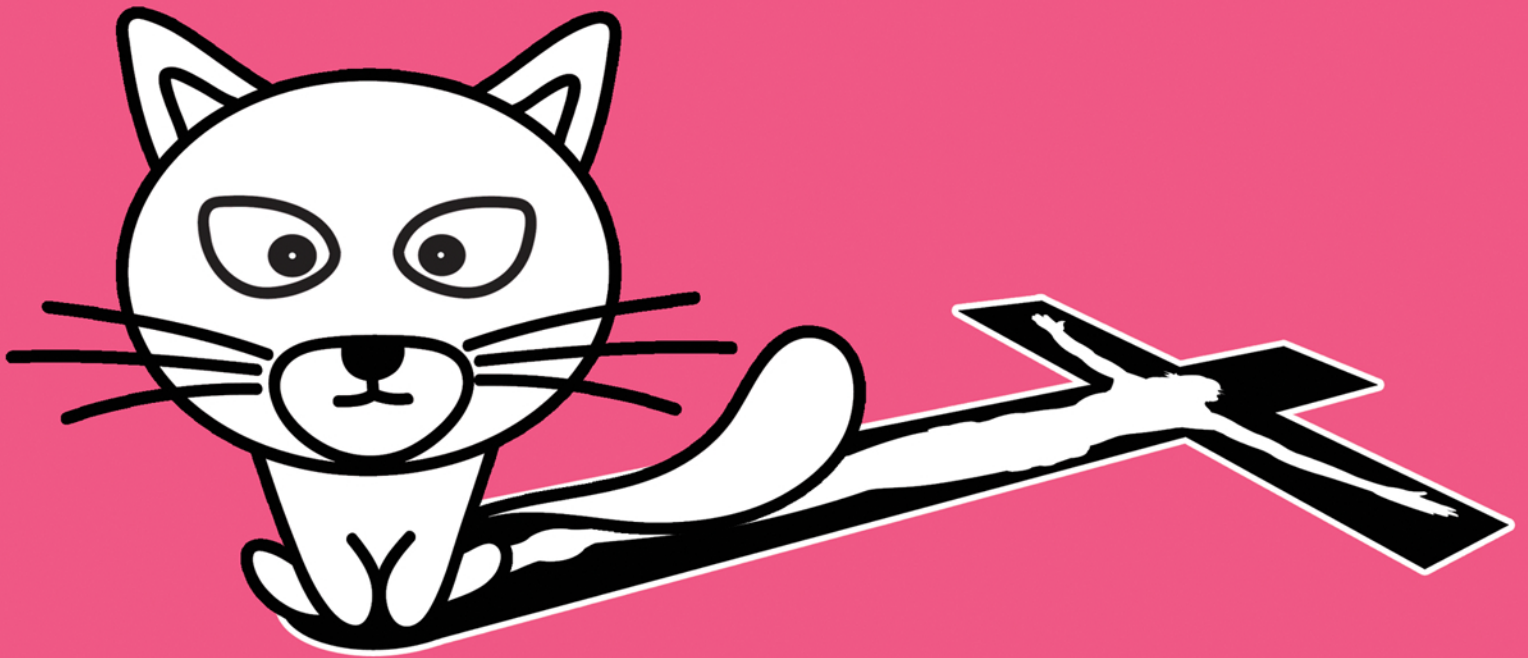


JESUSCAT

(or How I Accidentally Joined a Cult)



**a vlogger, a cat, a cult,
and the second-coming of
Jesus Christ.**

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Synopses

Logline: A vlogger, a cat, a cult, and the second-coming of Jesus Christ.

3-Line Synopsis:

Elle is an amateur documentary filmmaker. Charlotte is the self-proclaimed leader of the religious group, "The Movement for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ through the Seven Prophecies Which Must be Completed in Some Way Before the Evolution of Jesus Back into Man." As Elle documents the rituals of Charlotte and her followers, she struggles to retain her sanity when she realizes that she may have accidentally joined a cult.

Medium Synopsis:

Elle, an awkward and lonely amateur documentary filmmaker, begins vlogging about her experiences with Couchhoppers.com - a social networking website where travelers from around the world can connect to find places to stay. Through this website, she meets Charlotte, who merely requires that her boarding companion owns a pet cat. Elle arranges for Charlotte to stay with her and is relieved to find that she is much more likeable than her past guests. After quickly becoming friends, Charlotte reveals that she is the branch leader of a religious organization responsible for the second-coming of Jesus Christ.

Initially, Elle is discouraged to learn that her new best friend is a "Jesus Freak." But wanting to make an amazing documentary, she decides that Charlotte and her organization would be an even better focus than what she had originally planned. So she agrees to accompany Charlotte to a group meeting for the organization, "The Movement for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ through the Seven Prophecies Which Must be Completed in Some Way Before the Evolution of Jesus Back into Man" (or the MSCJCTSPWMCSWBEJBM). There she meets the other local members of the group but is unable to gather any further information about their cause. Skeptical, but intrigued, she decides to become an official member of the organization. As Elle documents the rituals of Charlotte and her followers, she struggles to retain her sanity when she realizes that she may have accidentally joined a cult.

Long Synopsis:

Elle, an awkward and lonely amateur documentary filmmaker, begins vlogging about her experiences with Couchhoppers.com - a social networking website where travelers from around the world can connect to find places to stay. Through this website, she meets Charlotte, who merely requires that her boarding companion owns a pet cat. Elle arranges for Charlotte to stay with her and is relieved to find that she is much more likeable than her past guests. After quickly becoming friends, Elle begins to notice Charlotte's strange behavior, including a shopping spree for food, clothes, and toys for her cat. Through an interview, Charlotte reveals that she is the branch leader of a religious organization responsible for the second-coming of Jesus Christ.

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(cont'd)

Initially, Elle is discouraged to learn that her new best friend is a "Jesus Freak." But wanting to make an amazing documentary, she decides that Charlotte and her organization would be an even better focus than what she had originally planned. So she agrees to accompany Charlotte to a group meeting for the organization, "The Movement for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ through the Seven Prophecies Which Must be Completed in Some Way Before the Evolution of Jesus Back into Man" (or the MSCJCTSPWMCSWBEJBM). There she meets the other local members of the group - Barry, a child-like man who claims he can speak "Cat;" Betty, an angry woman who seems to find joy in upsetting the others; George, a quiet member who is picked on the most; and an unnamed homeless man who silently lurks in the background near the refreshments table. Through the meeting, Elle learns that the group is in the process of completing a list of prophecies, which are made up of direct quotes from the Bible. She also notices that Charlotte is dressed in a full cat costume, while the other members are adorned with single items, such as an ear or a tail. As the meeting progresses, Betty, who serves as the group's treasurer, demands each member to pay forty percent of their paycheck to the organization. And George is dramatically awarded a whisker (or a line drawn on his face) for helping Charlotte fix her computer. After the meeting, Elle attempts to interview the group members for more information about their purpose, but finds little success. Skeptical, but intrigued, she expresses interest in joining the group. But while recruiting new members, she witnesses Charlotte's demanding and sometimes degrading power over the others, and realizes that the group might be a cult. When she confronts Charlotte with this accusation, Charlotte explains "cult" as being a misunderstood word which really just refers to a lot of people liking something. Furthermore, she is confident in her organization's process because she receives her instructions directly from Jesus every week via Skype. When Elle accepts Charlotte's invitation to Skype with Jesus, she meets Mr. Happy (another member, who is currently at Sunny Meadows, a mental rehabilitation center) -- and a cat. Assuming Mr. Happy is Jesus, Elle is surprised to learn that he is merely a translator and that the group believes Jesus is currently in the form of the cat - JesusCat.

In too deep and finally feeling like she belongs to something important, Elle agrees to be initiated as an official member of the organization. Jesus, the cat, shows up at Elle's apartment and joins Charlotte as another house guest. The other members of the group comment on how JesusCat has taken to Elle, implying that Elle must be an important addition to their cause. However, the strangeness of the situation causes Elle to breakdown, and she suspects that Charlotte might be brainwashing her. Charlotte attempts to comfort her, explaining that Elle is so important, that her joining the organization has completed one of the necessary prophecies. Lacking sleep and sanity, Elle goes for a walk and experiences a total religious awakening when she is surrounded by what she believes to be signs from God. This convinces her that the beliefs of Charlotte's organization must be true and that she is meant to be involved. Newly awakened and inspired, Elle is motivated to help Charlotte and the group complete the remaining prophecies, which lead up to the Final Ceremony where Jesus will transform from a cat back into a man.

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Director's Statement

JesusCat (or How I Accidentally Joined a Cult) doesn't technically have a director. Or a writer. Instead, we consider ourselves "co-creators." Yes, we funded this project out of our own pockets, we organized production and told the other actors what we envisioned, and we co-wrote a story outline as a structural skeleton of our narrative idea. But the outcome of this project, being improvisational, is really thanks to our amazing ensemble cast. And to be honest, most of the ideas or bits of dialogue we had pre-planned were ultimately cut from the final product because they simply weren't as funny as the randomness that came out on the spot while the camera was rolling.

We officially began developing this project in early 2011 - brainstorming ideas over lunch at our local Denny's, the meeting place of true independent filmmakers. We had previously co-produced the stage play, *Twenty-Two*, which was a dark and depressing glance into cocaine addiction and realized, "We need to do some comedy." And with Shaina's signature youthful, child-like appearance, we realized she needed to play a cult leader. Obviously. Julia had remembered a time from her youth when she was somewhat obsessed with the subject of real cults and had written a letter to Charles Manson in prison, expressing interest in developing a movie about his life as a cult leader. However, once she received a written response from him, she realized, "Wow! He really is crazy!" and halted her pursuit. So, in a way, *JesusCat* is now finally fulfilling her previous endeavor, just in a fictional, and therefore less creepy way.

Our primary goals with the making of *JesusCat* were to have fun, produce leading roles for ourselves as actors that would never be available to us otherwise, and create a social satire story that represents something serious in society today. We believe that sometimes the best way to bring awareness to a real issue is to poke fun at it. Cults are an extremely controversial topic because their definition is so ambiguous. People may disagree on when the line is crossed from a healthy religious or spiritual support group to a manipulative and abusive ideological organization. And cults do not generally make the public news until something drastic like murder, suicide, or crime occurs. However, according to the Cult Clinic [www.cultclinic.org], a non-profit organization in New York assisting former cult members, an estimated five to seven million Americans have been involved in cults and there are approximately 180,000 new recruits into cults each year.

As much as *JesusCat* pokes fun at a fictional cult, we hope it does not cause our audience to forget about the seriousness of the cult movement today. But for now, we invite you to witness a humorous series of events, and maybe even renew your faith in the impossible.

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Cast & Crew

Created by

Julia Morizawa & Shaina Vorspan

Starring

Julia Morizawa Elle Lee-Kim-Park
Shaina Vorspan Charlotte Newberry

R. Benito Cardenas George
Evan Lewis Homeless Man
James Adam Patterson Mr. Happy
Vance Roi Reyes Barry
Elizabeth Yocam Betty

Allana Barton Bettina
Aaron Brenner Brock Johnson
Jill Gehrke Paige
Rene Guerrero Gabriel
Tomas Quiroz El Toro
Bonnie Vorspan Sarah's Mother
David Vorspan Male Nurse
Biff Wiff Ashley
Brad C. Wilcox Dr. Angus Trimbleblath

Original Score by

Evan Lewis

Featuring the Original Song

"I Am a Healing Light"

written & performed by Brad C. Wilcox

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Creators' Bios



Julia Morizawa is primarily an actor and has performed in over 100 film, theatre, television and internet productions throughout her career. Acting highlights include *Judas Kiss* (feature film), *Tied Up* (feature film, awarded Best Supporting Actress at the Denver Underground Film Festival, 2004), *Lewis Black's The Root of All Evil* (television), *Star Trek: Odyssey* (webseries), *Frontier Guard* (webseries) and *Masha No Home* (stage, East West Players). She is currently a member of the professional conservatory at The Second City, Hollywood, where she is studying improvisation and developing a sketch revue.

Julia's producing and writing credits include *Sin & Lyle*, a short film which earned her a Best Female Filmmaker nomination at the Action on Film International Film Festival in 2007; and *Twenty-Two*, a stage play also co-produced by Shaina Vorspan, which premiered at the Knightsbridge Theatre in Los Angeles in 2010. In addition, her first book, *Memoirs of a Wannabe Sex Addict* is currently available on Amazon, iTunes, and in select bookstores.

JesusCat (or How I Accidentally Joined a Cult) is Julia's first feature film as an actor/producer, or in which she was responsible for the development of from start to finish. Additional information at: www.juliamorizawa.com.



Shaina Vorspan was born and raised in Suburbia, California, and turned to amateur filmmaking and performing as a way to keep busy and an outlet for her creativity. She earned her B.A. in theatre from the University of California, San Diego where she performed in and helped produce a number of productions. Back in L.A., she continued her love of theatre by becoming an active member of the Knightsbridge Theatre in Silverlake. There, she co-produced and co-starred in *Twenty-Two*, an original play by Julia Morizawa, along with performing in dozens of shows and co-starring in the award-winning film *Redemption*, by Knightsbridge Entertainment.

Although she is primarily focused on acting, Shaina enjoys many facets of filmmaking, including writing and editing. *JesusCat (or How I Accidentally Joined a Cult)*, is the love-child between her and Julia Morizawa, and Shaina hopes there are many more to come. She loves seeing a project through from start to finish and looks forward to the next one. Additional information at: www.shainavorspan.com.

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Production Notes

“JesusCat (or How We Created a Movie)”

JesusCat (or How I Accidentally Joined a Cult) was shot in HD, entirely on location in Los Angeles, California. Principal photography began in September 2011. Our official wrap date was November 1, 2012. Production was stretched out for so long for two primary reasons: 1) Due to the improvisation, we needed to edit a large majority of the film in order to determine where the gaps in the storyline occurred before continuing to the last few shoot days, and 2) Everyone was working on a volunteer basis, so scheduling the cast together around their day jobs and other projects was a continuous challenge. We captured over 12 hours of improvised footage, which we edited down to approximately 90 minutes. Then we shot additional footage, this time providing more specific guidelines on exactly what the actors needed to say, in order to clarify certain points that may have been a bit confusing before. One of the biggest challenges in editing was that the cast was so funny, we had a hard time choosing between the jokes and the story. However, through blood, sweat, and tears (well, maybe just tears from laughing so much), we hope our finished product is both humorous and interesting, ready to entertain audiences.

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Screenings & Awards

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Asians On Film Festival 2014 | Won – Best Comedy Feature
Won – Best Supporting Actress (Elizabeth Yocam)
Official Selection |
| Action On Film Festival 2013 | Won – Movie Heroes Rising Star Award
Nominated – Best Comedy Feature
Nominated – The Xristos Awards
Official Selection |
| Los Angeles Comedy Festival 2013 | Official Selection |
| Mockfest 2014 | Honorable Mention |

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Reviews

Excerpt from Rogue Cinema Film Reviews, written by Misty Layne

JesusCat (or How I Accidentally Joined a Cult) is a unique comedy, the love child of Julia Morizawa who plays the protagonist, Elle and Shaina Vorspan who plays the antagonist, Charlotte. With no actual director and no technical script, the film is almost entirely improvisational and was shot over the course of a year. And holy moly, it is good.

This film has a style akin to *Strangers with Candy* or *The Office*, a mockumentary type feel put upon by Elle interviewing the other members of the possible cult intercut with scenes of her vlogging. This style can be hard to pull off for some but here it's managed effortlessly.

Julia as Elle and Shaina as Charlotte are perfection, both equally hilarious in turn. They're awkward and hysterical and you can almost just see them giggling between takes. The rest of the cast does just as well a job with their characters. The funny thing is not one single character here is likeable – I hated them all but they're so damn awkward and ridiculous that you have to laugh. The whole premise is silly fun but also takes on the world of cults in a satirical way – it's not taking cults lightly but it is having a laugh at the extremes to which some people go to make friends and socialize and how eager people can be to have hope, so much so that they'll worship a cat even.

JesusCat is a wonderfully funny romp through the world of cults, social anxiety and the forming of new friendships. Considering the improvisational aspect of it and the low budget, it's phenomenally well done. My favorite part? During the credits there's a wicked sweet rap song done by Elle and Charlotte. This is a comedian's comedy, a comedy done right and one movie you should all check out.

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Film Stills



Julia Morizawa (Elle) and Shaina Vorspan (Charlotte)



From top-left, counter-clockwise: Elizabeth Yocam (Betty), Vance Roi Reyes (Barry), R. Benito Cardenas (George), James Adam Patterson (Mr. Happy), Evan Lewis (Homeless Man), Julia Morizawa (Elle) and Shaina Vorspan (Charlotte)

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