



[Article] – 4 Film Franchises That Don't Know When to Quit



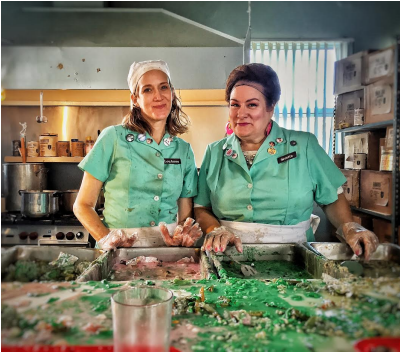
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[Interview] – Clarissa Jacobson – ‘Lunch Ladies’ – A Short Film





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Posted July 1, 2018 by admin

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Clarissa Jacobson created the comedy horror *Lunch Ladies* and it has already amassed an impressive following. Now this quirky little film has been selected for two Oscar qualifying film festivals, Palm Springs International ShortFest and Flicker's Rhode Island International Film Festival. *Lunch Ladies* stars Donna Pieroni (*CSI:NY*), Mary Manofsky (*Criminal Minds*), newcomer Daisy Kershaw and is directed by J.M. Logan.

Two burnt out high school *Lunch Ladies* do whatever it bloody takes on their quest to become Johnny Depp's personal chefs.

Writer/Producer Clarissa Jacobson started out as an actress performing off-Broadway and in numerous film and voice-over roles before realizing her true passion was writing. A long-standing member of Twin Bridges Writing Salon, she has several scripts under her belt including the full-length version of *Lunch Ladies* and the recently optioned *Stella By Starlight*.

Award-winning Director J.M. Logan wears diverse hats as a multi-faceted filmmaker directing, shooting, producing and editing. In addition to directing *Lunch Ladies*, his recent projects include an interactive feature film *The Garage Sale*, producing a feature documentary *The Disunited States of America* for SKY TV, and *Manson Family Vacation* for the Duplass Brothers. He is currently completing the pilot for a new anthology series CTRL|ESC.

Making quite a splash on the festival circuit this comical film has been selected by Clermont-Ferrand, Flickerfest, Bucheon Fantastic, Imagine Film Fest, Morbido, Santa Barbara and A Night of Horror to name a few. *Lunch Ladies* will screen at Palm Springs in June.



Interview:

To begin with, tell us about your latest film, 'Lunch Ladies', what is it about?

Lunch Ladies is a proof of concept comedy/horror short based on my feature that I wrote first. It's about two burnt out *Lunch Ladies* who do whatever it bloody takes on their quest to become Johnny Depp's personal chefs.

To me, Lunch Ladies is first and foremost about underdogs and reaching for one's dreams. The main characters, Seretta and LouAnne Burr, are middle-aged fraternal twin sisters who have been stuck at a dismal job for decades serving up slop to horrible kids. They get no respect and are constantly harassed by students and faculty alike. The only thing that gets them through the day is their obsession for "The Depper" and their dream of one day leaving their high school hell-hole to be his chefs. Nothing is gonna stand in the way of that. Not even a dead cheerleader.

How did you get involved with the film? Where did the idea come from?

I am a screenwriter, and wrote the feature first in my amazing writing class – Twin Bridges which is run by Joe Bratcher and Judy Farrell. I saved my money and decided to make a short version of it to prove that it would work as a feature. My goal is to get the feature made. I then found the director – JM Logan who was terrific, the majority of the cast and crew, and all kinds of other things I didn't know I had to do as I had never made a film before – it was incredible and joyful and the hardest thing I have ever done.

As for the idea, I was in a play (many years ago when I THOUGHT I was an actress and had yet to find screenwriting) with Donna Pieroni, who plays the lead in Lunch Ladies. Donna and I have remained friends over the years, and one day we were out to dinner and she was telling me that it sucked at auditions because not only are there not a lot of roles for middle-aged women, but she was always up against the same person. She really liked the other actress, but it was always a bummer because only one of them could get the role. She told me she wished someone would write a story about Lunch Ladies. Because then they BOTH could get cast.

So that's how it started. Then because (SPOILER ALERT) Sweeney Todd is my favorite musical I thought – wouldn't it be funny to do a spoof on it with two Lunch Ladies? And hey, lots of people do spoofs on Sweeney Todd, so why not wink at it and make it be about two Lunch Ladies obsessed with Johnny Depp and they get the idea to do what they do because they are in love with The Depper?

It's a crazy idea. I know.

Tell us about the cast, who is starring?

Donna Pieroni plays Seretta and Mary Manofsky plays LouAnne. Donna, as I mentioned was a friend of mine, I wrote the part for her. No one else could play her. Mary, the director, JM Logan, knew. He had cast her in another movie – The Garage Sale – that he had done. He said she was fantastic at physical comedy and I was looking for an exact opposite type not just looks wise, but energy wise from Donna. Josh thought Mary would be perfect. We never auditioned anyone else for the Lunch Ladies, we brought Donna and Mary into my little apartment had them read and that was it, they were cast.

Daisy Kershaw who plays Alexis the cheerleader, was a friend of Shayna Weber who is a producer on the film and my writing friend from Twin Bridges. Shayna knew Daisy since she was a little girl and said, I know someone who will be perfect. Once again, we didn't audition anyone else. Daisy read and that was it. She was perfect. She just turned 16 a few days before we filmed. Lastly, Chris Fickley who plays Principal Grossfetig is from my writing class. All the other extras in the cast were also from my writing class, actors I knew or people I found on Backstage casting call.

What are your influences as a filmmaker?

It's funny, sometimes you don't realize you are influenced by someone until you start hearing other people say "wow that reminds me of so and so" when they see your work. And I'm so happy and honoured because all the filmmakers I love have been shouted out at one time or another, as this film being influenced by them.

So that would be John Waters, John Hughes, Wes Anderson, Cohen Brothers and Tim Burton. But, I would also add in Mel Brooks. I'm definitely influenced by him.

What advice would you give any up-and-coming filmmakers, trying to crack the industry?

Well, I'm still trying to crack the industry hahahaaa, so I think the advice I give is not to look at it that way. You can't be in it to "make it." You have to cling with all your heart and soul to the joy it brings you and making it the best it can be. That is all you have control over. You don't have control over how people react to your art, or who will sign you, or pick up your film. So you must always remember why you are doing it. That you love it. And you must remove your ego and learn and listen and work and be patient. Don't be filming a feature that took you three days to write. Unless you are a genius, it's going to suck. Good scripts take time. Good directing takes time. Good films take time. They don't happen overnight. Be patient, get it right.

I truly believe if you work your ass off, don't give up, don't take "No" for an answer and are 100% authentic, that eventually the doors will open. But you must be prepared if they don't, you must not become bitter you must remember why you do it, because you love it. Always come from the place of joy.

When & where can we expect to see 'Lunch Ladies'?

We are at tons of film fests and adding more throughout the year. On my website – lunchladiesmovie.com under ANNOUNCEMENTS I list all the upcoming fests. Also if you sign up on the website for my emailers, you will know, as I write blogs from the Lunch Ladies point of view about where they will be next and it will go right to your inbox. I also have all the social media that will tell you where we will be.

Lastly, we have a sales rep – Ouat Media who is most likley securing some distribution for us later in the year and next which we can announce when things are finalized!

What is the next step for you? Do you have any other films or projects in production?

Lots of amazing things are going on right now. I've got my eye on making the feature Lunch Ladies, looking for the people to finance it. Then there is my coming of age road trip screenplay, Stella By Starlight, which was just optioned by Norman Stephens and Bev Nero with an eye to filming it in Tulsa. I also have a gothic horror about Elizabeth Bathory that I have a very talented Venezuelan director attached to, and a ghost hunter script called Spook Stalkers! that is being shopped. Lastly, I'm writing a comedy with my friend Shayna Weber. I'm busy and happy.

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