



# Tieuel Legacy presents... *Frame2Frame*

## Highlights

- Nationwide screenings of Silence. Film was his calling card.
- Finalist in Fox's On the Lot competition.
- 1st look 3 picture deal with Dreamworks Pictures.

## L i g h t s . . . C a m e r a . . . S i l e n c e

### Lights...Camera...Silence

One season and 12,000 film submissions ago, Fox Television and power filmmakers Steven Spielberg and Mark Burnett announced their intention to create the filmmaker's version of American Idol entitled On the Lot. To filmmakers, it was the opportunity to display every skill attained in during their amateur careers. Those techniques often include low budgets and 18-hour filming days often called "guerilla filmmaking". When professional filmmakers often have permits and elaborate sets, guerillas may steal shots and create makeshift sets that only last as long as the shoot. With no exception, a short film entitled Silence found its way to the website for the newly created reality Fox series. It details a young woman faced with teenage



Mateen's eye for detail.

pregnancy and various situations that come with it. Following rave reviews, the director of the film received the greenlight to take part in this million-dollar opportunity. It did not hurt that Silence won over a dozen awards at 80 festivals prior to the submission. Enter the director Mateen Kemet. The writer/director makes his way to the opposite side of the lens and his smile resonates as he is ecstatic to be a part of the potential windfall.

Mateen was born in the Bronx borough of New York. As a young adult he moved to Oakland, CA in an attempt to steer clear of any major trouble. After listening to his dialogue, I realized that he is a hybrid of both locations as he mixes catchy phrases from each. However, he clearly maintains the fact

that the gritty 70's films like French Connection and Dog Day Afternoon nearly define him as they were both filmed in the heart of New York. "Spike, Woody Allen, and Scorsese all captured New York accurately in their own way." As he describes filming in New York, I can't help

but to dream about what it is like to shoot amongst the towering buildings, concrete jungles, and bright lights. Instead, most of us have to settle by watching films like Silence. It was a labor of love as his cousin Dan Newell stepped in to finance a large portion of the film. "It

took me two years to lens Silence as the thesis for my master's degree. We shot it on 16mm film and I was fortunate to win the coveted Director's Guild Award as a result of our strenuous work."



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Kemet's friend, Kevin O'Neal, was another inspiration in college. As a film major, Kevin was his only insight on film education. At the time, Mateen could not fathom a person going to school to learn how to make movies. Wall Street was his next stop after college before the unthinkable happened years later. They switched roles. "Now, Kevin is a mortgage specialist and I am a filmmaker."

Before Kemet set foot On the Lot, he didn't know what to expect. Admittedly, he had a brief jones for "Flava of Love" but outside of wasting his brain for five hours on a VH1 marathon, he didn't spend much time on reality television. "On the show, my goal is to maintain a positive decorum. On here I am representing other people that share the same skin as me." He dug deep within his soul in order to show the world the filmmaker that he is and intends to be.

Spielberg handpicked Kemet as a hidden gem in the world by casting him "On the Lot". "Thank God for 'On the Lot'. Now my family is able to see the fruits of my labor. By investing in me, you're investing in yourself." That was tough for family to understand when Mateen often visited their homes with his palms out. Now his palms are looking up at Spielberg. "This moment is my crowning jewel."

At 41 years old, Kemet was the only African American chosen to display his skills on the lot. He has practically gone under the radar, as most of America hasn't caught onto this astonishing accomplishment of a man that only dreamt of being a filmmaker. "I watched Cary Grant as a child and loved the personality that Alfred Hitchcock injected into his films. Early in life, I thought that being a director was unattainable. But then I watched She's Gotta Have It by Spike Lee and it altered my view on life. I internalized the lifelong possibilities including the feat of becoming a successful film director

He pursued a degree in economics at San Francisco State University and pondered the idea of changing his major to film. He soon decided against it. Later, his best friend died at the age of 29 and it "freaked me out". Mortality began to settle in more each day. "If I'm going to go out, I want to go out the way that I want. Film can give me the voice that I want as I am allowed to analyze culture through the film medium."



Mateen directs Jerron.

“I argued with myself for a while. Would I create the films that would cater to the judges or would I stay in tune with myself?” He chose the latter.

His first film at On the Lot was entitled Soft, which is cute enough to make your grandmother chuckle. However, judge Carrie Fisher of Star Wars fame, didn't quite understand the idea behind it. The same was the case throughout his stint on the show. If ever there was a proposed outsider competing on the show, Mateen was likely one of the top choices. Each week it was difficult for him to win the judges support, some of whom complimented him regularly on his directing chops. They praised him, especially, on his work with actors as well as the verisimilitude that his films offered to real life. However, they never really gave him a resounding endorsement. Then during the “horror week”, he found that the gap between his films and the judges couldn't have been wider. There was not only a difference in style but there was a deviation in culture.

“We were given a prompt in which we had one day to write a script. Then we had to scramble to secure locations before filming began. Shooting and editing was complete in 48 hours each week. For Horror, they wanted to know the scariest thing that I could fathom. It wasn't about ghosts and goblins to me. The cops scare me more than anything, straight up.” In the film, I included all the elements of the genre-- a scary environment, blood, unfavorable odds against a seemingly superior foe and a sense of abandonment.” Although the judges never gave Kemet a full thumbs up the audiences at home helped him survive each week. He became a major player as he made it to the final eight in the competition. “I feel that I'm a much better director now. We made films each week with professional crews backing us. I came out with the strength of knowing that I can't be intimidated easily. It also didn't hurt that I received a two picture deal from DreamWorks, the production company co-owned by Steven Spielberg.”

When asked if he made friends while on the show he responds, “We are all friends. At first, it was a like a baptism of fire. We weren't able to talk to the other directors for a while. After the first three episodes, the excitement really began. It was like having an all-star team where no one knew anyone. Then we wouldn't sleep for 72 hours as we began pre-production and filming. We all shared the experience of being on the show and the Emerald Room.”

The Emerald Room is a place in which the filmmakers congregated. As it remains a mystery to the public, he states that each of the filmmakers will burst into laughter when that room comes up in conversation.

“Let's play a word game,” I suggested. The statement reminded him of the antagonist in the Saw movie franchise.

“Sure,” he responds.

I threw out words and he responded with the first thoughts that came to mind.

**Tieuel Legacy- “Comedy.”**

Kemet- “Coming to America.”

**TL- “Thriller.”**

Kemet- “Manchurian Candidate”

**TL- “Which version? Old blue eyes or Denzel?”**

Kemet- “Both.”

**TL- “Drama.”**

Kemet- "Real life."

TL- "TV show."

Kemet- "The Wire. I'm catching up on season three."

TL- "Director."

Kemet- "Spike, David Lynch, and Lars Von Trier."



Mateen Kemet is a filmmaker that is on the verge of a major breakthrough. During our discussion, I could tell that he has had a small taste of the life. Now he wants a mouthful. However, he hasn't put his title as "student" in the crates just yet. I imagine that he has the philosophy that each professional should maintain. If you feel like you know everything in film, it's time to leave the camera behind. Keep your eyes open wide for this gentleman's work or you might be blindsided. The next DreamWorks blockbuster film might have Mateen Kemet written all over it. Lights...camera...but never silent. Until the next time, it's a wrap at Tieuel Legacy Studios.

(Lights out.)

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