

# Sweetheart



**Written & Directed by:** Marley Morrison  
**Produced by:** Michelle Antoniadou, Hazey Jane Films  
**Language:** English  
**Country:** United Kingdom  
**Running Time:** 103 minutes

## SYNOPSIS

Socially awkward lesbian teenager AJ begrudgingly joins her family on a seaside vacation. She finds herself constantly at odds with her painfully “normal” mother and older sister, neither of whom can understand why she doesn't smile more or “dress like a girl.” Her anticipated “week of hell” takes an unexpected turn when Isla, a free-spirited and sun-loving lifeguard, catches her eye. Full to the brim with teen angst and romantic fumbling, Sweetheart wryly captures the bittersweet pangs of adolescent yearning, self-realization and personal connections, all against the hilarious ups and downs of the quintessential British family holiday. Praised as an “authentic account of the murky, counterintuitive waters of the queer adolescent experience” (*Little White Lies*), Marley Morrison’s feature debut is a surprisingly ebullient coming-of-age charmer not to be missed.

# AWARDS

## **BRITISH ACADEMY OF FILM AND TELEVISION AWARDS (BAFTA) 2022**

LONGLIST - OUTSTANDING DEBUT BY A BRITISH WRITER, DIRECTOR OR PRODUCER

## **LONDON CRITICS CIRCLE AWARDS 2022**

NOMINEE - Breakthrough British Filmmaker - Marley Morrison

## **BRITISH INDEPENDENT FILM AWARDS 2021**

**WINNER** - Breakthrough Performance - Nell Barlow

**WINNER** - Breakthrough Producer - Michelle Antoniadis

NOMINEE - Best Debut Screenwriter - Marley Morrison

NOMINEE - Best Debut Director - Marley Morrison

NOMINEE - Best Supporting Actress - Jo Hartley

# FESTIVAL ACCOLADES

## **GLASGOW FILM FESTIVAL 2021**

**WINNER** - Audience Award

## **INSIDE OUT TORONTO LGBT FILM FESTIVAL 2021**

**WINNER** - Best First Feature

## **FRAMELINE SAN FRANCISCO INTERNATIONAL LGBTQ FILM FESTIVAL 2021**

NOMINEE - Best First Feature Film - Marley Morrison

## **OUTFEST Los Angeles 2021**

**WINNER** - Outstanding Performance in an International Narrative - Nell Barlow

## **DINARD - Festival of British Film 2021**

**WINNER** - Special Jury Prize - Ensemble Cast

## **OUTshine - Fort Lauderdale 2021**

HONORABLE MENTION - Best Narrative Feature Award

## **Out On Film, LGBTQ Film Festival Atlanta 2021**

**WINNER** - Best Narrative Feature

**WINNER** - Best Ensemble

# WRITER-DIRECTOR



## **MARLEY MORRISON**

Marley is an award-winning British filmmaker with a background in music videos, high-end commercials, Film and Television.

Her short films LEROY and BABY GRAVY were both nominated for various festival awards, including Underwire Festival's Screenwriting Award, Iris Prize Best British Short and Youth Jury Awards. Marley's debut feature SWEETHEART (2021) was a winner of Film London's Microwave scheme, supported by the British Film Institute and BBC Films.

SWEETHEART received the GFF Audience Award, a Dinard Special Jury Prize and Best First Feature at Inside Out Toronto, and was nominated for five British Independent Film Awards, including a Debut Director and Debut Screenwriter double nomination for Marley.

Marley is currently directing the second block of UK teen drama series TELL ME EVERYTHING, as well as developing her own projects for Film and TV.

# WRITER-DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT



“The desire to tell this story was born out of my own battles with gender identity and sexuality and its ability to consume the psyche of an adolescent who hasn't quite learned how to navigate the world as a young lesbian.

I am interested in the way queer visibility and freedom of expression has changed over generations, and how that impacts a family, when confronted with the reality of an ever-changing world inside their own nuclear unit.

I hope to bring visibility to the people who don't fall under society's expectations of a female and to allow specifically lesbian perspectives to be at the forefront. My hope is that the film will be an uplifting and joyful experience, full of colour, humour, youthful energy and heart. Thus reflecting the rush and excitement of falling in love for the first time, whoever you are, and how when we let go of our constructed ideas of ourselves we are free to live without shame.”

– **Marley Morrison**

# PRINCIPAL CAST



**‘AJ’**

**NELL BARLOW**

SWEETHEART is Nell’s first feature and also her first leading role. She graduated from the University of East Anglia with a First Class degree in Drama in 2017. In 2016 whilst still at UEA, she made her small screen debut as Beatrice Gresham in Julian Fellowes’ screen adaptation of Anthony Trollope’s novel DOCTOR THORNE, directed by Niall MacCormick for ITV/Amazon.

Her next role was Lucy in Channel 4’s controversial, true life drama MARRIED TO A PAEDOPHILE, directed by Collete Camden for Hat Trick. She also voices Elsa Platt in the upcoming animation WHERE IS ANNE FRANK?, directed by Oscar-nominee Ari Folman (2021).

# PRINCIPAL CAST

## 'Isla'

### ELLA-RAE SMITH

Ella-Rae Smith is best known for her roles as Daisy Hoy in Netflix's eight-part British mystery thriller THE STRANGER and as Nix in AMC's martial arts Drama Series INTO THE BADLANDS. Other noteworthy television credits include her portrayal of Phoebe Parker-Fox in the much loved BBC series CLIQUE, as Fola in Netflix's THE WITCHER, and as Mia in her TV debut for UK TV's MARLEY'S GHOSTS. Ella-Rae has starred in an array of films including D. James Newton's 2:Hrs, Lionsgate's THE COMMUTER with Liam Neeson and British/Polish drama BUTTERFLY KISSES.

She will next be seen starring alongside Suki Waterhouse in the upcoming indie horror SÉANCE (Hanway Films) and has recently completed filming the movie THE LOST GIRLS alongside Louis Partridge and Vanessa Redgrave which centres around Peter Pan's Wendy.



# SUPPORTING CAST



## **‘Tina’**

### **JO HARTLEY**

Jo Hartley has appeared in some of the UK's most cutting edge films and dramas. Starting her professional career in Shane Meadows' dark, emotionally turbo-charged and disturbing DEAD MAN'S SHOES with the sublime Paddy Considine and Toby Kebbell, her career to date has shown huge range and versatility. "Hartley belongs to a tribe of actors and directors who have formed a new wave of talent intent upon modernising British cinematic storytelling" says The Huffington Post. Jo was recently seen starring in the BBC Three comedy-drama IN MY SKIN. Jo took a leading role as Trina, a mother who has bi-polar. The Times saying "Jo Hartley's performance as a woman sections was outstanding."

In 2022, Jo also reprised her role as 'June' in the final season of Ricky Gervais' critically acclaimed comedy drama AFTER LIFE for Netflix with Diane Morgan, Ashley Jensen. The series was one of Netflix's most watched originals. Perhaps best known for her as the warm and lovable 'Cynth' in the multi award-winning THIS IS ENGLAND. In film Jo has also appeared in the highly acclaimed EDDIE THE EAGLE starring Taron Egerton and as 'Pauline' in Ricky Gervais' LIFE ON THE ROAD, which is a follow on from The Office and David Brent's character, played by Gervais. Jo plays the role of AJ's mum, Tina, in Marley Morrison's debut feature SWEETHEART.

# SUPPORTING CAST



**SOPHIA DI MARTINO (Lucy)**

Loki

Yesterday

Flowers



**SAMUEL ANDERSON (Steve)**

Another Life

Dr Who

Gavin & Stacey

# PRODUCER



## **MICHELLE ANTONIADES**

Michelle is a British-Cypriot producer with an extensive production background in TV and feature documentaries. SWEETHEART is Michelle's first feature, backed by the BFI and released in UK cinemas by Peccadillo Pictures in 2021 with Michelle winning the Breakthrough Producer award at the British Independent Film Awards.

Previous short films work include the award-winning BABY GRAVY and LEROY for which Michelle was nominated for Underwire Festival's Emerging Producer Award. She recently produced two seasons of the international children's comedy series, ANGRY BIRDS ON THE RUN for Blink Productions/Rovio Entertainment and is currently developing a TV & Film slate for Hazey Jane Films, with a focus on LGBTQ+ and female driven stories.

# THE FILM LONDON MICROWAVE SCHEME

**Microwave's second slate of 6 films was developed in partnership with BBC Films and the British Film Institute.**

Microwave is Film London's flagship feature film scheme. It serves to inspire and develop the capital's best new filmmakers, empowering them to make bold, compelling features, for a micro-budget, that will surprise and excite global audiences. An initial slate of 8 films was made in partnership with **BBC Films** between 2006 and 2012 with a further slate from 2014 - 2020. All achieved theatrical releases, and many have gone on to receive critical recognition both in the UK and internationally.

## **Notable Nominations and Awards for Microwave Films:**

**Sweetheart** (2021) Longlisted for BAFTA Outstanding Debut by a British Writer, Director, or Producer, 2022.

**Looted** (2020) Premiered at Tallinn Black Nights 2019 winning the award for Best Film and later nominated for the BIFA Raindance Discovery Award in December 2020.

**Body of Water** (2020) Longlisted for the BIFA Raindance Discovery Award in December 2020.

**Lilting** (2014) winner of the Cinematography Award (World Cinema - Dramatic) premiered at the 2014 Sundance Film Festival. Nominated for Outstanding Debut by a British Writer, Director or Producer at the BAFTA Awards and Best Achievement in Production and Douglas Hickox Awards at BIFA.

**iLL Manors** (2012) winner of the Coup de Coeur and Best Cinematography awards at the 2013 Dinard British Film Festival. Nominated for three British Independent Film Awards along with Breakthrough British Filmmaker at London Critics Circle Film Awards.

**Shifty** (2008) nominated for the 2010 BAFTA award for 'Outstanding Debut by a British Writer, Director, or Producer', and 'Best Achievement in Production' and 'Best Technical Achievement' at BIFA. Won 'Best Screenplay' at Stockholm Film Festival, 'Best Feature Film Screenplay (Newcomer)' at the Writers' Guild of Great Britain awards, and the Geneva Cinéma Tout Ecran 'Best Actor' award.

# ABOUT FILM MOVEMENT

Founded in 2002, Film Movement is a North American distributor of award-winning independent and foreign films based in New York City. It has released more than 250 feature films and shorts culled from prestigious film festivals worldwide. Its catalog includes titles by directors such as Hirokazu Kore-eda, Maren Ade, Jessica Hausner, Andrei Konchalovsky, Andrzej Wajda, Diane Kurys, Ciro Guerra and Melanie Laurent. In 2015, Film Movement launched its reissue label Film Movement Classics, featuring new restorations released theatrically as well as on Blu-ray and DVD, including films by such noted directors as Eric Rohmer, Peter Greenaway, Bille August, Marleen Gorris, Takeshi Kitano, Arturo Ripstein, Sergio Corbucci and Ettore Scola. For more information, visit [www.filmmovement.com](http://www.filmmovement.com).

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