

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT - Margaret Whitton, A BIRD OF THE AIR

Like most things, your life changes when you're not paying attention. For me, it started innocently enough on a summer afternoon in a small bookstore. Why did this unconventional story feel so vivid to me? It's probably a form of madness or a brain disorder to finish a book and have the reflexive certainty that this story must be a film.

I love the real, ordinary, mysterious, romance of life. *The Loop* has elements of charm, loss, darkness, idealism, totemic animals, spirit, sacrifice, pratfalls, and tears. Like life, or at least as I experience it. And I confess I fell in love with the characters, two- and four-legged.

In Lyman's case, given his history and his present, a denial of any human need seems to be working for him. I was fascinated by his road warrior existence, dealing with the nightly carnage of the highways, and the way the smallest thing (like a green 17-ounce messenger) changes his life's course. How do men negotiate the romantic quest? How do they balance the strictures of society's view of what it is to be a responsible man and still keep an open, human, heart? How do we mourn the past to make way for a future? It takes a small, lost bird to shove a shim into Lyman's locked heart. Eventually a whole community of people, a sad-eyed hound, and a woman who makes her own rules, open it to an unknowable, joyous, uncontrolled life.

Fiona, in spite of being independent, smart, open, and owning her sexuality, is caught in her own loop -- but hers is the straight line of a born bolter. Are we encoded with the someday-my-prince-will-come archetype? Kissing a lot of frogs is only half the price. She idealizes men (the iconic cowboy), the world of literature, the answers in books, and the possibility of community. She still believes in Romance, yet when it inevitably crashes around her, she moves on. She discovers that the real man -- flaws and all (and we are all flawed) -- is more worthy than whatever romanticized image she has been struggling to uphold.

I loved the challenge of telling a non-formulaic story with elements of the great screwball comedies of the '30s and '40s. I wanted a low-key, classic feel to the film and for the energy to come from the meeting of the actors, the story, and the audience. I set out to treat my players as conscious artists and alchemists. Their generosity was extraordinary.

I wanted the story to unfold, to move from the dark to the light -- like Lyman's journey. We start with a mysterious man in the dark on the highway at the scene of an emergency. By the end he rides the crest of a hill and breaks into the dawn, headed for home.

I love the idea that meaning is a gift we give ourselves, and as Margie says, "being lost is only temporary."

I hope there is some small wisdom in it.