

= Little Miss Sunshine =

Little Miss Sunshine is a 2006 American black comedy @-@ drama road film and the directorial film debut of the husband @-@ wife team of Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris . The screenplay was written by first @-@ time writer Michael Arndt . The film stars Greg Kinnear , Steve Carell , Toni Collette , Paul Dano , Abigail Breslin and Alan Arkin , and was produced by Big Beach Films on a budget of US \$ 8 million . Filming began on June 6 , 2005 and took place over 30 days in Arizona and Southern California .

The film premiered at the Sundance Film Festival on January 20 , 2006 , and its distribution rights were bought by Fox Searchlight Pictures for one of the biggest deals made in the history of the festival . The film had a limited release in the United States on July 26 , 2006 , and later expanded to a wider release starting on August 18 .

Little Miss Sunshine had an international box office gross of \$ 100 @.@ 5 million . The film was nominated for four Academy Awards , including Best Picture , and won two : Best Original Screenplay for Michael Arndt and Best Supporting Actor for Alan Arkin . It also won the Independent Spirit Award for Best Feature and received numerous other accolades .

= = Plot = =

Sheryl Hoover is an overworked mother of two living in Albuquerque , New Mexico . Her brother , Frank , is a scholar of French author Proust and a homosexual , temporarily living at home with the family after having attempted suicide . Sheryl 's husband Richard is a Type A personality striving to build a career as a motivational speaker and life coach . Dwayne , Sheryl 's son from a previous marriage , is a Nietzsche @-@ reading teenager who has taken a vow of silence until he can accomplish his dream of becoming a test pilot . Richard 's foulmouthed father , Edwin , recently evicted from a retirement home for snorting heroin , lives with the family . Olive , the daughter of Richard and Sheryl and the youngest of the Hoover family , is an aspiring beauty queen who is coached by Edwin .

Olive learns she has qualified for the " Little Miss Sunshine " beauty pageant that is being held in Redondo Beach , California in two days . Her parents and Edwin , who has been coaching her , want to support her , and Frank and Dwayne cannot be left alone , so the whole family goes . Because they have little money , they go on an 800 @-@ mile road trip in their yellow Volkswagen Type 2 .

Family tensions play out on the highway and at stops along the way , amidst the aging VW van 's mechanical problems . When the van breaks down early on , the family learns that they must push the van until it is moving at about 20 mph before it is put into gear , at which point they have to run up to the side door and jump in . Later on , the van 's horn starts honking unceasingly by itself .

Throughout the road trip , the family suffers numerous personal setbacks and discover their need for each other 's support . Richard loses an important contract that would have jump @-@ started his motivational business . Frank encounters the ex @-@ boyfriend who , in leaving him for an academic rival , had prompted his suicide attempt . Edwin dies from a heroin overdose , resulting in the family smuggling the body out of a hospital and nearly having it discovered by the police . During the final leg of the trip , Dwayne discovers that he is color blind , which means he cannot become a pilot , a realization that prompts him to break his silence , and shout his anger and disdain for his family .

The climax takes place at the beauty pageant . After a frantic race against the clock the family arrives at the hotel , and are curtly told by a pageant organizer that they are a couple minutes past the deadline . A sympathetic hired hand instead offers to register Olive on his own time . As Olive prepares for the pageant , the family sees Olive 's competition : slim , hypersexualized pre @-@ teen girls with teased hair and capped teeth . They wear lip gloss , adult @-@ like swimsuits , and glamorous evening wear while performing highly elaborate dance numbers with great panache . It quickly becomes apparent that Olive (plain , chubby , wearing large eyeglasses , and untrained in beauty pageant conventions) is a mere amateur by comparison .

As Olive 's turn to perform in the talent portion of the pageant draws near , Richard and Dwayne recognize that Olive is certain to be humiliated , and wanting to spare her feelings , run to the dressing room to talk her out of performing . Sheryl , however , insists that they " let Olive be Olive " , and Olive goes on stage . Olive 's hitherto @-@ unrevealed dance that her Grandpa Edwin had choreographed for her is performed to Rick James ' song " Super Freak " . Olive scandalizes and horrifies most of the audience and pageant judges with a burlesque performance that she joyfully performs while oblivious to their reactions . The pageant organizers are enraged and demand Sheryl and Richard remove Olive from the stage . Instead of removing her , one by one the members of the Hoover family join Olive on stage , dancing alongside her to show their support .

The family is next seen outside the hotel 's security office where they are given their freedom in return for a promise never to enter a beauty pageant in the state of California again . Piling into the van with the horn still honking , they happily smash through the barrier of the hotel 's toll booth and head back to their home in Albuquerque .

= = Cast = =

Greg Kinnear as Richard Hoover
Toni Collette as Sheryl Hoover (née Ginsberg)
Steve Carell as Frank Ginsberg
Abigail Breslin as Olive Hoover
Paul Dano as Dwayne Hoover
Alan Arkin as Edwin Hoover
Bryan Cranston as Stan Grossman
Dean Norris as State Trooper McCleary
Wallace Langham as Kirby
Beth Grant as Pageant Official Jenkins
Mary Lynn Rajskub as Pageant Assistant Pam
Matt Winston as Pageant MC

= = Production = =

= = = Casting = = =

When choosing the cast for the film , directors Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris were assisted by casting directors Kim Davis and Justine Baddely who had worked with them on previous music videos . The directors had initially settled on Greg Kinnear to portray Richard Hoover . However , for the character of Sheryl Hoover , they considered several actresses before deciding on Australian actress Toni Collette . Davis and Baddely traveled to " every English @-@ speaking country " to search for the actress to portray Olive Hoover , and they finally chose actress Abigail Breslin through an audition when she was six . Paul Dano was cast as Dwayne two years before production began and in preparation for portraying his character , spent a few days taking his own vow of silence . Alan Arkin , who portrayed Edwin Hoover , was initially considered too young for the role .

The role of Frank , the suicidal Proust scholar , was originally written for Bill Murray , and there was also studio pressure for Robin Williams . The directing duo chose Steve Carell for the role a few months before filming began , and in an interview revealed : " When we met with Steve Carell , we didn 't know he could do this based upon what he had done . But when we met with him and talked to him about the character , the tone of the movie and the way we were approaching it , he was right on the same page with us " . Although known to Comedy Central viewers for many years as a correspondent on the highly rated satirical news program The Daily Show with Jon Stewart , at the time Carell was cast for Little Miss Sunshine , he was relatively unknown in Hollywood . Producers of the film were worried that he was not a big enough star and did not have much acting experience .

== Script and development ==

The script was written by Michael Arndt and was originally about an East Coast road trip from Maryland to Florida , but was shifted to a journey from New Mexico to California because of budget issues . Arndt started the script on May 23 , 2000 and completed the first rough draft by May 26 . He had initially planned on shooting the film himself by raising several thousand dollars and using a camcorder . Instead , he gave the screenplay to producers Ron Yerxa and Albert Berger who teamed up with Deep River Productions to find a potential director .

The producers met directors Dayton and Faris while producing Election and in turn gave the script to them to read in 2001 . The directors commented later on the script stating : " This film really struck a chord . We felt like it was written for us . " The script was purchased from first @-@ time screenwriter Arndt for \$ 250 @,@ 000 by Marc Turteltaub , one of the film 's producers , on December 21 , 2001 . Yerxa and Berger remained as producers as they were responsible for finding the directors and cinematographer , assisting in the ending re @-@ shoot , and helping bring the film to the Sundance Film Festival .

The film was pitched to several studios , and the only interested studio was Focus Features who wanted to film it in Canada . After the studio attempted to have the film be more centered on the character Richard Hoover , and Arndt disagreed , he was fired and replaced by another writer . The new writer added several scenes , including Richard 's confrontation with the character who dismisses his motivational technique business . A corporate change brought in a new studio head and Arndt was rehired when the new writer left after four weeks of rewriting the script . After two years of pre @-@ production , Focus Features dropped the film in August 2004 . Marc Turteltaub paid \$ 400 @,@ 000 to Focus Features to buy back the rights to the film and for development costs . He also paid for the \$ 8 million budget , allowing Little Miss Sunshine to then be filmed .

== Filming ==

Principal photography began on June 6 , 2005 . Filming took place over 30 days in Arizona and southern California , with scenes shot in keeping with the chronological order of the script . Arndt re @-@ wrote the ending to the film six weeks before the film 's release at the Sundance Film Festival , and this was filmed in December 2005 . Post @-@ production was completed four days before its screening on nine screens at the Sundance Film Festival , where it had its premiere . The film was dedicated to Rebecca Annitto , the niece of producer Peter Saraf and an extra in scenes set in the diner and the convenience store , who was killed in a car accident on September 14 , 2005 .

== Volkswagen T2 Microbus ==

When writing the script , Arndt chose the Volkswagen T2 Microbus to use for the road trip based on his experience with the vehicle and its practicality for filming : " I remember thinking , it 's a road trip , what vehicle are you going to put them in ? And [the] VW bus just seems logical , just because you have these high ceilings and these clean sight lines where you can put the camera . In the front windshield looking back and seeing everybody . " Five VW Microbuses were used for the family car as some were modified for different filming techniques . Three of the vans had engines , and the two without were mounted on trailers . During pre @-@ production , the cinematographer used a basic video camera and set it up at angles inside the van to determine the best locations to shoot from during filming . Many of the problems associated with the van that were included in the plot (a broken clutch , a stuck horn , and a detached door) , were based on similar problems that writer Arndt experienced during a childhood trip that involved the same type of vehicle .

While filming the scenes where the family pushes the van to get it started , a stunt coordinator was used to ensure the safety of the actors . In an interview , actor Greg Kinnear jokingly described how the scenes were filmed when he was driving : " I was going like 50 miles an hour in this ' 71 VW van that doesn 't have side air bags . Basically you 'd wait for this huge camera truck to come whizzing in

front of us with the camera . ' Okay , go ! ' I mean , it was insanity ; it 's the most dangerous movie I 've ever made . " While filming the scenes in the van , the actors would at times remain in the vehicle for three or four hours a day . For scenes in which Alan Arkin 's character was swearing excessively , Breslin had her headphones on and could not hear the dialogue , just like her character in the film . Only when she saw the film did she know what was being said . On July 25 , 2006 Fox Searchlight Pictures invited VW bus owners to a screening at Vineland Drive @-@ In theater in Industry , California . Over 60 of the vans were present at the screening .

= = = = Pageant = = = =

Prior to writing the script , Arndt read in a newspaper about Arnold Schwarzenegger speaking to a group of high school students and saying " If there 's one thing in this world I hate , it 's losers . I despise them . " As a result , Arndt developed his script lampooning the thought process : " And I thought there 's something so wrong with that attitude ... I wanted to ... attack that idea that in life you 're going up or you 're going down ... So to a degree a child beauty pageant is the epitome of the ultimate stupid meaningless competition people put themselves through . " Co @-@ director Jonathan Dayton also commented on the importance of the pageant to the film : " As far as the pageant goes , it was very important to us that the film not be about pageants . It 's about being out of place , it 's about not knowing where you 're going to end up ... " All the girls acting as participants in the beauty pageant , except Abigail Breslin , were veterans of real beauty pageants . They looked the same and performed the same acts as they had in their real @-@ life pageants . To prepare for filming , the directors attended several pageants in Southern California and met with a coordinator to learn more about the pageant process . A mother of a contestant in the film claimed that the film overplayed practices that the contestants go through : " Most pageants aren 't quite like that , with shaving the girls ' legs , spraying them with fake tans and putting on so much makeup . "

When Focus Features initially wanted to film in Canada , the directors opposed it , believing the costs of flying all of the pageant girls and their families would be excessive . The contestants and their families instead spent two weeks filming in a hotel in Ventura with most of the equipment and costumes being provided by the contestants ' parents . To make Breslin 's character the " plump " figure as shown in the film , she had to wear a padded suit during filming . For Olive 's final scene involving her dancing routine , Breslin spent two weeks preparing with a choreographer .

= = Release = =

= = = Sundance Film Festival = = =

Following the film 's premiere at the Sundance Film Festival on January 20 , 2006 , several studios placed bids ; Fox Searchlight Pictures won , offering \$ 10 @.@ 5 million , plus 10 % of all the gross revenues . The deal occurred less than a day after the premiere and was one of the biggest deals made in the history of the festival . The previous year 's festival had the film Hustle & Flow receive \$ 9 million from Paramount Classics and in 1999 , Happy , Texas received \$ 10 million from Miramax Films .

= = = Box office = = =

Little Miss Sunshine initially opened in seven theaters in the U.S. in its first week , earning \$ 498 @, @ 796 . On July 29 , 2006 , the first Saturday after its initial limited release , Little Miss Sunshine earned a \$ 20 @, @ 335 per @-@ theater average gross . It had the highest per @-@ theater average gross of all the films shown in the United States every day for the first 21 days of its release , until being surpassed by the IMAX film Deep Sea 3D on August 15 . In its third week of release Little Miss Sunshine entered the list of top ten highest grossing American films for the week . It remained in the top ten until the 11th week of release , when it dropped to 11th place . The highest

position it reached was third , which occurred in its fifth week of release . The largest number of theaters the film appeared in was 1 @, @ 602 . Internationally , the film earned over \$ 5 million in Australia , \$ 3 million in Germany , \$ 4 million in Spain , and \$ 6 million combined in the United Kingdom , Ireland , and Malta . Little Miss Sunshine has had gross receipts of \$ 59 @, @ 891 @, @ 098 in the U.S. and \$ 40 @, @ 632 @, @ 083 internationally for a total of \$ 100 @, @ 523 @, @ 181 .

= = = Critical reception = = =

On Rotten Tomatoes , the film received a 91 % " Certified Fresh " rating , based on 210 reviews , with an average rating of 7 @. @ 7 / 10 . The site 's critical consensus reads , " Little Miss Sunshine succeeds thanks to a strong ensemble cast that includes Greg Kinnear , Steve Carell , Toni Collette , Alan Arkin , and Abigail Breslin , as well as a delightfully funny script . " On Metacritic , the film holds a score of 80 out of 100 , based on 36 critics , indicating " generally favorable reviews . "

Michael Medved gave Little Miss Sunshine four stars (out of four) saying that " ... this startling and irresistible dark comedy counts as one of the very best films of the year ... " and that directors Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris , the movie itself , and actors Alan Arkin , Abigail Breslin , and Steve Carell deserved Oscar nominations . Joel Siegel issued a rarely awarded ' A ' rating , saying that " Orson Welles would have to come back to life for this not to make my year @-@ end Top 10 list . " Stella Papamichael of BBC News called the film " a winning blend of sophistication and silliness " . USA Today 's Claudia Puig commented on Breslin 's depiction of Olive Hoover , " If Olive had been played by any other little girl , she would not have affected us as mightily as it did . "

Owen Gleiberman of Entertainment Weekly labeled the film with a ' C ' rating , calling the characters " walking , talking catalogs of screenwriter index @-@ card data . " Jim Ridley of The Village Voice called the movie a " rickety vehicle that travels mostly downhill " and a " Sundance clunker . " Liam Lacey of Globe and Mail criticized the film , stating " Though Little Miss Sunshine is consistently contrived in its characters ' too @-@ cute misery , the conclusion , which is genuinely outrageous and uplifting , is almost worth the hype . " Anna Nimouse of National Review wrote that the " film is praised as a ' feel @-@ good ' film , perhaps for moviegoers who like bamboo under their fingernails . If you are miserable , then Little Miss Sunshine is the film for you . " Paste Magazine named it one of the 50 Best Movies of the Decade (2000 ? 2009) , ranking it at # 34 .

Jim Emerson , editor for RogerEbert.com , reflected on the film 's themes , writing " Little Miss Sunshine shows us a world in which there 's a form , a brochure , a procedure , a job title , a diet , a step @-@ by @-@ step program , a career path , a prize , a retirement community , to quantify , sort , categorize and process every human emotion or desire . Nothing exists that cannot be compartmentalized or turned into a self @-@ improvement mantra about ' winners and losers . ' " Brian Tallerico of UGO.com also focused on the film 's themes : " Little Miss Sunshine teaches us to embrace that middle ground , acknowledging that life may just be a beauty pageant , where we 're often going to be outdone by someone prettier , smarter , or just plain luckier , but if we get up on that stage and be ourselves , everything will turn out fine . "

= = = Home media = = =

The DVD was released on December 19 , 2006 . It includes a dual @-@ disc widescreen / full screen format , two commentary tracks , four alternate endings , and a music video by DeVotchKa . In its first week of release , DVD sales totaled \$ 19 @, @ 614 @, @ 299 and it was the sixth @-@ most sold DVD of the week . By September 16 , 2008 gross domestic DVD sales totaled \$ 55 @, @ 516 @, @ 832 . Rentals of the film from its release through April 15 , 2007 totalled \$ 46 @. @ 32 million . The film was released on Blu @-@ ray on February 10 , 2009 .

= = = Accolades = = =

Little Miss Sunshine was nominated for and won multiple awards from numerous film organizations

and festivals . It was nominated for four Academy Awards and was awarded two at the 79th Academy Awards : Michael Arndt received " Best Original Screenplay " and Alan Arkin received " Best Supporting Actor " . In addition , the AFI Awards deemed it the " Movie of the Year " , while the BAFTA Awards awarded it two awards out of six nominations with " Best Screenplay " for Arndt and " Best Actor in a Supporting Role " for Arkin . The Broadcast Film Critics Association Awards , Screen Actors Guild (SAG) , and Washington D.C. Area Film Critics commended the film for its ensemble cast . Then 10 @-@ year @-@ old Abigail Breslin was nominated for several Best Supporting Actress and Breakthrough Performance awards .

The Deauville Film Festival awarded the film the " Grand Special Prize " while the Palm Springs International Film Festival awarded it the " Chairman 's Vanguard Award " . The Independent Spirit Awards awarded it four awards out of five nominations , including " Best Feature " and " Best Director " . The film 's soundtrack was nominated for " Best Compilation Soundtrack Album for Motion Picture , Television , or Other Visual Media " at the Grammy Awards , but lost to Walk The Line . The film also had multiple nominations at the MTV Movie Awards , Satellite Awards , Chicago Film Critics Association Awards , and Golden Globe Awards , among others .

= = = Academy Awards producers controversy = = =

There was some controversy concerning how many producers should receive an award from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for their work in producing the film . In 1999 , the Academy decided that up to a maximum of three producers are eligible to be included in an award for a film . The rule was implemented to prevent a large number of involved filmmakers to appear on stage when a film was receiving an award . The Producers Guild of America (PGA) has not set a limit of producers that can be honored for a film . In the case of Little Miss Sunshine , there were five producers (Marc Turtletaub , Peter Saraf , Albert Berger , Ron Yerxa , and David Friendly) and the Academy did not want to include Berger and Yerxa . The two producers were responsible for finding the script , introducing the directors to the other producers , choosing the cinematographer , assisting in the re @-@ shoot of the ending , and helping bring the film to the Sundance Film Festival . The Academy acknowledged that the two were partners in the production process , but declared that only individual producers are recognized by the Academy . Deeming the two producers ' work as a collective effort , the Academy refused to consider either Berger or Yerxa for the award . Producer David Hoberman commented on the support for honoring all five producers , stating " If there are five people actually involved in producing a movie , there 's no reason why someone who 's made a good enough film to be nominated for an Academy Award should be precluded from being rewarded for the work they did . " Lynda Obst who was affiliated with an Academy Award producer committee , also commented : " By and large , five people don 't make a movie . If this is an exception , then it 's a sad situation . But you don 't destroy a rule for an exception . "

The PGA had previously honored all five of the producers . Albert Berger , reacting to the Academy 's decision while at a panel for the film , stated " No matter what the academy decided , we produced this movie . " In June 2007 , the Academy announced that they would allow exceptions for films that had more than three producers in the future , stating " The committee has the right , in what it determines to be a rare and extraordinary circumstance , to name any additional qualified producer as a nominee . "

= = Music = =

= = = Score = = =

The score for Little Miss Sunshine was written by the Denver band DeVotchKa and composer Mychael Danna . Performed by DeVotchKa , much of the music was adapted from their pre @-@ existing songs , such as " How It Ends " , which became " The Winner Is " , " The Enemy Guns " and

" You Love Me " from the album How It Ends , and " La Llorona " from Una Volta .

Directors Dayton and Faris were introduced to DeVotchKa 's music after hearing the song " You Love Me " on Los Angeles ' KCRW radio station . The directors were so impressed with the music that they purchased iPods for cast members containing DeVotchKa albums . Mychael Danna was brought in to help arrange the pre @-@ existing material and collaborate with DeVotchKa on new material for the film . The Little Miss Sunshine score was not eligible for Academy Award consideration due to the percentage of material derived from already written DeVotchKa songs . The DeVotchka song " Til the End of Time " received a nomination for a 2006 Satellite Award as " Best Original Song " . Both DeVotchKa and Danna received 2007 Grammy nominations for their work on the soundtrack .

= = = Soundtrack = = =

The soundtrack reached # 42 on the " Top Independent Albums " and 24 on " Top Soundtracks " in the U.S. for 2006 . It contains two songs by Sufjan Stevens (" No Man 's Land " and " Chicago ") , and songs by Tony Tisdale (" Catwalkin ' ") and Rick James (" Super Freak ") . Two additional songs in the film that were written by Gordon Pogoda ? " Let It Go " and " You 've Got Me Dancing " (the latter of which he co @-@ wrote with Barry Upton) ? are featured during the pageant scenes near the end of the film . " Super Freak " , the source music danced to by Olive during the pageant competition , was introduced during post @-@ production by a suggestion from the music supervisor . Arndt 's screenplay had called for Prince 's song " Peach " ; during filming , the ZZ Top song " Gimme All Your Lovin ' " was used .

= = Stage musical = =

See Little Miss Sunshine (musical)

A musical based on the film , with music and lyrics by William Finn and book and direction by James Lapine , was workshopped at the Sundance Institute Theatre Lab at White Oak in Yulee , Florida October 25 through November 7 , 2009 . It then premiered at the La Jolla Playhouse from February 15 through March 27 , 2011 . The cast features Hunter Foster , Malcolm Gets , Georgi James , Dick Latessa , Jennifer Laura Thompson , and Taylor Trench .

On March 11 , 2011 Malcolm Gets left the show . Ensemble member Andrew Samonsky took over the role of Uncle Frank , and understudy Ryan Wagner took over the role of Joshua Rose until the show closed on March 27 , 2011 . The musical premiered at Second Stage Theatre on October 15 , 2013 (previews) , and officially on November 14 , 2013 . The production closed on December 15 , 2013 . The cast features Hannah Rose Nordberg as Olive Hoover , Stephanie J. Block as Sheryl Hoover , Rory O ? Malley as Frank Hoover , Wesley Taylor as Joshua Rose , Josh Lamon as Buddy , David Rasche as Grandpa Hoover , Jennifer Sanchez as Miss California and Logan Rowland as Dwayne Hoover .