



# THE EVES

EMMY-WINNING DP EIGIL BRYLD JOINS A FEMALE WOLF  
PACK FOR THE LATEST ENTRY IN THE OCEAN'S FRANCHISE

BY S.C. STUART / PHOTOS BY BARRY WETCHER

# LIKE US



# 18 MONTHS

BEFORE *OCEAN'S 8* WAS SET TO OPEN, WARNER BROS. RELEASED A STILL FEATURING STARS SANDRA BULLOCK, CATE BLANCHETT, SARAH PAULSON, RIHANNA, ANNE HATHAWAY, HELENA BONHAM CARTER, MINDY KALING, AND AWKWAFINA ON A SUBWAY TRAIN, POINTEDLY IGNORING EACH OTHER - JUST LIKE REAL NEW YORKERS - AND SOCIAL MEDIA WENT WILD. AND ALTHOUGH THERE MAY BE A LOT RIDING ON *OCEAN'S 8*, ITS CREATORS WON'T CALL IT A REBOOT (OR AN XX-CHROMOSOME TAKEOVER). AS BULLOCK TOLD ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY, "IT'S NOT EVEN A PASSING OF THE TORCH. IT'S A PARALLEL STORY OF ANOTHER FAMILY MEMBER THAT WAS RAISED IN THE SAME FAMILY DANNY OCEAN WAS AND WHAT HAPPENS (NEXT)."

**TRUE TO FORM, *OCEAN'S 8* CONTINUES TO SUBVERT THE HEIST GENRE OF THE 1960 ORIGINAL** (featuring rat-packers Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin) and the 2001 remake, *Ocean's Eleven* (with modern-day rat packers George Clooney and Brad Pitt). Debbie Ocean (Bullock), sister of Danny Ocean, gets out of jail on parole, and within days she's recruited a criminal gang to rob New York's glamorous Met Gala. Or, more specifically, the 150-million-dollar necklace decorating the neck of the Gala's celebrity co-chair (Hathaway).

Director Gary Ross (*Hunger Games*, *Seabiscuit*) says he watched the previous movies so that this latest incarnation would "make sense as an *Oceans* film but also as its own being. Fortunately [*Ocean's Eleven*, *12*, *13* director and *Ocean's 8* producer] Steven Soderbergh is also a good friend, and we began a long conversation that lasted throughout prep," Ross describes. "I shared my shot lists and design, and he was incredibly encouraging that I be bold and commit to a strong cinematic point of view. The [previous] movies had lots of 'one-ers, which are thrilling to choreograph. Steven kept saying, 'This is your chance to do the things you can't do anywhere else,' so I took that to heart."

Emmy-winning cinematographer Eigel Bryld (*House of Cards*, *In Bruges*), who was Ross' DP, says Soderbergh's friendship with David Fincher (who created *House of Cards*) may have helped make Ross aware of his work. "I had already finished *House of Cards* when my agent sent me the *Ocean's 8* script," Bryld recalls. "I was back in Denmark, so I

flew to the states to meet with Gary. It went well, and I signed on."

Ross calls Bryld "unassuming and a huge talent. He lit enormous spaces with such subtlety. I learned more and more from him as the film moved forward." The Local 600 camera team supporting Bryld included A-Camera 1st AC Craig Pressgrove; B-camera 1st AC Bradley Grant and A-Camera Operator/DP for 2nd Unit Duane "DC" Manwiller, who previously worked on *Ocean's Eleven*, *12* and *13* as camera operator and Second Unit DP.

Bryld says that he can't begin to express his happiness that Manwiller was at his side.

"He's so good," the DP smiles. "And Craig [Pressgrove] nails it every time; we never had to do another take because of focus. Eric Boncher is always my first choice as Gaffer; we worked together on *The Wizard of Lies* and he's fast, creative and great at managing his crew. All these guys really love making films, and they bring incredible passion and skill to every job."

#### **THE BRIEF WAS TO WORK FROM THE ORIGINAL *OCEAN'S* TEMPLATE,**

so both cast and crew watched all the previous films in the pantheon. Manwiller says the *Ocean's 8* team tried to "emulate the same vibe from the three previous films, while also supporting Ross' own imprint. "Gary termed the phrase 'Oceansie,' for shots with that original *Ocean's* feeling," Manwiller describes. "On many occasions we'd have shots that would encompass the entire set in 360-degree moves."

Bryld confirms that he and Ross wanted "the swag, the jive-y scores, the all-out retro," of the earlier films. "We shot on ALEXA, mostly on the Zeiss master zoom, which is a big beast but worth it," he explains. "Obviously I had to light a bit more, but we weren't shooting too shallow anyway, with eight lead actors, and I didn't want to get into a situation with Craig having to bounce the focus around or use chunky stops."

Conventional wisdom with a large ensemble cast dictates long lenses, but Bryld says it was key to the storytelling to "get in close" and become a part of the group. "Gary wanted to use the zoom lens to bring different layers to the heist," the DP notes. "It was about telling the story with the camera through long, smooth takes, but it wasn't about making [the camera] invisible; rather, it was a part of the scene to keep the audience engaged."

Ross says *Ocean's 8* had more stylized camera movement than anything he'd ever

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done. “The Technocrane was a key tool, and Duane [Manwiller] a kind of jazz musician on the wheels,” the director shares. “He had a wonderful dialog going with our dolly grip because it takes two to tango in that situation. I think the Techno with the Libra head became the most vital piece of equipment.”

Manwiller cites a shot of Cate Blanchett’s character Lou, as one of many that exploited the Technocrane’s attributes. “It was always this wonderful dance between A-camera dolly grip Andy Sweeny, Craig [Pressgrove] rocking out flawless focus, and Eigil’s lighting,” he states. “This shot of Cate started on the second floor as she enters a DJ’s booth and works her way down a winding set of stairs to reveal the nightclub going off. She walks past partygoers to a bar on the first floor and on through the entire dance floor, which is filled with smoke, interactive lighting and imagery of old black and white movie clips being projected on the dance floor from an HD projector high above the set. It was total eye candy!”

But even such flamboyant moves took a back seat to *Ocean’s* key location – The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Founded in 1870, the museum’s collection contains millions of global treasures spanning five

thousand years; yet it’s neither designed nor equipped for moviemaking. In fact, few films have ever shot inside the Met (*The Thomas Crown Affair* and *When Harry Met Sally* being the rare exceptions).

The original plan was to build out a “Met” set onstage at Gold Coast Studios on Long Island. But then Anna Wintour, Editorial Director, Condé Nast, and Editor-in-Chief of *U.S. Vogue*, got involved, and, as B-camera 1st AC Grant explains: “We shot a scene in [Wintour’s] office at *Vogue*, she made a few calls, and we were able to shoot inside The Met itself,” he marvels.

The two weeks inside the Met came with many restrictions: shooting could only start once museum guests had left for the day and had to wrap before the doors opened the next morning. (Other limitations included a more scaled-back craft services than many were expecting as the Met handles its own catering within the venue.)

Don Holder, Lighting Designer for *The Lion King* and *Wicked*, was hired to create the look for The Met Gala, and each night the rigging crew would come in at 5 p.m. and help with gear for Holder to set the look.

As Boncher remembers: “Eigil and I would come in at 6 p.m. and create actual set lighting for the characters. The biggest challenge was to create a lighting infrastructure within the sets to support Gary’s dynamic camera moves. Many of the shots are on a crane arm or Movo Cam. Most sets were lit from a soft ambiance from above. Quasar Bulbs, Blanket Lights, SkyPanels thru bleached muslin. When we could, we’d bring LED Hybrid China balls, SkyPanels or Blanket Lights.”

Lighting was also a challenge because of the range of skin and hair tones across the main cast. Bryld and Boncher worked closely with Make-Up Department Head Louise McCarthy, as well as with each star’s personal hair and makeup artist. “It was a dual approach,” Bryld recounts. “We wanted to be flattering to a certain degree, but it also had to be real – not too cosmetic or soft. Cate [Blanchett] and Sandy [Bullock] couldn’t be more different, aesthetically, in the two-hander shots, and we wanted to play the diversity so it became a feast for the eyes.”

“You have to also give shout-outs to John Keating, head theatrical gaffer at The Met; Larry Price, rigging gaffer; and Scott Maher, lighting programmer,” Bonchor says. “Without their help, it would not have been

possible for us to achieve what we did.”

Bryld credits Key Grip Charlie Marroquin for helping Met officials understand that “we weren’t making it up as we went along. Charlie was the one on the floor making everyone feel safe. It was a tough place in terms of planning. Gary’s ideas evolve during shooting, which can be a very rewarding process of constantly adapting and optimizing the shots and the lighting. But it also meant we couldn’t say we’ll be exactly here or there; we had to discover things and be flexible.”

**BECAUSE OF ITS COLLECTION OF PRICELESS ART,** The Met had severe height restrictions, but the crew did get to employ the Technocrane, especially on the main staircase to capture the full sweep of fashionistas like Alexander Wang, Kim Kardashian West, Lauren Santo Domingo and Zac Posen entering the Egyptian Temple of Dendur. Ross and Bryld also wanted contextual inserts, so they sent the B-camera team on something of a Met tour.

“That was fascinating,” Grant recalls. “Just a few of us, including Dolly Grip Chris Deroche, as the Met staff provided descriptions of why certain pieces are important to the collection. The brief was to capture female-focused pieces of artwork to use as inserts. That’s what’s so interesting about working in the industry – you get to see stuff you’ve never seen before.”

One key setup, of celebrities heading into The Met in their finery from Fifth Avenue, was actually shot in L.A. by Steadicam Operator Bela Trutz. “I was having dinner one night, just having wrapped on the latest *Spider-Man*,” Trutz remembers. “And Diana Alvarez, Gary’s producer, with whom I worked on *Free State of Jones*, called. She asked if I was available to shoot in L.A. – the great logistics of being an L.A. local – and I said yes, instantly.”

The steps outside of L.A. City Hall have a similar grandeur as the Met, although they were built slightly later, in 1926. “We tented-up the whole area,” Trutz adds. “And sectioned it off with talk show hosts, cameras, et cetera. But the Technocrane didn’t reach to the bottom of the stairs, so I shot Steadicam all day long – up and down the stairs, following the different celebrities. Funny enough, I also got paid to be on screen, as there was another guy with a camera and I was in the shot!”



While the weather for the L.A. shoot was West Coast pleasant, major snowstorms were rolling in back east. The *Ocean's* shoot stretched into very long days – sixteen hours became typical – and crew members were exhausted by the trek out to the stages on Long Island. As these were just within the TMZ, most had to drive back to the city late at night and return early in the morning. And Production did not stop for the weather, especially as it didn't look like the storms would slow any time soon – tough choices had to be made.

According to the Guild crew, Ross addressed the elephant in the room. It had been on one of the director's earlier films, *Pleasantville*, that 2nd AC Brent Lon Hershman, on his way home from the set at 1 a.m. after a shoot which started at 6 a.m. the previous day, had his car skid off the Century (105) Freeway, ending his life. "[Ross] basically put the onus on us crew members," Grant recalls. "He wasn't going to stop production, so he said, 'Don't come in if you don't feel safe, or get a hotel room locally.' But, when you're freelance, and you need the work, it's hard to make that call. You want to do the right thing."

Which is what many IATSE crew members did one night, (after not making it out to the Long Island location), calling into the Warner Bros. safety hotline, as well as Local 600 business representatives. Ross got

to the location (presumably in a helicopter), and workarounds were found, but the whole dynamic made for some tension on the set. "There was a lot of prep and pressure, and the stakes were very high," Bryld confirms. "We had to do re-shoots, so there's hidden VFX in the movie, mostly for seasonal adjustments. We were shooting in snowstorms, with wind and cold! It was also a challenge for the cast as they were dressed as if it were spring, not winter."

And that same group of eight female leads also provided levity on the *Ocean's* 8 set with the kind of banter seen on, and off, screen in the preceding films by their male counterparts. However, Bryld admits crewmembers were a bit apprehensive about Rihanna, who is more accustomed to an entourage and filling massive stadiums than on-set camaraderie between takes.

"We joked around in the beginning and wondered how to treat each [actress] individually, especially Rihanna," Bryld reports. "But she's fantastic to work with and had a alchemical influence on the whole team. I remember on one of the first days when she flubbed a line. Sandra burst out laughing and said, 'So, you're not a hundred percent perfect. That's a relief.'"

The big question is, will audiences be equally lenient with a swerve in the thus-far successful franchise, including those who fell for the hipster wipes, Clooney suits, and

guy gang of the popular remakes? Bryld is convinced they did right by the original while delivering a sharp and sly twist on the heist formula. Would he sign up for *Ocean's* 9 – and beyond?

"It would be a great idea," he laughs. "Let's see whether it happens." 

## LOCAL 600 CREW

**Directors of Photography**  
Eigil Bryld

**A-Camera Operator**  
Duane Manwiller

**A-Camera 1st AC**  
Craig Pressgrove

**A-Camera 2nd AC**  
Victoria K. Warren

**B-Camera Operator/Steadicam**  
Mark Schmidt, SOC

**B-Camera 1st AC**  
Bradley Grant

**B-Camera 2nd AC**  
Suren Karapetyan

**DIT**  
Bjorn Jackson

**Loader**  
Holly McCarthy

**Still Photographer**  
Barry Wetcher, SMPSP

**Publicist**  
Julie Kuehndorf