

The Racket Boys DIRECTOR BRANDON WILLER

This buddy road-trip flick contains all sorts of surreal twists as two guys and a girl travel from Southern California along the Big Sur coast toward San Francisco in search of themselves. Shot in black-and-white, it's a clean, confident effort with dashes of screenwriting brilliance.



IT MUST HAVE BEEN FUN TO FILM, DRIVING UP THROUGH BIG SUR. WERE THERE ANY CHALLENGES?

I would say the biggest challenge was that we didn't scout the locations. Some of the stuff had to be found like an hour before shooting. The entire seven-person crew just ran around like crazy trying to find a place to shoot the scene I saw in my head. That was definitely hard.

Big Sur was lovely, but not too difficult because there was nobody around. The Bigsby Bridge scene and the McWay Falls scene were pretty much vacant locations. We could set up shop and shoot for as long as we needed. That was great.

DO YOU SEE YOURSELF AS MORE OF A SCREENWRITER OR MORE OF A DIRECTOR?

I've always worshiped the ones who do both, to be honest. That's how I see myself in the end. I think of everything I write as if I were behind the camera. It's kind of directing on page. I really don't know how directors can not write first, but at the same time I don't understand how anybody could just want to write. It's too much fun to work with other people on set and in the editing room as a director. Writing is the core of everything, but it gets pretty lonely in your room all day, talking to yourself in weird imaginary character voices.

WHAT'S YOUR SANTA BARBARA CONNECTION?

My Santa Barbara connection is Dannikke Walkker. She starred in and produced the film, but she grew up in S.B. and has been trying to convince me to move there in the future because she tries to convince everybody that it is the greatest place on the planet. I'm excited to get to know it more though.

—Matt Kettmann

Mon., Jan. 28, 4 p.m., & Thu., Jan. 31, 10 p.m., Metro 4

A Tiny Portal

DIRECTOR
STEPHANIE GUMPEL

Space alum Richard Riehle — this short packs a fantastical punch.
WHAT INSPIRED THIS FILM?

The film is inspired by the idea of passing through obstacles that we perceive as impossible whether they be social, emotional, or physical (all three in Fern's case). The portal is a visual symbol of passing through a "wall" into a new place that seemed impossible to get to before. Visually, the inspiration came from a place in Hawaii called the Makapu Tide Pools. While I was going to film school in Hawaii, I visited this place that is all volcanic rock. There are holes in some of these rocks carved out from the waves hitting them and the light shines through these holes beautifully from some angles. It was a very striking image to me and it has stayed with me.

THE PORTAL SCENE IS FANTASTIC LOOKING. HOW'D YOU DO IT?

I built the original model for the portal six months earlier. It was about 7" wide and made of cardboard, paper, and staples. I had a vision of Fern's whole body passing through the portal, which is supposed to be about 1/2" wide in reality. It was such an exciting possibility for a shot and I couldn't get it out of my head so I had to attempt to build it.

TELL ME ABOUT THE SOUNDTRACK.

We flew to Brooklyn, New York for a week in August and recorded with composer Perrin Cloutier from the indie-rock band Beirut. He was so open to communicating about concepts. We had to work out a language together. I write a little music, but he's on another level. We had to continually work together so closely to work through problems that came up and find solutions, a continual communication process. In the end, I think the score is so brilliant. All of the energy we put in was worth it!

—Aly Comingore

Santa Barbara Shorts: Thu., Jan. 31, Lobero Theatre, and Sun., Feb 2, Museum of Art



Mommy, I'm a Bastard
DIRECTOR MAX BARBAKOW



This puts the life story of twentysomething Max Barbakow — adopted son of former festival president Jeffrey Barbakow — under a brightly lit microscope, giving us a powerful look at completely open and honest adoption-done-right, while learning about the potential pitfalls along the way. It's funny, charming, heart-warming, and, at times, pretty tense, so much like your usual Thanksgiving dinner.

WHAT DID YOUR FAMILY THINK WHEN YOU WANTED TO MAKE A DOCUMENTARY OUT OF YOUR LIFE STORY?

The fam could not have been more supportive. To be honest, I think this is less a story of my life than of the members of my family and how they found each other just before my birth, or at least that's what I tried to achieve by making the film.

WOULD YOU ADVOCATE FOR OPEN ADOPTION AS A BETTER WAY TO HANDLE THIS SORT OF FAMILY SETUP?

My mom is absolutely fearless and always says, "Honesty is the best policy," and I agree in that I think that every kid should be able to know where they come from and if they are indeed a product of an adoption. A lot of time, secrets or pretending you're somebody you're not towards as a means of protection or because of insecurity only results in a lot of hurt and further distrust and bigger emotional problems.

All that being said, I respect the right of birthparents to not want involvement. Adoption is complicated, people are complicated, and there really isn't one answer about how to go about it when you have these complex emotions involved.

HOW MUCH DID YOUR EMOTIONS COME INTO PLAY WHILE MAKING THE FILM?

I thought making the movie would be a fun way to look back on a stretch I have no perspective on because I was either in utero or an infant, but it soon became apparent that this film was as much about me as everyone else. That might seem obvious, but I'm not really the extrovert type — it's why I prefer being behind the lens — and a lot of my re-cutting the movie had to do with finding a way to put myself in it. The second half of the film is filled with my emotions, so in that way, the making *Bastard!* was extremely cathartic.

—Matt Kettmann

Mon., Jan. 28, 7:20 p.m.

& Sun., Feb. 3, 10:20 a.m., both at Metro 4.

The Condor's Shadow
DIRECTOR JEFF
McLOUGHLIN

This doc dissects the valiant efforts being made to protect the critically endangered California Condor, as well as the manmade threats that continue to thwart conservationists' work.

WHAT'S THE BASIC CONCEPT BEHIND YOUR FILM?

The Condor's Shadow is an environmental documentary on the recovery of the California condor. It is a wildlife film, but at its heart it's a story about the passion it takes to pull a species back from the brink of extinction. Reduced to a population of just 22 birds by 1982, the species has been restored to over 400 today.

DOES THE FILM HAVE AN ENTRY POINT THAT HOOKS THE VIEWER?

We get up close and personal with a bird named Pitahsi (a Chumash name meaning "the power within") and come to understand the broad reach humans have into the remote corners of the backcountry.

WHAT DID YOU FIND MOST SURPRISING?

Condors approached extinction due to exposure to lead that they ingest while scavenging on the remains of hunter-shot game. It's an ongoing dilemma for the condor recovery effort and the film examines this in the context of the wildlife story.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE VIEWERS COME AWAY WITH AFTER WATCHING THE FILM?

Not many would ever have imagined that spent lead ammunition in hunter-shot game would harm a beautiful soaring bird. But it does and with just a few small changes we can fix that. I hope people will mention this to their friends who hunt and those who manage nuisance animals on ranch lands.

Hunting actually provides a great food source to condors and other scavengers. A simple change from a lead bullet to a copper one would mean one less toxic substance cast out onto the earth by humans. Yes, it will cost a few extra dollars, but I think most would agree that watching a bird with a ten-foot wingspan soar over your head is worth every penny.

WHAT DOES YOUR FILM REFLECT ABOUT THE WORLD AT LARGE?

We have entered a phase in human history where most acknowledge that our impacts on the earth have many unintended consequences. The larger message of the film is in seeing that we can make an impact as individuals. With commitment we can leave the world a slightly better place than when we entered it both for the environment and for humanity.

—Aly Comingore

Wed., Jan. 30, 1:20 p.m., Metro 4 & Sat., Feb. 2, 10 a.m., Museum of Art.



Charles Lloyd, Arrows to Infinity

DIRECTOR DOROTHY DARR



Delving into the rise, fall, and rebirth of one of the world's most revered jazz legends, and one of Santa Barbara's most beloved residents, Charles Lloyd's wife/manager Dorothy Darr lovingly re-traces the iconic jazz man's humble beginnings, big city triumphs, cross-over successes, and ongoing spiritual journey through music.

YOU'RE OBVIOUSLY VERY CLOSE TO YOUR SUBJECT. WHAT PROMPTED YOU TO MAKE THE FILM?

My life has been inextricably intertwined with Charles's for almost 45 years. I started out as a painter and have always seen myself as a storyteller. Charles's music and aspects of our lives together and apart have been seeds of inspiration for my paintings and collages. In the early '90s after Charles returned to touring, I bought a video camera and started lugging it everywhere. My first attempt at creating a film about his life was in 1995 with a film called *Memphis Is In Egypt*.

DID YOU LEARN ANYTHING NEW ABOUT HIM THROUGH THE FILMMAKING PROCESS?

I learned a few things, but I think the sweetest thing I learned was from Lewie Steinberg, the original bassist with Booker T and the MGs. He's about five years older than Charles and told me that, when he was 15, he got his first professional job from Charles. The image of 10-year-old Charles, and Lewie playing around a bonfire for a picnic group in Memphis was priceless.

HOW DID CHARLES REACT UPON SEEING THE FINISHED PRODUCT?
I think he was genuinely moved by it. Life goes by almost in a nano second. I have been truly blessed in this lifetime to be able to live it with Charles.

—Aly Comingore

Sat., Jan. 26, 7 p.m., Museum of Art & Tue. Jan. 29, 10:20 a.m., Metro 4

Ride

DIRECTOR
CHRIS YASKO

This two-minute short about riding your bike to work in Santa Barbara features commuter Seinn Schlidt, and ponders why so few people are willing to do so in places near and far.

LESS THAN 1 PERCENT OF THE COUNTRY COMMUTES BY BIKE. WHY?

I can understand in a larger city where it might be more dangerous or where long commutes might prohibit more people from biking but the whole idea of the movie really grew out of this question and I'm not sure I have an answer. It turns out that Santa Barbara is actually one of the communities where the numbers are pretty high. Even with those high figures locally it really seems like the bike lanes are pretty empty aside from all the weekend road cyclists.

YOU SHOW OFF SANTA BARBARA'S NICER SPOTS BUT ALSO SOME MORE URBAN SETTINGS TOO. HOW DID YOU DECIDE TO FILM WHERE YOU DID?

Some of that came from where Seinn rides every day like, for instance, Butterfly Beach, but I did make a conscious decision to show some more unusual areas so the audience wouldn't get to hung up on seeing one scenic spot after another. I did this because I think another aspect of being on a bike is that you really get to see things from a different perspective than you do in a car. It's a really different viewpoint and you see things you normally might not notice.

HAS YOUR FILM INSPIRED ANYONE YOU KNOW OF TO BIKE TO WORK?

I am really proud to say that the spirit of the film had a big impact on the ad agency where I work to significantly reduce waste and energy usage and even pursue an official "green" designation from the city. After seeing the film there was a great enthusiasm and excitement about the small ways we can all make a difference and, next thing I knew, several people across the agency had put together a "green" committee to look at all the ways we could be more responsible environmentally, which has been a really great outcome that I never saw coming.

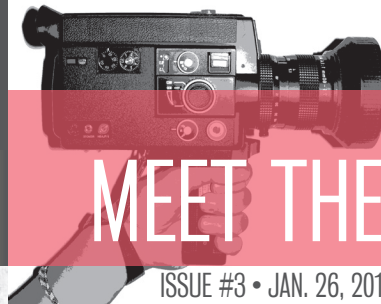
—Matt Kettmann

SANTA BARBARA SHORTS:

Thu., Jan. 31, Lobero Theatre,
and Sun., Feb 2, Museum of Art



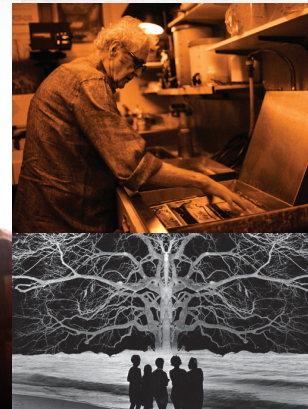
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Makers

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Jerry & Maggie: This is Not Photography

DIRECTOR SCOTT ERICKSON

This sleek and insightful look into the world of surrealist photographer Jerry Uelsmann, produced by the fine folks at *Lynda.com*, examines his revolutionary photo-splicing techniques as the precursor to Adobe's Photoshop, a tool which Uelsmann's wife — and fellow artist — Maggie Taylor uses to create all her work.

HOW DID YOU FIRST MEET JERRY AND MAGGIE?

As a photography student in high school, I was exposed to his photographs in a textbook and was completely blown away by them and the world they created. However, in the more literal sense, I first met Jerry when we showed up at his house in Gainesville, Florida to discuss doing a documentary on him. Jerry was pitched as a guest for our documentary series at *Lynda.com* called *Creative Inspirations* and it turns out that our co-founder, Bruce Heavin, was heavily influenced by Jerry's work as well.

Through our research, we discovered the work of Jerry's wife Maggie as well, but it wasn't until going down and seeing their home, workspace, and creative process that we knew had to make a film about them together.

WHAT WERE SOME OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES FOR TELLING THE STORY?

Story was incredibly important to us here and something that we really pushed ourselves. We've never made a film about two people before and, while Jerry's work carries a fair amount of name recognition and attention, we knew we wanted to give Maggie's story equal weight. They each have their own unique path to their chosen method of artistic expression, but their individual creative processes are incredibly symbiotic and we weave those stories together in the film and ultimately paint a picture of the incredibly supportive and loving relationship that they have.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE PEOPLE TAKE AWAY FROM THE FILM?

In my mind, there is nothing more inspiring than seeing other creative people being creative. I think what's also nice is that Jerry and Maggie both had incredibly different paths in life. Jerry found his artistic calling fairly early in his career and had a show at the MOMA while in his 20s. It took Maggie a long time and a lot of steps to find her calling, but looking back you see how crucial they are to making it all work for her. Without those early failures and set backs, she would not have landed where she did.

—Aly Comingore

Fri., Jan. 25, 10 a.m., Museum of Art
& Fri., Feb. 1, 1 p.m., Metro 4



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