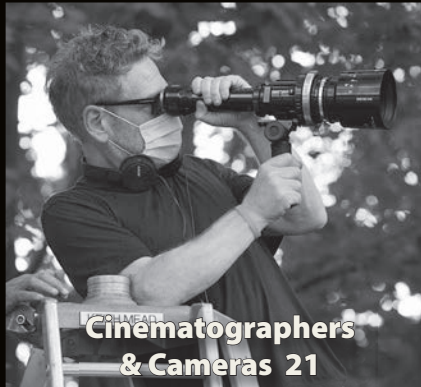


SHOOT®



Chat Room 11



Cinematographers
& Cameras 21



Sundance
Film Festival 27



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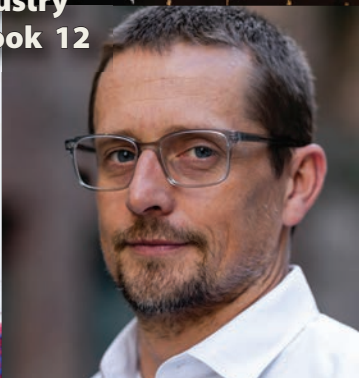
Top Row, L to R: Scene & BTS from *tick...tick...Boom!*, Mid Row, L to R: Scene & BTS from *Red Rocket*, Bottom Row, L to R: Scene & BTS from *Being the Ricardos*.



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By Robert Goldrich

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Red Rocket Goes tick...tick...Boom!

In a pandemic-induced era of uncertainty, there's much to be said for persevering as reflected in this week's installment of SHOOT's The Road To Oscar Series.

In its coverage of writer-director Sean Baker's *Red Rocket*, SHOOT referenced an AFI Fest actors' roundtable in which Simon Rex recalled Baker telephoning him out of the blue about *Red Rocket*.

At the time Rex said his Hollywood career was at a low ebb, describing himself as "halfway out the door in this business." Instead Baker helped Rex to knock that proverbial door wide open, casting him as washed up porn star Mikey Saber.

Now Rex, who felt like he was on the edge of a professional precipice, has been thrust into awards season relevance. Among the recognition he's earned thus far are Best Actor distinction from the

L.A. Film Critics, as well as Independent Spirit and Gotham Award nominations.

Meanwhile cinematographer Alice Brooks, ASC is in our Road To Oscar Series on the strength of her work on *tick...tick...Boom!*, which came on the heels of her lensing *In The Heights*. *tick...tick...Boom!* marked the feature directorial debut of Lin-Manual Miranda, an

what," said Brooks who revealed, "For me, there were so many times that I wanted to give up. Making movies is not an easy business. Six months before Jon (Chu) called me to shoot *In The Heights*, I felt like I was done. It felt like a moment in the movie (*tick...tick...Boom!*) where Jonathan goes to his friend Michael and asks that he get him a job in advertising.

"This is a movie for anyone who has a dream and it constantly feels like there's no way forward. You endure no matter what."

adaptation of Jonathan Larson's autobiographical musical show dealing with the pressures of being an artist, in this case sacrificing much of one's personal life to craft a successful musical. The film pays tribute to Larson (played by Andrew Garfield) whose artistic struggles ultimately yielded the Broadway hit *Rent*, a success he never lived to see.

"This movie is about a man who doesn't give up his dreams no matter

I remember my husband saying wait six months and if you feel the same, we'll seek something else out. But there are lessons to be learned from Jonathan's life. This is a movie for anyone who has a dream and it constantly feels there is no way forward. You endure no matter what. You take punches and keep getting up. You start your day all over again. This story is so personal. It feels universally personal."

By Joe Valentine

POV



Content in 2022

Content has long reigned supreme; it powers our business, and has a real influence over the way people feel about, and interact with, our clients' brands. But audience expectations for content are evolving as quickly as ever, and the hard and fast rules about what a brand should or shouldn't say—or be—to their customers are all but obsolete. Going into 2022 our agency is committed to expanding the parameters around the content we produce on behalf of our clients. It's not only a creative aspiration; it's a business imperative.

That certainly means thinking laterally about the network of creators we tap to support ad campaigns, but there's more.

We've learned a few things as we've watched the creator economy flex and expand (especially over the past 18 months), and witnessed agencies (ourselves included) struggling to produce content in

the pre-pandemic way. It's easy enough for any agency to tell their clients we'll "get scrappy" to produce the content they need. But for us (and our clients) it's been more fruitful to dispense with the assumption that the best idea is necessarily going to (or even likely to) come from inside the *metaphorical* four walls of our fully remote agency. To deliver breakthrough work for our clients we've opened ourselves up to diverse perspectives outside of traditional industry pros. We've expanded our network of partners to include talent agents, comedy writers and improvisers, illustrators, and multimedia artists, and even data management and machine learning experts.

We've also set out to eliminate some arbitrary barriers around the types of content we create for any given channel. We'll have work in a market that uses creators as talent in traditional TV spots and premium out-of-home placements. We'll post

professionally produced cinema-quality content on TikTok. We'll tap students and aspiring creatives to produce photo and video against an open-ended brief for an iconic brand, giving them a platform to launch their careers as creators.

We'll create and cultivate both content and expertise, curated from a multiverse of sources. And the work will be distinct and right-fit for modern brands, but it definitely won't feel like the typical agency work our industry has come to expect.

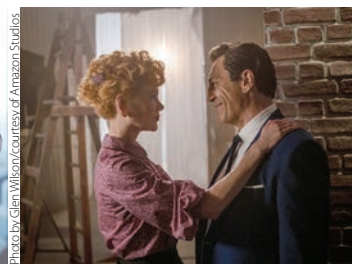
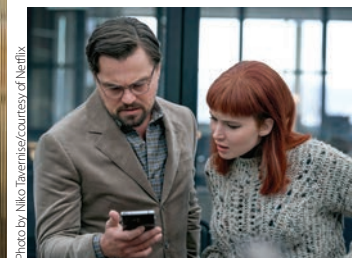
As companies big and small continue to trend toward agency consolidation, the agencies that are going to survive and thrive are ones that can act as facilitators in the truest sense. That means setting ego aside and asking clients to trust that the best way to be relevant in a frenetic digital landscape may just be to abandon assumptions about what it means for a brand to show up in culture.

Joe Valentine is president of Io8 Agency.

Directorial, DP and Editor Perspectives

Insights into *Red Rocket*, *Flee*, *tick... tick... Boom!*, *Being the Ricardos*, *Don't Look Up*

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



From top left, clockwise: Simon Rex (I) and Sean Baker on location for *Red Rocket*; a scene from *Flee*; Nicole Kidman (I) and Javier Bardem in a scene from *Being the Ricardos*; Andrew Garfield in *tick... tick... Boom!*; Leonardo DiCaprio (I) and Jennifer Lawrence in a scene from *Don't Look Up*; Hank Corwin, ACE, editor of *Don't Look Up*; *Flee* director Jonas Poher Rasmussen.

Writer/director/producer/editor Sean Baker recalled that his latest film was born out of necessity. When the pandemic lockdown first hit, a planned feature for Baker fell by the wayside. So he “pivoted to something more feasible to make with a skeleton crew.”

From that pivot *Red Rocket* (A24) was launched, adding to a lauded Baker filmography that includes *The Florida Project* (2017) which premiered at the Cannes Film Festival—earning a Best Supporting Oscar nomination for Willem Dafoe; *Tangerine* (2015) which debuted at the Sundance Film Festival and won an Independent Spirit Award as well as two Gotham Awards; *Starlet* (2012), recipient of the Robert Altman Film Independent Spirit Award; and *Prince of Broadway* (2008) and *Take Out* (2004) which were both nominated for the John Cassavetes Independent Spirit Award.

Red Rocket centers on a washed up porn star, Mikey Saber (portrayed by Simon Rex), who keeps on selfishly hustling and scamming when he returns to

his small Texas hometown, weaseling his way into the home of his estranged wife Lexi (Bree Elrod) and her mother Lil (Brenda Deiss). Mikey starts selling marijuana to make a living when he encounters Strawberry (Suzanna Son), a 17-year-old girl whom he sees as a ticket back to porn industry prominence in L.A.

Rex’s performance as Mikey entails a delicate balance. While he exploits people, somehow he retains a charm and a semblance of likability—in part due to the comedy of the situation and his disarming manner as someone who has never fully grown up emotionally. It all adds up to a darkly funny, humane portrait of a uniquely American hustler and a hometown that barely tolerates him. Baker teamed with Chris Bergoch on the screenplay.

At an AFI Fest actors’ roundtable a couple of months ago, Rex shared that Baker called him out of the blue about *Red Rocket*. At the time Rex said his Hollywood career was at a low ebb, describing himself as “halfway out the door in

this business.” Instead Baker helped Rex to knock that proverbial door wide open, casting him as Saber.

Rex recollected auditioning via an iPhone video, getting the gig and then having to drive three days to reach the shoot location—while memorizing dialogue along the way. Explaining that he couldn’t fly to the filming destination because that would have required his being quarantined upon arrival, Rex embarked on the film based on complete trust in Baker, whom he had never met.

While that story suggests a bit of eleventh-hour whimsy led Baker to Rex, the writer-director puts it in a different context, noting that the casting of Rex had rather been simmering for some time—well before *Red Rocket*. Baker said that he and Rex are about the same age, noting that he had been watching Rex’s career from the beginning. This dated back to when Rex was a MTV VJ whose interviews included a memorable session with Tupac Shakur. “I watched Simon’s career come and go, the peaks and val-

leys. He consistently entertained me,” related Baker who added that he was drawn in from afar by Rex’s stick-to-itiveness. “I felt a perseverance even though I didn’t know his personal journey,” observed Baker. “I felt it strange that the industry hadn’t offered him bigger, meatier (film) roles.” (Rex’s acting credits included three films in the *Scary Movie* franchise.)

Baker was also drawn to Rex’s deft use of social media platforms, reflected in an early presence on Vine and YouTube. “His six-second videos made me laugh,” said Baker who remembered doing research on the adult film world for *Red Rocket* and at that point texting one of his producers that if this film ever got made, Rex would be the guy to cast. Baker texted his producer a link to one of Rex’s Vine videos. “Rex had been on my mind for years,” affirmed Baker.

The director had also done some independent checking on Rex, again underscoring that casting him in *Red Rocket* was a very informed decision. Baker talked to his sister, Stephonik (production designer on *Red Rocket*), who’s knows one of Rex’s good friends, to find out more about the actor, how he was to work with. With a shoestring budget-time and money being precious-Baker realized he couldn’t afford “any divas” on *Red Rocket*. The feedback Stephonik received on Rex was that he was sweet, loyal and anything but diva-esque.

“I got on the phone with Simon and felt like I already knew him,” said Baker. “The trust seemed to be there from the beginning.” Rex was then sent what Baker described as “half a script, half a treatment” that still needed to be fleshed out. “Within 20 minutes, he sent back a self-made tape,” recalled Baker who first wondered if Rex was taking the project seriously. But upon viewing the tape, Baker found that Rex was already “90 percent there, that he had a handle on the character of Saber.

That has since been proven to be a very firm handle as Rex’s portrayal of Saber in *Red Rocket* has won him Best Actor distinction from the Los Angeles Film Critics Association, as well as Independent Spirit and Gotham Award nominations.

Another key first-time collaborator for Baker on *Red Rocket* was cinematographer Drew Daniels. Baker knew of

the DP’s work with writer-director Trey Edwards Shults spanning such films as *Waves*, *It Comes at Night*, and the 2015 SXSW Grand Jury and Audience Award-winning *Krishna*. Baker was also drawn to Daniels’ life experiences in Texas as that is where *Red Rocket* is set (primarily in Texas City, an oil refinery town on the

stead pivot and go into other directions. This led to serendipity, happy accidents. At first you can be defeatist, a ‘this had to happen now’ attitude. ‘Fuck me.’ But out of that came happy accidents, little miracles, like the movie a roller coaster of emotions. I never felt like this before when making a film.”



Photo courtesy of A24

Suzanna Son (l) and Simon Rex in a scene from *Red Rocket*

Gulf Coast). Daniels, whose family is from Texas, grew up in proximity to the area where the film was shot near Galveston and went to college in Austin. Daniels’ intuitive feel for Texas attracted Baker, particularly as the backdrop itself was a slice-of-Americana character in the film.

Baker and Daniels exchanged cinematic references to help define what the mood and tone should be for *Red Rocket*. Baker credited Daniels with coming up with the definitive cinematic language suggestion for creative inspiration, Steven Spielberg’s *The Sugarland Express* shot by the late Vilmos Zsigmond. Taking place outside of Houston just like *Red Rocket*, *The Sugarland Express* also captured the 1974 vibe that Baker envisioned.

Baker stressed that he had a simpatico feel and sense of purpose with cast and crew, reflected for example in his working relationships with Rex and Daniels. This helped *Red Rocket* weather the storm, sometimes literally, of being a production with limited time and budget during a time of uncertainty due to COVID. “There were little disasters all the time,” said Baker. “Hurricanes were coming our way. There were problems every few hours. We didn’t have the money or time to throw at any problems, We couldn’t tackle problems head-on. We had to in-

The tenor of the times too had an impact, continued Baker. “There was a very intense energy going on. Everybody was living in fear because of COVID, before the vaccine. The murder of George Floyd was on everyone’s mind. There was the upcoming (presidential) election. The country was divided...All that energy was somehow caught on the celluloid, We were living it every day. There was a constant adrenaline rush.”

Baker observed that there was a valuable lesson learned from the brand of guerrilla filmmaking he engaged in for *Red Rocket*. “You can’t live in the moment. In the moment I’m full of self-pity and kicking myself for taking a film a quarter of the budget of my last film. But then you realize all the great things that did for us. Those imposed limitations led to a lot of great things going on. The size of the crew-producers doing four positions on the film, wearing so many hats. There’s something really special about it, very freeing and liberating about the whole experience. We were an intimate little family with one goal in mind--to make this film and do it safely. I want to do it again, which is crazy. I never thought I’d say that while actually making this film. I want to make another film along the lines of *Red Rocket*-though hopefully with a

little more money. I want to do that before I take on another ‘big’ film. This crazy filmmaking family shooting guerrilla style in the middle of nowhere reignited my love for guerrilla filmmaking.”

Red Rocket debuted at the 2021 Cannes Film Festival. In addition to the aforementioned awards recognition for Rex, *Red Rocket* has scored assorted accolades including being named one of the year’s best films by the National Board of Review, Gotham nominations for Best Screenplay and Breakthrough Performer (Suzanna Son), and an Independent Spirit nod for Best Supporting Actress (Son).

Jonas Poher Rasmussen

Flee (Neon) is going long on the Oscar shortlists, making the cut not just for Best Documentary Feature but also Best International Feature (Denmark’s official entry). Additionally, *Flee* is widely considered to be in the running for Best Animated Feature, making the film directed by Jonas Poher Rasmussen a contender across three Academy Award categories.

Flee made its first major splash as a Cannes 2020 selection and the next year earned the Grand Jury Prize in the World Cinema-Documentary competition at the Sundance Film Festival. Furthermore, *Flee* recently won the Gotham Award for Best Documentary, the British Independent Film Award as Best International Indie Film, the National Board of Review’s Freedom of Expression Award (and inclusion in NBR’s Top Five Documentaries of the Year lineup), a New York Film Critics Circle Award, a Los Angeles Film Critics Award, the Annecy International Animated Film Festival’s Best Feature designation and three European Film Awards (for Documentary, Animated Film and the European University Film Award).

The latter honor credits *Flee* with untangling a young man’s real memories of “fleeing Afghanistan as a child to growing up openly gay in Denmark. The blend of different animation styles layered with the real voice of the protagonist (named Amin) and archival footage brings a surprising sense of realism to the film. The emotional connection to Amin’s story calls attention to the first-world ignorance of the stark reality for refugees and makes audiences reflect on their own position in

Continued on page 6

Director Jonas Poher Rasmussen Strikes Chord With *Flee*

Continued from page 5

society. *Flee* is a unique artistic exploration of how trauma affects one's sense of self while also bringing us to the conundrum of the universal sense of belonging and home."

Flee has also earned numerous nominations—four from the Annie Awards (including for Best Animated Feature Film), a Critics Choice Documentary Award

suming the name Amin, consented to share the real-life experience of his family fleeing war-torn Kabul, Afghanistan, in the 1980s.

What we see and hear in *Flee* marks the first time Amin has shared his story. Still, it was difficult for Amin to personally open up—even with his real identity protected. His five-year journey spanning Afghanistan, the Soviet Union and Scan-

Perhaps helpful in some respects to Rasmussen was his aforementioned background in radio. Though it sounds contradictory on the surface, radio is a visual medium. The magic of radio is that the listener can visualize things based on what's being said. For *Flee*, Rasmussen visualized what Amin said, trying to best do justice to his story.

While Rasmussen's first foray into animation was initially motivated as a means to preserve his friend's anonymity, the director said that the experience has him open to again deploying animation for other creative reasons. In working with Amin, for instance, Rasmussen learned that animation provided the creative option of being more expressive, to dive into the emotion of what's being said. While it might have been hard at times for Amin to talk about his trauma and recall certain details, he did vividly remember what he was feeling. And animation could delve into that emotion inside of him rather than being precise in terms of a scene. For example, when talking about his two sisters being confined in a container as they were being smuggled from Russia to Sweden, Amin didn't know the specifics.

of flight and dislocation is especially important to me. My ancestors fled Russia in the early 20th century to escape persecution and pogroms. Like Amin, the protagonist of *Flee*, they sailed across the Baltic to Denmark. This was where my grandmother was born, in a hotel close to the central train station in my current hometown of Copenhagen. Her family—my family—applied for asylum, but they were denied so they were forced to move again, this time to Germany. As a primary school student in Berlin, my grandmother was forced to stand before her classmates with a yellow star displayed prominently on her chest. Soon she had to flee again, this time to England. It happened almost a century ago, but the story of her forced displacement and dislocation still hangs over my family."

Rasmussen further stated, "Making *Flee* gave me new insights into the drastic consequences of fleeing home, especially as a child like Amin, like my grandmother. I began to understand the difficulties that children like them face when their past and present are so disconnected. I understood why they tended to look ahead to the future, while keeping a safe distance

from the people around them. I understood what it's like to have a deep secret that you cannot share with anyone, but which will always be a silent presence in that person's relationships and in life in general. As for Amin, I realized that this feeling of displacement still was very present in him, even after all these years. I believe it is because he never had

the chance to confront the past and share his story, the story of *Flee*."

A Danish/French film director, Rasmussen debuted in 2006 with the TV documentary *Something about Halfdan*, followed by a series of radio documentaries from around the world. He graduated from the Danish film school Super16 in 2010. His first feature film, *Searching for Bill*, a mix of documentary and fiction, won the Nordic Dox award at CPH:DOX, and the international competition prize at DocAviv. In November 2015 he premiered

Continued on page 8



Animation brings true story to life in *Flee*

nod, an Independent Spirit Award nominee for Best Documentary, a Golden Globe nomination for Best Animated Motion Picture, Best Feature and Director from the International Documentary Association Awards, Documentary of the Year and Technical Achievement of the Year (animation from Kenneth Ladekjaer) from the London Critics Circle Film Awards, and a Producers Guild Award nomination in the documentary theatrical motion picture category.

The origin of this awards trail was situated at an unlikely site—a bus stop in a small Danish town many moons ago. It was there that Rasmussen, then 15 years old, met another youngster as they went on the daily weekday morning commute to high school. They became good friends and Rasmussen was curious how and why his buddy wound up in the village. But the lad didn't want to talk about it.

Fast forward many years to when Rasmussen was working in radio and asked his friend about possibly making an audio documentary about his journey to Denmark. Rasmussen's buddy, though, remained reticent. Then eight years ago, Rasmussen was in a program pairing documentarians with animators. Rasmussen thought that by deploying animation, he could protect his friend's anonymity and make him more willing to tell his story. The friend, preserving his privacy by as-

summing the name Amin, consented to share the real-life experience of his family fleeing war-torn Kabul, Afghanistan, in the 1980s. What we see and hear in *Flee* marks the first time Amin has shared his story. Still, it was difficult for Amin to personally open up—even with his real identity protected. His five-year journey spanning Afghanistan, the Soviet Union and Scan-

denavia reflects the harrowing plight of migrants and their fight for survival. While he is in no way ashamed of his past, Amin doesn't want it to define him as he's come out of the ordeal with a successful career in academia and in a loving relationship with his fiancé Jasper. However Amin felt the compelling need to tell his story to raise awareness of and empathy for what the flight to freedom means, which is more relevant than ever given today's politically charged climate where immigrants are at times vilified. Rasmussen collaborated with animation studios Sun Creature in Denmark and Train Train in France on *Flee*, taking on a steep learning curve in the process. "I had to learn how animation works and the craft behind it," he related. "As a director, I had to be part of the process, understanding how things get put together. You can't change things once you start animating. I was used to doing things myself—to go out and shoot something, then go to an editor and work together. By contrast, you can't animate 80 hours of material. It has to be precise in terms of what you need. You have to animate before you shoot, edit rough storyboards. If you are doing a specific scene in a film and you need a closeup or a mood shot, you ask the storyboarder to make it for you. You can ask for anything—the exact shot you want. The precision is amazing."



A scene from *Flee*

He wasn't there with his sisters. But the emotions that Amin felt knowing what his sisters had to endure was real—and animation could reflect that as he told their story. Animation thus can be a valuable, viable tool for a documentary filmmaker. It can give generously shared testimonies the platform they deserve.

For Rasmussen, Amin's story resonated—not just for its implications for the issue of immigration today but also relative to the director's own family history. In his director's statement, Rasmussen shared, "Coming from a Jewish family, the theme

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TimeOut



Explore more in *The Lost Daughter - A Visual Companion* featuring exclusive images and essays from Clare Thorp, Jessica Kiang, and Ruffi Thorpe.



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DP Alice Brooks' Deep Connection To tick...tick...Boom!

Continued from page 6

his documentary *What He Did*, which won the prestigious Fipresci (International Federation of Film Critics) honor at the 2016 Thessaloniki Film Festival.

Alice Brooks, ASC

On the last day of lensing *In The Heights*, the Jon M. Chu-directed film adaptation based on the stage musical of the

lived with a bathtub in the kitchen. Like Larson, Brooks' tiny family apartment was frequently filled with artist friends who became a sort of community/family. Some of those friends, as also experienced by Larson, were lost to AIDS. Brooks too had artistic ambitions and her childhood memories of NYC are indelible. She initially thought that perhaps *tick...tick...Boom!* was "too close to home"

series in which dance becomes a battleground between good and evil. Brooks likened the experience on *The LXD* to being in "a lab which focused on telling different stories through dance and music. Each episode was a different length or style, a place to experiment with the narrative power of dance."

Brooks' next project with Chu also had a rich undercurrent of music as they adapted the 1980s' animated series *Jem and the Holograms* for the big screen. The live-action feature centered on a small town singer/songwriter who makes it big but at a personal cost.

Later Brooks again teamed with Chu on the musical feature *In The Heights*. This got her together with Miranda, setting the stage for her involvement in *tick...tick...Boom!* That involvement was unlike any other that Brooks had experienced in movies. "I think it was because Lin has been in the theater world for 20 years. My dad directed shows and wrote in theater. I grew up around theater. The collaborative experience there is you work on a show over and over again before you ever have a performance. It can be years. There's a discovery process. You discover a show as you rewrite it and rewrite it and rewrite it."

Though the timetable was more compressed for the feature film *tick...tick...Boom!*, there were similarities to the theater process with Miranda adopting that same workshop approach. He, Brooks, Levenson, production designer Mariela Comitini and storyboard artist Grant Schaffer brainstormed in an ongoing discovery process with, for example, models of sets inspiring script changes, cinematography transition ideas being incorporated into the script and so on. With all this work up front, particularly for the musical numbers, much was deliberated over and set by the time shooting began—always, though, with room for surprises, happy accidents and improvisation.

Invaluable to Brooks were videos of Larson from the late 1980s right up to the week of his unexpected death in 1996, shot by a friend who had a camera on Larson regularly. The tapes became a wealth of information spanning everything from set design and costume design to objects in Larson's life that were important to

him, and scenes from the stage show on which the movie is based.

"The thing I learned the most from these tapes was who Jonathan was and the enormous heart and joy for life that he had," shared Brooks. "The more I watched the tapes and got to know an intimate side of Jonathan, the more real he became—and the more real he became, the more I identified with his struggle as an artist and the more of an inspiration he became to me."

Inspiration came in handy when COVID hit and the production was shut down after just eight days of shooting *tick...tick...Boom!* The pause was planned originally to last two weeks—however, two weeks became six months. "But the bond we had formed during the first eight days was enough to carry us through," said Brooks. "We would have weekly *tick...tick...Zooms!* The entire cast and crew were invited. And we would have hundreds of people attend—every department."

Filming resumed in September 2020 and lasted for an additional 42 days without a shutdown. While PPE made normal interaction impossible, the original esprit de corps remained, observed Brooks. It was a loving, determined cast and crew with a profound sense of purpose.

Brooks deployed the Panavision DXL camera with Anamorphic G Series lenses, adapted by Panavision lens guru Dan Sasaki. When returning after the COVID hiatus, Sasaki had to further detune the lenses, taking off more of the front coating because Brooks could no longer use atmospheric smoke due to pandemic restrictions. Sasaki's retooling was needed in that Brooks wanted the lenses to feel a bit more aged and to respond to light on the edges of the frame in a stronger way.

The connection Brooks feels to Larson goes deep and well beyond her childhood. "Jonathan is a dreamer," she said. "This movie is about a man who doesn't give up his dreams no matter what. He sticks to his integrity, his dreams, his passion. He gets up, dusts himself off and starts all over again. For me, there were so many times that I wanted to give up. Making movies is not an easy business. Six months before Jon (Chu) called me to shoot *In The Heights*, I felt like I was done. It felt like a moment in the movie (*tick...tick...Boom!*) where Jonathan goes



Photo by Macall Pelsy/courtesy of Netflix

Robín de Jesús (l-r), MJ Rodriguez, Ben Levi Ross in *tick...tick...Boom!*

same name by Quiara Alegria Hudes and Lin-Manuel Miranda, cinematographer Alice Brooks, ASC got a call from her agent that Miranda was going to direct his first movie and that he'd like the DP to read the script and then they could talk.

The script was for *tick...tick...Boom!* (Netflix), an adaptation of Jonathan Larson's autobiographical one-man musical show (that eventually became a three-man show plus a band) of the same title dealing with the pressures of being an artist, in this case sacrificing much of one's personal life to craft a successful musical. A musical about creating a musical, the film pays tribute to Larson (played in the film by Andrew Garfield) whose artistic struggles ultimately yielded the Broadway hit *Rent*, a success he never lived to see. Miranda enlisted screenwriter Steven Levenson to turn Larson's show into a moving film that dives deeply into the life of the composer.

At first read, Brooks saw parallels to her own life, scenes from her childhood growing up in the 1980s with two artist parents—an aspiring playwright father and an actress/singer mother—in a 300 square foot apartment in New York, akin in many respects to where Larson

for her to take on as a project. But she ultimately decided that this was a movie she needed to help make.

In fact for her alluded to initial meeting with Miranda to discuss *tick...tick...Boom!*, Brooks prepared a lookbook filled with photos from her childhood. "A few minutes into our meeting Lin stopped me and said, 'wait, these are your personal photos?' My photos could be something right out of the movie. And he said to me, 'so this is a personal story to you?' From that moment—the moment where I shared my childhood photos—we just started exploring how we were going to make the movie together."

Brooks added, "Lin wanted to make the movie to look like New York when he was 10," related Brooks. "We both had the same memory of New York at the same exact time when as a child, life, dreams and reality sometimes get blurred."

Tick...tick...Boom! also coincided with Brooks lifelong love for musicals and artists, reflected in her filmography as a cinematographer which began at USC cinema school when she shot Chu's thesis film, a musical short. She and Chu later teamed on *The Legion of Extraordinary Dancers* (*The LXD*), a breakthrough web reality

Jeff Cronenweth Delves Into Lives Of Lucille Ball, Desi Arnaz

to his friend Michael and asks that he get him a job in advertising. I remember my husband saying wait six months and if you feel the same, we'll seek something else out. But there are lessons to be learned from Jonathan's life. This is a movie for anyone who has a dream and it constantly feels there is no way forward. You endure no matter what. You take punches and keep getting up. You start your day all over again. This story is so personal. It feels universally personal."

Jeff Cronenweth, ASC

The late Hollywood columnist and Turner Classic Movies host Robert Osborne referred to Lucille Ball in her heyday as likely being "the most famous woman in the world." And writer-director Aaron Sorkin's new film, *Being the Ricardos* (Amazon Studios), brings us a most challenging week during that heyday—with *I Love Lucy* at the height of its popularity, and Ball (portrayed by Nicole Kidman) well established for a long reign as the queen of TV comedy. It's a week—with some flashback context provided—when Ball and her husband, *I Love Lucy* co-star and behind-the-scenes genius Desi Arnaz (Javier Bardem), are in the throes of much uncertainty and anxiety.

For one, Ball has doubts about her husband's fidelity. Then there's the matter of her pregnancy with Ball and Arnaz trying to convince CBS and skittish sponsors to let her be expectant on the show. And looming even larger is the emerging accusation that Ball is a communist, which could be the death knell for *I Love Lucy* during the dark McCarthyism chapter in our history.

Supporting characters in *Being the Ricardos* include *I Love Lucy* writers Madelyn Pugh (Alia Shawkat) and Bob Carroll Jr. (Jake Lacy), showrunner Jess Oppenheimer (Tony Hale), and of course Vivian Vance who played Ethel Mertz in the show (Nina Arianda) and William Frawley a.k.a. Fred Mertz (J.K. Simmons).

Sorkin turned to cinematographer Jeff Cronenweth, ASC to lens *Being the Ricardos*. The two are hardly strangers as Cronenweth shot *The Social Network*, written by Sorkin and directed by David Fincher. Technically on that film, Cronenweth also collaborated with Sorkin as a director—albeit briefly. Fincher gave Sor-

kin the opportunity to direct the last shot of *The Social Network*.

Being the Ricardos, though, marks the first full Sorkin-directed feature shot by Cronenweth, a two-time Best Cinematography Oscar nominee, both coming for Fincher films *The Social Network* in 2011 and *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo* in 2012.

Cronenweth was drawn to the pros-

the chance to explore the lives of Ball and Arnaz. Most telling to the DP was Sorkin's structuring of *Being the Ricardos* as a color feature but with select black-and-white scenes—not recreating *I Love Lucy* but rather bringing to life what Ball would envision for the series as she explored comedic and staging options. Cronenweth observed that this use of black-and-white cinematography definitively told him that



Javier Bardem (l) and Nicole Kidman in *Being the Ricardos*

pect of working with writer-director Sorkin. *Being the Ricardos* is Sorkin's third feature as a director, the first two being *Molly's Game* and *The Trial of the Chicago 7*. Cronenweth related that Sorkin pitched him on lensing *Being the Ricardos* to help continue what's been a successful, enlightening run in the director's chair. Cronenweth said he couldn't resist such an invitation from a consummate storyteller. Also alluring was the chance to delve into the 1950s' *I Love Lucy* era which was of significance to Cronenweth because of his family lineage. His grandfather, Edward Cronenweth, was a Hollywood portrait photographer at the time—and the last shooter to receive an Oscar for his still photography. And Jeff Cronenweth's father, Jordan Cronenweth, ASC was a camera assistant during that stretch, going on to become a revered cinematographer, winning an ASC Award and nominated for an Oscar for *Peggy Sue Got Married*, and getting a Best Cinematography BAFTA Award for *Blade Runner*. Both Jordan and Edward at one time or another crossed paths professionally with the Desilu studio headed by Arnaz and Ball.

Further appealing to Cronenweth was

this movie wasn't about *I Love Lucy* but rather Ball and Arnaz, peeling back layers of the couple to reveal their relationship, their creative and business mettle, and their genius.

Sorkin and Cronenweth went the black-and-white route when, for example, Ball is at a table read for an episode. Her imagination is sparked and she instantly recognizes what the necessary beats and pacing should be in order for a particular scene to realize its full potential. What Ball sees in her mind plays out in black and white as if brought to a planned scene for *I Love Lucy*. In another instance there is no script but merely cards on a wall outlining a premise, prompting Ball to hash out what became a classic scene in which she stomps grapes in an Italian vineyard.

We also see in black-and-white splendor what Ball re-imagines for a scene when Fred and Ethel are sitting side by side on a short piano bench, jockeying for position, elbowing each other as they take turns falling off their perch to great comedic effect—far funnier than what the original *I Love Lucy* script called for. These black-and-white scenes in *Being the Ricardos* underscored Ball's comic

innovation, her uncanny sense of what makes a scene work—and gives rise to the notion that in a more progressive era she would have been a masterful director, not just of her own show but others of her own choosing. Cronenweth added that Ball and Arnaz were prolific TV producers at Desilu, with Ball giving the green light to the visionary *Star Trek* series.

Cronenweth continued that Karl Freund, ASC, who photographed *I Love Lucy*, was an innovator in his own right, coming up with the famed show's look because it was the best that technology could afford him at that time. Cronenweth took the liberty, though, to shoot the black-and-white sequences in *Being the Ricardos* with a little more contrast and more highlights. This, he reasoned, would be more relatable to "a modern audience far more evolved than an audience from the 1950s just getting television for the first time."

Cronenweth was also keenly aware that *I Love Lucy* presented unique challenges in terms of presenting it in the context of *Being the Ricardos*. "In general when doing a period piece, there are choices to make along the way. How do you want to present things without making a parody of that era? You want the audience to believe they are in the era that the characters are living in." But *Being the Ricardos* went beyond that because so many generations have a measure of familiarity with that specific era given the popularity of *I Love Lucy*.

Then there was the challenge of scenes flashing back to when Ball and Arnaz first met 10 years earlier. Cronenweth harkened back to his grandfather's portrait photography for Columbia Studios as a source of creative inspiration. The younger Cronenweth described that style—with hard isolating light and strong backlight—as "fashion noir." Adopting that "forced style," said Cronenweth helped to differentiate that era from that of *I Love Lucy* in its prime.

Cronenweth added that he also had to deal with the inherent challenge of a Sorkin script. "You're going to have actors talking nonstop and over each other. It's the same situation we had on *The Social Network*," observed Cronenweth. "There are certain sequences where due to the

Continued on page 10

Hank Corwin's Close-knit Collaboration With Adam McKay

Continued from page 9

interaction of the dialogue you have to shoot both sides of the conversation at the same time. Otherwise it's too editorially challenging to get things lined up. You have to design, structure and block a scene out so you can get the visual style you want. You keep the integrity of that, make it dramatic to serve the story and then shoot in two different directions."

For the lion's share of *Being the Ricardos*, namely the color scenes, Cronenweth went with RED Ranger cameras, paired with ARRI DNA glass for a vintage feel. For the black-and-white scenes, the DP opted for the RED Monochrome camera just as Fincher and cinematographer Erik Messerschmidt, ASC did for *Mank*.

The dynamic on set proved most memorable for Cronenweth. "Everybody had an experience with *I Love Lucy* in one way or another. We were all kind of connected by that. The script was so well conceived, the cast so talented and generous. It was one of those rare experiences where every department kind of lined up with a lot of integrity and caring. The third, fourth, fifth grip, whoever, were all invested. Everyday on the set we got to witness this brilliance being made, a creative ball of force that keeps moving forward. It takes a team to make any movie. But somehow the chemistry in this one was extra special."

Cronenweth also connected with *Being the Ricardos* star Kidman who wanted to separately do a PSA to get people to return to movie theaters. She partnered with AMC theaters on the project, with Jeff Cronenweth and brother Tim directing. The siblings operate as a commercial/branded content directing team under The Cronenweths moniker via production house Wondros Collective. In the PSA from creative agency Barkley, Kidman talks about her childhood, growing up at cinema houses and what the movie-going experience has meant to her. The spot has gained major exposure, running at the beginning of every movie shown at AMC theaters, as well as on TV and online.

Hank Corwin, ACE

Like Jeff Cronenweth, editor Hank Corwin is a two-time Oscar nominee whose experience also encompasses

commercialmaking. Both of Corwin's Academy Award nods for Best Editing have come for films from writer/director Adam McKay—*The Big Short* in 2016 and *Vice* in 2019. Corwin is now again in the awards conversation for another McKay feature, *Don't Look Up* (Netflix), a satire with plenty of laughs and an underlying seriousness in which a planet-destroying comet is on a collision course with Earth-

is McKay's nature as a collaborator which makes an editor "feel safe." Corwin added, "If you try things, you're not going to get in trouble. That sounds so elemental but if you're a composer, an editor, a writer, you're always exposing yourself. Adam is very kind and very generous even when he doesn't agree with you. He's willing to get rid of his own sacred cows as well." Corwin described McKay

propagate, to protect their young. We also see such scenes as an ocean wave breaking against the rocks. This nature footage juxtaposes with the absurdity and insanity at times of human behavior as we get glimpses of wildlife reality, creatures who will be impacted adversely by that absurdity, bringing an eye-opening perspective to what's happening in the story. "We wanted to show what was at stake," related Corwin who found speaking to a number of scientists enlightening—informed his edit to an extent. Scientists feel like their own cries have been cast into the wilderness, said Corwin who in that context felt it was "very important to show very basic elemental physical nature" which represents the truth and reality that hang in the balance.

As for his biggest takeaway from working on *Don't Look Up*, Corwin described it as "a very spiritual experience. I dealt out of necessity with the human comedy. Your mind stretches when you work on something like this. I felt ultimately much closer to the way the physical universe works. And that merged with some kind of concept of divinity and humility. This is maybe the most spiritual movie I've ever worked on."

Corwin's alluded to pedigree in commercials via his Lost Planet studio has impacted his approach to features. "I come from commercials, done like a gazillion music videos. In commercials I always thought symbolically you have to create a great piece of communication like a haiku, almost like a fragment of a poem. When I got into feature films, I found I looked at every shot that way. It means something to me, a subtext for almost everything I do. When bringing two shots together with a piece of music, hopefully the sum total is much bigger than the parts. I got this from commercials."

This is the seventh installment of a 16-part series with future installments of The Road To Oscar slated to run in the weekly SHOOT>e.dition, The SHOOT Dailies and on SHOOTonline.com, with select installments also in print issues. The series will appear weekly through the Academy Awards gala ceremony. Nominations for the 94th Academy Awards will be announced on Tuesday, February 8, 2022. The 94th Oscars will be held on Sunday, March 27, 2022.



A scene from *Don't Look Up*

—yet the perilous problem doesn't seem to rank as a top priority for the political powers that be or the public at large. The parallels to global warming and the COVID-19 pandemic, in which science isn't being heeded, are all too real. Yet the satirical McKay manages to keep us entertained somehow in the face of impending doom.

Jennifer Lawrence and Leonardo DiCaprio star as astronomers who discover the comet, try to sound the alert but to no avail. Not even the President of the United States, played by Meryl Streep, and her chief of staff (Jonah Hill) seems all that concerned. And the media too detour into audience-building diversions as, for example, morning talk show hosts (Tyler Perry and Cate Blanchett) can't see the forest from the trees with Blanchett's character more concerned with DiCaprio being a smoking hot astronomer. He becomes a social media sensation while Lawrence is reduced in the public view to being a hysterical alarmist. The stellar cast also includes Timothee Chalamet, Mark Rylance, Rob Morgan, Ariana Grande and Michael Chiklis.

Satire can be a delicate balance but helping to make it doable, said Corwin,

as "very fair, very impartial. His opinions don't necessarily matter more than ours if what we're doing is working."

Corwin said that the editing process entails at times a working triumvirate—himself, McKay and composer Nicholas Britell. Corwin likens their coming together to a riff among jazz musicians, with Britell at the keyboard offering a musical element that, for instance, underscores an emotion that Corwin might like to bring to a certain scene. They go back and forth, grappling with how to best do justice to the story and characters.

Corwin shared that he and Britell didn't at first see *Don't Look Up* as a comedy, McKay was willing to let them experiment along those lines but Corwin then realized that the film "almost demanded comedic elements." The editor explained that the last 20 minutes are ultimately where the film goes. "In searching for the right tone, we found that if we were too serious initially, then the last 20 minutes didn't land the way we wanted."

Helping to reach that destination, though, was Corwin adroitly incorporating footage of nature—whales, hippos, other members of the animal kingdom, reflecting the need of species to breed, to

Carter Burwell

Oscar-nominated composer reflects on Joel Coen's solo directorial debut, The Tragedy of Macbeth

By Robert Goldrich

Composer Carter Burwell is a two-time Oscar nominee for Best Original Score—in 2016 for director Todd Haynes' *Carol* and two years later for Martin McDonagh's *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri*. Burwell has a collaborative track record with both McDonagh and Haynes. For the latter's *Mildred Pierce* miniseries, Burwell won an Emmy for Original Dramatic Score and was nominated for Outstanding Original Main Title Theme Music.

Also among the composer's longstanding collaborative relationships is a most notable one with the Coen brothers. Burwell has scored 17 of Joel and Ethan Coen's movies, including *Fargo*, *The Big Lebowski*, *No Country for Old Men*, *Blood Simple*, *Raising Arizona*, *Miller's Crossing*, *Barton Fink*, *Intolerable Cruelty*, *A Serious Man*, *True Grit*, *Burn After Reading*, *The Ladykillers*, *Hail, Caesar!* and *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* But amazingly Burwell is yet to garner an Oscar nod for any of his films with the Coen brothers. That could change—at least partially—as Burwell is very much in the awards season conversation for *The Tragedy of Macbeth* (A24). The “partial” reference comes from *Macbeth* marking the solo directorial de-

but of Joel Coen. So if Burwell does end up with an Academy Award nod, it won't be for a Coen brothers film but rather a film written and directed by just one of the siblings.

The Tragedy of Macbeth stars Denzel Washington as Macbeth and Frances McDormand as Lady Macbeth. McDormand helped bring the project to fruition, having long wanted to do the Shakespeare play with her husband, Joel Coen, directing, possibly on the stage. But Coen saw it as a film, penning an adapted screenplay and enlisting cinematographer Bruno Delbonnel to lens it in stirring black and white.

The film also continued Burwell's string of collaborations with McDormand, not only on Coen brothers' fare but also on the aforementioned *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri*—for which McDormand won the Best Leading Actress Oscar—as well as the Lisa Cholodenko-directed *Olive Kitteridge* miniseries. McDormand's portrayal of title character Kitteridge earned her an Emmy.

Burwell has composed the music for more than 90 features including *Being John Malkovich*, *Rob Roy*, *Velvet Goldmine*, *Three Kings*, *Adaptation*, *Before Night Falls*, *A Knight's Tale*, *In Bruges*, *Twilight* and *Anomalisa*.



Photo by Tycho Burwell

SHOOT: What was the nature of your working relationship with Joel Coen on *The Tragedy of Macbeth*?

Burwell: I've worked with him for so long. He gives me scripts well before he shoots a film.

They were shooting (*The Tragedy of Macbeth*) and almost done when COVID shut down the production. The pandemic meant that the postproduction schedule was very very long. Theaters weren't asking for the film to be delivered. We had the luxury of time to try things out. Joel didn't know exactly what he wanted (for *The Tragedy of Macbeth*). When I work with the Coens, they either know exactly what they want or not. For *Inside Llewyn Davis*, they knew going in the folk music they wanted. By contrast, they didn't know what they wanted for *Fargo*, for example.

For *The Tragedy of Macbeth*, Joel sent his

adaptation to me. He used Shakespeare's language but wrote his own script for it. When you read the script, it feels like a film. We spoke about genre. *Macbeth* has been interpreted on film many times. Joel wanted it to have the sense of pace and urgency that a thriller has. Two people plot a murder and you follow the psychological ramifications of this—like *The Postman Always Rings Twice* or *Double Indemnity*. The thriller is always pushing forward.

At the same time, there's almost a tenderness between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, a great sense of support between them. I tried for instance writing (the music) from that point of view. But that didn't survive. It became a little distracting from the rushing forward like a thriller does. We tried many things. We had the luxury of time to try different approaches. Ultimately it was probably more about mood, the sense of an irresistible force or fate pushing things forward.

SHOOT: Is this your first time taking on Shakespeare?

Burwell: I did a version for Ethan Hawke's *Hamlet* which took place in contemporary time. That is my only previous experience with Shakespeare.

Macbeth is William Shakespeare's shortest tragedy. There are not a lot of places without dialogue. The “average” Coen brothers film will have visuals to tell the story. Shakespeare doesn't quite work the same way.

You normally don't (musically) score language that much. In a typical Coen brothers film you let the dialogue carry itself and the music play between sections of dialogue. That's not the Shakespeare structure. You do not want to get in the way of the dialogue. The audience has to be able to take the time to understand what's being said. The solution was to keep most of the music in the lower octaves of the orchestra so you're not interfering with the dialogue. You keep the melody fairly sparse. You're melodic only in-between moving from one dialogue into the dialogue in the next scene. The way we put it together, the dialogue would be the melody and the orchestra would accompany it.

SHOOT: What was your biggest takeaway or lessons learned from your experience on *The Tragedy of Macbeth*?

Burwell: There's no way to ignore the fact that part of this was done during a global pandemic. I will always remember it that way.

The score is mostly strings. You are able to record strings. Musicians can wear masks while playing—unlike woodwinds, brass, the chorus. We had to be conscious of how many people we had in a room at the same time. We did manage to pull off an orchestral recording in Manhattan in March of 2021.

Even setting the pandemic aside, I hear strings when I see a thriller, blood rendered in beautiful black and white. I invariably think of *Psycho* and Bernard Herrmann's score to that. The combination of that and practicalities during the pandemic led to strings.

SHOOT: What's next for you?

Burwell: Another medieval feature but nothing like *Macbeth*—Lena Dunham's *Catherine Called Birdy* (based on the novel by Karen Cushman), which is set in medieval England.

“There's no way to ignore the fact that part of this was done during a global pandemic. I will always remember it that way.”



Photo courtesy of A24

What's Next? Where Do We Go From Here?

Agency creatives share visions, goals for the new year, reflect on lessons learned in 2021
A SHOOT Staff Report



It's that time of year—for a new beginning, for New Year's resolutions, which often aren't kept, and predictions, which often aren't accurate. Nonetheless *SHOOT* called upon a brave cross-section of advertising agency executives, chief creative officers, creative directors, heads of production and exec producers to offer their hopes, goals, projections and plans for 2022.

We also asked respondents to reflect on lessons learned from 2021 and how they might be applied to this year.

While predicting what's in store for any year can be daunting—except for the truly clairvoyant—doing so for 2022 is even trickier given the uncertainty created by the pandemic. Thankfully vaccines have offered a measure of protection for many, preventing them from getting seriously ill and requiring hospitalization. Still, a cloud hovers over all of us as COVID infection rates at press time were escalating at an alarming rate, with hospitalizations also on the rise. The impact on our society, the economy, and the world at large figures to be substantive—with a ripple effect on business prospects, consumers' state of mind, marketing, and the advertising industry.

How can marketers best connect with people? What messages will resonate? What will—and should—brands stand for during these challenging times? What stories need to be told by brands? And who should tell those stories?

On the latter score, respondent Amanda Abrams, group creative director at Team One, shared, "Advertising shouldn't just be reflective of our society. It should be representative and inclusive of all our many points of view. So, we need to continue hiring, working with and growing storytellers—inside the agen-

cy and with our production partners—who help us shape more inclusive stories and experiences that connect with people on a deeper, human level. It's not just about showing diversity. It's about people really feeling seen, heard and represented. We have a lot of power in advertising to inform culture. It's on us to always try to do better.

As for what we learned from and have experienced during the pandemic, Francesca Bonomi, creative director, BBH USA, observed, "Working from home for almost two years toughens you up, that's for sure. Being a creative who finds inspiration in everyday life and thrives around people can be very challenging when your workday now consists of you and your laptop in your NY bedroom. You miss the fire that comes from a random conversation with a colleague over coffee, you miss war rooms where anything can happen until the very last second, and you miss late nights with the team working around the same table. In this new climate you learn how to be more diligent and disciplined, how to appreciate EVERY opinion because there could lie your inspiration, and how to multitask as you make a quick pasta while on a call. It's been a windy road but in the past year I've learned more than ever before—how to step up as a woman in this industry and how to use my being a Russian-Italian copywriter as a superpower."

Rob Lambrechts, chief creative officer at Pereira O'Dell, related, "2020 was a year of waiting for things to go back to normal and 2021 was the year of accepting that was never going to happen. The biggest shift we've made is to fully embrace the fact that this is an era of employee empowerment and are committed to giving our employees more say in when, where and how they work. Finding and retaining talent has been central to the agency's success and hopefully this will make us truly a talent first organization."

Al Moseley, global chair and chief creative officer of 180, assessed that in 2021 "it seems the internet just got interesting again, with Crypto going mainstream, meme investing, NFTs and the Metaverse. We saw a deluge of brands creating NFTs, and the already crowded Metaverse is becoming as expensive to buy property as the Bay Area. The truth is we are barely in the foothills of the blockchain and Web 3.0, and just like A.I. a few years ago, this technology will become more and more commonplace until it is seamlessly integrated into our everyday lives.

"At 180," continued Moseley, "we are looking at the application of these technologies to create meaningful ideas that have a positive impact on people's lives. Sometimes purpose gets left behind in all the excitement and too often brands create lame badging exercises. We are much more interested in brands

PRODUCTION OUTLOOK

coupled with technology driving cultural change and behavior.”

Survey

For our Production Outlook Survey, *SHOOT* posed the following questions to folks in the agency community:

1) How did your agency adjust/adapt to the marketplace in 2021 (new strategies, resources, technology, health/safety expertise) and what is the most relevant business and/or creative lesson you learned in 2021 and how will you apply it to 2022?

2) How are the events of 2021--from the pandemic to the call for diversity, equity and inclusion--impacting the content you create and/or the way you work?

3) What are your goals or New Year's resolution, creatively speaking or from a business standpoint, for your agency or department in 2022?

4) Gazing into your crystal ball, what do you envision for the advertising and/or entertainment industry--creatively speaking or from a business standpoint--in 2022?

5) Tell us about one current commercial or branded entertainment project you are working on for early 2022.

Here's a taste of the feedback we received, with full responses available on *SHOOT*online, in the 1/14 *SHOOT*>e.dition and *SHOOT*Dailies.



Amanda Abrams
Group Creative Director
Team One

1) We are an industry, and a population, of reinvention. 2020 forced us to sharpen this ever-necessary part of our creative identities. But 2021 reinforced that there is no going back to a past way of doing things. There is just today's way of doing things. Which will also continue to change. While this is daunting, it's a trait we as creative professionals have. The let's-figure-it-out gene. By accepting

and embracing that, it's freeing in a sense.

We can work anywhere. We can work in different ways. We can get comfortable with being flexible with schedules, working styles, technology and geographical divides. And we can still make great things. Although, it sure does feel good when we are able to see each other face-to-face and share a laugh. That's one thing we'll want to hold on to.

4) I think the past two years have taught me never to try to predict anything that's coming. But there is one truth that has and will always prevail. There's no replacement for human connection. No matter what trends, tech or variants the world throws at us, we'll always want those personal moments of connection. At the end of the day, we're just people. And the work that acknowledges that--be it film, experiential, print, virtual, digital or some new medium yet to be invented--will always be the best.

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Advertising Agency Feedback

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Will Benham
Executive Creative Director
Chemistry

1) We're lucky to be independent so we can make decisions based on our values and principles instead of just the balance sheet, and last year our ownership really took that to the next level. We turned down some opportunities that didn't feel like they lined up with the type of work we want to make or the type of agency we want to be, and we pitched with a really strong, really honest POV on what the

right type of work was for our partners. And it turns out that's a really compelling argument to work with us.

Creatively and personally, I learned to let go of some things and leave some room for the teams to learn through trial and error on their own (and maybe even a sprinkle of failure here and there). I was very fortunate to have CDs who let me run with things, and I want to do a better job of giving that same opportunity to the creatives I get to work with heading in to next year.

2) The biggest thing is just trying to bring more understanding to what everyone is going through every day outside of the work we're doing together. It's been a lot. Whether you have kids or you have aging parents or you've been stuck at home alone in a one bedroom apartment — everyone is dealing with a lot, so trying to take that into account when the days get tough. Also trying to dictate less and ask more. There are plenty of things I don't understand right away so instead of jumping right to my point of view, I'm trying to ask more questions and make sure everyone is heard and understood before we're making decisions on the work.

3) We have a really strong group of creatives and a great group of client partners, so my biggest goal for next year is to get them all opportunities to make work they're proud of. And get the creative teams things they can own from start to finish without having to jump-ball against other teams. Sometimes it's nice to just have a project that's yours. So just making sure everyone is making, And making things they're proud of.



Matt Bijarchi
Executive Producer
Blend

1) We became leaner and developed more of a niche focus on direct to client, end to end creative and production services. We don't try to be full service and we don't chase retainers. This enables us to use best-in-class, experienced, creative + production freelancers that are the exact right fit for that particular job. A fintech client has very different needs than a packaged goods client or an appliance

brand...and every category needs video now. So you have to be more nimble.

2) We created a Coronavirus protocol explainer video at the start of the pandemic and leaned into remote production as much as possible. We used drop kits at the beginning and phased in more as we could. We listened to our crews and made sure our clients knew the contingencies around someone in talent or crew testing positive. From clients, we've seen increased calls for true diversity in casting, and awareness around including more POC overall. As a result we had more Black and Asian actors in our work in 2021 than before. We also built partnerships with minority owned boutiques and production service vendors in 2021 that we hadn't had prior.

3) To communicate more effectively to potential clients and creative vendors the efficacy of OTT and CTV commercials. Digital marketers now care about commercials. That's new.

4) More boutiques working together to service fortune 50 brands on project based assignments. Clients who want an agency-in-a-box. Be there when they need you and not there when they don't.

Continued on page 16

Short Takes

SERENA WILLIAMS MEETS MATRIX FOR DIRECTV

This third installment of the DIRECTV Stream campaign featuring Serena Williams shows the tennis champion in a mash-up with the fan favorite *Matrix* movies—timed prior to the release of *The Matrix Resurrections*. The coming together of Williams and the cinema (earlier spots had her live TV sports juxtaposed with *Wonder Woman 1984*, and then scary feature films) underscores how DIRECTV Stream brings viewers the best of both worlds—live and on-demand entertainment.



TBWA\Chiat\Day L.A. and Critical Mass conceived of the campaign, with the Traktor collective directing via Stink Films.

CELLULOID CEILING REPORT

After reaching historic highs in 2020, the percentages of women directing top grossing films declined in 2021, according to the annual Celluloid Ceiling Report released by the Center For The Study Of Women In Television & Film at San Diego State University. Women comprised 17% of directors working on the 250 top grossing films in 2021, down from 18% in 2020. The percentage of women working as directors on the top 100 films retreated from 16% in 2020 to 12% in 2021.

Overall, women accounted for 25% of those working in key behind-the-scenes roles (directors, writers, executive producers, producers, editors, cinematographers) on the top 250 grossing films in 2021, up from 23% in 2020. The rise in the overall number is due to increases in the percentages of women working as executive producers and producers. By role, women accounted for 17% of writers (even with 17% in 2020), 26% of executive producers (up from 21% in 2020), 32% of producers (up from 30% in 2020), 22% of editors (even with 22% in 2020), and 6% of cinematographers (even with 6% in 2020). For the second consecutive year, the study also tracked women's employment on films included on the Digital Entertainment Group's "Watched at Home" list from January through December 2021. This analysis found that the majority of the percentages of women working on films on the watched at home list were slightly below those calculated using the box office grosses list.

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE....

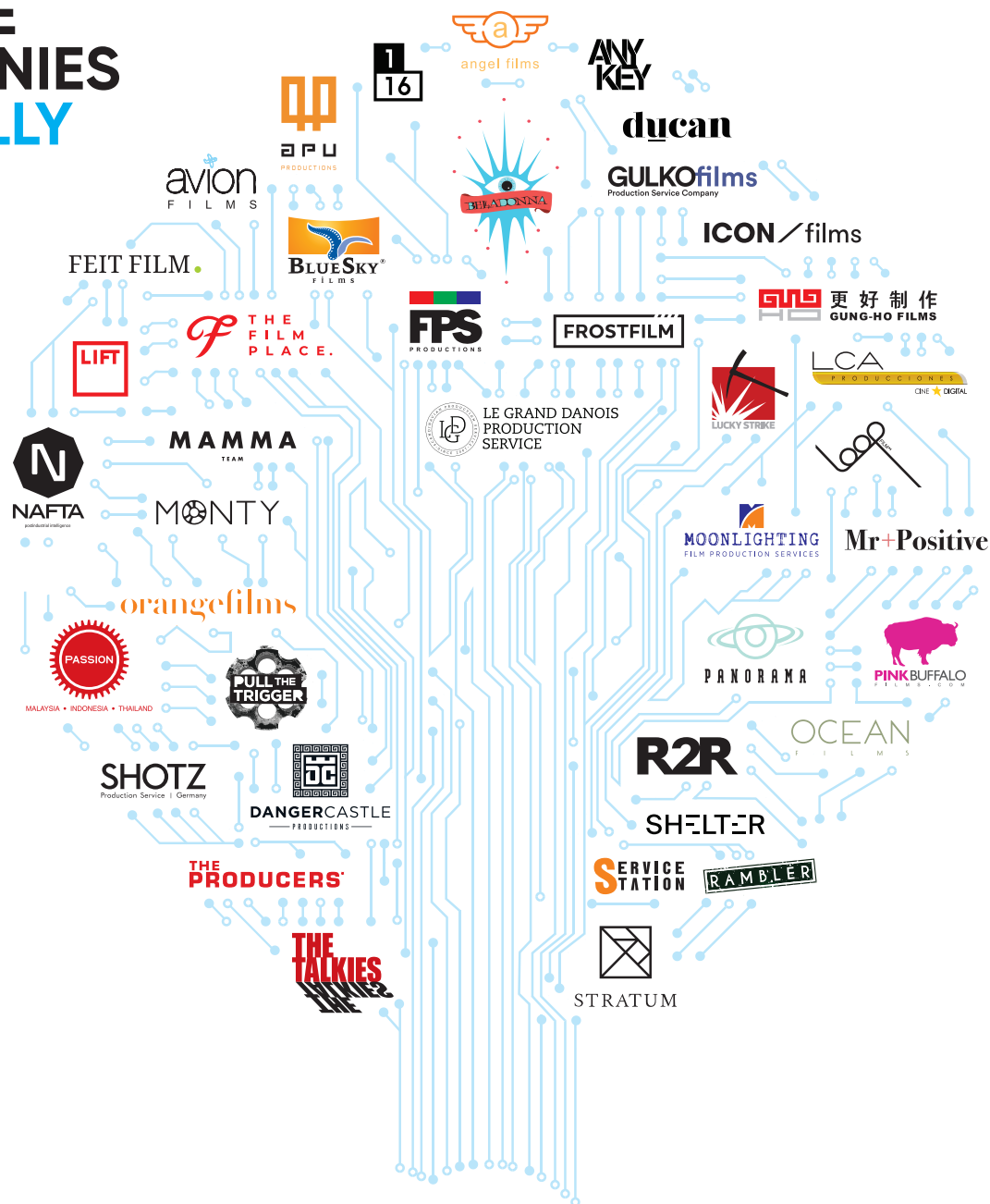
Boutique post company WAX, NYC and Boston, has expanded its roster with the addition of editors Cass Vanini and Jeremy Huff. During his time at Psyop, Vanini worked on a variety of projects including Coca Cola's "Happiness Factory" and Converse's "My Drive Thru" as well as gaining experience in the world of VFX. Next Vanini joined Work Editorial, where he was guided by such inspiring talents as Rick Orrick, Neil Smith and Stewart Reeves. Vanini



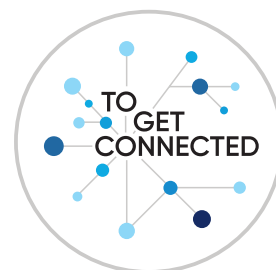
Cass Vanini

has cut for brands including Samsung, Under Armour, UNIQLO, FedEx, JBL, Coca Cola and Huggies. He has edited music videos for Pharrell Williams, Kid Cudi, Smirnoff Sound Collective and Sweethead to name a few. Huff's career began in San Francisco where he started as an assistant editor at post house Teak. There, for the next four years, he continued to hone his skills, working on a range of brands including Jansport, EA Sports, Comcast, Google and H&M. In 2011 he relocated to NYC where he worked for companies Superfad, Lost Planet and Consulate before settling in at WAX as a roster editor. Over the years Huff has collaborated with such brands as Verizon, NFL, Spotify, Planned Parenthood and Chanel....

REPRESENTING PRODUCTION SERVICE COMPANIES GLOBALLY



North America: Harry Tracosas
harry@globalproductionnetwork.com
 Europe: Julia Weichinger
julia@globalproductionnetwork.com
www.globalproductionnetwork.com



BBH, Zambezi, Fin Studios

Continued from page 14



Francesca Bonomi
Creative Director
BBH USA

1) I started at BBH USA a few months ago and walked into an agency that was firing on all cylinders. The leadership team of Amani Duncan, CCO Rafa Rizuto and CSO Tom Callard, who we affectionately call "ART," have seamlessly reshaped the business to adapt to current conditions. I can't give away all of our "secrets," but I can say we have mastered the art of the virtual pitch as we now have over 11

clients. But for ART it's more than just the work; they care about the employees and our wellbeing. We have BBH'apiness days every month, encouraging no emails or SLACK after 6:00pm, and a wellness benefit we can use at our discretion for gym membership, therapy, etc.

Speaking in terms of creative lessons, this past year I've learned that the lows are part of life and business. They're meant to be, and they'll make you appreciate even more the greatness that comes afterwards.

3) 2022 will be the Black Sheep year! We are looking to hire more talent, the best talent out there, to help shape the most heterogeneous agency that ever existed. The creative department is growing fast and steadily, with nearly a dozen new creatives joining since I started in September. We aim to bring in clients who care about putting out in the world the highest caliber of creative with real and meaningful impact while respecting each other, each other's time and life. At BBH we value "nice and good," and we think of our colleagues as humans rather than professionals.

5) Unfortunately, all projects I am currently on have NDAs protecting their privacy. All I can say is it's branded content, it's big and bold, and you won't be able to ignore it.



Alex Cohn
Head of Content
Zambezi & FIN Studios

3) Our goals for 2022 are pretty simple:
--Create great work for our clients
--Seek out great partners who want to collaborate on great projects
--Make sure to balance the demands of making the best work with taking care of the health and wellbeing of the people who make

the work

--Have an open mindset about the way we do business and the impacts of how we exist in the industry and in the wider world

5) We have been hard at work on a new content series for The Tennis Channel: "Warm & Fuzzy" is a show that came about as a reaction to the pressures of the pro tennis tour, and is meant to show the lighter, more personal side, of some of the biggest pros, and introduce audiences to some of the next generation of tennis stars.

We are also completing 8 episodes of our first podcast series "Undaunted: presented by Choose Unity" in collaboration with Spring Green Media. On the podcast, our hosts talk with young influencers and activists about some of the most pressing issues of our times, offering new perspectives and solutions to these problems. With guests like Rachel Cargle, DeRay McKesson, Rainn Wilson, Brittany Packnett Cunningham, Penn Badgely and more. It's a very different (and exciting) project for us.

We will also be in production on new work for DIRECTV as they head into 2022 with renewed purpose, for Traeger Grills as we gear up for the 2022 grilling season, and we are finishing up a host of spots and other content for Taylormade Golf, just in time for the winter thaw and a return to the golf greens.

Continued on page 17

Hot Locations

NJ Helps Tell *West Side Story*

Steven Spielberg came to Paterson and Newark, New Jersey, to film significant portions of his vibrant remake of the classic musical *West Side Story*. Streets in Paterson and Newark were redressed to bring to life late-1950s New York, the territory of the rival Sharks and Jets gangs. Paterson's Downtown Historic District was used to build sets in the parking lots between Veterans Place and Hamilton Street across from Paterson's Center City Mall. Businesses on Ellison



West Side Story

Street were transformed to recreate Broadway and 68th Street in Manhattan in the movie. Filming also took place in downtown Newark. The interior of the National Newark Building and the exterior of the former Bamberger's were used to recreate Gimbels Department Store.

"From the moment we conceived of this film, it was clear the story needed to come off the stage

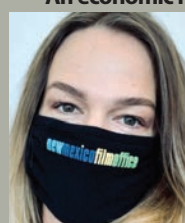
and onto the streets of New York in order to evoke the grit and authenticity we were striving for in recreating 1950's New York," said Spielberg. "New York itself served us very well as a primary filming location, and New Jersey afforded us another incredible backdrop for much of our story. The communities that welcomed us in both Paterson and Newark were fantastic partners, working closely and collaboratively with our production at every turn."

Spielberg is no stranger to New Jersey, having briefly lived in Haddon Township as a child. He returned to the state previously to direct two other features including 2002's *Catch Me If You Can*, starring Leonardo DiCaprio—which was partially shot in Orange—and the 2005 film *War of the Worlds*, starring Tom Cruise, which was filmed extensively on location in Newark and Bayonne.

Lensing's Impact On New Mexico

The New Mexico Economic Development Department and the New Mexico Film Office released an economic impact study on New Mexico's film and TV industry. The independent study, commissioned by the film office, was completed by Olsberg SPI, an international consultant firm specializing in the global screen sector. The study looked at the industry from fiscal year 2020 through 2021. In summary, findings revealed that the New Mexico film tax credit delivers strong economic benefits to the state across all key metrics. Data illustrated that the New Mexico film tax incentive program generated:

—An economic return on investment (ROI) of 8.4, meaning that for every \$1 invested through the program, the state's economy is benefited by \$8.40.



Amber Dodson

—For 92% of productions in New Mexico, the incentive is the most important factor identified by decision-makers when choosing where to produce film and television projects. Only 8% of total production would have existed in New Mexico without the film incentive.

—Significant direct, indirect, and induced economic benefits and impact to New Mexico amounted to an estimated \$1.37 billion in economic output in just two years.

New Mexico offers a 25-35% refundable tax credit on eligible spend in the state with an annual budget cap set at \$110 million. New Mexico Film Office previously announced in fiscal year 2021, despite the global shutdown of production due to the COVID-19 pandemic, that the state recorded an estimated \$623.8 million in direct spend by film and television productions in New Mexico, breaking all previous records for the state.

"The findings of this study prove the success and importance of the film incentive and the immense economic benefit this surging industry has on New Mexico. The film industry injects hundreds of millions of outside dollars into New Mexico's economy every year, supports thousands of jobs, creates revenue streams for local businesses, and generates opportunity and prosperity, while improving the overall quality of life for New Mexicans," said Amber Dodson, director of the New Mexico Film Office.

Reflections From BBDO SF, BSSP And Quigley-Simpson

Continued from page 16



Thiago Cruz
Chief Creative Officer
BBDO San Francisco

2) I can't really think of a single aspect of our industry that hasn't been impacted. Most of the changes have been positive, in my opinion. Not necessarily easy, but overall positive. One of the biggest exceptions would probably be how much more challenging it has become to properly mentor the younger folks in our teams. So much of what we do is learned through osmosis, just constantly being surrounded by the right people and the right conversations. I feel like we figured most of it out: how to create, manage, sell, produce and distribute the work remotely. And I hope companies can find a way to dedicate just as much energy and attention to helping the new generation navigate all of this.

4) My crystal ball is telling me that the "great resignation" might end up being a blessing in disguise for our industry. Sure, it's wreaking havoc right now. But it might also bring a much needed breath of fresh air as the relationships between companies and people, work and life, change dramatically, and we are all forced to look outside of our bubbles for new talent and new opportunities.



Sinan Dagli
Executive Creative Director
Butler Shine Stern & Partners (BSSP)

1) As a group, it was vital for us to emphasize the importance of mental health in 2021. We prioritized collaboration, mindfulness, and self-care for the agency. We wanted to make sure the runways were open for creativity to flourish. That's why we have implemented many measures from no meeting Fridays to creating "Zoom Watercoolers" that cultivate random digital cross-department encounters to expanding our health & wellness offering as a company. We will continue making mental health a point of emphasis in 2022.

2) It amplified our existing commitments as a company and opened our eyes to what we can do better and more.

Alongside our client partner Blue Shield of California, we created the campaign "Hear Me" featuring Venus Williams spotlighting gender discrimination in healthcare. In the US, 1 in 2 women's health concerns go unheard. Their pain ignored, concerns disregarded and symptoms dismissed. This leads to years of no-diagnosis, misdiagnosis, or an unexpected diagnosis that could have been avoided altogether. We wanted to shed light on this issue and raise awareness of this problem in healthcare which affects half the population.

5) We have an exciting music-driven project in the pipeline with our friends at ESPN.



Nicole Ellingson
Group Creative Director
Quigley-Simpson

2) Our agency and our clients are fully committed to amplifying diverse voices in our content and campaigns. This is reflected not only in the talent in front of the camera, but the talent behind the camera, as well. We've moved from crafting stories to letting real stories unfold. The pandemic has affected people in different ways—there

isn't one story to tell, there are many, and we've strived to inspire with different people, places, and perspectives that may have been overlooked. Some of our clients are travel brands, which were heavily impacted by the pandemic. We knew that international travel was on hold for many people, so we leaned into domestic discovery and ways people could connect to different cultures right here in the United States. It was a way to celebrate diversity locally and champion people's passions. We featured small businesses and shared ways people could support people in their own communities or in the communities they may visit. We wanted our productions to support communities, tell real stories, and feature people who are making a positive impact.

3) Our New Year's goal is to retain and collaborate with diverse and imaginative creative talent and make campaigns that have a positive impact. This is always our goal, but the pandemic—and mass resignations—have made it clear that who you work with is extremely important and we strive to be a team that appreciates our people and values everyone's voice. We know that representation matters, but even more, people need to feel welcomed and supported. That matters more than ever right now.

WHEN EXPERIENCE MATTERS.

CAPS

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commercial payroll excellence.

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Continued on page 18

Madwell, Pereira O'Dell

Continued from page 17



Jeff Gillette
Executive Creative Director
Madwell

1) With three offices spread across several continents, we were already pretty good at remote collaboration, but in 2021 we upgraded our game in both practice and technology. All offices got video/audio upgrades in order to help with a new hybrid way of working (some of us come into the office regularly, while many still work from home).

And we made significant changes in our HR practices to accomplish our two biggest needs in 2021: Hiring fast and retaining strong talent. We streamlined both our recruitment and interview processes to identify talent and make offers within just a few weeks. And we revised our review/raise process to make sure we could retain as much of our star talent as possible. "The Great Resignation" is real, and these moves have helped us stay just ahead of it, for the most part. But there's more work to do.

2) We've always valued diversity in our agency, both in our team and in our work. But in 2021, we realized—like many agencies—that we should do more. We formed a number of DEI committees, made public our values and goals, and have published our employee statistics to help ourselves stay on track and accountable. We've also established a new, and more thorough, creative review process to help us not just stay as sensitive and representative in our work as possible—but to identify ways to push ahead and help set new standards.

3) We have plenty of goals in 2022 for our creative team. The top five that come to mind are...

- Impact culture positively.
- Make more disruptive work—not just for big clients, but small ones too.
- Organize our creative dept to attack briefs and pitches more efficiently and cross-office.
- retain great talent.
- Continue striving to be an agency that puts fun first.



Rob Lambrechts
Chief Creative Officer
Pereira O'Dell

1) 2020 was a year of waiting for things to go back to normal and 2021 was the year of accepting that was never going to happen. The biggest shift we've made is to fully embrace the fact that this is an era of employee empowerment and are committed to giving our employees more say in when, where and how they work. Finding and retaining talent has been central to the agency's success and

hopefully this will make us truly a talent first organization.

3) To make people laugh—or at least smile—more. The world is full of negative sh*t right now, it would be great if advertising was fun.

4) "Predictions are difficult, especially about the future."—Danish proverb. I'm not Danish, but I've always loved that proverb. But if you forced me to predict something, I would say that with the changes in data collection/cookies/ad tracking brands will once again put a premium on creativity to attract new consumers.

5) I'm very excited about three branded entertainment projects we've got going right now. They are all in varying stages of development but one of them is the second season of a short-form, social media series for Corona, the other is a half hour docu-series about creativity as well as a feature documentary project in the cryptocurrency space.

Continued on page 19

Sound Lounge Upgrades Dolby Atmos Mixing & Authoring

Sound Lounge, a New York-based artist-owned and operated audio postproduction studio, has updated its main mix stage with a brand new Dolby Atmos renderer as part of a three system upgrade. With multiple configurations possible, this increased flexibility will allow a more streamlined workflow and larger capacity for future projects. Compatible with both headphones and home theaters, Atmos continues to take surround sound to a new level.



Sound Lounge's Atmos suite

"As an artist, using Atmos gives more flexibility and provides a more immersive experience than traditional 5.1 or stereo mixes. On the technical side, it's one mix that will render specifically for each viewer's playback environment. This provides a richer, more authentic experience for each viewer," said Steve "Major" Giammaria, supervising sound editor/re-recording mixer at Sound Lounge.

Sound Lounge has used its upgraded Atmos resources to mix and author television shows, commercials, and other content, including season two of the hit children's series *Helpsters* on Apple TV+. Dolby Atmos is being adopted by the major streamers as their standard for premium content.

Beacon Street Orchestrates DIY Xmas Caroling

The sounds of wrenches, drills, yeti cups, 2x4s, and even ping-pong balls might not be music to everyone's ears, but in a new holiday music video for Ace Hardware from agency OKRP, these tools and more perform an instrumental tribute to the do-it-yourself Ace customer. Bringing this score together was Beacon Street Studios. The musical track reimagines the holiday classic "Carol of the Bells" produced with the sounds of more than 65 hardware store products, many of which are top brands at Ace that make quality gifts for the DIYer in one's life. The initiative has run on paid social media and a paid influencer program.

Beacon Street got the gig on the strength of a pitch by composer Danny Dunlap who while inside an ACE store used the sounds of wrenches and drills to show that they could do.

OKRP also reached out to Gabriel Shalom to direct the piece after conducting an online search for filmmakers who make music in unusual ways. "Applying the DIY spirit to the products in the store was surprisingly intuitive as there was an entire orchestra waiting to be unveiled in the aisles," explained Dunlap.



Ace Hardware's DIY band

Finalists Set For CAS Student Award

Five finalists from schools in the U.S., Canada and Portugal have been invited to attend the 58th Annual Cinema Audio Society (CAS) Awards, where the recipient of the CAS Student Recognition Award will be revealed and receive a check for \$5,000.

The CAS Student Recognition Award Finalists are: Lily Adams from the Savannah College of Art and Design; Bernice Chu from the Sheridan College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning; Lindsay Ellis from Chapman University; Shehryar Khan from Universidad Lusofona; and Karthik Vijaymohan from the Dodg College of Film and Media Arts, Chapman University

After a virtual event in 2021, the 58th annual Cinema Audio Society Awards will return as a live event on March 19, 2022 to the Wilshire Grand Ballroom at the InterContinental Los Angeles Downtown. Legendary director and producer Sir Ridley Scott will receive the Cinema Audio Society Filmmaker Award. Also being honored with the CAS Career Achievement Award is previously announced honoree, re-recording sound mixer Paul Massey CAS.



CAS Student Award

Along with the Student Recognition Award, the 58th CAS Awards will honor sound mixing achievements in seven categories: Motion Pictures, Animated Motion Pictures, Documentary Motion Pictures, TV Movie or Limited Series, TV Series-One Hour, TV Series-Half Hour and TV Non-Fiction, Variety, Music Series or Specials.

Observations From Mirimar, 180, Grey Health, Venables Bell

Continued from page 18



John McKelvey
Chief Creative Officer & Founder
Mirimar

3) Mirimar is ambitiously devoted to building one of the most interesting creative companies in the world. We have a team of smart, kind and hardworking people who bring their creativity, humor and heart to work. We are looking to continue to genuinely partner with brands wanting to create breakthrough moments. To outsized attention for their investment in a concept and execution. And really 2022 is all about striving to make the best work we can with each and every opportunity.

4) There feels like there has been a real build up and there are now lots of opportunities, projects and demand for work that can breakthrough. We are busy and optimistic about 2022.

5) An interesting take on The Super Bowl.



Al Moseley
Global Chair and CCO
180

2) Just like my Boomer parents in the '60s, generation COVID have now experienced their own seismic moments of social change. From George Floyd to Me Too, the effect can be felt everywhere. But this revolution isn't just about big changes, but our actions every day. Every decision we make, we scrutinize closely to make sure we are honest. At 180, we have a policy that everyone has a voice. This means everyone in our organization is working towards a more equitable future.

3) Innovation is the key to creativity. This doesn't just mean technology, although many of our projects for 2022 are deeply technological. Innovation is about pushing ideas further than you feel you can imagine. It sounds highfalutin, but it is what 180 has been doing for years.

4) We are still accelerating into the future at a phenomenal rate. But if I were to make one prediction--brands and the blockchain (in whatever form) will be a thing.



Laura Potucek
Group Creative Director
Grey Group Global Health & Wellness

1) Just as we were getting used to working remotely and getting the hang of virtual shoots, 2021 brought on a new set of challenges. Zoom fatigue and the ongoing stress of the pandemic, along with staffing challenges, started to take its toll. And we all yearned for in-person moments to collaborate and connect with each other.

An important lesson I learned this year was to recognize that we are all going through a tremendous amount of stress in this environment, and it can affect us in all different ways. And although we might be on chats or video calls throughout the day, it's important to pause and take the time to check in with our colleagues. These moments can lead to better understanding of their unique challenges in an effort to provide the genuine support they need.

Secondly when it came to productions, I learned the benefit of working in an industry of creative problem solvers. I worked closely with producers and creative partners on multiple virtual shoots this year. I leaned on my partners to proactively plan and set client expectations, so we could maintain safety as the priority while still producing our best work.

I recently joined Grey Group as a group creative director in the health and pharma group. In 2022, I look forward to building strong connections with the internal team and with our talented production partners as we continue to adjust to the virtual environment and find solutions to continue to elevate our work.



Che-Na Stephenson
Group Creative Director
Venables Bell & Partners

2) The events of 2021 forced us to confront unimaginable heartache from which we had to grow and adapt. It has reminded me that we're all humans just trying to do the best we can, to cope with the human condition the best we can. With that in mind, I approach every person and every brief with a huge dose of empathy. Good work is really based on making people feel something and you can't do this without an excessive amount of empathy.

3) I'm fortunate to work in this industry and I'm grateful everyday to work alongside such caring and talented people. It's my goal every single day to be kind to people but hard on the work. I think this builds a culture where people feel safe to express themselves and ideas while keeping a high creative standard. I want every creative to make the best work of their lives and enjoy the process to get there.

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Production Head Feedback

Continued from page 19



Nik Traxler
Partner, Head of Production
The Distillery Project

1) We were fortunate enough to grow in 2020 because of our clients. In 2020, we learned how to navigate the very early waters of COVID-19. How to do a production through Zoom. How to manage teams and clients only on Zoom, Slack, iMessage and email. 2020 really set a foundation for how to work in the new world. We took those learnings and were able to hit the ground running in 2021. Our

output this year was 4x higher than it's ever been.

2) Our clients have always been sensitive to diversity, equity and inclusion. Year over year they continue to push for a more even ratio when it comes to talent we cast. From an agency stand point, we continued to learn how to ensure the culture of our agency survives in a world that is more remote than physical.

3) I hope TDP is fortunate enough to continue the trend we've been on since the agency was founded. Doing smart, creative work for great clients. We have a very healthy new business pipeline and a lot of production coming down the pipe, so selfishly, adding one more producer next year wouldn't be a bad thing.

4) I'm hopeful that more work will focus on bringing people together, especially after the last two years. It's nice to see industry talk about events that will be a hybrid / more in person attendance. It'll be interesting to see how our industry embraces the new world - things like return to office (if that ever happens), award shows, and more in person production.

5) We're preparing for a client sponsorship for the LPGA and we've specifically been instructed not to put it through a COVID-19 lens. That was nice to hear.



Annie Tsikretsis
VP, Director of Production
Two by Four

1) From a production standpoint, 2020 was about halting productions and learning to how to manage shoots with clients and creatives remotely. In 2021 at our agency, specifically in production, I had to focus on getting our clients and creatives not only back in the office but back on productions—safely. It took time to get everyone adjusted and comfortable with the safety protocols, including

the numerous testing procedures not to mention how their budgets were going to be impacted by these changes. 2022 will come with its own challenges and education as we head into a year with more people vaccinated yet a growing number of infections, it will be extremely challenging to maintain normalcy for crews and talent.

3) Our goal every year is to always create great work. From a production standpoint, I look forward to establishing new relationships with all types of partners as well as building upon our current roster to bring the creative to life. During these challenging times with new production protocols and supply chain issues, it is even more important that we continue to work with the best.

Full responses to our Production Outlook Survey from this cross-section of advertising agency executives, chief creative officers, creative directors, heads of production and exec producers are available on SHOOTonline, in the January 14th SHOOT>e.dition and SHOOT Dailies.

Absolute Brings Trio To Its CG Team



Risto Puukko

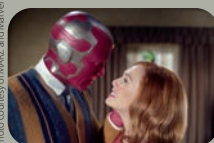
London-based Absolute has added VFX supervisor Risto Puukko, CG supervisor Patrick Keough and jr. CG artist Musharaf "Rasel" Hussain to its CG team. Puukko first established himself as a sr. VFX artist in London—moving there from his hometown in Finland, working at such studios as Framestore, The Mill and Wargaming. He's worked across campaigns for Netflix, Disney, Tesco and Vodafone, adding that his greatest career moment thus far is "getting the opening sequence of *Guardians of The Galaxy II* finished on time."

Keough worked earlier as a motion capture artist at Weta. His credits span such clients as Amazon, PlayStation, Dior and Hyundai. Keough lists working on 2014's *Dawn Of The Planet Of The Apes* as a pinch-me moment.

And "Rasel," who initially secured a job as a graphic designer, enrolled in a course at VFX outlet Escape Studios. He later interned at Framestore through its Launchpad competition, using Unreal Engine to create a 30 second short over eight weeks, before nabbing his first industry role at Absolute.

Funding Lands On MARZ

Monsters Aliens Robots Zombies (MARZ), a technology and VFX startup with an office in Toronto and a remote workforce worldwide, has raised \$6.5 million (in Canadian dollars) in Series A funding. The investment was led by Round13 Capital with participation from Rhino Ventures and Harlo Equity Partners, digital transformation company Torinit, and strategic angel investors John Cassaday and Jake Cassaday.



WandaVision

MARZ will use the infusion of capital to grow its core VFX services business and to accelerate the research and development (R&D) of its AI for VFX technology solutions, which adds a high level of automation to address the significant and growing VFX capacity shortage that is plaguing the entertainment industry. In beta since Q1 2021, MARZ's first AI for VFX solution has been used on 17 Hollywood productions to date, with that number expected to double in 2022.

The funding will also enable MARZ to hire key personnel across research, engineering, and product; and to build out its technology infrastructure to increase production capacity and improve the efficiency of its AI solutions.

Five Sheridan alumni nominated for Annie Awards

The animation program at the Sheridan school in Canada continues to turn out alumni who score impressively at the Annie Awards. Recently five Sheridan alumni garnered nominations from the prestigious industry competition which honors excellence in animation.

The Sheridan quintet currently in the running for Annies consists of Ami Thompson (Bachelor of Animation 2013) who earned an Annie nod in the Best Character Design—Feature category for *Raya & the Last Dragon*; Richard Chen (Animation 2004), Best Production Design—TV/Media, for *Maya and the Three*; Nachiket Pujari (Computer Animation-Digital Visual Effects 2009), Best Effects-Feature, for *Vivo*; Dimitre Berberov (Graphic design 2001), Best Effects—Feature, for *Encanto*; and Deanna Marsigliese (Animation 2004), Best Character Design—Feature, for *Luca*.



Annie Awards

Sheridan alumni have repeatedly brought home Annies in previous years for their outstanding work. They include Trevor Jimenez (Animation '07), who won last year for Best Storyboarding in a Feature category for his work on *Soul*. Earlier in 2019, Jimenez received Best Animated Short for his own project, *Weekends*. In 2015, Dean DeBlois (Animation '90) won Best Animated Feature and Outstanding Achievement—Directing, for *How to Train Your Dragon 2*.

Sheridan students have also been successful at the Annies as in 2020, *The Fox & The Pigeon* won Best Student Film.



Seamus McGarvey (l) and Joe Wright



A scene from *Cyrano*



Haris Zambarloukos



A scene from *Belfast*

Sharing Insights Into The Lensing Of *Cyrano*, *Belfast*

DPs discuss their collaborative relationships with directors Joe Wright, Kenneth Branagh

By Robert Goldrich

There are a couple of parallels between the two DPs in this latest installment of *SHOOT*'s Cinematographers & Cameras Series.

For one, both lensers are in the current awards season conversation for their efforts on lauded films.

And secondly, those artistic efforts were both for directors with whom the cinematographers enjoy long-time collaborative relationships.

Here are insights from Seamus McGarvey, ASC, BSC on *Cyrano* (MGM, United Artists Releasing), and Haris Zambarloukos, BSC, GSC on *Belfast* (Focus Features).

Seamus McGarvey, ASC, BSC

The classic tale of *Cyrano de Bergerac* from the play written by Edmond Rostand in 1897 has proven to be timeless. The premise of a man who harbors love for a woman—all the while thinking that he was unworthy of her love due to his physical appearance—especially stirred director Joe Wright when he saw Erica Schmidt's musical staging of the epic story at a theater in Connecticut in which Peter Dinklage played *Cyrano* opposite Haley Bennett as Roxanne. Wright was deeply moved and he enlisted Schmidt to write a bold new film adaptation, yielding *Cyrano* with a cast headed by Dinklage and Bennett.

The lineup of characters also includes the powerful Duke De Guiche (Ben Mendelsohn), a wealthy, egomaniacal suitor enamored with Roxanne, and Christian (Kelvin Harrison Jr.), a King's Guard re-

cruit who serves under *Cyrano*. Christian shares with *Cyrano* and Roxanne a common bond of failing to make a true connection. Christian's handsome physical appearance stirs Roxanne and she pleads with *Cyrano* to watch over and protect him. *Cyrano* pledges to do so and encourages Christian to woo Roxanne with love letters. These wise and witty letters, though, are penned by *Cyrano*, leading Roxanne to mistakenly feel a soulful bond with her good-looking suitor. But romance, real or imagined, falls by the wayside as war breaks out. Together and apart our protagonists experience happiness, despair, denial, discovery and destinies beyond what they envisioned for themselves.

Key for Wright to realizing what he hoped would be his destiny of bringing his interpretation of "*Cyrano*" to fruition in the midst of the COVID pandemic was reuniting with trusted collaborators—a prime one being cinematographer Seamus McGarvey, ASC, BSC.

McGarvey has twice been nominated for Best Cinematography Oscars—for the Wright films *Atonement* and *Anna Karenina*. The DP has lensed five of Wright's features. "We have a kind of trust and clear-sighted conversation that continues to this day," Wright told *SHOOT*. "He is a master. But there's something about Seamus' work that is always deeply humane."

McGarvey related, "Joe and I have been friends for 30 years. There's nothing better than going into the fray of making a film with somebody you have an immediate and well-founded rapport with.

That's the exciting thing about working with Joe. You can feel free to suggest ideas that can be absorbed, reflected or rejected. He's an auteur but also somebody who loves the democracy of ideas from collaborators. He's open to contributions from collaborators around the table."

McGarvey added, "The great thing about Joe is he has such a great way of distilling the kaleidoscope of ideas of collaborators into something unabashedly and absolutely a Joe Wright film."

Wright's openness, continued McGarvey, also extends to dealing with the unexpected and the gift of serendipity. "Joe makes films with a lot of preparation and thought that go into them sequence by sequence," noted McGarvey. "There's never a scattergun approach. The foundations are passionately led well in advance. But he is also somebody who enjoys the accident of the moment, the accident of performance, light and location, compromises that might have to be made, that sometimes affect a scene. Joe is able to go with the flow of what happens when you start shooting the film. He's a juggernaut. And there's a constant communication between us."

Communication became all the more essential when shooting a film in the midst of a pandemic. A bubble for cast and crew was created in Noto, a town in southeastern Sicily, Italy. The artists became a close-knit group during production there.

Plus Wright took on *Cyrano* as a musical—but a different kind of musical, which presented its own set of challenges.

Wright wanted the songs to feel natural and integrated into the drama. This wasn't your typical musical. There was no big fanfare, no major song and then a return to the story. Rather the drama, the characters, the story always took priority.

McGarvey saw the film going from romance and softness to the harshness of reality. There was a frivolity to the story at the beginning of the musical, a warmth and kind of "languid lyricism" to the cinematography. The first part of *Cyrano* was shot with the conscious decision to diffuse the image. Towards that end, McGarvey deployed Christian Dior #10 Denier stockings which work well when shooting large format (ARRI Alexa LF) with Leica lenses. Those lenses are inherently quite sharp so the stockings helped take the edge off to create more romance.

Then when the story evolves into war, the images become crisp as the lenses are used to their full capacity. For McGarvey, the final battle sequences were the most physically demanding of his career in that they were shot up the side of Mount Etna, an active stratavolcano on the east coast of Sicily. Furthermore the weather had turned unseasonably cold and snow began to fall. With molten lava beneath the land's surface, the snow would start to melt, making conditions uniquely difficult. "It was tough physically just getting up there to begin with," recalled McGarvey. "But somehow that lends an authenticity that Joe Strives for, an emotional authenticity, seeing soldiers who are freezing, wet and hungry. If that had

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McGarvey Discusses *Cyrano*

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been done on a backlot or bluescreen, you would not see that on their faces.”

Shortly after shooting wrapped, Mount Etna erupted, covering the sets in ash. The crew had to quickly evacuate.

After the battle came a return, near the end of the film, to a bit of image diffusion. But this time the camera movement shifts from fluidity to reflect that things have

away from the film. It’s about saying what you mean, expressing yourself truthfully and not obfuscating or beating around the bush—or avoiding things or procrastinating. All of those things that COVID taught me during lockdown are echoed in this film.”

McGarvey is also a two-time ASC Award nominee—for *Atonement* and *Anna Karenina*. Additionally he was



Peter Dinklage (center) and Bashir Salahuddin (r) in a scene from *Cyrano* become more anchored.

McGarvey credited a brilliant crew with making it all doable, including his longtime colleagues on Wright films, production designer Sarah Greenwood and set decorator Katie Spencer. Greenwood is a six-time Academy Award nominee for Best Production Design—four for Wright’s *Pride & Prejudice*, *Atonement*, *Anna Karenina* and *Darkest Hour*. Nominated with Greenwood each time was her long-time creative partner, Spencer.

The experience of making *Cyrano* is one that will stay with McGarvey. “The period prior to shooting *Cyrano* had been the worst of the lockdown,” he recalled. “The great aspect of that was it was a time for reflections about your life. You’ve been running and running, and suddenly there’s no choice but to force self-reflection. It was the first time in 25 years that I wasn’t working—and then I went into this film. I suddenly approached this film with a certain amount of fear (over the pandemic)—but also the sensation of making something really special. I loved the script so much. It has loads of life.”

McGarvey added that in the final scene you can’t help but think of “the fugitive nature of time and what you should say or should have said. That’s something I took

away from the film. It’s about saying what you mean, expressing yourself truthfully and not obfuscating or beating around the bush—or avoiding things or procrastinating. All of those things that COVID taught me during lockdown are echoed in this film.”

McGarvey is also a two-time ASC Award nominee—for *Atonement* and *Anna Karenina*. Additionally he was nominated for an Emmy on the strength of the *Black Mirror* episode “Nosedive,” directed by Wright. Beyond his collaborations with Wright—which also include *The Soloist* and *Pan*—McGarvey’s extensive filmography includes: a Best Cinematography BAFTA Film Award-nominated and BSC Award-winning turn on *Nocturnal Animals*, a BSC Award-nominated effort on *Bad Times at the El Royale*, and such work as *The Greatest Showman*, *The Avengers*, *The Hours*, *High Fidelity*, *Charlotte’s Web*, *The War Zone*, *Sahara*, *Nowhere Boy*, *Fifty Shades of Grey*, *World Trade Center*, *Butterfly Kiss* and *The Winter Guest*. Upcoming is director Paul King’s *Wonka* starring Timothée Chalamet, Olivia Colman and Sally Hawkins.

Haris Zambarloukos, BSC, GSC

Writer-director Kenneth Branagh’s *Belfast* has already earned honors for the black-and-white cinematography (with some impactful, relatively brief color work) of Haris Zambarloukos, BSC, GSC—including a Golden Frog nomination at Camerimage as well as nods for both a British Independent Film Award and a Critics Choice Award.

A coming-of-age tale set in late 1960s’
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DaVinci Not Going Quietly

New York based post house Irving Harvey used Blackmagic Design’s DaVinci Resolve Studio to grade the documentary *Not Going Quietly*. The software’s real time collaboration tools also helped support colorist Samuel Gursky’s remote workflow for the film.



Not Going Quietly

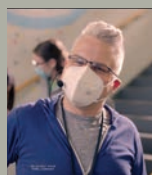
Directed by Nicholas Bruckman, *Not Going Quietly* follows Ady Barkan, a father and activist whose life is upended when he’s diagnosed with ALS. After a chance encounter and confrontation with a powerful senator goes viral and catapults him to national fame, Barkan embarks on a campaign for healthcare reform. Produced by Amanda Roddy and executive produced by Mark Duplass, Jay Duplass and Bradley Whitford, *Not Going Quietly* won a Special Jury Recognition for Humanity in Social Action at the 2021 SXSW Film Festival, earned a best feature nomination from the International Documentary Association (IDA) Awards, and garnered two noms for Critics Choice Documentary Awards.

Gursky and the Irving Harvey team pivoted to a remote setup as they began working on the film. Leveraging DaVinci Resolve Studio’s collaboration features, Gursky continued his work from home, providing the film’s editor with a matching OLED monitor, DeckLink Mini Monitor capture and playback card, and DaVinci Resolve Studio so they could collaborate remotely in real time.

“We used DaVinci Resolve Studio’s collaboration features to screen and revise on the fly while both reviewing on the same model of monitor. It was important that we both had the same highest quality image to review, so we could make sure no detail went unnoticed,” said Gursky. “With this setup, we were able to easily go through before and afters of various grades live to finetune together, which felt very collaborative even though we were viewing them separately.”

DP Benning Takes Cooke Optics For A Spin

The Disney Channel’s original musical comedy movie *Spin* is full of the type of color palettes expected of a story that follows an Indian American 15-year-old-played by Avantika—who discovers her artistic side through the unique world



Jeremy Benning, CSC

Spin was shot in Toronto and other areas around Ontario, Canada, using three ARRI ALEXA Mini LF cameras. Benning observed that the “Cooke lenses, especially the larger S7s, have great bokeh with roll-off, smoothness and distortion that works well for faces. They’re also great at separation of foreground and background, giving a 3D type look.”

An Avid Pursuit Promoting DEI

Avid® and the customer-led Avid Community Association (ACA) debuted the Avid Learning Collective program to gift professional media creation technologies, training and certification to not-for-profit educational organizations that have proven to inspire, engage and activate creators in underrepresented communities. Avid and the ACA also introduced the six inaugural award recipients, identified for their outstanding missions and achievements: Boston Arts Academy, Ghetto Film School, Girls Make Beats, Immersive & Inclusive Audio Institute, MAMA Youth Project and The Last Mile.

Each year, the Avid Learning Collective will welcome six additional educational organizations and initiatives that demonstrate the intention and ability to influence the current state of DEI through student advancement. For three years, recipients will enjoy membership in the global Avid Learning Partner program, which brings licenses for Avid creative tools, teacher training and course materials for students as well as peer and professional networking to cultivate visibility, mentoring and job opportunities for students.

Haris Zambarloukos Brings Deft Lensing Touch To Belfast

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Northern Ireland, *Belfast* introduces us to Buddy (portrayed by Jude Hill), a lad living with his mother (Caitriona Balfe), father (Jamie Dornan), brother (Lewis McCaskie) and grandparents (Judi Dench, Ciaran Hinds) during “the Troubles”

Cypress when Turkey invaded in 1974. He thus experienced a military presence around him as a youngster. “We wanted to tell a story—not just about his (Branagh’s) city but everyone’s city,” shared Zambarloukos. “It’s a tribute to parenthood, to parents who protect the innocence of a

youngster.

Color photography, though, wasn’t confined to just the scenes which appeared in color.

Color photography was also deployed for the black-and-white scenes, which constituted the lion’s share of *Belfast*. Shooting black-and-white in color was Zambarloukos’ preference due to the flexibility that afforded him in postproduction. In the DI, the DP explained that he has more precise control over tones of gray. “I can separate a particular color and give it a specific tonal value in gray,” said Zambarloukos who would not have that option if he instead just went with the installation of a black-and-white sensor on a digital camera. By shooting color for black-and-white, he can assign where in the gray scale something is visually such as the sky, clothing and people’s faces.

Speaking of faces, Zambarloukos often couldn’t see the faces of his crew col-

“There was a simplicity in our approach to *Belfast*, a minimalism that we were forced to use but turned out to be sort of joyful and playful. We were free to tell the story in a simple way, which as it turned out was best for the story. There was so much beauty in the words, so much drama in the performance that every time I tried to add a little bit, it felt wrong, like I was intruding. Less was better. The less we did, the more immersive the experience for the audience.”

Belfast has made a major mark on the awards show circuit, named one of the top ten films of the year by the National Board of Review, receiving a special prize from the American Film Institute, and winning the People’s Choice Award at the 2021 Toronto International Film Festival.

The People’s Choice Award is often a harbinger of things to come at the Academy Awards. Over the past decade-plus, every People’s Choice Award winner has



Caitriona Balfe (l) and Jamie Dornan in *Belfast*

when neighborhood streets turned into war zones as unrest grew between Catholics and Protestants. *Belfast* shows us this era as seen largely through the eyes of a child, Buddy, and has a semi-autobiographical bent informed to some extent by Branagh’s experiences as a youngster. The story first and foremost is about the love and resilience of a family, showing how that deep bond survives universal struggles.

Belfast continues a working relationship between Branagh and Zambarloukos which dates back to the 2007 release *Sleuth*. The shared director-cinematographer filmography also includes *Thor*; *Cinderella*, *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit*, *Murder on the Orient Express*, and the upcoming *Death on the Nile*. Back in 2017, Branagh and Zambarloukos received the Camerimage Cinematographer-Director Duo Award.

“It’s a real privilege to work with Ken, a consummate storyteller,” affirmed Zambarloukos. “In that respect I feel like we always start from the beginning. We assume nothing about the story we’re going to tell—even if it’s one in this case that he’s written himself and is about his own life. We still immerse ourselves in discovering a film and the language we need to use.”

Zambarloukos could relate to the *Belfast* story, recalling that he was a child in

family even through difficult times.”

Belfast marked the first film that Branagh and Zambarloukos shot together digitally. As for the decision to go that route, Zambarloukos said they “arrived at the same conclusion quite quickly” along with embracing black-and-white imagery, the latter desirable for its ability to capture and delve deeply into emotions without distraction. As for digital, it afforded the luxury of running the camera for longer stretches of time which can be advantageous with a child actor. While Hill is a talented young performer, Zambarloukos observed that it helps to make a 10 year old feel at home and relaxed, not always aware of the camera, even running it when he isn’t looking and not so conscious of what’s going on.

Zambarloukos also liked the nimbleness of the Mini Alexa LF, enabling him to shoot as silently and unobtrusively as possible which dovetails well when working with a minimal crew during the pandemic.

The alluded to color photography came in the film’s opening in the form of a visual love letter of sorts to the city of Belfast. Color also appeared when Buddy’s love of cinema comes to the fore as we see excerpts from such films as *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* and *One Million Years B.C.* which made an impression on the



A scene from *Belfast*

leagues. That was in large part because during the pandemic, the cast was unmasked and had to be protected. And in that this was one of the early shoots coming out of lockdown, still in the pre-vaccination stage, protocols were stringent and very much on the side of caution. “It was harder to communicate with a mask on. There was extensive sanitizing of the equipment. When we went for breakfast or lunch, we had to sit in a cubicle with a shower curtain around us. All these procedures broke the flow of what we’re used to—and the flow of work that we’re used to.”

The inherent nature of *Belfast*, though, lent itself to the conditions in a way.

gone on to earn a Best Picture Oscar nomination. In 2020 that was *Nomadland* which wound up winning the Best Picture Oscar, following in the footsteps of such People’s Choice Award-winning features as *Green Book*, *12 Years a Slave*, *Slumdog Millionaire* and *The King’s Speech*.

Besides his work with Branagh, Zambarloukos earned a British Independent Film Award nomination for his lensing of director Roger Michell’s *Enduring Love*, and an Australian Film Institute Award nom for Gillian Armstrong’s *Death Defying Acts*. Other credits for the DP include *Locke* from director Steven Knight, and the Phyllida Lloyd’s *Mama Mia!*

New--And Not So New--This Awards Season

Squid Game poised to make history? *Mare of Easttown*, *Hacks*, *The Underground Railroad* could build on strong Emmy showing

A SHOOT Staff Report



Photo by Youngkyu Park/courtesy of Netflix



Photo by Michael K. Sparo/courtesy of HBO



Photo by Michael K. Sparo/courtesy of HBO



Photo by Robyn Von Svanik



Photo courtesy of Amazon Studios



Photo courtesy of Amazon Studios



Photo by Anne Marie Fox/courtesy of HBO Max

New kids on the block and already established residents figure in the ongoing Guild awards conversation this season.

Among the new kids is the breakout Korean thriller *Squid Game* (Netflix), which is poised for what could be a history-making stretch. Until late last year a non-English project had never been nominated in a major television category at the Golden Globes or SAG Awards. This continues to hold true for the primetime Emmys. While the Golden Globes have diminished in stature, it's still significant that *Squid Game* broke through the non-English barrier in that competition last month, earning nominations in the dramatic series, lead (Lee Jung-jae) and supporting actor (O Yeong-su) categories.

At press time, the unveiling of the SAG Award nominations was pending so it remains to be seen if *Squid Game* will make such history again--though it is a distinct possibility.

There could also be awards recognition--beyond the Golden Globes acknowledgment--in the offing for *Squid Game*

creator and director Hwang Dong-hyuk. He and the dystopian survival drama from South Korea have already gained fame as reportedly the most-watched series globally in Netflix history. The show centers on people who are so desperate for money that they consent to compete in a series of schoolyard games with deadly consequences. *Squid Game* headed Netflix's Top Ten chart in the U.S. for nearly a month, attaining #1 viewing tallies in some 90-plus territories worldwide.

And back in November 2020, word came that *Squid Game* will be back for a second season--even though most TV shows in South Korea run for just a single season. The show's global success almost compelled a return engagement.

Squid Game also recently cracked the American Film Institute's (AFI) top ten TV programs of the year list.

That AFI rundown includes other programs that could loom large as the Guild awards season unfolds. But unlike *Squid Game*, shows such as *Mare of Easttown* (HBO), *Hacks* (HBO Max) and *The*

Underground Railroad (Amazon Studios) already have major award footprints, particularly those made at last year's primetime Emmys.

Mare of Easttown

Mare of Easttown, for example, won four Emmys--Lead Actress in an Anthology Series (Kate Winslet), Supporting Actress (Julianne Nicholson), Supporting Actor (Evan Peters) and Production Design (Keith P. Cunningham). Among the nominations were Outstanding Anthology Series and Outstanding Directing and Cinematography for a Limited or Anthology Series or Movie.

The directorial nod went to Craig Zobel, the sole helmer on the series, as well as an executive producer. Zobel could be in the running for a DGA Award nomination this year.

Zobel shared some insights into *Mare of Easttown* in last year's *SHOOT* The Road To Emmy Series, noting that he took on the limited series as if it were one big feature film, preserving a continuity of story

From top left, clockwise: A scene from *Squid Game*; director Craig Zobel (l) and Kate Winslet on the set of *Mare of Easttown*; Kate Winslet in a scene from *Mare of Easttown*; Jean Smart in a scene from *Hacks*; Thesa Mbedu in a scene from *The Underground Railroad*; DP James Laxton (l) and director Barry Jenkins on the set of *The Underground Railroad*; *Hacks* writer/director/co-creator Lucia Aniello.

Zobel Reflects On *Mare of Easttown*, Aniello Discusses *Hacks*

by going solo throughout in key roles—such as Zobel being the lone helmer of all seven episodes, Ben Richardson, ASC the cinematographer and so on.

This approach lent a best-of-both-worlds dynamic to the show. On one hand, a single creative artisan in each key discipline infused the project with a feature filmmaking feel. At the same time *Mare of Easttown* was not confined to a couple of hours on the big screen but rather had the luxury of some seven hours for character development and to create a portrait of a small town.

This mesh of feature and TV sensibilities was a natural fit for Zobel who has the distinction of seeing the first three features he directed all premiere at the Sundance Film Festival—*Great World of Sound* in 2007, *Compliance* in 2013 and *Z For Zachariah* in 2015. Zobel's most recent film, *The Hunt*, was produced by Blumhouse Productions and Universal.

On the TV front, Zobel was director and showrunner on the miniseries *One Dollar* (CBS All Access, which is now Paramount+). He directed the “Shogun-world” season two episode of *Westworld* (HBO), as well as an episode of *American Gods* (STARZ) and the critically acclaimed “International Assassin” installment of *The Leftovers* (HBO).

Also fluent in features and TV is Winslet, who stars in *Mare of Easttown*. Winslet is a seven-time Oscar nominee, winning for Best Leading Actress in 2009 for *The Reader*. She has also earned a pair of Emmy nominations, winning in 2007 for her portrayal of the title character in the HBO miniseries *Mildred Pierce*.

In *Mare of Easttown*, Winslet returned to a miniseries on HBO in another title role, portraying Mare Sheehan, a small-town Pennsylvania detective who investigates a local murder as life crumbles around her. Brad Ingelsby created and wrote the series which delves into the dark side of a close community and examines how family and past tragedies can define our present.

Mare of Easttown also starred Nicholas as Lori Ross, Mare's best friend since childhood; Jean Smart as Helen, Mare's mother; Angourie Rice as Siobhan Sheehan, Mare's teenaged daughter; Peters as Colin Zabel, the county detective called in to assist with Mare's investigation;

Guy Pearce as Richard Ryan, a local creative writing professor; David Denman as Frank Sheehan, Mare's ex-husband; Joe Tippett as John Ross, Lori's husband and high school sweetheart; Cailee Spaeny as Erin McMenamin, an isolated teen living with her volatile father; John Douglas Thompson as Chief Carter, Mare's boss at the Easttown Police Department; Patrick Murney as Kenny McMenamin, Erin's father; James McArdle as Deacon Mark Burton; and Sosie Bacon as Carrie Layden, Drew's mother and Kevin's ex-girlfriend; and Neal Huff as Mare's cousin, Father Dan Hastings.

Zobel collaborated for the first time with the lion's share of his key creatives on *Mare of Easttown*—a prime exception being his first assistant director, Kayse Goodell, whom he worked with on the David Gordon Green-directed feature, *Prince Avalanche*. Zobel was a producer on *Prince Avalanche* while Goodell was a second assistant director.

Among Zobel's many first-time collaborators on *Mare of Easttown* was DP Richardson. Zobel has been a fan of Richardson, citing his indie film work. A Best Cinematography Independent Spirit Award winner for *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (which additionally earned Best Cinematography honors at the 2012 Sundance Film Festival), Richardson has also been active in TV, as reflected in an ASC Award nomination in 2019 for *Yellowstone*. He could figure in this year's ASC Awards for *Mare of Easttown*.

Zobel said that he and Richardson were simpatico on the approach toward *Mare of Easttown*. “It needed to be naturalistic, all about the acting. We weren't trying to make a show with an aggressive visual style that would impact the naturalism of the acting.” At the same time, continued Zobel, the style of the show grew “out of the two of us interacting with each other.”

That and all conventional collaborative interactions, though, were interrupted by the pandemic lockdown. About one-third of the show had been shot before quarantine. This meant that change had to be adopted, embraced and adapted for when shooting resumed. The spirit of the narrative was preserved even though adjustments had to be made. “We couldn't do that scene that was supposed to have

200 extras,” noted Zobel. Thankfully, he continued, HBO provided the time and support necessary to bring the project to fruition—as well as a commitment to the health and safety of all involved.

Hacks

Also scoring big at last year's Emmys was *Hacks* (HBO Max) which too could figure in various award shows this season, including the DGA and SAG proceedings. *Hacks* won three Emmys—for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Comedy Series (Jean Smart, who could figure in the SAG derby for this performance as well as her supporting role in *Mare of Easttown*), Writing for a Comedy Series (Lucia Aniello, Paul W. Downs, Jen Statsky) and Directing for a Comedy Series (Aniello). Overall *Hacks* scored a total of 15 Emmy nominations, including for Outstanding Comedy Series.

Hacks stars Smart and Hannah Einbinder. The latter portrays Ava Daniels, a Gen Z comedy writer in Los Angeles whose career is in jeopardy over an insensitive off-the-cuff tweet. Desperate for an industry job, she finds an unlikely gig through her agent—writing contemporary, youth appeal material for legendary Las Vegas vet and stand-up comedy diva Deborah Vance who's played by Smart. The chemistry between the protagonists is a driving force behind the show. Their wide-ranging performances take us from the comedic to the dramatic and places in-between. This acumen for naturally blending laughs and pathos while generating empathy for the characters is a testament to Smart and Einbinder (who earned an Emmy nod for Supporting Actress in a Comedy Series).

In last year's The Road To Emmy Series, *SHOOT* caught up with Aniello, who is also a co-creator of the show. Her directing and writing Emmys reflect at the very least contending status for DGA and Writers Guild award nods this year.

Aniello related that among the challenges she faced on *Hacks* was working and adapting during the pandemic. Aniello's roots are as a stand-up and improv performer, which translates into a directing style she described as being “emotive.” She explained, “That's one way I'm able to get across what I'm trying to say to the actors.” But the performers could only

see her eyeballs when she was wearing a face mask and a shield. Instead of relying on facial reactions to convey her direction, she had to relate in words what she wanted. Aniello noted that while keeping everyone safe on set is paramount for her, she felt masking may have caused her to lose “a little bit of the humanity of what I feel directing is.”

Zoom meetings among the writers also were marked by a sense of loss. She missed no longer being able to joke and hang around with writing colleagues in person. Aniello said that when you're on Zoom, you feel you're on the clock and have to be pretty much all business. Thus the goofing-around banter was eliminated, off-the-cuff exchanges that under normal circumstances could serve as a catalyst for ideas, comedy and other elements that help to tell a story.

Still, *Hacks* has managed to resonate with viewers. Aniello was excited to find out that older people feel connected to the show, in large part due to Smart's portrayal of Vance, who's cool, sexy, funny and a bit of a hard-ass who says what she thinks. Vance is also relatable as a person who's surrounded by laughter and audiences professionally but by contrast isolated in a big mansion in her personal life. “I didn't quite foresee how much the show would resonate with older people. It's really satisfying that we are portraying somebody of a certain age so well.” Aniello noted that she's written 25-year-old characters most of her life but to be able to portray Vance has been a true gift.

Among the other *Hacks* Emmy nominees last year were cinematographer Adam Bricker, editors Jessica Brunetto, Susan Vaill, ACE and Ali Greer, production designer Jon Carlos, costume designer Kathleen Felix-Hager, re-recording mixers John W. Cook II and Ben Wilkins, production mixer Jim Lakin, and casting directors Jeanne McCarthy, CSA and Nicole Albellera Hallman, CSA.

They all could be considered in the running for awards in their respective guilds and disciplines this time around. For example, McCarthy, Albellera Hallman and casting associate Anna Mayworm received nominations on the strength of *Hacks* just two months ago for the Casting Society of America's Artios

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DP Laxton Proud To Be Aboard The Underground Railroad

Continued from page 25

Award in the comedy category spanning first season comedy series and TV pilots.

Hacks marked the sixth career Emmy nomination for casting director McCarthy who along with Albellera Hallman won the honor in 2016 for *American Crime Story: The Assassination of Gianni Versace*. Albellera Hallman is a five-time Emmy nominee. Aniello had worked previously with McCarthy and Hallman on the feature *Rough Night* starring Scarlett Johansson. Aniello served as writer-director-producer on that film.

Aniello also collaborated with editor Brunetto previously on such shows as *Broad City*, *Awkwafina Is Nora From Queens*, and *Time Traveling Bong*. Brunetto cut multiple episodes of *Hacks*, including the pilot, "There Is No Line," for which she earned the Emmy edit nomination. That same episode garnered Aniello her directing and writing Emmy nods. Given their track record of working together, Aniello naturally gravitated to Brunetto for the *Hacks* pilot. Aniello said of Brunetto, "She's a filmmaker herself" and from the outset understood what the series creators were going for.

Editors Vaill and Greer collaborated with Aniello for the first time on *Hacks*. The writer-director was drawn to their talent and dedication, saying it was gratifying to bring them into the fold. Vaill's editing nod came for the second episode, "Primm," which too was directed by Aniello. Greer's Emmy nom came for "Tunnel of Love," episode 7, directed by Desiree Akhavan.

Hacks also marked Aniello's first collaborations with DP Bricker, production designer Carlos and costume designer Kathleen Felix-Hager. Aniello was a fan of Bricker's work, citing such series as *American Vandal* and *Chef's Table*. The latter earned Bricker his first Emmy nomination back in 2018. *Hacks* marks his second nod.

Meanwhile Felix-Hager's prior credits included *Véep* and *Space Force*, and Aniello marveled over her "uncanny ability to find and source costumes." And if she couldn't find the perfect outfit for the character of Vance, Felix-Hager designed it herself—an example being the gold sequin two-piece worn by the stand-up comic in the season one finale.

Felix-Hager broke into the Emmy nominees circle with *Hacks*, scoring in the Outstanding Contemporary Costumes category. And Carlos now has two career Emmy nominations, the first coming as an art director on *Westworld* in 2020.

Re-recording mixer Cook II scored his 22nd career Emmy nomination with *Hacks*. He won an Emmy in 2008 for his contributions to *Scrubs*. *Hacks* marked the second career Emmy nom for re-recording mixer Wilkins, the first coming in 2003 for *Live from Baghdad*. Wilkins won an Oscar in 2015 for his work on *Whiplash*. Production mixer Lakin scored his first career Emmy nod for *Hacks*.

The Underground Railroad

The Emmy recognition for *The Underground Railroad* spanned seven categories—Outstanding Limited or Anthology Series, Directing (Barry Jenkins), Casting (Francine Maisler, Meagan Lewis), Original Dramatic Score (composer Nicholas Britell), Sound Editing (including sound supervisor Onnalee Blank, sound designers Jay Jennings, Harry Cohen, dialogue editors Chris Kahwaty, Katy Wood), Sound Mixing (re-recording mixers Blank and Mathew Waters, production mixer Joe White) and Cinematography (James Laxton). While a casting nomination didn't materialize in the Artios competition, the other Emmy-nominated artisans figure to be in contention this Guild Awards season—including Laxton for an ASC Award nomination.

Cinematographer Laxton and director/writer/executive producer Barry Jenkins have deep collaborative roots. The two were college roommates for a year and started working together at Florida State University film school. In fact, Laxton lensed Jenkins' last two student films and has gone on to do the same for all his features—*Medicine for Melancholy* for which the DP earned an Independent Spirit Award for Best Cinematography, followed by *Moonlight*, the Best Picture Oscar winner, and then *If Beale Street Could Talk*. Laxton earned Academy Award and ASC Award nominations for *Moonlight*.

Jenkins and Laxton again came together for *The Underground Railroad*, a limited series adapted from Colson

Whitehead's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel. The 10 episodes bring us into the world of Cora Randall (portrayed by Thuso Mbedu), an enslaved woman who escapes the horrors of a Georgia plantation with an unrelenting bounty hunter (Joel Edgerton) in pursuit. She gets free of bondage with support from a literal underground railroad that runs through the American South just before the Civil War. The series includes brutal depictions of violence against Cora and others.

With the myriad creative challenges posed by *The Underground Railroad*, perhaps the emotional toll of those re-creations of abuse marked the biggest hurdle for cast and crew to overcome. Amazon provided supportive on-set counseling to help actors and crew members cope with the atrocities chronicled during the course of production.

In a Road To Emmy interview with *SHOOT* last year, Laxton said that of the 116 shooting days, very few were sans dramatic depictions of abuse. Everyone's emotional state was being assaulted on some level but it was necessary in order to do justice to the story and our nation's history. "Amazon understood that," related Laxton, noting that having a counselor in place allowed cast and crew to step off the set when needed to discuss what they felt, engaging with someone in order to help preserve some semblance of mental health and well-being.

Furthermore, cast and crew helped one another. "We all needed to lean on each other's shoulders," said Laxton, grateful for having actors and artisans who are "open-hearted and supportive kind of people." He shared, "When the alarm clock rang, I never didn't want to go to work," in part because he looked forward to seeing Jenkins and his various colleagues who were all there for emotional support and a shared sense of purpose.

Audiences too may have found scenes painful to watch, yet there is also an inherent beauty captured by Jenkins and Laxton in the storytelling. And the pain we witness is seen through the perspectives of those being violated, generating an empathy as viewers connect with the horror endured and the humanity we share.

In other respects, though, Laxton felt the approach to *The Underground Rail-*

road was akin to the one he and Jenkins embraced in their feature work. "The visual telling of the story felt like a Barry Jenkins movie," assessed Laxton. And while the pace and schedule of television production can be demanding, it wasn't all that different from the type of independent, budget-challenged feature filmmaking that Laxton and Jenkins had done in the past. Laxton recalled, for example, that *The Underground Railroad* entailed shooting approximately the same number of script pages a day as *Moonlight* did.

Also as he's done in the past, Jenkins continued his pursuit of realism which in the case of *The Underground Railroad* entailed having people interacting with real trains. A train museum in Savannah, Georgia, helped to make this a reality, supplying trains of the era. Laxton explained that the production was allowed to largely take over the museum and under the aegis of Emmy-winning (*Mildred Pierce*) production designer Mark Friedberg, 200 feet of tunnel was constructed along the facility's existing private railroad track. The controlled environment was crucial to attain what Jenkins wanted while affording the production with the maximum safety considerations.

Reflecting on *The Underground Railroad* experience, Laxton observed, "Walking away from this show made me realize how much a trusted communal process that filmmaking really is." Without Jenkins and all the department heads—and mutual trust throughout those ranks—the vision for the series would have been impossible to attain, affirmed Laxton.

And the alluded to sense of purpose played a major role in intensifying that trust and communal feel. Laxton shared that clearly what he learned about slavery from a public school education in California was woefully lacking. Upon reading Whitehead's book, Laxton had a deeper understanding of what happened and its impact on people. The TV series, he said, delves into people's specific stories, tries to take viewers into their spaces. A prime goal creatively for Laxton was to help "put a face on those stories" so that audiences would fully realize the major impact on families and society, lessons from history that continue to hold a profound relevance to our world today.

A Tale Of 2 Directing Duos, 2 Solo Helmers

Two directorial duos—one sporting individual Sundance track records, the other with a joint pedigree at the festival—return this month with their latest documentaries.

Then we have two solo artisans on the narrative side, bringing their feature directorial debuts to Sundance.

While all these filmmakers harbored the hope that Sundance would return to being largely an in-person event this time around, the surge in COVID-19 infections globally caused event organizers to make the festival—which runs January 20-30—virtual for the second consecutive year.

Meet the directors behind *The Janes*, *Meet Me In The Bathroom*, *God's Country* and *Watcher*.

The Janes

Tia Lessin and Emma Pildes add to their Sundance credentials with *The Janes*, which makes its world premiere in the festival's U.S. Documentary Competition. As a director, Lessin's Sundance track record includes the Grand Jury Prize-winning documentary *Trouble the Water* in 2008, and *Citizen Koch* in 2013 (both of which she directed with Carl Deal). As a producer, Pildes has brought films to Sundance such as *Jane Fonda In Five Acts* in 2018, directed by Susan Lacy (Pildes' long-time collaborator).

Yet while they are accomplished Sundance and industry vets, both Lessin and Pildes experienced a new career wrinkle with *The Janes*. For once, director Lessin didn't also take on a producer's role. And for the first time, Pildes settled into the director's chair—in tandem with Lessin—while continuing in a

producer's capacity.

Pildes quipped that *The Janes* “whetted my appetite to direct more and Tia to produce less.”

The Janes introduces us to the Jane collective, an underground network which helped women secure safe, affordable, illegal abortions before the landmark Roe v. Wade decision was handed down by the Supreme Court. The group of women behind JANE deployed code names, blindfolds and safe houses to achieve their goal. Then in the spring of 1972, police raided an apartment on Chicago's South Side and seven women were arrested for their part in the clandestine service.

Pildes has a family connection to the story. Her father's first wife was one of the Janes. That woman's son, producer Pildes' half-brother, wanted to develop this important chapter in our history as a film. He approached Pildes who initially thought she would produce the documentary. This led her to Lessin whom she long admired as a filmmaker, person and activist. But as they got deeper into the project, Pil-

des came to a realization--“I underestimated my commitment to this story.” She had a vision for the film and felt the need to direct it. She and Lessin agreed to become a directing team on *The Janes*. “I've said many times that this film is greater than the sum of its parts because Tia and I did it together,” related Pildes, adding that it's most appropriate that this story about a certain kind of sisterhood was created “by a certain kind of sisterhood”

Continued on page 28

Reflections from the filmmakers behind Sundance selections *The Janes*, *Meet Me In The Bathroom*, *God's Country*, *Watcher*

By Robert Goldrich



Caption: From top left, clockwise: A scene from *The Janes*; a scene from *God's Country*; a scene from *Meet Me In The Bathroom*; and a scene from *Watcher*.

A Directorial Debut At Sundance; A Duo Returns To The Fest

Continued from page 27
between her and Lessin.

Pildes found her first directorial experience gratifying and would like to pursue more such opportunities. She continues, though, to love producing and will be active on that front as well.

Meanwhile Lessin found her first time not producing “kind of liberating,” enabling her to focus on creative aspects.

Going into Sundance not having to make a sale, already having a commitment from HBO ensuring major exposure to audiences, took some of the pressure off of Lessin and Pildes. Lessin, for example, didn’t have a distributor in place going into the festival for her prior Sundance films, *Trouble the Water* and *Citizen Koch*. While there was an excitement to pursuing a sales connection, there’s a measure of angst. Even after winning the Grand Jury Prize, *Trouble the Water* wasn’t sold at Sundance. It took a couple more months to seal the deal as prospective buyers may have been hesitant to commit to a film about Katrina survivors. Pildes said that HBO’s commitment to *The Janes* has been brave and steadfast.

Pildes shared that she started in documentary films because of her belief in them as “a medium to create empathy among people,” as “a medium of activism.” Initial response to *The Janes* reflects that people have been moved and affected, prompting some to tell her and Lessin their stories, to say things out loud and explore what they can do to organize and bring about positive change. Pildes noted that what she walks away with from

her experience on *The Janes* is an affirmation of what drew her to documentary filmmaking some 20 years ago—its ability to generate empathy, caring and activism.

God’s Country

Like Pildes, Julian Higgins’ directorial debut has made the Sundance cut. *God’s Country*, which Higgins helmed and co-wrote (with Shaye Ogbonna), is set for Sundance’s Premieres section.

Higgins’ road to *God’s Country* started back in 2010 when his mom handed him a short story collection titled “Jesus Out To Sea” written by James Lee Burke. A story in that book, “Winter Light,” struck a responsive chord with Higgins who made a short film based on it in 2014. “It was a pretty direct adaptation,” said Higgins, recalling that he was attracted to the idea of a character, a retired college professor towards the end of his life, confronting the conflict between his personal moral code and the reality of the world.

After directing the short, Higgins never thought it would turn into anything more. But fast forward to the 2016 presidential election and the feelings in the story that originally stirred him seemed all the more relevant—what he described as “the collision of an ethical moral world view with a world that seems to be moving in a different direction.” He fortuitously reunited with Ogbonna, a former AFI classmate, during a screening of a film in December 2016. While they sparingly stayed in touch over the years, their coming together this time sparked a profound conversation about what they

wanted to accomplish as artists. “He and I share so many values and motivations,” said Higgins who teamed with Ogbonna on the script for what became *God’s Country*. This time, the adaptation of “Winter Light” had Ogbonna and Higgins taking some creative liberties, including making the protagonist younger and a woman of color.

In *God’s Country*, a grieving college professor—portrayed by Thandiwe Newton—confronts two hunters she catches trespassing on her property. She’s then drawn into an escalating battle of wills with catastrophic consequences.

Higgins had been a fan of Newton for quite some time. And that admiration only grew when he saw her transform into the complex, flawed, compassionate character. *God’s Country* also brought Higgins together again with long-time collaborators, DP Andrew Wheeler and editor Justin LaForge. The threesome has teamed on assorted shorts, growing and developing as artists over the years.

Half of *God’s Country* was shot when the pandemic shut down production. “We had to wait for 367 days and we didn’t know if it would ever be possible to get this group of people together again,” continued Higgins. “The producers never for a moment considered abandoning the project. I feel so fortunate that the people working on this movie were so committed to getting this done and telling the story.”

When lensing resumed, it was still during a pre-vaccine period. Cast and crew observed the strictest protocols. “It was a very scary time and amazing to see that

people were willing to do what it took to finish the movie under the conditions,” said Higgins.

That trust among cast and crew members is akin to the trust Higgins places in the audience. He said the experience of making *God’s Country* “reinforced in my mind the idea that audiences rise to elevated expectations. You can tell a complex, challenging story and try to engage with the issues of our time. If its dramatized through character, story and emotion, audiences will go with it.” That, he related, is a refreshing realization for an industry that often thinks first about escapism and entertainment.

Higgins continued, “Trusting the audience is a core value for me.” And that trust was reflected in the film’s editing. Higgins explained that most of the moments that wound up on the proverbial cutting room floor were those in the script trying to explain things to the audience. Higgins affirmed that trusting the audience’s intelligence and capacity to understand, to fill in the blanks, is essential, especially for a project like *God’s Country* which is “designed to be a movie that unsettles the audience in a good way.”

Meet Me In The Bathroom

Directors Dylan Southern and Will Lovelace have a return engagement at Sundance with their latest film, *Meet Me In The Bathroom*, earning a slot in the festival’s Midnight program. Lovelace and Southern’s first turn at the fest came in 2012 with their *Shut Up and Play The Hits*, a documentary following LCD

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Chloe Okuno's First Feature Makes The Sundance Cut

Soundsystem front man James Murphy over a 48-hour period, from the day of the act's final gig at Madison Square Garden to the morning after, marking the official end of that iconic live band.

Meet Me In The Bathroom takes us on a journey through the New York music scene of the early 2000s. Set against the backdrop of 9/11, the film tells the story of how a new generation kickstarted a musical rebirth for NYC that reverberated worldwide. The documentary was inspired by the book of the same title by Lizzy Goodman. In the "it's a small world" department, Goodman was inspired to write the book by LCD Sound-system's aforementioned last show at Madison Square Garden.

"We weren't planning on going back to that subject matter," said Southern but upon reading a galley of Goodman's book, he and Lovelace thought it was a good time to tell that story—not only about the music but that time period in NYC.

Another plan that fell by the wayside was to film new material in NYC, including on-camera interviews. But then COVID hit and the film had to be recalibrated, becoming entirely archival. The silver lining was that instead of seeing musicians 20 years later and then cutting to their work back in the day, *Meet Me In The Bathroom* could take a more immersive approach, dropping its audience smack dab in NYC to experience that era.

Lovelace and Southern's music documentary exploits have taken different forms. For *No Distance Left To Run*, a Grammy Award-nominated rockumentary about British rock band Blur, the directors deployed interviews and archive elements. Then came *Shut Up and Play The Hits*, which centered on a live event at Madison Square Garden. Now *Meet Me*

In The Bathroom goes the full archival route which Southern described as "a really interesting way to tell a story but not as easy as one might think." It was an ongoing learning experience.

Lovelace observed that *Meet Me In The Bathroom* was in many respects "the most collaborative film we've made" relative to the team that had to come together. Whereas *No Distance Left To Run*, for example, had Lovelace and Southern editing in a room, *Meet Me In The Bathroom* due to its archival bent required the directors to work much more closely with editors and producers. "An archive film of this scale," he said, necessitated that deeply collaborative approach.

Watcher

Chloe Okuno earned a slot in Sundance's U.S. Dramatic Competition with her feature directorial debut, *Watcher*, which introduces us to a young American woman, Julia (portrayed by Maika Monroe), who moves with her fiancé from the U.S. to Romania. Feeling alone and isolated in a new country—and a new apartment—she is tormented by the feeling that she is being stalked by an unseen watcher in an adjacent building. The nature of the psychological thriller drew Okuno in—particularly the inherent frustration of a protagonist convinced of something but not able to convince the people around her that it's true. Even her fiancé can't fully empathize.

"I've personally felt that at certain times in my life," shared Okuno. "A lot of women have felt that as well. That core emotional story was interesting to me."

Coming out with this movie during a pandemic provides a strange dynamic in that perhaps viewers can now more closely identify with the protagonist's feelings

of isolation given the lockdowns and lack of social contact we've all experienced. Okuno observed that "spending the majority of my time alone in my little hotel room in Bucharest, not wanting to risk any exposure" helped her to relate to Julia on a deeper level. While the pandemic did not enter the movie's storyline, its impact was felt by those who made—and potentially those who will see—*Watcher*.

It took five years to bring *Watcher* to fruition. Okuno noted that it's hard enough to make any feature but the angst escalates when you put the stress of a pandemic on top of it, consumed by protecting the health and safety of yourself and everyone around you. Schedules were constantly changed. Prior to the shoot, some tested positive for COVID. Yet cast and crew safely persisted.

There was also the challenge of the story's minimalism, continued Okuno. "A lot of it takes place in this apartment where this woman is alone with her fear," which had the director looking for ways to portray that in an interesting way, to "visually keep the story alive."

Watcher taught Okuno "a lesson I already knew but you learn it over and over and over again. Ultimately the only thing I can contribute as a filmmaker is my perspective on the story. A lot of times that's challenged, especially as a first-time filmmaker, even more as a first-time female filmmaker. Challenge is good. It's part of the creative process. But the lesson is about sticking to your guns. If you have an instinct about something, probably that's the right way to go. It's your story. If it's not your story, then it's no one's story."

Flash Back

January 15, 2017 The five nominees for the DGA Award recognizing Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Feature Film for 2016 are: **Damien Chazelle for *La La Land*; Garth Davis for *Lion*; Barry Jenkins for *Moonlight*; Kenneth Lonergan for *Manchester by the Sea*; and Denis Villeneuve for *Arrival*..... MJZ and Park Pictures each had two directors scoring nominations for the DGA Award for Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Commercials for 2016. MJZ's Dante Ariola and Fredrik Bond are up for the honor as are Park Pictures' Lance Acord and AG Rojas. Rounding out the field is Derek Cianfrance of RadicalMedia..... John Hillcoat—a feature filmmaker (*The Road*, *The Proposition*) who successfully extended his reach to commercials, making an auspicious ad debut back in 2010 with Levi's "To Work" for Wieden+Kennedy, Portland, Ore.—has joined Serial Pictures for global representation in spots and branded content. He had previously been handled by production house Stink.....Catherine Locker, former group director, strategic marketing, for Coca-Cola North America, is joining DDB North America in the newly created role of chief of staff.....**

January 17, 2012 Washington Square Films (WSF) has signed director J.C. Chandor for exclusive representation in its commercial division. WSF has a long history with Chandor and produced his feature film *Margin Call* starring Kevin Spacey, Zachary Quinto, Stanley Tucci, Paul Bettany, Jeremy Irons, Penn Badgley and Demi Moore..... Director Paul Gay, whose filmography spans commercials, shorts and TV drama, has signed with O Positive for commercial representation in the U.S. His production house roost in London remains Waspface which he launched last summer with co-founder/executive producer Tim Nunn...Gary Krieg, head of content production at Wieden+Kennedy New York, is leaving the agency next month after some 14 years in order to pursue an independent production venture. Lora Schulson is set to take over his role at W+K, overseeing broadcast and interactive production for the NY office. Schulson has been co-exec director of content production at Y&R NY since 2008, leading (alongside Nathy Aviram) the agency's integrated production. Her joining W+K represents a change in plans in that she was recently hired as head of integration at BBH NY, a role she was originally scheduled to assume on January 23. She is instead headed to W+K.....

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street talk

UnderWonder Content has added photographer and director Thom Kerr to its talent roster. After attaining a Bachelor of Fine Arts, specializing in writing and directing, Kerr freelanced as a stylist, set designer and writer for numerous publications, collaborating with an eclectic set of photographers and directors while developing his own direction. Officially stepping behind the camera a few years later, he developed a successful photographic career. His folio has attracted an international audience with advertising and magazine commissions worldwide. Given his experience working across all aspects of imagery, Kerr is often asked to consult with brands, personalities and publications on the creative direction of each assignment. He then began translating his stylistic imagery into eye-catching visuals

for artists including Christina Aguilera, Doja Cat, Bebe Rexha and Jason Derulo. Kerr's filmography includes music videos for such performers as Iggy Azalea, Alice Chater, Kim Petras, Brooke Candy and Holiday Sidewinder. Kerr's signing comes on the heels of UnderWonder bringing directors Troy Roscoe and Jensen Noen into the company fold....Animation/VFX house Tippet Studio has promoted head of production Gary Mundell to chief operating officer. Recent Tippet projects include season 2 of both *The Mandalorian* on Disney+ and *Locke and Key* on Netflix, as well as Marvel Studio's *Falcon and the Winter Soldier*....International production services company The Roots, under the aegis of founder/executive producer Ariel Leon Isacovitch, has firmly established its office in Mexico over the past year. Launched in the throes of a pandemic, the office--headed by The Roots' production service EP/ partner in Mexico, Alejandro Rossi--has remained fully operational the entire time, persevering and building momentum with recent projects including collaborations with *Honey Bunches of Oats* and Audible. This is the fourth office for The Roots, the other bases of operation being in Chile, Uruguay and Argentina....

rep report

The **Directors Network (TDN)**, the talent agency for freelance directors and cinematographers, has added **Danielle Shapira**, an award-winning writer/director who's attracted billions of eyeballs with her digital and commercial work for *Vanity Fair*, *GQ*, *Architectural Digest* and *Allure*. Whether she's working with the next major Gen Z influencer or an A-list celebrity, Shapira, who's based in both NYC and L.A., brings out the best in a campaign with her comedic relatability and human touch. Celebs she's worked with include Dakota Johnson, Samuel L. Jackson, Zendaya and Paul Rudd....Also joining the TDN roster are **Karla and Maria Jose Noriega Pedroza**, otherwise known as **The Lucky Twins**, whose ad work includes Facebook, Puma, Intuit and many more fashion, beauty and lifestyle brands. Born and raised in Mexico and based in Miami, The Lucky Twins have made a name for themselves for the dreamy aesthetic and cutting edge, LGBTQ-conscious perspective....Former Lyft and Old Navy marketer **Sara Lezama** has joined brand and marketing consultancy **TwentyFirstCenturyBrand (21CB)** as associate partner. Lezama will drive the growth of the consultancy's business, team and client portfolio in the U.S. while fostering its culture in the San Francisco office. She will report directly to global managing director Colin Chow. Lezama brings extensive expertise in brand building across retail, tech, and consumer goods to 21CB which has among its clients Pinterest, Headspace, Bumble, Peloton, Gemini, LinkedIn, Mars Inc, Walmart, NextDoor, Instacart, Depop and VanMoof. Most recently, Lezama served as director of integrated marketing at Old Navy where she developed and launched the brand's Imagine Mission initiative aimed at bolstering its goal to foster a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable future. Prior to this role, Lezama was a creative strategist at Lyft where she launched several driver, rider, and product campaigns....

11 Dollar Bill Launches Post-Production Facility in Raleigh 11 Dollar Bill, a leading independent post-production studio specializing in creative design, editorial and finishing services, has opened a facility in Raleigh, North Carolina. The site boasts resources for creative editorial, design, motion graphics and animation as well as color correction...

"Love, Lawyers & The Government" Wins Grand Shark Award at Kinsale "Love, Lawyers & The Government" - created via TBWA\Chiat\Day New York, directed by Speck + Gordon, and edited by Graham Turner - has been honored with the Grand Shark at the 2021 Shark Awards International Creative Festival in Kinsale. The fest, with a 60 years history of distinction in...

"Press Record" Launched as NFT-Powered Song Marketplace Owned By Stone Rolla Media: "Press Record" has been launched as a new web3 NFT-powered song marketplace and is wholly-owned and operated by Stone Rolla Media, an L.A. and London based music publisher. The new platform will auction NFTs of original...

Goldcrest Post Helps Send Three Films to Sundance Goldcrest Post provided post-production services for three films screening at this year's Sundance Film Festival. They include Academy Award-nominee Ramin Bahrani's documentary *2nd Chance*, Tia Lessin and Emma Pildes' documentary *The Janes* and director Ricky D'Ambrose's narrative film *The Cathedral*. Picture Shop To Open New Dailies Facility at Pinewood Studios Picture Shop, part of Streamland Media, announced it will open a new dailies facility at Pinewood Studios, just west of London, in early 2022.

It's Official! ZBrush Is Now Part of The Maxon Family Maxon announced the completion of all financial and regulatory requirements for the acquisition of all assets of Pixologic, creators of the Academy Award®-winning ZBrush sculpting and painting software.

charlieuniformtango Names Meredith Machial Vice President/Executive Producer James Rayburn, charlieuniformtango President/CEO, announced Meredith Machial has been named Vice President/Executive Producer.

Documentary/Restoration Colorist Jane Tolmachyov Joins Goldcrest Post Former DuArt Senior Colorist Jane Tolmachyov has joined Goldcrest Post. Tolmachyov brings credits across feature films, television and advertising, but is best known for her work in documentaries and film restoration.

"A Beautiful Curse" To Have European Premiere at Paris International Film Fest With its inclusion in the lineup of 2022's Paris International Film Festival, "A Beautiful Curse" is coming to Europe. Since its world premiere at California's Cinequest 2021, where it won the Grand Jury Prize for Best Genre Film.

Assembly Joins Post New York Alliance (PNYA) Post New York Alliance (PNYA) welcomes full-service post-production company Assembly as a company member. Founded in 2021, Assembly operates two Manhattan facilities offering dailies, offline editorial, visual effects, color grading and editorial finishing services for film, television and advertising.

Whitehouse Post Proudly Promotes Steve Kroodsma To Editor Continuing their tradition of cultivating exceptional editorial talent, Whitehouse Post proudly promotes Steve Kroodsma to their Chicago roster.

Rising Sun Pictures Education: 2021 Was a Great Year For Aspiring Visual Effects Artists While 2021 remained challenging for many sectors of the economy, the visual effects industry has flourished. A global surge in film and streaming production caused VFX companies in Australia and around the globe to ramp up. That, in turn, led to a tight job market as studios competed with one another to hire capable staff.

HPA TR-X Presents: The Use of Cinema Cameras in Multicam Live Productions Hollywood Professional Association (HPA) has announced additional details for the 2022 HPA Tech Retreat, which will kick off with TR-X on the afternoon of Monday, February 21. The Tech Retreat returns as an in-person event in Palm Springs from February 21-24.

René Steinkellner Joins 11 Dollar Bill, Chicago, as Executive Producer Continuing to grow its leadership team, 11 Dollar Bill has appointed René Steinkellner as Executive Producer at its Chicago studio. Steinkellner, who served as Executive Producer at FCB, Lord+Thomas, Chicago, for 12 years, will lead post-production, business development and client relations.

AICP National Board of Directors Elects New Officers The AICP National Board of Directors elected a new leadership slate at its 2021 year-end meeting. Lisa Mehling, owner/president of Chelsea, was elected chairperson and Tabitha Mason-Elliott, partner/head of production, at BARK BARK was elected vice chairperson. Additionally, Robert Fernandez, CEO of Moxie Pictures, was re-elected treasurer.

A Tale of Two CG Cities at Post Asylum/Element X It was the best of times in 2021 for animation at Post Asylum/Element X. The Dallas based creative content studio created CG cities both small and large for two recent broadcast promos. AMC Networks in New York tapped PA/EX to create a miniature Christmas village for their IFC holiday promo.

94TH Oscars Shortlists In 10 Award Categories Announced The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences announced shortlists in 10 categories for the 94th Academy Awards: Documentary Feature, Documentary Short Subject, International Feature Film, Makeup & Hairstyling, Music (Original Score), Music (Original Song), Animated Short Film, etc...

Senior Post Joins Post New York Alliance (PNYA) Post New York Alliance (PNYA) proudly announced Senior Post, Brooklyn, as a new company member. Founded in 2012 by Josh Senior and Joanna Naugle, Senior Post is the largest editorial house in Brooklyn with 17 offline suites. It also provides dailies, editorial finishing, color grading and deliverables, while serving clients including Netflix, HBO, FX, Hulu and Disney+.

Pace Pictures Gets Into The Holiday Spirit With VH1's "Miracles Across 125th Street" Pace Productions capped a busy 2021 with the VH1 original movie *Miracles Across 125th Street*, produced, written and directed by Nick Cannon. Pace hosted the film's editorial team, led by Charles Norris. It also provided complete sound and picture finishing services for the film, part of VH1's "Naughty or Nice" series which brings a sharper edge to traditional holiday programming.

Ultraman Connection Live Holiday Special! Tsuburaya Productions, the legendary Japanese company behind the ULTRAMAN franchise is teaming up with Iceberg Theory, Starlight Runner Entertainment, and The Licensing Group to produce ULTRAMAN CONNECTION LIVE HOLIDAY SPECIAL, a massive global, virtual event that will feature exclusive First Looks at new Ultraman content, products, and surprises for fans

Visible Takes On Wireless Industry's Bias Against Singles, Offering Family Plan Savings - Without the Family Visible the Verizon-all digital wireless carrier, announced the launch of their holiday campaign entitled "Smash the Drama," to amplify awareness of the carrier's first-to-market offering: family plan savings without the need for a traditional "family plan."

The campaign was created by agency Madwell. Engine Names Melissa Brown Executive Producer, Frank Normandin Senior Account Director and Katie Schade Senior Account Director ENGINE, announced three key appointments to its Account and Production teams: Melissa Brown, executive producer, Frank Normandin, senior account director, and Katie Schade, senior account director. Creative Marketing and Advertising Agency Øuterkind Expands by Hiring Top Talent Team Creative marketing and advertising agency Øuterkind has hired four talented marketing leaders: Associate Creative Director Joanna Kammer, Account Supervisor Alyssa Montoya, Social Media Manager Alia Miller and Partner Jason Wozny to support its rapid growth and existing client needs.

Carbon Conjures Up Animated Film "Repeater" For OFFF Dach's Design Festival From creative production studio Carbon comes Repeater, the vibrant animated Title Film to this year's OFFF Dach creativity and design festival in Vienna. With original live-recorded orchestra music and sound design from Antfood, it's a tale of non-conformity and rejection that builds to a kaleidoscopic ceremony and the uplifting power of finding your place.

BOND Takes Home Top Honors at CLIO Entertainment Awards BOND has been named by the Clio Awards as the 2021 "Entertainment Agency of the Year," continuing their streak that began in 2019 and making them the first-ever agency to be awarded back to back Agency of the Year. The agency was also a recipient of Clio Entertainment's highest honor, the Grand Clio Entertainment Award, for the Interactive Trailer created for Warner Bros.' *Matrix: Resurrections*, in the Theatrical: Innovation category

2022 AMP Awards For Music & Sound Sets Date for Awards Presentation It's back! The unofficial 'loudest show in the industry,' better known as the AMP Awards for Music & Sound, has announced its return as a live, in-person event in 2022. The show will rock the stage in a triumphant return to Sony Hall in New York City on Tuesday, May 24, 2022.

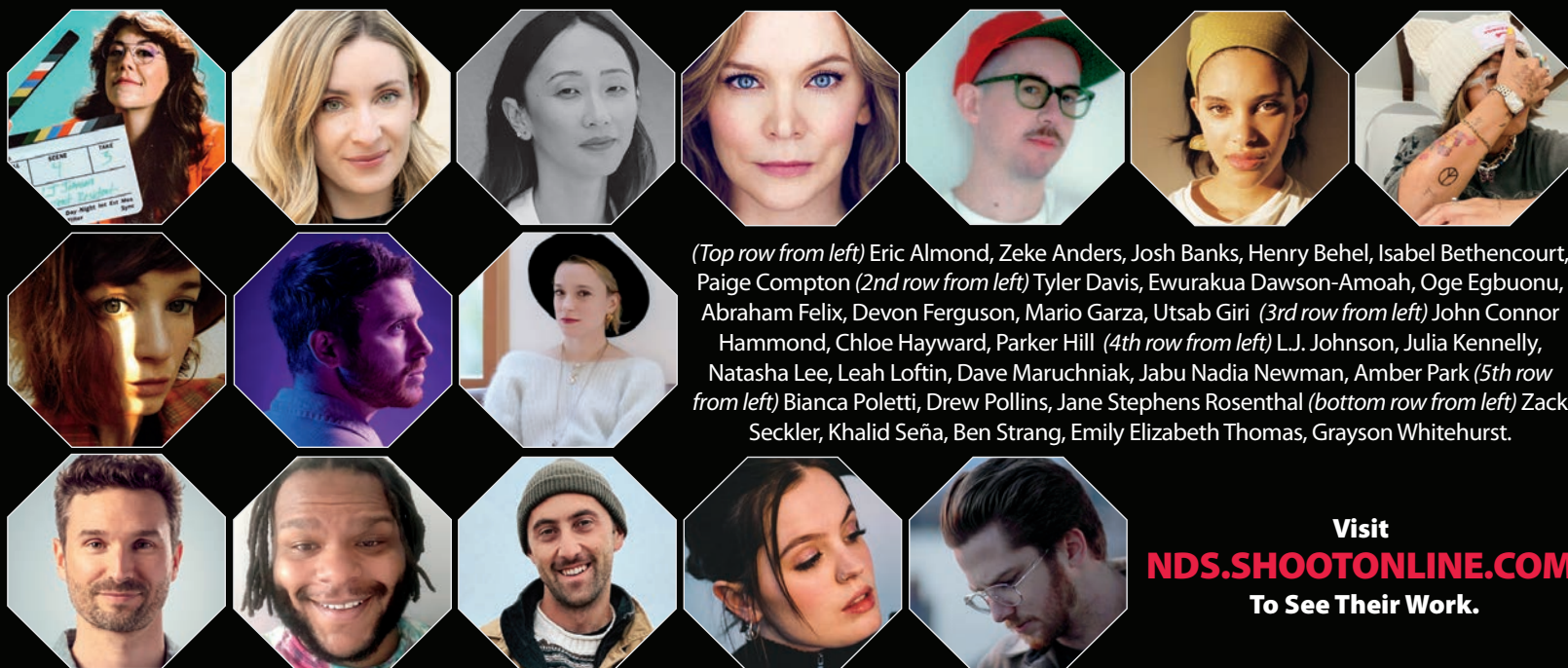
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Meet The NDS Class of 2021

Discover Emerging Filmmakers



(Top row from left) Eric Almond, Zeke Anders, Josh Banks, Henry Behel, Isabel Bethencourt, Paige Compton (2nd row from left) Tyler Davis, Ewurakua Dawson-Amoah, Oge Egbuonu, Abraham Felix, Devon Ferguson, Mario Garza, Utsab Giri (3rd row from left) John Connor Hammond, Chloe Hayward, Parker Hill (4th row from left) L.J. Johnson, Julia Kennelly, Natasha Lee, Leah Loftin, Dave Maruchniak, Jabu Nadia Newman, Amber Park (5th row from left) Bianca Poletti, Drew Pollins, Jane Stephens Rosenthal (bottom row from left) Zack Seckler, Khalid Seña, Ben Strang, Emily Elizabeth Thomas, Grayson Whitehurst.

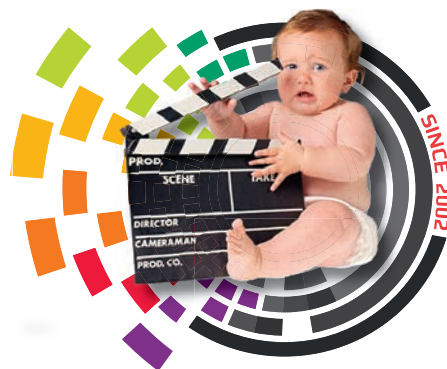
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The 19th Annual SHOOT NDS 2021 Reel

31 directors above made the final cut this year, with work spanning commercials, documentary shorts, features, music videos, promos, PSAs, spec work, thesis films, and a TV pilot.

Enter the 20th Annual SHOOT NDS 2022 Search

Each year SHOOT's editors conduct a search to discover the best up-and-coming directors who have been directing professionally less than 3 years and based on their entries, show promise to make positive contributions to advertising and/or entertainment. Only the strongest work entered makes the cut as SHOOT culls the field down to the final Showcase. Due to the pandemic, SHOOT did not hold its annual NDS Event at the DGA in NYC where we have debuted the Showcase Reel for 16 years. We look forward to resuming the event in the Fall of 2022. The 2022 Search will be open for entries April-June. For a reminder email when the Search opens, fill out the webform at [EnteringNDS.SHOOTonline.com](https://www.EnteringNDS.SHOOTonline.com)



**The
NEW
DIRECTORS
SHOWCASE**

Produced by The Editors of
SHOOT