

VINEYARD GAZETTE

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Chilmark Filmmaker Carries Acclaim Back to Home Festival

By MEGAN DOOLEY

Most filmmakers expect years of struggle and sacrifice before enjoying a moment of success in the film industry. Some never even catch a glimpse of it. The costs of making a film are high, the chances of making a hit low. But every once in a while, a filmmaker can change all the rules.

For Jasmine McGlade and Damien Chazelle, success sprang from a college assignment.

The recent Harvard graduates have catapulted into the esteem of the film industry with their feature-length film debut, *Guy and Madeline on a Park Bench*. The film premiered in April at the prestigious Tribeca Film Festival in New York city, and will make its way to the Island Wednesday as part of the Martha's Vineyard Film Festival's summer film series.

Ms. McGlade is no stranger to the Vineyard. Her parents are seasonal residents of Chilmark, and she became involved with the film festival there as a volunteer and then intern during her summer visits. She describes the festival as one of her favorite things about the Vineyard and hopes that Wednesday's screening will launch a lasting relationship between the Island and art that she loves.

"I'd love to continue sharing films with the Vineyard," she said. "[I] would love to get involved in whatever way I can to help bring films and art to the wonderful community here."

Ms. McGlade is billed as the producer *Guy and Madeline on a Park Bench* but also was involved with many creative aspects of the filmmaking process, including script revision, editing and casting. She and Mr. Chazelle, who directed the film, met as Harvard undergraduates. The project began as a short film for Mr. Chazelle's senior thesis and evolved into a two-year process involving hundreds of actors, musicians and dancers. Throw in an original score composed by Justin Hurwitz and performed by the Bratislava Symphony, a coveted spot in a popular film festival, and heaps of critical acclaim, and *Guy and Madeline on a Park Bench* may be one of the most surprisingly successful school projects ever.

“We still think of Guy and Madeline as a very small, modest movie, so its life thus far has been a bit surreal,” admitted Ms. McGlade.

They filmed on borrowed 16-millimeter cameras with a budget of under \$80,000. The result is a black and white throwback to “bygone eras of music and cinema,” said Ms. McGlade. It follows Guy (played by Jason Palmer), a gifted trumpeter, as he vacillates between two different women. He has little in common with the reserved Madeline (Desiree Garcia) apart from a shared passion for music, but she haunts him through his subsequent romance. Music carries the film through to its conclusion, but three stand-out sequences punctuate the musical flow. The first and most riveting sequence captures the energy of a jam session by cutting back and forth from Guy’s vigorous trumpeting to a tap-dancing vocalist’s song-and-dance number.

Despite the hard work poured into the feature, Ms. McGlade and Mr. Chazelle never expected instant success. “We’d come to the festival figuring that our tiny little black and white movie would be completely ignored, but instead, the opposite happened,” explained Ms. McGlade. “Critics Damien and I had been reading for years wound up championing the film, and now we’re looking forward to a real festival run in the fall.” She is unable to publicize the screening schedule until the various festivals announce their lineups.

“People who have really loved the film have included cinephiles, jazz enthusiasts, [and] lovers of musicals,” said Ms. McGlade. “That said, Damien and I have been really pleased with the sheer variety of people who have responded to the film, and we hope that everyone can take something away from it.”

Though her official title for this film is producer, Ms. McGlade’s real interest lies in directing. “Since I was very young I’ve known I wanted to be a film director,” she said. She studied filmmaking in Harvard’s Visual and Environmental Studies department, and is currently making preparations for her directorial debut, a film called *Maria My Love*. “[I] couldn’t be more excited,” she said. “What is most important to me is that I make movies that matter. I want people to walk out of the theatre moved, changed or inspired.”

She also looks forward to making her mark in a male-dominated industry. “There are not nearly as many prolific women film directors as there should be and I want to change that,” she said.

Mr. Chazelle is currently writing in Los Angeles, and seeking funding for his next project.

Mr. Palmer joins Ms. McGlade and Mr. Chazelle on the Island this week to promote *Guy and Madeline on a Park Bench*. They will appear in person at the Chilmark Community Center for the film’s Island premiere.

The duo is currently in the process of negotiating distribution rights for the film, and with a film festival tour continuing through the year and various projects on

the horizon, it seems unlikely that Ms. McGlade and Mr. Chazelle can find the time to think much farther into the future. But they still have managed to plan a return trip to the Island: next summer, they will hold their wedding here.

“Damien and I fell in love during the course of making [this] film together,” said Ms. McGlade, “so it’s a real thrill to be screening it on the Island where we’ll soon be getting married.”

*Tickets are available at the Martha’s Vineyard Film Festival Web site at tmvff.com, or at the door at the Chilmark Community Center from 5 p.m. the night of screening. *Guy and Madeline on a Park Bench* begins at 8 p.m. Wednesday, July 22.*