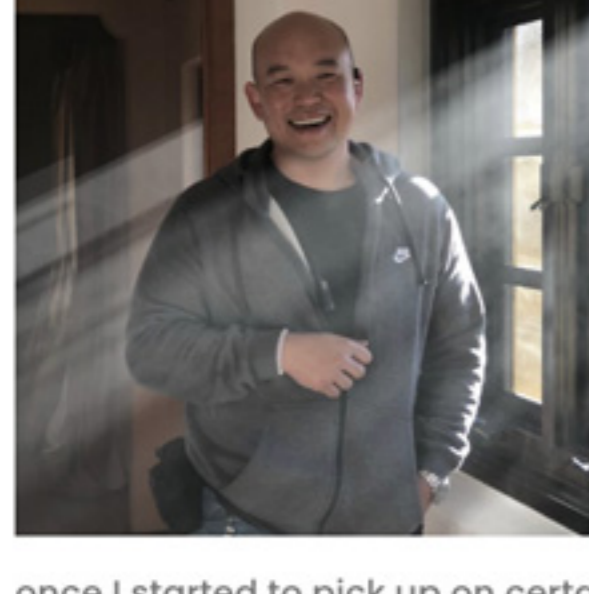


BEHIND THE SCENES

Behind the Scenes with CLT Danny Durr



We recently caught up with CLT Danny Durr to discuss his journey into the industry as well as his most recent work on *Malcolm & Marie*. Danny has worked on such projects such as *Little Fires Everywhere*, *Euphoria*, and *Malcolm & Marie*.



When did you become interested in working in film? What made you want to get into the industry?

My interest in working in the film industry began with my love for watching movies. Since I was young going to theaters and even watching movies at home was a big family event. That compounded with my father working in the industry, allowed me additional exposure whether working on set with him or being allowed access to how things were accomplished through magazines like ASC. At the beginning like most, I thought I wanted to direct, but once I started to pick up on certain styles and techniques of filmmakers I became much more interested in cinematography.

The Durr family name is well known throughout the 728 community. Tell us about the family. When did your father, Tim started working in the business?

I'm very grateful for my work ethic and knowledge of the film industry that has been passed down from my dad and has given me a firm foundation. Before getting into 728, he ran a rental house called J&L in the late 80s - early 90s. I grew up there, often getting picked up from school in a cube truck from the drivers that worked thereafter they would do runs. I think another thing that I've always been drawn to is the comradery amongst a crew. Having that is always an important part of collaborating and having a successfully functioning film set. From running around a rental house to hanging out on set; it allowed me to eventually work on set whenever it didn't interfere with school.

Tell us about Light Force Rentals. And what it's like to collaborate with your father, and brother Nick on Light Force.

Light Force was the company name of my dad's first G&E company. A part of my success was built on dad's past success and ability to navigate through difficult situations. His insight has allowed me to make decisions to position myself and the business to thrive. Now with my brother, Nick I feel like I'm able to pass on what I've learned not only to him but to anyone interested in working in the film industry. I think inspiring the next wave of filmmakers is an important part of my growth and others. I'm always trying to give back as much time and help as I can within my limits. Working with family presents its challenges, but in the end, we always know that we have each other's best interests in mind.

Growing up, did you have any inspirational Directors, DP's, Gaffers that have inspired you?
Growing up I was always inspired by Steven Spielberg films, as cliché, as it might sound his films, spoke to me. Eventually getting work with him as a 728 set lighting technician was a full circle for me and it happened much sooner than I expected in my career. I'm a firm believer in setting goals and challenging yourself constantly so that you keep moving up, never reaching a top. At that point in my career, I was always trying to absorb as much information as possible, constantly taking notes to develop my style when it came to lighting. This eventually led to me being able to work with some of the best DPS and Gaffers in the industry. Much of my understanding of how to operate and run a crew has been taken from what I thought were the best traits of Gaffers like Dave Devlin, Chris Culliton, and Mike Bauman. I've been very lucky to work under them and see how they light, operate with production, and collaborate with other filmmakers. Essentially they are my mentors that I'm striving to make my colleagues, their work is the bar that I'm trying to surpass.

What are some of your favorite films or tv shows that have influenced your work?
Creative and original movies that have something to say either emotionally or socially have always influenced me growing up. *Empire of the Sun*, *City of God*, *Shawshank Redemption*, *Requiem for a Dream*, *Cool Hand Luke* is a few that pop up in my mind. Trying to tell a story that has a larger meaning is always more fulfilling than just doing a job for a paycheck. Growing up from a generation that was raised on music videos, I also feel like they've been a huge influence in some of my work, sometimes you're forced whether by choice or budget to find creative ways to tell a story. I've always preached that the stories of how you get there are just as important as the stories that you are trying to tell.

Malcolm & Marie

You previously worked with Director Sam Levinson, DP Marcel Rev, and Production Designer Michael Grasley on Euphoria. What was it like to reunite with the crew? And, how did you first hear about the film?

The very first call I got was from Marcell and he told me that they wanted to make a small movie, literally me and a couple of LiteMats it was pitched as. With two actors, Sam, and a few other people and that they didn't want to pay for anything; equipment or manpower, but that we could have ownership in the film. By this point into the lockdown, I looked at it as an opportunity to get back to work and have a creative outlet. Of course, as interest grew, the project grew, and then we were shooting on 35mm film! I knew it was going to be very challenging given how we wanted to approach it but we were still able to find a way where we minimized the number of people. It was almost a return to making a movie for the love of making movies, with friends that helped everyone else do whatever needed to be done to complete the day. Getting to work with a team that has familiarity with each other allows you to put the introduction period of filmmaking aside and truly focus on what is trying to be accomplished, we only had 14 nights of shooting so we had to be as efficient as possible.

This was filmed in the city of Carmel, CA a few months into quarantine. I believe it was the first Hollywood feature to be entirely written, financed, and produced during the COVID-19 pandemic. What was it like working on this film during COVID?

In the beginning, it was a lot of uncertainty because of covid and being away from family, but as protocols were put in place and as we all isolated for 14 days before shooting I felt extremely safe working with the crew in our pod. We were essentially cut off from the outside world, which with testing formed a completely safe environment for us to make the film. Looking back at it, I feel very grateful that I was able to be a part of a film that was pushing me to figure things out. We didn't only make a beautiful film, we were able to share information to SAG and other production teams as to what we did and what worked, what difficulties we had, and how we could have done things differently.

Interior



What was it like working in the same location throughout the film? And what was it like working with only 2 actors throughout the film?

To me it was very challenging to make this film in one location and only with 2 actors because you have to find different ways to make the location interesting and keep the audience interested in these two actors in essentially real time. Luckily our two leads were uber talented and diverse in their performances. The caterpillar house at which we filmed was also very beautiful architecturally so it very much added to the story telling. Certain parts of the house were very cold and confined, while other parts were very open and grand, lending to what our characters were projecting in their performances.

Can you tell us a little about your lighting scheme for Malcolm & Marie? How would you describe the lighting style?

The caterpillar house had a lot of large open doors and windows, which allowed you to see a lot of the exteriors. Since we were shooting on black and white 35mm film we had to create depth in the deep background so that our talent wouldn't disappear into limbo. So for the exteriors we used a lot of hard light tungsten, 12 light maxi brutes and 20Ks to rake hillside or back light ridges. In the interior we use a lot of soft top light, which we were able to utilize tile lites, LiteMats, and rifa lights rigged throughout the house. All of these units were run to a dimmer board to allow us to move efficiently depending on what part of the house we were in and what we saw in the background. At the end of the filming I actually congratulated Marcell, because even though we had some Sky Panels, we never used a single one. They are usually a work horse for us, but I kind of thought it was cool to not use them for once. It was kind of my own personal nod to classical filmmaking.

Exterior



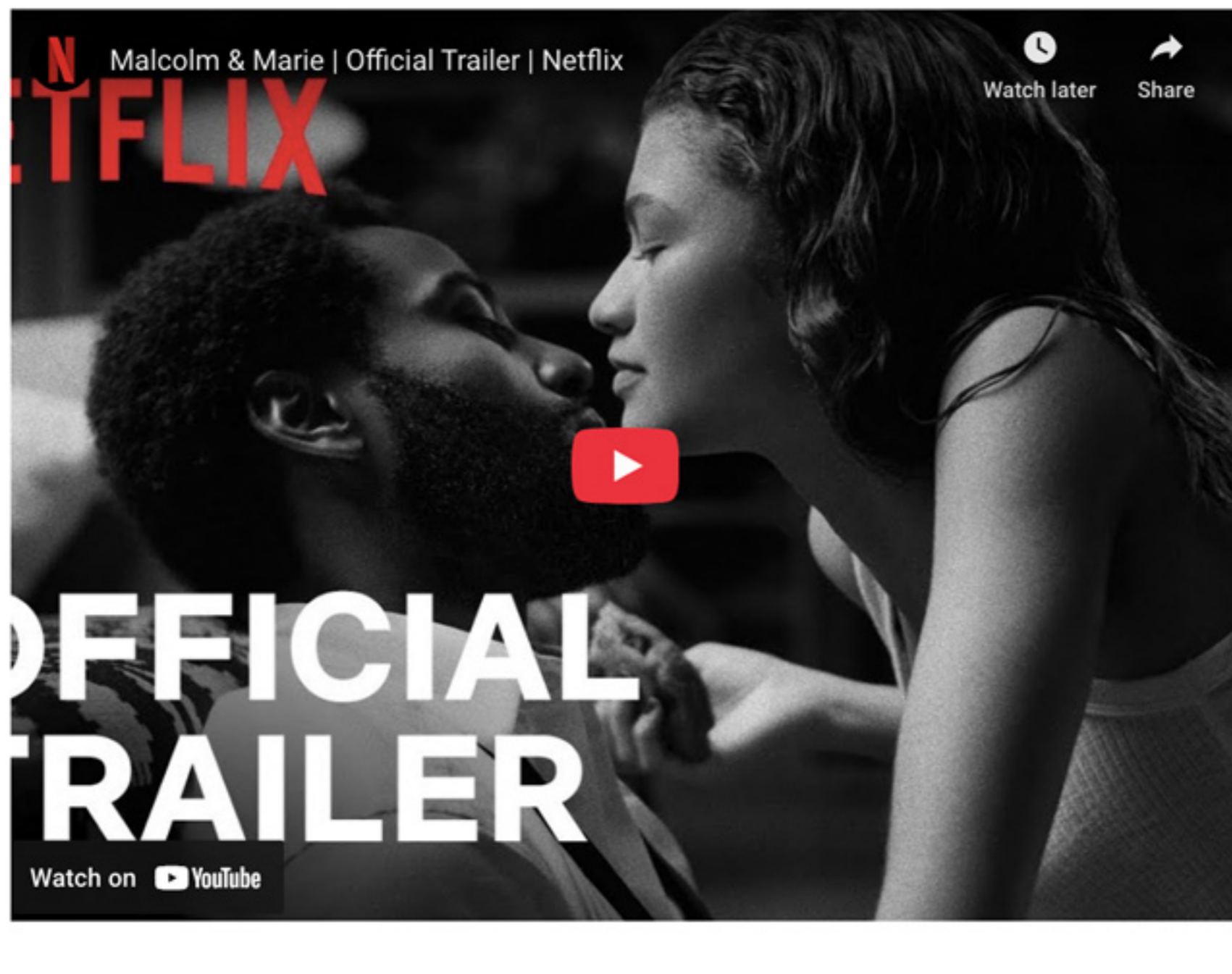
The look of the film is such a contrast from Euphoria. What was it like going from a series that was filled with so many vibrant color tones to working on a black and white film?

Going into the project I knew two things were for certain; we were going to need a lot of light and it was going to be very contrasty since we were shooting on Kodak 35mm double-x. In my opinion, Marcell is masterful when it comes to the technical aspect of shooting on film and that makes collaborating with him even easier. I think my strengths are contributing efficiency and making sure I have good taste in having his back when it comes to the imagery. The other thing that was for certain was as long as we stuck to our formula it was going to be impossible to photograph our talent poorly. It's generally hard to go wrong with large soft sources and beautiful talent, if we make them look good, they will make us look good.

Are there any scenes that you'd like to discuss that stood out from a lighting perspective?
One of my favorite scenes of M&M in the bathroom while Marie is taking a bath. The imagery is so still but the dialogue carries so much weight. We're filming these two characters in a very intimate moment in close-ups where they have nowhere to hide. One of the advantages to filming in black and white on such a contrasting stock in my opinion is that you can still pour a bunch of light in the frame and you can get away with letting the audience believe it was a night scene. We lit a lot of that with two 12 light maxi brutes bouncing into a 12x20 ultra bounce, diffused with a full grid. Had that been filmed the same way on tungsten color stock there would have been a lot of questions as to why it was so bright for a night scene, but in B/W that pure white gives it a very different feel.

Could you tell us about a show or project you are currently working on?
When I first got into the business there was only shooting on film, and as technology has advanced I get to work with still values shooting on film. I'm currently working with Sam and Marcell again on the second season of *Euphoria*, over a year removed from when we were supposed to shoot it pre-covid. I can't say too much about what we're doing but I think the world they are building is in such a different space from what season one was, hopefully, people will enjoy it as much if not more than the first time around. It's hard to tell how audiences will respond until the final project is put together, but I can genuinely say that I'm excited with the work we're doing daily and then even more excited after seeing results with dailies, hopefully, it translates and other people think it's cool too.

Malcolm & Marie is currently streaming on Netflix.



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BEHIND THE SCENES

A Discussion with Gaffer Jenny Scarlata

25 Mar



Throughout March we are featuring a series of discussions with some of today's most influential women cinematographers and gaffers. These artists talk about their journey into the industry, advice to young aspiring artists, and the art that has had an impact on their work. This edition features Gaffer Jenny Scarlata (*Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, *Succession*, and *Katy Keene*.)

When did you become interested in working in film? What made you want to get into the industry?

While I was in high school we had to do a senior project and I decided to take a film class at UCLA extension and it got me thinking that this was something I would like to do.

Describe your journey in becoming a gaffer. Historically speaking, the camera & lighting community has not been very diverse. What was the process like for you?

I started to work for free on student projects in college at SFSU and then low budget films as a camera assistant or grip and electric and then I became drawn to the team aspect of the grip/electric department so when I moved to NY I concentrated mostly on getting work on the grip/electric side then ended up on the electric side as I was working towards getting into the union. From there I was a lamp op for years then best boy and now gaffer. Although there are fewer women on the lighting side, I was lucky to work with really great crews and never really felt out of place.

What advice would you like to give young female aspiring gaffers?

Just keep learning, concentrate on being a solid electric first then everything will go from there. I was lucky to best for a strong gaffer (John Oates) which was key for me and he taught me a lot and has always had women on his crew.

What are some changes you believe the industry should make to help female filmmakers have their voices heard moving forward?

I'm not sure how to answer that- I feel like now is the time when you can really get ahead as a female.

Growing up, did you have any inspirational Directors, DP's, Gaffers that have inspired you.

Director's: Spielberg, Scorsese, Allen, Capra, Houston, Coppola, Tarantino, Coen Bros. DP's: Conrad Hall, Gordon Willis, Bill Butler, Roger Deakins, Vilmos Zsigmond, Bob Richardson all inspired me- I didn't know what a gaffer was growing up.

I find working with DP's and Gaffers coming up more influenced me such as Jonathan Freeman, David Franco, Reed Morano, Vanja Cernjul, Pat Capone, David Mullen, Brendan Uegama and Gaffers John Oates, John Velez, Kevin Janicelli, Steve Ramsey, and Shawn Green to name a few inspired and taught me a lot.

What are some of your favorite films? Have any of these films influenced your work?

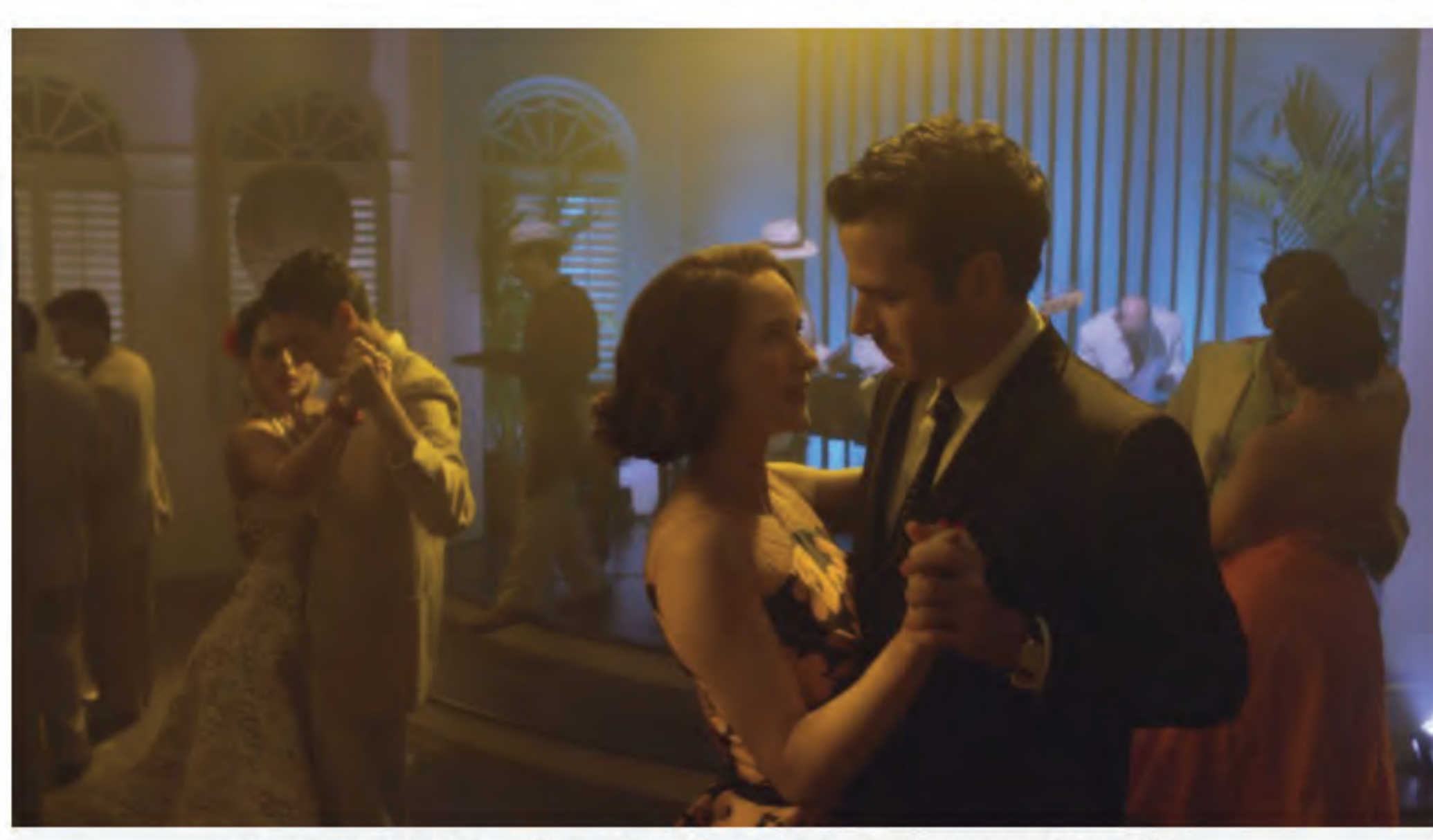
Annie Hall, It happened One Night, Raiders of the Lost Arc, The Conversation, Jackie Brown, Godfather 1&2, Singing In The Rain, When Harry Met Sally, Fargo.... to name a few. I think these films have more inspired me to work in lighting than specifically influenced my work.

Could you tell us about a show or project you are currently working on?

I am currently gaffing season 4 of *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*. It's a great project for lighting as it is very colorful and theatrical. Most of the shots are 360 degrees so we have to get very creative with the lighting placement. We tend to rig lights per shot (lots of LiteMats!!!!) We also do lots of comedy club scenes so we get to do a lot of theatrical lighting as well.

You can catch Jenny's latest work in season 4 of *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* later this year. Keep up with Jenny on her Instagram @jennyscarlata.

The following images are from The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel, season 3. Photos Courtesy of Amazon Prime Video.



Choreographed Steadicam shot. Photo Courtesy of Amazon Prime Video.



Susie's childhood home on fire in the Rockaways. Photo Courtesy of Amazon Prime Video.



Midge on stage at the Button Club. Photo Courtesy of Amazon Prime Video.



Moon box shot above Shy Baldwin's boat. Photo Courtesy of Amazon Prime Video.



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EDUCATIONAL, SPOTLITE

Lanny Smoot

13
Feb

Celebrating the many accomplishments of Lanny Smoot.

Lanny Smoot, is an electrical engineer, inventor, scientist, and theatrical technology creator. With over 100 patents, he is Disney's most prolific inventor and one of the most prolific Black inventors. He has developed interactive attractions, special effects, new concepts for ride vehicles, and numerous other technological advancements for Disney's theme parks, attractions, resort hotels and cruise ships, creating magical guest experiences and driving innovation for future attractions.

Prior to his move to Disney, Smoot invented some of the first fiber-optic transmission technologies widely used in the Bell Telephone system. Later, he moved to Bellcore, founded following the breakup of the Bell System, where he became their patent leader and a Bellcore Fellow, their highest technical honor. There, he invented the first high-quality, large-screen video teleconferencing system, the "VideoWindow," which ultimately was showcased at the Smithsonian Institution's "Information Age" exhibit. Smoot also holds patents on some of the first video streaming systems. One of his many inventions at Bellcore was the "Electronic Panning Camera" prototype, allowing unlimited users to control their views of a remotely televised site.

In 2024, Lanny Smoot, a Disney Research Fellow and longtime member of Walt Disney Imagineering Research & Development, is being inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame.

To learn more about Lanny Smoot please click on the links below.

[The National Inventors Hall of Fame](#)

[The Walt Disney Company](#)

THIS ARTICLE CONTAIN EXCERPTS FROM
THE NATIONAL INVENTORS HALL OF FAME
BLOG POST
FEBRUARY, 2024



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LITEGEAR CREATIVE SOLUTIONS

LiteGear Enhances the Ambiance at Messhall Kitchen



The local Los Feliz watering hole and favorite industry hangout gets a dual-purpose upgrade using cinema quality, color-rich, flicker-free lighting.

Project Origin

Messhall Kitchen, over the years has become a hub for creative professional actors, writers, and directors. Recently Messhall Kitchen has offered its establishment to film makers and encouraged them to take advantage of the unique location for their productions. When renowned cinematographer Charles Papert posted on social media about a flicker issue plaguing Messhall Kitchen’s bar lighting setup, Paul Royalty, LiteGear Sr. VP of Sales, offered to help find a solution

A Visit to Messhall Kitchen

When Paul scouted Messhall Kitchen to assess the location, he quickly discovered that the lighting setup was outdated, and relied on older magnetic power supplies without dimming capabilities. Moreover, the original LED tape was dim, non-color changing and with the magnetic ballasts exhibited an annoying flicker issue on camera.



A glimpse of the Messhall Kitchen bar before the new installation.

An Illuminating Collaboration

Anthony Ko, the owner of Messhall Kitchen, joined Paul and Charles to discuss revamping the bar’s lighting. They collectively agreed the new lighting needed to be flicker-free, high color quality, and provide studio-quality dimming.

Lighting and Dimming Solutions

To address the need for improved color quality, LiteRibbon Chroma RGB-Tungsten was the chosen lighting solution. LiteGear’s Chroma LiteRibbon offers color correct white light, flicker-free performance, and the ability to introduce colored accents. These colored accents are ideal for creating themed or festive lighting for holidays like Christmas, St. Patrick’s Day, and the 4th of July.

For dimming, the team opted for the LiteDimmer Studio 24×4, which could handle the quantity of LiteRibbon required for the job while allowing DMX control through a simple lighting console. This solution allowed for seamless mixing of RGB with Tungsten, as well as presets for multiple white light or saturated color looks.



LiteRibbon Chroma RGB-Tungsten set at Red

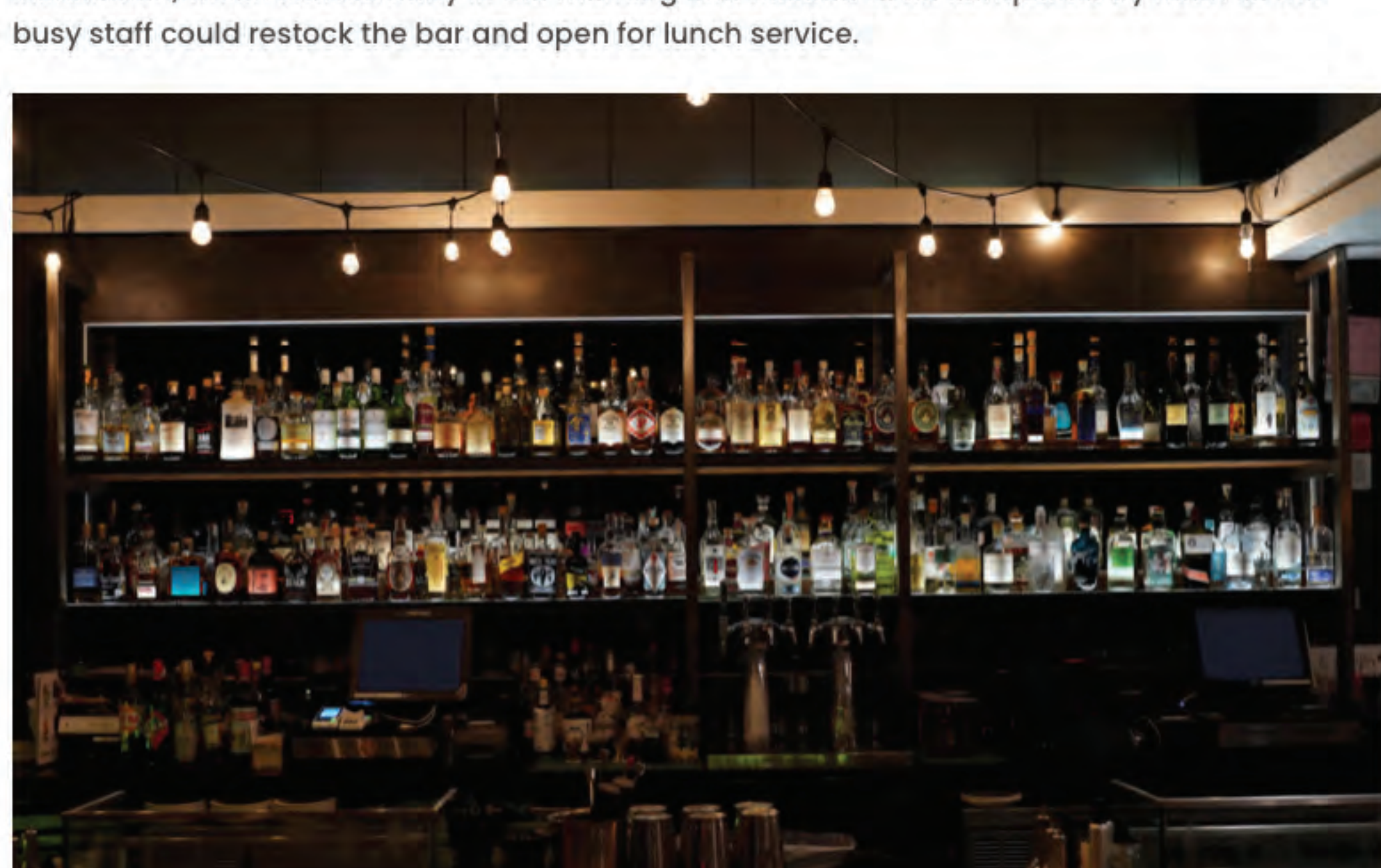
Creative Illumination

The primary goal was to up-light the back bar elements and bottle shelves while creating a dramatic and eye-catching lighting effect. The discreetly positioned LiteRibbon under the glass shelves, consisted of two rows resulting in four individual groups, each with its own independent control.

Challenges and Considerations

The primary challenge of the job was working with the established infrastructure. While the team initially expected to use the existing wiring, they quickly realized the wiring was inaccessible due to it being tiled over. As a result, the installation timeline grew to discreetly run new wiring without causing any undo damage to the building.

Working in an active restaurant environment presented challenges similar to those on a film set. The team needed to coordinate with staff members to gain access to the shelves while operating within the hours of a restaurant that remained open. There was a tight window for installation, which started early in the morning and needed to be completed by noon so the busy staff could restock the bar and open for lunch service.



LiteRibbon Chroma RGB-Tungsten set at White

Creating a Unique Atmosphere

The new lighting system offered unparalleled control, enabling Messhall Kitchen to adjust lighting levels throughout the day and create customized colors. What set this installation apart is how the simple design enhanced the restaurant’s ambiance year-round and provided cinema quality lighting for filming.

Feedback from the Restaurant

The management and clientele immediately noticed the improved quality of light, which enhanced the bar’s appeal and uniqueness. The positive response from everyone involved was so overwhelming that the desire to replace additional lighting setups throughout the restaurant is in the works.



The Messhall Kitchen bar up and running! Image from the Messhall Kitchen Instagram.

About LiteGear Creative Solutions

At LiteGear Creative Solutions, we leverage our 17 years of lighting expertise to provide unique and innovative lighting products and services. With roots in the motion picture industry, we know what it takes to create high-end results and apply these experiences to discover solutions tailored to your needs, aesthetics, and project goals.

Discover more about LiteGear Creative Solutions <https://solutions.litegear.com/>

