

A24

KRISHA



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SYNOPSIS

Winner of both the Grand Jury and Audience Awards at the 2015 South-by-Southwest Film Festival, and official selection of Critics' Week at the 2015 Cannes Film Festival, KRISHA is the story of a woman's return to the family she abandoned years before, set entirely over the course of one turbulent Thanksgiving.

When Krisha shows up at her sister's Texas home on Thanksgiving morning, her close and extended family greet her with a mixture of warmth and wariness. Almost immediately, a palpable unease permeates the air, one which only grows in force as Krisha gets to work cooking the turkey and trying to make up for lost time by catching up with her various relatives, chief among them her nephew, Trey. As Krisha's attempts at reconciliation become increasingly rebuffed, tension and suspicion reach their peak, with long-buried secrets and deep-seated resentments coming to the fore as everyone becomes immersed in an emotionally charged familial reckoning.

A potent combination of innovative cinematic storytelling and timeless themes of love, family, and forgiveness, KRISHA took the independent film community by storm upon its SXSW premiere, and it hasn't slowed down since. Marked by complex tonal shifts (the film moves from dark humor to deep pathos to almost horror movie-like intensity), virtuosic camerawork reminiscent of Terrence Malick (with whom Shults worked on multiple projects), and a propulsive score by Brian McOmber, KRISHA proves definitively that Shults is the real deal. He is one of the most exciting and unique storytellers to emerge in a long time, and is remarkable in the way he embraces successful traditional techniques while managing to innovate new ones. Additionally, with a cast of largely nonprofessionals, many of whom were friends and family (his aunt Krisha plays the lead, and has received universal accolades for her performance) a 9-day shoot in his parents' home, and a budget less than a studio film's catering bill, Shults is a shining example of how personal, homegrown filmmaking can lead to an accomplished breakout feature.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

KRISHA marks the feature debut of writer-director-editor-producer Trey Edward Shults, a Houston native who catapults to the front rank of independent filmmakers with his shattering, visionary family drama about a black sheep returning home following a ten-year absence. Emerging seemingly out of nowhere, KRISHA began its yearlong tour of international film festivals after premiering at South By Southwest earlier that year, where it took home both the Grand Jury and Audience awards. Two months later, it played to a global audience as part of the Critics' Week program at the Cannes Film Festival, where it attained almost universal acclaim.

Prior to becoming a *cause célèbre* on the festival circuit, it was a short film — also entitled KRISHA — which Shults created with \$7,000 of his own money, using family and friends as cast and crew. The story of an aging hippie with an independent streak — played by Shults' real-life aunt, Krisha Fairchild, in a star-making turn — KRISHA in both short and long form tracks the slowly escalating breakdown of an outsider who shocks her hosts to their core with a devastating plea for a seat at the Thanksgiving table. Culminating in one family's closing ranks on the wayward member who bolted into a life of addiction and self-destruction, this supremely assured psychodrama exudes the confidence and craftsmanship of a budding cinematic maverick. A classic example of "write about what you know," KRISHA began its incredible road to fruition with a nervous breakdown in its own right.

Shults' experience prior to KRISHA consisted of interning in the camera department at age 19 on Terrence Malick's still-in-production VOYAGE OF TIME; he interned again on THE TREE OF LIFE and worked as a camera loader on the forthcoming Malick feature set in the Austin music scene. Aside from studying the masters and working on film sets as a young man, he did not attend film school, embarking instead in 2012 on an early incarnation of what would become his debut short film. "I didn't know what I was doing and I was in over my head," Shults admits. "We didn't have half the cast or equipment we needed but I was stubborn, thinking everything would be fine. It was the worst week of my life and I fell apart behind closed doors."

He took two years and rethought the material, transforming it into the short film that would go on to win a Special Jury Prize at SXSW in 2014. Shults' best friend, Justin Chan, a producer on both films, persuaded him to rewrite the piece and shoot it as a feature. In August 2014, over nine days in the extreme Texas heat, Shults and his close-knit crew (many of them his family members) shot the third incarnation of KRISHA in his parents' home, with Shults himself appearing as Trey. His own mother, Robyn Fairchild, appears as the family matriarch, and his grandmother provides a memorable turn as a wheelchair-bound geriatric with a compromised memory. Working actors Bill Wise and Chris Doubek filled out supporting roles. "The whole cast felt like a real family," Shults insists. "It was beautiful."

The story itself hit *very* close to home, with Shults cribbing plot points from his own family remembrances and weaving them into the film. "Krisha herself is a combination of different family members, including myself but minus the addiction component," he admits. "There are aspects of my father's anger in her story as well the influence of my cousin, who passed away and sort of inspired the whole project."

But it was his close relationship with his aunt, a working actor with mostly bit parts to her name, which prompted Shults to cast Krisha Fairchild in the lead role of both his productions. "She's a sweet aging hippie who loves dogs — nothing like the character she plays," he insists. "I looked up to her when I was young because she worked in the industry. And since the material in KRISHA is so personal to our family, I knew she'd give an amazing performance."

Fairchild came to her nephew's productions with a theater background and appearances in the features THE KILLING OF JOHN LENNON and HIGHWAY. For the feature version's intense third-act scenes, Fairchild (who doesn't drink alcohol) barricaded herself in Trey's bedroom listening to the Rolling Stones and Bob Dylan. After gradually slipping into character, dabbing drops of wine on her lips to better grasp the power of alcohol, she descends upon the extended Shults family — gathered around the dining room table and also in character — for the film's incendiary final scene, a holiday blowout that ranks among the most searing in memory.

Shults' indelible debut is an exercise in escalating tension over the course of a single Thanksgiving Day as Krisha tries and fails to reconnect with her estranged family. "The whole movie is subjective and everything is from Krisha's point of view," Shults explains. "We wanted to build on that through the sound design, the score, the visuals and the production design." In the first act of the movie, Shults employs a 1:85 aspect ratio, using wider lenses and long takes to show the grandeur of his family's home — "this life that Krisha could have had but doesn't," he explains. After Krisha falls back into her old ways during the second act, the aspect ratio changes to 2:35, with anamorphic lenses employed to create a sense of mounting claustrophobia and distress. When Krisha passes out, and wakes up in the film's brief but harrowing third act, the ratio is an even tighter 1:33 — "It feels like the walls are closing in; we used longer lenses to try and show Krisha's heart and soul," he adds. "The goal of the movie was to make a nosedive into her own subjective delirium, where some things are really happening and other things aren't. You just don't know anymore."

Having worked on the set of several Malick productions, Shults adopted the fine art of "steal what you can, whenever you can," as he describes it, opting not to crib the legendary director's much-imitated meditative visual style but instead his propensity for working without a traditional script. Although KRISHA in both incarnations was meticulously written in screenplay format, Shults encouraged his cast to create scenes and dialogue of their own. All of the interactions between Krisha and the foul-mouthed, fast-talking Uncle Doyle (played by Bill Wise, a veteran of several Andrew Bujalski and Richard Linklater productions) were improvised, including Doyle's immortal line "I eat leather and shit saddles," delivered during a patio confrontation scene.

For Shults, this loose, freeform collaborative style was a high point of the production — and a method he intends to utilize in future projects. "We got amazing stuff that informed the whole movie by being open and going with the flow," he insists. "I was too ego-driven the first time I directed my short. For the feature version it was more about collaboration. There are things in KRISHA I could never have thought of myself that all these people brought to it. It's a wonderful way of working."

CAST AND CREW BIOS

TREY EDWARD SHULTS – Writer, Director, Editor, Producer, “Trey”

Trey Edward Shults was born in Houston, Texas, in 1988. His first foray into the film industry was on Terrence Malick's upcoming film *Voyage of Time*. It was on that film where he worked in the camera department as a film loader. From there, he interned on Malick's *The Tree of Life*, and then as camera department production assistant on *Weightless*, the director's upcoming film. Shults' short film "Krisha" premiered at South By Southwest in 2014 in the Narrative Shorts category, where it was awarded Special Jury Recognition for Cinematography. The short film went on to play many other film festivals, including the HollyShorts Film Festival, where it won the award for Best Narrative Short. In the summer of 2014, he completed the feature version of *Krisha*. *Krisha* is his first feature film.

JUSTIN R. CHAN – Producer

Justin R. Chan was born in Houston, Texas. He attended The University of Texas at Austin. *Krisha* is his first project and feature film to produce. The film was the winner of both the Grand Jury and Audience Awards at the 2015 South by Southwest Film Festival, as well as an official selection of the International Critics' Week at the 2015 Cannes Film Festival. He previously worked as a production assistant on the short film of the same title, from which the feature was expanded. Justin plans to continue working with Trey Edward Shults as a producer on his second film, *It Comes At Night*.

CHASE JOLIET – Producer, “Chase”

Chase Joliet is a Meisner-trained actor and independent filmmaker from Austin, Texas. He began his acting career with roles in NBC's "Friday Night Lights," "Revolution," and numerous independent shorts and features in the Austin film scene. Chase then took a hiatus from acting to work under Terrence Malick during the production of *Voyage of Time* and *Weightless*, during which he met Trey Edward Shults and developed a passion to both make films and act in them. You can find Chase in the horror-comedy *Lumberjack Man* and the soon to be released independent comedy *Here We Are*, both opposite his best pal Alex Dobrenko. He's currently acting in and producing the feature length thriller, *Inheritance*. He now lives in Los Angeles with his dog Shiner.

WILSON SMITH – Producer

Wilson Smith was born in Columbus, Georgia. He attended Auburn University, graduating with a Bachelor's Degree in Radio/Television/Film Communications in 2011. He then moved to Austin to work for the Austin Film Society. Since then, he has been fortunate enough to work with directors such as Terrence Malick, Jeff Nichols, Michael Bay, David Gordon Green, and Jason Reitman. In 2014, he produced his first feature film: *Krisha*, written and directed by Trey Edward Shults. It premiered at the 2015 South by Southwest Film Festival, where it won both the Grand Jury Prize and the Audience Award for Narrative Feature. Subsequently, the

film was chosen to play Critics Week at the 2015 Cannes International Film Festival. Since then, he has acted as producer on another feature - *Here We Are* - currently in the final stages of post-production, as well as on several short films and music videos. Future projects as a producer include *Lonely People* by Jack Mayer, as well as Trey Edward Shults' sophomore feature *It Comes At Night*.

BRIAN MCOMBER – Composer

Brian McOmber is a self-taught drummer and composer who improvises and collaborates with a wide range of musicians in his approach towards film scoring. He was a member of the Grammy nominated band Dirty Projectors (2006-2012), and has performed and/or recorded with Alarm Will Sound, Björk, David Byrne, Doudou N'Diaye Rose, Juana Molina, Kurt Ballou (Converge), St. Vincent and Tim Kingsbury (Arcade Fire). His score for Trey Edward Shults' feature film *Krishna*, was described as “bracing and beautiful” by Michael Phillip’s of the Chicago Tribune. Filmmaker Magazine’s Brandon Harris called Brian’s score for Hannah Fidell’s *A Teacher* “subtle and terrifying”. Currently, Brian has multiple feature film scores on the festival circuit including Celia Rowson-Hall’s silent dance film *MA*, Penny Lane’s stranger-than-fiction documentary *NUTS!*, and Bernardo Britto’s misadventure comedy *Jacqueline (Argentine)*.

DREW DANIELS – Director of Photography

Drew Daniels is a cinematographer from Texas, whose credits include the 2016 Sundance Grand Jury Award-winning short film *Thunder Road*, as well as *Krishna*, the 2015 South by Southwest Grand Jury and Audience Award-winner and 2015 Cannes International Critics’ Week Official Selection. He shoots features, shorts, music videos and commercials all around the world, but currently resides in Los Angeles, California.

MICHAEL SEMANICK – Sound Mix

Michael Semanick is an award-winning sound engineer, for which he won two Academy Awards for Best Sound on *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* and *King Kong*, as well as being nominated for another seven Academy Awards. He has worked with notable directors like Paul Thomas Anderson (*Magnolia*, *Punch-Drunk Love*, *There Will Be Blood*, *The Master*), David Fincher (*Fight Club*, *Zodiac*, *The Social Network*, *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*), and Spike Jonze (*Where the Wild Things Are*, *Her*).

JOHNNY MARSHALL – Sound Design

Johnny Marshall is an award-winning sound designer and re-recording mixer based in Dallas, Texas. Johnny received a 2013 Sundance Special Jury Award for Sound Design which, to date, has been the only award ever given for sound in the history of the Sundance Film Festival. He was nominated for the 2014 ALFS Technical Achievement of the Year Award by the London Critics’ Circle honoring his sound design with director Shane Carruth on *Upstream Color*. Johnny is the owner and creative head of Marshall Sound Design, a twenty-year-old full service audio editorial boutique specializing in sound design and mixing for indie films.

KRISHA FAIRCHILD – Krisha

Krisha was born in Louisiana, raised in Ohio, and schooled in the professional acting program of The Goodman Theatre School of the Art Institute of Chicago, BFA 1974. After working on an indie feature there with Andrew Davis and Tak Fujimoto, she moved to Los Angeles. During her decade there, she worked as a personal assistant to Joel Grey and Nancy Sinatra, sold real estate, managed a restaurant, and tried to avoid tarnishing her mental image of what acting could be. Moving to Seattle in her mid 30s, she found a niche doing narration and voiceover, and small character parts in features and episodic. Acting with Holly Hunter for Martha Coolidge in *Crazy in Love*, she was reminded that practicing her craft felt good. In her mid 40s, she moved to a beach in Hawaii to chill. The voicing and film work continued, with a raunchy bit part with Jared Leto and Jake Gyllenhaal in *Highway*, and a second lead in *The Killing of John Lennon*. She had retired in her early 60s to central Mexico when her nephew, Trey Edward Shults, presented her with first the short, then the feature of *Krisha*.

ROBYN FAIRCHILD – Robyn

Robyn Fairchild was born in Cincinnati, Ohio. She attended The University of Texas at Austin for graduate school and remained in Texas upon her graduation. Robyn is a therapist and continues to practice in Houston, Texas. Before her role in *Krisha*, Robyn acted in the short film of the same title, as well as the previous short films written and directed by her son, Trey Edward Shults.

BILL WISE – Doyle

Bill Wise is based in ever-populating Austin, Texas and is the proud father of two giant boys: Hartley and Liam. He is a twenty-year veteran of stage and screen. He has worked with internationally renowned filmmaker Richard Linklater as a pool hustler in *Dazed and Confused*, the boat car guy in *Waking Life*, and Uncle Stevie in *Boyhood*. Kickstarter voted his "Gill Webb Show with Bruce and Kelly" as one of its "Best Twelve Videos" of 2011 out of over 30,000 submissions. His latest venture as co-producer and lead can be seen in the 10 episode web series: *MASTER CLASS*. The show won the Hiscox Audience Award for Digital Scripted Series at the 2015 Austin Film Festival. He can be seen as Dean Samuelson in RoosterTeeth's celebrity-peppered comedy series, *Crunch Time*, sometime this spring. He dedicates his performance as Uncle Doyle in *Krisha* to Trey Edward Shults, who completely backed his pony from the gate to the tape. He can't thank Justin, Krisha, Robyn, Doubs, the entire cast and crew, and all of the rockstars at A24 enough for being there, helping to stir things up, and getting the *Krisha* gospel heard around the world.

CHRIS DOUBEK – Dr. Becker

First seen in *Lovers of Hate*, a John Cassavetes Award nominee in 2011 and Sundance Narrative Competition film in 2010, Chris starred as Alex Karpovsky's older and wiser brother. That same year, Chris also starred in *The Happy Poet*, a Venice Film Festival selection. Last year, he was featured in *Boyhood*, nominated for six Academy Awards. Chris also had the

pleasure of working with Richard Linklater on *Fast Food Nation* and *Everybody Wants Some*. He is featured in the Bob Byington films *Harmony & Me*, *Somebody Up There Likes Me*, and *Seven Chinese Brothers*. Chris had supporting roles in six films at the 2013 South by Southwest Film Festival: *Computer Chess*, *A Teacher*, *Loves Her Gun*, *Grow Up Tony Phillips*, *White Reindeer*, and *Goodnight*. Among his theatre credits, Chris was a member of the original Off-Broadway Ensemble of Julie Taymor's *Juan Darien*, with the Music Theatre Group in New York City. While in Austin, he won a B. Iden Payne Outstanding Cast Performance Award for the Southwest regional premiere of Yasmin Reza's *Art*. Chris got his start at his hometown summer stock theatre, the Hampton Playhouse, where he stayed out of trouble during high school by working as an apprentice. Though now known as 'Playhouse Drive', its memory lives on as the beginning of a great adventure.

OLIVIA GRACE APPLGATE – Olivia

Olivia Applegate is a Texas native now living in Los Angeles. She got her start acting opposite Rooney Mara and Ryan Gosling in Terrance Malick's *Weightless* and has since starred in several indie films and had a recurring role on NBC's "Revolution." You can also catch her singing on "America's Got Talent" in her musical duo, "Eric and Olivia". Olivia is overjoyed to be a part of such a heartfelt and impactful production as *Krishna*.

ALEX DOBRENKO – Alex

Alex Dobrenko is an actor, writer, and improviser living in Los Angeles, California. He recently acted in *Krishna*, which won the 2015 South by Southwest Grand Jury and Audience Choice Awards before being purchased by A24. Before that, Alex starred in the comedy-mystery *Arlo and Julie*, which premiered at SXSW 2014 to rave reviews from Variety, BadAss Digest, Austin Chronicle, and others, including Wired Magazine which called Alex one of the "15 Most Fascinating Filmmakers and Stars at SXSW." You can catch him next in *The Program* starring Ben Foster, Lee Pace and Dustin Hoffman (Alex played Dustin Hoffman's son - a personal dream come true), the indie comedy *Here We Are*, and the horror comedy *The Lumberjack Man* starring Michael Madsen. You can also catch Alex at improv theaters across Los Angeles. He is currently taking classes at the Upright Citizens Brigade. Alex also retains an active role at Tugg, a film start up based out of Austin.

BRYAN CASSERLY – Logan

Bryan Casserly was born and raised in Houston, Texas. At the age of 13, he met director Trey Edward Shults and producer Justin R. Chan, where they began making short films in their parents' homes. Bryan went on to study acting at the Academy of Art in San Francisco, run by long-time actress Diane Baker. After some time in the Bay Area, he had landed roles on the hit reenactment show, *I Almost Got Away With It*. Now in Los Angeles, Bryan's credits continue to grow working on three award-winning short films and features such as *Steve Jobs*, *Ted 2*, *Krishna*, and HBO's "The Newsroom." Along with acting, Bryan works for Ridley Scott's production company, RSA.

CAST

Krisha	Krisha Fairchild
Robyn	Robin Fairchild
Doyle	Bill Wise
Dr. Becker	Chris Doubeck
Olivia	Olivia Grace Applegate
Alex	Alex Dobrenko
Chase	Chase Joliet
Trey	Trey Edward Shults

CREW

Writer/Director	Trey Edward Shults
Producers	Justin R. Chan Trey Edward Shults Wilson Smith Chase Joliet
Exec. Producers	Jonathan R. Chan JP Castel
Cinematography	Drew Daniels
Editor	Trey Edward Shults
Original Score	Brian McOmber

