

MATTHEW EGAN

by JANE DUBZINSKI / PHOTO BY NICOLA GOODE

First Look



If there's one thing cinematographer Matthew Egan has learned in his young career, it's how to embrace the "nature of the beast." Coming of age in the technologically transient world of contemporary filmmaking, Egan has been able to adapt his creative approaches and capitalize on every opportunity. From dishing up lunch specials as a server in Austin, Texas to assisting Dean Semler ASC, ACS, as a camera PA for John Lee Hancock's *The Alamo*, Egan's malleable work ethic has helped him navigate the industry's ever-evolving landscape.

"I was working and saw the crew come in," he recounts. "I recognized Dean Semler and harassed him, in a very polite way, of course." The two exchanged numbers, and after a quick, elevator-pitch-style interview, Semler offered the budding cinematographer a PA position for the remainder of the shoot. "We worked closely every day, and I learned a lot from the experience."

Born and raised in Dallas, Egan attended the University of Texas in Austin to study jazz, though he developed a strong inclination toward cinematic arts after taking an Intro to film class as a program requirement. "I didn't see myself doing music full-time," he says, but with filmmaking, he realized he could blend screen and song for greater artistic impact.

Soon afterward, Egan followed in the hustle-and-flow tradition of young Hollywood and relocated to Los Angeles, enrolling as a student in USC's Master's in Film program. In attempting to remedy a summertime work lull, Egan made calls to production offices all over town, asking for DPs in need of assistance. "I saw *Serenity* was being filmed with Jack Green [ASC]," says Egan. "So I called and asked to speak with him." The risk proved successful, and by the following week, Green had Egan working as a camera PA for his second feature project.

Consequently, the *Serenity* shoot turned out to be one of Egan's most fortunate learning experiences to date. "It was even more influential than all the time I spent in school," he says. "I got to know Jack Green on a personal level, and he took the time to be a teacher to me."

Blending his love for music and film, Egan has also shot for the likes of Rufus Wainwright in the concert film *Sing Me the Songs That Say I Love You*, produced by Lian Lunson and Bono, whose *a capella* renditions of old Irish drinking songs exist as one of Egan's favorite memories behind the camera.

Currently, Egan is wrapping-up the final stages of his latest project, *Lost & Found*, directed by USC classmate Joseph Itaya, and shot in northern Ontario in difficult lighting conditions.

"Nights were definitely challenging," says Egan. "The sun went down quickly, so we had to find creative ways to get the shots." His resourcefulness proved valuable; instead of fighting the difficult conditions, Egan switched gears and used more dusk-to-night interiors and day-to-night exteriors, incorporating the lighting into the film's storyline. "We powered through it, and we had a blast," Egan says. "It was a great experience."

With the fractured state of independent filmmaking, Egan has emerged as an advocate for creative excellence. "I've found that technology can place the tools in everyone's hands to make a movie. They're available and accessible."

Varied means of distribution, including Netflix, video-on-demand, and Web-exclusive content have alleviated the limitations of small-budget projects, and Egan points out the most positive aspects: "You don't have to limit yourself. You can make something in its originally intended form," he concludes. "Merging the artistry and power of cinema and giving that to the world is one of the best feelings. I'm happy to be a part of it." 🍷