

Notes 4/14/2021 Sarah Megan Thomas

Sarah is a Philadelphia native who likes to use Philadelphia locations for films. You will find her on both sides of the camera. She grew up playing sports and enjoying acting. In Sarah's younger years, her mother would review and highlight writing errors on her school papers. So much so that Sarah could not read her original words. That was intentional on her mother's part, so that Sarah would rewrite in her own words. This stuck with Sarah and later sparked her love of writing. Sarah also reads a lot of books. Her two favorites are "Your screenplay sucks" and "the 12 Step of Storytelling."

Sarah originally had no interest in behind the scenes. She preferred acting and theatre. She also bartended to pay the bills but became creatively unsatisfied with the jobs she was booking. She wanted to create more genres for women and was drawn to commercial genres. She became passionate about "untold stories with a female lens."

Sarah will only take on a project for which she can easily fundraise. She seeks people who may have an interest in the project. For example, she made a movie about female rowers and approached her alumni rowers for funding. Sarah has a large network and asks for introductions to new contacts, if needed. She uses her alumni and other personal connections when fundraising.

Sarah also keeps in mind the potential viewers, including international. In making "A Call to Spy" three of the main female spy characters (there were 39) were chosen because of their international ethnicity. Sarah hoped this would attract worldwide viewers.

During the writing process, Sarah does extensive research to find stories that haven't been told. There are many "big relationships" in the business, so she is consistently nice and stays connected. She always takes into consideration that movie making is hard on all involved. Solving problems is more productive at the end of the day.

Sarah knew she wanted to tell a spy movie. She liked studying WWII and wanted to tell a story from the woman's point of view. The two female spies in charge of the group never met in real life, but Sarah wanted to bring them together for the movie. She created balance so that the movie wasn't a documentary. A total of 4 years was spent doing research!

According to Sarah, movie making doesn't get easier. There is a lot of planning and thinking involved. On the acting side, 10 minutes before her scenes in the movie, she would listen to Churchill speeches. She also wore the leg prosthesis to help her get into character and ground herself. Sarah is a big believer in breath work and stretching. Sarah brings herself to each character with her own authenticity. She is always prepared and believes "less is more."

Sarah worked with Troy Coffee on location choices. She had worked with him before and trusted him. In addition, her mother was also helpful. Sarah's Mom read an article about the Ardrossan Estate near Villanova and suggested it to Sarah. The estate is a replica of the owner's

home in Scotland. It is furnished with period furniture and was the perfect place for filming. Other scenes were filmed in Budapest for approximately 8-11 days. The background artists and international spies came across as more real. The combination of the two locations was the best they could do with the budget allotment for the film.

With the success of “A Call to Spy,” Sarah has gained confidence. There is so much rejection during the creative process that the success has validated her choices. She does share the success and credit, “You are only as good as the people you hire.” Sarah has the final say and cut on all of her movies, but surrounds herself with people she can trust. She always keeps her investors in mind.

3 keys to Producing a film:

1. Come up with an original idea and be passionate about it!
2. Research and have structure.
3. Find a good support system.
4. Don't give up! Stick it through and find a way.

Sarah believes young kids are very good actors. The idea of acting is quite understood by them, so they are more believable. As they age, they become more aware of their surroundings and the natural acting gets lost.

Sarah's dream role is James Bond. She also would have loved to be on House of Cards. On the production side, Sarah would love to create the Social Network from the female perspective. Ultimately, Sarah makes movies for others to respond. She hopes to inspire and change people.

Sarah's son appreciates her work but was upset that he was cut out of her last movie haha. He is more interested in math and science.

The biggest challenge with “A Call to Spy” was recreating the time period and staying within the very small budget. She credits her team for the success of both.

Sarah has been involved in mentoring and truly appreciates “background artists.” She admits that if the background artists don't do well, it affects the quality of the production. She encourages everyone at all levels to do background work. “So much is learned, but it's not a pathway to moving up as an actor.”

Sarah has had a great adventure and is proud of her work. She sacrificed family time, but says the finished movies are worth the sacrifice. She believes in celebrations and loves the small victories!