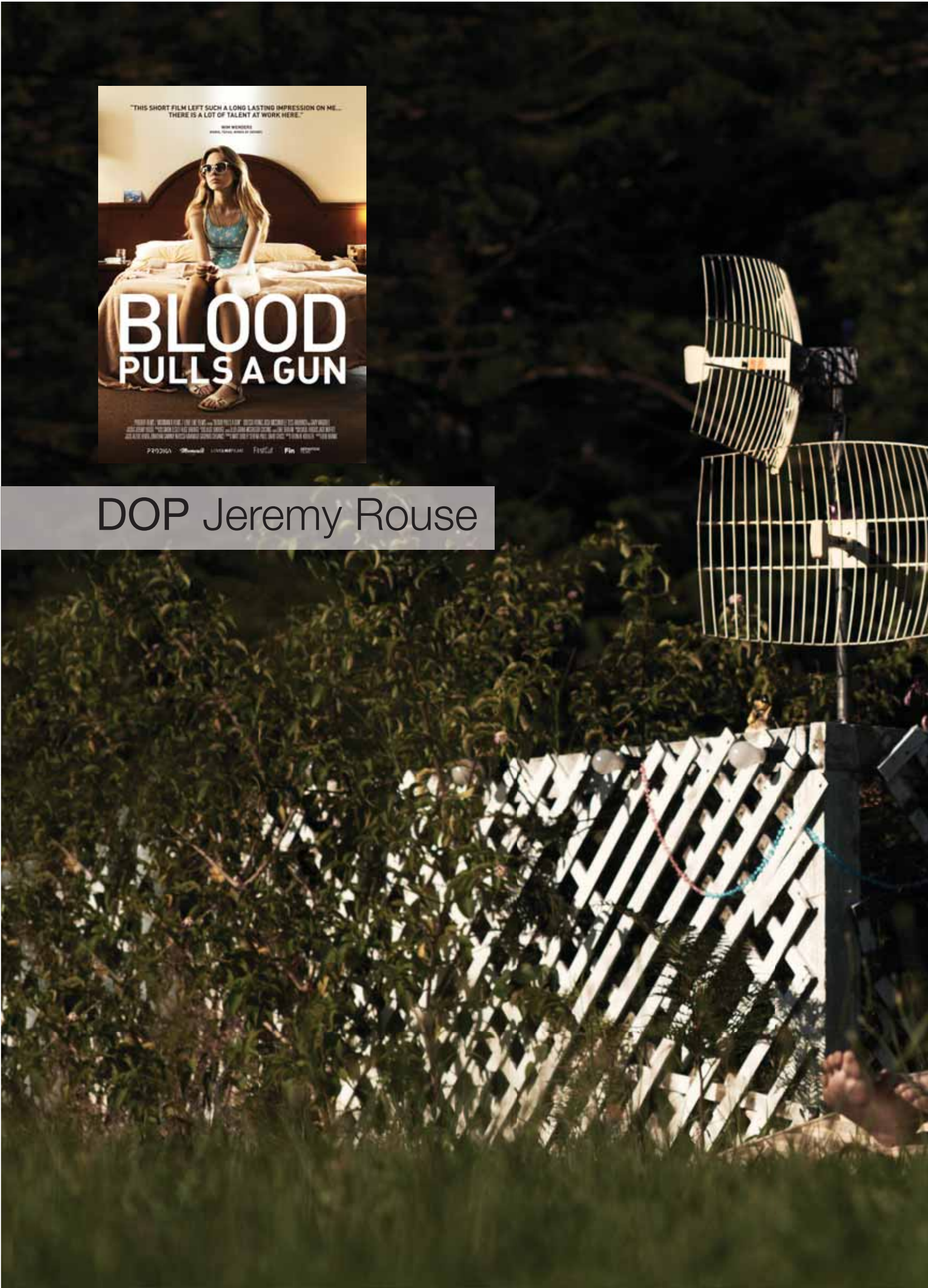
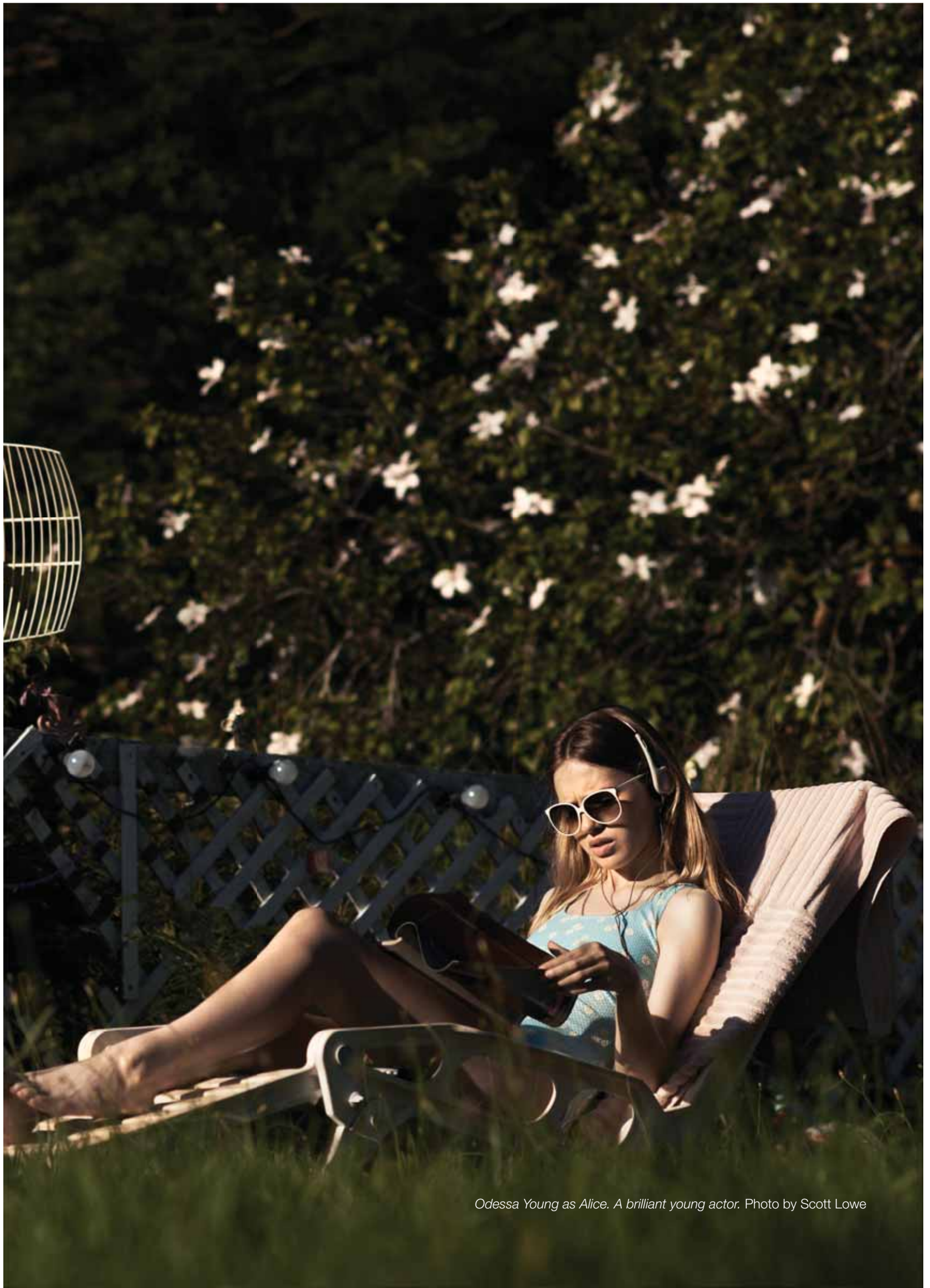
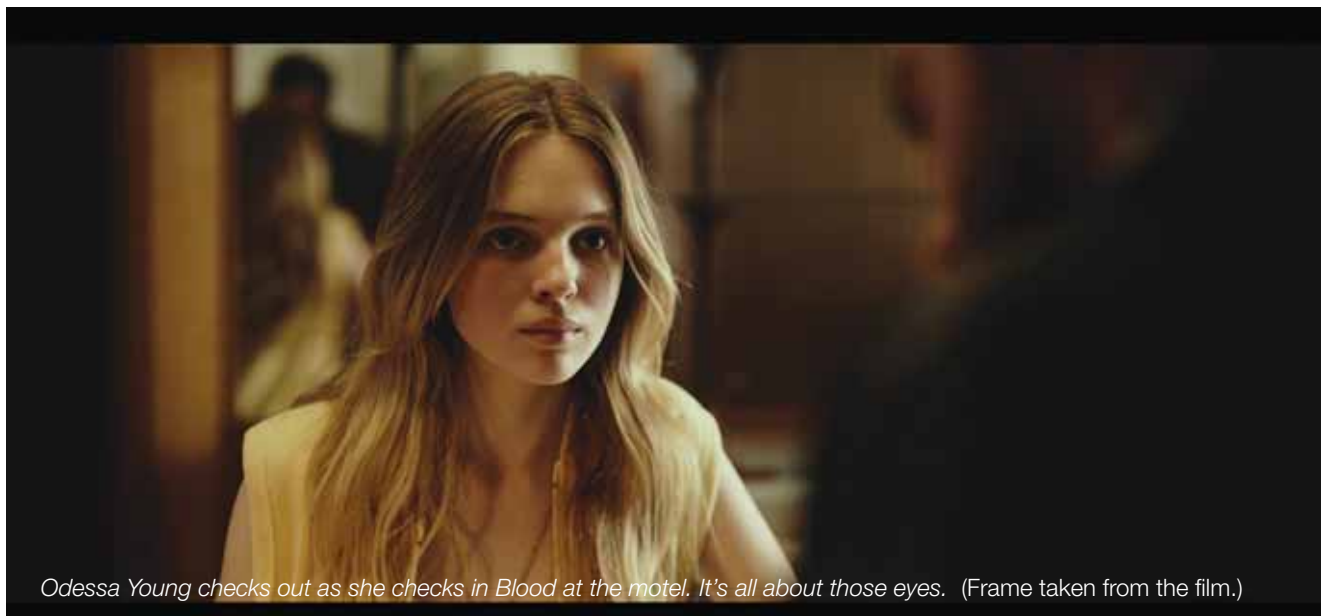


DOP Jeremy Rouse





Odessa Young as Alice. A brilliant young actor. Photo by Scott Lowe



I have an admission to make; I was totally seduced by a short film photographed by DP Jeremy Rouse, titled *Blood Pulls a Gun*. Jeremy's work is so in tune with the story and it contributes enormously to the tension and intrigue. He displays very high craft skills without attaching his 'look-at-me' filter. And writer/director Ben Briand is a very impressive story teller.

Blood Pulls a Gun was selected from a record number of over 4,000 entries and was the only Australian short film selected for competition in the recent SXSW Film Festival. I believe it represents the new wave of film makers in Australia. I loved this little 'feature' and I just know that it is the forerunner to much bigger and better things for everyone involved... especially Jeremy and Ben. I hope it's the beginning of a long term collaboration.*

* See Russell Boyd and Peter Weir's story on collaboration in this issue.

JR I'm from Perth and graduated from the Western Australian School of Art and Design majoring in film and television in 1999 and then I moved - I thought I've got to go east to really have a good go at this, so I tossed a coin... Melbourne or Sydney. I was 21 when I moved to Melbourne and started working at Cameraquip with Malcolm Richards. I spent almost two years there as a prep technician before I started as a clapper loader. I loaded on ads and features, you know, kind of worked my way into that, then became a focus puller, then an operator on a few films and then my career really started.

AC So what was your first, most important and significant moment in all of that? Was it the decision to move to Melbourne...?

JR The significant moment happened at film school, when I thought I was going to be a director. I realised I wasn't. I just didn't have the motivation for talking to actors as much as I did about figuring out how to tell stories visually. I thought, I don't want to direct; I'd rather go to Melbourne and actually take the time it needs to learn how to shoot... start from scratch.

AC Telling stories visually is all about having fresh, interesting ideas isn't it? The idea is the catalyst.

JR For sure. For me, it totally has to be that way. And I think, on that subject of creativity and ideas, I think that every time I talk about a job or read a script or I think of a music clip or whatever it is, before I think of anything technical, I think of the idea... what's interesting about this script, or what could be interesting? That to me is way more important than, "Shit I'm going to need this light, I'm going to need this camera or this lens." Before I even get to that point, it's like what is this, and what is interesting about it? What are the ideas that make it appealing... yeah, so the idea is a very important part of the whole process, for sure.

AC When I look at modern imaging, I see a stronger commitment to the visual truth, so to speak. I'm talking to a lot of young filmmakers now whose first reaction to a script is emotional, not technical. They say they want to know the truth of the story before they sign on. And I'm thinking that it's because, more and more these days, the technical side of image making is looking after itself and DPs have been freed up from so many of the technical stresses of the past... whether it's f.5.6 or quarter open on 5.6, the colour temperature is slightly green, or the contrast ratio is too great, not to mention the amazing ASA ratings of Digital cameras... what I'm alluding to is that the ARRI Alexas and Reds etc are doing us a lot of favours.



Josh McConville as Blood. (Frame taken from the film.)

JR There's some truth in that for sure. I don't deny that. You certainly don't have to worry about a quarter of a stop any more, though I was never really that technical. I can't tell you the last time I walked onto a set and said, "Okay, I've only got 200 ASA to deal with here." It's not about that any more. My job is not about a quarter of a stop here or there. I can see what I'm aiming to get; if I want it brighter, darker, harder light, softer light, more backlight... and I can do that by eye. Yeah, it certainly takes the pressure off what 'the negative' is going to look like.

AC Do you have a lighting philosophy then?

JR I don't have a philosophy. I trust my instincts first and foremost because every job's different. Some directors want a more high key, lit look, some directors want low key - and you can interpret it just by having a conversation with them. I always look where the natural light is coming from and take it from there; my work is very naturalistic, but a film like *Blood Pulls a Gun*, pretty much every scene in that film was very lit, you know, but the idea for me is to make it look not lit. Every job I learn something different about lighting. Every job I try something new or I work with a different gaffer - I've got no list of rules. As long as I look through the viewfinder and can't 'see' the light too much. That's the main thing... I don't want to feel a source. If I feel there's a source just outside the edge of frame, then it's wrong. The drama's taken away.

I don't have a philosophy. It's not like a 10-point commandment.

AC Getting back to *Blood Pulls a Gun*, I think that that little hero girl (Odessa Young) is going to be a major, major star. It's in her eyes. She acts with her eyes.

JR The scene with her and Blood in the reception where she just had so little to do, it was like, wow. She's really strong. It's pretty exciting.

AC You're right, but it didn't look heavily lit. It had a kind of David Lynch kind of look to it.

JR It does. It does have a slightly surreal, unusual, otherworldly feel- the director Ben Briand loves film craft in all its elements. Sound - it's very rich in music and sound. It's a very stylishly designed film, very detailed and it's edited sharply.

AC So what was your go-to light?

JR A 6K Par. Pars outside, pushing them through windows, different strengths; we were lighting through heavy curtains and veneers and things. It was a good strength, single source lamp. Considering the budget and time we had to light, I wanted a single lamp that could move from location to location quickly.

AC I was particularly interested in your source light for the wide motel exterior, when she was looking through the window and watched them making love it was like a moonlighty, mercury vapoury kind of light coming in from the left.

JR That was a teal cyan on a daylight balanced light. It was probably a 2.5K, heavily diffused. It's a colour that I'm not going to see every day. The rest was just Tungsten. I pushed the colour balance one way or another with the Red EPIC and that was kind of like, oh okay, that looks interesting.

AC Let's move on to the TVC for *Bulleit Whiskey*. How did you get that gig?

JR I focused on establishing myself by trying to work with certain commercial directors whose work I admired and that particular director, Christopher Riggert, I had really wanted to work with for a long time. Very talented. I think his work is always interesting. So I made the point of trying to pursue a relationship with him and an opportunity came up and he viewed my reel.

AC That commercial seemed to me to be 99% natural light. Your tonal choice and continuity of tone is excellent. And that's not easy to achieve these days, you know, when you're shooting 10-12 hours days, and the



Approaching Blood's muscle car, Alice (Odessa Young) looks for items to steal. PHOTO by Jeremy Rouse.



Alice (Odessa Young) lies in the back of Blood's car listening to the mysterious couple's rough sex in the nearby motel room. PHOTO Scott Lowe.



Fourteen year old Alice (Odessa Young) tries to behave much older than she really is. PHOTO by Jeremy Rouse.



Confused teen sexual tension as Ralph (Ben Ingram) doesn't know what to say to Alice (Odessa Young). PHOTO by Jeremy Rouse.



The mysterious woman (Tess Haubrich) right before seduction turns to destruction. PHOTO by Jeremy Rouse.



Alice (Odessa Young) surrounds herself with fireworks as the audience begins to question what is reality and what is fiction. PHOTO by Jeremy Rouse.



Jeremy Rouse shooting 14 year old actress Odessa Young. Behind the scenes photograph by Andrew Peters

director wants to shoot actors at midday under a hot sun.

JR That was very much natural light, yeah. That was very much time of day, anything that was lit was done with basic lighting... Kino FLOs, plug into the wall stuff, very simple, but yeah, that was more about capturing a spirit and an aesthetic of a lifestyle, than it was about creating an artifice. Capturing it as it is. But I've had my fair share of headaches with time of day as well.

AC Yeah, but do you feel that technology has allowed you to do that because now you're not working with the big crews, you don't have a lot of big lighting trucks and massive 20Ks and all that sort of stuff, so you can move quicker? And you can then spend a little more time waiting for the right light.

JR Yeah, certainly, you pick and choose the job - on some jobs I work with (bigger) units 18Ks and 20Ks and things like that. The script determines which way it's going to go. I love natural light and I love working with minimal crews... you know, I can get a sunrise shot and a sunset shot and then wait around for the rest of the day, because we can, we can wait, we can look around - and there's a lot of liberating, exciting things about that.

AC It's all about being able to control the light, don't you think? Whether it's natural or artificial.

JR Exactly. Lighting is about control. DOPs still have to control the light. You can't be a victim of light. You've got to embrace natural light but learn to control it. But that boils down to choosing your time of day. I'm more inclined to take light away these days then push it in.

AC *How difficult or important is it to be able to choose jobs you like? A lot of cinematographers do work that they're not really that keen on doing. It doesn't suit them emotionally nor their aesthetic, but they need the money. And I've also spoken to cinematographers who do choose their projects really, really carefully. You get offered the kind of jobs that are on your reel, don't you think?*

JR Yeah, for sure. It's a tricky one. Mostly, I (try to) choose my jobs based on who the director is and I do my research very thoroughly. I look at all their work and determine if I'm going to suit a certain director's aesthetic or not. With drama it's the same. I've read a lot of scripts and not all have gelled with me... or nothing clicked. So I don't feel like I need to do the job just to pay my mortgage. I feel very fortunate that I can say, "I don't know if I'm right for this".

AC *It is a very privileged position, but you've got to work to get there. You don't wake up one morning and suddenly everyone's offering you exactly the job you want. But I do think these days it's much more important to choose your work really carefully. By the way, had you worked with Ben before?*

JR No, that was the first time, actually.

AC Do you think that this could lead to a project with him? He's a good director.

JR He's a great director, yeah. The film just screened in South by Southwest and he's in LA now having meetings. I think there's a feature-length version, or that film was loosely based on a story that was written as a feature, so hopefully, yeah, I would love to do a longer project with Ben. And I really think it's exciting to build relationships with directors and work together over time. It gets to the point, with some of the directors I shoot with, where we hardly need to talk that much; our instincts are the same and we get to where we both think it should go without even speaking, just by seeing the frame and knowing what feels right.



TOP Tess Haubrich as *The Mysterious Woman* fights with Josh McConville playing *Blood*.

BOTTOM Actress Tess Haubrich
On Set image by Andrew Peters

