

# REED MORANO

D.p. behind 'Little Birds' trusts her intuition

Even though Reed Morano spent two years teaching cinematography at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, where she was honored with awards as an undergraduate, she realized there are some things you can't teach. "A lot of cinematography is intuition," she tells *Variety*. "It's an art, not a formula."

Morano has been on a roll as of late, having shot three films back-to-back in 2010: the Sundance Lab features "Little Birds" with Juno Temple, which premiered at Park City last month, and "Yelling to the Sky," starring Zoe Kravitz and Gabourey Sidibe, which is unspooling at the Berlin Film Festival this week; as well as So Yong Kim's "For Ellen," starring Paul Dano.

For "Little Birds," a coming-of-age tale involving two teenage girls set largely in the desolate Salton Sea region of the California desert, the locations helped reflect the characters' inner lives.

"It's a strange, surreal landscape that was very desolate with harsh sunlight," says Morano in an interview posted on Kodak's website. "It was a great metaphor for their lives."

Her combination of keen intuition and aesthetic sensibility is also evident in her collaboration with "Birds" director Elgin James: "Right from the first conversation, we were on the same page about the lighting and the look," Morano recalls in the Kodak interview. "We wanted naturalism, but with a cinematic quality. We referenced William Eggleston photographs, and movies

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## Role models:

Morano's father encouraged her filmmaking pursuits, but suffered a fatal heart attack just as her career was taking off. Her mother sustained Morano's efforts. "She kept me going."

## Camera & film

**used:** (For "Little Birds") 35mm, two-perf Panavision Platinum; Kodak 5217, 5219

## Fave tool:

Film. "I try to shoot film wherever possible. There's nothing like it." Also, hand-held rigs.

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like 'Badlands' (1973) and John Ford Westerns. Regarding format, the possibility of digital had been raised, but I knew that film and a 2.35:1 aspect ratio was the best way to capture the desert location."

Her intuition proved beneficial, even while shooting half the film while seven months pregnant.

Her approach to filmmaking? Collaboration and a positive attitude. "I don't say no to anybody, especially the director," says Morano, whose credits include the Sundance Grand Jury Prize winner "Frozen River" (2008). "I try to figure it out."

— Stacey Collins

