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GOLDIE!

The screen legend relives the night of her surprise Oscar win for 'Cactus Flower,' life with Kurt and what it would take for her to come back to movies

By Tatiana Siegel





Locations Play Big Role in Awards Hunt

Productions crave creativity, infrastructure and incentives • By Marta Balaga

The producers of Hollywood blockbusters and arthouse films alike are on the lookout for the most cost-efficient locations. Recent examples include several of the year's Oscar nominees, from "Aftersun," which shot in Turkey; "Mrs. Harris Goes to Paris," which went to Budapest; to "Elvis," in Australia.

"Budapest offered an affordable alternative to both London and Paris," says Jonathan Halperyn, managing director at Budapest-based Hero Squared and a co-producer on the film. "Hungary often comes up as a shooting destination when there is a budget crunch."

He adds: "We applied for co-production status and support from the National Film Institute of Hun-

gary during the COVID hiatus, and by the end of 2020, we were up and running. This is the kind of flexibility we have become known for."

Oscar-nominated costume designer Jenny Beavan praises her Hungarian team: "It was my first experience working in Hungary, and with [wardrobe supervisor] Zsoka Hoka. I think the resulting costumes speak for themselves."

The Czech Republic is also "financially reasonable" in comparison to other filmmaking hubs in Europe, says Pavlína Žipková of the Czech Film Commission, mentioning "the big three" priorities: creativity, infrastructure and production incentives.

But in order to attract high-profile collaborators, local crews need to think outside of the

box. Or make use of what they already have.

"One of the reasons why 'All Quiet on the Western Front' landed here is the fact that we have vehicles, weapons and costumes from both world wars," Žipková says.

"Viktor Prášil [Oscar nominated for sound] said they had to make 200 pairs of rubber soles for the soldiers' shoes, because the real ones have metal spikes. They were incredibly loud. When you shoot a historical film, you need to be creative."

Amusement Park Film's Malte Grunert, the Oscar nominated producer of "All Quiet," agrees: "Czech crews are very good, especially in the field of period construction and aging sets. Many

other locations we found there worked very well for the French and Belgian locations we were trying to replicate."

Digital imaging technician Vladimír Kesl of Macwell recalls: "During my first meeting, I was told it would be hell. Mud, explosions, frost, dust, rain, smoke, and even more mud. We had to rely on everything battery-powered and wireless, battling low temperatures at night."

Local teams have to stay up to date and be able to implement new technologies very quickly, notes Kesl. Or, adds Australian sound designer Wayne Pashley of Big Bang Sound Design, be ready to take creative risks.

"At the start of post-production, Baz [Luhmann, director of 'Elvis']

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Best pic nominee
"All Quiet on the Western Front" shot in the Czech Republic.

turned to me and said: ‘Make things happen!’ He was looking for a sonic language that, in his words, was ‘triumphant, emotional, gorgeous and awesome.’”

Although Pashley has been collaborating with Luhrmann for decades, since “Strictly Ballroom,” he still needed to think outside the box.

“‘Elvis’ uses montage with a visual kaleidoscope to drive the story forward. The editorial department would call it ‘poetic glue.’ Baz needed the sound department to follow suit, so ‘sonic glue’ was born!”

Lynne Benzie, president of Australia’s Village Roadshow Studios, says: “We all know the challenges that may arise, but we have the knowledge and the crew they need. As well as world-class studios, diversity of locations close to them, high-end crews, incentives, and a network of companies that can create a one-stop shop solution.”

The team at Territory Studio in London was also looking for a “specialized approach,” creating screen graphics matching Matt Reeves’ unique vision of “The Batman,” which shot in Liverpool, Glasgow and Leavesden Studios.

“The challenge was to match this distinct depiction, instead of leaning on traditional adaptations from the past,” says marketing manager Adam Cole.

“Batman makes do with hacked-together kind of solutions that only make sense to him. This meant we could design graphics that supported story beats in unconventional ways.

“We are already working on solutions that can incorporate our screen work onto a set virtually. As long as you have the right hardware and expertise, you can collaborate with filmmakers anywhere.”

Still, it’s crucial to “manage access and expectations,” says Jennifer Reynolds, film commissioner at Glasgow Film Office, especially when filming in public locations.

“We need to know the dates, the activity to be filmed and the levels of control required at a location before a definitive

answer can be given. We know our strengths and feel that we have developed a reputation as a viable production center with a film-friendly local authority. But we would always advise hiring a local location manager. Their knowledge is indispensable.”

According to the British Film Commission’s Samantha Perahia, the U.K. has now more to offer than ever. “The biggest change is that we now have seven production hubs all around the U.K. that can support big, chunky, high-value [productions]. Our U.S. clients were so used to going just to Shepperton [Studios]. It has been the biggest game changer in recent times,” she says.

“We have doubled for Gotham and I think the audience wouldn’t have the slightest idea that some of these big panoramic street scenes are actually shot in Liverpool or Glasgow. Some of these areas have additional incentives, on top of tax reliefs, and you can now base entire projects there.

“We handpick U.S. executives who have fully financed projects and we take them to Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, so that they can see, with their own eyes, what’s achievable. It’s not just rhetoric, it’s familiarization trips.”

Greece has also become a popular destination for filmmakers, hosting Netflix smash “Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery.”

“As Rian Johnson explained in interviews, he wanted a ‘beach vacation.’ Which is something

we certainly could offer,” says Panos Kouanis, president and CEO of EKOME, Greece’s film and TV agency. Noting that last year, 132 projects were supported by the country’s “competitive” cash rebate program, with special provisions for productions with eligible expenses over €8 million (\$8.44 million).

“Managing the logistics was one challenge, because the region of Porto Heli and the island of Spetses had never hosted such production before — the proximity to Athens helped. Another one was finding the crew, as many productions were filmed all over Greece at the same time,” he says.

“Ingenuity is a necessity. Like in every business, we can’t rest on our laurels.”

As stated by Nemanja Stanojević of 247Hub, offering services to international crews who shoot in Serbia, local companies must provide “extraordinary services” if they want to stand out.

“On ‘Triangle of Sadness,’ the filmmakers asked for a facility that could host their post-production and editorial department. As the biggest post-production house in this part of Europe, we were an obvious choice.”

“You need to be able to diversify your business model and take sensible risks. At least this is what we are trying to do at Heretic,” adds Giorgos Karnavas, a co-producer on “Triangle.”

“This collaboration happened in 2019 — [producers] Erik Hem-

mendorff and Philippe Bober found themselves in the dead end, trying to shoot in Thailand. I was able to match the locations they were looking for.

“My advice is this: make your film with people you like and understand, who can help you make the best version of it. In the end, it’s always about people.”

Funding opportunities, as in the case of “Tár,” which partly shot in Germany, are also a huge consideration.

“The project was funded with €5.2 million — a sum that could be given automatically as a grant after the eligibility requirements were met,” explains Ann-Malen Witt of German Federal Film Fund (DFFF).

“The producers were also attracted by the fact that the funding was paid out directly from the start of shooting, that the German service provider does not have to retain any rights, and that the fees of foreign cast and crew members are recognized for the time they work in Germany.”

While international collaborations are here to stay, it doesn’t mean there are no hurdles ahead.

“Frankly speaking, the biggest challenge is that our incentive program has been temporarily suspended due to the exhaustion of the finances. We are working on a new audiovisual law, however, and as soon as it’s implemented, we will get back to this silent ‘incentive war,’” says Žipková, while Halpern laments “the lack of business transparency and short-term thinking.”

With Grunert encouraging local companies to be honest about “the upsides but also the limitations” of their respective country or region, Xavier Marchand of MoonRiver Content, behind “Mrs. Harris Goes to Paris,” adds: “From a British point of view, there is a real concern about the long-term impact of Brexit.

“Not everyone can handle a bigger budget production with high-profile talent or move from servicing big studio films to a smaller production. Find the right partner not just based on their track record. Make sure you are on the same wavelength.”

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Ruben Östlund chose Greece for “Triangle of Sadness” because post-production facilities were also available.

