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VOD Spotlight: THE NICE GIRLS CREW

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Nice Girls Crew

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Kate Asche Wilson (@KateDoesLife) interviews the creator (Christine Kwon) and actresses Lynn Chen, Sheetal Sheth and Michelle Krusiec of NICE GIRLS CREW.



Kate Asche Wilson (KAW): What inspired you to create NICE GIRLS CREW?



Christine Kwon

Christine Kwon (CK): I had the opportunity to create a series at the organization where I work as a film curator, the Center for Asian American Media, and my boss Don Young encouraged me to do something female-driven. I was excited at this prospect, and came up with a very simple concept about three friends who get together for a book club, but wind up together, as the best circle of friends are wont to do. From there, I approached Tanuj Chopra, who I had known as a very talented and generous filmmaker through the festival circuit, and we collaborated to create what we feel is a very fun, uncensored, and rare take on Asian American women.

KAW: You all took the hilarity and craziness of your characters and just ran with it. What did you like the most about playing your respective



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Lynn Chen (Courtesy: Chopper Platt)

Lynn Chen (LC): For me, it was the freedom of being able to explore and be totally loose with a group of people who I felt comfortable being around. I trusted my fellow actors and my director completely, so it was a lot of fun.



Sheetal Sheth

Sheetal Sheth (SS): First of all I think that it's a really special thing when people are writing for you. It's great when you have a writer and producers that have you in mind for a specific character they're developing. That way they can model that character off of what you can do well. When someone writes specifically for you you're already half way there with the character, and then you have the opportunity to go even further and bring something very specific to the character on top of that. For me I was so excited because there was nothing that I couldn't say.



Michelle Krusiec (courtesy: Melly Lee)

Michelle Krusiec (MK): I really wanted to push the physical comedy and I also wanted to play a comedic character that was unlike anyone I'd played in the past. I wanted to change my overall look, hence the perm and I felt I took a bunch of risks that I normally wouldn't be allowed to take in mainstream projects. I also felt I exorcised a few secret desires of mine, such as dancing like a lunatic and a really bad Christopher Walken impression. Everyone has amazing Walken impressions, I feel my claim to fame could be a really terrible one. What I love about Geraldine is that she's got a lot of vices and I think she's totally unpredictable. She's definitely "on" something but you just don't know what.

KAW: How did you each get involved with NICE GIRLS CREW?

LC: Tanuj and Christine were kind enough to ask us!

SS: Tanuj reached out to me and said that he and Christine had developed this idea and wanted to do it with Lynn, Michelle, and myself. I thought that all of us together, working on this material, would be a really fun experiment. We had no idea what was going to happen. We had no idea if it was going to be crazy or over the top, but we just didn't care.

MK: I was invited to collaborate on the project from the get-go and the characters were built around our ideas and what we brought to our characters.



Lynn Chen, Sheetal Sheth, Michelle Krusiec (NICE GIRLS CREW)

KAW: You cover a wide array of literature in Book Club from Harry Potter to Zen In The Art of Archery. What was your personal favorite?

LC: I must admit, I've only read *Harry Potter*.

SS: My character never read any of the books so I made a point not to read them again for the production, but personally I'm a big Harry Potter fan. I've read all of them, and I think they're amazing.

MK: I think my personal favorite was *Howl* because I researched various readings of this poem and I got introduced to the whole beatnik scene.

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Michelle Krusiec, Lynn Chen, Sheetal Sheth (NICE GIRLS CREW)

KAW: *The Hunger Games*, *50 Shades of Grey*, *Twilight*. All of these novels have an intensely loyal fan base. Are you planning on covering any of them? I'm pretty sure Sophie could get into a lot of trouble with *50 Shades of Grey*.

CK: We thought about each of these books! We toyed around with a lot of options, but one thing we avoid is covering a book that is too new. This is partially for timing purposes: by the time the episodes would be released *The Hunger Games*, for example, would not be as relevant and I think we'd be just behind the conversation. So we choose books that have some relevancy, but are a bit older, and in some cases we probably introduce more obscure choices.

KAW: What is your dream book to cover?

LC: *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*. Anything by Judy Blume, actually.

SS: The only thing that Leena might actually read would be a really fun pop up book with pictures.

MK: One of my favorite books (it's an old one) is *The Power of One* and I could see Geraldine training as the welter weight champion of Orange County to possibly deal with bullying issues she faced as a gawky teenager. The theme of the episode would be called "Vengeance is Mine."

KAW: You said that the series went from festivals, to television, and then finally online. Are you a fan of VOD as a means of distribution?

CK: Absolutely, it's one of the rare personal expenses I splurge on, because I think some of the most compelling content produced right now is on cablecast and VOD. I understand there's some interesting things VOD is experimenting with in the way of films, and I'd love to see that expand to a variety of formats, including ours, which people automatically call Webisodes, but really it's a short-form series that we're exhibiting on multiple platforms.

KAW: I myself spend most of my time on the Internet watching shows On Demand. Are any of you loyal on demanders?

LC: Yes! I love being able to watch whatever I want whenever I want. It's the future, now!

SS: I'm a big On Demand person. **I think On Demand is doing really innovative and interesting stuff, and that it's a great resource.**

I can't tell you how many nights I've decided to stay home so I could watch On Demand.

MK: Actually, I'm terrible at watching anything in real time, so **the only way I CAN watch shows is On Demand.** It's a realistic approach to giving you access to content given everyone's hectic schedules and I'm a fan of marathon viewings. Where you can get an overload of the best shows all at once and when you're done, you feel like you've been in another universe and you've been drinking that show's "Kool-Aid."

KAW: NICE GIRLS CREW seems like it was an absolute blast to make. What was your favorite aspect of the production?



Michelle Krusiec, Lynn Chen, Sheetal Sheth (NICE GIRLS CREW)

CK: The talent is really exceptional, and I feel what we've made here is poised to galvanize a new and powerful following. We're trying to tap into the voice of young women and it's so crucial that people of color can see diverse representations of themselves.

LC: We had cupcakes every single day!

SS: We were constantly having a blast and having fun, but it was a lot of work to get to that place. The fun only comes once you've done your work. Everyday we spent a lot of time breaking the material down and finding our rhythm together. My favorite part was figuring out who these characters were with Michelle and Lynn, and taking the time to explore our characters, really getting them into our skin, so that we could have fun.

MK: My favorite aspect for this particular series was watching it with an audience during the festival run. Even though most of us watch things online now or in the privacy of our own homes, it reminded me how enjoyable things can be when experienced together. Normally, I don't get an opportunity to watch a lot of my comedic material with audiences, but screening this series with large crowds reminded me how invigorating it can be to make a crowd laugh. I'm just thrilled that it'll be available On Demand for folks who need a little pick me up! It's also just unlike anything else I've seen and I think it's really original.

KAW: What's next for NICE GIRLS CREW? Are you planning on having a season 2?

CK: We hope to do NGC 2 soon, and will have a crowdfunding campaign shortly. People can check out our Facebook page or follow us on twitter for updates @nicegirlscrew!

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- Kate Asche Wilson



Kate Asche Wilson is a contributing writer to On Demand Weekly. She is a graduate from the Dodge College of Film and Media Arts at Chapman University where she received a BA in Screenwriting. In her spare time Kate likes to take long walks on the beach, and watch telenovelas. Follow her on Twitter @KATEDOESLIFE

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