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Berlin
Generation



BEBA

A Film By
Rebeca Huntt

Run Time: 79 Minutes

Short Synopsis

First-time feature filmmaker Rebeca “Beba” Huntt undertakes an unflinching exploration of her own identity in the remarkable coming-of-age documentary/cinematic memoir BEBA. Reflecting on her childhood and adolescence in New York City as the daughter of a Dominican father and Venezuelan mother, Huntt investigates the historical, societal, and generational trauma she’s inherited and ponders how those ancient wounds have shaped her, while simultaneously considering the universal truths that connect us all as humans. Throughout BEBA, Huntt searches for a way to forge her own creative path amid a landscape of intense racial and political unrest.

Poetic, powerful and profound, BEBA is a courageous, deeply human self-portrait of an Afro-Latina artist hungry for knowledge and yearning for connection.

Long Synopsis

“I carry an ancient pain that I struggle to understand.” So begins the confessional narration that opens Rebeca “Beba” Huntt’s remarkable coming-of-age documentary/cinematic memoir, BEBA. What follows is a groundbreaking film eight years in the making, which sees Huntt investigate the historical, societal, and generational trauma she’s inherited and ponder how those centuries-old wounds have shaped her. Raw and intimate, powerful and profound, BEBA is a courageous, deeply human self-portrait of a restless artist hungry for knowledge and yearning for connection. Seeking to gain a more concrete understanding of her identity as a young Afro-Latina woman and an up-and-coming filmmaker, Huntt reflects on her childhood and adolescence in New York City as the daughter of a Dominican father and Venezuelan mother. After graduating from Bard College, Huntt returns to the rent-controlled one-bedroom apartment on Central Park West where she and her two siblings were raised.

Weaving together music, 16mm film, poetry, and interview footage, Huntt traces her life’s journey from her family home to the mountains of South America, where she spent youthful summers, and then onto the campus where she formed pivotal friendships and began to discover her authentic voice. As Huntt strikes out into adulthood, intense racial and political unrest mounts, leaving her eagerly searching for a way to forge her own creative path and to find her place in the world.

BEBA is written and directed by Huntt, who also produces with Sofia Geld. Petra Costa, Alyse Ardell Spiegel, Alessandra Orofino, Joy Bryant and Inuka Bacote-Capiga serve as the film’s executive producers.

BEBA: IN CONVERSATION WITH REBECA HUNTT

BEBA's title is taken from your childhood nickname. Why did you initially decide to make an autobiographical film?

I was going through this existential crisis upon graduating from college—I think every human being goes through some sort of an existential crisis in their early twenties. I was graduating from an educational institution where I had lived in a bubble for a while. I had briefly moved back home to a one-bedroom apartment where most of my family members weren't talking to each other, and the tension was palpable. Outside in the streets, there were echoes of the murders of Michael Brown and Trayvon Martin, and someone very close to me had taken their own life. There were these things happening around me, and I felt incredibly curious about all of them. I was like *Whoa. Is this what life is? I exist within this framework of chaos, and it's constant. How do I navigate this?* BEBA came out of an intense curiosity about my relationship to being alive.

You've described yourself as someone who is shy, yet BEBA is intensely personal and incredibly honest. Did you have any reservations about revealing such intimate details about your life and your relationships with your family and friends on screen?

Yes. I had many reservations, and I still feel this fear about how much of me is out there. But what's so much bigger than my shyness is my yearning to connect with people. I feel like it's an urgent matter that we all connect on a more honest level as human beings. I think we are innately correlated, and everything would look different if we were more honest with ourselves and honest with others. That to me was more important than me feeling shy about something. There was this weird meta thing happening when I was making BEBA because it's not an autobiographical tale of someone who's lived their whole life and is looking at themselves 40 years ago, even 20 years ago. There were these microscopic shifts in my personality that just accumulated, and by the time I finished the film I was like *Oh wow, she's so different from me*. Because it was made in real-time, there had to be a level of self-acceptance that I had to activate to be able to make a film that was this honest. When it came to sharing personal moments of my family, I make it super clear that it's my point of view from the beginning of the film. I was super careful not to judge or make conclusions about anyone. My intention was to share and connect, and I was incredibly intentional to be as honest and as loving as possible.

What was the experience like of interviewing your mother and father on camera?

It was very difficult at the time to interview my mother because we could just not talk to each other about anything. My father, it was kind of beautiful to interview him. I'd never seen my father in a situation where he had a camera in his face, and he was a natural. I love hearing him speak, and I love hearing his stories. But it was also difficult because there were things that I wanted to ask him about that I didn't feel comfortable with but knew I had to. It was beautiful and frustrating.

As an artist, why is film your chosen medium? What does cinematic language offer you, and how have other disciplines, such as portraiture and music, informed your approach?

I don't think that I would have been able to tell this story any other way—film was the only medium that allowed me to make use of every single form of art that I love. There are so many references

in the film to other types of art that have kind of saved my life, films like *La Jetée*, *The Illinois Parables*, *An Oversimplification of Her Beauty*, *Elena*. Music also played a huge part. I listen to music from the time I'm taking a shower in the morning to the time I'm falling asleep at night. Then, being able to work with so many other brilliant artists and hard-working people—I don't think that any other medium lets you do that in the same way that film allows a director to do that. That is the greatest gift.

Can you talk about your collaborators on this project and in what ways they helped you realize your vision?

A strong producer is what every writer-director needs. Sofia Geld, my producer, was with me from the very beginning. She knew this film had to get made and spent all her time and resources helping me figure out how we were going to do this. She was out there organizing shoots. She was applying for grants. Without that, I wouldn't have been able to do this. My DP Sophia Stieglitz is someone who will trek the jungle with you while the rain is pouring. She'll climb a tree that's full of snakes to get the shot. My editor, Isabel Freeman, was my story champion. From our first meeting, her emotional intelligence was so clear, and that was such an important aspect of making a film like this. Either Sofia or I have worked for every one of our executive producers, so we have long-running relationships with these women who have supported us and inspired us and mentored us as young filmmakers.

BEBA was shot on 16mm, and the film has such a distinct and arresting visual style. Why did you commit to shooting on 16mm? What qualities did that bring to the film?

Film in general has this beautiful, pulsating aesthetic. Every single thing it captures on screen feels pulsating like it's alive. The colors are just also arresting. There's something about 16mm that's innately intimate. So, when I was trying to capture on screen some of these things that we don't really have language for, these existential things we're talking about, I was like, *We've gotta do it on 16mm*. There was no other option really.

There's a sequence in BEBA in which you and your white friends discuss race—and we learn in the credits that those scenes were staged. Why was that essential to include in the film?

Those conversations were what was happening at the time. I went to a predominantly white school and a lot of my friends from college were coming from that background. That was the landscape, the environment. That gave you the context of time and space, so it was very important for me to include it in the film. The only direction I gave was, *Everyone, be the worst version of yourselves*. I gave that direction to everyone including myself in that situation. It felt very real and very natural even though it was staged.

In what ways has the experience of making BEBA changed you as an artist?

It's made me live my life way more authentically. Even though I have those moments of fear, there's a level of self-acceptance and a level of courage that I have that I never previously thought was possible.

What do you hope audiences take away from the experience of watching BEBA?

If this triggers humanity in the audience, for someone to be able to identify with this film or identity with this character, that's great. I hope this helps create a space where we can all talk a little bit more honestly about what it's like to exist. I want us to all talk a little bit more honestly about some of the dynamics in our relationships, which have so much to do with these instincts that we inherit and these systems that we live under. I want every single person who witnesses my films moving forward to feel a personal connection to them, to feel some kind of ownership to them. I want to encourage love, self-acceptance and compassion.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT by Rebeca Huntt

Camille Billops once told writer bell hooks, "Put all your friends in it, everybody you loved, so one day they will find you and know that you were all here together." Billops was referring to her own tendency to make auto-biographical films. I find this quote to embody a level of self-acceptance and love for humanity that is scarce in, and yet fundamental to art.

BEBA was born out of an immense curiosity towards every aspect of life. In 2013, I had recently graduated from undergrad into a recession. Amid the murders of Treyvon Martin and Michael Brown the streets trembled and the tension was palpable. In our one-bedroom rent-controlled apartment, my family members barely spoke to each other, I felt disconnected from my friends, and someone close to me had just taken their own life. Again, the tension was palpable. I thought "I either strive and become useful, or I disappear into the chaos." After a 10-hour conversation with Sofia Geld, a friend from college who would always go there with me, we were convinced that if we could make a film exploring the effects of this moment on an existential level, we might move people. From that moment on Sofia became our producer. No doubt, BEBA had to get made.

In the early days of writing this film, I didn't want BEBA to be an archetype, quite the opposite, she needed to be as unexceptional, as human as possible. It took years for the film to reveal itself to me: a clear story arc about a series of intimate, intangible shifts. Every major plot point in BEBA reflects an existential set back, or a quantum leap often only identified by the person experiencing them. If my goal was to tell a story that connected people on such a bare level, I had to be relentlessly honest about the moments I chose to share. It was a tricky concept, so I searched for moments in film, literature, philosophy, and even conversations that I felt I was never the same after experiencing. I strove to somehow recreate those feelings: for example, the first time I heard James Baldwin describe why it is essential to be an optimist, I was never the same. We used his voice over a shot of Beba hand-washing her clothes, because it is often in those mundane moments where the silent shift happens for each of us. We used 16mm film, shot handheld, for its ability to capture a limited yet pulsating aesthetic intrinsic to intimacy. The film is full of sentimental references, like the voice of Audre Lorde, and some less obvious ones: reinterpretations of scenes from the works of Djibril Diop Mambety and Chris Marker to name a few.

My editor, Isabel, once told me, "BEBA feels like I'm on a potent first date." I felt successful after hearing that. In BEBA, I'm not asking for you to like me, or even for you to identify with me; my hope is to trigger the human in you, so we can begin a deeper dialogue around what is already true: our innate correlation. I hope to continue to connect with others by making films that feel absolutely personal to each person who witnesses them.

PRODUCER'S STATEMENT by Sofia Geld

In BEBA, Rebeca bravely lays herself bare, she gives her audience the revolutionary opportunity of watching a young woman of color live her life honestly, it isn't always pretty, indeed it's often pretty dark, but it is unrelentingly real. In so doing, she challenges audiences to do the same, to look deeply within and ask: "What is the legacy I am leaving, can I fight for something better?" Knowing that this is the conversation we were starting made us wake up and battle for this film to be made.

For eight years, I had the distinct pleasure of watching Rebeca Huntt's creative process at work. In BEBA, Rebeca took the infinite complexities of her personality and weaved them into a symphony that keeps our minds working every step of the way.

BEBA provides a mirror for many who have never seen themselves reflected before on screen. As such, we had to create our own roadmap, consistently charting new territory. Now, we can triumphantly say that BEBA is claiming its space. These stories matter. These films deserve to be funded, celebrated, and talked about. It is my hope that BEBA will prop open a door that has as of yet been firmly closed.

Film Bios

Rebeca Huntt | Written, Directed and Produced By

Rebeca Huntt is an Afro-Latina Writer/Director born and raised in New York City. She wrote and directed her first feature-length film, BEBA, which premiered at Toronto International Film Festival and will be released by NEON in 2022. She premiered her short film “1-800 Lovable” at the 2020 BlackStar Film Festival, and has also screened at Oaxaca Film Festival, The Tide Film Festival, Athena Film Festival, Art of Brooklyn Film Festival, and The Fader Magazine. Rebeca was recently included in DOC NYC's 40 under 40 list and was a participant in The Gotham Documentary Lab. Rebeca is currently repped by UTA.

Sofia Geld | Produced By

Sofia Geld is a Brazilian producer and director interested in telling personal stories that have the power to ripple through society and create change. Most recently, she produced the feature-length documentary BEBA, which will have its world premiere at Toronto International Film Festival 2021. Sofia has produced for the celebrated directors Chai Vasarhelyi, Petra Costa and Kristi Jacobson for platforms like NYTimes Opdocs and Netflix. Sofia has directed and produced several short films, music videos and installations which have been exhibited internationally. She worked as an impact producer at Skylight Pictures on the feature films Rebel Citizen and Disruption. She directed the monthly human rights themed #RESIST screening series in collaboration with UnionDocs, Skylight, WITNESS and Remezcla. Sofia received her B.A. from Bard College and was a 2014 UnionDocs Collaborative Studios fellow.

Isabel Freeman | Editor

Isabel Freeman is a New York-based film editor and producer. Since 2005 she has worked across documentary, scripted film, advertising and television. Her work has screened at festivals around the world, including BFI London, Sheffield DocFest, Sundance, Clermont-Ferrand and New York Film Festival. During her three years serving as Head of Production for Huck Magazine, Isabel produced more than 25 short films. She also works in the field of contemporary art, helping artists to realize multimedia projects for gallery and museum spaces. BEBA is her third feature-length documentary.

Sophia Stieglitz | Director of Photography

Sophia was born in Mexico City into a Japanese, American and Mexican family of filmmakers. She discovered a passion for filmmaking and photography early in her childhood and had built her first pinhole camera when she was eight years old. Sophia has worked on films, commercials, music videos and documentaries. She was awarded Best Short Cinematography at The Barcelona Sci-Fi Film Festival in 2007, Best Adapted Short Film at The Sitges Film Festival in 2012 and Best Fictional Short Film at the Baja Cine Fest 2017 among other nominations and prizes. In 2018 she co-founded “The Electric Amazons” The first grip and electric group focused on employing women and non-binary professionals. The group marks a historical change in the industry in Latin America. Sophia has also teamed up with the ICFC, Apertura and

Free the Bid, who also foment gender-equality for the film industry. Sophia received her MFA in Cinematography from the American Film Institute and has been traveling the world shooting as cinematographer since.

Petra Costa | Executive Producer

Petra Costa is a Brazilian Academy Award-nominated documentary filmmaker whose work lives on the borderlines of the personal and political. She directed "Undertow Eyes" (2009), "Elena" (2012) and "Olmo and the Seagull" (2015) and most recently "The Edge of Democracy" (2019) which was nominated for an Academy Award for best documentary in 2020. Petra is the associate producer of Barbara Paz film "Babenco" (2019), producer of Moara Passoni's "Ecstasy" (2020) and executive producer of Rebeca Hunt's "Beba" (2021).

Alyse Ardell Spiegel | Executive Producer

Alyse Ardell Spiegel is an award-winning documentary film editor, producer, and writer based in New York. She most recently edited the critically acclaimed HBO series, *I'll be Gone In the Dark*. Her feature credits include Academy Award nominated *Paradise Lost 3: Purgatory*, as well as *CRUDE*, *The Somali Project*, and *This Is Congo* which garnered awards throughout the world. Her films have premiered at Sundance, TIFF, NYFF, Tribeca, and the Venice International Film Festival. Spiegel consults on several projects and is known for structuring complex narratives into compelling character driven films. She has always gravitated towards challenging projects that shine a light on under told stories. She has been invited to advise at the Columbia School of Journalism's Documentary Program, working closely with students for the last two years. A fluent Spanish speaker, Spiegel has worked in the field as a creative Producer in Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua, throughout Africa and North America.

Alessandra Orofino | Executive Producer

Alessandra Orofino is a non-profit executive, activist, director, producer and writer with extensive experience in advocacy and campaigning. She was a founding member of the NYC-based agency Purpose PBC, which she brought to Brazil before co-founding NOSSAS, one of the country's most important nonprofits. She is currently the showrunner at Greg News - a satirical journalism show on HBO Brazil - and a fellow at the Obama Foundation and Ashoka. She is also producing two documentaries with Academy Award-nominated director Petra Costa. Alessandra's work has been featured at numerous conferences and media outlets, including TED Global, Folha de São Paulo, BBC, Stanford Social Innovation Review and the New York Times. Joy Bryant (Executive Producer)

Inuka Bacote-Capiga | Executive Producer

Inuka Bacote-Capiga is a recovering attorney with 10+ years of entertainment professional experience. Inuka's producing credits include the feature documentary SUMMER OF SOUL, which won the Grand Jury Prize and Audience Award in the U.S. Documentary Competition at 2021 Sundance Film Festival.

The doc was acquired by Searchlight Pictures and is currently on Hulu and in theatres. She produced the feature film, THE 40-YEAR- OLD VERSION which garnered her an Independent Spirit Award nomination. She also co- executive produced the Daytime Emmy winning LGBTQ series, EASTSIDERS. Currently, Inuka is SVP Development & Production for Hot Sauce Productions which has a multi-year first look deal with Sony Pictures Television. Additionally, she serves as an affiliate of The Blackhouse Foundation, a non- profit organization dedicated to expanding opportunities for diverse content creators.

CREDITS

Written, Directed & Produced by

Rebeca Huntt

Produced by

Sofia Geld

Editor

Isabel Freeman

Director of Photography

Sophia Stieglitz

Executive Producers

Petra Costa

Alessandra Orofino

Joy Bryant

Inuka Bacote-Capiga

Alyse Ardell Spiegel

Co-Producers

Sheena Matheiken

Monihan Monihan

Isabel Freeman

Nikkia Moulterie

John Hoffman

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Anthony Di Damaso

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Archival Producer:

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Writing Consultants:

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Noelia Quintero Herencia

Alix Lambert
Sheena Matheiken
Monihan Monihan

Post Production Supervisor & Colorist

Ernie Schaeffer

Sound Supervisor

Ricardo Arteaga

Re-recording Mixer

Carlos Cortés Navarrete
Ricardo Lavalle Cárdenas

Sound Designer

Abraham Chacra

Living Room Race Conversation Actors

Hannah Mitchel
Eamon O'Rourke
Eliot C. Thompson

Additional Cinematography

Michelle Clementine
Sofia Geld
Rebeca Huntt
Alice Plati
Neo Sora

Production Audio

Kris Berle
Turner Curan
Paola Messina
Hannah Overton

Foley Artist

Pablo Espinosa

Foley Recordist and Artist

Uriel Valdés

Sound Effects

Adriana Santiago
Titles Designer
Brent Rollins

Music Supervisor

Joe Rudge

Music Coordinator

Christopher Glemaud

Film to Digital Transfer

Labo Digital
Spectra Film & Video

Post Production Coordination & Lab

Isaac D. Hernández
Anaïs Vignal

Post Production Assistant

Martín Dávalos
Assistant Editors
Aisha Amin
Samantha Grey
Paige Polke
Jose Roman
Keiko Wright

Archival Researcher

Lindsey Suzanne Smith

Associate Producers

Rashad Bailey
Nora Christiani
Arielle Knight
Amanda Naseem
Malaika Woluchem

Production Assistants

Paola Piers-Torres
Zazie Ray Trapido
Frances Underhill

Photographs Courtesy of

Daniel Blackwell
Rebeca Huntt
Veronica Huntt
Zachary Williams

Additional Footage Courtesy of

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Luis Burgos
Jesse Cain
Casey Carter
Jenner Furst
Saya Iwasaki
Lou Jasmine for Accenture
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Robert Rivilin
Malaika Woluchem

Archival Footage Courtesy of

Bard College Film Archives
Downtown Community Television Center
Fremantle
George Loynes, CharlieBo313
Getty Images
GHB Archives
Huntley Film Archive
Kino Library
Ralph McDaniels, Video Music Box
Screen Ocean/Reuters
Todd McCartney, LBV History
Veritone

Audre Lorde Audio Provided by Lesbian Herstory Archives

Recitation by Dr. Maya Angelou used with permission of Caged Bird Legacy, LLC

Legal Representation

Paul Szynol

Production Accountant

Richard M Prinzi, Jr

SONGS

"Inside Voices"

Written & Performed by
Holland Andrews

"Dirge"

Written & Performed by
Holland Andrews

"Free Now"

Written by Holland Andrews
Performed by Like A Villain
Courtesy of Accidental Records
By arrangement with Terrorbird Media

"Daddy"

Written & Performed by
Holland Andrews

"Big Flame (Is Gonna Break My Heart In Two)"

Written by William Shephard
Performed by Doris Wilson
Courtesy of Fervor Records

"Amazing Paper Cuttings"

Written by Holland Andrews
Performed by Like A Villain
Courtesy of Accidental Records
By arrangement with Terrorbird Media

"Harriet"

Written & Performed by
Holland Andrews

"You're a Rat"

Written & Performed by
Holland Andrews

"16 Bars"

Written & Performed by
Holland Andrews

"Glass Watch"

Written by Holland Andrews
Performed by Like A Villain
Courtesy of Like A Villain
By arrangement with Terrorbird Media

"Mendoza Fría"

Written & Performed by
Anthony Di Damaso

"Teen Spirit"

Written & Performed by
Holland Andrews

"I Want to Believe (College Version)"

Written & Performed by
Holland Andrews

"Ice Surfing"

Written by Mark Fletcher
Performed by Newport Reds
Courtesy of Newport Reds

"Coal"

Written by Holland Andrews
Performed by Like A Villain
Courtesy of Like A Villain
By arrangement with Terrorbird Media

"Dug Out"

Written By: Amina Parks
Performed by: Kijani Eshe
Courtesy of Kijani Eshe

"Room Interlude"

Written by Amina Parks
Performed by Kijani Eshe

"Annie's Point"

Written & Performed by
Holland Andrews

"Bewaa Song No. 3"

Written by M. Okrun

Performed by People of Nandom

Courtesy of TRF Music Inc.

"Cocaine Blues"

Written by Abner Jay

Performed by: Lola Kirke, Scout Willis, Audrey Turner,

Lily Kaminsky, Corenlia Livingston and Rebeca Huntt

Courtesy of Mississippi Records

"Black Love"

Written & Performed by

Holland Andrews

"I Want to Believe (Reprise)"

Written & Performed by

Holland Andrews

"I Want to Believe"

Written by Holland Andrews

Performed by Like A Villain

Courtesy of Like A Villain

By arrangement with Terrorbird Media

"Chambonea"

Written by: Antonio Peter De La Rosa

Performed by: Omega

Publishing: Allegro Music Publishing

Courtesy of: Planet Records

"Paloma Negra"

Performed by: Rebeca Huntt

Written by: Tomas Mendez Sosa

Courtesy of Warner Music Mexico S.A. de C.V.

By arrangement with Warner Music Group Film & TV Licensing

"My Hands"

Written by Holland Andrews

Performed by Like A Villain

Courtesy of Accidental Records

By arrangement with Terrorbird Media

"Jungles"

Written by Amina Parks
Performed by Kijani Eshe
Courtesy of Kijani Eshe

"Flood"

Written & Performed by
Holland Andrews

"Other Life"

Written & Performed by
Holland Andrews

"Life, yo"

Written & Performed by
Holland Andrews

"Paloma Negra"

Written by Tomas Mendez Sosa
Performed by Lola Beltrán
Courtesy of Warner Music Mexico S.A. de C.V.
By arrangement with Warner Music Group Film & TV Licensing