

My Life as a Diamond



Family/Sports/Drama/Comedy/2SLGBTQIA+

Based on the acclaimed YA Novel
by Jenny Manzer

My Life as a Diamond

Logline

Caz, a 10-year old baseball loving kid, comes out as transgender and is shunned by his teammates and classmates. When his dad takes a new job, moving the family across the country in the process, Caz is out to prove he belongs, both on and off the field.

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Synopsis

A week before her tenth birthday, ten year old Cassie Cadman decides to cut off her long hair. Then, on the way to baseball practice, she tells her mom, "I'd like you to call me Caz, like my nickname. Cassie's a girl's name." A huge weight is lifted from Caz as he says this... and his story begins.

Caz's best friend, Matt, is the only one on the ball team who seems to accept him, and Caz experiences even more bullying at school. Nana gets it. She takes Caz on his first gender affirming shopping trip, and is the one who tells Caz that he is a DIAMOND: how something special often comes from a tough situation, that "pressure makes diamonds". Even though Caz's parents, Alison and Sam, don't fully understand the change, they are completely supportive. But the lack of empathy from adults and kids alike leaves them exasperated. The family moves as Sam accepts a cross-country job offer.

Caz and his family arrive in a Seattle suburb, thousands of miles away from their hometown of Toronto, where nobody knows them. Caz tries out for summer baseball and *knocks it out of the park*. At the tryouts, Caz meets a taller boy, Kyle Budworth, a bully who is threatened by Caz's talent on the field. Caz meets his new team and coach, and feels free for the first time in a long while. He even strikes up a close friendship with Hank, a playful and confident goofball. Caz's parents, meanwhile, are slowly getting there. Sam's new job allows him to spend more time with Caz, and they bond over baseball. Alison, talking with Caz before bedtime, says spontaneously at the end of the conversation, "That's my boy."

When they play the arch-rival Rockets, Kyle the bully tells Caz that he looked up his old team in Toronto, and *knows* he used to be a girl. Kyle changes Caz's name on the lineup sheet to "Cassie", outing Caz publicly when he is called up to bat. Timeout is called, and Coach Vijay says, "Caspar, you don't need to say anything. We all know who you are. We know *you*." But it's not that simple. A lot of folks are shocked. Hank's parents feel betrayed. Another parent yanks his kid from the team, right then and there. And to make things worse, the Rockets go on to win the game.

The Ravens rally around Caz. They are behind him in every way. Their record isn't great, but Coach Vij reminds them, their last game is a rematch with the Rockets – and they can use the next few games to prepare. The team goes on a roll, winning them ALL, so now they'll be playing for first place!

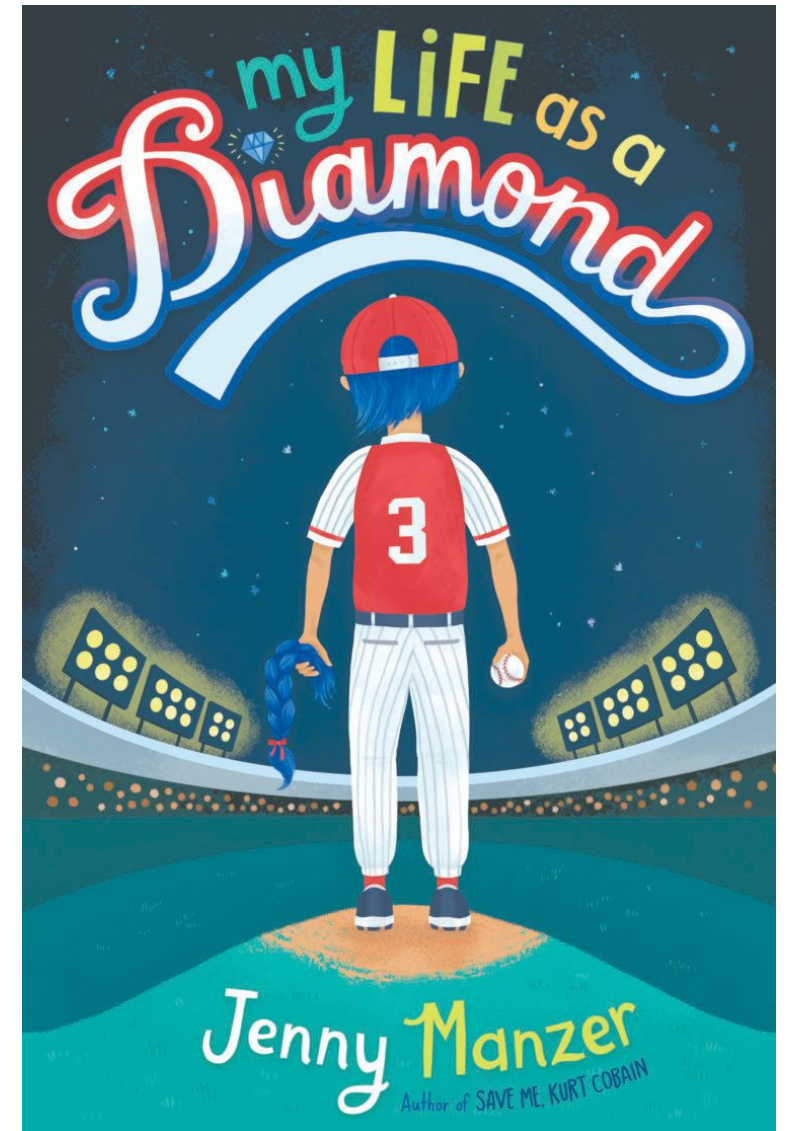
Nana is a surprise visitor on the day of the final game. When Caz asks why she's there, she says, "I came to see some baseball, of course. My favourite player got traded to a new team." This time, the Rockets are no match for Raven Power, as Hank scores the dramatic winning run. Caz has handled the pressure and found his people. His *team*. In a final moment, Caz arrives with his baseball buddies at school, discussing what would be the ultimate walk up song.

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Novel by Jenny
Manzer

Reviews and Awards

- Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People | 2019 | Commended
- Saskatchewan Young Readers Choice Award Diamond Willow | 2019 | Short-listed
- Chocolate Lily Award—Novel Category | 2019 | Short-listed
- Bank Street College of Education Best Books of the Year | 2018 | Commended
- CCBC Best Books for Kids & Teens, starred selection | 2019 | Commended
- Victoria Book Prize Society Children's Book Prize | 2019 | Short-listed
- Sliver Birch Award Fiction | 2020 | Short-listed
- TD Summer Reading List | 2020 | Commended
- Hackmatack Children's Choice Book Award | 2021 | Short-listed



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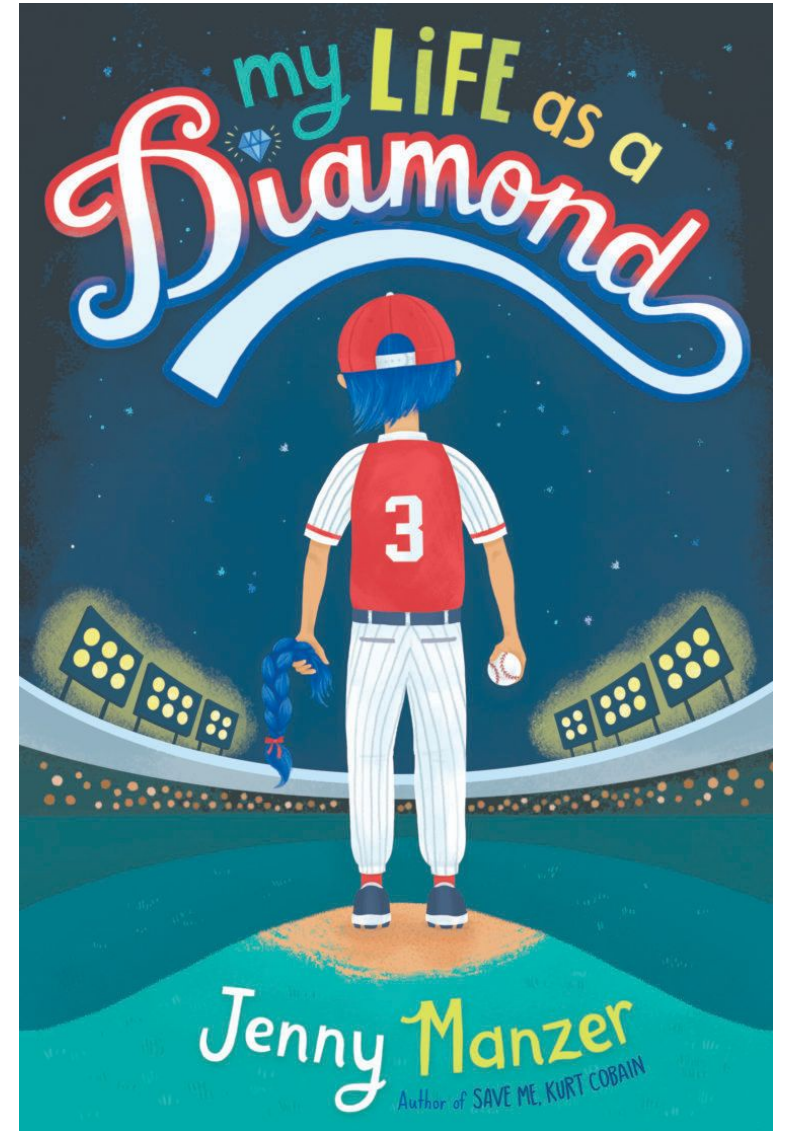
Reviews and Awards

"Deals with heavy subject matter around identity and agency, but the fast pace of the book and the warmth and humour author Jenny Manzer imbues it with make this an accessible middle-grade read."

– **Books & Ideas, Vancouver Writers Fest**

"Provides young readers with an opportunity to see a community that is accepting of Caz and who he is—not who they think he should be."

– **Quill & Quire**



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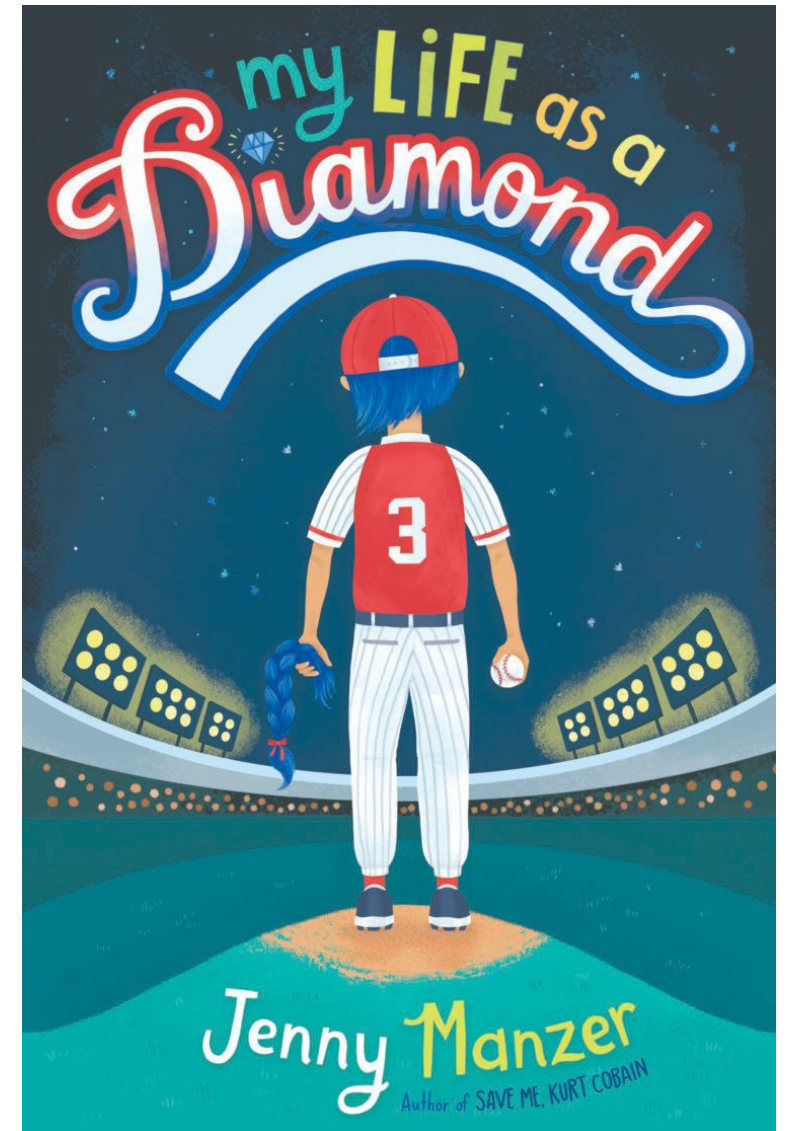
Reviews and Awards

RECOGNITION for the SCREENPLAY

- TIFF-CBC Films Screenwriter Award Finalist

SCREENPLAY / DEVELOPMENT support:

- The Harold Greenberg Fund
- Creative BC





CO-SCREENWRITER STORY - by Ollie Hebert

When I first read the book *My Life As A Diamond* back in 2020, I devoured it in one sitting, and not just because it's a YA novel, but because I was finally reading a novel about a kid who reminded me of me. I told Matt, my co-creative on this film, that I truly wished I had something like this when I was younger.

While I didn't know I was trans from such a young age, (it was the early 2000's when I was Caz's age, so I didn't even know what transgender *was* back then). Caz's story brought me to tears and spoke to my inner child in a way I honestly didn't expect.

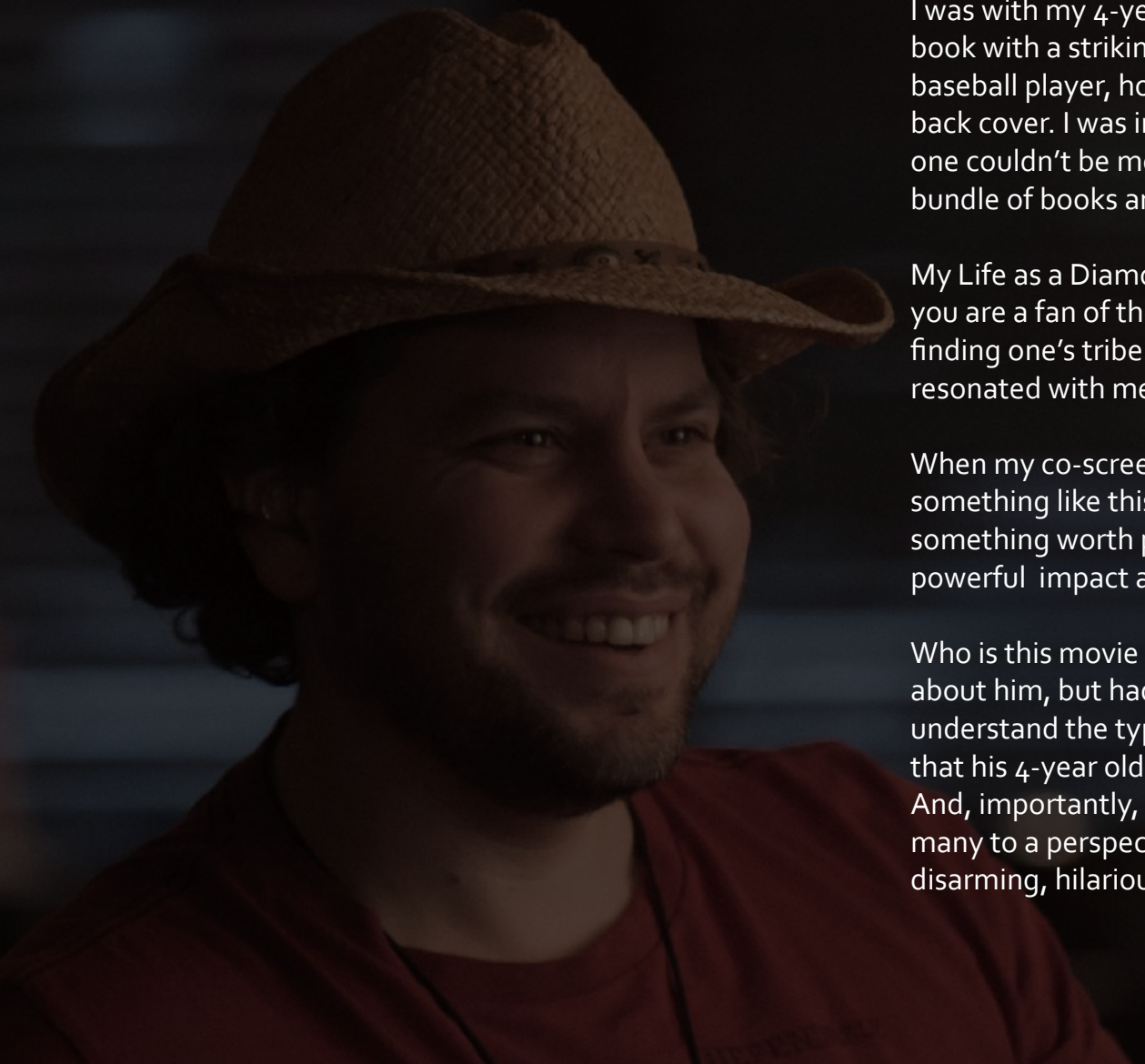
It was also refreshing that the parents are so willing to fight for their kid, and for Nana to be so accepting, much like my own experience with my parents. Sure, at first there was a struggle, because it can be a bit of a shock, but they're nothing but supportive now, and I want kids to see this movie and realize that the stories don't always have a sad ending, that things can go well, and family can be supportive. I also want kids to see this movie because it also shows that the right people, the right found family, will stick with you *no matter what*.

Caz is a character that... honestly, if I had read about him 20 years ago, I probably would have connected with on a level I didn't even understand. When I was around Caz's age, I chopped all my hair off, I started wearing "boys' clothes", I really started coming into my own gender presentation and my masculinity, despite my mother forcing me to wear sparkly earrings and have a 'feminine' haircut. I understand Caz wanting to just .. be himself, be seen for who *he* is, and it not be a big deal, because I want the same thing. I've wanted that for probably half my life.

As I slowly grew more confident, I realized there were so few role models out there in film and TV-land. Sure, there was Max on *The L Word*, who was unfortunately quite a toxic character, and there was *Boys Don't Cry*, which was a tragedy based on a true story, and they were important for the times, and are important to look back on the history of trans masculine representation, but Caz's story was the first time I really saw it from the perspective of a kid, and where the family was so accepting of this young boy.

Telling these kind of stories is the main reason I went to film school. That, and my love of movies. Everything I wrote in school had a trans-masculine protagonist, and while not all the stories were directly about the journey of being trans and figuring out how to navigate that, it was still intrinsic to the character's story. I want to tell stories like this, movies that matter and movies that move people, like the movies that have influenced me and over time, helped me find my own voice.

CO-SCREENWRITER STORY - by Matthew Kowalchuk



I was with my 4-year old son at the Children's library in downtown Vancouver, when I noticed this book with a striking cover image. It showed a picture of what looked like the back of a little league baseball player, holding a ball in one hand and a cut off braid in the other. I picked it up and read the back cover. I was intrigued. My older son, 9, loves baseball more than anything, while my younger one couldn't be more different. He loves Ariel, and Moana, and Elsa and Anna. Along with the bundle of books and DVDs we would get that day, I added *My Life as a Diamond*.

My Life as a Diamond is a well told, engaging baseball story, which is made all the more enjoyable if you are a fan of the game. But it doesn't stop there. It is also a modern tale of gender identity and finding one's tribe. Jenny Manzer's novel contains a unique combination of storytelling that resonated with me well after I had read the last page.

When my co-screenwriter Ollie Hebert read the novel, he said emphatically, "I wish there was something like this out there when I was a kid, or even a teenager". That's when I knew this was truly something worth pursuing. A story that needed to be told, which had the rare ability to make a powerful impact a diverse audience.

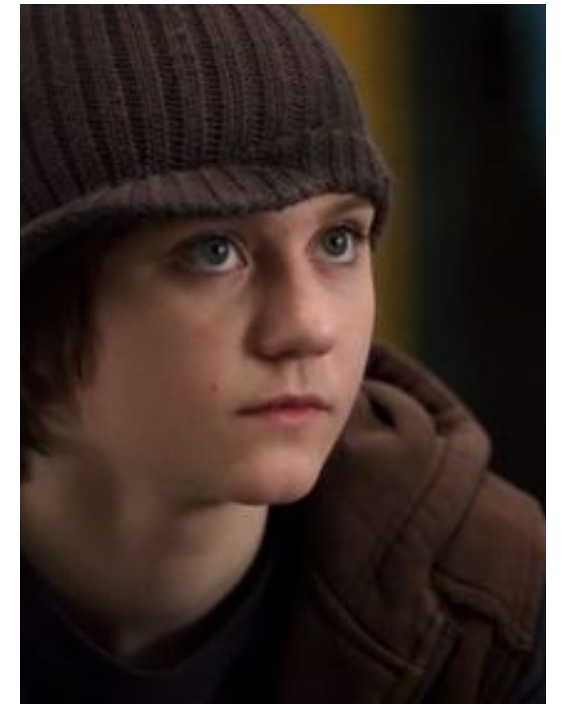
Who is this movie for? It's for kids who, like Ollie, at an early age knew something was different about him, but had no idea where to turn or who to talk to. It's for families who may not know or understand the type of struggle that Caz is going through. It's for a parent like me, who embraces that his 4-year old boy knows that he prefers Disney princesses to baseball, any day of the week. And, importantly, it's also for sports fans. *My Life as a Diamond* is a story that will open the eyes of many to a perspective that has yet to be told in a mainstream film. That it is equally fun, touching, disarming, hilarious, and exciting, is what makes me so passionately want to see it through.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

An unknown actor, (female or transmasculine), similar to Millie Bobby Brown or Jordan Todosey for...

CASPAR "CAZ" CADMAN

Our protagonist is a confident, athletic, mostly sure of himself kid. By the age of 10, he already knows that he's trans, (even if all the language isn't there), and isn't afraid to tell his parents and eventually his entire world. Caz is strong, a fighter, and stands up for what he believes in.



CAST OF CHARACTERS

Alison Pill, Briana Buckmaster, Sarah Polley for...

ALISON CADMAN

Caz's mother and a high school science teacher, is the kind of mom everyone would want. Her internal struggle with her traditional, religious upbringing and how to handle her child coming out as transgender, is a constant challenge. She is supportive, loving, and would fight for her child against whatever she had to. She's a bit of a mama bear and can be rather protective. While she is not close with her own parents, she shares a real bond with her mother-in-law, Nana Cadman.

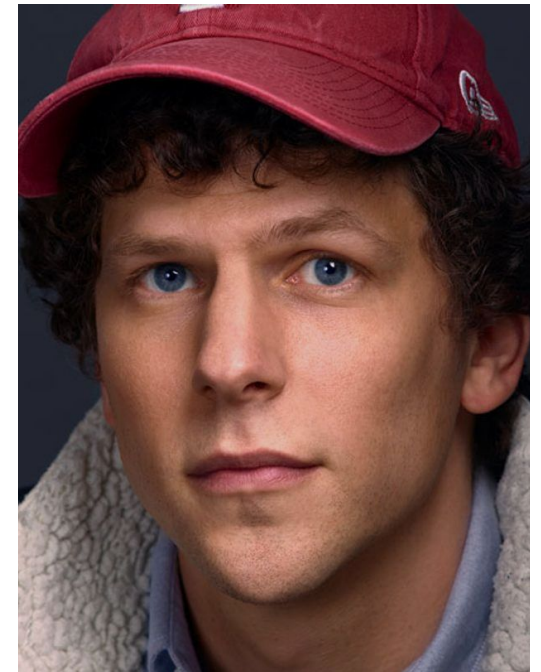
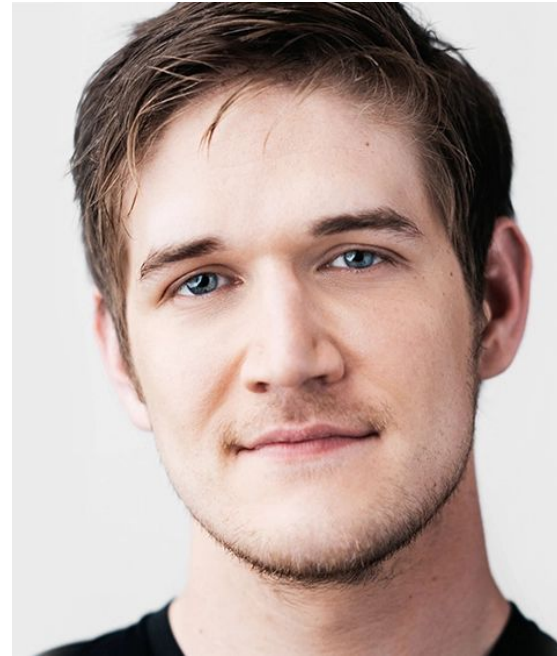


CAST OF CHARACTERS

Bo Burnham, John Cho, Jesse Eisenberg, for...

SAM CADMAN

Sam is the typical “dorky dad” type who loves his family time and tells all kinds of Dad Jokes; but he is also a pilot, and thus spends a lot of time away from home. Out of the three main adult figures in Caz’s life, Sam is the one who takes the longest to fully understand Caz’s gender identity: he supports his child completely, but it takes him a while to get there.

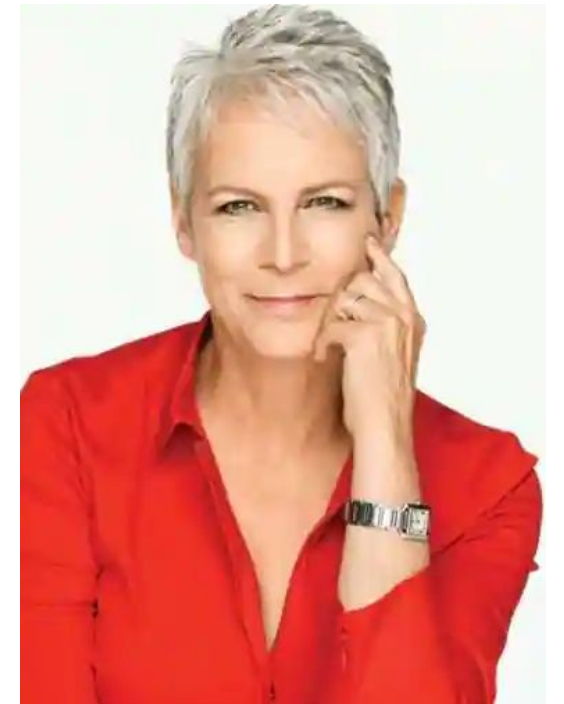


CAST OF CHARACTERS

A showcase role for... Catherine O'Hara, Jamie Lee Curtis, Lily Tomlin

NANA CADMAN

Nana Cadman is probably the coolest grandparent that everyone wishes they had. She's eccentric, outgoing, and has a boatload of life experience with stories for days. Nana loves sports and is one of the loudest fans at any game. She's also Caz's biggest supporter and advocate: she takes Caz for his first shopping trip to get gender affirming clothing.

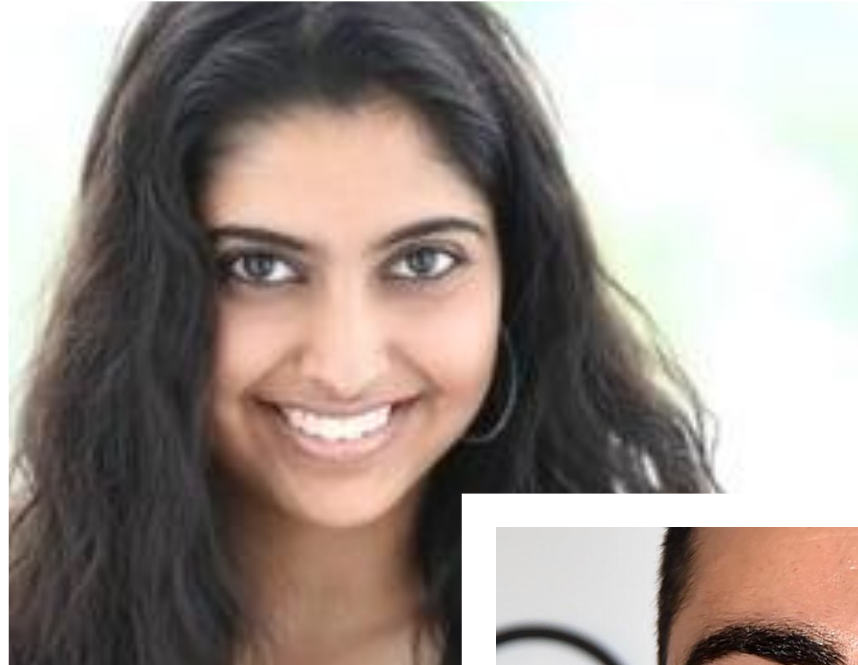


CAST OF CHARACTERS

Lee Majdoub and Aliza Vellani for...

RAVEN'S COACHES VIJAY AND MIRA GOEL

Along with their son, who plays on the Ravens, the kind and supportive "Coach Vij" and the ultra-confident, badass "Coach Mira" (who subs in for her husband on occasion, and has a few tricks up her sleeve) are a passionate baseball family, who turn out to be instrumental in guiding Caz in his journey towards confidence as a ballplayer and acceptance of his identity.



CAST OF CHARACTERS

An unknown actor, similar to Alex Hibbert or Shamon Brown, Jr., for...

HANK

Hank is Caz's first friend in Redburn, Washington, and is quite the character. He has a lot of confidence, especially in his batting ability, and makes a point of showing that off to Caz the first time they meet.



CAST OF CHARACTERS

The Team



THE RAVENS BASEBALL TEAM

All ages 9-10

Note: Character of AJ may be changed to female.



OSCAR: A little bit loud, always has something to say, usually something ridiculous. A bit of an odd duck, can often be seen doing the Moonwalk in the outfield.



BIG GUS: By far the biggest player on the team. He's a gentle giant with a big swing but also the humility to go along with it.



A.J. GOEL: Son of the coaches, a good all around player and a quiet leader.



PATRICK: An excellent pitcher, he's easy going and aloof. Doesn't change whether in practice or if the game is on the line.



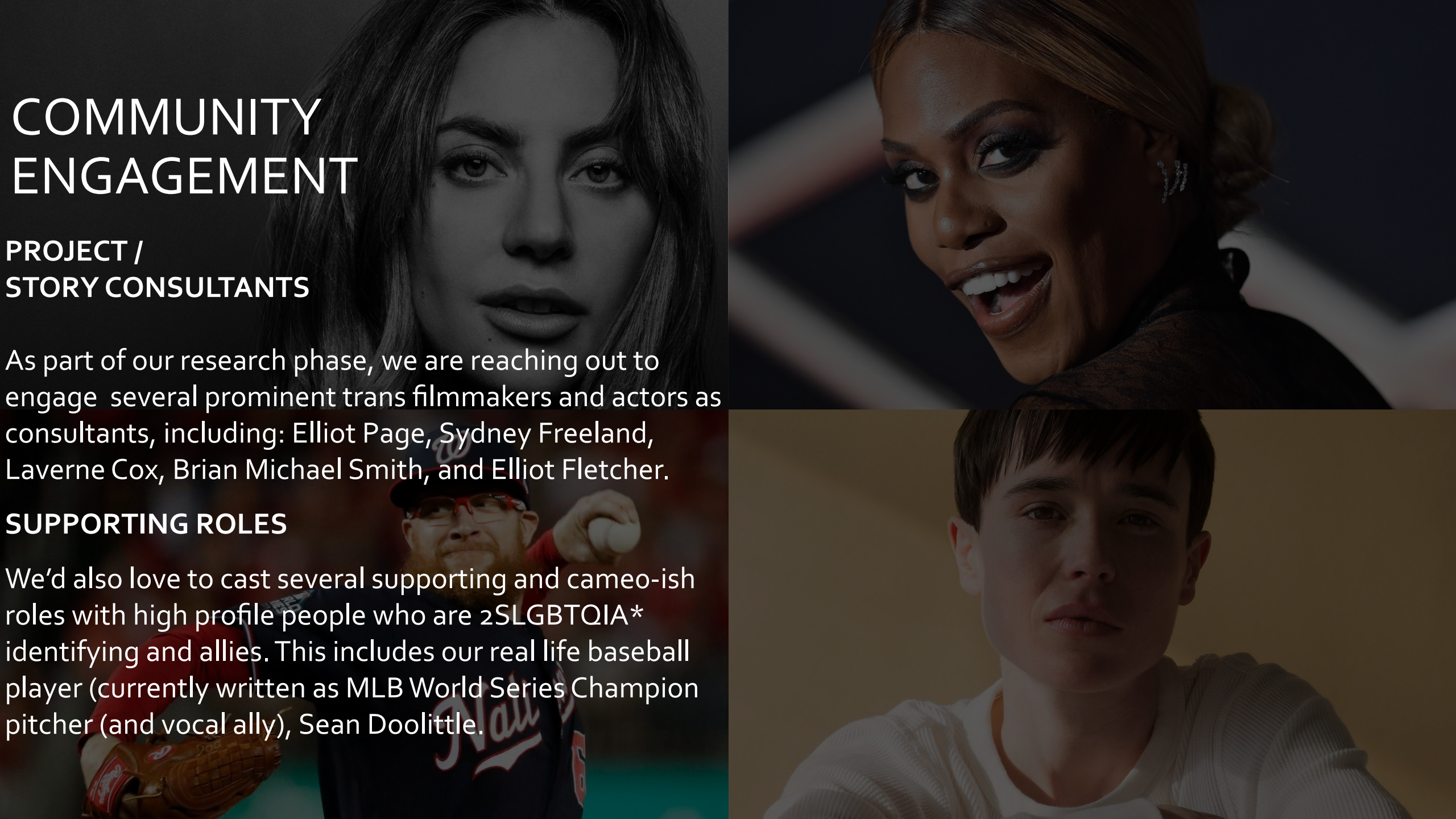
KAHLIL: The quiet kid. Secretly wants to be a rapper.



JEROME: Team clown, often unfocused, but is a good player when he does focus. Talks in Robot Voice occasionally.



DWIGHT: Gamer nerd, tries to bring a gameboy to the dugout.

The background of the text is a collage of three images. The top left image shows a woman with long, dark, wavy hair looking directly at the camera. The top right image shows a woman with blonde hair pulled back, smiling and looking towards the camera. The bottom image shows a man with a beard and glasses, wearing a red baseball cap and a red jersey with 'Nationals' written on it, holding a baseball.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

PROJECT / STORY CONSULTANTS

As part of our research phase, we are reaching out to engage several prominent trans filmmakers and actors as consultants, including: Elliot Page, Sydney Freeland, Laverne Cox, Brian Michael Smith, and Elliot Fletcher.

SUPPORTING ROLES

We'd also love to cast several supporting and cameo-ish roles with high profile people who are 2SLGBTQIA* identifying and allies. This includes our real life baseball player (currently written as MLB World Series Champion pitcher (and vocal ally), Sean Doolittle.

TARGET AUDIENCES

teens, young adults,
and their families

2SLGBTQIA* Community

Sports fans

THEMES

Identity, belonging, coming-of-age
Transgender youth and
2SLGBTQIA+ culture
Family Dynamics
Finding your team
Community vs Self-reliance

STYLE

Heart-centered family drama
Youth-leaning but very much with
adult themes
Authentic baseball, on-the-field
perspective
High drama, real life humor

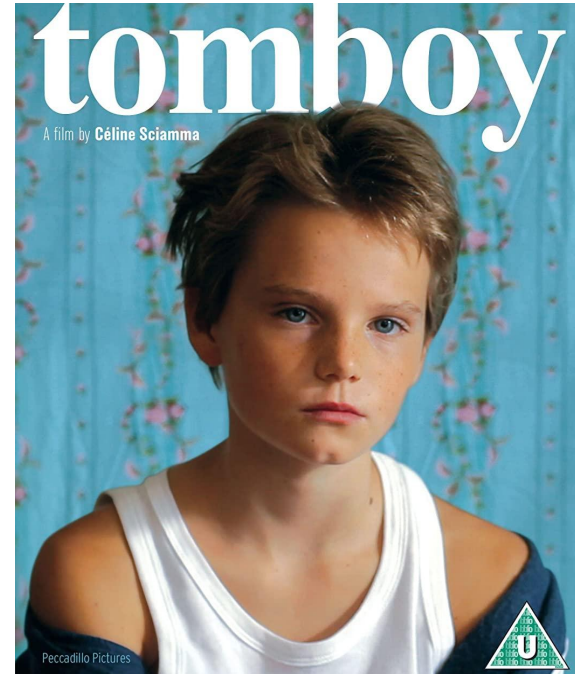


Comparables

Love, Simon 2017, dir. Greg Berlanti, budget \$17 million, gross \$66 million

Tomboy 2011, dir. Celine Sciamma, budget \$1.1 million, gross \$1.4 million

*Budget and BO gross in USD, from ImdbPro



The storyline of Tomboy most closely resembles My Life as a Diamond, but without the baseball. It is also a summer story of a 10-year-old who moves into a new town in summer time, and identifies as a boy. This is a lower budget film with a more free form indie sensibility, and it works. It won prizes not only at several 2SLGBTQIA* festivals, but also at Berlin, Odessa, Buenos Aires, as well as the Lumiere (French Film) Awards. Zoe Heran's lead performance was universally praised.

Love, Simon crossed audience boundaries, playing to the 2SLGBTQIA* audience members as well as traditional rom-com lovers. The tone of this coming of age high school romance was fun but also had a great deal of gravity to it. Love, Simon accomplished the feat of mainstream success while also winning many awards and accolades in the 2SLGBTQIA* community.



Comparables

The Sandlot 1993, dir. David Mickey Evans, budget \$7 million, gross \$34 million

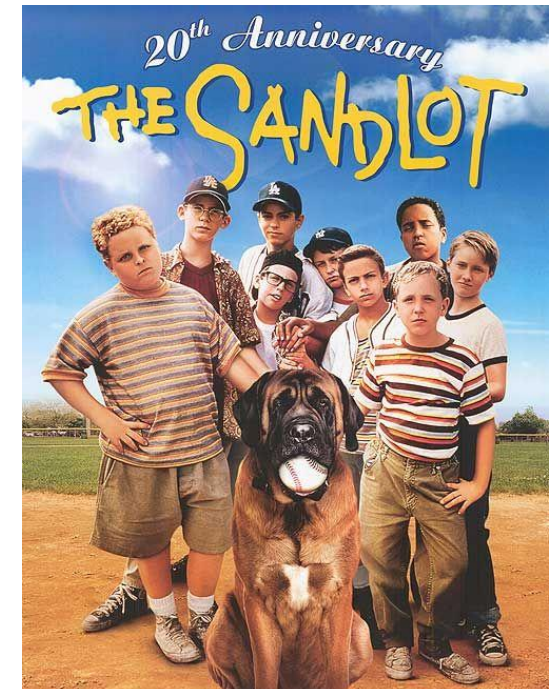
Bend it Like Beckham 2002, dir. Gurinder Chadha, budget \$3.9 million, gross \$76.5 million

*Budget and BO gross in USD, from ImdbPro



Like My Life as a Diamond, BiB was a decidedly out-of-the-box sports tale. The movie tackled racism and became the ultimate girl power underdog story. It found an audience because of its authenticity and unique vision, and is -- as all the great sports movies are -- about so much more than the game itself.

The Sandlot is a much beloved film, that, like My Life as a Diamond, is not only about baseball, but also becoming a part of a team/tribe. This is probably the closest comparison, in terms of both budget, story type, and theme.



Marketplace Potential

My Life as a Diamond is a family movie that will cross demographic boundaries. A good sports movie never goes out of style, and while the film will cater to sports and baseball fans, it will also attract an 2SLGBTQIA* audience. While baseball films are typically of interest to North American audiences, there is also a case to be made for more international appeal than usual.

The market right now is becoming more and more diverse, to the point where it's now possible that a film which might formerly have merely found a 'niche' audience, can now realistically find a much larger, broader base. Or rather, *they* can find *it*. Though 2SLGBTQIA* films have been around for ages, there has been a healthy growth and interest in them recently, as lower budget films like Love, Simon, and Moonlight (as different as they are in style and tone) have been given not only warm critical receptions but have both broken \$60 million at the box office. Meanwhile, streaming services like Netflix and Disney Plus have both formally made and shown commitments to 2SLGBTQIA* representation.

This is the right time for this film. The opportunity for a wide audience has never been greater.



THE CREATIVE TEAM

MATTHEW KOWALCHUK – PRODUCER / CO-SCREENWRITER

Matthew is a filmmaker who is hard of hearing. His first feature, *LAWRENCE & HOLLOWMAN* (Producer, Director, Co-Screenwriter), won the Canadian Comedy Award for Best Feature. At the film's VIFF premiere, he won the BC Emerging Director Award, quickly followed by Best Canadian Feature and the Rising Star Filmmaker Award from the Edmonton IFF. L&H went on to capture over a dozen major awards while playing across North America, and in far off locales such as Cannes, Perth, and Shanghai.

Matthew also directed the much-loved Crazy8s winning film, *BEDBUGS: A MUSICAL LOVE STORY* (*Best Short, EIFF, VTXIFF, RxSM*), a tour de force musical comedy that has been seen internationally, and recently was picked up for broadcast in Japan.

Matthew's producer credits include the ambitious live action-animation hybrid, *PENGUINS (ARE SO SENSITIVE TO MY NEEDS)*, which was commissioned for Kickstart Disability Arts & Culture's inaugural Wide Angle Media Festival. His experimental and personal 16mm film, *HEARING TEST* (*Best Short Finalist, Austin, TX, Cinema Touching Disability Film Festival*); And his debut, the 35mm-shot *THE JANITORS* (co-directed with Daniel Arnold), which won the National Screen Institute's Drama Prize.

He is also proud to be called "Coach Matthew" during baseball season, when he coaches his son's Little League team.

THE CREATIVE TEAM

OLLIE HEBERT - CO-SCREENWRITER

Ollie's activism in the 2SLGBTQIA* community started when he was 15 years old and came out as queer. Ollie began active participation with the Day of Silence; a non-violent protest to stand up against homophobia, transphobia, and biphobia. He has marched in Calgary Pride Parades, attended protests, and by graduation had started his research into LGBTQIA+ studies.

Ollie came out as trans-masculine and queer, (after many years worth of a gender and sexuality journey), in his 20's. It took a lot to come to the conclusion and acceptance of allowing himself to be fluid and not be stuck into labels that felt too rigid for him. Ollie is also proudly plus size and views it as an important part of his identity; and that we need more images of queer and trans* of all shapes, sizes, expressions and ethnicities.

Ollie is a graduate of Vancouver Acting School's full time Screenwriting Intensive, and was Valedictorian for his class.



THE CREATIVE TEAM

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

MARY ANNE WATERHOUSE (QUADRANT MOTION PICTURES)

Mary Anne is a two-time Canadian Screen Awards winning producer, with a resume that includes over 75 film and TV productions. Recent projects include line producing the Netflix series, *Tiny Pretty Things*, the Netflix Family Feature *NIGHTBOOKS* (Co-Producer), (made entirely during the COVID pandemic), and *13: The Musical* (Co-Producer). Her most recent film is Quadrant's *THE INVISIBLES*, which premiered at Cinequest 24 where it won the Audience Favorite Award.

Previously, Mary Anne ran production on Neill Blomkamp's *ELYSIUM*, starring Matt Damon and Jodie Foster; and Joss Whedon's horror parody *CABIN IN THE WOODS*. She also produced *DONOVAN'S ECHO* starring Danny Glover and Bruce Greenwood, *THE THAW* starring Val Kilmer, and the Lionsgate award-winning zombie comedy *FIDO*. Directed and co-written by Andrew Currie and starring Carrie-Anne Moss, Billy Connolly, Dylan Baker, and Tim Blake Nelson. Mary Anne is currently EVP of content production at Peacock Alley Entertainment (*Travelers*, *Tiny Pretty Things*, *New Eden*).





THE CREATIVE TEAM

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

ANDREW CURRIE (QUADRANT MOTION PICTURES)

Andrew completed SFU's film program and the CFC Director's residency. He directed the critically acclaimed/award-winning drama MILE ZERO, co-wrote and directed the zombie/satire, FIDO (2006) (Carrie Anne Moss, Billy Connolly), world premiere TIFF (2006), Sundance Film Festival (2007) and directed/produced the comedy/drama THE STEPS (James Brolin, Christine Lahti, Jason Ritter, Emmanuelle Chriqui) world premiere TIFF (2015) Closing Gala 2016 Miami International Film Festival. Just released is his most recent film, THE INVISIBLES, which premiered at Cinequest 24 and took home the Audience Favorite prize.

He produced THE DELICATE ART OF PARKING (1993), and executive produced LAWRENCE & HOLLOWMAN (2013), and INDIAN ROAD TRIP (2020). He is currently developing the TV series THE SIX at Peacock Alley, with co-creator Mike Rinaldi, and AT THE END OF THE WORLD a new feature, with co-writer Renalitta Arluk.