

## US director makes first smartphone movie

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Actress Gena Rowlands is seen in 2009. An independent US filmmaker has made what is believed to be the first feature-length movie shot with a smartphone, to be released next week -- with Rowlands in the starring role.

An independent US filmmaker has made what is believed to be the first feature-length movie shot with a smartphone, to be released next week -- with actress Gena Rowlands in the starring role.

"Olive," about "a little girl who transforms the lives of three people without speaking one word," was filmed using only a [Nokia N8](#) cellphone, with a high-resolution camera adapted with a 35 mm lens to give added depth of field.

"Technology is moving so quickly and cellphones are really going to be the thing that does everything eventually," director Hooman Khalili told AFP in an interview ahead of the US theater release of his movie on

December 16.

"They already do so much, and in January 2010 I came up with this idea and I saw there was nothing out there that existed," added the 37-year-old, who began pre-production of the movie last year.

The first five minutes of "Olive," viewable at [www.olivethemovie.com](http://www.olivethemovie.com), have already set tongues wagging in Hollywood, where the [movie industry](#) is gearing up for its annual awards season.

Set for release in Los Angeles next week, the movie is eligible to be nominated for the Oscars in February.

In pictures posted on the Flickr photo-sharing website, the filmmaker, who also hosts a radio show in San Francisco, holds a cellphone taped to the 35 mm lens and mounted on a tripod, with a viewfinder sticking out one side.

"This is groundbreaking technology. You know someone is gonna be first, and there's something special about being first. And yeah, our lens might be big and clunky, but this is how first generations of new technology are.

"And the second and the third generation become slicker and better," he said.

The movie cost less than \$500,000 -- a fraction of a typical Hollywood budget -- and is financed by [Chris Kelly](#), an executive with social network giant [Facebook](#), and William O'Keeffe, a San Francisco-based philanthropist.



A smart phone connected to a camera set near Berkeley, California. An independent US filmmaker has made what is believed to be the first feature-length movie shot with a smartphone, to be released next week -- with actress Gena Rowlands in the starring role.

Strangely, Finnish cellphone giant Nokia has had no particular input into the film. "They sent me a phone," said Khalili, adding: "After March of 2011 I never heard from Nokia again, they disappeared."

Technology aside, the film boasts the involvement of the two-time Oscar-nominated 81-year-old actress Rowlands.

"We sent her the script, and she said to me: 'I read six scripts a week and I maybe do one movie a year. This script is so good, (but) I need you to convince me to do this movie,'" Khalili said.

"So I sat there, and for an hour and a half I poured my heart out to her. She did it, not for the money. She (is) an independent spirit, and she liked the fact that it was the first cellphone movie," he added.

Khalili said the inspiration for the movie's story came from "The Triplets of Belleville," a 2003 animated film in which no one speaks but "everything is conveyed perfectly."

"We knew that it doesn't matter how amazing the technology is. If the story isn't good, nobody is going to watch it," said Khalili, who worked with co-director Patrick Gilles.

"I thought, how great would it be to have a central character that doesn't speak but you understand everything she is trying to communicate," said the filmmaker.

That inspired the story of a 10-year-old girl who "transforms" the lives of three characters: an old, bitter woman -- played by Rowlands -- an obese man and a foreigner adjusting to life in the United States.

"Every single one of us at one time of our lives is down in a ditch... The way you get out of that ditch is by having someone reach you with their hand and pull you out," said Khalili.

The film will be screened from next Friday, for a week, at the Laemmle's Fallbrook 7 movie theater in West Hills, northwest of Los Angeles.

Khalili said they are hoping to raise the \$300,000 needed -- via the micro-financing website Kickstarter -- to show the film on 100 screens before Christmas.

So far they have \$30,000, but they hope publicity will help generate the extra income.

"We need a little bit of a miracle," Khalili said.

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