

Independent producers on script development • Sustaining a career as a filmmaker

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FILM

life & time

RICHARD LINKLATER plays the long game
and directs a buoyant masterpiece,
BOYHOOD.



Ira Sachs'
LOVE IS STRANGE

Ned Benson's
**THE DISAPPEARANCE
OF ELEANOR RIGBY**

Philippe Garrel's
JEALOUSY

Roberto Minervini's
STOP THE POUNDING HEART

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structure?" she laughs. "As long as I have a passion for the project and believe the film needs to be done, I'd rather be in a space where I'm pushing myself hard than making something that's 'doable.' Even when I'm on set, I don't like getting exactly what I thought when I wrote the script. You know you're 'getting it' when you're surprised by your actors or the way the shots are coming through. There's something there, something that's alive." — *Scott Macaulay*

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ROBERT EGGERS

"When we think of historical witches we think of persecuted herbalists, kind white witches, earth mothers — what the Wiccan, New Age-y stuff has grown out of. But what's not talked about is the dark side of the early modern witch, and what she meant to not just men, but women. The witch embodied men's fears and fantasies about women, good and bad, and also women's fears and ambivalences about motherhood in a male-dominated society. And that baggage still exists in the unconscious of today."

That's Brooklyn-based designer-turned-director Robert Egger describing his first feature, *The Witch*, currently in post following an Ontario shoot whose production stories recall historical detail-obsessed productions like *Heaven's Gate* or *Barry Lyndon*, not a relatively low-budget independent. "You think it would be easy to find virgin forest in Northern Ontario, but it isn't because there's so much logging," Egger laughs. "Fortunately, the town of Kiosk has white pine and hemlock that's very similar to the forest system in New England. And the clapboards on the house — if they're not hand riven from red oak or white oak, they won't look correct. Nobody in Canada knew how to do that, so we had them done in England and shipped."

Produced by Parts and Labor's Lars Knudsen and Jay Van Hoy, the 1630-set *The Witch* may have had scary production ambitions — not just all that historical detail but child actors, animals, period diction, and "laying down 80 feet of dolly track in the woods several times a day" — but they are all in service to a sincere aesthetic. Growing up in New England, Egger says he was "a weird kid — I'd go to Salem every Halloween. Dilapidated colonial farms, witches — those were part of the childhood folklore I was into. And now, fairytales, folk tales comparative religion and mythology are my biggest

interests. If I'm not working on a project, I'll read Spencer's *The Faerie Queene* for fun." Indeed, asked to cite influences on the film, Eggers cites fairytale illustrators like Arthur Rackham, Edmund Dulac and Howard Pyle along with Bergman and, with very real humility, Tarkovsky.

Eggers began his career in theater and soon became an in-demand production designer. His second short film, an adaptation of Edgar Allan Poe's *The Tell-Tale Heart*, led to some feature interest, but his initial scripts "were too weird and genre-less." "They were semi-plotless but still had spectacle — Edwardian circuses, or Hoffmanesque doll-makers," he says. *The Witch* — a story of a Christian family's mysterious implosion at what may be the hands of the New Canaan-Woode witch — allowed Eggers to merge an interest in historical detail ("I read everything from Puritan prayer manuals and real accounts of witchcraft; I read the Geneva Bible from beginning to end," he says) with more of a classic, *The Shining*-type horror storyline. *The Witch* should hit the festival circuit next year along with his third short, *The Brothers*, a gripping, Cain-and-Abel tale set — where else? — in the woods. — *S.M.*

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JODIE MACK

What does Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon* mean to you?

A faded black T-shirt with that prism logo, and the hazily remembered times you had while wearing it? Or maybe the "ka-ching" of "Money" blasting from your dad's car radio on the way back from the beach. Perhaps your playlists contain not Floyd but remixes and remakes by the Orb or the Flaming Lips. Or just possibly your grandfather who had dementia came to live with you when you were in seventh grade, and you'd play the record every afternoon in your den because that's where the stereo was, and one day, after your granddad hadn't said a word for months, he lifted his head and muttered, under his breath, "this is such very strange music," and, suddenly realizing that there was someone still in there, your young head exploded with dark forebodings too.

Whatever meaning is encapsulated by Pink Floyd's immersive ode to losing your mind amidst post-war Western capitalism, you'll find it and much more in British-born, New Hampshire-residing filmmaker

Jodie Mack's early career masterpiece, *Dusty Stacks of Mom: The Poster Project*. Performed — yes, performed — at festivals ranging from Rotterdam to RIDM to True/False, *Dusty Stacks of Mom* is Mack's 43-minute animated film about the collapse of her mother's rock-and-roll merch biz. Against sequences ranging from psychedelic abstraction to her mom at the studio to explosive collages containing not just that light-shot prism but Tony Montana, Pamela Anderson, and the company's other T-shirt/badge/poster printing projects, Mack sing-songs an album-length cover in which Floyd's tunes are rewritten ("Us and Them" becomes "Supply and Demand") to chronicle not just the demise of her mom's company but physical media in general. It's a smart, improbably charming, and generally mind-blowing work.

An experimental animator who studied at University of Florida and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Mack's "cameraless" first films were "goopy, gunky, excited, fast-paced animations — I'd stick things to the film's surface," she says. From this work grew an interest in "discarded materials, cultural detritus, and waste." She explains, "I'm interested in how people perceive art outside of art and cultural circles, how we experience art in our everyday life, and how similar formal attributes can play out in the museum and in the Dollar Store."

Mack began *Dusty Stacks of Mom* right out of grad school, traveling to Florida to shoot at her mom's warehouse before it closed down. But it wasn't until a few years later when, heavily influenced by the experimental animation she was teaching at Dartmouth, "it all started to make sense." "I wanted to create this doc centered around this album and how it functions in an industry full of multiples," she says. "I wanted to convey information in an interesting way. Voiceover and text can be boring, so I decided it should be song." Mack got various musician friends to do instrumental covers of each track, and when she got frustrated during the sound mix, Images Festival Artistic Director Kate MacKay suggested she do it live — a perfect strategy for an era in which arthouse theater admissions are declining and films themselves are part of a digital media that's being discarded. "Having a live performance ups the stakes," Mack says. "It increases the reasons for us all to be convening together in a room. Each experience is unique; the imperfections play it



Jodie Mack



Christopher LaMarca and Jessica Dimmock



Bernardo Britto

differently each time."

Upcoming for Mack is work on a project about "fabrics, objects, and how they travel and represent culture in faraway lands." Describing it as a "travel play variety roadshow," Mack says, "It might just be like the early days of cinema — I'll talk, sing songs, screen the rushes, and maybe never even do a serious edit." — S.M.

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JESSICA DIMMOCK + CHRISTOPHER LAMARCA

Jessica Dimmock and Christopher LaMarca first met at the International Center of Photography, where training in documentary photojournalism laid the common foundation for their future working relationship. Separately, both took on long-term projects while working as professional photographers. Dimmock's three years tracking a group of heroin addicts became her monograph, *The Ninth Floor*, while LaMarca's work included a series on underground pool hustling in Queens and four years tracking forest activism in Oregon.

In 2010, LaMarca was burnt out on still photography. His work covering environmental issues for *Rolling Stone*, *GQ* and similar publications led him to feel that he was "adding to the madness." At the same time, the emergence of the 5D camera convinced him he could take up documentary work. The result was two years of shooting on *Boone*, a closely attentive portrait of three Oregon farmers struggling to keep their land and battling the USDA. "To say that the film is about the farm movement or green movement doesn't do it justice," LaMarca says of his film, currently in postproduction. "Farming has been very romanticized, but the actual experience is very gritty and not comfortable, and that was the story that I wanted to tell."

When shooting on *Boone* ended, LaMarca got a call from Dimmock, by this point a celebrated photojournalist who also d.p.'d Mark Jackson's feature, *Without*. She had found subjects in Portland that could offer a chance to collaborate. What began as a weekend shoot for a short became *Brick*, a multiyear project about four transgender women in the Pacific Northwest that begins editing this fall. "By the end of the first few days, it was very clear that we were going to

make a film together," Dimmock says.

"When we started shooting *Brick*, we both knew we wanted the film to feel immersive, not only making a film about an important social issue but also creating a visceral entry point into a world most people are unfamiliar with," LaMarca says. In fall 2013, *Brick* received a Chicken and Egg development grant, and in June 2014, the filmmakers screened early material for potential partners at Good Pitch. Dimmock and LaMarca's footage looks like the product of harmonious integration of two totally similar aesthetics: their handheld cameras are comfortable in dark domestic spaces, constantly shifting foreground-background focus while finding new objects of contemplation. The intent, she says, is not just to be "racking focus because someone is talking, but staying on something that feels emotionally resonant."

LaMarca got used to running his own sound on *Boone*, a method the duo employ to build intimacy with their subjects. "At the end of the day, another person in the room with a boom mic hanging over people's heads affects things," LaMarca explains. "We can run up to five lavs at a time: three off mine, Jessica with two, and we both have a shotgun." That also means handling two cameras simultaneously to allow for shot-countershot and a full, narrative immersion. "We want to be able to shift perspective as though you're in the room with them," Dimmock adds. "And we also want to make it really, really beautiful." — *Vadim Rizov*

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BERNARDO BRITTO

Bernardo Britto conceived his most recent animated short, the Sundance Short Film Jury Prize-winning *Yearbook*, after grappling with the ultimately insignificant scale of his previous work. "It didn't mean anything, and people would just forget about it," realized Britto. "How do you deal with making things people won't remember 100, 200, 300 years from now?"

If you're Britto, you make a devastatingly emotional, socio-politically steeped love story of sorts about a man who has been tasked with cataloguing our world history in the 17 years before an alien missile detonates Earth. It's a highly intelligent allegory, characteristic of Britto's style, which he says favors story over technique: "I think a lot of

people get into animation because they're obsessed with the craft, but I operate from a standpoint of, 'I have a great script, it would work well as an animation.'" Though he recalls creating vague animations in middle school with the obsolete Microsoft Paint, the Brazilian-born Britto enrolled at New York University's Tisch in 2007 for film production. "It wasn't until I took a course with John Canemaker," he says, "that I got into animation, I think maybe because of how supportive everyone was. And it wasn't as competitive as the film floor."

After graduation, Britto was introduced to the Miami-based Borscht Corporation through his producer, Brett Potter. Since Britto was reared in nearby Weston and looking to make a film reflecting on his home given his parents' imminent move, Potter suggested he send Borscht head Lucas Leyva a script. Leyva bit and commissioned *Places Where We Lived* (SXSW 2013), an animation that employs live-action and archival footage of industrial demolition to relay the history of Britto's home and sale with his signature brand of subversive paranoia.

As much as he enjoys the "direct path that animation affords from [his] brain to final product," Britto sometimes feels he's missing out on the collaborations inherent to live action. That fear should be assuaged, as this October he will head to Argentina to shoot a live-action feature. Starring Camille Rutherford as a "25-year-old French Edward Snowden-type" who takes refuge in Argentina after leaking government secrets, the film will be shot from the perspective of a documentary crew she's hired to trail her while awaiting the fallout. Britto describes it as *An Oversimplification of Her Beauty* meets *Blowout*. — *Sarah Salovaara*

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JAMEY PHILLIPS

Said the prizefight manager between rounds to his young, pummeled fighter, "It's not what he's doing to you. It's what you're not doing." Quoting those words at the head of an NAACP speech given on the 50th anniversary of the Supreme Court's *Brown vs. Board of Education* ruling, comedian, author and activist Bill Cosby famously turned that boxing message around. In what's now known as "the pound cake speech" (for a section decrying young black men shot for shoplifting a piece of pound cake), he sharply criticized not the white power structure