



SHERBET







London, 1990. Ten-year-old British Sri-Lankan Ruby Dassanayake must spend the summer in her mother's workplace, a four-star hotel, pulling her into the shady world of hospitality and pushing her relationship with her mother to the limit...

References



Whistle Down the Wind (Bryan Forbes, 1961)



The Florida Project (Sean Baker, 2017)



The Spirit of the Beehive (Victor Erice, 1973)



Celia (Ann Turner, 1989)

STAFF ONLY





Director's Statement

Sherbet is a feature-length coming-of-age drama set in 1990. It is based on summers spent at the central London hotel where my mother worked as executive housekeeper. Eleven-year-old British-Asian Ruby Dassanayake roams the hotel's glamorous corridors, a far cry from Ruby's home life in a council high-rise. Ruby must navigate the end of childhood, where the fantasies she constructs with celebrity guests collide with the plight of the hotel's immigrant staff, all drawn from former colonies. It is based on my childhood experiences of spending summer holidays at the Mostyn Hotel, Central London, where my mother worked as executive housekeeper. I witnessed my mother's career trajectory, which peaked in the late 1980s and declined sharply when she was made redundant at the onset of the first Gulf War (1990-1).

In the absence of regular childcare, this was a solitary and unusual way to spend the weeks during which other children were on holiday or outdoors. My playground was the four-star hotel, and I turned the empty corridors, luxury suites, lobbies and bars into a fantasy world that merged books, 1970s films and a 10-year-old girl's dreams. My companions were toys,

daytime television, and porters, bar staff and chambermaids, and actual 1980s celebrities who frequented the opulent surroundings. The hotel staff were my child-minders by proxy, and looked after me with room service and mocktails

By contrast, my home life was in a West London tower block, where my mother had to turn off her glamorous work persona to navigate single parenting. The hotel world thus became an escape for my mother and me, and *The Imperial* is an expansion of my childhood imagination: bringing moments of magic to the process of growing up.

Ultimately, it is a film about the relationship between a mother and a daughter and the levels of trust, dependency and love through which they must navigate. It is a political parable that avoids preaching in favour of showing people finding a new space for themselves, simply told from the unsullied and non-prejudicial perspective of a child.

Tonally, the project merges the harsh reality of "Summer, 1993" and "The Florida Project" with the vivid fantasies of Ann Turner's "Celia".

-Michelle Williams Gamaker









SHERBET

A film by Michelle Williams Gamaker

Written by Elan Gamaker

Format: HD (Shooting) DCP (Final), Colour 90 min

Language: English

Locations: London

Budget: £800k



