


CREATIVES INTERVIEW

The Beautiful People

Seth Reiss reveals all about the fantastical **A Big Bold Beautiful Journey**

WORDS: STEVE O'BRIEN

 ASK MOST SCREENWRITERS about their latest movie and they'll rarely say the idea arrived fully formed. Yet for Seth Reiss, he remembers distinctly the moment he came up with the concept for his newest film.

"I was on Interstate 95 in a rental car," he recalls, "and I was very depressed and in need of something, and then I was like, 'What if the GPS said, 'Would you like to go on a big, bold, beautiful journey?'"

Those exact words would come to title Reiss's follow-up to 2022's deliciously black satire *The Menu*. Despite arising from one of the lowest points in the writer's life, *A Big Bold Beautiful Journey* is a radiant, life-affirming

blast of positivity, at a time where that seems to be exactly what we need.

Best described as a romantic fantasy, the film is, in Reiss's words, "about two people who are given this opportunity to revisit their past and the events that have shaped who they are, in order to make a different choice about their lives and how they go forward. It's about getting to know a person you might be in a relationship with and really getting to know them and them really getting to know you."

Colin Farrell and Margot Robbie headline as the single strangers who, after meeting at a friend's wedding, go on a "big bold beautiful journey" together, one that transports them to pivotal moments in their respective pasts. As

the trailer reveals, the characters make every trip through a free-standing door, but as originally written, that gateway was a whole building. Reiss credits the mononymous director Kogonada for coming up with this simplified idea.

"These buildings that were off the beaten path, that was going to look weird," he says, "but his idea to just make them doors, I love that so much. I knew then I was in really good creative hands."

Arthouse favourite Kogonada signed on after the script found its way into his hands. As the director of indie films such as *Columbus* (2017) and *After Yang* (2021), he seemed a natural fit for a screenplay that Reiss says was influenced



David and Sarah get to have many *Sliding Doors* moments.

Colin Farrell, Margot Robbie and director Kogonada.



"Looks innocuous enough... you first."

by the likes of Charlie Kaufman and director/actor Albert Brooks.

"I was blown away by *Columbus* and *After Yang*," the writer enthuses. "I wanted this movie to be beautiful and classy, and I knew that's what he would bring to it. I knew he would bring his taste and his sensibility to the film – he makes bold choices that had I had those same thoughts, I would have written them, so it made for a really good partnership, especially when we were really digging into the script together."

Reiss says he didn't have any actors in mind when he was writing the screenplay, but was overjoyed when Farrell and Robbie came on board.

"Kogonada had a relationship with Colin [Farrell starred in the SF drama *After Yang*] and wanted to go with him, which was great, but we had to make the character a little older than I initially conceived it. Then Margo heard about the movie and knew that Colin was attached, read the script and agreed to do it, which was so exciting."

“Colin Farrell is playing a sort of less handsome version of myself”

A Big Bold Beautiful Journey is Reiss's first solo screenwriting credit (*The Menu* was penned with his friend Will Tracy) and he confesses it's a deeply personal film, one that wouldn't have worked with a co-writer.

"I would say that Colin Farrell is playing a sort of less handsome version of myself," he laughs. "But this is the story I wanted to tell and I've always wanted to do personal movies, that's the kind of writing I like."

Reiss admits he doesn't really think in terms of genre ("I don't think I'm very good at it," he says, "what I am good at is a premise that evokes the human condition"), so finds it hard to describe his next two projects, *42.6 Years* and *Five*. He can only say that the former is "more in line with this one" and that the latter is "a little darker".

"God bless the studio for feeling that the story itself and the way it's executed is exciting enough to overcome the lack of genre," he explains. "In a trailer, like the one we have for *A Big Bold Beautiful Journey*, if you can hit what the premise is, then I think the genre question goes out the window."

That trailer promises something magical, heartfelt and visually ravishing, and Reiss confirms that, yes, it's an accurate representation of the finished movie.

"Yeah, it's pretty evocative," he says proudly. "It's saying, this is going to take you on an emotional roller coaster and that it's beautifully cinematic and fantastical, so that's really exciting!" ●

A Big Bold Beautiful Journey is in cinemas from 19 September.

SCI-FACT! Seth Reiss cut his creative teeth on TV, as one of the head writers on the popular talk show *Late Night With Seth Meyers*.