

Interview with Actress Lauren Budd.



It's an exciting time to be a woman working in film. Women are carving a new space in filmmaking, both in front of and behind the camera.

Lauren Budd is a multi-hyphenate: actress on stage and screen, producer and executive of acquisitions and development for global film production and distribution company Firebook Entertainment.

Always wanting to be an actress, Lauren modelled for a time. “Really, modelling was the side-step,” she says. “I’ve always wanted to work in film and on stage. I was always in youth theatre groups, and the plan was to finish college, then go to drama school. Modelling happened, and it went really well, but once I got all I could out of that, I refocused on what I wanted to do: acting and filmmaking.”

Every filmmaker has their origin story, and Lauren is no different. “My mum always used to find me playing with my toys, making up plotlines and characters, having it just the way I wanted. I was obsessed as a child—there’s something about the imagination and the fact that it has no boundaries that has always appealed to me. My family always said that I was going to be an actress, and I’d always respond with ‘I know’. But I wasn’t sure if it was going to happen for a while, and I’m still on that journey, really.’

Over time, the filmmaking industry has really changed for women, but there is still work to be done. Though things have improved somewhat, sexism and misogyny remain rife. Women are still discriminated against and underestimated, despite their experience and skills. Lauren recalls an experience of this prejudice.

“I was speaking at a panel for female filmmakers, and we’re discussing stigma and the fact that people judge you before they’ve met you. A lot of people think you’re a soft touch or haven’t gotten the experience to drive things forward.”

“Later, a writer friend and I were chatting about how we didn’t want men to feel like they were in the wrong place—I’ve gotten into the habit of man bashing before, but I wanted to make it clear that male filmmakers have given me some of the best opportunities..- Then this guy comes up to us and starts listing off his CV, insisting that I need to change and be more like him. So I asked him, ‘Why do you think I need this advice? And he said: ‘You look too nice’. I was gobsmacked. Clearly, he hadn’t been listening to our panel for the last half hour. Eventually, he stormed away, and we laughed it off, but the irony!”

Lauren explains how she got to working with [Firebook Entertainment](#). It all started at Cannes, when a friend asked her to help sell their films. “I thought, a trip to Cannes? Why not!” Looking back on her first foray into this part of the industry, “I cringe a little,” she admits. “I had no idea what I was doing back then.”

At a party, she ran into John Moss, co-founder of Firebook, and the company ended up bringing her on as a representative for the EU and UK. Her career progressed, and now she holds the title of acquisition and development executive. “I seek out opportunities to develop relationships with filmmakers,” she explains. “I’m involved in the creative development, strategy and casting.”

Lauren's growing specialism is horror filmmaking, both as an actress and producer. We spoke about how essential it is to have women both in front of the screen and taking control of how stories are being told. "This role has opened my eyes to all the different stages of the conversation, the development of a film," she says. "There needs to be a good level of representation at every stage."

Women's role in horror has changed massively since the genre's early years, which often glamorised female victimisation. But as Lauren notes, things have changed. "We're moving to an era where women can be the monsters. The changing role of women behind the camera has changed how women can be in front of the camera. There is more feminist horror now, too, presenting the female experience from a female perspective—not just showing what men think we are experiencing. Horror can be a vehicle of social, political and cultural discussion."

Lauren goes on to reflect on the importance of connection and community in the filmmaking space. "Community is everything. Going to film festivals is also important—that's where you find your people," she says. "Local festivals like Frighfest, for example. There's a pub next to where all the films screen, and you will get press, actors, everyone in there together. You go to that pub, you'll come out in five WhatsApp groups."

She highlights incentives like Women in Fan and the Fantastic 7, groups through which she was able to gather an all-female crew for a recent project: a video campaign for [Call it Out](#), creating awareness surrounding women's safety in public spaces. Lauren's other recent project, a short film entitled 'One Shot of Espresso', explores similar themes. The film follows a barista who must determine whether a customer is a threat or not. "It's commenting on the under-the-radar harassment that women go through, the discomfort," Lauren explains. The piece builds on the coin toss scene in *No Country for Old Men*, Lauren reveals, when Anton Chigurh meets a store owner and ominously forces him to play a coin toss for his life. "That's what it's like for women, but every day."

Lauren is also working on upcoming projects in the new year. "I can't say what it is, but I'm working with a very popular British production company. I'm going to be producing and acting. I'm really excited for the challenge."

Words by Ayomide Asani

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