



A BIG HUG



Logline

After an innocent but inappropriate use of her phone, a young girl navigates conversations with her parents, an awkward call with her boyfriend, and the freedom of her dance class.



Official Selections & Screenings

Palm Springs ShortFest, 2025
New/Next Film Fest, 2025
IFFBoston, 2025
New Faces New Voices, 2025
Brooklyn Center for Theatre
Research 'A Night of Shorts',
2025

Technical Specs

Genre: Drama
Run time: 5:40
Country: United States/Australia
Language: English
Subtitles: No
Aspect ratio: 4:3
Shooting Format: Digital
Locations: New York
Year: 2024



Crew

Writer and Director: Yael Grunseit

Producers: Abyn Reabe, Jason Gotlieb, Sam Jang-Milsten

Director of Photography: Dylan Rizzo

Casting Director: Manuela Romero Samaca

Editor: Joe Seigel

Composer: Damon Hankoff

Production Design: April Wen

Colorist: David Torcivia



Director's Statement

The film emerged from my desire to tell a story about female sexual exploration that isn't sexualized or fetishized. In this short, the feminine body interacts with technology, self-perception, love, family and youth. I wanted to create a film where a potentially traumatic event takes place, but our young female protagonist is able to move on unscathed. I made A Big Hug for my little sister, my female friends, and my younger self.



Vael Grunseit

WRITER & DIRECTOR

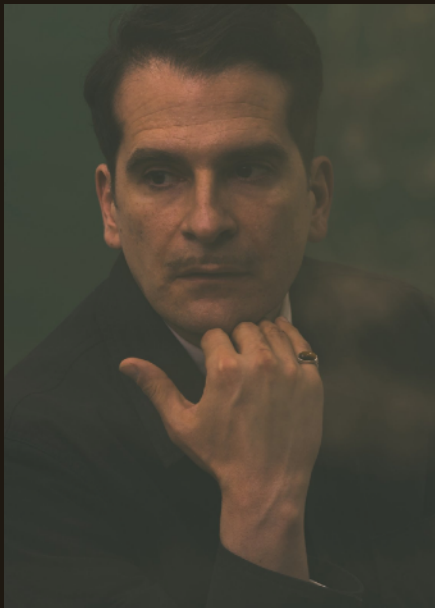


Vael Grunseit is a filmmaker from Sydney, now living in New York. Her short films have screened at Oscar qualifying festivals including Palm Springs ShortFest and Cinequest in 2025. She was a finalist for the 2025 Sundance Ignite Fellowship and is a Bend Basecamp Fellow. She holds her MFA in Film from the Feirstein Graduate School of Cinema, Brooklyn College.



Gerlanda di Stefano (Ally)

Gerlanda Di Stefano is a 20-year-old multidisciplinary artist drawn to movement, visual art, and performance as instinctive forms of communication. With a lifelong background in dance and recent lead roles in three short films, she continues to explore how storytelling lives in the body—often finding that her most honest expressions emerge without words. Gerlanda is honored to be part of this production and excited to keep evolving through her craft.



Carlos Dengler (Father)

Carlos Dengler has performed in local and regional theaters like Lincoln Center Theater, Dorset Theater Festival and Fringe New York where he performed his one-person show *Homo Sapiens Interruptus* in 2016. He has published essays in the *Tablet*, *Mars Review of Books*, *n + 1* and in the anthology *New Jersey Fan Club*. Carlos directed his first short called *Iowa* (2018) and served as screenwriter, editor and composer for the film, as well as performed as the lead. As a film composer, he has scored the motion picture drama *Sam's World* (2023) and the animation shorts series, *Love Letters to the Subway* (2023). He has recorded six albums of New Age compositions from 2022 to 2024. He is a cofounder of and performed as the bass player and keyboardist for the band *Interpol* until 2010. He was also a professional DJ in the 2000s and performed at Coachella and Lollapalooza. He has a BA in Philosophy (NYU, 1999) and an MFA in Acting (NYU, 2015).



Rebecca Robertson (Mother)

Rebecca is an actor & filmmaker from the woods of Maine & the Southern California coast. A graduate of NYU's Experimental Theater Wing, she most recently performed her original plays, *Loba* and *Sisters Weywrd* - at Theatre de Dix Heures and the Brick, and originated roles in Joey Merlo's *Midnight Coleslaw* and Punchdrunk's *Sleep No More*. As a writer/director, her shorts *matinée* and *whither* - completed through the MFA program at Brooklyn College - are in post production, and her first feature script, *Kindling* (developed at NYU's Feature Film Development Lab) is an Appalachian noir about the intersection of femininity and violence.



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