



# ELLE GINTER

DIRECTOR AT FAMILIA

From working on a whale-watching tour boat to appearing as an extra in an Adam Sandler movie, award-winning director Elle Ginter, (who's newly signed to UK-based Familia), has followed an unorthodox career path. Growing up in Poughkeepsie, New York, Ginter was home-schooled until the age of 11, but her "free-spirited" childhood was punctuated by her mother's recurring health issues. Long hours spent daydreaming in hospital waiting rooms have inevitably influenced her work. "I never put it together until this year, but these trends of escapism in my films come from my childhood," she says.

Eschewing a traditional film school background, Ginter studied Broadcast Journalism at university, before landing a production assistant role and working her way up through the ranks of camera crew. She shot her first film, *Why We Wake*, while ghostwriting treatments. "I was so terrified to make it, but the realisation I came to, is that imperfection is relatable." A haunting exploration

of mental illness, the film was inspired by Ginter's army veteran husband and his battle with PTSD. Picking up industry plaudits and screening at the AICP's Commercial Directors Diversity Programme, *Why We Wake* kickstarted Ginter's commercials career, despite production companies insisting the subject was "too dark" to appear on her reel. Three years later, the film is still attracting clients.

As a former track athlete and javelin champion, it's no surprise that Ginter's reel boasts a string of sports commercials for the likes of Comcast (*Voices of Change*) and Nike (*Freedom Prep*), but she admits it was "part of the game plan. The commercials world likes you to be niche, and picking a speciality is a really good way of growing as fast as possible," she explains.

Those action-packed spots reveal Ginter's technical approach to camerawork, but her directorial style is more intuitive, and

she admits to "rarely looking at the monitor." A keen observer of people, Ginter relies on her ability to "find humanity in everyone," to coax strong performances from talent.

*Freedom Prep*, a docu-short for Nike about an inner-city female rugby team, exemplifies Ginter's methods. She spent three weeks in Memphis simply getting to know the schoolgirl players. "It's unusual for a commercial, but it was the only way to capture those 'real' moments," says Ginter. "These girls had been through so much trauma they really don't trust strangers, and I was asking for them to put their lives on camera."

Although documentary is her forte, she also demonstrated a flair for narrative in Pearle Vision's *Olivia*, the story of a little girl finally able to see the world around her. But her favourite project to date is YouTube's *Ball on the Moon* with former astronaut Buzz Aldrin, which features her hallmark whimsical flashbacks and surreal shots.

As an in-demand female director, Ginter feels she has turned gender bias in the industry to her advantage. Having grown up tinkering with engines and playing on a boys' basketball team, she was surprised by the "girl director" label. Three years into her commercial directing career though, the situation is changing, and she relishes the responsibility of bringing diversity onto her sets.

Ginter's upcoming work includes a "cheeky" project for Dick's Sporting Goods starring soccer legend Brandi Chastain, alongside her first feature documentary, examining family dynamics around chronic Lyme disease. Having found a welcoming new home with Familia, Ginter is excited to start another chapter of her career together with the UK-based production company. Her career may have had a meandering start, but Ginter knows where she is heading. "I always had the mentality, if there's not a space for you, make it," she adds.