

ARRI ALEXA COMPETITION WINNERS PREMIERE SHORT FILMS IN LONDON

On Monday 30 April, six filmmakers screened their ALEXA short films at an exclusive Directors UK and ARRI screening event, at the Ham Yard Hotel, in London.

The annual Challenge ALEXA Competition - by Directors UK, the professional association for British screen directors, and ARRI, the industry-leading camera manufacturer - gives selected candidates access to ALEXA shooting equipment, for two-days for free, to create new and original content in the form of a short film, short documentary, teaser trailer, commercial or music video.

Now in its sixth year, Challenge ALEXA Competition is a programme created to encourage a varied range of stories from a diverse talent pool. Since its launch, the competition has grown bigger than ever, attracting many entrants annually, offering a rich mix of stories and genres, each one giving its own unique take on a set theme. The competition winners incorporated the chosen theme of “*Delight*” in their films.

The films showcased offered a rich mix of stories, each one giving its own unique take on the theme; Directors **Robert Hackett** (*Special Delivery*), **Lotus Hannon** (*Unseen*), **Claire Tailyour** (*Belittled*), **Beryl Richards** (*Hello Stranger*), **Miranda Howard-Williams** (*Evie*), and **Stewart Alexander** and **Kerry Skinner** (*The Bicycle Thief*) commented on their experience:

Special Delivery, by Robert Hackett, is an uplifting romantic drama about a woman who is forced to confront the postman who walks past her door on Valentine’s Day. Set in Thamesmead, London, the film aims to challenge perceptions of location – based in an area often only seen in violent films or social issue dramas, the film portrays the area in a positive way and different angle.

“I did a lot of research to see how others had shot the area, its sense of scale and differing landscapes rarely get seen on screen. The shooting package and the anamorphic prime lenses allowed us to capture this, you really need those big wides on a high-end camera to understand it’s a special place and not just another council estate. In terms of directing, the experience with the ALEXA package was invaluable. The [Directors UK Challenge ALEXA competition] experience was also a reminder of the power of a good script and how that is ultimately why great cast and crew get on board”, said Robert.

Robert’s next project is a psychological thriller feature called *Couchsurfer*.

Unseen, by Lotus Hannon, is a dark, Cinderella-like tale with a twist inspired by East Asian Cinema.

The film examines the challenges women face to be seen, appreciated and valued for something beyond what they look like and their sexuality. When ‘attractiveness’ and sexuality intersect with ethnicity, class and wealth, the restrictions on women can be even greater and how a young, the film explores how East Asian woman in the UK might overcome this.

“The Anamorphic Bokeh, the oval light flares you can capture with the ALEXA shooting package were part of the initial inspiration behind the film. I was conscious that a story set at night would utilise this magical, visual quality. The Alexa experience gave me both the freedom and the restriction to make a film from development to delivery in a very short space of time. The whole project has given me the chance to work with some inspiring people. Unseen will be a calling card for myself and everyone on the team - I’ll be adding it to my reel for prospective TV drama work and it will also help instil confidence in investors when raising finance for my debut feature”, said Robert.

Lotus plans to submit the film to festivals worldwide. She is also currently developing *#GoodGirlsDon’t*, a web series with writer Naida Redgrave and her directorial feature debut, *Orion’s Belt*.

Belittled, by Claire Tailyour, is a short film set in Victorian England about a migrant from India trapped in a mansion, inspired by a series of dreams and the belittlement of immigrants in the UK at the moment.

“The ALEXA shooting package sounds like it’s just technical but actually what came with it beyond the equipment can’t be downplayed. The expertise and support of everyone at ARRI during our prep was incredible. We had constraints; VFX shots, a

grade 2 listed location, a small room, using green screen. The ALEXA Mini and master anamorphic lenses combined to give this rich cinematic look that could handle the range of situations we threw at it”, said Claire.

Claire, will be entering *Belittled* in to festivals shortly after the screening, and is currently developing a feature script based on the concept with more twists along the way.

Hello Stranger, by Beryl Richards, an intimate film that looks closely at the dynamics of one small family and how an adopted child can change everything, with Beryl’s own family is my own with the story told from three perspectives and taken over by my son Joe, who now as an adult wants to start his own family.

“The ALEXA package allowed me to shoot some high-quality footage which is an element of the feature documentary, I wanted to show that it would be cinematic, and deserve consideration as a feature”, said Beryl.

Beryl’s next project is *Free Rein*, a Netflix teen drama and has submitted a play to the Edinburgh festival commissioned by BBC4.

Evie, by Miranda Howard-Williams, is a science-fiction short about how society and relationships might change in a world where sex robots exist. This near-future scenario is a lens to engage with issues of female objectification and the future of masculinity and sexuality - inspired by shows such as *Black Mirror*, *Humans* and *Utopia* as well as how films such as *Her* and *Ex Machina* explore how changing technology might affect relationships.

“Having the support of ARRI and the ALEXA package was great. Having such amazing kit available to us gave us the opportunity to create an incredible look for the film – the anamorphic lenses were particularly fab to work with from a creative point of view. I have really enjoyed the ALEXA Challenge Experience – it’s been intense, but wonderful. It’s also been my first science fiction short and I loved the creativity that comes with working in this genre and the amazing look we have been able to get with the ALEXA kit. Catherine, our DoP, and I were able to really think cinematically with the shoot and not be limited in our vision which was a wonderful indulgence on a short film!”, said Miranda.

Miranda will be entering *Evie* in to international film festivals, and is developing a TV series, *Syncing*, for production.

The Bicycle Thief, by Stewart Alexander and Kerry Skinner, a is the simple but charming story from the perception of a young girl’s quest to get her stolen bike back, through a beautiful location in South-East England.

“It allowed us to be extremely ambitious. We wanted to make something truly vibrant, saturated colours that would pop off the screen to represent this child’s view of her world. We shot it wide-screen and those anamorphic lenses give it a very special look and cinematic quality. We tried to really stretch ourselves with this film. It feels like participating in the challenge helped us to really hone our skills as filmmakers. Hopefully people in the industry will see what we’ve achieved in two days, and be interested in supporting us on future projects.”, said Stewart and Kerry.

Stewart and Kerry will submit their film in to festivals worldwide. They currently have two feature film scripts ready for production, and developing a TV series.

Laura Adams, Head of Member Services at Directors UK, said: “The films showcased at this screening we’re excellent! Each year I am so incredibly proud of each of the filmmakers selected. The Challenge Alexa Competition offers each filmmaker a great opportunity to learn new skills, build a network of new contacts [with specialist skills], develop their creative vision and use equipment they may not have had access to. We hope this experience leads to or helps with new career opportunities in the future.

So much of what we do for the Competition is made possible through the great partnership we have with ARRI and we thank them for their support again this year. We hope the competition continues to inspire and provide members with better access into work and opportunities, and encourages new aspiring directors to apply to the competition next year.”

Additional information and feedback on each directors experience is available on the Directors UK website at <https://directors.uk.com/news/challenge-alex-2018-an-interview-with-the-directors>

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

ABOUT DIRECTORS UK

- **Directors UK** is the professional association of UK screen directors. It is a membership organisation representing the creative, economic and contractual interests of over 6,500 members - the majority of working TV and film directors in the UK. Directors UK collects and distributes royalty payments and provides a range of services to members including campaigning, commercial negotiations, legal advice, events, training and career development. Directors UK works closely with fellow organisations around the world to represent directors' rights and concerns, promotes excellence in the craft of direction and champions change to the current landscape to create an equal opportunity industry for all.
- Further information and a copy of the new contract terms can be found at www.directors.uk.com
- To become a member of Directors UK for access to training, benefits and discounts, please visit www.directors.uk.com/join or contact us directly at membership@directors.uk.com
- Directors UK Social Media handle: **@Directors_UK**

ABOUT ARRI

- ARRI is the industry-leading provider of technology and services for motion picture, television and commercials productions. ARRI's ALEXA digital camera system is behind Oscar-winning movies such as The Revenant and Bird Man, and is ubiquitous on the sets of blockbuster feature films worldwide. ALEXA is also the camera of choice for countless television productions, with 28 of the top 30 UK dramas having been shot on ALEXA, from Doctor Who and Sherlock to Victoria, Poldark, Cold Feet, Call the Midwife, Peaky Blinders, Game of Thrones and more.
- ARRI will provide fine-tuned shooting kits – light and compact, yet delivering image quality worthy of a movie screen for a truly cinematic experience.

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