

JEREMY WALKER + ASSOCIATES, INC.

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present

FAT GIRLS

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY

ASH CHRISTIAN

PRESS NOTES

FILM FESTIVALS:

Tribeca Film Festival 2006

Montreal Image + Nation Film Festival 2006 - Coup de Cour award

Outfest 2006 - Outstanding Emerging Talent award

Running Time: 83 minutes

FAT GIRLS WEBSITE:

www.fatgirls-themovie.com

CAST

Rodney Miller
Sabrina
Mr. Cox
Rudy
Judy
Mildred
Bobby
Tina
Ted
Joey
Preacher
Little Woman
School Counselor
Leslie
Cheryl
Katie Chin
Dad
Gym Teacher
Gay Bar Drag Queen MC
Rudy's Mother
Waiter
Grandma
Grandpa
Church Woman #1
Church Woman #2
Church Woman #3
Church Woman #4
Hick #1
Hick #2
Student Council Slut #2
Roller Rink Attendant
Stoner
Hot Blonde Frat Ho
Old Man
Young Rodney
Pat
Nursing Home Volunteer

Ash Christian
Ashley Fink
Jonathan Caouette
Robin De Jesus
Deborah Theaker
Ellen Albertini Dow
Justin Bruening
Alexa Havins
Evan Miller
Joe Flaten
Richard D. Curtin
Selene Luna
Becky Jane Romine
Linda Leonard
Jennifer Emmerson
Linda Park
Mitchell Self
John Phelan
Richard D. Curtin
Michelle Renee
Dustin Sautter
Juli Erickson
Grant James
Ouida White
Trich Zaitoon
Allyn Carrell
Donna Sue Nickason
Andres Alfonso Ruzo
Tom Zembrod
Kalisa Wade
Charles Baker
Richard Porter
Scott Jacqmein
Irvin Mosley Jr.
Jesse Romero
Anita Thomas
Abby Cohen

FILMMAKERS

Writer/Director/Producer
Producer/Production Manager
Casting Director
1st AD
Director of Photography
Editor
Production Designer
Key Hair/Makeup
Production Sound

Ash Christian
Kim Fishman
Kelli Lerner
James Russell
Vincent Wrenn
Karl Kimbrough
Lynn Moon
Darcie Teasley
Lesa Foust

FAT GIRLS

FAT GIRLS is a candidly funny and off-beat coming-of-age story focusing on the trials and tribulations of Rodney Miller, a gay, theater-obsessed high school senior who has his heart set on Broadway stardom and an eye out for love. With the help of his 300-pound best friend (and fellow outcast) Sabrina, Rodney takes us on a winning journey of self-discovery. With an abundance of underdog spirit and crowd-pleasing humor, FAT GIRLS explores the sometimes heartrending challenges of growing up in small town America.

LONG SYNOPSIS

FAT GIRLS is a crowd-pleasing comedy centering on gay teenager Rodney Miller trying to survive his last days of high school in a small, not exactly tolerant, Texas town. Aided by his 300-pound best friend, Sabrina, and her Cuban refugee boyfriend, Rudy, Rodney just might find that inner fat girl he knew was a part of him all along.

The film opens with Rodney lying in bed staring upwards. He's not alone, but his bedmate is covered and we can't quite see who it is. In voice-over he tells us that he is a FAT GIRL and always has been. It is a hard concept to explain, he says. Being a FAT GIRL is more a state of mind, he tells us, an unspoken club. You don't even have to be fat to be one or even a girl for that matter. Rodney then invites us on his journey to discover his own inner FAT GIRL.

The journey begins, in flashback, some time earlier, backstage during the intermission of his high school's production of "The Odd Couple," where Rodney and his co-star in the production, Ted, the quarterback of the football team, are masturbating each other in the wardrobe room, because (as Rodney tells it) the "straight" Ted isn't getting enough sex from his girlfriend. However, Rodney's best friend, Sabrina, who also happens to be the stage manager, quickly breaks this up. Rodney divides the world up between those who are FAT GIRLS and those who are not. Sabrina, he tells us, is a true FAT GIRL -- inside and out, while hunky Ted isn't one at all and never will be.

After they take their bows at the end of the performance, Rodney begins a slow awkward roll home on his roller blades. He's accosted by a group of good old boys who call him over and offer him a beer - which he definitely should have refused. After Rodney figures out what is in the beer, he proceeds to throw up all over one of the villain's cowboy boots. It seems like things can only get worse, but then Bobby appears. In voice-over Rodney explains that the handsome Bobby is his cousin, and in protecting him, he's really only protecting the family name. Also, he says, Bobby is definitely not a FAT GIRL.

Bobby drops Rodney off at home. Inside, we meet Rodney's mother, a receptionist at the church and the kind of Christian lady who serves food with religious themes, like Angel Hair pasta and Jesus Jambalaya. His father, who runs the family plumbing business, is a silent, gaseous presence, stretched out on the couch in front of the television. Rodney explains (with the help of an old home movie) that his Dad always wanted a football-playing son, but got a kid who liked to dress up and put on make-up instead.

Rodney goes to his room and puts in a porn tape.

The next day at Martin Luther King Jr. High School, Rodney and Sabrina make their way

to the cafeteria. They bring their lunch to an empty table and are soon joined by Rudy Jackson, a bespectacled Cuban refugee, who seems to take a shine to Sabrina. The trio is interrupted by Katie Chin, the school's peppy cheerleader type (and Ted's girlfriend) who announces the upcoming graduation dance. Sabrina asks Rodney who he plans to go with, thinking that they'll probably go together, but Rodney has other plans, namely, the blonde and super cool Joey, a new arrival from England. Meanwhile, realizing that Sabrina is without a date, Rudy watches her leeringly.

Now, Mr. Cox, Rodney's favorite teacher, a nice guy and "total FAT GIRL" arrives at their table to enlist the three to volunteer at the Senior Citizen center. The friends reluctantly comply. Mr. Cox exits and then Rodney sees his chance with Joey as the new student crosses to the food line. After introductions, Rodney works up the nerve to ask Joey to the dance, telling him that he figures they might have something in common. Joey likes the idea of freaking out the school and agrees. Rodney, of course, is thrilled.

But soon it's back to humiliation when Rodney's classroom speech about anti-gay discrimination is interrupted when he is summoned to the guidance office. The counselor asks Rodney what he plans to do after graduation. Rodney shares his dream of Broadway stardom, but the counselor thinks Rodney should be more practical and think about how to support a family. When Rodney explains he doesn't want a family, only a boyfriend, the counselor sends him on his way with a Christian pamphlet for alternative lifestyles and a fistful of condoms.

Rodney and Sabrina buy tickets for the graduation dance. Afterwards, they run into Tina, Bobby's slutty girlfriend. Tina asks Rodney if she can take one of the condoms, and then she and Rodney get into a disagreement about the size of Bobby's endowment.

Later, Rodney, Sabrina and Rudy walk along the railroad tracks on their way to meet Mr. Cox at the Senior Center. Mr. Cox tells Rodney he wants to introduce him to a woman named Mildred, one of the residents. Mildred turns out to be a spunky old girl with a Broadway past. Rodney is impressed by this and Mr. Cox encourages Rodney to sing his self-styled "number" for the ex-performer.

During the ride home, Rodney comes to find out that Mr. Cox has returned to their small Texas town to take care of an ailing mother. Rodney makes no secret of his disdain for the town and his longing to escape to New York. Mr. Cox, a former resident of NYC, encourages Rodney and tells him how much he'll love it there.

Rodney comes home to the news that his father has died during a sexual encounter with a "midget woman." Rodney seems less disturbed by his father's passing than the group of church folks gathered in his living room.

Later, when his mother comes to his room to comfort him, he can't quite convince her that he's not that upset, given the obvious issues with his father. The more she tries to comfort him, the more he's amused. He tries, somewhat unsuccessfully, to stifle his giggles.

Later still, Joey calls to invite Rodney to BJ's, a gay club. Rodney is excited by the invitation. To the tune of 'I'm so sexy' he gets ready for the big night. Joey honks from the street and Rodney crawls out his bedroom window to meet him.

Meanwhile, Sabrina and Rudy are hooking up in the front seat of a Volkswagen.

At the gay bar, Rodney and Joey have barely settled themselves on their stools when Joey is propositioned by a hot guy. Joey and the guy retire to the bathroom and Rodney sits rejected and alone. But then the show starts and a drag performer is introduced – Miss Autumn Leaves. In Judy/Liza fashion she performs a stirring rendition of "Give My Regards to Broadway." Rodney is awestruck, but not so much by the performance. It's that he recognizes the performer as none other than Mr. Cox. After the performance, Rodney steals backstage and confronts his teacher in the dressing room. No words are exchanged. They just stare at each other until Rodney departs.

Back in the Volkswagen, while in the heat of passion, Sabrina gets her behind stuck between the dashboard and the seat. Luckily, Rodney happens along and comes to the (broadly comic) rescue, thanks to a handful of butter.

When Rodney is back in his room, Joey comes to his window and apologizes for abandoning him at the bar. Rodney accepts the apology and they end the evening with a kiss.

Mr. Cox calls Rodney to say he's sorry for the scene earlier, but Rodney tells him he has nothing to apologize for, that Mr. Cox was amazing. Rodney's mother is listening in on the conversation.

The next day, outside, Sabrina regales Rodney with surprising (and not so welcome) details of her relationship with Rudy.

Rodney suffers further humiliation when he's chosen last for basketball in gym class, but leaves the class pleading illness.

Rodney meets up with Mr. Cox on the school stage, where once again they discuss their accidental meeting at the club. Rodney reassures Mr. Cox that he was amazing and not to be upset about it. Then, much to Mr. Cox's amusement, Rodney comes out to him, only to be told that it's not such a secret.

Sabrina and Rodney have dinner with her two Moms and they discuss Sabrina's problems at school and a plot for revenge.

Rodney returns home and tells his mother that he has had dinner at Sabrina's. She tells him that she wishes he wouldn't have dinner with lesbians. She has some other choice comments until Rodney mentions that Sabrina has accompanied him home and is standing right next to him, though out-of-sight in the hallway.

Sabrina and Rodney go back to Rodney's room, after being warned by Rodney's mother not to partake of any "horizontal folk dancing." The two listen to music, get drunk and laugh, until they both roll off the bed.

Rudy is having a family reunion, to which Rodney and Sabrina have been invited. When the two friends arrive they notice that all Rudy's family are African-American -- he's adopted. After initial concerns that they will once again be outsiders, Rodney and Sabrina are greeted warmly.

Rodney goes out with Joey to a roller rink. While in the bathroom after a slightly disappointing but humorous encounter, Joey tells Rodney he is a Satanist.

Back home, Rodney's mom and her Bereavement Buddies are planning to pop in the latest Kirk Cameron movie. But what they get instead is one of Rodney's porn tapes. Rodney's mom has a tough time explaining that the tape does not belong to her.

When Rodney returns, he denies any knowledge of the tape and swears that he is not gay.

The next day at church, Ted signals to Rodney to meet him, but on his way out of the pew, the minister mistakes Rodney's movement as an approach to the altar to accept Jesus. The congregation lays their hands on him. Later, when he does catch up with Ted, upstairs in the church, they begin to have sex in a closet only to have the door swing open onto a shocked Sunday school class.

Back in his room that night he gets high with Bobby, who doesn't understand why Rodney hangs out with Sabrina, though Rodney explains that he's her friend.

Before the graduation dance, Rodney and Sabrina get ready at Sabrina's house, excited about their dates and how the night will end. Rudy comes to pick up Sabrina and there are some humorously awkward moments with her moms.

They all arrive at the dance. Rodney and Joey dance. Then Rodney and Sabrina. The two couples are having a good time. But Bobby is drunk in a corner making out with Tina and Tina wants to dance. He won't. She asks Rudy, and with Sabrina's permission, they begin to move on the floor. A drunken Bobby calls Sabrina a fat bitch. When Rodney protests, Bobby calls him a fag. This stops everything. Rodney realizes the ignorance of the small town he lives in and perhaps his own naiveté in even going to the dance. We travel backwards at warp speed to the beginning of Rodney's journey.

Next, Rodney is telling us what he did next was the only thing a FAT GIRL could do. He's back in the bed, staring up at the ceiling, but now his bedmate moves and we can see him clearly. It is Mr. Cox, the nice guy teacher and drag performer. Rodney leaves the bed, moves to the bathroom and looks in the mirror. He tells us that he has discovered his inner FAT GIRL. It simply means he is finally comfortable and happy with himself.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

At the age of 22, Ash Christian, the writer, director and star of *FAT GIRLS* has already accumulated the kind of resume most performers twice his age would envy.

A featured actor in major motion pictures, including *DOMINO* and *MAN OF THE HOUSE*, Christian is also familiar to television audiences for his recurring roles in the “The Division” and “Jack & Bobby.” To some he is best remembered for his part in the popular, award-winning “Got Milk?” advertising campaign.

The passionate, determined and doggedly optimistic actor left Rowlett, Texas at the age of 17 to make his mark on Hollywood, though he’d already had an auspicious start the year before with his first directorial effort, *SECRETS UNDERNEATH*. The dramatic short, about a young girl’s battle with self-mutilation, had a brief run on the festival circuit.

“I was hooked after that!” Christian recalls. “However, I knew for my first feature, I had to do something from my heart.”

Christian had always longed to do a movie about theater in small-town Texas. As luck would have it, while attending a film festival in Texas, he met Jonathan Caouette, a nominee for a 2005 Independent Spirit Award for his film *TARNATION*.

“I watched *TARNATION*, which was part of the festival there and I was absolutely blown away. It affected me more than any other film I’d ever seen. I got to hang out with Jonathan,” Christian remembers. “We brainstormed and the idea for *FAT GIRLS* came together that night. The next day, on the plane back to LA, I started writing.”

FAT GIRLS is a comic tale of three kids who are consummate outsiders, told with a refreshingly original voice. The themes in the movie are immediately familiar to anyone who has ever felt different. An underdog coming of age story with a John Waters feel, the film follows its lead character Rodney, a struggling gay teenager as he searches for self-acceptance or his own inner *FAT GIRL*. It’s a journey Christian could relate to.

“I was the ultimate theater geek growing up in Paris, Texas . . . not cool,” the actor admits. “I didn’t fit in in high school. But I’m glad it happened the way it did. It made me a stronger person.”

That strength has served Christian well. Even by the harrowing, seat of your pants standard of Indie filmmaking, *FAT GIRLS* had a bumpy ride finding its way. Money, not surprisingly, was a big issue.

“I met with endless ‘money people’,” Christian reports, “but since the lead character was gay, that deferred a lot of potential investors that most likely would’ve given me money if the lead character had been straight.”

A month before shooting was to begin on *FAT GIRLS*, none of the money had been raised; however not one to be discouraged, Christian persevered. He and Kim Fishman, producer of several award-winning short films and documentaries and the owner of Hear No Evil Films, kept a positive attitude, keeping on schedule and proceeding as if they already had their financing.

Fishman was able to get most of the crew and obtain discounts on equipment and services on the strength of the script.

“Ash gets a great deal of credit,” Fishman wrote in an article for Indie Slate Magazine, “for being the kind of individual that everyone tends to gravitate toward and wants to work so hard for.”

As for Christian, he also gives credit to the local talent.

“The wonderful thing about shooting in Texas is that people are eager to work in film and get their foot in the door, so we had lots of people helping in assistant positions.”

Verbal agreements were eventually secured for financing, but the production did not receive its first check until a week before shooting was to begin.

Meanwhile, Fishman and Christian were scouting locations in Canton, Texas, a small town about an hour east of Dallas. As Christian recalls, “They were very excited to have the movie there. We made outstanding deals for hotels, food, transportation, locations, picture cars, talent trailers, everything. This was going to be a great thing for us.”

Then, a day before shooting was to begin, the city manager of Canton pulled the plug. He phoned to say that *FAT GIRLS* could no longer shoot in town because officials had found out that the lead character was gay. With their already tight budget, they couldn’t afford to postpone the production. Actors were coming in from New York and Los Angeles and the crew was committed. They had to keep the production on schedule.

“It was a day before production,” Christian remembers. “There was nothing we could do and now we had no hotel, locations, food or permits. We were stunned.”

After what Christian describes as “countless phone calls and freak out messages,” rescue arrived at the eleventh hour in the person of a local talent agent and film supporter. She helped secure permits to shoot in nearby Waxahachie, where the Chamber of Commerce appeared to have no qualms about the subject matter or welcoming the *FAT GIRLS* crew.

With the help of casting director and co-producer Kelli Lerner, *FAT GIRLS* has assembled a terrific cast. In addition to Christian, who plays the lovably sardonic Rodney, and Jonathan Caouette, as a kindly teacher, Robin De Jesus, of the Indie hit

CAMP, appears in the role of Cuban refugee, and fellow outcast, Rudy Jackson. Newcomer Ashley Fink, plays Rodney's best friend, the unflappable Sabrina. FAT GIRLS also stars Deborah Theaker, best known for her roles in all of the Christopher Guest films (WAITING FOR GUFFMAN, BEST IN SHOW, A MIGHTY WIND and FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION) and Ellen Albertini Dow, the old rapping lady from THE WEDDING SINGER, and two young soap stars from "All My Children," Alexa Havins and Justin Bruening.

As an Indie film success story, perhaps it's fitting that the sometimes embattled production of FAT GIRLS, with its winding path to fruition, appears to have much in common with its irrepressible high school protagonists who never stop plugging away, even under the most trying of circumstances.

ABOUT THE CAST

JONATHAN CAOUETTE (*Mr. Cox*) Jonathan's award-winning documentary, TARNATION was executive produced by Gus Van Sant (GOOD WILL HUNTING, KIDS, ELEPHANT) and John Cameron Mitchell (HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH). TARNATION has received nominations for numerous awards including the Independent Spirit Awards in 2005. In 2006, Jonathan appeared in John Cameron Mitchell's SHORTBUS and he is currently in post-production on his film ALL TOMORROW'S PARTIES.

ROBIN DE JESUS (*Rudy Jackson*) Robin is best known as the lead role of Michael in the critically acclaimed indie hit film, CAMP, which premiered at the Sundance and Cannes Film Festivals in 2003. In 2006, he played Angel in the Broadway production of "RENT" and can be seen on Broadway again in the 2008 production of "In the Heights."

ASHLEY FINK (*Sabrina Thomas*) Newcomer Ashley Fink was featured in guest spots on "ER" and "Gilmore Girls," as well as Gwen Stefani's music video, "Rich Girl." She recently filmed a pilot for Mountain Top Pictures called "Dakota Blue."

DEBORAH THEAKER (*Judy – Rodney's Mom*) Deborah is known for her quirky roles in all of the Christopher Guest films, such as WAITING FOR GUFFMAN, A MIGHTY WIND, BEST IN SHOW and FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION, as well as the role of Mrs. Poe in LEMONY SNICKETS with Jim Carrey.

ELLEN ALBERTINI DOW (*Mildred*) Ellen's most memorable performance is the rapping elderly lady, Rosie, in THE WEDDING SINGER. She has also starred in numerous films such as THE WEDDING CRASHERS, ROAD TRIP, SISTER ACT I & II, and 54.

ALEXA HAVINS (*Tina*) Alexa stars in a recurring role in "All My Children" as Babe Chandler. She was nominated for a Daytime Emmy Award for this role in 2005.

JUSTIN BRUENING (*Bobby*) Justin plays opposite Alexa Havins in "All My Children" and won the Soap Opera Digest Award for Outstanding Male Newcomer.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

ASH CHRISTIAN (Producer/Writer/Director/*Rodney Miller*) Born and raised in Paris, Texas, Ash Christian began his journey in his local community theater, starring in productions throughout his childhood. He starred in a touring production of Neil Simon's "Lost in Yonkers" and received rave reviews. With his background in the theater, Ash garnered his first film role at age 16 as a disturbed student in Michael Cain's *STANDING STILL*. Ash moved to Los Angeles a year later and soon landed a lead role in the national spot for the *GOT MILK?* Campaign, which won the 2004 Adweek Best Spot of the Year Award. He has since guest starred on such major shows as HBO's "Six Feet Under," CBS's "Cold Case," and the WB's "Jack and Bobby," as well as appearing in films such as *DOMINO* and *MAN OF THE HOUSE* with Tommy Lee Jones. Ash also recently appeared alongside talent such as John Waters, Gus Van Sant, Ang Lee, Heather Matarazzo, and John Cameron Mitchell in Lesli Klainberg's documentary *FABULOUS!: THE STORY OF QUEER CINEMA* which premiered at the Berlin Film Festival and is currently airing on the Independent Film Channel.

Behind the camera, Ash made his directorial debut at 16 with the short film, *SECRETS UNDERNEATH*, which focused on a normal American family and the daughter's self-mutilation problem. The film toured the festival circuit and was very well received. He then directed a music video for the *SEPTEMBER 11th ORPHANS FUND* that appeared on FOX, NBC, MTV, ABC and CNN and was sponsored by the Clear Channel radio station 102.1 The Edge.

Making a mark on the film world at the age of 21 with the premiere of *FAT GIRLS* at the 2006 Tribeca Film Festival, Ash gained distinction as the youngest filmmaker in the festival's history. In July 2006, Ash was recognized with the *Outstanding Emerging Talent* award at Outfest in Los Angeles. *Modern Luxury Magazine* recently called Ash "The new face of independent cinema."

Ash currently calls New York City home and is in pre-production for his next independent comedy feature, *MANGUS!*

KIM FISHMAN (Producer) Kim was the associate producer on the HBO/Cinemax Documentary, *39 POUNDS OF LOVE*, an award-winning feature documentary, which was short-listed for the 2006 Academy Awards. She is also the producer of the upcoming documentary about the immigration struggle of gay and lesbian couples, *THROUGH THICK AND THIN*, which premiered at Framline 2007 and won the Freedom Award at Outfest 2007. She recently line produced the feature film, *SESSION*, starring Steven Bauer, Tom Bower, and Bar Refaeli, and is currently in pre-production for the feature film, *WISDOM OF THE PRETZEL*, an adaptation of the best-selling Israeli novel and

film. She's also in post-production for a documentary, *SENIOR STARS*, about an all-senior citizen's musical revue in Queens, NY. Kim holds a Bachelors and Masters Degree in Business Administration.

KELLI LERNER (Casting Director) Kelli Lerner Casting, LLC. is the leader in film casting in New York City. She cast *LOVERBOY*, Kevin Bacon's directorial debut which premiered at Sundance in 2006. Kelli's casting credits also include: HBO's "Chat Zone"; Mercer Films feature *SLINGSHOT* starring David Arquette, Balthazar Getty, Julianna Margulies, Joely Fisher and Thora Birch (dir. Jay Alaimo); and Buena Vista Pictures feature *DARK WATER* (dir. Walter Salles) starring Jennifer Connelly, John C. Reilly, Tim Roth, Dougray Scott, Camryn Manheim and Shelley Duvall.