

PRESS KIT

TECHNICAL DETAILS

Runtime: 16 minutes

Aspect Ratio: 16:9

Available Formats: DCP, MOV

Sound: 7.1 or stereo

Language: English

b l u e h o u r

blue hour



LOGLINE

Two personal journeys intersect when a struggling young photographer is hired for a last minute portrait gig. The unfolding photo session, while transient, leaves an indelible mark on both women.

SYNOPSIS

Rene gets far more than she expected she when answers an ad for a portrait photographer. When Rene arrives at the address she's surprised to find the building is actually a small clinic and what she thought was an apartment unit is a room number. Inside she meets Jaz and the true nature of her job comes into focus; she's been hired to take portraits of Jaz with her dying infant. Unable to find a graceful way out of the situation, Rene photographs Jaz with her child and in doing so the two women quietly form an intense connection that unsettles and transforms them both.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Blue Hour is a meditation on the intensity of transitory moments, the fleeting exchanges and interactions that have the power to alter your mood, day or life. Often it's only with the clarity of hindsight that we can identify these instances. Rarely there are times where you sense the tectonic shift in tandem with the moment. Rene and Jaz are aware of the emotional exchange passing between them. And we, like them, are left to wonder how this encounter will leave an indelible mark and shape the course of their lives.

As a storyteller, I'm drawn to coming of age narratives about wayfarers and outsiders at crossroads and those themes are woven into the film. The connection between Rene and Jaz is ephemeral, much like the brief final moments of dusk known as blue hour.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

The idea that would eventually become *Blue Hour* was born through a chance meeting with Deborah “Deb” Marcano, a multi-hyphenate artist who I now call a friend. Deb was late to a mutually attended event because she’d been volunteering as a bereavement photographer. I was intrigued and spoke to Deb at length about her work. Afterward, I reached out to Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep, a non-profit organization that provides remembrance photography to parents experiencing the loss of a child. I interviewed volunteer photographers who candidly and generously shared their experiences with me. I was fascinated and deeply moved by all that I’d heard and I knew there was a story there.

Curiously, several drafts into development, a childhood memory unlocked. I remembered that my parents lost an infant of their own, just two years before my birth. I couldn’t believe I hadn’t made the connection sooner. My father graciously shared his story with me and those details, as well as his Yaschia-A camera, were incorporated into the film.



PRODUCTION NOTES

Blue Hour was shot on location in Los Angeles, California.

The earliest iteration of *Blue Hour* was a script titled “Rene and Jaz”, originally written by J.D. Shields while a Screenwriting Fellow in Film Independent’s Project Involve. Diana Ward, a Producing Fellow in the same cohort, expressed interest in the film, becoming the project’s first creative collaborator. In total, four Project Involve alumni worked on the film.

Blue Hour was made as a part of the AFI Directing Workshop for Women and was generously supported by Women and Film through the Production Grant Program. It is the first collaboration between the two respected organizations.

It was important our creative team, both as a matter of personal philosophies and to honor the organizations who supported us, that we hire and empower marginalized artists. Over 80% of our cast and crew were women/non-binary, BIPOC, and/or LGBTQIA+ creatives and we are very proud of the community environment we created on set.





AFI DIRECTING WORKSHOP FOR WOMEN

Launched in 1974, the AFI Directing Workshop for Women (DWW) continues its longstanding commitment to increasing the number of women and gender nonbinary directors working in film and television. The prestigious film training program selects eight directors who receive several months of tuition-free film education culminating in the production of a short film.

Since its inception, the DWW has graduated over 300 alumnae, including accomplished filmmakers such as Lesli Linka Glatter (HOMELAND), Sarah Gertrude Shapiro (UNREAL), Tricia Brock (ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK), Neema Barnette (LUKE CAGE), Jennifer Getzinger (MAD MEN) and Hanelle Culpepper (STAR TREK: PICARD).

WOMEN IN FILM

Founded in 1973 as Women In Film Los Angeles, WIF advocates for and advances the careers of women working in the screen industries—in front of and behind the camera, across all levels of experience—to achieve parity and transform culture.

The Production Program offers critical opportunities and funding for emerging women creators to collaborate on short narrative content of their origination. Writers, directors, creative producers, and line producers who are accepted into the program are provided expert guidance through the process of development and production, with financial and practical support from WIF.



WRITER/DIRECTOR - J.D. SHIELDS

J.D. Shields is an award-winning writer/director from Atlanta, Georgia. Currently a Story Editor on *EMPEROR OF OCEAN PARK* and Staff Writer on *THE COMPANY YOU KEEP*, she's developed projects with Emmy-nominated showrunner Leslye Headland and Genius Entertainment and has written for DreamWorks TV Animation, Wondery and Sony Pictures.

An alumna of the AFI Directing Workshop for Women, her short film *BLUE HOUR* is sponsored by Women in Film. J.D. received the HUMANITAS Prize College Drama Award and has participated in the Disney Writing Program, the HBOAccess Writing Program, and Film Independent's Project Involve.

She penned the award-winning short film *WEDNESDAY*, which screened at the LA Film Festival and premiered at the ABFF as an HBO Finalist, later streaming on HBO. She earned her MFA in Screenwriting & Directing from Columbia University, having previously studied at NYU Tisch School of the Arts Asia in Singapore. She holds a BA in English & Theater from Vanderbilt University.



PRODUCERS

DIANA WARD

Diana Ward is a producer from Australia, who draws on her Chinese Malaysian heritage, immigrant experience and themes of diaspora and belonging in the subjects of the stories she chooses to tell. Since moving to America, she produced fan favorite feature documentary *Roller Dreams* (2017).

She has produced numerous award-winning short films taking honors at festivals such as Berlinale, SXSW, AFI, Chicago, Chilemonos, Miami, Sydney, Brooklyn, New York Childrens Film Festival and more. Her shorts include *Liberty* (2019) for Faren Humes; stop-motion animation *The Coin* (2019) for Siqi Song; *Were You Gay In High School?* (2020) for Niki Ang, *The Goldfish* (2021) for Ashley Brim and *Gugu naGogo* (2022) for Taku Mbudzi. Her films stream on Hulu, HBO, Amazon, ABC, Binge, Kanopy and Shorts TV.

Diana has been featured on the *Dear Producer's Producers in Front of the Camera* series and is a Film Independent Producing Lab Fellow and recipient of the 2018 Project Involve Amazon Studios Visionary Filmmaker Fellowship.

LAUREN AVINOAM

Lauren Avinoam is a veteran producer and writer of mixed MENA descent. Her feature films and documentaries have been exhibited and won awards at top film festivals from SXSW to BFI London and Tribeca to Outfest and have gained critical acclaim, garnered positive reviews and were selected as critics picks in *The Hollywood Reporter*, *Variety* and the *Los Angeles* and *New York Times*. All the films she has produced were acquired for worldwide distribution with buyers like MGM, Netflix, Hulu and Showtime among others.

She has several TV projects in development with Emmy, Peabody award winners and TONY nominated artists.

She is currently in production of an upcoming feature documentary, *RISE* about the US's first climate refugees alongside producing partner, Darren Aronofsky.

MAYA KORN

A UK/German native Maya is a LA based producer. Her company MHK Productions, is dedicated to uncovering stories in the genre space that highlight political issues, giving a voice to minority cultures. To date, she has produced films in Beijing, New York, Mexico City, Los Angeles and London. Her most recent credits include Vivienne Vaughn's *Deathcember A Christmas Miracle* (2019) and Tribeca Untold Stories winner *Lucky Grandma* (2019).

Prior to producing, Maya worked in marketing and distribution at The Weinstein Company, BBC America and at the Film Society of Lincoln Center.

Her first feature as lead producer shoots next year, Vivienne Vaughn's *Lucky Strikes*, which participated in the Fantasia Frontiers Co Production Lab, Berlinale Talent Project Market Lab and received Special Mention at Sitges Pitchbox.

She is a Columbia University Creative Producing MFA Graduate, a participant of the WIF Creative Producing Mentorship Program, a finalist of the Marcie Bloom/Sony Fellowship, The Sarah Jones Film Foundation Grant and a proud member of WIF, NYWIFT, BAFTA and PGA.

KEY CREW

CINEMATOGRAPHY

Bethany Michalski is a Los Angeles-based cinematographer and director. The instincts from her Baltimore street photography days and MFA training from the AFI Conservatory (MFA Cinematography19') have shaped her focus today. Michalski embraces her naturalistic sensitivities and interest in blending the narrative & documentary worlds. She splits her time between narrative and documentary features work, commercials, and music videos. Most notably, Bethany's directing and cinematography work have premiered at the DGA, Nobudge, Camerimage, Outfest, and Cinequest. Her clients include Disney, Showtime, MTV, Nike, Dior, Chanel, US Bank, Paper Magazine, and the Travel Channel. In 2022 her cinematography reel went viral on TikTok.



EDITING

Katelyn Wright is an award-winning editor who has been editing narrative films, music videos, and documentary projects for 10+ years. Katelyn believes that editing and story-telling skills are not only a fundamental part of filmmaking, but are also the tools to elevate any type of project to the next level. In addition to having films premiere at Sundance, TIFF, LA Film Festival and HBO APA Visionaries, she has been apart of programs such as America Cinema Editor's prestigious internship, Film Independent's Project Involve program and has worked with Disney, The Nature Conservancy, Pique Action and more brands. Her films include The Gift, Yūgen, Banning, and Eva. Her assistant editing credits include Endangered, California King, and Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom. She received her Bachelor's in Media Communications with an emphasis on Post-Production from Full Sail University in 2018.



PRODUCTION DESIGN

Eve Axness is an artist and filmmaker based in Los Angeles. With a background in painting and fine art, Eve discovered a love of filmmaking and production design after working on a few short student films at the AFI conservatory. She enjoys the technical, psychological, collaborative and creative aspects of filmmaking as a contrast to her more solitary studio practices. Her short film "Whistleblower," which she wrote and directed, was featured on NoBudge in 2020. Eve recently designed a short film "Last Days of the Lab" as a part of the Rising Voices fellowship program through Hillman Grad, Indeed, and 271 Films, which will premiere at Tribeca this summer.



MUSIC

Daniel Walter is a Los Angeles-based composer and musician. Collaborating with prominent filmmakers such as Ari Aster and Scott Aukerman, his compositions have featured in projects premiering at festivals from Cannes to SXSW. Daniel has guest lectured on film scoring at UCLA and received recognition through the ASCAP Film & TV Scoring Workshop, a Jerry Goldsmith Award nomination, and a composer residency in Alaska. He has scored commercials that played at the Super Bowl and Olympics, as well as movie trailers for all the major studios. Finally, he has also produced a feature film, THE TENANT, which sold to Sky UK, and a short film, PICTURE DAY, which won a special jury award at Palm Springs Shortfest in 2022 and which will play at the American Pavilion at Cannes Film Festival in 2023.



CAST



DOYIN DOMINGO AS RENE

Trained in the theater, Doyin Domingo has played roles from Checkov to Lynn Nottage, as well as many leading roles in independent films. She is first generation Nigerian-American and was raised in the San Francisco Bay Area. She loves storytelling in all forms.

DIAMOND TAYLOR AS JAZ

Diamond Taylor is a talented actress, singer-songwriter, and YouTube personality hailing from Louisville, KY, the home of Jack Harlow, Bryson Tiller, and Jennifer Lawrence. After attending the Walden School for Fine and Performing Arts at age 12, Taylor quickly gained a following on YouTube, showcasing her dynamic personality and captivating content. At age 16, she made the move to Los Angeles and quickly signed with her first manager. Taylor's hard work paid off when she landed her first co-star role on "Laff Mobb Tracks." Despite the pandemic, Taylor continued to audition for a variety of projects, and her persistence paid off when she landed the role of Jaz in "Blue Hour."

CREDITS

Doyin Domingo as Rene
 Diamond Taylor as Jaz
 Jabari Wredden as Larry
 Paulina Bugembe as Nurse

AFI Directing Workshop for Women presents a Women In Film Production
 Program Grant film produced by Curious Cargo, Darley Street Disco, Jemstone
 Productions and MHK Productions

BLUE HOUR

Written and Directed by	J.D. Shields
Produced by	Diana Ward, Lauren Avinoam and Maya Korn
Co-Producer	Shannon Kummer
Executive Producer	Katie Leary
Cinematography by	Bethany Michalski
Production Design by	Eve Axness
Costume Design by	Tyler Hollingsworth
Edited by	Katelyn Wright
Original Music by	Daniel Walter
Casting by	Kristi Lugo

Line Producer	Sue-Ellen Chitunya
Unit Production Manager	Mei-le Apalucci
First Assistant Director	Maria Valdez
Script Supervisor	Danica Tan
First Assistant Camera	Arman Meinecke
Second Assistant Camera	Eliana Mullins
	Lin Chen
Gaffer	Liz Charky
Key Grip	Marcelina Stardust
Best Boy	Isaac Crane
Location Sound Mixer	Tyler Shields
Art Director	Ana Coccioletti
Production Assistant	Matt Gall
Stills Photographers	April Maxey
	Quinton Lundy
VFX	Overmind Studios
VFX Artists	Tobias Kummer
	André Christopher Gerhardt
Digital Intermediate	FotoKem Creative Services
Digital Intermediate Colorist	Alastor Arnold
Digital Intermediate Producer	Miten Soni
Sound Editor & Design	Klaire Zhang
Sound Re-Recording Services	Provided By Formosa Group
Re-recording Mixer	Emilie Corpuz
Post Sound Executive	Jennifer Bowman-Gallagher

Camera Package courtesy	Arri Rentals
Camera Rentals	BeCine
G & E Rentals	Cinelease

Unit Rentals	Set Stuff
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Catering	B+G Catering
	Rise and Shine Catering

Special Thanks

April Maxey	John Douglas Shields	Nicole Gregory
April Moreau	Kelly Pike	Now I Lay Me Down to
Ashley Chrisman	Lucas McNelly	Sleep (NILMDTS)
Christina Choe	Lucretia Stinnette	Patty Garcia
Christina Bryant	Melanie Rodger	Rachel Summer
Deborah Marcano	Melissa Verdugo	Rebecca Murga
Em Weinstein	Michelle Krusiec	Sean Hackett
Eric Pumphrey	Maikiko James	Stacy Rose
Frederick Thornton	Mar Angélica Molina	

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ENQUIRES

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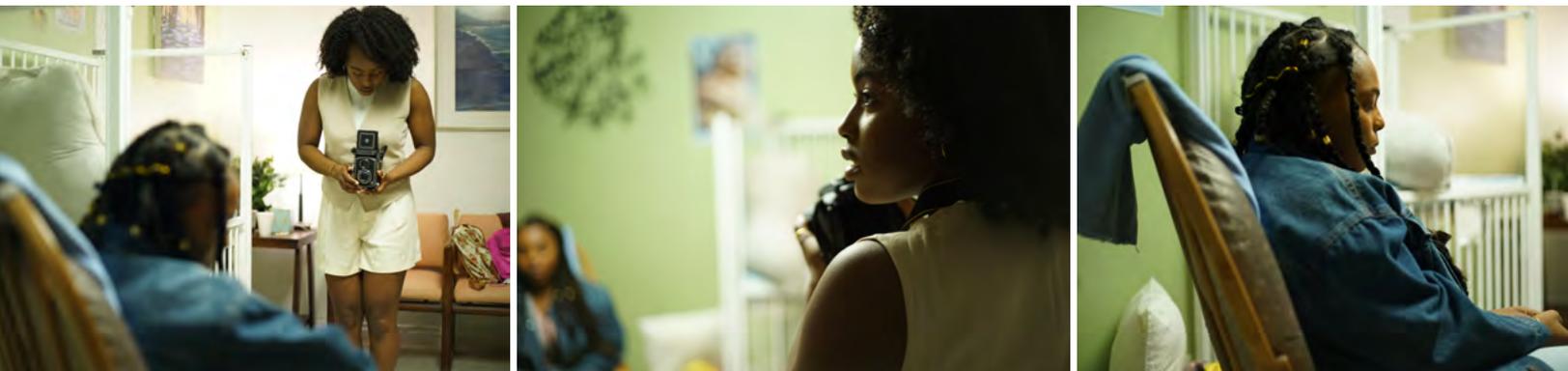
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Quinton Lundy: [@q_lundyphoto](https://www.instagram.com/q_lundyphoto)

Poster Designer

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Press Kit designed by Darley Street Disco

Poster designed by Super Nova Design

Photography by Bethany Michalski, Quinton Lundy and April Maxey