

# sorry, thanks

AN UNROMANTIC COMEDY.

**DIRECTED BY DIA SOKOL**  
**WRITTEN BY DIA SOKOL & LAUREN VELOSKI**



**STARRING:**

**WILEY WIGGINS**  
**KENYA MILES**  
**ANDREW BUJALSKI**  
**IA HERNANDEZ**

PRODUCED BY: LAUREN VELOSKI

Running Time: 93 Minutes

Camera: HD (Shot on DVC-Pro HD) / Exhibited on HDCAM

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**Sales:**

VISIT FILMS

89 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1002

New York, NY 10003

tel: 718.312.8210 / fax: 718.362.4865

info@visitfilms.com

**Publicity:**

42 WEST

220 West 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, 12<sup>th</sup> Floor

New York, NY 10036

tel: 212.277.7555 / fax: 212.277.7550

Michael.Kupferberg@42west.net

[WWW.SORRYTHANKSFILM.COM](http://WWW.SORRYTHANKSFILM.COM)

## PRAISE FOR “SORRY, THANKS”

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“The film is a sidelong charmer ...”

—Mark Olsen, **LATIMES.COM** (“The Envelope”), March 17, 2009

“The script should circulate among Hollywood studios looking to break that awful 'bromance' formula. *Sorry, Thanks* does not need such uninspired bricks of concept to make you care about its subjects. I am enamored of its ending, which avoids any neat conclusions while achieving a stunning finality.”

—Eric Kohn, **INDIEWIRE**, March 16, 2009

“A uniquely moral film but also a very funny one ... Wiggins, in his first lead role in 8 years, gives a minor miracle of a comic performance. The mix of humility, sadness, frustration and agony dancing across his face is a little heartbreaking, and a little hilarious. It’s that tone that sets *Sorry, Thanks* apart—it sets you up with its deceptively breezy, primary colored staging, and, in the unlikeliest of times and modes, delivers a gut punch.”

—Karina Longworth, **SPOUT**, March 14, 2009

“Could easily become a well-worn favorite of the DVD library of Gen-Yers of both sexes. Sokol’s script is as seamless as any studio rom-com—if studio rom-coms had astute, nuanced dialogue ... with a bumbling male like Wiggins at her film’s center (along with a superbly caustic supporting performance by Bujalski as his incredulous best friend) Sokol has not attempted to feminize Mumblecore. Rather, she has commercialized it—and that’s not a bad thing.”

—Lena Dunham, **HAMMER TO NAIL**, March 15, 2009

“Sokol’s experience may have come from producing, but she has leapt into the directing pool several strokes ahead of where we could reasonably expect.”

—Robert Davis, **PASTE MAGAZINE**, March 16, 2009

“Wiggins totally steals the show. Why he’s not doing more, I do not know; count me as someone who’d love to see Wiggins pop up on the big screen at least a thousand times per year.”

—Erik Davis, **CINEMATICAL**, March 5, 2009

“Beautifully transcends the narcissism and smugness that distinguishes the typical indie feature about suburban-raised 20-something urbanites. The parallel, shuffling routines of an aimless office worker and a black woman rebounding from a break-up gradually overlap, drawing us out of the shallows of middle-class pleasure-seeking and into deeper contemplations of ambition, purpose, integrity and character.”

—Michael Fox, **KQED**, October 22, 2009

“... an intimate, engrossing watch.”

—Kristine Tofte, **AUSTIN CHRONICLE**, March 20, 2009

“Funny and emotional in all the right places ... a superior, story-driven film.”

—Jeremy Kirk, **WE ARE MOVIE GEEKS**, March 14, 2009

**“SORRY, THANKS” in *Indiewire’s* Annual Critics Survey 2009:**

- Named **“BEST FIRST FEATURE 2009”** by Mark Olsen of the *Los Angeles Times*
- Named among the **“BEST UNDISTRIBUTED FILMS 2009”** by Mark Olsen, Robert Davis (*Paste Magazine* chief film critic), Karina Longworth (*LA Weekly*), and Aaron Dobbs (Tribeca Film Festival)

**AWARDS:**

IFP Rough Cut Narrative Lab Fellow / June 2008  
Adrienne Shelly Director’s Grant / September 2008

**FESTIVALS:**

**SXSW 2009** (*World Premiere*)  
Austin, TX / March 2009

**Sarasota Film Festival 2009**  
Sarasota, FL / April 2009

**Nashville Film Festival 2009**  
Nashville, TN / April 2009

**Berkshire International Film Festival 2009**  
Great Barrington, MA / May 2009

**DeadCENTER Film Festival 2009**  
Oklahoma City, OK / June 2009

**BAMcinemaFEST 2009**  
Brooklyn, NY / June 2009

**Milwaukee Film Festival 2009**  
Milwaukee, WI / October 2009

**Mill Valley Film Festival 2009**  
Mill Valley, CA / October 2009

**Cinema by the Bay (San Francisco Film Society) 2009**  
San Francisco, CA / October 2009

**Festival Internacional de Jóvenes Realizadores 2009** (*International Premiere*)  
Granada, Spain / October 2009

**Mar del Plata Film Festival 2009**  
Mar del Plata, Argentina / November 2009

**Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival 2009**  
Tallinn, Estonia / December 2009

**CPH PIX Film Festival 2010**  
Copenhagen, Denmark / April 2010

**Indie Spirit Film Festival 2010**  
Colorado Springs, CO / April 2010

## SHORT SYNOPSIS

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Reeling from a brutal break-up, Kira (Kenya Miles) sleeps with Max (Wiley Wiggins, *Dazed and Confused*), a charming wreck who already has ... Sara. His at-a-loss best friend (a comically belligerent Andrew Bujalski) does maddening battle on the frontlines of Max's emotional shortcomings, as Max decides to dabble in two new pursuits: an obsessive-tending interest in Kira, and (more fleetingly) in the mystery of whether he may in fact be an ass. From Independent Spirit Award Nominee Dia Sokol (producer of *Mutual Appreciation* and *Beeswax*) in her feature directorial debut, and co-written with Lauren Veloski, *SORRY, THANKS* marks a major return for Wiley Wiggins (*Dazed and Confused* and *Waking Life*) as a winning comedic lead and also stars Andrew Bujalski (*Mutual Appreciation* and *Hannah Takes the Stairs*), dynamic newcomer Ia Hernandez, and Kenya Miles in a remarkably honest debut performance. Set in San Francisco's vivid Mission District, *SXSW* Film Festival favorite *SORRY, THANKS* charts deep fallibility, bad decisions, and the wreckage of self-delusion. In a laughy kind of way.

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

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As a first-time director, my guiding aim with SORRY, THANKS has been to tell an emotionally vital story about relationships, with protagonists who on catastrophic levels don't yet know their value or their hearts. And I wanted to tell this story through the lens (and real-life avoidance tactics) of comedy. With ultra-natural performances and straightforward camera work, I have aimed to portray their frustrated self-discovery with emotional and visual honesty. I've opted at every step to let the audience share in their mistakes: we're co-opted as we laugh. It's not until the final scene that we're suddenly on emotionally unstable terrain, and see that these people have wrought irrevocable results.

We shot SORRY, THANKS with a "skeleton crew" of only seven people, on a micro-budget, on location in San Francisco's singular Mission District in November 2007. The film is built on unique, idiosyncratic performances, largely from non-professional actors cast locally in San Francisco (with the exception of Wiley Wiggins and Andrew Bujalski, who play best buddies in a tug-of-war friendship on the frontlines of Max's emotional shortcomings). My hope is that SORRY, THANKS plays on multiple levels for a wide audience—as a "buddy movie" with an indie bent, a woman's story tied irreparably to a man's (and vice-versa), and a comedy with a harrowing emotional core.

I was awarded the ADRIENNE SHELLY DIRECTOR'S GRANT for SORRY, THANKS in September 2008 (concurrently, the film was chosen as a Finalist for IFP's \$50,000 Finishing Funds Grant). The award means a great deal to me personally, as a female director, and as recognition of the fact that SORRY, THANKS is a movie made predominantly by women (directed, co-written, and edited), celebrating that key distinction while aiming to tell a story that rings true for everyone. It has also been extremely rewarding to direct actor Wiley Wiggins in his first fully-rounded adult role, and to discover in the process that he's a breakout comic talent.

With SORRY, THANKS, I wanted to tell a simple, brutally honest tale about relationships: one that would defy all the common traps (you can love them or hate them—SORRY, THANKS won't choose for you). I aimed for a comedy with the courage to break your heart, a no-frills portrait evenly weighted with the brutal shortcomings of women and men alike, and the comic sense to appeal to both audiences. My hope is that the end result beats out all jaded indie expectations, and all the typical "rom-com" categorizations as well. In real life, relationships are always finding new ways to surprise and agonize.

## DIA SOKOL (DIRECTOR) Q&A

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### **Why this project? Why now?**

I wanted to make a movie about attraction and self-delusion, by taking universal issues—dating, casual sexual encounters, cheating, work dissatisfaction—and approach them in a fresh way, with characters that feel deeply familiar but with whom you can't quite predict what they will do next. I wanted to create a female character that was grieving internally in a very repressed way because we rarely see that in films, and have a male counter point whose neediness is almost tangible, but equally as misdirected and misunderstood by himself. I also wanted to play with the traditional gender roles that a lot of these smaller movies seem locked into and subvert them in very subtle ways. I'm generally interested in moral quandaries: When is it okay to lie? Can we love these characters even though they are doing bad things? Is all attraction just a projection of our own needs?

I started my career working under the tutelage of Errol Morris. I think that influence has been profound, not just because a documentary background informs my search for the truth told via real people and ultra natural performances, but because so much of what was drilled in to me was to strive to not editorialize.

### **How did you find Wiley Wiggins and why did you cast him?**

I'd known Wiley for a few years thanks to our mutual friend Andrew Bujalski. We met when his film *Mutual Appreciation* premiered at SXSW and we instantly became friends. Wiley can come off as a very shy guy, but I loved when that wall of aloofness would crumble and suddenly this truly hilarious stream of irony would pour out of his mouth. I had seen him in this very strange film by the Zellner brothers called *Frontier*, which takes place in the faux country of Bulbovia and is performed completely in Bulbovian. I thought that despite the humor of the film, he actually brought a surprising level of gravitas to it. So the more I mulled over the character of Max, the more I felt that Wiley was the perfect person for it.

### **Did you write these roles for Wiley Wiggins and Andrew Bujalski?**

Lauren Veloski, my co-writer, created both of their characters from just the premise of Max's predicament. Andrew and Wiley so fully occupy the roles, but what's funny is that Lauren hadn't met either of them when she started writing. I think both guys did a phenomenal job of being deeply obtuse-yet-tuned in BFFs, and performing the delicate dance of misguided dude love.

Lauren had a lot of fun creating the world and personalities that surround the Max character, with just the two starting off points that I knew about him: he's a guy with a girlfriend and the movie starts with a "morning after." So her writing process was centered around imagining/deciding: Does this guy have friends? Should he have a best buddy? How do you create a dynamic that feels real and affectionate and taunting the way dudes really are, but not romantic comedy fake? They definitely have an antagonistic "buddy humor," but Mason still lets Max self-sabotage in the end. And that's one of the ways in which this is a very different kind of comedy. In a true buddy comedy, the best friend, however hostile, will walk across hot coals to rescue his BFF. Instead, Max's self-delusion trumps that here.

## **Why San Francisco?**

Well, I really feel like San Francisco is a city long-neglected in independent film. So I thought it would be exciting to take the movie there. And we chose to center the story in the incredibly colorful, loud (sorry, sound guys!), singularly diverse, amazing Mission District. The Mission is bustling enough that we could imagine these two characters (Kira and Max) living lives that unexpectedly overlap, but still existing in separate social spheres. And of course the Mission is really the epicenter of young, on-the-make San Francisco kids—and the history of the place (the murals and the color) is everywhere. San Francisco is an amazing place to shoot a movie, period. And the Mission in particular is a true microcosm of the city's diversity—it really runs the gamut: gorgeous (and overpriced) old Victorians, side-by-side with people who are really, really down on their luck. It's fascinating. The energy was fantastic.

## **What was the experience of shooting in the Mission District like?**

I loved the character the Mission brings to the film, although shooting there is a little like what doing brain surgery while on a roller coaster might be. We were intent on getting permits for all outside shots, and the city tried to work with us, but it's really not set up for low-budget filmmakers. I knew we were in trouble when as part of our permit to shoot in front of the Roxie Movie Theater, Lauren had to get signatures from every store owner. She was going door to door right up until the day we started shooting that scene. The Mission is home to panhandlers, families, hipsters, artists, the nouveau rich—everyone; lots of grit. One day, Lauren went into a deli inquiring about where she could find the owner in order to get his signature. The employee pointed to a guy peeing outside and said, "That's the owner." Everything felt a little like that. Oh, and we got the permit.

## **What was it like directing Kenya & Ia, both of whom are newcomers? How did you have to vary your approach in working with non-actors?**

I thought that the first time actors would need to be directed in a completely different manner than those with more experience, but it turned out to be much more a matter of personality than of experience. For me, directing this type of film is about allowing your actors to feel their way through scenes, under the umbrella of the script. This process starts from the very beginning—the casting process I employed is extremely non-traditional, much more like playing house when you're a kid than like going on an audition. I felt like it worked best to let people creep in to their characters. I constantly asked, "What would you do in this situation?" And after a few rehearsals I started to realize that they weren't telling me what THEY would do in the situation, or where THEY would stand, they were telling me what felt right for their characters.

I don't want to give away too much about the film, but Ia Hernandez (who plays Max's girlfriend Sara) was privy only to her scenes with Wiley and knew very little else about the rest of the story as it was taking place, which lends a tremendous authenticity to her performance and to her character's journey. Ia had a huge childhood crush on Wiley, which I think helped her enormously to believe in the romance between Sara and Max.

## **You've described the character of Kira as "repressed." Why create a female character who is withholding?**

In my experience, really shut off people don't have huge breakdowns, that's something you only

see in movies. And I've always wondered why? I think true self-involvement that doesn't really spill over to include others is far more complicated and interesting.

**What was it like turning the tables and directing Andrew Bujalski, whose 3rd directorial feature you had just produced?**

It was such a treat. In many ways it was very relaxing because I trust him infinitely and we were able to be completely creative. Because he was the actor I knew the best, I felt like I could push him more than anyone else, which probably wasn't particularly fun for him. In a lot of ways, though, it was a similar collaboration to the one I feel we have when I produce his films. Being a director was just a different way of providing a creative space for him. And he, in turn, completely supported me. Andrew is the person I would call for directing advice when I was freaking out at 2 a.m.

**What did you shoot on? How big was the crew?**

We shot the film on HD, using the Panasonic HVX-200, and utilizing P2 cards. Our crew was comprised of just seven people (that includes me and Lauren), two of whom were devoted almost exclusively to managing the P2 work flow (one on set, and one on night shift). The benefits of a skeleton crew are enormous. I think more than anything else the kind of intimacy you can create with a small crew is responsible for providing an environment to get ultra-natural performances.

Our cinematographer, Matthias Grunsky, who I've now worked on five films with, made the absolute most out of our small lighting package. Our production van consisted of the back seat of a 1989 Jeep Cherokee, or Lauren's grandparents almost broken-down Saturn, but I never once missed having a larger rig.



## ABOUT THE CAST

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### **WILEY WIGGINS** (“Max”)

Wiley Wiggins is best known for his roles in Richard Linklater’s films *Dazed and Confused* and *Waking Life* (on which he also worked as an animator). He’s also appeared in the Zellner brothers’ experimental and brazenly “Bulbovian” film, *Frontier*. More recently, he appeared in their film *Goliath*, which premiered at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival.

### **KENYA MILES** (“Kira”)

Kenya Miles hails from Washington D.C. by way of New York by way of Oaxaca. *Sorry, Thanks* marks her on-screen debut.

### **ANDREW BUJALSKI** (“Mason”)

Andrew Bujalski wrote and directed the films *Funny Ha Ha* and *Mutual Appreciation*, both of which he acted in as well. He won the Independent Spirit “Someone to Watch Award” in 2004 for his writing/directing work, and has appeared in IFC Films’ *Hannah Takes the Stairs*, as well as 2008’s *Goliath*. His third feature, *Beeswax*, premiered at Berlinale 2009 and was released theatrically by Cinema Guild in 2009.

### **IA HERNANDEZ** (“Sara”)

Ia Hernandez was born in Lima, Peru, and raised in Northern California. *Sorry, Thanks* marks her acting debut (unless you count a couple high school musicals, in which she requested the tiniest roles, due to “freak-ass stage fright”). In real life, Ia works with children on the autism spectrum and is earning her Masters degree in Education.

## ABOUT THE CREW

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### **DIA SOKOL, Director/Writer**

Dia Sokol began her career as the in-house producer for acclaimed director Errol Morris on *The Fog of War*, *Mr. Death* and his television series, "First Person." Dia is the producer for award winning writer/director Andrew Bujalski (*Funny Ha Ha*, *Mutual Appreciation*), and was nominated for a 2010 Independent Spirit Award for her producing work on his most recent film, *Beeswax*. In the world of television, Dia is the executive producer of MTV's hit series "16 and Pregnant." *Sorry, Thanks* is her feature film making debut.

### **LAUREN VELOSKI, Writer/Producer**

Lauren Veloski is a producer/writer based in New York City. She got her start at Stick Figure Productions, a documentary film & television company (*Loud Quiet Loud: A Film About the Pixies*, *What Remains*). She works as a screenwriter, a story producer for television, and a freelance creative consultant/writer-for-hire on a wide variety of film and television projects. She is currently finishing-up an original screenplay and diving into a book adaptation for the screen. Lauren grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area and is a graduate of Barnard College of Columbia University, where she studied creative writing and film.

### **MATTHIAS GRUNSKY, Director of Photography**

Matthias Grunsky is an Austrian-born cinematographer based in Los Angeles. He has shot projects internationally, including *Funny Ha Ha* and *Mutual Appreciation*, and *American Zombie* directed by Grace Lee. Grunsky has also lensed several documentaries, short films and commercials in Europe and the USA. He got his start with cinematographers Gerard Vandenberg and Lee Daniel (on Richard Linklater's *Before Sunrise*). Grunsky graduated from the American Film Institute in Los Angeles (Cinematography) in 2000 and is a member of the German Society of Cinematographers, bvk.

### **JENNIFER LILLY, Editor**

Jennifer Lilly edited 2008's acclaimed musical extravaganza *Were the World Mine* (winner of the Grand Jury Prize at OUTFEST), *The Limbo Room* (Slamdance, 2006), and *Shiner* (Tribeca, 2006). She began in the cutting rooms of some of NY's top directors, working on Woody Allen's *Sweet and Lowdown*, *Small Time Crooks*, *The Curse of the Jade Scorpion*, Martin Scorsese's *Gangs of New York*, and Sidney Lumet's *Before The Devil Knows You're Dead*, *Strip Search*, and *Find Me Guilty*.

## PRINCIPAL CAST

Max Callahan ..... Wiley Wiggins  
Kira Marks ..... Kenya Miles  
Mason ..... Andrew Bujalski  
Sara ..... la Hernandez

## ADDITIONAL CAST

Simon ..... Donovan Baddley  
Andrew ..... Moshe Kasher  
Zach ..... Mackenzie Keegan  
Rachel ..... Raluca Ioanoid  
Ryan ..... Ryan Tresser  
Jon the Intern ..... Jonathon Wallace  
Stephanie the Intern ..... Marika Kontoudakis  
Jonathan ..... Derek Fagerstrom  
Mandy ..... Kyre Osborn  
Marcus ..... Chris Matrisciano  
Julia ..... Bianca Justo  
Aunt Suze ..... Elvie Hernandez  
Receptionist ..... Cheryl McBride  
Wade ..... Jacob Sider  
Penny ..... Mia Blankensop  
Office Superior ..... Lauren Smith  
Girl with Black Glasses ..... Jaime Borschuk  
Concession Stand Cashier ..... Keith Cowling  
Waiter ..... Ryoji Kajikawa  
Voice of Psychotherapist ..... Ray Wilcox

## FILMMAKERS

Director ..... Dia Sokol  
Written By ..... Dia Sokol & Lauren Veloski  
Producer ..... Lauren Veloski  
Editor ..... Jennifer Lilly  
Cinematography ..... Matthias Grunsky, bvk  
Executive Producer ..... Monte J. Robison  
Sound Engineer ..... Coll Anderson, M.P.S.E.  
Music Supervisor ..... Nathaniel Krenkel

## FEATURING MUSIC BY:

**Tim Fite**

And by **TEAM LOVE Artists:** Tilly & the Wall, David Dondero, Capgun Coup, Mars Black, Nik Freitas, Joker's Daughter, Flowers Forever, The Berg Sans Nipple