

# 695 QUARTERLY

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WINTER 2015  
VOLUME 7 ISSUE 1

# 695 QUARTERLY

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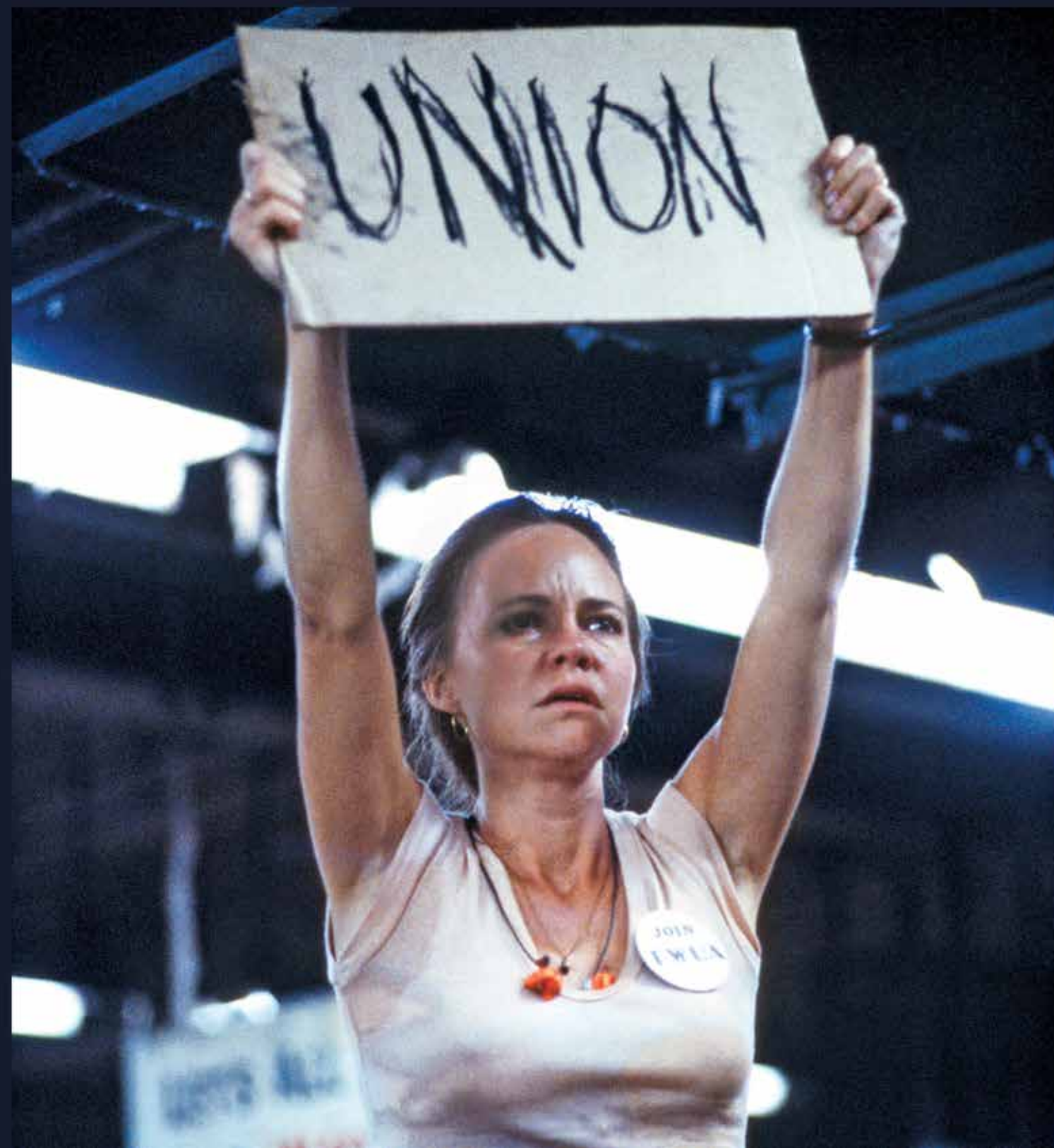
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# BEST SOUND MIXING

JON TAYLOR, FRANK A. MONTAÑO AND DAVID LEE

# UNBROKEN

THE UNBELIEVABLE TRUE STORY



# 695 QUARTERLY

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Cover: From the 1979 film *Norma Rae*, mixed by Bruce Bisenz

Photo: ©1979 Twentieth Century Fox. All rights reserved.

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## Local Participation

Something extraordinary occurred at the nominations meeting in December: members had to pull additional chairs from the storage racks to have some place to sit. That hasn't happened in a long time. With the end of the Trusteeship, we have experienced a resurgence of participation in the affairs of the Local. It's not a road we would have elected to travel to achieve that end but we welcome the development however it comes. We encourage members to continue the trend and also to share knowledge and experience by writing for the *695 Quarterly*.

We're now in the thick of awards season and have an assortment of articles for you. Steve Cantamessa and Ethan Andrus discuss their work on award contenders *Gone Girl* and *Boyhood*, respectively.

We also have a profile of Production Sound Mixer Bruce Bisenz, who pursued his own path over a career spanning nearly four decades.

Fraternally yours,  
Eric Pierce, Richard Lightstone and  
David Waelder

# It's no secret.

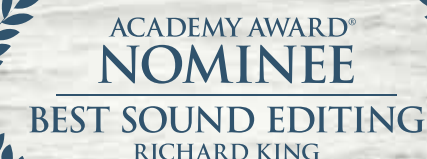
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TO THE SOUND OF AWE.”

- RICHARD CORLISS, TIME



A FILM BY CHRISTOPHER NOLAN

# INTERSTELLAR

PARAMOUNT PICTURES AND WARNER BROS. PICTURES PRESENT  
 IN ASSOCIATION WITH LEGENDARY PICTURES A SYNCOPY/LYNDA OBST PRODUCTIONS PRODUCTION A FILM BY CHRISTOPHER NOLAN "INTERSTELLAR" MATTHEW McCONAUGHEY ANNE HATHAWAY JESSICA CHASTAIN BILL IRWIN ELLEN BURSTYN AND MICHAEL CAINE EDITED BY MARY ZOPHRES  
 MUSIC BY THOMAS ZIMMER COSTUME DESIGNER LEE SMITH A.C.E. PRODUCTION DESIGNER NATHAN CROVLEY EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS JOYCE VAN HOYTENA P.F.F. N.S.C. EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS JORDAN GOLDBERG JAKE MYERS KIP THORNE THOMAS TULL PRODUCED BY JONATHAN NOLAN AND CHRISTOPHER NOLAN WRITTEN BY EMMA THOMAS CHRISTOPHER NOLAN LYNDA OBST  
 WARNER BROS. PICTURES LEGENDARY PICTURES SYNCOPY A FILM BY CHRISTOPHER NOLAN interstellartw.google.com #interstellartw

# Our Contributors



## Ethan Andrus, CAS

Ethan has been a Production Sound Mixer for nearly 20 years. He has worked on projects with directors such as Terrence Malick, Richard Linklater, Jason Reitman, Robert Rodriguez and Jeff Nichols. Ethan was a CAS Award winner in 2010.



## Steve Cantamessa

A second-generation Sound Mixer, Steve is an Academy Award winner for *Ray* as well as an Emmy and BAFTA Award winner.



## David Waelder

David has recorded sound for films for several decades and has been an editor of the *695 Quarterly* since its inception five years ago.

Photos courtesy of the respective contributors

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A California Nonprofit Labor Corporation  
Incorporated July 31, 1951, State of California  
Affiliated with the A.F.L.-C.I.O.,  
California State Federation of Labor,  
and L.A. Central Labor Council

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# From the President



Congratulations! Our Local has turned the corner and is entering this new year of 2015 stronger than ever.

I want to express personal gratitude for the level-headed leadership and professional hard work demonstrated by Scott Bernard and Laurence Abrams as they navigated Local 695 through the challenge of Trusteeship this past year, to the many members who

pitched in this year to support Scott and Laurence's efforts, and to all of you for stepping up and participating in the democratic process with a resounding mandate for the Local's newly elected Board of Directors. The new Board is a terrific group of people, a wonderful mix of experience and enthusiasm sharing the common goal of moving our union forward. My hat is off to you all.

Scott Bernard – Business Representative  
Mark Ulano – President  
Jay Patterson – Vice President  
Laurence B. Abrams – Recording Secretary  
Susan Moore-Chong – Treasurer  
Andy Rovins – Sergeant-at-Arms  
Shawn Holden – Trustee

Peggy Names – Trustee  
Jeff Wexler – Trustee  
Agamemnon Andrianos – Board Member  
Devendra Cleary – Board Member  
Courtney Goodin – Board Member  
Richard Lightstone – Board Member  
Steve Nelson – Board Member  
Philip Palmer – Board Member

Laurence B. Abrams – Convention Delegate  
Ed Moskowitz – Convention Delegate  
Jay Patterson – Convention Delegate  
Andy Rovins – Convention Delegate

Also, a heartfelt thank-you to our runners up for their generous participation: Chris Howland, Beau Baker, Jane Fleck, Kevin Muldoon and Elizabeth Alvarez.

As we enter into contract negotiation season, we couldn't ask for a better team to be carrying the responsibility of representing this Local's interests. We are in good hands.

Fraternally and with warmest regards,  
Mark Ulano  
IATSE Local 695 President

# From the Business Representative

On January 17, International President Matthew Loeb, along with Michael Miller (International Vice President and Director of Motion Picture and TV Production), joined the Local 695 membership at our first General Membership Meeting of 2015. President Loeb thanked the Local for the work we've done over the past year and installed into office your newly elected Board of Directors. I'm very much humbled by the trust that the membership has bestowed upon me and the rest of the elected Board. The Local's leadership will keep pushing forward along the path we established during the Trusteeship and continue to look for ways to improve services and representation for the members.

President Loeb informed the membership of the progress Local 695 has made, was impressed with the new direction the Local is heading and confirmed that, going forward, Local 695 has his full support and the support of the International. President Loeb made the comment that "Local 695 is the creative and technical crown jewel of the International."

After the newly elected Board was installed, we held our 1st Quarter Membership Meeting. I'm glad to report that President Loeb and Vice President Miller remained with us as guests of the Local.

During my report, I took the opportunity to address the current standing of Local 695 in the production community and how, with the help of the membership, we can increase awareness of the skills of our members. Here is an excerpt from my comments.

"We are the problem solvers. We are the people with the technical skills to get the job done. So what I would like to hear when I visit the set is 'Wow, there's the engineer Local—full of Hollywood engineers, video engineers, projectionists, maintenance engineers, video engineers on the trucks broadcasting the Emmys, the Oscars.' We're much more than a sound local. We

are the production engineers that make it happen! We have the most talented people and we will let Hollywood know—we're going to let the industry know—who we are.

"Every member is going to be represented by this administration. The Board works for you. And that's not just a speech, that's reality. But we need you behind us so, when we go to the negotiating table, they know who we are, they know who you are.

"Get involved. Stay involved. We work for you."

Scott Bernard  
Business Representative



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Scott Bernard at the  
January 17, 2015  
Membership Meeting

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## Jazz Jam

For many of us who work in production sound, we didn't arrive here without at least a layover, if not a full-blown residence, in music performance or production. After so many "Let's jam!" proclamations that never resulted in anything more than talk, a handful of us decided to finally get together to throw down some tunes.

The first such jam took place on December 30, 2014, at the home of our esteemed mixer and ace drummer, Mark Ulano (who in addition to playing drums also gave a demo of his vintage and fully functional Victrola). Other participants were Jay Golden (alto sax), Bill Jenkins (piano), Brandon Loulias (bass), Dennis Schweitzer (guitar), Johnny Kubelka (vocals and a really believable trumpet sound) and Chris Howland (piano, drums and acoustic guitar). This session consisted of jazz standards and selections from The Real Book including "My Funny Valentine," "All of Me," "Fly Me to the Moon," Art

Blakey's "Moanin'" and Miles Davis' "All Blues." We filled the breaks between songs with pizza and energetic conversations that crossed from music to production and back to music. Connecting with colleagues in a musical environment was fun and helped build deeper relationships.

Future sessions are already in the works, including a rock jam that should prove to be extra fun and EXTRA loud. A big thanks to Dennis Schweitzer for his help in song selection and organizing the event, and to Mark & Patrushkha for allowing us to invade their home and make some noise. We will have more jams in the future, and all production sound folks are welcome to join us. If you would like to take part, contact Chris Howland at [LASoundMixer@mac.com](mailto:LASoundMixer@mac.com).



Below from left: Dennis Schweitzer, Johnny Kubelka, Mark Ulano, Brandon Loulias, Jay Golden, Chris Howland, Bill Jenkins. (Photos by Chris Howard)



## MPTF: The Pride of Our Industry

One of the most fortunate perks of our careers, and one of the most overlooked, is the Motion Picture and Television Fund (MPTF). So this is a reminder to Local 695 members of all the ways the MPTF is there to help.

In 1921, Hollywood's earliest stars, including Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks and DW Griffith, to name only a few, began a simple relief fund for any of their peers having a tough time.

Today, the MPTF is a robust organization offering industry members a lot more than just health clinics. It provides all kinds of programs, services and financial aid for young and old alike and it truly belongs to all of us.

You owe it to yourself to take just a few minutes to explore all the programs and services that MPTF has to offer. Please visit [www.mptf.com](http://www.mptf.com) and

browse the website. Also, check out their Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/mptf](http://www.facebook.com/mptf)

And if you want to have one of the most enjoyable experiences ever, think about volunteering. You'll meet lots of other great industry members, from executives on down, all working together on projects and having a blast in the process! For more information, contact [Derek.Krull@mptf.com](mailto:Derek.Krull@mptf.com)

We are incredibly lucky to work in an industry that gives back in so many ways, and it's MPTF that makes all that happen. Let's make sure that Local 695 is well represented as contributors to the fund.

I hope you were able to attend the 4th Annual Santa Anita Day at the Races on January 31! [www.mptf.com/events](http://www.mptf.com/events) It's a great family-friendly event and your ticket supports MPTF activities. If you missed it this year, remember to seek it out next year.

—Robert Wald



Local 695 Business Representative Scott Bernard (fourth from left) with the IA's "A Day At The Races" committee. The January 31 event raised more than \$130,000 for the MPTF. Photos courtesy of the Motion Picture Television Fund (MPTF)

## In Memoriam

Tony Verna, the inventor of instant replay, died at his home in Palm Desert on January 18 at age 81. For the first use of the new technique at the Army-Navy game in 1963, he was at pains to assure the audience that Army had not scored another goal. Tony was mentioned prominently in the profile of Hal Hanie in the recent summer issue of the *Quarterly*. <http://695quarterly.com/6-3/6-3-hal-hanie-profile/>

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- Watch two cameras in one SDI output



# SALUTES THE 2014 CAS AWARDS NOMINEES

## MOTION PICTURES – LIVE ACTION



**American Sniper**  
**Walt Martin CAS**, Gregg Rudloff,  
John Reitz, Robert Fernandez,  
Thomas J. O'Connell, James Ashwell  
Production Sound Team: **Randy  
Johnson**, **Gail Carroll-Coe**, Nourdine  
Zaoui, Mustapha Elatouni



**Birdman or (The  
Unexpected Virtue of  
Ignorance)**  
Thomas Varga, Jon Taylor CAS,  
Frank A. Montaño, Gustavo Borner,  
Jason Oliver, John Sanacore CAS  
Production Sound Team: Brendan  
O'Brien, Adam Sanchez, Teferra  
Mckenzie



**Guardians of the Galaxy**  
Simon Hayes CAS, Lora Hirschberg,  
Christopher Boyes, Gustavo Borner,  
Doc Kane, Chris Manning  
Production Sound Team: Arthur Fenn,  
Robin Johnson, James Gibb



**Interstellar**  
**Mark Weingarten CAS**, Gary A. Rizzo  
CAS, Gregg Landaker, Alan Meyerson  
CAS, Thomas J. O'Connell, Mary Jo  
Lang CAS  
Production Sound Team: **Michael  
Primmer**, **David Raymond**, **Zach  
Wrobel**, **Drew Kunin**, Murray Head,  
Benedikt Amason



**Unbroken**  
David Lee, Jon Taylor CAS,  
Frank A. Montaño, Jonathan Allen,  
Paul Drenning CAS, John Guentner  
Production Sound Team: Mark Van Kool,  
Steven Harris, Dean Morcom

## MOTION PICTURES – ANIMATED



**Big Hero 6**  
Gabriel Guy CAS, David E. Fluhr CAS,  
Alan Meyerson CAS,  
Mary Jo Lang CAS



**The Boxtrolls**  
Carlos Sotolongo, Tom Myers, Ren  
Klyce, Nathan Nance, Nick Wollage,  
Mary Jo Lang CAS



**How to Train Your  
Dragon 2**  
Tighe Sheldon, Randy Thom CAS,  
**Shawn Murphy**, Brandon Proctor,  
Corey Tyler



**The Lego Movie**  
Thomas J. O'Connell, Michael Semanick  
CAS, Gregg Rudloff, Wayne Pashley,  
Brad Haehnel, John Simpson



**Penguins of Madagascar**  
Tighe Sheldon, Paul N.J. Ottosson CAS,  
Dennis Sands CAS, Randy K. Singer CAS

## TELEVISION MOVIES AND MINI-SERIES



**American Horror Story  
"Monsters Among Us"**  
Bruce Litecky CAS, Joe Earle CAS,  
Doug Andham CAS, Evan Daum,  
Kyle Billingsley  
Production Sound Team: Steve  
Huerstel, Jack Bigelow, Eric Heigle,  
Wade Summerford



**Fargo: Part 2  
"The Rooster Prince"**  
Michael Playfair CAS, David Raines  
CAS, Mark Server, Andrew Morgado  
Production Sound Team: Robert  
"Arjay" Joly, Val Siu, Mike Markiw,  
David Brown



**Houdini: Part 1**  
Tamas Csaba CAS, Onnalee Blank  
CAS, Ken Burton CAS,  
Chris Navarro CAS  
Production Sound Team: Mate Gabor,  
Tuska Milan, Csaki Janos,  
Csaki Janos Jr.



**The Normal Heart**  
**Drew Kunin**, Joe Earle CAS,  
Doug Andham CAS, Beauxregard Neylon,  
Scott Curtis  
Production Sound Team: **Mark  
Goodermote**, Paul Korenkewitz,  
Igor Panchenko, Billy Sarokin,  
George Leong, Schavaria Reeves



**Sherlock  
"His Last Vow"**  
John Mooney, Howard Bargroff, Nick  
Wollage, Peter Gleaves, William Everett  
Production Sound Team: Stuart  
McCutcheon, Abdulqader Amoud

The 51st Annual CAS Awards Final Five nominees were announced on Tuesday, January 13, 2015, and the awards ceremony will be held on February 14 at the Crystal Ballroom of the Millennium Biltmore Hotel, Los Angeles, California.

Retired Local 695 member **David Macmillan CAS** will be honored with this year's CAS Career Achievement Award.

## TELEVISION SERIES – ONE HOUR



**Boardwalk Empire  
"Friendless Child"**  
Franklin D. Stettner CAS, Tom  
Fleischman CAS, Mark DeSimone CAS,  
George Lara CAS  
Production Sound Team: Sam Perry,  
Laurel Bridges, Toussaint Kotright,  
Igor Panchenko, Larry Provost



**Game of Thrones  
"The Children"**  
Ronan Hill CAS, Richard Dyer CAS,  
Onnalee Blank CAS, Mathew Waters  
CAS, Brett Voss CAS  
Production Sound Team: Simon Kerr,  
Jonny Waite, Daniel McCabe, Richard  
Dye, Bradley Kendrick, Luke McGinley



**Homeland  
"Redux"**  
Diethard Keck, Nello Torri CAS,  
Alan M. Decker CAS, Stephen Webster,  
Shawn Kennelly  
Production Sound Team: Bert Roets,  
Clair Hesom



**True Detective  
"Who Goes There"**  
**Geoffrey Patterson CAS**,  
Martin Czembor  
Production Sound Team:  
**Jeffrey Humphreys**, **Scotty Jacobs**,  
**Chris Cooper**



**The Walking Dead  
"No Sanctuary"**  
Michael P. Clark CAS,  
Gary D. Rogers CAS,  
Daniel J. Hiland CAS  
Production Sound Team:  
**Robert Maxfield**, Dennis Sanborn

Names in **Bold** are 695 members

## SALUTES THE 2014 CAS AWARDS NOMINEES

### TELEVISION SERIES – HALF-HOUR



**Family Guy**  
“The Simpsons Guy”  
Patrick Clark, James Fitzpatrick CAS,  
Arman Steiner



**Modern Family**  
“Australia”  
Stephen A. Tibbo CAS,  
Dean Okrand CAS, Brian Harman CAS  
Production Sound Team:  
Srdjan “Serge” Popovic, Dan Lipe,  
Peter Hansen, Mark Van Kool



**Nurse Jackie**  
“The Lady With the Lamp”  
Jan McLaughlin CAS, Peter Waggoner  
Production Sound Team: Brendan  
O'Brien, Joe Savastano



**Parks and Recreation**  
“Moving Up”  
Steven Michael Morantz CAS,  
John W. Cook II CAS, Robert Carr CAS  
Production Sound Team:  
Craig Dollinger, Mitch Cohn,  
Mark Agostino



**Veep**  
“Detroit”  
William Macpherson, Richard Davey  
Production Sound Team: Steve Saada,  
Travis Groves

### TELEVISION NON-FICTION, VARIETY, MUSIC SERIES OR SPECIALS



**Cosmos: A SpaceTime  
Odyssey**  
“Standing Up in the Milky Way”  
Darryl L. Frank CAS, Mark Hensley,  
Joel D. Catalan, Paul Aronoff,  
David Torres  
Production Sound Team: Brian  
Copenhagen, Alex Usatine,  
Tom Williams



**Deadliest Catch**  
“Lost at Sea”  
Bob Bronow CAS



**Foo Fighters Sonic  
Highways**  
“Los Angeles”  
Eddie Kim, Jeff Fuller



**2014 Rock and Roll  
Hall of Fame Induction  
Ceremony**  
Brian Riordan CAS, Jamie Ledner,  
Jay Vicari, Bob Clearmountain



**The Roosevelts: An  
Intimate History - Part 3**  
“The Fire of Life”  
Dominick Tavella CAS, Lou Verrico  
Production Sound Team: John Osborne

Names in **Bold** are 695 members

The Oscar nominees for “Best Sound Mixing” were announced on Thursday, January 15, 2015. The 87th Academy Awards ceremony will be held Sunday, February 22, at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, California. The ceremony will be broadcast on ABC Television, and in more than 225 countries and territories worldwide.

### OSCAR NOMINEES BEST SOUND MIXING



**American Sniper**  
Walt Martin CAS, John Reitz,  
Gregg Rudloff  
Production Second Team:  
Randy Johnson, Gail Carroll-Coe,  
Nouridine Zaoui, Mustapha Elatouni



**Birdman or  
(The Unexpected  
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Wrobel, Drew Kunin, Murray Head,  
Benedikt Amason



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Production Sound Team: Mark Van Kool,  
Steven Harris, Dean Morcom



**Whiplash**  
Thomas Curley CAS, Craig Mann,  
Ben Wilkins  
Production Sound Team:  
David Stark, Michael O'Heney

The EE British Academy Film Awards nominations for “Best Sound” were announced on Friday, January 9, 2015, and the awards ceremony was held Sunday, February 8, in London, England.

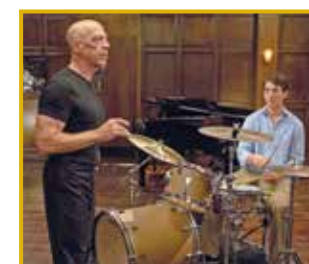
### BAFTA NOMINEES BEST SOUND



**American Sniper**  
Walt Martin CAS, John Reitz,  
Gregg Rudloff, Alan Robert Murray,  
Bub Asman  
Production Sound Team:  
Randy Johnson, Gail Carroll-Coe,  
Nouridine Zaoui, Mustapha Elatouni



**The Grand Budapest Hotel**  
Pawel Wdowczak CAS, Wayne  
Lemmer, Christopher Scarabosio  
Production Sound Team: St. Clair  
Davis, Howard Bevan



**Whiplash**  
Thomas Curley CAS, Ben Wilkins,  
Craig Mann  
Production Sound Team: David Stark,  
Michael O'Heney



**The Imitation Game**  
John Midgley CAS, Lee Walpole,  
Stuart Hilliker, Martin Jensen,  
Andy Kennedy  
Production Sound Team: Howard  
Bevan, Charlotte Gray, Martin Seeley



**Birdman or  
(The Unexpected  
Virtue of Ignorance)**  
Thomas Varga, Martín Hernández,  
Aaron Glascock, Jon Taylor CAS,  
Frank A. Montaño  
Production Sound Team:  
Brendan O'Brien, Adam Sanchez,  
Teferra Mckenzie

The London-based Association of Motion Picture Sound (AMPS) announced their 2nd annual Award for Excellence in Sound for a Feature Film in early January. *Whiplash* was deemed the winner, and the award will be presented at a ceremony in the summer.

AMPS NOMINEES

EXCELLENCE IN SOUND  
FOR A FEATURE FILM



**The Grand Budapest Hotel**

**Pawel Wdowczak CAS**,  
Wayne Lemmer,  
Christopher Scarabosio  
Production Sound Team:  
St. Clair Davis, Howard Bevan



**Into the Woods**

John Casali, Mike Prestwood-Smith,  
Renee Tondelli  
Production Sound Team: Chris Murphy,  
Alan MacFeely, Dash Mason-Malik,  
Peter Clarke, Jerome McCann, Jeremy  
Brown, Jon Olive



**Whiplash**

**Thomas Curley CAS**, Craig Mann,  
Ben Wilkins  
Production Sound Team: **David Stark**, **Michael O'Heney**



**The Imitation Game**

John Midgley CAS, Stuart Hilliker,  
Lee Walpole  
Production Sound Team: Howard  
Bevan, Charlotte Gray, Martin Seeley



**Exodus: Gods and Kings**

David Stephenson CAS,  
Paul Massey, Oliver Tarney  
Production Sound Team:  
Gary Dodkin, Lloyd Dudley,  
Alayn Crespo Calvo, Jorge Adrados,  
Jaime Llanos, Francisco Burguillo

Names in **Bold** are 695 members



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Production Sound for  
**GONE GIRL**

by Steve Cantamessa, CAS

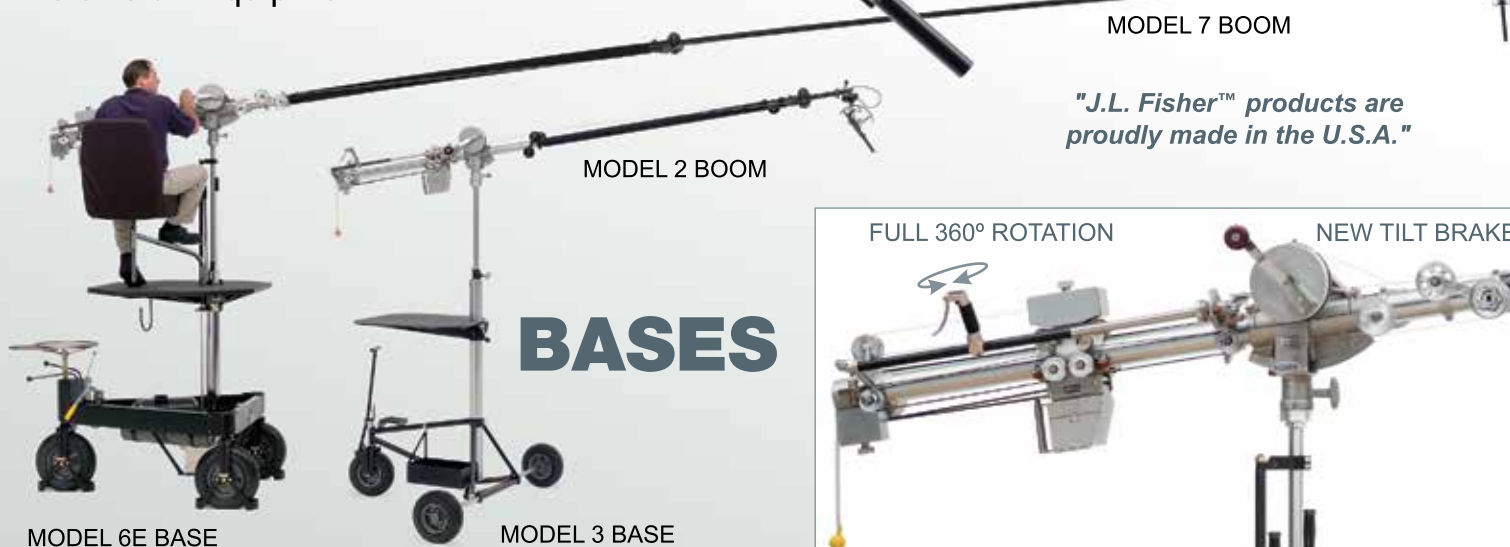
Rosamund Pike  
and Ben Affleck.

*My first impulse when the editors of the 695 Quarterly called to ask if I would write a piece on doing production sound for Gone Girl, was to pass and finish my round of golf. More thought and my wonderful wife's prodding changed my mind but presented me with my next quandary: though I try to keep up with the tech end of my craft and, with affectionate apologies to Mike Paul, my go-to guy for technical matters, production sound is not a terribly literary topic. A microphone with a skilled boom operator in control will render the best sound-ing track. Not always a doable task these days. It was a pleasure to work on a project that allowed us to use this technique. I spoke about penning this with a friend who reminded me that I have now become one of the new "old guys" and that I should just write what I know. So here we are.*

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Photos by Merrick Morton/Twentieth Century Fox except where noted

Before my interview with David Fincher, I didn't really know much about him, other than that I enjoyed his films and the work of his sound designer, Ren Klyce. That they sought me out was a compliment in itself. Thanks to my dad Gino's lifelong involvement, cinema has been part of my life since before I was born. Talking with a respected director like Fincher promised to be interesting at the least. We sat down and I instantly saw that he knows what I do and has an informed opinion of how he thinks it should be done. Sadly, these days many may think they know what we do and how we do it, but they are usually mistaken. David Fincher knows. We discussed my approach to things on the set along with various advances in technology, and then he asked me to do the show.

It didn't take me more than a couple of hours into the first day to realize that David Fincher was that rarest of birds these days—a director who does his homework and knows exactly what he wants when he gets on the set. And I mean exactly. Too often these days, many directors like to temporize important decisions. Others look at the call sheet and check things off and still others never seem to want to go home. On a Fincher movie, it is clear that everyone on the set has the same goal: to do his or her best work in order to make the best movie possible. Fincher crews his shows with the best people based, not on their ZIP codes, but on their body of work. From DP Jeff Cronenweth to Costume Designer Trish Summerville, everyone was helpful and mindful of the big picture, not just his or her own tasks. He understands that such efficiency on set will save far more money than any state tax credit ever will. He shoots his movie, not a corporate schedule.

*Gone Girl* was, I believe, the first show to use the Red Epic Dragon—a 6k camera capable of stunning imagery. As with the "first" of anything, there were issues. Specifically, considerable fan noise emanated from the front of the camera, where the actors usually are. The temperature of the chip in the Red was crucial, and seventy-two degrees was the magic number; once the camera readout on my video assist monitor went to seventy-three, I knew things were going to get noisy. Happily, the people at Red were most helpful. Though we started shooting in Missouri on mostly exterior locations, I knew that once we returned to LA for stage work, that fan noise would pose a big problem. Having been around the block a few times, when I explained this to the folks at Red I assumed that they wouldn't give a damn about some sound



David Fincher (right) directing Ben Affleck.

mixer's problems, probably being up to their own back ends with image tech problems. I was wrong. They listened, they asked questions and they wanted to hear my ideas. I told them that the fan noise coming out the front was a big issue and that it needed to be re-routed in some way. By the time we had returned to California, they had designed and built baffles that mounted to the front of the camera, routing the "sonic exhaust" around the side and then out the back. I was genuinely thankful and impressed that they cared. Most importantly, it worked.

The movie is wall-to-wall dialog, and my Boom Operator, Scott LaRue, was a busy guy; personal relief and lunch were the extent of his downtime. Our utility man was Brad Ralston, always a big asset with the gear and frequently serving as Second Boom Operator. Scott and I have been together since about 1992, so any discussion of how a shot is to be done is usually quite brief. Scott

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Ben Affleck.



Steve Cantamessa, CAS at work.  
(Photo courtesy of Steve Cantamessa)



Boom Operator Scott LaRue seen here on *Tropic Thunder*.  
(Photo courtesy of Steve Cantamessa)



Steve Cantamessa working at his cart.  
(Photo courtesy of Steve Cantamessa)

tells me how he sees it and I say, “Whatever you think.” There are those few occasions where I ask him to wire someone, but such requests are sometimes unwelcome. I do recall that when I was booming, I hated it when a Mixer would tell me to wire someone I felt I could easily get with the boom. It must be a Boom Operator thing, but the fact is that he’s been putting me over for years and I am truly grateful.

It seems like we were always either rolling or setting up. To repeat, Fincher does his homework. The sets in Hollywood were beautiful and well built, but without **greenbeds**. It’s just the way it is now, most sets have ceilings and lighting is done differently, but booming on a ladder over a wall through a slightly raised ceiling piece certainly isn’t the most elegant approach.

**HARDWARE NOTE:** My standard package consists of a Cooper 208 mixing panel, an Aaton Cantar X2, Lectrosonics 411 radios with SMA transmitters, Tram lavaliers and 416s on booms transmitted via Lectrosonics 400 transmitters. And, of course, plenty of IFBs for the Director, Script Supervisor, Camera and Producers.

Even with all the dialog we had to record, I can’t recall David ever telling our department how we should do things. Again, Fincher’s hiring philosophy: he made it clear that being streamlined was important. Just do the job to the best of your ability without making everything into a sound issue. Find problems during rehearsals and get them solved while the DP is lighting so that, when the actors step in, you are ready to go. I don’t know how others do things, but this is how we always work. I can only judge from what I saw when I was booming. There’s a lot to be taken from having seen the likes of Kirk Francis, Jeff Wexler, Bill Kaplan, Eddie Tise and my dad Gino. These guys got to the top because they are professional filmmakers, very good at a most unique craft.

Back to Fincher: ask him a question and he’ll give you an answer immediately without any doubt or hesitation. This makes for

a far more rewarding way to spend the day than the currently popular “Oh, just wire them all.” On the few occasions where he ran a tight camera with a wide shot, he would roll ten seconds of a clear frame and then have us bring the microphone into the shot. The ten seconds of clear frame provided a plate he could use to remove the microphone from the wide shot so the sound would not be compromised by the shooting plan.

Everyone involved in *Gone Girl* respected one another’s department and worked as colleagues. The focus and intensity on Fincher’s set benefited our department immensely. The actors never complained about wires. The Electric Department never jammed a generator up our butt. We never had to ask the dolly grips to quiet a track. The effects people were preternaturally aware of any sound implications. Locations were pre-scouted by the Locations Department for any sound issues, and those problems were solved before we got there. The sets were always dead quiet. For instance, we had a practical police station set located on a busy street in Culver City. David had the Construction Department build vestibules at each of the doors to the outside so we might have significantly diminished traffic noise yet still see extras come and go.

The scene with Ben Affleck and Rosamund Pike (Nick Dunne and Amy Dunne) in the shower was the one place that was a bit challenging and was the only set where David couldn’t arrange things to our advantage. There was quite a bit of dialog at a low level with water running the whole time. The FX Department was helpful by painting “**hogs hair**” the same color as the tile. This allowed us to quiet the sound of the water hitting the tile floor and, being the same color, didn’t adversely affect any of the lighting. They also plumbed the water lines and packed them with sound-absorbing material to ease the sound of the water running through the pipes. The Construction Department removed out-of-shot glass panes as we worked so Scott could get the microphone into the shower and get the dialog. Again, everyone helped.

Some of the questions that come up when someone finds out that I mixed *Gone Girl* are fascinating to me. One is about the number of takes. Granted, he does a lot of takes but what’s the big deal? There is always a reason for them. Any direction I heard him give to an actor, or any department for that matter, was concise and thoughtful. The second question is regarding the sound style used on the dialog throughout the film. I wish I could answer this but I wasn’t there in Post; Ren Klyce, the Re-recording Mixer, would have the answer. What I do know is that David likes to use sound, even the dialog, to create certain moods and feelings that do not follow the normal rules. Everything you see and hear in a Fincher movie is intentional and controlled by David’s sensibilities. You may like the style, you may not, but I assure you that none of it is due to a mistake, laziness or lack of attention.

Those who know me know that I would make a poor courtier and seldom sugarcoat things. That said, I enjoyed the *Gone Girl* experience and got immense personal satisfaction from working on such a good film that people will enjoy watching. Working with good actors, talented technicians and a good director is all any sane person in this business could or should ever want. It is no mistake that nearly every review of *Gone Girl* includes mention of the high quality of the technical aspects of the film. David Fincher showed the good sense to hire from the best talent pool in the land to get what he wanted.

Now, about my golf swing ...

### Glossary of highlighted words

**Greenbeds** A series of catwalks above the sets in a studio.

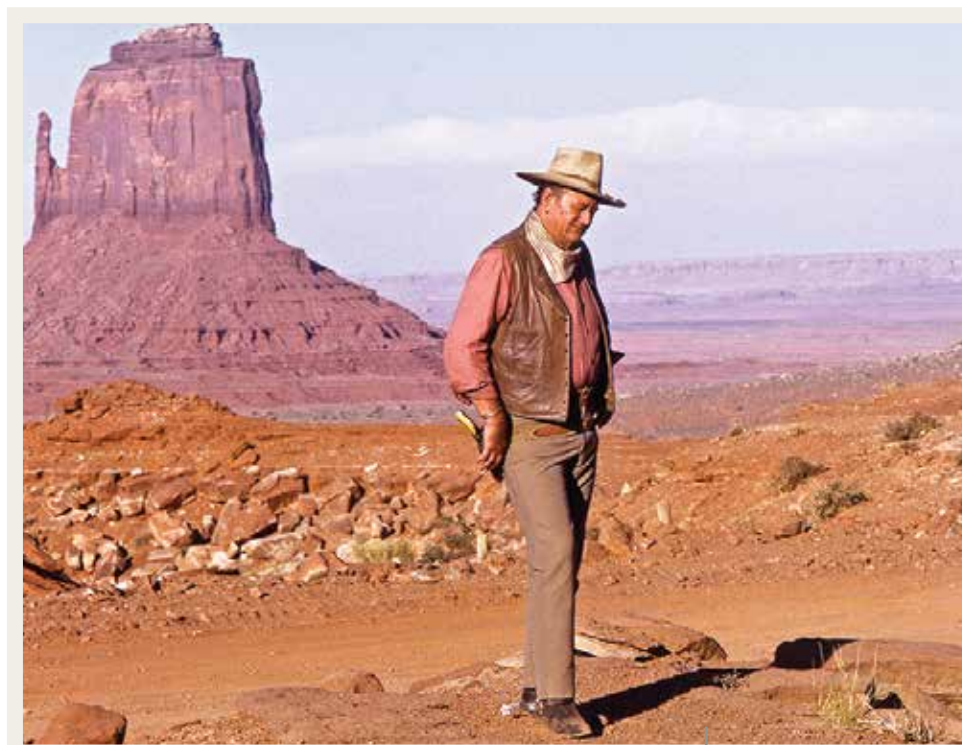
**Hogs hair** A woven filter material for heaters and air conditioners, used on sets to soften the sound of water droplets hitting a surface.



David Fincher with a Red Camera.

# A REMEMBRANCE OF THE American West

by Bruce Bisenz



John Wayne in his element

**I hope you'll believe me when I say this story's so good that I didn't have to embellish—even a little bit.**

Seven years into my freelance career, I began to get occasional documentary work with my friends at Wolper Productions and became a regular with Group One Productions.

Those were heady times; newly available portable equipment like the 16mm self-blimped Éclair NPR, George Quellet's Stellavox SP 7 (Sync/Stereo before the Nagra 4S) and VHF wireless from Vega made it possible for two or three to do the work of a whole crew. And Group One had assembled a skilled group of technicians who could use these new tools to best advantage. Bob Collins, their regular Director of Photography, and Editor Keith Olson had already won Emmys for *Peggy Fleming at Sun Valley*.

David Vowell, a documentary writer recruited for the project, had to interview a bedridden old man to construct a script. He asked for my help with equipment but jealously controlled access to his invalid, the famous film director, John Ford.

The idea was to film this amazing wreck of a man (still nobody's fool—scant months from his passing) and combine it with footage from his legendary Westerns and interviews with actors closely identified with him to make a TV special. *The American West of John Ford* was to be his last project.

I soon found myself at the “Four Corners” juncture of Arizona, Utah, Colorado and New Mexico. It is now home to Navajo, Hopi, Ute and Zuni reservations; it is also the location of Monument Valley and the Canyon de Chelly National Monument, the background for virtually all of the John Ford Westerns.

For “Pappy's” last visit, there was no difficulty getting accommodations or enticing iconic actors like John Wayne, Henry Fonda or Jimmy Stewart to be available. Dennis Sanders, the Director/Editor and Bob Collins, the DP, set up their first shot, an image of “The Duke” (I called him Mr. Wayne) against the desert west that had played such an important part in his own mythic career. Wayne didn't seem to take to me (after all, I was a “Long Hair”) so I was relieved when a minor incident focused his attention elsewhere. Duke Wayne had his big hat set to shade his eyes from the blazing desert sun when Dennis asked him to tip his hat back a bit for the camera. We all heard him rumble, “the hat stays right where it is!”

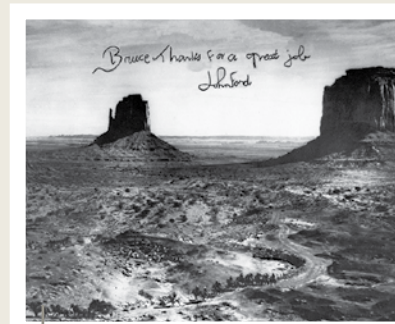
I knew that after a hard day of exteriors in the sun, there wouldn't be any fun in town. We were deep in the Navajo reservation and hours from any town so I brought a deck of cards. I sashayed (this was the Old West) into the lodge's dayroom and attracted a few players.

After a while, a 240-lb, 6-foot 4-in icon, moved by his unique gait, stood over our table and said to nobody in particular, “Is this a private game or can anybody play?” And a hush came over the room ...

Even I knew the response to this straight line. I took a moment to catch his eye, way up there from my chair, and then, remembering to give him a thin smile, I said, “Your money's as good as anyone's.” And the Duke sat down!



Bruce Bisenz recording “Pappy” Ford and “Duke” Wayne



John Ford autographed this photo of Monument Valley for Bruce at the end of the shoot.

Now, for some reason, everyone in the room wanted to play poker at my table. Soon I found myself with five cronies in Duke's “Home Game,” all of them millionaires except me. But I had a wad of \$100 bills in my jeans and \$3,000 was a lot of money back then.

“What'll we play, Duke?”  
“Oh, dealer's choice” (5/7 card stud and 5-card NOTHING wild).  
“What about the stakes, Duke?”  
“Um, table stakes?”  
“Sure, sure Duke.”

Whatever “table stakes” meant; I was green in this game in more ways than one.

High-stakes poker with John Wayne; it was cutthroat. His cronies kept on “Oh goshing” the Duke as he pulled on the neck of the bottle at his right hand.

“Ah, I can't drink the way I used to.”

But I noticed the level go steadily down past half.

I started out lucky. I grinned, bet and won with some pots running \$500–\$700. That was three or four days' pay. Finally, I had the best “up cards” for seven-card stud. But, for once, my first-to-bet up-cards weren't getting any better. I was surely behind

but I kept up my silly grin and the betting as, one by one, the others dropped out.

Head-to-head with John Wayne! I reckoned he was holding two solid pairs. I was drawing to a “Two Outer” and “Dead to Trips” (I learned this lingo in a later century). The last down card was a “Brick” so I “Value Bet” \$50 (and kept the dumb grin too).

His cronies kept calling out: “He's bluffing, call 'em, Duke, call 'em, You gotta call 'em.” That's when I realized: if they caught me bluff-

ing, they wouldn't kill me, but I might wish I was dead!

Well, Wayne thought for quite some time before he said, “Nah, he's been getting some good cards lately” and threw in his hand. Desperately grateful this was the kind of a game no one would think to upend my down cards, I said to myself, remember this one—you just “Bought One From the Duke!”

Editor's note: A variation of this story was originally published in *The Coffey Files*.

*Photos courtesy of Bruce Bisenz*



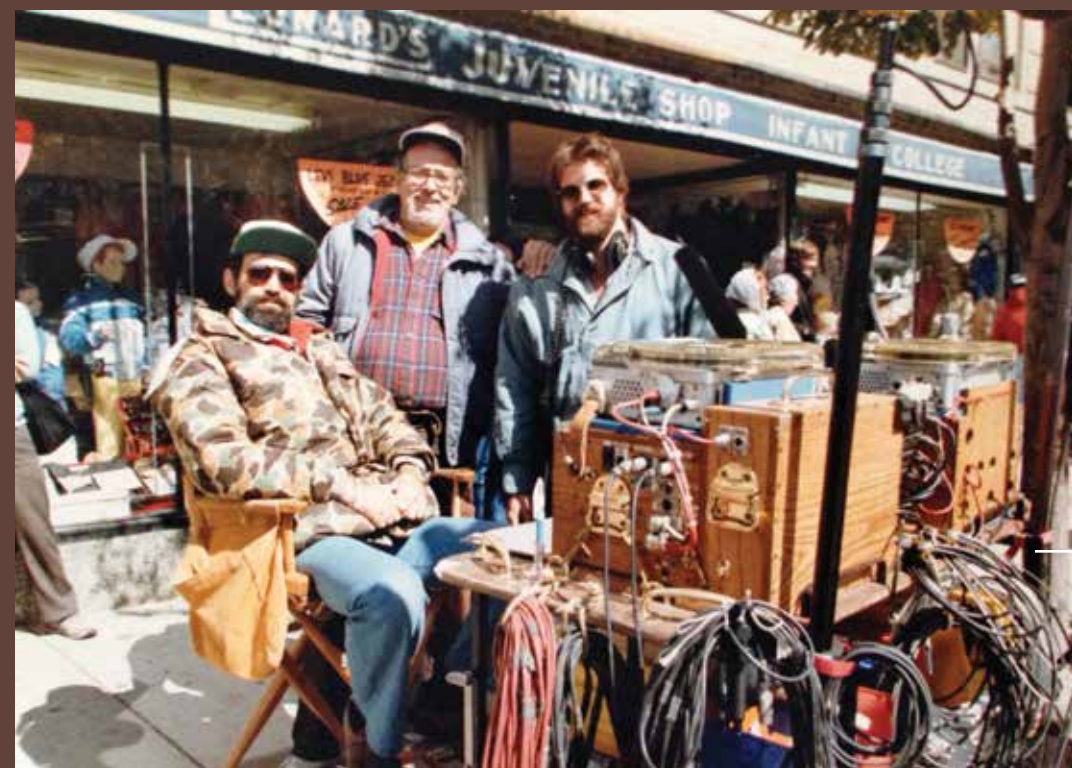
by David Waelder

# Bruce Bisenz:

## His *Personal Best*

**Robert Towne:** (recalling an interview prior to hiring him for *Personal Best*) What got me about Bruce—he did a movie about horse racing and I remember asking him about how he set up the sound on that movie. He told me there was nothing that he had seen or heard [in other horse racing films] that was unique in the way he figured it should be. He went out and recorded sound out on the track of the jockeys in the middle of a race and he said he’d never heard anything like it. It involved the way that the jockeys spoke and how significant [that] was and he described to me the ways in which it was different. I was fascinated because I felt that that’s the sort of thing that I wanted to do with track and field.

**Jeff Wexler, CAS:** I consider him somewhat of a mentor to me because anytime I was having any difficulty or I was, wanted to build something or had to do a job that I didn’t really understand completely, I would always ask Bruce, well, how would you do this ... and Bruce always had an answer. It often was not the answer that I would get from any other Sound Mixer ...



Photos courtesy of Bruce Bisenz

Opposite page: Bruce Bisenz in his home studio. The Pro Tools image on the screen is from the swing band recording he is doing now on twenty-six tracks@ 24/96.

Left: Bruce at his cart working on *Nothing in Common* in Chicago with Utility Sound Garry Van Scarboro and Boom Operator Douglas Schulman. (Photo courtesy of Douglas Schulman, CAS)

Bruce Bisenz has a well-earned reputation as a technical wizard. He designed and built much of the equipment he used throughout his career and he personally performed bias and alignment calibration (not a simple task) for all his recorders. It is particularly remarkable that he is essentially self-taught with little or no formal training in electronics or sound recording practices.

Coming out of military service in 1967, he was unsure what to do next but he had a good friend in David Ronne, who had already established a career in production sound. Bruce had an interest in hi-fi and work as an electronics technician, so David encouraged him to apply to FilmFair where he, until recently, had been working as George Alch’s assistant.

He stayed with FilmFair about two years, replacing David as George Alch’s assistant. He learned everything he could about production sound recording from George and then moved up when George left. He was also involved in Post Production, making transfers and preparing tracks for mixing, an experience that helped develop a sense of what was needed and what worked on screen.

Although he was earning good money at FilmFair, Bruce only stayed another year and left to tour Europe for a network mini-series hosted by skier Jean-Claude Killy. Returning home, he found work on documentaries and corporate projects. His friend David Ronne was then heading the Sound Department for Wolper Productions and recommended him for assignments including a special with historians Will and Ariel Durant and documentaries with Jacques Cousteau.

David Ronne introduced him to the practice of working with a handheld Nagra and a shotgun microphone, starting with a Nagra III and an EV 642 and progressing quickly to a Nagra 4.2 and the Sennheiser 804. That combination was a game-changer at the time.

A recordist, working alone, could produce a quality track that had previously required several people and a truck full of equipment. It was also an excellent training ground; the immediacy of working directly with the recorder and a handheld microphone imparts a keen sense of how microphone position determines the sound.

During this period and his time at FilmFair, he read everything he could find about sound recording and the science behind it, making a vigorous effort to understand all of the factors that determined the characteristics of a recording. This practice of total immersion investigation became a life habit.

Portable radio transmitter/receiver sets were becoming more reliable so Bruce wanted to make the lavalier microphones used with them sound more natural. Over time he determined the placement and EQ that would allow him to ‘Mix and Match’ with his fishpole microphones. This was especially important in the days of single-track dialog recording (no pre-fade backup tracks) when all microphones were mixed together.

Portable mixing panels with full parametric EQ were not available at that time, but David Ronne was building a device with potential. Ronne took out the guts of a Nagra and coupled a microphone preamp to a line preamp and bundled them together in a separate enclosure. Using this outboard preamp allowed feeding a third microphone to the two-input Nagra (or more if one daisy-chained the devices) and several Production Mixers built similar interfaces. (See the profile of Courtney Goodin in the Summer 2011 issue of the *695 Quarterly*.) Bruce Bisenz took the design a bit further.

He recognized that the Nagra line output card was sufficiently hot to drive a passive Program or Graphic equalizer and still yield an output that could be recorded through the Nagra line input.

Bruce collaborated with his engineer friend, Paul Bennett, to custom-build a microphone mixer using Nagra cards with Bennett-modified Altec Program and Graphic EQs configured with the curve that Bruce specified to make radio microphones sound natural. They also fit custom 24 dB/octave high-pass and 18 dB/octave low-pass filters. They even hand-selected capacitors and other components. The capability of this mixer-equalizer coupled with his experiments in microphone placement gave him the tools to tackle nearly any recording challenge.

Television commercials and documentaries were the sole beneficiaries of these skills for a long time but a change in advertising practice nudged Bruce to change direction in his career. He had been happy working commercials but the change from sixty-second to thirty-second spots diminished the work days needed on commercials and encouraged him to seek out long-form work. He was hired to record *Damnation Alley* in 1977 after audaciously telling Jack Smight, who was directing the picture for Fox, that if he didn't prefer his work to their regular Mixer (who was unavailable at the time), they should fire him. This was his first studio picture.

**Glenn (Rusty) Roland:** *The Sound Department at Fox got the dailies in from the location recordings and were amazed at how totally perfect they were. [They] didn't need any additional work 'cause Bruce, you know, was a perfectionist right on set.*

Using all the tricks and specialty equipment he had developed for commercials, Bruce produced an excellent track that needed little adjustment in Post. For commercials, he had been a NABET mixer but this project gave him the IA Signatory days he needed to qualify for IATSE membership. After his acceptance into IATSE Local 695, Bruce was able to work on studio pictures.

He worked with Cinematographer John Alonzo on *FM* and it was Alonzo who recommended him to Director Martin Ritt for *Norma Rae*.

*Norma Rae* cemented his reputation as a Sound Mixer of remarkable ability. Much of the action took place in the din of a working textile mill and Ritt's expectation was that Bruce would only be able to get a scratch track in that environment but even that was not at all certain. On the location scout, he used a Radio Shack sound level meter and measured 103 dB on the machine room floor. That's a deafening racket but not so loud that people couldn't communicate. Mill workers wore custom-fitted ear protection in the machine room and he watched them as they would approach one another and speak directly into the other person's ear. Even then, only the person listening could hear what was said; it was essentially private communication. He had principal actors fitted for ear protection by the mill and specified that the plugs should be molded around his



With Douglas Schulman in Hong Kong.  
(Photo courtesy of Douglas Schulman, CAS)

miniature microphones. Rather than stringing the earplugs on a cord, he sourced especially thin microphone wire and used that both as a neck-loop and to carry signal to the transmitter. Ritt naturally staged the action to match normal behavior in the machine room and the actors would holler their dialog into a microphone only an inch or so from their lips. While the results didn't have the quality needed for a production track, they were quite sufficient as a guide track..

Bruce made another key contribution to *Norma Rae*. Near the end of the film, Sally Field as Norma Rae has a confrontation with the management of the mill and is carted off by police officers. It's a climatic scene with dialog from several characters and would be chaotic if characters could only communicate by screaming in each other's ears, one on one. Bruce reviewed this with the Director and encouraged him to find a way to shut down the machines for that scene. Nothing of the sort was scripted but Bruce's suggestion



Custom mixer with modified Altec Program and Graphic EQs built with Paul Bennett.



On the USS Nimitz, starboard side of the bridge. Note the double Nagra rig and the David Ronne-inspired outboard microphone preamps on top of the modified Altec equalizer.



On the textile mill's machine room floor for *Norma Rae*.

came a few weeks prior to filming the scene so Ritt had some time to consider the advantages. He and his writers structured the scene so that, after Norma Rae displays her "union" sign, the workers, one by one, shut down the machinery. The scene played very much as Crystal Lee Sutton, the actual Norma Rae, recalled it but it hadn't been part of the first draft of the script. This *work stoppage* is arguably the key moment of the movie and intensely powerful.

Each project in a career brings its own set of challenges. Bruce evaluated each circumstance individually and adjusted his approach for the best result. He used whatever tools or techniques would produce a good track.

**Nick Allen, CAS:** *It was so [much] fun to work with Bruce because he would use lots of tools. With Bruce, you'd open the truck and, which of the forty-seven microphones would you like to use today, kid?*

**Glenn (Rusty) Roland:** *Bruce was always doing that on sets, he would always hide microphones everywhere ... he was always placing those huge, I guess they were Neumann, those huge microphones ...*

**Nick Allen, CAS:** *He was putting U-87s in the middle of a set and cranking it and getting real dialog they'd use in the movies. He did the wackiest, most obscure things but, like you said, his ears said, you know what, they'll use that in the mix ...*

In some cases, the simplest method was the best choice but Bruce was not afraid to swim against common practice if that yielded results. For *10*, there was a scene with Julie Andrews singing and Dudley Moore accompanying her on piano. Although he experimented with a plant for the piano, he ended up recording it off Dudley's radio microphone. Post Production didn't believe at first, that the piano was recorded on a wireless but he was fearless if a scene sounded good to him. Conversely, hiding microphones the size of a Buick, if they sounded good, was, for him, entirely normal.

**Nick Allen, CAS:** *And he had a "keep trying" attitude. He taught me that if take one was wrong, put something else in on take two. When you find something that's getting close, tweak it, don't change. There was this path of methodology.*

Regrettably, as Nick went on to say, the pace of production is now so relentless that the first take is often it and there may be no opportunity for adjustment. Whenever possible, he was a bold experimenter in the pursuit of excellence. It's a dangerous business to be running EQ in a shot—and changing it on the fly, no less! Multi-tracking was not an option at the time and there was a risk of over-compensating and spoiling a track. Nobody gets it right 100% of the time, but Bruce had an enviable batting average. He worked to maintain that record both by doing his preparation carefully to be sure he knew what to listen for and also by keeping his hearing in top form.

**Douglas Schulman, CAS:** *Another thing Bruce does, you know, I don't know if he's still doing it, but he would always wear earplugs in his ears when he wasn't wearing his headphones.*

**Glenn (Rusty) Roland:** *Bruce was very protective of his hearing. If we were in a loud place, he'd have earplugs in or something. He did not want to get his ears damaged by bad, loud noises. He had incredible ears for sound.*

Bruce regarded his ears as his primary instrument and took pains throughout his career to protect them.

**Douglas Schulman, CAS:** *He didn't have a problem, I mean, with teaching you something but Bruce was always funny. If he was going to show you something new, he would say, "Now, this is a secret. Don't tell anybody."*

**Nick Allen, CAS:** *I went to Berklee College of Music, very briefly, only for a couple years. I was studying production*



With Robert Towne through the fog of “battle.” The recorder over Bruce’s shoulder is a Nagra IS.

Bruce working at his cart.



*engineering and jazz piano and I didn’t learn as much there as I did from being around Bruce.*

In the course of his work, Bruce acted as a mentor to several of his boom operators. He recalls a time with Nick Allen when they spent half a day listening to windscreens and cataloging how each one slightly altered tone and ambiance. This kind of attention to detail might seem obsessive but it provides the foundation of understanding that permits responding rapidly to challenges.

**Douglas Schulman, CAS:** *The thing that I learned from Bruce is actually how to listen to stuff ... we tend to, with our minds, focus on things and take things out and what I learned from Bruce was to listen more like a microphone which hears everything.*

The summation or direction of a 37-year career isn’t often represented in a list of credits. This is especially true with crew people who don’t usually initiate projects but must accept or decline offers as they are available. Bruce Bisenz’s career was more eclectic than most, ranging from *Reds*, a grand historical vision spanning continents (he did the scenes shot in California) to intimate portrait films like *Without Limits*, the Steve Prefontaine story. He did performance films like *Purple Rain* with Prince and he continued to do documentaries like *The Making of a Legend: Gone With the Wind*. (I’m pleased to have worked with him on a few of the smaller projects like *Legend*.) Other highlights included *Captain Eo* and *Smooth Criminal/Moonwalker* where he engineered the off-speed playback, not a common thing at the time, so that Michael Jackson could dance in slow motion and still be in sync with the music. The one common element of all these projects is that they all received his focused attention and considerable thought. Bruce never “walked” through an assignment; he evaluated each one to consider what an audience should hear on the track and worked to accomplish that. It was just this intelligence that Robert Towne recognized in that first interview with Bruce for *Personal Best*.

**Glenn (Rusty) Roland:** *Oh yeah. I always thought Bruce was, he was just the best, I mean when you worked with him. It is different than others, that’s for sure, but in a very good way.*

**Robert Towne:** *You know, I just said, this is what I need and he somehow delivered it. I honestly can’t say enough good about Bruce in terms of what he brought to his work.*

The first thing that Bruce said to me when I interviewed him was that a “successful career implies a successful retirement. If you die in harness, that’s not a successful career.” He’s been retired for eleven years now but continues to be active. He records a live swing band weekly. The Jerome Robbins Dance Archive accepted for the New York City Library the photos of performing flamenco dancers he has been making over the ten years of his retirement.

#### INTERVIEW CONTRIBUTORS

I thank Bruce Bisenz for making himself freely available and for supplying the images that illustrate his profile.

I’m also grateful to the following colleagues who made themselves available for interviews:

Nicholas Allen, CAS was a Boom Operator for Bruce starting with *Crimes of the Heart* through *Gilmore Girls*. He works today as a Production Mixer.

Glenn (Rusty) Roland, a Cameraman/Director, remembers working with Bruce on motorcycle documentaries like *On Any Sunday*. He worked with Bruce on commercials and brought him in to do *The Making of a Legend: Gone With the Wind*.

Douglas Schulman, CAS was Bruce’s Boom Operator on *Personal Best*, *Heart Like a Wheel*, *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, *Captain Eo* and many others. He is a Production Mixer today.

Robert Towne is a Writer/Director. He hired Bruce for *Personal Best*, *Tequila Sunrise* and *Without Limits*.

Jeff Wexler, CAS considers Bruce a mentor; his first assignment in sound was booming for Bruce.



Dad and Mason Jr. (Ethan Hawke and Ellar Coltrane) put out the campfire

## Growing Up With BOYHOOD

by Ethan Andrus, CAS

*One of my first real breaks into the world of production mixing for feature films came fifteen years ago in 2000, when I had the opportunity to work on Richard Linklater’s film Waking Life. In 2002, I signed on to his Boyhood project and mixed the first six years. It seems appropriate that as my career has matured, so too has a film that I embarked on with Rick more than a decade ago.*

*Boyhood* is a unique, innovative narrative with an honest and moving portrayal of life, family and growing up. It was a fascinating experience to watch all of the characters, especially Mason Jr., grow and mature throughout the film. We began shooting in 2002, filming approximately three to five days each year. At the final screening, twelve years had passed and the six-year-old Mason Jr. was now eighteen, a young adult beginning college.

I had the benefit of working on two Linklater films (*Waking Life*, *Tape*) prior to starting *Boyhood*, and two more (*Fast Food Nation*, *A Scanner Darkly*) during its filming. These experiences gave me insight into Linklater’s filmmaking style and how he would most likely use and mix the sound. In my experience, Rick’s films have always been very dialog-driven, relying heavily on the production track and without the benefit of a lot of masking by ambiences and sound effects. This made the role of the production soundtrack that much more crucial, often living in the mix alone.

The shooting was broken up over twelve years, but the approach was much like a standard feature narrative. We had scripted dialog;

rehearsals with the actors took place prior to filming. Our locations at times presented a challenge, as this was a low-budget film, and we didn’t always have the luxury of “owning” our more public locations. Linklater consciously tried to utilize public spaces “as is” to further reinforce the authenticity of the character experience. A few particularly demanding scenes that I recall were the bowling alley and the Astros game at Minute Maid Park, where a live game was taking place.

A critical aspect of this film was documenting the narrative within a real time period that we can all relate to, so it was important that the actors were filmed during an actual baseball game, rather than a staged event. We opted to wire all the actors in this scene in order to get useable dialog during the live game, and also to avoid the excess attention brought on by swinging a boom around in the stadium seats. They naturally spoke up because of the high ambient level around them, which helped a lot, and with a little Post help, the production track made the mix. We did surround our talent with extras, but only in adjacent seats, so no actual spectator would accidentally look at the camera.

When presented with the concept of shooting a small portion of a feature length film over the course of twelve years, I knew the issue of changing technology and archiving would be a significant challenge to address. Had production begun just a few years earlier, I would have started with a Nagra and spanned almost the entire continuum of film sound recorder technologies. For production sound recording in this film, the story begins with timecode DAT and ends with digital multi-track field recorders. I utilized multiple machines throughout the process. I began with an HHB Portadat, and then switched to a Fostex PD-4. Shortly thereafter, digital multi-track field recorders became the standard and years 3–6 began with a Fostex PD-6 and ended with a Zaxcom Deva IV. All of these recorders offered different sound deliverables (DAT tapes, 8cm DVD Ram cartridges, DVD RAMs, CF cards and external hard drives), and it had to be coordinated with Post Production Sound for dailies and archiving purposes. All the different formats had to make their way into Pro Tools in preparation for the final mix.

Although I had many recorder changes, my microphone selections remained fairly consistent throughout my years on *Boyhood*. I used Sennheiser MKH 60s and 416s for exteriors and Sennheiser MKH 50s and Schoeps MK41s for interiors. My wireless changed a bit during the project, switching from Lectrosonics analog wireless to digital. I utilized both cart and bag modes for this film, so my receivers changed from Lectrosonics 211s to 411s and a Venue system with VRT modules. My lavalier microphones were mainly Sanken COS 11s, with an occasional Countryman B6 used.

Unlike camera, where 35mm film was chosen as the consistent image medium, sound recording was a dynamic and ever-changing process. I give credit to Editorial (Sandra Adair) and Post Production Sound (Tom Hammond) for their work on this film, as they were able to adapt to so many different audio formats.

As Mason Jr. aged, so would his voice and this presented a special challenge to this long-running production. We were aware of this situation so Linklater arranged for studio time to re-record any problematic lines after each filming session. That avoided problems with voice matching and ensured a quality track.

As I watched the film's premiere, so many distant memories of our production days and locations became crystal clear, sequentially rolling frame by frame:

- Familiar neighborhoods and schools in central Austin
- The bowling alley and café, just three blocks from my old home
- Sterile apartment buildings and the suburbs on the outskirts of the city
- Downtown Houston
- Minute Maid Park
- The Butterfly Museum and Herman Park
- Mile-long treks through Pedernales State Park
- Process trailer after process trailer, rolling down city streets and country roads



Ethan Andrus, CAS (green shirt) and Tom "Sturge" Sturgis (blue shirt)

These are great memories, and seeing the completed work gives me the feeling that my role has contributed to a greater artistic whole, which has always been the main aspiration of my filmmaking career.

Needless to say, *Boyhood* was an extremely interesting and innovative project to work on, and I feel very honored to have been a part of it. Everyone involved was highly invested in this amazing experiment in filmmaking. There was a strong sense of unity and family on the project, each year a family reunion, as we all worked together year after year to see it to fruition. Rick, Producer Cathleen Sutherland, the actors and the crew were all there to accomplish a common goal, and seeing the final product gives me a deep sense of satisfaction.

Unlike a typical feature, filming occupied less than a week each year, so I can only imagine scheduling actors and crew would have been quite the juggling act. Understandably, dates could be somewhat unpredictable and varied from year to year, but we all worked together to make it happen. My tenure on *Boyhood* ended with the father-son camping trip, right before Mason Jr. moved to San Marcos. I was able to work on the first six years of the project; in subsequent years, production conflicted with other film commitments.

Fortunately, my colleagues Benjamin Lowry, Benjamin Lazard and Mack Melson, CAS did a great job on the remaining years, and thanks to an outstanding Post Production Sound Department, the sound remains consistent throughout the film. Together, we were able to contribute our part to this film becoming such an exciting success, and I am thrilled to have been a part of it.

A drive-by with the GTO. Ethan Andrus working mobile with the recorder on an apple box.



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