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IN FOCUS

Five new films in postproduction. **By Mary Glucksman**

Brock Enright: Good Times Will Never Be The Same

Afterschool cinematographer Jody Lee Lipes makes his feature directing debut with the artist doc *Brock Enright: Good Times Will Never Be the Same*. The film follows the madness surrounding mixed media artist Enright's struggle to prepare for a potentially career-making first solo show at a big New York City gallery. Enright, whose previous work includes a video series depicting staged kidnappings, is not only the doc's subject but also one of its contributors. During the making of the film he shoots not only his artmaking process and cross-country move from Brooklyn to a California redwoods studio space, but also a 70-minute piece, *The Blackgoat*, that will ultimately serve as centerpiece to his multifaceted show, and some of this material is included. Add family tensions and a gallery rep who is reduced to tears and whose car tires are slashed to prevent her departure from Enright's studio and this doc has more drama than most features — and that's before the artist's show finally opens in New York.

By the time Lipes, 27, graduated from NYU's film program in 2004 he'd shot or directed dozens of shorts and received his first cinematography award. He has since shot the '08 Berlinale doc *Wild Combination: A Portrait of Arthur Russell*, two seasons of IFC's *The Whitest Kids U Know*, made music videos, doc shorts for Friends of the Highline, *The New York Times* and commercials for clients like American Express and Citibank, one of which won him an Emmy. Lipes first met Enright when the artist hired him to shoot several video pieces, and he turned down an offer to shoot *The Blackgoat* to make his own movie about Enright instead. "Years of involvement in his work put me in a position of understanding and trust, and I felt I could make his challenging art more accessible to an audience who might otherwise reject it entirely," Lipes says. *Times'* producer and editor are Kyle Martin and Lance Edmonds, NYU classmates who also worked on *Wild Combination*.

Lipes is currently completing the digital *Times*, shown in rough cut as a selection of the Spotlight on Docs section of the '08 IFP Independent Film Week, as he prepares a fall shoot for his second feature doc, *Jerome Robbins' NY Export: Opus Jazz the Film*, a collaboration with the New York City Ballet.



Defendor

"It's a story about an unlikely hero who brings hope to a city in desperate need of a guiding light," says writer-director Peter Stebbings about *Defendor*, the *Jeremiah* star and veteran actor's first feature. Woody Harrelson stars as a man convinced he has a double life as a superhero on a self-assigned mission to destroy the villain he blames for his mother's death; Sandra Oh (*Sideways*) and Kat Dennings (*Nick and Norah's Infinite Playlist*) costar in a film Stebbings says is a tonal cross between *The Professional* and *The Fisher King*.

Stebbins, 37, grew up in Vancouver and started doing regional theater at 12. He debuted on TV in an episode of *21 Jump Street* at 19 and moved to New York City at 22 to study at the Circle in the Square Theater School. He has dozens of TV acting credits and his film work includes leads in features ranging from indies like *Rudy Blue* and *The Limb Salesman* to blockbuster *K-11: The Widowmaker*. He co-wrote *Jack and Jill vs. The World* with Vanessa Parise, the film's director, and *Defendor* teams him with that film's producer, Nicholas Taborok, an '08 *Variety* pick for its Ten Producers to Watch.

The 35mm widescreen *Defendor* shot in small town Hamilton near Toronto in the late fall with David Greene (*Rhinoceros Eyes*) as d.p. "I've been preparing consciously for three years and full bore for the last year — it's been balls to the walls but a dream come true," says Stebbings. Also in the cast are Elias Koteas (*Zodiac*) and Michael Kelly (*Changeling*). Next for Stebbings as director could be his much-optioned script *The Wrestlers*, a *Full Monty*-

type take on an amateur league, or *Mayfly*, an episodically structured meditation on death.

Handsome Harry

"It's both a journey and a detective tale that's all about character, story and conflict," says director Bette Gordon (*Variety*) about *Handsome Harry*, her first feature since *Luminous Motion* in 1998. Jamey Sheridan, who played the Dad in *Motion*, stars as a Vietnam War vet forced to confront suppressed memories from his past and redefine his future by tracking down five surviving Navy buddies involved with a 30-year-old crime. Gordon directs from a script by Nicholas Proferes; the two are longtime colleagues as professors in Columbia University's film division. "When Nick asked me to read the script I fell in love with it," says Gordon. "The characters are Hemingway-esque, and I thought it would be interesting for a woman to look into the codes of men's behavior."

Gordon received her B.A., M.A. and M.F.A from the University of Wisconsin where she made her first films with experimental icon James Benning, then a teaching assistant. Her early shorts screened at New York City's Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Biennial, and *Variety*, long considered one of the defining titles of the first-wave DIY movement, premiered in the '83 Cannes Directors Fortnight. *Harry* is produced by Jamin O'Brien (*Just Like the Son*), who first noticed the project when it was in the No Borders division of the '05 IFP Market. "We hit it off and developed it together for two years," he says. The film is

BETTE GORDON'S *HANDSOME HARRY* (LEFT), JODY LEE LIPES'S *BROCK ENRIGHT*.

the first to be financed through new shingle Worldview Entertainment, which partners O'Brien with venture capitalist Christopher Woodrow and producer Amy Slotnick (*On the Road with Judas*), a veteran of nine years in production at Miramax.

The anamorphic HD *Harry* shot three weeks beginning mid-September in New York's Hudson Valley and Connecticut with Nigel Bluck (*The Home Song Stories*) as d.p. The film co-stars Steve Buscemi, Campbell Scott, Aidan Quinn, John Savage and Titus Welliver (*Deadwood*). O'Brien, who began his career as an a.d. on *Son*, director Morgan J. Freeman's *Hurricane* in 1997 and recently produced Michael Kang's *West 32nd*, is next prepping Kang's Somalia-set *The Sea of Tranquility* and Freeman horror outing *The Cold* for Worldview.

Harvest

"I was inspired by witnessing my grandfather's passing," says director Marc Meyers about his second feature, *Harvest*, which he wrapped this fall just before his first, *Approaching Union Square*, debuted on the Sundance Channel. The film follows three generations of a New England family reuniting to share the last days of a dying patriarch, a World War II veteran played by Robert Loggia. "It's an ensemble piece that gives equal time to the drama of sibling rivalries and resentments that emerge when loss is right around the corner and people act like less than their best selves," Meyers says.

Meyers, 36, grew up in upstate New York and studied English at Franklin and Marshall where he was a school newspaper columnist and disc jockey. Later a playwright and veteran of multiple New York theater collectives, he launched his film career as an IFP volunteer before going on to a sales spot at *Variety*. He helped start New York City's DocFest in 1998 and he was part of the team behind the 9/11

doc *Witnessing*. Meyers produced both features with his wife, Jody Girgenti, a former AMC and THINKFilm exec and also his partner in production company Ibidfilmworks. Their work under that banner includes music video *Stay With Me* and *Cube Farm*, a Web series for NBC Digital Studios and dotcomedy.com.

The HD *Harvest* shot 19 days in September in the Connecticut town where Meyers's family once owned a department store and where he spent his childhood summers. He wrote photogenic locations he knew well into the script and relied on his family's history in the area to add currency to a production whose actual cash, raised through private equity investment, was limited. Ruben O'Malley (*Love, Ludlow*) was the d.p. The filmmakers scheduled two days of pickups before principal photography to capture the locally famous annual July 4 parade. *Harvest* costars Barbara Barrie (*Breaking Away*), Jack Carpenter (*I Love You Beth Cooper*), Arye Gross (*Grey Gardens*), Peter Friedman (*The Savages*), Victoria Clark (*The Happening*) and Daniel Eric Gold (*Taking Woodstock*). Next for Meyers is a comedy, *Mommy Does Hollywood*, the tale of a Van Nuys porn director fielding a surprise visit from his unsuspecting mother.

The Scene

"It's a modern-day morality tale about popular culture, power, politics and human drama," says director Amy Glazer about her showbiz-set second feature, *The Scene*. "It's fierce, edgy, raw and scathing, very language-driven, and it owes a debt to my great regard for John Cassavetes." *The Scene* is an adaptation of the play by Theresa Rebeck, whose screenplay credits include *Gossip* and *Harriet the Spy*.

Glazer, 54, is a California Institute of the Arts graduate who grew up in Miami. She got her first taste of filmmaking as a child on trips to New York City to visit her uncle Sid-

ney when he was producing Mel Brooks's *The Producers* and Woody Allen's *Take the Money and Run*. Glazer has spent a decade teaching film and theater at San José State University and has directed numerous Bay Area theater productions through long affiliations with local outfits like the Magic Theater and Marin Theater Company. Her first short, *Ball Lightning*, had a script by Barry Gifford and premiered at Locarno in 2003, and her debut feature, 2006's *Drifting Elegant*, premiered in Mill Valley. *The Scene* premiered at the '06 Humana Theater festival and Glazer directed its West coast premiere at the SF Playhouse last spring with Daphne Zuniga (*Melrose Place*) in the lead; Zuniga reprises her role in the film and is producing alongside Glazer and Maurice Kanbar, the film's financier.

The digital *The Scene* shot 17 days in San Francisco in November with Jim Orr (*Elegant*) as d.p. and travels to New York City this spring for several days of pickups. Remainder of the film was completed out of an eight-story Pacific Heights building Kanbar owns where he made 20,000 square feet of empty luxury residences available for sets, production space and cast housing. Glazer says she and Kanbar are already planning to reteam for her next film, most likely an adaptation of a piece by playwright Rebecca Gilman. ▼

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