

WHITE RABBIT



Mister Lister Films

Runtime: 71 minutes



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SALES AGENTS

XYZ Films

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SYNOPSIS:

A dramatic comedy following a Korean American performance artist who struggles to be authentically heard and seen through her multiple identities in modern Los Angeles.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT:

I first encountered Vivian Bang while she was doing a performance art piece at the Redcat Theater in downtown Los Angeles. Entitled, "Can You Hear Me? / LA 92," this was an extraordinary piece in which Vivian embodied a Korean immigrant retelling the harrowing experience of living with her family under the duress of the LA riots in the early 90s. It is a slice of history rarely told and one that was certainly under explored in my secondary education in suburban Connecticut. All I recalled of the riots were images from the horrific beating of Rodney King and the civil unrest broadcast in graphic news reports from Southern California. Vivian's visceral piece opened my eyes to the specific friction between the black community and the Korean American community, the glaring lack of accountability of the news media and police, the thousands of Korean businesses that were destroyed, and the lives that were lost, all told through the power of monologue.

Hearing Vivian channel the struggles of a Korean woman during that time period made me reflect on my own privileged upbringing, and how little strife I had endured as a young white man growing up in such an insular and homogenous environment. We've all been brought up on the tenet of "the American dream", but it took on a much different meaning in this heightened and emotionally fraught context. Here were two marginalized communities struggling for freedom from oppression and fighting for space in a deeply broken system. They were underserved, underrepresented and tragically mistreated. Unfortunately, under these desperate circumstances, animosity emerged and violence erupted. Both sides turned on each other, while the outside world watched their neighborhoods burn.

When I left the theater, I felt a mixture of emotions; I was moved, heartbroken, enraged, guilty, enlightened. Suffice it to say I couldn't shake Vivian's gripping portrayal. I wanted to know more. *Who was she in real life? What was her life like as an artist? How did she come to tell this story?* These were just some of the questions on my mind when I first approached her through a mutual friend in Los Angeles. I told her I had recently finished making a film called *Blueprint*, about the aftermath of a police shooting of an unarmed black man in South Side Chicago, featuring real members of the community. While this would be a story different in both content and tone, I told her I was interested in creating a fictional world around elements of her real life, in a similar fashion.

From early on in my career, beginning with my first narrative feature, *Breaking Upwards*, I have been fascinated with blurring the line between fact and fiction, and meta explorations of identity. I'm endlessly curious about the ways we perceive both each other and ourselves. As I have gotten older, I have become more and more interested in

blending the personal with the political, especially as our world has become increasingly plagued with so much tragedy and injustice. As a white male filmmaker, I try to be conscious of intersectionality and identity politics, and I have been appalled by how little Asian American representation there has been and continues to be in Film and TV. I felt it was important to give opportunity where it was desperately needed, and to use the resources that were available to me to showcase this incredible talent. Not to mention, shining a spotlight on a strong and complicated female protagonist at a time when women, especially women of color, are still fighting for accurate and meaningful portrayals onscreen.

Building on the amazing foundation Vivian laid in her performance piece, I was inspired to make a film about the nature of identity and the process of being an artist. I wanted to explore the contemporary conditions under which the “fictional” Vivian lived and made work, and the every day challenges she faced. Having experienced my own struggles as an artist, the ups and downs, the inconsistencies, the heartbreak, I was interested in looking at the nuances of those emotions, as well as the question of art versus commerce, and how those two worlds are in constant conflict. Additionally, as an artist, I feel a responsibility to create work that serves as a mirror for our present world. But at the same time, I have been questioning if making art is unimportant in light of more serious ways to fix our broken society. It was out of discussions between Vivian and I around these ideas that White Rabbit was born.

As a filmmaker, I was interested in playing with both form and formula. Often times, in my experience, excessive planning and heavy script development can kill the joy of the artistic process. Extreme levels of control will sometimes, not always, compromise the intention of the piece and may lead to a potentially contrived product. I was interested in cultivating a different experience; one that was completely unadulterated, straight from our hearts and minds, built with a complex hybrid tone; something that was unmistakably real and uncomfortable and awkward and idiosyncratic but that still possessed a narrative thrust. The structure would come intuitively from the way the performances were naturally unfolding and evolving as we progressed. At the same time, we had to be open to failure, and sometimes even welcome it. As we embarked on our journey, it became clear that the filmmaking was, in essence, mirroring the film. Both were posing the same question: what does it mean to be an artist trying to find your place in the world, while everything around you is uncertain? The story we were telling was a lesson I had been seeking, but one that had not yet become crystallized; perhaps, simply put, to just let go and trust in the process.

BIOS



FILMMAKER/PRODUCER/CREATOR/EDITOR

Daryl Wein founded Mister Lister Films with his partner, Zoe Lister-Jones (BAND AID). He directed Greta Gerwig in *Lola Versus* for Fox Searchlight, *Breaking Upwards* for IFC Films, *Blueprint* for The Orchard, and *Consumed* for Mar Vista. He directed the documentary SEX POSITIVE (SXSW). He executive produced *Band Aid*, which premiered at Sundance in 2017, released by IFC Films. In TV, he directed for *Mozart in the Jungle* on Amazon.



LEAD ACTRESS/PRODUCER/CREATOR:

Vivian Bang had a lead role on POPTV's *Swedish Dicks* with Peter Stormare, Keanu Reeves, and Johan Glans. She was on TBS hit comedy series *Sullivan & Son*, produced by Vince Vaughn for 3 seasons. Bang is also known for her supporting role as "Soo-Mi" in the Warner Bro's hit comedy feature *Yes Man*, starring Jim Carrey. Other film credits include: *Memoirs of a Geisha*, *Boy Toy*, *Little Black Book*, *Robot Stories*, *Henry Fool*, and the 2006 Oscar-nominated short *Our Time Is Up*. TV credits include: Epix's *Get Shorty*, Freeform's *Famous In Love*, NBC's *A to Z*, MTV's *Status Updates*, ABC's *Better Off Ted*, CBS' *Numb3rs*, *House M.D.*, *Kath & Kim*, *How I Met Your Mother*, *Monk*, *Sex & The City*, *The Corner* and *Becker*.



CO-STAR

Nana Ghana is the 24th grand daughter of the sitting King in Ghana. As an actress, she can be seen in James Franco's upcoming film, *The Long Home*, and his previous film *The Institute*. She appeared in Janicza Bravo's short *Woman in Deep*. She was on the TV series *R.I.P.* Ghana studied acting at New York's HB Studio and was a regular player and member of the Shea Theater Group in Harlem.

END CREDITS

Directed by

Daryl Wein

Story by

Vivian Bang

Daryl Wein

Produced by

Vivian Bang

Daryl Wein

Associate Produced by

Nana Ghana

Executive Produced by

Zoe Lister-Jones

Executive Produced by

Christopher Pannizon

Co-Executive Produced by

Elsa Ramo

Tiffany Boyle

Starring

Vivian Bang

Co-starring

Nana Ghana

A Daryl Wein Film

A Mister Lister Films Production

WHITE RABBIT

Directors of Photography

Daryl Wein

Tyler Beus

Edited by
Daryl Wein
Spencer Rollins

Additional Editing by
Elizabeth Yng-Wong
Ella Hatamian
Jamie Kennedy

Assistant Editorial Services
Jackie Begane

Supporting Cast / Story Contributors

Nico Evers-Swindell
Tracy Hazas
Nana Ghana
Aaron Hatch
Erin Falls
Stephen Seemayer
Emmanuel Diner
Wanda Wang
Michelle Sui
Raina Lee
Sharon Dang
Elizabeth Sung
Nikhil Ra
Lena Gora