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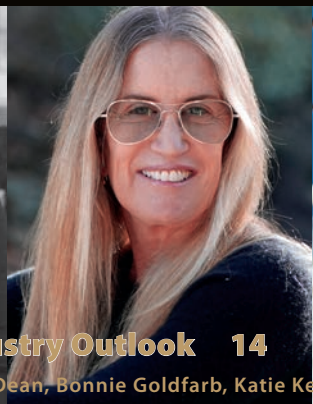
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# THE SHOOT

## THE ROAD TO OSCAR SERIES



From top left, clockwise: Scenes/BTS from *Minari*, *Nomadland*, *The Prom*, *The Trial of the Chicago 7*, *Promising Young Woman* and *One Night in Miami*. | The Road To Oscar Series, Part 3, Page 4



**Production Industry Outlook 14**

From Left: Justine Armour, Tasha Dean, Bonnie Goldfarb, Katie Keating

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By Robert Goldrich

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### Lifting The Celluloid Ceiling

While a return to normality is coveted in this COVID era, there's something to be said for not resurrecting business as usual on certain fronts—as shown in research from San Diego State University's Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film headed by Dr. Martha M. Lauzen.

To be sure, the report—titled “The Celluloid Ceiling: Behind-the-Scenes

**Dr. Martha M. Lauzen noted that the gender imbalance is huge; 80% of the top films have male directors.**

Employment of Women on the Top U.S. Films of 2020”—shows some progress. But at the same time, considerably more is needed to get the industry up to even a remotely acceptable level.

Among the prime positive-trending findings was that for the second straight year, the percentage of women directing top grossing films increased, reaching recent historic highs, while the overall

percentages of women working in key behind-the-scenes roles remained relatively stable. Women comprised 16% of directors working on the top 100 grossing films in 2020, up from 12% in 2019 and 4% in 2018. Women accounted for 18% of directors on the top 250 films, up from 13% in 2019 and 8% in 2018. In 2020, the percentages of behind-the-scenes women

ers, 22% of editors, and 6% of DPs working on the top 250 grossing films. Yet while percentages are up, movement is far too gradual. In 2020, the majority of films (67%) employed 0 to 4 women in the roles considered; 24% of films employed 5 to 9 women, and 9% employed 10 or more women. In contrast, 5% of films employed 0 to 4 men in the roles considered, 24%

working on the top 100 and 250 (domestic) grossing films inched upward. Women comprised 21% of all directors, writers, producers, EPs, editors, and DPs working on the top 100 films, up from 20% in 2019. Women working in these roles on the top 250 grossing films experienced a slight increase from 21% in 2019 to 23% in 2020.

Women accounted for 18% of directors, 17% of writers, 21% of EPs, 30% of produc-

employed 5 to 9 men, and the remaining majority (71%) employed 10 or more men.

Due to the COVID-impacted box office, the study also tracked employment on films included on The Digital Entertainment Group's “Watched at Home” list. Dr. Lauzen noted that the gender imbalance is huge. Most films employ less than 5 women and 10 or more men. And 80% of the top films have male directors.

## POV

By Josh Rabinowitz



### Top Ten For First 20 of the 2000s

I, like many of you, came of age professionally in these first 20 years of the 2000s. I've been an advertising music exec and professorial accomplice in the ad music continuum. Here are 10 things I've observed:

1) More than any brand, Apple became the top shaker/breaker and career-maker of artists and bands, aka the Apple Bump.

2) VW's use of Nick Drake's “Pink Moon,” 25 years after his death, sparked a reassessment of synching songs with ads—and the rest is “synchronistic” history.

3) In 2000, there were maybe 100 active music producer/supervisors in the branded music space. Now there are way more than 2,000. The modern music business has adapted to service this shift.

4) No matter how often folks in the ad space hear about copyright and sound-alike litigation re: ad music, and notwithstanding the brutal “Blurred Lines” sce-

nario, creators continue to infringe upon the IP of existing music with abandon.

5) The use of music libraries has become rampant. Many claim it's a budgetary imperative, which may be true, but it's irrefutable that the overall quality of their offering has improved tremendously.

6) The concept/business of sonic branding has become a darling of brand CMOs. And thus a cottage industry is born! Will the sound, or the Sonic DNA of your brand enhance its performance/business? Sonic strategists think so and brands are making 6-figure bets on it.

7) Until Spotify, sync and brand partnership deals kept the modern music industry's P&Ls afloat. Super Bowl sync deals, specifically, were generating minimum 6-figure deals. Now with this recent trend of legacy songwriters selling their rights, outright, don't be surprised to hear about even crazier high priced licenses. UMG has to make back the \$300+

million they spent on Bobby Zimmerman's (aka Bob Dylan) 600 songs, right?

8) The role of the agency music producer/supervisor, possibly a brand's greatest musical asset, is being challenged as the Big Agency model slowly fades away. Look to see more music consultancies over the next 5 years. Don't be surprised if the quality of original music, rather than licensed music, declines.

9) With the successes of Lil Nas X and Fleetwood Mac's “Dreams” vis-a-vis TikTok, there's certainly going to be more ad music executions infected by the social media cultural madness/fervor.

10) My vote for best music use of this period is Jet's “Are You Gonna Be My Girl” for the iPod. Although the song isn't the most original track ever, it integrates so well with the imagery, feel and product—it's a musical freaking bull's-eye!

Josh Rabinowitz is founder of Brooklyn Music Experience, a music consultancy.



# Writer-Director, DP, Editor & Production Designer POVs

Insights into  
*Nomadland*,  
*Minari*, *Promising  
Young Woman*, *One  
Night in Miami*, *The  
Trial of the Chicago  
7* and *The Prom*

By Robert Goldrich, The  
Road To Oscar Series, Part 3



Chloé Zhao is among this year's leading Oscar contenders as writer-director of *Nomadland* (Searchlight Pictures). Last month she earned Best Director honors from both the New York and Los Angeles Film Critics associations. In 2020, *Nomadland* also became the first film ever to garner the top prizes at the Toronto and Venice film festivals. *Nomadland* received the Venice Golden Lion and shortly thereafter the People's Choice Award at the Toronto fest. The latter honor is often a harbinger of things to come at the Academy Awards. Over the past decade, the People's Choice Award winner has gone on to earn a Best Picture Oscar nomination. In 2019, that was *Jojo Rabbit*. Earlier *Green Book* won at Toronto and wound up receiving the Academy Award for Best Picture. Among other People's Choice Award winners taking the Best Picture Oscar were *12 Years a Slave*, *Slumdog Millionaire* and *The King's Speech*.

Based on Jessica Bruder's book "Nomadland: Surviving America in the 21st Century" with Zhao penning the adapted

screenplay, the film *Nomadland* introduces us to Fern (portrayed by two-time Oscar winner Frances McDormand), an independent spirit who after the economic collapse of a small company town in Nevada packs her van and sets off on the road as a modern-day nomad, encountering unique places in rural America and even more unique varied characters including many played by real people (a staple of Zhao's filmmaking up to this point), the key exception being actor David Strathairn who emerges as a friend and a subdued potential love interest.

We meet older transient Americans living on the road in vans and recreational vehicles, taking on seasonal work when and where they can find it such as an Amazon processing plant where Fern has a regular Xmas-time gig. We experience both a sense of community and loneliness on the road, a dichotomy that is even present in Fern's van which carries feelings of isolation yet at the same time reflects an appreciation of a place to call home. There's a beauty and simplicity to

the nomad existence, in some respects showing that there's a shared humanity when you strip life down to surviving with limited resources while trying to connect with and help others--no matter how momentary or transitory those relationships may turn out to be. Some folks carry the weight of grief and loss yet there's a resilience that unites them all. There are many quiet, understated moments yet cumulatively they become substantive, underscoring Zhao's feeling that while politics and media portray us as divided, the reality is that people naturally have and can embrace "a spirit of co-existence." Getting the chance to delve into this helped satiate Zhao's long-standing desire to as she says, "make a road movie," an opportunity made richer by getting to work with McDormand "to create a character like Fern" who in turn was able to mesh, relate to and be at one with real-life nomads, bringing their lives to the fore, making for a remarkable performance.

*Continued on page 6*

**From top left, clockwise:**  
*Nomadland* writer-director Chloe Zhao; Frances McDormand in *Nomadland*; a scene from *Minari*; *Promising Young Woman*; *One Night in Miami*; *The Prom* production designer Jamie Walker McCall; *Chicago 7* editor Alan Baumgarten.



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## Directors Zhao, Chung Reflect On *Nomadland*, *Minari*

Continued from page 4

All this, continued Zhao, was done to be true to Bruder's book. "Jessica did an incredible job documenting and chronicling these lives," assessed Zhao

the audience to sleep. You need to capture transcendence, the real feeling of what it's like for people of that age existing on the road—how to be true to that and still have a story arc that will captivate an au-

crafted to reflect the spirit of those experiences, taking us on a unique empathetic journey of a family in search of its own American Dream.

It's a story in which each family member is heroic and resilient in his or her own way, all contributing to help the family survive and endure, shedding light on what really makes a home. Bringing this family to life is a brilliant ensemble cast in which parents Jacob and Monica are played, respectively, by Steven Yeun and Yeri Han, while their son David is portrayed by newcomer Alan S. Kim, daughter Anne by Noel Kate Cho, and grandma Soonja by South Korean acting legend Yuh-Jung Yoon. Also integral to the story is a neighbor, handyman and farm helper Paul, a devout Pentecostal who speaks in tongues but also through the universal language of kindness. He is portrayed by Will Patton.

Chung observed that another "family" key to the film consisted of the production and post artists who came together with a sense of purpose. Like the film's protagonists, each member of this production family contributed, he said, in heroic fashion within a limited budget and time. The film was produced by Plan B,

Milne, editor Harry Yoon, composer Emile Mosseri and production designer Yong Ok Lee. Mosseri, for instance, had worked with Oh on Plan B's acclaimed *The Last Black Man in San Francisco*.

Chung said he struck up an instant rapport with Milne, Mosseri, Lee and Yoon, feeling a creative kinship to each. In retrospect, he observed that the feeling of family among them helped them all better tell the story of the immigrant family in the film. For example, Chung said of editor Yoon, "I could tell from our first meeting how much of the script he had already digested and the details he understood. I had a trust in him to tell me about things that weren't working, what was working. When I came back from the shoot, a week later he told me he was going to show me a cut of the film. 'You will probably hate it. No director ever likes it,' he said. Once I saw it, I saw that Harry's instincts for the story and how to maneuver certain problem moments I had on set were so sophisticated. I could see we had a film there. I felt no sadness or depression. I had a good sleep after that. We had lots of conversations and had a good time working together. We had a good way of really talking things through and figuring



Frances McDormand in *Nomadland*

who too wanted to convey the ups and downs of a nomad existence that still, despite its share of melancholy, has its own life-affirming roots, with added inspiration coming from the desolate, beautiful plains, mountains and rivers of the Western U.S. *Nomadland* takes us to different worlds—these natural backdrops as well as inside people's heads and hearts, most notably Fern's inner self.

Filmed over four months on location in Arizona, Nevada, California, Nebraska and South Dakota, *Nomadland* takes us into communities where Fern's encounters at times show how we can make brief friendships that last within us for a lifetime, like her bond with Swankie who has terminal cancer yet feels fulfillment in life through nature. A touching memorial service that Swankie requested reflects that resonance.

Zhao said that among the prime challenges *Nomadland* posed to her as a filmmaker was creating the character of Fern, enabling McDormand to settle into "this real world with real people" in such a way that "we can naturally incorporate these interesting characters we run across without feeling forced."

Another major challenge came in Zhao's capacity as editor of *Nomadland*. She shared, "As an editor you have to figure out how to stay true to the sort of feeling of aimlessness that exists on the road, and at the same time not putting

dience."

Zhao said the experience of making *Nomadland* gave her a deeper appreciation of what people on the road go through on a daily basis. "We were filming for just four months but we find ourselves going to a place where you connect with people, then pack up and leave, and probably are never going to see them again. I was emotionally exhausted. The natural process of making the film helped us to heal as well. You may feel rootlessness but you also feel you're part of something that never ends."

### *Minari*

Writer-director Lee Isaac Chung's *Minari* (A24) made a major splash at last year's Sundance Film Festival, winning both the Dramatic Grand Jury Prize and the Audience Award in the dramatic category. An American production with dialogue mostly in Korean, *Minari* is deeply personal for Chung in that the story is inspired by memories of his childhood. We are introduced to a Korean-American family that moves to rural Arkansas, a father's dream to start a small farm there, the struggle of immigrants in a new land strange to them, and a boy's touching, tender and charmingly comic relationship with his loving, at times foul-mouthed grandmother who moves in to help. While not a factual representation of his own experiences, Chung's story was



Lee Isaac Chung (standing) directs on the set of *Minari*

the company in which Brad Pitt is a partner/EP. Chung credited Plan B producer Christina Oh with helping to assemble the production family behind *Minari*. "I had been doing more arthouse films and was looking to Christina to help navigate my pulling off this film," shared Chung. Oh brought in artisans for Chung to consider and whom he wound up embracing, including cinematographer Lachlan

out the story together. There is no movie without him."

A couple of challenges stand out for Chung when he looks back on *Minari* (which incidentally is named after a peppery Korean herb), starting when he was writing it on spec. "I was writing it in the dark, I wasn't sure if it would land anywhere. I'm writing about my family in a

Continued on page 10



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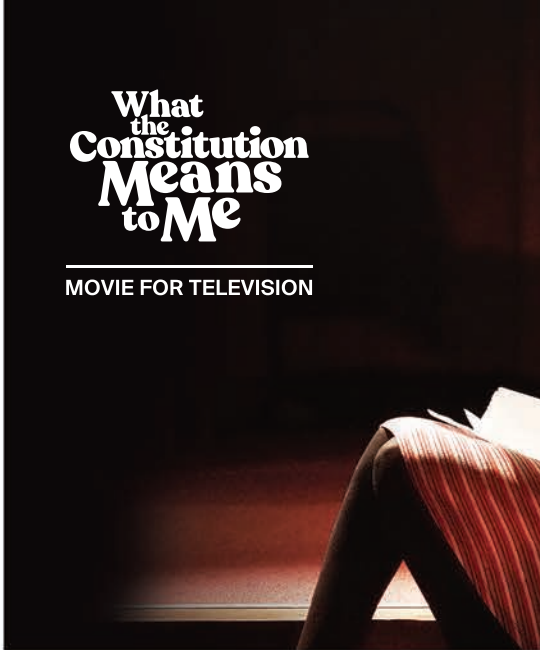
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## ROAD TO OSCAR

# Emerald Fennell Makes Auspicious Feature Directorial Debut

Continued from page 6

way and it can be boring when you talk about your family way too long. Talking about my family for two hours stands out to me as being the hardest. Then there were the limited time and resources--and within that having Alan, our seven-year-old actor (who portrayed David) on set for just six hours a day. He's almost in every scene. So there was no room for error during 25 days of shooting. For me and everyone, we couldn't make a mistake. You didn't always have time to think some things through. It felt like we worked a lot on intuition. Lachlan's (DP Milne) great experience helped. He's experienced in working on features that have had difficult schedules." And Chung was quick to credit the cast in dealing with that schedule. "That family feels so real. They (the actors) had to be so real with each other when we had the cameras rolling."

Chung affirmed, "We gave it everything we had. By saying that, I just don't mean the effort. I also mean the honesty, being real with the audience. That's what we were all aspiring to do, to the point of being a little vulnerable with ourselves so we could show that humanity is universal."

### Promising Young Woman

*Promising Young Woman* (Focus Features), which marks the feature directorial debut of Emerald Fennell, has already started to realize its promise on the awards show circuit with Carey Mulligan named Best Actress and Fennell winning for Best Screenplay at the Los Angeles Film Critics Association Awards.

Mulligan stars as Cassie, a medical school dropout whose once promising prospects have fallen off a cliff. She's working at a coffee house and spends her free time either moping about or pretending to be blind drunk at nightclubs where she ultimately shames guys who try to take advantage of her seemingly impaired state. It's an inexplicably strange double-life until we become privy to what made her quit med school, a despicable trauma suffered by her dear friend and fellow student, Nina, years ago. This genre-busting film plays at times like a dark comedy, a comic tragedy, a thriller, a psychological tale that perfectly dovetails with the #MeToo era, all the above and more.



A scene from *Minari*

Fennell—who first established herself as an actress spanning TV and features, and a writer (on such TV series as *The Drifters* and writer/producer on *Killing Eve*) before moving into the directorial ranks—explained simply, "I wanted to write a revenge movie, a classic revenge movie with a real person at the center of it." She added that the vibe she wanted for it was to be as "strange and unlikely as that journey would feel if you were actually in it."

Like *Minari*, *Promising Young Woman*

At first, becoming a director seemed what Fennell described as "an enigmatic thing" but over time she began to develop an appetite for it. "I've written forever," she said, noting that she wanted the chance to "really make something the way you want to make it, to direct your own material."

Fennell said she was fortunate to be able to work with "incredible directors" in film and TV. She cited her experience acting on a BBC series, *Call the Midwife*, as providing an invaluable education, being able to observe different directors and DPs coming in for episodes and being able to do "a side-by-side comparison of what works, what doesn't, what is time-saving, what isn't, what corners you can cut and the ones you really can't."

This education served Fennell in good stead as she became "kind of obsessive about the details while also knowing you've got to make your days."

She also knew first-hand the importance of selecting the right collaborators, among the prime examples on *Promising Young Woman* being cinematographer Benjamin Kracun, editor Frederic Thoraval and production designer Michael

shorthand with. If your relationship with a DP isn't easy, it slows everything down. Ben is a combination of being talented and great fun to be around. He could help me get the kind of performances I wanted and he could make the set itself a fun place to work, which is needed."

Kracun was essential in making *Promising Young Woman* work within the confines of 23 shoot days. Also integral in that regard was producer Fiona Walsh Heinz who did an "amazing" job according to Fennell, noting, "We had no fat. We were up against it but she helped that still feel like a fun place to be in." While the preparation had to be buttoned down, Fennell said they didn't lose the rush of feeling "like you're slightly flying by the seat of your pants."

As for her biggest takeaway from *Promising Young Woman*, Fennell shared, "It sounds so cheesy but I just loved directing in a way that really surprised me. Locking my car in the parking lot to go film on the first day, I just loved it. I loved being part of a team. I'm proud and grateful of how everyone worked so hard. I immediately want to do it all over again."

When that opportunity comes, though, Fennell would like "to loosen things up, have a little more time to play, a bit more space to work in."

*Promising Young Woman* is not Fennell's first project to score recognition at Sundance. Back in 2019, she directed *Careful How You Go* which was in the running for the Short Film Grand Jury Prize.

Fennell also has two primetime Emmy nominations to her credit, one for drama series writing, the other for Outstanding Drama Series—both for *Killing Eve* in 2019.

### One Night in Miami

Based on the stage play by Kemp Powers who also penned the screenplay, *One Night in Miami* (Amazon Studios) relates a fictional account of four high-profile Black Americans together in a hotel room in 1964 the night after a 22-year-old Cassius Clay (portrayed by Eli Goree) won the heavyweight boxing title with a stunning knockout of Sonny Liston. Clay, who would later change his name to Muhammad Ali, joins Malcolm X (Kingsley Ben-Adir), singer Sam Cooke (Leslie Odom Jr.)



Emerald Fennell (center) on the set of *Promising Young Woman*

made a big impact at last year's Sundance fest. And while its release was also delayed during the pandemic, *Promising Young Woman* is now picking up awards season momentum. The stellar cast also includes Bo Burnham as Ryan, Cassie's love interest, Alison Brie as a former school friend, Connie Britton as a med school dean, Laverne Cox as Cassie's coffee house boss, and Alfred Molina as a deeply remorseful attorney.

Perry. Fennell had worked, for instance, with Kracun about a year earlier on a commercial project, liked him and was drawn in particular to his work on *Beat*, for which he won a British Independent Film Award in 2019 for Best Cinematography. "He made that movie look spectacular," assessed Fennell, who added, "I was a first-time film director in Los Angeles shooting my baby. I knew my DP was important, someone I could have an easy