66).



Sophie Rhiannon Long as **Chloe**

Acclaimed as “phenomenal” in her role as Chloe by IndieEye Film Awards Podcast, Long was trained as a triple threat at Coastal Youth Theater and is now in the Actor Training program at Pacific Conservatory Theatre. She has performed on California central coast stages for 12 years.

CINEMATOGRAPHER



Simo Nylander

A veteran cinematographer (*Of Marshes and Morrows*, *Botso*, *Uncorked: Wine Made Simple* [6-episode tv series], *More Than Stars*), Nylander has also worked as a film director (*Of Marshes and Morrows* and *Hemispheres: A Documentary on Cerebral Palsy*). For *Trusting Chloe* he also worked as film colorist & special Fx artist.

DIRECTOR/PRODUCER/WRITER



Todd Long

Awarded “Best First Time Director” by Naples Film Awards, [Long](#) got his start as a stage actor, theater director (*Guys and Dolls*, *Anything Goes*, *Mystery of Edwin Droad*), and rock and roll musician (Mission 66). Now a philosophy professor (Cal Poly) with a Ph.D. in philosophy (Rochester), this is his foray in film directing, producing, screenwriting, film composing, and sound editing.

EDITOR



Randi Barros

An award winning screenwriter and editor (*Lives Well Lived*, *Botso*), including numerous documentaries and programs (PBS, CNN, BBC, Lifetime, Life 360), [Barros](#) has a B.S. in Film Studies (Ithaca College) and an MFA in Screenwriting & TV Writing (Stephens College). She teaches screenwriting and film production at Cal Poly.

Trusting Chloe Stills



ACCLAIM FOR *TRUSTING CHLOE*



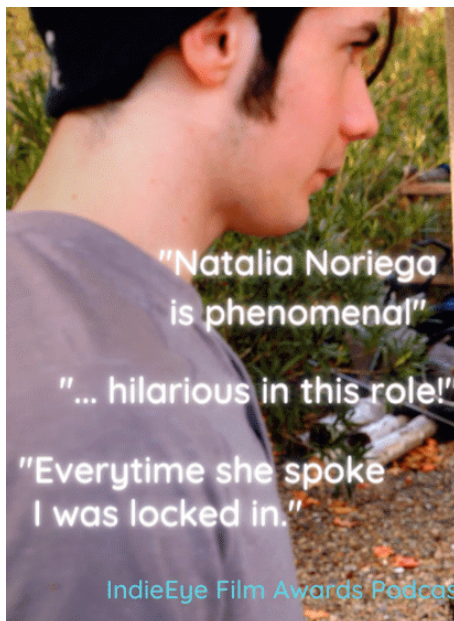
[IndieEye Film Awards Podcast on Trusting Chloe](#)

[IndieEye Film Awards Podcast on Natalia Noriega](#)

"Trusting Chloe was so much fun to watch!"

"There was so much work put into this to make it high quality and entertaining."

"Every character has their own quirks and deliveries and personality, and it was very well written."





"Timothy, who said anything about *spying*? I'm simply asking you to follow a group of kids without them knowing, take a few pictures, and report back to me. Does that sound like *spying* to you?!"



WRITER'S STATEMENT

One fine California afternoon in spring 2018 my talented daughter Sophie and I decided to make a film together. "Okay, but it's got to be good, Dad!" We brainstormed situations rooted in our own lives. How does someone who's passionately loved her childhood navigate through the transformation she knows is coming? How do her parents deal with her blossoming independence? Can they trust her? We wanted our story to be entertaining, even hilarious. So



we wondered: how would these family stress points be magnified if your parents were *famous*? With my background in rock and roll, our mutual interest in the California surf, and our experience with our wonderful Latino neighbors, characters began to emerge: Chloe, a spirited California teenager experimenting with her burgeoning independence; Billy Rome—a laid-back, surfer-slang-talking, middle-age rock star; and Esperanza, a bold, immaculately put together, ardent Latina.

Finally, I wondered, what marital anxieties (mid-life, financial, bedroom intimacy) get exposed in moments of crisis? The result is a funny set of episodes involving a rock concert, a shrink, a priest, and a slacker teenager, in circumstances involving misleading evidence and inappropriate public displays of affection. We were inspired by comedies with earnest characters doing their best to get along in the world. We love them in part because they don't know how lovable and funny they are. With *Trusting Chloe* we avoided the popular trend to motivate laughs through cynicism and standoffishness. Our characters don't stand apart from the fray of life, criticizing others from a privileged, ironic perspective. They welcome people from all walks of life; they're *engaged with the world*. Despite their fame and seemingly charmed lives, the Romes struggle with problems they didn't expect to be as challenging as they are. Their comical failures reveal a need for the kind of personal transformation that doesn't come easy (and might include a doozy of a twist or two). Just like real life, but funnier.

--Todd Long

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

"Like all the men, he want an eyeball on Esperanza."



My direction of *Trusting Chloe* was guided by the same foundational principles I brought to all the stage productions I directed early in my career: whatever you do, (i) reveal the interesting essence of every single character (make every character *shine*), and (ii) show the audience a coherent, emotionally satisfying story. I know of no better comedy exemplar than *Tootsie* (directed by Sydney Pollack), a masterpiece of character-driven, story-focused movie-making (with very few jokey gags). Pollack situates an over-the-top character in contexts few viewers have experienced but everyone can identify with. This was my goal with *Trusting Chloe*. Very few of us are rock stars or in ethnically mixed marriages, but we've all had families and problems we never dreamed would be as challenging as they turned out to be. If you live long enough, reality will reveal your weaknesses. And, like it or not, you've got to decide what to do, under uncertainty, when your own interests and desires conflict with other people's. The interesting question is rarely "what have you *done*?" (except maybe in Hollywood). The interesting human question is: what will you do *now*? Now that you've hurt *that* person's feelings, opened *that* can of worms, made *that* promise. I think *Trusting Chloe* is successful, not due to any technical filmmaking mastery, but because it actually draws you into a universal story with interesting, likable characters in situations that make you wonder what they're going to do next. And that's a function of fine writing, committed actors, great editing, and an adept production crew (who took up a lot of slack left by a first-time film director who also had a major acting role). It never hurts, of course, to give your movie a rock and roll theme with a cool surfer vibe!

-- Todd Long

Trusting Chloe F.A.Q.

1. You made this film far away from a movie industry city. How did you get competitive cast and crew talent?

The central coast of California where I live is full of talent. Way less than Los Angeles, of course. But, I'm telling you, there are plenty of highly skilled actors here, enough to make a lot of fine Hollywood-caliber films. Due to the limited numbers it may be harder to attract the right ones for your project. But, if you have good relationships with people and they believe in you, you can get anything you need here acting-wise, except star power. I think there are fewer highly skilled production crew people here, but there are some good ones. I was lucky enough to get connected early on with them (shoutout to Randi Barros).

2. What was it like directing mostly stage actors in a film?

Stage acting is my background, and I had done a few film roles; so, I knew the challenges. Acting is acting, to a certain extent. But, a stage actor frequently shifts, relative to the audience, to take the spotlight or give it back to another actor, whereas in a film it's a function of camera position and camera angle: you just need to stay in the frame. And you're playing to something a few feet away, rather than 50 or 100 feet. In film acting you can convey a lot with subtle movement that would be lost completely on stage. There were a few times when I had to point out to actors that they were over-projecting. But, that wasn't a big adjustment. The hardest adjustment to film acting is getting comfortable performing for the eye of that weird, nonpersonal camera that wants to capture every detail of your performance and set it in stone forever. It can be difficult to relax when you know there won't be an opportunity for redemption at tomorrow's matinee.

3. What was your biggest influence?

Definitely *Tootsie* (1982, directed by Sydney Pollack). Early on I knew I wanted to make a comedy in which the humor is driven primarily by the characters and the story, rather than jokey gags. This works only with really interesting, unselfconscious characters who are nevertheless universally relatable, placed in a coherent, satisfying story that's always moving the audience to wonder what's coming next. That's a tall order that few films fill, because it's so very hard to get the balance right. *Tootsie* does it for me, with its slightly over-the-top character and a host of other unique personalities with their own subtle quirks. It's about a struggling actor and the television business, which are a job and profession few people have any experience with; and yet we can all relate to the deeply human challenges and desires of the heart those characters and that oddball story put us in touch with. Movie alchemy, I call it. It's what I aspired to in making *Trusting Chloe*.

4. How did you approach presenting your two big characters, Billy and Esperanza, on screen?

Esperanza is feisty and mouthy. She's generous and loyal. A huge extrovert. She's very intelligent but impulsive. You *always* know what she's feeling. She speaks in broken English with a Spanish accent. That's very funny but a potential landmine. But, here's the thing about Esperanza: she's driven by a desire to relate emotionally with her many friends from all walks of life. She's learned English to *connect*, but she does not want to sacrifice the cadence and phrasing of her beloved native Spanish. Esperanza talks exactly the way she *wants* to talk. I told Natalia the challenge is to make Esperanza superb but not a caricature. She said, "I know what you want" and then she did it. There's no actress in the world I'd prefer to Natalia Noriega. She perfectly embodies the character. No wonder she's won six acting awards for Esperanza.

Billy is also a larger-than-life character but in a completely different way. Billy and Esperanza are both super-engaged and they've both fashioned personas that win friends through their speech patterns, but Billy is as cool and measured as Esperanza is hot and effusive. Billy has self-consciously developed his jazz-riffy, surf-slang patterns of speech because he loves words and surf culture and being perceived as cool, but most of all because it works its relationship magic on Esperanza. They *adore* each other. Billy's relaxed, witty, masculine wordplay excites and soothes Esperanza, and Esperanza's unrestrained personality is endlessly thrilling to Billy: he loves the challenge of calming her. So, I thought it would be a mistake to have Billy do the typical movie thing of matching Esperanza's intensity in their exchanges; that's not how Billy rolls.

5. You had prior experience as a stage director, but this is your first time directing a film. Moving from stage to screen, what's the learning curve?

Enormous ... probably exacerbated by the fact that, although *Trusting Chloe* is a short, it's actually a complex, 38-minute film with 18 scenes and 14 locations! And we didn't have the luxury of controlled, designed sets. Everything was on location, with minimal set up time and tight schedules. So, before the shots I had to do a lot of speculative planning and then a lot of on-the-spot blocking decisions just before the shoot, including quite a few I acted in myself. When I think back on it now, it seems crazy. Thank goodness I had faith in myself and a savvy production crew that took up a lot of my slack by making lots of good on-the-fly decisions. And that's just to talk about production. Post-production was a learning curve all unto itself, and because I did all the post-production sound--music, editing, design, rerecording, foley, effects, and mixing--I had a lot of new skills to learn that took me months. I'm so grateful Simo Nylander (cinematographer, film colorist, video effects, transitions editor) was there with me as a resource through it all with patience and good humor.

6. Where did all those zany love scenes in the therapist's office and priest's offices come from? How did you approach them on set?

What long-married couple hasn't experienced intimacy problems, especially in times of stress? I figured we could mine some comedy gold if we treated it in a lighthearted but titillating way. What can I say? The idea sprung from my own imagination of having Billy and Esperanza engage in animal-themed foreplay in inappropriate settings. It struck me as hilarious that Esperanza would be triggered by an authority figure (therapist, priest) asking her about their sex life at home: it's not happening *there* but it's about to go down *here*!

On set I was concerned about the priest's office scene, which called for Billy and Esperanza to dance around the office half-clothed, a passionate kiss on top of the desk, and a final shot where it looks like they've lost their clothes. It's comic action with no actual nudity but I was concerned about how it would feel to be Natalia under those conditions with a bunch of guys in the room. So, I reduced the crew to the bare essentials and invited Simo's wife Carol to be in the room. Once Natalia felt comfortable, we went full bonobo.

7. *Trusting Chloe* feels a little like a tv show. Is that what you were going for?

Eventually, yes. When we wrote the screenplay, Sophie and I were just trying to tell a satisfying story with really fun characters rooted in our own experience. We assumed it would be a short but we just kept writing until it felt complete and satisfying. When it was all done and I was figuring out what we had, a few thoughts occurred to me. The first was that we had a lot of scenes that unfold more like a feature film than a short story. The second was that it was only 40 pages long and the scenes were short and episodic. And the third was that *Trusting Chloe* ends on a surprise cliffhanger that makes you want to know what happens next. It occurred to me that we had the makings for the beginning of a tv show, a thought that blossomed as I dreamed up a story arc about Billy and Esperanza growing and maturing through various mishaps and epiphanies. So, when we got to post-production, I committed to giving it tv pilot elements (an opening montage/theme song, repeating musical comedy cues, and tv-like musical transitions). The result is a hybrid of comedy short film, mini-feature, and tv pilot. Now I think of it more as a tv pilot than anything else, and I'm writing additional episodes for a show I'm tentatively calling *Rock & Rome*.

8. What was it like writing the screenplay with your daughter?

Truly special. We had recently performed together in a local film, which had emboldened us to think we could do it, too. And you only have so much time with your teen daughter before she's gone. Sophie was immediately enthusiastic. We quickly determined we wanted to do something rooted in our life experience. We hashed out a general plot, and then something completely unexpected happened. My imagination exploded with characters and narrative ideas. Once we knew the parents would be a surfing-obsessed rock star and a feisty Latina, the scenarios and dialogue poured out as fast as I could type. I ran everything past Sophie, who often had excellent revisionary ideas. She wrote a good bit of the teen dialogue and helped fine-tune some of the adult dialogue as well. In two weeks we had two-thirds of the screenplay. We had so much fun reading it aloud to each other, trying out voices for the characters; we laughed . . . a *lot*. I'd wake up in the middle of the night with some new hilarious bit of dialogue or whatnot. I couldn't wait for Sophie to get home from school to run it by her. We loved our characters and story so much. I had never written a screenplay before but I knew we had something special. And, so did Sophie, who's a precocious, sophisticated movie critic. It was a joyous season of shared creation with my daughter. What's better than that?

Trusting Chloe

Monkeysweat Productions

Running time 38 minutes
Genre Comedy (Narrative Short/TV Pilot)
Year 2022
Language English
Rating PG (adult themes, implied nudity)

Shooting Format Digital
Aspect Ratio 16:9
Sound Stereo, 5.1 Surround
Country of Origin USA
Filmed on location in San Luis Obispo County, CA

Website: <https://trustingchloe.jimdofree.co>
Facebook: <https://facebook.com/TrustingChloe>
IMDb: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt14458174>
FilmFreeway: <https://filmfreeway.com/projects/2080648>

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CAST

Billy Rome Todd Long
Esperanza Natalia Noriega
Chloe Sophie Rhiannon Long
Timothy Phineas Peters
Dr. Cathia Karen 'Kaz' Kahn
Father Jim Gregg Wolff
Joe/Guitar Stud Joe Lynch
Tessa Josephine Berryman
Breezy Monica Haughey
Mr. Radner Lester Jenkins Wilson
Manicurist Sonja Wittlieb
Band Manager Jay Raftery
Teen 1 Nolan LeMay
Teen 2 Stevee Wittlieb
Teen 3 Gavin Hannegan
Teen 4 Shea MacKenzie
Teen 5 Makai Copado
Teen 6 Melody Goldin
Trash Girl Tessa Lewis
Bass Stud Jason Peters
Keyboard Stud Mark Burnes
Drum Stud Brian Poudrette
Lead Guitar Stud Daniel Cimo
Pamela (voice) Erin Tidmarsh
Announcer (voice) Mark Robertshaw
Richard (voice) Jeff Diehl
Vampire/Body Double Linda Camplese
Surfer Brendan Hannegan
Billy Rome Fan Club Sigrid Morrison Long,
 Zoe Kirby, Stephen Lloyd-Moffett, Amy Hart,
 Debbie Manville, Jeff Diehl, Shannon MacKenzie,
 Kristin Lewis, Simo Nylander
Concert Audience Jason Manville, Debbie
 Manville, Dylan Manville, Sigrid Morrison Long,
 Stephen Lloyd-Moffett, Amy Hart, Linda Cam-
 plese, Sophia Martino, Melody Goldin, Siona
 Patel, McKaila Lewis, Hayley Halvorsen, Nicole
 Raftery, Sonja Wittlieb

PRODUCTION

Director & Producer Todd Long
Screenwriters Todd Long, Sophie Rhiannon Long
Executive Producers Ron Burr & Sherry Hartman, David &
 Tricia Ottesen, Ed & Carol Morrison
Assoc. Exec. Producers Sam & Gwen Knowlton, Ted & Emily Long
Assist. Exec. Producers Ryan Manus
Cinematographer Simo Nylander
Camera Operators Simo Nylander, Curtis Yap, Dane Taylor,
 Casey Wieber
Sound Recording Casey Wieber, Andy Kulikowski
Boom Operators Casey Wieber, Andy Kulikowski, Carol
 Nylander
Lighting Technicians Simo Nylander, Curtis Yap, Casey Wieber
Production Assistants Ed Morrison, Carol Morrison, Tessa Lewis,
 Anthony Toohey, Carol Nylander, Tricia
 Ottesen, Dylan Long
Set Decorator Debbie Manville
Concert Lighting Lester Jenkins Wilson
Concert Spotlight Perry Patel
Caterer Sigrid Morrison Long

POST-PRODUCTION

Editor Randi Barros
Film Colorist Simo Nylander
Montage/Credits Editor Casey Wieber
Special Visual Effects Simo Nylander, Casey Wieber
Sound Editor/Sound Efx/ Todd Long
Foley Art/Surround Mixer Todd Long
Music Composer Todd Long
Musicians Brian Mulhearn, Todd Long,
 Clinton Kirby, Janis Johnson

SONGS

MISSION 66 (writers: Todd Long & Charles Bradford)
"A New Direction", "Via Satellite", "1960", "Down to the End"
WILL KIMBROUGH (writer: Will Kimbrough)
"Hey Trouble" (cowritten by Rich McCully),
"I'm Not Running Away", "Salt Water and Sand"



AWARDS

Paris Film Festival

Best Comedy
Best Editing (finalist)

Alternative Film Festival

Best Actress (Long Short)
Best Comedy (finalist)
Best Cinematography (finalist)

Boden International Film Festival

Best Actress: Short Film

Sweden Film Awards

Best Comedy
Best Actress - Short Film

IndieEye Film Awards

Web Series of the Year
Best Actor

Naples Film Awards

Best First Time Director

Hollywood Gold Awards

Silver Award: Web/TV Series

Best Shorts Competition

Award of Merit Special Mention: TV Pilot
Award of Merit: Leading Actress

Stockholm City Film Festival

Best Feature Film (30 min +)
Best Actor: Feature Film
Best Actress: Feature Film

Silicon Beach Film Festival

Best Ensemble Cast - Short Film