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Maine Tourism

As always, it was great speaking with all of you, and once again I have to say that I love the work you've come up with. The boards are beautiful. But saying that doesn't begin to express my feelings for the imagery you've captured. Each frame has its own unique human quality, and together they quietly and confidently deliver the very clear and powerful statement that Maine — is about the people.

That's not to say that the geography, the architecture, and the culture aren't all rich with inherent beauty. Maine has no lack of that, but the message we're setting out to deliver is that those attributes are like a bonus. It's a destination that offers an abundance of breathtaking views, which will definitely be included in the journeys we take our viewers on. But the true heart and soul of these stories will come from the people we meet along the way. They are what makes this destination like no other. They are the source of the color, the warmth, and the authenticity that makes a visitor to this state never want to leave. That's what these films need to be about, and my goal is to capture them in ways that are as original and interesting as these people are themselves.

Designing a Distinctive Look

Every time I begin a project, I like to go into it with a fresh perspective. And even though we've all worked together before, I want to approach this campaign in the same way I would if we were working together for the first time. In this instance, I think that's particularly important because the concept insists on a look that is crafted to meet the specific needs of this campaign.

Essentially we're setting out to create a photographic study of the people of Maine — and all the things that define them and make them different. Consistent with their individualism I would like to push the boundaries a bit by designing a visual approach that is unquestionably authentic — while still possessing a cinematic aesthetic that allows us to find beauty in the most intimate of well-observed details.

The photography will be rich, textured, and refined. Rather than using an overly active camera, I would prefer to capture moments with a sense of reserve that allows us to appreciate the things that separate this place and its people from all others. When appropriate, that will involve some use of handheld photographic, but when it's used, it will be much more subdued.

For instance, we might use a hint of handheld to travel along with some surfers as they weave their way through the pines, or bring a nuance of organic movement to a scene

in which we see a couple hiking through the woods. But those uses of handheld must never distract from the people or the stories we're setting out to tell. (For lack of a better term, it's an approach that I'll call Mike 2.0.)

As I mentioned on the call, it might even be worth considering shooting this a little more wide screen (by using a 240 aspect ratio.) It would offer us a look that separates itself from all others in the category while also lending the stories a quality that is a little more grand — without ever compromising the humanity.

It's just a thought, but if we do decide to go in that direction, I would consider working with cinematographers such as Bjorn Charpentier, Max Goldman, or Adam Marsden. But regardless of the look we arrive at, the key is to focus on capturing insightful living moments of portraiture, dominated by the people of Maine.

This is Me

Our anthem is a bit like a road trip that takes us on a journey all around Maine, to meet a variety of different people involved in unique and interesting work or lifestyle moments. Each time we arrive in a different location, we'll search for ways of capturing our people delivering the line "This is me," to camera. In some cases that might involve shooting a compelling close up of their face as they deliver that line. In other instances we might counterbalance those bold compositions with expansive shots that picture them amidst a stunning landscape. In the midst of these shots, we can even mix in a few shots of people immersed in their work, who just happen to glance up at camera to deliver their line.

The overall idea is to keep our audience constantly engaged in an ever-changing medley of shots that lends the anthem a visually and viscerally involving series of images that are as human as they are genuine and happened-upon. For some of these moments, we could even create scenes that feel a bit stylized. For example, when might drop into the artist's studio, we might find him casually posing amidst his work (in different stages of completion, perhaps).

Taking a visual shift, we can cut to an aerial shot of a woman sitting or standing by a tent overlooking the atlantic ocean before hearing her voice echoing up toward us. From this wide shot, we could cut to a close up of our man shaping a surfboard who pauses for a moment to look up at camera and deliver his line. Adding a hint of energy we can surprise the viewer by cutting to a simple and almost mundane moment of Mainer checking his mailbox. Nothing special about this until — a cyclist suddenly blows past camera as he yells "This is me..."

Our fly fisherman might counter that with a whispered line while casually making his casts across a river — which we can follow with a high angle shot of a man diving away from camera as he descends toward a river.

Bringing the story a hint of organic motion, we can start on the back of a couple lobstermen, and either curl around them to catch their line — or have them turn toward the camera before speaking. Then, bridging the seasons, we can peer into an ice shanty to catch a real Mainer doing some ice fishing. A moment later, we cut from there to an aerial shot of a hiker, and from that extreme wide, we can drop into a field for an intimate close up of a farmer picking some fresh lettuce.

No two images, actions, or setups will be alike. Each will present us with a unique individual representative of one of the many different people you can meet while visiting a part of Maine. But regardless of who we are introduced to, we will always make sure that their lines are delivered in the most natural way possible. Instead of feeling set up or performed for the camera, we'll create the feeling of having arrived just in time to catch the last part of casual conversation that just happens to end with the line, "This is me."

The People are the Story

Someone once said that the most interesting landscape that anyone could possibly photograph is the human face. Each is different. They are forever changing, and each has its own story to tell. That's what I think is so fascinating about these stories. They're about connecting with people on a very personal level. Instead of just going through a checklist of *places* visitors need to see, we're introducing the viewer to the people they'll meet in these destinations. They are the people of Maine, and I want to use the camera to capture these people in a bold and cinematic way.

This will come from a dynamic mix of compositions that range from wider shots in which we see these people in their own environments, to detailed close ups that provide us with intimate touches of cinematic texture. It might also be interesting to add in a few aerial shots — just as a way of adding a touch of cinematic scope to the stories.

In "Bobby" we can blend shots of the boat sailing beneath a beautiful sky, or the sun rising over the horizon line of the water, with close ups of hands grasping rope, a ship's compass covered with the patina of age, water rippling and sparking in the sun, sails billowing in the breeze, or the smiling face of the ship's captain.

In a similar way, "Mike" begs for a scenic shot gazing out at waves breaking toward a tree-lined shore. But we don't want to be limited to that. Again, this is a story about the people and the skills that make them different. So, let's get into the shop to see these boards being made.

Perhaps we could shoot down the length of a surfboard to see wood curling off the edge of a plane, or a shot of a cow peeking its head in through a window to watch Mike shape a board. In other moments we can blend a wider shot of Mike working in his shop amidst all these finished and unfinished boards. We can see sawdust blown

off the surface of a board, clamps being put into place, fins being fitted into grooves, lacquer being poured or spread, hands stacking finished boards into a truck, or a wide shot of an array of boards leaning up against the side of Mike's barn.

The same type of approach can be taken with any of the spots you've written. The idea is to give the viewer the feeling of having spent some time with each of these people. If we're visiting Erin, we want to get the sense that we've traveled with her through a day to get a sense of the love she has for what she does, and the unique quality that she brings to her cooking. The same holds true for Alivia, or Dan. We'll want to immerse the viewer in their worlds, capture moments from interesting and engaging angles and perspectives, shoot at different times of day and take advantage of different qualities of natural light to help bring some scope to the storytelling, while also offering us a look that is as authentic and genuine as these people are themselves.

The Casting

One of our greatest priorities will be to make sure that each every moment we see rings true. You've captured that sense of un-compromised authenticity in the boards. I want to make sure that we bring that simple and understated genuineness, honesty, and humanity to the film. And the fact that we'll be working with real people who live and work in Maine is something that I think can bring a wonderfully rich texture of reality to these spots.

In searching for these people, we'll simply want to look for a great mix of personalities who are warm, charismatic, charming, and who have the ability to relax and be themselves. To encourage this, I always like to establish a friendly and welcoming atmosphere on the set — just so that they have a comfort zone to work in.

If we're shooting in their home or their place of business, I'll also make sure that we are respectful of the space, and working with a lean and flexible crew will help in that respect. After that, this really comes down to keeping things loose. There's no need to belaboring moments. Success isn't going to come from giving these people strict directions. This is the type of project that lends itself well to a light touch that will allow for those little moments of magic to happen naturally during the filming process.

The Production

This project is as big as the state of Maine itself, and because of that we'll want to be mindful of bringing it a cinematic look — while also working in ways that are logistically precise. That means planning our days out carefully and working with a hyper-mobile crew that is efficient, fast, and flexible.

Considering the size of the state, and the ground we'll have to cover, it will also be a good idea to map out a plan that allows us to capture the full breadth and scope of

what we want — while still having the time to linger a bit and give each of these people’s stories the time and attention they deserve.

As we discussed on our call, one possible way of achieving these goals would be to use our principal location as the hub of the production day. For “Bobby,” the hub might be the boat, and we would make sure to cover that setting and situation well, and then work outward from there. “Mike’s” hub would probably be his shop. For “Erin” it would probably be the Lost Kitchen, etc. It’s a simple way of organizing the shoot, which will maximize our opportunities for getting a wealth of coverage, and one that still provides us with the ability to adapt to things that might happen on the day.

Summing up...

These are some of my early thoughts, but as always, I see this as the start of an ongoing conversation that will evolve as we move ahead. But as far as I’m concerned, it’s all there on the boards. The canvas you’ve painted is absolutely rich. The human stories are fun and fully engaging. Our job is to mold them into films that will make anyone who hasn’t been to Maine, want to visit, while making those who’ve been there long for a return. That’s the feeling I want to bring to these films, and that’s what I truly believe will lead to a product that we — and the people of Maine — can and will all be proud of.

Thanks again for thinking of me, and I look forward to speaking with all of you further.