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January 2021

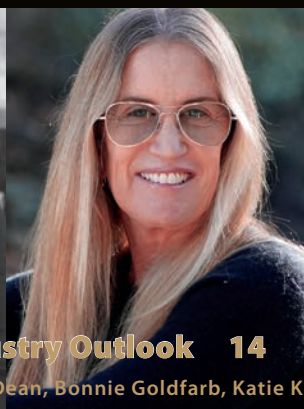
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From top left, clockwise: Scenes/BTS from *Minari*, *Nomadland*, *The Prom*, *The Trial of the Chicago 7*, *Promising Young Woman* and *One Night in Miami*. | The Road To Oscar Series, Part 3, Page 4



Production Industry Outlook 14

From Left: Justine Armour, Tasha Dean, Bonnie Goldfarb, Katie Keating

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By Robert Goldrich

spot.com.mentary



Lifting The Celluloid Ceiling

While a return to normality is coveted in this COVID era, there's something to be said for not resurrecting business as usual on certain fronts--as shown in research from San Diego State University's Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film headed by Dr. Martha M. Lauzen.

To be sure, the report--titled "The Celluloid Ceiling: Behind-the-Scenes Employment of Women on the Top U.S. Films of 2020"--shows some progress. But at the same time, considerably more is needed to get the industry up to even a remotely acceptable level.

Among the prime positive-trending findings was that for the second straight year, the percentage of women directing top grossing films increased, reaching recent historic highs, while the overall

percentages of women working in key behind-the-scenes roles remained relatively stable. Women comprised 16% of directors working on the top 100 grossing films in 2020, up from 12% in 2019 and 4% in 2018. Women accounted for 18% of directors on the top 250 films, up from 13% in 2019 and 8% in 2018. In 2020, the percentages of behind-the-scenes women

ers, 22% of editors, and 6% of DPs working on the top 250 grossing films. Yet while percentages are up, movement is far too gradual. In 2020, the majority of films (67%) employed 0 to 4 women in the roles considered; 24% of films employed 5 to 9 women, and 9% employed 10 or more women. In contrast, 5% of films employed 0 to 4 men in the roles considered, 24%

Dr. Martha M. Lauzen noted that the gender imbalance is huge; 80% of the top films have male directors.

working on the top 100 and 250 (domestic) grossing films inched upward. Women comprised 21% of all directors, writers, producers, EPs, editors, and DPs working on the top 100 films, up from 20% in 2019. Women working in these roles on the top 250 grossing films experienced a slight increase from 21% in 2019 to 23% in 2020.

Women accounted for 18% of directors, 17% of writers, 21% of EPs, 30% of produc-

employed 5 to 9 men, and the remaining majority (71%) employed 10 or more men.

Due to the COVID-impacted box office, the study also tracked employment on films included on The Digital Entertainment Group's "Watched at Home" list. Dr. Lauzen noted that the gender imbalance is huge. Most films employ less than 5 women and 10 or more men. And 80% of the top films have male directors.

POV

By Josh Rabinowitz



Top Ten For First 20 of the 2000s

I, like many of you, came of age professionally in these first 20 years of the 2000s. I've been an advertising music exec and professorial accomplice in the ad music continuum. Here are 10 things I've observed:

- 1) More than any brand, Apple became the top shaker/breaker and career-maker of artists and bands, aka the Apple Bump.
- 2) VW's use of Nick Drake's "Pink Moon," 25 years after his death, sparked a reassessment of synching songs with ads--and the rest is "synchronistic" history.
- 3) In 2000, there were maybe 100 active music producer/supervisors in the branded music space. Now there are way more than 2,000. The modern music business has adapted to service this shift.
- 4) No matter how often folks in the ad space hear about copyright and sound-alike litigation re: ad music, and notwithstanding the brutal "Blurred Lines" sce-

nario, creators continue to infringe upon the IP of existing music with abandon.

5) The use of music libraries has become rampant. Many claim it's a budgetary imperative, which may be true, but it's irrefutable that the overall quality of their offering has improved tremendously.

6) The concept/business of sonic branding has become a darling of brand CMOs. And thus a cottage industry is born! Will the sound, or the Sonic DNA of your brand enhance its performance/business? Sonic strategists think so and brands are making 6-figure bets on it.

7) Until Spotify, sync and brand partnership deals kept the modern music industry's P&Ls afloat. Super Bowl sync deals, specifically, were generating minimum 6-figure deals. Now with this recent trend of legacy songwriters selling their rights, outright, don't be surprised to hear about even crazier high priced licenses. UMG has to make back the \$300+

million they spent on Bobby Zimmerman's (aka Bob Dylan) 600 songs, right?

8) The role of the agency music producer/supervisor, possibly a brand's greatest musical asset, is being challenged as the Big Agency model slowly fades away. Look to see more music consultancies over the next 5 years. Don't be surprised if the quality of original music, rather than licensed music, declines.

9) With the successes of Lil Nas X and Fleetwood Mac's "Dreams" vis-a-vis Tik Tok, there's certainly going to be more ad music executions inflected by the social media cultural madness/fervor.

10) My vote for best music use of this period is Jet's "Are You Gonna be My Girl" for the iPod. Although the song isn't the most original track ever, it integrates so well with the imagery, feel and product--it's a musical freaking bull's-eye!

Josh Rabinowitz is founder of Brooklyn Music Experience, a music consultancy.

Writer-Director, DP, Editor & Production Designer POVs

Insights into *Nomadland*, *Minari*, *Promising Young Woman*, *One Night in Miami*, *The Trial of the Chicago 7* and *The Prom*

By Robert Goldrich, The Road To Oscar Series, Part 3



Chloé Zhao is among this year's leading Oscar contenders as writer-director of *Nomadland* (Searchlight Pictures). Last month she earned Best Director honors from both the New York and Los Angeles Film Critics associations. In 2020, *Nomadland* also became the first film ever to garner the top prizes at the Toronto and Venice film festivals. *Nomadland* received the Venice Golden Lion and shortly thereafter the People's Choice Award at the Toronto fest. The latter honor is often a harbinger of things to come at the Academy Awards. Over the past decade, the People's Choice Award winner has gone on to earn a Best Picture Oscar nomination. In 2019, that was *Jojo Rabbit*. Earlier *Green Book* won at Toronto and wound up receiving the Academy Award for Best Picture. Among other People's Choice Award winners taking the Best Picture Oscar were *12 Years a Slave*, *Slumdog Millionaire* and *The King's Speech*.

Based on Jessica Bruder's book "Nomadland: Surviving America in the 21st Century" with Zhao penning the adapted

screenplay, the film *Nomadland* introduces us to Fern (portrayed by two-time Oscar winner Frances McDormand), an independent spirit who after the economic collapse of a small company town in Nevada packs her van and sets off on the road as a modern-day nomad, encountering unique places in rural America and even more unique varied characters including many played by real people (a staple of Zhao's filmmaking up to this point), the key exception being actor David Strathairn who emerges as a friend and a subdued potential love interest.

We meet older transient Americans living on the road in vans and recreational vehicles, taking on seasonal work when and where they can find it such as an Amazon processing plant where Fern has a regular Xmas-time gig. We experience both a sense of community and loneliness on the road, a dichotomy that is even present in Fern's van which carries feelings of isolation yet at the same time reflects an appreciation of a place to call home. There's a beauty and simplicity to

the nomad existence, in some respects showing that there's a shared humanity when you strip life down to surviving with limited resources while trying to connect with and help others—no matter how momentary or transitory those relationships may turn out to be. Some folks carry the weight of grief and loss yet there's a resilience that unites them all. There are many quiet, understated moments yet cumulatively they become substantive, underscoring Zhao's feeling that while politics and media portray us as divided, the reality is that people naturally have and can embrace "a spirit of co-existence." Getting the chance to delve into this helped satiate Zhao's longstanding desire to as she says, "make a road movie," an opportunity made richer by getting to work with McDormand "to create a character like Fern" who in turn was able to mesh, relate to and be at one with real-life nomads, bringing their lives to the fore, making for a remarkable performance.

Continued on page 6

From top left, clockwise: *Nomadland* writer-director Chloé Zhao; Frances McDormand in *Nomadland*; a scene from *Minari*; *Promising Young Woman*; *One Night in Miami*; *The Prom* production designer Jamie Walker McCall; *Chicago 7* editor Alan Baumgarten.

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Directors Zhao, Chung Reflect On *Nomadland*, *Minari*

Continued from page 4

All this, continued Zhao, was done to be true to Bruder's book. "Jessica did an incredible job documenting and chronicling these lives," assessed Zhao

the audience to sleep. You need to capture transcendence, the real feeling of what it's like for people of that age existing on the road—how to be true to that and still have a story arc that will captivate an au-

crafted to reflect the spirit of those experiences, taking us on a unique empathetic journey of a family in search of its own American Dream.

It's a story in which each family member is heroic and resilient in his or her own way, all contributing to help the family survive and endure, shedding light on what really makes a home. Bringing this family to life is a brilliant ensemble cast in which parents Jacob and Monica are played, respectively, by Steven Yeun and Yeri Han, while their son David is portrayed by newcomer Alan S. Kim, daughter Anne by Noel Kate Cho, and grandma Soonja by South Korean acting legend Yuh-Jung Yoon. Also integral to the story is a neighbor, handyman and farm helper Paul, a devout Pentecostal who speaks in tongues but also through the universal language of kindness. He is portrayed by Will Patton.

Chung observed that another "family" key to the film consisted of the production and post artists who came together with a sense of purpose. Like the film's protagonists, each member of this production family contributed, he said, in heroic fashion within a limited budget and time. The film was produced by Plan B,

Milne, editor Harry Yoon, composer Emile Mosseri and production designer Yong Ok Lee. Mosseri, for instance, had worked with Oh on Plan B's acclaimed *The Last Black Man in San Francisco*.

Chung said he struck up an instant rapport with Milne, Mosseri, Lee and Yoon, feeling a creative kinship to each. In retrospect, he observed that the feeling of family among them helped them all better tell the story of the immigrant family in the film. For example, Chung said of editor Yoon, "I could tell from our first meeting how much of the script he had already digested and the details he understood. I had a trust in him to tell me about things that weren't working, what was working. When I came back from the shoot, a week later he told me he was going to show me a cut of the film. 'You will probably hate it. No director ever likes it,' he said. Once I saw it, I saw that Harry's instincts for the story and how to maneuver certain problem moments I had on set were so sophisticated. I could see we had a film there. I felt no sadness or depression. I had a good sleep after that. We had lots of conversations and had a good time working together. We had a good way of really talking things through and figuring



Frances McDormand in *Nomadland*

who too wanted to convey the ups and downs of a nomad existence that still, despite its share of melancholy, has its own life-affirming roots, with added inspiration coming from the desolate, beautiful plains, mountains and rivers of the Western U.S. *Nomadland* takes us to different worlds—these natural backdrops as well as inside people's heads and hearts, most notably Fern's inner self.

Filed over four months on location in Arizona, Nevada, California, Nebraska and South Dakota, *Nomadland* takes us into communities where Fern's encounters at times show how we can make brief friendships that last within us for a lifetime, like her bond with Swankie who has terminal cancer yet feels fulfillment in life through nature. A touching memorial service that Swankie requested reflects that resonance.

Zhao said that among the prime challenges *Nomadland* posed to her as a filmmaker was creating the character of Fern, enabling McDormand to settle into "this real world with real people" in such a way that "we can naturally incorporate these interesting characters we run across without feeling forced."

Another major challenge came in Zhao's capacity as editor of *Nomadland*. She shared, "As an editor you have to figure out how to stay true to the sort of feeling of aimlessness that exists on the road, and at the same time not putting

dience."

Zhao said the experience of making *Nomadland* gave her a deeper appreciation of what people on the road go through on a daily basis. "We were filming for just four months but we find ourselves going to a place where you connect with people, then pack up and leave, and probably are never going to see them again. I was emotionally exhausted. The natural process of making the film helped us to heal as well. You may feel rootlessness but you also feel you're part of something that never ends."

Minari

Writer-director Lee Isaac Chung's *Minari* (A24) made a major splash at last year's Sundance Film Festival, winning both the Dramatic Grand Jury Prize and the Audience Award in the dramatic category. An American production with dialogue mostly in Korean, *Minari* is deeply personal for Chung in that the story is inspired by memories of his childhood. We are introduced to a Korean-American family that moves to rural Arkansas, a father's dream to start a small farm there, the struggle of immigrants in a new land strange to them, and a boy's touching, tender and charmingly comic relationship with his loving, at times foul-mouthed grandmother who moves in to help. While not a factual representation of his own experiences, Chung's story was



Lee Isaac Chung (standing) directs on the set of *Minari*

the company in which Brad Pitt is a partner/EP. Chung credited Plan B producer Christina Oh with helping to assemble the production family behind *Minari*. "I had been doing more arthouse films and was looking to Christina to help navigate my pulling off this film," shared Chung. Oh brought in artisans for Chung to consider and whom he wound up embracing, including cinematographer Lachlan

out the story together. There is no movie without him."

A couple of challenges stand out for Chung when he looks back on *Minari* (which incidentally is named after a peppery Korean herb), starting when he was writing it on spec. "I was writing it in the dark, I wasn't sure if it would land anywhere. I'm writing about my family in a

Continued on page 10

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HUNTERS
DRAMATIC SERIES

Emerald Fennell Makes Auspicious Feature Directorial Debut

Continued from page 6

way and it can be boring when you talk about your family way too long. Talking about my family for two hours stands out to me as being the hardest. Then there were the limited time and resources--and within that having Alan, our seven-year-old actor (who portrayed David) on set for just six hours a day. He's almost in every scene. So there was no room for error during 25 days of shooting. For me and everyone, we couldn't make a mistake. You didn't always have time to think some things through. It felt like we worked a lot on intuition. Lachlan's (DP Milne) great experience helped. He's experienced in working on features that have had difficult schedules." And Chung was quick to credit the cast in dealing with that schedule. "That family feels so real. They (the actors) had to be so real with each other when we had the cameras rolling."

Chung affirmed, "We gave it everything we had. By saying that, I just don't mean the effort. I also mean the honesty, being real with the audience. That's what we were all aspiring to do, to the point of being a little vulnerable with ourselves so we could show that humanity is universal."

Promising Young Woman

Promising Young Woman (Focus Features), which marks the feature directorial debut of Emerald Fennell, has already started to realize its promise on the awards show circuit with Carey Mulligan named Best Actress and Fennell winning for Best Screenplay at the Los Angeles Film Critics Association Awards.

Mulligan stars as Cassie, a medical school dropout whose once promising prospects have fallen off a cliff. She's working at a coffee house and spends her free time either moping about or pretending to be blind drunk at nightclubs where she ultimately shames guys who try to take advantage of her seemingly impaired state. It's an inexplicably strange double-life until we become privy to what made her quit med school, a despicable trauma suffered by her dear friend and fellow student, Nina, years ago. This genre-busting film plays at times like a dark comedy, a comic tragedy, a thriller, a psychological tale that perfectly dovetails with the #MeToo era, all the above and more.



Photo courtesy of A24

A scene from *Minari*

Fennell—who first established herself as an actress spanning TV and features, and a writer (on such TV series as *The Drifters* and writer/producer on *Killing Eve*) before moving into the directorial ranks—explained simply, "I wanted to write a revenge movie, a classic revenge movie with a real person at the center of it." She added that the vibe she wanted for it was to be as "strange and unlikely as that journey would feel if you were actually in it."

Like *Minari*, *Promising Young Woman*

At first, becoming a director seemed what Fennell described as "an enigmatic thing" but over time she began to develop an appetite for it. "I've written forever," she said, noting that she wanted the chance to "really make something the way you want to make it, to direct your own material."

Fennell said she was fortunate to be able to work with "incredible directors" in film and TV. She cited her experience acting on a BBC series, *Call the Midwife*, as providing an invaluable education, being able to observe different directors and DPs coming in for episodes and being able to do "a side-by-side comparison of what works, what doesn't, what is time-saving, what isn't, what corners you can cut and the ones you really can't."

This education served Fennell in good stead as she became "kind of obsessive about the details while also knowing you've got to make your days."

She also knew first-hand the importance of selecting the right collaborators, among the prime examples on *Promising Young Woman* being cinematographer Benjamin Kracun, editor Frederic Thoraval and production designer Michael

shorthand with. If your relationship with a DP isn't easy, it slows everything down. Ben is a combination of being talented and great fun to be around. He could help me get the kind of performances I wanted and he could make the set itself a fun place to work, which is needed."

Kracun was essential in making *Promising Young Woman* work within the confines of 23 shoot days. Also integral in that regard was producer Fiona Walsh Heinz who did an "amazing" job according to Fennell, noting, "We had no fat. We were up against it but she helped that still feel like a fun place to be in." While the preparation had to be buttoned down, Fennell said they didn't lose the rush of feeling "like you're slightly flying by the seat of your pants."

As for her biggest takeaway from *Promising Young Woman*, Fennell shared, "It sounds so cheesy but I just loved directing in a way that really surprised me. Locking my car in the parking lot to go film on the first day, I just loved it. I loved being part of a team. I'm proud and grateful of how everyone worked so hard. I immediately want to do it all over again."

When that opportunity comes, though, Fennell would like "to loosen things up, have a little more time to play, a bit more space to work in."

Promising Young Woman is not Fennell's first project to score recognition at Sundance. Back in 2019, she directed *Careful How You Go* which was in the running for the Short Film Grand Jury Prize.

Fennell also has two primetime Emmy nominations to her credit, one for drama series writing, the other for Outstanding Drama Series—both for *Killing Eve* in 2019.



Photo by Marie Weismiller Wallace/courtesy of Focus Features

Emerald Fennell (center) on the set of *Promising Young Woman*

made a big impact at last year's Sundance fest. And while its release was also delayed during the pandemic, *Promising Young Woman* is now picking up awards season momentum. The stellar cast also includes Bo Burnham as Ryan, Cassie's love interest, Alison Brie as a former school friend, Connie Britton as a med school dean, Laverne Cox as Cassie's coffee house boss, and Alfred Molina as a deeply remorseful attorney.

Perry. Fennell had worked, for instance, with Kracun about a year earlier on a commercial project, liked him and was drawn in particular to his work on *Beat*, for which he won a British Independent Film Award in 2019 for Best Cinematography. "He made that movie look spectacular," assessed Fennell, who added, "I was a first-time film director in Los Angeles shooting my baby. I knew my DP was important, someone I could have an easy

One Night in Miami

Based on the stage play by Kemp Powers who also penned the screenplay, *One Night in Miami* (Amazon Studios) relates a fictional account of four high-profile Black Americans together in a hotel room in 1964 the night after a 22-year-old Cassius Clay (portrayed by Eli Goree) won the heavyweight boxing title with a stunning knockout of Sonny Liston. Clay, who would later change his name to Muhammad Ali, joins Malcolm X (Kingsley Ben-Adir), singer Sam Cooke (Leslie Odom Jr.)

Tami Reiker, ASC Reflects On Lensing *One Night in Miami*

and Hall of Fame football player and actor Jim Brown (Aldis Hodge) to discuss racial injustice and how they could use their celebrity to better society. Regina King, a Best Supporting Actress Oscar winner in 2019 for *If Beale Street Could Talk*, makes her theatrical feature directing debut

duction designer Barry Robison to create a hotel room set in New Orleans that was true to the design of the original hotel depicted at that time. With actors free to move about according to where the dialogue took them, Reiker had operators with either handheld cameras or with

powerful” parts of her experience on *One Night in Miami*. The DP noted, for example, that actor Ben-Adir’s dedication to craft in capturing Malcolm X was inspiring. “Watching him rehearse, the accent, his staying in character with the amount of lines he had raised the bar

Floyd’s death in Minneapolis. Floyd died while in the custody of a police officer whose knee was on Floyd’s neck for nearly nine minutes. Floyd was handcuffed face down in the street, pleading that he couldn’t breathe.

for everybody,” shared Reiker. “The whole crew was dedicated to telling this story.”

Writer Powers, incidentally, is in this season’s Oscar conversation for not only *One Night in Miami* but also as co-director of Pixar’s *Soul*.

The Trial of the Chicago 7

Written and directed by Aaron Sorkin—a three-time Oscar nominated screenwriter, winning for

The Social Network in 2011—*The Trial of the Chicago 7* (Netflix) is based on the 1969 trial of seven defendants charged by

The Chicago 7’s cast included Jeremy Strong and Sacha Baron-Cohen, respectively, as revolutionary counterculture activists Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman, Eddie Redmayne as Tom Hayden, Rennie Davis as Alex Sharp (Hayden and Sharp were members of Students for a Democratic Society), John Carroll Lynch as conscientious objector David Dellinger, Yahya Abdul-Mateen II as Black Panthers co-founder Bobby Seale, Joseph Gordon-Levitt as lead prosecutor Richard Schultz, Mark Rylance as defense attorney William Kunstler, Frank Langella as Judge Julius Hoffman, and John Doman as Richard Nixon’s Attorney General John Mitchell.

Sorkin made his feature directorial debut with *Molly’s Game*. *The Trial of the Chicago 7* is his second turn as a director.

Alan Baumgarten, ACE served as one of three editors on *Molly’s Game*. He



Photo courtesy of Amazon Studios

Kingsley Ben-Adir portrays Malcolm X in *One Night in Miami*

with *One Night in Miami*. She has numerous TV series to her directorial credit (including episodes of *Insecure*, *Shameless* and *This Is Us*) and is on the commercial-making/branded content directing roster of Independent Media. King is a four-time primetime Emmy winner for her acting—three for *American Crime* and the most recent coming in 2020 for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Limited Series for *Watchmen*.

SHOOT connected with cinematographer Tami Reiker, ASC, who lensed *One Night in Miami*. Reiker’s work spans features and TV. On the former score, she shot *High Art* which was nominated for a Film Independent Spirit Award for Best Cinematography. And on the TV front, Reiker won the ASC Award for the pilot episode of *Carnivàle*.

Regarding her experience on *One Night in Miami*, Reiker described King as “a force of nature, very much an actor’s director. We were connected at the hip for the entire prep and shooting. She wanted a rich, saturated film full of color. The challenge is we were turning a talky stage play into a dynamic film—with the majority of that film taking place in one room.”

While being in that setting can be claustrophobic, it didn’t prevent Reiker from making the situation cinematic as she and King worked closely with pro-

duction designer Barry Robison to create a hotel room set in New Orleans that was true to the design of the original hotel depicted at that time. With actors free to move about according to where the dialogue took them, Reiker had operators with either handheld cameras or with cameras on extended 12-foot jib arms capturing the action. The jib arms enabled the operators to move and float between characters, bringing a visual dynamic that engagingly shot their performances. Akin to boxer Ali’s “float like a butterfly, sting like a bee” description of himself in the ring, the camera floated in and around masterful acting performances covering in select scenes anywhere from 10 to 15 pages of wall-to-wall dialogue at a time.

Reiker deployed the ARRI Alexa 65, opting for Prime DNA lenses for softness that was further enhanced with use of the Bronze Glimmerglass #1 filter. All this served to deliver a filmic look for *One Night in Miami*. Reiker gravitated to the Alexa 65 in that she had recently come off of a positive experience with the camera on director Gina Prince-Bythewood’s *The Old Guard*.

Certain scenes had the characters escape the hotel room whether it be to a local bar, a pay phone, a rooftop or a flashback to a particularly poignant, stirring Cooke performance in a ballroom. Of the latter, Reiker recalled, “Because it was a memory, the saturation was even greater, the colors more vibrant. Everything took on more color, hue and glow. Leslie’s performance as Sam was incredible.”

For Reiker, director King and those performances stood out as “the most



Photo courtesy of Netflix

The Trial of the Chicago 7

the federal government with conspiracy and more, arising from anti-Vietnam War protests which turned violent as demonstrators clashed with police during the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago.

Addressing such issues as police brutality and social justice, *The Trial of the Chicago 7* has become all the more relevant in today’s society as protesters gathered across the country in 2020 after George

edited solo on *The Trial of the Chicago 7*. Baumgarten too is an Oscar nominee, earning that distinction in 2014 as one of three editors on director David O. Russell’s *American Hustle*.

Baumgarten said he was drawn to *The Trial of the Chicago 7* by his penchant for dramatic historical stories and the opportunity to again team with Sorkin. On the latter score, Baumgarten noted that work-

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Baumgarten Cuts Chicago 7

Continued from page 11

ing with a world-class writer such as Sorkin, whose stories are so well structured, is of great help to an editor. Baumgarten related, “With Aaron being a writer and director, there’s a singularity of vision. I love working with writer-directors. Aaron is very specific in script, structure, time periods. It’s a huge advantage right out of the gate to have that structure laid out so well. At the same time you can explore and experiment with the foundation already clearly there.”

The Trial of the Chicago 7 had been gestating for some time, on and off again as a project over the years before finally get-

present it to him. We then refine it methodically.”

For Baumgarten working with Sorkin’s “wonderfully written dialogue” is a treat. Perhaps the biggest creative challenge posed to him by *The Trial of the Chicago 7*, said the editor, is “fine tuning and navigating the different tone in terms of comedy within the story. We have very serious and important ideas from these characters but we also have to find places to let levity break up some of that, to make for a more engaging experience watching this film so that viewers aren’t getting hit over the head with one level of storytelling.”

The COVID-19 pandemic also altered



A scene from *The Trial of the Chicago 7*

ting the go-ahead. Thus, noted Baumgarten, “the script had been in his (Sorkin’s) head for quite some time. He had long known what he was going for and had a confidence in clarity of tone and specificity of performances.”

That confidence was also advanced by Sorkin’s experience of having directed previously. This time around, observed Baumgarten, the scope of what Sorkin tackled increased, with a scale entailing riot sequences, mass protests and chaos, “unlike anything he had done before.” Sorkin, continued Baumgarten, “was stretched in so many ways” by *Chicago 7* with a mix of great scale, action scenes, courtroom drama and dialogue very much up his alley.”

Baumgarten also had the benefit of having worked with Sorkin before. “I knew I could get to where he wanted to go. I had a sense of what he would prefer. We worked very closely together. He trusts me to put everything together and

postproduction plans.

“We ended up working the last four to five months from home,” said Baumgarten. “We were able to get through the director’s cut in person, which was fantastic. We finished the 10-week directors cut in March right when we had to shut down the editing room and move the Avid systems to our houses. As I continued to do fine cutting, I would post sequences for Aaron and then we would chat on the phone or via email or Zoom calls about the work, the changes, and to just keep working forward that way. We went to Warner Bros. for the sound mix, and for the color timing we went to EFILM. Aaron was involved in all of that as well but he let me get things close and then he would come for reviews and give notes, and we would finish that way.”

Baumgarten also cited the contributions of Christine Kim, his first assistant who was promoted to additional editor for *The Trial of the Chicago 7*.

Hot Locations

New Mexico: An Intimate Setting

The New Mexico Film Office (NMFO) has launched an intimacy coordinator training program aimed at increasing safety on sets in New Mexico. NMFO is partnering with the Intimacy Professionals Association (IPA) Intimacy Coordinator Training Program, taught by Amanda Blumenthal, to prepare individuals to work as intimacy coordinators in full-length feature film and TV productions upon completion of the training.



Amber Dodson

Intimacy coordinators are a fairly new category of industry professionals who work to create a safer environment on set for actors performing in scenes involving physical touch, nudity, intimacy, and simulated sex, while also helping the director to achieve his or her creative vision. Intimacy coordinators advocate for the safety and well-being of actors and become involved in the production process during prep, ensuring transparent communication and expectations between the actors and creative team. Intimacy coordinators are also available as a resource to the director and can assist with aspects like choreography and movement coaching, if requested to do so.

Amber Dodson, director of the New Mexico Film Office, said, “Intimacy coordinators are a critical component creating more safe, inclusive, and collaborative sets. Intimacy coordinators are expert advocates and liaisons working with the performers, director, and producers to ensure a more strategic, transparent, empowered, and respectful dialogue and plan to execute intimate scenes and achieve artistic goals.”

The program is a 16-week course of online training, as well as a capstone weekend choreography workshop (pending COVID-19 restrictions). Students will learn through a combination of lectures, assigned readings, experiential practices, homework assignments, quizzes, and mentorship. This training may include up to 12 participants, of which, up to three slots in the program will be reserved exclusively for trainees from New Mexico. NMFO, with use of workforce development funds, will cover 60% of tuition for up to three New Mexico residents who are accepted to the training program.

The Cherokee Nation Film Office has been recognized with the Hamilton Community Leadership Award at the 9th Annual Native American Media Awards. The virtual awards ceremony was held in conjunction with the 14th Annual LA Skins Fest back in November, a Native American film festival presented by Comcast NBCUniversal. The award is bestowed upon tribes, organizations and individuals who show true and groundbreaking leadership in film and TV.

Cherokee Nation Film Office Honored

Working with state and local film offices, the Cherokee Nation Film Office supports the growth of Oklahoma business by promoting northeast Oklahoma as a destination for filmmakers and serves as a cultural and historical consultant on projects. In addition to creating and promoting an environment that cultivates Native filmmaking and representation, the film office established the first-ever Native talent, crew and business/support services databases.

The Cherokee Nation Film Office was launched in 2019 to increase the presence of Native Americans in every level of film and TV while also creating opportunities for economic development and jobs in the Cherokee Nation.

“For far too long Native Americans have been underrepresented in film and TV, comprising less than 1% of the industry,” said Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr. “There’s opportunity here—opportunity for growth, opportunity for change, and opportunity for inclusivity and fair representation. That’s what our film office does. We invest in the future by partnering to attract filmmakers, funding scholarships to develop Native talent, and supporting community events that celebrate the Native American perspective. There’s a place for us in this industry, and not only do we have a story to tell, we have diverse Native talent ready to do so.”



There’s a place for us in this industry, and not only do we have a story to tell, we have diverse Native talent ready to do so.”

Jamie Walker McCall On Production Designing *The Prom*

Relative to his biggest takeaway from *The Trial of the Chicago 7*, Baumgarten observed, “I think the film shines a light on the importance of free speech, dissent and peaceful protest. It’s crucial these rights be protected to ensure peace and fairness in our democracy. My hope is that while the film shows this from 50 years ago, we can still learn from it today.”

The Prom

Adapted from the Tony Award-nominated Broadway musical of the same name, *The Prom* (Netflix), directed and produced by Ryan Murphy, tells the tale of Broadway stars (portrayed by Meryl Streep, James Corden and Nicole Kidman) whose

sputtering careers need a jump start. With Streep’s and Corden’s characters fresh off a Great White Way flop, they and two others whose careers are on the outs (played by Kidman and Andrew Rannells) reason that attaching themselves to a cause will give the illusion of altruism and in turn benefit them professionally. The cause they find takes them to a small Indiana town where an independent-minded lass (played by newcomer Jo Ellen Pellman) is banned from the high school prom because she wants to go with her girlfriend (Ariana Debose).

Our self-obsessed theater stars jump on the gay rights bandwagon, with proponents and opponents alike singing and dancing in a fun-filled ride that at the same time—in classic Hollywood musical fashion—raises awareness of intolerance and brings people together. The cast also includes Keegan-Michael Key, and Kerry Washington.

The Prom marks the feature debut of Jamie Walker McCall as a production designer. Her prior movie credits were as an art director. She is a long-time collaborator of Murphy, having first established herself as an art director on such shows as *Feud: Bette and Joan* and *American Crime Story: The Assassination of Gianni Versace*, both of which earned Excellence

in Production Design Award nominations (in 2018 and ‘19, respectively) from the Art Directors Guild for *McCall*. *Feud: Bette and Joan* also earned art director McCall a primetime Emmy nomination in 2017 for Outstanding Production Design for a Narrative Period Program. Judy Becker served as production designer on

as production designer on *The Prom* entailed “not much of a learning curve,” observed McCall. “Ryan’s TV shows are very large in scale with very high production value,” she explained, making the move to a high-profile feature not that big a transition. The big difference, she observed, is that with a feature “I only have one story to work on over six months”

whereas a Murphy limited series can be “six different stories I’m working on over the same time span.”

While much of the movie’s storyline is set in Indiana, its opening places us smack dab in the heart of the Broadway theater district in New York City. We see the opening night of an ill-fated

musical based on Eleanor Roosevelt and are introduced to its stars played by Streep and Corden. Felled by bad reviews, they seek refuge across the street from the theater at Sardi’s where they meet Kidman and Rannells’ character, an out-of-work actor who’s now a bartender. A pair of

bulls and theater marquees along with Sardi’s were built, designed by McCall who related that she “combined a bunch of different Broadway streets” to get the desired effect, picking the best marquees and signs to get “the most bang for our buck visually.” Assorted details were done justice to, right down to steam coming up from manholes.

“We had to pay the proper homage to Sardi’s and the Broadway streets,” said McCall. In the case of Sardi’s she took some liberties so that the interior lent itself better to a giant musical number but always kept in mind being true to the spirit of the place which is “so close to everyone’s heart on Broadway.”

McCall credited her team for being instrumental in bringing *The Prom* to life, including art directors Sarah Delucchi, Adam Rowe and Sammi Wallschlaeger, and set decorator Gene Serdena. McCall had worked with Rowe years back on *House* and then *American Crime Story*. She sought him out for *The Prom* given his acumen in TV and live theater, two areas he combined masterfully in his Emmy-winning turn on *Rent: Live*. He brought a blend of skills and knowledge of live theater that proved invaluable.

McCall also valued the collaborative openness of storyteller Murphy and cinematographer Matt Libatique, ASC as they teamed to work out color blocking and lighting elements which were integral to customizing the production design approach.

Also spurring on everyone, continued McCall, was a sense of purpose relative to conveying a message of tolerance, love and empathy. She’s felt that in a special way through her involvement in *Pose* and *The Prom*, noting that these shows “reach people who need hope. Love is love.”

This is the third installment of a 16-part series with future installments of The Road To Oscar slated to run in the weekly SHOOT>e.dition, The SHOOT Dailies and on SHOOTonline.com, with select installments also in print issues. The series will appear weekly through the Academy Awards gala ceremony. Nominations for the 93rd Academy Awards will be announced on Monday, March 15, 2021. The 93rd Oscars will be held on Sunday, April 25, 2021.



A scene on the Sardi's set from *The Prom*

the nominated *Feud* and *American Crime Story* episodes.

In that Murphy often promotes from within, when he asked Becker to take on the pilot for *Pose*, McCall was upped to production designer on the remaining episodes of *American Crime Story: The*



Nicole Kidman and Jo Ellen Pellman in *The Prom*

Assassination of Gianni Versace. From there McCall went on to production design *Pose* after the series pilot had been done by Becker. Next McCall served as production designer on *The Politician*, another Murphy series. Murphy then tabbed McCall for *The Prom*.

Diversifying into feature filmmaking

musical numbers on Broadway and then at Sardi’s sets the tone amidst the dazzle and bright lights of the Great White Way—perhaps the biggest challenge that *The Prom* posed to McCall who had to recreate all this on a four-acre lot in downtown Los Angeles.

A high-energy bustling district of light

2020 Vision, Lessons Learned For 2021

A cross-section of industry pros share POVs, goals, opportunities for the new year
A SHOOT Staff Report



With a 2020 in the rearview mirror that no one could have predicted, we now stubbornly try again to see what the new year has in store no matter the pitfalls of prognostication.

Yet while crystal balls are inherently flawed, there's something to be gained from considering what's possible with a new beginning, particularly coming off of a year in which so many have endured so much. By the same token, there's value in reflecting on what a year like 2020 has taught us and how those lessons can be applied to 2021.

In that spirit *SHOOT* called upon a cross-section of creatives and executives from the industry at large to offer their hopes, goals, plans, and a forecast or two for 2021. In seeking and sounding out different voices, we received feedback which often carried a deep sense of purpose and responsibility, especially in light of recent events.

Katie Keating, founding partner/co-chief creative officer at Fancy LLC, observed, "As tumultuous as 2020 was, and as much as none of us want to relive it (literally, or even in memory), it wasn't a bubble. It didn't pop at the stroke of midnight on Jan 1, 2021. I'm writing this on January 7, 2021, less than a day after the insurrection at the Capitol building in Washington DC and across state capitols, a day when 255,728 more Americans were diagnosed with COVID-19 and another 3,964 died. A day when the decision not to file charges against a white officer who shot and severely wounded a Black man in Wisconsin was announced. As marketers and creators we have the talent and the tenacity to push the cultural needle forward. We can do it with the stories we tell, with the people we cast, with the crews we

hire. What we do has the power to shape our world and people's responses to it. It's a privilege none of us can afford to waste."

That privilege also extends to opening up opportunities for diverse talent and storytelling voices, according to Dustin Callif, president, Tool of North America. "For me personally, my "aha" moment was that Tool needed to become more diligent in pushing outside our network to discover new creatives," he shared. "To shake up our foundation, we now look beyond a standard 3 spot 'commercial' reel.

"What's important," continued Callif, "is that we look for the creative spark in a director and make a leap of faith and trust that using our platform to create opportunity will help talented individuals become the next wave of commercial directors. It's working well. We've had some amazing, new directors join our roster and are already producing work for Allstate, Ford, Root Insurance, and others. We've also been supporters of Manifest Works and FreeTheWork and now Bid/Black. We're going to keep pushing and improving and very much look forward to evolving the teams and talent that we work with."

Predictions for 2021 contained a wide mix of visions, ranging from more altruistic messaging to an embracing of technologies that gained favor during the pandemic, and a word of caution about acquiescing on IP ownership.

On the latter score, Ben Looram, partner/owner, Chapeau Studios, said, "My slightly tinted crystal ball is telling me that creative businesses who are embracing bespoke technology should enter 2021 with a careful focus on IP ownership. I always embrace dialog and prefer to collaborate openly, but the hard lesson for boutique creative studios is to properly value our creativity. As creative work shifts to client-direct models, we've increasingly been seeing far-reaching NDAs from potential clients that note their ownership of vendor IP, in some cases even before it has been formulated or clearly conceived. For creativity to thrive in 2021 and beyond, we have to collectively insist that clients value creative autonomy as much as they value their own intellectual property. Innovation will be critical in the post-COVID climate, but for creativity to thrive, clients need to incentivize it, invest in R&D, embrace big ideas and give them room to grow, and their brands will blossom in 2021 and beyond."

Meanwhile on the progressive messaging front, Dan Kelleher, chief creative officer, Deutsch New York, projected, "2021 will be the year for more purpose and caring in our advertising messaging. 2020 has left everyone disheartened, cautious and weary. People need something to believe in. To be part of. To trust. There is a massive opportunity for brands to truly step up and connect with their consumers by thinking bigger than

INDUSTRY OUTLOOK

their own immediate needs. I am inspired by this moment for our industry and look forward to being part of more meaningful work.”

As for pandemic-sparked practices, Jason Gaboriau, chief creative officer, Doner LA, related, “2020 has fundamentally changed the way we work, and I predict this new way of working will continue well into the future. This is not because the pandemic will rage on, but because it is simply a better way to work. Bloated productions and boondoggle travel have long been a thing of the past. Agencies have learned/been forced to work smarter, faster, and cheaper. Collaborative work sessions and interfacing with clients has evolved for the better. We are all fully embracing collaborative ways of working via Zoom, Google Docs, Collaborative Keynote, Slack, Miro, etc. 2020 has forced everyone to move outside of their comfort zone and adopt new ways of doing things. Those that are waiting for the pandemic to end so things can ‘go back to normal’ are short-sighted and doomed. We’re not going back. The industry had changed. Get on board.”

Survey

For our Industry Outlook Survey, SHOOT posed the following questions to executives and artisans:

1) What’s the most relevant business and/or creative lesson you learned in 2020 and how will you apply it to 2021?

2) How will the events of 2020--

from the pandemic to the call for social and racial justice--impact the content you create and/or the way you work?

3) Gazing into your crystal ball, what do you envision for the industry--creatively speaking or from a business standpoint--in 2021?

4) What are your goals, creatively speaking and/or from a business standpoint, for your company, division, studio or network in 2021?

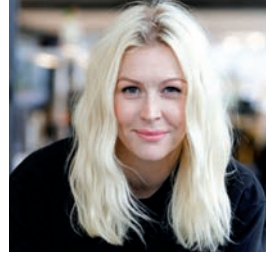
5) Tell us about one current project you are working on for early 2021.

6) How did your company, agency, network, service or studio adjust/adapt to the marketplace in 2020 (new strategies, resources, technology, health/safety expertise) and what of all that bodes well for 2021?

7) What’s your New Year’s resolution, creatively speaking or from a business standpoint, for your agency, department or company?

What follows is a sampling of the feedback we received from a range of respondents. They all provided food for thought and a springboard for further reflection and discussion.

Full responses can be found at SHOOTonline.com and in the concurrent SHOOT>e.dition.



Justine Armour
Chief Creative Officer
Grey New York

1) When we all live the same life, we all come up with the same ideas. Last year was like a bad creative experiment, millions of isolated people in a massive monoculture. You would have an idea, and then the same idea would pop up in five other places. I found this very disturbing. I’m still inside my house, but this year I’m being more intentional about filling my eyes, ears and mind with more

interesting stimulus.

2) We made a number of projects with P&G for their equality mission last year; a piece for gender equality in the pandemic, a heartfelt LGBTQ+ story for Pride, and a 90 second film on white privilege called The Choice that Oprah gave notes on. We’re lucky to work with P&G because they’ve been in the race conversation for years, so they’re not afraid to make work that takes a strong stance and moves the conversation forward. Last year increased the urgency to create a company culture where our Black coworkers really feel their value at work, because we want and need their perspectives to impact the work and get into the public psyche. Advertising can influence the masses in powerful ways, and we certainly see our role in shaping a more equal future for Black people through the work we make.



Dustin Callif
President
Tool of North America

1) We’re in the business of firsts and doing things that have never been done before, and this year COVID-19 forced us to innovate in a million small ways. Taken together, the business has dramatically changed and is more flexible and capable than ever before.

A big learning has been how we can re-purpose a framework or production solution and build it into a reusable platform. We’ve done

this with software solutions leveraging computer vision and live stream polling.

Our clients are going to prioritize creative solutions like this because they provide immediate business results, while maintaining the quality clients demand, efficiently. That’s what production companies do best. As creatives and producers, we need to understand these business needs and be able to provide solutions that meet the needs of the world’s best brands.

This isn’t the death of branding or campaign led work, but it shouldn’t be the only thing your business is built on. I’m excited about how Tool has continued to work with our directors to develop well-crafted creatively-driven work, while also diversifying into software and practical solutions that offer scale and ease of use.

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Ad Agency & Post Feedback

Continued from page 15



Tasha Dean
EVP, Head of Production
The Martin Agency

1) Hyper Interconnectivity. Working in a state of constant change you realize just how interconnected people and systems are with one another. One decision sets off a domino effect of events. It's a challenging space to be in and there is an immense amount of critical thinking, gut instinct, and future forecasting that has to happen in real-time. Fast and smart decisions can make or break the creative

execution of an idea. It's interesting to watch how our decisions play out and how they help shape the execution of an idea. 2021 means going even faster and most likely making critical decisions with even less information. We have to get really good at anticipating the future and be ok with taking risks.

7) Creatively speaking it is to continue to make work that impacts culture. We ensure that we make only the best work for our clients despite the situation. The situation is constantly evolving and it's not always easy to navigate but with some creative thinking, we can still execute amazing things.



Michelle Eskin
Managing Partner
Cut+Run

2) The pandemic forced us to get out of our comfort zones and try new ways of working, living, and staying connected as a business and as people. When the pandemic hit we quickly reshaped our company structure and workflow to create a seamless transition into the new WFH model, and kept a focus on finding ways to feel like we were together in spirit with our clients and staff. We strove to be

transparent beyond our company walls. We addressed tough issues. We had hard conversations and really dug into the ways we as a company can be impactful now and into the future. In order to change and grow, we must not forget we need each other. Competitors have come together and helped each other navigate what has for now become the new normal and I have got to say, it's been inspiring and motivating. We candidly shared with each other what worked and what didn't, to collectively get through as best possible. We weren't competitors, we were colleagues. We are all moving through this time together. As I mentioned above, we must learn to adapt...and turns out we are all quite good at it.



Jason Gaboriau
Chief Creative Officer
Doner LA

1) The pandemic changed so much. It accelerated the adoption of new technology, changed the way we work, who and how we hire and how we interface with clients. And the companies that were able to pivot quickly, adapt and innovate have been able to achieve success amidst this challenge. For me, I feel like we continued to do something that has worked for us for a long time: think like a

Startup. Don't get tied up in process, overcome limitations and both accept and embrace change. This is something we intend to keep doing in 2021.

2) For a long time, Doner has focused on working with women-, minority-, and veteran-owned production suppliers, and our clients have recognized our efforts and supported our ongoing initiatives. In 2021, Doner will be increasing the overall amount of our agency's production spend with women-, minority-, and veteran-owned production suppliers. We hope others throughout the industry follow our lead.

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AARDMAN FITS WALLACE & GROMIT ON A SOFA

London ad agency krow, part of the MISSION Group, has rolled out its latest animated campaign for DFS, created in collaboration with independent studio Aardman. Once again, much loved inventor Wallace and his long suffering dog Gromit get into a tangle in the brand new ad, but all is saved with the arrival of a DFS seating solution that is big enough for the both of them, and a handful of wary sheep.



Directed by Aardman's Will Becher, the spot sees Wallace proudly revealing his extendable sofa, a contraption that increases in length to accommodate everyone and even makes tea. But as with many of his inventions, something is amiss. It's Gromit to the rescue as he sees the neighbors across the way getting a calm and simple delivery of a much more suitable piece of furniture from DFS. This is DFS' third campaign featuring Wallace & Gromit where the characters' natural charm and bonkers adventures use humor to tell an engaging story. In this case the message is clear—you don't have to put up with a sofa that is not right for you, even if you made it yourself.

THINK LA NAMES NEW BOARD MEMBERS

ThinkLA, a nonprofit media, marketing and advertising community which helps businesses thrive by fostering connectivity and producing educational and networking events, has named its 2021 board of directors.

ThinkLA co-presidents are Aaron Walton of Walter Isaacson and Jean Freeman of Zambezi. VPs are Kirsten Atkinson of NBCUniversal Media, and Kevin Mayer of BJ's Restaurant. Treasurer is Steve Orenstein of Battery.

The 2021 directors are Pete Imwall of RPA and Eric Johnson of Ignited who are both advisors. Other directors serving on the board are Alexis Boerger of Orion Consulting, Luis Camano of Key Activations, Andrew Derr of Amazon, Carol Terakawa of Shopkick, Greg Castonovo of St@rt LLC, Latasha Gillespie of Amazon Studios, Jenna Lauer of Hall & Partners, Kim Lewis of ET, Wanda Kato of Horizon Media, Mikaela Liboro of TBWA\Chiat\Day, Stuart McLean of MUXIP, Samantha Perlich of MiQ, Zach rosenberg of Zach Rosenberg consulting, Frank Scherma of RadicalMedia, and Karin Shaer of The Firm.

New directors on the board are Juan Suarez of The 4A's, Joe Shields of iHeartRadio/Connections, and Mac Hagel, EP/managing director West for Spark Foundry.

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE....

Lauren Boyle has joined HARBOR's NYC headquarters as sr. producer, commercial sound post. With more than 15 years experience, Boyle will spearhead the operations and sales for HARBOR's expanding commercial sound post division, joining sound mixers Steve Perski, Walter Bianco and Mark Turrigiano.



Lauren Boyle

Boyle began her career working sound in promos for network television studios, including Viacom (Nickelodeon), Discovery (Animal Planet, Food Network), NBCUniversal (USA, Syfy), Cartoon Network and Disney TV Animation. On the advertising side, she has delivered sound for assorted national campaigns created by agencies such as Ogilvy, FCB Health, 21 Grams, and Johannes Leonardo. Prior to joining HARBOR, Boyle was sr. producer at Digital Arts where she led the sound team. Previous to that, she served as director of operations at Nutmeg where she worked with Perski. She now reunites with him at HARBOR

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PLANNEDPARENTHOODSPARKSJEOPHARTERCOMMUNICATIONSBLACKEASTERRESURRECTIONKASASAMEMORIALHERMANN
RADIOSHACKTACOBUENONORWEGIANCRUISELINEMATEURBASEBALLTODAYBACKYARDBURGERSBLACKBERRYGOLFSMITH
MCDONALDSOLDNAVYSONICTIRERACKSOUTHWESTERNBELLVALEROINVESCOTHEHOMEDEPOTSAMSTOWNCASINOFODLION
LUZIANNETEATROPICANASELSUNBLUEPHILLIPS66LIPITORDFWAIRPORTFOODLIONLAUNCHKEYBANKNATIONWIDEINSURANCE
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NOKIALANDROVERKIMBERLYCLARKEFLORIDACITRUSBENNINGANSTERMINIXINTERSTATEBATTERIESHONDAGLADWAREMANWICH
LIPTONICEDTEACASTROLPEDIALYTECENTURYLINKBANQUETCHICKENTAXACTFIRSTFINANCIALBANKLIVESCRIBEMARSREALPAGE
NISSANJAMESAVERYEXXONMOBILJCPENNEYADVANCEAUTOPARTSBEANOABERCROMBIE&FITCHKARASTANMOHAWKBACARDI
BOSTONMARKETGORVINGCHEVROLETDISHNETWORKSAFEWAYJUSTMYSIZEFAMOUSFOOTWEARCENTRALMARKETJOHNDEERE
HOLLYWOODCASINOAFATWRECKCAESARSPALACEHEELYSPIZZAHUTSTAINMASTERNATURESOWNLIVESTRONGDISCOUNTTIRE
DONTMESSWITHTEXASEDIBLEARRANGEMENTSKATEWEISERCHOCOLATEGTECORONAPACIFICBEERSCHWEPPEJIMMYDEAN
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THANK YOU.

CHARLIE
UNIFORM
TANGO

DIRECT | PRODUCE | SHOOT | EDIT | MIX | SCORE | DESIGN | ANIMATE | FINISH

DALLAS | AUSTIN

charlietango.com

POVs From Droga5, harvest films, NuContext, Fancy LLC

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Thom Glover
Creative Director
Droga5 New York

1) In a word, speed.

This was the year that produced several occasions where nearly every advertiser wanted to say roughly the same thing at exactly the same time. Some said it better than others, but the ones who got their messages out first stood a much better chance of getting the desired response.

As Mark Singer wrote, "One guy in a tuxedo producing doves can be magic; ten guys producing doves is a travesty."

3) 2020 felt like a year dominated by film, both because no one was really doing anything experiential other than experiencing being in the same place for long periods of time and because in a crisis, we prefer to operate from our comfort zones.

In 2021, I think we'll see more brands poking their heads out of the burrow and looking for different sorts of opportunities to make an impact in the new world they find there.

4) In 2021, we want to widen the aperture. The aim is to tell some new stories from different perspectives in different ways.

Working on Facebook's "Born In Quarantine" last year, we spoke to a lot of centenarians about their experiences from the Spanish influenza pandemic of 1918.

One woman told us that when it was over, they "came out into a new world, and everybody stopped wearing long dark clothes, and everything was fresh and new and colorful."

If that's going to happen again, we want to be right at the center of it.



Angela Guice
Founder/Executive Producer
NuContext

1) For us the key lesson of 2020 was adaptability and staying positive in the midst of uncertainty—where there is a will there is a way. We realized quickly after the production shutdown in March that our clients needed a solution for filming. Instead of waiting for production to open, we immediately got to work and pivoted from in person production to inventing our NuContext remote filming system.

By April we were helming dozens of shoots a month, and even landing new clients using this new technology. Being solution oriented, nimble and quick to react are all qualities companies needed during the pandemic and given the changes our industry faces during "normal times", these qualities are sure to be at the forefront as we navigate a post-pandemic production landscape.

2) There are so many incredible voices and talent that just need one person to say "yes" and give them the opportunity and exposure.

As a 100% female owned company, NuContext has always valued representation both in front and behind the camera, and we are thrilled that the industry is catching up! We are committed to producing work that cultivates an inclusive and nurturing space for the people creating it, and have a long standing policy to hire a minimum 20% female & BIPOC crew and postproduction team members with an emphasis on key crew and leadership positions. We are incredibly excited to work with and amplify the next generation of BIPOC talent to succeed in our industry by taking part in the AICP led #doubletheline pledge, supporting organizations like Made in Her Image and sponsoring an internship program with HBCU Southern University, Baton Rouge.

3) There is no doubt we will continue to be tested in our creative approach to production in 2021, which we are already experiencing with the current production "pause" here in Los Angeles. Agencies, clients and production companies will have to continue to innovate with technology and creative solutions in an environment where anything can happen.



Bonnie Goldfarb
Co-Founder/Executive Producer
harvest films, inc.

1) In 2020, I added global pandemic to my short list of things I can't control. Weather used to be at the top of my list; it's now moved to number 2. I learned that the conditions of working in a pandemic brought our clients, agencies and crews together closer than ever and we moved through our shoot days like a ballet in a phone booth. Masked up, social distancing, testing, remote feeds, protocols and

guidelines, each member of our team(s) brought their A game and I was humbled by the trust they put in me; in harvest. As we move into 2021, these bonds and production methodologies we developed will continue to be tested, pushed to the limit and iterated over and over, again.

I will apply the following lessons in 2021:

Stay nimble, flexible.

2-3 masks are needed per shoot day.

Print scripts to bring to set.

Actors that are related are not always better for a project.

Don't forget headphones for remote shooting and back up batteries.

Keep booking basecamps where crews can walk to set.

Petty Cash is no longer green money.

Digital Timecards can be unreliable.

Brush hair before turning on ZOOM camera.

5) We are working with our director, Elizabeth Banks on a large commercial campaign that is shooting in January. NDAs prohibit me from saying too much more other than we're all very excited about the project.



Katie Keating
Founding Partner/Co-CCO
Fancy LLC

1) Really, you can't run a business or be creative without a good dose of empathy. And 2020 certainly brought that into crystal clear focus. The past 10 months have poignantly illustrated that we don't necessarily know what's going on in a person's life. The struggles they face. The burdens they are carrying. The experiences they live. This applies to the people on your team, to your clients, to the audi-

ences you create for. At Fancy, we're looking at 2021 as an opportunity to be better. Better at listening. Better at understanding. Better at connecting. Better at pushing ourselves to be better.

3) Over the next 12 months, I think we'll be seeing more innovative ways of production, and more comfort with being remote, both from the agency and the client side. I also think we'll be seeing fewer spots that are ABOUT being remote, fewer with that zoom/facetime/I-haven't-left-this-room-or-these-sweatpants-in-months look. What WILL stay though is a deeper focus on understanding the real lives our audiences are living—it's just that that means a lot more than their lives on their screens.

4) Fancy has had a distributed workforce from our very beginning almost 10 years ago so the shift away from our office to FULLY remote for everyone all the time was easy in a lot of ways. BUT the absence of occasional get together in person for work, but especially for fun, has been acute. We're going to be more focused on offering more ways to connect with each other throughout the year that aren't on a screen.

7) We're going to lean into the power of the positive this year. We've had it with the negative swirl all around us and if we can use our talents to help people move in a more positive direction—to think, to laugh, to grow, to learn, to feel—we'll be helping to create the cultural shift that will make the world a better, kinder place.

Deutsch, Zambezi, Chapeau



Dan Kelleher
Chief Creative Officer
Deutsch New York

1) Advertising in 2020 can be summed up in one word—Zoom. Creatively speaking, Zoom is the best and worst thing to happen to our industry. It was Zoom that allowed us to keep working and continues to do so. Zoom proved that we don't have to be within the walls of our office to be productive. We could be scattered all over the country—and we were—and still be successful. For that, I thank

you Zoom. (You can't see me right now but I'm giving Zoom a golf-clap.) That being said, Zoom does not come without creative consequences. Coming together to create and review work as a team of 2"X 2" boxes cannot and will not ever compare to actually being in the same room to discuss a wall of work covered with ideas. Pixels cannot replace the spontaneity, comfort, support and collaboration that occurs in person. There is an "X" factor that is missing creatively with Zoom. Mr. Spock might disagree. But Captain Kirk gets it. And if you're a creative, you get it too. So, for 2021, Zoom will continue to be a powerful tool for us. But there is a time and a place for it.



Gavin Lester
Partner + CCO
Zambezi

1) I have learnt that everything was/is in a constant state of flux, so we have to be flexible. In 2020, we saw huge shifts in creative asks as the world faced significant health, social justice and political issues. Creative agencies must approach work and business challenges with adaptability and quick-wittedness. While this has always been true for agencies that I've worked with, it's increasingly

critical now and in the year ahead as our world culture and business communities continue to tackle unique and complex challenges.

2) We have all had to adjust and push ourselves to meet the tough issues that blew up in 2020.

This is not just making us better as people but also better at our jobs; it is testing us, opening up our apertures and ultimately teaching us the importance of true empathy. Our business is built on understanding our consumers and adapting to their needs, so this experience is absolutely teaching us valuable lessons and sharpening our skills in useful ways.



Ben Looram
Partner/Owner
Chapeau Studios

1) The pandemic locked down live-action shoots in 2020, and brands needed alternative ways to deliver their creative concepts. We went back to basics, and what became clear was that in most cases, our clients didn't need a new shoot to communicate a new idea. With Chapeau's core artistic disciplines-- compositing, design, animation, and CG-- we could put existing footage to work bringing fresh brand

stories to life.

We dissected stock footage and combined it with user-generated content, layers of animated graphics, design elements, illustrations, and animation techniques. High-end pixel-perfect compositing is what I've built my career on, and while it feels "old school" in comparison to the new visual technologies we love pioneering, in 2020 old-school approaches were our most reliable tool.

In 2021, COVID is still very much with us, and clients are asking us to think outside of traditional live action production until further notice. In addition to fulfilling their marketing needs, they are also seeing the efficacy of trusting experienced CG teams to introduce the world to their new products, and the ability of digital artists to give older footage new life.



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Bonfire, MRM Perspectives

Continued from page 19



Jason Mayo
Partner/Managing Director
Bonfire

1) I think most of all, because of the circumstances, we really had to open our eyes to what is most important to us as a collective group of artists and producers. We were surprised at how smooth a transition we were able to make to working remotely. It was a real test of the culture we have built. In order to withstand the lack of proximity, we had to really concentrate on the art of communication between

ourselves, as well as, with our clients. We were able to really peel back the onion so to speak and see just how strong our relationships had become both on a personal and a professional level. In the end our business is about taking care of the people we collaborate with.

2) That's a really good question. For us, when the pandemic started, we talked as a group about showing empathy for others. Work was important but we didn't want to be tone deaf. We realized that treating people with respect and humanity was most important. We quickly realized how much people had going on away from the office. There were sick relatives to consider, child care and all the stress and anxiety from the circumstances that had a really big effect on how people were able to approach their work. Going forward we hope that empathy, patience and understanding continue to take priority in the way we do business.

3) I think the key to thriving in 2021 and beyond is finding new ways to handle more with less. The days of overpriced client lunches and dinners, unnecessary travel and lavish client sessions are a thing of the past. The budgets and schedules have been more challenging for years now but there was no correction in the expectations of the quality or amount of work being produced. Having gone through these last several months and scaling back, I think people realize that all of those things aren't necessary to do great work or have a great experience. Hopefully that money saved can go back into what's important which is the creative and the productions.



Ronald Ng
Global Chief Creative Officer
MRM

1) Remember 13 months ago when we thought 2019 was a tough year and wished for a better 2020? Who would've guessed 2020 would turn out to be the roughest year of our lives. And though we're keeping our fingers crossed for a better 2021, I've learned one thing — never be surprised by surprises. Mike Tyson famously said, "Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth." And despite all the plans we made last year, the world got a barrage of sucker punches. But the response to creativity didn't change that much. Ideas that were authentic, non-cliché and even entertaining were welcomed. Innovative applications of technology led to unimaginable adoption and growth of e-Commerce. And virtual finally became reality where new ways of working, selling, happy hour-ing, reuniting and consoling showed us that creativity always wins no matter what year it is. Thanks for the lessons 2020.

3) Creativity always has, and always will be, the silver bullet for brands to survive and thrive. Apart from a few exceptions, 2020 wasn't a bumper year for creativity. Though 2021 will continue to be challenging, brands will need to differentiate and seek new levels of creative innovation from agency partners. How can a brand's relationship with people become more meaningful when the connection between them continues to be contactless and virtual? Can we augment technology to feel more human? Not just remove friction but create unique brand experiences online, in-store, virtually, on social or with A.I. And with the promise of 5G, just imagine the new ways people can experience products, spaces, learning and events. The crystal ball may be hazy but when you supercharge technology with creativity, the future is clearly limitless.

2021 Big Game Seen With 2020 Vision

What a difference a year makes. Fox sold out ad inventory for the 2020 Big Game back in November 2019. Fast forward to today, well into January, and CBS still has commercial slots open for Super Bowl LV at an asking price of \$5.5 million for 30 seconds. Last year's Super Bowl generated \$489 million in ad revenue. Whether that tally will be met this time around remains to be seen.

Of course, the dynamic that has taken its toll on even a marquee event like the Super Bowl—which is slated for February 7 in Tampa Bay, Fla.—is the COVID-19 pandemic. Economic woes have made significant advertisers less bullish on a megabuck Super Sunday investment. Still, the Big Game is most attractive as it figures to again deliver a mega audience, which is increasingly rare in this era of media fragmentation.

There are other pandemic-related concerns as well. Will a comedy ad seem tone deaf with hundreds of thousands of Americans dead from the coronavirus? On the flip side, a somber commercial could come across as depressing during a time when there's quite a bit to be down about. Finding the right tone from such options as humorous, lighthearted, socially conscious and/or inspirational gives the creative community a challenge arguably unlike any prior year, particularly with sharp divides over public health policy relative to COVID, a contentious presidential election and its conspiracy theory-fraught, insurrection-plagued aftermath serving to further polarize the nation.



M&M's spokescandies

Just as there will no stadium packed with fans, the Super Bowl audience across the country will also be different in that big parties and social gatherings tied to the game figure to be few and far between—at least among those who take the warnings of epidemiologists and frontline healthcare professionals seriously. So we will be apart socially while divided ideologically, making for a tough audience to connect with. Or perhaps it's a golden creative opportunity as the Super Bowl can allow us to put aside differences for a few hours and just enjoy the game, rooting for a team while in the big picture for a change feeling like we're all on the same team.

Familiar faces

The Super Bowl LV lineup has some familiar faces including reportedly Anheuser-Busch InBev, a Big Game staple, with multiple spots, likely involving such agencies as Wieden+Kennedy (Bud Light), DAVID and VaynerMedia (Budweiser) and FCB (Michelob).

Also back will be Mars Wrigley's M&M's with a :30 from BBDO New York featuring the spokescandy characters that will air during the first commercial break following the kickoff. This will be M&M's sixth Super Bowl ad in the past decade.

TurboTax via Wieden+Kennedy joins the Super Bowl ad lineup for the eighth straight year as will WeatherTech through Pinnacle Advertising.

Back for its fourth Super Bowl will be Pringles from agency Grey.

Another returnee is Toyota via Saatchi & Saatchi, marking the automaker's fourth consecutive year on the Super Bowl.

PepsiCo's Mountain Dew and Frito-Lay are also scheduled to be back on Super Sunday—the former out of TBWA\Chiat\Day NY, Frito-Lay via Publicis Dallas.

Another member of the PepsiCo family, Pepsi itself, will be in on the Big Game with the Pepsi Super Bowl Halftime Show starring The Weeknd. However, Pepsi's focus will be on that halftime extravaganza sans any spots airing during the telecast. Pepsi will however launch a campaign featuring The Weekend the day prior to help call attention to the singer-songwriter's halftime performance.

Not returning

While Little Caesars ran its first Super Bowl commercial in 2020, the brand is not returning to the Big Game this year.

Among other brands not coming back this time around are Sabra, SodaStream, P&G's skincare brand Olay, Avocados From Mexico and Hyundai. The latter's decision ends a five-year run of Super Bowl ads.

Sounding Out Voices From PluckStudio, Wondros, LOBO



Patrick Ortman
CEO
PluckStudio

1) Two words: kindness and agility. Being kind matters— one can get entranced by the thrum of production. It's easy to forget we're all going through stuff. People and kindness need to come first. Agility means finding ways to create when the old ways fail. Personally, I am hoping that 2021 brings more kindness. I'm pretty sure the new year will continue to require more agility.

2) First, the pandemic. PluckStudio officially launched in 2020. We got to do exactly one live-action production in New York, then the world went into quarantine. But one client told us they had our back and they helped keep us afloat with projects throughout the year. And I'll tell you something, I'm hearing the same sort of story from several agency owners.

It was a terrible year, but it was also a year where kindness happened.

Second, social and racial justice. I think 2020 showed us that we can all do better. Our little crew of creatives is already a diverse group. But I want PluckStudio to do better and that means more than making sure you're ticking diversity boxes. This year I did a lot of thinking, which led to a manifesto of sorts about who we are and what we stand for. We plan on using this to strengthen our DNA and focus our efforts in 2021 and beyond.

3) I think to be successful the industry needs to keep changing— to be more agile, transparent, and kind. I don't think we're going back to the way things were. At PluckStudio, we're putting a lot of love into our new 3D animation and VFX capabilities, because those are pandemic-resistant lines of business. We're embracing virtual production and remote production. We were already great at doing more with smaller, more focused teams. We were already about radical transparency. And we were founded as a "people first" kind of organization. This is the way.



Danielle Peretz
Sr. Executive Producer
Wondros Collective

2) The events of 2020 have changed the way we conduct our business forever; and frankly, in very important and good ways. Safety, respect and inclusion are the key words that come to mind. We have been very cautious about what jobs to engage on, all based on the approach and how safe the production can be. Given that no one knows when production processes will be what they once were, I think we are developing some protocols that will stay with us indefinitely. Being respectful of personal space, how clean we consistently keep our hands and equipment, are a few protocols that I believe (and hope) will become the new normal. Regarding racial injustice, prioritizing the diversity of our roster, employees and production crews has always been at the top on my agenda as well as since joining Wondros in the Fall of 2019. Going beyond gender diversification to ensure that humans of color

and all backgrounds are hired to give every qualified person the opportunity to excel in this business is essential.

7) Each New Year, I come up with a word or phrase that ends up being a kind of mantra. For 2021, it's "Trust the process." It resonates for me since I cannot control a whole lot of what is happening in our world and in our industry today, but I can choose grace in moving through it. That feels better to me than the other options.



Luis Ribero
Partner/Executive Producer
LOBO

1) The most relevant lesson we learned was the nuances of making a remote workflow as productive as possible. While remote work has been part of the animation modus operandi for a long time, there was usually an option for in-person collaboration. We had to get used to a lack of immediate internal feedback from key leaders on projects. The head of a department couldn't walk to the desks of artists to deliver a response to work, no matter how tight a deadline.

To remedy this for clients throughout 2020 and into 2021, we made animation how-to decks. The decks explain the animation timeline for 2D, 3D, mixed media projects and more, and set client delivery and communication expectations right out the gate. All companies were adjusting to new WFH workflows, and setting standards for 2020 projects helped make each job run smoothly and efficiently.

2) Over time, we began to receive briefs from companies we had never received briefs from before, but were proud to collaborate with. Animation—with its tendency to evoke empathy in its viewers—became a powerful tool to use to communicate messages on sensitive and timely topics like racial equity and social justice. We have since collaborated on a variety of campaigns for nonprofit Women Moving Millions, the Joyce Foundation and Google for Small Business, contributing animated campaigns addressing topics such as women's equality, Black-owned small businesses, and gun control initiatives.

Additionally, to do our part in spurring community outreach, we created original animations on vital COVID-19 topics for our company IGTV, breaking down the struggles different groups face and pointing users toward organizations that could use donations and help.

3) I hope we receive more social justice-oriented projects that help move the needle for women, the LGBTQ+ community, communities of color, and more. Brands have to walk the walk and talk the talk, as an introspective year like 2020 has demonstrated.

7) My resolution is not to have one. I want to tiptoe into 2021 and hope for the best. Of course, I still want to continue to diversify our creative team, but that initiative is baked into our company ethos as an operating standard and not something we look towards just once a year.

Continued on page 22

Sam Swisher, Jack Waldrip

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Sam Swisher
Owner/EP
WoodShop Studios Inc.

1) Real partnerships reign supreme, especially during down or COVID times like these. We really struggle without them. Like any marriage, an understanding of the process and a mutual respect for the process are big keys to success. To this end, we will continue to define and refine our methodology when it comes to improving quality and accessibility to our services. We see the continued imple-

mentation, monitoring and improvement of our process as it relates to quality as vital.

5) Without giving too much away, we're in the middle of a 360-degree product launch that has us capturing and delivering (post) elements for all channels and brand touch points in one comprehensive shoot. While this type of relationship takes great understanding and trust, it results in all kinds of efficiencies when it comes to cost, time/speed and the top-shelf production value required to put the brand on the next level (quality). It's important to note that the AOR (not WoodShop) is still the creative lead and we collaborate with everyone to take the collective vision and make it better. This type of relationship and vision has all the makings of a beautiful partnership.

6) March was a gut shot on a lot of levels. In the early days, we managed to pivot straight away and take a lot of our slated live-action jobs and transition them to post jobs almost seamlessly. Over the next few months, we were fortunate to be able to leverage both our facility/stage and the working relationship we have with our crew; thanks to these long-term relationships we had their trust. As a result, we were quick to adapt and institute all requisite safety protocols, and continue to do so on what feels like a daily basis. Our agency partners and our crew were willing to go back to work as soon as we were given the green light. In this sense, we were both lucky and grateful.



Jack Waldrip
Sr. Editor/Co-Founder
charlieuniformtango

1) No doubt 2020 was a cluster bomb, and we were fortunate in that all of our people and their loved ones were all largely spared.

Business wise, it didn't require any assets we didn't already possess: resilience, rapid adaptation, innovation and communal work ethic. But, it required them to be deployed in new and untested ways,

and if you had any weak links anywhere in the chain they would be exposed. Not at Tango. To a person, we have been absolute studs. So, it's really not so much about what was learned, it's about what was confirmed: Culture counts. Yeah, it's a tired cliché, but why it's different when it comes to Tango, is that it's not bullshit. If you attract and assemble the best, and build relationships on trust, responsibility and commitment to each other and a shared purpose, you can prevail over any storm. Through it all, we didn't cut a single position and we didn't reduce a single salary, in fact, we added people. This experience has really strengthened every aspect of our company.

2) From a work process perspective, remote editorial/post is here to stay. But, as soon as we can, we'll all be back in office. Coordinating remote client schedules for an hour here or an hour there is no replacement for the undivided attention of butts on your couch. While this experience has forced the employment of multiple strategies that allow us to create in unique circumstances, it has only reinforced that traditional in-room, in-person sessions are the most efficient and productive way to deliver the best content.

DaVinci Workflow Enhances Safety For Disney+

The Disney motion picture *Safety* utilized a complete DaVinci Resolve Studio workflow from principal photography through final delivery, incorporating a digital asset management (DAM) system on set built around Blackmagic Design's switchers, recorders, routers and monitors. The film premiered on Disney+ last month.



Safety

Safety tells the empowering story of former Clemson University football safety Ray McElrathBey (Jay Reeves) whose dedication and persistence help him to triumph over adversity. Aided by teammates and the Clemson community, he succeeds on the field while raising and caring for his 11-year-old brother.

The need to be more efficient and cost effective, both on set and in post, had become a necessity for tightening budgets. EP Doug Jones knew the tech workflow on set had to be improved, getting rid of roadblocks between set and post, while allowing editors to better interface with production. Jones began to see how DaVinci Resolve, combined with integrated Blackmagic hardware on set, could provide an "online all the time" pipeline, and would save time and money.

Working with director Reginald Hudlin, DP Shane Hurlbut ASC and editor Terel Gibson, the team outlined how the pipeline could help make production more efficient. The process they developed was simple and manageable by one operator on set. When production cameras rolled, they automatically triggered HyperDeck Studio Mini recorders on the DAM cart to record simultaneously, with matching time code, creating immediate playback footage. That same video feed was live graded onset with DaVinci Resolve, allowing video village and remote creatives to view only colored footage rather than raw, uncolored imagery. Thus, colored playback was available right away, with dailies available twice daily both onset as well as remotely, when uploaded to secure cloud services. Live images and recorded shots were immediately available throughout the set via ATEM 1 M/E Production Studio 4K switchers and Teranex Mini SDI Distribution 12G boxes. Audio was handled by the Blackmagic Audio Monitor 12G.

Those on set who have impact on post decisions, such as directors and DPs, were able to make notes on clips that went through the DAM cart directly to editorial. Even script supervisor notes were added to metadata and available to editorial immediately. Camera original shots were downloaded from storage cards directly to high speed RAID drives, which were then delivered to nearby postproduction multiple times a day.

Hurlbut said, "We were able to track all metadata coming out of the cameras and put that right into our RAID system, send shots all the way up to Disney and keep everyone on the same communication level, with same day dailies that kept the studio feeling very connected to the film."

Dick Pope Cookes For *Supernova*

Cinematographer Dick Pope, BSC, chose to return to Cooke Panchro/i Classic Prime lenses to shoot *Supernova*, a film about love and loss written and directed by Harry Macqueen. *Supernova* follows Sam (Colin Firth) and Tusker (Stanley Tucci), partners of 20 years, on a road trip across England visiting friends, family, and places from their past. Since Tusker was diagnosed with early-onset dementia two years ago, their time together has become precious.



Pope (l) and McQueen

"The lenses I chose for *Supernova* were based on the look that Harry Macqueen wanted for his film, which was somewhat old fashioned, warm and romantic in feel, offering a close and intimate chemistry between the two main characters," said Pope. "I arranged a screening for him of Edward Norton's *Motherless Brooklyn*, on which I had previously used Cooke Panchro/i Classic Primes, and Harry loved them on that film."

Pope had also used the original Cooke Speed Panchros on Mike Leigh's *Mr Turner* (2014). "These classic go-to Hollywood lenses from the 1950s and 1960s were loved by Stanley Kubrick and often used by him—for example, on *Spartacus*," he said. "The updated Panchro/i Classics retain the same characteristics as those vintage lenses."

Assimilate Continues to Drive On-Set Tools with Major Update to Live Looks and Live Assist Assimilate announced a major update of their Live Assist and Live Look-on-set software, which enables a first in highly efficient, streamlined on-set workflows at unprecedented price/performance value for video assist and DIT live grading functions.

charlieuniformtango Uses Character Animation Integrated Into Live Action For Gas South The charlieuniformtango FX/CG team did the character animation integrated into live action to create one :30 and two :15's for The Richards Group client Gas South. The campaign's fun spots bring "Mr. Meter" to life to introduce Gas South's simple, no deposit, OnePrice plan™ with the tag line "The Difference is Good"

adidas Runtastic Selects IPV To Support Its Studio Video Team's Move To Hybrid Working IPV have announced that adidas Runtastic will use Curator to centrally control and publish their rapidly growing video archive of brand assets. With more than 170 million registered users worldwide, adidas Runtastic has digitized traditional fitness through social networking, gamification, and an industry-leading mobile fitness app.

Director Ky Dickens Joins Yard Dog for Advertising Projects Award-winning filmmaker Ky Dickens is joining Yard Dog for advertising projects originating on the West and East coasts. Based in Los Angeles, Dickens has earned wide acclaim for her documentaries and for work for agencies and brands, which often involves real people and heartfelt subject matter.

ThoughtMatter Unites The World In Craft with Campaign For American Craft Council The American Craft Council (ACC) teamed up with New York-based brand design studio ThoughtMatter to help communicate the historic importance of craft and rally people around their mission to support makers.

Stephen Arnold Music Scored Big in 2020 for WGN America, CNN, HLN, CNBC and Others Across the U.S. and the World Stephen Arnold Music enjoyed a banner year in 2020, creating sonic branding and custom music for national and local clients across the United States and internationally. Highlights of the studio's work included a complete branding package supporting the launch of *NewsNation*.

Goldcrest Post Helps Send Six Films To Sundance Continuing its long-time support for independent film, Goldcrest Post provided post-production sound and/or picture services for ten films screening in this year's Sundance Film Festival.

MTI Film Accelerates Set-to-Screen Workflow Management With CORTEX v5.3.2 MTI Film has released a new update to CORTEX, its family of products for managing workflows from the set through post-production. CORTEX v5.3.2 includes numerous improvements to performance and user-experience.

Veteran Audio Engineer Eduardo Mendoza Joins One Union Recording Studios One Union Recording Studios has added Sr. Engineer Eduardo Mendoza to its mix staff. Mendoza arrives from a similar post with Facebook and brings more than 15 years of experience in audio recording, editing and mixing for broadcast, digital, corporate and other media.

Twentyfour Seven Welcomes Jordi Molla As Production Ambassador Production services specialists Twentyfour Seven welcomes Jordi Molla to their team team working across Spain, Portugal and Poland. Jordi has built an unparalleled reputation for client hosting in Spain for film and commercials production.

ArsenalCreative Names Thomas J. Connors as VFX Supervisor/CG Generalist Seasoned 3D artist Thomas Connors has been named VFX Supervisor/CG Generalist at ArsenalCreative. Founder Mark Leiss announced Connors' appointment, which is effective immediately.

PluckStudio Launches Animation Division with "Duck & Snowman's Christmas Adventure" PluckStudio has added an animation division to bring short and long-form animated commercial production and original entertainment to the content studio's clientele of brands, agencies, and Fortune 500 companies.

Short Film Spotlighting Farmer Mental Health Released on Amazon Prime, YouTube, Vimeo California-based production company The Factory officially released their award-winning short film 'Dying Breed' on Amazon Prime, YouTube, and Vimeo. The public release is the culmination of a Festival circuit that included official selections to the Sedona International Film Festival, Lone Star Film Festival, and Tallgrass Film Festival, where it received the Narrative Short Audience Award.

PepsiCo Design Wins Best of Show in Mobius Awards "A Can Has No Name," created by PepsiCo Design & Innovation, New York City, for Mtn Dew and Game of Thrones superfans, won Best of Show/Grand Prix in the 2020 Mobius Awards competition.

Hindsight is 2020: Filmmakers As "The Witnesses"

When the pandemic began we all became witnesses to a world outside of our windows. And nothing was ever the same again. "The Witnesses" is a collaboration between filmmaker Matt Ogens and Invisible Collective, a creative collective dedicated to making diverse and unique voices heard, founded by Justin Polk. For this timely project, Ogens asked people to share what spoke to them when they looked from their windows during quarantine.

Pace Pictures Makes Virtual Production a Reality For Independent Film The future of independent film production in a post-covid-19 world is taking "virtual" shape at Pace Pictures in Hollywood. The boutique facility recently used groundbreaking virtual production technology to produce Match, a feature-length romantic comedy from director Sean McGinly (Silver Lake, The Great Buck Howard).

Dick's Sporting Goods Spotlights Beloved Community Organization Co-Op City Tennis Forty years ago, NYC-based Co-Op City Tennis founder Ms. Lorraine and her late husband launched the organization to teach kids foundations of tennis, but also community, respect and leadership. Today, the group still runs strong in spite of pandemic-era setbacks, and community children feel indebted to its leader. The Dick's Sporting Goods spotlight of Co-Op City Tennis was shot on location, directed by Savannah Leaf and produced by Park Pictures, out of agency Anomaly.

Arch Empowers VFX Studios To Scale In The Cloud with AWS As modern visual effects (VFX) studios continue to move creative workflows into the cloud, Arch Platform Technologies is providing secure, cloud-based infrastructure for studios and vendors to scale teams from anywhere in the world. Built on Amazon Web Services (AWS), Arch packages together a complete VFX workflow.

Universal Studios Florida's Production Stages and Locations Are Ready and Open The production professionals comprising Universal Studios Florida's Production Group (USFPG) are ready to welcome the next round of film, TV and commercial productions to their Sound Stages, Backlot and across the resort's ultra-unique properties.

Valiant Pictures Co-founder Vincent Lin Joins The Academy Nicholl Fellowships Top 50 Screenplays Valiant's co-founder and director Vincent Lin has earned high ranks among the 2020 Academy Nicholl Fellows, cracking the Top 50 Screenplays as a semi-finalist for the writing fellowship for his dramatic comedy 'CHOPIN'. Leviathan Announced Key Promotion and Staff Expansion The principals of specialized creative agency Leviathan announced a key promotion and several new hires. Effective immediately, Adam Pere rises to Director of Creative Technology, while the full-time staff additions include Senior IT Operations

Manager Andrew Peplinski, Senior Creative Software Engineer Grady Sain, and Creative Software Engineer Kate Milleker. Also the addition of Account Manager Meg Miller, Art Director Mackenzie Suben, and Designer Morgan Itterly were announced.

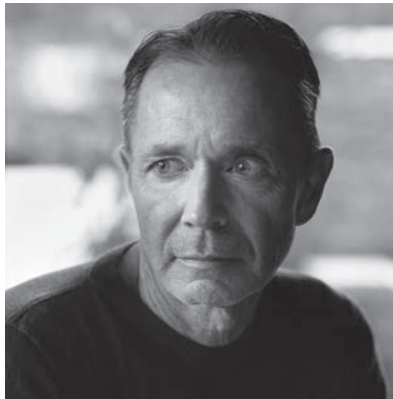
Strand Releasing Acquires North American Rights For Director Braden King's Feature Film 'The Evening Hour' Strand Releasing announced that it has acquired all North American rights to Braden King's THE EVENING HOUR, which had its World Premiere in Competition at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival and its International Premiere in Competition at the 2020 Rotterdam Film Festival.

HBO Documentary Film "Baby God" Finished at Goldcrest Post Goldcrest Post Colorist Marcy Robinson applied the final grade to BABY GOD, now streaming on HBO Max. From first-time director Hannah Olson and executive produced by Academy Award nominees Heidi Ewing and Rachel Grady,, the documentary is a shocking examination of the work of a Las Vegas fertility specialist, Dr. Quincy Fortier, and the many women he guided to pregnancy through use of his own sperm, often without their knowledge or consent.

NextPaw Technology and Emmy Award-Winning Agency Digital Brew Create Video Addressing "Pandemic Puppy" NextPaw Technology and Emmy Award-winning Agency Digital Brew have partnered to create an animated explainer video aimed at independent pet businesses seeking online growth during the unprecedented "pandemic puppy" sales boom the industry has experienced for the past six months.

For the full stories [and many more], contacts info and videos with credits, visit SHOOT® Publicity Wire (spw.SHOOTonline.com). SPW is the best place to announce your news or video release to amp up the "buzz" among the entertainment & advertising industries motion picture segments' movers and shakers from Hollywood to Bollywood and from Madison Avenue to Cannes and beyond. To get more info on how to "Toot Your Own Horn" via SPW visit pr.SHOOTonline.com

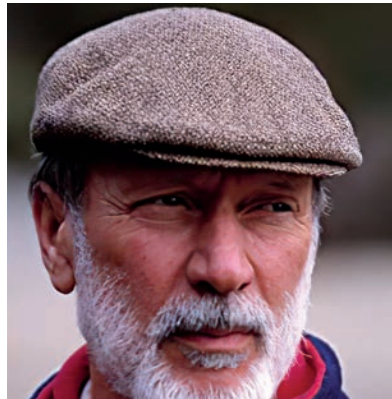




Tobias Schliessler, ASC



Ma Rainey's Black Bottom



Chris Menges, ASC, BSC



Waiting for the Barbarians

Lensing *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *Waiting for the Barbarians*

DPs Tobias Schliessler and Chris Menges discuss their approaches, collaborators, cameras

By Robert Goldrich

A tale of two cinematographers—one whose feature is currently in the Oscar conversation across varied categories, the other already a two-time Academy Award winner with professional achievements that also include a number of lifetime achievement honors.

The latter DP is Chris Menges, ASC, BSC who shares insights into his latest feature, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (Samuel Goldwyn Films).

And the other DP is Tobias Schliessler, ASC who shot *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (Netflix), a film that is among the most talked about contenders this awards season. Menges and Schliessler shared with *SHOOT* their approaches to the respective features.

Ma Rainey's Black Bottom

With an adapted screenplay by Ruben Santiago-Hudson based on the award-winning play by August Wilson, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (Netflix)—directed by George C. Wolfe—marked the last performance on film by Chadwick Boseman who passed away last August at the age of 43 from cancer. Boseman made an indelible impact on audiences worldwide as well as those with whom he worked, including Schliessler. Among the highlights for Schliessler during shooting *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* was a moving scene in which Boseman's character, trumpeter Levee, tells the story of his mother being raped and his father's murder at the hands of a group of white men.

"I was mesmerized by Chadwick's per-

formance and can honestly say I don't think I've ever photographed something so emotional. At one point Chadwick walked into an extreme closeup and the look in his eyes expressed so many years of pain. It gave me chills. (Camera operator) Kirk Gardner was on the slider and instinctively kept pushing in closer. I had a small eye light on Chadwick but suddenly felt I wanted to bring up the intensity to complement his performance—at that moment it magically started coming up. I turned to my dimmer operator, Eric Androwitch, who was sitting right next to me and my DIT Curtis in the DIT tent. He gave me that nod 'I got you' as he was bringing the light up on his board. That's how this movie was—we all were on the same page and had to be in sync as the performances were too precious for anyone to make mistakes. This put a lot of extra pressure on my 1st ACs, Willie Estrada and Dan Schroer, and my dolly grips, Kyle Carden and Tim Christie, but everyone did a fantastic job. It was the beautiful collaboration with all crew members that made this movie so special."

While everything came together for Schliessler during that pivotal scene, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*—set in 1920s' Chicago—had the DP feeling slightly uneasy going in given the constraints of its primary venue. The majority of the film takes place in a basement band room and recording studio where Ma Rainey, a celebrated blues singer (portrayed by Viola Davis), and her four backup musicians (Boseman as Levee, Colman Domingo as Cutler, Michael Potts as Slow Drag, and

Glynn Turman as Toledo) are set to record her new album, including the single "Black Bottom."

Schliessler explained, "The only part of the project that had me a bit apprehensive—and I think most DPs would feel this way—was that literally over half of the story played out in a 23x18 foot windowless rehearsal room in the basement of a recording studio. The room was described in the script as 'INT. BAND ROOM. BASEMENT. IT IS A WINDOWLESS SUBTERRANEAN ROOM. ONCE A STORAGE ROOM. NO AIR. NO LIGHT.'"

The cinematographer continued, "I questioned myself—how could I make this contained room with no motivated light from the outside visually interesting? I knew there would be practicals, but for half the movie it would be one look in the same space which felt daunting to say the least. Before I talked to George (Wolfe), I called the production designer, Mark Ricker, to find out just how set George was on not having any outside light coming into the room. Mark empathized with my creative concerns, but confirmed that George was dead set on this decision—he wanted the four musicians to feel trapped in the room like in the underbelly of a slave ship with no connection to the outside world. This made complete sense for the story and was impossible to argue with. My fears of lighting this space and keeping it interesting was one of the first things I brought up with George when we spoke. I thought it might cost me the job, but felt I had to be honest with him about my concerns. I confessed I didn't yet have

any ideas on how to make the basement scenes visually compelling and his response was 'If you already knew how to do it, where would be the challenge? And then why do it?' I loved this answer and knew I was in great hands with George."

Thankfully Schliessler also formed a bond with Ricker who had the two main sets, where 80 percent of the movie takes place, built on a stage in the 31st Street Studios in downtown Pittsburgh. Schliessler recalled that while the plan was to build the band room set on stage, Ricker wanted to show him and Wolfe an old bourbon and barrel warehouse as inspiration for the texture and color of the brick walls he was going to construct. "As we were exploring the space," noted Schliessler, "Mark walked into a small storage room and called for George and I to join him. In the room was a tiny 1x3 foot window close to the ceiling. The sun came through at a perfect angle and illuminated Mark like a Caravaggio painting. We all responded in awe of the beautiful natural light and within moments agreed that a tiny window in our set would make a considerable difference. George justified the addition of the window by placing it up high like in this storage room—a portal to an unreachable outside world for the characters.

"I now had a motivated light source that would alleviate my initial fear. I designed the whole look around the window, using 1x20k, 2x10k, 1x5ks tungsten Fresnel lights and multiple narrow par cans through the small window. If the light was too hard for closeups on the ac-

CINEMATOGRAPHERS & CAMERAS

tors I'd cover the window with different diffusion frames - it varied from Hampshire, opal and 250. For fill light we used a 12x12 softbox above the set with ARRI Skypanels, which allowed me to change the color temperature and intensity levels from the dimmer board. There were practicals on the walls which I used as additional light motivation for the areas where the window light didn't reach. For eye lights I used a combination of LiteMat 4s, 8s and Chimera pancake lights right on the floor wherever was out of the way of the actors or camera. In some cases the old school Chinese lanterns with 250 watt photofloods came in handy.

"With my biggest lighting challenge of the room solved," continued Schliessler, "my next task was figuring out how we would shoot the blocking of the scenes in a 23x18 foot room with four actors, their musical instruments and sometimes 8 to 10 pages of continuous dialogue. George compared the blocking of the actors to a boxing match, but instead of gloves, they used dialogue to take swings and hit hard. This was extremely helpful and immediately gave me ideas for camera movement and coverage. To make sure the actors could perform long sections of dialogue and monologues uninterrupted, we shot with two, sometimes even three, cameras. Kirk Gardner was my A camera/Steadicam operator and Dino Parks was my B camera operator, both of whom I had worked with before and trusted immensely."

Schliessler also benefited from the deep trust and support he received from up top, including Netflix and producers Denzel Washington and Todd Black. Schliessler noted that he, longtime friend Black and Washington had earlier worked together on *The Taking of Pelham 123* and had a positive experience. For *Ma Rainey*, Schliessler wanted to deploy a 15-foot Chapman telescopic arm with a remote head to help capture actor performances. "Originally our budget didn't allow for the Chapman arm but I felt strongly that we needed it. I had already given up but then Denzel Washington offered to pay for it personally and it showed up the next day. I was shocked. Never in my career has a producer trusted me so much that I needed a piece of equipment to make the movie better than they paid for

it themselves. Feeling fully supported by everyone, the three weeks in the space that originally made me the most nervous ended up being one of the best experiences of my career."

Schliessler chose the Sony Venice camera for *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*. The DP tested lenses and filters to deploy in concert with Venice. He remembered using the Bronze Glimmer Glass filter by Tiffen in tandem with an antique suede filter on a commercial which was flattering on darker skin tones. That combination ended up being the choice for exterior scenes in *Ma Rainey*. For interiors, Schliessler lost the antique suede and only went with the Bronze Glimmer Glass. After putting varied lenses through their paces, Schliessler opted for Zeiss Supremes, explaining, "We had planned a lot of focus pulls between actors especially for the long dialogue scenes in the bandroom and the Supremes had the least amount of lens breathing. Additionally, we wanted to use wide lenses for close ups and the Supremes had the least amount of distortion on the wider end. For these reasons, along with George (Wolfe) not wanting to distract the audience from the performance with strong lens characteristics, the Supreme primes felt like the right choice."

Schliessler concluded, "I'd much rather be on a movie set than on a vacation--because of those moments we have with actors, the collaboration with everyone." Cast and crew came together with a great sense of purpose on *Ma Rainey* which the DP said was a special project. August Wilson in *Ma Rainey* delves into issues of race, religion, art, segregation and the exploitation of Black recording artists. Everyone involved in the film felt a deep commitment to doing justice to the story.

Legendary eye

Menges is a four-time Best Cinematography Oscar nominee, winning twice--for *The Killing Fields* in 1985 and *The Mission* in 1987. Menges was nominated again in 1997 for *Michael Collins* and in 2009 for *The Reader* (shared with Roger Deakins, ASC, BSC). Menges also has four ASC Award nominations thus far---for *The Mission* in '87, *Michael Collins* in '97, *The Boxer* (directed by Jim Sheridan) in '98, and *The Reader* in 2009. The very

next year Menges won the ASC's International Achievement Award, presented to a cinematographer who has made enduring contributions to the international art of filmmaking.

Last year Menges received the 2020 IMAGO Award for Lifetime Achievement in Cinematography. The Imago honor is just the latest of a series of lifetime achievement awards for Menges, including from the British Independent Film Awards in 2001, the British Society of Cinematographers in 2012, and Camerimage in 2015. As for the BSC Awards themselves, Menges has five career nominations, winning for *The Killing Fields*. The other four nods were for *The Mission*, *Michael Collins*, *Dirty Pretty Things* and *The Reader*.

Additionally Menges earned a BAFTA Film Award for Best Cinematography in 1985 for *The Killing Fields*. Seven years earlier he garnered a BAFTA TV Award as Best Film Cameraman for *Last Summer*. Menges has four other BAFTA Film Award Best Cinematography nominations--for *Local Hero* in '84, *The Mission* in '87, *Michael Collins* in '97, and *The Reader* in 2009.

Yet while those laurels are considerable, Menges isn't inclined to rest on them. His latest film is director Ciro Guerra's *Waiting for the Barbarians*, which premiered at the 2019 Venice Film Fest and then was released on VOD by Samuel Goldwyn Films in summer of 2020.

With a screenplay by Nobel laureate J.M. Coetzee from his 1980 novel of the same title, *Waiting for the Barbarians* is set in an isolated frontier settlement on the border of an unnamed empire where a magistrate (portrayed by Mark Rylance) becomes increasingly disturbed over the way the imperial military led by a ruthless colonel (Johnny Depp) treats the native people whom it deems "barbarians." The torture of a young "barbarian" woman spurs the magistrate to a crisis of conscience and an act of rebellion, for which he has to pay a price.

Menges was drawn to the story, initially by Coetzee's book, back in the mid '80s. "It is a searing indictment of the oppression of indigenous people by a colonial power," said Menges who many years later was asked by Guerra and producer Michael Fitzgerald to be the cinematog-

rapher on the film. Menges noted that he had "a good working relationship" with Fitzgerald, having lensed for him *The Pledge* directed by Sean Penn, and *The Three Burials* directed by Tommy Lee Jones.

The DP related, "Great screenplays energize your imagination. When I read a script, I spend days imagining and drawing and writing and this was a special screenplay about 'the elusive terror of Kafka.' Michael with Ciro and designer Crispin Sallis had spent a considerable time searching for the perfect location--a remote fort on the edge of a large empire with indigenous people living in the mountains beyond. After a long search they found the ideal location--an old fortified house/farm due south of Marrakech, close to the towering Atlas Mountains in Morocco."

Menges opted to deploy two Alexa SXT cameras and one Alexa Mini camera on *Waiting for the Barbarians*. He noted, "After many locations scouts, Ciro and I agreed that we should shoot with a wide-screen format and we opted for 2.39 to 1. It became obvious that as we had a shoot of 37 days, entirely on location, on the north side of the Atlas Mountains during the winter of November/December, that we needed great quality lenses and of a fast speed that would enable us make the schedule. I chose the Cooke series 5i lenses which have a great beauty with a fine edge and fast at T1.4. The choice of zooms was that champion Optima 24 to 290mm T2.8."

Menges found his collaboration with Guerra gratifying, sharing that he was eager to team with the director. "I greatly admired the film *Embrace the Serpent* directed by Ciro in 2004--we have in common anthropologist friends--so I was intrigued and anxious to learn new tricks from a fine storyteller."

As for his biggest takeaway from working on *Waiting for the Barbarians*, Menges observed, "What I learnt from working on the film was to remember how much I love the Sahara desert: The vast high contrast light at midday, the ebbing of twilight as night approaches, the wind in the snow peaks lifting. I learnt that at age 78 [at the time he was working on the film; he is now 80] it was a joy to work long days with many creative spirits."

Directors Reflect On Their Feature Documentaries

Lucy Walker, Pedro Kos, Parker Hill discuss project backstories, challenges, Sundance's significance

By Robert Goldrich



Lucy Walker has had assorted films—both feature documentaries and shorts—make their initial mark at the Sundance Film Festival over the years. Two of those films, *Waste Land* and *The Tsunami and the Cherry Blossom*, went on to earn Oscar nominations, respectively, for Best Documentary Feature in 2011 and Best Short Subject Documentary in 2012.

Among Walker's other Sundance films were *Devil's Playground* which went on to receive three Emmy nominations (Best Documentary, Best Director, Best Editing), the acclaimed short *The Lion's Mouth Opens*, and *The Crash Reel*. The latter garnered Walker a DGA Award nomination in 2014 for Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Documentary.

Now Walker's Sundance odyssey continues with *Bring Your Own Brigade* which will be showcased in the fest's Premieres category. The character-driven verite feature takes us on a journey embedded with firefighters and residents on a mission to understand the causes of historically large wildfires and how to survive them.

Walker gravitated to the story naturally, having moved from London to California where one record wildfire after another ravaged multiple communities. These included the Camp Fire in 2018, the deadliest and most destructive wildfire in California's history. The Camp Fire struck Northern California's Butte County, including the town of Paradise which was devastated. Concurrently the Woolsey Fire roared through Malibu in Southern California, leaving behind unimaginable loss.

Walker wondered if things had to be this way and sought to get to the bottom of what was happening. While not yet at liberty to discuss in detail what she discovered with the debut of her film pending, Walker shared that the experience was an eye-opener, yielding insights and answers that were often quite different from what she had expected going into the project. "Navigating through these different communities, beliefs, getting out of your own bubble," observed Walker, makes for a valuable learning experience.

The good news, she continued, is

that there are steps that can be taken to meaningfully address the situation—but questions remain as to exactly why those steps haven't yet fully been implemented. Thankfully, affirmed Walker, the problem is "a lot more fixable than it seems."

Perhaps the biggest challenge posed by *Bring Your Own Brigade* entailed not only filming in dramatic disaster zones fraught with physical danger but also the emotion entailed in following firefighters who put their lives on the line and residents who have lost their homes and/or loved ones. Chronicling and relating to what firefighters and residents were going through was at times overwhelming. "What firefighters are asked to do in these fires is literally hellish," said Walker. "A burning hell is a literal definition of what firefighters are working in and what residents are facing. Ours is a very sympathetic look at the residents and firefighters while trying to capture the real story of what's going on."

Walker's acumen at capturing all sorts of stories and having them connect with viewers is itself well documented, in part

From top left, clockwise: Lucy Walker; a scene from *Bring Your Own Brigade*; Pedro Kos; a scene from *Rebel Hearts*; Parker Hill; a scene from *Cusp*; Parker Hill (I) and Isabel Bethencourt.

SUNDANCE PREVIEW

by her longstanding prolific, ongoing run at Sundance which numbers thus far 10 films and counting.

Walker's short-form exploits extend beyond master works like the aforementioned *The Tsunami and the Cherry Blossom* and *The Lion's Mouth Opens*. She also remains active in commercials and branded content via the Merman studio. She has to her credit for example a noteworthy film for the Always feminine hygiene brand in which girls talk about and start to realize how they are stereotypically limited in emojis depicting them as compared to their male counterparts.

Walker observed that her work in the ad arena informs her documentary filmmaking and vice versa. "I'm always looking for the best stories, building my skills, wanting to learn from different stories. You develop a craft and sense of which stories will connect with audiences. Brands have helped me in that regard. I've done some fantastic projects with brands, telling stories. I love films of different lengths. I pride myself on finding the right length for different stories. You learn something different along the way. I love sharpening my nose for stories and the craft of telling them. I don't want to repeat myself. I always like a new challenge."

Pedro Kos

Merman also figures in the work of director Pedro Kos, representing him in the branded arena while also serving as a production company on the feature *Rebel Hearts* which was one of 10 films selected for this year's Sundance U.S. Documentary Competition. Kira Carstensen, global managing partner of Merman, is one of three prime producers on *Rebel Hearts*, the other two being Shawnee Isaac-Smith and Judy Korin. *Rebel Hearts* centers on a group of pioneering nuns who bravely stand up to the Catholic Church patriarchy, fighting for their livelihoods, convictions and equality against an all-powerful Cardinal. From marching in Selma in 1965 to the Women's March in 2018, these women had a hand in reshaping our society for the better.

Kos, who first made a major career splash as an editor (including winning a primetime Emmy for *The Square*, shared with two other cutters), is no stranger to Sundance. In 2017, the feature documen-

tary *Bending the Arc*—which he and Kief Davidson directed—premiered at Sundance in the Premieres section. Earlier Kos had edited work that also made the Sundance cut, including Walker's *The Crash Reel*. (Walker and Kos additionally teamed on the writing of *The Crash Reel*.) Still, *Rebel Hearts*—the second feature documentary directed by Kos—breaks new ground for him at Sundance as the first feature doc. he's helmed solo.

He credits Carstensen, a friend and colleague, with affording him the opportunity. The genesis of the project came actually some 20 years ago when Isaac-Smith connected with several former Immaculate Heart Sisters and was moved by their story. She conducted interviews with these nuns and began to build a treasure trove of material, including archival photos, correspondence, artwork and media coverage. Carstensen and Isaac-Smith later connected and bonded on a mutual charity/community service endeavor. Then in 2014 upon learning of Isaac-Smith's work on the nuns' story, Carstensen was immediately drawn in. A year later, recalled Kos, Carstensen came to him.

When Isaac-Smith and Carstensen shared the material that had been compiled over the years, Kos said, "It was love at first sight. This one was like an arrow right through my heart. The Heart Sisters got involved in the civil rights movement, the farm workers' movement, the anti-war movement." Kos described the nuns as "a community of women who empowered each other, stood up to an oppressive structure. Growing up as a gay man in Catholic Brazil, I empathized a lot with them, their interpretation of the faith."

Yet while considerable archival and interview resources had been gathered, Kos had to cover a story that spans five decades, a great deal of it taking place in the 1960s. "They haven't invented a time machine yet so there were parts of the story we had to figure out how to best bring to life," related Kos. "My goal and dream as a director is to make a story feel completely immersive. I want to take you on a roller coaster ride, an emotional journey with incredible characters. One of the challenges was how can we bring the story to life in a unique cinematic way that is going to transport people into and capture the emotional resonance of what's happening.

"This biggest challenge," he continued, "turned out in a way to be our greatest opportunity." The pivotal discovery, said Kos, was Icelandic animator Una Lorenzen who brought a unifying cohesive element that helps tie the story together. Ambitious and inspired animation and motion graphics informed by "the heart of the story" helped realize the immersive feel that Kos wanted. These and other elements meshed to do justice to the Heart Sisters' saga which Kos described as "a joyous rebellion," sparking "an awakening that reverberated and changed the world."

Parker Hill

Parker Hill and Isabel Bethencourt, whose friendship dates back to their time together studying film at NYU, were on the last day of a photo road trip that took them from Montana to Texas. They set out on the sojourn to capture the American teenage summer, hitting burger joints, state parks and other hangouts. Their last night of the photojournalism trek had them 90 minutes outside Austin at a gas station filling up their final tank before heading home. A truck pulled up blasting music and slammed to a halt. Girls hopped out of the cab.

"We found ourselves in the midst of a boundless adolescent summer night," recalled Hill. "The girls were a blast to be around. We got to talking, they invited us to a friend's house. They were going on an adventure, planning to jump in the river in the middle of the night."

Hill and Bethencourt stayed in touch with the girls on Instagram, eventually asking them if they'd be amenable to being part of a documentary short. That short evolved into *Cusp*, a feature documentary chronicling a formative year of teenage life for three friends in a Texas town. Autumn, Brittney and Aaloni allowed directors Hill and Bethencourt to observe intimate moments within their lives. The film's verite approach creates a sensitive, multifaceted portrait of adolescent girlhood.

Cusp is now on the verge of its world premiere at Sundance in the U.S. Documentary Competition. It marks Bethencourt's directorial debut and the first feature documentary helmed by Hill who earlier directed some short films. Noting that Bethencourt's background is in cinematography for documentaries while

hers is more in directing, Hill recalled suggesting to her compatriot, "You could co-direct if I could co-shoot it." Hill continued, "Isabel is a great collaborator," which is something she knew long before *Cusp*. "We're good at having a small footprint, working with real people." Back in 2019, for example, Hill directed an ESPN commercial promoting the SEC Network (college sports), which Bethencourt lensed. "It was real people in real places. We have such a good workflow and shorthand," noted Hill who directs commercials through production house Tomorrow.

In addition to directing and shooting *Cusp*, Hill and Bethencourt served as producers of the film. Hill additionally edited while crediting supervising editor Fiona Otway with making an integral contribution. Otway, an accomplished editor known for her work in documentaries (*Hell and Back Again*, *Iraq in Fragments*), was brought onto *Cusp* after it was selected for the Sundance fest. Hill observed that Otway provided a much needed objective perspective. "Isabel and I were attached to the girls in the film," explained Hill. "It was nice to have an outside voice (Otway) come in and help shape the story, to clarify things. As first-time feature directors, we want to say so much about the world, about the girls. She (Otway) reined us in a little bit and gave a focus on what we could say in an hour and a half, which is not a lot of real estate considering how much we shot."

Having her feature directing debut selected for Sundance means a great deal to Hill. "Sundance has been my dream festival forever," she said. "My uncle lives in Park City. Since my first year in film school, I've gone to the festival and seen opening night films for years, including the premiere of *Whiplash*, one of my favorite movies. I've been waiting for this moment as long as I've wanted to make movies. It's a bit of an emotional roller coaster, though. You dream of standing on stage, addressing an audience. It is a bummer that the premiere won't be in a room with others."

Yet there may be a silver lining to the Sundance fest being largely virtual with perhaps more people being able to gain access to content. The Sundance Film Festival runs from January 28-February 3.

Consciousness of Streaming

Big Screen features debut concurrently on the Small Screen in Warner Bros. distribution model for 2021

A SHOOT Staff Report

On January 29, director John Lee Hancock's psychological suspense thriller *The Little Things*, starring Academy Award winners Denzel Washington, Rami Malek and Jared Leto, is scheduled to premiere both in theaters around the country and on HBO Max. *The Little Things* will be available on HBO Max for 31 days from its theatrical release in the U.S. at no additional cost to subscribers.

This marks the beginning to a new year in which Warner Bros.' pandemic-induced simultaneously streaming TV/theater distribution model will take hold—on the heels of this past Xmas weekend's rollout of *Wonder Woman 1984* in theaters and on HBO Max.

Warner Bros. Pictures Group's 2021 release slate is also expected to include *Judas and the Black Messiah*, *Tom & Jerry*, *Godzilla vs. Kong*, *Mortal Kombat*, *Those Who Wish Me Dead*, *The Conjuring: The Devil Made Me Do It*, *In The Heights*, *Space Jam: A New Legacy*, *The Suicide Squad*, *Reminiscence*, *Malignant*, *Dune*, *The Many Saints of Newark*, *King Richard*, *Cry Macho* and *Matrix 4*.

"We're living in unprecedented times which call for creative solutions, including this new initiative for the Warner Bros. Pictures Group," said Ann Sarnoff, chair and CEO, WarnerMedia Studios and Networks Group (of which Warner Bros is part). "No one wants films back on the big screen more than we do. We know new content is the lifeblood of theatrical exhibition, but we have to balance this with the reality that most theaters in the U.S. will likely operate at reduced capacity throughout 2021. With this unique one-year plan, we can support our partners in exhibition with a steady pipeline of world-class films, while also giving moviegoers who may not have access to theaters or aren't quite ready to go back to the movies the chance to see our amazing 2021 films. We see it as a win-win for film lovers and exhibitors, and we're extremely grateful to our filmmaking partners for working with us on this innovative response to these circumstances."

Jason Kilar, CEO, Warner Media, stated, "After considering all available options and the projected state of moviegoing throughout 2021, we came to the conclusion that this was the best way for WarnerMedia's motion picture business to navigate the next 12 months. More importantly, we are planning to bring consumers 17 remarkable movies throughout the year, giving them the choice and the power to decide how they want to enjoy these films. Our content is extremely valuable, unless it's sitting on a shelf not

being seen by anyone. We believe this approach serves our fans, supports exhibitors and filmmakers, and enhances the HBO Max experience, creating value for all."

Toby Emmerich, chairman, Warner Bros. Pictures Group, added, "This hybrid exhibition model enables us to best support our films, creative partners and moviegoing in general throughout 2021. We have a fantastic, wide ranging slate of titles from talented and visionary filmmakers next year, and we're excited to be able get these movies in front of audiences around the world. And, as always, we'll support

all of our releases with innovative and robust marketing campaigns for their theatrical debuts, while highlighting this unique opportunity to see our films domestically via HBO Max as well."

However not all view this business model as the "win-win" described by Sarnoff. Several major directors have pushed back against the Warner Bros. plan for 2021, including one of the studio's most preeminent filmmakers, Christopher Nolan, who was quoted as saying, "It's a unilateral decision that the studio took. They didn't even tell the people involved. You have these great filmmakers who worked with passion and diligence for years on projects that are intended to be feature films with fantastic movie stars. And they've all now been told that they're a loss-leader for a fledgling streaming service."

Some films originally intended for theatrical release, though,



From top left, clockwise: Denzel Washington (l) and Jared Leto in *The Little Things*; Bill Murray (l) and Rashida Jones in *On The Rocks*; Letitia Wright in a scene from *Mangrove*, part of Steve McQueen's *Small Axe* anthology series; a scene from *In The Heights*.

TELEVISION: STREAMING BOX OFFICE

made a major mark in 2020 via streaming platforms. For example, *Hamilton*—the filmed Broadway musical based on the life of U.S. Constitution framer Alexander Hamilton—premiered on Disney+ during the Fourth of July weekend, drawing a massive audience to the streaming service. RadicalMedia produced what’s been nicknamed “Hamifilm,” the live capture taken from two on-stage Broadway performances with most of the original cast in June 2016. The movie was originally scheduled to open in theaters in October 2021. But the pandemic moved up that timetable and shifted the venue from cinema to households and other streaming destinations. The critically acclaimed *Hamilton* film delivered a special shared experience to audiences, bringing a much needed dose of virtual togetherness during isolating times.

And in an Oscar season unlike any other, work from feature filmmakers has as of late received critical acclaim playing for a primarily streaming audience, including David Fincher’s *Mank* (Netflix), Sofia Coppola’s *On The Rocks* (Apple TV+), and in the offing is Lee Daniels’ *The United States vs. Billie Holiday*, for which Hulu recently acquired U.S. distribution rights. Meanwhile The Walt Disney Co. steered Pixar’s *Soul* to Disney+ in the U.S. *Soul* opened theatrically in some international markets. Additionally a notable project intended for streaming TV, Steve McQueen’s *Small Axe* (Amazon Prime) anthology series, gained Oscar momentum last month when it won the Best Picture honor from the Los Angeles Film Critics Association. Now a debate has emerged over whether *Small Axe*, a series of five films, is Emmy or Oscar-eligible.

Set from the late 1960s to the mid-1980s, the *Small Axe* films each tell a different story involving London’s West Indian community whose lives have been shaped by their own force of will despite rampant racism and discrimination. Even though this collection of films is set some decades ago, the stories are as vital and timely today as they were for the West Indian community in London at the time. *Small Axe* is a celebration of Black joy, beauty, love, friendship, family, music and even food; each one, in its own unique way, conveys hard-won successes in the face of great adversity.

Perspectives on Zoom

While the awards season jury remains

out for *Small Axe*, other directors are on the Zoom circuit to in part build audiences for their films while bolstering Oscar prospects. Having the likes of Fincher and Coppola advancing features that are mostly connecting with U.S. viewers on streaming platforms underscores how firmly—if perhaps only temporarily—smaller screens have taken hold for first-run features in the wake of COVID-19.

Writer-director-producer Coppola recently participated in a Zoom session with stars Rashida Jones and Marlon Wayans to promote *On The Rocks*. Coppola described the film as “a love letter to New York City,” noting that she wanted to take a creative departure with something lighter in tone. *On The Rocks*, she continued, plays like a father-daughter (Bill Murray-Rashida Jones) buddy story with a screwball comedy twist yet connecting with some important themes along the way.

Coppola felt fortunate to have finished filming right before production was shut down due to the pandemic. Having the freedom, she said, to roam about the city, capturing what NY feels like and what it means to so many, was a treat—albeit done on a tight shooting schedule of 28 days.

Coppola also praised her cast, including Murray with whom she has a fruitful track record. She said that the actor “always brings some sort of magic to the set,” often through “unexpected things,” noting that he’s at his best when called upon to be “more vulnerable and heartfelt” which yields work that is “touching.”

To promote *Mank*, Fincher was in on a Zoom session with such colleagues as cinematographer Erik Messerschmidt, editor Kirk Baxter, production designer Donald Graham Burt and costume designer Trish Summerville. They swapped stories and shared insights about *Mank*, including Baxter’s aversion to coming on set. The editor explained that he loves “not knowing the artifice,” preferring to concentrate “on the parts of the frame I can influence.” Fincher meanwhile acknowledged that he has an inclination to overthink things at times but deeply values how he and his compatriots continually push to achieve more, experimenting on different fronts. There can be benefits, noted Fincher, to pushing and testing things out, akin to how makers test the weave of fabric, helping them to “end up with a piece of fabric

that can stand the test of time.”

Long-term impact

Still to be determined are what lasting effects, if any, the pandemic will have on industry distribution models. Some think audience appetite will grow for first-run features on streaming platforms—at least serving to shorten the exclusivity window for theaters once a semblance of normality is regained after the pandemic.

But many remain firm believers in the in-theater shared experience. During a keynote session at the virtual American Film Market back in November, Elissa Federoff, president of distribution at NEON, said, “We know that audiences will come back to movie theaters, that the theatrical landscape will be vibrant again. This is very exciting news about the vaccine because potentially it makes the span of time a little shorter.” She affirmed, “I truly believe there is no virtual offering, there is no streaming equivalent, there’s no digital

equivalent to being in a movie theater with an audience having a completely immersive experience in the dark, no phones, no talking, no distractions and of the audience being a character in that film. That really changes the whole dynamic.”

Multipatform releases remain part of the business equation, continued Federoff. “NEON is not a company that believes every film is one size fits all—there will always be films for us and for the entire world that will need a very long and thought out release in theaters for 180 days before they go to VOD. We love those. Films like *Honeyland*. We would have never released that in any other way than a long thought out release. *Parasite*, same thing. But then there have been other films like *Snowpiercer* that we did in a compressed window and we put it on VOD and it was very very successful for us. It made in excess of \$10 million on VOD. And the fact that we can be flexible, I think just opens up many more avenues in our business.”

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Brett Henenberg

TRaverse32 co-founder talks films, TV, brands

By Robert Goldrich

Brett Henenberg leads all elements of TRaverse32's domestic and international film, television, and content productions. Recently launched by IPG Mediabrands, TRaverse32 is an independent development and entertainment company aimed at connecting film and TV audiences with highly influential brands and creators. Henenberg is co-founder and global head of production for TRaverse32. He works in concert with co-founder Brendan Gaul who serves both as global president of TRaverse32 and the first-ever global chief content officer of Mediabrands.

Prior to TRaverse32, Henenberg served as

IP holders, distributors and brands to move between the worlds of entertainment and advertising.

SHOOT: Discuss how *5B* and *Dear Santa* inform your approach to content creation at TRaverse32. I recall, for instance, you talking about how important the selection of the filmmaker is for any given project (such as Dana Nachman for *Dear Santa*).

Henenberg: It's really a custom case-by-case scenario dictated by the types of stories we're telling, but our approach to



"We partner with creators, IP holders, distributors and brands to move between the worlds of entertainment and advertising."

SVP and global head of production for Mediabrands' UM Studios. There Henenberg produced a series of film and television projects including the 2019 Cannes Lions Jury Grand Prize-winning documentary *5B*, which was also the first brand-funded film to ever premiere at the Cannes Film Festival. Directed by Paul Haggis and Dan Krauss via Saville Productions, *5B* was produced for UM client Johnson & Johnson and named after the San Francisco General ward which opened in 1983 as the first full-fledged hospital unit dedicated to treating AIDs patients.

TRaverse32 will make it possible for companies to create, develop, and co-produce relevant mainstream film and television content akin to UM Studios' *5B* and the well-received *Dear Santa*, distributed by IFC, which was recently released in select theaters nationwide and is available on Video on Demand. *Dear Santa*, a heartwarming documentary directed by Dana Nachman, shines a light on the 100-year-old "Operation Santa" Program of the United States Postal Service (USPS).

Here are some excerpts from our chat with Henenberg. Check out SHOOTonline.com or the SHOOT>.edition for the full interview.

SHOOT: What is the mission statement for TRaverse32?

Henenberg: We partner with creators,

content creation is always the same--and that is one of true partnership. We never hire production companies or directors just to execute our vision. Conversely, we do not provide funding just to bring someone else's vision to life.

The initial idea for a project can come from any number of places, but the development and execution of that idea is always an equal collaboration between our team, the filmmakers/creators and the brand. It's a model that's based on being strategic in choosing the right partners and then spending as much time and effort as needed aligning on a creative vision. Our objective is to give the filmmaker and creators the space they need to bring their vision to life while ensuring there are guardrails and touch points for all parties to imprint on the work.

A good proof point that the model is working is that we've been able to give our filmmaking partners final cut, and to date, we've been successful based on the partnership model we've created. That said, when you put all of your effort behind equal partnership and a shared creative vision, it really doesn't matter at the end of the day who has final cut. It's about being in agreement on the creative decisions regardless of who contractually has the final say.

street talk

International branding agency INVNT has appointed Neil Mason to serve as executive creative director, EMEA. Mason brings more than 20 years' experience to the role, over which he has led the creative output of experiential and integrated campaigns for brands including Nike, McLaren, Samsung, Google and Cisco. Based in London, Mason joins from Identity Group where he was ECD, and has held sr. creative positions at agencies including George P. Johnson and Jack Morton Worldwide. Throughout his career, he has managed and grown creative departments, elevated existing projects to achieve strategic business goals, and won new business across all sectors. Mason--a judge of the D&AD Awards since 2018, guest lecturer at the Royal College of Art in London, and member of the board of governors

at Ravensbourne University--will report to INVNT managing director Claudia Stephenson....VFX supervisor Artemis Oikonomopoulou has joined Cinesite's London studio. She brings with her more than 20 years of experience in film and comes to Cinesite after having just delivered sci-fi thriller *Infinite*. Prior to that she was the VFX supervisor for *Mermaid 2*, sequel to the all-time highest grossing film at the Chinese box office. Throughout her career Oikonomopoulou has held various supervisor roles across feature films which include *Venom*, *Thor: Ragnarok*, *Annihilation* and *Ant-Man* among other tentpole film franchises. Oikonomopoulou has a proven track record for delivering industry-leading visual effects for 1,000-plus shot feature film projects. The achievements of her career were acknowledged in June when she was announced as a newly elected member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. On set supervision is one of Oikonomopoulou's many strengths. Her talents were called upon to supervise a unit in the U.S. for *Venom* in 2018 and more recently she was on location at the pyramids in Egypt, shooting with drones and capturing background plates for *Death on the Nile*....

report

Creative studio Makiné has retained Laura Coones of Moccasin Management to help lead its business development initiatives in the entertainment space where the studio has created integrated campaigns, promos, and network rebrands for Disney, Nuvo, and Fuse, along with bespoke social content for brands like Amazon Music and T-Mobile. Launched in 2003, Makiné specializes in advertising and marketing content for brands, media and entertainment companies. Led by co-founder/executive producer Maria Alejandra Padua, the 100% Latina-owned and minority-certified company has garnered Cannes Lions, Clio, The One Show, D&AD, Webby, and Promax awards over its nearly 20 years in the business. It is a trusted partner to such clients as Coca-Cola, BMW, Disney, Discovery, Toyota, T-Mobile, Amazon, and Procter & Gamble, among others. Moccasin Management is a talent management company representing an ensemble of brand strategists, creative directors, live-action directors, designers, animators, editors, AR/VR, and VFX artists....Meg Miller has joined Leviathan as account manager. Leviathan is a specialized creative agency that transforms distinctive environments into exceptional experiences. By blending artful content, digital technology and physical space, Leviathan designs destinations that engage audiences, change perceptions and drive transactions for clients worldwide. Previously Miller was a digital experience project manager at Gensler who specialized in integrating digital content into the architectural design process. Having launched her career at Framstore New York, she was an early member of the Digital team, which evolved into the VR and Immersive Content Studio in 2013. Drawing on her work for brands including AT&T, HBO, McDonald's, Paramount and Samsung, Miller has a deep understanding of the content development process spanning multiple mediums and physical spaces....

Meet The NDS Class of 2020

Discover Emerging Filmmakers



The 18th Annual SHOOT NDS 2020 Reel

34 directors and a duo, shown above in alphabetical order, with work spanning commercials, PSAs, promo fare, spec advertising, short films, documentaries, music videos, web series, comedy, drama and tabletop. What they have in common is directing professionally less than 3 years and a great passion for being a director! Due to the pandemic, SHOOT was unable to hold its Annual New Directors Showcase Event at the DGA in NYC where we have debuted the Showcase Reel for the past 16 years. We greatly appreciate the DGA's longtime support and look forward to resuming the event in the Fall of 2021. In the meantime, we invite you to check out the great work in the 2020 NDS!

Visit NDS.SHOOTONLINE.COM To Watch & Discover New Talent.

The 19th Annual SHOOT NDS 2021 Search

Due to the pandemic and production slowdown caused by it, the 2021 SHOOT 19th Annual New Directors Search will open for entries in April this year and remain open for at least 3 months. To get a reminder email when the Search opens simply complete the webform at EnterNDS.SHOOTonline.com



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