

- Randy Mack: Welcome to Essential NOLA Cinema, a podcast where me, Randy Mack, a New Orleans filmmaker, talks with a cinephile about a New Orleans movie in terms of its relevance to future productions, what it says about the time it was made, its history and so forth and so on. I'm pleased today to bring on a man who popped my podcast cherry, as the first podcast I ever guested on was his, and now he's my first guest on the first podcast I've ever hosted. So, Mr. Greg Tilton. How are you, man?
- Greg Tilton: Hello. Thanks for having me on, Randy. Known you for a long time and I'm surprised you didn't do this sooner, so I'm excited to see the conversations you have. You've always got the brutal yet very much needed advice in the film community and I've always really respected that.
- RM: Wow. Huh, "brutal." Wow, okay. I'll have to work on that. [Laughter]
- GT: Oh, I mean that with all the love, man. I love the support of artistic communities whether it's podcasting or filmmaking. Everyone's really like, "You got out and you did it." Everyone should be praised for going out and doing it. Like that is a huge step, but you also got to get some people to tell you the things that you did wrong because I guarantee you, you did things wrong. [Laughter]
- RM: Well, yes, I'm pretty hard on myself, I guess. It's the thing; we should always be thinking about the next thing and always be working on improving and learning from what you've done. That's the whole point of the podcast is actually to get people inspired and thinking forward about how they can apply the lessons of, in today's episode, LOOPER, Rian Johnson's 2012 sci-fi film, which was shot here in Napoleonville and is a great example of template filmmaking where there's a lot to apply to projects moving forward. I think Greg chose this one. I think it's an awesome choice. It's one of my favorite films over the last decade, for sure. What led you to choose it?
- GT: Well, one thing that made it stick out to me was one, it in some ways is the script, what happens if you go back in time and kill Hitler? In some ways it's like playing out that in a very real way. [Laughter]
- RM: Yes, if you happened to be Hitler. [Laughter]
- GT: Exactly. What I really like is this film - for one, I just love hard sci-fi. Looper has a number of problems as any major film does but ultimately, I love to see the lingo or rather I want to hear the lingo. I want to see your vehicles. I want to see your drugs. I want to see all the little details that make your sci-fi world different and imaginative. I just love hard sci-fi. The other thing that made it stick out to me was when we were walking through what films to do, you said you wanted stuff where you could take a

lesson from and the fact is, aside from some like really interesting prop work, a lot of the effects in this movie are incredibly rudimentary.

RM: Oh, totally.

GT: They're just executed in a clean way. It's one of those movies you can watch it and go, "I want to do that." You can and I think that that makes it stand out for me.

RM: I had the same response watching it last night. I actually watched it twice. I was blown away by how very simple and effective and low cost. Basically, all the expensive stuff you see on screen is in the streets just to sell this world. The vehicles have been modded a little bit but not in ways that would break the bank. It's not like Star Wars level design. They're just tacking fins and things onto existing vehicles, almost Mad Max style. What really sells the futurism of the world is the jargon they use, which is incredibly cheap. That's the screenwriting. You have your new drugs which are eyedrops, which are just shot beautifully, which is just also screenwriting and some nice cinematography.

They go inside that nightclub in the beginning of the movie. There's nothing in the nightclub that's futuristic. There's no tech in there at all, but it feels like the future because of the slang and the lingo and occasionally, somebody was levitating a nickel which is... You know how they did that? I watched all the supplementary materials. Anybody floating a coin was actually done with strings on set. There's no CGI levitation in there. They just simply erased the strings later because they wanted it to move like a physical object reacting to wind and air and stuff and they found that none of the CGI was right. So Rian insisted that they just do it on set that day.

GT: Exactly. It underscores that point, like they're using string for the coins and even just the time travel, they just poof, bang, kill them, right? It's just a simple plate. [Laughter] I mean that's a really very basic, the very beginnings of filmmaking, and they were doing that. That is something literally anyone can do with an iPhone.

RM: The jump cut, yes. The jump cut invented in 1884 or whatever. Turn the camera off, put a guy in frame, turn the camera on, boom.

GT: Editing. [Laughter]

RM: Yes, it couldn't be more basic. It's very low budget even for a modestly budgeted film. I never did figure out what the budget was on it. I think \$25 million-ish. I think probably most of that above the line was going to Bruce Willis and I imagine the below the line cost would probably be in the five to 10 range.

GT: That was what I was going to say. A movie like that, you've got Bruce Willis, Joseph Gordon-Levitt and - why am I blanking on her name?

RM: Emily Blunt.

GT: Emily Blunt, thank you. I mean that alone is just going to chew through budget.

RM: Yes, JGL was in a weird place in his career because he was budding but he hadn't made Inception yet. Brick was '05 and he was still five or six years before Don Jon and falling in with the whole Chris Nolan gang. Did you notice that Looper has several cast members from Brick in it as well as Inception? Inception also has the same three cast members from Brick. It's funny.

GT: It is. Also, you had those interesting... well, maybe I'm jumping ahead a bit but I remember watching it and going like, "Man, he looks really different. What is up?" Then I Googled it and they had these prosthetics to make him look like Bruce Willis a little bit. A little mixed results. I'm not quite...

RM: That's very generous of you. [Laughter]

GT: I'm trying to be kind. [Laughter]

RM: For me, it's the biggest failing of the movie, those prosthetics -

GT: It's so unnecessary.

RM: It's both unnecessary and distracting but also it's really inconsistent from shot to shot. It goes anywhere from an A- to a D+ level execution. I think it's the lighting at the end of the day. On my rewatches last night, I decided this is a lighting problem because in some of the deleted scenes, he looks actually like almost dead-on perfect and then a lot of the takes that were used in the final film, he looks terrible and it differs drastically. It's a really weird thing. It's almost like maybe they got better over the course of the production and that's always one of the dangers. I don't think it was necessary either, because Bruce Willis has a broken nose from his bartending days. I think that's the story, and that very distinctive profile, that almost Dick Tracy-shaped schnoz could easily be the result of a fight. I mean you see him getting in all kinds of skirmishes. The guy is an assassin, for Christ's sake. It would make sense that at some point in the future he got his nose broken. You don't really have to use prosthetics to that extent.

It also covers up the actor's natural expressiveness and stuff. If you see the guy get hardened over time... There's a moment when the movie jumps in to the parallel timeline, goes to China and we see him age up and then suddenly he's got the long gothic haircut and then Bruce Willis turns around in the same haircut. That never worked for me. Even in the theater I remember thinking, "Oh, that's really rough." [Laughter] Especially, you can see where the hair plugs meet his head in the shot. Which is also a lighting thing. They could've hidden that quite a bit better. Do you know the story about how they went to China?

GT: No, I don't.

RM: It's a very, very interesting thing. It's very much a taste of maybe the future of filmmaking. This is one of the first examples of this. There's a company, I think it's called DGE. Are you familiar with Todd Garner and his moviemaking podcast? Todd Garner is an executive at Paramount. Sorry, he used to be an executive at Disney, at Touchstone/Disney and then he became an independent producer with a deal with Paramount, and he has a podcast called The Producer's Guide. I listen to way, way, way too many filmmaking podcasts. Todd Garner started doing a whole series of essentially pandemic episodes, just talking it through with professionals in the industry about what the future of the business is going to be post-pandemic, and what aspects of the business will survive and what possibly won't. He talked to the executive at DGE who worked on Looper, and so the story of Looper is that it was financed by EndGame Productions who had also financed The Brothers Bloom, which is the Rian Johnson movie he made before.

Johnson actually still has only, I think, five movies which is really shocking to think of that because he feels like such a big figure, but he started with Brick. Brick was his like half-a-million-dollar micro-budgeted film. It came out in 2005 but he spent the better part of a decade working on it. Joseph Gordon-Levitt stars. It's a film noir set in high school. The Brothers Bloom was his follow-up. It's Adrian Brody and Mark Ruffalo as brothers pulling off cons and then Looper was his third film and then The Last Jedi and now Knives Out. So that's his whole filmography. Yet, it seems so much more formidable than it really is. [Laughter] So anyway, he gets this film financed. They raise the money and shoot it without a distribution deal, without any studio backing or a sense of where it's going to go. It gets picked up in post-production by a company with a deal through Columbia TriStar basically. So while he's in the financing stage, basically he's written this whole thing. You know how the character is trying to learn French and Jeff Daniels is like, "I'm from the future. Learn Mandarin. Trust me." It was a great line. [00:10:00]

GT: Yes. [Laughter] Basically telling him exactly what to do. He's like, "I'm not supposed to tell you what's coming in the future but I'm literally telling you what's coming. Learn Mandarin." [Laughter]

RM: They knew the movie was being shot in New Orleans. So they were going to shoot Paris in New Orleans and the financiers came to them and said, "Listen, we got some of our foreign sales money." Basically, the company was in the black even before the shoot began with foreign sales. He said, "Our Chinese people came to us and they said they can actually throw in quite a bit more money if you actually shoot in China and make it a co-production." According to the commentary, Rian said all he did is went to the script and changed the slug lines. He didn't change the character names or anything

and they were able to spend two weeks in Shanghai, shooting on location. [Laughter] It is an amazing story. You get to hear the other side of that in Todd Garner's podcast. I'm looking it up right now. It's the "Chris Fenton: Feeding the Dragon," episode, April 16. Chris Fenton was the executive at DGE at the time, I guess. I just think that story is fascinating because, for starters, the idea of shooting New Orleans as Paris actually makes a lot of sense.

GT: Sure.

RM: I've got a screenplay that's set in the Belle Époque era of Paris and I have this idea that I can shoot it like Guy Madden-style in New Orleans. It's like one of those things as a filmmaker you get a little bit of encouragement in finding that one of... like, a really established filmmaker has had a similar thought process to you at one point. So that's how the whole Shanghai section of the film came to be. It was a combination of foreign money and doing co-production, and of course now there's... Chinese content is a big deal in the tent-pole arena. Marvel movies and so forth often do a lot of shooting there because it's the fastest growing filmmaking population in the world, 1.3 billion people. According to this Chris Fenton interview, the number of theaters in China went from 2,500 in 2010 to 75,000 in five years.

GT: Jesus Christ.

RM: Yes. It's that kind of market.

GT: My brother always says, to give you a perspective of how big China is, he's like, "China has a population of 1.3 billion people. The US is the .3." [Laughter] We're like an afterthought as far as population is concerned. [Laughter]

RM: We're a rounding error.

GT: Exactly.

RM: Tell me, watching *Looper* again - did you see it in theaters when it came out?

GT: I can't remember. I think I did. I obviously saw it before we did this recording. I'm like 90% sure I saw it in theaters because like I said, I love hard sci-fi. Even as I say hard sci-fi, this thing is a blend of hard sci-fi and action flick, like summer action flick.

RM: Yes, almost like a gangster noir kind of thing.

GT: Yes. It's the softest version of a film I would call hard sci-fi, if that makes sense. [Laughter] Right? Reno is the biggest little city, right? It's very digestible. The rules are laid out very clearly even if they're a little inconsistent. The film literally tells you what the rules are to a fault. [Laughter]

RM: The scene in the diner where he's like, "Look, I'm not going to sit here and explain the rules. We'll be out here all day making diagrams with straws," is like a line that killed in theater when I saw it and it also was singled out by almost every critic that I read. It's almost a meta moment. It's almost a commentary on other time travel movies. It's

a funny thing when I dug into the extra materials and stuff. There's a three-minute deleted piece of that diner scene which is already quite long where apparently, there was a punchline to that whole thing when young Joe is confronting him about his memories and he's like, "So if I do something, it creates a memory in you," and there's a deleted moment where Bruce Willis sighs, looks at him and says, "All right, give me the straws," and he actually does a diagram. He's not doing time loops or anything. What he's doing is explaining how the memories work. He ended up cutting it and I think it's a lot stronger for being cut.

GT: Yes, the film is pretty handhold-y with that stuff. It's utilizing even inconsistent level of voiceovers. I think that that was probably the smart play. I mean, the ultimate - he just needs to know that it muddies their memories. The memories are altered as the course changes. That makes sense. You see it, like it's expressed when he's sitting there going first time he met her, first time he met her, first time he met her, scenes like that.

RM: Yes. It's funny how he was... In the commentary, Rian calls out the Back of the Futurisms of it. There's the whole locket thing. There's actually a deleted scene where the locket starts to disappear.

GT: I kept half expecting it. [Laughter]

RM: Which is just like the Back to the Future photograph and there's a Back to the Future 2 reference with the... I think there's some hoverboards in the background of some of the early CBD shots. There's also a deleted scene where they explain that the time machine is fixed in time durationally. That's not even a word, "durationally." Basically, what it means is the film is set in 2044 and the time machine was built 30 years later. So it's 2074 and apparently, what they figured out is that in 2074, they can go back in time but only exactly 30 years. There's no adjusting it. You can't go back 15 and you can't go forward at all. It's a hard 30-year-back thing. He ended up cutting the scene that explained that. It does make sense. Do you know what I mean? It certainly simplifies the paradoxes, the possible paradoxes.

GT: Yes, I was wondering... For instance, when he was waiting and Bruce Willis was delayed, I remember thinking like, "Well, wait a second. If you're dialing in when to drop the person off, why does that matter?" That doesn't make any sense.

RM: It makes no sense at all. [Laughter]

GT: Yes.

RM: No, it's totally illogical. Oh, no, it IS logical if you can't adjust how far back -

GT: I was going to say, now that we know this deleted scene, now I understand it but I was like... But that was one moment where I'm like, "Uh, that explanation might've helped," but at the same time I also kept being like, "You know, every time travel

movie just gets so ridiculously convoluted especially when they try to explain it.” I remember even watching Primer, one of my favorite movies.

RM: I love that movie.

GT: Look, you can get all day to like is it pretentious or not, whatever, but at the end of the day, it’s a very powerful film about relationships and they get very nitty-gritty with the time travel and what does it do? It short-circuits your brain in the end. You have to watch it three or four times and not even because it’s so complicated and heady. You’re just going, “Okay. Who is kind of Abe Prime and who’s this and why is there this mysterious student? What is even happening?”

RM: Which guy am I looking at? [Laughter]

GT: Yes, it just gets so complicated and you need a corkboard and you have Dennis from It’s Always Sunny just going like, “Ah,” like freaking out in the background, right? [Laughter]

RM: Primer is a big inspiration on **Laundry Day**. There are all these fan sites for Primer online that were like people attempting to find visual representations of that storyline in terms of all the prime and subprime characters moving around in the same time space and how they’re doing it, and like there are so many ways to graphically represent it and they’re all mind breaking. I can hang on to comprehension for five minutes and then as soon as I look away and look back, it’s gone again. It’s some next-level complexity.

GT: So Looper is just like, yes, there’s all kinds of weird timey-wimey nonsense happening but yes, you can alter memories, that’s critical to know, and you can change your course, your fate is not fixed, things like that.

RM: The conflict in Looper is really interesting because, talk about a low-budget concept. It’s basically two men struggling for control of their own timeline, their own fate. The struggle is incredibly low-fi, like, excluding the rampage scene at the end of the movie that Bruce Willis goes through to kill everybody up to Jeff Daniels. It’s extremely low body count. The biggest weapon you see is a handgun or at one point, there’s a machine gun I guess but mostly we’re talking about low-level person-on-person, one-at-a-time violence. It’s not scenes of thousands or whatever and yet it’s really compelling because it’s extremely interesting worldbuilding and very interesting conflicts and dilemmas for the characters to wrestle with.

Even if you look at some set pieces, these are extremely affordable low budget set pieces. The one that’s probably the most creative and the one that really sticks with you is the death of Paul Dano where the older version escapes into the city and so they capture the younger version and just start cutting parts of his body off and you never see the butchering of the young one but you see the limbs disappearing off the older

version. It becomes almost like a horror movie for those few minutes. It's like Cronenberg. [00:20:00]

GT: That's some serious body horror going there.

RM: Yes. He's driving the car, his foot disappears and he can't stop the car and he crashed. It's like, "Holy crap." Yes, that's nightmarish. As I was taking notes, I kept noting that the genres kept shifting, which has become a Rian Johnson specialty, the genres within genres, like the "turducken" genre structure of Knives Out and so forth. There are some elements where it really starts to become a horror film towards the end of it and I thought that was foreshadowed nicely even though it starts to become very unwieldy. When Rian Johnson joined Twitter, I'd just joined Twitter too. This was around the time of Looper. In fact, it was just after Looper and somebody asked, "What was your most exciting moment in the theater this year?" I tagged Rian and in my response, I said, "It was watching Looper and really wondering how the hell he was going to resolve the story in any way that made any sense whatsoever. Then when he did, in the final 10 minutes of that movie, I remember raising my arms in the theater like I just witnessed a goal being scored in the last seconds of overtime or something. I was like, 'The kid pulled it off. He did it!' That was amazing," [Laughter] and wanting to shout out with joy because I just thought it seemed like such a mess. There are so many things happening story-wise leading up to that finale that I thought there's no way he can pull this off, and then when the kid flips everything into the air and freezes them all and then the way Young Joe resolves it, I was just like, "Oh my god. This is so brilliant." It's totally surprising and yet completely organic to the story.

GT: Well, they bury the solution pretty early in the film actually, during the diner scene. The young version of Joe says, "Why is it my problem? If you don't ever meet her then she doesn't die. So I'll just avoid her," right? It's kind of tipping the hat. What I like is he keeps going, "You're so selfish. You're so garbage. You don't deserve her." Really, Willis is willing to destroy all these other lives so that he gets to experience her. So he's still the selfish person and the only way to break the cycle is to get over his own ego which he didn't do as an adult.

RM: You know it's funny because the screenwriter in my head wouldn't stop trying to fix things in the movie last night and one of the big moments was I love that dialogue in the diner about, "You've got a child's mind," he keeps telling him.

GT: Yes.

RM: And how selfish he is and stuff. When he shoots himself, there's this moment where Willis hasn't disappeared yet. I wish there had been a closeup on Bruce looking at him, realizing what he's done and nodded, like, "Okay, kid, you finally learned." I wish there had been a moment of him recognizing that he's helped his younger self grow up

because that seemed like the through-line, the period at the end of that thematic story. I wish that had been there. But yes, let's talk about the locations because that's super fun. I just drove down O'Keefe Street coming back from the grocery store and stuff. Did you see the Rouses? I just got my coffee at the Rouses and that Rouses is in the movie.

GT: Yes, I've made a few notes because you specifically said earlier about how the set dressing isn't that complicated and I really think a lot of these movie lessons can be distilled into looking at the locations and looking at the set dec because, like, right out of the gate, what do we see? We see the old Market Street Power Plant. We see the CBD side of St. Charles. We even see the Hibernia Bank topper which is always purple, green and gold during Mardi Gras here and now it's a horror show for a dystopian future. [Laughter]

RM: Where the billboard is? That CGI billboard with the TK ad?

GT: Yes. It's just basically add a filter, a rusted car too and maybe a small trash fire. Baby, you got a dystopia. [Laughter]

RM: The CBD was really truly under construction at that point. I looked it up. The production began on January 4th, 2011. The CBD was an area of abandoned warehouses and parking lots, just entire blocks that were just parking lots full of rubble, essentially, and in the last 10 years it's been overdeveloped into like a nightmare of condominiums and \$400.00-a-night hotels. Even O'Keefe is completely unrecognizable. It's a fascinating thing to realize that basically they're like, "We need a place that looks like a dystopian future." "Oh yes, we'll just shoot in New Orleans. We won't even have to dress it." [Laughter]

GT: That's what Planet of the Apes did. [Laughter]

RM: Is that right? Okay. Which one? Dawn? The first one?

GT: Was it Dawn? I think Rise was shot here.

RM: Rise is the second one with Jason Clarke that takes place in the Pacific Northwest.

GT: I can't keep track. It all blends together for me. They definitely shot a lot of it here.

RM: Dawn is the one with James Franco and John Lithgow? Yes, I know. The titles all run together.

GT: I think that one was shot here.

RM: It's very confusing. The piece of O'Keefe they shot is, I go down there all the time, probably four or five times a week for the last 10 years. I was fascinated by the fact they didn't change anything at eye level. They CGI'd a bunch of stuff on the top which Rian says in the commentary were actually old-school matte paintings that they superimposed which gives them an optical look that blends more cleanly, it doesn't look like it's photoshopped on top. The early scenes where he's out in the cornfields

and stuff and then at the diner, he's going back to the city, you really believe there's a city in that horizon even though it clearly couldn't be there in reality. That's because he used optical effects and not CGI for those things.

Basically, he put things on the tops of the buildings. Where the club is, is actually just a parking garage and they just put an awning and a neon sign on the front. In the street, they put all these modded vehicles but made them junky. Basically, once you drive down that street, you get a sense of this world, you get a sense of where the tech is, that it's some kind of like massive economic depression but the tech has been creaking along forward.

GT: For those who can afford it. [Laughter]

RM: It's what a producer friend of mine calls the money shot. It's a shot where they show you something in a way where you truly believe it and then you don't really have to show it again, you can evoke it later and save a ton of money.

GT: That's what "money shot" means? [Laughter]

RM: Well, it's the shot where you spend all the money. Typically, it's like a wide shot with a lot of characters in frame and a lot of vehicles and production design and a lot of depth and stuff. You spend a lot of money on one shot to sell it and then you can have pieces and closeups and stuff and it's super-efficient, cost-efficient. I love how all that stuff with Paul Dano and his freaking little moped he's like souped up and... All of that is just brilliant in terms of how to sell a future that you believe and incredibly efficiently without breaking the bank on it. Then by going old-school with the guns and old-school with the jargon and stuff, they're using terms from the 1800s and stuff, it invokes this Western quality.

It really hit me when the first scene with Jeff Daniels. He goes in... Jeff Daniels has this line, "I cleaned you up and put a gun in your hand," which is straight out of Deadwood or something. That [says] yes, they're really going for a Western vibe here. Kid Blue's wearing a duster, that kind of thing. It's, again, that genre mixing. But yes, it's a great template. If you're thinking about wanting to do a high concept/low budget movie, time travel is a great way to do it. You can do the Primer-style thing where you have doubles of people because they're coming back. You can do a Looper style thing where you have old and young versions of the same characters. Even The Fly, the Cronenberg from the 80s, is relatively modest. There's simply one line item.

GT: Even the hardware is so interesting, right? Like Primer, they just have a big metal box which was one of the most expensive props they had in the whole damn thing, and then in Looper, it's just this rattle cage and what do they do? They throw up a tungsten light, shake it around a little bit, time travel. [Laughter] I mean it is a \$25 million

movie and that time travel scene is all of 10 seconds and it's literally rattling a dude in a cage. It's not special. I could do that at home.

RM: Yes. It's so unimportant to the movie that they wait an hour to even show you how they do it at all.

GT: Exactly. You can't get hung up on those things if they're not critical to the story.

RM: Yes, exactly. I love how they shoot using downtown New Orleans as a kind of dystopia. Rian says in the commentary that they didn't add any graffiti. There's a flashback where Paul Dano shows up in his apartment and says, "They closed my loop and I couldn't do it," and then we flash to what happens with him. They actually shot that in a place I recognize [Laughter] which is the remains of a building that had a door but no roof basically, and there's a really interesting kind of reverse dolly where Old Paul runs away and he runs basically at the camera and then past the camera but the camera is backing up and they both go through this doorway and then the door slams on him. The door slam bothers me a little bit because it doesn't make any sense. I noticed that Rian, he was really in love with people abruptly entering or leaving doorways throughout the thing. There are several shots where there's Django Unchained-style people getting shot so hard they fly through a doorway, out of frame. Which is one of the least believable, dopiest gun fight effects I ever liked. [00:30:00]

GT: If you don't mind my interrupting, I'm sorry. You reminded me of this thing with the gun that drove me crazy, with the blunderbuss, where Bruce Willis... It's a funny shot, the wide where Bruce Willis comes up and just beats him up. He takes a shot and doesn't take a second shot, but later, when he's fighting people, you see him unloading the blunderbuss. I've never understood how Bruce Willis had time to close the gap and not just get blown away by a second shot. [Laughter]

RM: It's a buy. It's one of those things... You can question it but the script really needs you to believe it. There's a couple of ways they try to sell that moment. First of all, you see it from Bruce Willis' perspective. They do it as a wide one later when his timeline comes back. You're right, not having a second shell loaded is nuts but they do... There's an interesting social hierarchy where the Gat kids are much cooler than the Loopers and they say that he... Kid Blue says something like, "Yes, you can't hit anything past 25 yards and you can't miss anything below 25 yards with those stupid blunderbusses." I think the idea is that the blunderbuss is almost like data entry for the assassin world. It's the lowest skill available. All you got to do is point it vaguely in the direction of the guy and shoot him, and so you don't need more than one shot typically because they're already bound. I mean, you got to believe that he can cross that distance, also that he's going to throw the bar perfectly.

GT: That was funny. [Laughter]

RM: Everything has to go exactly perfectly or nothing works in that plan. It's very strange.

GT: Here's a little nitpicky thing I just felt like I had to point out because it was striking later. I watched him unloading it into the concrete to make a smokescreen and I was like, "Wait a second, I thought these guns were like slow one-shotters." That like totally violated what I thought was the case. It's nitpicky and you're right. It's one of those things where you go, "You've already accepted so much. That's what you're going to get hung up on?" [Laughter]

RM: Yes. File it under questionable. I didn't buy it the first time. The first time you see it from the point of view shot, it definitely looks crazy because it looks like Bruce Willis teleports over to him, but then when you see it in the wide, you're like, "Ah, okay." [Laughter] I think they must've cheated the distance a little bit. There's a bunch of stuff like that in the movie. I think there's stuff like that in every Rian Johnson movie because he's so singularly fixated on pulling off the big scale thing that he often lets little... There's little writing bits that you just have to accept or you're just out of the story completely, and he's very good at making them fly by quickly and so forth. It's almost like as a screenwriter, he's thinking in terms of modes and genre conventions and thematic through-lines a lot more than airtight plot logic. He's figuring the joy of the film is going to come through all these other areas, that if you're enjoying it, you're going to forgive these little skips that you have to do in the logic in order to take you to the next beats and stuff.

GT: Sure.

RM: A great example is when Emily Blunt shows up an hour and 15 minutes into the movie and the whole movie just goes into a new gear that wasn't even on the table, where suddenly it's rural and slow and it's about a mother-son relationship and it seems to be a whole new genre completely and you don't even know what genre it is. It just seems to be in a different world almost. Eventually it all pulls together but I remember in my notes, I realized that really great scene where the kid starts to get upset, they're doing multiplication tables and the kid starts insisting that eight times three is 32 or whatever, it becomes so legitimately scary there, like that scary kid thing.

GT: Well, it reminded me of Twilight Zone, the "I'm going to send you to the cornfield" kid.

RM: Yes.

GT: The mother is terrified of their child and she goes and literally locks herself in a safe. [Laughter]

RM: I got a Firestarter vibe out of it. That's about a father raising a daughter who is super powerful, and basically, it's about being afraid of your own child, and Emily Blunt sells that so incredibly well, that whole sense of like, "I don't know what this kid is capable off." Every tantrum is potentially life-threatening, yet it's a mystery in this case

because you don't really know. It's actually funny because it's almost like a dry run for Star Wars, that there's a lot of Star Wars-y things in there and you suddenly realize like, "Oh, Looper was like an audition tape because you see so many of those elements." I actually was taking timecode notes as I was watching it. The telekinetic thing, the TK gene, is brought up in minute four and a half in the film. It showed Paul Dano levitating a nickel in the car then they showed another guy doing one in the club, and then - I'm getting the exact numbers here - it takes 75 minutes for the TK thing to show up again in the film. It's crazy.

GT: I didn't realize it was that big of a gap.

RM: So the next time TK is said or seen at all is 75 minutes later with the kid.

GT: In which it becomes the core of the film basically until the end. [Laughter]

RM: Yes, exactly. Joe says, "Oh, so he's a TKer, huh?" and suddenly, you're like, "Oh yeah, that thing." It's amazing he had the confidence to know he didn't have to constantly bring it up and stuff. There's a great bit of voiceover where he says, "We all expected superpowers and instead we got bozos trying to impress girls in bars." So you kind of write it off at that point but it's a beautiful thing because he understood that it's memorable enough, that you're still going to know what he's talking about 75 minutes later, but at the same time, he wants you to forget about it because he wants you to feel like awe.

Another parallel in a cautionary way was Dark Phoenix. Looper does what Dark Phoenix was trying to do really well which is like the Dark Phoenix X-Men story is supposed to be like your friend and ally who is troubled, has this amazing power, kind of telekinetic psychic power that isn't quite in her control. Did you see the new Dark Phoenix X-Men movie?

GT: No, I saw how badly it bombed and I was like - well, I also haven't read the comic and it's supposed to be one of the best X-Men comics ever made. It's like one of the most beloved stories. So I was like, "Well, I'd rather just read the story and enjoy it in the good format." [Laughter]

RM: I'll say it's better than Apocalypse but it's not good. Anyway, I was fascinated by how Looper was doing all the same things and doing it so much better in half the time. I think the problem with... Everybody in the X-Men is starting to be... Marvel has the same problem: everybody is the most powerful at everything. Like, at various points, they describe the Hulk as the most powerful being in the world, like more powerful than an Asgardian and more powerful than Thanos and whatever, but that never turns out to be true in the actual fights. [Laughter] It's a very murky thing where everybody has to be the best at everything and the most powerful, and when you have the X-Men which is a lot of psychic abilities and telekinetics and stuff, then Xavier is the most

powerful, oh except now there's Phoenix who's the most powerful ever and you never really get a sense of... It becomes the problem of why don't they just use that, the most powerful person in every fight to just solve everything right away. So of course as a screenwriter or filmmaker, you can't use them because they're way too powerful. Storm in the X-Men is literally a god, and so they always give her three minutes in every movie because it's just too much. Marvel has this problem, like Dr. Strange could literally do anything and you also have Captain Marvel who can kind of literally do anything and then the Hulk is "the most powerful being in the universe" but then you have these titans and these gods, and it's like after a certain point, it's like nobody can ever get hurt in these fights.

GT: Well, not to get too off track but that's actually what's been a lot of fun in the comic world right now is in the actual issues and books, a lot of writers are taking different directions. Like Hulk has gone back to like... You mentioned Cronenberg earlier, this body horror monster, that's like it's so bizarre and it's so good and the stakes are just completely different. It's not about stopping the big baddy. It's this self-discovery story but also the threats are not about destroying the world. It's more like threats to his existence. It's interesting. It's much more like horror film. It's almost got this Frankenstein feel to it. It's really creepy.s

RM: Yes, I love that.

GT: Playing with the formula is so much more fun in some ways.

RM: No, definitely. It must be refreshing as hell for starters. I have a theory that lower stakes are more emotional, and I think when everybody is super powerful and it's always the universe at stake, you kind of numb out. But one person trying to do one small thing or saving one person can be much more moving and powerful. So the low stakes of Looper are... They just hit you a lot harder, using the same motifs and the same kind of superpower ethos. By scaling it down, you can get a lot of power out of it.

GT: You still get your big baddy with the Rainmaker. [00:40:00]

RM: Yes, exactly, who's offscreen the entire time and everything. Really, what it's working... I think where your emotions are, you care about Emily Blunt and her child, you care about Young Joe needs kind of a redemption arc, and Bruce Willis and his wife were very moving too. So, you have these personal relationships driving it. I think it's a great lesson for low budget filmmaking is that you can still get a lot of oomph and power. It doesn't need to feel like a compromise that you can't have a thousand soldiers crossing a hilltop with laser guns or whatever.

If you have human dynamics at the heart of something even with just as low tech as handguns, you can have something really powerful, and I think the trick that Rian Johnson has been able to pull off over and over again is mashing up genres so you that

you can have these dynamics but it doesn't feel hacked. It doesn't feel like you've seen it before because it's not just a Western or it's not just a noir. He's found a completely new way of building a world using some of the genre conventions but not the literal tropes of it. It's a great model for anyone making a low budget film who wants to do something more commercial but it doesn't need to be - what's the word - hamstrung by those limitations. Those limitations can actually make the film much more powerful if you put enough care into the screenwriting to make those characters and those emotional relationships drive the story.

For instance, Bruce Willis being driven by his wife, the memory of his wife and that relationship, is much more powerful than him being driven by, say, an ideological thing or even revenge which would be wife-related or wife-tangential. He really seems to be driven by love and it makes him do horrible things which is really fascinating.

GT: Yes, I mean it's true and it's funny how that lesson of, it's not necessarily tying your hands, it's kind of providing rails, good rails... I don't know, we always think of railroading a story and stuff, we think of all these things. Even in videogames, they railroad you, they railroad you, but sometimes that's essential to a story or it's essential to good creation. I think in academia, right, my brief brush with academia, I was a History major and I had to write a 60-page thesis and all this stuff. The thing is, you learn very quickly that it is so much harder to write a one-page paper than it is to write a 20-page paper.

On top of that, you learn that an interesting paper or book or whatever isn't "Why did World War II start?" What's more interesting is, "What was the effect of the Norden bombsight on the Pacific Campaign bombing runs" and "What are the ethics of bombing runs if we start debating whether or not you can actually zero in on a target." Now you've got a very complicated branching-off discussion point and you're confining yourself. You're not going to deal with Germany and Nazis, you're not going to be dealing so much with all the other fronts. You're very focused on a specific element of a specific thing, and that's when you can drill deep and get something of value. That's where you strike oil, if we're going to take that metaphor too far.

RM: Yes. It's where you find the humanity in these large-scale things. You made me think of Dunkirk, how the scale of Dunkirk is at that human boots-on-the-ground level.

GT: And phenomenal in the air scenes. [Laughter]

RM: Yes, boots in the plane. I love it.

GT: There you go.

RM: Boots on the boat. All three timelines.

GT: Boots on the boat. [Laughter]

RM: Yes, no, that's a great point.

GT: It's a...

RM: Yes, choosing your scale of storytelling is so fundamental and that's why the idea of, say, taking on a time travel hitman kind of thing, there's a lot of movies out there that are quite big budgeted that have car chases and train derailments and airplane crashes and stuff that you couldn't really do on a practical level but for independent filmmakers, you can look at a film like *Looper* and see that great characterizations and really precise but minimal world building at the very beginning of the film can set up everything. Because once we leave the CBD, that CBD stuff is the first 15 minutes. That movie is two hours long and almost everything... I mean the last hour is set in a house in a cornfield. I mean, it's the lowest budget filmmaking ever.

GT: A bunch of scenes in his apartment, a bunch of scenes in the office of...

RM: Jeff Daniels?

GT: ...the boss man, the guy from the future. I mean, they're all in these rooms. You set dec it, light it well...

RM: Couple of neat props.

GT: Yes. You can sell it.

RM: And real basic effects. Like when the kid levitates the guy who comes to investigate, that shot, one of the money shots is everything lifting off the floor and table, all strings. They had like 18 people holding a string that went to a pulley that went to the object in the room, and they did a countdown on three and then they just all pulled at the same time and everything just lifted off. Totally in camera effect.

GT: [Laughter] I'm sure the blood exploding from his chest too is all in camera, right? No, I was kidding. [Laughter] It was brutal, man, and it was crazy how every time he reacted, it kept scaling up how strong he was in an interesting way, because what I was taking away from that was it became clear, especially once you found out he was Rainmaker, that you're like, "Oh, we have no idea like the upper limits of this dude's power." The fact that everyone is from the future going like, "This dude came out of nowhere. Nobody knows who the hell he is and he just murders everybody," and it just sounds almost this Jack the Ripper-y thing going on like, "Oh, he's everywhere at once." Like no, he's literally able to just rip people apart with his brain. He's just an unstoppable force. [Laughter]

RM: Yes, it's funny. Willis has a great line. He's describing him and he says he came out of nowhere and he took over the city alone. I mean literally alone. It's borderline... It's like the scene we were talking about when Willis shows up and hits him with a bar in the head, that the logical response is, "Oh, he must be a really strong TK," right? But they don't have that line because they don't want to give it away. Because if that line

was given at that point in the movie which is 30, 40 minutes in, as soon as you see the kid lift anything, you're going to immediately put it all together. By not having the response, it keeps the TK thing, it remains in the background. What's really scary about the kid is - I mean the power is, sure, but it's how angry that kid looks. That face, that kid angry face is like fucking terrifying. [Laughter]

GT: That's, again, where I got that Twilight Zone thing where he's going like, "No, no, no, no." When he starts doing that, I'm like, "Oh, man. Cornfield. Send him to the cornfield," like it's coming. [Laughter]

RM: Funny production note: those were all sugarcane fields. They were shot in Napoleonville, Louisiana which is, I guess it's somewhere off the 10, about two-thirds of the way up to Baton Rouge, and all of those things were builds. The diner was built completely from scratch.

GT: Wow.

RM: They had locals showing up constantly every couple of hours asking when the diner was going to be open for business because they were so excited to have a 24-hour diner in their town, [Laughter] and they all were just completely crushed and they're like, "No, this is a set." As a funny sidenote, that it still stands and you can still go out and visit it. You can find it on Google Maps and stuff.

GT: That's funny.

RM: Yes. So the fields, they shot in, like I said, January and everything was dead and brown. So they had a greensman create a fake layer across the fronts of the fields to make them look green from side views and then CGI'd and color corrected the stuff to make it look green when they were inside the fields and stuff. That's part of where that budget went. They had a lot of money to spend on detail like that. Expensive detail.

GT: Yes, no kidding. Well, I mean...

RM: It's so funny in hindsight... actually, I just remembered that in this film, Young Joe actually says, like, "These fields are all dead anyway" to her and she says, "No, it's for seed next season." Because his first advice is to burn the field down so that they can see everybody coming. Yes, so it's an interesting thing where the money goes. Did you know Looper was based on a short film?

GT: I did not know that.

RM: The 10 years it took them to make Brick, there was a moment where he and Steve Yedlin, his DP, were getting really burned out and spending all their time chasing money and having these futile meetings. Steve said, "You know what? We got to do something creative. We're just becoming guys in suits in meetings." So he wrote a five-page version of Looper that consists of the voiceover from the beginning, the first scene where the guy shows up, except the first guy is the older version of himself, and the

guy punches him and runs and then the rest of the next three minutes was a foot chase through the city. They did it just as a creative experiment, and I don't think they ever released the short. I mean it's on Johnson's website but they never sent it to festivals or whatever. It was such a fundamentally good idea, just that nugget of that single loop and the idea of closing the loops and stuff. It's really meaty. You can imagine the movie right away from that premise. [00:50:00]

GT: Yes. Not to get too off the rails here but it's funny when you see the number of movies that come from short films. It actually not as many as you'd think but sometimes the stories are very unlikely. So, obviously, one of the most famous examples recently was the drumming movie. Why am I blanking on it?

RM: Whiplash.

GT: Whiplash, thank you. I just can't think of names today. Yes, Whiplash is a great example. Another good hard sci-fi one I loved, I think they made the feature eventually, I haven't seen it but I loved the short, was Code 8. It was basically X-Men meets District 9, and basically people are starting to develop mutant powers but they live below the poverty line and there's laws that don't allow them to use their powers in society. So you immediately get this parallel to like illegal immigration, migrant workers, the kind of social pressures there, but it also has hard sci-fi elements and like in the beginning of this film, it has a pretty interesting cold open that's a little more background. [Laughter]

In the beginning of this, he's just standing there, a dude screams and he blows them away. I mean it's like the opening scene of the movie [Looper] basically, Code 8. You see kind of a grainy... You see some footage of these police chasing a dude in a hood and you're getting like, "Oh god, here we go. This is going to be touchy." He turns around, it's a white kid, and all of these policemen are pointing guns at him, and all of a sudden, he lifts his hands up and all the rocks and everything start rising, and when he cocks his hand back, they all gun him down. So it immediately violently throws you into this world, starts upending social morays, and a part of me is like, I'm sure the feature is good and all but it was such a strong short film that I was like, "I don't know, I liked that package." Looper is interesting in that you say it's a short film and immediately your mind's off to the races. You're like, "Oh my god, what if you're encountering your future self?" There are so many stories you could take it down, you're right. That's a long-winded response but it just immediately made me think of that film.

RM: No, that's great. It's social allegory basically. I think all great sci-fi has some kind of allegorical power. X-Men has always been very powerful as a coming out parable and being different and so on but it's also... Like District 9 with the aliens, it was an

apartheid parable in a way, but there's always been a very interesting sort of love-hate relationship with immigrants in this country. When you think about "Polack" jokes and so forth, and even in New Orleans, if you look at the massive Sicilian immigration here in the early 20th century and stuff and how the locals were taken aback by that... I was born in Brazil. I mean, I wasn't even an American citizen until I was six or something. It's very interesting, the love-hate relationship people have with immigrants in a sense that the country, the economy, needs them for all kinds of reasons, but they also bring in this cultural creativity, they bring in fresh perspective. They bring in things that they've been doing in their homeland for generations that nobody's thought of in North America, and suddenly, it's a paradigm shifting effect and you can sense that kind of resentment. In the movie *Do the Right Thing* for instance, like all the Black residents of Bed-Stuy really resent the Korean grocer on the corner and there's a scene where the old men are like, "These guys have been here 10 years. They already own their own business." It's kind of a love-hate thing that you can easily imagine somebody with a kind of extra ability that gets them... Maybe levitation, whatever, you can name your X-Men power, and how that would be handled by people who are both afraid of it and in awe of it at the same time, and that question of what are they going to do with this power.

Or there's a parallel with all these generations of like, super rich, the children of billionaires and stuff, who are born into an incredible amount of economic leverage and are they all going to end up being trash people like the Trump kids or are they going to end up doing something useful with that or not? I mean, it always comes down to a question of ethics and how they're raised and so forth, and it's a perennial question, of course, because generations just keep going on, there's new children being born into different kinds of context all the time, and using sci-fi, fantasy, comic books and so forth to explore a lot of the sort of queasy power relationships that Western culture has with all of these issues.

I would like to think we're slowly moving along but then it always seems like two steps forward, three steps back, and then suddenly five steps forward and then four steps back. It's emotionally whiplashing watching the culture move along as it handles all this stuff. The 80s had all these *Death Wish* movies where the whole idea was to murder minorities and immigrants. I mean one of the things I love about the early X-Men films and Marvel and stuff is how there's a constant refrain of how useful and powerful other cultures can be in terms of helping things but they all get Americanized in the end. It's a weird...

- GT: Well, it's the question of like, okay, if you ask most Americans whether you agree with them politically or not, most people will say, "Yes, I value other cultures. Yes, America is multicultural. Yes." Like, most people will, at least on a surface level, say it is good to have other culture in our lives and culture is good, but the question isn't that. The question is, whose culture, right? That's when you start getting into murky, complicated conversations. I think X-Men has always been, as you said, it's an allegory for the queer community, like it is an LGBT story through and through, and it becomes to the point where it's engrained in law that they're not allowed to be who they are. I mean there's no subtlety to X-Men and the gay rights movement. [Laughter]
- RM: Can mutants get married? That's the next frontier. [Laughter]
- GT: Yes. Even in, was it X-Men III, the Angel one with his huge wings, I mean it's just all the imagery... I mean X-III has a lot of problems but you get the idea though. I mean you're dead on, and it's the question of culture and immigration, all that, always it really boils down to, well, who's the immigrant and what is their culture, and that's where things get interesting. [Laughter]
- RM: Yes. It makes me think there's some great New Orleans independent films to be made taking a basic sci-fi premise like along the lines of Looper or X-Men or Code 8 and setting it in, making it about, say, the Creoles' relationship or the Sicilian community's relationship with the mainstream culture here, or at least, even the uptown Founding Father plantation set versus the downtown Tremé set or whatever. There's a lot of interesting allegorical stuff to explore, because New Orleans' culture is so specific and unique, and it doesn't play out exactly the way it does in New York or Detroit or Chicago.
- GT: No, it's like until Plessy v. Ferguson, New Orleans basically did not operate on the same racial... What's the word I'm looking for? Basically, under the same rules that the rest of the country did. Not that it was necessarily better. The Code Noir has all kinds of huge problems, but it's that... It's distinct though, that you can argue about which form of segregation and removing of rights is worse than others, but at the end of the day, New Orleans is very unique and different and it colors our culture in very unique ways that we still feel.
- RM: Yes, absolutely. As somebody who's racially ambiguous and multiethnic, I always love how New Orleans had something like eight or nine identifiable races written into law in the slave era which is fascinating because I feel like in the modern America, we really only think in terms of Caucasians and African Americans as the major binary, and then there's, oh yes, Asians and Hispanics and whatever but even that is so reductive, and Creoles - I mean, one of my favorite statistics about New Orleans is that we had... This was the number one slave trading port in the world but it also had the highest

population of free people of color simultaneously. It's a city of deep fundamental paradoxes but also had a much wider rainbow of racial identification. That's something I'd love to explore or see explored in a movie.

GT: Yes.

RM: Yes, grappling with New Orleans history in an allegorical context is really interesting I think, in a way, but... You know that t-shirt that says "New Orleans: so far behind, we're ahead?"

GT: Yes.

RM: I'd love to see a movie about how the idea of embracing people's multiethnicities could actually be a way forward in the future instead of the reductionist kind of racial profiling. It makes the imagination wonder like how that could be handled with a simple sci-fi premise, say, or a Code 8 style or District 9 style approach. There's a lot of stories to be told and I think on that note, we should start wrapping it up. You are a prolific podcast hoster. Tell me what you're working on. [01:00:00]

GT: [Laughter] Yes, man. So obviously with COVID right now... Sorry to date the episode but filmmaking is taking a bit of a backseat. There's not a whole lot of production going on right now, but I do have a business here in town with my good friend and business partner, Mickey Gaidos. We are inDEPTH media. We do shooting, editing, everything. We've done work with Randy before. I produce a couple of podcasts: "Rumor Flies" which is urban legends and urban myths smashed together with a lot more comedy and we think of it as somewhat like Snopes meets MythBusters, but a lot fewer degrees. I really enjoy that show. We've been doing that for several years now. I think it's four years which is crazy to me.

RM: Yes, that show's awesome. Is it international urban legends or is it local urban legends? Do you have a...?

GT: It's anything. It can be about food allergies, it can be pregnancy myths, it can be... We did like a stats myths one about, is it more likely to get struck by lightning than to win the lottery. But then we get down and dirty into the numbers to make it more interesting, or we'll find these urban legends like... I don't know if you heard as a kid- this is a little profane, sorry - but if you drink Surge or Mountain Dew that it would make your genitals shrink.

RM: Woah, no.

GT: Did you hear that? Schoolyard myth. That's a classic schoolyard myth that we found out. The drink has just been changing but we found examples of it from the early 60s. It's like an old schoolyard myth.

RM: Just keep updating it for the newest beverage. [Laughter]

GT: Yes. So just funny stuff like that. Sometimes more serious stuff, sometimes more funny stuff. “Jacks of Trades”... Oh, I’m sorry?

RM: Have you done the “Mikey from the Life cereal ads died from mixing Pop Rocks and Pepsi?”

GT: No. Got to look at that one though. That’s 100% up our alley.

RM: Yes, that was a big one going around in Southern New England when I was a kid.

GT: Oh my god, that’s amazing. We do a podcast called Jacks of Trades. It’s a comic book review show. I didn’t even read comics prior to that but then I finally started reading them with my hosts and now I love comics. I’m so into it and it’s an amazing time to be reading comics and graphic novels right now. They do a really good deep dive of each one we read, and then the one I launched recently, it’s more locally focused. It’s called “We’ll Be Right Back: The Future of Hospitality.” I launched it with my sister and co-producer and our friend Barry who’s a colleague and friend of ours as well. Yes, it’s been a really incredible project. We basically are interviewing people from all corners of the service industry, the nonprofit world, government, talking about basically charting a new path in the wake of COVID-19 with a particular focus on the hospitality industry.

RM: I’m fascinated. Do you consider the hospitality industry synonymous with service industry?

GT: One guy came on, I really liked his language. He calls it the “nightlife economy.” I really think that’s a slightly... I mean you can tell obviously it’s not all night, but it’s a somewhat encapsulating concept, but it gets tricky, right? Who is the gig economy? Are we talking about Uber drivers? Are we talking about...? We’re not super narrow in that regard but we’re very much focused on consumer-packaged goods, food, bars, really focused on the stuff that makes it to your plate and in your cups.

RM: Yes, I love “nightlife economy” because that’s a wider umbrella, it seems to me, than “hospitality” per se because... And “service industry” is a term that I’ve always used to include artists because they are providing a service of a kind, especially gigging musicians who need the bars and clubs and nightlife. “Nightlife economy” really encompasses all of the hospitality, hotels, food and beverage, but it also does the club owners, the bar-backs, the doormen and shouters and all the different people who are required to keep these clubs going. That’s fascinating.

GT: Well, we’re definitely finding our definition as we go. It’s very much focused on bars and restaurants but we’re a little flex with that, to be honest, and I think - you’ll see the interviews themselves; you know, you can check them out. But yes, I love podcasting. I love that you’re doing one. I think New Orleans could always use more podcast.

RM: Cool. Yes, I was encouraged to do this. You know me. I always have a bunch of projects brewing but this is... I've always wanted to sit down with folks like you and other filmmakers around the city, and people don't necessarily like talking about themselves so much, but we all start to get chatty when we start sharing the things we appreciate and love about the movies that have been made here. So I look forward to a lot of conversations. I've already got the first eight episodes lined up and it's all sectors. It's very niche, the city, in terms of the filmmaking thing because there's no kind of central place or central organizing group or whatever. So reaching out to everybody, even finding contact info has been exciting.

We also have an attrition rate that's really high which means it's important to capture people while we can, but I love... This pandemic is a mess and there's obviously so many downsides, there's no point in listing them, but the one upside is that we can always use this time to plan, write, do the creative work that we can do by ourselves or over Skype and stuff, keep it mano-a-mano and contained. Screenwriting is a huge part of that and anything to encourage screenwriting and more filmmaking, that's what I'm all about, from everybody and anyone. Even people who aren't necessarily filmmakers but maybe want to try it or think about it, or people who maybe have been writing novels or comic books or whatever and want to come into the filmmaking world.

That's what this podcast is here to do, is to try to stimulate ideas and get people inspired and thinking ahead to try to get the silk purse out of the sow's ear, to use an old-timey expression. So thank you so much, Greg. This has been awesome. Essential NOLA Cinema will hopefully be out on a regular basis. I haven't quite decided on the time, whatever, but we've got a website up and I guess there's going to be show notes. I also got to choose a hosting service. I am really in the embryonic stage of this but as a first episode, this has been super exciting and thank you, man, and great choice too. I love that movie.

GT: Thanks for having me on.

RM: Subscribe. Rate. Review. Tell your friend. Et cetera. [Music]

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