

# PORTER+CRAIG SETS THEATRICAL RELEASE FOR AWARD-WINNING QUEER COMING-OF-AGE DRAMA 'SUGAR BEACH'

*Award-winning queer drama "Sugar Beach," first film in a planned trilogy from director Noely Mendoza, opens in select theaters Pride weekend, June 26.*

BEVERLY HILLS, CA, UNITED STATES, June 24, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Festival-recognized feature from director Noely Mendoza, the first installment of the planned Sugar Beach Trilogy, opens Pride weekend in select theaters

Written by and starring Zoe Manzotti, SUGAR BEACH is the first installment of the planned Sugar Beach Trilogy and one of the rare American independent features to place a high school throuple at the center of its story.

Set against a sun-drenched stretch of the California coastline, SUGAR BEACH follows Rosalyn Roman, a valedictorian and soccer star struggling with the loss of her brother in a surfing accident. As she turns to alcohol and an intense connection with two people who become her emotional refuge, Rosalyn is forced to confront her grief, her identity, and the kind of love that exists outside conventional structures.

The film explores queerness, chosen family, first love, and survival with an emotional honesty that has resonated throughout its festival run.

SUGAR BEACH earned recognition across the 2025 festival circuit, including Best Picture and Best Director at the California Women's Film Festival, Best LGBTQ Film at the LA Film Awards, and Best Picture at The Great Film Festival. The film also received honors and official selections from the Los Angeles Independent Film Festival, Queer Expression, where it was named Best of the Fest, the Universe Multicultural Film Festival, the SF Queer Film Fest, where it won the Audience Jury Award for Best Picture, and the Silicon Beach Film Festival, where Mendoza received Best Director.



Sugar Beach Poster

“SUGAR BEACH is exactly the kind of film Porter+Craig exists to champion: independent, fearless, and made with a voice you cannot fake,” said Jeff Porter, Chief Executive Officer of Porter+Craig Film & Media Distribution. “Audiences have been finding this story at festivals and responding to its honesty. Opening the film in theaters during Pride weekend gives this story and its filmmakers the theatrical platform they deserve.”

“This film is for everyone who figured themselves out on their own stretch of beach,” said director Noely Mendoza. “We made it with total honesty about grief, about love that does not fit a template, and about the people who carry you through. Getting to share it on a theater screen, during Pride, is everything we hoped for.”

Mendoza, an honors Film & Media Studies graduate of Amherst College who collaborated with Academy Award-winning filmmakers before making her feature debut, directs an ensemble led by Zoe Manzotti alongside Emma Blomquist, Ryley Schroeder, and Troy Leigh-Anne Johnson, whose credits include *Totally Killer*, *On My Block*, and *The Rookie*.

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*Jeff Porter Co-Ceo of  
Porter+Craig Film and Media*

To prepare for the emotional and physical demands of the story, Manzotti, Schroeder, and Blomquist spent months building the trust and intimacy reflected on screen. Their preparation included rehearsing off-grid in New Mexico, surfing, playing soccer, and completing an intensive at the Lee Strasberg Theatre and Film Institute.

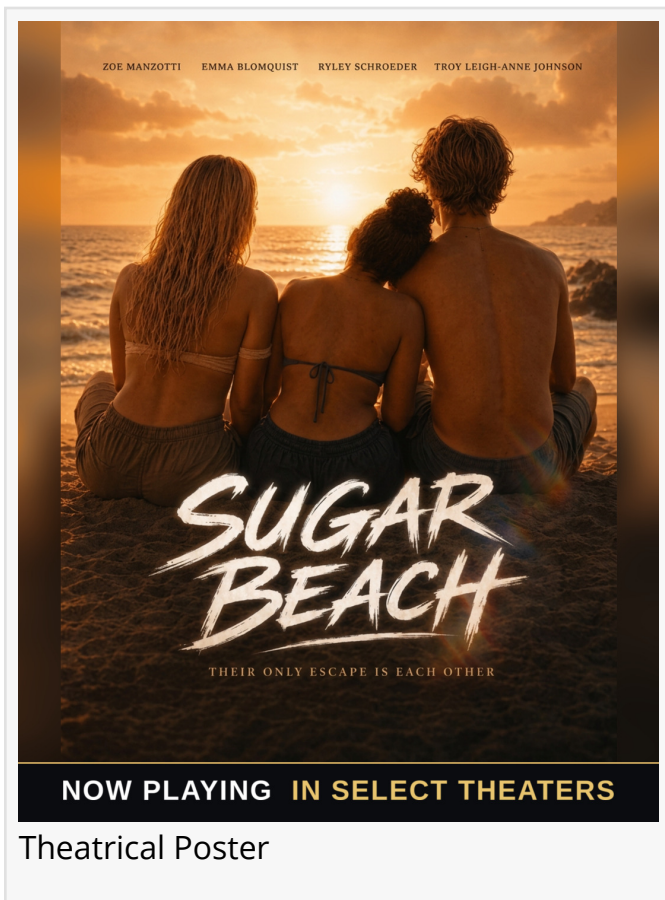
The film also features cameo appearances from Megan Lawless of *Obsession*, along with digital creators Oliver

Blank and Kio Cyr, whose platforms reach more than nine million followers.

SUGAR BEACH opens June 26 in select theaters, anchored by opening-weekend Q&A screenings with the director and cast in Los Angeles.

About Porter+Craig Film & Media Distribution

Porter+Craig Film & Media Distribution is a Beverly Hills-based independent distributor with a



Theatrical Poster

catalog of more than 400 feature films, television movies, and documentaries released across theatrical, digital, and broadcast platforms worldwide.

Porter+Craig champions independent voices and connects films that matter with the audiences they were made for. Learn more at [www.pcfilmandmedia.com](http://www.pcfilmandmedia.com).

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