



Written and Directed by
Nathaniel Lezra

The lives of a street punk, a millennial couple, and a Salvadoran teenager being recruited by a local gang collide, forming an interlocking story of class and identity in Echo Park, Los Angeles.

Synopsis

A film about self-discovery in the face of economic and social pressures, IN ECHO PARK tells three interlocking stories that take place over the course of 48 hours, each focusing on a different population of the Los Angeles neighborhood Echo Park. An analysis of both gentrification and the present economic landscape, the film follows JJ and Nina, two street punks with histories of domestic abuse and addiction; Leanna and Jared, a millennial couple on the verge of financial and personal collapse; and Luis, a Salvadoran-American teenager being solicited for membership by a local street gang. Over two days, we watch as the dramas of these characters' lives unfold. JJ is given information that could lead Nina to shelter and away from their shared life; Jared confronts Leanna about their stagnating relationship, which has become defined by infidelity and financial stress; Luis considers following the path of gang life set down by his father. These three stories track characters who gradually, over the course of these two days, begin to reevaluate their circumstances, their choices, and what steps might need to be taken in order to find their own versions of peace. These people are together the faces that make up Echo Park, and this film presents their lives with unflinching honesty and compassion. Told in an interwoven mosaic style, IN ECHO PARK is an uncompromising portrait of the contemporary American urban experience.

Director's Statement

My films often focus on the interaction between environments and the populations that inhabit them. I work to assess real-world conflicts and tensions; to show how they are triggered and shaped by the environment they arise in; and to lay out how the people who inhabit those environments are affected. This can be delicate, because telling a story about a place in transition - and the underlying tensions present - necessarily means examining very real people in chaotic if not potentially devastating situations. My hope is that IN ECHO PARK gives the viewer a glimpse of that dynamic: you can't talk about a gentrifying neighborhood without also honestly talking about the lives and specific experiences of its different populations.

When I lived in Echo Park, it had already endured major gentrification. But there was still visible tension regarding the neighborhood's cultural identity: did it belong to the millennial newcomers? Or was it an immigrant community, largely with roots in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Mexico? Was it a suburb for the wealthy, as it had been in its earliest days? Was it a gang neighborhood? In my mind, Echo Park has an indelible identity. That identity, though, is radically different depending on who you talk to. A millennial might describe it as a perfect homebase as they begin their journey in the entertainment industry, while a thirty-five year old Salvadoran woman might describe it as the tense new home she found after escaping civil war as a child.

IN ECHO PARK invites viewers to consider these different experiences. My hope is that it will incite in them some empathy for people they had never thought to engage with; and that it may cause some to consider the mark they leave on the world, their environment, the neighborhood they live in. A place like Echo Park has so many stories and faces. All of its people have left a mark, no matter their background or economic standing. If my film helps someone consider the value of these different people and stories, and the weight of their presence, then it will have succeeded.

Production Notes

The Story

The story crystalized for me after I moved out of Angelino Heights, and relocated to a studio on the Temple Street side of Echo Park. The unit was one of many in a small complex, inhabited largely by Central-American and Mexican immigrant families. After living in Angelino Heights - which was heavily gentrified and populated mostly by millennials looking to crack into the entertainment industry – the differences in social dynamics were striking. The area had much more thoroughly retained its cultural identity as a working-class immigrant neighborhood, and historic Echo Park gangs operated in the open, undeterred. So, living in that complex, I started seeing the different gears of gentrification at work. I talked to local business owners, my landlord, other residents of the complex. I started taking down the stories I heard. Stories of being displaced by a changing economic landscape; of fleeing civil war; of pursuing art; of pursuing a safer life. I felt that the only way I could make a film that was honest to the neighborhood was by braiding together these inextricably linked stories - each representing a different experience or perspective. I wanted to examine Echo Park and its people in all their messiness and beauty. The result is an interlocking piece about Salvadoran-American teenagers living in the shadow of gangs and economic displacement; struggling millennials negotiating entertainment ambitions with the realities of adulthood; and people on the margins of society looking for something new.

Nathaniel Lezra

The Production

The IN ECHO PARK production team had a number of specific goals for the picture once our financing was secured. To shoot the film entirely on-location in Echo Park; to pay cast and crew so that those involved would be able to pay their rent; and to permit thoroughly enough to allow for more significant lighting set-ups and camera moves than would be possible if shooting guerilla, or with limited sidewalk permits.

Shooting on-location was a story requirement, so production's first step was negotiating the support of local businesses. Costumes were picked up at local thrift shops and dollar stores; catering and meals were supplied by area restaurants. Another key component was making local gangs aware of our presence. As the picture is in part an examination of Echo Park gang culture, we knew we would be tagging walls, and would be spending time in gang territory. Consultants and various members of the cast and crew had grown up in the neighborhood, and knew connected people. With their help, we got the greenlight from gang leadership to move forward.

Paying people in an ultra-low-budget production context happens all too infrequently in the independent film world. Our production refused to abuse favors, so we committed early on to paying everyone what we could. The crew handled it fantastically – they were absolute professionals, executing their crafts efficiently and working through punishing heat, all in service of the film.

Biographies

Nathaniel Lezra Writer - Director



Nathaniel Lezra has directed critically acclaimed narrative and documentary short films, as well as branded content for SB Nation and Managing Madrid. He recently wrapped production on the pilot of a short-form documentary series examining underground music cultures across the country, titled From the Underground. He holds a BA in Film from Emerson College, and attended New York University as a visiting student, where he studied Sociology, Writing, and Film Production. He lives and works in New York City.

Skylar Wilson Cinematographer



Skylar Wilson is a cinematographer and photographer living and working in Laguna Beach, California. She holds a degree in Film from Emerson College, and is the co-founder of mixed media collective Sea Legs Creation Station. She and Nathaniel Lezra are frequent collaborators, having worked together on narrative short films and documentary content. Also an avid skimboarder, she competes professionally on the United Skim Tour.

Jenell Randall**Producer**

Jenell Randall is a producer, production designer, creative director and graduate of Emerson College with a degree in Film Production. Jenell has produced content featured on Indiewire, No Film School, and Film of the Week, and has an ongoing involvement as an associate producer on an upcoming Lionsgate bio-pic, "The Reginald Lewis Project" starring Oscar winning actor Jamie Fox. Outside of the entertainment industry, she has worked with the Offender Aid and Restoration Project, volunteered at Food Not Bombs, and hosts fundraiser shows for 826 LA. She works and lives in Highland Park, Los Angeles.

Molly Rose Kaplan**Producer**

Molly Kaplan is a producer, line producer, and entertainment professional based in Los Angeles, California. She served as an Executive Producer on the Boston based documentary series Musicians Wanted. Since receiving her BA degree in Television Production, Molly has worked on the shows Revenge, and AMC's Freakshow. She works as a Coordinator in the Feature Film Production department at Warner Bros. Pictures.

Mackenzie Woodcock

Cement Head Films, LLC.

Producer

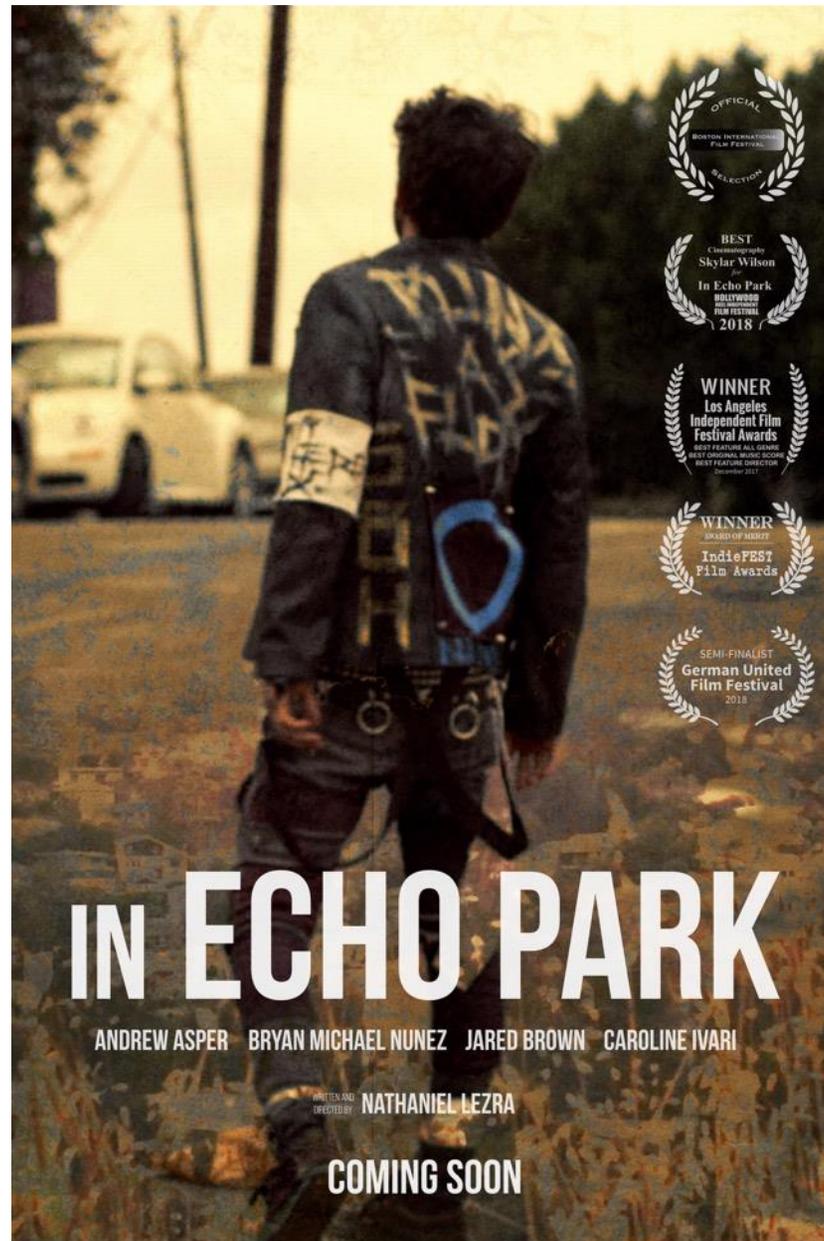
Mackenzie Woodcock is a Los Angeles based entertainment professional, working as a producer and production designer. Her initial creative work began serving as production designer and producer on short and feature films while attending Emerson College. Since graduating, she has worked at The Playtone Company on Parkland and Olive Kitteridge, and as a freelance producer.

Stills and Promotional Art











CREDITS

FIRST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: GAVIN PERETTI
SECOND ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: ELIZABETH ARMANCAS
SCRIPT SUPERVISOR: MICHAEL BERLIND

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

JENELL RANDALL
 MACKENZIE WOODCOCK
 MOLLY ROSE KAPLAN
 NATHANIEL LEZRA

CAST (In order of appearance)

JJ – ANDREW ASPER
 LUIS – BRYAN NUNEZ
 PILAR – DAHIANA TORRES
 JARED – JARED BROWN
NEIGHBORHOOD KID – QUENTIN CHAVEZ
 NINA – KODI SAINT ANGELO
 PINKY – TIMOTHY DEPRIEST
BLUE EYES – RUFINO ROMERO
 JAIME – DAVID BARACSKAI
 RAY – CHRISTIAN VUNIPOLA
RICARDO – CESAR HERNANDEZ
 MIKE – DARON MCFARLAND
 LEANNA – CAROLINE IVARI
 KRISTEN – KYLA SCHOER
 TIM – TIM TAYLOR
 DAN – ALEXANDER ROBERTS
 ESTEBAN – ANTONIO DE LIMA
NEIGHBORHOOD KID'S MOTHER – STEPHANIE VALENZUELA
 ANA – EVY DE LA CRUZ
LIQUOR STORE OWNER – DAVID PLASCENCIA
 RAY'S MOTHER - SORAYA LIEBSON
 1st AC: ARKIE TADESSE
 2ND AC: STEVE CARSON
 GAFFER: JOHN CICO
 KEY GRIP: JOSH LEVY

SWINGS

LOUIS WEISSMAN
DIMITRI CHRISTOFORIDIS
SAMUEL KIM
PATRICK LYNCH
SAM NEEDHAM
CHRISTIAAN TAHYAR

**PRODUCTION SOUND: MOLLY YOUNG
PRODUCTION SOUND (PICKUPS)**

FELIX ROMERO
LOU BALDANZA

COSTUMES

KOPHNS MARTINEZ
EVAN MRVA

HAIR/MU

DONNA DELIA
LINDA MICHAELS

**PRODUCTION COORDINATOR: ALEXIS LOYA
PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS**

NICK MOODY
JAMIE SARFEH
MANDI ROBINSON
TYLER BURKE
PAUL ZECHARIA

**ASSISTANT EDITOR: NELSON RAMM
VFX ARTIST: DELANEY PORTER
COLORIST/ONLINE EDITOR: DANIEL ORENTLICHER
SOUND ENGINEER: JONATHAN JETTER
ADDITIONAL AUDIO POST-PRODUCTION
ZACHARY MCMILLAN
JONATHAN JETTER**

WILL MADDEN

"We May Change"
"To the 90s"

SOHO KINGS

"Heart on My Sleeve/World on My Back"
"Life of the Party"
"Olly"

CARL TURNER AND MATT RIVERA

"Cortelyou Dumont"

PAPER AND SAND

"Age of Imperials"

JOKAMUNDO

"Neckless"

HANNAH WINKLER

"Rowena"

OHNOMOON

"So Long"

QUOTIENT

"Gulag"

THE TAXPAYERS

"Let The Wheels Turn Slowly"

VENDORS

DIVISION CAMERA
LA GRIP
WOODEN NICKEL LIGHTING, INC
FILM LA
CAZT

LOCATIONS

PATRA BURGER
LIQUOR AZTECA DE ORO
GEORGE'S LIQUOR STORE
1642 BEER AND WINE

CATERING

PATRA BURGER
ECHO PARK CANTINA

SPECIAL THANKS -

XIAOPING XU
ROD RANDALL
JULIE KAPLAN
KEN KAPLAN
SUSANNE WOFFORD
JACQUES LEZRA
GABE LEZRA
HELEN WOODCOCK
MIKE WOODCOCK
SEAN HOKANSON
JOSH GROSSMAN
KIRSTEN JUDSON
BENJAMIN ASKINAS
DOUG PORTER
JOHN EDWARDS CURTIS
DIMAS MARTINEZ
ERICK MAURICIO ROMANO



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THIS PROJECT WAS MADE POSSIBLE WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES & THE FILM LA OFFICE.

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