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Guild Awards Preview 24

From Top: *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, *Dahmer*,
A League of Their Own



THE ROAD TO OSCAR



Top Row, L to R: Scenes from *Babylon*, *The Woman King*; Mid Row, L to R: Scenes from *Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery*, *BARDO*, *False Chronicle of a Handful of Truths*; Bottom Row, L to R: Scenes from *The Whale*, *Empire of Light*, *The Inspection*. Series Part 9, Page 4



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Cinematographers & Cameras 20

Left to Right: Erik Messerschmidt, ASC; Mandy Walker, ASC, ACS; Polly Morgan, ASC, BSC



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By Robert Goldrich

spot.com.mentary



Lessons Learned

Aristotle famously wrote, “The more you know, the more you realize you don’t know.”

This applies to the most accomplished artists as reflected in the awards coverage in this issue of SHOOT. Gina Prince-Bythewood, lauded for directing *The Woman King*, shared that she learned a valuable lesson from the film. Growing up as an athlete, Prince-Bythewood felt it

this “allowed” her colleagues to “trust me as a director.” To hear and experience that trust was “a stunning thing.”

Similarly playwright Samuel D. Hunter, who adapted his “The Whale” into a movie of the same title (directed by Darren Aronofsky and starring Brendan Fraser), had a revelation about acting—even though he already had great insights into

him with this, some on-the-fly changes? Maybe that will underscore it a little bit more.’ Sometimes it would need that. Sometimes it wouldn’t. It was such an incredible thing to witness.”

And finally there’s the lesson of gratitude, shared Amy Sherman-Palladino, creator of *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, who said, “A lot of people didn’t get to

Life lessons--personal and professional--came from *The Woman King*, *The Whale* and *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*.

actors based on their performances of his live-theater productions. Hunter said that Fraser “taught me so much about what a really good film actor can do with a role.” So much so that it sparked Hunter to shape, write and further hone the story as it unfolded during rehearsal and in front of the camera. “There were moments on set that I would see him [Fraser] do something and I would feel, ‘look what he’s doing. Can I give him text to support

work [during the pandemic]. We got to work. Many had been with us since the pilot. It’s a close-knit crew who hang onto each other. Creative endeavors are wonderful for your wallet, resume and career. They can also save you from going insane during insane times. Being with like-minded people who care as much as you do, to be able to hold onto each other, is one of the best case scenarios you can have for a job.”

POV

By Robert Goldrich



12 Angry Men

“Let’s talk about *Women Talking*!” That was part of the pitch for a virtual press conference last month to promote *Women Talking* (MGM Studios), a film directed by Sarah Polley who penned the adapted screenplay based on the novel by Miriam Toews. *Women Talking* introduces us to the women of an isolated religious community as they grapple with reconciling their reality with their faith. Dealing with continued sexual and physical abuse from the men in their colony, the Mennonite women come together to discuss whether they should leave or stay and fight. Polley assembled a cast which included Rooney Mara, Claire Foy, Jessie Buckley, Judith Ivey, Ben Whishaw and Frances McDormand.

The press event featured Polley, Toews, McDormand and the film’s producer, Dede Gardner. The latter, who is presi-

dent of Brad Pitts’ Plan B Entertainment, noted that a knock on the *Women Talking* premise early on had to do with a talking heads film not being cinematic. Gardner rejected that argument, knowing Polley’s filmmaking acumen as well as the nature of the script. The story, she affirmed, is inherently cinematic, in part because it has “a ticking clock” with a deadline as to when a decision has to be made. It’s a mystery because there’s no telling what the women in this village will decide.

“It’s something I feel so much about,” affirmed Gardner of her belief that a story about women grappling with a life-changing situation is worthy of a film. “If there can be *12 Angry Men*, there can be eight women in a hayloft,” she said.

However, there is a place for men in this film as discussed in a separate SHOOT interview with Luc Montpelier, CSC who earlier worked with writer-director Polley on the features *Away From Here* and *Take*

This Waltz. Despite his collaborative bond with Polley, Montpelier felt some trepidation about shooting *Women Talking*.

“I thought it might be better for a woman to take this on,” reasoned Montpelier who offered to step back so that Polley could consider a female DP. Montpelier recalled that Polley then made it clear to him why he should work on *Women Talking*. “She said this film isn’t just about women. It’s about everyone, the hard conversations we need to have between men and women. Having you photograph this film is honoring what is in the film—a conversation between men and women that’s needed even though the film is women talking amongst themselves.”

It turns out that talking and listening can translate into a cinematic achievement. *Women Talking* has earned six Critics Choice Award nominations, and been named the winner of Film Independent Spirit’s Robert Altman Award.

Director, Writer, DP, Editor & Sound Designer POVs

Artists share insights into *The Woman King*, *The Whale*, *The Inspection*, *Empire of Light*, *Glass Onion*, *Babylon* and *Bardo*

By Robert Goldrich, The Road To Oscar, Part 9



Photo courtesy of Sony Pictures



Photo courtesy of A24



Photo by Patti Perrie/courtesy of A24



Photo courtesy of Netflix



Photo by Scott Barfield/courtesy of Paramount Pictures



Photo by John Wilson/courtesy of Netflix

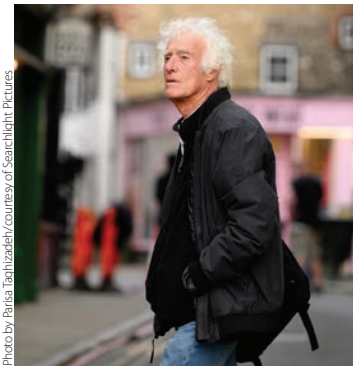


Photo by Parisa Tashizadeh/courtesy of Searchlight Pictures

It's already been an eventful awards season for Gina Prince-Bythewood. On the strength of her epic feature *The Woman King* (Sony's TriStar Pictures), she earned a Critics Choice Award nomination for Best Director. This came after Prince-Bythewood won the Agnes Varda Award for Directing from the Middleburg Film Festival, and the Women in Film Crystal Award for Advocacy. Additionally, the AFI named *The Woman King* one of the 10 best films of 2022.

The accolades for Prince-Bythewood, though, go beyond *The Woman King*. Back in November, she received the Filmmaker Tribute at the Gotham Awards for a career of insightful, relevant storytelling.

Jeffrey Sharp, executive director of The Gotham Film & Media Institute, stated, "Gina Prince-Bythewood is a visionary filmmaker and a champion of Black narratives, particularly stories that center around Black women. She has brilliantly tackled painful moments in our nation's history, thorny philosophical debates, and love stories. From the beloved and

burnished classic *Love & Basketball* to the pinnacle success of this year's *The Woman King*, Gina is a true inspiration."

Prince-Bythewood's body of work has also landed her the American Cinema Editors (ACE) Golden Eagle Filmmaker of the Year Award, recognizing an artist who exemplifies distinguished achievement in the art and business of film. The ACE honor will be presented at the 73rd annual ACE Eddie Awards on March 5.

"A supremely versatile trailblazer from day one of her career, Gina Prince-Bythewood has consistently entertained us with intimate films and global blockbusters that explore the human experience through formidable female characters," said ACE president Kevin Tent, ACE. "A champion of diverse, character-driven narratives, her latest film—*The Woman King*—is the crown jewel of a career spent pushing boundaries and telling stories that touch our hearts and minds."

For Prince-Bythewood, these varied honors "feel like a celebration" of the work that went into bringing *The Woman*

King to fruition—"not just my work but everybody who came together to realize this vision. Producers Viola Davis, Julius Tennon and Cathy Schulman took seven years to get it to a studio which finally said 'yes.'"

Prince-Bythewood said it was gratifying "to now be on this [awards] side of it after that long struggle."

That gratification, she continued, extends to other fronts such as audiences embracing the characters in *The Woman King*, and women, particularly Black women, getting the chance to lead the way on an epic action film—something Hollywood has been reluctant and reticent about.

Inspired by true events, *The Woman King* is the remarkable story of the Agojie, the all-female unit of warriors who in the 1800s protected the African Kingdom of Dahomey from invading slave traders. Inspired by true events, *The Woman King* follows the journey navigated by General Nanisca (Oscar winner Viola Davis) as she trains the next generation of recruits

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From top left, clockwise: Viola Davis (l) with director Gina Prince-Bythewood on the set of *The Woman King*; Brendan Fraser in *The Whale*; Jeremy Pope (l) and Raul Castillo in *The Inspection*; Roger Deakins, CBE, ASC, BSC on the set of *Empire of Light*; Kate Hudson (l-r), Jessica Henwick, Daniel Craig and Leslie Odom Jr. in *Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery*; Margot Robbie (l) and Diego Calva in *Babylon*; *Bardo* sound designer Martin Hernandez.

6 CRITICS CHOICE AWARD NOMINATIONS
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‘Glass Onion’ offers a clear-eyed and devastating takedown of vapid modern disruptor culture, taking dead aim at the perpetrators but also making sure that the blindly subservient acolytes receive a dressing down too. **Rian Johnson** is a filmmaker who fuses modern ideas to antiquated narrative forms. A filmmaker who creates huge blockbuster films from original IP. A filmmaker who works within beloved existing IP and thrillingly makes the material his own. It’s tempting to see Benoit Blanc as the closest thing Johnson has given us to an on-screen avatar: an avuncular brainiac trapped between worlds and traditions, but always coming out on top.”

Little White Lies

Glass Onion

a
Knives Out
mystery



Scan here to watch Rian Johnson and the cast on making the film

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Gina Prince-Bythewood On The Making Of The Woman King

Continued from page 4

and readies them for battle against an enemy determined to destroy their way of life. The film stars Davis, Thuso Mbedu, Lashana Lynch, Sheila Atim, Hero Fiennes Tiffin and John Boyega.

were cut in half. An epic battle which had a thousand background performers scheduled now had to make due with a couple of hundred. Prince-Bythewood and her compatriots, including cinematographer Polly Morgan, ASC, BSC had to

This was reinforced further as a Black female director. “In my mind, vulnerability was weakness,” she recalled. But as she came together and worked in close-knit fashion with producer/actor Davis and actors such as Lashana Lynch, “women who are in touch with that side of themselves,” Prince-Bythewood saw the value of vulnerability and revealing one’s humanity. Prince-Bythewood related that this “allowed” her colleagues to “trust me as a director.” To hear and experience that trust was “a stunning thing.”

At the same time, her experience on *The Woman King* reinforced and advanced a dynamic Prince-Bythewood always had—self confidence, and the conviction to trust her gut. Protecting her vision for the story, taking on assorted obstacles so that she could “believe in everything that went up there [on the big screen]” further instilled in her a quiet strength that nobody or nothing could undermine her vision for and belief in the story she

husband Reggie Rock Bythewood will serve as executive producers under their production company banner, Undisputed Cinema. *Genius: MLK/X* will explore the formative years, pioneering accomplishments, dueling philosophies and key personal relationships of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X.

Stage to screen

The learning curve from stage to silver screen can be steep for even an accomplished playwright. When embarking on his first screenplay—an adaptation of his own play, “The Whale”—Samuel D. Hunter began to teach himself, studying cinematic form and language, sparked by filmmaker Darren Aronofsky who saw an off-Broadway production of “The Whale” and became enamored with—and excited over—the prospect of this story as a feature film.

A lover of learning, Hunter savored the challenge. But perhaps the greatest les-



Viola Davis in a scene from *The Woman King*

Prince-Bythewood had to deal with varied challenges to bring *The Woman King* to pass, a prime one being having to deftly navigate through a 63-day shooting schedule to deliver a project of massive size, scope and logistics. But far and away the scariest challenge was coping with the coronavirus Omicron variant. Prince-Bythewood recalled getting through the first three weeks of shooting unscathed. Then one case of Omicron popped up on a Saturday. By Monday, that jumped to six. Then on Tuesday there were 21. The decision was made to go on hiatus. Prince-Bythewood felt great trepidation over the uncertainty. Would the Omicron cases rise or plateau? Would the studio opt to cut their losses after three weeks of shooting. Prince-Bythewood said that she and Davis stayed on location while everyone else left. “There was something psychological about me staying,” she observed. “I felt that if I left, I was never coming back.”

Ultimately, continued Prince-Bythewood, she felt blessed that the COVID outbreak plateaued relatively quickly, the authorities in Africa handled the situation adroitly, the actors were eager to get back and finish what they had started, and the studio committed by investing more money to help everyone come back as safely as humanly possible. Still, Prince-Bythewood, cast and crew had to continually adapt. Background actors

be creative and resourceful.

The Woman King marked the first time Prince-Bythewood had worked with Morgan. The director recalled that she was drawn to the DP from their very first meeting. “The lookbook she created was so in sync with what was in my head,” noted Prince-Bythewood. “We clicked in our collective passion to tell this story.”

Prince-Bythewood added that Morgan deeply understood how often women are “locked out of the big sandbox” when it comes to epic spectacle films. The director and DP each had a commitment in terms of will, work ethic and spirit to pull everyone through so that justice would be done to the story, and the vision behind it fully realized.

Morgan immersed herself in the task at hand. In turn Prince-Bythewood prepped the DP on myriad details, including having her present at every single meeting with fight and stunt coordinator Daniel Hernandez. “I saw her [Morgan] growing exponentially by the moment—and by the time we were ready to shoot, we had a true collaboration.” The DP’s contributions were integral to the film.

Collaborative bonds also spawned revelations, including one for Prince-Bythewood that was contrary to what she had clung to over the years. Growing up as an athlete, Prince-Bythewood felt it imperative not to show any vulnerability.



Viola Davis (I) and John Boyega in *The Woman King*

wanted to tell.

Prince-Bythewood’s filmography include such features as *Love & Basketball*, *The Secret Life of Bees*, *Beyond The Lights*, and the *Old Guard*. For television Prince-Bythewood directed the pilot and served as an executive producer of ABC’s limited series *Women of the Movement*. The six-episode series debuted in January 2022, and was based on the true story of Mamie Till-Mobley, who devoted her life to seeking justice for her son Emmett Till following his brutal murder in the Jim Crow South in 1955. Prince-Bythewood’s next television project is *Genius: MLK/X*, for which she and her

son learned came from Brendan Fraser who portrays Charlie, the protagonist in *The Whale* (A24). Charlie is a reclusive, morbidly obese English teacher who seeks to reconnect with his estranged teen daughter (portrayed by Sadie Sink). Figuring into the relationship is Herman Melville’s classic “Moby Dick” with Charlie a sort of Captain Ahab in his own right, caught up in the pursuit of something all consuming yet elusive.

From auditioning to the final tour de force performance as Charlie, Fraser imparted a revelatory lesson to Hunter who recalled Aronofsky renting a theater in

Continued on page 8

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Playwright Samuel D. Hunter Adapts To The Big Screen

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the East Village before the pandemic hit full force. There, auditions were staged. And Hunter recollected his fervent hope that they could at least “see something” in the form of a sign that an actor “could get there,” that he had the potential to realize Charlie as a human character.

Exceeding that hope in his audition was Fraser. “With Brendan, he was already there,” said Hunter. “It was in the room. The character was so fully and concretely realized in such a nuanced, layered way.”

From there, Fraser continued to add to Charlie. And during a three-week rehearsal run Hunter came to appreciate Fraser as being “a very humble man, masking a deep intelligence and level of craft that is pretty remarkable.”

Hunter learned much from Fraser—but that too was remarkable in that the writer was already well versed in the magic of acting. “In theater you coach a group of people to hold a performance in their bones every night—that’s almost an athletic feat,” observed Hunter. “So much goes into sculpting it. You press ‘go’ and it happens in front of you. It’s so invigorating and intoxicating.”

Hunter continued, “Brendan taught me so much about what a really good film actor can do with a role.” So much so that it sparked Hunter to shape, write and further hone the story as it unfolded during rehearsal and in front of the camera. “There were moments on set that I would see him [Fraser] do something and I would feel, ‘look what he’s doing. Can I give him text to support him with this, some on-the-fly changes? Maybe that will underscore it a little bit more.’ Sometimes it would need that. Sometimes it wouldn’t. It was such an incredible thing to witness.”

In film, noted Hunter, multiple takes, the ability to shoot something over and over again, accentuate “what an actor can do with one glance, a twitch of his chin. The tiniest things can tell volumes. Brendan is one of those actors who can tell a story with his eyes in an incredibly layered way. It is inspiring to me as a writer knowing you can trust actors so much by NOT giving them text. So much of being a writer is giving an actor a situation where they can tell the stories themselves.”

Hunter has proven himself to be adept



Photo courtesy of A24

Sadie Sink in a scene from *The Whale*

at creating such situations. He received a 2014 MacArthur “Genius Grant” Fellowship for his work as a playwright. Besides “The Whale” (Drama Desk Award, Lucille Lortel Award for Outstanding Play, GLAAD Media Award, Drama League nomination for Best Play, and Outer Critics Circle nomination for Best Play), his plays include “A Case for the Existence of God” (New York Drama Critics’ Circle Award for Best Play), “A Bright New Boise” (Obie Award, Drama Desk nomination for Best Play), “Greater Clements” (Drama Desk nomination for Best Play, Outer Critics Circle Honoree), “Lewiston/Clarkston” (Drama Desk nomination for Best Play), “The Few,” “A Great Wilderness,” “Rest,” “Pocatello,” “The Healing” and “The Harvest.”

Hunter’s work on director Aronofsky’s *The Whale* wasn’t, however, a direct leap from stage to screen. In-between Hunter served as writer and producer on all four seasons of the TV series *Baskets* (FX

Networks). Hunter said that experience helped him settle a bit more comfortably into the feature filmmaking space.

As a playwright, he grew accustomed to delivering a script in its final form for theater, doing readings, getting notes and feedback from his husband. But ultimately, “the buck stops with me,” said Hunter. By contrast, *Baskets* opened up not only a new world but also Hunter himself. “I was not used to collaborating with other writers. It kicked me off balance in a good way.” In a writers’ room with the showrunner and other writing talent, Hunter found himself in new territory. “I never really had to speak my ideas before. It was really good for me in that way—learning to write with other people, to ideate, be open, to be less rigid.”

Hunter felt it was an invaluable experience to write in “such a different medium with such different people, working on a comedy so far away from something I had ever done.”

Additionally there was the dynamic of “being on set,” which “expanded my knowledge base. My world got a lot larger working on *Baskets*.”

This different brand of collaboration made taking on a feature a bit less daunting. And further easing the creative transition was being able to work with Aronofsky. Hunter described it as “an easy collaboration. Our work is very different. We do very different things. We brought different skill sets to the table.”

The coming together of these skill sets was, related Hunter, akin to a Venn diagram. “*The Whale* is where our Venn diagrams met. Working together was really great actually, responding to his notes. He welcomed my input.” Hunter and Aronofsky dovetailed naturally, a meeting of minds and creative spirits that somehow made cinematic a story with a static protagonist, confined to his home where he engages other characters, ultimately yielding for the audience an emotionally moving and life-affirming experience.

Eloquence from Elegance

Paradoxically, “Don’t ask, don’t tell” speaks volumes when put into deeply personal context by writer/director Elegance Bratton in *The Inspection* (A24), recently named one of the year’s 10 Best Independent Films by the National Board of Review.

Bratton enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps and went into boot camp in the midst of what was the American military’s “Don’t ask, don’t tell” era whereby applicants to the armed services could not to be asked about their sexual orientation. In essence, non-heterosexuals could remain in the military if they did not openly declare their sexual preferences. While the policy on one hand opened up the military to many who had been denied access, such service members could not be openly queer without threat of being discharged. And thousands of brave service members were discharged simply for who they were and whom they loved.

The Inspection centers on Ellis French, portrayed by Jeremy Pope, who reflects what many Black gay military recruits experienced during the time that the “Don’t ask, don’t tell” policy was in force. Blatant homophobia—as well as xeno-

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Photo by Patty Perret/courtesy of A24

Gabrielle Union (l) and Jeremy Pope in *The Inspection*

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Darius Khondji’s
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Elegance Bratton Shares Poignant Journey In *The Inspection*

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phobic and Islamophobic-behavior is depicted. But in the face of deep-seated prejudice, there is a silver lining to be found that takes the form of unexpected camaraderie, esprit de corps, strength and support. For French this is an essential life-saving experience, giving a sense of belonging and purpose to an existence that had been marked by alienation and isolation, including being ostracized by his own mother for being gay.

This in many respects parallels Bratton's own journey--kicked out of home by his mother for his sexual orientation and having to survive on the streets, coping with homelessness for some 10 years before joining the Marines. But French goes beyond his connection to Bratton; the character reflects so many of those whose voices haven't been fully heard, showcasing the precarious ground that queer service members stand on as they try to create a path for themselves--striving to serve their lives and their country.

Bratton and French found that path--in real life and fiction, respectively, as both worlds have blended in the writer-director's impactful brand of filmmaking. Bratton related that he came to the Marines at a point when he thought his life was "worthless." But he recalled a drill instructor telling him that he had value in that he was given a precious trust "to protect the officers to my left and my right. It's the concept that I was important in how I could help others," observed Bratton.

In *The Inspection*, Bratton aspires to put that concept out to a world that has become increasingly polarized. "You have to learn to love yourself again. All positive progressive change starts with the individual.

Bratton's husband, Chester Algernall Gordon, played a major role in motivating the filmmaker to see the story of *The Inspection* through to fruition. Bratton had written the first draft of the script while a grad student at NYU Tisch Film School. At the time, Bratton had sold a series to Viceland which gave him the financial sustenance to take the time to write a passion project. He penned three feature-length fictional scripts, ultimately picking one to pour himself into--*The Inspection*. Gordon, a producer on the film, inspired Bratton throughout the process, perhaps

most profoundly with the notion that Bratton had a sacred duty to "bring the audience to a place that they couldn't go without him."

This helped lead Bratton to the realization and belief that this story--in many respects similar to his own--would be something people would want to hear and come to value.

While *The Inspection* marks his feature-length fiction film debut, Bratton came into the project with proven value as a storyteller. He is creator and executive producer of the alluded to Viceland TV show, *My House*, a 10-episode series nominated for Outstanding Documentary at the 2019 GLAAD Media Awards. His nonfiction feature debut, *Pier Kids*, made its TV and streaming debut last year on PBS/POV. In 2021 Bratton won the Film Independent Truer Than Fiction Spirit Award which is given to an emerging director of non-fiction features who has not yet received recognition commensurate with his/her/their talent.

Such recognition, though, has been generated for *The Inspection* which made its world premiere as the opening night film of the Toronto International Film Festival's Discovery Section and later closed the 2022 New York Film Festival.

Serving Bratton in good stead has been a self-described "cinematic dyslexia" which blurs the line between documentary and fiction. *The Inspection* has an authenticity when it comes to conveying the emotions, desires and fears of its characters, particularly French. Bratton blended this authentic bent with creative license. He sees his dyslexia as embracing "two divergent paths to the same result which is ultimately a movie." Documentary and narrative mesh, coming together in the case of *The Inspection* to "influence and inspire through my process of healing and triumphing over traumas. I've been through these experiences and am sharing them so they can be of value to others."

Bratton said he was blessed by a gifted cast and crew--the former including Pope as French and Gabrielle Union as French's mother, Inez. Pope is a Black man who's come out in real life. Bratton said Pope was completely invested in the story. "I wanted him before I had a first draft," recalled Bratton, citing Pope's acting acuity,

men, commitment and ability to be tough and vulnerable at the same time.

As for Union, Bratton related that his own mom had died just a few days after *The Inspection* was greenlit. A major reason behind Bratton telling the story in *The Inspection* was it serving as "a steppingstone toward repairing" the relationship with his mother. Union was cast right around the time Bratton's mom had passed. "Gabby was my mother's favorite actress," said Bratton, noting that Union had exhibited in past performances the ability to portray "a tough, beautiful woman, a demonstrative human being with raw bone beauty and fierce intelligence." These characteristics were all part of Bratton's mom and he felt grateful

kins has a career tally thus far of 16 ASC Award nominations.

Empire of Light--which is set in and around a fraying but still beautiful cinema house on the south coast of England in the 1980s--centers on an unlikely bond between a white woman named Hilary (Olivia Colman) and a young Black man, Stephen (Micheal Ward), who work at the Empire theater. It's a liaison which in a sense helps them both heal together as Hilary grapples with mental illness and Stephen is impacted repeatedly by rampant racism in the U.K. during that era.

The film is at its core a character study, "much more in the world of the films I imagined working on when I started out I suppose," related Deakins who is no



Olivia Colman (l) and Micheal Ward in *Empire of Light*

that Union agreed to in a sense "bring her back to life."

Emperor of light

Roger Deakins, CBE, ASC, BSC, twice a Best Cinematography Oscar winner and a 15-time nominee, is widely acknowledged as an emperor of light, a billing reinforced by *Empire of Light* (Searchlight Pictures), his latest collaboration with director Sam Mendes. *Empire of Light* marks Deakins' fifth film for Mendes, the others being *Jarhead*, *Revolutionary Road*, *Skyfall* and *1917*.

The latter earned Deakins his second Academy Award. His first win came two years earlier, in 2018, for *Blade Runner 2049*. Both *1917* and *Blade Runner 2049* also earned ASC Awards, of which Deakins has a total of five--the others being for *The Shawshank Redemption*, *The Man Who Wasn't There* and *Skyfall*. Dea-

kins to doing justice to characters but as of late it's been within the context of epic fare such as *1917* and *Blade Runner 2049*.

Still, the setting for *Empire of Light*--perhaps more accurately, finding the setting--had its challenges. Deakins noted that Mendes originally had in mind a theater in Brighton that he came to know years ago. But upon visiting there, they discovered that the interior had been turned into a casino. "Nothing would have worked. The Brighton seafront would have been a nightmare to control," assessed Deakins as the town on the U.K.'s south coast was overdeveloped and not at all reminiscent of what the writer-director remembered in his youth.

A suggestion was made to go to the east coast, where the city of Margate proved much more in line with the movie's era and story. A fortuitous discovery there was a fairground with a

Insights Into Lensing Empire of Light, Editing Glass Onion

cinema house that hadn't been used for quite some time. While its glory days had passed, the art deco theater built in the 1930s fit much of the bill for the Empire movie house. Production designer Mark Tildesley had to rebuild the front facing, including fashioning an Empire sign which lent a slight Americana feel. The interior was difficult to work in due to asbestos and varied restrictions of what they could do—but that sense of a disused structure dovetailed well with a section of the Empire that was closed off, a hidden venue where Hilary and Stephen could spend some alone time, even along the way repairing the wing of a pigeon, one of many birds making that abandoned area their roost.

Mendes experienced as a youngster, coming out of the cold during a rainy holiday into a movie house, seeing the concession stand, sweets, popcorn, the red carpet, plush curtains and then entering a dark theater where movies unspooled, sparking a sense of childhood awe. So in addition to being a character study, *Empire of Light* serves as a small homage to the cinema.

Deakins captured all of that and more, deploying the ARRI Alexa Mini LF, the camera he used for *1917*. For *Empire of Light*, he paired the Alexa Mini LF—desirable for many reasons, including its light weight and maneuverability—with ARRI Signature Prime lenses which he described as fast, physically light, very clean

ter in its own right.

Peeling the Glass Onion

Editor Bob Ducsay, ACE has a deep working collaborative relationship with writer-director Rian Johnson which spans a little over a decade. Together they have teamed on four features, starting with *Looper*, then *Star Wars: Episode VIII—The Last Jedi*, the original *Knives Out* for which Ducsay earned an ACE Eddie Award nomination in 2020, and the recently released *Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery* (Netflix).

Ducsay and Johnson also have taken on television together with *Poker Face*. Created by Johnson, the Peacock series debuts this month. Ducsay cut a couple of episodes directed by Johnson.

Among the prime challenges posed by *Glass Onion* was meeting expectations from a fan base that came together for the original *Knives Out*. Yet as the same time, *Glass Onion* is not a sequel. Rather it's a completely different mystery, the common bond being the detective character, Benoit Blanc, portrayed by Daniel Craig.

Ducsay is all too familiar with projects that come with an already established fan base, which sets a high creative bar going forward. His second collaboration with Johnson, after all, was in the *Star Wars* franchise.

"As a movie fan, when I see a sequel of a movie I loved, I want more of what I saw—but I don't want to see the same movie again. While *Glass Onion* feels related to the first movie, it's a whole new adventure. That's the needle you have to thread—combining familiarity and newness," said Ducsay.

Helping immeasurably in threading that needle is Johnson and Ducsay's working process. "I get involved really early on. I get a draft of the screenplay when we work together. *Glass Onion* was no different. We talk about things that may or may not be working. Details about character, nuance, sometimes abstract parts of the process. We really go through any issues that may impact us down the road. I read multiple drafts of the screenplay in the early stages. I go on location wherever we're making the movie."

This extensive up-front involvement—having a handle on how a movie is coming together throughout the process, being in step with how a character and/

or coverage is or isn't working and making adjustments accordingly—has helped Johnson and Ducsay avoid having to engage in any additional photography once a movie is finished.

Ducsay described *Glass Onion* as "an editor's dream," putting him smack dab in the middle of the mystery genre and all its delights, enhanced by Johnson's interest in unconventional structuring of stories. "I absolutely love ensemble movies, all these disparate voices, the characters than Rian created. As an editor you're hoping to make a lovely meal in which the actors and the screenplay deliver these incredible ingredients, making sure that everyone is represented at the right level so that the movie can be its best."

Each character, continued Ducsay, becomes "a movie friend" as an editor sits with them 12 hours a day for a year. In the case of Blanc, Ducsay was dealing with a character he had come to know and shape in a prior film. And in the second go-around you know that character infinitely more intimately. He's not a brand new creation but rather one you try to help continue evolve. Ducsay said that making that task easier and him all the more confident was the high caliber of Craig's performance. Like an onion, it's a performance with many layers that the editor—and audience—can peel back and discover.

The downside is the wealth of material that a great ensemble cast delivers, meaning that invariably some wonderful work winds up on the proverbial cutting room floor. A scene might get a tremendous laugh or stir an emotion but sometimes it has to be taken out to be of service to the overall movie, observed Ducsay, adding that an editor must have "the discipline" to subtract in those instances.

Ducsay finds strength in being part of a movie family like the one Johnson has created. While he spends an enormous amount of time on the job, Ducsay said the experience has been "delightful and wonderful" in that there's a true esprit de corps among collaborators and colleagues. "It's easier to do good work with people whom you both admire and who are wonderful to be around. A lot of that shows up on the screen."

As for what's next, Ducsay continues

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Photo by John Wilson/courtesy of Netflix

Edward Norton (l) and Dave Bautista in *Glass Onion*

The old cinema house on the fair-ground also had an old auditorium which production designer Tildesley had gutted, rebuilding its stage, all the walls and revamping the floor. The vintage real-world site thus after this work was done gave Mendes a great deal of what he needed in one location.

Furthermore, just several doors down was an amusement arcade which had gone up in smoke. A set for the theater lobby was built there by Tildesley and his team—providing the gateway to the cinema house that wasn't present at the nearby location.

Deakins noted that the proximity of the lobby set to the theater meant that they shared virtually the same view when looking out the doors. The welcoming interior environ—replete with a grand staircase, a foyer, offices and cinema space—gave the venue a feeling of what

and sharp. He also extensively used LED lights for the first time. (A few LED lights were used on *Blade Runner 2049*.)

Margate turned out to be a "dream-land" for *Empire of Light* though Mendes had to adapt his vision a bit in that it still was a bit different from Brighton, related Deakins. "It took a little time for him to get his head around Margate as the setting for his story."

Deakins shared that he enjoyed being in Margate for *Empire of Light*. He grew up in Torquay, some 250 miles away, where he along with his wife and collaborator James Ellis Deakins still have a place. Margate and Torquay are similar English seaside towns. And in Southern California where the couple mainly live, they are just a few blocks from the beach. The DP has an affinity for the water, and his lensing contributed to making the seaside town for *Empire of Light* a charac-

Cross On Cutting Babylon

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his Netflix run with *Atlas*, a sci-fi thriller directed by Brad Peyton and starring Jennifer Lopez. Ducsay has a track record with Peyton, having cut such films as *Rampage* and *San Andreas*, both starring Dwayne Johnson.

Collaborative ties

Babylon (Paramount Pictures) marked the continuation of two collaborative relationships for editor Tom Cross, ACE—with writer-director Damien Chazelle, and cinematographer Linus Sandgren, FSF, ASC.

The first time Cross cut a Chazelle-directed feature, *Whiplash*, he wound up winning the Best Editing Oscar. The

editing. The two of us just run scenes and look at takes, trying different things. By this point we certainly have a shorthand. There's a lot of trust between us in the editing room. I'm never afraid to pitch a crazy idea. I don't think he is either. We are very well matched in terms of how open we are in trying to solve story issues."

Babylon spans the decades, resurrecting the silent film era—full of free wheeling, madcap hedonism and depravity—and then the advent of the talkies which slows down the chaotic decadence yet at the same time brings chaos to those trying to adapt to movies with sound.

Chazelle not only directed but also wrote *Babylon*. Cross noted that while



Margot Robbie (center) in a scene from *Babylon*

second film on which they collaborated, *La La Land*, yielded another Oscar nomination for Cross. They next teamed on *First Man*. Cross' collaborative history with Chazelle actually dates back to the short film *Whiplash* (a Sundance Award winner), which spawned the feature of the same title.

Meanwhile Cross first teamed with Sandgren on director David O. Russell's *Joy*. That collaboration was so fruitful that Cross was part of a chorus recommending the DP for *La La Land*, which ended up earning Sandgren the Best Cinematography Oscar. Cross and Sandgren again came together on *First Man*. And then they took on the James Bond film, *No Time to Die*, for director Cary Joji Fukunaga.

As for how he works with Chazelle, Cross related that the filmmaker “loves to be in the editing room. We share breakfast, lunch and dinner everyday while

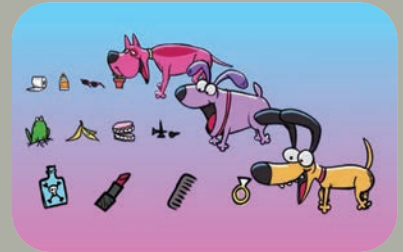
Chazelle meticulously planned the film, the auteur was “not overly precious” in the editing room. That open-mindedness, explained Cross, is because Chazelle “believes in the editing process as a continuation of his writing process. It’s a privilege for me to work alongside him, to rewrite dialogue or change a concept. I don’t take that lightly. He is such a brilliant storyteller, everything mapped out and storyboarded. He’s very precise about what he sets out to do. But once he gets into the editing room, he’s very flexible, very collaborative.”

Similarly Cross has a strong bond with Sandgren, one that is an exception to the rule for the editor who generally feels “a little removed from the rest of the department heads and crew simply because I’m rarely on set. I’m usually too busy trying to dig myself out of a hole with a pile of dailies coming in.” But starting with *Joy*

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CALABASH, ASPCA TEAM ON ANIMATED CANINE PSA

As any dog owner knows, our beloved furry friends will eat anything, or will attempt to anyway. To protect man's best friend, Chicago-based Calabash turned out this animation PSA for the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and agency FCB Health NY.



The work can be seen on the ASPCA's website, YouTube, Instagram and TikTok.

The spot is centered around a country-rock earworm of a jingle with the lyrics: "Dogs eat anything, dogs eat everything, dogs eat crazy things!" A montage, courtesy of Calabash, shows wacky cartoon dogs eating everything from wedding rings and rotten food to live electrical wires and hilariously repulsive items.

Calabash EP Sean Henry said, “FCB came to us with this great idea and a really funny song, which we all connected with as dog owners ourselves. They had some wonderful characters and gags already sketched out, but also gave us the opportunity to contribute our own dog designs and crazy scenarios. Of first importance, the agency needed to develop these dogs as characters and expand their use beyond the TV spot and into social, print, mobile, etc. Character design is in Calabash’s DNA, and we welcomed the opportunity to work closely with the creative team to give these characters life and personality that could extend their presence beyond this singular campaign.”

ANA WORD OF THE YEAR: "INCLUSION"

"Inclusion" is the ANA's (Association of National Advertisers) Marketing Word of the Year for 2022. Last year's ANA Marketing Word of the Year was "Diversity," an indication of the level of importance in which the marketing community views Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) issues.

According to the ANA's Alliance for Inclusive and Multicultural Marketing (AIMM), inclusion is "the act of being seen, heard, understood, and respected for who we are as individuals and within a group, structure, or system." AIMM defined diversity as "understanding and recognizing each other's unique qualities, perspectives, and similarities that shape who we are as an individual or in a group."

Since 2014, the ANA has surveyed its committee members to select the Marketing Word of the Year.


"It's clear from the last two annual votes for the Marketing Word of the Year that DEI is front and center in the mind of marketers," said ANA CEO Bob Liodice. "And that's how it should be. It's abundantly clear that our industry is serious about addressing these issues and solving the problems they cause for our communities"

Runners-up in the ANA 2022 Marketing Word of the Year voting were “hybrid” and “metaverse.” Inclusion, however, was the top vote-getter by a solid margin.



Jep Hill

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE....



Jep Hill

Alkemy X has promoted Jep Hill to executive creative director, VFX after joining the company in 2021 as VFX creative director and head of imaging. With over 25 years of visual effects experience, Hill takes on a new role which will include holistic creative and logistical oversight of the VFX department, including client relationship management, talent management and development, and quality assurance across all of Alkemy X's VFX output. Hill has worked in varied capacities over the years, including a stint as a CG supervisor at ILM. His credits include *Armageddon*, *The Polar Express*, *The Lord of the Rings: Two Towers*, *Mighty Joe Young*, *The Giver* and *Spi-derman: Homecoming*.....

Martin Hernandez Delves Into The Soundscape For Bardo

Continued from page 12

and then even more so on *La La Land*, Cross and Sandgren began developing what the editor described as “an informal, casual shorthand.” That blossomed on *No Time to Die* at the U.K.’s Pinewood Studios where Cross and Sandgren would talk about what was going to be shot, questions and concerns the DP had and so on. They would text back and forth, often with Cross noting as a bit of positive reinforcement how “amazing” the material was that Sandgren had shot.

Cross said that for *Babylon* he was “always trying to keep in mind the pace and the energy” of the film which had a script of some 180 pages. “Even though we knew it would be a big, epic movie covering several decades, Chazelle wanted the silent film era in particular to have “a breakneck pace.”

Cross had to work to maintain that, adding that composer Justin Hurwitz’s score “kind of added a foundation for everything that we were cutting,” helping to inform the rhythm and pace of what was “a music-driven movie.”

At the same time, though, continued Cross, “We had to be careful not to overdo it, careful to build peaks and valleys in the storytelling, to know when we could be full throttle and when it was time to put the brakes on.” That’s why it’s exciting to work with Chazelle, observed Cross, in that the director keenly understands the need for contrast. “He wanted the beginning of the movie to be feral, chaotic, loud, fast, to kind of pull the audience in and really support the idea of the Wild West days of Hollywood. It was important we play that to the hilt so that when the story reaches a major turning point, the transition to the sound era, we could do a big stylistic reset.”

This established a new context, starting in a scene where silent film actor Nellie LaRoy (Margot Robbie) is doing take after take to get a simple scene for her first sound picture right—but seemingly to no avail. “Damien wanted us to take our time in that scene to set up a new language, a new film grammar for the audience to understand.”

Regarding the biggest takeaway from his experience on *Babylon*, Cross cited a scene from the film in which gossip columnist Elinor St. John (Jean Smart) lets

one-time major silent movie star Jack Conrad (Brad Pitt) know that his career is over and has been for some time. In the big picture, she says that he had a great ride, should appreciate that and find great solace in that 50 years down the road his movies will be discovered by a new generation, meaning long after he’s gone, he will come back to life. In that same vein, Cross said he’s grateful that he’s been given the opportunity to work on movies he believes in and feels strongly about—in collaboration with filmmakers like Chazelle. As another character in *Babylon*, Manny Torres (Diego Calva) affirms, moviemaking affords you the chance to “be part of something bigger than yourself.”



Daniel Gimenez Cacho (I) and Ximena Lamadrid in *Bardo*
Radio days

Martín Hernández, a supervising sound editor and sound designer on writer-director Alejandro G. Iñárritu’s *Bardo, False Chronicle of a Handful of Truths* (Netflix), is a two-time Oscar nominee for Best Achievement in Sound Editing—in 2014 for *Birdman or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)* and the following year for *The Revenant*; both films were helmed by Iñárritu.

Iñárritu and Hernández started working together quite awhile ago, dating all the way back to a radio station in Mexico. And perhaps those radio roots amplify part of what has made the feature film collaborations of Hernández and Iñárritu so successful. After all, radio is paradoxically a very visual medium as sound and dialogue spark viewers to picture what they’re hearing. Sound can conjure up powerful memories and that is integral to *Bardo* which centers on Silverio Gama

(portrayed by Daniel Giménez Cacho), a renowned Mexican journalist and documentary filmmaker living in Los Angeles, who, after being named the recipient of a prestigious international award, is compelled to return to his native country—a simple trip that will cause him to grapple with his memories and fears from the past, filling his present life with bewilderment, wonder, questions about his identity and mortality, what Mexico means to him, as well as the importance of family. The experience parallels in some respects that of Iñárritu, who made a deep dive into self-reflection as he wrote the screenplay with Nicolás Giacobone, his compatriot on *Birdman* and *Biutiful*. Going back home is

through which sound helps in the discovery of the story behind the story.

While Iñárritu, a five-time Oscar winner, is a brilliant visualist, Hernández described him as “a very sound-driven director” who’s challenging himself and his collaborators all the time, delving into how sound can uncover memories, enrich the experience for viewers. This in turn motivates Hernández. “I love challenges. I like to work on projects that are challenging. That’s the only way I can grow and improve myself. When you are always in your comfort zone, nothing can be achieved.”

This has yielded what Hernández described as “a very mature soundtrack,” which helps *Bardo* as a film “connect one idea with the next one, and that idea with the next one” and so on. The ideas never end until the film finishes, said Hernández who likened it to “a small creek of water flowing and you go with the ride. You have to lose yourself and see where the flow is taking you.”

Sound plays an essential role in “taking the audience to a place,” continued Hernández. The sound in *Bardo* is akin to a concept album where “track one becomes track two” with a natural path from one subsequent track to the next, taking the listener for a ride. Hernández cited Pink Floyd as among the many progressive groups doing concept albums, creating a flow from one track to the next. By the way, noted Hernández, a concept album comes with images, more like a film. *Bardo* in turn as a film has a concept album flow from a sound perspective.

In addition to the two Oscar nominations, Hernández won a BAFTA Award for *The Revenant* and BAFTA nominations for Iñárritu’s *Babel* and *Birdman*, as well as the Guillermo del Toro-directed *Pan’s Labyrinth*.

This is the ninth 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/PDF issues. The series will appear weekly through the Academy Awards gala ceremony. Nominations for the 95th Academy Awards will be announced on Tuesday, January 24, 2023. The 95th Oscars will be held on Sunday, March 12, 2023.

a theme that’s particularly apropos in that *Bardo* marks Iñárritu’s first film shot in Mexico since *Amores Perros* in 2000.

Hernández observed that capturing the “purity of radio” whereby the story relies on the listener’s imagination, is a dynamic which he and Iñárritu apply to their approach to sound and the role it plays in a feature film. Like radio listeners, those who see and hear a feature film are asked to actively engage, bringing their imaginations to the fore—that’s the form of storytelling he and Iñárritu strive for, to connect with the audience on that deeper level.

Towards that end, Hernández and Iñárritu teamed with Nicolas Becker on *Bardo*. Becker won an Oscar and a BAFTA Award for his work as sound designer and sound supervisor for the film *Sound of Metal*. Hernández noted that Becker provided another separate perspective on sound, a reinterpretation of scenes, lending a depth

New Year's Predictions, Hopes, Resolutions

Agency creatives share their visions, goals for 2023, reflect on lessons learned in 2022
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 ad agency executives, executive creative directors, group creative directors, creative directors, heads of production, a CCO, and a head of emerging experience and technology to offer their hopes, goals, projections and plans for 2023.

We also asked respondents to reflect on lessons learned from 2022 and how they might be applied to this year.

AI was high up on the list for several agency folks as they identified significant trends that emerged during 2022.

Amanda Abrams, group creative director at Team One, related, "There's a rise in conversation around AI in the creative space. It's hard to truly predict how these tools will transform the industry long term, but it's exciting to think about the prospect of their usefulness with things like making storyboards and writing search copy. And it should light a fire under creatives to continue thinking of bonkers, wild, wonderful ideas a machine couldn't possibly come up with."

Even more bullish on AI, with greater specificity, was Chris Neff, global head of emerging experience and technology at Anomaly, who observed, "From my perspective, the most impactful industry evolution of 2022 came in the form of consumer ready, generative AI. These tools took the building blocks of generative AI systems, ones we have seen in experiments and marketing stunts over the years with GANS, NLP, and deep learning, and operationalized them through computing power, speed, and quality that feels more like magic than technology.

This spectrum of growth saw product after product, born out of two motherships in OpenAI and Stability AI, flood the market. The interfaces on Discord evolved into web experiences and then transferred to apps like Lensai. We moved from static to motion to an iteration of a chatbot (ChatGPT) that conquered the shortcomings of its predecessors.

"These developments," continued Neff, "impact creativity because they fundamentally change how the imagination materializes. No other aspect—from the shift of NFTs to Digital Collectibles to the boom of Metaverse properties to the massive changes in the social media landscape, to any of the market contraction—compares.

But whether emerging ways or tried-and-true means of communicating, diversity, inclusion and equity remain a priority. Brett Alexander, recently elevated to managing director, head of integrated production at The Martin Agency, affirmed, "Equity is paramount in all we do. Our culture thrives on equity and inclusion, and we strive for it in everything we make. In 2022, our 50/50 goal (at least 50% of our work helmed or edited by underrepresented talent) was a huge success, and it fundamentally changed how we look for, source and consider talent."

Miriam Franklin, EVP, head of integrated production at Deutsch NY, noted that coming to the fore in 2022 were "the awareness and embracing of diversity across all pillars and the beginning of actually implementing sustainable strategies vs. just talking the talk. We still have a long way to go, but it's a step in the right direction. It's essential to have representation in all areas of the industry in order to effectively converse with and be part of culture. Valid ideas, thoughts and creativity come out of communities that do not always have a seat at the table and that is a big miss."

Chris Plehal, VP/creative director of OBERLAND, said, "The world is changing fast and I think the biggest advantage an agency can have is a diversity of points of view. Employing people of different ages, ethnicities, life experiences, backgrounds and nationalities isn't just about checking a box. It makes for more interesting insights and richer creative work."

DEI is among varied societal issues that advertisers and marketers need to become engaged in as a growing number of brands and agencies find it imperative to take a stand. Mona Hasan, creative director at Fortnite Collective, shared, "Like the rest of the country, we were frustrated and devastated by the news of Roe v. Wade being overturned by the Supreme Court. As a creative agency, we knew we had to do something. And not just a cool video, either. We knew it was all about getting the right people into public office. So right before the midterm elections, we created VOTEX, the first-ever tampon brand

PRODUCTION OUTLOOK

that helps you vote. Using the tropes of feminine hygiene products, each box of VOTEX was plastered with instructions on how to register, and where to vote, all in hopes of causing a raging gush of voters in support of pro-reproductive rights candidates in Colorado. And it won't stop there. We'll be inserting ourselves into the next elections as well."

Then there's the issue of economic reality and its impact on the marketplace. Keith Cartwright, chief creative officer, CARTWRIGHT, said, "The recession isn't over. I'm predicting more attrition and more global consolidation. It's a good thing in my opinion. Let's cut the fat, get small and get back to big ideas and amazing work."

Mikko Pietilä, executive creative director, 180 New York & 180 Global, noted, "After the hyper-evolution of the meta-verse, spending frenzies, marketing blow-outs of brands and the crypto crashes of 2022, predicting that 2023 will be a year where we go back to building meaningful connections and humane approaches. Community and unity will matter over everything, be it at the workplace or inside the brand communities, virtual or irl. Understanding our audiences and their movement will become more important so cultural and audience data, and how to utilize it will play a big role in 2023."

Survey

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

1) What industry trends, devel-

opments or issues were most significant in 2022?

2) What is the most relevant business and/or creative lesson you learned in 2022 and how will you apply it to 2023?

3) How have any societal issues--such as the pandemic, the Supreme court decision on abortion, calls for equity, inclusion, diversity, racial and social justice--impacted the way you do business, company policies and/or selection of projects/creative content?

4) What are your goals or New Year's resolution, creatively speaking or from a business standpoint, for your agency, company or department in 2023?

5) Gazing into your crystal ball, what do you envision for the advertising and/or entertainment industry--creatively speaking or from a business standpoint--in 2023?

6) How did your company, agency, studio or department adjust/adapt to the marketplace in 2022 (new strategies, technology, health/safety expertise) and what of all that bodes well for 2023?

What follows is a sampling of feedback. Full responses can be found on *SHOOT*-online.com and in the *SHOOT*>e.dition.



Amanda Abrams
Group Creative Director
Team One

2) Take breaks. This isn't a revelation, but it's a principle that isn't being practiced like it should. We've been very heads down, hunched over laptops, starting the next online meeting while we're still in the last one. We need fresh air and fresh experiences to both recharge ourselves and inspire, you guessed it, fresh thinking. Go for a walk.

Go to a movie. Go halfway around the world. We'll be better for it.

3) Everything affects the work because it affects the people who make it. Sometimes, we need to simply pause and give ourselves the space to process things before we get back to it. As shapers of culture, we owe it to ourselves and to our audiences to listen more, to reflect more, and to include, promote and amplify more diverse voices and stories. We're far from getting it all right, but as long as we stay committed to the journey and the work, we can make meaningful change. And the creative will only get better because of it.

4) Make cool s*@t and have fun doing it. The last few years have been a grind, personally and professionally, so let's not let our work take itself so seriously.



Brett Alexander
Managing Director, Head of Integrated Production
The Martin Agency

1) In my opinion, two of the most significant things to happen were the Stand With Production movement and visual effects workers potentially unionizing. Both could have impact on overall production costs. A third would be the return of commercial supported tiers on streaming services and how that impacts marketing and

production spend.

2) This year I started reading the Stoics. From them, I embraced two things for business. First, pausing is important. Clarity coming from a pause can push the work forward to greater heights. Second, take time on things that matter. People don't see the timeline, they see (and judge) the resulting craft.

6) We continued to create work that impacts culture across all the mediums we touch. Ideas that were part of important cultural conversations. Successful agencies need experts to help drive that work and conversation. Luckily our Cultural Impact Lab and production group are positioned to do exactly that in 2023.

Continued on page 16

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Keith Cartwright, Aaron Duffy

Continued from page 15



Keith Cartwright
Chief Creative Officer
CARTWRIGHT

1) The recession was real. Clients cut budgets and pulled back on productions. That will be the take-away for most business but as it affects advertising we are usually the first to feel it and the last to recover.

2) The best work happens when humans are in the room. Being together affects the work in a positive way. You can't mimic human creative synapses over zoom.

3) Everything affects the way you do business. As a creative culture we feed on what is happening in the world. People respond to ideas based on where their heads at. If you ignore that you're just talking to yourself.

4) Make the most creatively audacious work we can. That's what's fun. That's what drives business for our partners, and that's why I love what I do.

5) The recession isn't over. I'm predicting more attrition and more global consolidation. It's a good thing I'm my opinion. Let's cut the fat get small and get back to big ideas and amazing work.

6) We had an appetite to come together again. We spent a lot of time working through our safe practices and policies that fit the culture of our business and the people. 2023 will be the time to see the real efforts of our planning.



Aaron Duffy
Founder/Executive Creative Director
SpecialGuest

1) At the start of 2022, I remember a lot of optimism about all things "metaverse." I started the year very curious but skeptical. I didn't know at the time that I would be diving eyeballs deep into the metaverse for most of our work for the year. We worked on all the big campaigns for one of the biggest VR games, Beat Saber, and

we were jamming in Meta Horizon Worlds nearly every day. So, as the rest of public opinion turned more skeptical, I warmed up to it. SpecialGuest put in a lot of hours in VR, meeting the early adopters and builders of the metaverse, and experiencing the shortcomings at the same time. But by finding all the pitfalls, we also understand better where it all might be going. I'm reminded of the early days of AOL chat rooms, when I was in middle school, not realizing that the often frivolous and short-lived interactions in those chat rooms would essentially lead to platforms like TikTok. At the time, those chat rooms left a ton to be desired as an experience. And that's where we are with the metaverse. But through that lens, it's also clear how immense it is going to be. Skepticism is a crucial part of the development, but I love working on the beginnings of something big.

5) I'm sure we are all thinking about how to reckon with developments in AI that are already disrupting the creative industry. I definitely see that in the crystal ball, and I think it's a pretty exciting prophecy. I've grown up being borderline dyslexic, and I have always thanked my lucky stars that I exist at a time of "spell check," for example. What a fabulous bit of early AI. I'm equally excited about the creative potential of generative art and language. We've been working with versions of creative AI tools like this for about half a decade. And yet, the crystal ball vision is still cloudy. We started a new company, SpecialGuestX, based in Madrid and New York, to study and implement these very tools, so I think it is going to be a fun 2023.

Continued on page 17

NJ Hosts *The Best Man: The Final Chapters*

The latest installment of *The Best Man* franchise returned to New Jersey for the filming of its conclusion. *The Best Man: The Final Chapters*, a recently debuted eight-episode series on Peacock, which brings viewers up-to-date on the lives of its endearing characters Lance (Morris Chestnut), Shelby (Melissa De Sousa), Harper (Taye Diggs), Candy (Regina Hall), Quentin (Terrence Howard), Robyn (Sanaa Lathan), Jordan (Nia Long), and Julian (Harold Perrineau).



The Best Man TV series

The original Universal feature *The Best Man* (1999) was partially filmed on location in Alpine and Secaucus. *The Final Chapters* shot in Alpine once again and in many other New Jersey locations.

Universal Television took advantage of New Jersey's Film & Digital Media Tax Credit Program in the production of this series. The Tax Credit Program offers eligible production companies up to 35% transferable tax credit on qualified film production expenses, plus an additional 2%-4% diversity bonus for qualified productions. Universal reported hiring 150 cast and crew members for the filming of *The Best Man: The Final Chapters*, spending over \$45 million in New Jersey for labor, goods, and services according to David Smith, vice chairman of the New Jersey Motion Picture and Television Commission.

Cherokee Nation Film Office Tabs 1st TV Apprentice

The Cherokee Nation Film Office (CNFO), headquartered in Tulsa, Oklahoma, has named Echota Killsnight as its first television apprentice. In fulfilling the new position, Killsnight learned firsthand from award-winning director John Hillcoat while working on the set of the biopic TV series *George and Tammy* (Showtime and Paramount Networks) which chronicles the life and marriage of country music legends Tammy Wynette and George Jones.

"As artists and filmmakers, I have always believed that the most incredible privilege that even a modicum of success affords us is the ability to hold the 'door' open for those who decide to walk this path," said Hillcoat. "CNFO graciously provided me the opportunity to fulfill this obligation to upcoming talent when I had the pleasure and privilege of mentoring Echota. I am grateful to share what knowledge I can with someone as passionate as he is and I look forward to helping future talents within the Cherokee Nation and other tribes."



Echota Killsnight

The apprenticeship took place in North Carolina where the series was filmed. Through CNFO's new mentorship program, the opportunity was made available to citizens of any federally recognized tribe with previous experience in the film and television industry, and Killsnight participated at no expense.

Killsnight's film and TV career began in 2015 and includes projects such as 2016's *Big Sister Rug*. He is currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in cinematic arts and technology at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe.

Dark Winds Blows Into New Mexico

New Mexico Film Office director Amber Dodson announced that the series *Dark Winds* had begun principal photography in November and will continue through 2023 in and around Santa Fe and Tesuque Pueblo.

Directed by Betsy Burke, produced by Robert Redford, George R.R. Martin, and Vince Calandra, and starring Zahn McClarnon. *Dark Winds* is based on the book series, "Iconic Leaphorn & Chee," by Tony Hillerman. Set in the 1970s on a remote outpost of the Navajo Nation, *Dark Winds* tells the story of Lieutenant Joe Leaphorn and Deputy Chee as they uncover crimes and mysteries, not only in work, but also within themselves.



Amber Dodson

The AMC and AMC+ show will employ 18 New Mexico crew members, 10 background/extras, and five New Mexico principal actors.

Insights From Deutsch NY, Fortnite, Cornett, Anomaly

Continued from page 16



Miriam Franklin
EVP, Head of Integrated Production
Deutsch NY

4) My goals for my team in 2023 are simple — continue to grow and develop our production offering and continue to bring more and more creative solutions to the agency. As budgets and timelines shrink, it's incumbent upon production to always seek out new approaches and ways to not only deliver but raise the bar on what we deliver. With all the exciting new technology available, we are finding new and exciting ways to harness the tech in service of great storytelling.

6) It's interesting because certainly the pandemic brought a whole new way of doing business and delivering creative. And the past year has only seen that develop and turn more and more in everyone's favor. The access to talent has opened up now that the world has become accustomed to remote and hybrid workflows. We have talent on board who pre-pandemic we would not have had access to and they contribute and enrich our team with different points of reference and ideas. The exponential speed with which new technologies are being adapted and giving us new tools to tell stories is really exciting and we have been diving into that as well. We are going into 2023 excited to continue to grow and adapt and pivot and learn and make great ideas come to life.



Mona Hasan
Creative Director
Fortnite Collective

1) To go back into the office. Or not. That is the question. The great return to the office debate was big in 2022. For many, it became clear that there was no reason to go back. Or to even have a physical space anymore. For others, a formalized hybrid approach made the most sense. So you had the flexibility we've all grown to love as well as opportunities for in-person magic to happen. Balancing the productivity of telework with the community vibe of the office was a major challenge. But people are getting their groove back.

Next up: the Four-day Work-week debate.

2) Change is a constant. Cliche, yes. But so true. We thought the pandemic was the thing that was going to change everything. But it was just the beginning. From the weather to a recession to war, you have to be flexible enough to course-correct in order to keep up. The old way of working turns into the new way, and before you know it, the new way is old again. So the lesson is: don't get stuck. The way audiences do things, consume things, and share things, will continue to change. And in this industry, we can't stay the same industry.



Jason Majewski
Group Creative Director
Cornett

2) A commitment to simplicity has served us well, as well as following our instincts. Focused, simple ideas that juxtapose something interesting about our brands with something happening in culture. A lot of agencies, and a lot of brands overcomplicate things. We got the world talking about our partners' brands by keeping things simple, following our process, and trusting that if something got us all laughing or energized, it would do the same for our audiences.

4) It sounds obvious, but our goal is simply to stay hot as a creative department and as an agency. Just keep winning and having fun doing it. For us, it's about delivering a steady stream of ideas that our partners didn't necessarily ask for, but can't say no to...while never losing sight of our partners' business and creative strategy, driving big business wins through smart, strategic campaigns. Beyond that, continuing to build a creative culture where every single person feels empowered to do their absolute best work, and can live their best life outside of work. It's about time we made that more of the norm in our industry.



Chris Neff
Global Head of Emerging Experience and Technology
Anomaly

3) Anomaly is built on the belief that diverse thinking leads to better outcomes. It's part of our DNA. So, the events of this year didn't greatly impact how we engaged in the socio-political landscape. We know that diversity, equity, and inclusion make our company more powerful, both creatively and commercially. Sometimes, this mentality manifests through a meaningful collaboration, like partnering with Afropunk founders Matthew Morgan and Jocelyn Cooper to co-create the forthcoming LETS GET FREE music festival. Other times, a powerful idea that calls out societal tension exemplifies it; for instance, this year, a group of creatives out of our L.A. office came together to create Abortion Bus, a spin on Desert Bus, infamously known as the worst video game ever, to highlight the extraordinary lengths pregnant Texans have to travel for an abortion and drive donations for Fund Texas Choice. But

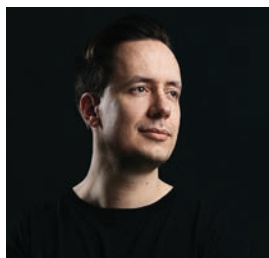
we know there's always room for continued growth and education, and that's why we're in the process of formalizing a new diversity review panel to stem the spread of stereotypes and bias in our creative work and content.

From a company policy perspective, we introduced a wage assessment to ensure women, Black talent, and all People of Color get paid equitably in 2021. That year also marked the introduction of new, Global KPIs that extend beyond talent diversification to include measuring inclusion, retention, and elevation by gender and amongst underrepresented groups. We've consistently increased diversity in race and gender each year, but we still have a ways to go and will continue to find opportunities to drive representation across all disciplines and, most importantly, our leadership team. These examples are just a few of the many efforts that Anomaly has in place to continue supporting diverse talent and increasing representation.

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180, OBERLAND Feedback

Continued from page 17



Mikko Pietilä
Executive Creative Director
180 New York & 180 Global

1) Creative community over traditional agency model. We're seeing a big shift where agencies transform into creative communities to attract and retain talent and clients alike. Positioning themselves as more of a strategic partner instead of just a creative one, and growing existing partnerships as an antidote to the pitch overload the industry is facing.

Rise of the Metaverse and the blurring reality between IRL and virtual. This is one of the central changes affecting the landscape of how people experience brands. Lines between the real world and virtual are fading at a rapid phase as brands experiment and stretch the limits of engagement, how they build their communities and evolve their "commerceverse".

Diversity, diversity and diversity. This was the year of diversity in many ways. We see diversity being prioritized from the way the industry hires, promotes and talks, all the way to how brands are evolving their messaging by challenging 'majority' perceptions and what used to be the cultural norm. Seeing this happen on a regular basis gives us hope that a true change is taking place.

2) Be it on the marketer or agency side, company culture eats everything else for breakfast.

As we are still 2D on screen most of the time, it becomes even more important how we keep our culture alive, recognize and shine a light on the good work and support when support is needed. When the element of in person interaction becomes that of a rare occasion we need to really put extra effort into the virtual one.

3) As the landscape has experienced and is still experiencing the big transformations, people look for authenticity in brands. They want to know what's behind the curtain and what are the true values, and can they identify with them. Creating real and humane connections has never been more important. It goes to consumer and brand relations as much as it goes to agency and client relations.



Chris Plehal
VP/Creative Director
OBERLAND

1) Advertising just felt more fun this year. So many campaigns were joyful, or silly, or based on a single dumb pun. Maybe it's the can-do, DIY influence of TikTok, but I felt like advertising took itself a little less seriously in 2022.

2) In February, I remember being jealous of that Larry David FTX commercial in the Super Bowl. Fast forward 8 months, and we all know how FTX turned out. It reminded me that I want to spend my time working on projects that are a net positive for the world, rather than chasing cool creative for its own sake.

3) The world is changing fast, and I think the biggest advantage an agency can have is a diversity of points of view. Employing people of different ages, ethnicities, life experiences, backgrounds, and nationalities isn't just about checking a box. It makes for more interesting insights and richer creative work.

4) OBERLAND is an agency for purpose-driven brands, so we do a lot of work for non-profits. But purpose isn't just a non-profit thing. I'd like to work with some brands that don't seem very purpose-y on the surface and find ways to help them create actions (or ads) with a true positive impact.

5) I think agencies are going to start playing with the formats of ad-supported streaming services. Like a few years back, GEICO did amazing work having fun with YouTube preroll. The next frontier could be something like Netflix's new ad-supported tier. I think we'll start to see spots that turn that on its head a bit.

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Squeak E. Clean Launches Experiential Division

Global creative audio network Squeak E. Clean Studios has joined forces with experiential pioneer Tom Webster to launch an experience division. With a proven track record working alongside artists, choreographers, and award-winning directors, he will collaborate with brand teams to develop engaging activations that build narratives around cultural moments. As head of experiential, Webster will draw from his extensive network of diverse interdisciplinary creatives and producers to put together teams curated for the unique needs of each experiential activation.



Tom Webster

The new venture aligns with the cultural DNA of Squeak E. Clean Studios, drawing from the creativity of Grammy-nominated artists and co-founder Sam Spiegel and the company's background for collaborating with artists such as Doja Cat, Lizzo, Anderson.Paak and Wu-tang Clan. The launch also underscores Squeak E. Clean Studios' continued growth beyond traditional music and sound. Squeak E. Clean maintains offices in L.A., New York, Chicago, Austin, Chicago, Melbourne and Sydney.

Webster just finished a seven-year stay as a partner at production company HELO. Prior to that, he started the standout experiential division at Mother New York. Highlights from his 30-year career include multiple award-winning projects for Target, Virgin, Nike, Coors, XBOX, Microsoft, Nissan and Vice.

Stevenson Joins TMP, The Diner As EP

Original music and artist licensing company The Music Playground (TMP) and production music library The Diner have brought Jeff Stevenson aboard as executive producer.

Before joining TMP/The Diner, Stevenson spent two-plus years as EP for Nashville-based boutique Howling Music where he handled client relations and creative production on everything from original music projects to catalog licensing to sound design and sonic branding. Before that he worked as a production manager for Sorted Noise, a sync-focused production company in Nashville.

TMP and The Diner continued to expand their global efforts over the past year, including by partnering with MUXIC, the Music Tourism Office for the government of Mexico, to promote the development of local Latin talent and to represent the MUXIC catalog of artists for sync licensing. Another expansion has been opening a Mexico City-based sister creative studio for original music, El Patio de Musica.

Stevenson who has lived and worked in Mexico for the last 18 months, will remain based in Mexico City to support the MUXIC and El Patio de Musica initiatives to unite LATAM musical talent with creative sync opportunities. He will simultaneously bring his wealth of experience and knowledge to TMP's expanding creative and business development endeavors in the advertising, film, and television markets, both in Mexico and across the U.S.

Silo Music Adds Lauren Harman

Lauren Harman has been appointed president, film/TV licensing for Silo Music. A music industry vet of over 17 years, Harman will bring her sync expertise and the amalgamation of her many relationships in the music, film and advertising communities to Silo, where she will oversee creative pitching and A&R.

Harman began her career at Zync Music in 2005 and began signing indie bands such as Beach House and Grizzly Bear. She left Zync in 2009 to start an independent music licensing company called Lip Sync Music.



Lauren Harman

There, she signed artists such as Sharon Jones & The Dap Kings and their Daptone Records, Passion Pit, Local Natives, Aloe Blacc, Dillon Francis, Cults, and The Naked & Famous.

After 10 years at Lip Sync, she sold it to music publisher Anthem Entertainment. She then went on to run the sync department for Mass Appeal Records (owned by Nas,) working with music by artists such as Run The Jewels, DJ Shadow and Pusha T.

Insights From TDA_Boulder, Butler, Shine, Stern & Partners

Continued from page 18



Jeremy Seibold
Partner/Creative Director
TDA_Boulder

1) Liquid Death and Maximum Effort reminded people that advertising is an entertainment industry. We spend our days interrupting the things people would rather be doing so you better make it worth their time.

2) You can't overstate the value of great clients. Big names and budgets are fun, but it is the trust and bravery of the people you work with that leads to the best work. When looking at new business opportunities, pay more attention to the people in the room than the name on the RFP.



Robyn Tenenbaum
Creative Director
Butler, Shine, Stern & Partners

1) I think there's a few industry trends we saw in 2022 that are worth noting. Firstly, we saw an even greater push from brands wanting to appeal to and connect with Gen Z. Sure, this is nothing new but, but this year in particular, the aim to be relevant and "get younger" with who brands are talking to, how they're talking, and where, was seen across the board from Tik Tok challenges to unexpected brand crossovers and collabs.

Then there's the influencer marketing phenomenon we're seeing on TikTok. Where anyone and everyone has become an influencer and has the ability to make something "go viral." In my opinion, this has totally changed the game. I spent more money this year on random skincare products just because a 21 year-old college student and total stranger made a 30-second Get Ready With Me video and I had to have whatever she was using. Countless influencers literally sold out workout sets, mom jeans, and cardigan sweaters from major retailers like H&M and Zara for simply posting a "haul" from their latest shopping excursion. They have a following. A following with money to spend on things like mascara and matching sweatsuits. That is power. And brands are only starting to figure out how to fully tap into it.

4) My New Year's resolution for my creative department and agency is that I will keep pushing us to make good work that we're proud of. Work that makes an impact for our clients. And ultimately makes an impact for people out in the world.

5) I think we started to see a slight resurgence of absurdist comedy in advertising and that will continue in the next year. We got so serious there for a while. And even though I can't prove this, it's maybe more of a manifestation? Fingers crossed.

6) In 2022 our agency continued our remote work policy (established during the Pandemic) which allowed us to hire talent from all over—we have teams in LA, SF, Portland and NYC. And even though we work in many different time zones, we used this year to really try and figure out how to make it work and support everyone from afar. I think this flexibility will allow us to look outside of just the San Francisco talent pool and continue to hire strong creatives from all over in this next coming year.

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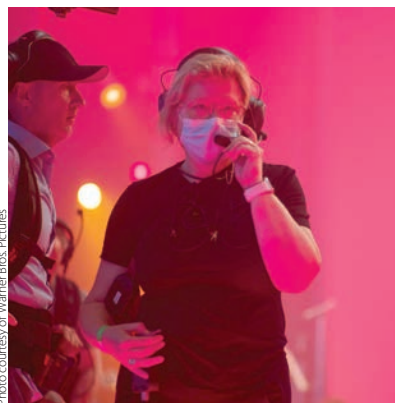
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Mandy Walker, ASC, ACS



Polly Morgan, ASC, BSC



Erik Messerschmidt, ASC



Austin Butler in *Elvis*

Shooting *Elvis*, *The Woman King* and *Devotion*

DPs Walker, Morgan and Messerschmidt discuss their collaborations with directors

By Robert Goldrich

One cinematographer recently made history when her work was honored by the Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts.

Another DP's historic accomplishment still stands as she is currently the only woman to be a member of both the American Society of Cinematographers and the British Society of Cinematographers.

And our third lenser is an Oscar and ASC Award winner whose latest feature release marks his first collaboration with director J.D. Dillard. Meanwhile this DP continues to enjoy an ongoing collaborative relationship with David Fincher and recently teamed on a feature with Michael Mann.

Here are insights from Mandy Walker, ASC, ACS on *Elvis* (Warner Bros. Pictures), Polly Morgan, ASC, BSC on *The Woman King* (Sony's TriStar Productions), and Erik Messerschmidt, ASC on *Devotion* (Sony Pictures Entertainment, Black Label Media). Additionally, some light is shed on another of Morgan's recent lensing endeavors, *Where the Crawdads Sing* (Sony Pictures).

Mandy Walker, ASC, ACS

Last month Walker became the first woman to win the Best Cinematography feature film honor from the Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts (AACTA). The award came for her lensing of *Elvis*, a biographical and musical story which earlier garnered Walker the Camerimage Audience Award. Addi-

tionally she and director Baz Luhrmann received a Golden Frog nomination at Camerimage on the strength of *Elvis*.

Walker enjoys a deep collaborative bond with Luhrmann which spans some 20 years, their first project having been a Chanel No. 5 commercial. That led to Luhrmann and Walker teaming on the sprawling epic feature *Australia*, followed by another Chanel No. 5 spot, and then *Elvis*.

While covering Elvis Presley's life from cradle to grave, the film—which features a transcendent performance by Austin Butler in the title role from age 17 on—is hardly a conventional biopic. Luhrmann navigates a journey that unfolds in a sweeping, evocative fashion, diving into the contradictions, myths, truths, memories and headlines of Presley's life. Tom Hanks portrays Colonel Tom Parker, who managed and promoted Presley's career but not necessarily with the entertainer's

best interests at heart. The film's story is actually first framed from the perspective of Parker who is dying in a hospital room overlooking the Las Vegas strip. He looks back on Presley, who died a couple of decades earlier. Through Parker and other providers of context, we get to go on a ride through Presley's life and career, marked by a sense of excitement and extravaganza for which Luhrmann is known as a storyteller.

"Overall one of the things that Baz said to me super early on was that the camera has to 'dance' with Elvis," related Walker who in turn got her team to become familiar with Presley's songs. "When Austin was doing his rehearsals, we would be there learning the choreography, finding our camera positions. My cameras would know what he was doing and Austin knew where our cameras were going to be."

It's this involvement from the get-go

that characterizes the nature of Walker's collaborations with Luhrmann. The director brings her into the process very early on. In fact, Walker recalled being present for Butler's first audition some six months before pre-pro began. She also conducted some test shooting, being in on the ground floor of costumes, fabrics, textures, colors, art department proceedings, and the coming together of sets spanning different eras in the movie. She got to spend time discovering what each scene of the movie should look like, dovetailing with Butler, and of course conducting detailed research into the historical periods and locations.

Classic concerts were re-created including the "comeback" event which was an NBC special in 1968. "Baz wanted to reproduce those concerts exactly—the lighting, the shots," said Walker who noted that the drama of the film also had to be integrated with those concerts. During a concert, for example, she recalled a scene where Parker was in the audience writing a contract that will tie down Presley for the next five years. The meshing of drama with a dynamic, authentic concert feel was a prime objective laid out by Luhrmann.

Initially there was some discussion about shooting *Elvis* on film but Walker said the ultimate decision was that would be too restrictive. Walker opted for the ARRI Alexa 65, drawn to the large format and the scope and depth it afforded her. The first half of the film, covering the 1950s into the '60s, was shot spherical with Panavision Sphero 65 lenses de-



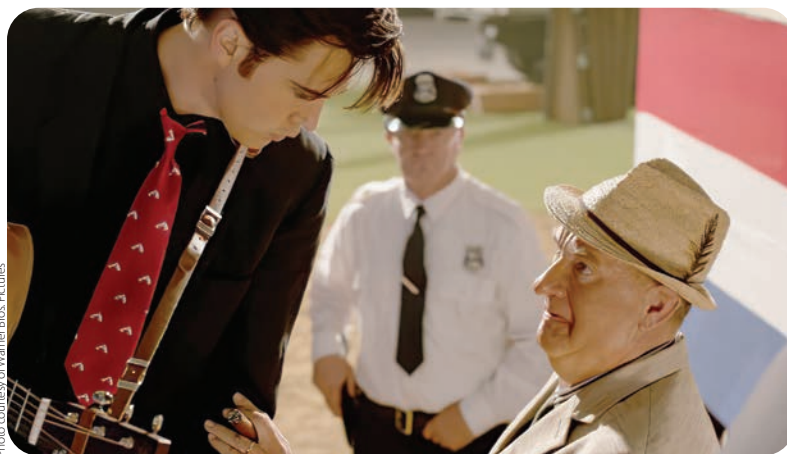
Austin Butler as Elvis Presley in *Elvis*

CINEMATOGRAPHERS & CAMERAS

played. As the story got deeper into the '60s and Vegas, Walker shot anamorphic, going for T-Series lenses which Walker worked with Panavision tech guru Dan Sasaki to adapt. For the '68 NBC special, an Alexa 65 was placed within the housing of an old television camera so the proper angle and perspective could be replicated from the original TV shoot.

Walker said it was a pleasure to lens Butler in concert and in dialogue scenes. "He was amazing. You felt like you were working with a star. I enjoyed being caught up in the music. The music was a big influence on the photography. The camera dances with the performance."

Asked to reflect on what it means for her to be the first woman whose cinematography was honored by the AACTA, Walker shared, "Elvis was my 20th feature film. I've been shooting for a long time. The award makes people aware that this was the first time a woman won



Austin Butler () and Tom Hanks in a scene from *Elvis*

Award and a Film Critics Circle of Australia Award while also earning a Best Cinematography nomination for an Australian Film Institute Award. For director Luhrmann's *Australia*, Walker won a Satellite Award, the Hollywood Cinematographer of the Year Award, and the

As for what's next, Walker at press time had wrapped lensing of Disney's live-action *Snow White* directed by Marc Webb.

Polly Morgan, ASC, BSC

Morgan is another history-making cin-

ASC Award nomination in the category of Best Cinematography in Television for her work on *Legion*.

Morgan now finds herself again in the awards discussion for her lensing of *The Woman King* for director Gina Prince-Bythewood. The historical epic centers on a group of women warriors responsible for protecting the kingdom of Dahomey in 19th century West Africa. *The Woman King* chronicles the real-life adventures of General Nanisca (portrayed by Viola Davis) who trains her fellow fighters to go up against invading slave traders.

This marked Morgan's first collaboration with Prince-Bythewood, a filmmaker she's long admired. That admiration only grew when she got the chance to work with the director. "She brings artists together in a very family-type environment, collaborating and working together as a team," said Morgan of



Mandy Walker and Baz Luhrmann confer on *Elvis*

the award. A lot of people came up to me and said they weren't really aware that no woman had been recognized in this way. Now I'm hoping that it opens doors for other women, enabling them to be seen and making more people aware of their work. I've always strived to get more women into my field—mentees, trainees. I'm conscious of the makeup of my crew which I try to make as diverse as I can. Winning this award hopefully shines a light on the fact that women are here and we're forging ahead."

The AACTA honor adds to Walker's awards pedigree. For the John Curran-directed *Tracks*, Walker won an Australian Cinematographers Society's Gold

Women in Film, Kodak Vision Award in 2008. Earlier in her career, Walker garnered a Film Independent Spirit Award nomination for Best Cinematography on the strength of director Billy Ray's *Shattered Glass* (2003). Walker also garnered an Australian Cinematographers Society Award for director Ray Lawrence's *Lantana* (2002). Prior to that, her lensing of director Kathryn Millard's *Parklands* (1996) won the Best Cinematography in a Non-Feature Film honor from the Australian Film Institute.

Walker's filmography also includes *Hidden Figures* directed by Theodore Melfi, *Mulan* helmed by Niki Caro, and *Truth* from director James Vanderbilt



Viola Davis in *The Woman King*

ematographer. She is currently the only female member of both the American Society of Cinematographers and the British Society of Cinematographers. "I hope that will change soon," she shared, noting that as an ASC member she has the opportunity to sponsor other members and she is keenly aware of some incredible British female cinematographers. Morgan works with the ASC diversity committee to help bring deserving talent from underrepresented backgrounds, such as women and people of color, into the Society fold. When she joined the ASC rank and file in 2018, Morgan was the Society's youngest member. Two years later she garnered an

Prince-Bythewood. "She gives people a lot of freedom to do their jobs and trusts them. At the same time she clearly defines what's ultimately a strong central message so that we all understand what she is trying to communicate through her work."

Morgan was drawn to the script, which was sent to her while she was on location in Louisiana for *Where the Crawdads Sing*. Morgan recalled being moved by *The Woman King* script, its scope, and the beautifully written relationships among the women characters. The story touched Morgan on varied levels.

Upon deciding that a digital camera
Continued on page 22

Morgan On The Woman King

Continued from page 21

would be the way to go, Morgan ultimately selected the ARRI Alexa Mini LF. The camera's small lightweight body gave her a measure of flexibility and maneuverability which she greatly valued. Morgan added that they needed a camera system very pleasing in its color gamut, offering a naturalistic palette. Morgan said she veers towards ARRI Alexa cameras for that, citing a vast gamma curve and a dynamic range conducive to capturing the subtleties of different ranges of shadows and highlights. The large format version of the camera helped do justice to the scope of Africa.

That scope is far reaching and the director sought an "intimately epic" feel to reflect that. The West African nation is rich, lush, full of color and beauty.

Also essential was showing the beauty of the women protagonists—a beauty stemming from their vulnerability and a physical appearance highlighted by gorgeous black skin.

Morgan affirmed that *The Woman King* was "a very special experience for me. As a white woman, I was drawn into this very unique part of Black history, brought into a family of Black filmmakers. I was honored to be invited to tell this story with them and to share this part of history with the world. For all who were involved, there was so much passion, desire and excitement to not only be telling this story but to do justice to the legacy of these incredible women. To shoot in Africa was important from the outset. There was an energy on set. It was very emotional at times—seeing the power of the Black community staying together and fighting slavery. It brought me to tears, gave me goosebumps. This is an important and powerful story made by people who care about it deeply. I learned a lot in great detail about the history. I got to experience it and bring it to life.

In addition to *The Woman King* and *Where the Crawdads Sing*, Morgan's most recent credits include *A Quiet Place Part II*. She is next slated to lens *Back to Black*, a biopic about singer Amy Winehouse that is being directed by Sam Taylor-Wood.

Where the Crawdads Sing marked Morgan's first collaboration with director Olivia Newman. The movie is part coming-of-age tale, part murder mystery, part love

story, part homage to nature's beauty, part tribute to the human spirit, resiliency and the will to survive. The mix of genres is rooted in Delia Owen's novel of the same title, adapted for the big screen by Lucy Alibar, the Oscar-nominated writer of *Beasts of the Southern Wild*.

Where the Crawdads Sing stars Daisy Edgar Jones as Kya, a girl abandoned by her family, having to raise herself in the marshes of North Carolina. We follow Kya from her childhood in the 1950s through to adulthood. She forms a deep connection to the land and its beauty while disconnected from townspeople who ostracize her. She bonds, though, with a young suitor named Tate from whom she learns about romance and how to read. But she is abandoned by him as well. Another suitor, Chase, emerges but he is found dead in the wilderness. She's charged with his murder, is jailed and then put on trial, further intensifying the alienation and isolation she feels from a community that has always misjudged and dismissed her—a rare exception being her defense attorney. Throughout her ongoing ordeal, Kya perseveres and manages to find her own path and a life with purpose.

Director Newman said of her DP, "Polly has an exquisite eye. This was a film meant to be shown in wide format on the big screen. We needed viewers to feel immersed in these landscapes. Polly and I had the same references—directors like [Jane] Campion, [Terrence] Malick when it came to incorporating landscapes as a character in their films."

Meanwhile on the television front, in addition to her ASC Award nomination for *Legion*, Morgan has done episodic work for director Dominic LeClerc on the BBC series *From Darkness* and *Call The Midwife*. The latter won two BAFTA TV Awards and was nominated for a BAFTA Audience Award. She also lensed *Strange Angel* for Scott Free Productions and CBS, collaborating with director David Lowery.

Erik Messerschmidt, ASC

An Oscar, ASC and BSC Award winner in 2021 for director David Fincher's *Mank*, Messerschmidt this year further expanded his narrative feature reach with *Devotion* (Sony Pictures Entertainment).

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Cintel Scanner G3 HDR+ Hits The Market

Blackmagic Design has rolled out the all new Cintel Scanner G3 HDR+, which features a completely redesigned light source that allows real time HDR film scanning in Ultra HD. Demonstrated earlier this year at NAB 2022 in Las Vegas, the new high intensity LED grid array light source allows customers to get even better quality images from scanned film at much higher film scanning speeds.



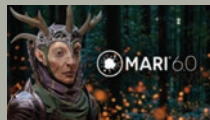
New Cintel Scanner

The new Cintel Scanner G3 HDR+ is available immediately from Blackmagic Design resellers worldwide for \$32,045. The new model also retains features of the Cintel Scanners, such as digital servos, gentle capstan drives, advanced color science, 35mm and 16mm film support and an elegant architectural design that can even be wall mounted. The Cintel Scanner can be deployed for unlocking vast archive film libraries for conversion into new Ultra HD masters so they can be uploaded for streaming and online distribution!

The new high intensity light source in Cintel Scanner G3 HDR+ is now six times more powerful. The RGB LED grid array illumination source has a square array of 576 high power LEDs arranged into a grid pattern, which are focused onto film using a new light cylinder. This design means that more than twice the silicon area for generating light is available, resulting in more light being directed at the film. There are tens of kilowatts of power contained in each illumination flash to scan a single frame of film. HDR scanning speed is also now up to three times faster at full real time speed of 30 frames per second in Ultra HD. The Cintel Scanner G3 HDR+ also features improved color science and up to an additional 3.5 stops of HDR range.

Foundry Releases Mari 6.0

Foundry, a software developer for media and entertainment, has released Mari 6.0. Mari is Foundry's cutting-edge 3D painting and texturing tool that combines power and performance to handle the most complex assets. This release focuses on enhancements to improve artists' workflows and efficiency, with two new USD Exports, a new Roller Brush paint mode, Python snippets as Shelf items and a teleport node.



Mari 6.0

The two new USD improvements are designed to ensure that texturing pipelines are USD-ready. With the USD Look Exporter, artists can export a single USD Look file that contains all of the relevant shader information, reducing duplication of work in setting up USD Looks for use in Katana or other DCCs and bringing Look Development and Lighting together earlier on in the pipeline. Artists will also now have the ability to use Mari's selection tools to assign materials to the correct USD face set-based location.

Building on the already extensive painting toolset in Mari, the Roller Brush is a new painting mode that enables artists to paint a tileable image whilst following the curves and directions of a brush stroke. This allows artists to perfect the finer details without having to manually paint each individual stitch by hand, saving valuable time without losing creative control. This makes repetitive painting tasks such as creating seams and decals on characters' clothing easier than ever.

Mari 6.0 also introduces a simpler way to execute Python Script actions using Python Snippets as Shelf items, so artists aren't required to install Python Scripts into the Scripts path before launching Mari. This encourages collaboration between artists as they can more easily share scripts amongst themselves and across studios, meaning tasks can be completed more efficiently.

Finally, the teleport node: a node of two parts—Broadcaster and Receiver—that creates hidden connections in the nodegraph lands in this release. Allowing artists to easily organize the nodegraph, clean up networks and reduce excess clicks, the teleport workflow saves valuable time and reduces the risk of strain from manual navigation. Artists can jump quickly between Broadcast and Receiver to quickly navigate the nodegraph without needing to manually find nodes.

Erik Messerschmidt Discusses *The Lensing Of Devotion*

Continued from page 22

ment), a true story which centers on the bond formed during the Korean War between Ensign Jesse Brown (portrayed by Jonathan Majors), the first African American to complete Navy flight training, and Lt. Tom Hudner (Glen Powell), a hotshot Navy aviator. Both became war

aspect of *Devotion* ultimately even more alluring. At first, Messerschmidt acknowledged that he might have been a bit “seduced by the challenge of shooting the aerial sequences.” But beyond that grand air show, Messerschmidt continually reminded himself that *Devotion* at its core is a very human drama.

everything except the movie itself: cinema, art, politics, life.” The two bonded and shortly after that call, Dillard offered him the job.

Messerschmidt went primarily with the Panavision DXL2 for *Devotion*. Among the advantages that this digital camera afforded him were a versatile RED sensor,

track down serial killers in the late 1970s. Messerschmidt in 2020 wound up garnering his first career Emmy nomination for his lensing of *Mindhunter*. He’s shot the lion’s share of *Mindhunter* episodes; the series represented his first major TV gig as his DP endeavors prior to that were primarily in commercials and other short-



A scene from *Devotion*



Jonathan Majors as Ensign Jesse Brown in *Devotion*



Jonathan Major (I) and Glen Powell in *Devotion*

heroes. Brown—who faced racism in various forms ranging from being hazed, bullied and forced to repeat Navy tests multiple times—persevered and went on to posthumously receive the Purple Heart, the Air Medal, and the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Based on the book of the same title by Adam Makos, *Devotion* was directed by J.D. Dillard. While there are ambitious and stunning aerial scenes—when the figurative bar for such work has been set high with this year’s release of *Top Gun: Maverick*—Messerschmidt found another

Although there are high action/adventure moments in *Devotion* that are fun and exciting, Messerschmidt noted that “the most pleasure” he got out of the film came when he was working with the actors. This reinforced for Messerschmidt the belief that one cannot “get caught up in the complexities of spectacle”—and that the priority should instead be to “try to tell human stories.”

Messerschmidt connected with director Dillard on that level. In fact, the DP recollected that their first conversation—over a two-hour Zoom call—was “about

a large format facilitating IMAX release, and a portraiture effect in closeups that carried a soft, delicate quality. The camera was also well suited for capturing high octane action sequences, enabling Messerschmidt to avoid an excess of visual effects. “We didn’t want this to be a visual effects extravaganza. Obviously there are visual effects in the film but we tried to keep them to a minimum to make things look as real as possible—to keep as much work in-camera as possible.”

Messerschmidt shared that *Devotion* was shot in just 52 days. Part of that mix entailed some select deployment of a virtual stage with a LED video wall.

Fincher—alluded to in reference to Messerschmidt’s multiple high-profile awards wins for *Mank*—has played a prominent role in the DP’s career. It all started back in the day when Messerschmidt served as a gaffer for cinematographer Jeff Cronenweth, ASC, most notably on the Fincher-directed *Gone Girl*. During the course of that movie, Fincher had Messerschmidt do some promotional still work for *Gone Girl* and the two struck up a rapport. This eventually led to Messerschmidt becoming the DP on Fincher’s *Mindhunter*, the thriller series centered on an FBI agent’s quest to

form fare. Fincher then further expanded Messerschmidt’s reach—this time into the feature realm with *Mank*. Messerschmidt then lensed Fincher’s *The Killer* which is currently in postproduction.

Messerschmidt most recently wrapped director Michael Mann’s feature, *Ferrari*. And in the offing for Messerschmidt is an undisclosed TV pilot directed by Ridley Scott. This will mark a return engagement for Messerschmidt with Scott. The DP had shot multiple episodes of *Raised By Wolves*, a series exec produced by Scott.

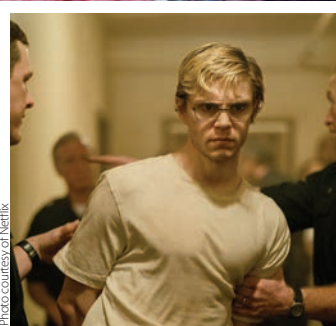
Before he became an iconic filmmaker, Scott first established himself in commercials. Messerschmidt noted that his own commercialmaking activities have informed his feature and TV endeavors. Among the directors he’s shot spots for is Joseph Kosinski, the filmmaker behind *Top Gun: Maverick*. Messerschmidt described commercials as a wonderful playground, affording cinematographers the opportunity to explore new techniques, pieces of equipment and innovative approaches. On the latter score, Messerschmidt observed that directors seem more inclined to take risks in commercials they can’t always opt for in narrative TV or feature work.

Delving Into Maisel, Dahmer, A League of Their Own

Amy Sherman-Palladino, Daniel Palladino, Ryan Murphy and Jamie Babbit shed light on their series

By Robert Goldrich

From top left, clockwise: Rachel Brosnahan (l) and Alex Borstein in *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*; Niecy Nash-Betts in *Dahmer--Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*; *Dahmer* series creator Ryan Murphy; a scene from *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*; Kelly McCormack (front) and her Rockford Peaches teammates in *A League of Their Own*; Evan Peters as Jeffrey Dahmer in *Dahmer--Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*; and Jamie Babbit, director/exec producer, *A League of Their Own*.



It's apropos that producers-directors-writers Amy Sherman-Palladino and Daniel Palladino be part of a Guild Awards Preview—for reasons that include but go beyond those guild nominations they've directly received thus far over the years.

That tally by the way includes: five Directors Guild of America Awards between them—three for Sherman-Palladino and two for Palladino, all for episodes of *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* (Prime Video); three shared Producers Guild Award nods, also for *Mrs. Maisel*; and a Producers Guild Lifetime Achievement Award in 2019 for Sherman-Palladino. Plus there are two Writers Guild Award nominations shared by the wife-and-husband team for *Mrs. Maisel*. And earlier Sherman-Palladino earned her first WGA nom for *Roseanne*.

Just as if not more impressive, though, are the other assorted guild award nominations spawned by *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, the series created by Sherman-Palladino. It takes a village to raise a series and among the guild award winners

behind *Mrs. Maisel* over the years are cinematographer M. David Mullen, ASC and production designer Bill Groom.

Mullen is a three-time ASC Award nominee for *Mrs. Maisel*. Groom has won two Art Directors Guild (ADG) Excellence in Production Design Awards for *Mrs. Maisel*, adding to four prior ADG nominations (including a win) for Martin Scorsese's *Boardwalk Empire*, and another nod for the Gus Van Sant-directed feature *Milk*.

For season four of *Mrs. Maisel*, the directors/producers/writers, cinematographer and production designer all figure prominently in the current guild awards derby. *SHOOT* connected with Sherman-Palladino and Palladino to gain insights into their lensing and production design colleagues as well as the challenges posed by *Mrs. Maisel* this time around.

COVID was a prime challenge, shared Sherman-Palladino who didn't want the work to at all indicate that this was the COVID season for *Mrs. Maisel*, a series always marked by big scope, energy and

movement. "Every year Midge [Maisel, portrayed by Rachel Brosnahan] has her world expand a bit. Things are very structured and very small as she ventures out. But as her ambition grows, her world suddenly stopped or was constricted [due to the impact of COVID on production]."

While concerns and safety protocols in response to COVID curtailed some planned traveling and kept season four in New York City, the expansion of *Maisel*'s world could still be accomplished—thanks to the artistry of contributors such as Groom who brought a major new environment into the mix, heading up the creation of a decaying and then rejuvenated Wolford strip club. It's there that Midge Maisel takes on emcee duties for a burlesque show which starts out with crude bare-bones acts that over time become more elaborate and choreographed. And over time the burlesque theater itself shapes up as a venue—with ambitious productions done on stage—at the behest of Maisel.

GUILD AWARDS PREVIEW

In addition to the Wolford Theater, among other special season 4 environs was a '60s game show set replete with studio audience—work firmly rooted in the script and extensive research.

Sherman-Palladino said of Groom, “He has so much incredible experience. We really value and love people who are war torn...who know how to get everything done. He understands how we shoot and how we like to shoot when he’s building something or looking to turn something into something we need. He gives us what we want whether we ask for it or not, so rich, layered and textured.”

In that vein, Sherman-Palladino described the Wolford theater as the epitome of “shabby gorgeousness,” reflecting the expansive mindset of Maisel while designed in such a way that “we never ran out of ways to shoot it.”

Palladino concurred, adding that Groom “reads scripts carefully and creates sets based on the characters,” a far cry from those who merely “build boxes” and “put furniture in them.” Palladino said that Groom’s environments and backdrops help to reflect, build and develop the characters, underscoring the artistry of production design.

Similarly, Palladino described Mullen as being “a kindred spirit” who’s made integral contributions to *Mrs. Maisel*.

Expounding upon that was Sherman-Palladino who said of Mullen, “He’s got an amazing sense of color. He’s not a DP who’s afraid of movement. A lot of DPs want to light something beautifully in a corner. We don’t do that, We don’t settle. We move and move. He’s a lover of musicals, a lover of old movies, a lover of movement, a lover of wide shots. He embraces all of that.”

Sherman-Palladino also cited Mullen’s vibrancy and penchant for putting women in a good light figuratively and lighting women literally “with such care, which I find is rare. It’s not about vanity and 14 layers of gauze. When you have leading ladies treated that way, it makes a difference. It really matters to him that they feel confident and taken care of. That’s huge. They’re free to act.”

Mullen, continued Sherman-Palladino, is also “a gentle spirit who’s very commanding in a very quiet way. He’s not a cowboy. Being a woman director, I’ve

dealt with a lot of cowboys which is fine. That’s not the way I choose to work. I like our set to be a little bit more of a family, a little bit more sensitive. We’re a female-driven show with strong female leads and the tone should be set that way. He [Mullen] is a quiet, respectful authority but definitely an authority. He’s also funny. We adore David Mullen.”

There was also a big picture reason to adore—and appreciate—season four a little more, noted Sherman-Palladino. “It was a season so emotional off screen,” she related. “We were so fortunate because we didn’t have to stop working [during the pandemic]. A lot of people didn’t get to work. We got to work. Many had been with us since the pilot. It’s a close-knit crew who hang onto each other. Creative endeavors are wonderful for your wallet, resume and career. They can also save you from going insane during insane times. Being with like-minded people who care as much as you do, to be able to hold onto each other, is one of the best case scenarios you can have for a job. We’ll love these people forever.”

And there’s one more season of that esprit de corps to come. Palladino said that the final go-around for *Mrs. Maisel*, season 5, will be “a big one.”

Ryan Murphy

Like Sherman-Palladino, Ryan Murphy earned distinction from the Producers Guild with a Lifetime Achievement Award in Television; his came in 2018, a year before Sherman-Palladino received hers. Murphy has 11 PGA Award nominations, winning for *The People v. O.J. Simpson: American Crime Story* in 2017 and *The Assassination of Gianni Versace: American Crime Story* in '19, and earning the Stanley Kramer Award for the telefilm *The Normal Heart* in 2016.

Murphy is a four-time DGA Award nominee—twice for *Glee*, and one apiece for *The Normal Heart* and *The People v. O.J. Simpson: American Crime Story*—as well as the recipient of 10 Writers Guild Award nominations.

Murphy is again in the guild awards season conversation for *Dahmer—Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* which in November became at the time only the third Netflix series ever to register more than 1 billion hours of viewing in its first

60 days—the others being *Squid Game* in 2021 and season 4 of *Stranger Things* in 2022. *Squid Game* and *Stranger Things*, season 4, reached that milestone in the first 30 days as did most recently *Wednesday*, Tim Burton’s *Addams Family* spinoff. This means Wednesday also passed *Dahmer* to become Netflix’s second most popular English-language series of all time.

Evan Peters portrays real-life serial killer and cannibal Jeffrey Dahmer in the limited series which tells a story of a case fraught with racism and homophobia—seemingly making it less of a priority for police to solve as law enforcement repeatedly ignored warnings from the public as to what was happening. Episode 7, the Jennifer Lynch-directed “Cassandra,” for example, chronicles an apartment complex neighbor of Dahmer, Glenda Cleveland (played by Niecy Nash-Betts) who repeatedly called police about suspicious activity going on next door but to no avail. A Black woman, Cleveland was given no heed in a murder spree (which stretched from 1978-’91) claiming the lives of 17 people, 15 of whom were Black, Indigenous, Asian or Latino men and boys, mostly in a predominantly Black Northside neighborhood in Wisconsin. Dahmer met a number of his victims in gay bars and LGBTQ community locales.

Last month, Murphy moderated a Netflix panel discussion in Los Angeles on *Dahmer—Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* featuring Peters, Nash-Betts and Richard Jenkins (who played Dahmer’s father, Lionel). During the session which took place right after a screening of “Cassandra,” the participants shed light on the series.

Murphy said he’s had long professional relationships with the three lead actors and has a deep trust in each—though he wasn’t sure he could get Peters and Jenkins to take on the project. Murphy asked Peters to have an open mind and to at least read the script available at that time. Peters said he found the role “terrifying” but also felt himself being drawn to the challenge “to push myself and see if I could do it.”

Murphy sent scripts of the first three episodes to Jenkins who loved the writing, describing it as “so human” and connecting with the feeling that a father

cannot help but to blame himself to some extent for what his son did in this case. Jenkins also read “A Father’s Story” written by Lionel Dahmer. The book, related Jenkins, was “a cautionary tale” as the father acknowledged that he didn’t want to hear that his son was gay. Lionel Dahmer lamented that perhaps this denial and ignorance of who his son was somehow contributed to the young man’s psychological problems which in turn led to heinous crimes.

Nash-Betts meanwhile was best known for her comedic work but Murphy could see she had dramatic chops and was just lacking the opportunity to show them. He was confident in her ability to take on the role of Cleveland and she was eager to oblige. Nash-Betts observed that she was unfortunately all too familiar with the story which is “still playing out today—marginalized people being over-policed, themes of homophobia and white privilege in the world. The story is not new. It also is not old and that is the problem.” Nash-Betts said she could relate to the role of a Black woman who is not heard. “I have been a Glenda Cleveland all my life—not being believed. To not be heard is painful. I wept for this woman, for all the times I wasn’t heard.”

Nash-Betts added that she wasn’t all that enamored with Peters personally at first. But later she discovered that his seemingly detached, aloof, unfriendly behavior was rooted in his acting method which had him immersed in the Jeffrey Dahmer role. His process did not allow him to be engaging. “I wondered why is he being mean to me?” smiled Nash-Betts. Peters wanted and needed to keep that tension going. That tension on camera played well—particularly in a scene from *Cassandra* in which Jeffrey Dahmer visits Cleveland in her apartment, trying to convince her to retract her complaint to the landlord which has resulted in an eviction notice for Dahmer. He presents her with a home-made sandwich as a peace offering. Murphy said he loved the scene which afforded the two actors in character to “go at each other.”

Nash-Betts relished the scene as an opportunity for Cleveland to finally “confront him properly,” ultimately scoring a checkmate on Dahmer. Cleveland held

Continued on page 26

Ryan Murphy, Jamie Babbit

Continued from page 25

her ground throughout the encounter despite how scared she really was.

When not on camera, Nash-Betts and Peters talked to each other sparingly, if not barely. It was only after shooting was wrapped that Nash-Betts got to know Peters and came to like him on a personal level.

Murphy's alluded to history with each panelist included casting Peters in *American Horror Story* and *Pose*, working with Jenkins on the feature *Eat Pray Love* (directed by Murphy and starring Julia Roberts), and bringing Nash-Betts aboard for a bit part on what was Murphy's first TV show, *Popular*. Nash-Betts later starred in Murphy's *Scream Queens*.

Jamie Babbit

Jamie Babbit, a Producers Guild

feature.

Babbit was immediately drawn to the prospects of such a show, finding herself simpatico with the show's co-creators, Will Graham and Abbi Jacobson. Babbit loved the script, was a fan of the movie and had an affinity for Marshall's work. In fact, Babbit wrote her first paper in college about Marshall as a filmmaker, analyzing her work. Now she could pay homage to one of her films in this series while taking it into new territory. But the exploration of sexual orientation and discrimination couldn't be taken down a political path; it still had to be entertaining, funny, and carry an emotional resonance.

Babbit's storytelling as well as comedic acumen are evident in a body of work which includes *But I'm a Cheerleader*, a romantic comedy starring Natasha Lyonne and Michelle Williams which de-



A scene from *A League of Their Own*

Award nominee in 2018 for *Silicon Valley* for which she served as an exec producer and director, is now once again up for PGA and DGA consideration on the basis of her work on *A League of Their Own* (Prime Video).

A drama series inspired by the beloved 1992 feature film of the same title directed by Penny Marshall, *A League of Their Own* takes us back to the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League and its women ballplayers of the 1940s. The series, though, is an opportunity to play extra innings and delve more deeply into other aspects such as queer players, segregation and the marginalization of African-American talent, realities of urban life—all while keeping the humor and heartwarming spirit of the original

butted at the Sundance Film Festival; *The Itty Bitty Committee* which took Best Feature Film honors at the South by Southwest Film festival; a return to SXSW with her *Addicted to Fresno*; episodic directing for the likes of *Gilmore Girls*, *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, *Russian Doll*, *United States of Tara*, *Girls*, *Akwafina Is Nora From Queens*; and Emmy-nominated turns for comedy series directing on *Silicon Valley* and *Only Murders in the Building*.

As for getting to the truth of the characters in *A League of Their Own*, Babbit was excited over the prospects, sharing that “as a gay woman who has directed a lot of queer content, this was a good match for what I do.”

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VFX Supervisor Rocheron Joins DNEG



Visual effects and animation studio DNEG has added Guillaume Rocheron as VFX supervisor. The multiple Oscar® and BAFTA-winning supervisor joins DNEG with more than two decades of industry experience and is based at the company's Los Angeles studio.

Rocheron's list of VFX supervisor credits includes Jordan Peele's otherworldly sci-fi thriller *Nope*, Sam Mendes' groundbreaking war film *1917*, Michael Dougherty's big budget monster movie *Godzilla: King of the Monsters*, and Rupert Sanders' sci-fi techno-thriller *Ghost in the Shell*. Rocheron has most recently overseen the visual effects work for Alejandro G. Iñárritu's *Bardo, False Chronicle of a Handful of Truths*.

In 2020, Rocheron was honored with an Oscar and a BAFTA Award for his work on *1917*. He had previously taken home an Academy Award, a BAFTA and a Visual Effects Society (VES) Award for his work on Ang Lee's *Life of Pi*.

One of Us Names Rachael Penfold CEO

One of Us, a VFX studio with recent titles that include *The Sandman*, *Fantastic Beasts*, *The Matrix Resurrections* and *Bridgerton*, has appointed co-founder and director Rachael Penfold as CEO.



Rachael Penfold

In 2004 Penfold alongside co-founders Dominic Parker and Tom Debenham launched One of Us in London. The company has since added a Paris studio. Penfold, Parker and Debenham retain ownership of the company. Penfold will head a hand-picked band of new appointments in addition to existing members of the senior team. The studio is now home to around 400 people.

Among the new appointments, Neil Boughen is now CTO, Rob Shers becomes head of production and Aimee Dadswell moves to the role of production executive, working alongside Louise Hasting. Ben Harrison has been named head of resourcing.

Cinesite Lines Up \$235M In Funding

The Cinesite group, an independent VFX and animation studio collective, has executed a series of transactions which will result in a \$235 million funding package. This support will enable the company to continue its organic and acquisition revenue growth over the next few years, further develop its talent and serve its customers.



Antony Hunt

NatWest Corporate Bank led the financing alongside Barclays who are the company's long standing bankers, with flexibility to allow more institutions to join the banking club as required. The overall package includes, debt, equity and mezzanine lines from existing shareholders.

Cinesite, which has grown its revenue 14-fold since 2014, will use the funding to accelerate its growth by offering clients greater creative capacity, allowing the company to enter new geographies and business segments while building on its studio partnership model to expand its talent base and global footprint.

Cinesite is a studio group with more than 30 years of industry experience. Its expanding capacity of over 2,500 artists and technicians serve Hollywood studios, streaming services and international production companies. Headquartered in London, the Cinesite group also has facilities in Montreal and Vancouver alongside partner studios in Berlin, Munich (Trixter) Belgrade, Skopje (FX3X) Montreal (Squeeze Animation & L'Atelier Animation), Quebec City (Squeeze), Mumbai (Assemblage Entertainment) and Vancouver (Image Engine) enabling it to scale to thousands of VFX and animation artists worldwide.

Cinesite group CEO Antony Hunt, “Across the Cinesite group we are very well positioned with significant opportunities to capitalize on increasing demand from Hollywood studios, production companies and streaming services. The platform we have built over the last few years coupled with the three decades of experience, world-class talent and trusted reputation will help us greatly in scaling and widening the scope of our business.”

Coed Studios Expands Directorial Roster, Adds Versatile Lineup of Creative Talents Coed Studios, a boutique production and post house launched by directors Haley Geffen and Sam Stephens and Managing Director Damijan Saccio, has expanded its directorial roster with four new additions.

Meet RSP Graduate Matt Dorey Among the newest additions to Rising Sun Pictures' Brisbane Studio is lighting artist Matt Dorey. A 2018 recipient of the studio's Graduate Certificate in Dynamic Effects and Lighting, Matt began his career at Pixel Zoo, Brisbane, and earned his first screen credit at Mill Film Adelaide (now MPC) on the post-apocalyptic drama *Love and Monsters* (a 2021 Oscar nominee for Best Visual Effects).

Filmmaker Sebastián Caporelli Grants Three Wishes To Close Out 2022 Director Sebastián Caporelli (represented in the US by Easy Mondays) tests the boundaries of VFX (courtesy of Caporelli's post house, WolfVFX) with a new 3-spot campaign for Palacio de Hierro (translation: The Iron Palace), an upscale...

Sony Pictures Post Production Services Creates Stirring Soundtrack For "The Woman King" *The Woman King*, the critically acclaimed film from TriStar Pictures, Entertainment One and Director Gina Prince-Bythewood, presents the remarkable story of the Agojie, an all-female unit of warriors who protected the African Kingdom of Dahomey in the 1800s with skills and a fierceness...

Looking at eBay and Sustainability In 2022, Through The Lens of Director Rocio Crudo eBay has released its end-of-year "Manifesto," a 30 celebration of young consumers whose agility and persistence served them well this year. The spot was directed by Rocio Crudo (represented in the US by Easy Mondays), created via Achtung, and produced by E+P, with support from service company Chelsy on location in Vienna.

RSP Continues To Deliver Excellence In VFX Training as 16 Recent Grads Have Been Hired By The Studio Riding the current boom in visual effects production, Rising Sun Pictures has been on a hiring spree. The studio, whose recent projects include Warner Bros' *Elvis*, Marvel Studios' *Thor: Love and Thunder*, and Amazon Studios' *The Boys*, has been recruiting artists at all levels of experience.

James Gunn's Marvel Studios' Special Presentation: "The Guardians of the Galaxy Holiday Special" Features Retro TV Main Title Typography Crafted By Sarofsky Written and directed by James Gunn and recently released on Disney+, the Marvel Studios' Special Presentation "The Guardians of the Galaxy Holiday Special" follows the *Guardians of the Galaxy* as they celebrate Christmas and search for a perfect gift for their leader Peter Quill, aka Star-Lord...

A Christmas Tango - 2022 Every year the charlieuniform-tango team creates a video to share at their year-end Christmas dinner party.

Goldcrest Post Provides Finishing Services For HBO Documentary Films' "Pelosi in the House" Goldcrest Post helped tell the story of one of the most remarkable political careers in recent American history in providing post-production services for the new HBO documentary *Pelosi in the House*. The facility handled both picture and sound finishing for the nearly two-hour film...

Director Samuel Bayer Unveils Creative Labor of Love, Short Film "TIME"; Collaborates With Arcade Editor Matt Laroche Award-winning Director Samuel Bayer teamed up with Arcade Editor Matt Laroche to tell the moving story of the short-film "TIME" T-Mobile Game of Phones Holiday Metaverse. T-Mobile revealed its 2022 Holiday Metaverse, "Game of Phones," which brings the T-Mobile corporate headquarters and top executives to life in the 3D world, engaging users through an immersive online gaming experience. The entire 3D world was built by volumetric production technology company...

Marco & Gio of Joinery Produce Enchanting Campaign For La Marca Prosecco Joinery directors Marco Bellone and Giovanni Consonni, known as Marc & Gio, create an enchanting new campaign for La Marca Prosecco out of Ogilvy. Since meeting in art school, Italian natives have helmed campaigns for clients including Jeep, Coca Cola, Luxottica, Fiat...

Footprint and WattTime Partner to Decrease Carbon Impact of Digital Media Campaigns Digital performance and sustainability firm Footprint and environmental tech nonprofit WattTime announced a partnership aimed at decreasing the carbon impact of digital media campaigns. Their recent integration incorporates historical and real-time marginal emissions data from WattTime...

MTI Film Releases Cortex v5.5 With New AI Tools For Frame Rate Conversion and Up Resolution MTI Film announced the release of Cortex v5.5, a major update to its widely used family of transcoding and workflow solutions.

Director Rocio Crudo Blends Body Positivity, Armpit Hair Removal, and a Touch of Humor For Philips Lumea Directed by Rocio Crudo (represented in the US by Easy Mondays) and created via DEPT, Philips "Lumea" IPL rips the metaphorical band-aid (and the literal follicles) off the hair removal process. Women (and some men) are shown struggling with...

VSA Partners Celebrates 40th Anniversary With Exploration of Design's Human Impact VSA Partners is celebrating its 40th anniversary. Since its founding in 1982, the company has become an iconic part of the Chicago advertising and design community, and has worked with top brands like IBM, Google and Nike to help companies break through in an increasingly noisy world.

Pete Stevenson, Executive Director of The Edge Picture Company Joins New York Festivals TV & Film Awards Advisory Board New York Festivals® TV & Film Awards announced the addition of Pete Stevenson, Executive Director of The Edge Picture Company to the 2023 TV & Film Advisory Board.

ALIBI Music Ramps Up Sound Design With 4 Simple SFX Albums By popular demand, ALIBI Music has expanded its sound design catalog with the release of four new sound effects (SFX) albums. "Lifestyle Title Moves," "Lifestyle Signatures," "Lifestyle Transitions" and "Soft Whooshes."

The Sound of "Devotion" *Devotion*, the new film from Black Label Media, distributed by Columbia Pictures, and based on Adam Makos bestselling book of the same name, tells the inspirational, true story of two elite US Navy pilots who helped turn the tide in the most brutal battle of the Korean War...

HiFi Project Earns London International Award For Progressive Radio Campaign Creative music and sound studio HiFi Project's work with Arnold Worldwide on the Progressive "Barbershop Quartet" radio campaign earned a Bronze London International Award (LIA) in the "Radio & Audio: Campaign" category.

Is Louisville, KY America's Next Major Film Production Hub? Mayor Greg Fischer announced that Louisville Metro Government (LMG) has signed a letter of intent with River

City Entertainment Group, LLC to explore the transformation of the Louisville Gardens building into sound stages for music, film, and digital production.

Five Minutes With... Director Sasha Levinson of Spears & Arrows Like many directors who find success in advertising, Sasha Levinson honed her filmmaking skills on the sets of many music videos, including classic clips for Mary J Blige, 50 Cent, Angelique Kidjo, and Cake. "The music video piece informs my ability to work seamlessly and with a focus..."

Acclaimed Sound Designer Jimmy Boyle Joins Formosa Group Formosa Group, a part of Streamland Media, announced that the acclaimed sound designer and supervising sound editor Jimmy Boyle has joined its impressive talent roster.

Renan's Non-Stop Big Adventure Company Films' Renan Ozturk's recent adventures have taken him around the world for Disney+, climbing the cliff walls of Tepui for National Geographic and scaling remote Alaskan peaks for Greenwich Entertainment. The director that brought us feature films 'MERU' and 'SHERPA' takes TV viewers and his million plus IG followers.

Maxon Closes The Year With Another Maxon One Update & A New Cineversity Maxon announced updates to their Maxon One offering. Magic Bullet now takes full advantage of the new ACES color mode that was introduced earlier this year, offering users better highlight roll off management, better use of dynamic range and improved color accuracy.

Ateliere Shares Key Insights From A+E Networks EMEA on Successful Media Supply Chain Migration To The Cloud Ateliere Creative Technologies, a leading developer of media supply chain solutions, just released key insights from A+E Networks EMEA on how to successfully manage a cloud-native media supply chain migration.

Hometeam Celebrates World Cup With Projects For AmericaSCORES, Volkswagen and USMNT Hometeam kicks off the 2022 World Cup with spots for AmericaSCORES, Volkswagen and the US Men's National Soccer Team (USMNT).

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



A Directorial Showcase

SHOOT's annual talent search makes it mark on festival lineup

By Robert Goldrich

After two years of being curtailed by the pandemic, the Sundance Film Festival looks to return to Park City in full force this month (January 19-29) with an ambitious lineup of screenings and in-person events—just as SHOOT's New Directors Showcase returned in November 2022 to the DGA Theatre in NYC with the screening of its Showcase Reel, an In The Director's Chair session featuring Lauren Greenfield of INSTITUTE, and panel discussions.

Beyond getting back to face-to-face interaction, there's another parallel of sorts between this year's Sundance proceedings and SHOOT's New Directors Showcase as several alums of the latter have feature films slated for debut at the former.

Among them are Eddie Alcazar (SHOOT's 2012 New Directors Showcase), A.V. Rockwell (2017 NDS) and Charlotte Regan (2019 NDS). Meanwhile, making the cut at this year's Sundance shorts competition is director Crystal Kayiza (2019 NDS).

Here's a rundown of the films they are bringing to Sundance:

• *A Thousand and One* / U.S.A. (Director and Screenwriter: A.V. Rockwell, Producers: Eddie Vaisman, Julia Lebedev, Lena Waithe, Rishi Rajani, Brad Weston) – Convinced it's one last, necessary crime on the path to redemption, unapologetic and free-spirited Inez kidnaps 6-year-old Terry from the foster care system. Holding on to their secret and each other, mother and son set out to reclaim their sense of home, identity, and stability in New York City. Cast: Teyana Taylor, Will Catlett, Josiah Cross, Aven Courtney, Aaron Kingsley Adetola. World Premiere.

• *Divinity* / U.S.A. (Director, Screenwriter and Producer: Eddie Alcazar, Exec Producer: Steven Soderbergh) – Two mysterious brothers abduct a mogul during his quest for immortality. Meanwhile, a seductive woman helps them launch a journey of self-discovery. Cast: Stephen Dorff, Moises Arias, Jason Genao,

Karrueche Tran, Bella Thorne, Scott Bakula. World Premiere. Fiction.

• *Scrapper* / U.K. (Director and Screenwriter: Charlotte Regan, Producer: Theo Barrowclough) – Georgie is a dreamy 12-year-old girl who lives happily alone in her London flat, filling it with magic. Out of nowhere, her estranged father turns up and forces her to confront reality. Cast: Harris Dickinson, Lola Campbell, Alin Uzun, Ambreen Razia, Olivia Brady, Aylin Tezel. World Premiere.

And the alluded to short film set to screen at Sundance is:

• *Rest Stop* / U.S.A. (Director and Screenwriter: Crystal Kayiza, Producers: Jalena Keane-Lee, Brit Fryer) – On a bus ride from New York to Oklahoma, Meyi, a young Ugandan-American girl, realizes her place in the world through her mother's ambitious effort to reunite their family. Cast: Leeanna E. Tushabe, Alicia Basiima, Khalid Semakula, Robert Wanyama, Margaret Bisase, Olivia Nantongo.

Rockwell's *A Thousand and One* is in Sundance's U.S. Dramatic Competition. Regan's *Scrapper* made the cut in the World Cinema Dramatic Competition. Alcazar's *Divinity* will screen in Sundance's NEXT showcase. And Kayiza's *Rest Stop* is in the U.S. Fiction Short Films lineup.

Rockwell, Alcazar, Regan and Kayiza are not strangers to Sundance. Each has had prior work that made the festival cut. Regan screened her short film *Fry-*

Up at Sundance in 2018. Rockwell brought her short *Feathers* to the festival in 2019. Alcazar directed the short *Fuckkkkyouuu* which made the Sundance shorts cut in 2016. (Alcazar was also a producer on *Kuso*, a Flying Lotus-directed feature which screened at Sundance in 2017.) And director Kayiza has had two prior short films selected for Sundance—*Edgcombe* in 2019 and *See You Next Time* in 2020. *Edgcombe* earned her a slot in SHOOT's 2019 New Directors Showcase.



From top left, clockwise: Directors Eddie Alcazar, A.V. Rockwell, Charlotte Regan and Crystal Kayiza

All four directors have production company affiliations in the commercial-making/branded content space: Alcazar is with Chromista; Kayiza is repped by Little Minx; Regan is on the Knuckle-head roster; and Rockwell is handled in the U.K. by Somesuch.

SHOOT caught up with directors Alcazar and Kayiza to shed further light on their latest Sundance selections.

Eddie Alcazar

Sundance's Next program is for visionary works set apart by an innovative, forward-thinking approach to storytelling. *Divinity* is one of nine films earning Next distinction this year at the festival. Alcazar said he's honored to be in such company, part of "a specific section that focuses on something that is out of the ordinary. That's what I'm in film for—to explore and discover new ways of telling stories."

Rather than 30 or more continuous days of lensing, *Divinity* was made over the course of seven separate shoots spread out over an extended stretch of time. Multiple cinematographers were deployed as Alcazar grappled with the themes/topics of rebirth, immortality and the meaning of life and death. He cast Stephen Dorff as a tech mogul who creates a chemical called Divinity which enables people to live forever. It's not quite perfected as Divinity creates physical but not mental longevity. The chemical is a work in progress for Dorff's character as are the implications of living forever, triggering weighty questions and soul searching. However, Alcazar brought some lightheartedness to the story at the same time, describing it in genre language as sci-fi, horror, drama, thriller and suspense "but also loose in its seriousness."

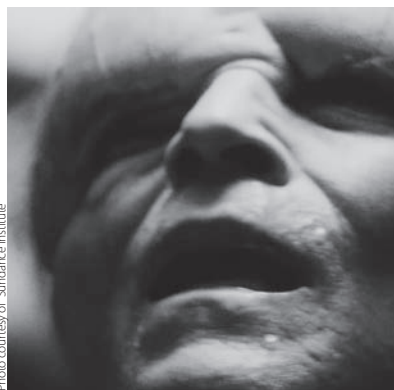


Photo courtesy of Sundance Institute

A scene from *Divinity*

Helping him to fashion and craft the feature was noted filmmaker Stephen Soderbergh who served as an executive producer on *Divinity*. It was on a prior feature he directed titled *Perfect* that Alcazar first hooked up with Soderbergh. An actor and friend of initially connected Alcazar with Soderbergh. Alcazar had been seeking different opinions on a rough cut of *Perfect* and Soderbergh consented to give it a look-see. After viewing that rendition, Soderbergh came to meet Alcazar in person, providing help and feedback. "He came on board that film after it was pretty much done," recalled Alcazar. "It was cool to next have him involved from the ground up [on *Divinity*]." Alcazar added that Soderbergh also provided some funding support for *Divinity* while being hands-off yet very open to helping explore different approaches. "Our relationship grew from *Perfect*," said Alcazar who greatly values the trusting bond he has with Soderbergh.

Alcazar was surprised that Sundance selected *Divinity* in that he could only provide the festival with a rough cut. "I was thinking I'd have this movie ready by Cannes. Then Sundance picked it and I had to get moving." At press time,

Alcazar was putting in long hours to finish the video and audio post in time for Sundance.

Once he's done that and soaks in his latest Sundance experience, Alcazar plans to reflect on the way this film was shot, which entailed collaboration with five cinematographers, the prime ones being Danny Hiele along with Matthias Koenigswieser. While on one hand you lose some continuity by working with varied DPs over a year or more, there's something to be said, observed Alcazar, for working with a lot of different creative minds who are all able to contribute to the film. And instead of being confined to footage shot over a month or so, you can rethink and reevaluate the imagery you need, enabling a project to evolve visually.

Alcazar has a collaborative track record

with Hiele, including on the short film *The Vandal* for which Darren Aronofsky served as an executive producer. In fact Aronofsky introduced *The Vandal* last year for its world premiere screening at the Cannes Film Festival. (Aronofsky is also a founder of Chromista, the production company that handles director Alcazar for spots and branded entertainment.)

As for DP Koenigswieser, he shot the aforementioned *Perfect* for Alcazar.

The director's filmography also includes the HBO documentary feature *Tapia*, which was executive produced by 50 Cent.

Crystal Kayiza

While *Rest Stop* is the third short Kayiza has brought to Sundance, it is the first

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Flash Back

January 8, 2018 Filmmaker Michael Mann—a four time Oscar nominee, including for Best Director on *The Insider*—has joined RSA Films for commercial representation worldwide. Mann's most recent project with the company is Nike's "You Can't Guarantee a Win, but You Can Guarantee a Fight," featuring unbeaten Hong Kong boxer Rex Tso in a gripping ad that exalts resilience and will. It's a reunion for the director and RSA, who first collaborated on a sultry thriller for Rolex called "Water," via JWT Paris.....TBWA\Chiat\Day New York has hired John Doris as head of integrated production. He reports directly to chief creative officer Chris Beresford-Hill....Bonnie Goldfarb, co-founder and executive producer of harvest films, has been appointed to the California Film Commission (CFC) as a member of its advisory board. Goldfarb continues her stewardship of harvest as EP. She has been very active in identifying efficiencies productions can take that promote recycling, carbon neutralization and overall waste reduction. She is a long-time member of the DGA and brings decades of production experience to the CFC.....

January 8, 2013 The Directors Guild of America (DGA) has named its nominees for Best Commercial Director of 2012: Lance Acord of Park Pictures; Steve Ayson of MJZ and The Sweet Shop; Fredrik Bond of MJZ; Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu of Anonymous Content; and Tom Kuntz of MJZ....Wieden+Kennedy (W+K) has made two additions to its global executive management team: Colleen DeCourcy and Mark Fitzloff, who will serve as global co-executive creative directors. Meanwhile partner and global COO Dave Luhr will assume the role of president, and Dan Wieden will become chairman of W+K's global management team. Additionally Joe Staples has been promoted to executive creative director of W+K Portland. Staples will replace Fitzloff on the Portland management team, partnering with Susan Hoffman and Tom Blessington.... Epoch founder Mindy Goldberg is expanding upon her role as managing director of the production company, which operates out of New York, Los Angeles and London. Goldberg will continue to chart the long-term vision of the production house while extending her oversight of the day-to-day operations, alongside an Epoch team consisting of exec producer John Duffin, head of production Megan Murphree and new hire, exec producer Melissa Culligan. Prior to joining Epoch, Culligan was EP of The Directors Bureau.....

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Nelson Cragg

Cinematographer turned director garners awards season attention for episodic work on The Boys



By Robert Goldrich

First establishing himself as an accomplished cinematographer—as underscored by an ASC Award win in 2009 for an episode of *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* (“For Gedda”), and a pair of Emmy nominations in 2013 and 2016, respectively, for episodic lensing on *Homeland* (“Beirut Is Back”) and *The People v. O.J. Simpson: American Crime Story* (“From the Ashes of Tragedy”)—Nelson Cragg has since settled nicely into the director’s chair thanks in part to series creator extraordinaire Ryan Murphy.

Cragg had shot several shows for Murphy and was looking to break into directing. Murphy gave him that opportunity with episodes of *American Horror Story: Roanoke* and *The Assassination of Gianni Versace: American Crime Story*. Then came additional directorial turns on installments of Murphy’s *Pose* and *Ratched*.

Cragg’s directing endeavors have since extended beyond Murphy shows, most notably multiple episodes of *Them* (which include the pilot and his serving as an exec producer on the series), *Truth Be Told*, and most recently *The Boys* (Prime Video)—specifically episodes 5 and 6 of season 3—which has him in the current Emmy and Guild Awards

season conversation.

Garnering considerable attention has been episode 6, “Herogasm,” named after the annual superhero orgy event right out of Garth Ennis and Darick Robertson’s comic book series on which the show—created by Eric Kripke—is based.

“Herogasm” puts the likes of Butcher (portrayed by Karl Urban), Hughie (Jack Quaid), MM (Laz Alonso), Annie/Starlight (Erin Moriarty), The Deep (Chace Crawford), Homelander (Antony Starr) and Soldier Boy (Jensen Ackles) in major mayhem, some immersed in while others are surrounded by X-rated behavior.

Cragg, the cinematographer turned director, was in 2021 nominated—as a director in tandem with DP Checco Varese for a Camerimage Golden Frog Award in the TV series competition on the strength of the *Them* pilot.

Among his other lensing credits in years past were *Breaking Bad*, *Flashforward*, *Halt and Catch Fire*, and pilots for the series *Terra Nova* and *Elementary*.

This Chat Room interview was edited for clarity and brevity.

SHOOT: What drew you to *The Boys*? How did the opportunity emerge for you to direct two pivotal episodes in season 3?

Cragg: I went to USC where Eric Kripke also went. I didn’t know him well but I knew some of the same folks from around those years. I hadn’t talked to him for a long time.

At the height of the pandemic, everything shut down. Production was just starting up in the new year [2022] and *The Boys* was looking to crew up.

I had a great call with Eric. We hit it off. I loved the gritty style of *The Boys*. I loved the idea of bringing that realism, kind of like what I shot as a DP on *Homeland*, to super heroes.

SHOOT: What was (were) the biggest challenge(s) that *The Boys*—particularly the “Herogasm” episode—posed to

you as a director?

Cragg: For me the biggest challenge was getting the tone right. You have to treat the material so honestly and make it as real as you can.

People wearing superhero outfits and doing insane things—that material needs to be grounded so that it works emotionally, so that this story and this world work. People enjoy being in this world and respect the characters.

We wanted to do fantastical episodes but still keep it emotionally real. It was challenging. How [in the “Herogasm” episode] do you do that when you’re in that room with 200 extras simulating sex?

SHOOT: Is it difficult as a director letting go of the cinematography since you used to be a DP? How did you go about working with cinematographer Dan Stolfoff on

The Boys?

Cragg: It is easy to let go. As a director you’re preoccupied with so many things. Dan is an amazing photographer. He has been with the show since season 1. He’s an incredibly nice man and a talented storyteller, easy to work with. He helped set and knows the tone of the series.

SHOOT: What was your biggest takeaway or lessons learned from working on *The Boys*? What do you feel you walk away with first and foremost from the experience?

Cragg: With all the spectacle of “Herogasm,” the fight sequences, my relationship with the actors was important. Jensen Ackles who plays Solider Boy was pretty much introduced in the previous episode.

He didn’t get much screen time until episodes 5 and 6. It’s important to build relationships with actors.

We were in Toronto, quarantined [per COVID protocols]. We couldn’t leave. We couldn’t bring our family or friends. We were able to build relationships with the cast that you couldn’t have done in normal times.

Because we were isolated up there,

there was an intense kind of familial bond. It allowed us to go a little deeper with the actors and their characters than you would in normal television.

We built interesting characters. Jensen’s character was built in a cinematic way.

I love working with Eric Kripke. I love the cast. They delivered great performances.

SHOOT: Ryan Murphy gave you the opportunity to direct after you served as cinematographer for him on a number of series over the years. How did that all come about?

Cragg: It was after I had wrapped shooting on Ryan’s *The People v. O.J. Simpson: American Crime Story* that I was called into his office for a meeting. He asked me what I would like to do next.

I told him that I would like to direct shows for him. He was gracious enough to give me episodes of *American Horror Story: Roanoke* and *The Assassination of Gianni Versace: American Crime Story* to direct.

Later I directed episodes of *Pose* and *Ratched* for Ryan. And then I went on to shows for other producers like *Them* and *The Boys*.



“I loved the gritty style of *The Boys*. I loved the idea of bringing that realism, kind of what I shot as a DP on *Homeland*, to super heroes (now as a director).”

Rest Stop On The Fest Circuit

Continued from page 29

one that's scripted. Both *Edgcombe* and *See Your Next Time* were documentary shorts.

However, all three films have a common bond, reflecting Kayiza's penchant for delving into and shedding light on the human condition.

Edgcombe introduced us to North

her mom was when making the move to the U.S. This underscored for Kayiza the importance of her familial connections and in particular the relationship with her mom.

The transition from documentary to scripted fare was not all that jarring for Kayiza. "My process is my process," she observed, noting that whether a project



Alicia Basiima, Leanna E. Tushabee and Khalid Semakula in *Rest Stop*

Carolina's impoverished rural Edgcombe County, focusing on an African American on probation who works at an Applebee's restaurant, and expanding with a look at his larger community. Meanwhile *See You Next Time* took us to a nail salon and spa in Brooklyn, NY, and the relationship between a nail tech named Judy, a Fujianese immigrant, and Arriana, a Black woman who is a counselor and Judy's loyal client. *See You Next Time* gives us a window into the relationship between women of color and how they see each other and themselves.

Now *Rest Stop*, directed and written by Kayiza, connects us with a young Ugandan-American girl and her mother as they look to reunite with their father/husband and siblings whom they've been separated from for some time. Kayiza, whose family is Ugandan, shared that the short explores that moment as a kid when you realize your parents are human beings and have a presence in the world that goes beyond being your caretakers. Kayiza described *Rest Stop* as "a pre-mature coming-of-age story."

Kayiza assembled an entirely Ugandan cast of first-time actors for *Rest Stop*. The director noted that she began writing the script at about the same age that

is scripted or nonfiction, her instinct is to be "collaborative and build community on set," forming what amounts to being a family of sorts in the pursuit of filmmaking. Having *Rest Stop* selected for screening at Sundance, she continued, is a celebration of this team and how they came together on the project.

Rest Stop made its debut at the Toronto International Film Festival with Sundance now in the offing. Kayiza loves the opportunity to see how an audience responds to a film. Making her cherish the experience even more is the fact that *Rest Stop* was made during the pandemic, making her feel especially blessed that it can be shown to festival goers in person.

"When making this film, we were definitely unsure what state the world was going to be in," said Kayiza. Just being able to have people get together to see a film, she affirmed, is cause for celebration.

While she plans on continuing her filmmaking spanning documentary and nonfiction, Kayiza also hopes to make more inroads into the commercialmaking/branded content arena via Little Minx, the production company headed by Rhea Scott. Kayiza sees that space as "a great opportunity to expand and further define my voice as a filmmaker."

A League of Their Own

Continued from page 26

Babbitt said she was blessed with a stellar ensemble cast which includes new aspiring players Carson Haw (portrayed by Jacobson), a married catcher from Idaho, Lupe Garcia, the team's star pitcher, and Joe Deluca (Melanie Field) and Greta Gill (D'Arcy Carden), best friends from NYC.

An example of the new ground traversed by the series is Maxine "Max" Chapman (Chanté Adams) who wows everyone at an open tryout with her pitching arm. But because Chapman is Black, she's not allowed to compete. The series follows her over the course of the season as she strives to play the sport she loves. This expands greatly upon Marshall's feature film in which an unnamed Black woman with a once-in-a-lifetime arm is seen briefly but not heard from again.

Among the biggest challenges was assembling the overall cast. The search was on for not only diversity but comedic energy and acting talent. Babbitt said "a very big net" was cast to find talented comedians and actors. Then there was the inherent difficulty of scenes with 30 or so people, the amount of coverage and planning that takes. Babbitt tapped into her experience that entailed years on *Gilmore Girls* and then *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*. "I had to implement my knowledge of constructing one shot with 15 to 30 people in it. They are some of my favorite shots in the show [*A League of Their Own*]."

Another prime challenge was the pandemic. Babbitt wrapped directing the pilot for *A League of Their Own* just a day before production, and the world in general, was shut down to COVID. Post was done remotely to finish the episode. When the pandemic lockdown was eventually lifted, Babbitt took on the pilot for *Only Murders in the Building*, which ended up debuting before *A League of Their Own*. She then resumed her duties on *A League of Their Own* as a director and EP.

Babbitt also incorporated adroit usage of visual effects into the show. For one, they were deployed to help make an old-fashioned circa 1940s baseball field in L.A. look like the multi-level Wrigley Field stadium in Chicago. Furthermore shooting in modern-day downtown L.A. to create 1940s' Chicago, VFX also had to be put to work to give buildings the verticality and scope of the Chicago skyline

of the '40s. Babbitt noted that she opted for location filming in that shooting on a backlot doesn't feel lived-in—"it just feels like a backlot." For Babbitt it was important that *A League of Their Own* show "real people with all their flaws, their queerness and things the original movie didn't get into"—all within authentic spaces, in grimy and real lived-in city streets.

For the pilot episode, Babbitt once again collaborated with cinematographer Jeffrey Waldron who had shot two features for her—*Addicted To Fresno* and *Breaking the Girls*. Babbitt cited various factors, including Waldron's talent with colors to support characters and story, as well as sophisticated cinema-style lighting, as drawing her to him for *A League of Their Own*.

For the next two episodes she directed—which entailed shooting in Pittsburgh where steel and glass factories circa the 1940s proved to be valuable settings—Babbitt turned for the first time to cinematographer Dagmar Weaver-Madsen. Babbitt said of the DP, "She brought a lot of the same things that were working in the pilot with Jeff [Waldron] while adding some of her own flair."

Babbitt was initially attracted to Weaver-Madsen's work on *High Maintenance*. "It was a well-done show, very well lit, had a real energy and grittiness to it yet still beautiful." Those qualities were important to *A League of Their Own*, continued Babbitt, explaining that she wanted to depict the characters as "real women who got dirty, had pit stains and were not perfect Barbie dolls." Weaver-Madsen made sure "things looked a little bit more lived in," assessed Babbitt.

Babbitt said she learned much from *A League of Their Own*, particularly since she had never done a sports show before. She confessed to being intimidated by and not familiar with the rules of baseball going in. Babbitt discovered, though, that "even if you're not an expert in a certain aspect of the show you're directing, if you come to it with an appreciation and a desire to learn, you can explore it in a very informed way. You approach it kind of like the audience does." This in turn helps in the creation of a series that can connect with baseball and non-baseball fans alike, doing justice to the human stories and inherent drama of the sports genre.



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street talk

Entertainment marketing agency Wild Card Creative Group (WCCG) has inked a strategic partnership with editor, director, producer and executive Skip Chaisson through which his production shingle Skip Film will set up shop under the WCCG umbrella. The addition of Skip Film bolsters the company's already established editorial services. Skip Film will also collaborate with WCCG's creative content studio, 3AM. WCCG will provide full operational support to Skip Film. As an example of the creative work the two entities will execute through this strategic partnership, their latest release was the teaser for Lucasfilm's highly anticipated *Indiana Jones 5*. Chaisson founded Skip Film in 2001 as a boutique post company and creative agency specializing in trailers, promos, main titles, commercials, and original

content for major studios and streaming platforms. He joined El Rey Network, founded by filmmaker Robert Rodriguez, in 2014 as SVP of creative and on-air promotions, before being upped to CCO in 2016 to shepherd all creative and brand elements for the network's linear, digital and social feeds. During his time with El Rey, the Skip Film banner shifted focus from entertainment marketing to creating hundreds of hours of content and series production, including *Lucha Underground* and *The Director's Chair with Robert Rodriguez*. Skip Film's partnership with WCCG will bring the company's abilities full circle, back to marketing campaign development. Chaisson has more than 20 years as a creative director, EP, network exec, editor and director. Among the feature trailers he's developed are *Braveheart*, *Armageddon*, *Gladiator*, *Gravity*, *Man on Fire*, *Mission Impossible* and *Mission Impossible 2*. WCCG and Skip Films hit the ground running. In addition to *Indiana Jones 5*, they've lent their respective editorial expertise to *Avatar: The Way of Water*, *The White Lotus*, *Star Trek: Strange New Worlds* and *Till*. The Wild Card Editorial team cut the trailers for *Black Adam* and *The Handmaid's Tale* with Chaisson cutting both *Star Trek* and *Till*....

rep report

Indie reps Bobby Rowe and Sabrina Mehar have formalized their longtime close professional and personal relationship into a new repping company named **THICK and THIN**. Based in New York and Miami, Rowe and Mehar open with a roster of companies including: **Chapeau Studios**, a VFX and design studio; editorial and production company **Cutters Studios**; **E1 Studios**, a mainstay in the field of pre-visualization that now handles any stage of the production pipeline from start to finish; **MAS, Music and Strategy**, a bicoastal music and sound studio; **Curiosity Productions**, a minority-owned studio which offers production, post and photography; minority-owned production company **Unicorns & Unicorns**; and production company **Windy Films**. Rowe comes to **THICK and THIN** from his own company, Bobby Rowe, while Mehar comes over from her post as head of sales at **E1 Studios**. Rowe is a native New Yorker who found his way into repping from his first perch at **Crushing Music** where he started as an intern. That's where he met Mehar, a London native who'd just arrived in NYC on a Mountbatten internship. Rowe went on to become a producer, albeit with a sales focus, at music house **Karmagroove** and has worked as a freelance composer. Mehar connected him with his next gig, at **MAS**, and from there he landed at the pre-viz specialist shop **321 Launch**, where he reconnected with Mehar. He opened his own repping firm after leaving **Launch** in 2019. Mehar's career took a similar path, with a few side jaunts. After **Crushing Music**, she joined edit house **The Well**, and ended up working with indie rep **Jolie Miller**. Mehar took a year's break to work in Dubai, then landed a sales and marketing gig at a Wall Street private club, where she specialized in partnering with global luxury brands seeking to connect with its clientele. She then returned to the ad biz, landing at **321 Launch** while also opening her own rep firm **Cachet**, before going in-house at **E1 Studios**....



Meet The NDS Class of 2022

Discover Emerging Filmmakers



(Top row from left) Rebecca Applebaum, Amandla Baraka, Ilanna Barkusky, Alec Basse, Annie Bercy, Sheena Brady, Jeffrey Brown
 (2nd row from left) Eva Doležalová, Ariel Ellis, Taylor Ellis, Alexander Gilbert, Evan Ari Kelman, Tess Lafia, Maren Lavelle
 (3rd row from left) Kyle LeClaire, Bethany Mollenkof, Jeremy Nachbar
 (4th row from left) Bola Ogun, Andrew Rhee, Kimberly Stuckwisch, Walter Thompson-Hernández, Steven Tralongo, Drew Vaughan, Clayton Vila
 (5th row from left) Noah Wagner, Robert E. Wagner, Rog + Bee Walker, Wes Walker
 (bottom row from left) Miles Warren, Gabrielle Woodland, Wukda, Courtney Sofiah Yates.

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The 20th Annual SHOOT NDS 2022 Reel

The 33 directors above made the final cut for this year's Showcase with work spanning commercials, PSAs, spec advertising, promo fare, branded content, short films, music videos and episodic TV. The reel debuted at the SHOOT 20th Annual New Directors Showcase Event at the DGA in NYC in November. For event details, pics & videos visit SHOOTonline.com/AboutNDS2022

The 21st Annual SHOOT NDS Search 2023 will be open for entries April-July at EnterNDS.SHOOTonline.com



24 of the 33 directors in the SHOOT New Directors Showcase Class of 2022 were present at the NDS Event at the DGA Theatre in New York City, November 17, 2022 (photo by Doug Goodman)

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The NEW DIRECTORS SHOWCASE

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