

KICKING GOALS

Award-winning cinematographer Ashley Barron continues her achievements, while imparting her talent to film students in Western Australia – **by Anthony Connolly**



A scene from 'The State Suite' - DOP Ashley Barron

The State Suite, filmed by cinematographer Ashley Barron, is an experimental short film starring the infamous barrister and writer Charles Waterstreet QC. Shot in a hotel room over one evening, Barron describes her work on the interesting project as a “**confined voyeuristic gaze**”. A venture with production company The Pool Collective, the project marks her first collaboration with director Juliet Taylor.

Barron and Taylor set out to showcase the mysterious and sensuous nature of a hotel and to present it as a character in and of itself. A character, perhaps, that now incorporates us, the viewers, into its voyeuristic wormhole. Having never seen the location, Barron and Taylor had just three hours to survey the space, hash out a plan and shoot. Lighting the piece almost entirely with existing light sources, Barron utilised the architecture and design of the respective rooms while she was composing the shots. She then constructed the lighting to her advantage by working with the dark, earthy tones within the framework to create contrast and pockets of darkness.

The State Suite continues Barron's tradition of producing singularly

stunning pieces of work, including *Little Boy Blue*, *Midnight Walk* and *The Faintest Clasp* which saw her earn Gold at the NSW/ACT State Awards in 2016. So it is no surprise that the Western Australian Screen Academy (WASA) sought out Barron's expertise to conduct a masterclass at their Perth campus.

Each year, six cinematography positions are offered into their training programs in both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Run by Mahmudul Raz Islam, the intensive one-year course aims to develop both practical and creative skills across a range of screen productions.

“Raz and I met many years ago when I was just starting out, before I even stepped into the camera department. It was quite a moment to now be asked to pass on my knowledge.” says Barron.

Barron's practical experience as a cinematographer spanning over a decade made her the perfect fit for the Academy's course on lighting, bringing with her past teaching experience from her bouts with the American Film Institute Conservatory and Global Cinematography Institute in Hollywood.

“There is no doubt the quality of Barron's cinematography is world class and she has a very unique approach to visual story telling. Seeing her recent work, I thought she would be the perfect inspiring figure for our students,” said Islam.

Barron applied an approach she learned from her family of mathematicians. Math was never her strong suit but Barron saw the beauty in having a formula to solve any problem. **“Understanding the nature of light itself, the physics of light and its characteristics,”** she explains, **“you can apply to any lighting fixture and situation. I wanted the students to gain an understanding of not just how a particular lighting fixture worked, but why.”**

The masterclass, conducted in early 2017, garnered a great response from both the students and the Academy. **“Ashley offered a great insight into her approach to understanding and controlling light that the students will take with them as they embark on their career,”** Islam says. **“It's fantastic to have direct access to someone who is dedicated to honing her craft and who is clearly at the top of her game.”**

Anthony Connolly is a Brisbane-based writer and filmmaker.