

THE ROAD TO OSCAR SERIES



From top left, clockwise: BTS/scenes from *Blitz*, *Maria*, *Piece by Piece*, *Saturday Night*, *Nickel Boys* and *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice* | The Road To Oscar Series, Part 7, Page 4

December 2024 / January 2025

www.SHOOTonline.com

THE SHOOT

NEW DIRECTORS SHOWCASE

22nd ANNUAL

Discover Emerging Filmmakers



Meet The Class of 2024 21



Guild Awards Preview 33



Shown top to bottom: *House of the Dragon*, *The Day of the Jackal*



Cinematographers & Cameras 16



Left to Right: Lawrence Sher, *Joker: Folie à Deux*; Peter Simonite, *Day of the Fight*; Greig Fraser, *Dune: Part Two*; Markus Förderer, *September 5*

The Best Place To Put Your Work To Work To Find You New Work.

My SHOOT

My.SHOOTonline.com

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION
IN ALL CATEGORIES INCLUDING

BEST PICTURE

BEST DIRECTOR

JACQUES AUDIARD

BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY

PAUL GUILHAUME, AFC



**"UTTERLY ELECTRIC AND STAGGERINGLY
CREATIVE ON EVERY SINGLE LEVEL.**

A ONE-OF-A-KIND CINEMATIC FEAT."

COLLIDER

EMILIA PÉREZ

UN FILM DE **JACQUES AUDIARD**



SCAN TO WATCH
A CONVERSATION
BETWEEN DIRECTOR
JACQUES AUDIARD
& GUILLERMO DEL TORO



FILM.NETFLIXAWARDS.COM

COPYRIGHT PHOTO: © SHANNA BESSON

EDITORIAL

Publisher & Editorial Director

Roberta Griefer

203.227.1699 ext. 701 rgriefer@shootonline.com

Editor

Robert Goldrich

203.227.1699 ext. 702 rgoldrich@shootonline.com

ADVERTISING

Rates & Information
marketing@shootonline.com

203.227.1699 ext. 701
www.shootonline.com/calendar_event/advertise

Advertising Production

Gerald Giannone

ads@shootonline.com

203.227.1699 ext. 700

OFFICES

Main Office

2046 Treasure Coast Plaza, Suite A-117
Vero Beach, FL 32960 USA
203.227.1699 Fax: 203.571.3355

West

203.227.1699 ext. 702

Print Production

Jim Theodorou

jtheodorou@shootonline.com

Circulation

203.227.1699 ext. 4

circulation@shootonline.com

SHOOT Publicity Wire

203.227.1699 ext. 700

publicitywire@shootonline.com

© 2024 DCA Business Media LLC. All rights reserved.

SHOOT and SHOOTonline are registered U.S. trademarks.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in any retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

PDF Issues
and order back issues
backissues.SHOOTonline.com

SHOOT ePubs

The SHOOT » edition weekly ePub is published on Friday. The SHOOT Dailies are published daily Mon-Fri. Brand News weekly ePub is published Wednesdays.
www.shootonline.com/subscribe



SHOOT is a member of:



afci affiliate member

Follow SHOOT via hashtag #SHOOTONLINE at:



Cover photo credits: The Road To Oscar, from top left, clockwise—Blitz, Apple TV+; Maria, Pablo Larrain/Netflix; Piece by Piece, Focus Features; Saturday Night, Hopper Stone/Sony Pictures; Nickel Boys, Orion Pictures/Amazon/MGM; Beetlejuice Beetlejuice, Parisa Taghizadeh/Warner Bros. Pictures; Cinematographers & Cameras, I-F—Lawrence Sher, Joker: Folie à Deux, Warner Bros. Pictures; Peter Simonite, Day of the Fight, Falling Forward Films; Greig Fraser, Dune: Part Two, Niko Tavernise/Warner Bros. Pictures; Markus Forderer, September 5, Paramount Pictures; Guild Awards Preview, top to bottom, House of the Dragon, Ollie Upton/HBO; The Day of the Jackal, Peacock.

By Robert Goldrich

spot.com.mentary



Merging Disciplines

This week's installment of SHOOT's The Road To Oscar Series includes reflections from directors who have broken new ground in their films—from Steve McQueen with *Blitz* to Morgan Neville in *Piece by Piece*.

The latter feature has a unique precedent-setting aspect to it in that *Piece by Piece* is in the awards season conversation

across two normally mutually exclusive categories—Best Documentary Feature and Best Animated Feature.

Piece by Piece tells the story of composer/musician/performer Pharrell Williams—through LEGO animation.

Neville described the film as “creative nonfiction.” It's a hybrid of disciplines—documentary and animation—which are masterfully meshed despite philosophically being inherently contradictory. Nev-

ille had to grapple with these contradictory elements, balancing their virtues to do justice to Williams' story. “I realized early on that animation is the opposite instinct of documentary. The director is ‘God’ in animation. In documentaries,” quipped Neville, “the director can barely decide where to put the camera.”

Neville finds a beauty in the restric-

jump cuts, missed focus, even different aspect ratios—flaws that are not uncommon in a documentary.

At first, Neville said he and animation director Howard Baker were kind of like “two flavors that don't go together.” But they both evolved. Neville expressed the need to honor the imperfections of documentary filmmaking while gain-

The director is "God" in animation. In documentaries, "the director can barely decide where to put the camera."

tions of the documentary form, the lack of control. He wanted to retain that lack of control at times within the animation framework, subtly looking at the friction between having control and the lack thereof, adding an artistic dimension of human realism to the film. Whereas animation of objects such as LEGOs conventionally deploys great handheld camera work, Neville on occasion wanted the camera work to be a bit jagged, with

ing respect for the incredible artistry and transformative powers of animation. “Howard became much more attuned to the documentary form. I became much more attuned to animation,” said Neville who wound up appreciating what he described as “the nonstop drip of animation. Every morning there are 20 shots to look at and get notes on. You can go a little bit crazy doing that. It's a micro-focus. But I really got into it.”

By Robert Goldrich

POV

ANA Marketing Word of the Year

The ayes have it. Or more accurately, the AI has it. For the second consecutive year and third time in the past eight years, “AI” has been crowned the ANA (Association of National Advertisers) Marketing Word of the Year, reinforcing its profound and transformative impact on the marketing industry in 2024.

Since 2014, the ANA has selected its Marketing Word of the Year through a voting process. The ANA staff first identifies a list of finalists and then asks members to cast their votes to determine the winner. The survey has two questions: What word should be the ANA Marketing Word of the Year? and Why did you vote for that word?

This year, the ANA surveyed its membership base between November 18 and December 2. A total of 284 ANA members participated in the online poll, where AI emerged as the clear winner, securing

65% of the vote. The second-place contender, “personalization,” garnered just 14% of the vote. In the 11-year history of the ANA Marketing Word of the Year, AI is the only repeat winner, taking top honors in both 2017 and 2023.

Marketers who voted for AI shared reasons for their choice. “Nothing has affected the world of marketing in 2024 more than AI,” said one marketer encapsulating the sentiment of many. Additional responses included:

—AI is all over! No matter when and where, AI always comes up when talking about marketing.

—AI has 100% become a part of our everyday work life. No exceptions.

—It's everywhere! Flooding the feeds and a hot topic of conversation that I think we are all a little scared by, intrigued and have so much to learn to help enable our work and lives.

—AI is becoming prevalent in all our

tech stacks, tools, and essentially every app we use.

—AI and its potential to change how we work as marketers has been all the buzz. We are at the point where we have to figure out how to integrate AI into how we work, or we will be left behind.

At SHOOT's New Directors Showcase event last week at the DCA Theatre in NYC, a panel discussion delved into the creative, production, technological and legal aspects of AI. SHOOT's coverage of that session—with insights from Ryan Chong, EVP and head of production at Publicis Groupe's Le Truc, Vico Sharabani, founder and ECD at The-Artery, and attorney Jeffrey Greenbaum, a partner at law firm FKKS—will soon appear on our site as well as in an upcoming »e.dition.

Previous ANA Marketing Words of the Year have included inclusion (2022), diversity (2021), pivot (2020), personalization (2019) and brand purpose (2018).

Director, Writer, DP and Costume Designer POVs

Insights into *Blitz*,
Nickel Boys,
Saturday Night,
Piece by Piece,
Maria and
Beetlejuice
Beetlejuice

By Robert Goldrich,
The Road To Oscar Series,
Part 7

From top left, clockwise: Actor Elliott Heffernan (l) and director Steve McQueen on the set of *Blitz*; *Nickel Boys* director RaMell Ross; Pharrell Williams in *Piece by Piece*; *Saturday Night* director Jason Reitman (r) and DP Eric Steelberg; Anglina Jolie in a scene from *Maria*; Massimo Cantini Parrini, costume designer on *Maria*; and *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice* costume designer Colleen Atwood.



Photo courtesy of Apple TV+



Photo courtesy of Warner Bros



Photo courtesy of Netflix



Photo courtesy of Orion Pictures



Photo by Pablo Larraín/courtesy of Netflix



Photo courtesy of Focus Features



Photo by Hopper Stone/courtesy of Sony Pictures

I brought up Alfred Hitchcock's *Foreign Correspondent* during the course of an interview with writer-director Steve McQueen who embraced the cinematic reference. We were talking about McQueen's *Blitz* (Apple Original Films), a title that's short for the Germans' "blitzkrieg" bombing of London during World War II. The *Blitz* story is told largely through the eyes of a nine-year-old boy, George (portrayed by Elliott Heffernan), whose single mom, Rita (Saoirse Ronan), made the heartaching decision to send him to the countryside with other schoolchildren to flee the devastating aerial attacks.

It's a chapter in history addressed in *Foreign Correspondent*, most famously in the final scene where Joel McCrea, portraying a war correspondent, stands in front of a radio microphone and broadcasts back to America the horror of the nighttime bombing that's happening all around him. London has gone into blackout, its main defense against an aerial onslaught. McCrea's character reports that what his listeners are hearing is the sound

of death coming to London. All they can do is stand in the dark and let the bombs drop. It's as if the lights have gone out everywhere—except in America. He implores Americans to keep their lights burning and shining bright to push back against the darkness that has enveloped the world. And in a sense that's what *Blitz* does some 84 years after the release of *Foreign Correspondent*—underscoring not only the relevance of that piece of history to today but also figuratively keeping the lights glowing by centering on a family trying to navigate around circumstances beyond their control, keeping hope alive through the love that a mother and son feel for each other even when forced to be apart.

Heightening Rita's anguish in *Blitz* is news that her son has gone missing. George had hopped off the train supposedly sending him to safety to try to return home to his mother and grandfather (Paul Weiler) in East London. The lad's journey is perilous yet he perseveres due to a family bond that has grown stronger

through adversity—not just in terms of coping with the war but George having to endure the sting of prejudice and ridicule much of his life due to his mixed-race heritage.

McQueen shared that in telling this story, he "never felt more useful as an artist." While *Blitz* depicts the overwhelming scope and scale of the bombing, the death and destruction, it also shares an intimacy in which family remains a source of joy and strength—spawning a steely resiliency—in the midst of tragedy.

When asked about the biggest takeaway or lessons learned from his experience on *Blitz*, McQueen simply answered, "Love, love, love."

The story of *Blitz* has resonated with audiences while also impacting those who made it, including cinematographer Yorick Le Saux, AFC who shared his experience in a prior installment of our Road To Oscar Series, citing the value and current relevance of telling the story from George's perspective. "It got me to

Continued on page 6

WINNER
CAMERIMAGE FILM FESTIVAL
LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
ED LACHMAN

"ABSOLUTE
PERFECTION"

VARIETY

for your consideration in all categories including

BEST PICTURE

BEST DIRECTOR
PABLO LARRAÍN

BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY
ED LACHMAN, ASC

"A GRAND CONCLUSION
TO PABLO LARRAÍN'S TRILOGY.
EDWARD LACHMAN'S CINEMATOGRAPHY
is continuously breathtaking. A deeply moving film."

NESTLE
NBP

Academy Award® Winner

A N G E L I N A J O L I E

M A R I A

SHOT ON
35MM | 16MM | SUPER 8
FILM

N

FILM.NETFLIXAWARDS.COM

Writer-Director Steve McQueen Reflects On Blitz



Elliott Heffernan (I) and Saoirse Ronan in *Blitz*

Continued from page 4

thinking about Palestinian kids, Israeli kids, Ukrainian kids, Russian kids,” said Le Saux, adding that filming George was a catalyst for thoughts and feelings about children today and what’s happening to them in the throes of war and conflict. With the insanity of war, Le Saux fears that we are “building a generation of traumatized kids.”

Blitz marks the first collaboration between McQueen and Le Saux. The writer-director found a simpatico spirit in Le Saux, noting that he was initially drawn to the cinematographer’s body of work with director Olivier Assayas (which includes the features *Personal Shopper*, *Non-Fiction*, *Clouds of Sils Maria*, and the TV miniseries *Irma Vép*).

Another essential collaborator for McQueen on *Blitz* was Heffernan, who was discovered through an extensive casting search. “We threw out a very large net and found Elliott,” related McQueen, recalling that in auditions the young actor had “a stillness about him” that was beyond his years, part of what made him “fascinating” and clearly the George they had been looking for.

McQueen found George and for that matter all the characters focused on in *Blitz* to be “fascinating” in that the movie explored uncharted territory when it came to this era, telling stories, said McQueen, about “the people who fell between the gaps of history.”

Blitz tapped into what McQueen described as “a rich landscape” of a cosmopolitan London, and social strata ranging from women working in factories to so-called “beautiful people” cavorting at

a nightclub, to a Nigerian soldier whom George meets while trying to get back home. And all these segments of society were thoroughly researched by McQueen and his team.

For example, the bombing of the al-luded to nightclub actually happened, with *Blitz* re-creating many details, even the music being played at the time of the devastating attack.

And the Nigerian soldier too is based on an actual person who delivers an eloquent message after befriending George and taking him to a London shelter where a man has cordoned off a family of Jewish refugees. At the shelter, the soldier explains that the self-made wall has to be brought down because it represents what the free world is fighting in Hitler and the Nazis. McQueen found those



Saoirse Ronan (I) and Elliott Heffernan in a scene from *Blitz*

Black—a heritage the youngster earlier denied due to a lifetime of being ostracized by others for it.

Supporting the realism McQueen sought for *Blitz* was the calculated decision to tap into actual locations and ambitious sets—thus keeping any reliance on VFX and green screen to a minimum. Cinematographer Le Saux noted that capturing as much as possible in-camera was paramount. The sets were from production designer Adam Stockhausen who created varied aspects of the post-Industrial Revolution in London. “Actors are much more affected” when performing in an actual environment, explained McQueen, adding that Stockhausen is a consummate artist.

McQueen and Stockhausen have a track record of collaboration, including on

and *West Side Story*, and Wes Anderson’s *The Grand Budapest Hotel*.

For the latter, Stockhausen won the Best Achievement in Production Design Oscar in 2015.

RaMell Ross

Director RaMell Ross made an auspicious directorial debut with the documentary *Hale County This Morning, This Evening*, which followed Black residents in Alabama’s Hale County and earned nominations for a Best Documentary Feature Oscar, a DGA Award, and an Emmy for Exceptional Merit in Documentary Film in 2019. *Hale County This Morning, This Evening* won a Special Jury Award for Creative Vision at the Sundance Film Festival in 2018, followed by a Peabody Award in 2020.

Now another stellar debut—his first fictional narrative feature—has emerged for Ross in *Nickel Boys* (Amazon MGM Studios), which he directed and co-wrote with Joslyn Barnes, an adaptation of Colson Whitehead’s Pulitzer Prize-winning novel “The Nickel Boys.” The drama centers on two Black teenagers sentenced to an abusive reform school, the Nickel Academy, in Florida during the Jim Crow era. Whitehead used the real Dozier School for Boys—and its victims—as a model. The cast includes Ethan Herisse, Brandon Wilson, Hamish Linklater, Fred Hechinger, Daveed Diggs and Aunjanue Ellis-Taylor.

Ross’ film introduces us to Elwood Curtis (portrayed by Ethan Cole Sharp as a boy, by Herisse as a teen, and Diggs

Continued on page 8



Ethan Herisse (I) and Brandon Wilson in a scene from *Nickel Boys*

words chronicled in historical archives and brought them to *Blitz*.

Emotionally moved by the soldier, George declares proudly that he too is

Widows and Best Picture Oscar winner *12 Years a Slave*. Stockhausen is a four-time Academy Award nominee—for *12 Years a Slave*, Steven Spielberg’s *Bridge of Spies*

CRITICS CHOICE AWARD NOMINATIONS

INCLUDING

BEST PICTURE

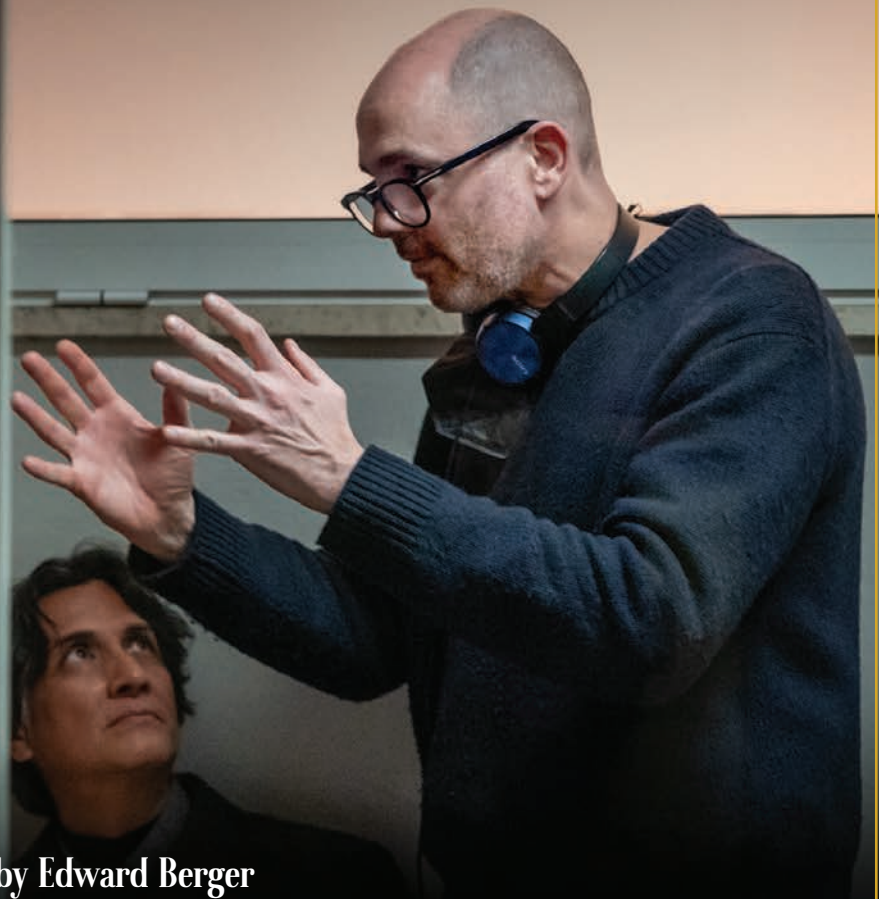
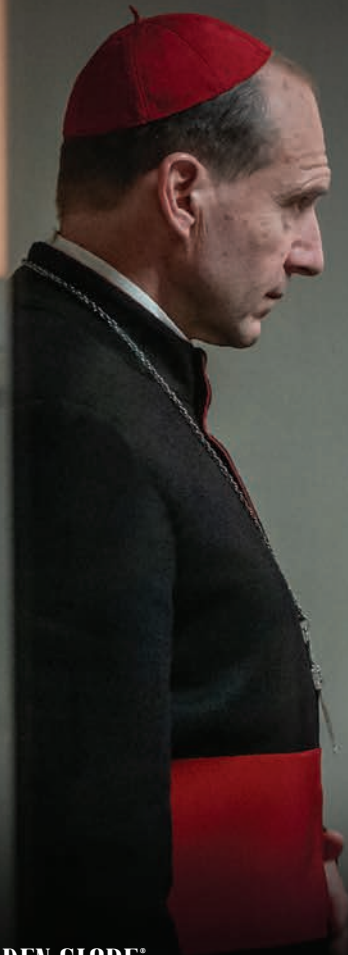
BEST DIRECTOR EDWARD BERGER

“HANDS DOWN, THE BEST PICTURE OF THE YEAR”

The Curvy Critic

“Director Edward Berger Expertly Steers This Ever-Unwinding High Drama”

Deadline



6 GOLDEN GLOBE
AWARD NOMINATIONS
INCLUDING
BEST
PICTURE

Directed by Edward Berger

CONCLAVE

YOUR CHOICE CHANGES EVERYTHING

AFI
ONE OF THE
BEST PICTURES
OF THE YEAR

FLMATION

HOUSE

HOUSE
PRODUCTIONS

Sign up at FocusInsider.com for exclusive access to early screenings, film premieres and more. For more on this film, go to FocusFeaturesGuilds2024.com.

AFI
FESTIVAL

MUTANT

FOCUS
FEATURES

FOCUS
FEATURES

Director RaMell Ross Embraces Collaboration On Nickel Boys

Continued from page 6

as an adult) and Turner (played by Wilson). The Black youngsters witness and endure harrowing experiences at the reform school where they first meet. They bond as friends but also represent a clash of mindsets and attitudes—Elwood with an optimistic worldview even in the face of evil, and Turner, a skeptical, seen-it-all survivor who dispenses advice on how to cope with the brutality.

Ross—who won the Gotham Award for best director earlier this month on the strength of *Nickel Boys*—reflected on making the transition from documentary to narrative

fiction (though based on horrific factual circumstances). Whereas he not only directed, co-wrote, produced, lensed and edited *Hale County This Morning, This Evening*, Ross turned to more collaborators for *Nickel Boys*, including cinematographer Jomo Fray and editor Nicholas Monsour.

Ross explained that while he didn't "let go" of cinematography and editing for *Nickel Boys*, he learned to "share the steering wheel" with Fray and Monsour. And this shared experience proved fruitful and invaluable. Ross embraced the art of expressing what he wanted, giving an idea to someone, respecting their point of view and seeing what they come up with. Through this process, you can get closer to or achieve what you want. Or sometimes you "realize that what they want is better than what you wanted." That working dynamic, observed Ross, has given him a new dimension of "hope for future projects."

That hope in part is grounded in the realization, observed Ross, that "pain or suffering is not unique to you" as millions of people across time and history have experienced it. So collaborating with others, "figuring out ways to open yourself up" and "be part of a larger community," including people who share your point of view, can have creative benefits. There

are collaborators who "can push the idea forward" and not just execute what you said. They can help expand limited imaginations.

Ross described Fray as "a deep thinker about images" and their power to realize "emotional resonance." Ross felt an

affinity for Fray and his commitment to create innovative and evocative visual stories rooted in empathy. Fray seeks to build upon a tradition of what he calls "experiential storytelling"—films that strive to have the viewer not only see the story but feel it as well. Towards that end, Ross said that as he and Fray operated cameras, they found themselves "engaging with the material as it is born in front of us." With that approach, "the moment becomes more alive."

Ross noted that he found in Fray someone who has "the type of sensibility and capability of contorting according to the atmosphere." That openness to discovery helped infuse *Nickel Boys* with an experiential energy and honesty that helps do justice to the story.

Similarly Ross was drawn to Monsour, an editor "interested in incrementally building the film and allowing it to change as the organism grows." Sometimes, continued Ross, you have no idea what direction to go in but through building on sequences you are forced to evolutionarily grow and shape the story.

At the same time, while letting the film evolve, Ross noted that he and co-writer Barnes (producer on both *Nickel Boys* and *Hale County This Morning, This Evening*) felt a personal responsibility to honor the Dozier School boys, to pay homage

to Whitehead's sense of urgency when writing the book, the expression of their lives through the author. Towards that end, bringing a filmic and cinematic orientation to that story, looking to capture "the camera's relationship to the Black community," is essential.

Furthermore, there's a personal, emotionally moving orientation to the camerawork. We see and experience the world through the eyes of Elwood and Turner, an approach that fosters empathy. Seeing in the first person helps you to see and feel the person first. It makes for an eye-opening perspective, both literally and figuratively speaking.

And off course, noted Ross, there were logistical hurdles to clear, including "trying to hold the spirit of the film in relationship to the challenges of production. This isn't animation where you can build

the rest of us, there's "a constant competition with time and everything along with it. In managing the spirit of the film, you're making decisions that [hopefully] don't undermine that out of stress and self-preservation."

Nickel Boys opened the 62nd New York Film Festival a couple of months ago. Dennis Lim, the festival's artistic director, shared in a statement, "*Nickel Boys* signals the emergence of a major filmmaking voice. RaMell Ross' fiction debut, like his previous work in photography and documentary, searches for new ways of seeing and, in so doing, expands the possibilities of visual language. It's the most audacious American movie I have seen in some time."

Jason Reitman, Eric Steelberg

Director Jason Reitman and cinematographer Eric Steelberg, ASC share a deep collaborative bond. Steelberg has worked with Reitman over nine films, including *Juno* and *Up in the Air*, both of which earned Best Picture Oscar nominations. The director and DP most recently came together on *Saturday Night* (Sony Pictures/Columbia Pictures) which takes



Ethan Herisse in a scene from *Nickel Boys*



Brandon Wilson in *Nickel Boys*

out exactly what you want. There are time constraints, atmospheric problems. The sun isn't the same as it was 10 minutes ago." There are setbacks like people being stricken with COVID. "You are ever responding to the real world. If you have a billion dollar budget and time is not of the essence, then you can do your masterpiece. There are no excuses for it not being what you wanted." Otherwise, for

us back to October 11, 1975 at 10 pm in New York City, 90 minutes prior to the debut of *Saturday Night Live* (SNL) on NBC.

Saturday Night allows us to be the proverbial fly on the wall—or more specifically, on the shoulder of producer Lorne Michaels—during that hour-and-a-half leading up to showtime. The chain of

Continued on page 10

“Director Robert Eggers’ NOSFERATU is a perfect film in every way.
A masterful film that transcends the genre of horror itself while
honoring every single aspect of what makes horror work.”

Offscreen Central

Written for the Screen & Directed by

Robert Eggers

NOSFERATU

For Your Consideration in all Categories Including

BEST PICTURE
BEST DIRECTOR
ROBERT EGGERS



STUDIO
8

© 2024 FOCUS FEATURES LLC

Sign up at FocusInsider.com for exclusive access to early screenings, film premieres
and more. For more on this film, go to FocusFeaturesGuilds2024.com.



Jason Reitman, Eric Steelberg Reunite On Saturday Night

Continued from page 8

events is mind boggling and mind scrambling as assorted elements have to come together to get this fledgling show on air—and there's even some question if it will instead give way to a rerun of Johnny Carson's *Tonight Show*, and be delayed a week or much longer.

Reitman—who also wrote the *Saturday Night* screenplay with Gil Kenan—and Steelberg wanted to drop the audience into this chaotic, frenetic world. At times we feel part of one seemingly continuous shot following Michaels (played by Gabriel LaBelle) from one figurative potential fire to the next, mostly on the eighth and ninth floors of the landmark Rockefeller Center in NYC, including studio 8H.

Reitman and Steelberg ultimately decided to go with 16mm film for *Saturday Night*, the DP explaining that it “put us in the moment,” capturing that look of the time as if watching a movie from 1975—but being careful to avoid a gritty documentary feel. Steelberg played with film stock, attaining a softness and fashioning a color palette that helped realize the sought after creative vision.

Reitman noted that his priority was not so much how the film looked but how it felt, dovetailing with the sensation of dropping the audience into the birth of SNL, “the moment when this group of people came together and changed television history,” Reitman added, “In a way the camera becomes a character, a person wandering through the halls of the eighth and ninth floors.”

Reitman could also tap into his own experience on *SNL*, when a dream came true and he got to spend a week in 2008 as a guest writer and director. He even wrote a sketch that got on air. Reitman recalled that dynamic of starting on a Tuesday with nothing and then by Saturday having a finished 90-minute show of comedy and music.

“It was not unlike the feeling of putting on a summer camp musical or a high school talent show,” he observed, noting that coming together to make something in this fashion is special. For *Saturday Night* he wanted to “capture the purity of young people living in the moment and creating whatever.”

Putting together *Saturday Night*, though, was far more professionally ex-

acting and precise than staging a summer camp musical. Planning was intricate and had to be meticulous, particularly in light of the extensive choreography entailed throughout—coordinating dolly and hand-held camera moves with what the actors were doing as well as with varied

body properly positioned.

A key part of the coordination involved the creation of the sets with production designer Jess Gonchor reviewing original blueprints for Rockefeller Center so that he could do architectural and engineering justice to the environment, making

ninth floors have to feel 100 percent real, with the grime and history of 100 years, decades of radio and TV in that building. Jess and Claudia figured that all out.”

“Without Jess and Claudia, we cannot do our job,” affirmed Steelberg, noting that the production designer and set decorator had to account for every scene through their work. Lighting had to be built into the set, providing the right amount of illumination and sight lines to accommodate “the way we wanted to shoot.” Steelberg said that Gonchor and Bonfe were key contributors to figuring out how to best light the physical environment they had created.

Beyond his work for Reitman, Steelberg has credits which include the features *Dolemite Is My Name*, *Baywatch*, *(500) Days of Summer*, and series such as Marvel's *Hawkeye* and Lucasfilm's *Star Wars: Ahsoka*. He also lensed the pilots for Showtime's *Billions* and ABC's *The Good Doctor*.

Reitman meanwhile has a total of four Oscar nominations, the aforementioned Best Picture nod for *Up in the Air*, directing and best adapted screenplay for the same film, and best directing for *Juno*. Reitman made his feature film debut with the 2006 Sundance hit *Thank You for Smoking*. *Up in the Air* also earned Reitman a Golden Globe, a Writers Guild Award, and a BAFTA Award for his screenplay.

His other feature films include *Young Adult*, *Tully*, *The Front Runner*, and *Ghostbusters: Afterlife*. Reitman executive produced the Oscar-winning film *Whiplash* directed by Damien Chazelle and the Jean-Marc Vallée-helmed *Demolition*, and produced the cult hit *Jennifer's Body* helmed by Karyn Kusuma. Reitman additionally produced four seasons of the Hulu comedy series *Casual*.

Morgan Neville

A Best Documentary Feature Oscar winner for his 2013 film, *20 Feet From Stardom*, director Morgan Neville again finds himself in the awards season conversation—familiar for him in the documentary competition but the new wrinkle this time around is that he has a film that is also being bandied about for its prospects in the animation category.



A scene from *Saturday Night*



Gabriel LaBelle (l-r), Kaia Gerber and Cory Michael in *Saturday Night*

other elements.

To get the desired feel, the camera is in a sense reacting to everything that's happening. A prime example of the high bar set was a sequence early on in which seemingly all the characters are introduced in a manner that sets the tone and pace for much of the movie. There's one major continuous shot that starts at an elevator. Michaels and other characters get off and the camera weaves through various rooms, providing glimpses and introductions to certain folks, setting the stage for what we as viewers are going to experience. Extensive rehearsing was needed to get the timing right and every-

it camera friendly for Steelberg, facilitating the feel of wandering about the halls, stairs and offices of SNL. Reitman, Steelberg and Gonchor worked closely together to map out set design to support desired camera moves. Reitman had long wanted to work with Gonchor, a two-time Oscar nominee (for *Hail, Caesar!* and *True Grit*, both for the Coen brothers), but scheduling conflicts had gotten in the way—until *Saturday Night*.

Reitman credited Gonchor and set decorator Claudia Bonfe with creating a setting around what the cinematography had to be, shaping the world on set as “a living, breathing space. The eighth and

Documentary and Animation Come Together Piece by Piece

Piece by Piece (Focus Features) tells the story of composer/musician/performer Pharrell Williams—through LEGO animation. Audio interviews with Williams and collaborators like Kendrick Lamar and Missy Elliott relate moments that come to life via LEGO-constructed visuals.

Neville described the film as being “creative nonfiction.” It’s an unlikely hybrid of disciplines—documentary and animation—which are masterfully meshed despite philosophically being inherently contradictory. Neville had to grapple with these contradictory elements, balancing their virtues to do justice to Williams’ story. “I realized early on that animation is the opposite instinct of documentary. The director is ‘God’ in animation. In documentaries,” quipped Neville, “the director can barely decide where to put the camera.”

Neville finds a beauty in the restrictions of the documentary form, the lack of control. He wanted to retain that lack of control at times within the animation framework, subtly looking at the friction between having control and the lack thereof, adding an artistic dimension of human realism to the film. Whereas animation of objects such as LEGOs conventionally deploys great handheld camera work, Neville on occasion wanted the camera work to be a bit jagged, with jump cuts and missed focus, even audio boom poles in the shots, different aspect ratios—flaws that are not uncommon in a documentary.

Neville found himself engaged in a delicate balancing act, sharing that he was “trying to make sure we kept those documentary elements but at the same time letting animation do what it can do—transport us through time and space. In the beginning I was a little worried that going back and forth between these gears would feel abrupt but once it all landed in the LEGO world, those differences disappeared. You could do something ‘realistic.’ You could start floating and go with it. That was one of the happiest surprises of making the film.”

The documentary/LEGO construct also contributed greatly to *Piece by Piece* as a musical, reflecting the magic of music which stirred Williams during his childhood and carried through to his adult life (except perhaps for a creative dry spell



Pharrell Williams (l) and Morgan Neville in *Piece by Piece*

when he wasn’t being true to his music). The LEGOs take us to another place. “As much as it’s a story,” observed Neville, “it’s also a kind of hallucination of his way of seeing the world. Pharrell is a magical thinker. This gave us license to embrace the magical thinking in the storytelling. He’s somebody who puts things together that don’t necessarily fit. He sees things that others don’t see. We can see sound [through the use of LEGOs]. How incredible is that? A conventional film—scripted or documentary—couldn’t really do that.”

It all originated with Williams who said a documentary about his life had to be done with LEGOs. That was the gist of Neville’s first conversation with Williams.

“I didn’t know what that meant,” recalled Neville. “I didn’t know if that was possible. But I got very excited right away. It was a big crazy idea.”

In essence, Neville wound up making the film twice, gathering materials, conducting interviews, shooting footage, using existing footage—and hiring a student from art college to draw what was being cobbled together. Neville put together a cut which was screened and re-screened. “You could watch it in a theater,” he said. “It was a weird Frankenstein-like cut. When we finished that, we started working with the animation studio.”

Neville’s point person was animation director Howard Baker who worked with animation teams around the world. Neville and Baker built a close-knit rapport, discussing everything from production design to character design. There were 1,500-plus shots, every shot going through multiple rounds of notes as Nev-

ille and Baker looked to hone and refine the work.

At first, Neville said he and Baker were from different worlds, kind of like “two flavors that don’t go together.” But they both evolved. Neville expressed the need to honor the imperfections of documentary filmmaking while gaining respect for the incredible artistry and transformative powers of animation.

“Howard became much more attuned to the documentary form. I became much more attuned to animation,” said Neville. This broadened perspective sometimes had Neville advocating for animation and Baker for documentary sensibilities.

Piece by Piece was some five years in the making. Neville first met with Williams in January 2019. It took about a year to get LEGO on board. They did a proof-of-concept piece to sell it and really began in earnest at the beginning of 2020.

Then COVID hit. Neville did most of the interviews remotely during the pan-

dem. It was four years of solid work, with Neville for the first time experiencing the painstaking animation process.

The years that go into making a film can be similar between a conventional documentary and an animation film—but for different reasons, observed Neville. “A documentary will often take many years. Your subject goes away. You don’t have funding. It’s not like you’re working on something every day for years and years.”

By contrast, there’s what Neville described as “the nonstop drip of animation. Every morning there are 20 shots to look at and get notes on. You can go a little bit crazy doing that. It’s a micro-focus. But I really got into it.”

The LEGO process, though, was impacted by the documentary form. Normally a LEGO-animated movie would have some giant beautiful sets that are used repeatedly, giving a kind of unifying aesthetic to the entire film. There are primarily wide shots, showing characters in full body.

Much different was *Piece by Piece* which as a documentary has you montaging from location to location, traveling through time and space. Sometimes a location is used for just a shot or two. And there are a lot of medium and tight shots of the characters. Neville embraced the process and what was necessitated by bringing the documentary and LEGO moviemaking together.

He also valued being able to come together with the animation community. Because of *Piece by Piece*, Neville has had occasion to dovetail with animation pros on the promotional circuit. He recently

Continued on page 14



Jay-Z (l) and Pharrell Williams in *Piece by Piece*

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION
BEST DIRECTOR DENIS VILLENEUVE
"VISIONARY"

SCREEN
INTERNATIONAL

"DENIS VILLENEUVE DELIVERS A
TWO-PART EPIC OF LITERARY NUANCE AND
TIMELY SIGNIFICANCE."

Los Angeles Times

"DENIS VILLENEUVE'S DUNE: PART TWO IS A BOLD
AND ASTONISHING PIECE OF FILMMAKING."

The Telegraph

"DENIS VILLENEUVE DELIVERS ENTHRALLING,
HIGH-WIRE ACTS OF VISUAL POETRY AND
BOUNDLESS ORIGINALITY."

Esquire

WINNER
AFI AWARDS
ONE OF THE BEST PICTURES OF THE YEAR

10 CRITICS CHOICE
NOMINATIONS
INCLUDING
BEST PICTURE
BEST DIRECTOR DENIS VILLENEUVE

GOLDEN GLOBE
NOMINEE
BEST MOTION PICTURE
(DRAMA)

BEST PICTURE OF THE YEAR

Los Angeles Times

WINNER
BEST DIRECTOR
DENIS VILLENEUVE
SAN DIEGO FILM CRITICS SOCIETY

WINNER
BEST DIRECTOR
DENIS VILLENEUVE
LAS VEGAS FILM CRITICS SOCIETY

WINNER
BEST DIRECTOR
DENIS VILLENEUVE
ST. LOUIS FILM CRITICS ASSOCIATION

DUNE

PART TWO

LEGENDARY

For screenings and special content please visit www.wbawards.com

WARNER BROS.
PICTURES

Massimo Cantini Parrini Gets Dressed Up For Maria

Continued from page 11

was part of a panel discussion with animators, for instance. “I feared they would see me as an imposter,” said Neville. “I have to say they’ve been great. I felt very welcomed and love that feeling from the animation world. I knew animation was hard. But now I have such a profound love and respect for animators and what they do.”

Piece by Piece adds to a body of work for Neville which includes *Won’t You Be My Neighbor* (about Fred Rogers, aka Mr. Rogers); *Roadrunner: A Film About Anthony Bourdain*; *Best of Enemies*, centered on the debates between liberal Gore Vidal and conservative William F.

rini worked with Larrain. Via an English translator, the costume designer said that a phone call from the director about *Maria* was a complete surprise. “I adore Pablo, his cinematic language, the way he makes movies.” Getting the opportunity to collaborate with Larrain was “a dream come true” for Cantini Parrini.

And the dream didn’t end there. Cantini Parrini is an unabashed admirer of Callas, affirming that he has loved and adored the Italian diva and opera singer “all my life” and it was a pleasure “to enter her life and wardrobe.”

Cantini Parrini met with Larrain in Rome. “As soon as we met, we shared a

juncture. She had spent most of her time at home and there were no photographs of her at that time.

That dovetailed nicely with Cantini Parrini’s penchant for putting “something that is new and novel even in period costuming,” reasoning that a contemporary element can make a character and wardrobe more relatable to audiences, forming another level of connection.

Maria marked the second time that Cantini Parrini worked with Jolie, the first coming back when he was an assistant costume designer on director Robert Zemeckis’ *Beowulf*. Cantini Parrini regards *Maria* as his first full-fledged

occhio each garner a Costume Designers Guild Award nod. And *Cyrano* also was recognized with a BAFTA Award nomination for Best Costume Design.

Colleen Atwood

Colleen Atwood has a dozen Oscar nominations for costume design, winning in 2003 for *Chicago*, in 2006 for *Memoirs of a Geisha*, in 2011 for *Alice in Wonderland*, and in 2017 for *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*.

Now she is yet again in the awards season banter for *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice* (Warner Bros.), continuing her longstand-



Angelina Jolie as Maria Callas in *Maria*

Buckley; *They’ll Love Me When I’m Dead* about the final film of Orson Welles; *Keith Richards: Under the Influence*; *STEVE(!) Martin a documentary in 2 pieces*; and *Bono & The Edge: A Sort of Homecoming with Dave Letterman*.

Massimo Cantini Parrini

A two-time Oscar nominee—for *Pinocchio* in 2021 and *Cyrano* in 2022—costume designer Massimo Cantini Parrini turned his attention to Maria Callas, the legendary opera singer, during the final week of her life in 1970s Paris as depicted in director Pablo Larrain’s *Maria* (Netflix).

Angelina Jolie portrays Callas whose voice and dramatic life captivated millions. Larrain’s film delves into Callas as she confronts her identity, life, insecurities and vulnerabilities—all the while looking to sing again, not for audiences but for herself.

This marked the first time Cantini Par-

wonderful feeling and vibe for each other. I loved the way he thought, what he said. We really were on the same page.”

The two immediately got to work, sharing images and photographs. Subsequently more extensive research was done, unearthing videos, more pictures.

The script was the main guideline for Cantini Parrini as he did his own research for the film, seeking and finding documentation that provided insights into the clothing ensembles worn by Callas. He created close to 70 outfits for *Maria*.

While he re-created and re-designed Callas’ outfits very precisely for Jolie—particularly as the film flashes back on the singer’s career—Cantini Parrini noted that he had some creative license due to the nature of the storyline, which covered the last week of her life.

“That’s when I got the opportunity of creating my own look for Maria Callas’ wardrobe,” he shared, noting that there weren’t many images of her during that



Angelina Jolie in a scene from *Maria*

collaboration with Jolie and he was duly impressed.

“Angelina is so dedicated, completely devoted to portraying her character. She was always in perfect form when we fitted outfits, always remained in character—from the morning, on set until the end of shooting. She never needed any retouch. She was always in character. Never stepped out of it even during pauses from one shoot to the other.”

Cantini Parrini said he was struck by the “great professionalism” of both Jolie and Larrain.

Maria is the third entry in an unofficial trilogy for Larrain on the lives of world-famous women who found themselves at emotional crossroads. He helmed the biopics *Jackie* about Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis (portrayed by Natalie Portman), and *Spencer* centered on Princess Diana (Kristen Stewart).

In addition to his pair of Oscar nominations, Cantini Parrini saw *Cyrano* and *Pin-*

ing collaborative relationship with director Tim Burton. Since their teaming on *Edward Scissorhands* in 1990, Atwood and Burton have paired up for *Sleepy Hollow*, *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, her Oscar-winning turn on *Alice in Wonderland*, *Dark Shadows*, and the Netflix series *Wednesday*. Atwood garnered Academy Award nominations for *Sweeney Todd* and *Sleepy Hollow*. And in 2023, she won an Emmy for an episode of *Wednesday*.

Like Burton, Jenny Ortega is a colleague providing another measure of continuity for Atwood on *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice*. Atwood has costumed (and continues to costume) the actress for *Wednesday*.

“Jenny and I have a lot of trust for each other. She’s young but incredibly smart, with intuitive ideas about character,” related Atwood, noting that Ortega informs her costuming as they compare notes,

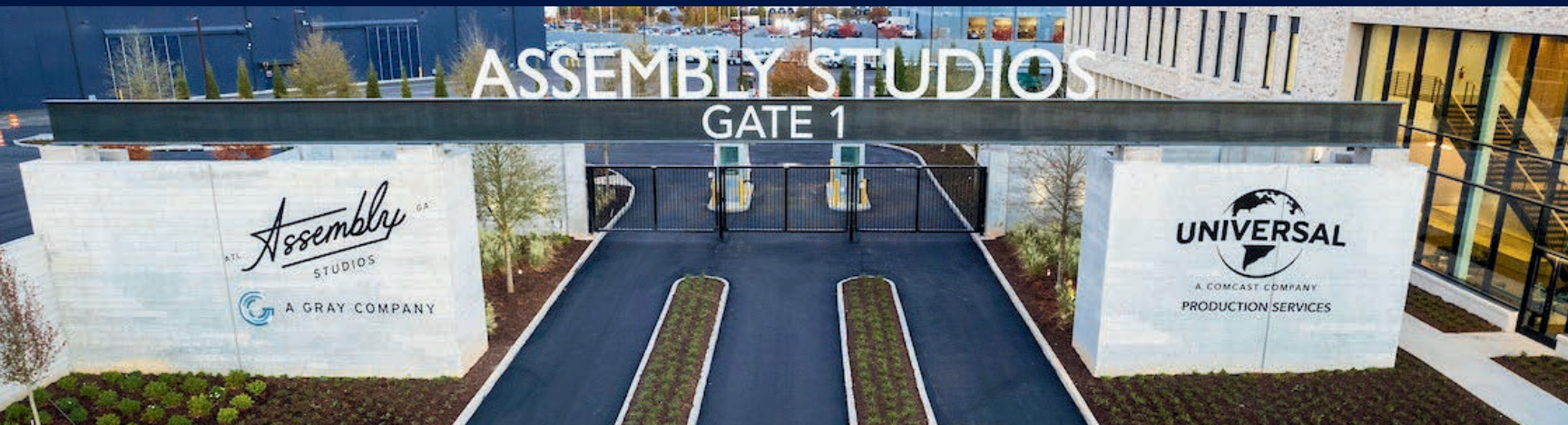
Continued on page 37



A COMCAST COMPANY

PRODUCTION SERVICES

NOW OPEN!



WORLD-CLASS STAGES & STUDIO SERVICES IN ATLANTA

22 SOUND STAGES
SET LIGHTING & GRIP
COSTUME
SUPPLIES & EXPENDABLES

EXTERIOR LOCATIONS
SIGN, FABRICATION & PAINT
TRANSPORTATION
AND MORE!



CALL TODAY! 470.657.3700

INFO@universalproductionservices.com

UNIVERSALPRODUCTIONSERVICES.COM



Lensing *Dune: Part Two*, *Joker: Folie à Deux*, *September 5* and *Day of the Fight*

DPs Greig Fraser, Lawrence Sher, Markus Förderer and Peter Simonite discuss their work and director collaborators

By Robert Goldrich

One DP took on a much anticipated film, the follow-up to his Oscar-winning turn on the first cinematic installment of a revered sci-fi novel.

Another continued a fruitful collaborative relationship, wrapping his seventh feature for a director whom he's worked with for the past 15 years.

Our third cinematographer also enjoys a lengthy track record with a helmer, dating back to film school. And they most recently teamed to take us back some 52 years to a tragic chapter in history—from the perspective of the small group of broadcasters who covered it live, to the shock and horror of the world.

And our fourth DP came together with a first-time director on a period piece marked by personal redemption found during the course of a single day.

Here are insights from Greig Fraser, ASC, ACS on *Dune: Part Two* (Warner Bros. Pictures); Lawrence Sher, ASC on *Joker: Folie à Deux* (Warner Bros. Pictures); Markus Förderer, ASC, BVK on *September 5* (Paramount Pictures); and Peter Simonite, ASC, CSC on *Day of the Fight* (Falling Forward Films).

Greig Fraser, ASC, ACS

If you believe in astrology, perhaps cinematographer Greig Fraser, ASC, ACS was somehow destined to work with director Denis Villeneuve in that they were both born on October 3, albeit in different years. From the moment they first worked together on *Dune: Part One*, Fraser felt a connection with Vil-

leneuve. Often their thinking is not only simpatico but verges on “a mind meld” in their perspective, view and approach, observed the DP.

Whatever your take on the constellations, clearly the stars aligned for them on *Dune: Part One* with Fraser winning both the Best Cinematography Oscar and the ASC Award in 2022. Fast forward to *Dune: Part Two*, which hit theaters earlier this year, and Fraser noted that his bond with Villeneuve deepened as they continued to tell a grand story, striving to do justice to Frank Herbert's classic science-fiction novel.

“Denis kept saying he doesn't see *Part Two* as a sequel—that each stand-alone film tells one story,” related Fraser. It's a story Villeneuve has lived with and admired since he was a teenager. And because of that, although the *Dune* films are a great spectacle, Villeneuve's priority in every decision that's made, related Fraser, is to tell a story that centers intimately on the characters. The ability of audiences to connect with those characters is paramount, their relationships to each other and their environments. A planet, for example, can be stunningly beautiful yet its harshness, in which there's beauty, can kill you at the same time. The narrative is one of relationships--interpersonal and to your surroundings.

Towards that end Fraser and Villeneuve carried over essential elements from *Part One* to *Part Two*, a prime example being to bring film into the digital process in order to gain an emotional feel. Fraser dovetailed with Fotokem, a digital lab that



Photo by Niko Tavernier/courtesy of Warner Bros. Pictures

Photo courtesy of Warner Bros. Pictures

Photo courtesy of Paramount Pictures

From top left, clockwise: Greig Fraser, ASC, ACS; Lawrence Sher, ASC; Markus Förderer, ASC, BVK; and Peter Simonite, ASC, CSC

After An Oscar Win For *Dune*, DP Fraser Takes On The Sequel

also processes film, for *Dune: Part One*. They explored shooting digitally (deploying the ARRI Alexa LF) spitting it out to film and then scanning back to digital. While not originating in film, *Dune: Part One* was thus able to have the benefits of film make their mark on the storytelling, bringing an analog dimension to the production. Fraser found that being able to push the film stock opened up creative opportunities, affording some control and options that wouldn't normally be realized. He observed for instance that film lent a softening dynamic to the surroundings. You don't have to tell the story of a harsh environment with harsh light and through harsh windows. You can instead allow the wind, the texture and the sound to depict harshness.

And this softening dynamic comes into play for the story and its characters, helping Fraser to provide Villeneuve with images that nurture the audience's empathy for characters. That humanity helps to ground the film in reality, which can prove invaluable when creating worlds not your own. Even within that context, viewers can recognize the reality of the environment and what's transpiring in it.

This digital/film process remained intact for *Dune: Part Two*, for which Fraser turned to the ARRI Alexa 65 and LF cameras. Fraser said that Villeneuve in his wisdom felt that taking the film-out step "helped take the digital edge off what we were filming."

Fraser noted that Villeneuve was insistent that "we connect all the characters." In the midst of explosions, stunt work and epic action, there's the inherent danger of becoming disconnected from the characters--and of the characters becoming seemingly disconnected from each other. Fraser felt that among his main responsibilities was to maintain that human connectivity through the visual language developed for the films.

In the big picture, Fraser shared that Villeneuve encourages input and feedback from his collaborators. In that pursuit, Fraser said that Villeneuve is "straight forward" and "doesn't sugarcoat anything." And conversely, the cinematographer related, "I can say quite boldly and unabashedly what I think without the risk of feeling I need to sugarcoat anything." This straight-up, honest ex-



Photo by Niko Tsamir/courtesy of Warner Bros. Pictures

Timothee Chalamet (l) and Zendaya in *Dune: Part Two*

change of ideas is essential to the process. And with some six hours over two feature films to tell the story, Villeneuve encouraged bold choices so that everyone could feel the freedom to figuratively "swing for the fences." One such successful swing for Fraser was shooting a key *Dune: Part Two* exterior sequence in infrared. "I may not have chosen to do that if we were making a film that wasn't that long in total run time," conjectured Fraser.

The "swing for the fences" mantra, pointed out Fraser, represents quite a departure from the varied unfulfilled attempts over the decades to make a film based on Herbert's "Dune." The story was frequently deemed "unfilmable" and "unmakeable," said Fraser who affirmed that Villeneuve was steadfastly committed to bringing what turned out to be his two films to fruition. Villeneuve's imagination as a youngster was engaged and sparked by Herbert's 1965 novel which introduces us to a young man on a journey carrying heroic themes spanning personal duty and responsibility, destiny, heritage, colonialism, brotherhood, religion, the environment, politics, morality and the lack thereof. The "Dune" book did all this in an awe-inspiring poetic manner and when Villeneuve became a filmmaker his dream project was at some point to bring the spirit and depth of Herbert's tale to the big screen. Fraser noted it's been inspiring to watch Villeneuve work with the actors and assorted collaborators to tell the story and in the process tackling head-on assorted limitations and logistical hurdles. The DP said he feels "fortunate" to be "sitting alongside Denis as a filmmaker." (Villeneuve also wrote

the adapted screenplay for *Dune: Part Two*, teaming with Jon Spaihts.)

Fraser is a two-time Oscar nominee, the first coming in 2017 for *Lion* which also earned him his first ASC Award win. Fraser is a four-time ASC Award nominee. Besides the wins for *Lion* and *Dune: Part One*, Fraser was nominated in 2021 on the TV side for *The Mandalorian*, and last year for the feature film *The Batman*. Fraser is also a three-time Best Cinematography BAFTA Award nominee--for *Lion*, *Dune: Part One* and *The Batman*.

Lawrence Sher, ASC

For Sher, *Joker: Folie à Deux* is the continuation of a process, not started as one might assume with the original *Joker*--for which he earned Oscar and ASC Award nominations in 2020--but rather a process that began some 15 years ago when he first collaborated with director Todd Phillips on the feature *The Hangover*. Since then, Sher has shot seven movies for Phillips, including both *Joker* films.

From the outset, Sher said that he and Phillips have been experimenting with ways to free the actors to perform, removing constraints such as the confines of lighting. The director and DP have sought to enable actors to do what they do best with creative and physical freedom--affording them the flexibility to go 360, set new marks, explore scenes in real time. With each film he shot for Phillips, Sher said they have progressed in different ways, moving closer to realizing that aspiration and more. This forward-thinking, open mindset, for example, facilitated Phillips, Sher and Joaquin Phoenix being able to discover scenes in real time, mo-

ments for the first time as they happen before the camera. Phoenix of course wound up winning the Best Actor Oscar for *Joker*.

This approach, Sher told *SHOOT* during that Oscar season, made the film feel different from others in the so-called superhero/supervillain genre. "The movie feels handmade, a little bit dirty, very real, constructed by human beings, not a pre-vis lab. Humanity is the best way to describe it. *Joker* introduces us to a human being who happens to transform into something that exists within a superhero context."

Now, four years later, *Joker: Folie à Deux* emerges with that humanity carrying over but taking on new dimensions as the sequel also brings us musical numbers, additional crime thriller elements, a romance dynamic (Lady Gaga as Lee Quinzel), and a courtroom drama as an imprisoned Arthur Fleck (aka Joker, again portrayed by Phoenix) goes on trial for the murders that occurred in the first *Joker* film.

Besides developing a shorthand and deep communication with one another, Sher and Phillips' long track record has yielded another major benefit. "We've expanded our filmmaking language together," said Sher, commencing with *The Hangover* in which "characters are in situations that are crazy but the world they're in is visually authentic. The authenticity helps make the craziness of the comedy better." Sher added that he and Phillips discovered "the most valuable thing we can do is to give actors the freedom to perform--that informs my lighting philosophy, environments are lit as opposed to people." This, he continued, affords room for a final product that benefits from being more "jazzy" and improvisational.

Over the past 15 years and counting, Sher said that he and Phillips have kept pushing that dynamic from one film to the next, including *The Hangover* films, *Due Date* and *War Dogs*. By the time they got to *Joker*, it wasn't a departure but really "an extension of what we had been doing."

Like the first *Joker* film, *Joker: Folie à Deux* takes place, said Sher, in "a realistic world that's heightened. It's not a wholly realistic space but we like it to

Continued on page 18

Lawrence Sher Meshes Visual and Musical In Joker Sequel

Continued from page 17

feel grounded in reality.” That grounding is also important in the musical scenes which are at times fantastical, allowing the characters to break out of full reality into very production designed spaces. But even in those fantasies, there are heightened versions of things that exist, observed Sher. And the musical numbers are wide ranging, including a rooftop dance that resides close to the spirit of the 1940s’ MGM movie musicals.

Among the prime challenges that *Jok-*

car carrying some of his so-called admirers. Fleck takes flight from them as well.

As for the biggest takeaways from his experience on *Joker: Folie à Deux*, Sher said he learned that “you can do something that really feels quite improvisational” as long as you plan meticulously. Lighting sets to give the actors freedom, even real-time lighting certain spaces towards that same end, enables you to “play jazz with the camera and the actor.” At first, Sher earlier feared that attaining that jazzy dynamic would “feel formless

ures (2017) starring Owen Wilson, Glenn Close, Ving Rhames, Christopher Walken and J.K. Simmons. Sher also directed multiple episodes of the Peacock series *Rutherford Falls*. And he continues to be repped as a commercial/branded content director via brother, the production company headed by filmmaker Theodore (Ted) Melfi and EP Rich Carter.

Sher said that serving as a director gave him a much better perspective of the filmmakers he shoots for, what they’re going through day to day—the multitude of

Camera Award for Best Cinematography, the Best Cinematography Award at the 2011 Sitges Film Festival in Spain, and a nomination for Best Cinematography Debut at Camerimage International in 2012. Förderer lensed Fehlbau’s second feature, *The Colony* (2021). And slated for wide U.S. release this month is their third feature together, *September 5*, a dramatic thriller set around the live coverage of the terrorist attack at the 1972 Munich Olympics. Some 20 hours after it began, the attack claimed the lives of 11 members



Photo by Niko Tavernise/courtesy of Warner Bros. Pictures

Joaquin Phoenix (l) and Lady Gaga in *Joker: Folie à Deux*

er: Folie à Deux posed to Sher was visually figuring out how the music was going to play into the story. Noting that music was a big part of the original *Joker* but not as overtly as in the second film, Sher said it was somewhat natural to incorporate musical numbers into the sequel in that the *Joker* and Fleck had music within them all along—and Gaga’s character gives them a chance to sing out to her. Plus, they sing out to each other in ways that further define the characters. Still, this was described by Sher as a “scary” proposition. But at the same time, he observed, “Scary is part of the reason you want to do it. If I feel it’s something I’ve done before, it’s usually something I don’t want to do.” Fear and anxiety in prep turned to “exciting and new once we got into it.”

As with the first *Joker* film, Sher deployed the ARRI Alexa 65 for *Joker: Folie à Deux*. For a sequence towards the end where Fleck escapes the courthouse after an explosion, Sher went with the Sony VENICE digital camera in the portable Rialto mode to better follow Fleck as he flees; along the way he’s picked up by a

in a bad way.” But with thorough planning, jazzy doesn’t mean having to feel unfocused and sloppy—as long as your approach is thought out and precise. “When I watch the film, I feel a level of precision,” said Sher, adding that at the same time it didn’t feel meticulously planned out. Rather he feels naturally connected with Fleck and the characters because the actors were given the latitude to perform at their best. Sher described the process of working with Phillips and the actors as “joyous.”

The other major takeaway for Sher is that “when you make a movie, you then give it away and it’s out of your hands.” It’s akin to a child you raise who goes on to live his/her/their own life. “The joy of a movie can sometimes not align with the way it’s received,” observed Sher who still firmly believes that *Joker: Folie à Deux* will have a longer history than what has been written thus far.

Sher brings another experience to his cinematography as he’s been directing from time to time. For example, he directed the comedy-drama feature *Father Fig-*



Photo courtesy of Paramount Pictures

***September 5* takes us inside the ABC TV control room**

concerns and elements “outside of my purview” as a cinematographer. “When I come to them with a question, need or desire, I’m one of 40 others asking them something that day.”

While he is looking to direct select projects down the road, Sher reaffirmed that he loves lensing. And the experience of directing has made him a better cinematographer, re-inspired and more courageous, willing to take more chances as an artist. In fact, after *Joker: Folie à Deux*, Sher shot a commercial for director Melfi as well as the feature *The Bride*, directed by Maggie Gyllenhaal.

Markus Förderer, ASC, BVK

Like Sher and Phillips, cinematographer Förderer has a longstanding track record with director Tim Fehlbau. The two went to the same film school in Munich and have collaborated regularly over the years.

Förderer made his feature film debut on Fehlbau’s post-apocalyptic feature, *Hell*. The film garnered Förderer several awards including the 2012 German

of Israel’s Olympic team, a West German policeman, and five terrorists from the group Black September, an affiliate of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

September 5—which Fehlbau wrote with Moritz Binder and co-writer Alex David—focuses on the sports broadcasters from the ABC Television Network who had cameras in place and wound up covering the live events as they unfolded to shocked audiences around the world. A group of sports broadcasters suddenly found themselves covering an event which normally would have been the province of ABC News. *September 5* brings us into the ABC Sports control room, the fateful decisions made within that space and how they reverberated worldwide.

Förderer shared that he was initially concerned about the prospects of shooting much of the film in such a confined space—a TV network control room—with very few exterior shots. Förderer asked himself, “Are we doing these events justice with the scope?” Telling a global event within such a small setting seemed coun-

Covering The 1972 Olympics Massacre In September 5

ter-intuitive at first. But Förderer came to embrace a “less is more” philosophy as the drama of the real-life story generated a palpable energy within such a claustrophobic environment. Förderer observed that the control room crew rolling out a map on a table, showing we are here and the hostages are there, had a unique impact all its own. This way so much “takes place in the audience’s head,” said the DP. And at times both in and beyond the control room, Förderer said that when it came to lighting, he often didn’t want to show everything in certain scenes, opting to keep mystery in the shadows so viewers’ imaginations could fill in the blanks. “Nothing is as strong as our imagination,” shared Förderer who maintained an approach of restraint so that “each audience member creates their own little film in their head” as he and Fehlbaum were intentionally not always specific in what they showed the world, sticking to what those in the control room saw and could make of it.

Writer-director Fehlbaum had this film in development in his own mind for some three years prior to the start of the actual shoot, noted Förderer who was brought onto the project, scouting locations, a long time before any green light was given. Förderer grew up in Germany, attended film school in Munich and knew the Olympic Village there quite well. It looked very much the same as it did in the 1970s. The film evolved over time as Fehlbaum became fascinated by the perspective of telling the story through the eyes of the media—what they knew, didn’t know, and the challenges posed by a new form of live television. Förderer said that Fehlbaum was very respectful of the facts—and the families who lost loved ones. The writers thoroughly researched the history and just days before the film got underway, German reports on the terrorist attacks were declassified and served as a major resource, documenting the failure of the German police, their lack of preparation while pretending to have everything well under control. At one point, German authorities reported that the Israeli hostages were successfully rescued—but a short time later came news of a shootout at the Fürstenfeldbruck air base outside Munich, where a plane was waiting at the request of the terrorists.

None of the Israelis survived.

At one point, ABC Sports producer Geoffrey Mason (portrayed by John Magaro)—who was thrust to the helm of the control room—decides to go on air with the report that the hostages were safe, which was initially corroborated only to later fall by the wayside.

“We wanted the audience to feel part of this crew in the control room—witnessing the characters as the events unfold,” Förderer pointed out.

Also key was the shootout at the air base—with original footage shot from afar. Fehlbaum got access to some of the archival content which was on videotape and of poor quality so Förderer had to recreate what audiences saw at that time. He went with black-and-white digital paired with old lenses, capturing traffic jams around the airport as well as nearby residents being interviewed about what they heard and saw. Förderer and Fehlbaum decided to embrace the darkness of the actual period footage, which was illuminated by car footage. Förderer used a couple of hidden LED lights and tried to replicate the look of 16mm film with digital cameras. Some archival footage was used (of ABC Sports anchor Jim McKay on air, and wide shots of fencing around the air base) but the majority of the action was re-created. “It was important for Tim to never show real images of the hostages out of respect for their families.

Förderer selected the RED Digital Cinema V-Raptor 8K digital camera, paired with lenses from the 1960s and ‘70s, for *September 5*. He also learned about Zoomar, the first Zoom lens of its kind, which was used at the ‘72 Olympics. A self-described “lens freak,” Förderer hadn’t heard about the Zoomar lens before. He wound up locating one on eBay from a collector. Förderer had this Zoomar lens—which was made for still photography—converted to shoot in conjunction with the digital camera sensor. Additionally, some select sequences in *September 5* were shot on film.

Förderer noted that Fehlbaum is well versed in camerawork, having started in film school shooting documentaries and short films himself. “He has a great understanding of the camera and for me as a cinematographer it’s a gift to have such a creative partner to bounce ideas back



Photo by Jürgen Olzak/courtesy of Paramount Pictures

A scene from *September 5*

and forth with. We have similar tastes and sensibilities. We started out making films from the early days. We know each other’s style. I know what he likes and doesn’t like.”

For *September 5*, they looked to strike a balance—a documentary feel but not a documentary, bringing a cinematic quality to the work.

September 5 premiered at the Venice International Film Festival and went on to the Telluride Film Festival. Besides his work with Fehlbaum, Förderer has to his credit two feature films with director Roland Emmerich, the period drama *Stone-wall*, which bowed at the 2015 Toronto Film Festival, and *Independence Day: Resurgence*. Additional credits include Mike Cahill’s sci-fi drama, *I, Origins*, which won the 2014 Alfred P. Sloan Feature Film Prize at the Sundance Film Festival; the feature film *I Remember*, which premiered at the 2015 Berlin Film Festival and won the 2016 German Camera Award for Best Cinematography; the pilot for the sci-fi horror series *Nightflyers*, by *Games of Thrones* writer George R.R. Martin; and the drama *Bliss*, directed by Cahill.

Förderer also lensed the pilot and second episode of *Constellation*, the Apple TV+ sci-fi thriller starring Noomi Rapace; and the action-comedy *Red Notice*, directed by Rawson Marshall Thurber, which launched on Netflix and is the streamer’s most watched movie of all time.

Peter Simonite, ASC, CSC

Day of the Fight marks the feature directorial debut of Jack Huston. It’s also the first time that cinematographer Simonite worked with Huston who going

in was best known for his body of work as an actor.

“One of his producers was familiar with my work and knew I had done some recent black-and-white projects,” recalled Simonite, adding that Huston had also expressed interest in poetic visuals with a Terrence Malick kind of feel. Simonite had some experience working for Malick and cinematographer Emmanuel “Chivo” Lubezki, having done second unit work on their *The Tree of Life*. Based on all that, Simonite’s name was submitted to Huston for consideration on *Day of the Fight*.

Simonite described Huston as “very driven and very hard working. He’s far from a first-time director. He has a lot of experience in film from performing as an actor, being on set with the likes of Ridley Scott and Martin Scorsese, and growing up with a family history of filmmaking [his grandfather being the legendary director, John Huston]. You’re working with a director who has a deep sense of performance and visual storytelling. He has a strong sense of what he likes and at the same time is a great collaborator. This was a nice opportunity for me to join in with him and discover a language together for the film.”

Day of the Fight follows a former champion boxer, Mike Flannagan (played by Michael C. Pitt) as he takes a redemptive journey through his past and present, on the day of his first fight since he left prison. Simonite was drawn to Jack Huston’s script, soulful with a lot of heart, as well as an instant rapport he felt with the writer-director, and a stellar cast headed by Pitt,

Continued on page 36

GIANT SPOON CREATES LUCID CAMPAIGN

Automotive technology company Lucid has secured Giant Spoon as its lead agency. They've kicked off their partnership with Lucid's first brand campaign, the centerpiece of which is the "Compromise Nothing" spot featuring Muhammad Ali, Nina Simone, and Neil Armstrong.

Directed by rubberband. via production house SMUGGLER, shot by DP Oliver Millar, and cut by Dylan Edwards of Cabin Editing Co., "Compromise Nothing" positions Lucid's transformative technology and engineering as the superior vehicle that customers want, without the tradeoffs.

The campaign anchors Lucid's ethos and history of success with Lucid Air by showcasing the model alongside a preview of the upcoming Lucid Gravity SUV (which just opened up for orders). To share the inspiration that motivated them to redefine the EV category, Lucid partnered with three greats—Ali, Simone and Armstrong—who worked harder, dreamed further, and never stopped short at "good enough" to make an undeniable mark in history.



NBC LAUNCH PROGRAM ASSEMBLES CLASS OF 2024-'26

NBCU LAUNCH, the umbrella brand that houses the comprehensive inclusion efforts across the company's entertainment television portfolio, has named the 2024-26 class of its trailblazing scripted directing program, the NBCU LAUNCH TV Directors Program. The 2024-'26 class and the NBCU series they are attached to are Parisa Barani (*Law & Order*), Winter Dunn (*The Irrational*), Nina Kramer (*St. Denis Medical*) and Liz Sargent (*Chicago Med*).

Founded in 2009, NBCU's scripted directing program (now called the NBCU LAUNCH TV Directors Program) gives experienced directors with distinct points of view their break into episodic television. The program supports the company's goal of producing authentic stories with talent whose lived experiences inform their creative visions.

It's the first scripted directing initiative in the television industry to guarantee that participants will helm at least one episode by the culmination of the program. Directors shadow on two episodes of an NBCU scripted series ahead of sitting in the director's chair themselves.

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE...

Final Cut has added New York-based editors Nick Gilberg and Marc Thomas to its roster. Gilberg, who hails from Cape Town, South Africa, has won an array of awards, from Clios and Cannes to a D&AD Wood Pencil and recognition at the London Fashion Film Festival. His editing work includes Dubai's "A Romance to Remember" spot, which starred Zac Efron and Jessica Alba in a charming desert caper. Gilberg is also behind the video for Taylor Swift's single "ME!" He also put his skillful touch on Jif's "The Return" ad, which made use of animation to morph Ludacris into a superhero. Meanwhile New Yorker Thomas has turned out such work as Common and Stevie Wonder's acclaimed "Black America Again," a moving docu-video featuring slice-of-life, BIPOC portraiture. Thomas was also a creative force behind Meta's "Black History Told By..." series, an immersive take on Black History Month. These are just two examples of the many collaborations between him and director/DP Bradford Young, for whom Thomas has also edited multi-channel video installations for The Carnegie Museum and The Rotterdam Film Festival. Thomas showed off his knack for transformative fiction with the short film *Protect You + Me*, an edgy odyssey into character studies. Thomas' work has also garnered accolades at Sundance and the L.A. Film Festival.....



Marc Thomas (l) and Nick Gilberg

Thomas showed off his knack for transformative fiction with the short film *Protect You + Me*, an edgy odyssey into character studies. Thomas' work has also garnered accolades at Sundance and the L.A. Film Festival.....

Welcome to the Special SHOOT 22nd Annual New Directors Showcase profile section. It's hard to believe this is the 22nd year of the Showcase. We love conducting the New Directors Search and producing the annual Showcase because it gives us the opportunity to introduce and celebrate new talent, complementing our coverage of up-and-coming directors in SHOOT Magazine and on SHOOTonline year 'round.



Each year we conduct the official NDS Search and receive hundreds of entries consisting of a great variety of short and long-form advertising and entertainment content. Once the field is narrowed down to the final Showcase, each director who has long-form work selected provides an up-to-two-minute excerpt or trailer for the Showcase Reel. Since the shortened versions don't do justice to the work, we encourage you to seek out the directors to see the full versions via contact info on each director's profile page on the special SHOOT NDS website: <https://nds.shootonline.com>.

The following section contains thumbnail sketches of the Showcase directors with their responses to select questions. Additional Q&As with each director appear on the NDS site along with the Showcase Reel. We hope you take a look at each director's profile page, view the reel and spread the word to your colleagues to check out the work.

Just last week at the DGA Theatre in New York City, SHOOT held its New Directors Showcase Event. We started hosting this event at the DGA in 2005 when it was the 3rd Annual NDS Showcase. Aside from not being able to have an in-person get-together for two straight years due to the pandemic, SHOOT has been at the DGA Theatre screening the Showcase Reel each and every year since '05. We had a string of 15 consecutive years at DGA prior to COVID; and we are now on a new streak of three straight years and counting at the Guild venue.

We embrace and value holding a face-to-face gathering, sharing insights, information and points of view during afternoon panel discussions and our In The Director's Chair session, which this time around featured acclaimed documentary filmmaker Dawn Porter. Then seeing the Showcase Reel on the big screen that evening is a stirring experience.

Well beyond those proceedings, the Showcase Reel will remain a major means of exposure for new worthwhile talent, continuing to be scrutinized by the advertising and entertainment communities which are increasingly interconnected. Networking and dialogue persist with the work of Showcase directors serving as a catalyst given the industry's insatiable need for new talent.

The NDS Reel remains a force for drawing people closer as agencies seek new collaborators and production companies reach out to directors who can enhance their rosters. The Reel also is a platform for new voices to be heard as diverse storytelling perspectives are more valuable and relevant than ever in helping to better society through fostering more empathy and deeper understanding of others, including those often underrepresented in the media landscape.

Fifteen of the Showcase directors are women. The overall lineup totals 30 directors—consisting of 26 individual helmers and two duos. Twenty-five of the directors are unaffiliated with a production company.

Showcase directors' body of work spans commercials, public service fare, branded content, a feature film, shorts, documentaries, music videos, proof of concept for a TV series, a sports team promo and spec work.

This year's showcase field features directors from varied backgrounds that include acting, producing, editing, production design, sound design, visual effects, live theater, serving in agency creative and in-house directing capacities, comedy writing for such series as "Saturday Night Live" and "The Goldbergs," serving on staff at Apple as a video producer, even working in the film commission sector to provide support services to the industry at large.

Helping to enable new voices to be heard is most gratifying for us at SHOOT. We wish all the NDS filmmakers a long and successful career, and we are excited to play some small part in bringing them to your attention. We hope you enjoy the NDS profiles and Reel as we come together literally and figuratively this year and for many years to come.

—Roberta Grier
Publisher & Editorial Director
rgrier@shootonline.com



26 Solo Directors, 2 Duos Earn Slots In *SHOOT* Showcase

Lineup includes 25 directors sans production company affiliations; 15 women make final cut

A *SHOOT* Staff Report

SHOOT's 22nd Annual New Directors Showcase offers a total of 30 up-and-coming directors. The field includes 25 directors--21 individuals and a pair of duos--who are unaffiliated with a production company.

The NDS Class of 2024 includes directors from varied backgrounds that include acting, producing, editing, production design, sound design, visual effects, live theater, serving in agency creative and in-house directing capacities, comedy writing for such series as *Saturday Night Live* and *The Goldbergs*, on staff at Apple as a video producer, even working in the film commission sector to provide support services to the industry at large.

Our '24 Class consists of 15 female directors (including one duo, and half of another duo), 14 male helmers (including half of a duo), and one nonbinary director. The Showcase directors' body of work spans commercials, public service fare, branded content, a feature film, shorts, documentaries, music videos, proof of concept for a TV series, a sports team promo and spec work.

The director with the feature motion picture--India Donaldson whose work on the New Directors Showcase reel is a trailer for her film titled *Good One*--has already had an eventful December on the awards circuit. On the basis of *Good One*, the National Board of Review recently bestowed upon her the distinction of making the year's Best Directorial Debut. And Donaldson's writing chops were also recognized as *Good One* garnered her a

Best First Screenplay nomination from the Independent Spirit Awards. Donaldson is repped in the spotmaking/branded content arena by production company Tinygiant.

Agency pedigree

On the agency score, unaffiliated director Lanre Danmola, a first generation Nigerian-American from South Orange, NJ, landed his first creative role with Wieden+Kennedy NY where he worked at its social media sub-agency, Bodega. There, he primarily performed as an in-house director, but had the opportunity to produce, write and art direct campaigns. He then began freelancing and has worked with varied companies since. Most recently, he served as a creative director at Coinbase to launch its new social video content strategy.

Acting and comedy writing

Alison Rich, who is with production company Imposter, came to directing from a background in comedy writing and acting. She has worked professionally for over a decade as an actor and writer. She's written on TV shows including *Saturday Night Live* and *The Goldbergs*. And Rich has acted in various TV shows and movies including *2 Broke Girls*, *The Goldbergs*, *Drunk History*, and *The Other Two*.



Apple gig

As for the alluded to former video producer for Apple, Chris Cole had that tour of duty in the Bay Area prior to becoming an unaffiliated Showcase director. He observed, "Going through that soup to nuts process at a company that works on such a high level ended up strengthening me so much as a director, and I don't think *Terminally III* [his short film Showcase entry] has the attention to detail and level of craft without me having gone through the experience of working at Apple."

Brady bunch

Two Showcase directors this year credited Jordan Brady with being their mentor. Unaffiliated Showcase director Pamela M. Carbonero related, "I've been lucky to be mentored by Jordan Brady through the Commercial Directing Film School. His expertise has been great for my understanding of how the commercial directing world works. He was also a wonderful sounding board for my first commercial, 'I Miss You, Mom,' that got me into this year's New Director's Showcase! Very grateful!"

Unaffiliated Showcase helmer Ava Himmel too expressed gratitude for Brady's mentorship. Himmel said of Brady, "It's rare to find someone as warm,

kind, and giving as he is."

Brady directs through production company True Gentleman, which is also home to his director/cinematographer son Ben Brady who last year earned a slot in *SHOOT*'s New Directors Showcase.

Unaffiliated filmmakers

In addition to the aforementioned Carbonero, Cole, Danmola, Himmel and Krouch, the unaffiliated crop of up-and-coming filmmaking talent--25 directors in all--consists of Reece Daniels, Lauren Maya Davis, Giuseppe De Lauri, Louise de Nexon, Duncan Heger, Elizabeth Katz, Brian Lawes, Mitchell Lazar, Derek Nguyen, Vanessa Pla, Sophia Prestwich, Igor Raevskii, Shahriar Rahman, Annalee Walton, Dennis Williams, and Jackie! Zhou--as well as two helming duos, the Potter Sisters (Grace & Emily Potter), and scout (Lindsay Sunada & Jensen Vinca),

Company ties

Five Showcase directors have production company affiliations. In addition to Donaldson and Rich, they are: Jason Blanc of Diamond View; Raghav Rampal of Collider; and Severine Reisp of Cutter Entertainment.

This year's New Directors Showcase Reel premiered before an industry audience on December 9 at the DGA Theatre in NYC. The following pages contain thumbnail sketches of the Showcase directors with their responses to select questions. Additional Q&As with each director--as well as the Showcase Reel--can be accessed on nds.shootonline.com.

Need a director who's gonna crush those boards?

the directors network



FIND THE PERFECT FREELANCE DIRECTOR

Directors Jason Blanc, Pamela M. Carbonero, Chris Cole

Continued from page 21



Jason Blanc

Diamond View

Family First's "Your Daughter" (public service film)

1) What was your first professionally directed work and when was it?

Fuccillo Car commercials

2) How did you get into directing?

I always wanted to be a director - started directing short films with my friends. Worked my way up in a production company to fulfill my dream of being a director

3) What is your most recent project?

Experia | 4 Corners Dominican Republic - 4 episode road trip film through the Dominican Republic

4) What is the best part of being a director?

Leading a team, creating cool things with cool people.

5) What is the worst part of being a director?

The responsibility, pressure and stress but thats what makes it worth it.



Pamela M. Carbonero

Unaffiliated

Reebok's "I Miss You, Mom" (spec spot)

1) What was your first professionally directed work and when was it?

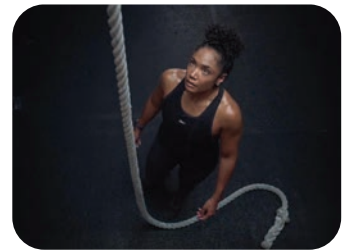
My first professionally directed work was a short film called The Big Picture that I was hired for that we shot in early 2023. I have yet to professionally direct my first commercial or branded work but something tells me it's coming up soon!

2) How did you get into directing?

It started in college as a freshman when I was a theatre major. I had chosen to take a film production class out of general curiosity. In that class, we role played different production positions, such as director, producer, etc. When it came time for me to play the director, I remember the professor asking me what I wanted, and at the time, not knowing exactly what a director did, I looked over at the producer and asked them what they want. The professor immediately stopped me and said, "No, this isn't what the producer wants, what do YOU want?" And it was right then and there that I realized what a director does and quite literally had an epiphany on the drive home that night that I'm meant to be a director, not an actor. I went back the next week and changed my major from theatre to film and graduated with my BA in TV, Film and Media Studies with complete clarity that I will be a director in this industry. And it's the best decision I've ever made in my life.

3) What is your most recent project?

The most recent project I directed was the finale of a 12 episode mini TV series I co-created through the LA Director's Lab. Before that, I most recently directed an Athleta spot that I'm really proud of!



Chris Cole

Unaffiliated

"Terminally III" (excerpt from short film)

1) What was your first professionally directed work and when was it?

"Terminally III," the short film I directed last year, was my first professionally directed work. Prior to that, I had directed student films, music videos, spec commercials, and even an interactive film. I've spent the past couple years producing in the commercial space, which has lent itself to how I approach directing. Since "Terminally III," I've had the pleasure of directing a number of political ads, and I'm glad to have used my film-making and storytelling skills to support causes that I care about.

2) How did you get into directing?

When I was a kid, I saw a TV commercial for this camera called the Digital Blue, which was a kids toy that came with editing software. I begged for it for Christmas and Santa got it for me. I'm 1 of 4 siblings, including my twin brother, and I would corral them into making films with me around the house. It was so much fun. YouTube came out right around the time I started middle school, and me and my brother would make these parody rap videos that were kinda stupid, but also encapsulate a lot of what I'm still interested in: hip hop, comedy, and filmmaking. By the time college came around, I knew I wanted to either do music journalism or film school. I ended up at NYU Tisch for Film, and interned at a Hip Hop news website HipHopDX the summer after my freshman year. I continued to freelance write for a couple years after that.

The first thing I directed that a lot of people saw was my student film "If You're Reading This It's Too Late." It was a scrappy black and white short about a guy who is obsessed with Drake. It was absurd, funny, dark, and it ended up kinda blowing up on the internet. I made this weird thing that was very much in my voice, and seeing people respond to it made me understand how powerful directing can be.



Continued on page 24

THE DIRECTORS GUILD OF AMERICA

congratulates

**all of the directors selected for the
SHOOT 22nd Annual New Directors Showcase!**

*You are the future of the industry, and we
are here to support and protect you.*

To learn more about the
many benefits of joining
the DGA community,
please contact DGA
Director of Commercial
Contracts Winona Wacker
at wwacker@dga.org



Directors Reece Daniels, Lanre Danmola, Lauren Maya Davis

Continued from page 22



Reece Daniels

Unaffiliated
Jordan Webb's
"Pass Go" (music video)

1) What was your first professionally directed work and when was it?

My first professionally directed work was my music video for Jordan Webb's "Pass Go," which I shot in April 2024.

Up until then, I was a film student at NYU, directing self-funded short films and student music videos. While our productions and crews were growing, there was the safety net of being a film student, I had the freedom of making mistakes and chalking it up as a simple learning experience.

Working with Jordan taught me the value of the client, both their investment and their understanding. It was a very collaborative experience, anchored by my preparedness, which included a storyboard with every shot, a comprehensive shot list and schedule, and a clear communication to Jordan as to what this was going to look like and the purpose of each shot. Shooting a video as conceptually convoluted as this, it required coherent direction and a clear vision for the final product.



2) How did you get into directing?

I became a director when I was 7 years old because my Dad gave me a camcorder and I began making YouTube videos, telling my neighbors and friends what to do and say in front of the lens. I didn't know it at the time, but that was directing. Since then, I had always been motivated by learning, experimenting with daymation and animation, making homemade music videos, and even working as a background actor on professional television sets.



Lanre Danmola

Unaffiliated
Meta For Education Brand Sizzle
Film (commercial)

1) What was your first professionally directed work and when was it?

My first professionally directed work was the McDonald's Fan Truth Highlight Reel in November 2022. A series of digital ads highlighting various relatable experiences associated with eating and ordering McDonald's.

2) How did you get into directing?

For me, directing began as a pandemic hobby that accidentally blossomed into a career. I bought a Canon M50 camera with my stimulus check in 2020 and was immediately obsessed. I began filming anything I could from my mother cooking breakfast to my friends skateboarding in town. I taught myself VFX editing to get into music videos and eventually I got the attention of some producers at Widen+Kennedy. I joined on a 1-month contract without knowing anything about the company or the advertising industry. I worked there for two years as a creative and in-house director. This gave me the confidence and network to begin freelance directing in the summer of 2023.



3) What is your most recent project?

My most recent project is a branded music video called "Sunny D" by the artists Emei and Whethan. The music video doubled as an ad for Sunny D marrying my two passions of music video and commercial directing. It was a fun experience and I hope I get to direct more work like this in the future.



Lauren Maya Davis

Unaffiliated
"Songbirds" (trailer for the director's short film)

1) What was your first professionally directed work and when was it?

I started directing music videos and fashion films, for EMI and Universal, before going to film school to study cinematography.

2) How did you get into directing?

I went to art school in London, specialized in motion design, and immersed myself in experimental work by Saul Bass, David Lynch, Bill Henson and Lynne Ramsay. I worked as a director in London and then with celebrated film directors and cinematographers in Los Angeles before going to film school to study cinematography at AFI. There, I was able to develop my own visual language, alongside the technical aspects of film-making for both short and long form, with a visual-eye for immersive poetry and big world sci-fi VFX capabilities which includes a project on The Volume at NantStudios.



3) What is your most recent project?

"Songbirds," which has been lucky to receive a few festival awards including a bronze at Cidope Festival. The project was shot in the Mississippi Delta where I was based for 3 months. We cast 400 children, scouted every corner of Mississippi's beautiful and terrifying textured terrain and through this process a very special project came to life. The film is exhibiting at several museums next year.

5) What is the worst part of being a director?

Having to be good at a lot of things to then be able to express and execute your ideas fully and hope the work touches and moves a wider audience in some way (and simultaneously not have a heart attack).

Continued on page 26



Cast & Crew | Commercials

Formerly known as CAPS

Your Partner in Commercial Production Payroll

At Cast & Crew Commercials, relationships are everything. That's why we become a true partner to the production companies we work with, tailoring our solutions to support each specific portfolio of projects.

What we deliver

- ✓ Employer-of-record payroll for union and nonunion crews
- ✓ Digital tools including commercial accounting and timekeeping platforms
- ✓ Workers' compensation and unemployment liability coverage
- ✓ Industry-leading support tailored to your needs

Work smarter, not harder

You can streamline crew onboarding and timekeeping with our intuitive, web-based platform. Fully integrated with our payroll system, it delivers faster, more efficient workflows, a user-friendly interface, centralized data management, and complete control over timecards. Boost efficiency while enjoying the personal service of experienced payroll coordinators.

With decades of experience and a team of industry insiders, we offer streamlined payroll, workers' compensation coverage, and expert guidance every step of the way.

Let's connect and optimize your payroll strategy today!

Reach out to us at InfoCommercials@castandcrew.com



Guiseppe De Lauri, Louise de Nexon, India Donaldson

Continued from page 24



Guiseppe De Lauri

Unaffiliated
"The Shell"
(excerpt from short film)

1) What was your first professionally directed work and when was it?

I directed a short film titled Welcome in 2021, which tells the story of an undocumented young man who immigrates to New York and works in his uncle's restaurant. Production and shooting were challenging due to the height of COVID, which drove up costs, but the crew was incredibly dedicated. Together, we managed to complete the project, which premiered at the Rome International Film Festival and was also screened at the Rhode Island Film Festival and the Montreal Film Festival.

2) How did you get into directing?

My path to directing was a bit of a winding one. I actually started out as a theater actor, but during a performance of King Lear—I was playing the Duke of Cornwall—I realized acting wasn't for me. When my character was killed on stage, it felt almost like a metaphorical farewell to acting itself. After that, I moved into assistant directing in theater, and my theater friends and I started making short spots and mini films. I think I was drawn to writing, photography, and the artistic expression of acting, and cinema brought all those passions together.

4) What is the best part of being a director?

I think the best part of being a director is the collaboration during pre-production, working with all the talented crew members who bring their creativity to my vision. Then, of course, there's the energy on set, when you set the script aside, and it feels like everything is starting fresh. I love finding order within the chaos.



Louise de Nexon

Unaffiliated
"Antinomy" (short film)

1) What was your first professionally directed work and when was it?

I've been directing for musician friends for the past few years but with incredible freedom and no "client to director" relationship. I'd say the first professionally directed work was Nothing Lasts forever in February 2023.

2) How did you get into directing?

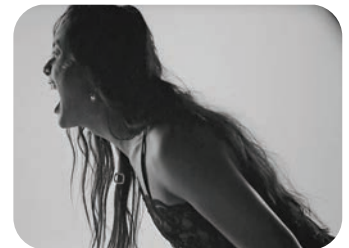
I come from a family of artists, so I'm not sure I ever thought I'd pursue any other field. If anything, my desire to become a filmmaker really resulted from a lack of imagination. But in all seriousness, I first wanted to be a writer, then thought about pursuing photography. It's only around the age of thirteen that I started thinking about becoming a filmmaker as the medium seemed to combine both storytelling and images. Prior to that age, I wasn't clear on the role of the director, hence couldn't really dream of becoming one.

Beyond the urge to make (as in create) something, I think I really grew up with a desire to attach meaning to things and reach a certain understanding of human behavior. "Why did one person do this and another say that?". Filmmaking somehow requires to take a stand on the why and convey it through intentionally crafted images. It's a fascinating exercise that also has the advantage of making

me like people slightly more.

3) What is your most recent project?

I've just directed a music video for an old friend of mine. We had very little resources and I'm really proud of the concept we landed on. This one felt very close to home and so liberating creatively.



India Donaldson

Tinygiant
"Good One" (trailer for the director's feature film)

2) How did you get into directing?

I came to directing through writing. I was writing screenplays and realized I really wanted to be directing them myself. I made several short films and met a lot of collaborators that way. I learned a lot through the process of trying things out and experimenting, and collaborating with talented people!

3) What is your most recent project?

"Good One" is my first feature film and most recent project. It's about a teenage girl who goes on a backpacking trip with her dad and his oldest friend in the Catskills. We premiered it at the Sundance Film Festival in January, and Metrograph Pictures released it this past August.

4) What is the best part of being a director?

Writing can be pretty lonely, so I love how collaborative directing is!

10) Tell us about your background (i.e., where did you grow up? Past jobs?)

I mostly grew up in L.A., and lived in New York for about 12 years after graduating college. I worked in fashion for much of my 20s before transitioning into writing and filmmaking.



22nd ANNUAL NDS 2024

Filmmakers Duncan Heger and Ava Himmel



Duncan Heger

Unaffiliated

LAFCS "2024 Kit Reveal"

1) What was your first professionally directed work and when was it?

My first professional project was a promo for Netflix's "Enola Holmes 2," shot in 2022. We were tasked with capturing a Rube Goldberg machine made up of dozens of different components, inspired directly by the film. The director of Enola Holmes watched our spot and quite liked it, which was all the praise we could've dreamed for.

2) How did you get into directing?

By accident. I came up filming NFL athletes as a one man band - directing, shooting,

and editing. When I got asked to shoot an interview with a player, I figured I should be the one to ask the questions. I had my friend DP the shoot and another handle lighting. I deeply enjoyed the team aspect of the set and the natural collaboration. The rest was history, I've been pursuing directing ever since.



Ava Himmel

Unaffiliated

Match.com :30 (specspot)

1) What was your first professionally directed work and when was it?

I was hired to direct scenes of a Sizzle reel for an up-and-coming writer to pitch his feature, Puppet President, in December of 2021. It starred the writer himself as well as William O'Leary. It was an exciting opportunity, and the first chance I had to direct something that was both paid and not self-produced.

4) What is the best part of being a director?

Collaborating with other creatives to manifest something that was once just an idea in

someone's head. I liken directing to captaining a ship. It's your vision - you know where you want to go and how you want to get there. But you can't sail that ship alone. You need a great crew to bring their expertise and help get you to the final destination. And, if you're open to it, not only will they bring your vision to life they'll make it so much better in the process.



Continued on page 28

WE SUPPORT NEW DIRECTORS



DGA.org

**CHARLIE
UNIFORM
TANGO**

CharlieUniformTango.com

**COMMERCIAL
DIRECTING
FILM SCHOOL**

CommercialDirectingFilmSchool.com

harvest

harvestFilms.com

**THE
ART
ERY**

the-artery.com



TRUEGENT.TV



A COMCAST COMPANY

PRODUCTION SERVICES

universalproductionservices.com

Frankfurt Kurnit

fkks.com



Directors Elizabeth Katz, Thavary Krouch, Brian Lawes

Continued from page 27



Elizabeth Katz

Unaffiliated

"Role Play" (excerpt from musical short film)

1) What was your first professionally directed work and when was it?

I was recently hired to direct two music videos for the artist Natalie Wilson, for her debut album "Lady & The Champs." We shot both of the videos in her Connecticut hometown in September 2024 and they were released recently, October 4th and November 1st!

2) How did you get into directing?

Being on Broadway was always my dream as a kid. I studied acting - more specifically musical theater - in New York and dabbled on the film acting side as well. I had a class at NYU called "Create Your Own Material," in which I wrote and directed (and acted in) an intimate, personal 5-minute short film. Much to my surprise, people really connected with it. I realized I felt far more excited by the prospect of assembling the puzzle of a story than being a piece of it as an actor, and I then took every opportunity I could to make shorts with my network of actor friends. I started calling myself a filmmaker, though I'd had no formal training. I later decided to pursue an MFA in directing, where I actually gained some tangible skills and honed my voice.

3) What is your most recent project?

"Role Play," my MFA thesis film, is on a festival run - we're premiering at Dances With Films: NY in December. I'm currently finishing a feature screenplay - a dark comedy about the world of competitive dance, sort of Whiplash meets Heathers. I'm actually also directing and choreographing a collegiate production of Heathers: The Musical onstage in the spring. And I'm writing a short that I hope to shoot in January 2025!



Thavary Krouch

Unaffiliated

"Arrangements" (excerpt from short film)

1) What was your first professionally directed work and when was it?

My first professionally directed work outside of film school was the short film Bitter Melons. After graduating, life's demands and the need for a stable career pulled me away from filmmaking. But, following a hard-fought battle with cancer, I felt a strong urge to return to storytelling as a way to process the transformative experiences of those challenging years. Bitter Melons became that outlet. For the first time, I faced the challenge of raising funds to pay a professional crew. Landing a sizable grant from the Chicago Media Production Fund was pivotal, covering a little over half of the budget and allowing me to approach the project with greater resources. Balancing the responsibilities of financing, crew management, and equipment rentals, I experienced the complex realities of independent filmmaking. I couldn't have done it alone; the support from my community was crucial, with people volunteering their time or working on a sliding scale to help bring Bitter Melons to life. This project became a true testament to resilience and collaboration.

2) How did you get into directing?

I found my way into directing through a non-traditional path. After earning a B.A. in Anthropology, I spent several years working as a research analyst for a non-profit focused on housing and homelessness. While the work was impactful, I began to feel a growing restlessness, craving a creative outlet that could channel my love for storytelling—a passion I'd nurtured since childhood. This led me to make a bold pivot, applying to Columbia College Chicago's film program. Film school was an eye-opening, full-circle experience that reignited my love for stories and introduced me to the art and craft of directing. It was there that I realized directing was not only a possibility but a viable career path. Film school taught me that I could shape narratives and bring characters to life in ways I'd only dreamed of as a kid watching TV. This discovery marked the beginning of my journey into directing.



Brian Lawes

Unaffiliated

TSET's "Shapeshifters" (public service film)

1) What was your first professionally directed work and when was it?

My first professionally directed project in the entertainment world was a 60-minute documentary I co-directed in Fall 2021 called "Dialogue Lab: America." Commissioned for release in partnership with the National Day of Dialogue in January 2022, the film explores themes of unity and dialogue around polarization in the U.S.

Shortly after, largely due to the success of my short film "Lost Kings" on the festival circuit, I was given the opportunity to direct my first advertising project—an anti-tobacco PSA in June 2022. Both of these projects, along with the momentum from my narrative short films touring festivals, were instrumental in helping me establish myself as a professional director.

2) How did you get into directing?

From a young age, I was interested in photography, writing, and acting. But most of all, I was fascinated with movies and the process of making them. I got involved as an actor in local theater productions in elementary school, and then not too long after, I started to teach myself to edit when I got a hold of Final Cut Pro in middle school. This was the final piece to click into place—writing, photography, performance, and now video editing—they all finally combined as I began making films myself.

I hear the stories of J.J. Abrams and Spielberg when they were kids, and I really relate; I was also just a kid who got a hold of a camera, learned how to edit, and became the director for projects with his friends. It's a dream that started very early for me, and one I'm still striving towards today.



Mitchell Lazar, Derek Nguyen, Vanessa Pla, The Potter Sisters



Mitchell Lazar

Unaffiliated

"Test Drive" (a proof of concept for a TV series)

1) What was your first professionally directed work and when was it?

"Verizon Credo" – a long-form branded content piece that explores the impact Verizon employees have on customers' lives. I had the opportunity to shape the project's creative direction and contribute to the writing, blending my narrative instincts with commercial storytelling to create something visually and emotionally resonant. This project set the tone for the kind of work I love—stories with real substance that connect beyond the screen.

2) How did you get into directing?

I began my career as a child actor, making myself at home on set from an early age. I had the chance to act in a professional production of Sweeney Todd as part of the ensemble, guiding each act forward. I loved the storytelling and eventually, I became more drawn to what happened behind the camera.

3) What is your most recent project?

On the commercial side, I recently directed an Amex campaign highlighting the advantages for merchants who accept Amex, using a docu-style approach to bring their stories to life. On the narrative side, I completed "Test Drive," a proof-of-concept short film for a TV series titled "Dukes of Kingston." The series is a character-driven crime drama that follows a reformed criminal entangled in a dangerous plot, threatening his family and new life.



Derek Nguyen

Unaffiliated

MTV AAPI Heritage Month's "Chasing Meaning" (short film)

3) What is your most recent project?

My most recent project was MTV's AAPI Heritage Month Film "Chasing Meaning." A highly personal project dedicated to my Ba Noi, the film explores the indefinite, hyphenated identity that is Asian-American and the generational divisions within immigrant families. It was truly such a unique project as MTV had reached out to me after I had already committed to being in Southeast Asia for the next few months with Directors Think Tank. What seemed like a scheduling conflict turned out to empower us to make this distinctly Asian-American film in Asia. Embracing crew from all variations of Asian diasporic identities, Directors Think Tank guided us and MTV through Malaysia's culture every step of

the way – infusing our film with genuine authenticity. Just like how the hero in "Chasing Meaning" learns about his culture through his grandmother's memory, us diasporic Asians learned about Malaysia through our Malaysian teammates. This combination of Asian and American perspectives was vital to make the distinctly Asian and American film that is "Chasing Meaning" and culminated in my most personal work yet.

4) What is the best part of being a director?

The best part about being a director is empowering the amazing, talented collaborators around me to make art. In the end, we're in an industry fueled by passion, and it's so inspiring to be able to see that love for film course through all different aspects of filmmaking. While I come into every production with my own vision, it's exhilarating to see what ideas my teammates come up with.



Vanessa Pla

Unaffiliated

Lillet's "An Inspired Afternoon" (branded short documentary)

1) What was your first professionally directed work and when was it?

This is such an abstract question for me because I consider a lot of my early work professional, even though I wasn't getting paid professionally. I'm self taught in my craft and I began creating content in the form of music videos. I "came in through the bathroom window" as my dad likes to say (just without a silver spoon), and paved a path for myself through my love of music.

I was asked to make a music video for The Black Angel's debut single "El Jardin" off their 2022 album Wilderness of Mirrors. I had dreamt about making a video for them since I had first heard their music in 2010,

specifically their album Phosphene Dream. They are still one of my favorite bands and a strong influence on my creative path.

At our first meeting for the video, Alex Maas (lead-singer) described to me a story about a boy in a dystopian future who comes across a headset that shows him what the world used to look like, a WALL-E meets Spielberg idea.

At the time, I was given the largest budget I had ever worked with, but it felt extremely low considering what I was trying to pull off.

But I am SO proud of what we were able to make. I consider that project a major professional stepping stone, because it led me to my first commercial project in 2023.



The Potter Sisters (Grace & Emily Potter)

Unaffiliated

"Freaks" (excerpt from short film)

1) What was your first professionally directed work and when was it?

Our first professionally directed work was a music video for a local Austin band, Duncan Fellows. It was a great opportunity to collaborate creatively with the band. Though it was a music video, it followed a traditional narrative structure. This first experience was the catalyst to create more music videos as well as narrative pieces.

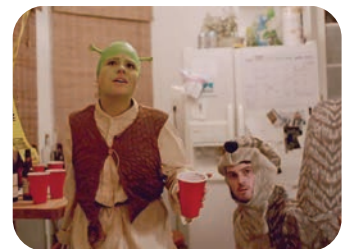
2) How did you get into directing?

We have long talked about wanting to direct. We both got our start in the industry by working in the art department on a number of projects in Austin. The role of the Director immediately captivated us, though, because they were always at the center of the action! The director has a unique role that allows them to engage with every detail of the story on a micro and macro level. It was so fun to watch.

From there, we started assisting directors and showrunners on different projects, and ultimately creating and directing our own.

3) What is your most recent project?

Most recently, we completed a feature script based on a previous short film proof of concept. We also recently submitted a commercial to the Doritos Crash The Super Bowl ad contest.



Continued on page 30

Directors Sophia Prestwich, Igor Raevskii, Shahriar Rahman

Continued from page 29



Sophia Prestwich
Unaffiliated
Pressed Floral (commercial)

1) What was your first professionally directed work and when was it?

My first professionally directed work was for MixHers, a company who helps women balance their hormones in Christmas of 2022. I loved the process of crafting a story with a team and being on set and watching it all come together.

2) How did you get into directing?

I've been bossing my siblings around since I can remember, haha. I grew up writing stories and then having my siblings act them out with puppets or in costumes (bless them, honestly). But really, I started making videos when I was in high school just for fun and kept going - I do have a lot of embarrassing YouTube videos to show for it. I have always enjoyed a more documentary style approach so I do make an effort to work with real people and tell their stories, as opposed to just actresses or models. I went to film school in the states and then have continued working in the industry since.



3) What is your most recent project?

My most recent project is a fashion piece I did for Dolce Vita. We shot it in the beautiful Utah mountains - I feel grateful to live in a place where we have such an abundance of beautiful, natural landscapes to work with. It was a fun day shooting with a nimble crew and great models in Utah's mountains.



Igor Raevskii
Unaffiliated
Ford's "Bring on Tomorrow"
(spec brand film)

1) What was your first professionally directed work and when was it?

If we're talking about my first paid, professional work, that would be this year—a music video for the artist Nige.

2) How did you get into directing?

My journey was a bit like Quentin Tarantino's. I initially took acting classes, but during my studies, I realized I wanted more than just to be in a movie—I wanted to bring my own stories and ideas to life. That's when I knew I needed to be a director. I wrote my first short film script and directed it using actors from my acting class. I fell in love with the craft and continued to refine my skills.



6) What is your current career focus: commercials and branded content, television, movies? Do you plan to specialize in a particular genre—comedy, drama, visual effects, etc.?

My current focus is movies and commercials. I'd like to try different genres, but right now, I want to concentrate on dramas.

7) Have you a mentor and if so, who is that person (or persons) and what has been the lesson learned from that mentoring which resonates with you?

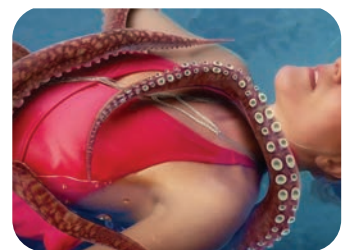
I don't have a formal mentor, as I'm self-taught in filmmaking. However, I draw inspiration from various filmmakers whose work I admire, and I consider them my mentors, even though we've never met.



Shahriar Rahman
Unaffiliated
"The Blue Yonder" (excerpt from short film)

1) What was your first professionally directed work and when was it?

Near the start of my career, I was the chief of production at a TV channel based in NYC. It was the most transformative experience of my life. As I explain in the following questions, difficult circumstances compelled me to take this job, as four years before I had "fallen out" of status due to an error by a government agency. While at STV, I had the good fortune to direct numerous shows for broadcast and commercials for small, local businesses. I have learned quite a bit about the "production triangle" of the art, the machine, and the resources. Though I was paid for this work, I do not consider it "professional" enough to count. So although I never have been a professional director, I have some meaningful experience.



2) How did you get into directing?

I never intended to go to film school or become a director—my childhood dream was to become a doctor. My parents were both doctors in Saudi Arabia, the country from which I emigrated to the U.S. at age 15. My student visa was the ticket and first step in my pursuit in studying medicine, I thought. But something unimaginable happened when I was 18. I stumbled upon a film display at college. Intrigued, I took my first Intro to Film course, and although I loved it and continued in the film track, I was not ready to give up my resolution to go to medical school. That all changed when the USCIS made an error in my green card petition, plunging me into an existential crisis. I was asked to leave the country in 4 months, and medical school became a non-reality. So I set my heart fully on a film directing career, although I was deprived of the normal pathway to this career.

In a sense, though, I was always a director. My most prized possession since 12 was my dad's National M7 VHS video camera. I made 30 short films with it growing up, starring my brother and friends. I recorded Arabic commercials off the TV and dubbed them with my humorous English renditions. My family loved these "screenings." I was already living the life.

Directors Raghav Rampal, Severine Reisp, Alison Rich, scout



Raghav Rampal

Collider
Young Franco's "HITA"
(music video)

Definitely the part where I point my fingers, and people do things haha. I think directing is a such a loose job. I'm really just making decisions, and guiding the ship creatively. The best part is working with people, negotiating ideas, and figuring out how we're gonna make this thing good.

3) What is your most recent project?

I'm working on a bunch of stuff at the moment, so it's hard to say, but I've just finished a bunch of jobs with Collider (who I love working with a lot) for Mazda, Cricket Australia and Macquarie Bank, and a couple of music videos for Hellcat Speedracer, The Buoy & DZ Deathrays. As I write this, I'm about to shoot another MV for Skeleten, and a commercial for New Balance! Super thankful to be doing a bunch.

4) What is the best part of being a director?



Severine Reisp

Cutter Entertainment
Christie's "Keith Haring: Pixel Pioneer" (excerpt from short film)

My favorite commercial director is Bruno Aveillan, known for his distinct and elegant visual style. I also admire Chloé Zhao's work because of her intimate storytelling and authentic portrayals of real people.

7) Have you a mentor and if so, who is that person (or persons) and what has been the lesson learned from that mentoring which resonates with you?

I consider Hillary Cutter, the founder of my production company, to be a mentor. I also learn a great deal from my collaborators on set, especially Wolfgang Held, an Emmy-winning cinematographer I frequently work with. Together, we grow and learn from each other in the industry.

8) Who is your favorite director and why?



Alison Rich

Imposter
Producers Guild Awards' "Pay It Forward" (awards show video)

2) How did you get into directing?

I came to directing from comedy writing and acting. I've worked professionally for over a decade as an actor and writer. I've written on TV shows including "Saturday Night Live" and ABC's "The Goldbergs." And I've acted in various TV shows and movies including "2 Broke Girls," "The Goldbergs," "Drunk History," "The Other Two" and more. I started directing because I knew I wanted to create my own movies and TV shows, so I figured I should grow in my understanding of filmmaking. I did not initially think I'd want to become a director. Rather I thought I'd learn more about directing, so I could hire directors for future projects, but once I started directing, I knew it was meant to be a major part of my career. I love the process of bringing a script to life. I love the collaboration and think my natural talents lend themselves really well to directing. I'm a strong communicator. I have a clear internal sense of the sorts of emotions and/or laughs I'm trying to get from a moment. Since I've worked as an actor, I know how to elicit awesome, fresh performances out of actors. And since I've worked as a writer, I understand the mechanics and considerations of storytelling on a deep level.



3) What is your most recent project?

I recently directed multiple social media spots for a national Metro PCS campaign called Nada Yada Island. It was the second iteration of a campaign spoofing reality shows like "Love Island" and "Love is Blind," featuring beloved reality stars of the last several years. The directors for the main unit TV spots were seasoned comedy veterans Nathan Fielder, Jason Woliner, and Ana Fabrega. It was an absolute thrill to support their vision through the social media spots.



scout (Jensen Vinca & Lindsay Sunada)

Unaffiliated
Haku the Label's "It Starts With A Dream" (branded short)

1) What was your first professionally directed work and when was it?

Our first directing job was a social campaign for EOS chapstick in 2021.

2) How did you get into directing?

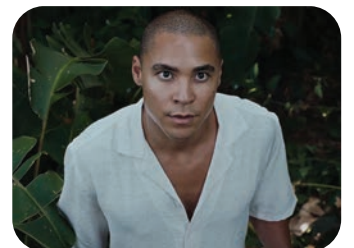
We met in film school, but it wasn't until after graduation that we began directing together. As a duo, we balance each other's strengths well - Jensen is a very technical director and oversees a lot of our cinematography, lighting, VFX, and post production conversations. Conversely, Lindsay comes from an art department background and handles most of the production design, wardrobe, and hair/makeup conversations on set.

3) What is your most recent project?

We recently wrapped two spec commercials for Calvin Klein, which were produced by our mentor company Spears & Arrows as part of the CDDP (commercial directors diversity program) through the AICP and DGA.

4) What is the best part of being a director?

Something we really cherish is the collaborative nature of production. As commercial directors, we're fortunate enough to learn about ourselves through creative exploration, at the same time getting to help brands and clients tell their stories, while working alongside other super talented people.



Directors Annalee Walton, Dennis Williams, Jackie! Zhou

Continued from page 31



Annalee Walton

Unaffiliated

Black + Decker's "Freeze Tag" (spec spot)

1) What was your first professionally directed work and when was it?

Does a commercial for my dad's work count? Gotta start somewhere!

2) How did you get into directing?

I'm an only child of two very loving and anxious parents who didn't really know what to do with me and my fabulously random talents. Out of an abundance of caution, they took me to an aptitude testing place to see if THEY knew what to do with me. After a couple days of analyzing things like my finger dexterity and how many objects I could envision a Q-tip to become, the psychologist suggested my ADHD would fit well in the film industry. I went to film school and it had my attention span in an absolute chokehold. I didn't have the patience to specialize in anything like Production Design or Editing, so figured bossing everyone around as a director would be more fun.

3) What is your most recent project?

I just finished a comedy commercial that I fabricated a giant monster worm out of plastic bags that explodes and pushes the actor out of frame. Fabricating my own VFX and figuring out exactly how they will be executed on set has become a big part of my process. I'm endlessly curious about how stunts and gags will work physically.

My poor fiancé lived with hundreds of bags in our apartment for a month. We've use old props I've made as home decor pieces (the broken arm from Freeze Tag holds our remote controls).

I'm also revisiting narrative and currently writing a short about a 20-something aspiring actress who becomes desperate for the attention of the beloved neighborhood stray cat who has chosen to reject her. It is loosely autobiographical. . .



Dennis Williams

Unaffiliated

Honor The Gift's "Imprint" (branded short)

1) What was your first professionally directed work and when was it?

In 2022, I directed a campaign titled "Dear Brodie" for Russell Westbrook's Honor the Gift clothing brand which was my first professional directing work. The campaign involved a one-minute commercial as well as a 10-minute narrative project.

3) What is your most recent project?

My most recent project was an intimate social spot titled "Game Day Style," featuring LAFC's Denis Bouanga and stylist Brittany Hampton, created to promote Apple TV and the MLS playoff

I wrote the social spot, which aired in both French and English, and directed it. The spot featured extreme close-up probe shots of fabrics, a seamstress at work, green screen visual effects, and more, capturing Bouanga's preparation for the first playoff game on Apple TV.

4) What is the best part of being a director?

The best part of directing is bringing characters to life off the page and making audiences believe in them.

Beyond that, the sense of teamwork and camaraderie that develops while making a film is an experience I've grown to love deeply. Forming bonds like brothers and sisters with each department throughout every stage of production is transformative for me. Together, we create an idea and allow it to take on a life of its own.



Jackie! Zhou

Unaffiliated

Chappell Roan's "Super Graphic Ultra Modern Girl" (official visualizer)

1) What was your first professionally directed work and when was it?

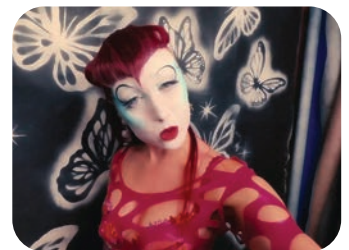
My first professionally directed work was a narrative short film, "Order for Pickup" for Indeed & Hillman Grad's "Rising Voices" program in 2023. Prior to this partnership and grant, I had been working professionally as a sound designer and self-funding my directing work from narrative shorts to music videos for friends' bands and music projects. This film existed at the blurry lines of branded storytelling and I'm thankful for the opportunity to flex my narrative directing muscles within the infrastructure of a branded opportunity. Upon premiering at Tribeca, the film took on a dreamy festival journey including: CAAMFest, Bentonville, Palm Springs ShortsFest, Baltimore New/Next, and ShortOfTheWeek.

2) How did you get into directing?

My entry to directing was by way of a decade of working professionally as a sound designer in film, television, and commercials. As a sound designer, you're in a unique position of joining a project towards the end of the process - after the project has transformed through pre-production, production, and editorial, you are a rare set of fresh ears for the project to revitalize and define the project for its vital iteration. Sound is magic - you aren't bound by conventional parameters and are often extending the action beyond the frame, and I am thankful to have developed storytelling and world building muscles through my work as a sound designer.

4) What is the best part of being a director?

People! Humans are everything. I find my inspiration from humanity and our surprising synchronicities and multitudes. Getting to celebrate humanity and forge connections both in themes and characters on-screen as well as the magic of collaboration behind the scenes continues to fill my cup with each directing project. The making is always sweeter shared and I feel so lucky to get to create! make! dream! with incredible people every day for my livelihood.



Streaming Into The Guild Awards Season



Photo by Miles Crist/courtesy of Netflix



Photo courtesy of Netflix



Photo by Dan Clay



Photo by Dale Elena McCready



Photo courtesy of Peacock



Photo courtesy of Peacock



Photo by Theo Whiteman/courtesy of HBO

Artists shed light on *Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story*, *House of the Dragon*, and *The Day of the Jackal*

A SHOOT Staff Report

The guild awards season is upon us. And the contenders range from established series that have an Emmy track record to brand new shows that next year may very well be up for consideration by the Television Academy for the first time.

This *SHOOT* Preview delves into a small sample which reflects that mix. This time around we sound out some select artists behind: *House of the Dragon* (HBO), recipient of nine Emmy nominations last year (winning for costume design); and a pair of new entries--*The Day of the Jackal* (Peacock), and *Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story* (Netflix).

The latter has gone beyond what's typically on a producer's wish list such as critical and commercial success, connecting and resonating with an audience, and serving as a spark for thought and conversation. Created by Ryan Murphy and Ian Brennan, the limited series has gone a substantive step further, making a societal impact by helping to gain momentum for the movement to free Erik and Lyle Menendez, the brothers convicted

of murdering their parents Jose and Kitty Menendez in 1989. The brutal killings and sensationalized courtroom drama dominated the headlines back in the day--and now once again the case has come to the fore with more weight given to the allegations that the brothers were sexually abused by their father. Menendez family members have come out in support of the brothers (with some, though, denouncing the streaming series). Lobbying efforts for the brothers' release from prison have intensified. The office of newly elected Los Angeles District Attorney Nathan Hochman--who defeated DA George Gascon in November--has a meeting slated for January 30-31 to consider a motion asking for parole and/or a reduced sentence. The brothers have thus far served some 34 years in prison. The reopened case has also garnered the attention of California Governor Gavin Newsom.

This second installment of the true crime anthology series *Monsters* (the first centering on serial killer and cannibal Jeffrey Dahmer) stars Nicholas Alexander

Chavez as Lyle Menendez, and Cooper Koch as Erik Menendez. Portraying parents Jose and Kitty Menendez are, respectively, Javier Bardem and Chloë Sevigny.

The series has been praised for its role in helping to resurrect a case by raising public awareness of circumstances that might not have been properly considered during the original trial proceedings. At the same time, many folks have noted that there are other cases worthy of scrutiny that have fallen by the wayside--lacking the benefit of a high profile TV show to drum up interest.

Either way, *Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story* underscores the power of storytelling--in this case sharing a story that's tragically all too real. During a Netflix panel discussion last month in Los Angeles, Murphy said that he and co-creator Brennan were "very proud" that the limited series helped launch a conversation that has gotten the wheels of justice to turn in response. He further credited the cast and crew with breathing

Continued on page 34

From top left, clockwise: Nicholas Alexander Chavez (l) and Cooper Koch in *Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story*; Chloe Sevigny in a scene from *Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story*; *House of the Dragon* costume designer Jim Clay; Jefferson Hall in a scene from *House of the Dragon*; Eddie Redmayne in *Day of the Jackal*; Latasha Lynch in *Day of the Jackal*; and *Day of the Jackal* cinematographer Dale Elena McCready, BSC, NZCS

GUILD AWARDS PREVIEW

Period Pieces Delve Into Monsters and House of the Dragon

Continued from page 33

life into the story. Among those he cited were fellow panelists including Koch, Chavez, Bardem, Sevigny, casting director Tiffany Little Canfield, production design Matthew Flood Ferguson, costume designer Paula Bradley, head of the hair department Karen Bartek and head of the makeup department Miho Suzuki.

Murphy shared that while he tried to define as much as possible up front for *Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story*, at the same time he realized the essential need for artists to do what they do

Award. Since then, Ferguson has taken on the first two iterations of *Monsters: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*, and *The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story*.

Koch noted that the cast and crew bonded during the production of *Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story*, helping him to take on the most difficult aspects of his performance as Erik Menendez—perhaps most notably exemplified in episode five during which he talks with legal counsel Leslie Abramson (played by Ari Grayner) about how his parents locked him up and his father



Photo Courtesy of Netflix

Cooper Koch in *Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story*

best. He made sure to give his collaborators the freedom to “interpret it the way you want to,” giving them “a lot of agency to try things.”

Production designer Ferguson has enjoyed a fruitful collaborative relationship with Murphy. It’s a relationship that dates back to Ferguson’s days as a set decorator when he worked in that capacity on the Murphy-directed film *Running With Scissors* and then such Murphy series as *American Crime Story* and *Ratched*, as well as the pilot for *Pretty/Handsome*. Ferguson got to team with acclaimed production designer Judy Becker on *American Crime Story* and *Ratched*. On the latter, Becker had to move onto another project with Ferguson stepping in for her as production designer on the last three episodes. On the heels of that came Ferguson’s first full-fledged production design gig on Murphy’s limited series, *Hollywood*. In 2020 *Hollywood* landed Ferguson his first career nominations for an Emmy and an Art Directors Guild (ADG) Excellence in Production Design

abused him. The emotional damage is raw and lasting. At one point, Erik shared that his father just loved Lyle. It was only when he was being abused that Erik felt “love” from his dad. Erik added that his mother was aware of what was happening and let it persist. Erik affirmed that he has been a broken person ever since. Koch added that he has been nurtured, energized and supported by performers not only in scenes with him—but also acting talent out of the camera’s range who were right there just off the set to give him responses in real time that positively impacted his performance. Koch related that he was the only person to see the performance off camera from Sevigny or Grayner—but that dynamic was right there with him and proved invaluable.

Bardem said that among his biggest takeaways from *Monsters* was the reaffirmation that “a lack of love can perpetuate pain for generations.”

As for the ultimate takeaway, that has not yet been written. The limited series concludes with the jury deciding that the



Photo by Ollie Linton/Courtesy of HBO

Henry Collett (I) and Bethany Antonia in *House of the Dragon*

brothers should be sentenced to two consecutive life terms without the possibility of parole. By the end of the episode, Erik and Lyle Menendez are on their way to prison.

In real life, though, another ending might be written.

And on a more mundane level, the jury is still out on whether or not performances on-camera, off-camera and behind the camera for *Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story* will be recognized by varied guilds and associations this awards season.

Jim Clay

Faced with the daunting challenge of meeting the high bar set by the iconic *Game of Thrones*, production designer Jim Clay by all measures was up to the task with his season one work on its prequel, *House of the Dragon*. Attesting to his success was not only an Emmy nomination last year for Outstanding Production Design for a Narrative Period or Fantasy Program (One Hour or More) on the strength of the series’ first episode (titled “The Heirs of the Dragon”) but also a nod for the Art Directors Guild’s Excellence in Production Design Award. He shared the Emmy and ADG Award nominations with supervising art director Dominic Masters and set decorator Claire Nia Richards. Now Clay is once again in the awards season conversation for season two.

Seemingly making Clay’s performance thus far all the more remarkable is the fact that he hadn’t seen *Game of Thrones* prior to garnering the opportunity to work on *House of the Dragon*. He rapidly got up to speed but in retrospect ob-

served that not being familiar with *Game of Thrones* from the outset in a way was “an advantage. I came to it with a fresh perspective, an appetite, a fresh vision” for a show set some 200 years before the events of *Game of Thrones*, telling the story of House Targaryen.

For the first season of *House of the Dragon*, Clay noted that he had to make the audience—particularly *Game of Thrones* fans—feel they were stepping into “familiar territory,” that they still were part of the same saga. At the same time, though, he had to create “new territory.” The challenge was meeting *Game of Thrones*’ fans expectations while also providing them with something unexpected.

And in a sense Clay’s approach to season two entailed straddling the same fence—having continuity from season one of *House of the Dragon* but creating new worlds, new sets for new situations written by showrunner Ryan J. Condal for the second season. Condal of course teamed with *Game of Thrones* guru George R.R. Martin to create *House of the Dragon*.

There’s also the balancing act of dovetailing with multiple directors. For season two, Clay production designed for five directors over some 36 weeks of shooting. The experience, he observed, is akin to doing multiple feature films with different directors. He credited Masters with doing a masterful job of coordinating this logistically, handling “a real juggling act,” keeping the production design, art decoration and set decoration departments in “complete harmony”—and maintaining that dynamic from one season to the next.

Staying harmonious was made easier by the strong collaborative bond that

Cinematographer Dale Elena McCready Shoots *The Jackal*



Emma D'Arcy (Il) and Matt Smith in *House of the Dragon*

Clay enjoys with Masters and Richards. Clay began teaming with Masters some 15 years ago. They first worked together on *Shanghai*, a show on which Masters first served as art director and then supervising art director.

Masters in turn had previously worked with Richards and suggested that Clay connect with her. They did on the acclaimed *Belfast* from writer-director Kenneth Branagh. Clay said that Masters and Richards have proved invaluable over the years, particularly in helping the production designer fulfill his desire to help “create the psychological climate” for a story. Masters’ administrative and creative prowess in tandem with Richards’ meticulous set decoration have contributed greatly to realizing that desired climate.

Integral to *House of the Dragon*, continued Clay, is the “reliability of the team,” which includes Masters and Richards, and the “generous” support from HBO in terms of budgetary resources to create ambitious worlds. It’s a brand of world building that’s a 24/7 proposition with an ensemble of talent in terms of construction and decoration this is “resilient and unrelenting.”

Two other worlds have also come together for Clay who prior to *House of the Dragon* was best known for his feature work, including for such films as director Alfonso Cuarón’s *Children of Men* and Branagh’s *Murder on the Orient Express* for which the production designer earned ADG Award nominations in 2007 and 2018, respectively.

Asked how his feature experience has informed his streaming/TV endeavors and vice versa, Clay observed, “The way

the business has evolved, from features to streaming channels, those worlds have merged into one. I don’t think we differentiate [between the two] any more. We treat this [*House of the Dragon*] like a feature film—that was part of the brief from Ryan and HBO. We want to bring a feature film sensibility to the small screen. It’s all very much merged now. There’s much more streaming work than feature films now. But we still work in the same way.”

Clay’s body of work over the years includes more with Branagh—namely the adaptation of Eoin Colfer’s young adult fantasy novel, “Artemis Fowl,” and *Death on the Nile*. For *Belfast*, Clay received nominations for the Critics’ Choice Award for Best Production Design, and the British Independent Film Award (BIFA) for Best Production Design.

Clay has also teamed with directors Richard Curtis on *Love Actually*, Woody Allen on *Match Point* and *You Will Meet a Tall Dark Stranger*, Chris and Paul Weitz on *About a Boy*, Atom Egoyan on *Felicia’s Journey*, Neil Jordan on *The Crying Game*, John Madden on *The Debt*, Mike Newell on *Great Expectations*, and Simon Curtis on *Woman in Gold*.

Dale Elena McCready

Cinematographer Dale Elena McCready, BSC, NZCS was immediately drawn to the prospect of taking on the modern retelling of author Frederick Forsyth’s thriller, “The Day of the Jackal.” This streaming iteration on Peacock (and Sky in the U.K.) appealed to her on several levels, including a cast headed by Oscar-nominated Eddie Redmayne as the

infamous assassin, and Latasha Lynch as his pursuer, British intelligence agency operative Bianca Pullman who’s obsessed with bringing him to justice.

The opportunity to lens select season one episodes of *The Day of the Jackal* came about in part due to the collaborative connection McCready developed with one of its directors, Paul Wilmshurst, on *Belgravia: The Next Chapter*.

Based on his positive experience with her on that show, Wilmshurst gravitated

verbial shoe on the other foot in the past, having shot the initial episodes of a show while leaving room for others to come up with their own new wrinkles in later episodes. In that scenario, McCready is appreciative of cinematographers who “take what I established, develop it further and run with it.” For *The Day of the Jackal*, McCready sought to reach the level Ross attained in the first three episodes and build on what “he lined up for us.”

Affording some additional creative



Eddie Redmayne in a scene from *The Day of the Jackal*

to McCready for episodes six, seven and eight of *The Day of the Jackal*. McCready added that they both had the good fortune to connect for the first time with 1st assistant director Shelley Lankovits. McCready related that she, Wilmshurst and Lankovits developed a working rapport and rhythm, mapping out in prep what they intended to do in order to realize the vision for episodes they teamed on. Wilmshurst and McCready found a kindred spirit in Lankovits which fueled an approach that was bold and of high energy, simpatico with the show’s top-drawer cast and writing.

McCready also had a foundation to build on, furnished by cinematographer Christopher Ross, ASC, an Emmy nominee earlier this year for *Shogun*. Ross lensed the first three episodes of *The Day of the Jackal*, setting a tone and style. McCready described Ross’ work as “gorgeous” yet still open-ended enough to afford subsequent cinematographers the opportunity to put their own creative stamp on the series (which was recently picked up for a second season).

McCready noted that she’s had the pro-

latitude for McCready was the fact that her block of episodes for *The Day of the Jackal* was quite different from the first block delivered by Ross. There was the opportunity for McCready to drive the story onwards; a prime example being episode eight which takes us back to the origin of *The Jackal*. Harkening back to *The Jackal*’s past—and benefiting from Redmayne’s nuanced performance—McCready had varied moments when she could break from the style of the show, such departures being what she described as “great fun” for an artist.

Ross’ influence, though, was a constant factor. From a technical standpoint, his choice of camera, the Sony VENICE 2, remained in place throughout season one, coupled with ARRI ALFA lenses.

In the bigger picture, McCready shared that the series “invigorated my idea of leaning into the bolder, somewhat more stylized choices” that Ross set up—with the added joy of putting her “on twists on things, too”

McCready described *The Day of the Jackal* as being “a stylish, fun yet dark show that’s human at the same time.”

Peter Simonite Captures Day of the Fight For Jack Huston

Continued from page 19

with supporting roles for Joe Pesci, Ron Perlman, Steve Buscemi and Nicolette Robinson.

Simonite felt an affinity for Huston based on his strong ideas and sense of the story. “Jack also envisioned this as a black-and-white film with this sort of interesting use of color flashbacks—almost a hand-tinted color feel,” said Simonite. The latter artistic choice grabbed the cinematographer in that it was based on “the feeling of memory” to which he could relate. “In your memories, things can be colored a little bit or faded a little bit. So much of the story happens within the protagonist’s mind. There’s a poetry to that,” which the subtle use of color reflects.

Simonite said, “Jack wanted a very classic timeless visual quality, which called to mind street photography and classic black-and-white movies, a higher contrast black and white, more like a silver gelatin print, more of a fine art kind of look, not your creamy black and white.”

Huston and Simonite identified visual references, which included John Huston’s *Moulin Rouge* for its interesting use of color and Elia Kazan’s *On the Waterfront* for its great long takes, inspiring the use of one-ers to enhance the narrative flow in *Day of the Fight*. Simonite cited another parallel to *On the Waterfront* in that it and *Day of the Fight* have storylines that involve boxing but are not necessarily boxing films. There’s a lot of heart and human poetry on the screen in *Day of the Fight* as viewers can feel New York City in the 1980s.

Simonite ultimately opted for the

ARRI Alexa 35 which he regards as delivering “the gold standard, the most era operator Jim McConkey to handle Steadicam which facilitated a number of



Photo by Jeong Park/Courtesy of Falling Forward Films

Michael Pitt (l) and Nicolette Robinson in *Day of the Fight*

modern, beautiful digital format.” He put that camera in tandem with Leica Summilux lenses, which Simonite described as delivering a classic and timeless look. Simonite also reached out to master cam-



Photo by Jeong Park/Courtesy of Falling Forward Films

Michael Pitt in a scene from *Day of the Fight*

Conkey’s talent—including his acumen for long, artful tracking shots—and gravitated toward him for *Day of the Fight*. McConkey’s giant tracking shots (and rigs he invented to accomplish them) have made their narrative mark on varied projects, including five seasons of *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*—and on director Michael Mann’s feature, *Ali*.

Like any film, *Day of the Fight* had its challenges, causing Simonite and other crew members to coin the phrase “fight of the day” to encapsulate the assorted obstacles that would emerge—such as prepping in the midst of the COVID pandemic, shooting during the winter in New Jersey, and working with an indie budget on a film full of big aspirations. “Like a lot of independent films, there was a lot of passion behind this. And as they say, ‘if it’s not challenging, you’re not trying hard enough,’” said Simonite.

Huston challenged Simonite to help liberate the actors during shooting. “Jack was very clear from the beginning that he wanted his performers to have a sort of freedom in the blocking and staging of the scenes. He didn’t want to nail things down too much. His instincts as a director were to protect that space for the performers, to have a fluid feel for things.”

In addition to his second unit work on *The Tree of Life*, Simonite contributed additional photography to other Malick films such as *To the Wonder* and *Song to Song*. Simonite’s credits as a cinematographer also include *Voice from the Stone* starring Emilia Clarke, and *The Perfect Guy*, starring Michael Ealy and Sanaa Lathan—as well as music video work for Billie Eilish.

SHOOT

Connecting Buyers & Sellers of Creative, Production & Post Services since 1960

Production Industry pros turn to SHOOT Magazine, SHOOTonline.com, The SHOOT>e.dition, The SHOOT Dailies & The SHOOT Publicity Wire to keep abreast of the latest commercial and entertainment production and post industry news, new work, talent, techniques, tools, applications, locations, award shows, festivals & events.

Market your company via SHOOT’s digital and print platforms to let decision-makers at Production, Editorial, Post, VFX, Animation, Music & Sound companies; Ad Agencies & Brands; TV, Cable & Online Networks; Movie Studios and Independent Filmmakers know why they should connect with your company’s talent, services and products.

For more info on Digital & Print Marketing, please visit <https://shootonline.com/go/advertise>

For info on the next Print Issue, please visit <https://shootonline.com/go/upcomingissues>

For more info, rates & space reservations, please contact marketing@SHOOTonline.com



Receive SHOOT e-Pubs (free)
<https://shootonline.com/subscribe>

Info on The SHOOT Publicity Wire
<https://pr.shootonline.com>

Become a SHOOT Member
<https://members.shootonline.com>

Post MySHOOT Co. & Talent Profiles
<https://my.shootonline.com>

Emmy FYC Marketing
<https://shootonline.com/emmyfyc>

Academy FYC Marketing
<https://shootonline.com/fyc>

street talk

Sports company PUMA has opened Studio48, a creative hub at its headquarters in Herzogenaurach, Germany, where its designers and creatives can come together to freely develop new ideas and create concepts for new performance and Sportstyle products as well as campaigns. Spanning more than 5,300 square feet, Studio48 will feature a 3D printing facility, leather and textile sewing machines, a set up for printing and embroidering, a product testing area, a photo studio and a meeting space to connect designers across different departments and welcome external creatives to work on new products and campaigns. As part of PUMA's brand elevation strategy, the company will strengthen its sports performance credibility by developing products that perform at the highest level but also distill

this sports DNA into its Sportstyle offering with a unique design language. While Studio48 can be used by the company's designers and creatives all year round, the space will also play an important part when hosting external partners or bringing PUMA's global design community together for workshops and events. Earlier this year, PUMA announced plans to open a creative space in Los Angeles to inspire products and campaigns for the U.S. market....Creative editorial company Final Cut has named editor Sophie Solomon as a partner. Solomon has been with the post house since 2015 and on its roster of talent since 2021. Working out of Final Cut's East Coast office, Solomon will work closely with Final Cut's leadership team including EPs Michelle Corney in the U.K., Suzy Ramirez in Los Angeles, and Sarah Roebuck in New York to elevate Final Cut's editorial talent, provide creative support, and serve as an essential member of the management team. She joins fellow Final Cut partners Jeff Buchanan, Jim Helton, Ashley Kreamer, JD Smyth, and Crispin Struthers. Recently, Solomon edited "Anti-Choice Ads" for Wisp x Abortion Freedom Fund, which won a Gold Clio and was shortlisted for a Glass Lion at Cannes.....

report

Ikegami Electronics (USA) has added to its executive team with the appointment of industry vet Emilio Aleman as sr. product manager. Operating from the company's New Jersey headquarters, he will be active in technical sales support and collaboration with design and service across the entire Ikegami range of imaging and display equipment. Graduating from the New Jersey Institute of Technology in 1984, Emilio Aleman advanced into technical, sales and supervisory

roles within the electronics industry, gaining four decades of experience in optics, electronic imaging, signal processing and transmission. Progressing to Ikegami from Ross Video, he will be active alongside Alan Kiel, Teri Zastrow and colleagues in promoting Ikegami solutions to the broadcast, security, medical and industrial imaging sectors....Anoki AI, a provider of AI solutions for Connected TV (CTV), has brought Abbey Thomas on board as chief commercial officer. Thomas brings extensive expertise in scaling advanced TV advertising platforms, most recently serving as chief revenue officer at OpenAP. Previously, she served as chief marketing officer at Tremor Video and held leadership positions at Entertainment Weekly and MTV, where she began her career in digital advertising. Anoki AI has established itself as an innovator in the CTV space through strategic partnerships, including one with Amagi. Additionally, Anoki AI has secured brand advertisers across key verticals including CPG, pharmaceuticals, automotive, travel, retail, entertainment and financial services. The company has expanded its premium content partnerships, collaborating with A+E Networks, Warner Bros. Discovery, Filmrise, Sony Pictures Entertainment, Lionsgate, PBS, Bloomberg and other major media companies as its AI-powered solutions continue to drive innovation in content discovery and advertising effectiveness to help fuel the next stage of growth in CTV....

ROAD TO OSCAR

Designer Colleen Atwood

Continued from page 14

look at wardrobe possibilities—all based on the reality of the character she's portraying.

As for Burton, Atwood's collaborative bond dates back some 35 years spanning movies, TV, photo shoots and videos. Their process is well defined as she typically will gather pictures, images, materials, talk to him about characters. He provides his take on everything and as Atwood builds costumes, she shows him what's evolving for the actors. Atwood said her time with Burton, as with many

ment as their heads are small and their arms move differently than people. The humans inside the Shrinker canary-yellow suits had to be able to see with the tiny heads perched atop them. Mesh shirts were devised so that the people inside the costumes had a field of vision so they could act and move about.

In *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice*, Ortega plays Astrid, the daughter of Lydia Deetz (Winona Ryder). Staying true to the character of Astrid, who doesn't care much about how she looks, outfits were created that looked kind of haphazardly put together



Photo by Parisa Taghizadeh/Courtesy of Warner Bros. Pictures

Michael Keaton in *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice*

directors, is "compressed" so they make the most of it.

They've been together long enough to the point where they now communicate a great deal via "shorthand." The priority for them, she affirmed, is to continually "challenge ourselves not to get into the same old groove." They are always looking to break new ground.

Beetlejuice Beetlejuice dovetailed nicely with that aspiration. While the famed Beetlejuice suit pretty much carried over from the original film to this new iteration—only slightly baggier, dirtier, covered with moss in certain areas with a little bit more of a paunch built in for Michael Keaton—most of the costuming otherwise represented new territory to navigate as the underworld is different than in the first film. Costuming underscores that passage of time, adding a modern vibe to its timelessness.

Among the array of crazy characters Atwood clothed were the Shrinkers, which required research and develop-

and grungy—though that changed on occasion, like when she dons a Marie Curie Halloween costume which looks sort of reflective and radioactive. Corpse bride Delores (Monica Bellucci) meanwhile wears a multi-colored Victorian-style corset gown.

Atwood first and foremost appreciated Burton keeping as much as possible in-camera, not having to rely on visual effects. "It's fun to be able to keep the craft on the costumes," she affirmed.

As for the balance of Atwood's aforementioned 12 Academy Award nominations, they came for *Little Women* in 1995, *Beloved* in 1999, *A Series of Unfortunate Events* in 2005, *Nine* in 2010, *Snow White and the Huntsman* in 2013, and *Into the Woods* in 2015.

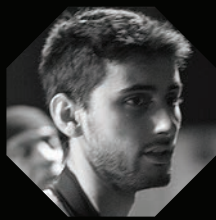
This is the seventh installment of our weekly 16-part The Road To Oscar Series of feature stories. Nominations for the 97th Academy Awards will be announced on Friday, January 17, 2025. The 97th Oscars will be held on Sunday, March 2, 2025.



Jason Blanc



Chris Cole



Reece Daniels



Lanre danmola



Lauren Maya Davis



Giuseppe De Lauri



Louise de Nexon



India Donaldson



Duncan Heger



Ava Himmel



Elizabeth Katz



Thavary Krouch



Brian Lawes



Mitchell Lazar

Meet The NDS Class of 2024

Discover Emerging Filmmakers



Pamela M. Carbonero



Derek Nguyen



Vanessa Pla



Potter Sisters



Sophia Prestwich



Igor Raevskii



Shahriar Rahman



Raghav Rampal



Severine Reisp



Alison Rich



scout



Annalee Walton



Dennis Williams



Jackie! Zhou

About The 22nd Annual SHOOT NDS 2024 Reel

26 individual directors and 2 duos above made the final cut this year, with work spanning commercials, PSAs, branded content, a feature film, shorts, documentaries, music videos, proof of concept for a TV series, a sports team promo and spec work.

Visit [NDS.SHOOTONLINE.COM](https://www.nds.shootonline.com) to view their work online and learn more about their backgrounds.



The SHOOT New Directors Showcase Class of 2024; 21 of the 30 NDS directors were present at the 22nd Annual NDS2024 Event at the DGA Theatre in New York City, December 9th, 2024 (photo by Doug Goodman)



The NEW DIRECTORS SHOWCASE

Produced by The Editors of

SHOOT

©2024 DCA Business Media LLC. All rights reserved.