

WINNER
Easterseals
Disability Film
Challenge
2024

HollyShorts
OFFICIAL SELECTION
2024

SLAMDANCE
FILM FESTIVAL
2025

OUT OF REACH

A FILM BY COSMO RUDD STARRING SAWSAN ZAKARIA & JAMES IAN PRODUCED BY JAKE LINN & SAWSAN ZAKARIA
WRITTEN BY SHANE BURCAW, HANNAH BURCAW, & COSMO RUDD EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS HANNAH BURCAW & SHANE BURCAW
EDITED BY COSMO RUDD MUSIC COMPOSED BY GRACE CONNOLLY PRODUCTION DESIGN MA-AFRIKA SETONA DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY KADIR MAYEL

FILM INFORMATION

Original Title: Out of Reach
Country of Production: United States of America
Duration: 5:30

FESTIVAL SCREENINGS (to date)

EasterSeals Disability Film Festival (2024)
Heartland International Film Festival (2024)
HollyShorts Film Festival (2024)
Slamdance Film Festival (2025)

LOGLINE

When two disabled best friends are left home alone together without any help, they discover a major difference in their personalities as they struggle to provide for themselves.

SYNOPSIS

James and Sawsan, two disabled best friends, discover that their partners will be gone for the evening, leaving them to fend for themselves as they attempt to have a cozy night-in. Along the way they encounter obstacles that constantly set back their plans in different ways. Sawsan confidently and promptly seeks assistance from others while James denies the need for assistance and attempts to prove his independence through a number of unconventional tactics to get the job done. As the night nears its end, James and Sawsan reflect on their differing definitions of independence. After a final (and rather personal) obstacle leaves Sawsan dangling in the air, James finally sees Sawsan's point of view and learns to ask for help.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

This film was originally made for the Easterseals Disability Film Challenge which highlights disabled filmmakers. Going into the challenge, I wanted to tell a story that truly spoke to the experience of being disabled without being preachy. It was important for the point of view of the film to be real and genuine, and our cast and crew, which was made up largely of disabled individuals, helped that become a reality. It was also exciting to tackle an issue I haven't seen in other disabled media (not that there is much) which is self internalized ableism. Both myself as director, as well as the disabled writers and executive producer, were all able to relate to the ambivalence of needing help. James and Sawsan's characters personified this ambivalence, bringing to the screen an internal struggle that many disabled people deal with.

On set, I directed some of the performances to be quite dramatic and shifted some of the story beats. The first cut of the film was darker and lacked some of the brevity of the final film. But through further drafts, I managed to refine it, keeping the important messaging and commentary intact while maintaining a lighter dramedy tone. My hope is for the film to reach the sweet spot between being thoroughly entertaining and funny, while still delivering an impactful message. And I believe we achieved that. The best compliment I got about the film was from my Aunt who said it made her think about how I live as a disabled person in a way she'd never considered before. Sharing unique points of view and educating while also entertaining is the ultimate goal at least in my art, and I hope and believe we achieved that with this film.

Cosmo Rudd

PRODUCER'S STATEMENT

Disability is not commonly represented in the media, and if it is, it typically centralizes the disability as opposed to the person. We wanted to tell a story that shared a day in the life of a person, who just so happens to have a disability.

We were able to find a way to show people that people with disabilities have a pretty typical day just like anyone else... but sometimes, it comes with obstacles. We were able to depict the little obstacles people with disabilities face and the mental hardship that comes with asking for help.

We wanted to share a message with the world that people with disabilities can still be seen as independent, regardless of the physical help we need. Throughout the film, we see James and Sawsan share a pretty close friendship, but discover that they do not agree when it comes to asking for help in times of need.

I think it's so important for people with and without disabilities to see that everyone needs help, whether it be physical, emotional, or mental; We all look and rely on the help of humans around us to live independently and happily.

Sawsan Zakaria



Cosmo Rudd - Director | Writer | Editor

Cosmo Rudd is a writer, director, and editor hailing from the Bay Area. His interest in film was sparked at a young age after discovering an old camcorder with his sister and attempting to recreate scenes from classic books and movies. He went on to discover the world of editing after receiving his first laptop and soon began creating short films with his friends and family. Cosmo later moved to Los Angeles to pursue film school. Through his creative endeavors, he discovered the significance of telling stories from his unique perspective as a person with a disability. With his films he hopes to represent and inspire others with disabilities as well as bridge the gap of understanding between disabled and non-disabled communities, all while creating engaging, powerful, and immersive films.

Shane and Burcaw - Writers | Producers

Shane and Hannah Burcaw are relationship vloggers on a mission to change the way society understands disability. On their YouTube channel, Squirmy and Grubs, which has gained almost two million subscribers, the couple shares an authentic examination of what it's like to be in an interabled relationship. In addition to their work on YouTube, the couple co-authored a nonfiction collection of love stories that involve people with disabilities. Shane and Hannah speak across the country from universities to elementary schools to Fortune 500 companies. They live in Minneapolis, MN with their fluffy labradoodle, Chloe.

Sawsan Zakaria - Actor | Producer | Editor

Sawsan Zakaria is a model and actress living in Los Angeles advocating for underrepresentation in the media of people with disabilities. Most of her past work can be seen through commercials such as Sephora, Disney+, Doritos, and GoRV. Sawsan's current transition from commercial to film makes its primary debut through "Out of Reach." Sawsan has spinal muscular atrophy and uses a power wheelchair, influencing other people who utilize mobility devices to live independently and confidently through social media and entertainment. Sawsan recently was matched with a service dog who will begin to join her in the media industry. They can be seen together on their first print shoot with Amazon.

James Ian - Actor

James Ian is an award-winning actor, singer, songwriter, writer, and graduate of Georgetown University Law Center. He has spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) type 3, and is a passionate advocate for authentic representation of disabled artists in music, TV, film, and other media. He was a lead on the BET series "Kimboo & Kids," and his filmography includes several movies, national commercials, and documentaries, including "The Allnighter," "Pugsley," and "Inner Warrior." He is the singer and primary songwriter of "SPACES," which is a first-of-its-kind song that highlights those living with SMA. He is also a singer and songwriter of "Lift Me Up", which is a tribute to disability rights activist Judy Heumann.



FILM CREDITS

Director/Writer/Editor - Cosmo Rudd

Executive Producer - Sawsan Zakaria

Producer - Shane Burcaw, Hannah Burcaw, Jake Linn

Writer - Shane Burcaw

Writer - Hannah Burcaw

1st Assistant Director - Abdullah Shoaib Khan

Director of Photography - Kadir Mayel

Production Designer - Ma-Afrika Setona

Gaffer - Isaac Cantrell

1st AC - Deborah Kim

1st AC - Ayesha Fernandez

Sound - Cesar Fion Gongora

Production Assistant - Julia Colloca

Makeup Artist - Sarelle Simmons

Marketing Director - Melanie Waldman

Composer - Grace Connolly