

A young boy with a bowl cut is peeking over a ledge. His eyes are looking towards the camera. The background is a warm, slightly blurred interior with red curtains and a wooden shelf. The lighting is soft and natural.

# God & Buddha Are Friends

a short film by Anthony Ma

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19 minutes, Comedy, USA

**ELECTRONIC PRESS KIT**



## LOGLINE

A young Taiwanese American boy falls into an existential crisis when a charismatic Christian pastor comes between him and his overprotective Buddhist mother.

## SYNOPSIS

After receiving a dragon jade necklace from his Buddhist mother, young Andy spends the day with a devout Christian family, where he meets a fiery pastor who convinces him that his jade is a devil's totem. Conflicted and terrified, Andy returns home to his wary mother, who goes ballistic upon learning the news, forcing him to navigate the complex terrain of stubborn adults and religious debate to figure out his own truth.





## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

"*God & Buddha Are Friends*" is a love letter to my mother—the strongest, most fearless, and, let's be honest, most stubborn person I know. As an only child raised by a single mother, our bond is unbreakable, even if her relentless persistence drives me crazy. She never backs down, especially when protecting her family, and I wanted to capture that resilience in this film.

Based on a real event from my childhood, the film follows young Andy, whose Buddhist mother gifts him a jade dragon necklace. After spending time with a devout Christian family, a fiery pastor convinces Andy that his jade is a "devil's totem," leading to an explosive showdown. Through humor and heart, the film explores the tensions of growing up between two cultural and spiritual identities while ultimately showing that we're more alike than we think.

Made on a \$40,000 budget—half crowdfunded—our film was shot over three weekends with a skeleton crew of 25. Post-production was a two-person effort between myself and my filmmaking partner, Ryo Shiina. Our cast features Karin Anna Cheung (*Better Luck Tomorrow*), Taiwanese icon Janet Hsieh (*Fun Taiwan*), and Jim Meskimen (*How the Grinch Stole Christmas*), with breakout performances by Ethan Wang and Emilie Ong.

This film is about more than just religion—it's about how we reconcile love with belief, how we protect those we care about, and how we find common ground even in the most unexpected places.

At its core, it's a film about my mother, but it's also about every parent who fights for their child, every person who has ever questioned their identity, and everyone who has ever found themselves caught between two worlds.

I hope this film sparks conversation, laughter, and maybe even a little self-reflection. Because in the end, no matter what we believe, we all just want to be seen, heard, and loved.

**Anthony Ma**  
(Writer, Producer, Director)

# CAST

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## Ethan Wang

as "Andy"

Ethan Wang makes his film debut as the lead character, Andy, in *"God & Buddha Are Friends."* With natural charisma and an emotional depth beyond his years, Ethan brings to life the heart of the story—a curious young boy caught between two worlds. His performance has been praised for its honesty, humor, and raw vulnerability.



## Karin Anna Cheung

as "Judy"

Karin Anna Cheung is best known for her breakout role in the Asian American cult classic *"Better Luck Tomorrow"* (Sundance 2002). A talented actress, musician, and visual artist, she has appeared in films such as *"The People I've Slept With"* and *"Yes, We're Open."* In *"God & Buddha Are Friends,"* she brings depth and heart to the role of Judy, a fiercely protective mother navigating single motherhood.



## Janet Hsieh

as "Hui-Ming"

Janet Hsieh is an award-winning TV host, actress, and author, widely recognized as the face of Fun Taiwan on Discovery's TLC. Fluent in multiple languages and an adventurer at heart, she has traveled the world sharing cultural experiences with global audiences. In *"God & Buddha Are Friends,"* she plays the peaceful and devout Auntie Hui-Ming, adding warmth and humor to the story.



## Emilie Ong

as "Esther"

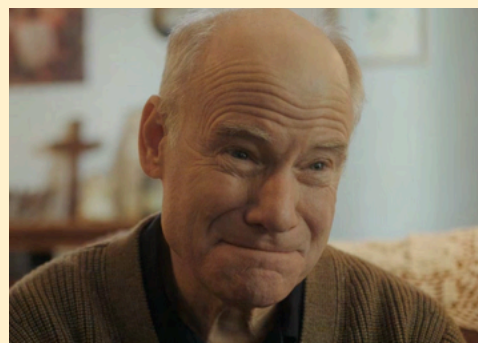
Emilie Ong plays Esther, Andy's big sister figure and Hui-Ming's daughter in *"God & Buddha Are Friends."* Beyond acting, Emilie is also a gifted singer and performer, recently gracing the Broadway stage and most notably performing alongside Becky G at the Oscars. Her natural charisma and depth bring an endearing authenticity to Esther's role in Andy's journey.



## Tamra Meskimen

as "Meredith"

Tamra Meskimen brings warmth and impeccable comedic timing to her role as Meredith, the kind-hearted and supportive wife of Pastor Richard. With just one look, she adds layers of humor and nuance to every scene. A veteran actress with over 30 years in the industry, Tamra has appeared in *"American Crime Story,"* *"Jane the Virgin,"* *"General Hospital,"* and *"Apollo 13,"* showcasing her versatility across film and television.



## Jim Meskimen

as "Pastor Richard"

Jim Meskimen is a veteran actor, voice artist, and impressionist whose extensive career spans film, television, and animation. His credits include *"How the Grinch Stole Christmas,"* *"Fresh Prince of Bel-Air,"* *"Parks and Recreation,"* and *"Gaslit."* As Pastor Richard in *"God & Buddha Are Friends,"* Jim brings both commanding presence and nuanced humor to his portrayal of the well-intentioned yet overzealous pastor.

## KEY CREW BIOS

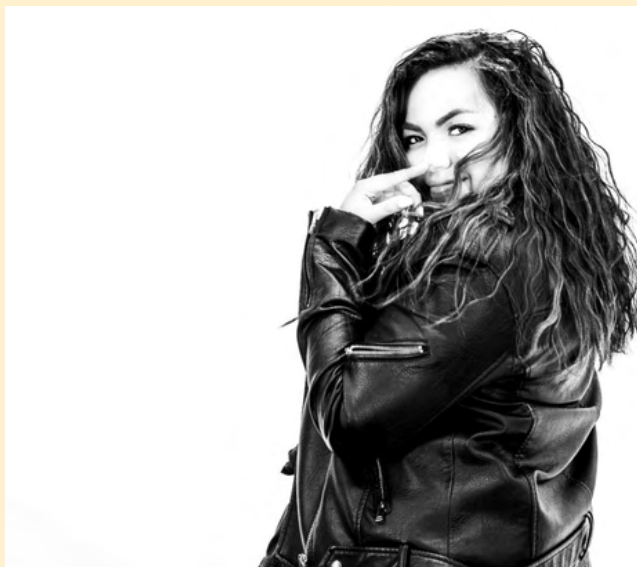


### **Anthony Ma**

*Writer, Director, Producer*

Anthony Ma is an award-winning Taiwanese American actor, writer, director, and voiceover artist born & raised in Arcadia, CA. "Chinese Antique" (2009), a short film he wrote and produced, was screened at film festivals nationwide and received audience choice awards at the 168-Hour Film Festival and NFFTY. "Elevator" (2015), a feature he wrote and produced, was filmed in Los Angeles, New York, and Japan, garnering an Honorable Mention for Screenwriting at DisOrient Asian Film Festival. The latest feature he co-wrote, called "Staycation" (2018), premiered at the Los Angeles Film Festival and received the LA Muse Award.

As an actor, he most notably guest starred in "Scandal," "S.W.A.T.," and "This Is Us." The LA Asian Pacific Film Festival awarded him Best New Actor for the rom-com indie feature "Love Arcadia" (2015). He was also a co-host on the HBO Max foodie reality series called "Family Style." An active member of his community, he co-founded and served as the Executive Director of the Taiwanese American Film Festival from 2017-2019.



### **Jaclyn Amor**

*Producer*

Often appropriately deemed as a "Jac of all trades", Jaclyn Amor is an international, Filipino Australian, director, producer, writer and artist. With a unique background in creative direction, fine arts (painting, sculpting, photography) and performance (singing, dancing, acting), Jaclyn's work includes music videos, fashion editorial films, branded content, influencer campaigns, digital series, VR projects, narrative shorts and features.

From directing the Asian American International Film Festival and off Broadway plays, to creating content for the likes of ABC Australia, Bravo, Google, YouTube, College Humor, Adaptive Studios, Snapchat, TikTok and Condé Nast (Architectural Digest, CN Traveler, Vanity Fair), Jaclyn has worked passionately towards highlighting the talents of fellow creators from diverse backgrounds, in hopes to contribute to the positive change in the entertainment industry.



### **Ryo Shiina**

*Director of Photography, Editor, Visual Effects, Composer*

Ryo Shiina is an international Japanese Taiwanese filmmaker and music composer; born and raised in the rural area of the Chiba prefecture of Japan. His films have been selected at various film festivals around the US, including the 168-Hour Film Festival and the NFFTY audience award-winning short "Chinese Antique," where he served as co-director and composer. "Elevator," a feature he also co-directed and musically composed, was filmed in US and Japan and screened at the DisOrient Asian Film Festival. His work as director of photography and composer for the sci-fi short "Intelligentsia" secured a slot in DUST's tightly curated playlist, a popular YouTube sci-fi cinema channel. His musical work has also included projects overseas for several TV ads and drama series on Fuji Television in Japan.

Currently, Ryo works with Instrument, a creative digital agency, producing content for leading brands and diverse clients such as Din Tai Fung, Huntington Library, Herman Miller, Speedo, Meta, Tillamook, and more.





**Genre:** Comedy  
**Country:** USA  
**Production Year:** 2024  
**Language:** English / Mandarin Chinese  
**Duration:** 18:50  
**Aspect Ratio:** 1.85:1  
**Frame Rate:** 24 fps  
**Shooting Format:** Fujifilm, Z Cam, iPhone  
**Exhibition Format:** 2k ProRes  
**Prores Sound:** Stereo

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**Links**  
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