

SHUFFLE – Director & Executive Producer Statement – Garrett Bennett & Aron Michael Thompson

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT – GARRETT BENNETT

I recently read a quote from Academy Award winning director Mike Nichols, where he said in relation to movies, *"The only safe thing... is to take a chance."* That statement summarizes so much of the movie making process for me.

Aron Thompson and I sat down for coffee in November 09. He had a window to make a short film, which was before the Christmas rush kicked in, which meant 4 weeks. He pitched me the idea of SHUFFLE – A hit man, raised as a kid by a crime boss, who grew up to be a professional killer. Aron's a great admirer of the classic films such as THE HUSTLER where a single intricate scene could play out for ten minutes long and he desired to emulate this style and center SHUFFLE primarily around one long scene.

I was intrigued with the challenge and fascinated by the character of a hit man -- Not in a general sense, but specifically on the microscopic level, which immediately conjured many questions, such as... How does a real professional killer deal with his equipment? How does he clean his gun? From there I learned more about guns than I ever wanted to know, and soon we both discovered themes inherent in the story.

I became enthralled with the idea that Bodhi was like all of us, in the sense that so much of his upbringing shaped who he'd become, a very good killer. Only despite Bodhi's professional approach to killing, his conscience remained intact, which enabled him to see outside the downfalls of his world and glimpse a different future for himself. The theme of how unbelievably difficult, often impossible it is to break away from the coding of our upbringing... was impacting... And became the central question in my mind -- What does a killer have to do in order to change?

All of this was ruminating as Producer Quinn Rudee and Cinematographer Mark McKnight came on board. Denis Arndt agreed to play Big Boss, Brent Fraser as Johnny and a couple weeks later we were having our first official Production meeting just a week or so out from shooting...

My long time colleague from AFI, Production Designer, Bryan Felty jumped on a jet from Boston, just two weeks before Christmas to join the team and a week later we were shooting SHUFFLE... All of which came from a 'safe' cup of coffee in less than a month.

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER / WRITER STATEMENT – ARON MICHAEL THOMPSON

2010 is the year that Steve McQueen would have turned 80, and I developed the character of Bodhi in SHUFFLE with McQueen specifically in mind: More visceral than vocal, he communicates physically and only talks when he needs to and he speaks more with his actions than his voice. McQueen often portrayed morally ambivalent characters who went up against domineering, overbearing older men in positions of power in an attempt to finally improve themselves, and Bodhi does the same.

As a short film, SHUFFLE is intended to convey an old-school style that was more prevalent in feature films of the 1960s and 70s, but with a modern interpretation. I believe very strongly that there is an audience for this sort of filmmaking again that is driven by writing and acting as opposed to massive budgets and special effects.

"When I believe in something, I fight like hell for it." - Steve McQueen