

Darren Genet

GENERATION NEXT 2011

Home: Los Angeles

Education: University of Florida, 1993; AFI, 2004

Favorite Film: *Once Upon a Time in the West*

Most recent gig: *CSI: Miami*

Potent Quotable: "There's no Academy Award® for easy."

Union Love: "We do as much as we can to make the world smaller, to put ourselves in communities, and the Union does that for me."

Growing up in Miami Beach, Darren Genet knew he wanted to be behind a camera. So after college, he took any gig he could. He started as a stand-in, talked his way into PAing, and then landed a gig at Panavision in Hollywood. He parlayed that experience into assisting on commercials with John Stanier, BSC, Tony Scott, Michael Bay and Samuel Bayer.

All were big influences. "John had that very English style of lighting; one big soft source coming through windows. Very simple and as single-source as possible," Genet recalls. "Samuel is very stylized in the way he shoots and that gave me a sense of pushing the envelope with lighting, art direction, manipulation of lenses and camera for dramatic effect."

His feature credits include *All the Boys Love Mandy Lane*, *Lucky* and *The Human Contract*, with first-time director Jada Pinkett-Smith. At AFI, Genet's work has earned two student Emmy® Awards for the short films *The Monster* and *The Peanut* and *Death Strip*. He was also nominated for the ASC Heritage Award and twice received the Emerging Cinematographer Awards (2007's *The Death Strip* and 2005's *Raveling*).

"This award's a big honor because it's people who do exactly what you do," he says. "To be recognized in that way, you know you're doing something right. Doing that twice is humbling."

"Darren knows each level of the camera department from a personal level and that has definitely helped him be a successful director of photography," says camera and Steadicam operator Jason Blount, who worked on *The Human Contract*. "He keeps very up-to-date on the latest technologies and incorporates them when possible and/or necessary."

Last summer, Genet shot an entire film using DSLRs, not surprising for a guy who's inspired by still photography. "It felt both liberating and limiting to have it be our primary format," Genet explains. "We created an intimate environment with that tiny little handheld that's so sensitive to light." By contrast, on *Mandy Lane*, he shot on Super 35mm, and used a hand-cranked camera with anamorphic lenses. "We wanted to make the image literally break down as it got grimmer for the characters," he says. "Horror films are great because you get to be aggressive with the photography and play with convention."

Choices like these can make his job more difficult, but Genet's OK with that. "I'm not interested in 'easy,'" he asserts. "I want to do what's best."

