THE HIGH POINT ENTERPRISE
LIFE&TV
C1
3579
SATURDAY-SUNDAY, OCTOBER 17-18, 2026

'A TOTAL DREAM PROJECT'

High Point native produces movie starring Turturro

BY JIMMY TOMLIN
ENTERPRISE STAFF WRITER

HIGH POINT

Regardless of what else he steals, John Turturro will steal your heart with his riveting performance in the upcoming feature film, "The Only Living Pickpocket in New York."

That's the slightly biased opinion of veteran movie producer — and High Point native — Katie McNeill, who produced the crime thriller for T-Street Productions. But it's also the less-biased opinion of numerous film critics who have seen the movie for themselves.

And then there's the list of prestigious film festivals that selected the film for screening, including Sundance, Berlin, Telluride, New York and Zurich.

"The reviews have been pretty incredible," McNeill, 40, said during a recent telephone interview.

"When Sony Pictures Classics acquired the film, one of their goals was to get John nominated for an Academy Award. We're not there yet — we don't know how that will play out — but getting into those film festivals is a good indicator. We're certainly rooting for John and hoping it works out. He has never been nominated for an Academy Award, so this would be a huge thing — and, honestly, the man deserves it."

In the film — which will open in Los Angeles and New York on Oct. 23 before a nationwide release on Oct. 30 — Turturro plays Harry Lehman, an aging pickpocket who can't seem to — or doesn't want to — embrace modern technology. He's still trying to make a living lifting weighty wallets and luxury wristwatches on the subway, but his marks typically have eschewed wads of cash for more practical credit cards — which are easily canceled if stolen — and they rarely wear watches anymore.

The 60-something street thief is also caring for his ailing wife, a poignant storyline that allows Turturro to stretch his acting skills and show a softer side. The story takes a dramatic turn when Harry steals — and then loses possession of — a device belonging to a member of a major crime family, and he's forced to try to get it back.

"This felt like such a great role for an actor of his age (Turturro is 69)," McNeill said. "He's an actor we've all adored. He read the script and loved it. He said it was one of the best scripts he had read since 'The Night Of' TV series (which he also starred in). We were pinching ourselves working with such a great actor. Once John said he wanted to do it, this became a total dream project."

The timing was ideal for McNeill, who joined T-Street in 2024 after spending the first 15 years of her career with Hunting Lane Films. McNeill built up solid credentials at Hunting Lane, producing such projects as "Mississippi Grind," "The Zookeeper's Wife" and four "30 for 30" sports documentaries, among other projects. One of her "30 for 30" films, "The Day the Series Stopped" — about the earthquake that interrupted

the 1989 World Series — earned her an Emmy Award.

Still, the offer to join acclaimed filmmaker Rian Johnson at T-Street intrigued her. Johnson's impressive list of credits included "Knives Out," "Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery" and "Star Wars: The Last Jedi." He and his T-Street partner, Ram Bergman, were looking to expand their independent studio, and McNeill got the nod — and the opportunity to produce "The Only Living Pickpocket in New York."

"This was the first film I've produced for T-Street," she said. "They had already signed on to do the project, ... and once I joined, it was given to me. They said, 'If you believe in it and you want to run with it, it's yours.' "

She believed in it, and she ran with it.

As producer, McNeill's multitude of tasks included everything from hiring a creative team and scouting shooting locations to working with the casting director to hire the supporting cast, which includes the likes of Steve Buscemi, Giancarlo Esposito and (in a surprise appearance that has since been leaked publicly) Jamie Lee Curtis as the crime boss. One of the more unusual tasks was securing a pickpocketing consultant — sleight-of-hand entertainer Apollo Robbins — to coach Turturro on the finer points of street thievery.

The biggest coup, though, was getting Turturro to sign on.

"The thing about John is that he does a lot with very little," McNeill said. "Just his face communicates so very much. ... It's hard to take a criminal — a character we should not be rooting for — and make him likable, but he does. I think it's because we're showing his day-to-day struggles, and it's something we all can relate to."

McNeill, a 2004 graduate of High Point Central High School, now lives in Los Angeles with her husband, writer Michael Molina, and their two children, 3-year-old Carson and 3-month-old Coy.

Juggling family and career presents its own set of challenges, but they're made easier by having a job she loves, McNeill said.

"I think I have the coolest job ever," she said. "I grew up loving movies, and sometimes I have to pinch myself when I'm on a film set. It's such an exciting way to spend your life."

This particular project was especially rewarding, McNeill added.

"For a lot of us who worked on it, it kind of reminded us why we love this job so much," she said. "It was a great set, and everyone had a lot of fun. We all felt like we had been a part of something special."



JON PACK

Veteran actor John Turturro stars in "The Only Living Pickpocket in New York," which is being released this month. The movie was chosen for several prestigious film festivals and could earn Turturro his first Academy Award nomination. SPECIAL | HPE



SPECIAL | HPE

During a break in filming, High Point native Katie McNeill talks with writer and director Noah Segan (center) and actor John Turturro on the set of "The Only Living Pickpocket in New York," which McNeill produced.



SPECIAL | HPE

High Point native Katie McNeill (center) and crew members observe the action during filming of "The Only Living Pickpocket in New York," which she produced for T-Street Productions.