

DECEMBER 6, 2025  
HOTEL SOFITEL, BEVERLY HILLS

# HOLIDAY TOAST



# THE ENDURING RESILIENCE OF THE WIM COMMUNITY

## A Message from Founder & Executive Director, Tema L. Staig

As we close out another challenging year in the entertainment industry, I've been contemplating the remarkable resilience and determination of our community. This year tested us in unexpected ways—professionally, creatively, and personally.

The onset of 2025 was marked by the devastating impact of the LA fires. Many in our membership faced evacuations, production shutdowns, and emotional strain as beloved locations and communities were threatened. Yet even amid smoke and uncertainty, I witnessed what I always know to be true: our community shows up for one another. We support, we rebuild, and we keep creating. Less than a year since the devastation, many have broken ground on new homes, and are revitalizing their lives and livelihoods.



Photo by Ashley Covington

Despite the headwinds, this year delivered muscular victories for Women In Media members and our mission of inclusion. The annual Altitude Awards continued to amplify the achievements of women cinematographers, camera operators, and gaffers. Past Altitude Awards judge Alicia Robbins and First Place winner Valentina Caniglia both earned admission into the prestigious American Society of Cinematographers (ASC). This milestone reflects not only individual excellence but a shifting landscape in which women's contributions behind the camera are gaining much deserved recognition.

Almost a year since we issued The Short Form Film Finishing grant, we continue to celebrate the achievements of the grantees. Through a rigorous process, six participants were chosen for cash grants and professional consultations offered by our Advisory Board and Pro members, leading to premieres at top-tier festivals. Notably, Erin Brown Thomas' *Chasers* debuted at Sundance, and Catie Skipp's *MONSTER SLAYER* premiered at Tribeca, showcasing authentic, fresh perspectives on influential stages.

With leadership from Events Chair Paige Blankenship, we hosted the Reel/Forward Production and Sustainability Conference. The mission was two fold: foster connections between creatives to those in a position to fund their projects, while making the case that minimizing our environmental footprint is better for the budget and health of the crew. We held two jam-packed days of panels, a vendor expo, networking, and pitch sessions. Our Advisory Board members and friends in the sustainability sector offered their expertise prior to, and during the conference with master classes, seminars, and panel insights. We couldn't have done it without our Grants and Fundraising Chair, Robyn Coburn who secured the seed funding from the Wilhelm Foundation.

But aside from these wins, recognizing that many are feeling pain from the extended downturn in the US film industry was unavoidable. It had me thinking about what I could do to help our impacted film friends.

I came up with one of my "crazy ideas". Over the years, we have done two rounds of the CAMERAderie Initiative and the New Tech Initiative music video, *Never Too Late*. These initiatives offered in-kind gear and production support, mentorship, and education culminating in the production of seven 10 page high production value short films. They have all gone on to win awards and boost the careers of the participants. Post CAMERAderie, many have gained television, film, and new tech careers, hiring each other and building on the relationships made from the programs. With all that success, I asked myself, "Why not expand the framework to foster more jobs and upward mobility by facilitating the making of independent feature films?"



With the help of WiM Board Treasurer, Allison Vanore and member Neobe Velis, we built the CAMERAderie FEATURES business plan. It entails shooting a bundle of features with a combination of grants, fiscal sponsorship, and equity, keeping the core lab aspects of the original CAMERAderie Initiative in place.

Sometimes, my crazy ideas come to fruition - but only with the support of you, our community. I am grateful for your help in sustaining our mission of inclusion. **If you are interested in being on the CAMERAderie Features Leadership Committee, please let us know by scanning the QR code and filling out the this inquiry form.**

Together, we will continue to push boundaries, uplift one another, and build a more equitable, sustainable industry.

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## 2025 WOMEN IN MEDIA HOLIDAY TOAST HONOREES

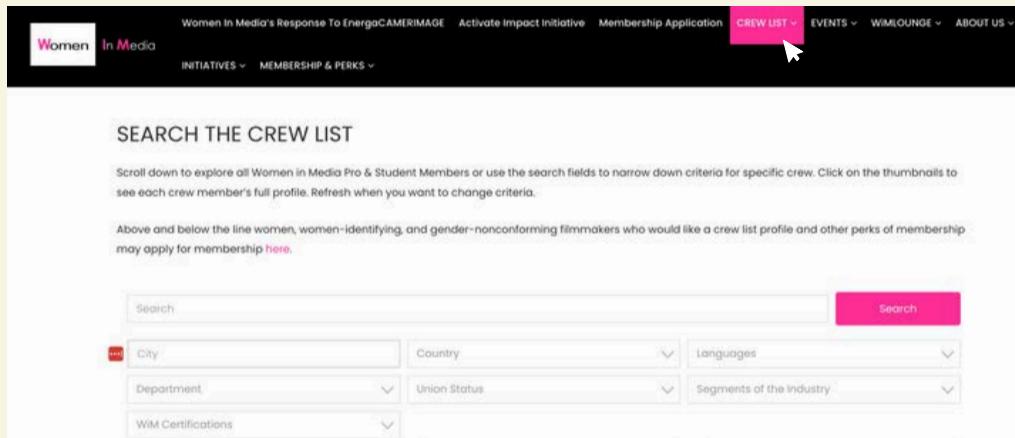
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# WOMEN IN MEDIA CREW LIST

## SEARCH VETTED INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS IN ALL DEPARTMENTS



The screenshot shows the Women In Media website's Crew List search interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for 'Women In Media', 'Women In Media's Response To EnergyCAMERIMAGE', 'Activate Impact Initiative', 'Membership Application', 'CREW LIST' (which is highlighted in pink), 'EVENTS', 'WIMLOUNGE', and 'ABOUT US'. Below the navigation is a search bar with the placeholder 'SEARCH THE CREW LIST'. A sub-section titled 'SEARCH THE CREW LIST' contains instructions to scroll down to explore profiles or use search fields to narrow down criteria. It also mentions that above the line women, women-identifying, and gender-nonconforming filmmakers are welcome to apply for membership. Below this are several search filters: 'Search' (input field), 'City' (dropdown), 'Country' (dropdown), 'Languages' (dropdown), 'Department' (dropdown), 'Union Status' (dropdown), 'Segments of the industry' (dropdown), and 'WIM Certifications' (dropdown).



[womennmedia.com/crew-list/](http://womennmedia.com/crew-list/)

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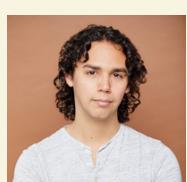
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THANK YOU TO OUR ADVISORS WHO OFFER THEIR TALENTS, SUPPORT, AND GUIDANCE TO OUR ORGANIZATION. YOUR PASSION FOR THE ART AND CRAFT OF FILMMAKING FUELS OUR COMMUNITY.

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## RUN OF SHOW

**10:00 AM** Premier champagne pre-party

**11:00 AM** General admission, Step and repeat, Champagne brunch, Silent auction

**12:00 PM** Toasts and Conversation with Honorees

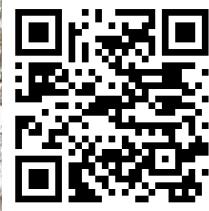
**1:30 PM** Silent auction closes

**2:00 PM** Event concludes

## APPLY FOR WOMEN IN MEDIA MEMBERSHIP



<https://womennmedia.com/join/>



Now more than ever, community counts.

Unlock access to special events, initiatives, your WiM CrewList profile, discounts, networking, professional development, hands-on training, members-only newsletters, exclusive video content, our online social connector ~ The WiMLounge, and more!

Photo by Ashley Covington

## HONOREE KRYSTINA FIGG

Krystina Figg is an accomplished Best Boy Grip and proud member of IATSE Local 80 and IATSE Local 491. Having worked her way up through the ranks, she is known for her technical expertise, leadership, and steady hand on some of Hollywood's most ambitious film and television productions. Her extensive credits span blockbuster features such as *SUPERMAN* (2025), *AVATAR*, *DUNKIRK*, *TENET*, *SPIDERMAN II*, *ONCE UPON A TIME ... IN HOLLYWOOD*, *KILLERS OF THE FLOWER MOON*, and *TEAM AMERICA*.

Her work in television is equally impressive, with credits including *The Shield*, *Desperate Housewives*, *That's So Raven*, *Angel*, *Alias*, *The Bernie Mac Show*, *Jimmy Kimmel Live*, *Sons of Anarchy*, and *The Lincoln Lawyer*. She also served as a Rigging Grip on *True Blood*, contributing to the series' cinematic visual style and signature production quality.

Whether orchestrating complex rigging setups or supporting demanding on-set camera operations, Figg's precision and problem-solving abilities have made her a trusted collaborator for award winning directors such as Martin Scorsese, Quentin Tarantino, and Christopher Nolan and cinematographers such as Hoyt Van Hoytema, ASC and Robert Richardson, ASC.

Never content to rest on her laurels, Figg is a firm believer in making it one's responsibility to never get jaded and to keep extending one's technical prowess. In an effort to continue learning about camera movement, she has added Matrix Remote Head Tech to her skills.

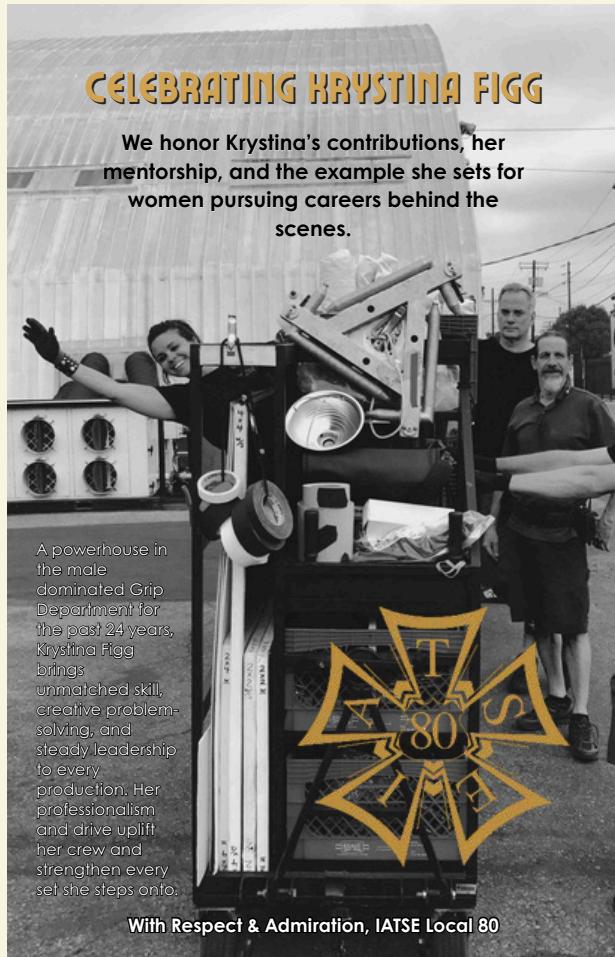
## Toastmaster Scott Howell



In 1982, Scott Howell kicked the sand from his flipflops, left Florida and moved to Los Angeles, telling his friends and family that he was going to "go to Hollywood and become a stuntman." Stunt work, though exciting, was scarce and sporadic. To fill in the gaps between gigs, he began working as a grip, where he quickly gravitated to the cranes and dollies.

With hands on the push bar and ear to the operator, he felt plugged into the creative loop, a collaborator on the shot, and he couldn't get enough. The purchase of his first modular crane quickly followed, and Cinemoves was born.

From those early days, Cinemoves has held sacred that spirit of collaboration. Scott is the first to admit that the success of the company is built upon the contributions of many talented individuals whose perspectives and expertise shape Cinemoves' creative direction. In fact, he brags about it, claiming the key to achievement "is to surround yourself with people smarter than you."





## HONOREE MANDY WALKER

Mandy Walker ASC, AM, ACS is an Australian cinematographer based in Los Angeles. She is one of the few female DOPs working on big-budget feature films today. Best known for *AUSTRALIA* (2007) *HIDDEN FIGURES* (2016) and *ELVIS* (2022), the latter of which garnered her an Oscar® and BAFTA nomination and led to her becoming the first woman to win the ASC award, ACS award and AACTA for best cinematography and the Milli Award for Cinematographer of the year.



Alongside feature films, she is renowned for her long career in commercials. Most notably the famous advertising spots for Chanel N°5, featuring Nicole Kidman and Gisele Bündchen.

She is currently serving as the first woman president of the American Society of Cinematographers (ASC), is an accredited member of the ASC and Australian Cinematographers Society (ACS), served as a Governor for both the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and the ASC, is inducted into the ACS Hall of fame, received an Honorary Doctorate from AFTRS, and in 2021 she was awarded The Member of the Order of Australia Medal for her contributions to the industry.

## Toastmaster Niki Caro



## Congratulations

Mandy Walker, ASC, ACS, AM

Honored at the  
2025 Women In Media Holiday Toast  
A visionary artist.  
A trailblazer in cinematography.  
An inspiring leader.  
— The ASC & AC



American  
Cinematographer

Writer and director, Niki Caro, is one of the most successful filmmakers to emerge from New Zealand. Her first feature film *MEMORY & DESIRE* was selected for Critics Week at the Cannes Film Festival in 1998. Her second feature film, *WHALE RIDER* won twenty seven international awards, including audience awards at prestigious international film festivals, including including Toronto, Sundance, Rotterdam, San Francisco, Seattle and Maui.

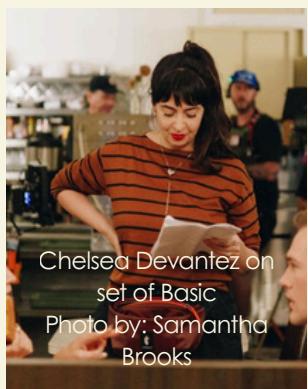
Caro's more recent feature-length films include *MCFARLAND, USA* starring Kevin Costner, and *THE ZOOKEEPER'S WIFE*, starring Jessica Chastain, and the live action version of Disney's *MULAN*, with Mandy Walker, ASC, AM, ACS as her cinematographer.



Ashley Nicole Black (right) on the set of Shrinking with Niccole Thurman & Kenzie Elizabeth



Ashley with Shrinking co-creator Jason Segel



Chelsea Devantez on set of Basic  
Photo by: Samantha Brooks

## HONOREE ASHLEY NICOLE BLACK

Ashley Nicole Black is a two-time Emmy Award-winning writer, actress, and comedian. She received an NAACP Award nomination for Outstanding Writing in a Comedy Series in 2022 for *Ted Lasso*, and was again nominated in 2025 for her work on *Shrinking*.

Ashley is an Executive Producer on the AppleTV+ series *Shrinking* in which she also recurs as 'Nikki'. Black was previously a Supervising Producer on the Apple TV+ series *Bad Monkey* where she plays 'Johnna,' a writer on *Ted Lasso*, a writer and star on HBO's *A Black Lady Sketch Show*, as well as a writer and correspondent on *Full Frontal W/ Samantha Bee*. Her career in comedy began at the legendary Second City in Chicago.

## Toastmaster Chelsea Devantez

Chelsea Devantez is an Emmy-nominated writer, national bestselling author, comedian, and director. She was formerly Head Writer for *The Problem with Jon Stewart* on Apple TV+ who developed multiple shows under an overall television deal with 20th Century Fox. Her writing credits include *Girls 5Eva*, *Not Dead Yet*, *Bless This Mess*, among others. Her debut memoir, "I Shouldn't Be Telling You This (but I'm Going To Anyway)" became a national bestseller. Devantez is also known for hosting the popular hit podcast *Glamorous Trash*, with over 6 million downloads to date.

## CELEBRATING WOMEN LEADERS

Nixon Peabody is honored to support this celebration of groundbreaking women in entertainment.

We stand with Women In Media in their mission to uplift and empower women across all facets of entertainment and congratulate this year's Holiday Toast honorees:

- / **Ashley Nicole Black** – Writer, Actor, Producer: *Shrinking*, *Ted Lasso*, *A Black Lady Sketch Show*
- / **Krystina Figg** – Best Boy Grip - *SUPERMAN*, *KILLERS OF THE FLOWER MOON*, *DUNKIRK*
- / **Mandy Walker, ASC, AM, ACS** – Director of Photography: *ELVIS*, *HIDDEN FIGURES*, *MULAN*;
- / President of the American Society of Cinematographers



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## ERIN BROWN THOMAS: THE ROAD TO DIRECTING HER FIRST FEATURE



Erin Brown Thomas is no stranger to navigating the realm of short format storytelling. Her directorial work has earned her short films numerous laurels across the country. She also co-founded and serves as the Artistic Director of Salute Your Shorts Film Festival, a competition which strives to find and champion emerging filmmakers and interesting voices. Some highlights of Thomas' short form work include REKINDLED, which screened competitively at Palm Springs International Shortfest, and [SUBTEXT], which won the Jury Award at the Bay International Film Festival, as well as the Best Fantastic Short Jury Award at Filmquest. Her pilot Chasers, which she wrote, directed, and produced, premiered at Sundance in 2025. Thomas is currently in production on her first feature film as a director, LADY KINGS OF TEXAS.

Thomas is a recipient of a WIM Film Finishing Fund for Chasers, which follows an aspiring musician as she navigates her way through an LA house party and struggles to stay afloat in the difficult industry which she is trying to break into. Filmed as a 31 minute continuous oner, the pilot takes a big creative swing. Thomas states "Chasers is inspired by my own experiences navigating the blurred lines between "paying your dues" and sacrificing your boundaries in pursuit of a dream. The older I get, the more I feel that the deck is stacked against those of us who dream. Those of us who care. Those of us who pursue unapologetically. And so I ask myself..Is it possible to chase what you want in this life without getting f\*cked in the process? This question is the inspiration for Chasers."

No stranger to forging a path as a female artist with a distinctive voice, the film is highly personal for Thomas. That doesn't mean the path through production came seamlessly. Thomas recalls "Women In Media provided me support at a crucial time. I had just been accepted to Sundance, but we had not finished post on our film and were out of money. We were able to finalize our score, music licensing, original song, color pass, final mix, and conform the film in time for our big premiere thanks to the generosity of Women In Media".

Thomas is currently in production for her first feature film as a director, LADY KINGS OF TEXAS. She tells WIM "LADY KINGS OF TEXAS came about because of Chasers being at Sundance. This is a suspense satire about four women living off the grid against the backdrop of Texas seceding from the union, criminalizing women for being childless over 35, and encouraging the hunting down of these "redundant" women. It's very timely and has a lot of thematic overlap with Chasers. I'm shooting with the same DP".

Looking forward in her career, Thomas is aware of the challenges to come and is eager to conquer them, "The last two decades in LA have in no way been easy. There are so many other career paths I could have chosen. But I chose to remain a filmmaker because, over time, I can tell stories in all the worlds that fascinate me. Filmmaking makes me a perpetual student of life. It pushes me to keep learning, synthesizing ideas, and balancing creativity with strategy. Filmmaking is inherently both personal and communal. It demands I dig deep to unearth my unique perspective, then labor to birth that vision, with talented friends and collaborators acting as midwives to bring it to life".



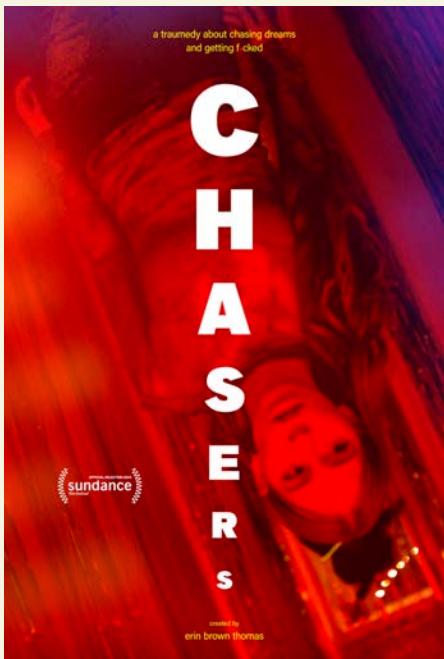
## SHORT FORM FILM FINISHING GRANTS

The Women In Media Short Form Film Finishing Grants were a vital opportunity to bring our member's projects to fruition. WiM Short Form Grants supported completion of either a short narrative, short documentary, or other short form projects with a completed running time of no more than 30 minutes.

The Short Form Grants included a cash prize of between \$500 – \$3,000, as well as consultations, mentorships, and services for film finishing. Consultants included: Vickie Sampson – Post production sound; Jennifer Smith – Music clearance; and Kimberley Browning – Film festival strategy. Thank you to the Short Form Grants Program Administrator, Betsy Pollock, for her diligence and dedication.

LA County  
ARTS &  
CULTURE

*The Short Form Film Finishing Grants were supported by the LA County Department of Arts and Culture as part of Creative Recovery LA, an initiative funded by the American Rescue Plan.*



### CHASERS

Written by Erin Brown Thomas and Ciarra Krohne  
Directed by Erin Brown Thomas  
A starry-eyed musician navigates an LA party, chasing her crush while desperately dodging the heartbreak secret that could shatter her pursuit.

Premiered at Sundance Film Festival

Awards: Hollyshorts Best TV; FilmQuest Best Supporting Actor & Best Production Design



### SCENE HOUSE

Written and Directed by Annabella Fazio  
In a dystopian future, Actors live as spectacle in The Scene House where Observers can interact with them like exhibits in a zoo. As one actor questions their existence, the boundaries blur between performance and reality.

Premiered at Nòt Film Festival

Awards: Best Director, Shooting Star Shorts. Best Performance, Shooting Star Shorts.

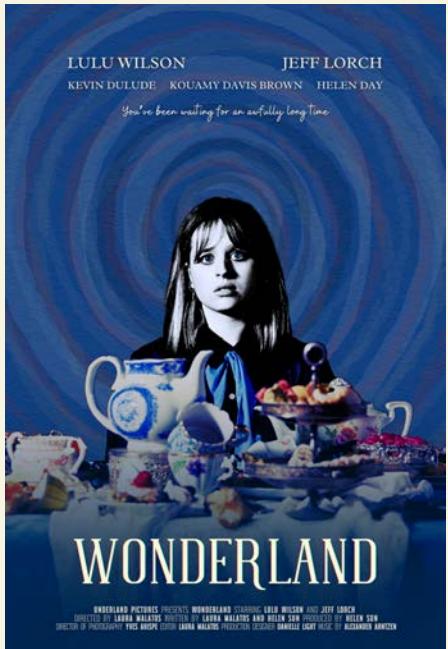


### MONSTER SLAYER

Directed by: Catie Skipp  
When Monty's pleas for justice go unheard after she's assaulted while working at a strip club, she paints a billboard to confront her assailant and the stigma surrounding sex work.

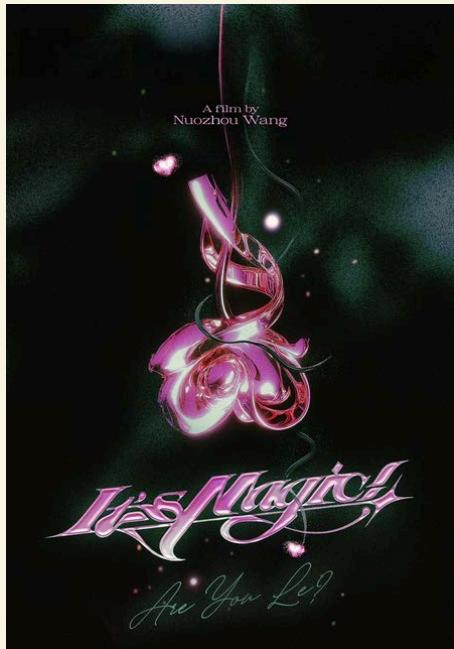
Premiered at Tribeca Film Festival

Awards: Best Female Focus Film, Cordillera Film Festival



### WONDERLAND

Written and Produced by Helen Ryu Sun  
At her father's funeral reception, Alice, entangled in grief, encounters a mysterious stranger who seemingly knows more than they lead on.



### IT'S MAGIC!

Written and Director by: Nuozhou Wang  
After finding a card saying 你想要快Le吗? (Are you truly happy?) in her steamed bun, a Chinese lesbian factory worker is introduced to an underground queer network.



### THE EYEIRE

Written and Directed by Jiacheng (Tiffany) Wang  
In a post-apocalyptic world and Buddhist dystopia, "The Eyeire," where human desires are prohibited and repressed, Synesthesia is the only empath with hyper-human senses.

### Program designed by:



# CATIE SKIPP: SLAYING THE FESTIVAL CIRCUIT



Catie Skipp has made a name for herself as a documentary filmmaker, producing and directing FLORIDA WOMAN, which was included in the PBS Reel South series. She produced Netflix's TRIAL BY MEDIA, and Disney+'s MARVEL'S 616. Her directorial credits also include MONSTER SLAYER, which premiered at the 2025 Tribeca Festival and is currently on the festival circuit. It won Best Documentary Short and Best Female Focus Film at the Cordillera International Film Festival. Skipp received a WIM Film Finishing Grant for MONSTER SLAYER.

## **How did you first get involved in WIM?**

I was looking for organizations in Los Angeles that genuinely support female filmmakers, and Women in Media immediately stood out. When we entered post-production on Monster Slayer, I dug deeper into the Film Finishing Grant and was struck by how thoughtfully it's structured—not just the financial support, but the consulting sessions and the broader sense of community. I've really enjoyed getting to know the Women in Media network since last year's Holiday Toast and am excited to continue being involved in their efforts.

## **How did the WIM Grant help you and what would you like to share about the film?**

The grant was absolutely crucial in helping us cross the finish line. It allowed us to pay for essential post-production work, including editing and animation. Beyond the funding, the consulting sessions were also incredibly valuable. Music consultant, Jennifer Smith, gave us important insights into clearances and the way to work with our composer, and after an incredibly helpful consulting session, we brought Kimberley Browning on board for film festival strategy. We're now looking for distribution opportunities to continue sharing the film with wider audiences.

## **What has drawn you to documentary work? What drives you as an artist?**

I've loved documentary filmmaking since I was a kid. It's always felt like the perfect way to explore the world—both to learn something new and to step into someone else's experience. What drives me is the challenge of shifting how people see one another, breaking down preconceptions, and finding the threads that connect us. I'm drawn to intimate, character-driven stories that say something universal about who we are and leave a lasting emotional impact.

## **What do you see as the most important part of producing and directing?**

For me, directing a documentary has always meant juggling two hats: the creative vision of a director and the practical responsibilities of a producer. It's been an ongoing balance, figuring out what's essential to keep the story intact and what compromises are necessary to actually get the film made, all while supporting the team bringing it to life.

## **What project of yours are you most proud of?**

I'm incredibly proud of MONSTER SLAYER. It's been a creatively ambitious project from the start, and I'm so proud of how it's turned out, and how audiences have responded. It's also deeply rewarding to know our subject, Monty, feels proud of how her story was told. I'm equally proud of the team behind it, my producer Grace Oathout, editor Sara Nell, and cinematographer Dominique Hessert Owens, among many others. The collaboration on this film has been something truly special.

## **Where would you like to see the industry headed?**

I'd like to see the industry take bigger creative risks in supporting projects and filmmakers earlier in the process, before a film is fully complete. I hope to see more investment in emerging voices and in stories that challenge conventions and don't fit neatly into existing categories.



### If someone is interested in pursuing documentary, where should they start?

Don't wait for someone to hand you an opportunity, create your own. Surround yourself with collaborators who believe in you, and make sure you believe in them too. Directing and producing aren't about having all the answers; they're about figuring out how to find them. Collaboration and community are everything, seek mentors, support others, and be willing to ask for guidance along the way.

### What advice do you have for young female and nonbinary people who want to pursue producing?

There are a few places to start with any filmmaking career, but for me, becoming a great documentary filmmaker begins with watching as many films as possible. In documentary filmmaking especially, there are countless ways to approach a story, and each approach can communicate something entirely different. That's where I think the excitement of the medium lives: finding a story and discovering the best way to tell it. How do you get closest to the truth? How might you explore the concept of truth itself? You don't need to tell the audience what to think, but you guide how they experience the story—the emotions, the information—and ultimately where you want to leave them.

I'm excited to continue honing my voice and craft as a director while growing alongside my creative team. MONSTER SLAYER reminded me why I love this work. It's the chance to connect, to move people, and to shift how we see one another. I can't wait to keep chasing that feeling.

### What are you most excited about looking forward in your career?



Beyond that, find a story that you truly care about and one that you feel uniquely positioned to tell. People sometimes say it's as easy as picking up a camera, but I know firsthand it's not always that simple. If you don't know where to begin, ask someone. Learn from others at any stage of the process. That's been a hugely beneficial part of my career—I've worn many hats: production assistant, producer, post-supervisor, story producer, director. Each role has built my knowledge, helping me understand a film from every stage and shaping how I approach storytelling today.

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<sup>1</sup>Restrictions apply. Membership eligibility rules apply. Federally Insured by NCUA.

**THE LIST**  
TOP CREDIT UNIONS 2024



## RACHAEL HASTINGS ADAIR: BIG LIGHTS AND FRESH CINEMATIC NARRATIVES



Photo by Ashley Covington

Rachael Hastings is a versatile cinematographer who has worked on run and gun documentaries to theatrically released narrative films. She is part of the ASC Vision Committee Mentorship program, under the tutelage of Polly Morgan, ASC, BSC. Hastings' feature work as a cinematographer includes *SWEET NOTHING*, and *UNDER THE INFLUENCER* which won Best Feature at the San Francisco Queer Film Festival, as well as *UNEXPECTED CHRISTMAS*, which enjoyed its theatrical release in November, 2025. She has been incredibly active in WIM for years, and is a strong advocate for underrepresented voices in the industry. WIM had the pleasure of asking Hastings Adair about her journey in film and her hopes for the future.

**You've been very involved with WIM over the years. How would you say your career has evolved since shooting the CAMERAderie film SMASHED and the New Tech Initiative video Never Too Late? How have those projects helped you grow as an artist?**

I joined SMASHED as the cinematographer at the tail end of the COVID pandemic. I was pivoting from traveling the world shooting docs and events into a more narrative and commercial focus. I wanted to get more experience working with larger scale narrative projects and, most specifically, with big lights, because that's not what we tend to use on documentaries. CAMERAderie gave me hands-on opportunities to craft a look using large lighting fixtures and in extensive numbers (we used over 200 lights).

I had the opportunity to work with the union Lighting Director from MBS studios to get our sets lit, crafting the look the way we wanted. That was backed up by the comprehensive WiM/MBS Illumination Grip and Electrics Training program that we took prior to prepping the stage. Beyond Illumination Training and CAMERAderie, I went on to work as an electric and gaffer who was comfortable working with 18K's on a Speedo commercial and doing complex lighting effects on a Gatorade commercial. I had a higher level of confidence to work while learning more on projects for Netflix, Disney, etc.

Through the experience as DP on SMASHED, I gained insight on how to communicate with authority while keeping the spirit of collaboration with crew and director. Since then I have DP'ed three narrative features, done additional cinematography on two others, plus countless web series, short films, doc projects and more. I have been working consistently and that has not stopped. I earn a consistent living doing this. The backup from the WIM programs and the other people I have met through WIM is definitely a part of that.

### **What advice do you have for emerging crew looking to have a sustainable career in the camera department?**

In the past, the advice was to specialize and get really, really good at a narrow skill set. You do one role and stick to a specific genre and a set style and that would carry you through to the next rung on the ladder. I believe that this advice was true, but in the current climate is outdated. As I had learned from working on SMASHED, being willing to stretch your skill set outside of your comfort zone will keep the phone ringing. One of the reasons I work consistently is that I have experience in documentary working with small crews. Our modest crew would be in a remote village, and had to figure out how to make the most beautiful picture we could with the resources available. We diversified our skills out of necessity. So, I would say that it's wise to open up your mindset, become really good at more than one thing, and think outside the box. Consider doing live event or livestream work. Being live really puts your skills on the spot. It's different than narrative, but some of the skills cross over. I surprised even myself and I'm glad that I took the leap. Most importantly, if the state of the industry is getting you down, figure out how to keep your mental health in a good place. Things are crazy right now and that can take a toll on folks. If you are okay, then you can help others in turn.

**What has the experience been like with UNEXPECTED CHRISTMAS? How did the feature come about and what did you learn from production?**

Director Michael Vaughn Hernandez and I had previously built a working relationship on t.v. series and short films. UNEXPECTED CHRISTMAS was originally scheduled to shoot in Atlanta with a different DP. When the film rescheduled to shoot in Los Angeles, he called me.

The shoot evolved, so we had to be flexible and creative. We started with a tight cast, but as word got out about the excellence of the story, Mamma Scott's family kept growing. More incredible actors said they wanted to be a part of the film. Not wanting to pass up on the opportunity, writer Cassandra Mann wove them into script. So, that meant that we had a lot of people to cover in those big family scenes. We were adding more people, but we were not adding more days.

We had to be clever about the coverage so that we could get the evolving story told efficiently. We shot with the Alexa Mini LF, and for some scenes we expanded to two cameras.



The lighting was nearly entirely Nanlux because their tools are top tier, and the professional support was a lifeline to help me problem solve. We were able to get big light looks through windows to mimic any time of day. Having that versatility was necessary so that we could roll with the changes without breaking a sweat. We were also expertly supported by BECINE with lenses, and the company owner, Bianca was the true MVP.

Making our days was only possible because we could lean on the hard work of the crew. Our Chief Lighting Technician Olivia Riportella and Key Grip Samantha Boesch worked quickly and efficiently, making a large group look amazing under shifting conditions. Camera Operator Nacia Schreiner, 1st AC Samantha Kelley, 2nd AC Jasmine Dueñas were a creative pit crew. Dengo our Steadicam Op stepped up to the plate to AC on non-steadicam days.

**What are you most excited about, looking forward in your career?**

The thing I am most excited about is being able to support the vision of inclusive filmmakers (Directors, Writers, Producers, etc.). I have a passion to bring those stories to life with a stellar inclusive crew. Keeping a healthy vibe on set is also very important to me - it actually makes us all way more efficient.

I can't wait to see who wants to tell stories from underrepresented perspectives and on any platform that fits the message. My company, Girls with Gear is a professional filmmaking collective of female-identifying, gender non-conforming and trans filmmakers who own and operate their own film gear. My camera operator Nacia and my wife Michele help us to facilitate those dreams because usually these unheard perspectives aren't getting as much funding as traditional "safe" stories, which frankly can feel a bit stale. That's why we collect gear, helping other crew gain more skills and confidence. It's a team. Let's gooo!

An advertisement for the Greenberg Glusker Women In Media Holiday Toast 2025. The background is a blue and green gradient with diagonal lines. The text reads: "Greenberg Glusker proudly sponsors the Women In Media Holiday Toast 2025 and congratulates today's honorees ASHLEY NICOLE BLACK, KRYSTINA FIGG, MANDY WALKER, ASC, AM, ACS". At the bottom, there is a blue bar with the website "GreenbergGlusker.com".

## TERILYN SHROPSHIRE, ACE: THE JOYS OF EDITING & ENDURING CREATIVE RELATIONSHIPS



With over 40 credits to her name, Terilyn Shropshire has distinguished herself as an editor with a discerning eye and the heart of a storyteller. A longtime collaborator with writer-director Gina Prince-Bythewood, Shropshire has been instrumental in such iconic films as *LOVE AND BASKETBALL*, *THE OLD GUARD*, and *THE WOMAN KING*. She was the editor on the 2024 blockbuster *TWISTERS*, (directed by Lee Isaac Chung) positioning Shropshire as one of two black female editors to work on films grossing more than \$100M. Shropshire is also known for her TV editing work, including the important 2019 Netflix series *When They See Us*.

In 2020, Women in Media honored Terilyn for her contributions to the industry, and she has been a friend of WIM since, adding her expertise and insights to our community. She lends more of her wisdom to the WIM community in this interview by WIM member Tara Sanders Brooks.

### **What drew you to editing? What was your journey like finding your place as a storyteller?**

Editing ... It was less a draw than a realization that, in storytelling, editing allows you to move and play outside of the "lines" of the narrative and explore endless possibilities.

### **As an editor, your relationship with the director is so important. Can you give any advice about creating a professional rapport with a director across films?**

When you are in the editing room, you have a collection of the best intentions of each person who has contributed their artistry in service of the story. I get to watch it all and help decide which moments make the cut, figuratively and literally. Editing is an immersive experience where you are able to travel to new worlds, meet fascinating characters, and navigate their journeys. From a very early age, I was drawn to books, plays, and movies. Who doesn't want to stretch the boundaries of our own imagination? We are all storytellers whether we choose it as a profession or not.

Create a safe space for your director who is feeling a thousand things coming off of set -- excitement, self-loathing, hope, fear, exhaustion. Ride the wave. And be a beacon. Your perspective is necessary, and how and when you share it is a skill. Trust is not given; it must be earned. Have pride in your work, but do not covet it. You are in a collaborative art form. And at the end of the day, you are there to help realize the director's vision. And hopefully, it is a vision you believe in. The editing room should be a safe "lab" where the director can experiment with the multitude of "what ifs." I have a sign in my room, "If at first you don't succeed, destroy any evidence that you tried." And yes, sometimes the "try" can test your resolve, but in the "try," greatness is sometimes discovered.

### **Can you speak to your work with Gina Prince-Bythewood and what it was like editing *THE OLD GUARD* twenty years after *LOVE AND BASKETBALL*?**

When Gina and I began our journey on *L&B*, we were both early in our careers. This was Gina's first film, and while I had a few features under my belt, including *EVE'S BAYOU*, she had her pick of editors with more films on their résumés. She looked beyond the résumé, trusted her instincts, and took a leap of faith. In the 26 years and numerous works that have followed, we have grown as women, filmmakers, and storytellers. Every new film we jump into, we bring an elevated level of our experience and artistry to the challenges that arise with the mindset that failure is not an option. Second chances are a rarity for women in our industry. We are always mindful of that. Gina and I have been collaborating for almost thirty years, and I never take for granted that she continues to invite me to her journeys. I must be doing something right.

The beauty of THE OLD GUARD is that we took the leap together into the big sandbox, a play space that has had a tall-ass fence around it with barbed wire and electricity keeping us out. Despite the greater pressure, the bigger budget, the bigger canvas, we never let go of our central focus – tell a good story first. Because all the VFX, action, world-building means nothing if you don't care about the characters and their journey. And it's been fun bringing our aesthetic into these big films. Gina calls it "disrupting genre."

**What project of yours are you most proud of? What would you love for people to watch again?**

After spending countless hours of my life, energy, and passion to navigate a project from the script stage to the screen, I am proud of all of them because each one has challenged, stretched, and allowed me to grow. Each one prepared me for the next.

When people are at home and in the mood for a good drama, comedy, love story, or adventure, I would love for them to watch any of the ones I have edited and be entertained.

**What led you to get involved in Women in Media?**



I have to thank the amazing warrior and advocate for all, Queen Tema Staig, for inviting me into the incredible force that is Women in Media. We need our village for strength, support, and the reminder that on the hardest days, we are not alone.

**Where would you like to see the industry headed?**

Tough question. I want the industry to return to storytelling and to foster new, creative, distinct visions. I want more support and intention from studios and media companies to create opportunities to help train our rising cinematic artists within the professional space, which Women in Media is helping to do.

**Do you have any creative endeavors on the horizon that you would like to tell people about?**

Currently, I am collaborating with Gina-Prince Bythewood on the epic fantasy feature CHILDREN OF BLOOD AND BONE.

**What advice do you have for up-and-coming filmmakers who want to pursue editing?**

An editor is a storyteller who edits. If you know you want to hone your talent and skills as an editor, you learn the tools. But the tools are not only the hardware and software. Your skills as a listener, communicator, facilitator, and mediator are equally essential. Your observance and understanding of the other collaborative disciplines — acting, directing, cinematography, production design, sound, etc. — will inform your choices in the editing room. How you navigate the politics of the post-production process from beginning to end is a necessary tool.

Attend panels with editors discussing their films. Volunteer at film festivals to connect with emerging filmmakers. First be an audience to watching a film and then watch the film again as a storyteller. What did you notice on the second viewing? You begin to pay attention to who is editing your favorite content as you would any director. If you admire their work, reach out. You may not always get a response, but editors are usually helpful when available. Be patient, passionate, persistent and persevere. Good luck!

Panavision is proud to sponsor the Women In Media Holiday Toast.

**Cheers to Mandy Walker ASC, AM, ACS and all the 2025 honorees!**

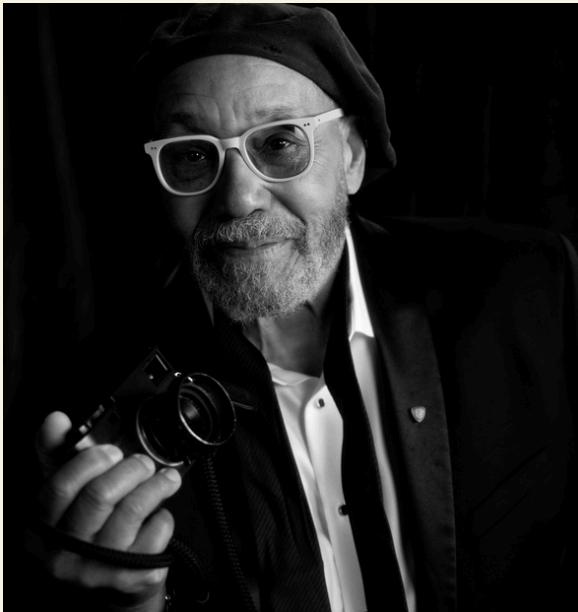
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# JOHNNY SIMMONS, ASC: THE VISION BEHIND EXCELLENCE



Johnny Simmons, ASC began his illustrious career framing up with a stills camera. After honing his eye shooting photography for the Chicago Daily Defender, he found his way to cinematography, and began to work his way up the ranks of the camera department. He found a home in the world of music videos, shooting for artists such as Stevie Wonder, Tupac Shakur, and Snoop Dogg. His work in television includes two Emmy nominations for *Pair of Kings*, one Emmy nomination for *Family Reunion*, and an Emmy win for *Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn*.

Alongside Cynthia Puscheck, ASC, Simmons is a founding co-chair of the ASC Vision Mentorship Committee. Simmons has always found time and placed importance on nurturing the next generation of diverse talent in camerawork, while also pushing the bar forward at the top of the field of cinematography, himself. A longtime friend of WIM, Simmons shares his insight into creativity, the need for inclusion, and his enduring passion for making art.

## **What drew you to cinematography?**

When I was an undergraduate at Fisk University, writer/director Carlton Moss was a visiting lecturer who came twice a month to teach a class titled, "The Image of the Black Man in American Cinema." I shared my still photographs with Carlton Moss and director Ousmane Sembene. They looked at my work and said I was a cinematographer. I wasn't completely sure what that was. Carlton gave me a subscription to American Cinematographer Magazine and I absorbed it. Roz and Cal Bernstein owned a company with Haskell Wexler-Dove Films. They sent me an Arriflex, 16mm film, a tripod and a changing bag. I looked through that camera and fell in love with moving images. That was in the late 60's.

## **For many DPs coming up today, you are an inspiration for your artistic and boundary pushing work. Did you have any early mentors or heroes that you looked up to?**

When I discovered the work of Gordon Willis it led me to the films of so many cinematographers. I can't begin to list them all, but I was influenced by the artistry of Jordan Cronenweth, ASC, Vilmos Zsigmond, ASC, and László Kovács, ASC. Their styles increased my love for the art and craft of cinematography.

## **How does your work as a photographer inform your work in the film industry? What do you have to say about being a multi-disciplinary artist?**

I loved photography and collages long before I knew what cinematography was. They are all about visual language. Cinematography is a collaboration and I enjoy that collaboration which is usually about bringing to life someone else's ideas. My still photography is all about me. There's no collaboration. My photography is street photography so it's about reality, photographing undisturbed day to day life. My collage work is creatively boundless, not trapped in reality. So each discipline enriches the other but each is its own thing.

## **You have been a major force in bringing music videos to the forefront of cinematography. How do you feel music videos have evolved over the last couple of decades and what have you gleaned from your work in that field?**

During the late 80's and early 90's everything was shot on film. There wasn't a monitor on set that you could really tell much from. There was trust in the cinematographer. There was always room for experimenting. There were also pretty decent budgets. I was able to make a living shooting and directing music videos. The music industry hadn't merged with the film business yet. Talent was most often concerned with what they were doing and not so much with what I was doing. Nowadays there's no music video channels aside from YouTube and a few other platforms. The budgets are now often smaller and people make really good stuff on phones and go straight to the web. It's very different. I really enjoyed the years I spent making videos. Many of the techniques I used in making music videos I employ in my work today.

**Can you speak to the importance of the work of the ASC Vision Committee?**

The ASC Vision committee was started in 2016 by president Richard Crudo, ASC and Cynthia Pusheck, ASC and myself. Our initial goal was to "change the face of the industry" and to create a space where women, people of color, and non-binary folks could see themselves behind the camera. The ASC Vision committee helps under-served cinematographers feel a sense of community. Our mentoring programs, various workshops and educational opportunities, I feel it has made a difference.



**Where would you like to see the industry headed?**

Technically there is no state of the art, there's always a new camera or other piece of equipment. What doesn't change is storytelling. For the most part, we all have access to high quality cameras even in our pockets. So now people can tell their stories. As far as where the industry is headed, there are so many things changing, we have AI to contend with and learn more about, the equipment continuously changes, independent film making is sure to have a bigger voice due to these changes. Over the past couple of years production has dropped off so there will be a new normal.

**What advice do you have for rising filmmakers pursuing a path as cinematographers?**

There are a lot of people interested in being a cinematographer and it's a challenging profession. We have to study as much as we can and shoot as much as we can. Believe in your dream and never give up. Always know that your point of view is important and is informed by all aspects of your life.

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# MICHAEL FISHMAN: THE EVOLUTION OF A MULTI-HYPHENATE



Michael Fishman joined the film industry at the tender age of six, starring as DJ Conner on the iconic sit-com *Roseanne*. 220 episodes later, Fishman has added writing, producing, and directing to his oeuvre. He is a member of the Advisory Board of WIM and a passionate advocate for diversity in the film industry. His book "D.J. Find Your Light: Life Lessons From Lanford" comes out in 2026. WIM had the opportunity to speak with Fishman about his long career and his hopes for the future.

**You are the definition of a multi-hyphenate. What advice can you give as an artist who has experience both in front of and behind the camera?**

For all things it begins with love what you do, continue to grow, and be a good teammate. Successful production is all about collaboration. As an Actor be present, listen, then make bold choices that create memorable moments. You can feel when it's working. I encourage Actors to make sure they know the words but stay on set to feel the tone and build camaraderie. For Directors preparation, communication, and calm decisiveness sets a tone for production that cultivates the best from everyone. Leadership is about getting the best out of everyone else in cohesive direction. Creatively as a Writer or Producer build a scaffolding for production, then be the problem solver and teammate people lean on.

**What advice do you have to give as someone who grew up in the industry?**

Life in our industry is about riding the waves with joy. Remember that a rising tide lifts all boats. Lift people with you because the higher you grow together the more support you have to spread the pressure when the dips come between waves.

Love what we do because it's challenging. Accept what others call rejection as redirection. Keep showing up day after day with unwavering enthusiasm. People remember those they enjoy being around and working with. If you can, learn everyone's names. Our names live together for eternity from the new PA to the lifelong executive, value people.

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**You have a prolific career in comedy. What wisdom can you share about how to pull off humor on the screen?**

Comedy is about moments, play the humanity of the scene. Not all comedy is funny to the person experiencing it. When in doubt, connect with your scene partner and build together. The more they shine the better the scene. Learn how to heighten someone else's moment and yours are soon to follow. Play, people love to watch people have a good time, so when we love it, it shows.

**What project of yours are you most proud of? What would you love for people to go home and watch again?**

The most impactful has been *Roseanne*. We built a show through trials, tribulations, controversies, that highlighted real experiences. Episodes didn't just inform or shape me, they helped shape generations. I'm honored every time I step on set.

**What led you to getting involved in Women in Media? What has your experience been like on the advisory board?**

Women in Media does incredible work. Growing up on a set that expanded the roles women were featured in gave me special respect for the challenges women face in our industry. Women in Media is at the forefront of that ever changing wave of equity, inclusion, and respect. It's been my honor to help elevate those around me. In many ways I am taking my advice from the first question, making sure to create safe, collaborative, and inclusive production environments.

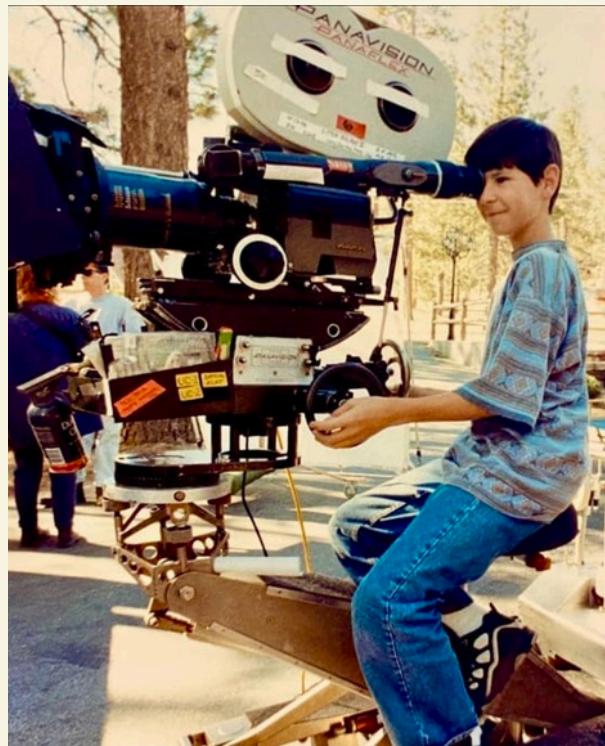
**Where would you like to see the industry headed?**

Our industry has always been groundbreaking and trend setting. The world needs more voices from diverse backgrounds. In the projects I create I strive to tell stories as diverse as the world we live in. I believe that should be true in front of and behind the camera. It is imperative people can see themselves on screen in a variety of ways because it helps the next generation dream bigger and live more fulfilled lives.

**Do you have any creative endeavors on the horizon that you would like to tell people about?**

Every great creative is a phone call away from new opportunity and a different life. As an Actor, I'm looking for the right roles to utilize my intelligence and heart to bring people together. As Director I'm looking for the right first feature film project that resonates with my soul.

In the meantime, I'm writing the things I want to see into reality. Utilizing my diverse life experience I have a law enforcement drama that I love. I still long for another great sitcom. I have one about a working class military family, another multigenerational comedy, and then one based in my life in our crazy business.



On the film side I have a racing coming of age story, a historical baseball drama, a high octane heist film, and a romantic comedy, all of which are in various phases of development. Every day on set has the potential to be great. I want to work forty plus weeks a year for the next few decades. A lifetime in production taught me to never sit still. I'm always looking for the next opportunity to collaborate.

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# MARITTE GO: ON THE MOVE BEYOND CAMERADERIE



Maritte Go began her creative career in front of the camera as an actress, before finding her way to writing, directing, and producing. A graduate of USC's MFA in Film Production program, Go is passionate about making space for filmmakers and stories that don't always receive the spotlight. Go is a Project Involve Directing Fellow and a WIM CAMERAderie director. Her work on the short REMITTANCE earned her an HBO Visionary award, as well as distribution through HBO. She has directed several feature films for Blumhouse and Lifetime. She is prepping to shoot her next feature film in Atlanta, GA next month. Maritte is also developing two horror films with Unapologetic Films and The Wonder Company, which will be shooting next year. WIM sat down with Go to find out more about her blossoming career.

## **What was the experience like writing and directing the CAMERAderie film ILLIPINO?**

I got involved in WIM when I applied to the CAMERAderie program and was selected as one of the 3 projects for my short film, ILLIPINO. It was amazing. I couldn't believe there was an organization who encouraged my vision and my very personal story. There was such an amazing supportive community from all these powerhouse women. I got to work with women from all over the industry and, for the first time ever, all key positions were filled by women, something that is incredibly rare. We got to go through post production at a real studio and get advice and notes from veteran filmmakers. We also got to screen our films to so many other filmmakers. It was just an amazing experience overall. I learned so much and am so thankful for the opportunity.

## **How do you feel you've developed as an artist over the course of directing your first feature RISE?**

I've learned and changed so much over the years. I think I've become more bold and confident in my choices. I am not afraid to make strong selections and stand behind them. I'm also not concerned about reviews anymore. If I get to make a movie and I've put my heart and soul into it and I've tried my best, then I've been able to live my dream, and that's all that matters. The reviews have nothing to do with me. I pay attention to feedback from other filmmakers and my friends and family and take that criticism to move forward.

## **What project of yours are you most proud of?**

It's hard to say. I've committed fully to every project I've done and for that I am very proud. Even if I didn't entirely love the script I put my all into it. I try to improve my work with every new project I tackle. It's like saying I favor one child. I love all my children (movies).



## **Where would you like to see the industry headed?**

I'd like to see the industry expand. I feel like I see less and less people working. I hope to see people use technology and AI to their advantage so that it becomes more of a tool to let more filmmakers express their stories vs. take our jobs away. I hope to see more work in LA. Everything I'm shooting takes me out of the state. I hope LA becomes the epicenter for film work again. I also hope to see studios and production companies push to see stories from underrepresented communities again. I think we found originality and common ground despite our differences with these stories and I hope that we can find bold studios to support those stories again.

## **What advice do you have for young female and nonbinary people who want to pursue directing?**

Don't wait for permission to tell your stories. Get a camera (even if it's your cell phone) and write, direct, and share your work! Post it on social media or YouTube if you don't get into a festival, and then do it all over again and again. Don't stop creating and learning. Unless you're burnt out – then go experience life so you have something to draw from and find inspiration. Find your tribe of people and create together. If you wait for permission, you'll be waiting forever. Once you've gotten to a professional level, the work will come to you. But even then, keep pushing yourself to grow and become better. Never stop learning. Never stop creating. The joy in this industry is the act of creation, not accomplishment.

## **What are you most excited about looking forward in your career?**

Through Women in Media, I was able to make a Filipino American story that was extremely personal. I haven't been able to do that since. Right now, I'm developing a script that's about another Filipino American and it's on its way to production next year. Although I can't share too many details right now, I am extremely excited to direct this movie. I'm also looking forward to continually push boundaries and keep growing in my career.

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Krystina Figg, Best Boy Grip  
and all honorees at the Women In Media Holiday Toast.

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