



# THE LAKE EFFECT

NO TIME LIKE A FAMILY VACATION  
FOR A MIDLIFE CRISIS.

COVERT PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS "THE LAKE EFFECT"  
ROSS PARTRIDGE TARA SUMMERS AND KAY PANABAKER  
CASTING BY SAMANTHA FINKLER MUSIC BY THE MINOR CANON MUSIC SUPERVISOR MIKE LOCKE FILM EDITOR STEVEN EDWARDS CINEMATOGRAPHER BRETT JUSKALIAN  
CO-PRODUCER SKIPPER MARTIN PRODUCED BY JENNIFER WESTIN WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY TARA MIELE

# THE LAKE EFFECT

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*THE LAKE EFFECT*  
PRESS KIT

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*THE LAKE EFFECT*  
THE STORY

LOGLINE

Rob Lawson's perpetual quest for success is interrupted when his estranged daughter shows up pregnant, challenging him to be a father before he becomes a grandfather.

SYNOPSIS

Rob Lawson is a middle-aged man-child bent on success. With his latest business venture on the rocks, his young, yoga-loving wife Natalie hounding him to make babies, and his boyish charm fading, Rob eagerly escapes to Lake Michigan for a summer vacation. But spending time in his inherited lake house is a constant reminder of his failure to live up to his deceased father's lofty expectations.

Rob's delusions of his youthful potential evaporate when his estranged 18 year-old daughter Celia shows up unannounced and 9 months pregnant. While Rob struggles to get his head around his impending role as Grandpa, a doctor orders Celia not to travel back to Cincinnati until the baby comes. Rob looks to his ex-wife, to Celia's baby daddy, and to Natalie, who tries to swallow her jealousy but insists no one is coming to his rescue. Rob must care for Celia until her baby comes.

Rob, blackberry in hand waiting for news that his deal will go through, resists his pending Grandfather-hood. He treats Celia like a child despite her very adult condition. Meanwhile, Celia, convinced she can keep her life plans intact by attending college in the fall, tries to convince Rob that he should help her raise the baby. Their dysfunctional family dynamic is further challenged by the arrival of Celia's boyfriend Jace. At first Rob is glad to have someone to take care of Celia but Jace's unnatural maturity rankles him. Rob soon grows protective of Celia making Natalie wonder if Celia's baby wouldn't be better off raised by Rob and her.

Rob almost manages to embrace his role as the head of this newly-formed family when his last chance to finance his latest and most ambitious business falls through. He reverts to his childish ways, dragging Natalie off to schmooze their hip city neighbors into investing. Meanwhile, Jace goes off to play a dream gig while Celia, watching her dreams slip away, is unable to sit alone in the house. She throws a party for a group of local kids. When Rob and Natalie return to find the place wrecked, Rob explodes claiming that he never wanted kids. Natalie is stunned, Celia is crushed, and Rob is left alone to decide whether or not he can step up and be a father before he becomes a grandfather.

*THE LAKE EFFECT*  
CREDITS

THE CAST

Celia	Kay Panabaker
Rob	Ross Partridge
Natalie	Tara Summers
Jace	Chase Maser
Barry	Mike McNamara
Deb	Tiffany Paige
Saleslady	Sharon Williams
Birth DVD Instructor	Amy Snively
Dex	John Kerry
Steve	Barry Kahn
Delivery Guy	Ben Konstantin
Local Guy	Matthew Felkey
Local Girl	April Washko
Truck Boy	Brooks Applegate

THE CREW

Writer/Director	Tara Miele
Producer	Jennifer Westin
Director of Photography	Brett Juskalian
Editor	Steven Edwards
Composer	M. Paul Larson and The Minor Canon
Casting Director	Samantha Finkler
Production Designer	Diane Kowalski
Costume Designer	Emily Pignataro
Music Supervisor	Mike Locke
Sound Designer	Jon Schell
Co-Producer	Skipper Martin

*THE LAKE EFFECT*  
CAST BIOGRAPHIES

**KAY PANABAKER**

Celia

Kay Panabaker is an award-winning actress with numerous television, stage, and film credits as well as a history degree from UCLA – all earned before she turned 18.

Kay can next be seen in the highly anticipated ABC show coming out this fall *NO ORDINARY FAMILY*. The show is about a normal, modern family who suddenly acquires supernatural powers after their plane crashes in the Amazon. Kay stars as ‘Daphne Powell’ the daughter of Julie Benz and Michael Chiklis.

In the spring of 2010 Kay played ‘Young Kitty Walker’ on the hit ABC show *BROTHERS AND SISTERS* and also starred in the Lifetime movie *SECRETS IN THE WALLS*.

Teenagers will recognize Kay from her role as angst-filled teen Nikki Westerly on the drama *SUMMERLAND*, for which she won the Young Artist Award for “Best Performance by a Leading Young Actress in a TV Series – Comedy or Drama.” Younger fans know her from her work on Disney Channel, including the telefilm *READ IT AND WEEP* and a recurring role on *PHIL OF THE FUTURE*. Kay also played Lindsey Willows, daughter of Marg Helgenberger’s character on *CSI: CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION*. Her other screen credits include *GREY’S ANATOMY*, *MEDIUM*, *GHOST WHISPERER*, *BOSTON LEGAL*, *TWO AND A HALF MEN*, and *WEEDS*.

In 2007, Kay was seen on the big screen playing best friend George to girl sleuth *NANCY DREW* in the Warner Brothers feature film adaptation of the classic book series, and later on the small screen, in Lifetime’s *CUSTODY*, alongside Rob Morrow and James Denton. She played the title character in *MOONDANCE ALEXANDER*, an award-winning family film which also starred Lori Loughlin and Don Johnson. That role earned her the Dixie Film Festival’s award for “Outstanding Actor/Actress in a Film.” She was also recognized in 2007 for her performance in the Dylan and Cole Sprouse film *A MODERN TWAIN STORY: THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER*, receiving the inaugural “Rising Star Award” at the Temecula Valley International Film Festival.

In 2009 Kay starred in the MGM remake of *FAME* along side Kelsey Grammer, Megan Mullally, and Bebe Neuwirth.

Extraordinarily focused, Kay was able to accommodate a rigorous academic schedule in addition to her work, graduating as valedictorian of her high school at the age of 13, and then completing her undergraduate work in history at UCLA in March 2007, at the age of 17. That made her the youngest graduate on record for the UCLA History Department – which is ranked 9th in the nation.

## **ROSS PARTRIDGE**

Rob

Ross Partridge was last seen as Matt in the critically-acclaimed Duplass Brothers' film *BAGHEAD* (Sundance 2008). Upcoming films include *THE FREEBIE* (Sundance 2010) directed by Katie Aselton, *THE OFF HOURS* directed by Megan Griffiths, *THE TREATMENT* with Joshua Leonard, directed by Steven Shardt and Sean Nelson, and *FEED THE FISH*, alongside award-winning actor Tony Shaloub and Barry Corbin.

Other film credits include Steven Spielberg's *THE LOST WORLD*, *BLACK AND WHITE* with Gina Gershon, *AMITYVILLE HORROR* with Terry O'Quinn, and *THE WEDDING MURDERS* with Canadian indie director Bashar Shbib.

In addition, Ross wrote and directed the feature film *INTERSTATE 84*, which premiered at the Toronto Film Festival, starring Kevin Dillon and Clifton James and executive produced by Kevin Spacey. He was also a producer for Trigger Street Productions, most notably on the award-winning documentary film *UNCLE FRANK* and the PBS 9/11 documentary, *AMERICA REBUILDS*.

## **TARA SUMMERS**

Natalie

Tara Summers has appeared in major motion pictures that have been both critical and popular hits, including *ALFIE* with Jude Law, *THE JACKET* with Adrien Brody, and *WHAT A GIRL WANTS* with Amanda Bynes and Colin Firth. She costarred in *FACTORY GIRL* with Sienna Miller and Guy Pearce, and *LOVE LIES BLEEDING* opposite Jenna Dewan, Brian Geraghty and Christian Slater. She will soon be seen in the much anticipated indie drama *LUSTER*. Tara had a recurring role on FX's "Dirt" and has just completed two seasons as a series regular on "Boston Legal".

A graduate of Brown University (where she received a B.A. in History) and the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts, Tara has also written and starred in her own one-woman theatrical show, *Gypsy of Chelsea*. The play is the story of Tara's childhood, charting her mother's turbulent journey from cocaine addiction to recovery. Seen through the eyes of Tara aged eight to 18, we encounter an astonishing range of characters that make up this extraordinary story.

*Gypsy of Chelsea* performed to critical acclaim and a full house at the Royal Court Theatre in London (where Tara is a member of the Young Writers Programme) and most recently at Studio 54 in New York City in aid of Action on Addiction, where audiences included Annette Bening, Jack Nicholson, Harvey Keitel, Lorne Michaels and Anjelica Huston. Given Tara's experience with addiction, it's no surprise that the young actress was tapped to play blue-blood Brigid Berlin (aka Brigid Polk) in *FACTORY GIRL*.

Tara resides in Los Angeles and London.

## **CHASE MASER**

Jace

Chase Maser is a senior at Portage Central High School in Portage, Michigan. He started acting in high school theatre. His first professional job was at Farmers Alley Theatre in Kalamazoo, Michigan where he played the part of Hank in *Marvin's Room*. Based on that performance, he was cast as Jace in *THE LAKE EFFECT*. After high school graduation, Chase hopes to attend UCLA and major in theatre. In his spare time, he can be found on the court playing basketball or rollerblading with friends.

## **MIKE MCNAMARA**

Barry

Mike's feature film credits include *CYRUS* (Brian Krause, Lance Henriksen), *POLISH BAR* (James Badge Dale, Judd Hirsch), *BARBERSHOP 2: BACK IN BUSINESS*, *TAPIOCA* (David Pasquesi, Tim Kazurinsky), *2WKS 1YRS* (Official Selection, Los Angeles Film Festival) and *THE QUIET* (Winner, Best Film, Screen Magazine Star Awards).

Television credits include the new TNT series "Leverage", starring Timothy Hutton, the long-running CBS drama "Early Edition" and Mike's current stint as host of the new entertainment series, "What's Your Twenty."

Mike's theatre credits include *True West* (American Theatre Company), *Pride and Prejudice* (Northlight Theatre; Joseph Jefferson Nomination), *Proof* (New American Theatre), *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (Red Wolf; Joseph Jefferson Nomination) and *Odin's Horse* (Infamous Commonwealth; Joseph Jefferson Nomination).

Mike is also the proud co-founder of two well-known Chicago-based institutions: the independent radio station Fearless Radio and The Midwest Independent Film Festival, which is solely dedicated to celebrating excellence in Midwest filmmaking.

## **TIFFANY PAIGE**

Deb

Tiffany Paige has had a remarkable career spanning many areas of media and entertainment, including international modeling assignments, numerous film and television projects and as a successful host and correspondent. She is currently producing and hosting her own series, "Green with Tiffany: Shades of Green" on YouTube, that helps educate people on how they can make major changes in the environment by making minor changes in their daily lives.

Tiffany has landed numerous roles in many independent films including *THE DUPLICATE*, winner of the best feature prize at the 2002 Telluride Film Festival, *SPACE GIRLS IN BEVERLY HILLS* and the upcoming action adventure, *FIERCE TARGET*.

*THE LAKE EFFECT*  
FILMMAKER BIOGRAPHIES

**TARA MIELE**

Writer/Director

Tara Miele spent her formative years on stage in community theatre before entering the BFA Dramatic Arts program at the University of California at Santa Barbara. She soon declared Film Studies as her second major and earned the privilege of directing one of four coveted 16mm senior film projects. Her short film, *MISS GENTILBELLE*, based on the Charles Beaumont story of the same name, earned several grants and awards including the Corwin-Metropolitan Theatres Award. The film premiered at the Slamdance Film Festival and has since screened around the world. Tara's second short film, *SMACKERS*, has also screened at dozens of festivals, including South by Southwest and was recognized as one of the "Best of Fest" at the Newport Beach Film Festival. Clocking in at a mere minute and a half, the short parables the downfall of Junior High royalty.

For several years, Tara worked in theatre, film, and television while devoting time to developing her screenwriting career. She, along with writing partner Kristine M. Skeie, sold her first script, *COUGARS*, to Gold Circle Films. The romantic comedy about older women who hunt younger men is slated to shoot in 2009. She also completed her passion project, a coming of age dramedy entitled *TITS*, which Silverwood Films snatched up the rights to, with Tara attached to direct. Most recently, New Line Cinema preemptively purchased Miele and Skeie's romantic comedy pitch, *COVER YOUR ASSETS*. The project has found a new home at Lionsgate.

Tara currently writes and resides in Los Angeles.

**BRETT JUSKALIAN**

Director of Photography

A graduate of the UCLA School of Theatre, Film, and Television, Brett Juskalian has had the pleasure of training under renowned cinematographers John Simmons, ASC, and Walt Lloyd, ASC. His television work includes documentary series for Discovery, BRAVO UK, Sci-Fi Channel, A&E and the History Channel. Additionally, he has lensed dozens of award-winning shorts and feature films, most recently *THE GAUNTLET*, featuring international star Bai Ling. His commercial work includes lauded spots for Jenny-O Turkey, Electronic Arts, ABC Family, Acura, and Shell. He has shot performances and music videos for Green Day, Death Cab for Cutie, Fallout Boy, Snow Patrol, Wolfmother, Counting Crows and Pearl Jam.

**STEVEN EDWARDS**

Editor

Born in Atlanta, GA, Steve Edwards received a Bachelor's degree in English Literature from the University of Georgia. He worked in television post-production on projects such as "The Sopranos," "NYPD Blue," "Arli\$\$," and "The Mind of the Married Man," before moving up to cut his first feature, *THE UPSIDE OF ANGER*, starring Joan Allen and Kevin Costner, for director Mike Binder and New Line Pictures in 2005.

In 2006, Steve worked with director Aaron Woodley and Executive Producer Lee Daniels (MONSTER'S BALL and PRECIOUS) on the feature TENNESSEE, starring Adam Rothenberg, Ethan Peck and Mariah Carey for Vivendi Entertainment.

Steve then re-teamed with Mike Binder on 2007's REIGN OVER ME, starring Adam Sandler, Don Cheadle, Liv Tyler and Jada Pinkett Smith, for Columbia Pictures.

Last year, Steve worked with first-time director Nia Vardalos on the romantic comedy I HATE VALENTINE'S DAY, starring Nia Vardalos and John Corbett for IFC.

THE LAKE EFFECT is Steve's fifth feature.

### **MIKE LOCKE**

Music Supervisor

Growing up in Santa Barbara, California, Mike cultivated his independent music ethos through the "do it yourself" indie punk scene, playing and touring in local bands and booking shows before moving to Los Angeles to study at UCLA. Expanding his involvement in music, Mike ran the Concert team at Campus Events at UCLA, hosted a radio show while living abroad in Spain and got his feet wet in the recorded music side at Capitol.

In 2001, Mike went to work for Warner Special Products which later merged with Rhino Entertainment. At Rhino, Mike first worked in audio licensing (clearing samples and tracks for compilations) then digital (researching rights for downloads and ringtones) and finally in the Synch department (licensing for commercials). Bringing in one emerging label to represent for licensing in 2004 set the template for Mike's currently created position, established in the summer of 2007, to contract with independent labels/artists that fill gaps within WMG's catalog. Heading up and branding his focus area "Rhino Independent", Mike works hand in hand with the Synch department to facilitate license deals (i.e. for commercials, films/trailers, TV, video games, compilations and custom products) for represented artists.

### **SAMANTHA FINKLER**

Casting Director

Samantha Finkler has been casting feature films and television shows since 2004. She grew up on Long Island and moved to Los Angeles to attend the University of Southern California. She discovered her passion for Casting early on in her college career and began working her way up the Hollywood ladder as an intern in 2001.

She has been fortunate enough to have worked along side and be mentored by some of the industry's most well respected Casting Directors including Deborah Aquila, Tricia Wood, Sig de Miguel, Barbara Fiorentino and Amanda Mackey. Samantha recently founded her own casting company, Sam Finkler Casting.

Samantha has worked on over 30 feature films and 4 television shows, some of her credits include, FAME, THE UGLY TRUTH, TWILIGHT, DISTURBIA, LIVE FREE OR DIE HARD, David E. Kelley's series "The Wedding Bells", Season 4 of FX's "The Shield" and THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

## **M. PAUL LARSON and THE MINOR CANON**

Composer

Composer M. Paul Larson was born and raised in southern California. A veteran of the Silver Lake indie rock scene, Paul cut his teeth playing with the "eno-core" rock band Strictly Ballroom in the late 90's.

Larson now leads the soul-infused melancholic indie rock outfit The Minor Canon. Described as "honest-to-god stellar-sad pop" (OC Weekly) and "memphis soul on an indie bender" (Blackbook Magazine), The Minor Canon was also hailed as one of "10 bands to watch in 2007" by the Los Angeles Times: "so there might not be much commercial potential in a seven-piece with a horn section, but the music is as heartfelt and as inventive as it gets." The LA Weekly named the band's debut album, "No Good Deed Goes Unpunished" as one of the "10 best local albums of 2007."

The Minor Canon started as Paul's solo project but has since evolved into a full ensemble with horn section, at times, a 12 piece orchestra. Larson's guitar work can also be heard on Dntel's "Dumb Luck" album (Sub Pop), a project of Jimmy Tamborello (Postal Service), which also features Conor Oberst of Bright Eyes and Jenny Lewis of Rilo Kiley.

## **JENNIFER WESTIN**

Producer

Jennifer has produced several short films including THE DAWN CHORUS written and directed by Hope Dickson Leach, which played film festivals including Sundance and London, and won Best Student Narrative Short at the Austin Film Festival. Her film LONGSHOTS, was shot on location at a thoroughbred horse farm in upstate NY and premiered at MethodFest. She also produced TWENTY DOLLAR DRINKS, a short starring Sandra Bernhard and Cady Huffman, which premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival.

Jennifer's background is in theatre and for the stage she's produced a critically acclaimed rendition of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* and a benefit run of *The Vagina Monologues* in Los Angeles. Her most recent theatrical venture was in 2006 when she produced *Only a Lad*, a new musical based on the music of 80's band Oingo Boingo, which premiered at the New York Fringe Festival.

She recently served as the line producer on independent features TEN STORIES TALL, starring Ally Sheedy and Josh Hamilton, and DEAR LEMON LIMA, featuring Melissa Leo, Beth Grant and Meaghan Jette Martin. She was an associate producer on INDELIBLE, a feature that won the Sloan Foundation Production Grant.

Jennifer recently founded her own production company, Covert Productions, and has several projects in development. She participated in the 2007 Film Independent Producers Lab in Los Angeles, and took one of her projects through the Berlinale Talent Project Market in 2008.

Westin was a finalist for the PGA Debra Hill Fellowship and the Hallmark Young Producer Award. She won the Arthur Krim Memorial Award for excellence in producing. She has a BA in theatre from the University of Southern California and an MFA in film from Columbia University.

*THE LAKE EFFECT*  
DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The idea for *THE LAKE EFFECT* came to me in the middle of the night years ago. It was a time when, as my charming husband, cinematographer Brett Juskalian, put it (and as Rob says in the movie) my ovaries were glowing through my goddamn pants. The concept was simple: A middle-age guy is staving off his younger wife, who is eager to have children, when his daughter shows up on his doorstep, in labor. At first it seemed that maybe the story belonged to the young wife, Natalie, who I identified with wholly - so eager and blindly optimistic as her biological clock replaced her heartbeat. I understood the daughter Celia, too, and her desperate certainty that she could have a baby and nothing would change. It wasn't until I was three months pregnant, unemployed, and having panic attacks at the thought of bringing a child into the world, that I connected with Rob. His insecurity, his frustration with his lack of success mirrored my own.

As a Saleslady tells Rob in the film, "When it comes to children, wanting them, having them, losing them... it just hits right to the heart of everything that matters." The ticking clock of the baby's arrival reveals each character's deepest needs and deepest fears. Natalie's yearning for children is really about her fear that Rob isn't fully committed to her. Celia's search for someone to share the burden of caring for her child is secondary to her desire to redeem her own childhood by reconnecting with her father. And Rob's efforts to avoid responsibility for his daughter and his unborn grandchild mask a deeper fear that without having reached some arbitrary marker of success, he has nothing to offer them.

Throughout the film, I made an effort to shoot the character of Rob in constant motion, as he's always racing towards his goal. In the opening scenes, while Natalie enjoys the view of the lake, Rob is still bustling about, getting slapped in the face with a sun shade. When Celia shows up, he eagerly escapes out to his kayak. And after his climactic fight with both Celia and Natalie, he can't stand still as he paces the screened in porch waiting out the storm. It is not until the next morning while kayaking that a shoulder cramp finally slows Rob down and he is forced to stop and take in the world around him. He finally sees the beauty around him and engages in the present moment, which enables him to redefine his vision of success and step up as a father for the first time. The story is Rob's coming of age as he comes into himself as a father and as he attempts to win his daughter back it becomes a love story between a Rob and Celia.

It's fitting that the themes of success versus failure echo the way in which we made the film. Just as Rob is struggling to get his business off in a rough economy, I have struggled to get projects moving in a tough industry. Thankfully, creative frustration breeds innovation. So when I heard that Jennifer Westin was ready to produce a micro-budget feature in Michigan, I jumped at the opportunity, knowing that the small relationship-driven story of *THE LAKE EFFECT* was the perfect candidate. Just as Jace manages his own band via Facebook and Celia recommends that her dad start up a web-based version of his company without private equity, we set out to accomplish the formidable task of shooting a film, with almost no money, on our own.

The movie would not have been the same had it been made any other way. Living with the actors in the house where we were shooting was like film camp. The shoot was infused with a positive and collaborative creative energy. When we wrapped a tough scene at 5 am, we were able to make up over grilled cheese and tomato soup breakfasts and come back stronger the next day. And when a storm raged in at midnight on our day off, our lead actor didn't hesitate to run out into the fray with the cinematographer and me to shoot a scene. It was immensely satisfying working with such an invested team.

A lot of people will think that I was crazy to direct a film while 7 ½ months pregnant. The truth is that making this film got me through my pregnancy. Shooting the film became a grand catharsis. I was resolving my own issues along with my characters, examining my pregnancy through the prism of the story. In addition, the pregnancy served to inform my choices as a director. I wanted to tell this story as honestly as possible and that included challenging the typical depictions we see of pregnancy, labor, and birth. I made sure that we had a doula (birth coach) on set the day we filmed the birth to make sure we were being realistic. I'll admit that it was surreal to shoot the birth scene, to have such a tiny baby on set, to see an actress performing what I was destined to live out in just a few weeks... And I'll admit that I was pushing it when we did a pick up shoot when I was 37 weeks pregnant, officially "full term." I sat on Hollywood Blvd in the heat watching the tourists as the crew loaded out, thinking "I'm too pregnant for this." My water broke the morning after we officially wrapped and my daughter was born 38 hours later. What a perfect example of life imitating art, imitating life.

THE LAKE EFFECT  
PRODUCTION NOTES

DEVELOPMENT

*Subject: Want to make a feature this summer?*

*Dear friends,*

*I'm making a movie. It's going to be ultra-low budget, shot in southwest Michigan this summer. I'm looking for a writer and a director.*

*This is a creative experiment—what can we do with what we have?*

*Production plan: Director, DP and I travel to Michigan, live at my family's house while we prep for a few weeks. Bring in 2 actors to play the leads. HD, minimal lighting, minimal crew, short shoot.*

*Limitations:*

*-No explosions or car crashes*

*-Has to be contemporary*

*-Action should be mostly contained to my family's house and the surrounding beach and woods*

*Additional resources:*

*-1994 Ford Ranger, plum colored*

*-Kayaks*

*-Dog, cute, not really trained*

This is the email that producer Jennifer Westin sent to her filmmaker friends in the spring of 2009. With a list of successful shorts behind her, she knew she could turn a few dollars and the Michigan tax incentive into a first-rate feature—provided she found a brilliant script and the perfect director. No problem.

Meanwhile, writer/director Tara Miele sat at her desk, four months pregnant with her first child, tired of selling scripts that never got made, and eager to return to her indie directing roots. When a friend forwarded Jennifer's battle-cry, she dusted off a pet project deemed too "indie" by the big guys. It was something Tara had dreamt up two years earlier – a simple story about a man-child who becomes a grandfather. Tara knew she was primed to dive into a project that examined parenthood from a multitude of angles.

Jennifer loved the script. Tara loved the "gung-ho" nature of the production... but wondered if Jennifer would be willing to shoot in June instead of September, as Tara had a slight conflict on August 15, her due date. Jenn agreed they could just make it and both women took a huge leap of faith. They decided to work together and planned their shoot in reverse, setting their wrap date in July, three days before Tara would be 37 weeks, literally too pregnant to fly.

Jennifer immediately left for Michigan to fundraise and start pre-production. Tara began a mad re-write to accommodate the tiny budget and the new Michigan beach location. Jennifer sent Tara location photos and fed her information on southwest Michigan culture and landmarks. From the South Haven pier to the old Gibson guitar factory, the landmarks of Jennifer's home town made their way to the page and began influencing the story.

## CASTING

Tara and Jenn were lucky to land Casting Director Samantha Finkler, fresh off her work on FAME, to cast the three lead roles. Coincidentally, Kay Panabaker, who had starred in FAME, was Tara's first choice for the role of Celia, the daughter. The two had met years earlier and Tara was thrilled when Kay assured her that a down and dirty shoot with no trailers and no make-up sounded awesome. Kay proved to have an indie spirit, slating her own shots in between takes where she delivered a heartfelt performance.

Finding the right person to play the often unsympathetic character of Rob, the dad, proved trickier. It required a leading man with humor, charisma, and vulnerability. During the extensive casting search, Tara twice ignored Facebook messages from a friend of a friend from New York, who turned out to be the uber-talented mumblecore-alum Ross Partridge. Luckily, Ross was undeterred by Tara's non-response. Certain that he was right for the role, he put himself on tape and proved it. Ross' experience on other micro-budget films including the acclaimed Duplass Brothers' movie BAGHEAD made him undaunted by the unorthodox shooting style and living situation. He dove in to both the role and the DIY nature behind the film's creation with total commitment.

Actress Tara Summers' terrific work on BOSTON LEGAL landed her on the filmmakers' original list for Natalie, so it was a pleasant surprise when Ms. Summers came into the first casting session and nailed the audition. With three phenomenal actors attached to the project, Tara and Jennifer started to appreciate the slowness of the film industry, as it was quickly becoming a boon to their little project.

The rest of the cast was found locally. Jennifer's childhood neighbor happens to be a fabulous theatre actress (she plays the baby store clerk). Tara went to see her in a play and discovered Chase Maser, the charming high school senior who plays Jace, the baby daddy. Many of the other actors came from the southwest Michigan theatre community, or theatre students at Western Michigan University.

## PRODUCTION

Tara, now a bulbous seven months pregnant, joined Jennifer in Michigan a few weeks before production began. Tara's husband Brett Juskalian, the fantastic cinematographer from award-winning indie DAKOTA SKYE, was lovingly convinced to shoot THE LAKE EFFECT. The rest of the crew came mostly in the form of an insanely dedicated cadre of interns from Western Michigan University, with a few professionals pulled from Grand Rapids, Detroit and Chicago.

All too soon it was time for production. Ross, Tara Summers and Kay arrived and moved into the Westin house. Tara and Brett stayed in the master bedroom, which would also serve as the production office and set. The sound mixer, Jennifer and her husband (aka the caterer/accountant) moved down the beach to a friend's house. It was go time.

Production lasted 15 days, averaging seven pages per day. Knowing how quickly she had to shoot, Tara worked with Brett to develop a cinematic style that would work with their limitations. Brett had only three lights, an amazing fact considering how beautiful the footage is. The key to shooting this way, Tara decided ahead of time, was to make the style a choice. The film has a verite quality that brings the audience in intimate contact with the characters and their struggles. Like *Dogma 95*, but not quite as dogmatic.

The entire film was shot handheld and Tara and Brett worked out a shorthand for how fluid the camera was to be in any particular scene. “Camera Shaky 1” meant barely any movement. “Camera Shaky 5” was only used for the intense birth scene. Brett is of Armenian descent and for special shots, Tara would call for the “Armenian dolly”, which usually entailed Brett walking backward as smoothly as possible.

Tara, who had a remarkably uncomplicated pregnancy, of course wanted to make sure she took care of herself and her baby so every effort was made to keep shooting days to twelve hours— unheard of with this kind of guerrilla-style filmmaking. At the end of every day, the team sat down together for a home-cooked meal, to gaze at the sunset, decompress and get to know each other. The camaraderie these dinners fostered created a unique atmosphere on set. There were stressful times, sleepless times, and moments of creative differences, but whatever happened during the day, dinner was like a reset button, invigorating everyone for the following day.

On one such night, a storm gathered out near the horizon over Lake Michigan. Tara, having witnessed a similarly terrifying storm at the house during pre-production, wrote an electrical storm into the script. Seeing her chance, Tara had Brett grab the camera and hurried Ross into wardrobe. The footage filmed that night is the storm sequence after the big fight in the film. It was really fun until it knocked out the power for three days. No power, no hot showers, no phones. Must keep filming. The camera crew worked off battery power, recharging a couple miles away at a place with a generator. No one complained about bathing in the lake and, true to her British roots, Tara Summers even managed to make tea on the gas barbeque.

A few short weeks later, Tara found herself in LA directing the very last bit of the movie—a pick-up shoot of the birth class scenes. At the end of the relatively light day (a mere 2.5 pages) Tara called Jennifer who was wrapping in Michigan. Surrounded by sound gear and the chaos and heat of Hollywood Blvd in late July, Tara told Jennifer, “I’m just too pregnant for this.” Twelve hours later her water broke.

## POST-PRODUCTION AND BEYOND

Tara Miele is truly SuperWoman. Three weeks after giving birth she joined editor Steve Edwards at his in-home editing room to get back to work! Unsurprisingly, working with the baby added extra challenges to the post process. Music spotting sessions happened during nap times and Tara’s mother-in-law proved herself a saint. The baby, Luna, knows more about color timing than most film students, but somehow it all worked out.

Finding a composer with the right balance of bitter and sweet was not an easy task until music supervisor Mike Locke suggested a song by LA indie rock band The Minor Canon for the soundtrack. Tara and Jennifer loved The Minor Canon and convinced the lead singer/songwriter

M. Paul Larson to compose THE LAKE EFFECT score. His sound and Tara's voice mesh beautifully. Fleshing out the soundtrack are tracks by bands including Cinematic Orchestra, My Dear Disco and The Lonely H.

The film will premiere at the 2010 Moondance Film Festival, where director Tara Miele will be accept the Spirit of Moondance Award for best feature film by a female director. Shortly after that, THE LAKE EFFECT will have its international premiere at the Raindance Film Festival in London.

*THE LAKE EFFECT*  
TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Production Dates	June-July 2009
Locations	Southwest Michigan
Language	English
Total Running Time	93 Minutes
Negative Format	High Definition
Camera	Sony EX-1
Exhibition Formats	HDCAM, Blu Ray
Color Information	Color
Aspect Ratio	16:9
Rating	This film is not yet rated.