



Filmmaker of the Week Janae Ballot

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Filmmaker of the Week – Janae Ballot



Episode 42 of Filmmaker of the Week featuring Janae Ballot!



Give us a brief introduction of yourself, where you're from originally and where you are now if different

My name is Janaé Rachel Ballot. I am a filmmaker, producer and screenwriter based in Los Angeles. I was born in Santa Cruz California and raised in Beverly Hills where all is not what it seems. In this heat right now, I miss Santa Cruz's beach very much... But enough about me. 😊

What is it that first got you into the world of filmmaking?

Anything great starts with a story, right? Well the intro of how I was thrust into this business was my older sister. As a young tot, she walked up to my parents and said, "I want a sister." 5 years later, I was born into competitive dancing, pageants and the entertainment industry. My sister (actress and producer Savannah Ballot) acted for Disney, Toon Disney, Nickelodeon. My loving mother practically drew up the figurative contract and wanted me to act to include me. I went on my first Warner Brother audition at the ripe age of 5. It was crazy.



So much so, I didn't feel comfortable. My comfort zone was watching movies. My mind spun stories as I frequented theaters. Yes, it was very romantic while on this path of self discovery. Actually, something out of a movie. So I kept spinning stories in my head and chasing this dream of storytelling. At 17, I started to professionally write, produce and direct. Now I am happy to discuss a fantastic pilot called *Managed!*

Share a little bit about your specialty in the film world

Film and TV screenwriter, producer, director. I can also write a mean email.

What has been your most challenging project to date?

There's two. The project I did at 17 years old. I didn't know anything but film references. Bad director. Bad leader. Naive. I put my sister who was the lead through the ringer. For those younger directors reading and watching tons of movies, "just act like Gena Rowlands" is NOT direction! I did learn how to treat actors with more empathy. Running with empathic leadership is very important. A movie should be secondary. I am currently in post for a film right now. This one has proved to be challenging as well since I want it to resonate with a lot of people.





Tell us a bit about your latest project.

The challenging one?! It's a period drama set in the 1950's. I am all about themes and all I am allowed to really touch on are the themes... deception, facade, double lives. Stay tuned!



What is one moment you've had in any part of the filmmaking process where you learned a really valuable lesson?

On the set of *Managed*, we were losing daylight and behind schedule. *Managed* was originally 15 plus pages. Now 11 minute pilot. We just didn't have the time for that page length. I took our young and talented executive producer (Matthew Monelli) and slashed pages. It felt *liberating*. Cutting to the meat and purpose of story is *always* liberating. I ran a check through every page, line, action line. I remember saying to myself after reading some lines, "I just wrote that because it **sounds** cool. Cut it." Let's save ego for therapy please? Leave it off the set and when you do like on *Managed*, it saves time. Gotta tell stories with a purpose at every turn!

What are some of the 5-year goals for you as a filmmaker/creative?

Love the question but I can't remember if yesterday was Tuesday or tomorrow is Friday. I think we can all agree the pandemic has turned time into an oddball. I just learnt yesterday they were still releasing days...so there's that. Okay, enough enough— In five years? I'll be pushing myself to always be better as Janae for God and my loved ones first and as a creative/filmmaker second.

If you could work with one idol of yours, who would it be?

Managed touches on idolization. I loathe it with a passion. Someone I knew once said, "It's the Kardashian-effect and it's sickening." Couldn't agree with him more. I do not idolize any filmmaker and for the ones I *used* to... I ended up having my meetings with them. It's not all it's chalked up to be— just be who you are. I don't want to be a pain and ignore the question though. Aaron Sorkin is a brilliant creative who taught me the importance of media-res in screenwriting.





Name three films that have inspired you most in your journey.

Jurassic Park. My mother introduced this to me and my sister. Holds history in my heart. It is so thought out and beautifully crafted.
Postcards From the Edge. Who can say no to Carrie Fisher's writing?
Candy. The AU film starring Heath Ledger that speaks about heroin addiction in the truest and poetic form in cinema.



Where can folks find out more about you online?

Go over to the lovely cesspool called Instagram. I joke! Kinda? Managed explored themes of the dangers of social media. Okay, Janaé focus: @Janae_ballot — I am going to take a shower now.

Any last thoughts or pieces of advice to filmmakers out there?

Just keep going and do not let anyone silence your voice. Seriously. Everyone says it but it is true. Do not be swayed the other way and put out stories that mean something.



Managed Pilot Teaser

from Janaé Rachel Ballot

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