

theGÉDUNK

The camera doesn't lie. No one knows that better than filmmaker Brian Osmond '88 in this Focus on the Arts issue.

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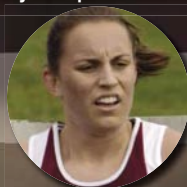
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Lights, Camera Action!

During his film career, Brian Osmond '88 has learned reel life lessons

By Amy Clingensmith '96

When Brian Osmond '88 watches a movie with his wife, he's not allowed to be Brian Osmond The Filmmaker. He has to be Brian Osmond The Movie-lover.

"I can't say anything," he laughs. "I just have to sit there."

Osmond and his wife, Laura (Davis '89), can sit in a theater together, but they appreciate what's happening on the screen for different reasons. Since graduation from Grove City College 17 years ago, Osmond has carved out for himself a successful career in filmmaking. But his wife still wants him to sometimes sit there, eat his popcorn and enjoy the show.

"I love movies," he says. "I love to go see a good movie. If a movie is entertaining, it's a good movie. It doesn't have to be 'Citizen Kane' or 'The Godfather.'"

But in the dark theater, a tiny version of Brian Osmond The Filmmaker sits on his shoulder and reminds him of who he is. Good use of lighting. Nice camera angle.

"You do watch them differently," Osmond says. "You watch them more fully.

You appreciate the score, the lighting, the dialogue. I think you have a much better appreciation and can enjoy it on a different level."

Osmond started out as a computer science major at Grove City College in the mid '80s. But after Dr. William Donnelly's film class and a few internships at KDKA and WDVE in Pittsburgh, he began to stray away from

technology and sought out work in radio, television and theater.

"Along the way," he says, "I discovered film."

That discovery was almost by accident. While working at KDKA, he was doing a story on a movie set and said, "I don't want to do this; I want to do *that*."

Although it seemed like quite jump from journalism to

film, Osmond found that he was utilizing much of the same skill set.

"I was always using the same sort of medium," he says. "For me, both are about telling stories and getting to know people and creating. Film and video was the fusion of all of those things. And I fell in love with all of it."

Once he made this realization, he looked into film



BRIAN OSMOND '88 ON THE SET OF A COMMERCIAL FOR A HEALTHCARE COMPANY. / Contributed photo

school and found it to be much too costly for a young graduate. So instead, he applied to the Maine Photographic Workshops in Rockport, still in existence today. He didn't apply as a student, however, but as an intern. He had no experience in photography or film, but

knew that as an employee at the training ground, he would get an inside look at where he wanted to go.

Quickly, he started gathering that experience, rounding up projects here and there with the hope that no one would find out he didn't know what he was doing.

"I bid on and delivered videos with no experience," he said. "I don't know what I was thinking. I was taking a huge risk, spending other people's money. I did anything people would let me do. I was completely inexperienced but bold and motivated."

That boldness and motivation was what got Osmond into the Maine workshops. He didn't fool the interviewers there. They could see he had no experience. Resumes and portfolios were littered with qualifications. But the workshop organizers could see a quality in Osmond that couldn't be put on paper.

In the interview, Osmond looked at the stack of 300 resumes for three jobs and he laid it on the line.

"I said that I knew I was inexperienced, but I really wanted it and if they gave me a chance I knew I could do a really good job," he said. "That sounds trite but I think they

realized how bad I wanted it and they wanted someone who really wanted it."

Maine hired him for the six-month unpaid gig but all of his expenses

were taken care of and he could attend all of the workshops. "I was broke but I shot some of the best pictures of my life there."

His career was beginning to be spliced together.

Osmond's first job after the workshops was a camera trainee for the movie "An Unremarkable Life" in 1989, shot in Sharon, Pa., about a half hour from Grove City. During that film, which starred Patricia Neal and Shelley Winters as sisters, he found that he loved working with sound and editing. He also discovered that he had followed his heart correctly and chosen the right career in film. He was hooked.

Osmond's big break came in 1991 when he was hired

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Brian Osmond '88



BRIAN OSMOND '88 ON THE SET OF 'THE WAR THAT MADE AMERICA,' A PBS DOCUMENTARY AIRING NEXT FALL. / Contributed photo

Brian Osmond's Top 25 Movie Picks (In no particular order)

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| "Singin' in the Rain" | "Double Indemnity" |
| "Chinatown" | "Brazil" |
| "Silence of the Lambs" | "Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels" |
| "The Godfather" | "Cinema Paradiso" |
| "The Godfather II" | "Alien" |
| "The Matrix" | "In the Heat of the Night" |
| "Raiders of the Lost Ark" | "The Score" |
| "Koyaanisqatsi" | "North by Northwest" |
| (www.koyaanisqatsi.org) | "Amadeus" |
| "The General" | "My Cousin Vinny" |
| "Dr. Strangelove" | "Ocean's 11" |
| "This is Spinal Tap" | "And yes, I guess everybody needs to say 'Citizen Kane' ... I think it's required." |
| "Raising Arizona" | |
| "The Shawshank Redemption" | |



Lights, Camera Action!

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into the camera department of "Silence of the Lambs," starring Jodie Foster and Anthony Hopkins. Not only were the stars big, but Osmond says the overall production was Oscar-worthy.

"There was top-notch talent across the board," he says, "from acting to directing to the technical. I saw a different realm of filmmaking."

Since '91, Osmond has worked in a variety of roles: director of photography,

camera operator, producer, director, editor, assistant cameraman, second assistant, film loader and trainee. Throughout the '90s, he worked extensively on mainstream projects, such as "Lorenzo's Oil," "Houseguest," "Diabolique," "Kingpin," "The Client," "Sudden Death," "Striking Distance" and "The Program." Still living in Pittsburgh at the time, Osmond kept busy as more and more filmmakers were choosing Pittsburgh as a location to film.

"That's when I started developing a network, which is extra competitive in the film industry," he says.

Through that network, more projects were coming to Osmond's way from the west coast, so in 1996, he based himself permanently in Los Angeles, his first California project being "Volcano." More mainstream projects, such as "Outside Providence," "American Pie," "Bring It On Again" and a pilot for HBO's "Six Feet Under," helped him establish himself in a new locale, but then in the late '90s, the dynamics of filmmaking began to change.

"I realized I was kind of limiting myself," Osmond says. "While I was working on big projects, I really wanted to do other things, too."

So he began branching out. Today, Osmond works on everything from commercials and corporate videos to big blockbusters, such as Nicholas Cage's recent "National Treasure," and smaller, closer-to-the-heart projects, like his family's Christmas e-mail video newsletter.

The stars were just as big: Ben, 8, Nicholas, 7, and Evelyn, 3. And Osmond found that he is a perfectionist no matter what the project. He was the director, which meant Laura didn't have much of a say. Osmond looked at the project with as keen an eye as when he's working, just shy of throwing up his hands and exclaiming, "Work with me, people! Work with me!"

In 2004, Osmond says his favorite projects weren't big blockbusters or daring documentaries, but a tiny

four- to five-minute short he did with his own camera. It was for Laura, who was directing a summer camp and needed a short skit to show at week's end. Osmond didn't have much direction other than it should star two people and a tiger. What he came up with was a true treat for the hundreds of parents and kids in attendance.

"It brought the house down," he says. "It was so rewarding. Every little project has something to offer."

Even from that, he adds, he learned something new about comedic timing. In fact, there is a lesson to be learned in every project. And he makes sure that lesson is never lost on him.

No matter what the project, Osmond has learned the hard way that no element of the film – from the acting to the directing to the special effects – is as crucial as passion.

"That's important because the work's too hard not to enjoy it, at least some of the time," he says.

Some of that difficulty comes from long and unusual hours as well as travel, which can be a double-edged sword. Yes, the trips can be fascinating and it is always interesting for Osmond to visit a new location, whether it be Venezuela for Disney's "Jungle 2 Jungle" or Oklahoma City. But it also means time away from family and some annoyances and inconveniences in a post-9/11 world. To date, Osmond has worked in 31 states.

The time commitments can be stressful also. A big action film, like "National Treasure,"



BRIAN OSMOND '88 FILMS A PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT IN ATLANTA. / Contributed photo



BRIAN OSMOND '88, WITH CAMERA, WORKS ON BEVERLY HILLS' RODEO DRIVE. / Contributed photo

can shoot for 75 to 100 days, while a shorter, low-budget film can shoot in 20 days. The average, Osmond says, is 40 to 50 days.

“Working in production, working on a set, is not for the faint of heart,” Osmond says. “It can be a lot of fun, but it’s very dynamic. It can be 3 a.m. and 20 degrees in a room about the size of a closet with 20 people all standing close and you can’t move. And you’ll be there for the next five days. It can be physically and emotionally grueling sometimes.

“On the flipside, I love it and I find that the movie business attracts people who are meant to be there,” he continues. “You’ll either embrace it or leave it. So the people are highly motivated, creative, intelligent and have great work ethics. It’s great to work with people like that.”

In 2005, Osmond continues to branch out and, like most in the movie business, he’s working on a script and has been for the past 10 to 15 years.

“I never thought I’d write a script,” he says, “because everyone in Hollywood has a script. But lately, I have been

bitten by the bug. Not because I feel like I’d sell a big movie, but it’s a great exercise to develop characters you can empathize with.”

For Osmond, picking a favorite movie is like asking a chef to pick a favorite food. “The more movies I see, the less I can pick a favorite,” he says. There is one genre, however, that is especially appealing to him.

“I love a good heist film: ‘Ocean’s 11,’ ‘The Score,’ ‘The Italian Job.’ I swear, if someone is stealing something in a movie, I love it.”

Osmond had trouble listing even a Top 10 (see a “short list” of favorites, page 5), but that’s the beauty of film, he says. There are so many facets of the industry he loves, much like there are many different reasons to feel connected to a movie. And that connectedness may change from one day to the next, from comedy to drama, horror to suspense.

“Every day is different and every day faces a new challenge and I never get tired of it.”

(Amy Clingensmith '96 is the Grove City College director of communications and GeDUNK managing editor.)

Brian Osmond’s Guide to Watching Movies

The next time you sit back in the theater or pop in a DVD, try watching a movie from a filmmaker’s perspective. It’ll change the way you take in a movie. Watch especially for:

Story and characters: “I watch for a story worth telling and characters worth telling it,” says filmmaker Brian Osmond '88. “Once those things are in place, there are lots of things that add to the experience. All of these should serve and enhance the story, not upstage it.”

Lighting: “The best lighting,” Osmond says, “serves to bring mood and texture to the story. Flashy, look-at-me lighting may be impressive, but it might be a poor choice for creating the right mood for the movie. Thinking about this might be the clue to appreciating it. It comes down to artistry and a ‘What is art?’ discussion, doesn’t it?”

Hints and Foreshadowing: “Horror movies use tricks like that all the time,” Osmond says. “Some movies are very subtle about it. The audience may pick up on it, it may not, at least not on a conscious level. Take a look at ‘The Sixth Sense;’ there are clues all through the movie.”

Music: “I watch ‘dailies’ all the time, the raw footage that we watch a day or two after we shoot it. The only thing sound-wise that is typically recorded is the dialogue of the actor on camera. No music. No sound effects. No editing. Believe me, music adds a lot. Music is another component that creates mood, subtext, feeling, emotion. It adds its own unique and powerful contribution to the story. Imagine ‘The Sound of Music’ without the wonderful songs; ‘Star Wars’ without its dynamic orchestral opening; ‘Jaws’ without the ‘dum dum’ warning of a shark approaching; ‘Singin’ in the Rain’ without, well, singin’ in the rain; the wonderful scores of ‘The Godfather,’ ‘The Sting,’ ‘Out of Africa’ and hundreds of others. Can you imagine all those without their music? I would bet that this short, stream-of-consciousness list elicits an emotional response from everyone out there. That’s what music means.”

The Credits: “I watch the credits because I know people in them,” Osmond says. “But there are (other) tidbits throughout – where the film was shot for example. Films that are shot on locations almost always will list the places they went. Various people and organizations are thanked for their contributions. The complete list of the actors’ names will run somewhere in the list. And, yes, my name is there sometimes, too.”

The Filmmaker’s Choices: “One of the most basic things to think about when watching a movie in depth is to ask why the filmmakers made the choices that they did. Almost nothing happened by accident. So, ask why and you will find a way to dive into world of filmmaking. Why did they choose that location? That look? That actor? That edit point? That song? That time period? That architecture?”

