

## ADG AWARDS

## QUICK ON THE DRAW

Production designer Jim Bissell reveals his pal George Clooney's secret talent and the favorite set he created for *E.T.*

By Carolyn Giardina

PRODUCTION DESIGNER JIM BISSELL, 63, first worked with **George Clooney** on 2002's *Confessions of a Dangerous Mind* and earned an Oscar nomination for Clooney's 2005 film *Good Night, and Good Luck*. In recognition of their friendship, Clooney will present Bissell with a Lifetime Achievement Award at the 19th annual ADG Excellence in Production Design Awards. An Emmy winner for the 1980s Depression-set drama series *Palmerstown, U.S.A.*, Bissell also boasts such credits as *E.T. The Extra-*

*Terrestrial* and *Mission: Impossible — Ghost Protocol*. *THR* caught up with him by phone as he was scouting locations in London, where he currently is working on *Mission: Impossible 5*.



Bissell

ART DIRECTORS  
GUILD EXCELLENCE  
IN PRODUCTION  
DESIGN AWARDS

JAN. 31  
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#### How did you meet George Clooney?

Andrew Lazar, who was producing *Confessions of a Dangerous Mind*, said he had George Clooney on board. George agreed to meet me, and we spent three hours talking. That enthusiasm remained throughout the entire production. George doesn't admit it, but he can draw. I always find that some of the most successful collaborations are between people who can draw. What excites me is the material he picks.

#### What was your most memorable set for *E.T.*?

The house draped in plastic. Originally that wasn't meant to be: **Steven [Spielberg]** decided not to bring [the main character] Elliott to a hospital [as originally intended] and have scientists descend on the house instead. It was a scramble to figure out how to do it.



The *Monuments Men* was the fourth film Clooney (bottom left) made with Bissell.

#### What is most misunderstood about production design?

Production design is an art, and if you are really successful, nobody knows what you did. Hopefully the images are so appropriate for the story that [viewers] are totally engaged in the story.

#### How is *Mission Impossible: 5* going?

It's going to be a smart film. It's directed by **Chris McQuarrie** [who won an Oscar for writing *The Usual Suspects*], so it has that layer of intricacy. We've been shooting in Morocco, Austria and London. We're evolving the film in real time, which is hard for the production design and art departments.

#### HONORING THE ART OF FILM



CHRISTOPHER NOLAN  
Cinematic  
Imagery Award

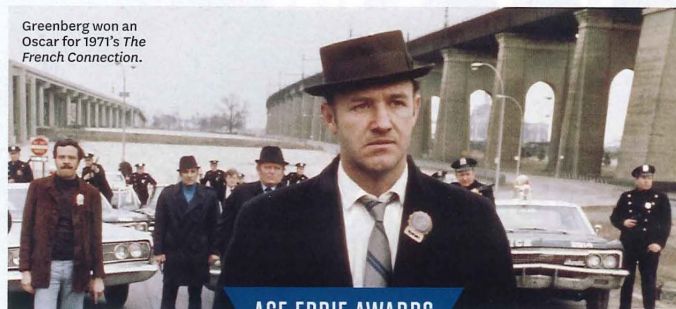
#### Lifetime Achievement Awards

CAMILLE ABBOTT  
Illustrator and  
matte artist

WILL FERRELL  
Scenic artist

JOHN P. BRUCE  
Set designer

JIM BISSELL  
Production  
designer



Greenberg won an Oscar for 1971's *The French Connection*.

#### ACE EDDIE AWARDS

## Where the Action Is

From *The French Connection*'s harrowing car pursuit to *Apocalypse Now*'s unforgettable helicopter convoy, editor Jerry Greenberg put the pieces together

JERRY GREENBERG, 78, WHO will be feted for career achievement at the American Cinema Editors' 65th annual Eddie Awards, has cut such films as *The French Connection* (for which he won an Oscar), *Kramer vs. Kramer* and *Apocalypse Now* (both earned him Oscar noms). He recently recalled some of his classic cuts with *THR*.

*Apocalypse Now* was a famously troubled production. Did you think it could become a classic while making it?

Yes, I knew I was working on a film for all time. I had never worked on a film so large in scope before, and I was happy to be a part of it. I was one of four editors. [The others were



Greenberg

Richard Marks, Walter Murch and Lisa Fruchtmann.] The helicopter sequence, that was my thing. It was about making tough choices. There was voluminous material, enough to make 20 movies.

The car-chase sequence in *The French Connection* continues to inspire film editors. What was it like to work on it?

**Billy Friedkin**, who is everything to *The French Connection*, had this brash quality that was refreshing. He didn't want to do the same thing everyone else did. ... He wanted to make this car chase personal. It wasn't just a collection of stunts; it was happening in Hackman's head. And the beauty of it is, it was mostly his point of view. There was an awful lot of material, and all of it good.

My assistant and I couldn't move; the room was filled with these [film] bins that we couldn't get around.

*The Untouchables* contains a scene on the stairs of a train station that

pays homage to the Odessa Steps sequence in *Battleship Potemkin*. How did that come together?

That was **Brian De Palma**; that scene is almost a line-for-line copy of the Odessa stairs scene. It was taking something that was an homage and making it his, making it unique and modern. I worked with Brian on five films, more than with any other director. — C.G.

#### ACE EDDIE AWARDS

JAN. 30  
BEVERLY HILTON

#### SPECIAL AWARDS

Robert Wise Award  
▼ CAROLYN GIARDINA



*THR*'s contributing tech editor, who writes the Behind the Screen blog, will be honored for shining a spotlight on editing and the filmmaking process.

Golden Eddie  
FRANK MARSHALL

Lifetime Career  
Achievement Awards  
DIANE ADLER  
JERRY GREENBERG