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December 2016

# SHOOT®

## The Best of 2016

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# Collaborations, Backstories, Realizing A Vision

Insights into  
*Moonlight*, *Silence*,  
*Jackie*, *Neruda*,  
*Arrival*, *La La Land*

By Robert Goldrich | Road

To Oscar Series, Part 6



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Photo courtesy of The Orchard

Before his first feature, the well-received *Medicine for Melancholy*, director Barry Jenkins made an early mark as a filmmaker with a 2013 short titled *Chlorophyl*, an evocation of his native Miami emphasizing changes wrought through urban renewal. The film premiered at the local Borscht Film Festival.

Now fast forward to his second feature—the recently released *Moonlight* (A24 Films)—and we find that Jenkins has returned to his Miami roots.

*Moonlight* is a coming of age story that centers on Chiron whom we follow through three distinct chapters in his life—as a boy (portrayed by Alex Hibbert), a teen (Ashton Sanders) and then a young man (Trevante Rhodes). Growing up in the perilous Liberty Square neighborhood of Miami, the vulnerable, quiet Chiron copes as best he can with a harsh reality which includes a drug-addicted mother (Naomie Harris) and kids who mercilessly bully him. However, Chiron finds camaraderie and intimacy in a childhood friend, Kevin, played at differ-

ent ages by Jaden Piner as a lad, Jharrel Jerome as a teen and Andre Holland as a young adult.

Just as Chiron and Kevin form a special bond, so too do director Jenkins and playwright Tarell Alvin McCraney enjoy a special connection. Jenkins adapted *Moonlight* from a never produced story by McCraney titled “In Moonlight Black Boys Look Blue.” Jenkins and McCraney did not know each other in childhood and through their teen years like Chiron and Kevin. However, in real life Jenkins and McCraney grew up in Liberty Square, attended the same elementary and middle schools around the same time and both went on to become artists.

While Jenkins is straight and McCraney is gay, the two African-Americans have a familial parallel as each had a mother who struggled with drug addiction. Jenkins’ mom survived her battle and has remained HIV positive for 24 years while McCraney’s mother passed away from AIDS. Jenkins told *SHOOT* that Naomie Harris’ character is a com-

posite of his and McCraney’s mothers.

This coming together to form a flawed yet ultimately repentant maternal figure has its own backstory. McCraney first submitted the short work “In Moonlight Black Boys Look Blue” to the aforementioned Borscht Film Fest which is dedicated to showcasing works by regional artists forging the cinematic identity of Miami through stories that “go beyond the typical portrayal of a beautiful but vapid party town.” Heading off to London for a writing residency with the Royal Shakespeare Company, McCraney all but forgot about the piece.

Fortuitously “In Moonlight Black Boys Look Blue” resurfaced as producer Adele Romanski, a friend of Jenkins since college, was sifting through prospective projects for the director after his successful *Medicine for Melancholy*. McCraney’s story of his own youth in Miami came to Jenkins and Romanski through a Borscht collective member. Romanski and Jenkins gravitated towards the piece. Jen-

*Continued on page 6*

From top left, clockwise: A scene from *Moonlight*; director/writer Barry Jenkins; a scene from *Jackie*; Luis Gnecco portrays Pablo Neruda in *Neruda*; director Martin Scorsese; Amy Adams in *Arrival*; Ryan Gosling in *La La Land*



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MARTIN SCORSESE

# SILENCE



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# Scorsese On Silence; Larrain Discusses Jackie and Neruda

Continued from page 4

Jenkins empathized with McCraney's work, noting that adapting the screenplay "was one of the most fluid processes I had experienced. Tarell did a great job of capturing growing up in the housing projects of Miami. He put energy and vibrancy in the source material. My job was to not fuck it up and extend it in an organic way to the screen that was true to his voice."

Bringing that story to the screen entailed Jenkins calling on a mix of artisans ranging from ongoing to first-time collaborators. Among the former were DP James Laxton (Romanski's husband) who shot *Chlorophyll* and *Medicine for Melancholy*, and editors Nat Sanders and Joi McMillion. Sanders cut *Medicine for Melancholy*. McMillion cut *Chlorophyll*. Jenkins went to Florida State University Film School with Laxton, Sanders and McMillion. "We all share a language," related Jenkins. "For example, James shot my work at film school. It was great to work with a cinematographer whom I know so well and go back with a ways because this was a movie which had me going back home to make a film about this place I know very well—and that James has a distinct sense of. This made it easier for us to find the right visual way to express myself and tell the story."

At the same time, Jenkins reached out to a first-time collaborator, production designer Hannah Beachler, to help realize his *Moonlight* vision. "I'm friends with [director] Ryan Coogler who worked with Hannah on *Creed* and *Fruitvale Station*," related Jenkins. "So she knew both sides—a bigger budgeted movie as well as working within the confines of a more modestly budgeted picture. She did not bring a small-budget aesthetic to *Moonlight* even though it had a much smaller budget than *Creed*. Her creative attention to detail is amazing. For example, the last five minutes of *Moonlight* have the two main characters [Chiron and Kevin] talking in the kitchen. That conversation was supposed to take place in the living room. But Hannah had done such a thorough job of designing that apartment to the point where the kitchen space turned out to be ideal. The kitchen was supposed to be a tight space with a stove and a pot sitting atop it—nothing more than that. But she did so much with that space that

it just felt right for their conversation to take place there."

Getting that "right" feeling was a constant pursuit for Jenkins on *Moonlight* who said a prime challenge was working with different actors playing the protagonists at different stages of their lives. "We made the film in 25 days with three different actors on both sides—one portraying Chiron as a child, another as a teen and then a young adult, and three doing the same for Kevin. Jenkins said he was striving "to attain consistency of performance across the board yet to make each actor distinct. Working with James [Laxton], we had to trust our actors, trust in our training and the process."

## Martin Scorsese

Nominated eight times for the Best Director Oscar—and winning in 2007 for *The Departed*—Martin Scorsese has for most of that stretch of excellence spanning several decades harbored a passion project which faced varied financial, legal and logistical obstacles. It began in 1989 when he read *Silence*, a 1966 novel by Shūsaku Endō. The story of religious faith and somehow maintaining it in the face of unthinkable violence struck a responsive chord for Scorsese, taking him



Martin Scorsese (l) and Andrew Garfield

on an off and on-again journey which finally yielded a motion picture which will be released later this month in the U.S. Paramount Pictures' *Silence* is a historical drama set in the 17th century, centered on two Portuguese Jesuit priests (portrayed by Andrew Garfield and Adam Driver) who face peril and persecution when they surreptitiously travel to Japan to locate their mentor (Liam Neeson) who is rumored to have renounced his religion

after being tortured. In remote Japanese villages, Garfield and Driver tend to the religious needs of devout Christians who practice their religion in secrecy for fear of government retribution.

After a preview screening of the film in Westwood, Calif., Scorsese discussed the film, accompanied by several of his collaborators. Once he read Endō's novel, Scorsese recalled thinking that if he could "express how the book made me feel" through a movie, it would not only be a worthwhile artistic endeavor but also "a religious act" for him personally.

Scorsese and Jay Cocks ultimately teamed on a screenplay. But getting to that point was a struggle for Scorsese as he grappled with his changing views of faith and religion over the decades, feeling at times that he was about to "grab" the gist of the story only to fall back and find translating it into a movie to be quite "elusive."

At times, even if he were to attain a script that worked for him, Scorsese thought it would be virtually impossible to get *Silence* made—that is until venerable producer Irwin Winkler visited him on the set of *Hugo*. Winkler, who was also on stage in Westwood with Scorsese after the *Silence* screening, recollected asking Scorsese during the *Hugo* shoot what ever happened to that project that had long been gestating. This led to Winkler coming aboard to help bring *Silence* to fruition, navigating legal and other entanglements to help Scorsese realize his vision.

Among others on stage with Messrs Scorsese and Winkler was Garfield. *Silence* marked Garfield's first time working with Scorsese. He described the director as having "divine confidence" in his vision tempered by "doubts" which keep him open to "allowing moments to happen." Through all of this, Garfield said of Scorsese, "When he has caught lightning, he knows it." Garfield added that the director wants his actors at their most "wild," "unconscious" and "uncomfortable." Garfield affirmed that collaborating with Scorsese was "the greatest experience I've had as an actor."

## Pablo Larrain

For filmmaker Pablo Larrain, the Oscar conversation is in stereo. Not only has his

*Jackie* (Fox Searchlight) starring Natalie Portman as First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy garnered acclaim but so too has *Neruda* (U.S. distribution being handled by The Orchard) in which Luis Gnecco portrays Nobel Prize-winning Chilean poet Pablo Neruda. *Neruda* was selected as Chile's entry for Best Foreign Language Film Oscar consideration.

*Jackie* marks the first English-language film for Chilean director Larrain. To entrust him with the story of the iconic First Lady as she copes with her husband's assassination and struggles to regain her faith, console her children and help define President JFK's historic legacy would seem a leap of faith to say the least. However, it wasn't such a leap for acclaimed filmmaker Darren Aronofsky who served as a producer on *Jackie*. Aronofsky was president of the 2015 Berlin International Film Festival jury which bestowed the Silver Berlin Bear upon Larrain's *The Club*.

"I met Darren at an after party in Berlin," recalled Larrain. "He said, 'why don't we work together?' I thought it was just party talk. A week later he sent me the script for *Jackie*."

Larrain noted that Aronofsky was "very generous to me" and seemed to



Pablo Larrain

think having someone not American directing this movie could prove advantageous, bringing a fresh outsider perspective to Jacqueline Kennedy's story. "I had a superficial idea of who Jackie Kennedy was—someone who defined and was concerned about style and fashion. But in researching and digging deeper into who she was, I found this sophisticated, educated, brilliant person who had a great

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## TERRI TIMELY MUSCLES UP FOR MEKANISM

Directing duo Terri Timely of Park Pictures lends the physical stamina of Green Bay Packers linebacker Clay Matthews to athletes in need of an extra boost in the new campaign, "Lean on Me" for Muscle Milk, out of Mekanism. The campaign features the burly NFL star literally lending a helping hand to give struggling competitors a winning edge in running, swimming, soccer, rock climbing and even yoga. Matthews not only loans his muscle, but he also supplies the vocals for the "Lean on Me" (previously flexed in *Pitch Perfect 2*) track that takes a humorous twist on stereotypical sports campaigns. The campaign includes a :30 anthem spot as well as four additional :15s.



## LION TO ROAR AT CAPRI, HOLLYWOOD

*Lion*, the critically acclaimed film from The Weinstein Company and See-Saw Films, directed by Garth Davis and starring Sunny Pawar, Dev Patel and Oscar®-winner Nicole Kidman, has been selected to receive a Capri Award for Best Adapted Screenplay at the 21st edition of Capri, Hollywood-The International Film Festival. The award will be presented on December 29 at the Cinema Paradiso in Anacapri.

Poet and writer Luke Davies wrote the script which he adapted from Saroo Brierley's autobiographical book "A Long Way Home". The film, which also stars Rooney Mara, David Wenham and Divian Ladwa, tells the moving story of an Indian boy adopted by an Australian couple who, tormented by his past, decides to look for his mother in the place where he accidentally left by train when he was a child.

"*Lion* is a wonderful, uplifting tale brought to the big screen through great storytelling and for this reason it deserves the 'Capri Award' as well as many other awards," said iconic Italian filmmaker Lina Wertmüller, honorary president of the Capri in the World Institute and the first woman ever nominated for a Best Director Academy Award (*Seven Beauties*).

Previously announced 2016 Capri Awards are Best Ensemble Cast to Damien Chazelle's *La La Land*; Producer of the Year to Bill Mechanic for *Hacksaw Ridge*; Best Documentary and European Movie of the Year to *Fire at Sea*; Best European Director to Stephen Frears for *Florence Foster Jenkins*; and the Capri Lifetime Achievement Award to Israel's Amos Gitai.

The Festival will open on December 27 with the European premiere of *The Comedian*, directed by Taylor Hackford. This year's Festival is dedicated to the legendary Italian producer Dino De Laurentiis.

## PEOPLE ON THE MOVE



Cameron Templeton

Indie agency 22squared has hired Cameron Templeton, formerly a creative director at Firstborn NY, as creative director in its Atlanta office. While at Firstborn, Templeton played key leadership roles on campaigns for clients such as Audible, Patron and Rolex. A copywriter by trade, Templeton will be working on brands at 22squared including Baskin-Robbins, SunTrust Bank and The Home Depot. Templeton is the fourth creative to join the Atlanta office of 22squared in the past 14 months and the third to matriculate from agencies in NY. ECD Al Patton joined from R/GA in May and creative director Roy Torres joined from Grey last September. 22squared also hired creative director Bryan Lee, formerly of BBDO Atlanta, in July...

## Bradford Young Teams with

*Continued from page 6*

instinctive nose in terms of her political sensibilities. There are very few people who have even half of her brilliance. While there are tons of biographies about her, she is one of the most unknown of the known people in the 20th century. I wanted to do justice to her—and that was the biggest challenge. People think my biggest challenge was to make a movie in English. But in fact the biggest challenge was to make a movie about a woman. I had dealt with male subjects all my life. I had to capture her sensibilities and I found her story to be mostly about a mother, a woman who put grief on her back and pushed through it."

Integral to telling Jackie's story was casting Portman in the role, and changing the original orientation of the film. On the former score, Larrain simply related that he would direct the film only if Portman portrayed the First Lady. Aronofsky called Portman, whom he directed in her Best Actress Oscar-winning performance in *Black Swan*, and helped to secure her for *Jackie*.

Regarding a shift in orientation, Larrain said he suggested to writer Noah Oppenheim that the perspective of certain scenes change so that "almost every shot is seen through Jackie's eyes." Larrain also found that when he was shooting medium and wide scenes, he kind of naturally wound up coming in closer and closer to Portman. "There's a mystery about Jackie. We want to know what's going on inside her. Those eyes are the doors to the unknown. I felt we needed to be very close on her with the camera and the more we did that, the cinema started to work. We got really, really close to Natalie and she was not intimidated. We had an incredible DP [Stéphane Fontaine] who was great at putting the camera on his shoulder and 'dancing' with her."

Larrain also had the comfort factor of working with two trusted collaborators with whom he had a long track record—his brother, Juan de Dios Larraín who was a producer on *Jackie* (and all of the director's films), and editor Sebastian Sepulveda. Larrain credited Sepulveda with the idea that they cut based on the emotional chords struck by Portman. Her performance became the backbone of the edit, especially facial expressions.

Larrain's research led to another key element as he found online the famed televised White House tour conducted by the First Lady. Larrain encouraged Oppenheim to add the tour to the story. For *Jackie*, the White House tour was recreated shot for shot and even married with some of the original TV footage. The tour dovetailed with the aftermath of JFK's assassination. Just as she revamped and showcased the White House to restore its history for the American people, so too did she later make a concerted effort to ensure that JFK's legacy would burn bright, a "Camelot" for all to remember.

As he did with *Jackie*, Larrain thought outside the biopic box for *Neruda*. While he had to get up to speed on Jacqueline Kennedy, Larrain was all too familiar with Pablo Neruda. "He was a diplomat, a collector, a woman lover, a politician, a poet, a communist leader, almost president of Chile and one of the biggest writers in our country," said Larrain of Neruda. "He was an elusive, incredible, ungrabbable cosmic guy. We couldn't do a conventional biopic about him. We worked more with his cosmos and spirit for this film."

*Neruda* thus is a lyrical, at times whimsical mesh of fact and fiction that takes the form of a detective story/thriller caper set in the late 1940s with a police commissioner (Gael García Bernal) in pursuit of Neruda who is in hiding from a dictatorial government looking to capture and make an example of him. In some respects, observed Larrain, *Neruda* is more 'a Nerudian story or novel that he might have written or at least enjoyed' and less a chronicle of his life. But by going this unconventional route, Larrain looks to convey the essence of Neruda, showing his artistry, his courage, his foibles, his sense of farce, love of the absurd, and commitment to social justice. Larrain looked to translate Neruda's poetry into cinematic expression, making a movie that is both narrative and surreal.

## Bradford Young, ASC

The cinematography of Bradford Young, ASC, on director Denis Villeneuve's *Arrival* (Paramount Pictures) has already received awards season recognition, winning the Silver Frog at this year's Carimagine.

Based on "Story of Your Life," a short



## Denis Villeneuve On Arrival

story by Ted Chiang, *Arrival* depicts alien beings who bring spacecrafts to Earth, hovering slightly above terra firma at sites throughout the globe. A team is assembled—which includes linguist Louise Banks (portrayed by Amy Adams), mathematician Ian Donnelly (Jeremy Renner) and U.S. Army Colonel Weber (Forest Whitaker)—to investigate and communicate with the other worldly lifeforms. Is their visit to our planet a prelude to a global/galactic war? Or does it signal an opportunity for peace and unprecedented scientific and societal progress based on technologies and knowledge from a civilization more advanced than ours?

*Arrival* is a multi-faceted, intelligent, emotional form of science-fiction that touches the heart and mind, departing from the Hollywood norm in depicting alien lifeforms and telling otherworldly stories. Drawing Young to *Arrival* were Villeneuve and the story. “I’m a big fan of Denis,” affirmed Young. “I’ve studied

this story for us not to be just technicians. We had to be people, human beings telling a human journey, relating it to fathers and parents. Our process was steeped in brotherhood. From that deep personal place, we were able to put our arms around the material.”

As for the creative challenges that *Arrival* posed to him as a cinematographer, Young shared, “This was my first visual effects film. I hadn’t done much of that work except for some basic bluescreen from time to time. So for *Arrival* I had to extend my imagination beyond what was in front of me—which is a muscle I hadn’t worked a lot prior to this film. My experience had been about grounding images and what’s happening right in front of the camera, and then responding to that. I had to incorporate the visual effects in my mind to help create the visual landscape that Denis and I envisioned.”

Young shot *Arrival* digitally, deploying the Alexa XT, and for flash forward sequences the Alexa M camera. “Denis enjoyed shooting digital earlier with Roger [Deakins, ASC, BSC, on *Sicario*] and he likes the idea of seeing what he’s getting,” related Young. “It was our first visual effects movie of this scale and having that element of control means one less mystery out of a list of mysteries. You don’t have to stress at night about the dailies. We saw what we got, and that we could achieve the intimacy we wanted by shooting digitally.”

*Arrival* adds to a Young filmography which includes director Ava DuVernay’s *Selma*, which earned him an Independent Spirit Award nomination for Best Cinematography, the Dee Rees-helmed *Pariah* which won the Best Dramatic Cinematography Award at the Sundance Film Festival in 2011, and filmmaker David Lowery’s *Ain’t Them Body Saints* and director Andrew Dosunmu’s *Mother of George* which tied for the Sundance Drama Cinematography Award in 2013.

### Linus Sandgren

Recently earning Cinematographer of the Year distinction at the Hollywood Film Awards for his lensing of *La La Land*, DP Linus Sandgren recalled that his work for director David O. Russell, including *American Hustle* and *Joy*, helped

*Continued on page 29*



Bradford Young, ASC

his work and technique. I almost didn’t care what the material was as long as I got to work with him. But the material also spoke to me in a real personal way. I’m a brand new father. And the question of mortality around your children [as experienced by Amy Adams’ character] seems unimaginable yet resonated and crystallized with me in a really deep way. To go on a journey with an artist you admire while telling a story you feel a connection to represented the perfect combination.”

The humanity in *Arrival* was attained in part thanks to the humanity of Young’s dealings with Villeneuve. “A lot of our preparation was my being able to break bread at Denis’ table, to get to know him. We clicked instantly. It was necessary for



Matthew Earl Jones

contributions from Scottsdale, Arizona corporation, YAM Worldwide, Inc., owned by GoDaddy founder Rob Parsons, an entrepreneur and philanthropist.

“Supporting the establishment of a state film and digital media office [under the state’s economic development organization The Arizona Commerce Authority] will bring movie-making back to the great state of Arizona, and that’s good for the economy,” said Parsons.

With the state’s rich surplus of talent, resources, unique architecture and scenery—ranging from desert to forest landscapes—Studio 48 will offer location scouting, traffic assistance, talent sourcing and coordination with local and state agencies as needed.

The Arizona Commerce Authority has appointed Matthew Earl Jones as director of Studio 48. He brings 30-plus years of experience on both sides of the camera in film and television, as well as the music industry.

### Ballers Lured By Calif. Incentives

Fittingly, the HBO series *Ballers*—which stars Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson as a former pro football player looking to make his mark as a financial manager—has scored an economic touchdown with a move from Florida to California. After shooting its first two seasons in Miami, *Ballers* will settle into Greater L.A. for its upcoming season, a prime lure being a reported \$8 million-plus worth of tax



Photo by Jeff Daly/courtesy of HBO

Ballers

credits covering 10 episodes. The credits are provided by California’s ongoing filming incentives program covering TV and features.

*Ballers* becomes the seventh television series to relocate to California to take advantage of the Golden State initiative that’s designed to retain and attract high-impact lensing business. Prior series that have moved to California for the tax credits include FX’s *American Horror Story* which came over from Louisiana, and HBO’s *Veep*, a transplant from Maryland. *Ballers* departs Florida after one of that state’s key incentive programs ended this past summer. According to the California Film Commission, the third season of *Ballers* will hire 135 cast members, 209 base crew members and 5,700 extras.

### Fuglsig’s Horse Soldiers Begins Filming in New Mexico

The feature *Horse Soldiers*, produced by Jerry Bruckheimer Films and Black Label Media, is filming in early December through mid-February in and around Albuquerque, Socorro and Alamogordo. Announcement was made by Nick Maniatis, director of the New Mexico Film Office. The production will employ over 250 New Mexico crew members, 50 New Mexico principal actors and approximately 2,000 New Mexico background talent.

Directed by Nicolai Fuglsig (two-time DGA Award winner for commercials via MJZ), *Horse Soldiers* is based on the book by Doug Stanton, with a screenplay by Ted Tally and Peter Craig, and tells a powerful true story of events which occurred in the aftermath of 9/11. When a U.S. Special Forces team and their untested captain are sent to a rugged, mountainous region of Afghanistan, they must join forces with a Northern Alliance warlord to fight against overwhelming odds to drive out the Taliban.



## Composer Nicholas Britell

### *Reflections On Moonlight, Barry Jenkins*

**By Robert Goldrich**

Among composer Nicholas Britell's notable credits prior to director/writer Barry Jenkins' recently released, Oscar buzz-generating *Moonlight* is the score for director Adam McKay's *The Big Short*. Britell's music was also featured prominently in the Best Picture Oscar-winning *12 Years a Slave*, for which he composed and arranged the on-camera music including the violin performances, spiritual songs, work songs and dances (Hans Zimmer composed the score for that Steve McQueen-directed feature).

*SHOOT* connected with Britell to delve

posed to be getting together with Barry for coffee turned out to be a two-hour talk in downtown L.A. Early on we felt we had a similar musical perspective. Our conversation began that day and then continued, thankfully leading to me getting the chance to score *Moonlight*.

**SHOOT:** What were the biggest creative challenges that *Moonlight* posed to you?

**Britell:** One of the interesting creative challenges is the story's three-part structure, reflecting vastly different periods of time in the life of Chiron with three dif-



**"I read it [the *Moonlight* screenplay] and was profoundly moved. It was sensitive, poetic. I had never read anything like it."**

more deeply into *Moonlight*, a coming-of-age story centered on Chiron, an African-American whose story we follow in three chapters—in childhood, as a teenager and then a young adult. Raised in the dangerous Liberty Square neighborhood of Miami, Chiron has much adversity to overcome, including being mercilessly bullied in school and being raised by a drug-addicted mother. He struggles to find himself as a person, eventually coming to certain realizations, including that he is gay.

**SHOOT:** How did you connect with Barry Jenkins and get the *Moonlight* gig?

**Britell:** I scored *The Big Short* last year and Plan B produced that film. I also wrote and researched music for *12 Years a Slave*, another Plan B project. During the time I was scoring *The Big Short*, Jeremy Kleiner [*Moonlight* producer and co-president of Brad Pitt's Plan B Entertainment] reached out to me, telling me about this incredible screenplay. I read it and was profoundly moved. It was sensitive, poetic. I had never read anything like it. I had never met Barry but wanted to after reading that script. I had seen *Medicine for Melancholy* [Jenkins' first feature] and thought it was wonderful. What was sup-

posed to be getting together with Barry for coffee turned out to be a two-hour talk in downtown L.A. Early on we felt we had a similar musical perspective. Our conversation began that day and then continued, thankfully leading to me getting the chance to score *Moonlight*.

I sent a piece of music to Barry, calling it a piano and violin poem or Chiron's theme. That theme in chapter one appears in a deeper and more modulated form in chapter two. In chapter three an ensemble of cellos is brought in, orchestral changes are made. We had an interesting creative breakthrough when Barry told me about his passion for Chopped and Screwed music, a Southern strain of hip-hop which slows the recording down, lowers the pitch, deepens and enriches the sonic texture. Things are stretched out so that there's more of a physicality to the sound. Early on in the conversation with Barry, he mentioned what if we Chopped and Screwed the score? We did that on the music I wrote and recorded, became excited about the possibilities and dived right into the process.



# DP Sandgren Discusses *La La Land*, Director Chazelle

*Continued from page 11*

him land the movie musical gig. “I got a call from Damien Chazelle about *La La Land*,” related Sandgren. “He was interested in me from watching *American Hustle* and being drawn to its camera movement and style. We met and I showed him pictures from *Joy* which I had just finished. In our discussion, we found that we had similar situations—foreigners moving to L.A.—and that we shared similar sensibilities. I loved Damien’s work on *Whiplash*. For me he was a very interesting director to meet and talk with. He’s an inspiring person and knows where he wants to take a film—I find that to be the case especially when you work with directors who have written the script. I was inspired by his vision for *La La Land*. He played music for me. It was melancholy which surprised me for a musical, made me even more interested. What was supposed to be an hour meeting lasted at least two hours. I left with a real understanding of what he was after and it laid the foundation for a common friendship.”

*La La Land* tells the story of Mia (portrayed by Emma Stone), an aspiring actress, and Sebastian (Ryan Gosling), a dedicated jazz musician, who are struggling to make ends meet in a city known for crushing hopes and breaking hearts. Set in modern-day Los Angeles, this original musical about everyday life explores the joy and pain of pursuing your dreams.

The movie is the latest music chapter in Chazelle’s career. His debut, *Guy And Madeline On A Park Bench* (2009), was a loving ode to the city of New York, and to being young and in love; and then his feature *Whiplash* (2014) offered an intense take on a young drummer’s self-destructively ambitious pursuit of music-making. *Whiplash* garnered Chazelle a Best Writing, Adapted Screenplay Oscar nomination in 2015.

Chazelle’s vision as writer/director for *La La Land* “was very ambitious in terms of the musical numbers,” said Sandgren. “He wanted long single unbroken takes—continuous action without cutting. He didn’t want any coverage. He was so sure that the single take was the only way to do it. The reason behind it was to give the audience a sense of being in the moment of a given sequence. It helps the viewer to feel that he or she is another character ac-

tually present in the scene. In the old days there were musicals with those unbroken takes but the camera moves were simple back then. Now with more modern equipment like cranes and Steadicam-like breakthroughs, we could be far more three-dimensional in our approach. Adding to the challenge was Damien wanting a lot of those scenes in magic hour, meaning we had to work within a very small time frame.”

Chazelle and Sandgren opted to shoot *La La Land* on film in Cinemascope. “For Damien that is the most Hollywood epic sort of classic format,” explained Sandgren. “It was akin to *A Star is Born* or one of those kinds of 1950s’ movies—as well as musicals back in the day. He didn’t want to cheat. The work should be like it was back in the day when you crafted a film without cheating by fixing things in post-production. We could have shot certain scenes using green screen but didn’t—only did so in one scene because the actors were floating in space. Otherwise it was all in camera.”

Sandgren said that he and Chazelle developed a healthy give and take. “We live three blocks from each other,” said Sandgren. “Every morning in prep we met at his house for three hours. We went over every scene, came up with how to shoot everything in combination with scouting and rehearsals for the dancing. He already had strong ideas for how the camera was to move during musical numbers—which we had to adjust for locations and camera technicalities that I knew about. The production was set up so we had all the departments including dance, choreography, the art department, et cetera, on the same lot. You could walk back and forth between everything—in addition to Damien and I being able to readily get together to figure things out.”

Lighting was deployed to heighten the emotional feel of select scenes. “When Ryan plays the piano, for instance, in this film about dreamers, we enhance that by adopting something more along the lines of stage lighting, helping the audience to better connect with the character,” explained Sandgren. “We used a mix of theatrical and stage lighting. There was almost an emotional connection with the light. The cinematography had to interact almost more like a character, being emo-

tional and not just an observer. That was one of my big takeaways from this film—not just being a camera that observes but one that is more involved.”

*This is the sixth of a multi-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 in-*

*stallments also in print issues. The series will appear weekly through the Academy Awards. The Oscars will be held on Sunday, February 26, 2017, at the Dolby Theatre at Hollywood & Highland Center in Hollywood, and will be televised live by the ABC Television Network. The Oscar presentation also will be televised live in more than 225 countries and territories worldwide.*