



# Allen Sunshine

Press Kit July 2024





“Harley Chamandy already has his own voice.”

- *Werner Herzog*





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*-International Cinephile Society*

“Beautiful and impactful, and about a subject that is simultaneously intimidating and universal.”

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**Allen Sunshine**  
Allen Sunshine



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# PRESS + REVIEWS

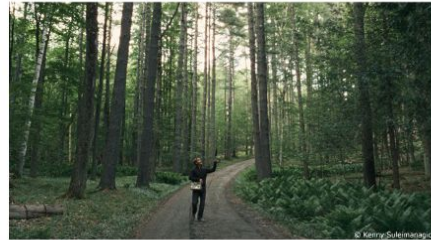
## The Werner Herzog Film Award 2024 goes to Harley Chamandy for his film ALLEN SUNSHINE

The Werner Herzog Film Award, an annual award endowed with a sum of €5,000, can go to a feature film, a documentary, a filmmaker, an actor, or anyone working in the art of cinema. It will be given to special achievements in innovation, courage, and vision. The award is open to citizens of all countries. There is no application procedure, and no competition.

The Werner Herzog Foundation Award 2024 goes to  
Harley Chamandy for his film ALLEN SUNSHINE



**Shooting on 16mm, ALLEN SUNSHINE by young Canadian filmmaker Harley Chamandy offers a deeply personal and emotional journey with poignant images and sounds. The directorial debut of the Montreal-born and New York-based filmmaker beautifully captures the solitude of a man who lost his family, now living in his remote cabin, and his friendship with two young boys. Using music as a powerful tool to explore themes of redemption, grief, and emotional attachment.**



### Werner Herzog on the bestowal of the award:

"The Werner Herzog Film Award for 2024 goes to Harley Chamandy for his film ALLEN SUNSHINE. One of the Foundation's missions is to support emerging talents, and it is remarkable that Harley Chamandy participated in my first young filmmakers' workshop in Cuba when he was just 17 years old. At 21, he made his subtle, award-winning film.

ALLEN SUNSHINE tells the story of a former music mogul who retreats to a secluded lakeside house to cope with the suicide of his famous wife. He processes his grief by composing atmospheric electronic music and forms an unexpected friendship with two boys he meets while fishing at the lake. Throughout his stages of grief, Allen encounters various people who remind him of what he has lost and forgotten, and what he hopes to rediscover.

The criteria for the award from my foundation are always innovation, courage, and initiative, and Harley Chamandy has demonstrated all of these. He already possesses a unique voice. Congratulations to him."

The award ceremony is going to take place on  
**Friday, December 6, 2024 at 7 pm**  
at the Munich Cinematheque (Filmuseum München), St-Jakobs-Platz 1

The ceremony is followed by the screening of the award winning film and a live discussion between the Harley Chamandy and Werner Herzog.

Limited ticket sales.



"Beautiful and impactful, and about a subject that is simultaneously intimidating and universal."



There isn't one way to grieve that is considered more effective than others. We all mourn in our own way, and coming to terms with the loss of a loved one can be a daunting process that often feels like we are wandering aimlessly through life, without any sense of guidance outside of the well-wishes of those who care but are still not able to offer the psychological and emotional balm we need in those instances. This is something that the protagonist of *Allen Sunshine*, the beautiful and heart-wrenching directorial debut of Harley Chamandy, has to endure after the death of his wife. Relocating to a lakeside home in a pastoral region of Canada, he attempts to process this immense loss on his own but is soon drawn into the lives of two young boys who live nearby. Neither of them can comprehend the scope of what the protagonist is facing, but instead they provide the necessary distraction that ultimately proves to be just what he required on his path towards recovery. Beautiful and impactful, and about a subject that is simultaneously intimidating and universal, *Allen Sunshine* is a tremendous film that takes on many different ideas, weaving them together to create a poignant examination of grief and how it can lead us down various paths that we never imagined we'd traverse, but which turn out to be vital to our journey towards overcoming the pain associated with loss.

At first, *Allen Sunshine* seems to be telling two parallel stories, since its first act focuses on slightly separate narratives – one about the titular character as he navigates the aftermath of losing his wife, who was both his personal and professional companion and the person who guided his entire life by being his artistic muse; the other about two boys visiting the same region for the summer, and their various misadventures as they begin to examine the world that surrounds them. The stories eventually come together, and we realize that this is a film about a trio of characters who are all facing various challenges and confronted with major emotional obstacles, which can be overcome only by attempting to comprehend some of life's most peculiar mysteries. Chamandy combines a story of grief with a coming-of-age narrative, two very common storylines that are given further meaning through this nuanced, measured examination of how they evoke similar feelings of confusion in those experiencing them. The director makes some fascinating observations about these two experiences that are mostly considered universal, at least at their core, and which will resonate with many viewers who have felt as adrift and lost as these characters.

Growing up and grieving loss are common experiences that are rarely viewed in similar terms, yet come together in unexpectedly moving ways throughout this film. *Allen Sunshine* proves to be a much more layered exploration of these themes than we may have anticipated, particularly in how Chamandy draws fascinating and insightful correlations between them and finds ways to put them in dialogue with one another, creating a unique and complex narrative. Despite the intense subject matter, the director is entirely aware of how to look at these ideas without relying on predictable patterns or the tropes that we would expect to accompany such a film. This is a film in which the loud proclamations are mostly inconsequential, while the intricate minutiae carry the most meaning since it's sometimes the silences that resound with the most force. It is reminiscent of a particular kind of gentle, easy-going character drama produced in the 1970s, where we were presented with stream-of-consciousness narratives that examined the intricate details and used them to construct a rich, vivid tapestry of the human condition. Chamandy achieves this both in terms of the visual aesthetic (setting the entire film in a beautiful corner of the country, focusing on capturing the natural beauty of the region), and in terms of the emotions, which are kept simple. A film like *Allen Sunshine* works best when it is at its most minimalist, focusing on subtle emotions combined with a gentle sense of humanity that breaks the monotony and even softens the intense emotional blows that occur throughout the film, making it a tender, genuinely moving drama with moments of extraordinary compassion.

There are many elements of *Allen Sunshine* that are worth appreciating – it is anchored by a trio of exceptional performances. Vincent Leclerc is absolutely incredible as the titular character, portraying his grief in a way that feels earnest and complex, rather than simply being a bundle of predictable tics that we usually associate with the subject. Miles Phoenix Foley and Liam Quiring-Nkindi prove to be remarkable young talents, portraying his happy-go-lucky companions who represent the welcome invasions that those experiencing periods of deliberate isolation secretly crave. We follow him as he goes on a journey of healing, in which he discovers that life is full of unexpected surprises, and that rather than avoiding them they should be embraced as part of the process. This is not a particularly complex film in terms of its ideology or execution, since it makes its intentions clear from the start and doesn't waver from its firm commitment to constructing a compelling character study that will be widely resonant. The quiet, meditative tone prevents any heavy-handed emotions from encroaching on this tender, pensive exploration of the mourning process. Ultimately, *Allen Sunshine* is a film focused on exploring the beautiful poetry of everyday life, a quietly human depiction of grief and how it is not a linear process. Chamandy is a gifted young filmmaker who seems poised to become an intriguing voice in contemporary cinema, and this film proves to be an audacious feature-length debut that will stand him in good stead going forward, particularly if this kind of simple, compassionate storytelling becomes a regular component of his future works.



This entry was posted in [Reviews](#) and tagged [Allen Sunshine](#), [Harley Chamandy](#), [Liam Quiring-Nkindi](#), [Miles Phoenix Foley](#), [Vincent Leclerc](#). [Bookmark the permalink.](#)

## Review: *Allen Sunshine* (Harley Chamandy)

Matthew Joseph Jenner  
July 24, 2024



Home > Film > Global Jul 10, 2024 5:46am PT

# 'Allen Sunshine,' About Grieving Music Mogul, Wins Werner Herzog Film Award (EXCLUSIVE)

By Naman Ramachandran



Chasseurs Films/Mother & Son Films

The [Werner Herzog](#) Foundation has revealed that Canadian filmmaker Harley Chamandy will receive the 2024 Werner Herzog Film Prize for his feature "Allen Sunshine." The annual award, presented in collaboration with the Munich Film Museum, comes with a €5,000 (\$5,445) prize.

"Allen Sunshine" follows a former music mogul who retreats to a secluded lake house after his famous wife's suicide. The protagonist copes with his loss by composing electronic music and forming an unlikely bond with two local boys. His journey through grief is punctuated by encounters that remind him of his past and future.

The film debuted at the Munich Film Festival in June. Chamandy previously directed several shorts and made his feature debut with "Allen Sunshine."

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# Herzog, in a statement, praised Chamandy's work: "The Werner Herzog Foundation Prize in 2024 will go to Harley Chamandy for his film 'Allen Sunshine.' One of the foundation's tasks is to promote young talent, and it is remarkable that Harley Chamandy took part in my first workshop for young filmmakers in Cuba when he was just 17 years old. At the age of 21, he made his subtle film, which has been awarded here."

The foundation's prize criteria include innovation, courage, and initiative. Herzog added, "Harley Chamandy has demonstrated all of these. He already has his own voice. I congratulate him."

Chamandy told *Variety*: "This is the ultimate award for me. To be recognized for my debut feature film, by one of the most legendary filmmakers of all time is a true dream come true. Werner's work has inspired me since I was a teenager. He's one of my biggest inspirations of all time and I am truly humbled."

The award ceremony is scheduled for Dec. 6 at the Film Museum, where Herzog will present the prize and engage in a post-screening discussion with Chamandy.

The Werner Herzog Film Prize is open to feature films, documentaries, filmmakers, actors and individuals of any nationality who demonstrate courage, determination and vision in their work. Past winners include Asghar Farhadi's "A Hero," Natalija Yefimkina's "Garage People," Chloé Zhao's "The Rider" and [Rezo Gigineishvili's "Patient #1."](#)



# Harley Chamandy Will Not Let Cinema Die

— Culture



June 24, 2024

**There's an evocative synergy that film shares with music, and Harley Chamandy has been trying to properly encapsulate that feeling for all his life. The 24-year-old Montreal-born filmmaker straddles an innate attachment to both mediums. At 17, he was the youngest invitee of Werner Herzog's Black Factory Cinema Workshop in Cuba, working under the tutelage of an esteemed pioneer, cutting his teeth with 54 other auteurs-in-training. With a healthy catalog of wistful short films by age 22, Chamandy crafted his debut feature film, *Allen Sunshine*, across two weeks in southeastern Quebec. Through the musical recordings of its eponymous protagonist, *Allen Sunshine* is a story of friendship in the wake of loss, using its ambient score as a device for emotional rumination.**

By Olivier Lafontant

Photo by Jetro Emilcar

The polarizing values of seclusion and companionship in Allen's life are accentuated by the nature of his environment: placid woodlands, serpentine pathways, a big, blue body of water. When I connect with Chamandy through Zoom, he's eager to contextualize the journey behind the biggest piece of his young career, delving into the myriad of unrelated influences threaded into his process. At the core of his desire for artistic fulfillment is an unfettered admiration for Chief Keef, who, like Herzog, turned precocious spontaneity into world class artistry, infinitely imitated. Last year, *Allen Sunshine* was the recipient of the TRT First Cut+ Award at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival in the Czech Republic. This July, Chamandy will be in Germany for its world premiere at the Munich International Film Fest.

The way Chamandy describes *Allen Sunshine* is like a soccer dad raving about his daughter who plays striker for the school team; the sheer level of pride shines through immensely. Across half an hour, Harley Chamandy goes into detail about the subtleties that make up *Allen Sunshine*, what he's learned about the film industry so far, and the use of music as a storyteller.

**Olivier Lafontant— Allen Sunshine largely centers around the life of an ambient music producer and former record executive. Where did the inspiration for this come from?**

**Harley Chamandy—**It all began with an artist named Ethan Rose who did all the music for my film. He's an electronic artist who did music for Gus Van Sant's *Paranoid Park* (2007) and *Showing Up* (2022) by Kelly Reichardt. One day when I was in high school I had his album called *Ceiling Songs* and it made such a strong impression on me that I kept listening to it every day, and it sort of got me into that world of that music. When I was writing this script, I always knew that it had to be that type of music, I just didn't know that I'd be able to work with my favorite artist, Ethan Rose. I was playing his music the whole time while writing the script and once I finished it, I reached out to him [by] cold email 'cause that's my thing and you never know what will happen. He really liked the relationship with Allen to the music and that's something he really wanted to take on, and he thought that was an interesting challenge for him as an artist. I really think [ambient music] is the most introspective form of art and of music, and I really thought that I had never seen that in film, you know, someone really making art for themselves. In a larger context, I think that electronic music is an artform that's really for the self and what can happen with the instruments. It's never really about thinking about the consumer, which I was very interested in.

**Yeah, especially with Allen in the movie. There's the scene where his brother sees his studio and asks him what it's for, and Allen tells him that it's only for himself. How do you feel like the music itself informs the narrative of the film? How does it represent Allen as a character?**

Well I definitely think that it's a tool that's used to display the introspection of the character—how he's feeling, what he's thinking about—without having to say anything. Just through the music we can understand his state of mind, and how he's feeling about things. After the brother comes, the music is way more somber, and then when he hangs out with Bill, the man who comes with the fruits and veggies, there's something more uplifting and optimistic. I thought it was so interesting to play with the headspace of the character in regards to the music.



**Considering this is your debut feature film, what are some of the challenges that came with fleshing out a script across 80 minutes or so?**

Literally everything you could imagine. They say don't work with dogs, don't work with kids, don't work with fire, don't work on the water; I literally chose to do all of it. Plus we shot it on film which was another crazy challenge because we shot in Canada, two hours from the city where we were developing, so we had someone drive the film back every day. I think the biggest challenge really was getting people to believe in a young filmmaker. I made the film at 22 and [had to gain] people's trust, not just on the financial side of things but also on the creative level. Making a film is very challenging but also very rewarding.

**You mention shooting it on film and I noticed that within the narrative itself, a lot of the items and tools used in *Allen Sunshine* are analog: Allen's music equipment, his film camera, even the housephones. Why did you feel like it needed to be in a time period that represented that?**

That was a huge part of the film. I always had this feeling that I wanted all my films to feel timeless, like there was no way to feel what the time period would be. When I was developing the visual language and shooting on film, we had a production designer, but I was so specific on finding my props on eBay and I feel like every little detail mattered so, so much: the color of the housephone, what kind of camera he was using (a Contax G2 'cause I think that's the nicest looking camera), all the synthesizers—that was one of the biggest challenges of the film because it's so hard to find this gear. I spoke to a lot of costume designers before doing the film and no one could understand what I was trying to say, so I worked with my girlfriend who has never done costume designing before, but she almost spoke the same language as me in terms of what I was trying to get out.

**There's a real pervasive sense of subtlety that moves the plot along and the majority of the narrative is informed through context clues and vague dialogue. Why do you think it was important for the narrative to be presented that way?**

I just think that so much art these days made by young people or for young people is so in-your-face and always very edgy and out there. I think that's totally cool, but I wanted to have a refreshing sensibility for my generation and I wanted to evoke more of a nuance in terms of the sensitivity of dialogue and how to approach things, and really ask the viewer to slow down. That was a really big thing for me. To be honest it's something I've been chasing for so long, this type of feeling.

## **Does the overarching theme of grief and mourning derive from personal loss? What drives you to write and direct films of this nature?**

I never thought the film was a film about grief, but I really thought it was a film about love and what it means to live without it. That's always how I wanted to approach it. I know on the surface it's a film about grief, but to me it's about finding love in new forms. It's a film about reawakenings, and finding new outlooks on life, and what happens after loss.

## **How do the characters you write derive from the characteristics of the people in your life, if at all?**

Well if we get really deep into the subconscious, I grew up with a mother who's a musician. I grew up coming home every day [seeing her] in the studio making music. I never looked at it that way, but I think those are always characters I've been inspired by: people that were doing their own thing in their own way. Maybe Allen comes from that. But I've also been fascinated by the big mogul kinda characters that also have this really artistic side to them, but we never really see it in the media. I think we haven't really seen that type of character in a film before: a very rich, successful music industry guy who's also making ambient, super alternative stuff. I thought that was a really cool juxtaposition. I guess with the kids, I feel like we've all grown up with the chubby kid with the long hair. It's almost like everyone kinda knew these people somehow or some way.

## **What was it like submitting *Allen Sunshine* to the Karlovy Vary International film festival?**

I was part of this lab called First Cut lab which is run by this amazing person, Matthieu Darras. Many of the films go on to play Cannes and Venice and the major film festivals, and I was lucky enough to be a part of it. Then they have First Cut+ lab in Karlovy Vary, Czech Republic, which is where we meet with mentors and sales agents, and then we pitch our movie to 300 people. There were eight [finalists] and the jury picked what they felt was the best film. Now we're world premiering at the Munich International Film Festival in July which is super super exciting. But yeah the submission process is very challenging, especially these days where not just so much about how great of a film you make but there's definitely a lot of politics involved. I think as a first-time filmmaker with not a lot of industry connections, it's more difficult than I had anticipated, but I'm really grateful for the journey.



## **Can you describe the process, even outside of Karlovy Vary, of finishing the movie and now promoting it as much as you have even two years down the line since completion?**

What I'm really grateful for is that I'm so proud of this film, I really think that it's everything that I think cinema should be in terms of the sensitivity, the images, the dialogue. I'm really pushing what I wanted to push, which is this optimistic approach. When I announced my film I said that "to choose optimism is to choose happiness," and I think that's really the core of what I think the film is about in a sense. Especially as a young person, I really feel like cinema is dying, and [with] the stuff that's coming out, people get less and less interested. I think what makes great cinema is having young artists with very strong points of view and aesthetic points of view, and not being so worried about storytelling. That's what I really think is the downfall of cinema is that we've always spoken about it as storytelling, but it's so much more than that. It's aesthetic, it's visual, it's sound, it's feeling. I think with *Allen Sunshine*, what I'm the most proud of is I was chasing a feeling and I wasn't chasing a plot narrative. I was collecting images when I was 17, 18 of old images from thrift shops, and a lot of the references are high fashion and a Canadian painter named Alex Colvill. [There aren't] a lot of cinema references at all. Now to have it out, I feel like it's a huge part of me that I've never been able to show to anyone.

## **Could you speak more on the high fashion influences? What particularly about certain fashion labels drew you to making a film like this?**

I was extremely inspired by Alexander McQueen and Margiela and the way that they [have spoken] about fashion... in a sense I relate more to them than how filmmakers speak about film these days. This aesthetic point of view that they've pushed, this nuance--it's the sensitivity, the details. And the way that these designers speak about things, and their lookbooks and the images... it feels like they're always pushing things forward. I think that fashion is one of the only artforms that is always being continuously pushed, and there's so much avant garde but there's always commercial appeal. There's something that I'm trying to figure out with film; is there a way to really get to [where fashion is]? Balenciaga is doing some of the craziest shit artistically, but people are still consuming it. Why can't that work with film? I think that's what inspired me. Even Demna, I hear him speak and it's so inspiring to me and that's where I'm tryna get the film stuff to go. I just watched the [John] Galliano documentary and I feel so much more inspired by these people. I wanna hear about why you chose this type of fabric, and why this photographer? They always speak about inspiration coming from these deep places and I don't hear that as much in film. [Filmmakers] always wanna explore culturally relevant things and I'm not excited about that.

## **How do you envision yourself building off of the experiences garnered from the making of this film and its subsequent promotion?**

I think that I learned so much about making movies that I never thought about beforehand. It's not just about having a script and a film and people that are down to make it, but it's also about what happens after it, the commercial aspect of it, the international interest. I wouldn't make the film differently at all because I'm honestly so, so proud of it, but I think [from] a business [standpoint] and a larger global context, I would think about things different. Like trying to secure a more famous cast and little things, you know? You gotta have someone attached to it that's a bit bigger. I've networked so much that I've been able to meet the head of Sundance, the head of Venice, but I've realized it's a really large game and you gotta play it right, you know? I think when you're so young and you're so passionate, you think it's you against the world and you wanna make these great films. Then you get to a point where you see there's so many other factors working. It kinda opens your eyes and you're like "Damn, I gotta think about the art 'cause that's what I wanna do, but how can I make the art more global? How can I get it to more people?"



*Allen Sunshine*, the directorial debut of Montreal-born and New York-based filmmaker Harley Chamandy, observes its title character's journey to acceptance after loss through the help of several neighbors, including two children and a local delivery man. The film has a modest appearance, with its minimal plot allowing Allen's feelings to be conveyed through mood and setting. Much of *Allen Sunshine* amounts to watching the generosity of others, and how basic acts of kindness and connection can change someone's world.

Chamandy was 22 years old when he shot *Allen Sunshine*, and he's quick to explain how much he pored over every one of his film's seemingly light touches. His background includes multiple shorts, as well as getting to [participate in a filmmaking workshop led by Werner Herzog](#) when he was only 17. Now, he directs his first feature with precision, which includes his choice to shoot on 16mm. So far, things have been working out for him. *Allen Sunshine* won the [First Cut+ award](#) at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival in 2023, and Alex Coco, who produced Palme d'Or winner *Anora*, signed on as an Executive Producer.



Before the film's world premiere at the Munich Film Festival, I spoke with Chamandy via Zoom about the making of *Allen Sunshine*.

**The Film Stage:** This is an entry into a sort of subgenre of rural Canadian movies. I think it's a part of Canadian identity, this idea of going into the woods or to a cottage. My family didn't have one, but growing up we'd go visit friends at their cottages in the summer. Did you have that experience growing up?

**Harley Chamandy:** Yeah. Like you said, every Canadian—especially in Quebec—growing up you'd go skiing or you'd go to a country house. If it's not yours, it's a friend's. My parents had a country house and we did the classic thing of going to friends' homes to ski. It was never really in the summer—more like winter-country vibes. But it was never the inspiration. I never thought of the Canadian aspect of it, but I really wanted to explore this [kind of location in] North America. That's why there's no defined location in the film; I really wanted to grasp this aesthetic of North America and this location. There's a familiarity. We know where it is, but it's not specified. But I had never thought of it that way.

**Do you prefer the solitude of a rural environment?**

I definitely appreciate the solitude. The idea stemmed from this image of a man alone with his dog making electronic music and going through something. I really like the juxtaposition of electronic synthesizers and big gear by a lake. I had never really seen those images come together. As a filmmaker, I know that a lot of people feel like they have stories to tell, but I never see film as storytelling. I think that story evolves from images. But it really started with this element of solitude and this juxtaposition in the image.

**Why did you think of electronic music?**

It's one of my favorite genres of music. I was looking into electronic music, and I read an interview with Aphex Twin where he said something that stood out to me: he said electronic music is the most introspective music because it's the only music where you're not thinking about another audience. It's really about you and the gear and what comes out of that. It's a beautiful, meditative relationship. I think that electronic music is the most personal form of music, and that's what I'm looking for.

**So you have this image of a man in the woods working on electronic music. How do you branch out from that and come up with more details?**

I wanted to explore the idea of an intergenerational relationship that is completely innocent and how one can learn from that. And that stemmed from the idea that this person is already famous, and what fame and celebrity means in the modern context of how we approach people. I think that these two kids, already knowing that Allen was a famous musician, made for so many possibilities to explore. I also wanted to explore what happens after grief and how we find ourselves. It was very much about this idea of what can happen next, and finding the truth through these two boys.



*Allen Sunshine*



**What made you want to have children play the parts of those helping Allen through his grief?**

I guess I was always interested in children. All of the short films I made prior were with kids, and I think there's so much more truth to them. I personally had never really seen many modern films explore that. One of my favorite filmmakers is Abbas Kiarostami, and one of my favorite movies is *The Wind Will Carry Us*. I thought the relationship between the young boy and the man who comes to the village was very interesting. I think that in a modern, American context that would be so taboo. There were so many ideas and thoughts that went into my film that you don't see on the surface. Questions about society and what's stopping us from becoming friends with people that we wouldn't necessarily be friends with. What are the outcomes of that? I was basically searching for these questions while writing.



I've seen two of your short films as well as *Allen Sunshine*. *The Final Act of Joey Jumbler* was inspired by your lead actor and his backstory. And with a short like *Where It's Beautiful When It Rains*, you shot it guerilla-style with an actor you liked. How would you describe your process when it comes to making films?

With the short films, they were always exercises. I've been making short films since I was 14. I had many prior films, some that I'm not as proud of. *Allen Sunshine* was this aesthetic that I was chasing for a very long time. I was collecting photos for years in high school, and my focus was always to evoke this atmosphere of *Allen Sunshine*. Even with the shorts, I was always thinking about how I could take it to the next level. But I thought that the short format was too limiting because it's more punchline-y, like it's always getting to the punch. The primary focus was really to evoke this emotional atmosphere rather than telling a simple, linear story. Every detail of the film has been carefully considered—like the props, the costumes, the way characters speak, the selection of the film stock, the breed of Allen's dog. The way I speak about my film is more like how a visual artist would speak about a film, rather than a movie maker.

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Your film is not what one might commonly associate with a first-time feature filmmaker at your age. It's subdued, and people might expect something more fast-paced or energetic. Have you ever thought about what draws you to the style you've described about your work?

I honestly take that as a compliment, that you recognize that. Even in my festival submissions I would write that I find a lot of art made for and by young people is very cynical and nihilistic. I hope to offer a fresh perspective of optimism and choosing happiness. The core of my movie was always about returning to what makes us human. Obviously it starts with the image, then the thematic of finding yourself, and these questions of society and fame and these big topics that I wanted to explore. This nuance was something that I thought was missing, and I still think it's missing in my generation.

Do you think there's a response built in your work to the cynicism you're seeing in contemporary art?

For sure, because [with film festivals] you start to find these patterns in what they're accepting. If you told me tomorrow to remake my first feature film but the goal was to get into Cannes, I would make a completely different movie. Even for the short films like *Joey Jumbler*, all these fancy festivals weren't down with it. But after it played at a festival, I had people come up to me and shake my hand saying it's refreshing and how they're so moved. It's interesting that they use the word refreshing, since it's really the essence of what we are as humans. These are stories about childhood and happiness and friendship—these very PG, nice subjects.

The film takes place almost entirely at Allen's large, lakeside cottage. What was location-scouting like?

I did the location-scouting all on my own. I was looking everywhere—Airbnb, all those websites. The last resource I had was Facebook. I know that no one in my generation uses Facebook anymore, but I just had this urge to go on Facebook. I really like this area of Magog, Quebec, because my producer Laurent Allaire has his production company in the Eastern Townships. That was easier, since he can drive there, and if I'm in New York I could drive there. I went on a Facebook group in the Eastern Townships and I got so lucky that a woman had this home. It's a home from the 1880s; it was a draft-dodger's home and it had about ten acres of land. It was the craziest find, but that was a very difficult period of my life to try and find a perfect location. It was months and months of looking and then finally—like two weeks before I had to lock in a location—I found this house.



Behind the scenes of *Allen Sunshine*

Since this is your first feature, what was the most difficult part of the shoot for you?

The most difficult aspect was literally everything. [Laughs] Finding the location was hell. Another difficult thing was finding this exact dog breed that I really wanted. There was only one dog in all of Quebec that was a black Great Dane, and a month before the shoot that dog got cancer. I had to find another one, and the dog that I got had never acted before. Werner Herzog once said there's no such thing as child actors, there's just children, so working with two 10-year-old boys was difficult. My Native American actor, Joseph, never acted before. He shows up on set and he says, "What's a script?" So that was completely improvised. What else can I tell you?

Looking back at it now, this film would have never been possible to make with the budget we had without my mother [producer Chantal Chamandy], who found a solution to everything even when it seemed impossible. I don't even know how I was able to get this movie done because it was so difficult every step of the way, especially being a young filmmaker with no real industry connections. I mean, my mom did one movie and she makes music, but it wasn't a thing where it's, like, one phone call to make this movie happen.

I wanted to ask you about casting Vincent Leclerc, who plays Allen. How did you get him for the film?

Vincent is a very well-recognized actor in Quebec, and I work with this casting director named Ginette D'Amico, who I actually interned for when I was 13 or 14. She was casting my short films, so when I came to do this film she told me it's very hard to get actors interested because it's a low-budget movie. We sent the script around and I actually got [a response] from Vincent. We got on a FaceTime call, and he loved how nuanced and sensitive the [script] was.

Was there a lot of hashing the role out with Vincent Leclerc on set or during prep for the shoot?

I had a very specific view of how I wanted Allen to be. I know that most actors probably wouldn't love that because it doesn't give them as much room to figure [the role] out. I thought it was important to get this sensibility across, this nuanced and toned-down type of performance. We spoke every day before shooting and really got into the scenes and the character and the motivations. Once Vincent got on set and saw all of the music gear, he understood way more of what I meant by this character, like the subtleties of his luxury and the way that this man was living.

I assume it's more straightforward when you're working with the two kids.

Yeah. They're kids, they're jacked-up on Mountain Dew, they're just acting and having fun. They were excited to say some bad words.

Can you talk about developing the visuals with your cinematographer Kenny Suleimanagich, and why you chose to film on 16mm?

The reason for 16mm, in terms of an aesthetic choice, was that it was very important that there was no time frame in the film and that it had a timeless essence. I felt like 16mm really was the way to capture that. I always knew this was a movie that had to feel almost like an old photo. Kenny is one of my best friends and he did me a huge favor by doing this movie. It actually made more sense to shoot with Kenny because he owned the camera and the lenses. We spent countless hours speaking about how we find that modern movies—even stuff that's shot on 16mm—are not very specific. To us, the colors mattered, the texture and the grain and what we were going to do with the image.

None of our references were cinematographic. The only references we had were from the Canadian painter Alex Colville. All of my visual references stem from paintings because I wanted this to be the purest form of me trying to create new images, even though that's impossible these days. I never wanted to get inspired by any cinema.

**In pursuing that timeless quality beyond the format, what do you think helps with that? I'm guessing, from what you said, that you're mainly looking outside of cinematic influences.**

I almost wanted each image to serve as a reference for other artists. Don't kill me for this, but: I've always wanted to say that I think, if a filmmaker is not thinking visually first, that they shouldn't be making films because film is a visual medium. The filmmaker should think about every single thing that's in frame, and this attention to detail is really lacking these days. To create this atmosphere, the clothes needed to be these vintage pieces, like designer pieces. Think of these old Margiela, old Tom Ford, Ralph Lauren, where you're feeling these textures. It's like you're bringing other art into a frame. Everything has to work in a way that's very harmonious. All of those things really went into this and I really wish that more people could get that.

**I agree with you: these details are all there, and it's frustrating that people won't register them, but at the same time it's contributing to something overall.**

I think that's what gets lost in North American film. Europeans use the word "sensibility" and we never use that word to speak about film as much in the modern context.

**How do you work on developing that through compositions?**

It's instinct. I just know where the camera needs to go. I am trying to make every frame a painting. I would love for you to go through my movie and, if you screenshot every second and one of them looks like they can't stand alone, then I did a bad job. I wanted to create stuff that you can reference when you're one day doing something.

**You have several scenes where Allen is working and we hear his music. It sounds experimental, more like him doing a jam session with his synthesizers. Could you go over the process of working with your composer Ethan Rose on establishing the sound of Allen's music?**

Ethan Rose is an artist I've admired forever. I think that his music has so much nuance because he's using all these different [sources], like old piano boxes and ambient sounds he records. Allen and his relationship with the natural world, and what that meant, was very important to me. Because of his relationship with nature and music, it all becomes one. It's all part of the healing process. The music was a collaborative way of speaking about what I wanted. But I told Ethan that he has to just watch the movie, and however he feels about it should be the way that [Allen] feels about it, because this character is like a version of him and the music that he's made.

**How did he feel about that, if you put it in that way to him?**

He said that he really liked the relationship Allen had with his music. And I think, by him saying that, I understood that it's similar to the way that he composes. I never met Ethan in-person yet, but we had these Zoom calls where he showed me around his entire studio. And I based a lot of the character off of how I envisioned Ethan made his music.

Earlier, you asked me what was really hard. Finding the synthesizers was extremely hard, because it needed to be these very rare Japanese synthesizers that no one has anywhere except for one guy in Montreal, who I was so blessed to meet. His name is Peter Venuto. He owns this thing called Synth Palace, but it's basically in his apartment. He has synths from all over the world—he's a crazy collector—and I just hit it off with him. It was a blessing that he was so willing to lend me his stuff for next-to-no money when it's like \$200,000 worth of gear. Obviously most viewers won't know that Allen's setup is a half-a-million-dollar kind of setup. It's a little nuance that I really wanted to push. It's these small things that, in the end, are gonna make this big picture.

**You put some light, magical-realist touches in your film. There's the strange fish that Allen and the boys catch.**

My reference was *The Tree of Life* and the dinosaurs. I wanted the viewer to ask if it was real or not. I took a lot of inspiration from *Blow Up*, and there's even a scene that references a shot. You're saying magical realism, but it was this question of "what is our reality?"

**What I took from it was the idea of going on outside Allen's perspective. What made you want to put these elements in? There's also the camera someone gives Allen. There's no explanation; it just shows up on his doorstep.**

And it's in a purple velvet box. It would never be delivered that way. Allen exists in one reality—of the modern day and success and fame. My question was, “Can he learn to live in this other reality?” The question of reality interested me, which adds to the *Blow Up* context and how the whole movie is about what's real and what's not. And then to continue that with these little magical elements, so the audience keeps [wondering] what's real. And in an aesthetic way that just hits for me. I'm like, “Damn, that's fire. I love that.”

**This is your first feature, which you made when you were 22 years old. You've had success already, like the prize you won at Karlovy Vary. You've also had some people put their names on your film who are interested in it. I guess, in a very broad sense, how would you summarize your experience navigating the industry side of things since making the film?**

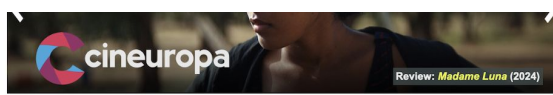
It's a success to have even made this film, but an even bigger success that I have made a film that I'm so proud of, and that I feel is preaching everything that I believe cinema should be. But at the same time, I feel like I got to be outspoken. There are too many filmmakers that speak so humbly about their stuff, but I'm so excited about my movie. Even getting someone like Alex Coco, who just won the Palme d'Or for *Anora*, to want to put his name on it... I never knew him. I met him after he put his name as Executive Producer. He found my movie through a kid I knew that worked on his set of another movie. He watched the movie and he said he wanted to be part of this. I think that's cool, that people like that could recognize.

And then I got Werner Herzog, who I did a program with when I was 17. We did a Zoom call before shooting the movie to get his advice, and now his brother's coming to my premiere in Munich, which is sick. Winning the First Cut Lab programme, and then winning at Karlovy Vary—that was a really big deal for me. I'm this random 22-year-old kid winning at a major festival like Karlovy Vary. There were filmmakers there with their fourth feature in the same category. I hope that I'll be able to push out what I really believe that cinema should be, because I really love cinema. I live for cinema, and I think that we need it to change if we want to survive, and you gotta have young people really care about it.

**You mentioned names like Werner Herzog and Alex Coco, and you told me before that you talked with *Godland* director Hlynur Pálmason as well. Is there any piece of advice that you have taken from the people you've encountered while navigating the industry?**

That's one I got to think about. [Pause] Probably from Hlynur. He said to me, “It's all about persistence. Just keep going, keep making the work, it's gonna find a home.” The advice that I would want to give to any young person or young filmmaker is: don't be afraid to send that cold email. I met Hlynur because I went to see *Godland*, and I was so floored by it that I had to email him. He offered to do a Zoom with me and then watched my movie. We've been in contact for a year now. It's sick because he's one of my favorite filmmakers, and I now have a dialogue with him. So don't be afraid.





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KARLOVY VARY 2023 KVIFF Eastern Promises / Awards

### Harley Chamandy's *Allen Sunshine* wins the First Cut+ Award at Karlovy Vary

by VASSILIS ECONOMOU

© 05/07/2023 - The debut feature will receive a €5,000 cash prize sponsored by Turkish public broadcaster TRT



The winners of the First Cut+ Award

The latest instalment of First Cut+ has drawn to a close, and the winning project of this edition has been revealed. First Cut+ is a programme dedicated to enhancing the appeal and commercial viability of feature films. It took place during the KVIFF Eastern Promises Industry Days, a prominent segment of the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival. This year, First Cut+ showcased eight captivating films (see the news) that are presently undergoing post-production.

(The article continues below - Commercial information)

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**Harley Chamandy**, an emerging filmmaker making his directorial debut, claimed the First Cut+ TRT Award for his film *Allen Sunshine*. Through this recognition, initiated in partnership with Turkish public broadcaster TRT, a cash prize of €5,000 was bestowed upon the winner. A panel of film professionals presided over the decision-making process – they included **Francesca Tiberi**, sales acquisitions manager at True Colours; **Marge Liske**, CEO of Baltic Event and head of Industry at the Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival; and **Ezra Demirkiran**, festivals coordinator at TRT Cinema.

The jury's reasoning states: "For an exceptional cinematic effort crafted by a remarkably talented emerging filmmaker, showcasing a sensitive portrayal of genuine friendship and the journey towards solitude following loss, while developing a minimalist yet deeply impactful approach to storytelling and cinematography".

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**Giffoni** The Giffoni Film Festival



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**Allen Sunshine** (Canada, USA), directed by Harley Chamandy and produced by Chantal Chamandy.

**Jury statement:** “For an exceptional cinematic effort crafted by a remarkably talented emerging filmmaker, showcasing a sensitive portrayal of genuine friendship, the journey towards solitude following loss, and developing a minimalist yet deeply impactful approach to storytelling and cinematography.”

**TIR**



In addition, there will be two world premieres of films by filmmakers from Canada, the focus country at this year's CineCoPro conference being held during MIFF from July 1-4. Harley Chamandy will present his debut feature *Allen Sunshine* starring Vincent Leclerc, as a musician who retreats to a remote cabin to mourn a tragic loss until an unexpected encounter ends his isolation and gives him a fresh outlook on life.

*Allen Sunshine* was produced by Chantal Chamandy of New York-based Mother and Son Films with Laurent Allaire of Canada's Chasseur Films, the film won the First Cut+ Works in Progress TRT award at Karlovy Vary's Eastern Promises industry section last year.





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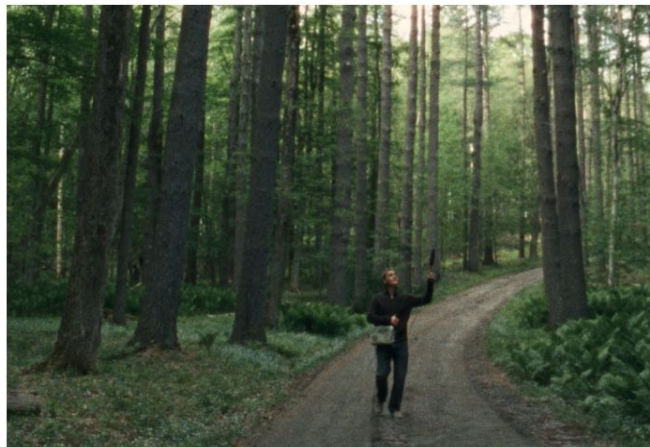
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## Allen Sunshine to world premiere at Munich fest

BY TAIMUR SIKANDER MIRZA

June 18, 2024



Among the Canadian titles also making their world premiere are Jamie Kastner's doc *The Spoils* and a Canada-Germany copro doc.

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**H**arley Chamandy's debut feature *Allen Sunshine*, Jamie Kastner's feature doc *The Spoils* and the Canada-Germany copro doc *Born to be Wild – The Story of Steppenwolf* will make their world bow at the Munich International Film Festival.

The festival announced the lineup for its 41st edition on Tuesday (June 18), with a total of 150 films from 53 countries.

*Allen Sunshine* (pictured) is written and directed by Chamandy, and produced by Quebec-based Chasseurs Films' Laurent Allaire and Chantal Chamandy under her U.S.-based banner Mother and Son Films. The feature will be competing for the CineVision Award in the Cinevision Competition, which highlights "international directorial talents who break new ground with their film language."

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*Allen Sunshine* centres on a musician who retreats to a remote cabin to mourn the death of his wife. There, he strikes up an unexpected friendship which ends his isolation.

The cast includes Vincent Leclerc, Catherine Souffront, Stephanie Breton, Liam Quiring-Nkindi, Miles Phoenix Foley and Joseph Whitebird.

*The Spoils* centres on an exhibition in honour of Jewish art dealer Max Stern, which was delayed by three years by discussions about the restitution of art looted by the Nazis. The film, which will premiere in the Spotlight section, is produced by Kastner and Laura Baron Kastner through their Cave 7 Productions banner.

Written and directed by Oliver Schwehm, *Born to be Wild – The Story of Steppenwolf* will also debut in the Spotlight section. The film is produced by Rezolution Pictures, Lunabeach TV and Media GmbH. Lisa M. Roth and Markus Hilß are the producers and exec producers include Catherine Bainbridge, Ernest Webb, Markus Hilß, Daniel Morin, Linda Ludwick and Randy Lennox.

The doc looks at the journey of singer John Kay and bassist Nick St. Nicholas "to the pinnacle of the music world."

Meanwhile, the Canada-Germany copro *Rumours*, is among ten films competing for the 100,000-euro –approx CAD\$147,430 — CineCoPro Award. The comedy, directed by Guy Maddin, Evan Johnson and Galen Johnson, is set at a G7 summit, where world leaders end up getting lost in the woods.

The 41st edition of the Munich fest will run from June 28 to July 7.

*Image courtesy of the Munich International Film Festival*



Home / Filmfest München / Filmfest München 2024 / Filmfest München 2024: Allen Sunshine (by Harley Chamandy) | Review

Filmfest München 2024

# Filmfest München 2024: Allen Sunshine (by Harley Chamandy) | Review

Polina Grechanikova · 7 days ago

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**Harley Chamandy's film invites audiences into the secluded world of Allen Sunshine, a renowned music mogul who, following the loss of his wife, seeks solace on the tranquil shores of a lakeside retreat. Amidst the rhythms of nature and the unexpected friendships with locals and teenagers, Allen discovers renewed purpose and unexpected joy.**

*Allen Sunshine*, the splendid debut film by the young director **Harley Chamandy**, invites viewers into a world where every rustle of leaves and raindrop isn't just background noise but a key to the protagonist's inner world. **Vincent Leclerc** portrays Allen Sunshine, a renowned music mogul living a secluded life on the lake's edge, accompanied only by his faithful dog and a tape recorder capturing the sounds of nature, which inspire his musical compositions.

At the heart of the film is Allen's internal conflict as he seeks solace following the tragic loss of his wife, a famous singer. He listens to her voice on old cassette tapes, deepening into memories each day, surrounded by the tranquility of nature. Fishing on the lake, bathing in cool river waters, and taking long walks along forest paths not only help him come to terms with his loss but also infuse his life with renewed purpose. Unexpected friendships with local residents play a crucial role in Allen's life. One neighbor regularly brings fresh produce, offers advice, and surprises him on his birthday with his wife's homemade berry pie recipe. These simple acts of kindness become a source of joy and comfort for Allen.

Particularly significant are the unexpected friendships Allen forms with two teenage boys in the neighborhood. They forge an unusual bond, spending time together playing games, fishing, biking, and cooking tacos using Allen's late wife's recipe. These moments of simple joy become pivotal for Allen, reinforcing his belief that true happiness lies in the small things we often take for granted.

*Allen Sunshine* is more than just a drama about loss and loneliness; it unveils the deep inner world of a man who finds solace in life's simple pleasures and the support he receives from others. It is a cinematic exploration of nature, tranquility, and the possibility of finding happiness in solitude, thanks to the understanding and kindness of fellow human beings. Harley Chamandy has crafted not just a film but an exploration of human emotions and inner life that resonates deeply, prompting reflection on the importance of simple joys and kindness in everyone's lives.



Allen Sunshine (Dir. Harley Chamandy, Canada, USA, 2024)

Our writer Polina Grechanikova was on the ground of the [45th Munich](#)





# Schön!



# Schön!



## interview | harley chamandy



Harley Chamandy, a young Lebanese-Egyptian-Canadian filmmaker, is quickly emerging as a compelling voice in contemporary cinema. With a unique background that spans continents and cultures, Harley's work is a rich tapestry of influences that reflect his diverse heritage and experiences. His latest film, Allen Sunshine, is a poignant exploration of love, reality, and artistic expression, set against the backdrop of electronic music as the film follows a former music industry vet who retreated to a secluded lake house after his wife's suicide. What's most compelling, though, is Chamandy's direction – taking the lead character from the past to the future throughout the film. It's been critically acclaimed, even winning the Werner Herzog Film Award, with Herzog applauding Chamandy's vision and touching on how he first took part in Herzog's first workshop for young filmmakers when he was just 17 years old.

Following the film's premiere at the 41st Munich International Film Festival, Schön! dives into Harley Chamandy's creative process, inspirations, and the challenges he faced as a young filmmaker.

Can you tell us about your background and how your Lebanese, Egyptian heritage and Canadian roots influence your filmmaking?

Absolutely. My mother, Chantal Chamandy was born in Egypt and is a singer by trade. She was the first person to perform in front of the pyramids in Egypt on live television. I remember watching her perform at the pyramids when I was about eight years old. My grandfather, although not a professional musician, is a pianist and immigrated from Egypt to Canada with my mom when she was ten. Their journey was tough, especially after my grandmother passed away. They went from a comfortable life in Egypt to sleeping on a small mattress in a one-bedroom apartment in Montreal. My grandfather opened a deli and worked tirelessly to support them. Their shared bond for music and the artistic struggles they faced have deeply influenced my creative work. Music and art have always been a way to connect and express, even during the toughest times.

What inspired you to create Allen Sunshine and how did you come up with the storyline and themes?

I wanted to explore the idea of love and what it means to live without it. I think visually, so I started with images that I wanted to see and built the narrative around them. The film delves into our current reality and different realities, like modern-day success versus genuine human connections. Allen's journey in the film reflects this, moving from fame and money to forming new friendships and exploring different realities. I also incorporated elements of magical realism to prompt viewers to question what is real. The themes of fame and parasocial relationships, where people feel they know someone through their image, were also crucial to the story.

How did electronic music and fashion play a role in Allen Sunshine and why were these elements important to the film?

Electronic music, especially Ethan Rose's work, was a significant influence. His album Ceiling Songs moved me deeply, and I listened to it daily while writing Allen Sunshine. Electronic music is introspective and doesn't cater to an audience, making it a meditative and personal art form, which suits the film's introspective nature. Fashion was also vital; I wanted every frame to look like a painting. My girlfriend, Samantha Vocatura a sustainable fashion designer, took on the role of costume designer, ensuring that every piece of clothing was second-hand, adding texture and character. I am inspired by fashion designers like Alexander McQueen and Margiela, whose strong aesthetic viewpoints influence my filmmaking more than other filmmakers.

Can you share your experiences working with Ethan Rose on the score and how his previous work influenced the musical direction of the film?

Discovering Ethan Rose's music was a transformative experience for me. His album Ceiling Songs profoundly impacted me, and I couldn't imagine the film without his music. I reached out to him with a cold email, sharing how much his work meant to me. He appreciated the script and the focus on Alan's relationship with his music. This collaboration started with a cold email and evolved into a partnership that shaped the film's musical direction.

As a young filmmaker at 22, what challenges did you face while making Allen Sunshine and how did you overcome them?

We faced numerous challenges, from working with non-actors and animals to dealing with unpredictable weather. My mom produced the film, and her resourcefulness and dedication made it possible. She and her partner found creative solutions to make the film on a very small budget. Working with family created a strong support system, allowing us to navigate the obstacles together.

In your opinion, what is the current state of cinema, especially for young artists, and how do you see it evolving in the future?

I believe cinema is currently in a challenging state, with many young filmmakers focusing on politically motivated themes and punchlines rather than visual storytelling. To keep cinema alive, we need a strong aesthetic viewpoint and original perspectives. Filmmakers should prioritize visual elements and create more nuanced and thoughtful work. We need more artists like Frank Ocean in the film industry, pushing boundaries and creating impactful art.



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## Munich International Film Festival Sets Trio Of World Premieres: Harley Chamandy's 'Allen Sunshine', Jamie Kastner Documentary 'The Spoils' & Davi Pretto's 'Continente'

By [Stewart Clarke](#) [+](#)

June 10, 2024 6:00am



The Munich International Film Festival red carpet

**EXCLUSIVE:** The [Munich International Film Festival](#) has set an eclectic trio of world premieres for its upcoming 41st edition. Harley Chamandy's [Allen Sunshine](#), Jamie Kastner feature doc [The Spoils](#) and Davi Pretto's [Continente](#) will each premiere, Deadline can reveal.

[Allen Sunshine](#) is the first feature from Harley Chamandy, the Lebanese-Greek-Egyptian helmer out of Montreal. The film follows a music mogul who retreats to a remote cabin to mourn his famous wife's suicide. Amid the solitude of the Canadian wilderness he struggles with grief, until an unexpected encounter ends his isolation.

Filmfest discovery

# Harley Chamandy on “Allen Sunshine”: “I love the control over every frame”

04 July 2024 • 10:15 • Thomas Schultze

One of the most beautiful discoveries at the Munich Film Festival was “Allen Sunshine” by Harley Chamandy, which had enthusiastically acclaimed screenings as its world premiere in the “CineVision” series. We talked to the young Canadian.



Harley Chamandy, director of “Allen Sunshine” (Credit: private)



Review by **Snallor Moon** PATRON

## Allen Sunshine 2024

★★★★

Watched Jul 26, 2024

A lovely mournful slow and muted film about being, existing, and living after a bereavement. It's probably not everyone's cup of tea, but this is exactly the kind of film I love

Review by **outsidetheb**

## Allen Sunshine 2024

★★★★★❤️

Watched Jul 01, 2024

Allen Sunshine felt like a massage to the heart. This movie could touch spiritual substance, it felt so personal and brought up forgotten/unexplored feelings. Movies today want to shock at any cost, but this one was just incredibly humane.

❤️ 2 likes

Review by **alperkurtul**

## Allen Sunshine 2024

★★★★★½

Watched Jul 05, 2024

Great movie, emotionally rich. Made me question about my childhood!

❤️ 2 likes

Review by **TimTeyso** PRO

## Allen Sunshine 2024

★★★★❤️

Watched Jul 07, 2024

Perfect sunday morning film at Filmfest Munich. What a nice hug of a movie, makes you want to call the people you love. Also makes you want to quit society and befriend some kids in remote Québec. I have so many questions about how the fantastic score was made. Watch it if you can!

❤️ 4 likes

Review by **sweige** ★★★★★❤️

Allen Sunshine was a compelling work of art down from everything to the musical equipment hand-selected for the set design, the shot selection on film & of course, one of my favourites, the sustainable, quiet luxury styling across the film from brands like Maison Margiela.

But what captured me most were moments in the film of the two boys showing they adverse amount of love and friendship that breaks beyond their cultural upbringing Reminded me a lot of my childhood having people you could relate to so much that goes beyond environmental constructs!

Spectacular piece and I'm looking forward to so much more from Harley Chamandy.

❤️ 2 likes

Review by **ella\_canella** ★★★★★

The synopsis sounded darker than the film actually felt. The director said during a Q&A after the screening that he wanted the viewer to experience a certain feeling, a sensation of "letting go". Also, he wanted to make a film about love and how to find it in various beings and things rather than about grief. I feel he managed just that. I left the theater relaxed and smiling.

❤️ 5 likes

★★★★★❤️ Watched by **Lorenzo1312** 07 Jul 2024

The Presenter at Filmfest München told us, that the Director asked us to Log and Review this on Letterboxd as it helps small movies. So if you're Reading this: Great Job, Harley. Impressive Debut! One of the my favorite Films i've seen at the Festival this year.

❤️ 8 likes

★★★★★❤️ Watched by **Mariana** 02 Jul 2024

Playfull and artistic, beautifully shot - this debut feature finds light and lightness in dark places.

❤️ 3 likes

**Moowywood** Activity for film ★★★★★

**caliposhades** Activity for film ★★★★★

**HrishiBardhan** Activity for film ★★★★★

★★★★★ Watched by **Maxi Raben** 01 Jul 2024  
**Ffmuc 24/2**  
❤️ 4 likes

★★★★★❤️ Watched by **neunummer** 08 Jul 2024  
Im still in deep thoughts about this beautiful movie and profound storytelling. From the mesmerizing scenery to the intricately crafted characters, to the amazing soundtrack, every element of this film weaves together so seamlessly.  
Set against the breathtaking backdrop of the Canadian landscape, Allen Sunshine invites us on a beautiful journey filled with poignant moments, heartwarming and tense encounters. The film's meticulous attention to detail is evident in every frame, drawing viewers into a world where silence speaks volumes and emotions run deep. Each performance of the cast is a testament to the power of human connection and the enduring strength of the human spirit. This movie reminds me of the beauty that can be found in the most unexpected places and the hope that can arise from even the darkest circumstances.  
Kudos to Harley and the whole crew, definitely one of my favorites at Munich film festival.  
❤️ 3 likes

# About *Allen Sunshine*



# Logline

A music mogul retreats to a remote cabin to mourn his famous wife's suicide. Amid the solitude of the Canadian wilderness he struggles with grief, until an unexpected encounter ends his isolation.







# Synopsis

“**Allen Sunshine**” tells the story of a former music mogul who retreats to an isolated lake-side home to grieve his famous wife’s suicide.

He copes by composing ambient-electronic music and by nurturing an unexpected friendship with two young boys whom he meets on the lake fishing.

Throughout the course of his stages of grief, Allen encounters characters that remind him of what he’s lost and forgotten, and what he hopes to gain and reconcile.





# Directors Statement

I wanted to make a film about love, and what it means to live without it and finding it again in new forms. To choose optimism is to choose happiness and that's what I hoped to push with my film. In our current landscape, it seems that so much art made for and by young people is cynical and nihilistic and I hoped to bring a different kind of sensibility to my generation.

The film first began with an image of a man living alone on a lake with his dog and making electronic music. I was thinking about big vintage synthesizers by a lake. Then, I began to think about celebrity and fame, which has increasingly come to be regarded as an end in itself. The themes of isolation, natural beauty, celebrity, alienation, and grief eventually came together in the figure of Allen, who enjoys the trappings of wealth and fame but also contends with the fact that his wife was driven to suicide. Allen finds solace in his friendship with the two ten year old boys who open his eyes to the simple things that make life worth living.

I was honored to have world premiered at the 41st Munich International Film Festival, to have won the TRT First Cut + Award for best works in progress at Karlovy Vary IFF and to have won the annual Werner Herzog Award 2024.





# Harley Chamandy

*Writer and Director*

*Allen Sunshine* is Harley's first feature film which he shot when he was 22. At 17, Harley was selected as one of 55 filmmakers from around the world to work under the guidance of legendary filmmaker, Werner Herzog at the EICTV in Cuba. He graduated from NYU in 2021 in the Global Liberal Studies Program with a minor in Creative Writing, Italian, and Film Producing. During the program, he lived in Florence, Italy. His short films have showed at many film festivals around the world. He has directed and produced music videos for Universal Music Group.

His debut feature film *Allen Sunshine*, won the TRT First Cut+ Award for best works in progress at Karlovy Vary IFF, world premiered at the 41st Munich International film festival and was awarded the annual Werner Herzog Film Award.







# Chantal Chamandy

*Producer, Mother and Son Films*

Chantal began her career in the entertainment industry as an actress and singer when she became a member of a multi-million selling duet. She was a Juno nominated artist, and achieved critical acclaim for her PBS TV show which she wrote, starred in , and produced entitled "*Chantal Live at the Pyramids*" Chantal went on to produce her first feature film entitled "*Hit By Lightning*" starring Jon Cryer (Two and a Half Men) and Will Sasso (Three Stooges). Chantal has been a creative collaborator, and the Producer for all of her son Harley Chamandy's films, such as Harley's award winning short films "*The Final Act of Joey Junbler*", and "*Where It's Beautiful When It Rains*". Most recently, she is the Producer of Harley's first feature film "*Allen Sunshine*", and the two plan to collaborate together in the future on both their respective projects.









# Laurent Allaire

*Producer, Chasseurs Films*

Laurent Allaire has worked in the film industry for over twenty years, both as producer and founder of CHASSEURS FILMS and as distributor and co-founder of distribution company LA DISTRIBUTRICE DE FILMS. His expertise in distribution contributes significantly to how he approaches projects in the development, production and throughout the marketing of a film. Laurent has produced over twenty short films including Palme D'or competing *Chef de Meute* and 6 feature films in the last few years and has just started a film services production company to take on international film projects.









# Alex Coco

*Executive Producer*

Alex Coco has produced films such as Sean Baker's A24 Cannes Official Selection *Red Rocket*, Sean Price Williams *The Sweet East* which premiered at the Directors Fortnight and most recently *Pet Shop Days* which premiered at the 80th Venice International Film Festival.

He produced the 2024 Palme D'Or Winning *Anora* by Sean Baker.









# Kenny Suleimanagich

*Cinematographer (Super16mm)*

Kenny Suleimanagich is a cinematographer based in New York City and Los Angeles. His work spans narrative, documentary, and commercial across 16mm, 35mm and digital formats.

Projects he has shot have appeared at Sundance, Slamdance, SXSW, Rooftop, Fantasia, Cinequest, Maryland, New Orleans, Camden, and Outfest Film Festivals. Commercial work includes clients like Versace, Byredo, Salomon, Google, McDonalds, Uber, Casper, Jose Cuervo. His editorial work has appeared in Vogue, The New Yorker, GQ, NY Times, New York Magazine and NBC News.









# Vincent Leclerc

*Lead Actor*

Vincent Leclerc is a Canadian actor from Trois-Rivières, Quebec. He is noted for his performance in the 2018 film *La chute de l'empire Américain*, for which he received a Prix Iris nomination for Best Supporting actor in 2019; his starring role as Séraphin Poudrier in the television series *Les Pays D'en Haut* for which he won the Gémeaux Award for Best Actor in a Short Run Drama Series in 2016; and for acting alongside Leonardo DiCaprio in the "The Revenant," directed by Academy Award winner Alejandro Iñárritu.



# Catherine Souffront

*Supporting Actress*

Catherine is a bilingual, versatile and passionate actress who thrives on challenges. On July 31, 2018, the woman who had previously worked as a crown prosecutor at the DPCP in Montreal took the risky bet of leaving everything in order to pursue what she felt was her path; that of artistic expression.

Since then, Catherine has played multiple roles on the small screen. In addition to seeing her recurrently as Mylène in *L'oeil du cyclone*, the nurse Jocelyne in the *Red Bracelets* as well as the mermaid Coralie in *L'Ile Kilucru*. On the big screen, Catherine is part of the cast of the hit *December 23*, where she plays Jessica.

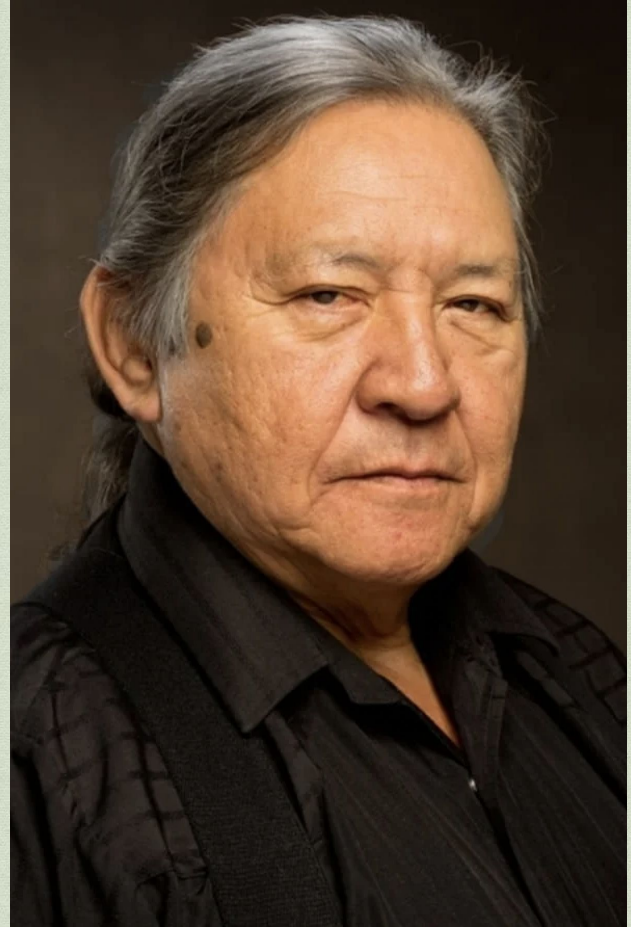




# Joseph Whitebird

*Supporting Actor*

After trucking for 35 yrs, Joseph began to chase his passion as an actor. *Allen Sunshine* is Joseph's first speaking role in a film. Joseph will continue to follow his dreams and passions as an actor for film and television. And continue with his hobby as a karaoke singer.





## Liam Quiring - Nkindi

Originally from Toronto, Ontario, Liam is a Young Artist Academy™ Award winning actor with experience in TV & Film and theatre. Liam has screen experience working with top stars in the musical comedy *Schmigadoon!* on AppleTV+, and *Holly Hobbie* on Hulu. Liam has won awards for his past work in TV, Film, and Commercial work with Young Artist Academy, Nova Star Awards, and Joey Awards.



## Miles Phoenix Foley

Miles has acted in multiple TV series and films including *Seagrass* which premiered at TIFF in 2023. *Allen Sunshine* is his first major part in a film.



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