

HAF 07 I AM A BANANA!



COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: Singapore, Canada

GENRE | FORMAT | LANGUAGE | RUNNING TIME: Comedy, Romance | HD | English, Singlish, Mandarin | 90 mins

DIRECTOR:

Honey B SINGH

PRODUCER:

Mona SINGH, Gabrielle KELLY

HAF GOALS:

Funds, Co-producers

BUDGET:

US\$500,000

SECURED BUDGET:

US\$125,000

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

First Feature Director

ONE-SENTENCE SYNOPSIS

What happens when a 'banana' who has never embraced her Asian roots receives a ticket to Singapore, where her late absentee father has left her a shophouse? Presenting Olivia Lee!

SYNOPSIS

Olivia Lee is a typical Asian Canadian, aka "a Banana" - white on the inside and yellow on the outside. She knows nothing about her Chinese heritage, rebukes the traditions and only dates white men because of her absentee Singaporean father. She is struggling with mounting student debt and taking care of her ill mother in Toronto. Eventually she gets fired from her BuzzFeed-esque video producer job for endangering the life of a colleague and also is dumped by her white boyfriend for not having a "real culture."

Unexpectedly, a call from her late father's estate leads her onto a 22-hour flight to Singapore, where she discovers a derelict shophouse that now belongs to her.

Olivia lands in Singapore and meets her overly hospitable and pushy uncle who tries to dissuade her from visiting the shophouse, which is situated in the Geylang neighbourhood on the East Coast. Olivia nonetheless begins to explore the neighbourhood, where she discovers where her father grew up, and feels the strong community spirit in all the residents. As she begins to meet people, discover local culture and even fall in love with a local hawker-stall boy, Olivia realizes that she has found a real family.

In the middle of all these, her opportunistic uncle tries to cut Olivia a hefty deal to turn the shophouse into a boutique hotel in exchange for all the student loans will be cleared and her mother's treatment will be taken care of.

As Olivia tries to accept her new-found identity in a country that is willing to embrace her and a love that begins to blossom, she must choose between who she believes she is and who she must become.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I am the quintessential tri-cultural kid in the sense that I was born in India and raised in Singapore and Canada. My friends always called me a coconut and now as a 29-year-old I wholeheartedly embrace the fruit that I am!

I want to tell the story of Olivia Lee as a banana because I feel there is a new identity taking shape caused by traveling, by birth, and by immigration and this creates a unique and relatable challenge for my generation who are trying to figure out who they are.

I feel that Olivia's struggle to understand her Asian roots with her Western sensibilities is a very prevalent theme in society which I want to explore in a romantic-comedy premise.

Singapore is the ideal country for Olivia to rediscover herself because it has such an array of multiracial and multicultural lifestyles which will force Olivia to engage with the lively expat community and warm local population - creating hilarious opportunities to discuss issues like ethnocentricity, modern versus traditional values and what it means to be...a banana!

I AM A BANANA! offers that perfect combination of a local story with a global relatable message.

I believe that it very important to showcase an empowered Asian-Canadian female navigating two very strong cultures in her own way because these perspectives are very underrepresented. I have grown up with a very influential female role model in my mother who has always pushed me to accept myself as I am and *I AM A BANANA!* is a story of Olivia accepting herself as she is.

The message of creating your own identity and having the power to choose your own path is at the heart of my film which is essentially about being true to yourself.

DIRECTOR

Honey B SINGH

Honey is a Canadian writer-director who graduated from with an MFA in film production from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts Asia in Singapore in 2016.

For the past four years, Honey has been writing, directing and producing short films, music videos and commercials which have won awards and played at numerous film festivals.

Honey's short film *HEER* (2015) has won many awards including Best Short Film at the London Asian Film Festival and Emerging Female Filmmaker at the Dada Saheb Phalke Film Festival in Delhi, India.

This past March, *HEER* (2015) was screened at some of the most prestigious film festivals geared towards children including Toronto International Film Festival for Kids, Ajyal Youth Film Festival in Doha and the Montreal World Film Festival. Honey's first-ever commercial, which she wrote-directed for the MOFILM competition, won 3rd place and subsequently Häagen-Dazs incorporated it in their China campaign where it aired in movie theatres all over the country.

Honey was invited to attend the NALIP's Diverse Women in Media Residency Lab 2015 (which is the only screenplay lab in the world geared towards women-of-colour) to further develop *Arrange Me* (a South Asian cross-cultural romantic-comedy script) with other female creatives and mentors.

PRODUCER

Mona SINGH

Mona Singh is a Canadian-Indian producer (and Honey B Singh's mother) who has grown up on Bollywood cinema as she spent her youth living in India, the Middle East and Canada.

Her strong belief in female empowerment and love of films has led her to take on the role of co-founder and producer at Honeylove Films to develop films which feature strong female characters and stories.

Mona Singh resides in Singapore.

Gabrielle KELLY

Gabrielle Kelly is a screenwriter and producer of diverse content for the global marketplace with expertise in production in Asia. She is the recipient of two Fulbright Awards: in screenwriting at Taipei National University of the Arts, Taiwan and as writer/mentor in the screenwriting /producing Lab for the ASEAN Independent Cinema Project in the Philippines.

In Hollywood she ran producer Robert Evans' company (*Godfather, Rosemary's Baby, Love Story, Chinatown*) at Paramount Studios working in development and production on a slate of diverse projects and has worked as Executive and Producer at HBO, Fields Hellman, CBS Films, Eddie Murphy Productions and Warner Bros.

She has consulted on many international productions such as China's *Empire of Silver*, starring Jennifer Tilly and Russia's Oscar nominee *The Edge*.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Honeylove Films

Honeylove Films is a boutique production company founded by Honey B Singh and her mother Mona Singh. The company's primary purpose is to create stories and develop projects for film and television which feature strong female protagonists of colour whose faces and voices are vastly underrepresented.

To date, Honeylove Films first short film *HEER* (2015) which was developed and produced within the company has played at over 16 festivals and won up the Best Short Film award at the London Asian Film Festival, Best Emerging Female Filmmaker and Best Actor at the prestigious Dada Saheb Phalke Film Festival in Delhi. Mona won Best Producer at the New York University, Tisch School of the Arts' First Run Film Festival for the gruelling schedule in rural North India for *HEER*.

Honeylove Films is developing a slate of films about women-of-colour including an arranged marriage cross-cultural romantic comedy set in the thriving South Asian community in Toronto.