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Print Issues

Subscription Service

circulation@shootonline.com

SHOOT (ISSN# 1055-9825) printed edition is published bimonthly for members by DCA Business Media LLC, 256 Post Road East, #206, Westport, CT 06880. Printed periodicals postage paid at Westport, CT and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to SHOOT, P.O. Box 184, Lowell, MA 01853

USPS (06-234)

SHOOT ePubs

The SHOOT > edition weekly ePub is published on Friday.

The SHOOT Dailies are published daily Mon-Fri.

Brand News| weekly ePub is published Wednesdays.

SHOOT Screenwork published Mondays.

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spot.com.mentary

By Robert Goldrich



Director/Healer

Groucho Marx famously played havoc with the old adage “time heals all wounds,” concluding instead that “time wounds all heels.” While I’m not convinced as to the absolute truth of either statement, it would seem that today we have plenty of heels in prominent places whose currency is divisiveness at the expense of the greater good. And their behavior needs

to be addressed with some sort of healing process that reaffirms our shared humanity which transcends any differences we may have.

In covering events and penning stories for this edition of SHOOT, these concepts came to the fore, a prime example surfacing at the DGA Awards ceremony when Greta Gerwig went on stage to accept her nomination medallion for *Lady Bird*. Gerwig said to her peers in the audience, “Sto-

rytellers are healers and I am so honored to be included among you.”

Storytelling can indeed be healing—by raising awareness of injustices, fostering empathy for others, even helping us to look at ourselves differently. On all these fronts, consider our Sundance Film Fest coverage which includes *The Sentence*, the first documentary from Park Pictures

The Sentence won the U.S. Documentary Audience Award at Sundance. Jackie Kelman Bisbee, one of the producers of *The Sentence* and a founder of both Park Pictures and Park Pictures Features, described the experience of making this film as “a highlight of my career.” She affirmed that Park Pictures Features will be doing more documentaries.

Peele said that the stories being told by DGA members can spark empathy and push back against hate and bigotry.

Features, the feature division of spot/branded content house Park Pictures. *The Sentence* shows us how the family of Cindy Shank is impacted by her imprisonment for a mandatory sentence of 15 years. Directed by Shank’s brother, Rudy Valdez, *The Sentence* calls our justice system into question while putting us in the shoes of not only Shank but also her three young daughters and how they coped with their mother’s absence.

Jordan Peele, in accepting the DGA Award for Outstanding Achievement of a First-Time Feature Film Director for *Get Out*, said that the stories being told by Guild members can shed light on humanity, spark empathy for others and push back against hate and bigotry. Peele called on the filmmakers in the DGA audience to continue to “use your voice,” which is “the most powerful weapon we have against evil.”

POV

by Celine Tricart



Directing VR in a War Zone—“The Sun Ladies”

I was teaching VR in San Francisco when I received an unforgettable call. It was Maria Bello, trying to produce a documentary on the Sun Ladies; women fighting against ISIS. She asked me if I could be in Iraq next week to shoot and direct. I said yes, hung up and cried.

Days later in Erbil inside Iraqi Kurdistan, my heart was pounding. I met one of our producers, Dylan Roberts, and co-director Christian Stephen, both filmmakers and war journalists. We spent six days in Iraq, from the Syrian border to refugee camps in Dohuk, interviewing Yazidi women who had been taken as sex slaves when ISIS invaded Iraq. They are now fighting back with AK-47s and sheer determination to free their captive sisters.

Shooting 360° isn’t easy, even more true in Iraq. Our camera (generously supplied by Google) was the best VR camera but it

also looked like an improvised explosive device, making every checkpoint crossing stressful. When I met the Sun Ladies, I was blown away by their incredible strength and beauty. I also noticed how similar we were. If not for the uniform and machine guns, they were like other women, braiding each other’s hair. That’s why our film makes people emotional: It’s not about victims of war, it’s not about unattainable movie super-heroines. It’s about you and me. The Sun Ladies and us are the same, just the world around us is different.

We were able to tell the story of these women in an immersive, intense way. Guided by the voiceover of Sun Lady Captain Xate Shingali, we explore her life, from famous singer in Kurdistan to the frontlines. We mix footage of breathtaking Iraqi landscapes and their military training compound with VR animation and news footage. The most important thing: we bring our audience close to these

women, to understand their state of mind, their longing for peace, honor and dignity. VR is about “being there” and empathy. It is vital to take in the environment and capture the emotion. This is done by finding the best camera placement and the right pace through editing. VR is a completely different type of filmmaking. It can be transcendent. We must abandon the total control we love as filmmakers and let each viewer see slightly different scenes.

Premiering at the Sundance Film Festival, we offered our audience the choice to write letters to the Sun Ladies. An emotional crowd gathered around the table, picking up pens and paper to write. The day we left, Xate’s second in command, Fahima, came to me and whispered in my ear: “I love you.” I cannot wait to get back to deliver the letters and tell her “me too.”

Celine Tricart recently signed with *The Cavalry Productions and SPECTACLE to direct spots and branded content.*

Perspectives From Different Filmmaking Disciplines

Reflections on *The Shape of Water*, *Dunkirk*, *Get Out*, *Lady Bird*, *Call Me by Your Name*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Darkest Hour*

By Robert Goldrich,
Road To Oscar Series,
Part 14



Along The Road To Oscar is a significant destination in and of itself—the DGA Awards. And four of this year’s five DGA nominees for Outstanding Achievement in Feature Film correspond with those in the running for the Best Director Oscar: Guillermo del Toro for *The Shape of Water* (Fox Searchlight); Greta Gerwig for *Lady Bird* (A24); Christopher Nolan for *Dunkirk* (Warner Bros.); and Jordan Peele for *Get Out* (Universal Pictures). (The remaining DGA nominee was Martin McDonagh for *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri* while the other filmmaker up for the Best Director Oscar is Paul Thomas Anderson for *Phantom Thread*.)

SHOOT was on hand for the Directors Guild’s Meet the Feature Nominees symposium earlier this month (Saturday, 2/2) at the DGA Theater in Los Angeles where dual Oscar/DGA nominees del Toro, Gerwig, Nolan and Peele shared insights into their films. The session was

moderated by director Jeremy Kagan.

Later that same evening, at a gala ceremony in Beverly Hills, del Toro won the DGA Award, making him the odds-on favorite to take the Academy Award for Best Director.

During the DGA symposium, del Toro observed that directing entails such prime responsibilities as creating worlds and deftly dealing with the unexpected happenings that invariably come up during filmmaking. He likes to call the latter “orchestrating the accidents,” citing the adage, “the obstacle is the path.”

The director shared that there were “at least two major crises” every day on *The Shape of Water*. How a director and his team deal with these crises is crucial, he affirmed.

Those unexpected occurrences or crises are both the best and worst parts of being a director, continued del Toro. Out of the unexpected can come something positive and beautiful. It’s akin, he said,

to the sound barrier. It’s a challenge but “once you break through,” you can find “the true art.”

Most importantly, though, asserted del Toro, is thorough preparation. “When you prepare, an accident is benign.” But if a director isn’t properly prepared, an accident can turn opportunity into “disaster.”

In his preparation for *The Shape of Water*, del Toro knew he wanted to adopt a “dry for wet” approach to certain underwater sequences, which had cinematographer Dan Laustsen, DFF, using smoke, wind machines and projection to create a dripping, pulsating feel contributing to the illusion of water. This enabled the actors to perform with their eyes open, tapping into their facial expressions, serving to heighten feelings of both romance and mystery.

Del Toro said he knew dry for wet would work, having successfully deployed it in the feature *Hellboy*. The dif-

Continued on page 6

From top left, clockwise: A scene from *The Shape of Water*; Greta Gerwig (r) directs Saoirse Ronan in *Lady Bird*; a scene from *Dunkirk*; a scene from *Get Out*; Timothee Chalamet in *Call Me by Your Name*; a scene from *Darkest Hour*; Emillie Georges, one of the Best Picture nominated producers on *Call Me by Your Name*.

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Directorial Insights Into *Dunkirk*, *Get Out* and *Lady Bird*

Continued from page 4

ference this time around with *The Shape of Water*, explained del Toro, was that the dry for wet technique had to yield a “painterly” feel.

As for the feel a director must have, del Toro related that “the set is a living thing” and a filmmaker has to serve in many capacities. In that vein, del Toro said he’s “good at comforting” and “confrontation” depending on whatever the situation calls for.

Christopher Nolan

For what’s believed to be the first time, all five DGA nominees also wrote the screenplays for the movies that earned them Guild nods. Nolan penned a script for *Dunkirk* that was about half the length of what he normally would write for a feature. An economical 76 pages contained “mostly stage direction and very little dialogue,” he said.

This also marked the first feature for Nolan depicting a true historical story, which necessitated him spending time up front in the actual filming locations, including Dunkirk beach. Prior to writing the screenplay he walked the locations, soaked them in, and researched the history extensively.

Making the transition from writing the material to realizing it cinematically as a director is a process that has changed dramatically for Nolan over the arc of his career. “My first film cost \$6,000,” he recalled, “and I wrote what I had access to, to what I could film.” As his career progressed and budgets grew, he was afforded the opportunity to “write things I didn’t know how to do, that I didn’t know

how to film.”

Challenging himself in this manner spurred Nolan’s growth as a filmmaker, a maturation which paradoxically makes it increasingly difficult to come up with something he hasn’t yet experienced. However, *Dunkirk* fit the bill, extending him into different realms—a true story, and logistically dealing with boats and how to best capture the experience at sea on film.

Casting also presented a different experience from what had been the star marquee actor norm for Nolan. For *Dunkirk*, he found himself instead looking for “unknowns in the leads,” portraying the 18 and 19-year olds who were in battle. As for what he sought on the acting front, Nolan said performers who could visually elicit “the mysterious quality of empathy.” He needed “a kid you need to care about,” someone an audience could relate to even though that character doesn’t talk a lot in the movie.

Also in the mix was an accomplished actor, Mark Rylance, whom Nolan had wanted to work with for decades. Rylance portrayed Mr. Dawson, one of many civilian mariners whom the British navy enlisted to help rescue soldiers across the English channel.

Dawson was one of the everyday heroes who piloted his own boat to Dunkirk for the mission. Nolan credited Rylance with pointing out a gap in his script—namely the relationship Mr. Dawson had with his son who’s on board for the mission. Nolan and Rylance then collaborated to bring that aspect of the story to the screen, underscoring the importance, said the director, of listening to the profes-

sionals around you.

While Nolan’s films are ambitious and often involve complex logistics that require extensive, detailed planning, he still likes to leave some room for the unexpected, happy accident that can occur during production. That’s why, he explained, that his preference is to do “as much in-camera as possible.” Computer-generated imagery, he pointed out, doesn’t typically have the flexibility to accommodate such serendipity.

Immersing himself in the Dunkirk story which unfolded in 1940 proved to be a learning experience that went beyond just the event itself. It showed Nolan that like many people he had “an inadequate grasp of history and its importance.” He is now striving to address this, not so much as a filmmaker but personally to become a more informed person who better understands the past, its significance and the implications it carries relative to the present and the future.

When presented with his nomination medallion at the evening DGA Awards ceremony, Nolan said that doing justice to history weighed heavily on him in the making of *Dunkirk*. He met several people who were part of that history firsthand, now in their 90s, and felt a profound responsibility to them to be true to their stories, honoring those who didn’t survive the event, as well as the heroism of both the civilian rescuers and those in the military service who lived to tell about it.

Being entrusted to bring this story to the screen so that younger generations could learn about it, said Nolan, “is one of the great privileges in my career.” He noted that what the civilians and military forces endured and achieved in the face of insurmountable odds as well as in the face of tyranny will “stand in eternity.”

Jordan Peele

As a first-time director, Jordan Peele described the audition process for actors “as much an audition for me working with actors. I learned I needed to experience the emotions as much as the performer did.” For *Get Out* auditions, Peele found himself at times teary-eyed, having cathartic moments with actors. “I didn’t know that would happen,” he shared.

Even with a tight turnaround time

whereby *Get Out* was shot in just 23 days, Peele often made time to break away from takes to “walk and talk” with actors, take them aside to gain their feedback and provide them with counsel before resuming shooting. As a director, Peele observed “the illusion I like to present to actors is that we have all the time in the world.”

Peele’s approach to *Get Out* was powered in part by dealing with all the inevitable, unexpected “curveballs” thrown at him during the course of production as if they were welcomed “gifts.”

Budgetary limitations often fostered such “gifts” as reflected in a party scene where Peele would have liked 40 people in the background to create the desired vibe for the story.

But Peele learned that instead he would have to make do with 16 or so backgrounders. This prompted him to place the performers in the scene in a choreographed fashion which wound up feeling “creepy” and “eerie,” promoting an uneasiness that wound up complementing his horror film.

Get Out was a transformative experience for Peele, achieving a long-held aspiration. “Since I was 12, I wanted this (to direct a film). I wanted it so bad, it gave me a pain in my stomach. There were so many reasons I doubted myself.”

Peele thought he had relinquished his dream awhile back but now realizes, “I never actually abandoned my dream.” Rather, he was “developing a skillset to do this movie. I’m so glad I didn’t try to do it earlier.”

Waiting paid off—not just with the DGA nomination in the marquee category, but also with a DGA Award win for Outstanding Achievement of a First-Time Feature Film Director.

Greta Gerwig

Gerwig discussed her dual role of writer and director of *Lady Bird*, noting, “My movie is almost entirely on the page. My cuts are on the page. I need to know what the rhythm is in an editorial sense on the page. I don’t like finding it in the edit.”

As a writer and director, she likes to attain a story that is “something familiar but not what you could have imagined,” making it relatable for an audience but a

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A scene from *Dunkirk*

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IT TAKES THE POWER OF LEADERSHIP TO UNITE A NATION

Gerwig's Takes On Directing

Continued from page 6

new experience at the same time.

Gerwig also likes when “the opening of a movie feels like the entire movie in a scene,” a reference to the mother-daughter exchange in the car between Laurie Metcalf as the mom and Saoirse Ronan as Lady Bird.

Still, there are times when a director may face doubts about how to bring to life what he or she has written—or for that matter doubts about the script itself. Gerwig thus valued the counsel of Tracy Letts, who portrayed Lady Bird’s dad. A playwright, Letts offered Gerwig what she described as a well-timed relevant piece of advice along the lines of “you have to trust the person you were when you wrote it. You’re not the same person anymore—now you need to direct it.”

While a director may need to make adjustments to the story if something doesn’t work, Gerwig said you still need to “respect the person who wrote it.”

Based on her experience as an actor, Gerwig finds herself innately “sympathetic” with performers, recalling the horror of auditioning.

Asked to describe that horror, Gerwig

of Julie, Lady Bird’s best friend. At the audition, Gerwig recalled that she “knew right away” that Feldstein was right for the role.

Once actors were cast for *Lady Bird*, Gerwig got them to meet, exchange phone numbers and get connected to one another. She likened this process to “laying sediment,” building a foundation for an ensemble cast to help foster a good working rapport which is conducive to their characters relating to each other.

Gerwig acknowledged that she has an affinity for doing lots of takes. “I like to see where actors go when they get bored of their ideas,” she explained. Oftentimes, you see the most interesting performances “on the other side of boredom.”

Gerwig said that directing is something she’s been “working towards and wanting to do for a very long time.” *Lady Bird* marks her first turn as a solo director (she had earlier co-directed *Nights and Weekends* with Joe Swanberg).

For Gerwig, *Lady Bird* was like “realizing that you have the ability to breathe underwater.” She related you may be apprehensive about diving into the ocean, thinking “what if I drown?...But what if



Saoirse Ronan (l) and Laurie Metcalf in “Lady Bird”

remembered going to an audition as an actor only to hear, “You better be a good actor if you wear overalls.” Gerwig thinks she replied, “You betcha.”

As a director, Gerwig said she’s not a fan of an actor sharing everything in one fell swoop during an audition. She prefers to get a sketch, “an opening gambit” that shows the promise of what a performer can offer.

Gerwig saw that in Beanie Feldstein when she auditioned and won the part

you don’t?” Then you dive in, “and you don’t drown,” laughed Gerwig.

Directing, she affirmed, has been a transformative experience.

At the evening DGA Awards ceremony when she was presented with her nomination medallion, Gerwig said to her peers in the audience, “Storytellers are healers and I am so honored to be included among you.” She then referred to the symposium earlier in the day which had

Continued on page 9

Hot Locations

L.A. Lensing Marks 2nd Strongest Year On Record

On-location filming in the Greater Los Angeles region achieved its second best year on record in 2017, according to data released by FilmL.A.

Last year on-location filming decreased 3.4 percent (from 39,627 Shoot Days to 38,284 Shoot Days) for a second-place annual finish compared to 2016. Meanwhile, according to new data, L.A. area sound stage occupancy remains above 92 percent.



Paul Audley

FilmL.A.’s longest-running reporting effort, focused on production that takes place on-location within its service area, determined that filming levels in 2017 remained high despite finishing below 2016 totals.

On-location television production finished 2.1 percent above its five-year rolling average in 2017, despite slipping 7.6 percent (to 15,218 SD) compared to the prior year.

TV dramas ended last year 11.2 percent over the category’s five-year average, slipping 1.3 percent (to 4,385 SD) year over year. A 21.3 percent fourth-quarter increase helped, as did the California Film and TV Tax Credit program which continues to sustain local production. TV dramas saw 1,401 incentive-linked Shoot Days in 2017, which accounted for 32 percent of all activity for the year.

“Our ability to achieve and sustain a high level of production over the past few years is substantially due to the California Film and Television Tax Credit—which is creating thousands of jobs and returning high economic benefits to California,” said Paul Audley, FilmL.A. president.

Incentive-linked TV projects that filmed in 2017 included *This Is Us*, *SWAT*, *Westworld*, *Lucifer*, *Shooter* and the TV pilot project, *Mayans*.

On-location TV comedy production decreased 12.8 percent in 2017 (to 2,155 SD). TV pilot production also decreased 40.2 percent (to 441 SD). FilmL.A. analysts attribute the pilot decline to the significant number of scripted television series already available through broadcast, cable, and digital channels.

Television subcategories ineligible for state incentives also decreased compared to 2016, including TV reality (down 8.3 percent to 4,383 SD), and web-based TV production (down 9.2 percent to 1,918 SD).

Meanwhile, on-location feature production decreased in 2017 (down 19.8 percent to 3,901 SD). FilmL.A. analysts note that while the total number of feature shoot days is down, the economic value of projects in this category may be increasing over time. Features that qualify for California’s Film & Television Tax Credit tend to generate larger job and spending impacts than non-incentive-linked projects. In 2017, 61 feature projects filmed in Los Angeles, including 19 incentive-linked projects with a cast and crew count above 75 persons on-location. This is nearly twice the number of incentive-linked, similarly-sized projects the region captured in 2016. Incentive-linked features shot on-location in L.A. included *Destroyer*, *A Wrinkle In Time*, and *Bumblebee*.

Commercial production increased 9 percent in 2017 (to 5,548 SD) compared to the prior year. This is the strongest annual showing for commercials that FilmL.A. has ever observed.



Nick Maniatis

New Mexico Milestone

This past December marked the beginning of a yearlong celebration for New Mexico, commemorating the 120th year of filming in the state. Events extending throughout 2018 will recognize the milestone.

Nick Maniatis, director of the New Mexico Film Office, stated, “For 120 years, New Mexico has been at the heart of the film industry. We are continuing to build on that strong tradition by attracting new productions to New Mexico and creating the film industry’s greatest economic impact in New Mexico history, three years in a row.”

The film industry contributed over half a billion dollars of direct spending into the state’s economy last year.

A Producer's Perspective On Call Me by Your Name

Continued from page 8

her and fellow nominees talking about directing and their different approaches to the work as being “one of the most exciting three hours of my life.”

Emilie Georges

Producer Emilie Georges earned her first career Oscar nomination with *Call Me by Your Name* (Sony Pictures Classics) which is up for Best Picture—one of four nods, the others being for Best Adapted Screenplay (James Ivory), Leading Actor (Timothée Chalamet) and Original Song (Sufjan Stevens for “The Mystery of Love”).

Georges shares the Best Picture nomination with producers Peter Spears and Marco Morabito, and producer/director Luca Guadagnino.

Among the prime artistic challenges that *Call Me by Your Name* posed, observed Georges, was to do justice to the

story, “the representation of the characters’ emotions and resilience, how to properly create the emotions of first love,” and to depict that love in the context of “giving life to a multilingual family, the fluidity between an American father (portrayed by Michael Stuhlbarg), a French mother (Amira Casar) raised partially in Italy during the summers, and a son (Chalamet) who comes out of this trilingual environment,” discovering the beauty and heartbreak of love through a relationship with a visiting grad student (Armie Hammer).

In terms of delving into characters’ emotions, Georges noted that director Guadagnino gets close to these people by keeping a distance from them with the camera. “He went for very long shots in certain scenes, capturing characters within their environment, which gives insights into the general mood and their relation to the world.”



Sarah Greenwood

That world was set in 1983 in a 17th century villa where the characters spent the summer. Georges said that Guadagnino had an “obsession” for artistic coherence relative to the time period.

Georges described *Call Me by Your Name* as “an incredible adventure,” a journey yielding critical acclaim and Oscar nominations while “emotionally moving a lot of people all over the world.”

As for what Georges’ first Oscar nomination means to her personally as well as professionally, she is “very proud” of the work, adding that it affirms her commitment as a producer “to continue to protect authors and directors who have strong visions, giving them the opportunity to act upon and realize their vision.” Georges finds it particularly gratifying to offer European directors a bridge to the U.S., being entrusted with bringing their talent to people throughout the world.

Sarah Greenwood

Production designer Sarah Greenwood added two Oscar nominations to her filmography this year—for *Beauty and the Beast* (Disney) and *Darkest Hour* (Focus Features). She now has six career Academy Award nods; the first coming in 2006 for *Pride & Prejudice*.

A common denominator across these
Continued on page 10

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A Production Designer's POV On Her Two Nominations

Continued from page 9

half-dozen noms is that Greenwood earned them in collaboration with her long-time set decorator, Katie Spencer. With a track record together spanning some 20 years, Greenwood and Spencer first met at the BBC.

"We have a real kind of simpatico," said Greenwood. "There's something about working with someone you really know and understand, who has similar taste. We don't always agree, but it's all good. It's part of a very creative partnership. Now I wouldn't know how to work with somebody else. We choose projects together. I don't choose a project without her saying it's good for us to pursue."

Greenwood's first collaboration with director Bill Condon, *Beauty and the Beast* appealed to the production designer on many levels.

"I very much liked that it wasn't set in fairy tale land," explained Greenwood. "Rather it was a period film, set in 1740s' France. That gave it a grounding for me as a production designer—so I could build from there and then figure out how to enchant it, make it be magical."

Also enticing were the unique characters and the questions they sparked for Greenwood. "How would a candlestick walk, a clock dance?"

And then there's the production designer's dream of creating an 18th century village. Initially the plan was to shoot in France as Greenwood and her colleagues scouted there and found a number of viable options.

But ultimately the decision was made to build the village on a backlot. Greenwood asked rhetorically, "What production designer wouldn't want to build such a world? And because we had been to France, what we had seen there made a great reference point for us—to take the best of what we saw, capture that in the village we built while making this world work in terms of the choreography."

Greenwood observed that *Beauty and the Beast* was the best of old Hollywood—physical construction, painting, designing and shaping—meshed with on-the-edge modern tech.

"If we had built the sets in CG, it would not have been a true live-action film. But CG helped to bring certain

characters to life, "giving us a combination of the old and new working together to make something quite special."



courtesy of Disney

Beauty and the Beast

While she worked with Condon for the first time, Greenwood has maintained an ongoing, long-time creative relationship with *Darkest Hour* director Joe Wright. It's been a most fruitful collaboration. In fact, of Greenwood's six career Oscar nods, four came for her work on Wright-directed films: *Pride & Prejudice* in 2006, *Atonement* in 2008, *Anna Karenina* in 2013, and now *Darkest Hour*. (Greenwood's other Academy Award nomination came for the Guy Ritchie-directed *Sherlock Holmes*.)

"I go back a long way with Joe (Wright)—not quite as long as with Kate

Oldman who delivered a stellar performance as Winston Churchill" (which has earned a Lead Actor Oscar nomination),

and Joe's vision which "made an historical drama into a political thriller."

"We all helped Joe turn a story with gray men in gray rooms into this political thriller," affirmed Greenwood whose production design had to reflect not only the time period leading up to World War II but also "the feeling of the moment—depressed, quite grim, gray, being underground in a British war room, claustrophobic."

Greenwood noted, "Everything that came out of that space ran the war—and before that, the decision to go to war emerged from that room. And it was from this gray room that they went up against

ing, seemed a bit tawdry, a bit low key, a bit sad." Greenwood and her colleagues built The House of Commons based on original drawings from that era, recreating what it looked like during Churchill's war time reign as Prime Minister.

Overall, said Greenwood, "We had to do a lot within a tight budget, a tenth of what we had on *Beauty and the Beast*. But Joe and I are used to making things work no matter the limitations."

Greenwood noted that enough can't be said about Oldman's incredible transformation into Churchill.

"He became Churchill. It was so astonishing, it gives you a shiver. For all three months of shooting, I never saw him as Gary. He was always made up as Churchill. It was odd to once in awhile see him as Churchill and to hear him talk as Gary off-camera."

Greenwood added that fortuitous timing has given us a movie season in which both *Darkest Hour* and *Dunkirk* were released. And she believes the two films "work brilliantly" to tell the story of Dunkirk from distinctly different yet fascinating perspectives.

From the gray war room, Churchill in *Darkest Hour* put the wheels in motion for civilian mariners to take their boats across the English Channel to rescue the country's trapped military forces. And in *Dunkirk*, we see that rescue come to life—the horrific deaths, along with an overlapping heroism and triumph of the human spirit depicted in both films.

Greenwood conjectured, "I think *Dunkirk* and *Darkest Hour* will one day be part of the same curriculum to teach people about an important chapter in history, taking us from the London underground to across the Channel."

This is the 14th 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. The series will appear weekly through the Academy Awards gala ceremony. The 90th Oscars will be held on Sunday, March 4, 2018, at the Dolby Theatre at Hollywood & Highland Center in Hollywood, and will be televised live on the ABC Television Network. The Oscars also will be televised live in more than 225 countries and territories worldwide.



photo by Jack English/courtesy of Focus Features

Gary Oldman (center) as Winston Churchill in *Darkest Hour*

(set decorator Spencer)," said Greenwood. "Joe is simply a great director to work with. He is very collaborative, very open to what you have to offer."

As for what *Darkest Hour* had to offer, Greenwood cited "a great script," Gary

the German war machine. It's quite remarkable what was accomplished out of that little space"

Historical accuracy was essential, continued Greenwood, pointing out that Buckingham Palace back then was "ag-

Floyd Russ

Tool director debuts short documentary ZION at Sundance Film Festival, adding to his notable body of work

By Robert Goldrich

The filmography of director Floyd Russ has made its mark on varied fronts, most recently at last month's Sundance Film Festival where his documentary short *ZION* debuted. Russ introduced audiences to Zion Clark, a young wrestler who was born without legs. Growing up in foster care, Clark struggled with fitting in his whole life—until he finds the sport of wrestling, pushing himself to great lengths.

The inspirational story—produced by NYC-based The Bindery—is akin to much of Russ' other work. The director has a penchant for striking a responsive chord through showing our shared humanity, and in the process has earned accolades. His "Love Cam" PSA for The Ad Council out of R/GA, produced by his spotmaking/branded content roost Tool of North America, last year earned a primetime commercial Emmy nomination. Russ also directed skincare company SK-II's "Marriage Market Takeover" which won a Gold Glass Lion and an Entertainment Bronze Lion at the 2016 Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity.

Produced by Tool and conceived by Forsman & Bodenfors, Stockholm, the SK-II campaign emphasizes that everyone should have the free-

dom to marry for love and not because of undue pressure from family and society. In the film, women who feel alienated and ostracized—often by their own parents—because they "dare" to live independently, to wait for true love or simply choose to live alone, decide to declare their independence at the marriage market in Shanghai's People's Park. The marriage market is designed for women to find men whose "qualifications" are listed for matrimony. The women in this short instead use it to articulate their right to choose the lives they want to lead.

Meanwhile "Love Cam" puts a twist on the sports stadium jumbotron "kiss cam" by replacing it with an unbiased camera depicting positive expressions of love, unity, diversity and acceptance across race, religion, gender, sexuality, ability and age. Filming took place at Camping World Stadium in Orlando, Fla., not long after the June 2016 terrorist attack/hate crime in Orlando, which claimed the lives of 49 people. Among those appearing in "Love Cam" was a lesbian couple who is seen kissing—they were survivors of the onslaught at Pulse.

Russ' filmmaking talent first came to *SHOOT*'s attention in 2016 when he was selected for our New Directors Showcase.



SHOOT: Please provide some backstory on *ZION*. What led you to the story of Zion Clark?

Russ: About a year and a half to two years ago, I saw an ESPN article about Zion, along with five still photos of him. He was born with no lower body, a rare disability called caudal regression syndrome. He grew up in foster care and dealt with a lot, including prosthetics that hurt him as a child. When I found out about him, I was immediately drawn to his story, his hard work to become something, to pursue his passion for wrestling. I talked to him, his coach, his foster family. It's a story that just had to be told.

At first, we approached brands to support the making of a film and tie into this story but we weren't able to make enough progress on that front.

"To have this short screened on opening night was a thrill...But ultimately it's about Zion Clark. It's his story, his determination which made this possible."

I just decided to go for it, to make this as a short documentary. We assembled a small crew but had access to great resources thanks to the generosity of so many who believed in this story. Panavision gave us equipment at a huge discount. Method and Cut+Run were among the many who contributed.

SHOOT: Reflect a bit on what it meant to have *ZION* debut on opening night of Sundance. Plus it's now on the festival circuit, next scheduled for the Big Sky Documentary Film Festival this month in Missoula, Montana.

Russ: It's been 10 years since I graduated from film school. Getting into Sundance has always been a goal. I never even attended Sundance until now. And to have this short screened on opening night was a thrill. To have



this documentary selected from so many submissions is a great honor [which included being nominated for Sundance's Short Film Grand Jury Prize]. But ultimately it's about Zion Clark. It's his story, his determination, which made this all possible.

SHOOT: You turned to several of your commercialmaking/branded content colleagues for *ZION*, including DP Gregory Wilson and editor Robert Ryang. Give us a handle on their contributions.

Russ: Gregory Wilson has shot a couple of music videos as well as several commercials for me. We have a good working relationship and rhythm.

I've worked with Robert Ryang a lot [including on "Kiss Cam" and "Marriage Market Takeover"]. We've developed a creative shorthand of sorts. Very briefly, years ago, I was his assistant editor for a couple of months. He's a close friend of mine and a busy commercial editor who devoted a lot of his time to *ZION*, with additional editing by Adam Bazadona. [Both Ryang and Bazadona are with Cut+Run]. Method also turned out an animation sequence which added a different perspective to the story.

SHOOT: Ryang said that you two spent months "playing with all the possible structures to develop a piece that unfolds more abstractly than traditional narrative." How much time did you devote to postproduction on *ZION*?

Russ: We shot *ZION* at the beginning of 2017, and wound up editing it over a six-month period. Though it's only a 10-minute film, the effort we put into editing over an extended period made all the difference with the elements properly flowing together to tell Zion's story. We didn't finish postproduction until around Christmas time.

SHOOT: You have an affinity for telling emotionally moving stories as reflected in *ZION* as well as many of your commercials and branded content endeavors. Is this the kind of work you seek out?

Russ: I tend to get emotionally moving spots that have some kind of social influence or important messaging, showcasing or helping to encourage empowerment for those who've been struggling. It's gratifying work. I look for the narrative art in their situations whether it's a 10-minute piece, a :30, :60 or :90.

Creatives Assess New Crop of Big Game Ads

What worked?
What didn't?
Identifying themes,
weighing the
impact of prior
online exposure

A SHOOT Staff Report



Though defensive-minded coaches found the Super Bowl shootout cringe-worthy, most everyone else enjoyed a thoroughly entertaining game with the high scoring affair yielding another bonus—a victory for the underdog Philadelphia Eagles.

The Big Game, though, was a double-edged sword for the ad community. On one hand, the Super Bowl held audience interest throughout, meaning that advertisers had a chance to shine in the mega-audience spotlight from the opening kickoff to the final play. At the same time the game was so good that it was a lot for the ads to live up to. And at \$5 million-plus on average for a 30-second time slot on NBC, you've got a lot of living to do in order to justify your investment.

Looking to see who had the most justification in this year's ad crop, SHOOT sought out agency creatives for their expert feedback. We only solicited those creatives with no axe to grind—meaning they didn't have any commercials on this year's Super Bowl and thus could provide an unvarnished assessment of the ads. Here's a sampling of their observations:

Paula Maki, managing creative director, mono San Francisco, shared a pet peeve about Super Bowl advertising, relating, "Remember when you couldn't wait until Sunday night to see if Carrie and Mr. Big will finally figure out their relationship or to see which Soprano was going to get whacked this week? There was something magical about a country coming together in front of similar-shaped screens to watch a story unfold without pause, rewind, fast-forward or binge; where no one knows what will happen until it actually happens. In a world of a la carte programming and bespoke content, these universal Sunday night moments have been reduced to the Golden Globes/Grammys/Oscars and—of course—the Super Bowl."

Maki hearkened back to all this to declare "my disdain for the epidemic of over-sharing ads prior to the game. As a marketer, I get it. "Gotta get those view counts up, gotta maximize the buzz leading up to The Big Game so we can leverage the momentum and justify our company paying \$10 million for 60 seconds of airtime." I get it. But here's where I draw

the line: if you're going to share your ad prior to game, there's got to be something big about your ad—something that makes us want to talk about it, share it, at least hit 'refresh' on our video players.

"This year there were just a few brands that made me want to do that:

- Amazon—Every year, there's a brand that says, "Screw it, let's go for it." This year the credit goes to Amazon. Not just for all the cameos. But for the simple idea and the A-level performances (that employee's reaction to Jeff Bezos asking "will it work?" was gold).

- Doritos vs. Dew—This is probably one of those things that marketers especially appreciate in its "innovative use of back-to-back placements." No civilian American, smashing some Doritos and Dew whilst watching "The Big Game" will turn to his bro and say, "Wow, what an innovative use of back-to-back media placements." But still. Props.

- Michelob Ultra—While it would be easy to justify my liking of this two-parter "because of Chris Pratt," I liked the charm of it. I liked the twist of the "star-

Clockwise from top left: Chris Pratt in Big Game spot for Michelob Ultra; Paula Maki of mono; Rob Schapiro of Brunner; Jenny Moore of WONGDOODY; David Harbour in Tide's Super Bowl spoof fare; Brett Craig of Deutsch; Jeremy Schwartz of Truth Collective

SUPER BOWL

as-extra” in part one, and how they actually followed through with it in part two.

- Tide FTW! For turning every Super Bowl ad into another Tide ad. And for waiting until game day to do it! #dont-stopbelievin #fadetoblack.

In the overall picture, Maki observed, “The biggest theme I saw this year as opposed to last year is the surprising (and purposeful?) lack of social commentary from the big brands (with some exceptions from Mass Mutual and Verizon). On one hand, maybe this is a good thing. We all get the fact that this was a tough year. Do we need to be reminded on the one day a year Paleo devotees say “f-it” and stuff their faces with carbs and sugar? Maybe our biggest marketers knew that we all just needed a laugh and a dance. But with the past year of natural disasters and national struggles, you’d think more brands would bite on one of our biggest social pain points in a bigger way. Hat tip to Stella Artois and Budweiser for picking an issue that relates most to their product—water—and actually doing something about it. Hat tip to Toyota for breaking free from automobiles and owning mobility and inclusivity in a human and non-preachy way, executed beautifully.”

Rob Schapiro, CCO, Brunner

Schapiro wondered if any brands would take a stand by trying to express their values by commenting on timely or controversial issues. Also in the lead-up to the game, he asked, Will they cater to the 7-layer bean dip party crowd and go wacky? Will their ideas not have been made possible without leveraging

social platforms? Or perhaps will they try to ride celebrity coattails to higher ad tracker scores? Thus Schapiro divided his analysis into those four categories: Values; Wacky; Social; and Celebrity

Schapiro cited the following pieces of work under the “Values” heading:

- Stella Artois was the 1st brand to release its spot. Matt Damon speaking on behalf of clean water. This one won’t rate high. But even if it doesn’t do good for the brand, at least it will help do some good.

- Budweiser’s anthemic execution lived up to what we’ve come to expect from this brand on the Super Bowl. All the ingredients were there. Great cinematography. Music. Storytelling. But no Clydesdales. I’m sure seeing their charitable efforts to deliver water to Texas, Florida, California and Puerto Rico touched a lot of hearts. Cynics might scoff that it was self-serving. Based on the spot alone, it seems they really did serve a lot of people in need.

- In a powerful follow-up to the Paul Harvey ode to farmers from a couple years back, Dodge Ram went with an inspiring MLK speech delivered 50 years ago to the day. The message? Everyone can be great. Brought to you by a truck brand, it was certain to inspire some strong negative reaction.

- Then there’s the Kickstarter campaign to raise \$5.5 million to air a message about global warming. #airmyglobal-warmingad. It came up short. No Super Bowl spot. Let’s face it. A lot of people don’t want to think during the big game. Which brings us to the next category.

As for the “Wacky,” Schapiro went with:

- Febreze introduced us to Dave, who’s

“bleep” don’t stink, and all the people in his life. (It’s a shame they wouldn’t spring for the :60 version.) The spot was well-written and acted. Played dead straight, just as it should be. Except for the overly comedic music track that brought it down a peg for me.

- The Avocados from Mexico spot could go in the Celeb category except that Chris Elliot had to tell people he’s Chris Elliot in the teaser. And couldn’t give away his autograph to save his life. Nice cameo by Chris Elliot. And nice Avocado Toast reference.

- I liked Tide’s strategy of creating a series of 15 second spots that hijacked other brand hallmarks. Of course, everyone in advertising likes self-referential advertising. Of course, since the Super Bowl is all about advertising, I suspect everyone else liked them, too.

- One more thing. I hope after the Super Bowl, Bud Light makes it official. The brand will no longer milk “Dilly Dilly.”

Going Social, Schapiro singled out:

- Skittles created “The Most Exclusive Commercial Ever Made”? One guy gets to see it? Wait. I don’t get to see it. Ok, now I really want to see it. Those Schwimmer teasers make me want to see it even more. Did I go to the Skittles Facebook Page to see a livestream of his reaction? I’m in the industry. Of course, I did. I bet a lot of kids who eat Skittles went there, too. Did it live up to the pre-game hype? Probably not. But I admire the effort.

- Last year, Hyundai pulled off an ad filmed during the game itself. This year they planned to surprise Hyundai owners as they walked into the game by turn-

ing metal detectors into Hope Detectors (#HopeComesStandard). The ambitious idea was not without technical difficulties, but still they brought some attention to a really great program.

- With an anti-celebrity message and I suspect a more limited budget, Kraft auditioned real families through social media (#FamilyGreatly) to star in its Super Bowl Spot. The idea had good intentions. And the strategy was on-brand for Kraft. But during the Super Bowl, most people would rather just see some celebrities.

And Schapiro selected for his Celebs:

- PepsiCo had me at their teaser. Put Peter Dinklage for Doritos Blaze up against Morgan Freeman for Mountain Dew. Then for the finished spot, add Busta Rhymes and Missy Elliot to the “mix” and you’ve set a new bar for lip-sync amazingness. Oh, and get Nabil to direct.

- If you want your celebrity spot to be funny, go with a funny celeb. Bill Hader’s funny. So Pringles went with him to introduce Stackers. The way he said “wow” was funny. The way he jammed the different flavors into his mouth was funny. Even the early-released outtakes were funny. And outtakes are rarely funny. But was it “Super Bowl” funny?

- Chris Pratt was wasted for Michelob Ultra and their fitness strategy was a bit on the nose. Danny DeVito was perfectly cast as an M&M. I sure enjoyed watching him float in chocolate. John Malkovich was a hard act to follow for Squarespace this year. Turns out Keanu Reeves is no John Malkovich. And I’ll give credit to the Amazon spot featuring a parade of

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Feedback From Deutsch, Truth Collective, WONGDOODY

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celebs as replacements for Alexa (and Jeff Bezos as a not very believable Jeff Bezos) for poking fun at itself.”

Brett Craig, EVP, ECD, Deutsch

Brett Craig, EVP, exec creative director, Deutsch, looked favorably upon the Michelob Ultra commercials with Chris Pratt which “finally right-sized the tone for that brand. They were fun, had Super Bowl scale and they no longer featured the brand trying to be Gatorade. The Tide work also stood out. It’s an idea that’s been done many times before (parodying commercials) but they were everywhere—30s, :6s and even faux NFL bumpers. By sheer bombardment, they certainly owned the day in terms of recall.”

Missing the mark was T-Mobile which “settled on stating some feel-good platitudes over images of cute babies and then putting up their logo. They have been a disruptive upstart in the category, but they failed to tell 100 million people anything relevant to their service. Thank you, T-Mobile, for telling me that you think it’s good to be an individual and love whomever I want. But really, can you just make my cell bill lower, please?”

Overall, related Craig, “Thankfully, this year seemed somewhat apolitical compared to last year’s sermonizing, post-election Super Bowl ads.”

Jeremy Schwartz, CCO, Truth Collective

Work for Tide, Amazon and Kia got a thumbs-up from Schwartz. He observed, “Tide circumvented all the pre-game release hype and stole the Super Bowl ad game with its hacks of other well-done past Super Bowl ads with the help of Stranger Things’ David Harbour. From

inserting itself into the ethos of car and beer commercials, to the more overt parodies of Old Spice and Mr Clean ads, Tide’s simple no-stain message and repetition of ‘it’s a Tide ad’ stood out as the freshest take on the ad landscape on Sunday night. Viewers perhaps even had to pause for a moment to determine if the spot they were watching was a Tide ad or one of the other Super Bowl advertisers’ spots since they created a brand presence in each quarter of the game.

“Among the spots with a more traditional Super Bowl buy approach, Amazon’s ‘Alexa Lost her Voice’ ad was not just star-studded for celebrity sake, but integrated those unique personalities into the narrative in an integral and amusing fashion. The spots eased into the concept (even allowing us a glimpse of Jeff Bezos, the world’s wealthiest man, himself) with some broader comedy delivered by Gordon Ramsey and Cardi B. But Rebel Wilson and Sir Anthony Hopkins drive the spot home by dialing-up heaps of humorous discomfort.”

Schwartz noted that Kia’s “Feel Something Again” for The Stinger “was not only well-executed, it featured one of the best rock anthems in history and starred its iconic singer Steven Tyler, but it felt like it came from pure insight around the car itself. Remember: these expensive spots are actually supposed to sell product. And I feel Kia and its agency were able to use a 69 year-old to sell a car billed as ‘Fueled by Youth’ with a fresh take on a time travel concept. I want to feel how that car drives because the spot reinforced the excitement of driving. I’d guess some Millennials could be equally as curious as they seek their next car purchase. Critically, I felt the inclusion of Formula One and Indy driver Emerson

Fittipaldi was unnecessary. Perhaps they bought some authenticity for older motorsports fans, but it broke the flow of Tyler’s story to a small degree—that is, until The Mill’s badass effects kick into gear as Tyler slams the Kia Stinger into reverse.

As for what work missed the mark, Schwartz assessed, “The Big Misstep of the night—and it’s no surprise—was RAM’s ‘Built to Serve.’ This is another instance in which I wish I could watch the past several months unfold leading to production of this spot. Did the pressure of RAM’s past Super Bowl successes weaving Paul Harvey’s “God made a farmer” into their effort simply put them on this collision course by continuing the tradition of that spot? Was it a clever planner or writer who picked up on Super Bowl LII coinciding with the exact 50th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s “The Drum Major Instinct” sermon that compelled them to lean in? Was the creative team inclusive and considerate of Dr. King’s intended audience? Once the idea survived the undoubtedly multiple rounds of Super Bowl creative reviews, was there testing to understand how appropriating the words of one of the most celebrated social justice leaders—to sell pickup trucks—might be received? And did they even care that they only lifted a small piece of the sermon best serving their agenda—disregarding the full context of MLK Jr.’s rallying cry against the “verbal persuasion” of the ad industry and being swayed into materialistic over-indulgences?”

“I do hope the folks behind this spot knew it was a gamble—one they surely lost in real-time on Twitter during the game. If they weren’t aware, that means they are disconnected from the broader implications of the spot’s ineptitude. No doubt, the social climate in the U.S. is fraught with growing pains as we forge progress. Every once in a while, advertising can be a mirror in which society looks to create an aspirational image of ourselves. What’s reflected there is an ugly truth about privilege and exploitation. Simply put, you should not reduce the importance of a leader like MLK Jr. to sell a few trucks.

Jennie Moore, creative director, WONGDOODY

Moore thought the biggest Big Game

brand winner was Tide with its well crafted misdirects.

She assessed, “The first Tide spot was so funny and well done and based on a simple truth—everyone’s clothes usually are super clean in Super Bowl ads. Then I was surprised every single time they came back with a play on a popular commercial. Old Spice guy, Clydesdales, Mr. Clean—I lost track. By the time the fake pharmaceutical ad came on with old lady playing tennis, I actually clapped ‘cause they got me again!”

“Febreze’s “The Only Man Whose Bleep Don’t Stink” also had me cheering. Great use of the mockumentary style, and although it could run anytime, I loved how they tied the product into the context of a Super Bowl party at the end.

“Toyota’s “One Team” spot that started like a set up to a bad joke (A rabbi, a priest, an imam and a monk go to a football game...) was charming and heartwarming. The dialogue and little moments between the characters made it even better.

“Finally, the Visit Australia spot was a surprise favorite, too, and not just because Thor was wearing a white button down and sipping Shiraz. (But yeah, partly because of that.) Mainly, I truly wanted to see the movie they were promoting. Danny McBride and Chris Hemsworth? Sign me up! It was a clever turn and great use of celebrity. And you’ve got to love a country (or brand) who’s willing to poke fun at themselves.”

As for those commercials that wound up missing the mark, Moore asked, “Why was Keanu Reeves standing on a speeding motorcycle and pontificating? Maybe there’s a Squarespace website that could explain it all, but I don’t care enough to check it out.

“And the ad with the babies. Oh, man they were adorable! And it talked about diversity and equality and inclusion and I was so ready to wipe away my mom-tears and cheer on Pampers or Gerber or any company who was remotely relevant. T-Mobile was definitely not that company.

“And the words of Martin Luther King Jr. spoken 50 years ago today, were poignant and moving and beautiful. But every time they cut to a Ram logo, I felt myself cringe. Those are sacred words written and delivered to inspire greatness, not sell heavy duty pickup trucks.”

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Promoting Diversity, Inclusion, Opportunity



As production and post execs look to the new year, SHOOT surveyed them on their vision and goals for 2018. And in light of such issues as sexual misconduct, gender pay disparity, the lack of opportunity for women and ethnic minorities finally coming to the fore, we sought feedback on these fronts, finding them to be of paramount concern to a cross-section of industry respondents.

Robin Shenfield, CEO of The Mill, noted that an initiative yielding positive results in the U.K. could surface in the U.S. this year.

Shenfield shared, “Since launching The Mill’s diversity and inclusion strategy in September 2016 we have been working with a range of external partners to help grow the recruitment talent pool and raise awareness of VFX careers within underrepresented communities. Last year The Mill formed and continues to lead ACCESS: VFX, an industry movement made up of 11 award-winning VFX studios working together to create a more inclusive creative industry. The UK VFX community working together toward a shared goal, and collaborating in this way is crucial if we are to succeed as creative and innovative companies. This year we want to roll out our diversity initiatives across the US – it is a priority for our business. We believe that The Mill’s future success is deeply rooted in the celebration of different perspectives, ideas, backgrounds and people, and accepting everyone into the inclusion conversation is at the heart of getting this right. In 2018 we have a full calendar of events and mentoring opportunities that provides opportunity to backgrounds, dis-

abilities and regions.”

Bonnie Goldfarb, co-founder/executive producer of harvest films, has a sense of the torch being passed onto us today to make progressive change. “I often think of the women a generation older than me who sacrificed so much for me to be where I am today. I can count those women on one hand. So, it is critical for us to step up and create opportunities, too. And I think (and hope) this awareness of pay disparity, sexual misconduct, and the like is the beginning of a fair, and inclusive work environment for all.”

As for policies that could be put in place to create and foster a healthy workplace environment, Ali Brown, partner/executive producer at PRETTYBIRD, related, “Our policy is honesty. About who we are and what we represent. PRETTYBIRD is owned by two women and an African American man and our success depends on the telling and consumption of stories by all people. We believe obstacles shouldn’t be placed in front of you due to gender, race or sexual preference, rather opportunities to share your worldview.

“We seek out artists who don’t tell the same stories the same way. So our policy is making sure our company reflects all that organically in its roster, staffing, and output of work rather than making a single rule. I commend anyone doing anything to improve where they are, but I don’t believe any single policy can make the level of change that’s truly needed in this industry. You have to be honest about WHAT your company represents, not WHO they represent and live that truth at every level of your organization...not just sign up for the newsletter. So our policy is truth and a company full of people committed to making sure we live it. And calling bullshit the minute we don’t.”

For Robin Benson, owner of Company Films, having a voice and being vocal are essential. “The shame is that so many women (and powerless people of all genders) feel they will be denied opportunities if they don’t ‘play the game’ or if they tattle their experiences; by continuing the dialogue, the marginalized will feel more confident to speak up. Let’s keep talking, out loud.”

In terms of priorities, Oliver Fuselier, managing partner, Tool of North America, said, “It’s of utmost importance that our company treats each and every one of our employees with respect, and to hold each other to the same standard. We believe this industry works best when you work together and build off of one another’s ideas. This means that building trust and respect should be a priority. Our team consists of the best, and we ensure no one feels they are mistreated,

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Industry feedback prioritizes a safe working environment free of harassment, marked by gender equality

A SHOOT Staff Report

Companies Look To Be Catalysts For Positive Change

Continued from page 15

simply by promoting a positive work environment that encourages anyone to say something that they may feel is concerning. Transparency is key to keeping everyone honest.”

Jordan Brady, filmmaker/partner at Superlounge, affirmed, “Forget thoughts. Here’s an action step: announce at both the tech scout and your morning safety meeting on shoot days that this is a set free of misconduct, leering, inappropriate comments and such. Director, 1st AD’s and Producers need to set the tone and verbalize the zero tolerance of misconduct of any kind, including the one-thought benign comments. Get woke people.”

Kira Carstensen, global managing partner of Merman, noted, “We are a company created and run by women. And we launched with four of our five directors being female on our commercial roster. So for Merman, we are ensuring gender parity by adding more men to our roster in 2018. We all have to contend with unconscious bias to some degree. Instinctively, we all gravitate towards creative and characters that reflect our own personal experiences. So it

is important to empower creative voices on your team that come from varied backgrounds and experiences different to your own. We constantly ask: Does our company and project slate represent a rich diversity of voices and ideas?”

Michele Eskin, managing partner of Cut+Run, said that diversity has been in the company’s “life blood since we began, both in terms of gender and ethnicity. We have female, male and ethnically diverse owners, editorial and VFX talent, and staff. This year we will look for opportunities to push the bar further. We have joined Free the Bid, which champions female talent and is opening up equal opportunities for this incredible talent base. One of the powerful ways our industry can support change is to dedicate time, energy and resources to underrepresented stories and initiatives for change. We are actively looking for projects that will amplify messages and a voice for change. To proudly stand up for our beliefs, and take action.”

Lola Lott, principal/CEO at charlieuniformtango, stressed that talent has always been a prime focus for her company. “I’ve found over the last 25 years that when you keep that focus, you nat-

urally attract an incredible range of people—from different ethnic backgrounds, different religions and different walks of life. Advertising is a global industry, and it’s important to have employees that reflect a global perspective.”

Lisa Mehling, owner/president of Chelsea Pictures, observed, “The #MeToo movement has swept in a rate of change in this country that has been truly profound. The effects are having an immediate impact on our industry and it’s really too soon to say how it will play out. 2018 marks the beginning of a new era, and it’s long overdue.”

Survey questions:

SHOOT posed the following six questions to select production and post execs and artisans:

1) What’s the most relevant business and/or creative lesson you learned in 2017 and how will you apply it in 2018?

2) Gazing into your crystal ball, what do you envision for the industry--creatively speaking or from a business standpoint--in 2018?

3) Tell us about one current project you are working on in early 2018.

4) What are your goals for 2018, creatively speaking and/or from a business standpoint, for your company or division?

5) What policies do you have in place or plan to implement in 2018 to ensure gender & racial diversity in your company or division?

6) With gender pay disparity, sexual misconduct and worse in the entertainment industry--and specific examples of these injustices surfacing in advertising, media and other sectors--what are your thoughts on what should be done to make for a safe, fair and inclusive work environment for everyone?

What follows is a sampling of the feedback we received from a range of industry respondents. Full responses can be found at SHOOTonline.com and in the concurrent SHOOT>e.dition.



Robin Benson
owner
Company Films

1) Emails and texts are fantastic and often we all prefer this mode of communicating rather than making a phone call that can be difficult to schedule. But I keep learning—repeatedly—there’s nothing like talking to ensure the most successful relationships and productions.

2) I see our world continuing to get smaller and all of us more dependent on one another, both economically and in our partnerships. We will all benefit if everyone works toward understanding each other’s needs and perspectives.

4) This is a great question. The industry has been changing so much in these past few years, both economically and how clients get their message out to the world. We’d really love to continue to focus on creating new opportunities through our creative partnerships with the agencies, the clients and the filmmakers we work with. For instance, we’ve recently partnered on projects with a feature film company who is interested in doing more short form content and we’ve also started working with a branding company creating and producing content for them. So a main goal for us in 2018 is to look for creative opportunities that we don’t see every day!



Jordan Brady
filmmaker/partner
Superlounge

1) Despite quick turnarounds, insane deadlines and ghastly underfunding of projects, creative problem solving and open communication will always save the day.

2) More and more, agencies are reaching out to use before going to their clients. I love this for two reasons. First, it’s rewarding to be a part of the creative team early on. Two, we can offer everyone a production reality check, not that everyone listens.

3) I am currently collaborating with Scooter the Neutered Cat for the fourth year.

4) I’d love to see more projects where I personally can work with the editor to jumpstart the postproduction process. You know, that Euro way of delivering a cut, then hand the reins over to the agency creative team and editor. It makes sense for both creative and economic reasons and some of my US agency producers pave the way for that.

5) The Superlounge Diversity Award sends a filmmaker from an under-represented population to Commercial Directing Bootcamp. We started in 2016 and have since helped non-white males learn the ropes of our business.

Continued on page 18



AWARDS

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Company Partners Reflect

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Ali Brown
partner/executive producer
PRETTYBIRD

4) My goals are written on stickie notes, pinned on bulletin boards, scribbled in a myriad of notebooks and usually on the back of my hand. They range from goals for single individuals, whether directors, staff, or self, to large chess board moves in a quest for empire like expansion! But what they all boil down to is serving and supporting the talent in our company.

We aren't a company that primarily consists of directors that only do commercials. Their talents are diverse therefore we have to be as well, to stay in business with them across all their dreams while simultaneously making sure we never lose sight of the standard, the brand, or the culture that we've worked hard to cultivate the last 10 years. My goal is to have our company continue to be inspired by and inspiring to those around us.



Kira Carstensen
global managing partner
Merman

2) I think media will continue to be consumed in a fractured way, demanding that clients work with an increasingly targeted approach to gain audience attention. Brands need to be part of the creative content, not just sponsors of it.

Entertainment that is written for brand communication, where brands are characters and not just advertisers will be more and more the future. Partnerships and collaborations, instead of the traditional service or vendor relationships will be key.



Michelle Eskin
managing partner
Cut+Run

5) Diversity has been part of Cut+Run's life-blood since we began, both in terms of gender and ethnicity. We have female, male, and ethnically diverse owners, editorial and VFX talent, and staff. This year we will look for opportunities to push the bar further. We have joined Free The Bid, which champions female talent and is opening up equal opportunities for this

incredible talent base. One of the powerful ways our industry can support change is to dedicate time, energy and resources to underrepresented stories and initiatives for change. We are actively looking for projects that will amplify messages and a voice for change. To proudly stand up for our beliefs, and take action.



Oliver Fuselier
managing partner
Tool of North America

4) For 2018, I want to focus on the storytelling. I say this a lot, but it's because I truly believe in the process and have seen the results it gives us and our clients. It all comes down to the story you're trying to tell the consumer, and making it as captivating as it can be, whether it is strictly a story being told or supported by technology. When the viewer walks away from your

campaign with a feeling that they can't shake, that's when you've done your job the best.

5) When it comes to women in film, Tool has always been a leader in promoting women filmmakers. Look at our roster... we at one time represented Alma Harel. Today I think about: how do we go beyond just female directors? I want to find the next generation of executive producers, creative directors, directors of color and everywhere in between. It's not only about hiring women in every area, on every level, but true diversity.

Continued on page 19

ZOIC, BODEGA SPEEDSKATE FOR UNDER ARMOUR

Zoic Studios teamed with BODEGA to demonstrate how Under Armour has helped prepare U.S. speedskating athletes as they head into the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang. The film, produced direct-to-client, brings to life the silhouette of a methodical speedskater crystallizing into icy form as the competitor rounds the oval. As velocity heightens, the ice shatters, revealing a human form in Under Armour's new speed skin design.



Zoic worked closely with co-directors Megan Oepen and Haley Geffen, contributing all up-front look development and technical expertise in pre-production, ensuring that all visual effects could be successfully implemented for the final piece. Prior to the shoot, the Zoic team, led by VFX Supervisor Julien Brami, took a 3D scan of Olympic Gold medalist and film model Joey Cheek inside the Under Armour skin. This ensured a fast implementation of the skater model into the Zoic pipeline and a smooth transition into its use for the subsequent match-move and creation of the "ice man" silhouette. Once the match-move was in place, the formation of the ice man was rendered with a combination of both Houdini and Maya, and lit in V-Ray. MoGraph was both designed and animated in After Effects. Each shot was composited in Nuke, with a final Flame finish.

AGENCY AMPS UP IN CONSOLIDATED VENTURE

AMP Agency, with offices in Boston and New York, is consolidating with L.A.-based digital agency BLITZ and 206Agency, an experiential marketing and branding agency based in Seattle. The combined marketing firm will be named AMP Agency, will have a new brand identity, and will be joined by Adlucent, a performance-based media and analytics company in Austin that will operate under its existing brand. The four agencies are owned by agency network Advantage Solutions. AMP Agency bills itself as a brand ecosystem agency. Its new model is predicated on the fact that brands that deliver fully integrated, personalized experiences lead in business performance. Informed by their proprietary data, behavioral analysis, and predictive analytics, AMP Agency crafts elegant and impactful marketing, digital products, and tactile experiences to grow businesses.

To date, the agencies coming together in AMP Agency have produced a wide range of digital products and tactile experiences for clients that include Amazon, Facebook, Disney, Fisker Inc., Garnier Fructis, Hasbro, Levi's, LinkedIn, Maybelline, Southwest Airlines and Patagonia. The combined agencies have won multiple awards, including Cannes Lions, The One Show, Effies, Webby Awards, OMMA, Communication Arts, London International Awards and more.



Ruby Wang

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

Dallas-based new media creative studio Flight School has added Ruby Wang as concept artist. Wang is an integral part of Flight School's creative team, crafting new designs for characters, environments and assets on varied projects. She also contributes to story development for the studio's VR and animation projects. Most recently, Wang was the art director on Island Time, an in-development VR arcade game, as well as an artist on projects for clients including Dell, Chevy and Starbreeze VR. Earlier Wang interned with Tonko House, working on the Annie Award-nominated series "PIG: The Dam Keeper Poems," based on the characters from the studio's Oscar-nominated short....

Industry Observations From harvest's Bonnie Goldfarb

Continued from page 18



Bonnie Goldfarb
co-founder/executive producer
harvest films

1) I happened upon the realization that I cannot control the advertising community and the decisions made at the client/agency level. After all, we producers have a gift of control and the tighter we clench, the better we produce. And as a new member of the California Film Commission, I have an arduous list of exciting ideas to implement on behalf of the commercial community, really, the entire film community we live in.

2) Each time I think we're settling in to a rhythm, things change and we've gotten used to being comfortable with the uncomfortable. We are responsible for the world's communication through brands and causes to a generation who has never experienced life without a screen. That is a huge weight to carry, an enormous responsibility. I love that we have integrated VR and AR into the narrative and I love even more that a tactile bronze sculpture was the most celebrated work of 2017. My crystal ball says we have only seen the beginning of the rapidity of change, including our business models.

Continued on page 20

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Feedback from Honor Society, charlieuniformtango,

Continued from page 19



Megan Kelly
founder/managing partner
Honor Society

1) The most relevant lesson I learned in 2017 is to remain flexible in my thinking, and to constantly challenge what I think I know. Having a more fluid approach helps me stay nimble and adapt to the continued changes 2018 will surely bring.

2) Generation Z has radically different viewing habits than any generation before them - providing them minimal exposure to "commercials." I see a shift with advertisers moving towards long form branded entertainment. I foresee brands sponsoring short and long form series, as well as features.

4) We were really fortunate to have had a great 2017 and ended the year with an expansion on the West Coast and the addition of a few new directors. Business wise, our goal is to continue with our growth across all formats.

5) As a woman-led company, diversity is a core principle. We will continue to encourage and drive more diversity on staff and sets with our crews. Mentoring is an important part of this business and I encourage both established women and men to champion younger women. Most of my mentors were men and I think it would be incredible if more men, especially on crews, took the time to encourage and champion women.



Lola Lott
principal/CEO
charlieuniformtango

2) I think 2018 will continue to blur the lines that have defined "commercial" for so long. We no longer think of it as commercial at tango - we think content. From more traditional length spots, to micro-length pieces of content for social media and other digital platforms to longer format, more cinematic pieces that lie somewhere in between, brands are constantly trying to reach consumers in new and innovative ways. Taking a campaign from TV to digital to social to AR or VR is no longer unique, it's expected, and we are seeing those integrated campaigns take the stage already this year.

6) Creating an environment with completely safe and open communication is critical. I want everyone at every level at tango to know I absolutely have an open-door policy, and they can come to me any time, with any issue, complaint, or piece of information. I am lucky to have employees that have been with me 10, 15 even 20 years and we are colleagues, friends and family inside the workplace and out. There are going to be situations where conflict arises. However, when it does, we deal with it immediately, and find a way to resolve the issue--not mask it. We all know our industry can be stressful and fast-paced. But no one should be uncomfortable for any reason. I think that responsibility lies with the owners and heads of companies like charlieuniformtango to have a zero-tolerance policy for those who put those principles in danger.



Lisa Mehling
owner/president
Chelsea Pictures

2) Change is the only constant. Competition is fierce. Creative opportunities are everywhere.

3) I am proud of a campaign we just finished which came to us at the end of the year. We were given a complex, unorthodox brief. My team pitched a unique solution and together we made something very impactful. It will premiere on the Super Bowl.

4) After a complete rebranding and restructuring of Chelsea last year, I have moved the company to exactly where I want it to be. I think 2018 is going to be a great one for us.

5) As a woman business owner with two of the top woman commercial directors on my roster, happily Chelsea is ahead of the diversity curve and we are stronger for it. It is very important to me to bring diverse points of view to our work, and Chelsea will continue to push racial and gender boundaries.

6) The #MeToo movement has swept in a rate of change in this country that has been truly profound. The effects are having an immediate impact on our industry and it's really too soon to say how it will play out. 2018 marks the beginning of a new era, and it's long overdue.

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PRODUCTION OUTLOOK

Chelsea Pictures, kaboom and The Mill



Lauren Schwartz
owner/executive producer
kaboom

6) We are one of a handful of women-owned and women-run production companies. For 20 years we have been on the forefront of having a thoughtful and inclusive work environment for everyone. It just comes naturally, I think, because I am a woman and I own the joint.

People have told me we feel different...as a place to work, as a place with which to do business. I came to own kaboom pretty much straight from the agency side and, as such, never really learned how other production companies work. All I know is what feels right to me: to try and be on every shoot so that I can represent the company, to be at the forefront of our "sales," to bring a personal touch to all my dealings with agency, client and director alike; and to create an environment that I hope honors each individual and creates space for everyone to do their best work.

So what can we do as an industry? Support new talent, mentor, discuss tricky issues and then shine a light on them. Go to the 3 Percent Conference and be inspired, then use that inspiration to make change. It is an imperative.



Robin Shenfield
CEO
The Mill

2) The advertising model is now very different, and this has opened up new space. The Mill will continue to evolve and diversify our client base, leveraging our tech literacy, fluency and legacy of 'making.' We expect AR and real-time technologies in particular to provide fresh and exciting creative opportunity. New commissioners and tech platforms will have a major impact on the industry, disruptive, but ultimately positive.

3) Building on the success of 'The Human Race', the fully interactive configurable commercial that launched at the Games Developer Conference (GDC) in 2017, we are embracing a future that demands real time technology. We are working on a groundbreaking project that will allow us to create live, character animation. A game-changer for storytelling.

4) Continue to be market leaders. Doing the best work in our field and supporting creative endeavor. Ultimately it is why The Mill attracts such brilliant clients and a brilliant team. We aim to provide an environment where everyone at The Mill can be successful, learn, grow and do the best work of their lives.



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Winning Directors Reflect On Their Work

Insights from Guillermo del Toro, Jordan Peele, Matthew Heineman, Reed Morano and Martin de Thurah

By Robert Goldrich



If history stays true to course, it's most likely that the Best Director Oscar will take the "Shape" of the DGA Awards which recently bestowed its coveted Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Feature Film honor upon Guillermo del Toro for *The Shape of Water*. All but seven of the DGA Award winners since 1948 have gone on to garner the corresponding Academy Award. In terms of recent history, 13 of the past 14 DGA Award winners have wound up garnering Oscars for directing, including last year's winner, Damien Chazelle for *La La Land*. (The one departure from that norm during this span came in 2013 when Ben Affleck won the DGA Award for *Argo* in 2013 while Ang Lee scored the Academy Award for *Life of Pi*.)

Further bolstering del Toro's current prospects and those for *The Shape of Water* in general are other recent indicators such as the film winning the Producers Guild Award—and topping this year's Oscar tally with 13 nominations, including for Best Picture and Best Director.

In accepting the DGA Award, first-time nominee del Toro choked back some tears as he thanked his mother and father, the latter who has been ill. The director said that *The Shape of Water* is "full of many reasons why it shouldn't work and they are the reasons that it works." He added that the DGA recognition is a reaffirmation of sorts, relating, "And for you to tell me today to keep doing these insane fables that I've believed in for 25 years means the world to me."

Earlier in the evening Richard Jenkins, a Best Supporting Actor Oscar nominee for *The Shape of Water*, observed that del Toro's legacy is that he brings a distinctly different vision to cinema. Jenkins observed that del Toro asks, "Why can't the creature get the girl," a reference to the love story at the center of *The Shape of Water* in which a mute woman falls for an underwater creature. Jenkins said that del Toro's legacy entails showing us that what is conventionally feared is something that should be "embraced," providing a fresh perspective on life and love.

During the Meet the Feature Directors symposium held earlier in the day and setting the stage for the evening's DGA Awards ceremony, del Toro asserted that attention to every detail, every role to be cast, is essential. He said of directors, "What we do is symphonic. One wrong note can ruin a movie."

Del Toro topped a field of DGA nominees which consisted of Greta Gerwig for *Lady Bird* (A24), Martin McDonagh for *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri* (Fox Searchlight), Christopher Nolan for *Dunkirk* (Warner Bros.), and Jordan Peele for *Get Out* (Universal Pictures).

Peele's work on *Get Out* was honored in another DGA Award category, winning for Outstanding Directorial Achievement of a First-Time Feature Film Director. In his acceptance remarks, Peele affirmed, "This has been the best year of my life, hands down," citing the success of *Get Out* as well as he and his wife welcoming a beautiful baby into the world. At the same time, though, Peele said he had to balance this joy with what he regards

From top left, clockwise: Guillermo del Toro; Sally Hawkins (l) and Octavia Spencer in *The Shape of Water*; Jordan Peele; a scene from *Get Out*; Reed Morano; Matthew Heineman; and Martin de Thurah.

as “not a good year for this country and not a good year for many of us,” alluding to the impact of the Trump administration. Peele said that the stories being told by DGA members can shed light on humanity, spark empathy for others and push back against hate and bigotry. He assessed that *Get Out* gives a voice to “victims of oppression” while “reaching out to people who might not have experienced” racial prejudice and injustice but through the movie get to “walk in the shoes” of those who are living through that experience. Peele called on the filmmakers in the DGA audience to continue to “use your voice,” which is “the most powerful weapon we have against evil.”

During the aforementioned daytime DGA symposium—during which it was noted that the five marquee feature film category nominees all wrote what they had directed—Peele said that while words are important, “ideas are crucial.” And making discoveries along the way can give a director a better handle on how he wants to tell a story—and/or what he can tap into in order to better tell that story and the ideas behind it. Plus there are inspiring ideas to be had during the process. For example, Peele recalled that he saw in rehearsal that Daniel Kaluuya and Allison Williams “didn’t feel like a couple in love” during the first couple of readings. At the same time, though, Peele could see that they shared a strong sense of humor, making one another laugh. For the purposes of *Get Out*, Peele went with that shared humor as something Kaluuya and Williams could build upon as a dynamic that attracted their characters to one another, sparking their falling in love.

Reed Morano, another first-time DGA nominee, won dramatic TV honors for her helming of the pilot for *The Handmaid’s Tale* (Hulu). In her acceptance remarks, Morano thanked her producers and Hulu for being “the rare people who were seeking the opportunity to work with women instead of fearing it.”

Earlier during last year’s Emmy season—which saw her earn the Emmy for best director of a dramatic series for the same pilot episode (“Offred”) of *The Handmaid’s Tale*, Morano told *SHOOT* that among her prime challenges on the project was “finding the right tone” for the show. “My natural instinct used to be

to gravitate to what is most real, authentic and grounded. But for *The Handmaid’s Tale*, another dimension was needed. To tell the story and connect with an audience, the experience had to be made more epic and not one that just totally drags the viewer down. You can’t just strike one note all the way through. You have to create more of a roller coaster ride. For me the goal was to find a balance between realism and heightened elements here and there.”

Helping with this heightening was cinematographer Colin Watkinson whom Morano described as simply “spectacular.” She and Watkinson looked to bring new life to what can be visually mundane voiceover and flashback sequences. Of course, the beautiful and poetic writing of *Handmaid’s Tale* author Atwood imbued the voiceover with a stirring spirit. Morano and Watkinson in turn worked to make the point-of-view story of greater visual interest. “We thought,” shared Morano, “if everything we do with the camera is psychologically driven, getting into the mind of the character, then these sequences could be all the more engaging.”

Engendering gender reform

Morano was one of several female winners during the evening; others including Beth McCarthy Miller who won in the comedy series category for HBO’s *Veeep*; and Niki Caro who took the children’s program competition for an episode of *Anne with an E* (Netflix). Gerwig meanwhile earned her nomination for *Lady Bird*. And Alma Har’el of Epoch Films was nominated in the commercials category. The latter is one of a select few women directors to gain Guild recognition in the spotmaking competition—the first being Amy Hill as half of the directorial duo Riess/Hill in 1999; followed by Katina Mercadante as half of the team known as The Mercadantes in 2015. That same year, Lauren Greenfield also received a nomination, making her the first individual female helmer to earn that DGA distinction in commercials. Har’el becomes the second solo woman director to be nominated for Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Commercials since this category was established in 1980.

DGA president Thomas Schlamm kicked off the awards ceremony calling

for more opportunities for women, greater ethnic diversity and overall inclusion. He said strides have been made—noting that more than half of the Guild’s national board consists of women—but much more must be done. Schlamm also tackled the sexual misconduct issue, saying, “Today we are witnessing a historic cultural shift in our industry and hopefully our society as well. Our Guild has been outspoken about our commitment in the drive to more respectful and inclusive workplaces, which includes a world where our members and others can show up for work without any fear of sexual harassment.”

Schlamm further noted that the DGA has joined the Commission on Sexual Harassment and Advancing Equality in the Workplace, an industry-wide coalition which has set goals to lead the entertainment community toward alignment in achieving safer, fairer, more equitable and accountable workplaces. The Commission is under the aegis of law professor Anita Hill who brought the sexual harassment issue to the national stage in 1991 when she testified during the Supreme Court confirmation hearings of Clarence Thnomas.

Documentary, commercials

Winning the DGA Award for Outstanding Achievement in Documentary was Matthew Heineman for *City of Ghosts* (Amazon Studios) which introduced audiences to a group of citizen journalists who came together after ISIS took over their land. Heineman came on stage to affirm, “In the era of fake news where facts seem to be malleable and journalism is under fire, it’s important to celebrate groups like RBSS (Raqqqa Is Being Slaughtered Silently) that are courageously speaking truth to power.” (Heineman is handled for spots by Superprime Films.)

Speaking of commercialmaking, taking the DGA Award in that discipline was Martin de Thurah of Epoch Films. It’s the second career DGA win for de Thurah who this time around earned best spot director of 2017 on the basis of three entries that exhibited a mix of humor and cinematic acumen: StubHub’s “Festival” and “Machines” for Goodby Silverstein & Partners; and WealthSimple’s “Mad World” from the client’s in-house agency.

De Thurah topped a field of nominees

which also consisted of his Epoch colleague Har’el; the Hoffman/Metoyer duo from MJZ; Miles Jay of Smuggler; and Isaiah Seret of Biscuit Filmworks.

In brief acceptance remarks, de Thurah said he was deeply honored by the award and by being in the company of such talented fellow nominees. He then gave a shout-out to Har’el, sharing that he thought she was going to win the award based on her high-caliber work. He also cited her efforts to open up opportunities for women directors, a reference to the Free The Bid program she launched a little more than a year ago. The nonprofit initiative, which has picked up widespread industry momentum, asks ad agencies to include a female filmmaker on every triple-bid project, production companies to sign more woman directors, and marketers to seek one woman’s bid on each of their commercial productions.

De Thurah additionally thanked Epoch Films and his support team which included first assistant director Charles Connor on the two Stubhub commercials, and first assistant director Jey Wada and second assistant director Custis Smith who worked on the WealthSimple entry.

De Thurah first won the DGA Award in 2014 for two spots he directed in 2013: Hennessy’s “The Man Who Couldn’t Slow Down” for Droga5, and Acura MDX 2014’s “Human Race” for Mullen L.A.

Among the other DGA winners this year were Glenn Weiss for directing *The 89th Academy Awards* (ABC), Don Roy King for helming the Jimmy Fallon-hosted episode of *Saturday Night Live* (NBC), and Brian Smith for helming an episode of reality show *MasterChef* (FOX).

Special honors

Director and past DGA president Michael Apted received the DGA Honorary Life Member Award in recognition of leadership in the industry, contribution to the Guild and the profession of directing, and outstanding career achievement.

Dwight Williams was the recipient of the 2018 Frank Capra Achievement Award for career achievement in the industry and service to the Guild.

And Jim Tanker received the 2018 Franklin J. Schaffner Achievement Award in recognition of career achievement in the industry and service to the DGA.

Breaking The Glass Lens Ceiling

Rachel Morrison, ASC, makes industry history at ASC Awards, Oscars

By Robert Goldrich



Rachel Morrison, ASC earned her first career ASC Award nomination last month on the strength of director Dee Rees' *Mudbound* (Netflix). The nod carries historical significance because it broke the glass ceiling as Morrison became the first woman to be nominated for an ASC Award in the competition's marquee Theatrical Feature category for Outstanding Achievement in Cinematography.

Two weeks later, Morrison broke more glass with *Mudbound* as the first female nominee ever for a Best Cinematography Oscar. "I hadn't even remotely thought about breaking ceilings," said Morrison. "It's always been just about the work. I would have thought that other women had been nominated in the past, like Mandy Walker. It's eye-opening to think that in 90 years of the Oscars, I'm the first woman nominated (for Best Cinematography). It's momentous and an incredible honor."

More importantly, Morrison hopes the ASC and Oscar recognition will inspire others. "I would like to see it help open the floodgates for other women, encouraging them to pick up a camera and follow their dreams."

Morrison is part of an ASC Award nominees crop this year which also consists of: Roger Deakins, CBE, ASC, BSC for *Blade Runner 2049*; Bruno Delbonnel, ASC, AFC for *Darkest Hour*; Hoyte van Hoytema, ASC, FSC, NSC for *Dunkirk*; and Dan Laustsen, ASC, DFF for *The Shape of Water*. This is the same lineup of DPs in the running for the Best Cinematography Oscar.

Based on the novel by Hillary Jordan with a screenplay by Rees and Virgil Williams, *Mudbound* centers on two families—one black, the other white—in the rural American South dur-

ing World War II. The white McAllen family—headed by Henry (Jason Clarke) and his wife Laura (Carey Mulligan)—moves to the Mississippi Delta from Memphis and isn't fully ready for the harsh demands of tending to the land. Their lives intersect with a black family headed by Henry and Florence Jackson (Rob Morgan, Mary J. Blige). While segregation, discrimination and racism stack life against the Jacksons, the sharecroppers persevere with great dignity. Though the McAllens do not face such race-related adversity, the two families have other struggles in common—coping with the ravages of Mother Nature, and each with loved ones who go off to war overseas and ultimately return to the battle of adjusting to everyday life on the homefront. The war vets—Jamie McAllen (Garrett Hedlund) and Ronsel Jackson (Jason Mitchell)—develop a fast and at first uneasy friendship, each bearing the scars of war only to then have to return to the brutality and cruelty of the Jim Crow South.

Mudbound—which marked Morrison's first collaboration with Rees—carried varied creative challenges for the cinematographer. "When you have a single character driving the story, it's easy to know where to put the camera," Morrison related. "This ensemble cast was so strong that we effectively had six main characters as driving forces in various scenes. We had to take six different points of view and make it work as a feature film. Dee was able to weave it into a narrative that was poetic and functioned as a whole."

Mother Nature itself was another prime challenge in the lensing of *Mudbound*, a film that pitted its characters against the elements. Morrison observed, "The elements always win. We are all put in our place by the elements—rain, wind, the harsh sun. It doesn't matter how prepared you think you are." The DP further observed that even in a world of racial disparity, the elements "level the playing field," impacting people no matter their race or gender. She described nature as "the great equalizer." Morrison shot widescreen as a means of isolating people in the frame against a landscape of fields, conveying human insignificance in the face of nature.

At the same time, Morrison captured more than the onslaught of the elements; she also conveyed the flip side of Mother Nature, its beauty which evokes hope and inspiration.

Morrison said that she and Rees wanted to shoot *Mudbound* on film but budget realities necessitated they go digital. Morrison estimated that the cost of film would have translated into two less shooting days as compared to digital. They couldn't afford to lose two precious days on an already extremely challenged shooting schedule.

Morrison thus opted for the ARRI ALEXA Mini, which she coupled with a mix of lenses—Panavision B, C and D series ana-

From top left, clockwise: Rachel Morrison, ASC; Roger Deakins, CBE, ASC, BSC; Bruno Delbonnel, ASC, AFC; Dan Laustsen, DFF.

ASC AWARDS PREVIEW

morphics in addition to Vintage Super Speeds from the 1960s and '70s that lent themselves to reduced contrasts, among other desired features.

Mudbound piqued Morrison's interest for the chance to depict the historical era. Archival photographs of the post Depression South commissioned by the Farm Security Administration provided key visual references for Morrison—these included images by Arthur Rothstein, Ben Shahn, Dorothea Lange and Gordon Parks. That work, noted Morrison, was integral to the design of the movie and many of her compositional choices.

Roger Deakins, CBE, ASC, BSC

In sharp contrast to the firsts garnered by Morrison, Roger Deakins, CBE, ASC, BSC, added to his record ongoing haul of ASC Award nominations over the years. In fact, it might be more newsworthy to report the years Deakins has not been an ASC nominee in light of the 15 nods he's received thus far dating back to his first in 1995 for *The Shawshank Redemption*, for which he won the award. He also received the ASC Award for *The Man Who Wasn't There* in 2002, and for *Skyfall* in 2013.

Blade Runner 2049 marks Deakins' third collaboration with director Denis Villeneuve—all of which have earned ASC Award nominations, the first two being *Prisoners* and *Sicario*. Those three films also each garnered a Best Cinematography Oscar nomination, giving Deakins a career total of 14, though he is yet to win an Academy Award.

Deakins said of Villeneuve, "We just hit it off right out of the gate on *Prisoners*—and it's continued since then. When you meet and work closely with a director, some you get on with better than others. Denis and I have similar kinds of feelings about filming and style, trying to make something true to the story."

Blade Runner 2049 posed its own unique challenges, with a seemingly simple "goal" proving to be easier said than done. "We were adamant about everything we shot outside had to be in gray light. Both Denis and I wanted this very kind of smoggy, foggy, gray, claustrophobic atmosphere for the film. Something simple like shooting an exterior scene on the backlot, though, became more challenging as we had to hold out for gray light. It's easy to

want, but hard to schedule."

Taking some of the difficulty out of realizing the filmmaker's vision, continued Deakins, was the meticulous mapping out of that vision through the painstaking task of storyboarding the whole movie. "Denis is very minimalistic as am I. We spent a long time in Montreal thinking of specific ways to shoot each scene," said Deakins. "Of course, things change on set, scenes evolve. But we had storyboards drawn out going into the shoot. It kept us in touch with the original vision."

After much research, Deakins again gravitated to the Alexa XT as his camera of choice for *Blade Runner 2049*. He also returned to another long-time lens ally, Zeiss Master Primes. Deakins described the Alexa XT as "a user-friendly camera. I operate myself so that's important. I also like the camera system because the images it produces are as close to what I see by my eye."

The Zeiss Master Primes, were chosen simply because they are "about the fastest, sharpest lenses around," assessed Deakins. "They're sharp and clear, with less flare in them from light sources."

Regarding whether he was influenced by the original iconic *Blade Runner*—directed by Ridley Scott and shot by the late, great Jordan Cronenweth, ASC—Deakins said, "I'm very aware of the original *Blade Runner*. I've seen it a number of times. But I don't think you can go the way of being influenced by that. I work differently, have a different sensibility than another artist. I didn't want to be inspired by the original *Blade Runner*. I instead took the script for *2049* as if it were any other script and approached it from there."

That approach entailed Deakins being involved in the process—extensive pre-pro, production and post—for "a very long time. I was involved in visual effects all the way through. It was absolutely crucial for Denis that we do as much as we could in camera and that the effects wouldn't look like effects so that the audience could get fully immersed in this world."

Bruno Delbonnel, ASC, AFC

Darkest Hour garnered Bruno Delbonnel, ASC, AFC his fourth career ASC Award nomination, the other three being for *Amelie* in 2002, *A Very Long Engage-*

ment in 2005, and *Inside Llewyn Davis* in 2014. *Darkest Hour* is Delbonnel's fifth Best Cinematography Oscar nod, four of which correspond to his ASC Award nominations, Delbonnel's other Academy Award nom came in 2010 for *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*.

Darkest Hour marked Delbonnel's first collaboration with director Joe Wright. The DP had been contacted in the past, including being reached out to for the movie *Pan*, but scheduling conflicts prevented him from teaming with Wright. Happily they were finally able to come together on *Darkest Hour*.

Delbonnel went with the ARRI Alexa to lens *Darkest Hour*, noting he has a comfort level with the camera and its pairing with Cooke lenses. *Darkest Hour* is the fourth feature Delbonnel has lensed digitally.

Delbonnel said he was drawn to *Darkest Hour* for the opportunity to delve into Winston Churchill, portrayed by Gary Oldman who landed a Best Lead Actor Oscar nomination on the strength of his performance. Delbonnel said that Churchill was an amazing person, initially unwanted, sort of "a dark horse" who resided in the shadows and was then thrust into the spotlight. "Playing with the idea of dark and light was how I translated Churchill, looking into the reality of his character," said Delbonnel.

The cinematographer shared, "I try to think of lighting as a musical score. Basically when I work, I don't follow the daylight or what is written in a script in terms of light setting. Instead I place a valuation on lighting that is like a piece of piano music—this kind of melody inside the script that I try to follow. Some scenes have much more contrast than others; there's a rhythm with the light. Like a melody, lighting can underscore the emotion of a particular scene. It's like a symphony which has varied movements. That's the approach I've developed to my lighting."

Dan Laustsen, DFF

The Shape of Water marks the first career ASC Award nomination for Dan Laustsen, DFF and the third feature he's shot for director Guillermo del Toro—the first two being *Mimic* (1997) and *Crimson Peak* (2015). *The Shape of Water* also garnered Laustsen his very first Best Cin-

ematography Oscar nod.

In *SHOOT's* The Road To Oscar prequel coverage, Laustsen said he found it comforting going into the film that he and del Toro "have the same taste and opinion when it comes to lighting and camera movement. Guillermo knows exactly what he wants to do and how. As a cinematographer, I find him very easy to be around. We understand each other. A lot of stuff we don't even have to talk about."

The Shape of Water is a fairy tale set during the Cold War era of America circa 1962. In the hidden high-security government laboratory where she works as a janitor, Elisa (Sally Hawkins), a mute, is trapped in a life of isolation. Her life, though, takes on hope, when she and co-worker Zelda (Octavia Spencer) discover a secret classified experiment—a hybrid man/sea creature with whom Elisa makes a special connection. Elisa and this amphibian man (Doug Jones), who too is mute, fall in love.

A relationship between mutes, steeped in a rich emotional silence, is a premise, said Laustsen, that is "very cinematic." The visual becomes all the more important in showing their special connection, against a backdrop of espionage, danger and government Cold War era secrecy. Adding to the fairy tale mystery is how the creature is photographed. "You have to reveal enough of him so that the audience can feel a connection but at the same time," noted the DP, "the key was not to show too much."

Hoyte van Hoytema

Hoyte van Hoytema, ASC, FSE, NSC, who was unavailable for an interview at press time, previously collaborated with director Christopher Nolan on *Interstellar*, for which the DP received a BAFTA Award nomination. Coming together again with Nolan on *Dunkirk*, van Hoytema earned both an ASC Award nomination and his first career Best Cinematography Oscar nom. *Dunkirk* marks the second time that the DP has landed an ASC nod, the first coming back in 2012 for director Tomas Alfredson's *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*.

ASC Award feature and TV winners will be announced and honored during a gala ceremony on Saturday, Feb. 17, in Hollywood, Calif.



Joe Letteri



"Hero's Journey" for Kia



Tom Graham



War for the Planet of the Apes

The Long and Short Of It In Visual Effects Artistry, Invention

Reflections on VES-nominated fare from a Super Bowl ad to War for the Planet of the Apes

A SHOOT Staff Report

In culling through this year's Visual Effects Society (VES) Award nominations, SHOOT coverage across the board in 2017 carried a connection to many of those in the running for honors, ranging from commercials to features. On the latter score, for example, *War for the Planet of the Apes* (Twentieth Century Fox) tied with *Blade Runner 2049* (Warner Bros. Pictures) for the most noms with seven. And one of the prime contributors to the *Apes* saga, Joe Letteri—sr. VFX supervisor on *War* and a partner in New Zealand-based studio Weta Digital—knew before the awards gala (2/13) that no matter how *War* fared, he would be leaving with some hardware in that he had already been named the next recipient of the VES Georges Méliès Award which honors lasting contributions to the art and science of the visual effects industry by way of artistry, invention and groundbreaking work.

Letteri's creative vision and inventive techniques have garnered him four Academy Awards for Best Visual Effects on *Avatar*, *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* and *King Kong*. Last month on the strength of *War for the Planet of the Apes*, Letteri scored his 10th Best VFX Oscar nomination.

SHOOT editorially crossed paths with Letteri on several occasions last year—including interviewing him on stage after a screening of *War for the Planet of the Apes* at The James Blakeley Theater on the Fox studio lot in Los Angeles, as well as earlier gaining his reflec-

tions on the film in our prequel to this awards season's continuing The Road To Oscar series of feature stories. In both the prequel and on stage, Letteri shared insights into *War for the Planet of the Apes*, which was nominated for VES Awards in the following categories: Outstanding Visual Effects in a Photoreal Feature; a pair of nods for Animated Character in a Photoreal Feature (for Caesar and for Bad Ape); two more for Created Environment in a Photoreal Feature (for Hidden Fortress and for Prison Camp); Effects Simulations in a Photoreal Feature; and Compositing in a Photoreal Feature.

For Letteri, character is king in that the only way to strike a responsive chord with viewers is through a story advanced by its characters. Letteri cited the development of ape leader Caesar, portrayed by Andy Serkis, as a marquee example of how a character can continue to grow and develop in the realm of performance capture. Serkis' performance in *War* reaches inward as Caesar battles demons within, grappling with crossing a moral boundary which has him seeking vengeance for the murder of his family, causing him to abandon his long-held vision of humans and apes somehow peacefully co-existing.

The brilliance of Serkis and Weta's penchant for being in the moment with the character, delving into what's happening behind Caesar's eyes and the subtleties of translating human performance to an ape performance help to propel the narrative. This artistry is

what evokes empathy and connects audience to characters and story.

Spectacular spots

Among the commercials nominated for VES Awards were "Hero's Journey" for Kia Niro and "Do What You Can't: Ostrich" for Samsung. The former was selected by SHOOT editors as the #4 entry in our rundown of the Best Work of 2017, while "Ostrich" emerged as #5.

"Hero's Journey" was up for the VES Award recognizing Outstanding Visual Effects in a Commercial as was "Ostrich," which scored two other VES nods—Outstanding Animated Character in a Commercial (for the Ostrich); and Outstanding Compositing in a Photoreal Commercial. MPC Life, MPC Advertising's character development team, helped realize "Ostrich." Directed by MJZ's Matthijs Van Heijningen for Leo Burnett, the ad gave MPC the opportunity to create a fully photo-real and anatomically correct ostrich—and give him his own quirky personality. Opening with a curious ostrich stumbling into a VR headset, the spot shows the character beginning to dream of achieving the impossible. Via Samsung VR, the ostrich reaches new heights to the beat of "Rocket Man."

A reference shoot involving several real ostriches took place in South Africa before the CG counterpart was re-born via MPC London creative director Diarmid Harrison Murray, MPC LA creative director Michael Gregory and a global team of experts in LA, London, Paris

and Bangalore. Murray noted, "A photo-real ostrich definitely ranks as one of the toughest CG creatures I've faced, bar none. Their feathers are insanely fluffy and dynamic, and not like any other bird we have created before. We completely upgraded our existing feather system to deal with these challenges."

Van Heijningen also directed the Kia 2017 Super Bowl spot "Hero's Journey," this time collaborating with VFX house The Mill. In the :60 from agency David&Goliath, Melissa McCarthy is out to save the environment, learning that it can be perilous to do so. Each time she gets the worst end of the exchange, including when a surging whale emerges from the sea and dives back down onto her small motorboat, catapulting McCarthy towards the side of a distant ship with a cartoon-like thud. Luckily, McCarthy drives a Kia Niro, the vehicle that's up for any adventure, underscoring that "it's hard to be an eco-warrior but it's easy to drive like one."

The Mill LA primarily worked on "Hero's Journey" with its London office also contributing. The Mill's Tom Graham, who served as VFX shoot supervisor and 3D lead artist, related, "Everyone was in agreement that the CG had to be completely seamless. With full CG ocean shots with a whale and a digital double, a tree falling off a cliff, icebergs crumbling, and a rhino, we knew it would be tight in the amount of time we had. The clients were mainly concerned with keeping the story clear to the viewers with so much happening."

A Sense of Purpose Grows At Sundance



Documentary fare strikes responsive chord with filmmakers, audiences; episodic content makes an impact

By Robert Goldrich

Park Pictures Features—the motion picture division of commercial/branded content production house Park Pictures—has become a fixture at the Sundance Film Festival in recent years, last month breaking new ground at the indie showcase by extending its reach to a filmmaking discipline for the first time to tell a deeply personal, emotionally moving real-life story that resonated with attendees, winning a coveted Audience Award.

Since its launch in 2010, Park Pictures Features has produced 10 feature films, nine of which have made the Sundance cut. Three of the films were rolled out at last month's fest: the closing night movie, *Hearts Beat Loud* directed by Brett Haley; the Jim Hosking-helmed *An Evening with Beverly Luff Linn*, part of the Sundance Next Fest program; and *The Sentence* directed by Rudy Valdez.

The latter is the alluded to new groundbreaking company wrinkle—the first documentary produced by Park Pictures Features, and it's a project that means a great deal to producers Sam Bisbee and Jackie

Kelman Bisbee, the husband-and-wife team who are partnered in the company with filmmaker Lance Acord.

Sam Bisbee shared that he and Jackie have known Valdez—who makes his directorial debut with *The Sentence*—long before he got into filmmaking. “It was back when Rudy was our daughter’s pre-school teacher,” recalled Sam Bisbee. And it was well before Valdez’s sister, Cindy Shank, went to prison, given an unjust mandatory sentence of 15 years.

The mother of three, Shank was imprisoned in 2007 for tangential involvement with a Michigan drug ring years earlier. She was sentenced even though her then live-in boyfriend drug dealer was shot and killed years earlier—and at that time she was charged with no crime. As the “girlfriend,” though, she eventually found herself targeted by prosecutors. Despite her alleged participation—she contended she was not involved in any drug conspiracy—and the nonviolent nature of the charges, Shank was subject to mandatory minimum drug sentencing

of 15 years in a federal prison.

Valdez spent about a decade shooting footage documenting his nieces growing up so his incarcerated sister could at some point see their accomplishments and personal milestones. But this project evolved into something much bigger, becoming an intimate portrait of the devastating consequences that a mandatory minimum drug sentence can have on a family. For Shank, this included her daughters, her now ex-husband Adam, and of course, brother Valdez. Adam Shank and Valdez fervently pursued clemency for Cindy which was granted as President Barack Obama prepared to leave office in late 2016.

“This family’s story captivated us,” said Sam Bisbee. “We had to make a film to tell this story. There was a great sense of purpose in telling this story.”

It’s a story that connected with Sundance attendees as *The Sentence* won the U.S. Documentary Audience Award. The film’s premiere screening elicited a tear-

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Clockwise from top left: *The Sentence*; *Generation Wealth*; *Hearts Beat Loud*; director Lauren Greenfield; *Mr. Inbetween*; Sam Bisbee of Park Pictures Features; director Matthew Heineman

The Director's Network Signs Cinematographer Anthony Arendt Cinematographer Anthony Arendt signed with The Director's Network, the premier talent agency for freelance directors, director/cameramen, and directors of photography.

Timber Provides VFX For Triad of Super Bowl LII Spots Timber provided VFX and postproduction for three Super Bowl LII commercial spots for T-Mobile, Avocados of Mexico and Persil.

Camp + King Hires AD, Senior Producer and Senior Strategist Agency Camp + King appointed three execs to its talent roster, partner/CEO Jamie King, announced. Dan Depew, Garrett DeLorm and Paige Robertson work out of the shop's Presidio office.

SIGGRAPH 2018 Seeks Submissions, Announces Program Expansions SIGGRAPH 2018 announces the call for submissions for the 45th conference as well as two program expansions.

Stun Announces Significant Expansion LA-based Stun announced a significant expansion to a new, larger, headquarters.

Five Agencies Come Together as MERGE MERGE launched in three cities—Chicago, Boston and Atlanta, CEO Ron Bess announced.

Noble Directing Team Tiny Inventions Nominated for Academy Award Tiny Inventions, the directorial duo represented in the US by Noble, has been nominated for a 2018 Academy Award for their touching animated short film, "Negative Space."

Istituto Luce-Cinecittà Selects WCPMedia's Cloud Platform Italy's historic Istituto Luce-Cinecittà selected WCPMedia Services to manage its massive catalog of Italian feature films and documentaries.

TM Partners With charlieuniformtango on Super Bowl LII Spot The Texas Rangers once again tapped TM Advertising to tackle this year's Super Bowl spot. The ad, created in partnership with charlieuniformtango, debuted this Sunday during the big game.

NBCUniversal LightBlade Production Lighting Debuts 3 New Products The highly successful NBCUniversal LightBlade LED released 3 new products at the BSC Expo (Stand 526) in London, February 2-3, 2018. The new 1 Blade, 2 Blade and 4 Blade product configurations were showcased.

Directors Richie Smyth and Kieron Walsh Join

The MUGSY Gang Directors Richie Smyth and Kieron J. Walsh have joined MUGSY for commercial and branded content representation in the U.S. market.

MTI Film Hires Colorist Trent Johnson Veteran colorist Trent Johnson joined MTI Film.

Comedy Director Kevin Smith Joins STORY Continuing to grow its creative roster, STORY signed award-winning director Kevin Smith for exclusive national representation.

Z CAM & ASSIMILATE Announce Integrated S1 VR Camera and SCRATCH VR Z Bundle The Z CAM S1 VR Camera/WonderStitch/ASSIMILATE® SCRATCH VR Z Bundle, the only professional VR integrated production workflow on the market, is now only \$3999!

The Colony's Hughes William Thompson and Ogilvy, Atlanta Create a Cautionary Tale About Mobile Devices The Atlanta Jewish Film Festival commissioned a film from Ogilvy Atlanta and The Colony director Hughes William Thompson to remind audiences of the power of cinema and the festival to connect people in a way that small screens can't.

Timber Contributed Striking Visuals for "The Middle" For Maren Morris, Zedd & Grey In Partnership With Target Timber's team of VFX artists contributed their talents to "The Middle," which premiered at the 2018 Grammy Awards. Timber collaborated closely with Mother in New York for the three-minute, live performance video.

Black Label Content Founder Joseph Uliano & Director Paul Feig Bring The Laughs With A Touch Of Hollywood Flair In 2018 Oscars Campaign With the highly-anticipated 90th Oscars telecast on March 4th, 2018 on ABC, Black Label Content Founder/Executive Creative Director Joseph Uliano and Director Paul Feig bring the laughs with a touch of Hollywood flair in ABC's 2018 Oscars campaign.

Filmmaker Matt K. Turner & Eleven Mixer/Sound Designer Jordan Meltzer Create a Soundscape for "RFLKTR" Eleven Mixer/Sound Designer Jordan Meltzer celebrates the official selection of "RFLKTR," a new short film from Writer/Director Matt K. Turner.

Black Spot Creates Magic With Universal Kids Black Spot and Universal Kids created a new winter wonderland anthem spot that is magical and very danceable.

SourceAudio's Alpha Libraries for Radio Signs Pact with Entercom SourceAudio announced that its Alpha Libraries for Radio, the radio industry's largest production library service, signed a multi-year deal with Entercom.

Synthetic Pictures' Justin Corsbie Delivers First National Campaign for the Rapidly-Growing Orangetheory Fitness and The Tombras Group When Synthetic Pictures Founding Director Justin Corsbie visited an Orangetheory Fitness for the first time, one thing became clear — it's membership is a diversely fit group with cult-like dedication to their workouts.

7 Win Best of Show in Mobius Awards 2017 Competition French ad agencies led the Best of Show (Grand Prix) winners list for the 2017 Mobius Awards int'l competition.

Grand Large Adds Director Lisa Immordino Vreeland Lisa Immordino Vreeland, director of critically acclaimed documentaries on Cecil Beaton, Peggy Guggenheim and Diana Vreeland, joined the U.S. roster of the global production boutique Grand Large.

Charming Romantic Comedy "Off The Menu," Starring Dania Ramirez & Santino Fontana, to World Premiere The charming, new, indie romantic comedy "Off The Menu," starring Dania Ramirez, Santino Fontana, Makenzie Moss, and Maria Conchita Alonso, made its World Premiere during the 2018 Santa Barbara International Film Festival. Executive Produced and Directed by Jay Silverman.

Writer & EP Janet Arlotta Joins Friends Of Mine as Executive Producer Writer and veteran Executive Producer Janet Arlotta joined the Emmy Award-winning design and branding studio Friends of Mine (FOM) as Executive Producer.

Director Jessica Sanders Continues to Push Boundaries with New Shatterbox Anthology Short Film "End of the Line" Picture this: A lonely man walks into a pet store to find a companion, and walks out with a tiny man in a cage. What follows involves abuse of power dynamics, and an exploration of class and desire.

Whitehouse Welcomes Editor Lizzy Graham To NYC Whitehouse Post added to its already robust New York roster by bringing aboard editor Lizzy Graham.

One at Optimus Welcomes Mary Ann Holecek as EP/Managing Director and Damian Huck as EP One at Optimus announced that Mary Ann Holecek has taken the reins as exec producer/managing director and Damian Huck was hired as EP.

Director Kelsey Larkin Launches U.S. Career Via Yard Dog Yard Dog signed director Kelsey Larkin for exclusive representation in the U.S.

Toronto's Sequoia Content Signs Director Bram Van Riet Director Bram Van Riet, a native of Antwerp and now a resident of San Francisco, joined the Toronto-based Sequoia Content for Canadian Representation.

RODEO FX Brings Creatures To Life In *Jumanji: Welcome To The Jungle* Visual effects powerhouse Rodeo FX was tagged to create 96 shots for *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle*, including some of the most iconic creatures in the movie.

Artifact Studios Launches Uncle Victor To Serve Entertainment Industry To meet increased demand from clients in the entertainment industry, Los Angeles-based creative agency Artifact Studios launched a new company called Uncle Victor.

Sherpas Cinema Pays Tribute to Skiing Legend J.P. Auclair in North Face Film "Imagination" A boy riding in the backseat of his parents' car through snow-swept Nelson, British Columbia, has his skiing fantasy spring to life in a sweetly thrilling short film produced by Sherpas Cinema for The North Face.

ArsenalCreative Names Mike Wynd VFX Supervisor ArsenalCreative announced expanded VFX team with the addition of award-winning VFX Supervisor Mike Wynd.

Alchemy Post Sound Pulls Out All The Stops For EPIX Spy Thriller "Berlin Station" Now in its second season on EPIX, the tense cloak and dagger drama Berlin Station centers on undercover agents, diplomats and whistleblowers inhabiting a shadow world inside the German capital.

Director Cody Stokes on Balancing Commerce and Art in Ads and Film Over the past five years, Cody Stokes has crafted a busy career as a commercial director.

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



Chelsea Director Lauren Greenfield Returns To Sundance

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ful standing ovation, emotions churning in particular over seeing how the three young girls coped with their mother's long absence, their relationship being reduced to phone calls and occasional visits, including one in which Shank makes Halloween costumes out of toilet paper so that her kids can go quasi-trick or treating in a secured area of the prison.

"I love to tell stories. That's why we do all this," said Kelman Bisbee. "But this story is the one closest to my heart. My family grew up having people out on parole coming to our home for Thanksgiving and Christmas. It was part of our life--and now it is for Sam. Mass incarceration, what's going on in our social justice system and its impact on families all make for a story that deserves to be told--and hopefully will prompt some reform, having us question who goes to jail and who doesn't."

At Sundance, HBO acquired U.S. TV and distribution rights to *The Sentence*.

Asked if *The Sentence* whetted Park Pictures Features' documentary filmmaking appetite, Kelman Bisbee affirmed, "Documentaries are something we plan on doing more of. This film has been a highlight of my career."

There's also the benefit of the crossover effect for Park Pictures, the spot/branded content company run by Kelman Bisbee and Acord. "Rudy [Valdez] will have a commercialmaking career with us," she assessed, saying the same for Haley who directed the aforementioned *Hearts Beat Loud*, which was a Sundance Premiere film, exploring the budding strength and friendship of a father-daughter relationship through the power of music. Park Pictures, Houston King Productions and Burn Later Productions produced *Hearts Beat Loud*, which at Sundance was picked up for distribution by Gunpowder & Sky. Sony Pictures Worldwide Acquisitions nabbed international rights.

The remaining Park Pictures' feature at this year's Sundance Fest was *An Evening with Beverly Luff Linn* (produced in conjunction with Wigwam Films and Rook Films), directed by Hosking (whose spotmaking roost is Skunk). Starring Aubrey Plaza, Jemaine Clement and Emile Hirsch, the comedy showcases a one-night only performance from the mysteri-

ous Beverly Luff Linn, much to the woe of Lulu Danger's (Plaza) strained marriage.

Generation Wealth

Director Lauren Greenfield also has a Sundance lineage, the latest entry being *Generation Wealth*, which screened in the Documentary Premieres program and is slated for theatrical release by Amazon Studios in July, with streaming availability likely to begin towards the end of the year. The documentary has been described as the filmmaker's "postcard from the edge of the American Empire," capturing a portrait of a materialistic, image-obsessed culture. Simultaneously personal journey and historical essay, the film bears witness to the global boom-bust economy, the corrupted American Dream and the human costs of late stage capitalism, narcissism and greed.

Greenfield said of the film, "In a way it's a combination of all my prior photography and documentaries, which told stories that examined popular culture, celebrity, self-image, materialism. The economic crash in a way caused me to see all these stories as a kind of morality tale about the way we've been living. It got me to think about my work in a different context. I started to wonder if the individual stories I had done somehow revealed a bigger story about how our culture had changed, our values had changed, how the American Dream had changed. It's like my work dating back many years showed over time the major shift in our culture--from my parents' generation when the American Dream was more about hard work, discretion, frugality, giving your children a better life to now when what started awhile back is reaching its zenith today--winning, celebrity, narcissism, and looking the part more than having substance. Fake it so you can make it. It didn't matter how you made the money as long as you had it. I started playing with all these intersecting stories and characters I dealt with over the years, and started to realize a bigger story."

Greenfield's Sundance journey kicked off with *Thin*, her directing debut which made a major splash at the 2006 festival. The documentary was based on her book of the same title which chronicled four women as they struggle to fight eating disorders. *Thin* also resonated with the

brain trust at Chelsea Pictures, which signed Greenfield for commercials and branded content, a relationship which continues to flourish today.

In 2012, Greenfield won the Sundance U.S. Documentary Directing Award for *The Queen of Versailles*, which tells the story of a couple losing their home amid the mortgage meltdown crisis--except in this story the residence is a 90,000 square

foot mansion inspired by the extravagance of France's Palace of Versailles, and the beleaguered couple consists of Florida time-share condominium entrepreneur David Siegel and his wife, Jackie. When the real estate bubble burst, the Siegels took a hard fall from their world of extreme wealth and privilege.

Both *Thin* and *Queen of Versailles*
Continued on page 30

Flash Back

February 11, 2013 Roger Deakins, ASC, BSC, won his third career ASC Award for Feature Film Excellence, this time for *Skyfall*. Deakins topped a field of ASC Award feature nominees which also consisted of Danny Cohen, BSC, for *Les Misérables*, Janusz Kaminski for *Lincoln*, Claudia Miranda, ASC, for *Life of Pi*, and Seamus McGarvey, ASC, BSC for *Anna Karenina*....Iran-hostage drama *Argo* continued its journey from awards-season outsider to favorite Sunday, winning three prizes, including best-picture, at the British Academy Film Awards. Ben Affleck was named best director for the based-on-reality story of a longshot plan to rescue a group of American diplomats from Iran after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, and the film also took the editing trophy for William Goldenberg, A.C.E....Garth Davis, a director whose work spans commercials and television, has joined Reset for worldwide representation, excluding Australia and New Zealand, where he remains with his long-time company Exit Films....David Mamet, the Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright (*Glengarry Glen Ross*) and twice Oscar-nominated writer (for screenplays for *Wag The Dog* and *The Verdict*), has come aboard the directorial roster of Aero Film for commercial representation.....

February 15, 2008 Framestore-CFC, London, won the Visual Effects Society (VES) Award for outstanding effects in a commercial on the strength of Smirnoff's "Sea" directed by Daniel Kleinman of Rattling Stick, London, for JWT London. This marks the fourth time in the six-year history of the VES competition that Framestore has topped the spot category...Animation studio Acme Filmworks, Hollywood, won the Annie Award in the commercials category for Power Shares' "Escape Average." Acme's Dave Wasson directed the spot for Euro RSCG, Chicago. This marks the third time in the last four years that Acme Filmworks has won the Annie Award for best commercial...Passion Pictures, London, has launched Strange Beast, a company that will rep an international roster of emerging filmmaking talent, including Encyclopedia Pictura, Amautalab, Lorenzo Fonda, The Blackheart Gang, Takeo, and James Price. Strange Beast will be based on Passion's U.K. premises and run by former freelance agency producer Nicola Finn...Joanne Ferraro has been named executive producer of Beat, New York. She comes over from NY editorial house Bluerock where she served as EVP, running day-to-day operations....

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Heineman Debuts *The Trade*

Continued from page 29

thus figured in the alchemy that yielded *Generation Wealth*. Asked if her lauded #LikeAGirl film for P&G/Always made its way into *Generation Wealth*, Greenfield explained, “Not in the same way, not literally the way my photography and documentary work did. But #LikeAGirl did figure symbolically in that it was a piece about gender and how human beings are turned into commodities.”

Greenfield described Sundance as a place “where I learned to be a filmmaker,” with *Thin* sparking the Chelsea Pictures connection, and *The Queen of Versailles* benefiting from contributions from advisors at the Sundance Lab. And while she didn’t work with The Sundance Lab for *Generation Wealth*, Greenfield noted that a couple of key advisors at Sundance helped as part of “an informal lab.” Those advisors, said Greenfield, were Rob Moss “who had been my teacher at Harvard way back,” and Mary Lampson, “an amazing editor who also helped me on *The Queen of Versailles*.”

The Trade

Matthew Heineman made his first mark at Sundance with feature documentaries, starting in 2012 with *Escape Fire: The Fight To Rescue American Healthcare*. Then in 2015 his *Cartel Land* earned him both the festival’s Documentary Directing and Documentary Cinematography Awards. And last year, Heineman’s *City of Ghosts* was nominated for Sundance’s Grand Jury Documentary Prize.

Cartel Land landed Heineman a Best Feature Documentary Oscar nomination, two primetime Emmy wins, and a DGA Award for Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Documentary. He won the same DGA honor again earlier this month for *City of Ghosts*.

Last month Heineman returned to Sundance but not with a feature doc. Instead he made the cut in the Special Events section with *The Trade*, a character-driven verite docu-series which explores the opioid epidemic and drug trafficking from the highly personal perspectives of growers, addicts and law enforcement officials on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. The series recently debuted on Showtime.

Heineman said that *The Trade* was in-

spired by and serves as a bit of a follow-up to *Cartel Land*, which introduced us to vigilante characters on both sides of the border. “I felt there was a lot more to be told in this area, that there were more issues to be explored,” said Heineman.

A prime order of business was to find real-life characters for *The Trade*, casting a wide net to connect with people affected in different ways in different countries. “We had an amazing set of producers who hit the streets and found people,” noted Heineman. “News of the opioid epidemic is splashed everywhere. But we wanted to create a deeper understanding by looking at law enforcement, addicts, poppy growers, drug cartel members. It’s through these real characters that you can generate an empathy for what’s happening. And that kind of empathy promotes greater understanding of the issue as a whole.”

Mr. Inbetween

New to Sundance this year was the Indie Episodic section, which provided a platform for *Mr. Inbetween*, a series written and starring Scott Ryan, with Nash Edgerton directing and serving as an EP. Edgerton directs commercials and branded content via The Directors Bureau.

Mr. Inbetween introduces us to a gent who has to juggle the roles of father, ex-husband and boyfriend—along with that of hitman. The Australian series sprung from a low budget film, *The Magician* (2005), directed, written and starring Ryan. Edgerton produced and edited the fake documentary about a hit man, which was well received Down Under and in other international markets.

Airing in Australia, *Mr. Inbetween* is seeking distribution elsewhere, with Sundance expected to help on that front. As for the biggest creative challenges posed by the show to Edgerton as a director, he assessed, “I’m such a fan of the original film that Scott made years ago. I wanted with this series to try to capture the feeling of that film but in a dramatized form. The other major challenge was this was my first time doing television. It’s a faster schedule than doing a feature film. I knew, though, that I had a great central character, with Scott in both the original film and now the TV show. I wanted to cast other actors who would balance well with his style of performing.”

street talk

Mexico City-based production company KIDS has added Antonio Riestra, ASC to its roster of directors. Riestra is known for his work as a cinematographer which has taken him worldwide. He has lensed films ranging from *Lidice* which was nominated for a Czech Lion, to *Kathmandu Lullaby* filmed in Nepal, *Last Knights* with Morgan Freeman, and *Mama* produced in Hollywood. Riestra earned a Goya Award and a Gaudi Award for Best Cinematography on the strength of *Black Bread*. In addition to his narrative film work, Riestra has a career in commercials which has seen him shoot campaigns for such brands as Dodge, Fiat, Cerruit, and Beats by Dre....Engine Group North American CEO Rick Eiserman has announced new executive leadership for content creation and entertainment

marketing agency Trailer Park Inc. Zihla Salinas has been appointed CEO of Trailer Park Group and Matt Brubaker has been promoted to CEO and creative director of the Trailer Park Film Entertainment Division. Both Salinas and Brubaker will report to Eiserman. Salinas will oversee the vision and direction of Trailer Park Group’s business and integrated offering across the company’s divisions. She joins from Doner LA where she was EVP and managing director. As president of Trailer Park’s Film Division for the past decade, Brubaker has created cutting-edge content spanning theatrical, Broadway and home entertainment. Renowned in the entertainment marketing industry, Brubaker has contributed to massive growth at Trailer Park and to it garnering industry accolades, such as recently being named CLIO Entertainment Agency of the Year. He has worked on award-winning campaigns, including for *Dunkirk*, *Baby Driver*, *Interstellar*, *Mad Max*, *Suicide Squad*, *The Dark Knight Rises*, *The Great Gatsby*, *Godzilla* and *Ocean’s Eleven*. Prior to Trailer Park, Brubaker was a creative executive at New Line Cinema and at Warner Bros....

report

Cinematographers Daniel Bombell, Matt Egan, Michael Lockridge, Peter Mosiman and Topher Osborn, and production designer Melisa Myers have joined the commercial and feature rosters at Innovative Artists....Innovative Artists has also brought agent Lauren Zak into its commercial department, joining Lisa Holguin. Zak comes from Dattner Dispoto & Associates....Cinematographer Salvatore Totino has wrapped principal photography on *Bird Box*—

directed by Susanne Bier, starring Sandra Bullock and Sarah Paulson—and is now available for commercials and feature films exclusively through ICM Partners.... Dattner Dispoto & Associates has booked costume designer Antoinette Messam on the feature film *Superfly*....Maria Teresa Hernandez has been named VP of client development at Branded Entertainment Network (BEN), the Bill Gates-backed company that connects brands with consumers through popular entertainment. In 2017, BEN delivered over 5,000 brand integrations valued in excess of \$1 billion, spanning TV, features and influencer programming. Hernandez will be responsible for driving new business efforts across multicultural markets as well as overseeing the company’s multicultural programming strategy. Prior to BEN, Hernandez was VP of client strategy at Orion. She will report to Kristin Glushon, BEN’s VP of client development....Sally Bernard is joining Las Vegas-based digital gamified marketing company Engaged Nation as VP of business development. Bernard most recently served as the director of sales-Western region for DITRONICS Financial Services, a casino multi-service kiosk manufacturer. Prior to that, she was a sr. account exec for Konami Gaming, where she produced over \$17 million in new revenue. Her extensive gaming industry sales experience includes her tenure as a sr. account exec at IGT, product director for CompuDigm International...

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