



BRADLEY COOPER

A STAR IS BORN

<https://youtu.be/Jxl26V0n-9Q>

Thank you.

Good to have you here.

Hey.

One of the nicest, hardest working people in Hollywood. You're very real, you keep it real. You've had an arc as an actor that has been impressive both, in theatre and numbers; four Academy Award nominations, I believe, BAFTAs and so forth. But you've entered this new realm of directing, so you've kind of gone from what we would call around here, an individual contributor role, the actor, to a leader where you have to have a vision and you need to inspire people and then you have budgets and you've got technology. So were you a little bit scared going into all this or how did it all roll out?

You're absolutely right. First of all, thank you for having me. It's such a pleasure to be...

Oh, its hardship to have you here.

No, really... no, it's kinda... it's insane, it's insane... and I was able to... you were kind enough to invite me to Sicily, to the Google camp. We show the movie, which was really incredible.

Everyone was buzzing about it.

That was very great.

Not a dry eye, I heard.

My daughter loved it. Not the movie. But she... It's a big pool there. You're so right about budgetary issues and timing and all of that stuff, but I actually loved all of that. I loved actually having a, you know, dipping my toe in all of those aspects of it. And I think that's because, you're right when you have a vision and you want to see it through, I would feel very odd if I didn't have a part of the, it's because that's part of the road and how wide it is and how, you know, where the velocity picks up. You want to have a say in everything because it winds up the finished product is right now, now, belongs to you. So, I very much was a part of all of that and I couldn't imagine not doing it that way.

Anything really surprised you about that process and journey, I've seen so many interviews of the tight cast coming together and saying, we had a magic experience working as a team, working as a collaborative creative group. It wasn't so much scripted as enabled by a clear vision of the story and you're just freeing up Lady Gaga, Dave Chappelle to play their parts in ways they said they never experienced before and of course, it's Lady Gaga's first film debut.

Yeah. I think I've heard them say that. That makes me so happy because that's was the goal to create an environment where, as you all know, when you feel safe and you feel motivated, and you also know that you're called upon to bring all of yourselves; that that's the environment that you can really thrive and you go home at night and think, oh wow, that was a really fruitful day. I think because I've been in this business for 20 years, and I've been in round all the different types of environments. But in the same setting, I just, you know, I'm a good listener and observer, so I just watched and picked up everything that works for me. And I just wanted to create an environment which was the culmination of all the good parts and take all the bad parts out of it. And then hope that in that respect, I could get the best out of the people that have entrusted themselves to me quite frankly, because that was a, I mean I just couldn't believe that Lady Gaga took such a huge risk, because it's a big risk. This is one of those projects where you're like, well, you know, if it doesn't work out, you'll be okay. It's like, not really. Actually, if it doesn't work out, you're going to take a big hit. So there's a lot at stake. And even for Dave Chappelle, that took me like two and a half years to get him and he just doesn't do this kind of thing and, but he was so willing and Sam Elliott, you know, I've never seen him play a character that was so filled with resentment the way that character was and he just threw all of himself into that. And my hope is that it's because they felt that there was that kind of inspiring environment, which by the way, I sort of set the tone, but everybody else has to help create that. You know, every single crew member, everybody has to be on the same page and everybody dictates. I mean, you know, in your work environment, if there's one person that has an energy that's off, the whole, it contaminates the rest of the team. So everybody really has to be on the same page.

And you pursued this script for years. I've seen various reports, six years. You said you'd pursued Dave Chappelle for over two years. So when'd you get the burning idea to do the fourth incarnation of A Star is Born?

It was sort of like coming together, two different things. I always knew I wanted to direct. And I would work with great directors like David O. Russell or Clint Eastwood, who really allowed me to be a part of their process. I was in the editing room, almost every day for Silver Linings Playbook and Jay Cassidy who was David's editor, he and I worked together on this movie. So I always knew that eventually I'm going to have to stop just saying I'm going to try to do and actually do it. And because I knew that, all these sort of compositions cinematically would always fly around in my head and I was at a Metallica concert. And I was and I met Lars Ulrich and it's like the night before and I said oh man, I'm a huge Metallica fan and he said, well come to the concert tomorrow night. So I found myself 12 hours later, standing behind his drum kit at Yankee Stadium. And I could see the sweat on his back and I can also see the scope of the crowd and I thought this is an incredible composition that people don't get to see. And that was the birth of the subjective idea of always being on the stage in the movie. So, in the movie, we're never in the crowd. So just like little ideas like that, thinking about fame, like what fame can be, you know, paparazzi and you watch TMZ, but what is it, what's the experience like? And to me, it's sonic and it's like this cacophony of noise where it's like, whoosh! And then silence. And that's the opening of the movie is, you're thrust onto this thunderdome with this guy. And then all of a sudden, you're whoosh!

into this very small, almost like coffin-like environment. And that's an emotional juggernaut for people. So, that was something I thought of early on. And then, there was just this property Warner Brothers had and I thought, I could explore all these things; family, trauma, what happens if two people actually love each other? There's no infidelity, it's actually true love. And even with that, it's hard. So these are things I wanted to explore and then this property was perfect because it had music and you can't hide when you sing. And I thought, well this would be the great way to do it. So really, it was really a combination. I didn't think it's, I never ever thought, like... you know, it's a thing people should do before the remake of the Star is Born?

No, no, go ahead.

I definitely didn't do that.

And this is one like none other. So we're all going to pay money to see it. You can't hide if you sing, you just said that. You didn't hide, you studied, took voice lessons for 18 months, you learned the guitar and Lady Gaga required that you take all of the... do all of the singing live, that you weren't dubbing.

Yeah.

So what was that all like?

Well, the music is a character in the movie, you know, it's not like with the movie takes a break and then all of a sudden, there's a song. It actually has everything to do with what's going on. It's almost, it is a scene. My favorite scene of Lady Gaga's, actually, acting wise is the final song. We watch this character go through the grieving process through the song, which I just, that's... what a feat, acting feat she did. So, it would have been, we had no choice but to sing live and that's much easier for her. And I thought, how the heck am I going to do that? The other thing is she's the real deal. I know I had the nuclear power of the movie. It's like, well, at least I have this. If the movie sucks, at least there'll be like, 10 moments where she's singing and it won't be horrendous. But I knew I had to lift the rest of the movie up to her level so you believe it. Otherwise, if you don't believe me as this character, you don't believe, we're really on the stage singing in front of people, if you don't believe that Saturday Night Live, then there's no way I'm going to be able to allow you to enter into this world learn about her. So there was really no question that that had to happen. It was great that she felt so strongly about it as well. But it added, I mean, it's part of the DNA of the film.

It's a beautiful story of Jackson Maine, a fading country music star with a alcohol problem, and Ally, who you discover and encourage and you see her rise through the film. So...

It's funny when you say country star, so when we started writing it, I was trying to figure out where he was from. And I quite honestly thought, like maybe it's country because I can kind of like, kind of fake sing and like, maybe get away with it. And then as I kept working and starting to like, fall in love and create this character, I swear if we had like six more months, he would have been like completely heavy metal like it kept getting harder and harder and harder. We've talked about this actually, what genre Jack's Music is, because it's definitely not country.

You're right.

Yeah.

Although you do have a twang when you speak and kinda that ruddy red face that looks like you had too much... scotch.

But even with the twangs, that's a good question. So in terms of his voice, that was the hardest thing actually, was lowering my voice just about an octave. And I wanted to pick a voice that you couldn't place geographically, and Sam Elliott wound up being, before I even thought about writing the role for him, the voice that I studied. So, I would get all of these tapes of Sam Elliott, and

It's crazy.

And then I was doing it and because he's born in Sacramento, which you'd never know. He's from California, but his mother was from Texas. So he's got this odd accent that you can't really place. And then I was reading Bruce Springsteen's autobiography. He was talking about stealing his father's voice. That's what he did as a kid. And I used to always want to be my dad. I thought, what if Sam Elliott is his older brother and he stole his voice. And so, that's how that whole thing happened.

Wow! So, you both visualize, and you have auditory things going through your creative process?

Yeah.

Sounds like. Speaking about auditory, there's someone in the audience who gradually lost her hearing as a child and is impressed by how accurately you portrayed the frustration and denial many people experience when losing their hearing. So her question is, do you have any personal experience with hearing loss? And how did you study to portray that aspect of the role so authentically?

Oh, well, I'm glad that you thought that. Is the person here? Hi! Bradley, nice to meet you. I'm glad you felt that way. I was born... Now, here's the other thing, when you get to write the movie, you just cheat all the time because you just do everything that's real to you, like his choice of drink is crazy personal for me. That's my dog, Charlie. That's my real dog. A bunch of my friends are in the movie, who I went to grad school with and the hearing loss, I wanted him to be like a prize fighter because, in the other versions of the movies, he's so obsessed with fame and his fame is dwindling and I didn't want, I had no interest in investigating that. And also, people today, everybody makes money touring and a lot of these bands that have been maybe huge, back 20 years ago, still make a lot of money touring. So the reality was he's fine. So it was more about what's the wear and tear and it takes a toll on your body. And I interviewed and spent time with tons of musicians. And the thing that happens is hearing loss. That's the number one thing that goes, which makes sense. But I was born with a cholesteatoma in my eardrum, and it was removed. And then I was kind of, I would always jump off of high places as a kid. Don't ask me why. And I kept puncturing it, and so I had all these operations, like five operations. I have a hole in my right ear. So when he's telling her that story in the bar, that's me. That's all real. That's like so... And so, I don't have hearing loss, but I did, when I had ear infections, I hear that * sound. So I know it very well. And then it was all about in the mixing stage, creating... recreating that sound sonically for the audience. So I'm glad you felt that way. Thank you.

There's something about determination and grit that has to go into pulling off something this epic. But also you kind of jumped out of your actor skin or the place that your fans for these past 20 years have had you as an actor and theatre performer into this, Surprise! he's also a great director. There's a lot of press around, just the shots, close in shots, lingering shots, like just an intense visual experience that is all of a sudden your own in your first go with this. Of course, you've been in film for a while, but talk just

a little bit about that journey that, did it require grit, self-belief, did you ever doubt yourself? And are you surprised now, at the reaction of the critics and the press around? Wow, like it's a new Bradley.

I think, you know, Elia Kazan said, if you're going to audition to play a cowboy, show up with the horse because people only know what they see. So for me, it wasn't a shock because I've been thinking about shots since I was a kid, you know, and observing movies and seeing like, and the movies that I love is form always follows function. An arbitrary, cool shot. If I'm watching a movie and I'm aware as I'm watching the movie, well, that's a cool shot. To me, that's not enjoyable as a viewer of a film. I want to serve afterwards when I'm thinking about how I felt emotionally and say, oh well Martin Scorsese, that was one shot as they went into the Copacabana. Oh, wow, right, you know, that's the goal. So, you know, and it's all character-based for this movie. Jackson takes his hat off when he's on stage. He wants to avoid the camera. She's not even aware of her talent. But the movie is telling you in the beginning, she comes out of the bathroom and she's in the center of the proscenium. She's on the stage already, even though she's in the bowels of a building in the bathroom. So you could do things like that cinematically with shots, but it's all based on story and then by the end of the movie, he can't avoid the camera anymore. So when he's in the bedroom, the cameras right on top of them, that he can't escape it. So the hope is that you're feeling these things, but you're not quite sure why, but it's because I'm manipulating it through the choice of the shot. And that to me is what's fun about telling a story cinematically. That's the whole point. Otherwise, I never would have tried to direct a movie if I didn't have a point of view of how I wanted to shoot it.

I asked you earlier in what we call the Green Room, whether you're still playing to sing, play the guitar. And you said there's one song you want to go finish in the studio. So talk to us a little bit about that journey and whether you'd do it in the shower or you're going to go back into the studio permanently?

I did sing Shallow in the shower at the hotel the other day like, can I still sing that song? It was okay, I think. When you shower, it all sounds good, doesn't it? No, I don't think, I mean, here's the thing I love about what I get to do for a living; is I get to enter into a world like a sociologist, you know, and learn about everything and soak it in not just cerebrally, but also sensorially and then get to transfer it into some sort of ritualistic performance. So it's a wonderful way of learning. And this was incredible, it took four years... six years when I thought about, that's when I was at the concert with Metallica. And the truth is, I've been lucky enough there's something else that I feel that obsessed by now, so I'm kind of, my head and my heart is somewhere else now. And I only know how to do this if I am completely in love with it. Because as you said, it's true, it takes a tremendous amount of work. I mean, I edited the movie in my house, thank God. Because we were pulling 16 hour days for like six months and I just had a kid. So there was that too. I'm always wondering if she's going to like grow up and like, oh cause of the set, because we edits loud and it was right below her bedroom and I thought, oh, she's going to hear this music for like the first six months of her life. I wonder if she's gonna like, hate our music or love it. Yeah, so I don't know how to do anything to this degree unless I completely loved it. That said, I absolutely enjoyed singing, but I hope that what I want to do at least for the next decade or two is to make movies, but there was that song Too Far Gone that's in the cop bar and I only wrote the first verse and chorus. And I had the other day, I had this thought of the second verse and a bridge. So I'm going to go...

So he's a songwriter. It's multi-talented. You just said, you are a bit obsessive. So, what are you obsessing about now?

I don't want to say it cause if it doesn't happen...

So I'd love to just ask you what you think the platforms that we have nowadays, technical platforms, but YouTube in specific, how has it enabled creativity? How do you view it? Do you spend time consuming content on... other device?

In its best form, what these platforms and technology has given us, is the means by which we can create story in various forms, which is incredible. I was talking to somebody yesterday in Dallas about, you know, what took Stanley Kubrick six years to develop because he wanted to have some sort of flowing shot, you could do with your iPhone now and then you could post it. And the fact that you can get content out there is just incredible. So it kind of goes back again; you just have to figure out what is you want to say and how to say it? Because the means by which you can tell that story are at our disposal, you know, it's almost too easy. That's the other thing about shots. It's like, but form to me at least, form still has to follow function. It also has to do with what is it that you want to say and how do you want to say it? And then use technology in order to help, you know, convey that.

Bradley, thank you so much for having something beautiful to say. And the way in which you say it in A Star is Born and I just want to thank you for coming to Google and...

Thank you. Thanks for having me.

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