

Damien Chazelle: The “La La Land” Interview

With Kam Williams
For The Skanner News

Damien Chazelle wrote and directed the Academy Award-winning “Whiplash,” which landed five Oscar nominations, including Best Picture and Best Adapted Screenplay for Chazelle. The movie won a trio of Oscars in the film editing, sound mixing and Supporting Actor (J.K. Simmons) categories.

In 2013, his short film of the same name won the short film jury prize at the Sundance Film Festival. Previously, Damien wrote “Grand Piano,” starring Elijah Wood and John Cusack, and co-wrote the hit horror sequel “10 Cloverfield Lane,” starring John

“I liked the idea of doing an American answer to the French answer to the American musicals, if that makes sense

Goodman. His screenplays for “Whiplash” and “The Claim”

both appeared on the Blacklist, the annual survey of the most-liked motion picture screenplays



Director Damien Chazelle

not yet produced.

Damien shot his first feature film, Guy and Madeline on a Park Bench, while still an undergrad at Harvard University. The critically-acclaimed debut was named the Best First Feature of 2010 by L.A. Weekly and was described as “easily the

best first film in eons” by Time Out New York.

Here, Damien discusses his latest movie, La La Land which just swept the Golden Globes, win-

ning a record 7 awards.

Kam Williams: Hi Damien. Congratulations!

Damien Chazelle: Thanks, Kam.

KW: Not that I’m at all surprised by your incredible success. After all, back when you

released your first film, “Guy and Madeline on a Park Bench,” I told anybody who’d listen, “Appreciate Damien now and avoid the rush!”

DC: I remember those

lines so well. I think yours was the first Rotten Tomatoes review of it. “La La Land” is sort of like “Guy and Madeline, but with a budget.” [Chuckles]

KW: Well, I loved it! It’s #1 on my Top 100 List for 2016. And I started my review saying, “If you only see one movie this year, you need to get out more. That being said, “La La Land” is the picture to catch.”

DC: Thanks! I’m thrilled you liked it.

KW: I’ve seen four times already. It’s a movie you absolutely have to see on the big screen.

DC: Yeah, part of my hope was to make a movie meant for the movie theaters, in the old-fashioned sense of a film designed for a group of people to watch on the big screen. I think that old school idea was so beautiful, kinds like those roadshow musicals from the 1950s and 1960s.

KW: The first time

I saw it was with fellow critics, and everybody applauded when the closing credits started to roll. That was the first time in ages that there was a standing ovation at a film critics’ screening I attended. We’re a jaded lot that’s pretty hard to impress.

DC: That’s awesome!

KW: I understand that

this movie took six years to make, partly because other studios were willing to greenlight the project on the condition that you agreed to substantial revisions, like changing the ending and the music from jazz to rock.

Read the rest of this interview at TheSkanner.com

Movies cont’d from pg 6

Steenburgen and Paul Reiser.

Everybody Knows... Elizabeth Murray (Unrated) Meryl Streep narrates this reverential retrospective about the late Elizabeth Murray (1940-2007), a single-mom who overcame considerable obstacles en route to becoming a prominent modern artist.

Go North (Unrated) Futuristic sci-fi set in the wake of an apocalyptic catastrophe which has left the planet without any adults. Ensemble includes Jacob Lofland, James Bloor, Sophie Kennedy Clark and Patrick Schwarzenegger (Ar-

nold’s son).

Ok Jaanu (Unrated) Romance drama, set in Mumbai, about an ambitious couple (Shradha Kapoor and Aditya Roy Kapoor) forced to pick between their careers and following their hearts when work threatens to pull them apart. With Naseeruddin Shah and Leela Samson. (In Hindi with subtitles)

Reset (Unrated) Dance documentary chronicling the efforts of choreographer-turned-artistic director Benjamin Millepied to rejuvenate the Paris Opera Ballet. (In French and English with subtitles)

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