An Antidote Films Production

CHARLOTTE

A Wooden Boat Story

Directed by Jeffrey Kusama-Hinte

Running Time:	1 hour, 36 minutes
Screening Format:	HDCam 1080 23.98p
Aspect Ratio:	1.78 (16x9)

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Film Synopses

One Line:

A documentary about tradition, craftsmanship, community, and love of the sea.

Short:

CHARLOTTE is a film about an extraordinary boatyard, the Gannon & Benjamin Marine Railway, located on the island of Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts. Ross Gannon and Nat Benjamin established the boatyard in 1980 with the purpose of designing, building, and maintaining traditionally built wooden boats, and in the process they transformed Vineyard Haven harbor into a mecca for wooden boat owners and enthusiasts. After a long career of designing and constructing boats for others, Nat embarks on building a 50 foot gaff rigged schooner for use by his family and friends — her name is Charlotte. Through close observation of the everyday activities of the boatyard, the film emerges as a meditation on tradition, craftsmanship, family, community, our relationship to nature, and love of the sea.

Medium:

CHARLOTTE is a film about an extraordinary boatyard, the Gannon & Benjamin Marine Railway, located on the island of Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts. Ross Gannon and Nat Benjamin established the boatyard in 1980 with the purpose of designing, building, restoring, and maintaining traditionally built wooden boats. Over the ensuing decades Ross and Nat have played an essential role in preserving and extending the art and craft of wooden boat building.

The film begins as Nat embarks on building a 50 foot gaff-rigged Schooner for use by his family and friends — her name is Charlotte. Charlotte is being built from Nat's original design, using traditional plank-on-frame, all wood construction. He has been preparing to make this boat his entire adult life, accumulating the experience, know-how, and resources that would allow him to construct the boat of his dreams.

The film portrays the everyday activities in and around the boatyard. Much of the work is mundane, repetitive, and confusing to the uninitiated, while other work demonstrates moments of singularly inspired craftsmanship and ingenuity. Those who work at the boatyard are bound together in mutual support, friendship, and shared mission; the friends, family, enthusiasts, and clients who drop by sustain the boatyard, materially and spiritually.

After decades of preparation, and three and a half years of construction, Charlotte is moved from the shed. The launch of Charlotte is the climax of the film. Hundreds of people turn out, some traveling thousands of miles to attend the event — many have no direct relationship to the boatyard, they have come to support its work and celebrate the enduring tradition of wooden boatbuilding. The film is a character study of the processes, people, and the boats themselves, but ultimately what emerges is a meditation on tradition, craftsmanship, family, community, and love of the sea.

Long:

CHARLOTTE is a film about an extraordinary boatyard, the Gannon & Benjamin Marine Railway, located on the island of Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts. Ross Gannon and Nat Benjamin established the boatyard in 1980 with the purpose of designing, building, restoring, and maintaining traditionally built wooden boats. Over the ensuing decades Ross and Nat have played an essential role in preserving and extending the art and craft of wooden boat building.

Nat and Ross employ traditional boatbuilding techniques because they feel that this is the best way to produce boats that are simple, beautiful, robust, and a pleasure to sail; they employ modern techniques, materials and technology in the (limited) circumstances that it improves the boat. Their work is informed by close examination of the great yacht designers of the past — first and foremost Herreshoff, Alden, Sparkman & Stephens— but the vast majority of the boats they have produced are based on Nat's original designs. This combination of tradition, innovation and originality has made the

boatyard a mecca for wooden boat owners and enthusiasts from the world over, and has transformed Vineyard Haven harbor into a showplace for a vast array of gorgeous wooden boats.

The film begins as Nat embarks on building a 50 foot gaff-rigged Schooner for use by his family and friends — her name is Charlotte. It is the dead of winter, a blizzard envelopes the Boatyard, and Nat is working alone in an improvised and unheated "workshop." He is installing floors on a massive keel timber that sits atop a salvaged 8 ton ballast. Charlotte is being built from Nat's original design, using traditional plank-on-frame, all wood construction. In a way he has been preparing to make this boat his entire adult life, accumulating the experience, know-how, and resources that would allow him to construct the boat of his dreams.

The plan for the boat is reflected in a simple set of line drawings. The drawings provide a general sense of how the hull is shaped and the boat rigged, but little guidance about how it will be built. Drawing on his practical judgment and a profound knowledge of traditional building techniques, Nat works directly on the boat as well as communicating the details of the construction to the ever-changing collection of volunteers, apprentices, and a precious few Boatwrights who work on the project over the years. Every piece of wood on Charlotte is unique, it is carefully selected in terms of species, grain structure, size, defects, and is shaped through hand work and basic woodworking machines guiding in every instance by the judgment of the craftsperson carrying out the work. Most of the metal fittings for the rig are designed by Nat and his rigger and custom fabricated. There are precious few manufactured items integrated into the boat — the winches, compass, navigation and communication systems, etc. — and many of those were salvaged from preexisting vessels.

While Charlotte is being built, the boatyard goes about its usual business of repairing and building boats for their clients. Summer begins with readying a large portion of the Vineyard Haven fleet of wooden boats for the sailing season — bright work

is sanded and refinished, winches are lubricated, systems are checked, the boats are rigged, etc. The flurry of activity gives way to the more deliberate pace of summer, when they continue to work on new boats and undertake restoration projects. Launches punctuate the regular pace of work: the staff organizes the yard, boats are "rolled" onto the marine railway, and a hundred or more friends and family of the boat's owner as well as supporters of the boatyard, come to celebrate the occasion. During the fall boats are prepared for the coming winter — taking a wooden boat out of the water leads to wood shrinking that can be detrimental to the boat, so by and large the boats are left in the water over winter thus must be prepared to face the harsh conditions. In the fall boats are prepared to face the harsh conditions of winter. Year in and year out the cycle continues, work is done according to what the seasons necessitate and what the weather will allow.

Nat is kept quite busy by his responsibilities to the boatyard and thus can only work on Charlotte intermittently. The process of building Charlotte is slow and careful, but satisfyingly cumulative. In the first year the boat is lofted, the keel is laid, and the floors are installed. In the second year the sawn frames are installed and the boat is planked. Once the boat is "shuttered up" the pace accelerates, due in large part to two Boatwrights who begin to systematically work through the myriad details that go into completing a large wooden boat. In due course the hull is faired and caulked, the engine and mechanical systems are installed, the doghouses, decking, and rigging are completed, and the interior is fitted out. The process is cooperative and artisanal, bearing no resemblance to modern manufacturing.

While Charlotte is under construction the boatyard completes work on the 38' Sloop Here and Now, the motor yachts Ilona and Alliance, the 26' sloop Advent (after Herreshoff's Alerion), as well as a half dozen smaller boats and countless repair jobs. After decades of preparation, and three and a half years of construction, Charlotte is moved from the shed. Once she is out we share Nat's obvious pleasure in seeing the beauty of her lines for the first time. The launch of Charlotte is the climax of the film. Hundreds of people turn out, some traveling thousands of miles to attend the event —

many have no direct relationship to the boatyard, they have come to support its work and celebrate the enduring tradition of wooden boatbuilding.

Charlotte's homeport is Vineyard Haven Harbor, where she joins a fleet of other Gannon & Benjamin boats; the family resemblance to her cousins is unmistakable and gratifying to behold. Under sail, Charlotte comes into her own: she cuts a beautiful line through the water, and when her sails fill with a stiff breeze she pulls forward, fully alive, eager to bring her crew wherever she might be steered. Besides day trips around Vineyard Sound, she has already travelled from the Caribbean up through Maine, and I suspect that in her long life she will eventually sail all of the oceans of the world.

The film portrays the everyday activities in and around the boatyard. From the selection, cutting, planing, and fairing of massive timbers, to the sanding and varnishing of bright work, to visits by friends and family, the ritual of "coffee time", festive launches, and sailing. Much of the work is mundane, repetitive, and confusing to the uninitiated, while other work demonstrates moments of singularly inspired craftsmanship and ingenuity. The visits and breaks might appear as distractions from work but, in fact, they are evidence of the social context that make the work possible. Those who work at the boatyard are bound together in mutual support, friendship, and shared mission; the friends, family, enthusiasts, and clients who drop by sustain the boatyard, materially and spiritually.

The film is structured around a simple plot line: the design, construction, and launch of Charlotte. However, narrative structure is deemphasized as the film seeks to provide the viewer with carefully constructed succession of observations, allowing the boat building process to speak for itself, showing rather than explaining, much in the way that knowledge of boatbuilding is passed from master to apprentice. The film is a character study of the processes, people, and the boats themselves, but ultimately what emerges is best characterized of as a meditation on tradition, craftsmanship, family, community, our relationship to nature, and the love of the sea.

Director's Statement

Short

I first visited the Gannon and Benjamin Marine Railway about 10 years ago. The boatyard was abuzz with activity — a symphony of planing, sawing, drilling and hammering. The wooden boats in the shop, sitting in the cradle on the railway, and tied up in the harbor were graceful, robust, and inspiring; their wood topsides were stunning and down below the cabinetry was sumptuous, yet eminently practical. The boatyard embodied a certain "American" ingenuity and a can-do spirit that immediately attracted me and I began to imagine making a film to provide a glimpse of what ingenuity, dedication, and workmanship can bring into the world.

After a couple of years of indecision and planning, I jumped into the fray and set out to make an observational film constructed in a cinéma vérité fashion, one that allowed the people, their work, the materials, the boats, and nature to "speak" for themselves. Cinéma vérité invites the filmmaker to be honest, direct, practical and to avoid embellishment, all qualities that are reflected in work and ethos of the boatyard; it is also a form that allows a great attention to be paid to the physical, material dynamics of a situation, to show rather than tell, to demonstrate rather than explain. The building of Charlotte, a 50 foot gaff rigged schooner, became the focus of the film. Not only was the boat one of the larger vessels that the boatyard had set out to build, it was Nat Benjamin's personal boat and based on his original design. Charlotte was fullest expression of Nat's practical and aesthetic sensibilities toward boatbuilding and thus a fitting focus for the film.

I have long admired the beautiful lines of wooden sailing boats, the richness of their bright work, their majesty as they glided across the water under sail. In this film I set out to understand and convey what is behind this beauty. When I look at Charlotte (the schooner, not the film) I think about all of the skilled artisans who worked on it, the trees that were felled and the thousands of pieces of wood that were carefully shaped and

fitted together, the metal elements that were fabricated and forged, her elegant rigging and generous sails, the families of the boatwrights and the wider community of supporters and admirers who nourished and encouraged everybody involved. This is all present in the boat, and necessarily so. Though Charlotte followed from Nat's design, it was equally dependent upon the bounty of the forest, the hands of artisans, the traditions of boat building, and so much more — it could not exist but these myriad contributions. All of this is evoked when I see Charlotte, and my deepest desire is that some measure of this feeling is communicated to those that see the film.

Long

I first visited the Gannon and Benjamin Marine Railway about 10 years ago. The boatyard was abuzz with activity — a symphony of planing, sawing, drilling and hammering. Lumber, machines, hand tools, fittings, paints, rope, and chandlery filled the shop. Every tool and machine was well-worn, indeed it was hard to imagine that they had ever been new. I puzzled over the hieroglyphics written in sharpie and pencil on the painted-white floors, and watched the boatwrights go about their work. It seemed to be organized following the principles of maximum functionality and minimum pretense, with an overriding concern not to discard anything that might prove to be useful someday — with the terms "useful" and "someday" very expansively defined. The wooden boats in the shop, sitting in the cradle on the railway, and tied up in the harbor were graceful, robust, and inspiring; their wood topsides were stunning and down below the cabinetry was sumptuous, yet eminently practical. As I explored, I couldn't help but to pass my hand over the wood surfaces. I was smitten.

The boatyard embodied a certain "American" ingenuity and a can-do spirit that immediately attracted me and I began to imagine making a film to provide a glimpse of what ingenuity, dedication, and workmanship can bring into the world. I wanted to spend time with the boatwrights and convey what I found to others. I envisioned an observational film constructed in a cinéma vérité fashion, one that allowed the people,

their work, the materials, the boats, and nature to "speak" for themselves. Cinéma vérité invites the filmmaker to be honest, direct, practical and to avoid embellishment, all qualities that are reflected in work and ethos of the boatyard; it is also a form that allows a great attention to be paid to the physical, material dynamics of a situation, to show rather than tell, to demonstrate rather than explain. But I am experienced enough to know that infatuations of the heart not a movie make and I well understood the difficulties of translating what moved me into the form of film. My approach wouldn't allow me to import anything exogenous into the film — if it didn't unfold before the camera it didn't exist — and there wasn't a discernable dramatic arc that I could readily take hold of and build a film around. I couldn't quite figure out how to make the film, and I couldn't walk away.

During these years I continued to visit the boatyard. I would speak to Nat and Ross upon occasion — they were always cordial, but "talkers" often drift in and out of the boatyard and I sensed that they were (properly) weary of people and their fanciful ideas. I photographed the boatyard as well, developing a set of images to meditate on while contemplating the film. The visuals were captivating. The well worn hands of the boatwrights, the massive boards of tropical woods, with their color, grain, surface texture; the jointing, planing, and cutting the boards into useful shapes; how everything was weathered and worn, bearing the scars of years of use. And then there were the beautiful, elegant finished boats. But the static character of the photographs was frustrating, for as much as they revealed, I yearned to document the activities of the yard in their evolving, unfolding motion.

Along the way Nat introduced me to Brian Dowley, a consummate cinematographer with a wonderful facility for vérité filming. Brian had spent quite a lot of time in the boatyard, and had shot some launches and other events; moreover he was a friend of Nat's and an accomplished sailor. We met during the summer of 2004 and discussed the project at length; I was satisfied that he would be the ideal collaborator. That winter, while I was shooting a film in Iceland, Brian sent an email saying that Nat

was beginning work on a 50 foot gaff rigged schooner, based on Nat's original design. Not only was the boat one of the larger vessels that the boatyard set out to build, it was Nat's personal boat. This felt like the opportunity that I had been waiting for — I imagined that this was the boat that Nat had always wanted to build, and it would be the fullest expression of his practical and aesthetic sensibilities toward boatbuilding. I convinced myself that this was enough of a "story" to base a film around, half knowing, though consciously denying, that it was more of a justification than an actual story line.

The first critical decision was to determine the medium in which to shoot the picture. Video was the obvious choice from a cost perspective and for its capacity to effortlessly shoot hour after hour. However, when we did some preliminary tests I couldn't get over the feeling that video didn't render the boatyard as I saw it. There was an electronic sheen that removed me from what I was observing; also, it did a poor job handling the extreme lighting conditions with which we were faced. Also, we were planning on shooting in all weather conditions, with extreme variations of temperature and humidity, something that video cameras don't generally deal with particularly well. On the other hand, film just felt right. It rendered the scenes beautifully, where its natural grain complimenting and extending what was being photographed; exposure extremes, harsh shooting conditions, no problem. Film was tried and true, predictable and reliable, the major drawback was the expense. However I even managed to see the cost in a positive light: I knew it would instill discipline on the shooting process, where we had no choice but to be thoughtful of every foot of film we shot. Perhaps the deciding factor was that Brian owned an Aaton Super 16mm camera, and was superbly well adept at handling it.

Brian began shooting in the Boatyard during the winter of 2005, and I joined him the following summer. It had always been a pleasure to visit the boatyard, but making a film about it heightened my experience. My senses were attuned to everything that was going on — a plank being planed there, an apprentice sweeping up over there, the birds flying through the shop, the moisture in the air — and I was focused on how to best

capture what was going on around me, and how it could be conveyed to others. The experience was exhilarating, but there were also times, usually when I was tired, when everything starting to look and feel the same and the process grew tiresome. And then there were the frustrations, large and small, like running out of film right at the moment that a garboard was ready to be attached or following an interesting conversation only to realize that a key piece of information needed to understand what was under discussion was missing. But we preserved, and over time we began accumulating wonderful, compelling footage.

Charlotte (the schooner) began as a set of basic line drawings hand drawn by Nat on large sheets of paper. They are spare, deceptively simple drawings. The lines that trace the shape of the hull are smooth and sinewy — in Nat's words they are "fair lines." Through the use of three views, and the application of multiple "waterlines" "diagonals" and "buttock" lines, the two dimensional drawing gives a remarkably accurate representation of the curvaceous three-dimensional hull. The offset table gave the distances between these lines at full scale, and this allowed Nat and the crew to translate the line drawings into full-size plan on the shop floor; a process that is called lofting. Though the principles of lofting are elementary, this process appears puzzling to the uninitiated, a feeling that tends to bloom into complete bewilderment by the apparent ease with which a master Boatwright lofts a boat. Once Charlotte had been lofted, the boatwrights used the full size drawing on the floor to guide them in shaping the parts that comprised the structure of the hull.

Nat's drawings didn't show any construction details, and every step of the way he guided the construction process, informed by decades of experience and study, and built upon millennia of boat building practice. Nat mapped out the dimensions of the deadwood, the number of planks, the width of the garboard, the dimensions of the deck beams, etc. and communicates this information to his fellow boatwrights. Nat explains, makes sketches on odd pieces of wood, and often demonstrates what he means. The boatwrights don't simply carry out orders but ask questions, make suggestions, and

ultimately do the work within the limits of their abilities. Actions, not words, are the primary means of communicating between the boatwrights. The apprentices are given just enough instruction to get them to working — its takes a couple of minutes to explain how to set a bung, but the learning really comes from completing the action a thousand times. There is constant exchange of information, but no less important is the passing on of knowhow, and a certain ethic toward work, materials, tradition, and nature. This is essential for building the boat, but it precisely what keeps the craft traditions alive and vibrant, and allows them to be passed down from one generation to the next.

And then there is the wood from which Charlotte was built. Angelique, Wana, and Silver Balli from Surinam, and White Oak, Black Locust and old growth Cypress from the United States. Each species has qualities that make it ideal for specific functions. Angelique is a hard, dense, oily wood, that is virtually impervious to water; it is used for much of the keel and floors of the boat. White Oak is flexible, strong, workable and it is ideal for frames, deck frames and other structural items that need these qualities. The boatwright doesn't simply pick up a piece of wood of the correct species and size and begin working it; first it must be carefully examined to determine if it is a suitable for the particular task — every piece of wood has a unique grain pattern and array of "defects." The variations of the wood are not considered a nuisance, merely the inherent quality of working with "living" materials. In fact variations are essential when, for instance, the Boatwright carefully selects a piece of wood with a sweeping grain that matches the curve of a particular futtock or knee; by following the grain the piece is stronger and more resistant to breaking. This is a profound contrast to using fiberglass or steel, which are engineered to be inert, the more uniform (i.e., "dead") the better. The relationship of the boatwright and the wood is profound, and fundamentally shapes the particular character of the work in the boatyard, and the boats themselves.

The building process is a wonderful blend of formal engineering, know-how, tacit knowledge, hand skills, and what the available material allows. The work of boatwrights was not much different from those working a century ago, or a century prior to that

(except that the advent of power tools has made the process more efficient). Their focus, clarity, and dexterity was a pleasure to view; every operation involved in building Charlotte was guided by the Boatwright, using his or her hands. The end result is organic, strong, intelligible, and repairable. Most of the work moved along seamlessly, but when confronted by a piece of wood that showed an unanticipated defect, or when a mistake was made, they took a step back and began to rework the part until it was done correctly. There was an overwhelming sense that their work is important to them and that carries with it a sense of accomplishment; though the process can be slow, it is cumulative and progressive. Every contribution — from placing a bung to a installing the transom — is important and tangibly contributes to the final form of the boat. Moreover the integrity of the boat depends upon the quality of their work, and of course the pleasure and safety of the sailors depends on the integrity of the boat. Their work is is a repudiation of this age of impatience, superficiality, incomprehensible technologies and disposability. This work is a world apart from modern office work, where people sit at computers "processing information," designers manipulate pixels or, indeed, directors edit films. While the work at the Boatyard is neither easy nor free of frustrations, there is a general feeling of connectedness, wellbeing, and satisfaction among the boatwrights, and this work is the opposite of mass manufacturing, which depends on interchangeable and anonymous people and parts.

During the initial stages of construction, the resemblance of the hull to the skeleton of the whale is uncanny, and not accidental — nature has evolved forms that are robust and beautiful, which is what Nat aspires to in his designs. One fascinating aspect of wooden boats is that water will pass through the hull (hopefully in very small quantities) and the wood will expand and contract depending on its moisture content. Wooden boats are inextricably intertwined with nature, in a very tangible sense they remain alive, a reflection of the forests from which the wood is harvested and the oceans on which they sail. The ocean is as unforgiving as it is majestic. The salt air, water and sun are life giving and unremittingly corrosive; the wind propels sail boats through the water, but when too powerful in can tear them apart, as can the swells that arise from the interaction

of tide and wind. It somehow seems improbable that boats made of wood could withstand, even thrive in, this environment. The fact that they do both is a testament to boatwrights' ingenuity and their wherewithal to treat the natural world as an active partner in the process. The construction and sailing of wooden boats has much to teach us about the natural world, ultimately leading one to accept nature's awesome power and agency.

After three and a half years of filming Charlotte's construction, she was ready to be launched. I anticipated that the launch would bring out a large crowd, and for the occasion I splurged and brought on a second camera-sound team to film the event — our crew swelled to five people that day! Hundreds of people showed up, filling the workshop, lining the beach, and covering the dock. They were Nat's family and friends, customers of the boatyard, wooden boat enthusiasts, townspeople, and some who just wandered in to see what the celebration was about — they came around the corner and across oceans. The ceremony consisted of speeches, music, prayers, and the christening. What I found most moving was the extended community that turned out to support the launching of the Charlotte; so many disparate people, brought together to express their support and admiration for Nat and the work of the boatyard. Charlotte was Nat's boat, but she was also a gift to all those who were present, to all those who would see her in the harbor and the high sea. As Nat said in his remarks, the boatyard could only survive with the support of the Community; and while material support is important, I took Nat to be referring to a more vital, ethereal form of support, spiritual in character.

Seeing Charlotte finally set sail was thrilling. The crew pushed out the sails to catch the breeze, and Charlotte gently pulled away from its mooring. Soon she moved into the channel, picking up speed, pulling herself through the water. She was strong, beautiful and glorious; Nat was happy and relaxed, in his element. I had always imagined that this would be the final scene of the film, and it fully delivered. This also marked the end of the shooting process, a moment I greeted with equal measures excitement and trepidation. During production everything seems possible, one is excited

by all of the new and wonderful things that are being filmed, and one never knows what captivating, pivotal event will transpire next. But everything changes when the camera stops rolling. The universe closes, the possibilities are reduced to what exits on a finite number of camera and sound rolls. This is a daunting moment for any film, but with a vérité documentary the stakes are higher — one can't shoot another interview, write narration, or do reshoots — the film is either in the can or not.

I sat down with David Smith (the wonderfully talented editor who was also my collaborator on Soul Power) to begin the process of transforming the footage into a film. David and I screened all of the footage, noted what we felt was compelling, and then embarked on making assemblies of scenes — the tried and true process of editing vérité documentaries. Truth be told, at this point I didn't know exactly what the finished film would look and feel like, and at times I even doubted whether we would be able to craft a satisfying film from the footage. But I put my faith in the process. At a particularly rough moment, when we felt "lost at sea", I printed out Kübler-Ross' five stages of grief (Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance) and taped it up on the edit room wall. I meant it humorously; to remind us that we were not, in fact, dealing with life and death issues. Periodically I would read the stages aloud, in an appropriately grave voice. The practice was amusing, but it was also did serve to becalm and focus us. I realized that rehearsing these stages was helping me overcome my resistance to moving forward, to accept the finite materiality of the footage, and to fully embrace the cinema vérité ethos with which I had approached the film. I had to accept the death of the ideal, to allow the film to live. Ultimately, we created a film with which I am very happy. By embracing the (limitations of the) footage and transcending my preconceptions about the ultimate form of the film, I came to a film that was much richer and I had imagined.

I have long admired the beautiful lines of wooden sailing boats, the richness of their bright work, their majesty as they glided across the water under sail. In this film I set out to understand and convey what is behind this beauty, i.e. what makes this beauty possible. When I look at Charlotte (the schooner, not the film) I think about all of the

skilled artisans who worked on it, the trees that were felled and the thousands of pieces of wood that were carefully shaped and fitted together, the metal elements that were fabricated and forged, her elegant rigging and generous sails, the families of the boatwrights and the wider community of supporters and admirers who nourished and encouraged everybody involved. This is all present in the boat, and necessarily so. Though Charlotte followed from Nat's design, it was equally dependent upon the bounty of the forest, the hands of artisans, the traditions of boat building, and so much more — it could not exist but these myriad contributions. All of this is evoked when I see Charlotte, and my deepest desire is that some measure of this feeling is communicated to those that see the film.

Cinematographer's statement

We shot Charlotte using motion picture stock. We felt that imagery exposed on an emulsion-based medium would best capture the natural feel of sculpted wood grain, the artistry of the builders and the details of their environs. Film feels like a natural product. It is visually organic – and, yes, I know the stock originates from a lot of chemistry in Rochester, NY! The film medium helped guide my own art as a cinematographer: The exposure range combined with the depth of field of super 16mm film aided me in staying flexible and in the moment. With no added production lights I had to depend on the expansiveness of the medium along with the mechanics of my camera.

Shooting vérité

There is something about the commitment a shipwright makes when cutting wood into shape. You can't go back. A tight fitting plank is cut just so – it has to fit or the boat will leak forever. The commitment is similar with shooting film. A shot has to be timely and correct. There is little margin for error. A missed shot is simply missed.
Like the choice of film, the decision to shoot vérité was also deliberate. We did not want to direct the boat builders to work for us. From the outset, we made an agreement with Nat Benjamin and Ross Gannon that we would not interrupt their process or their daily lives. Shooting this way is demanding. It requires constant attention to what is in front of you while always keeping an eye open to anticipate what is about to happen as the "story" unfolds.

Vérité shooting is also about hand holding the camera--it is a dance with your subject. I had to move with Nat and Ross, and the other builders, while not being in their way. One of the great challenges is to be in the middle of everything with a minimal presence. My goal was simple--I try to make their world visible while remaining as invisible as possible. In this kind of film-making dance, experience and instinct ultimately take over.

Director / Producer Biography

Jeffrey Kusama-Hinte (fka Jeffrey Levy-Hinte) founded his New York City based production company, Antidote Films, in 2000.

President of Antidote Films in New York, Jeffrey Kusama-Hinte (fka Jeffrey Levy-Hinte) most recently produced THE KIDS ARE ALL RIGHT, written and directed by Lisa Cholodenko, and starring Julianne Moore, Annette Bening, and Mark Ruffalo. THE KIDS ARE ALL RIGHT had its world premiere at the 2010 Sundance Film Festival, and went on to screen at the 2010 Berlin Film Festival, where it won the Teddy Award for Best Feature Film. THE KIDS ARE ALL RIGHT has received numerous accolades, including four Academy Award nominations – Best Picture, Best Actress (Annette Bening), Best Original Screenplay (Lisa Cholodenko & Stuart Blumberg), and Best Supporting Actor (Mark Ruffalo). The film also received four Golden Globe nominations, winning two Globes for Best Actress (Musical or Comedy) and Best Motion Picture (Musical or Comedy). The film was released worldwide in 2010 by Focus Features and UGC-PH.

Two years ago, Kusama-Hinte directed and produced the documentary SOUL POWER, which premiered at the 2008 Toronto International Film Festival. SOUL POWER also had its European premiere at the 2009 Berlin International Film Festival, and was winner of the 2009 Los Angeles Film Festival Audience Award. SOUL POWER was released domestically by Sony Pictures in the summer of 2009, and internationally through Celluloid Dreams.

Kusama-Hinte has also recently produced the documentary THE DUNGEON MASTERS, directed by Keven McAlester, which premiered at the 2008 Toronto International Film Festival, and ROMAN POLANSKI: WANTED AND DESIRED, a documentary directed by Marina Zenovich. Nominated for the Grand Jury Prize and winner of the Documentary Editing Award at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival, ROMAN POLANSKI: WANTED AND DESIRED was released domestically by HBO and internationally through The Weinstein Company and the BBC. THE DUNGEON MASTERS is currently in DVD release through Film Buff and MPI Media Group.

Additionally, Kusama-Hinte produced the critically acclaimed eco-horror thriller, THE LAST WINTER (released by IFC Films) and the documentary BOMB IT, a comprehensive investigation of graffiti, covering street art from all around the world. THE LAST WINTER premiered at the 2006 Toronto International Film Festival while BOMB IT premiered at the 2007 Tribeca Film Festival's World Documentary Competition.

Previous to THE LAST WINTER and BOMB IT, Kusama-Hinte produced THE HAWK IS DYING, adapted from Harry Crews' novel and directed by Julian Goldberger, starring Paul Giamatti, Michael Pitt, and Michelle Williams. THE HAWK

IS DYING premiered at the 2006 Sundance Film Festival and was admitted to the 2006 Director's Fortnight at Cannes.

Kusama-Hinte also produced MYSTERIOUS SKIN, adapted from Scott Heim's novel and directed by Greg Araki, starring Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Brady Corbet, Michelle Trachtenberg, and Elisabeth Shue. MYSTERIOUS SKIN screened at the 2004 Venice and Toronto Film Festivals and the 2005 Sundance Film Festival, was released in the US in May 2005, and was nominated for IFP Gotham and Independent Spirit Awards.

Prior to that, Kusama-Hinte produced CHAIN, a hybrid documentary-narrative feature which premiered at the 2004 Berlin Film Festival and for which director Jem Cohen was awarded the "Someone to Watch Award" at the 2005 Independent Spirit Awards; and THIRTEEN directed by Catherine Hardwicke and starring Holly Hunter and Evan Rachel Wood, which screened at the 2003 Sundance Film Festival where it won the Dramatic Directing Award, and which received numerous award nominations, including a Best Supporting Actress Oscar nomination for Holly Hunter, Golden Globe and Screen Actors Guild Award nominations for Holly Hunter and Evan Rachel Wood, and Best Screenplay and First Feature nominations and the Best Debut Performance award at the Independent Spirit Awards.

Kusama-Hinte's other productions include LAUREL CANYON directed by Lisa Cholodenko, WENDIGO directed by Larry Fessenden, AMERICAN SAINT directed by Joseph Castello, and LIMON, a documentary directed by Malachi Roth.

Born in Santa Monica, California, Jeffrey Levy-Hinte is a graduate of Cal State, Northridge and the University of Michigan, and is Board Chair for IFP (Independent Filmmaker Project) in New York.

Director of Photography/Co-Producer Biography

Brian has been a director of photography for over 30 years and has shot dozens of documentaries as well as some feature films. He has traveled with scientists and historians all over the world for a variety of productions, including shooting films for PBS and The BBC. For PBS he has shot many NOVA films, including: CANCER WARRIOR (Emmy nominated), WINGS OF MADNESS and FOUR WINGED DINOSAUR (Emmy nominated). Films for American Experience include, DINOSAUR WARS, THE ALASKA PIPELINE and LOST IN GRAND CANYON In 2003, Brian won a Peabody Award for his cinematography and field production for the PBS series, THE RISE AND FALL OF JIM CROW. He shot for the 2009 Emmy Award winning, National Geographic Special, FIVE YEARS ON MARS.

Brian is recognized for hand held camera work, lighting design and aerial production. Brian's formal training includes both an MFA in film production and a BFA in Photography from the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD).

A personal note about this film:

Working on CHARLOTTE has been a labor of love. Brian has sailed in Vineyard waters all his life. He met Nat Benjamin in the late 1970s when Nat was working on his first design, the *Canvasback*. Over the years Brian has sailed with Nat Benjamin and Ross Gannon and has documented the launches of many boats. Having the opportunity to shoot and produce a film about these two great friends and mentors has been a privilege.

Editor Biography

Editor David Smith is based in New York. CHARLOTTE is the second film he has edited for Jeffrey Kusama-Hinte. He previously collaborated with Jeff on SOUL POWER for which he received a Cinema Eye Awards Best Editor nomination.

David has worked on many features including THE KID STAYS IN THE PICTURE, ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF THE SPOTLESS MIND, AMELIA, NINE, and THE NAMESAKE. He is currently working with editor Claire Simpson on EXTREMELY LOUD AND INCREDIBLY CLOSE, directed by Stephen Daldry.

Co-Producer Biography

Beginning with THE STATION AGENT in 2003, James Debbs has worked on numerous independent film productions, primarily as Post Production Supervisor at Antidote Films on features such as ROMANPOLANSKI: WANTED AND DESIRED, SOUL POWER and the Best Picture Oscar nominee THE KIDS ARE ALL RIGHT. He also worked as Co-Producer on BOMB IT and as Associate Producer on THE HAWK IS DYING and THE DUNGEON MASTERS.

Sound Designer Biography

Tom Efinger began his film career in New York City in the early 90's, and has since worked on numerous films and television projects. As Founder, chief engineer, and president of Dig It Audio, Tom brings over 20 years of professional audio experience to the table. He has Supervising Sound Editor, Sound Supervisor, and Re-Recording Mixer credits on over 125 Feature film projects.

Some noteworthy projects include the Oscar winning INSIDE JOB, the hit documentary JOAN RIVERS: A PIECE OF WORK, the Oscar nominated film HALF NELSON, indie favorites THE STATION AGENT, and GOODBYE SOLO and Josh Marstens soon to be realeased THE FORGIVNESS OF BLOOD.

The collaboration with Jeff Kusama-Hinte and Tom spans several years and as many projects incuding SOUL POWER, ROMAN POLANSKI: WANTED AND DESIRED, THE LAST WINTER, HIGH ART and WENDIGO to name just a few.

Tom has received 2 Emmy award nominations for Sound for THE DEVIL CAME ON HOSEBACK and FULL BATTLE RATTLE. Tom also received a Grammy Award for Sound Supervision and Mixing on Best Comedy Album, 2110 for LEWIS BLACK's: STARK RAVING BLACK.

Composer Biography

Paul Brill's compositions for numerous award-winning films, TV series, NPR program themes, and several acclaimed CDs of original and innovative songwriting show that youthful adventures as an herbal smokes salesman, street performer, valet, corporate errand boy, and a marine biology instructor can serve the creative spirit well.

Paul has received 3 Emmy Award nominations for his scores for the films FULL BATTLE RATTLE (National Geographic), THE DEVIL CAME ON HORSEBACK (Break Thru Films), and THE TRIALS OF DARRYL HUNT (HBO), which was hailed by Variety as "memorably chilling, sounding notes of purest dread. Young American Recordings recently released the Hunt soundtrack, curated by Brill, featuring selections from his score and contributions by Andrew Bird, M. Ward, Dead Prez, Califone, and Mark Kozelek among many others.

Brill recently collaborated with Rock legends U2 on the HBO film, BURMA SOLDIER, new string arrangement for an acoustic version of their classic hit, "Walk On." He scored the hit documentary, JOAN RIVERS: A PIECE OF WORK (IFC), as well as Christy Turlington Burns' directorial debut, NO WOMAN, NO CRY, on which he collaborated with songwriter Martha Waignwright, and FREAKONOMICS (Magnolia Pictures), the film adaptation of the best-selling book.

Brill is currently the composer for the acclaimed A+E television programs THE FIRST 48 and STEVEN SEAGAL: LAWMAN and dozens of films for MTV, The Oprah Winfrey Network (OWN), History Channel, National Geographic, Discovery Channel, and PBS, among others.

Musician Biography

Pianist Matt Ray is known in New York as a versatile artist, having worked for many years as a jazz pianist, recording artist and producer, music director for theater and cabaret shows, a sideman for singer-songwriters, as well as an accompanist for some of the city's best vocalists.

His work as a bandleader includes two albums, and a number of tours and New York featured performances. His album *We Got It!* climbed as high as #12 on the Jazz radio airplay charts, and was the one of the most played jazz CDs in America in 2002. His most recent CD *Lost In New York* was also released to wide critical acclaim. In addition, the Matt Ray Trio has performed all over the world, including the Caribbean and Central America for the U.S. State Department as part of the Kennedy Center's Jazz Ambassadors program.

Matt has had a long collaborative relationship with CHARLOTTE composer Paul Brill, having played on three of Brill's albums, and two Brill film scores -- PINDEMONIUM (2008) and the soon to be released BETTER THIS WORLD. Matt's piano playing has also been featured in a number of other documentary film scores, including WHAT'S ON YOUR PATE (2009) and GIVE UP TOMORROW (2011). Currently Matt is in the studio lending his piano playing to composer Pat Irwin's score for the third season of HBO's BORED TO DEATH series.

In his years as a professional musician Matt has worked with a diverse group of musicians including jazz artists Joe Lovano, Jeremy Pelt, Anita O'Day, Queen Esther, Bobby Hutcherson, and Marcus Belgrave; rock and pop artists Paul Brill, The Flying Change, and Danielia Cotton; and theater artists like Taylor Mac and the cabaret troupe The Citizens Band. In 2009 Matt played piano in, and music directed Taylor Mac's Obie Award winning theater production "The Lily's Revenge", and can be seen touring with Mac's hit show "Comparison Is Violence: Or the Ziggy Stardust Meets Tiny Tim Songbook."

Current New York performances include Joe's Pub with Bridget Everett and the Tender Moments, as well as weekly shows with his own trio at Pinkerton in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

Matt holds a Bachelors of Music from Oberlin Conservatory, is a member of the National Music Honor Society Pi Kappa Lambda, and in 1999 was honored as a semi-finalist in the prestigious Thelonious Monk International Jazz Piano Competition.

A committed educator, Matt is currently leading seminars teaching jazz to New York schoolchildren through the Jazz Discovery Program.

Matt is a board member and Vice-President of Consilience Productions, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to using live music performances to increase civic engagement and activism.

"**Charlotte" The Film - Technical Details**

Charlotte was shot on Brian Dowley's Aaton XTR Prod Super 16mm film camera (http://www.aaton.com/products/film/xtr/), using a Canon 8mm to 64mm, T 2.4 zoom lens.

In order to save money, we initially shot as many short ends and recans as possible. But it soon became apparent that productions were not using very much Super 16mm and thus the leftovers were not readily available; the final blow to the plan was when Dr Rawstock went out of business (http://www.raw-stock.com/) and we were forced to use fresh, new stock. Fortunately, Anne Hubbell at Kodak was very understanding and helped us with pricing and donated (discontinued) stock whenever possible.

One consequence of our money saving approach is that we shot a wide range of color negative stocks. Most of the stocks that used were discontinued before we finished the film; this actually worked to our advantage because suppliers needed to get rid of their remaining inventory. When looking at the list one has the feeling that the circumstances were conspiring against us, but we managed to fend off planned obsolescence long enough to get the film made!

Here are the stocks we used:
KODAK EXR 50D, 7245 Discontinued 2006
KODAK VISION2 50D, 7201
KODAK VISION2 100T, 7212, Discontinued 2010
KODAK VISION 250D, 7246, Discontinued 2005
KODAK VISION2 250D 7205, Discontinued 2009
KODAK VISION2 500T, 7218

Over the five years we were in active production we shot for about 87 days, using 275 rolls of film, rendering about 45 hours of usable footage.

All of our sound was recorded digitally. Most of the sound was recorded on PDR 1000 TC Plus DAT Recorder with Timecode, but half way through we began to use the Sound Design 744T, which records directly to digital files. The recordists used various Neumann shotgun condenser microphones on a boom pole and, when practicable, they used lavalier microphones on Nat and Ross, from Scheops and Lectrosonics.

"**Charlotte" The Schooner - Technical Details**

Charlotte is a two-masted gaff rigged schooner designed by Nathaniel Benjamin and constructed at the Benjamin and Gannon Marine Railway.

The line drawing was created in December of 2003, and the design is designated "No. 53." The Boat was constructed and rigged between January 2004 and September 2008.

Dimensions: LOD 50'6", LWL 43'10", Beam 14', Draft 6'8"

Sail Area: 1319 sq. ft. for the "Four Lowers", 1649 sq. ft. total.

Displacement: 57,000 lbs.

Materials:

Hull

- Ballast Keel — Lead, 17,000lbs, from a 52' Philip Rhodes ketch.
- Backbone — Angelique (Surinam)
- Sawn Frames — Angelique (Surinam) and Black Locust (Domestic)
- Hanging Knees — Hackmatack Roots (Domestic)
- Planking — Silver Bali (Surinam)
- Transom — Wana with Angelique fashion pieces (Surinam)
- Decks Beams — White Oak (Domestic)
- Deck and Deck Houses— Teak (Burma)
- Fastenings — Bronze
- Deck Hardware — Custom Cast Bronze

Interior

- Bulkheads — Silver Bali (Surinam)
- Settees — Old Growth Cypress (Domestic)
- Trim — Mahogany

Rigging and Spars

- Misc. Rigging Hardware — Custom Cast Bronze
- Sheet Winches and Compass — Recovered from 1921 10m "Sorcerer of Asker"
- Spars — Sitka Spruce and Douglas Fir (Domestic)
  - Mainmast from 50' Herreshoff "P" Class boat
  - Foremast made from "recycled" lumber from spar of a large ketch

The Founding of the Boatyard
Excerpt from *Schooner: Building a Wooden Boat on Martha's Vineyard* by Tom Dunlop and Alison Shaw

They each came to Martha's Vineyard with long experiences of — and a profound respect for — things built the old-fashioned way.

In the late spring of 1974, Ross Gannon, a trained engineer who moved to Martha's Vineyard in 1969, was building homes using timbers saved from old buildings for which a suburbanizing world no longer had purpose or room.

Nat Benjamin, after spending several years with his wife and young daughter delivering sailboats to the Caribbean and exploring the Mediterranean on their own boat, had settled in Vineyard Haven in 1972. Nat found work at the Martha's Vineyard Shipyard, all the while taking note of the small but increasing number of wooden sailboats that needed repair in the harbor.

The two men were casual friends, both in their late twenties and residents of Vineyard Haven. Both were builders and craftsmen, and most important, both thought there was nothing quite so useful, or delightful, than to work with a good piece of wood.

Now, on a spring evening in 1974, Ross and a few other friends came to the Benjamin home for a bon voyage dinner. The Benjamins' family boat, *Sorcerer*, a wooden, engineless ten-meter racing sloop built in 1921 in Norway, was tied up in Majorca, Spain. The sloop was being sold to an Island man who wanted her sailed to the Vineyard.

Ross made his first trans-Atlantic passage under sail, aboard *Sorcerer*, helping to successfully deliver the boat to Nat and his wife Pam, who used the proceeds from the sale of the boat to buy their Vineyard home.

Four years later, Ross came to Nat's house on a fall morning to ask for advice about *Urchin*, his wooden thirty-six-foot Casey cutter. With a friend, the late Ed Warsyk, Ross had hauled *Urchin* onto the beach at the head of the harbor using a cradle, rollers, planks, and Ed's Land Rover. The boat was bigger than the two Ross had owned and worked on earlier in his life, and important structural parts of *Urchin* were in pretty tough shape.

Most crucially, nearly all of *Urchin*'s frames - the structural ribs of the hull - needed to be replaced. This was a complicated process, requiring skill and swiftness. It meant heating six-to-eight-foot timbers of white oak in a steam box for just the

right length of time, then - one after the other - pounding them quickly but forcefully down into the hull with a sledgehammer, and bending and clamping them to the shape of the frames they were to replace before they cooled too much and hardened. The frames were one and a half inch square, larger than any Ross had dealt with before, and he wanted counsel about how to work with them.

By then, Nat had earned a solid reputation for restoring wooden boats and building wooden dinghies and dories in a workshop at the family home, just up the road from the harbor. When Ross knocked on his door to ask for advice, Nat went one step further. He offered to help. "And he did," Ross recalls. "I just went to ask him a friendly question and get some advice, and he came down and helped me bend in almost every frame in the boat."

As Nat and Ross worked, they discussed all the other young men and women in town who needed help with old wooden boats of their own. Vineyard Haven, in the fall of 1978, was full of them. … They were part of a larger collection of young nonconformists who were meeting in harbors up and down the Atlantic coastline and around the world. Many of these sailors of wooden boats heard about the harbor, some came to visit, and each year one or two stayed; by 1978 there were at least a dozen large wooden boats and many smaller ones in Vineyard Haven. But like Ross's cutter *Urchin*, a fair number were in poor condition, and their owners needed skilled plank-on-frame boatbuilders to help keep them on the water and under sail.

It took two days for Nat and Ross to reframe *Urchin* on the beach. By the end Of the second afternoon, the men had decided to start a boatyard devoted to the repair and maintenance of wooden boats. "When we started our boatyard," says Nat, "it was really because of the clear evidence of this growing wooden boat community in Vineyard Haven Harbor. Most of the wooden boats in Vineyard Haven are owned by tradesmen, schoolteachers - they're not people who can afford to say to the shipyard, 'Fix it.' Some are, but most of them aren't."

"So we wanted to help these people out, because we were part of them. We were them. And that was one of the main purposes of the boatyard - to provide a railway where, if people wanted to do their own work, fine; if they wanted some help, fine; if they wanted us to do everything, fine. But at least make it possible for people to work on their boats."

It took nearly two years to find the right waterfront lot and secure it with a lease. Just south of the beach where Nat and Ross had re-framed *Urchin* was a piece of land where some of the barges and rearmament boats were built during World War II. More recently, the town had fought off an attempt by a mainland entrepreneur to open a McDonald's there. In response to that threat, the town had restricted all new enterprises along the harbor front to marine use only.

During the summer of 1980 the partners began to organize a shop in a shed

filled with old nets and cobwebs. They built a cradle and pier, acquired tools, rebuilt old machinery, laid down a railway to haul and launch boats, and cleared space upstairs for a sail-making loft.

As expected, traditional boats in Vineyard Haven began to line up right away for rebuilding and repair - a gaff-rigged sloop from 1904, a gaff-rigged Bahamian sloop from 1950 - but word of Gannon and Benjamin went out beyond the harbor breakwater, and soon Nat and Ross were working on a wooden commercial fishing boat from the neighboring Island harbor of Oak Bluffs and on a catboat that arrived in pieces from a boatyard in East Providence, Rhode Island.

It was also clear that Gannon and Benjamin was set up to do more than repair and restoration work. In 1980, there were few other boatyards in the country quite like it. Here was a self-sufficient operation, attending exclusively to boats of wood, hewing frames and planks from lumber and fastening them together with screws and nuts and bolts of bronze. Most distinctively, there was both a designer and an engineer in the shop who could build a new wooden boat to suit an owner's needs.

Given the Vineyard's long, proven, and nearly uninterrupted experience of traditional vessels, it should have been no surprise that the first boat launched by a yard set up to minister to old boats was, in fact, a new one. In August of 1980 Gannon and Benjamin christened *Sally May*, a twenty-five-foot Canvasback sloop, designed for singer James Taylor by Nat and built at Nat's shop the previous winter. As soon as *Sally May* was launched, there came an order for a twenty-foot gaff sloop, then a second Canvasback. As the two men began working together that first summer, Ross had figured that when the season ended, he'd go back to building houses until the following spring, when he and Nat both hoped more boats would come in for maintenance and repair.

"In the beginning," says Ross, "we never dreamed the boatyard would be full-time right from day one. But that first winter we had a new boat to build. Shocking!"

The Boat Builders
Excerpt from *Schooner: Building a Wooden Boat on Martha's Vineyard* by Tom Dunlop and Alison Shaw

Nat Benjamin

By the time he was twenty-two, Nat Benjamin had skippered a charter boat in the Caribbean for a season, delivered boats half a dozen times between New England and the West Indies, sailed across the Mediterranean single-handed and the Atlantic with a crew. He grew up with an older sister and brother in Garrison, New York, a small town on the Hudson River. As a teenager, Nat was restless - something was always calling him away on adventures.

He took a break from high school to work on a ranch in Texas and never went back. While working as an underage bartender in Newport, Rhode Island, he was invited to help deliver a thirty-two-foot sloop to St. Thomas. That trip, in the fall of1967, set the course for the rest of Nat's sailing, designing, and boatbuilding life.

The following year, an owner in Long Island hired Nat to sail *Tappan Zee*, a wooden thirty-eight-foot schooner, from Malta to Newport. The odyssey took more than a year. Tempests blew out her sails. Stress opened up seams in her hull. Her rigging let go. But as Nat sailed to Cueta, Spanish Morocco, and Casablanca for repairs, he discovered small, old-fashioned boatyards where sailors could work with skilled shipwrights and simple tools to get their boats going again.

"I liked the atmosphere, I liked the work," says Nat. "I could see the skills - lost skills, a lot of them. I knew that the chartering business was a good way to make pretty easy money. But I preferred this kind of work, and this kind of lifestyle, at those boatyards."

And once she was properly refit, *Tappan Zee* proved to be a splendid sea boat, like many of the other wooden boats Nat had sailed on open-water passages in his youthful career. Wooden boats were fun to work on and, if well thought out, saw you safely home like nothing else on the water. Why, Nat wondered, would anyone ever want anything less?

In the summer of1972, he sailed into Vineyard Haven with his wife Pam, whom he'd met in the Caribbean, and daughter, Jessica, a toddler. The Benjamins were looking for charter work and a place to settle as a young family. They soon found a home near Vineyard Haven Harbor and in 1973 they had a second daughter, Signe, born at home. (Today Nat and Pam have five grandchildren.) At the house Nat set up a boat shop, and owners began to queue up with old sloops and catboats that needed repair. Nat began building dinghies and dories of his own, and he also started sketching larger traditional

boats with an idea that here, in this harbor, he might one day soon get the chance to build them.

"For almost everything," he said in a 1977 interview, "there's usually a new and an old way to do things. And I've found it is cheaper, better and more fulfilling to do it with wood - the old way."

Ross Gannon

From the age of three, Ross Gannon was taking things apart and putting them back together - radios, alarm clocks, whatever gizmos his parents gave him to work on. His father was an executive for merchandising at General Foods, and after moving around the country a bit, Ross settled with his parents and older brother and sister in Darien, Connecticut. When he was in seventh grade, he began to work summers at the Noroton Yacht Club. Under the direction of Charlie Potter, a math teacher who also supervised the maintenance of everything the club owned ashore and afloat, Ross began to find his way toward a career as an engineer and builder on land and water.

"What he did for us boys is, he let us do things that were so beyond our abilities," says Ross of his mentor. "He would just turn us loose. We built all the floats, we built all the ramps, we replaced the deck on one of the launches one spring. We were teenage boys! Even if you botch it, you're having a ball. Doing it until it comes out right- I found that just fabulous. I gained a lot of confidence from working for Charlie Potter."

Ross earned a degree in engineering from North Carolina State University. He moved to the Vineyard, which he'd visited a few times, in 1969, after working for a company that trained dogs to look for land mines in Vietnam. On the Island, working his way up from smaller contracting jobs, he started moving and building houses, often using timbers salvaged from larger buildings he was being hired at the same time to demolish. He wanted to get back to the waterfront and repairing boats, though. "I thought in college or thereabouts how nice it would be to have a little boatyard," he says. "At the time I wasn't envisioning building boats. It would have been too far of a reach for me to imagine
that. It was only at thirty or so that I thought, 'You know, I think I can do that."'

He bought two old wooden boats, both day sailers native to the Vineyard, and began to teach himself how to repair them. His goal was to move up to a boat he could live on. He found her in *Urchin*, the Casey cutter he hauled on the beach in the summer of 1978 and went to Nat Benjamin to ask for advice about replacing her frames. Two years later, the Gannon and Benjamin Marine Railway was under way.

Ross has a son, Lyle, from a previous relationship, and twins Olin and Greta with his wife Kirsten Scott, to whom he proposed during the *Rebecca* project. At the boatyard, he long ago realized that he and Nat are ideally suited to building traditional boats together:

"My background is an engineering background, and I always approach things first with how to build it structurally, then how to do the rest of it - how to make it look pretty, how small you can make something and still have enough strength. And I think Nat starts with how he wants it to look and works the other way. So it's a wonderful combination. What we learn from one another, we take to the next job."

A Brief History of Vineyard Haven Harbor
Excerpt from *Schooner: Building a Wooden Boat on Martha's Vineyard* by Tom Dunlop and Alison Shaw

Until the opening of the Cape Cod Canal in 1914 - and depending on the direction from which the schooners, tugs, and barges sailed - Vineyard Haven was either the first or last harbor they could tuck themselves into on the perilous coastal highway between New York and Boston.

For two hundred years, the traffic between these two towns had been heavy and it picked up sharply during the Industrial Revolution: In 1883, for example, the *Cross Rip Lightship*, anchored ten miles east of Vineyard Haven as a sentinel in the very heart of Nantucket Sound, counted some twenty thousand passing vessels. Many ships dropped anchor in Vineyard Haven when the tides or weather went against them, or supplies ran low, or something broke on the voyage.

Vineyard Haven grew up on all this transient commerce. In the village of those days, there were lofts to mend sails; a shipbuilding company to repair hulls and rigging; a marine hospital; and a Seaman's Bethel to minister to sailors, body and soul - and sometimes spirit. Between 1865 and 1915, some two thousand ships were wrecked, and more than seven hundred lives lost, between Gay Head at the gateway to Vineyard Sound and Provincetown on the tip of the Cape. In Vineyard Haven there are two cemeteries where dozens of shipwreck victims, sometimes known but often not, were buried.

Vineyard Haven, called Holmes Hole until 1871, was also a town of shipbuilders. Beginning in the middle 1840s, the Holmes Hole Marine Railway - known today as the Martha's Vineyard Shipyard - built at least a dozen large schooners and brigs on a sandy isthmus dividing the harbor from an inland lagoon. Between the autumns of 1942 and 1943, thousands of feet of harbor shoreline were commandeered as an open-air construction site where shipwrights and house carpenters worked furiously to build barges and scores of high-speed rearmament and personnel boats for World War ll. And for nearly forty years, between 1931 and 1969, a craftsman named Erford Burt, whose formal education ended after one week of high school, built many of the Vineyard Haven racing sloops that Nat Benjamin was restoring in his workshop in the late 1970s.

But what drew together the working past and wooden-boat building future of Vineyard Haven Harbor was the arrival of a topsail schooner named *Shenandoah* in July 1964. She was 108 feet on deck, carried 7,000 square feet of cotton canvas, and her two sharply raked masts towered over everything else on the water. Designed by her owner and master, Robert S. Douglas, who in a few years would build The Black Dog Tavern on the Vineyard Haven waterfront, *Shenandoah* was

intended to take thirty passengers on weeklong cruises up and down the southern New England coastline.

A generation had passed since a commercial sailing vessel had called Vineyard Haven her homeport. *Shenandoah* was modeled on *Joe Lane*, a square-rigged revenue cutter that chased down pirates and tax cheats along the eastern seaboard in the middle of the nineteenth century. Like *Joe Lane*, *Shenandoah* had no engine. Kerosene lamps lit her saloon and navigation lights. Her stove was fired by coal, her dining room table was gimbaled to counteract the motion of the sea, and she carried a chanteyman who sang on deck when the schooner rode at anchor as the sun went down. Her passengers could experience nothing more authentic by way of old-world sailing ships in the twentieth century than a cruise on *Shenandoah*.

There were always among her crew each summer one or two traditionally minded young men who decided a harbor that supported a schooner like *Shenandoah* was a harbor they couldn't quite bear to leave. So they stayed, bought old wooden boats of their own - the only kind they would ever countenance, and the only kind most could then afford - and began to form an offshore neighborhood on Vineyard Haven Harbor. "In those days," says Gretchen Snyder, who would soon join Gannon and Benjamin as a sail maker, "there were about six of us living on boats, and you'd call over and say 'What's for dinner? It was a small community, and everyone did all their own work on their boats. It was very community-oriented, working together to get what we needed."

Main Cast and Credits

Characters in Order of Appearance

Master Shipwright / Yacht Designer	NAT BENJAMIN
Apprentice	TYLER GIBSON
Volunteer	BILL COTE
Master Shipwright / Engineer	ROSS GANNON
Shipwright	CHRIS ROCKWELL
Shipwright	MATT HOBART
Shipwright	DUANE CASE
Wood Supplier & Master Mariner	BRAD IVES
Owner of Alliance	MICHAEL COOK
Nat's Daughter	SIGNE BENJAMIN
Nat's Grandson	HARPER HEARN
Owner of Ilona	CHARLES KLINCK
Owner of Ilona	HEATHER KLINCK
Ross's Spouse	KIRSTEN GANNON
Ross's Son	OLIN GANNON
Ross's Daughter	GRETA GANNON
Shipwright	ROBERT BENNET
Shipwright	MARTY HARRIS
Refinisher	SARAH BIRDSALL
Helper	DAVID GREY
Office Manager	CAROL GANNON SALGUERO
Apprentice	CHRISTIAN CABRAL
Shipwright	ROBERT BENNETT
Apprentice	CHRISTIAN WALTER
Ross's Son & Apprentice	LYLE GANNON
Shipwright	DON HUTTON
Gift Giver	KEN BILZERIAN
Helper	ALEX BILZERIAN
Shipwright	ANDREW MILLER
Shipwright	MANNY PALOMA
Refinisher	LLOYD MORGAN
Helper	JACOB PALCKES
Owner of Here & Now	MICHAEL NAUMANN
Owner of Here & Now	MARIE WARBURG
Shipwright	BILL BENNS
Name Painter	MAYNARD SILVA
Owner of Mya	SENATOR TED KENNEDY
Owner of Mya	VICTORIA KENNEDY

Owner of Malabar II	JIM LOBDELL
Carpenter & Hull Fairer	PETER BECKETT
Founder of Wooden Boat Magazine	JON WILSON
Owner, Martha's Vineyard Shipyard	PHIL HALE
Nat's Spouse	PAM BENJAMIN
Historian, Curator	MATHEW STACKPOLE
Nat's Grandson	HOFFIE HEARN
Nat's Grandson	SILAS ABRAMS
Nat's Grandson	AXEL ABRAMS
Nat's Daughter	JESSICA BENJAMIN
Rigger	MYLES THURLOW
Sailor	GREGORY CURTNER
Sailor	BRIAN MALCOLM
Captain's Mate	ZOLI CLARKE
Banjo Player	CHANNING

Crew

Producer and Director	JEFFREY KUSAMA-HINTE
Co-Producers	JAMES DEBBS BRIAN DOWLEY
Cinematographer	BRIAN DOWLEY
Editor	DAVID A. SMITH
Music composed by	PAUL BRILL
Performed by	MATT RAY
Sound Designer	TOM EFINGER
Production Sound Recordists	GEORGE SHAFNACKER JOHN CAMERON
Additional Photography	STEPHEN MCCARTHY
Additional Sound	FRANK X. COAKLEY DICK WILLIAMS STEWART ADAM DAVID SCHWARTZ
Production Assistants	MIMI MICHAELSON MALCOLM DOWLEY LUKE DOWLEY
Re-recording Mixer	TOM EFINGER

Sound Editors	PAUL BERCOVITCH JOHN MOROS
Foley Engineer	ERIC GITELSON
Foley Artist	SHAUN BRENNAN
Sound Effects Recording	JOHN MOROS
Assistant Sound Editor	JEFF SEELYE
Dig It In House Producer	ALICIA LOVING
Audio Post Facility	DIG IT AUDIO INC
Music composed and produced by	PAUL BRILL
Lab and Video Dailies by	TECHNICOLOR NY
Dailies Colorist	CHRIS GENNARELLI
Selects Colorist	MARTIN ZEICHNER
Project Manager	MICHELLE MORRIS
Post Production Services	FINAL FRAME POST
Colorist	CHARLIE ROKOSNY
Title Design	RICARDO GALBIS
Very Special Thanks	ANNE HUBBELL and KODAK CHARLES HERZFELD and TECHNICOLOR NY
Antidote International Films Vice President	TAKEO HORI
Antidote International Films Project Supervisor	JAMES DEBBS
Antidote International Films Office Managers	GERRY KIM KATHY RUIZ
Accommodations provided by	HARBOR LANDING MANSION HOUSE
Sound equipment provided by	TALAMAS BROADCAST
Camera maintenance provided by	ABEL CINETECH RULE | BOSTON CAMERA
Camera mount equipment provided by	AERIAL PRODUCTIONS

Shot on Kodak Super 16mm Color Negative Film with an Aaton XTR prod camera.

In Memory of Maynard Silva and Senator Ted Kennedy

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