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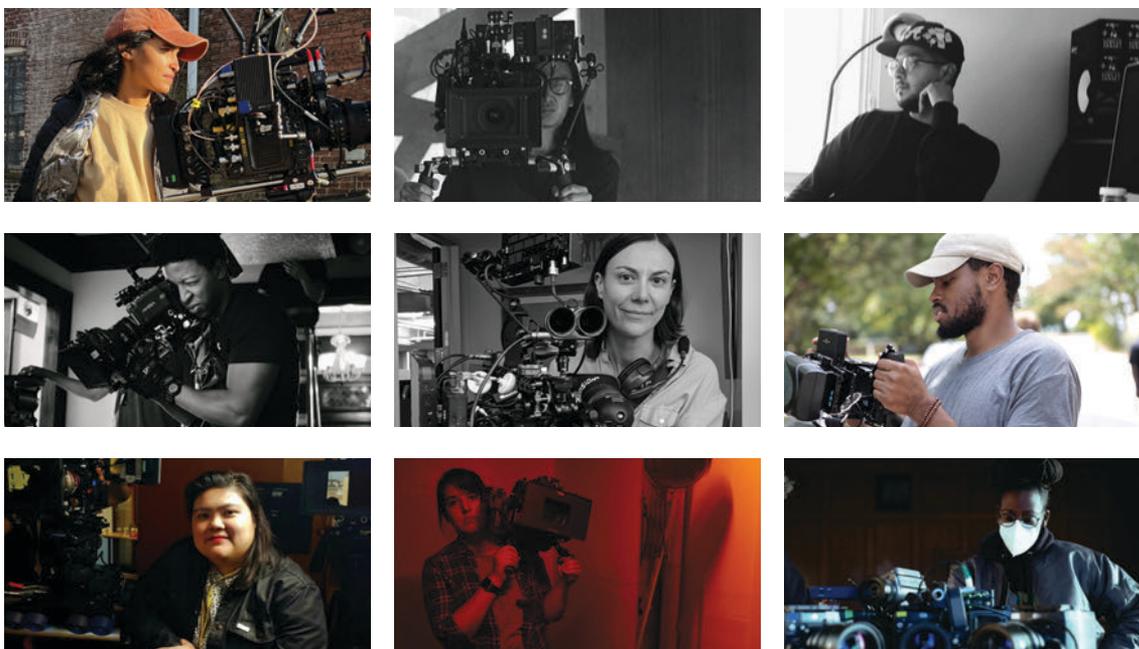
The Art of Light

2022 Rising Stars of Cinematography

Eclectic Perspectives

AC shines its annual spotlight on nine talented artists.

Profiles by Tara Jenkins



Since 2017, *American Cinematographer* has released an annual roster of up-and-coming cinematographers selected by a panel of ASC members and the magazine's staff. This year's nine Rising Stars have accrued an impressive list of accomplishments over the course of their upward-trending careers. Veronica Bouza; Matthew Chuang, ACS; Jomo Fray; Michael "Cambio" Fernandez; Catherine Goldschmidt; Isiah Donté Lee; Christine Ng; Julia Swain; and Erin G. Wesley come from varied backgrounds and have eclectic artistic sensibilities, and all show immense talent, promise and an impressive dedication to the art of cinematography. Here are their stories.



JULIA SWAIN

After making movies on her own as a teenager, Julia Swain worked in TV news as an undergraduate in order to gain experience with professional cameras. “I was trying to do what I could to become a better storyteller and filmmaker, and then quickly realized that cinematography was where it was at — I needed to be behind the camera,” she says. Swain attended UCLA as a graduate student studying cinematography, and during her time there, she became one of the first recipients of an ASC Vision Scholarship. In 2014, she was honored with a Women in Film Fellowship in Cinematography. Since graduating, Swain has shot numerous short films, commercials and music videos, including projects for Hozier, Quin XCII and Kelsea Ballerini.

Swain is grateful for the cinematography mentors who have helped her throughout her career. “Johnny Simmons, ASC, on top of being everyone’s favorite human, taught me at UCLA, and he’s been a mentor ever since,” she says. “I also feel really fortunate to have a lot of amazing women to look up to at this point as well; it’s been really incredible to discuss my path with [ASC members] Mandy Walker, Natasha Braier and Quyen Tran. Bill McDonald, the head of the cinematography department at UCLA, taught me how to expose film, and he was always so generous.”

Swain considers her fourth feature, *Lucky*, which premiered at SXSW in 2020, to be her break. “The director, Natsha Kermani, and I had done some projects together, but this was our first feature together. She’s become one of my greatest collaborators and friends, and I’m thrilled to keep telling stories with her.”

Swain has since been busy shooting multiple features slated to be released this year. “I feel like I do a lot of genre work, but what I’m most excited for people to see right now is a feature called *The Mattachine Family*. It’s a modern-day drama, and even though it isn’t genre, it was a project I could really resonate with and pour myself into. It was a story I felt I had to tell.” Swain also recently wrapped the sequel *Becky 2: The Wrath of Becky*.

Looking to the future, Swain is eager to shoot a series. “I’ve just done features,” she says, “so doing a crime-thriller series interests me. I love everything that Alex Garland and Rob Hardy [ASC, BSC] do. I would love to do something as surreal and haunting as one of their films.”