

## ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

For two weeks in the summer of 2003 director Nicole Sylvester and producing partner Alisa Lomax came together to make a movie. Getting to this point would prove exhausting and exhilarating. Over the course of the previous twelve months, the two had discussed wanting to make a feature film. Nicole had commissioned a writer to write a story loosely based on her relationship with her mother, Veronica. Veronica, who died of liver failure due to alcoholism, had been clinically depressed for most of Nicole's life. Upon her death, Nicole realized how much she didn't know about her mother and was thinking about making a documentary on their relationship when she approached screenwriter Rashim Cannad. He took these thoughts and blended them with ideas of his own and *Layla's Girl* was born. Once the script was complete the producer and director set a budget of \$200,000 and the process began... or so they thought.

Six months later, with not a dollar raised, Nicole and Alisa had to make a decision. Postpone production or make a film with no money. Call it perseverance – or stupidity – they decided to keep moving forward. They applied for and received a grant from the Public Benefit Corporation for less than the original budget. Additional money came from the producers and their families and the budget was revised and then revised again.

The two assembled an unbelievable roster of non-paid cast and crew. Due to budgetary limitations they decided to shoot video instead of film and began scouting locations. As luck would have it, one of the crewmembers had access to an unoccupied but furnished house, which would become the production office and main location for the two-week shoot. Things started to fall in place and the world was finally on their side. After meeting Rashim on an airplane, Richard Gant (*The Big Lebowski*, *Rocky V*) graciously agreed to accept the supporting role of JB. For the lead character, Carla, newcomer LaShae Martin was cast. Principal photography began as scheduled on July 12, 2003 and wrapped July 26 with two pickup days in November.

With no budget for editing the producers had to rely on an unpaid inexperienced editor. Things started off smoothly enough, but then they began noticing little things – like the editor not knowing how to digitize the footage or how to log it into the computer properly. After two months of editing, the editor abruptly announced that he was relocating and gave the drive back to them. Unfortunately, because he didn't know how to properly transfer the film from his computer to the hard drive and never made either a tape or DVD copy of the project, there was no film. It was Christmas 2003 by now and Alisa and Nicole decided to take a break. When the break ended, it was Spring 2005. Fellow filmmakers were shaming them by starting and completing their films in

Layla's Girl

# Layla's Girl

the time it had taken to resume editing *Layla's Girl*. At this point they were determined. They knew what they had to do to end the embarrassment – teach themselves to edit and complete this film.

Now, two years later, Nicole and Alisa are two years wiser and extremely appreciative of the support that they have received and the hardships that they had to endure. “This process has been the most rewarding of all my productions,” says Nicole. “If I had to do it all over again I would... I think.”