LOST IN LA LA LAND

EMMA STONE, RYAN GOSLING AND DAMIEN CHAZELLE GO BEHIND THE SCENES OF THIS YEAR'S ROMANTIC RETURN TO CLASSIC MUSICALS.

MICHAEL KEATON JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE AVA DUVERNYA PABLO LARRAIN KENNETH LONERGAN
The director switches gears from the oppression of 13th to the "scarily talented" cast of *A Wrinkle in Time*.

BY ANTONIA BLYTH

IF YOU ASK AVA DUVERNAY which genre she prefers, she says, "I want to play in the whole sandbox," and she's doing just that, with fingers in various directing, writing and producing pies right now. With her Netflix documentary 13th on release, her OWN TV show Queen Sugar raking in impressive ratings, and now at the helm of the $100 million-plus, A-list, sci-fi Disney film *A Wrinkle in Time*, DuVernay is doing it all.

After directing the Oscar-nominated Selma, she found herself in hot demand, but first on the to-do list was 13th—an exploration of the ways in which the U.S. criminal justice system is heavily weighted against people of color. Squeezing 100 years of history into 100 fast-paced, extremely affecting minutes, the resulting film was the first documentary ever to open the New York Film Festival.

But DuVernay has not allowed herself a pause to regroup. "I have a certain window," she says, "and during that window I want to do everything I can. There is no woman director that I can look to that has a 30-year career in this country, and there are very, very few filmmakers of color, black filmmakers in particular, that have had a very robust, full-bodied career.”

13th was such a powerful tool for educating voters. How do you feel about the outcome of the election?

Yes, the documentary talks about Trump, but it also talks about many people throughout history who espoused this point of view, and the effects of that kind of policy and that kind of thinking. And also the ways in which people have started to come back at that, and that's where we are now, that folks will resist this. The interesting thing now is that this is not a new feeling for people of color. It's a new feeling for people who are not of color, because they're concerned. The punditry of concern has expanded since 13th.

"I'm sure a lot of viewers didn't know about The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) and how it's been affecting them for years.

That was my big surprise too. I grew up in Compton, so there was a very aggressive police presence there. I was feeling fear when police officers came, so it was a different way to grow up. I was an African-American Studies major at UCLA, so I studied a lot of Black Liberation theory, but ALEC never came into any kind of conversations I had. It really came through making this film that I learned about ALEC and was immediately fascinated and frustrated by it. You could do a two-hour documentary just on ALEC. I tried to distill it down enough to get people to understand that there is a shadowy group that meets in secret, working hand-in-hand with lawmakers to protect their corporate interests, making laws that we all have to abide by. Those people are not lawmakers, they're not elected officials. That's nuts.

What effect did making this film have on you personally?

We just finished the film maybe 10 days before it debuted in September. It was really intense, over 1,000 hours of really intense, racist, violent footage to wade through. It's not easy to do, so I really feel these days that I'm happy to be working on a movie about a girl time-traveling through the universe (*A Wrinkle in Time*). I get to spend my days creating creatures and beautiful costumes, instead of having to look through the worst of society with this footage.

Madeleine L'Engle, who wrote the novel *A Wrinkle in Time*, was turned down by 26 publishers because she was a woman writing about science fiction. Does it feel like a fitting legacy being a woman making this film?

Yeah, I love it. Madeleine L'Engle is a rabble-rouser. One of my favorite things that I have about the book is the fact that the book was banned. I love that. That's one of the things that I take great pride in, that we are really putting it on its feet and bringing to life a book that threatened people, just through the sheer creativity of this woman and what she felt and thought.

How is the shoot going so far?

It has been extraordinary. This cast is really, really scarily talented. I love the cinematographer that I'm working with, the crew looks like the United Nations. We work really hard to make sure that there are people of color and women across all the departments, really bringing in a different perspective to this thing. It's one thing to have a woman director, but to have a woman director and an all-female crew, you're really not doing what you mean to do, you're not truly being inclusive in the crew. You're just a figurehead, and that's something that I never want to be. To have a black director and no other people of color in the crew, that's unacceptable.

Nothing that I make accepts that. From Queen Sugar, which has all women directors on board and very, very inclusive crew too, to Wrinkle, to 13th, that's shot by two black cinematographers. This work goes beyond the director. There's a lot of talk about women directors, there's a lot of talk about black directors, but truly the real work is done with a crew. I feel it's a little disingenuous to be there and just talk about my vision.

With Queen Sugar, what first grabbed you about working in TV?

Really, it was watching Cary Fukunaga, who directed all the episodes of the first season of *True Detective*. I wanted to do that. It's like making an eight-hour movie. But then we get into working on it and it got to be too long, so I had to bring in other directors to direct with me, but just the idea of making television was really interesting to me. It's the scarcest thing that I've done. Every week, you're like this, "Will they tune it in?" It's a different kind of storytelling. I'm menosvous every freaking week. ✫