



THE MASTERMIND

STARRING JOSH O'CONNOR

A
FILM BY
KELLY
REICHARDT

cinéart

PERSMAP



FESTIVAL DE CANNES
2025 OFFICIAL SELECTION
COMPETITION

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Synopsis

THE MASTERMIND is de nieuwe film van Kelly Reichardt (CERTAIN WOMEN, FIRST COW), gekenmerkt door haar unieke visuele stijl. Met een sterke rol van Josh O'Connor (CHALLENGERS, LA CHIMERA), die perfect is als slechtste kunstdief ter wereld.

In een uithoek van Massachusetts rond 1970 vult de saaie JB Mooney (Josh O'Connor) zijn dagen als timmerman. Terwijl hij zijn vrouw (Alana Haim, LICORICE PIZZA) en zijn moeder (Hope Davis) voorhoudt dat hij een grote klus heeft binnengehaald, is hij stiekem bezig met het voorbereiden van een kunstroof. Zo moeilijk kan het toch niet zijn om een aantal schilderijen uit het lokale museum te stelen? Totdat niet alles volgens plan verloopt...

THE MASTERMIND werd geselecteerd voor de Gouden Palmcompetitie op het Filmfestival van Cannes. 'Quietly fantastic... Kelly Reichardt steals the spirit of the '70s with a gorgeously rumpled art-house art heist' (Variety)





Writer & director: Kelly Reichardt

Biography

A retrospective of Reichardt's work took place at the Centre Pompidou in October 2021, and she was awarded the 2022 Carrosse d'Or award at Cannes.

Her feature films include: RIVER OF GRASS (1994), OLD JOY (2006), WENDY AND LUCY (2008), MEEK'S CUTOFF (2010), NIGHT MOVES (2013), CERTAIN WOMEN (2016), FIRST COW (2019) and SHOWING UP (2022).

Grants: Film Independent Bonnie Award, United States Artists Fellowship, Guggenheim Fellowship, Anonymous Was a Woman Award, Renew Media Fellowship. Special Screenings: Whitney Biennial (2012), Film Forum, Cannes Film Festival, Venice International Film Festival, Sundance Film Festival, Viennale Film Festival, Berlin International Film Festival, Toronto International Film Festival, International Film Festival Rotterdam, BFI London Film Festival.

Retrospectives: Museum of Modern Art, Anthology Film Archives, Pacific Film Archive, Museum of the Moving Image, Walker Art Center, American Cinematheque Los Angeles, European Touring Retrospective (The American Landscape: The Films of Kelly Reichardt).

Teaching: The Baby Jane Holzer Visiting Artist in Film at Harvard University (2019), currently S. William Senfeld Artist-in-Residence at Bard College. Publications: ReFocus: The Films of Kelly Reichardt, E. Dawn Hall, Edinburgh University Press. L'Amérique retraversée, Judith Revault-d'Allonnes, Centre Pompidou.

THE MAKING OF THE MASTERMIND

The Story

A tale of art and crime set in a Massachusetts suburb in 1970, Kelly Reichardt's latest film *THE MASTERMIND* reshapes the classic heist movie into a quiet study of one man's decisions and their unforeseen outcomes. Josh O'Connor takes the role of James Blaine Mooney, an unemployed carpenter who has yet to live up to the expectations of his comfortable middle-class upbringing, and dabbles in petty art theft on the low down. With his eyes on some easy money, Mooney plots his first big heist with a ragtag gang, orchestrating a daring daylight raid on a small local art museum to steal a series of abstract paintings by American artist Arthur Dove. When things go fully haywire, Mooney's world begins to unravel.

Like many central characters in Reichardt's films—the aging male pals of *OLD JOY* (2006), the stranded protagonists of *WENDY AND LUCY* (2008), the stymied settlers of *FIRST COW* (2020)—Mooney has lost his way and struggles to find the path forward. Seeped in the sleepy atmosphere of suburban New England, *THE MASTERMIND* plays out a character study of Mooney and his many circles: his father, a respected local judge (Bill Camp); his all-too-generous mother (Hope Davis); his wife Terri (Alana Haim) and their boys Tommy (Jasper Thompson) and Carl (Sterling Thompson); and J.B.'s meager gang of small-time thugs (Eli Gelb, Cole Doman and Javion Allen). *THE MASTERMIND* offers tensions slowed down to the speed of the everyday, a delicate modulation of time that builds on the explorations of her eco-terrorist caper *NIGHT MOVES* (2013).

Not unlike how the director reimagined the Western for *MEEK'S CUTOFF* (2011), *THE MASTERMIND* hijacks the conventions of the classic heist picture. ("Melville's are my favorite" Reichardt states, citing the French director's later neo-noir movies like *LE CERCLE ROUGE* [1970] and *UN FLIC* [1972]), "and the 'hard novels' of Georges Simenon—plots where the outcome is always doom." Upending the genre's typical time structure, Reichardt's story places the heist itself in *THE MASTERMIND*'s first quarter, leaving the remainder of its run to deal with the event's after-effects. "It's an aftermath film, an unraveling film," she says. This aftermath structure reappears, in certain scenes, right down to the levels of the sequence and shot, which might begin just a moment after some decisive action has occurred, the camera choosing instead to linger upon the reactions and realizations of the characters. Continuing a theme that runs throughout the director's career, *THE MASTERMIND* examines what happens to a person—and those around them—once their actions have consequences.

Origins & Inspirations

"In the 90s I thought about doing an art heist film on Super-8," Reichardt recalls, "so it's been cooking in the back of my mind for a long time. A couple of years ago, I came across an article about the fiftieth anniversary of this art heist at the Worcester Art

Museum in Massachusetts, where some teen girls got swept up in the robbery. That was a fun image and was kind of the first seed.” Locally legendary, that event took place on the afternoon of May 17, 1972, when armed men pilfered two Gauguins, a Rembrandt, and a Picasso. In an era before total electronic mass surveillance, bold heists of notable artworks flourished far more than today: some of the most colorful of the time were the 1969 theft of a Caravaggio from a Palermo chapel, the massive 1972 looting of 18 paintings and 39 pieces of jewelry from the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, and the IRA-backed robbery of \$20 million in paintings by Rubens, Goya, Vermeer and Gainsborough from a British politician’s manor in 1974.

“There are so many snatch-and-grabs in that era before the Gardner Museum,” Reichardt says, referring to the infamous 1990 theft from the Boston institution, which remains history’s most costly art heist. The plot of *THE MASTERMIND* was created by Reichardt out of a mixture (“a salad,” she says) of many such incidents of the time. “People are still stealing art like this. In fact, while we were shooting in Ohio, a young guy broke a window and entered a building on the campus of Bard College [where Reichardt has taught since 2006], took two paintings off the wall, and fled on foot into the woods. He was discovered by a heat-sensing drone.”

THE MASTERMIND’s burglary takes place in Framingham, Massachusetts, a normally quiet municipality located halfway between Worcester and Boston. In Reichardt’s scenario, J.B. Mooney and his accomplices lift a suite of paintings from the fictional Framingham Museum of Art. (In 1970, the actual Framingham, Massachusetts, boasted both a university and a women’s prison, but no art museum.) Reichardt decided against having the criminals go for the big-name Old Masters that the real heists of the time favored. “J.B. isn’t that ambitious. He goes for the paintings he’s familiar with and feels a connection to,” she says.

Instead, she chose to have them target an exhibition of paintings by Arthur Dove, a favorite artist of Reichardt’s. An influential but lesser-known modernist who is often cited as the first abstract painter in the United States, Dove worked throughout half of the twentieth century until his death in 1946. “It could have been someone like Milton Avery,” Reichardt says, “but I put Dove in when I was first writing the script, then went through a bunch of other possibilities and came back around to Dove. For one thing, his name made so much sense for the film. Also, I knew a friend of a friend, Alec MacKaye worked at the Phillips Collection, a place where you can go and see Dove paintings in person. I thought, at least Alec would be a person to begin a conversation with as we were trying to get our heads around how to get reproductions for our museum.” (The Phillips Collection in Washington, DC, hold the largest number of paintings by Dove) Walking right past more iconic paintings by other artists, Mooney’s gang grab four paintings by Dove: *Willow Tree* (1937), *Yellow Blue Green Brown* (1941), *Tree Forms* (1932) and *Tanks & Snowbanks* (1938). Elsewhere in the exhibit, we can spy *Red Sun* (1932), one of Dove’s most iconic works.

“Tony Gasparro and the art team built the museum from the ground up in an old warehouse,” Reichardt reports. “That was a real thrill, watching the process of our foam model and floor plan come to life: the walls going up, the scenics painting the floor

boards, the frame builder, the artist re-producing the Dove work, the local carpenters working around the clock. One of our scenics Jeff Crowe was carving miniatures for the glass cases that were being built. Christopher Blauvelt and his team were designing the lighting at the same time. So cool, at the end of a scouting day, to swing by the warehouse and see the day's progress. Once the museum was built and the paint was dry, and the art was on the walls, the Art Department hosted an opening for all the builders. The art interns walked around with trays of cheese and crackers. Ha ha. Super sweet. Then we shot for two or three days, the whole thing got dismantled, the materials got donated to a bunch of different places and it's like the whole thing never happened."

For the museum's exterior scenes, Reichardt's team shot at the Cleo Rogers Memorial Library in Columbus, Indiana. Completed in 1969, the facility was designed by architect I. M. Pei with an eye to revitalizing the town's center. The library is a humble modernist brick-box building, opening onto a circular front plaza that features a monumental Henry Moore bronze (*Large Arch*, 1971) at its center. The pleasant and accommodating public space serves as an elegant reminder of America's ambitious and still-optimistic civic projects of half a century ago, beautifully renewed through Christopher Blauvelt's cinematography.

J.B. Mooney & his circle

"There are a lot of different tones in the movie," Reichardt says. Much of the effort of selecting actors, she states, involved "trying to get these different tones, these different acting styles, to mesh and all work together. Casting Director Gayle Keller came on early and partnered in that effort."

For the role of J.B. Mooney, the central focus of the film, Reichardt decided upon rising British actor Josh O'Connor, then fresh from his first American role in Luca Guadagnino's *CHALLENGERS* (2024). "I missed *CHALLENGERS*, but I had seen Josh in *GOD'S OWN COUNTRY* (2017) when it came out, and then again in *THE CROWN* doing something totally different with his voice and posture. My friend the director Karim Aïnouz introduced us, and by this time he had made the beautiful *LE CHIMERA* (2023) with Alice Rohrwacher." O'Connor was enthusiastic about *THE MASTERMIND*'s script and the character of J.B., a man smart enough to get into trouble, but not smart enough to get out of it. "Josh had a mantra that he would repeat before every scene," Reichardt relates. "He'd repeat it to anyone who would listen, 'This is a really good idea,' referring to stealing the paintings. A grip would be tearing out the backseat of the car and Josh would say, 'You know, Bruce, this is a really good idea' or Chris Carroll, the Assistant Director, would be cueing up the background actors and Josh would say, 'Chris, I do think this is a really good idea.'"

THE MASTERMIND's world includes three generations of the Mooney clan. The film's first half spends careful time exploring J.B.'s relationships with his parents, wife, and two sons. "It's a heist movie, in a sense, but the family and friend dynamics are kind of the main thing. Mooney is blowing up his world and the heist is how he goes about it,

consciously or unconsciously.”

To help get the cast into the proper late 60's-1970 mindset, the director also asked the family members all to watch and study the 1974 documentary *THE PLAINT OF STEVE KREINES AS RECORDED BY HIS YOUNGER BROTHER JEFF*, one of the earliest films by Jeff Kreines. Reichardt says, “It was a nice thing because all the actors meeting each other had something to talk about since everybody had watched it.” A groundbreaking independent filmmaker, Kreines is best known for two features he made with partner Joel DeMott, *DEMON LOVER DIARY* (1980) and *SEVENTEEN* (1983); Reichardt has long been an admirer of Kreines and DeMott's work. As its title indicates, the cinema-verite style *Plaint* is a portrait of Kreines' own family, chronicling the moment when 22-year-old Steve finally moves out of his parents' house. Hope Davis, playing J.B.'s mother, was particularly drawn to Kreines' film. “She really got hooked on it. For all the many times I've seen that movie, I think I know it by heart, Hope saw details in it I'd never seen. The actors were getting together on Zoom to practice their Framingham accents (Bill Camp is from the Worcester area) and the conversation would end up being all about the Kreines film.”

Costume designer Amy Roth and her crew “had everyone feeling really good and comfortable with their clothes,” Reichardt says. “We modeled Mooney's look after a young Jasper Johns. We dressed Bill up like the father in *PLAINT*, with his high waisted dress shorts. The day we shot with Bill in the living room I saw Amy tearing up, and when I asked her what was wrong, she said she thought Bill's shorts weren't high enough.”

The Mooney children are played by two fraternal twins, Jasper and Sterling Thompson. “They're twins, but they are different boys with very different personalities,” she says. “At first, when we were auditioning kids, Lynn Meyers and Becca Schall, the local Ohio casting team, would have the kids reading lines. That approach quickly went out the window. They just started having conversations with the kids, asking them about school and their friends. Jasper and Sterling came in separately. I saw them in different groups of kids that were taped and they were both just hilarious. I had no idea they were related. It was just like—how amazing, there are these two super funny kids. The brothers live in Louisville, Kentucky and eventually came to Cincinnati with their mom and we all met at Graeter's Ice Cream. They were a lot taller than I imagined and they did that twin thing where they finish each other's sentences. They were great and their mom was super cool. Josh and Alana took the boys out for a pancake breakfast and by the time I saw them all together they were in a deep world of jokes and riddles that never let up and is probably still going on via email.”

This film, like the seven features before it, was produced by Neil Kopp, Anish Savjani and Vincent Savino. “No one has ever seen Vincent in person but we all count on him. Neil and Anish are the first people I show a script to. They see it way before it's ready to be seen, so that they start thinking about how it could come to be. Then they are with the film in every conceivable way for the rest of the film's life.”

The Look & Sound of 1970

To perfect the look she wanted for *THE MASTERMIND*, Reichardt and Blauvelt revisited the 70s films of Dutch cinematographer Robby Müller, particularly the muted, brunette-tinged color schemes of *THE AMERICAN FRIEND* (1977), among other titles. “Christopher and I, years ago, got the chance to see John Huston’s *FAT CITY* (1972) on the screen together. That film, I think, is really part of our collective DNA. Like a lot of people my age, you kind of can’t escape the influences of photography heavies like Stephen Shore and William Eggleston.”

As the film progresses, the mostly daylight settings give way to darker tones. Reichardt has become increasingly drawn to the inky shades of night scenes, allowing for subtle motion and fine detail within the blackness of the screen. It’s a strong visual effect, explored extensively with Blauvelt in an earlier collaboration, the frequently nocturnal *First Cow*. Here, the growing darkness of the image parallels J.B. Mooney’s increasing isolation. “Usually, a cinematographer wants a lot of light, and the director is fighting for darkness,” Reichardt observes. “Or at least, I think that might be true. But Christopher and I both love night-time scenes. It’s tricky because it’s easy to go too far. Sometimes, we don’t pull each other back, so things can get really dark. Josh kept noting that his performance didn’t really matter because no one would be able to see anything anyway.”

The film was scored by musician Rob Mazurek of the jazz ensemble Chicago Underground Trio, working with ensemble member Chad Taylor and a number of percussionists and bassists. Mazurek and Taylor each provided solos, on trumpet and drums, respectively, and the music was recorded at studios in Philadelphia and Marfa, Texas. Having a full jazz soundtrack is a departure for Reichardt, who has used the musical genre only briefly in her prior work. But while writing *THE MASTERMIND*’s script, she says, she was listening to records by Sun Ra, Pharaoh Sanders, John Coltrane, and Bill Evans, and it came to define the film’s mood as it developed.

No film set in the 70s would be complete without the sturdy American automobiles of that era, which have all but defined how that period appears in cinema. *THE MASTERMIND* is no exception: Car guru Tim Wells wrangled a wide variety of vintage cars for the film, from Mooney’s gold ‘64 Chevy Nova to Terri’s green Volkswagen bug, with a rumbling menagerie of Fords, Dodges, Oldsmobiles, and Buicks in the mix. “The cars came from all over the country, at least one was pulled out of a swamp,” Reichardt reports. “When we see Terri backing out of the garage, the paint on her bug is still wet.”

Some of *THE MASTERMIND*’s most decisive and memorable scenes take place inside these cars. “It was a real dream to finally get to shoot in some nice boxy cars with big windows, low seats, lots of room to put a camera where you want it, not to mention the colors and designs,” the director says. “The cars were just so great to look at. The first thing I knew I wanted in the film was a museum with a roundabout, where the cars could pull right up front. That’s a tough order because I guess museums figured out roundabouts made it easier to run off with art and make a quick getaway. A lot of museums used to have them, but then you can see them all disappearing. We lucked

out in Indiana with the library, which had a roundabout and a giant Henry Moore sculpture in the center of it.” Jane Streeter and her locations team found all the other locations in and around the Cincinnati area.

Televisions and radios relay information about the Vietnam War throughout the film, but always in the background, atmospherically. “In those days, one of the three major networks would play footage of the war as it was unfolding in the jungle,” Reichardt recalls, “These long stretches of wretched scenes on 16mm film.” For Reichardt, this resonates with today’s political moment, when media continue to bring far-away violence into the quiet of the everyday. “The media is much more controlled, obviously, the access isn’t the same, but yesterday, for example, I was listening to a podcast where doctors were reporting on the number of children in Gaza getting shot in the head,” she recalls. “The most horrific thing you can imagine. And a minute later, I’m walking down to a gallery in lower Manhattan, and I’m sitting in this room full of paintings, and my friends are playing, people are sitting on couches and the floor, listening to this lovely music, kids are running around, dogs roaming in and out. And wow, it’s so strange, you know, these two realities existing at the same time. These horrors peek into your world, but then you go on with your day. But you know, it’s hanging over all of our heads. There’s a collective sorrow we’re all living with.” *THE MASTERMIND*, she says, explores this idea through Mooney, who clings to “the idea that you can truly be separate from what’s going on. I think everyone’s more connected than that.”



THE CAST

Josh O'Connor

Actor Josh O'Connor trained with the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School and has garnered critical acclaim for his roles across film, television, and theatre.

He starred in Luca Guadagnino's critically acclaimed *CHALLENGERS*, alongside Zendaya and Mike Faist, which grossed nearly \$100 million. He also led Alice Rohrwacher's BIFA nominated film *LA CHIMERA*. Josh is known for his portrayal of Prince Charles in Seasons 3 and 4 of the award-winning Netflix series, *THE CROWN*, which earned him SAG and BAFTA nominations, and Critics' Choice and Emmy award wins. He is also recognized for his breakout performance in Francis Lee's BAFTA nominated and BIFA winning directorial debut, *GOD'S OWN COUNTRY* (2017), which earned him a BIFA for Best Actor and a BAFTA for Breakthrough Brit, among other awards.

His upcoming projects include *REBUILDING*, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival; *THE HISTORY OF SOUND* alongside Paul Mescal; Kelly Reichardt's *THE MASTERMIND*; Steven Spielberg's untitled film; and *WAKE UP DEAD MAN: A KNIVES OUT MYSTERY* in which he will star alongside Daniel Craig.



Alana Haim

Already well-known for her longstanding music career, multihyphenate Alana Haim made her feature film debut to rave reviews as the female lead of Paul Thomas Anderson's Academy Award-nominated film, *LICORICE PIZZA*.

The film tells the story of Alana Kane (Haim) and Gary Valentine growing up and falling in love in the San Fernando Valley in 1973. United Artists Releasing released the film in theaters on December 25, 2021. For her performance, Haim received the "Breakthrough Performance" award from the National Board of Review and was nominated for a BAFTA Award for "Best Leading Actress," a Golden Globe for "Best Actress in a Motion Picture – Comedy or Musical," and a Critics' Choice Award for "Best Actress." She was also honored with the "Virtuoso Award" from the Santa Barbara International Film Festival.

In the fall, Haim will reunite with Paul Thomas Anderson for his upcoming black comedy action film *ONE BATTLE AFTER ANOTHER*. The Warner Brothers film, which co-stars Leonardo DiCaprio, Sean Penn, Benicio del Toro, Regina Hall, and Teyana Taylor, follows a group of ex-revolutionaries who reunite to rescue one of their daughters from a former enemy.

Haim can also soon be seen in A24's upcoming romantic comedy-drama film *THE DRAMA*. Directed by Kristoffer Borgli and co-starring Zendaya and Robert Pattinson, the film follows a couple whose romance dramatically changes before their wedding day.

Beyond acting, Haim is also a member of the self-titled band *HAIM*. Formed in 2007 with her two sisters, Este and Danielle, the award-winning all-female rock band has garnered much critical acclaim, including a Grammy nomination for "Best New Artist" and "Album of the Year" for their third album, *WOMEN IN MUSIC PT. III*. The band will release their highly anticipated fourth album *I QUIT* on June 20, 2025. A dynamic artist, Alana plays the piano, guitar, and drums and is a lead vocalist for the band. Haim is a Global Ambassador for the luxury fashion brand Louis Vuitton.



Cast

JAMES BLAINE MOONEY	Josh O'Connor
CARL MOONEY	Sterling Thompson
TERRI MOONEY	Alana Haim
TOMMY MOONEY	Jasper Thompson
BILL MOONEY	Bill Camp
SARAH MOONEY	Hope Davis
GUY HICKEY	Eli Gelb
LARRY DUFFY	Cole Doman
MS. PITMAN	Carrie Lazar
RONNIE GIBSON	Javion Allen
JULIE	Reighan Bean
ROBIN	Katie Hubbard
HELEN	Margot Anderson Song
DAISY	Avery Deutsch
MUSEUM PATRON	Deb G. Girdler
DETECTIVE LONG	Richard Hagerman
AGENT CARROLL	Juan Carlos Hernandez
COACH SAM	Ryan Homchick
JERRY THE DRIVER	Matthew Maher
MR. ROSS	Marc Ross
THUG	Rick Dutrow
BUS DRIVER	Clark Harris
FRED	John Magaro
MAUDE	Gaby Hoffmann
CLEVELAND NEIGHBOR	Kevin Michael Walsh
LOUISE	Amanda Plummer
LINE COOK	Mauricio Soliz
GORDON	Rhenzy Feliz
CURTIS	Kade Clarks
DAVID	Marc Antony Howard
TICKET LADY	Ashlyn Porter
IRIS	Dale Hodges
YOUNG MAN WITH WALLET	Caleb Phillips

Crew

WRITER & DIRECTOR	Kelly Reichardt
PRODUCERS	Neil Kopp Vincent Savino Anish Savjani
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY	Christopher Blauvelt
EDITOR	Kelly Reichardt
PRODUCTION DESIGNER	Anthony Gasparro
SOUND	Ryan Billia
COMPOSER	Daniel Timmons Rob Mazurek

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