

Shipham Community Cinema

presents

The Big Sick (15)

Director: Michael Showalter. Starring: Kumail Nanjiani and Emily V Gordon

A breakout hit at Sundance, this sensitive, funny and truthful take on modern romance tells the real life story of the relationship between the film's writers (Emily V. Gordon and Kumail Nanjiani) - a Pakistan-born comedian and his American girlfriend.

When comedian Kumail (Nanjiani) falls in love with grad student Emily (Zoe Kazan), he has to take on the expectations of his Muslim family, their 1400-year-old traditions, and his desire to forge a career in stand-up. As his parents relentlessly try to set him up with potential brides for an arranged marriage, Emily contracts a mysterious illness, and Kumail must navigate the crisis with her parents (Holly Hunter and Ray Romano) and the emotional tug-of-war between his own family, and his heart.



This interview by Audrey Gorden with Kumail Nanjiani and Emily V Gordon originally appeared on chicagotribune.com on 29 June 2017.

Husband and wife duo Kumail Nanjiani and Emily V. Gordon are no strangers to the entertainment industry. Nanjiani has acted in TV shows and films, including "Silicon Valley" and "Mike and Dave Need Wedding Dates." Gordon, the family therapist turned writer and producer, has multiple published personal essays and wrote for Nanjiani's TV show, "The Meltdown with Jonah and Kumail." But their new movie, "The

Big Sick," marks the first time the couple sat down, got (semi) serious and wrote a screenplay about a landmark time in their relationship: dealing with Gordon's critical illness and medically-induced coma while facing pressure from Nanjiani's family about dating a woman outside the Muslim faith. We had a chance to talk to the power couple about the already critically acclaimed film and working together as a pair.

Kumail, you've written for and acted in many TV shows and films before, but this is the first feature-length production that you've been heavily involved with. How has creating and having a lot of control over "The Big Sick" been different for you?

KN: You never relax. It's kind of exciting to be involved with every aspect like music and editing and literally picking out the clothes; I loved that. We know this movie so well—I've never known a movie so well before. Or anything this well. It's exciting to be involved with every single piece of it but it's also scary.

Emily, you've written a personal essay for the "Lenny Letter" about your experience being in a coma—what was the difference in writing that versus expressing it through the screenplay?

EVG: For one, it's not a movie about Emily dealing with an illness, it's about Emily and Kumail together. I think the essay really delved into the nitty-gritty of what happens to your body and your mind when you're going through an experience like that, and that's just something we weren't ever planning on tackling in this movie.

The Kumail you see on screen is a creation of both us and the producers and director. Emily is the same way. So the Emily that Zoe ended up being is a creation, a character. We pressed her as an actress to do her own work with what was on the page. But that being said, we did hang out a whole bunch and it turns out that we have a lot in common so I don't think it was that difficult of a thing for her to do.

KN: What helped was that we really have similar likes and dislikes when it comes to movies and TV. There was never a conversation like "What should the tone of this be?" We were going for the exact same thing.

Judd Apatow, a producer of the film, has worked with his wife, Leslie Mann, on many things. Did he give you any advice?

EVG: We never actually talked about that. But he shows early cuts of movies to his family, not just his wife but his daughters, and relies on their input a lot. They're quite honest with him. I think that maybe when you're as famous as Judd people are just going to be like "Oh it's great! Everything you do is great!" But, and I don't think I'm speaking out of school, I think his wife would tell him if something was terrible and I thought that was really lovely. If anything, it encouraged us that if you work with someone in your family it's OK to be honest with them and tell them the truth.

One of the most endearing parts of the movie is Kumail's relationship with Emily's parents. How close were you in real life and what was their reaction to the film?

KN: You get very close. I didn't really know them before, but then you spend a few weeks in a situation where the only other people who understand what you're going through are her parents. The three of us, I felt like, were really bonded and we became sort of a unit because only we knew what it was like.

EVG: My parents have seen it several times. The only concern they had was that they didn't want us to make light of something like that that they went through. They fully understand now that their characters were fictional, this was a partly fictional version of our story, and they really love it.

KN: (My parents) love it. They are very proud of me. I think initially it is a little jarring to see such a big part of your life on screen, and there are differences, but what helped was we had called them before and said "We're making a movie. This is what is real life, this is what is different, this is what we made up." So they didn't have any surprises watching it.

Notes courtesy of The Watershed

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME:

Announcements

Trailers for *My Life As A Courgette* and *Loving Vincent*, our extra show on 23rd March

Trailer for *Dunkirk*, main feature on 13th April

Short film - *Renaissance*

Main feature (120 mins) with a break after about 60 minutes

We welcome your feedback. Tell us what you thought of the show on our Facebook page, by email to cinema@shiphamhall.co.uk or by filling out a feedback form, (hand it to any committee member).

Our usual many thanks to our sponsors:

