

# SUPERGIRL

A Film by Jessie Auritt

## PRESS NOTES



## SOCIAL MEDIA

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## **LOGLINE**

Naomi seems like a typical nine-year-old girl, until her passion for powerlifting transforms her life with world record-breaking championships and national news headlines. SUPERGIRL explores Naomi's coming-of-age journey as she and her Orthodox Jewish family are changed forever by her inner strength and extraordinary talent.

## **SYNOPSIS**

When a nine-year-old girl breaks a powerlifting world record, she turns into an international phenomenon and "Supergirl" is born. Naomi Kutin seems like a typical Orthodox Jewish pre-teen, until her extraordinary talent transforms the lives of her family and thrusts her into news headlines. SUPERGIRL follows Naomi's unique coming-of-age story as she fights to hold on to her title while navigating the perils of adolescence—from strict religious obligations to cyber-bullying, and health issues which could jeopardize her future in powerlifting. Can she still be "Supergirl" if she can no longer break world records? With a passionate family supporting her each step of the way, Naomi must learn to accept herself and discover she is as strong inside as she is outside.

## **LONG SYNOPSIS**

In the testosterone-fueled sport of powerlifting, the last person one expects to see is a slight, 95-pound, nine-year-old Orthodox Jewish girl. Since she began competitively lifting at the age of eight, under the coaching of her father, Naomi "Supergirl" Kutin has consistently shocked spectators and lifters alike, lifting nearly three times her bodyweight and breaking one record after another. Nicknamed "Supergirl" by her parents, she has become an international media sensation, appearing on multiple television shows and amassing thousands of fans on social media.

SUPERGIRL follows Naomi as she prepares for two major life events - her Bat Mitzvah, the symbolic entrance to womanhood in Jewish tradition, and the biggest powerlifting competition of her life, where she is attempting to break a new world record in the 97 pound weight class. Along with the universal struggles of adolescence, Naomi must deal with strict religious traditions, cyberbullying, and health issues. Things take a sudden turn for the worse after a contest, leaving Naomi's future in powerlifting unknown and her identity thrown into crisis. Can she still be "Supergirl" if she can no longer break world records?

Shot over the course of three years, SUPERGIRL follows Naomi as she comes of age and confronts these challenges. As she grows up, her idea of what it means to be "Supergirl" changes and she begins to take ownership of her identity. She learns to find fulfillment by meeting her own goals, instead of measuring herself against the expectations of others. Ultimately, she learns to accept herself and discovers that her she is as strong inside as she is outside.

SUPERGIRL is not only a coming of age story or a sports film, nor is it solely about religion or women's empowerment. It is a combination of all of these elements, which makes it dynamic, nuanced and compelling. At its core, SUPERGIRL is a film about growing up and finding your identity. It tells a modern coming of age story about figuring out who you are amidst the pressures of today's society. The film is about contemporary families and tells a new kind of American story. It's about embracing your strengths and your differences and holding fast to your beliefs—even in the face of adversity.

## **DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT**

JESSIE AURITT

As a director, I see documentary filmmaking as an opportunity to shed light on unique characters, circumstances, and issues that most audiences know little about. As I did with my short film, *THE BIRDMAN*, my goal as a filmmaker is to make what might at first glance seem strange or inconceivable, relatable to the viewer. Through personal narrative storytelling, and a bit of humor, my hope is for the audience to identify and empathize with the characters on a personal level that will transcend preconceived stereotypes or stigmas.

I first learned about Naomi and her family in January of 2013 when I came across a piece on her in the *Jewish Daily Forward*. Having grown up as a non-practicing secular Jew and somewhat of an athlete myself, I was fascinated by her story and the dichotomy of her world. I immediately wanted to find out more about Naomi and explore the intersection of competitive powerlifting and Orthodox Judaism in her life. Shortly after an initial phone call and a visit to the Kutin household, accompanied by my cinematographer and producer, Carmen Delaney, we began making *SUPERGIRL*.

While Naomi's circumstances are unique, many of the issues she faces are universal. We have all gone through that trying phase of adolescence - struggling to figure out who we are and our place in the world. My hope is that *SUPERGIRL* will be a source of empowerment and inspiration for a broad audience, particularly for women and girls. As female protagonists have long been underrepresented in film, it is especially crucial to see strong female characters on screen who do not conform to gender stereotypes. Naomi is a great example of a young woman who is not afraid to put herself out there, break boundaries and pursue her goals. I am excited and honored to tell her story in *SUPERGIRL*.

## ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

### JESSIE AURITT - Director/Producer/Editor

Jessie Auritt is an award-winning documentary filmmaker based in New York City. Her short film, THE BIRDMAN, screened at festivals around the country and received multiple awards, including the Slamdance Grand Jury Prize for Short Documentary in 2013. In addition to independent filmmaking, she has shot, edited, directed, and produced videos for UNICEF, IFC.com, the New York Daily News, and many other companies and nonprofit organizations. Jessie is an alumni of the IFP Documentary Lab and a member of the women's filmmaker group, Film Fatales. SUPERGIRL is Jessie's debut as a feature film director.

### CARMEN DELANEY - Cinematographer/Producer

Carmen Delaney is a NY & LA based cinematographer, known for her unique narrative approach to shooting documentaries. Her work has been screened at film festivals around the world. Delaney has shot corporate, industrial and commercial work for clients such as Google, Adobe, HP, AirBnB, Puma, Sephora, Chase, Pfizer and The City of New York. She is a fellow of CIFF's Points North Fellowship, Film Independent's Fast Track program and Doc Lab, IFP's Spotlight on Documentaries and Documentary Labs and she is currently a 2016 Project Involve Fellow.

### JUSTIN LEVY - Co-Producer

Justin Levy is a freelance film producer and writer working in documentary and narrative film. He is currently the associate producer for SACRED, a feature documentary for PBS by Academy Award-winning director Thomas Lennon. He worked with director Marshall Curry on his latest documentary, POINT AND SHOOT, which was awarded the Grand Jury Prize for Best Documentary at the 2014 Tribeca Film Festival, released theatrically in over 75 cities, and aired on PBS, BBC, and other networks worldwide. His narrative work includes the features VALEDICTORIAN (Rotterdam, 2015) and I USED TO BE DARKER (Sundance and Berlin, 2013).

### ERIK DUGGER - Editor

While working in Asia, Erik's early projects explored topics ranging from innovations in stem-cell research, eco-tourism in Malaysia, to the UN's land mine removal mission in Lebanon. Since moving to the US eight years ago, he has worked on a number of feature-length documentaries that include BLOOD, SWEAT + GEARS, featuring a professional American cycling team, THE MAGIC LIFE, which follows three aspiring magicians trying to turn their passion into a career, NO LE DIGAS A NADIE, the story of an undocumented immigrant activist publicly coming out of the shadows, and LITTLE WHITE LIE, in which a young Jewish woman raised in an all-white community confronts her family & her own identity after discovering she is actually black at age eighteen. His work has been featured on the Sundance Channel, the Discovery Channel, A&E Biography, as well as PBS's Independent Lens and POV series.

### ELIOT KRIMSKY & DEREK NIEVERGELT - Composer & Music Producer

Eliot Krinsky is a co-founder and lead singer of the band Glass Ghost, composer, and media artist. Glass Ghost has been called "delicately brave" by Andy McCluskey of the electronic group OMD, and "weird and mournful yet highly rhythmic" by Time Out New York. In 2015, Glass Ghost did an interactive new media performance at Lincoln Center. Krinsky has collaborated with Meshell Ndegeocello, Open House, Battle Trance, Here We Go Magic, choreographer Beth Gill, and director Dustin Guy Defa. His music has been featured for film and television on HBO and at the Sundance Film Festival, and for dance in the Laurie Anderson curated Live Ideas festival. Krinsky has done multimedia performances with the NY arts organization Performance Space 122, and has performed at venues such as Lincoln Center, The Kitchen, O2 Arena London, and Montreal Jazz Festival.

Derek Nievergelt is a graduate of the Berklee School of Music. After being selected for the Thelonious Monk Institute at New England Conservatory, Derek received one-on-one instruction from the institute's musical director, legendary bassist Ron Carter. Derek has toured internationally as a member of Terence Blanchard's quintet. While in Blanchard's band, Derek recorded the trumpeter's Grammy-nominated album, Let's Get Lost, and was featured on the score to Spike Lee's film Bamboozled. As a performer and recording artist, Derek has played with a diverse selection of artists like Nancy Wilson, Cassandra Wilson, Dianne Reeves, Diana Krall, Coldplay, and Keb Mo to name a few. As a songwriter and producer Derek has written and released songs for Sharon Jones and the Dap

Kings, and he Co-Produced Robin McKelle's Sony release Soul Flower and Co-Wrote many of the Songs on Soul Flower and her follow up release Heart of Memphis.

# END CREDITS

## SUPERGIRL

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**Directed by**  
Jessie Auritt

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**Produced by**  
Jessie Auritt & Carmen Delaney

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**Co-Produced by**  
Justin Levy

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**Edited by**  
Jessie Auritt & Erik Dugger

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**Cinematography by**  
Carmen Delaney

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**Music by**  
Eliot Krimsky & Derek Neivergelt

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