

Entertainment Film The Latest

# Patricia Field is the Happiest Color in New Tribeca Festival Doc (INTERVIEW)

"Because I like happy," she quips unapologetically.

by Julia Mazza | June 14, 2023 | 0 comment

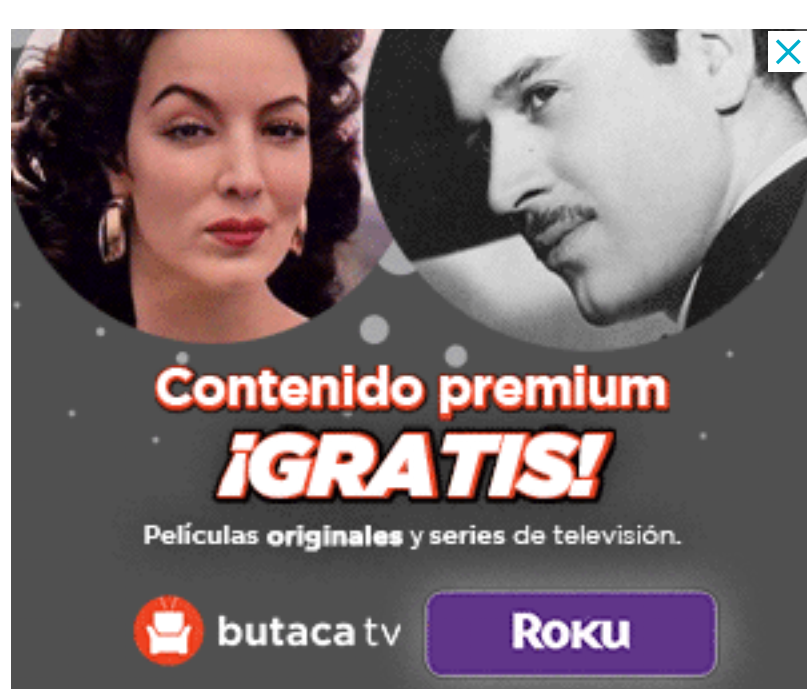


**"I like your combination—it's down my alley," quips Patricia Field to Nadia Tulin in one of the early moments of *Happy Clothes: A Film About Patricia Field*, premiering at the 2023 Tribeca Festival.**

"I like mixing patterns" says Nadia, as she settles in before the kick-off meeting to discuss the costuming for season two of the STARZ original series *Run the World*, where she serves as the show's assistant costume designer.

"I never knew that about you," Patricia says, as she pours herself a glass of her favorite Chianti. "It's the color—they could be different colors, but they have to be happy together," she adds. "As long as the colors work together, you could f\*\*\* around with the patterns."

For Patricia Field, the idea behind finding colors that are "happy together" is also a personal philosophy that follows her as she lives and works. It offers an explanation for how she selects the projects she chooses to work on.



"Because I like happy," she says boldly, flashing a smile. "I don't like miserable."

Last week, I had the opportunity to sit down with Patricia Field and director Michael Selditch to discuss the documentary's themes of "finding happy," Pat's personal memory of Billie Holliday, and her creative process as a consulting costume designer (a title she made up herself). Check it out:

**So, in the documentary you touch on the idea of finding colors and patterns that are happy together—would you be able to tell me more about that philosophy?**

Well, it's just about when you see something and it gives you pleasure—it's totally positive. And creativity is something I can spot in a split second.

I recently worked on a TV show called "Run the World" and it was kind of billed to me as a Black "Sex and the City"—four girlfriends and so on. It's on STARZ network. I was like, "I'll take it," because, in my opinion, when I see the Black girls, they care for themselves much better. You do [gesturing to my outfit], but a lot of the white girls don't. The Black girls they care about how they look, so when I was offered this job I was like. "Great, I want to do this."

I love working with the Black kids because, maybe, I think that they feel as though...I mean, of course it's their talent, but I feel as though they have to like, try harder. I don't know if that's the right word, but it's about their consciousness of themselves, and, you know, outdoing it in a beautiful way.

**Exactly—you're able to explore a culture that you've never really explored before in storytelling. Can you tell me more about what you did to explore *Black Culture*?**

Well, I tell you, I went to Flushing High School and it was a very mixed biracial neighborhood, or high school I should say, and also in my mom's business, she employed young African-American men in her dry cleaning business. They were pressers and so on. That was part of my growing up, and I really had a very, let's say, mixed upbringing culturally. You know, from Greek Grandmom, to my Mama who's a business gal, my friends, and so on.

I'll tell you an interesting story. One of my Black girlfriends, her mom was a radio broadcaster, and her studio was up in Harlem. And we went up there, occasionally—it was Clyde, and Patty, and me. We went up there and my friend's mom was interviewing on her radio show: Billie. Holiday. I was a big jazz fan. And I was sitting there on the floor, and Billie Holiday was up there on the radio singing, and I'll always remember that.

**That's such an amazing memory.**

Yeah, it was an amazing experience. It really was.

**You strike me as somewhat of a "rule breaker" in fashion—are there any rules you find yourself following when you style outfits?**

Well, the main rule is that I stay away from *trendy*. It's more a creative experience, a give-and-take of my point-of-view and the actor's. It's a combined experience and I think that's basically how I operate. Of course, you know, the actor also has their points-of-view and that's to be respected because they're the ones who are in front of the camera and they have to feel good.

**Michael, what was it about Patricia's life and work that drew you to create the documentary and tell her story?**

Well, after meeting her, I was very drawn to her and I was always familiar with her work for a long time. I remember myself coming to her store when I moved to New York in the mid-80s, and so I was always familiar with her. But it wasn't until I met her that I really thought, "Wow, there's a really fascinating person here that deserves to have her story told."

You know, I think that was it, but when I watch Pat's work even now, even all the way through from way back in "Sex and the City" till now in "Emily in Paris" and "Run the World," there's a really fascinating consistency there and it's a perspective of Pat's that seems so unique to other people's perspective. Whether it's, you know, the mixing of high and low, or it's the mixing of crazy patterns that most people would never think about mixing, it feels still very specific to Pat and that's fascinating to me.

**I love how you explore the idea that [Pat] looks for colors and patterns that are happy together, but you also explore how she finds happiness in her life and putting that into her work. Can you tell me a bit more about how you explored that?**

Well, you know, when you're making a documentary there's so much of it that you have to feed off of your subject and that was coming from Pat. And I was just like, "give me more, give me more, give me more."

That's just how Pat works and so, you know, in a sense it was easy to lean on that when you're in post-, to lean on those parts that I found fascinating but they all came from Pat. I didn't tell her to be happy.

Pat interjects: "My first experience with you was that swimming pool in Chelsea, because you asked me what I do for exercise. I'm not a big exerciser, when I do I like swimming and you put me in the swimming pool! And it was like 'wow, this is cool!'"

Michael responds: "It's still to me an extension of, that you [Pat] never stop—that you're running around and you're busy and you're doing a million things, and to me that was a really fun visual way to show the audience without telling the audience, like, 'look at this woman, she's running here, she's at Bergdorf's, she's swimming."

To me, it was this unspoken way of showing the energy that you [gesturing to Pat] have. Everything that I'm doing in the doc came from what I'm observing from Pat."

**Speaking of keeping busy, Pat, you mentioned in the documentary that you don't seek out projects that are sad or depressing—what else do you look for in a project when you're deciding to work on it?**

Basically, a project that has an optimism and I relate to optimism as opposed to pessimism. Because I relate to it, I can get into and enjoy it. And when I'm enjoying it, I'm producing creatively.

If I wasn't enjoying it, I couldn't do it, because I don't associate with it—I have to associate with it. It's a part of just, being honest.

**You're so good at making colors pop in your work whether it's "Emily in Paris," or "Sex and the City," or another project that you've worked on, but you're also very good at helping guide a narrative with clothes.**

**I always think about when I watch "The Devil Wears Prada," how you could turn the sound off and you can still tell where Andi [played by Anne Hathaway] is in her career by just looking at what she's wearing. Can you tell me more about how you use clothes to guide a narrative?**

Well, of course, the first thing is the script. It's not just a free-for-all, and you just gonna put people in nice clothes or whatever. It has to make sense to the person that is watching and viewing it.

Then comes, of course, the actor. Their style, their comfort level, because they need to be feeling positive about themselves in front of the camera. And it's my responsibility to learn and get to know them so that I can provide what they feel good in.

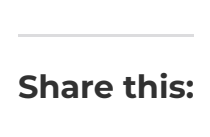
**One last question—what do you hope filmgoers at the Tribeca Film Festival take away from the documentary when they see it?**

Pat: [contemplating] What do I hope from this documentary? I never thought of it that way, but I hope they enjoy it.

Michael: I hope that the doc makes people feel good. I think it's fun to watch and you know, especially if people are nostalgic for some of the work that Pat has done. It's a fun thing to revisit those projects, so, you know, I hope it's a feel-good doc.

**"Happy Clothes: A Film About Patricia Field," directed by Michael Selditch, will be making its premiere at the 2023 Tribeca Film festival; you can find the showtimes for screenings of the film [here](#).**

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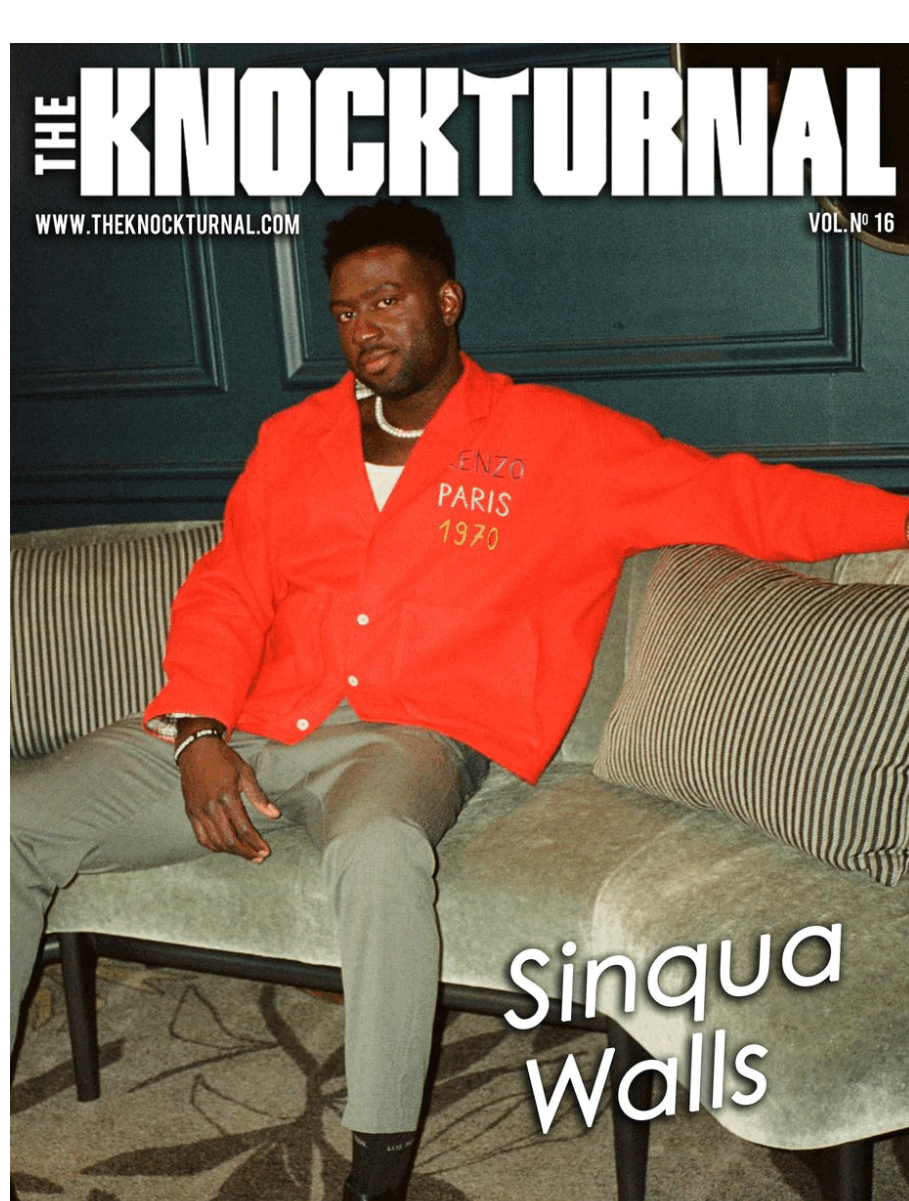
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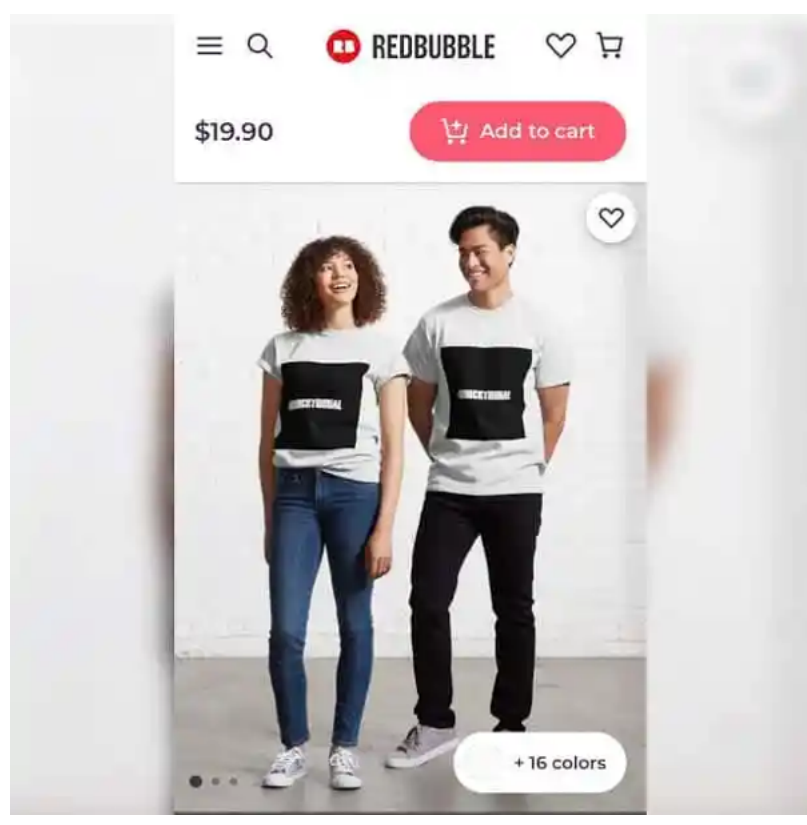
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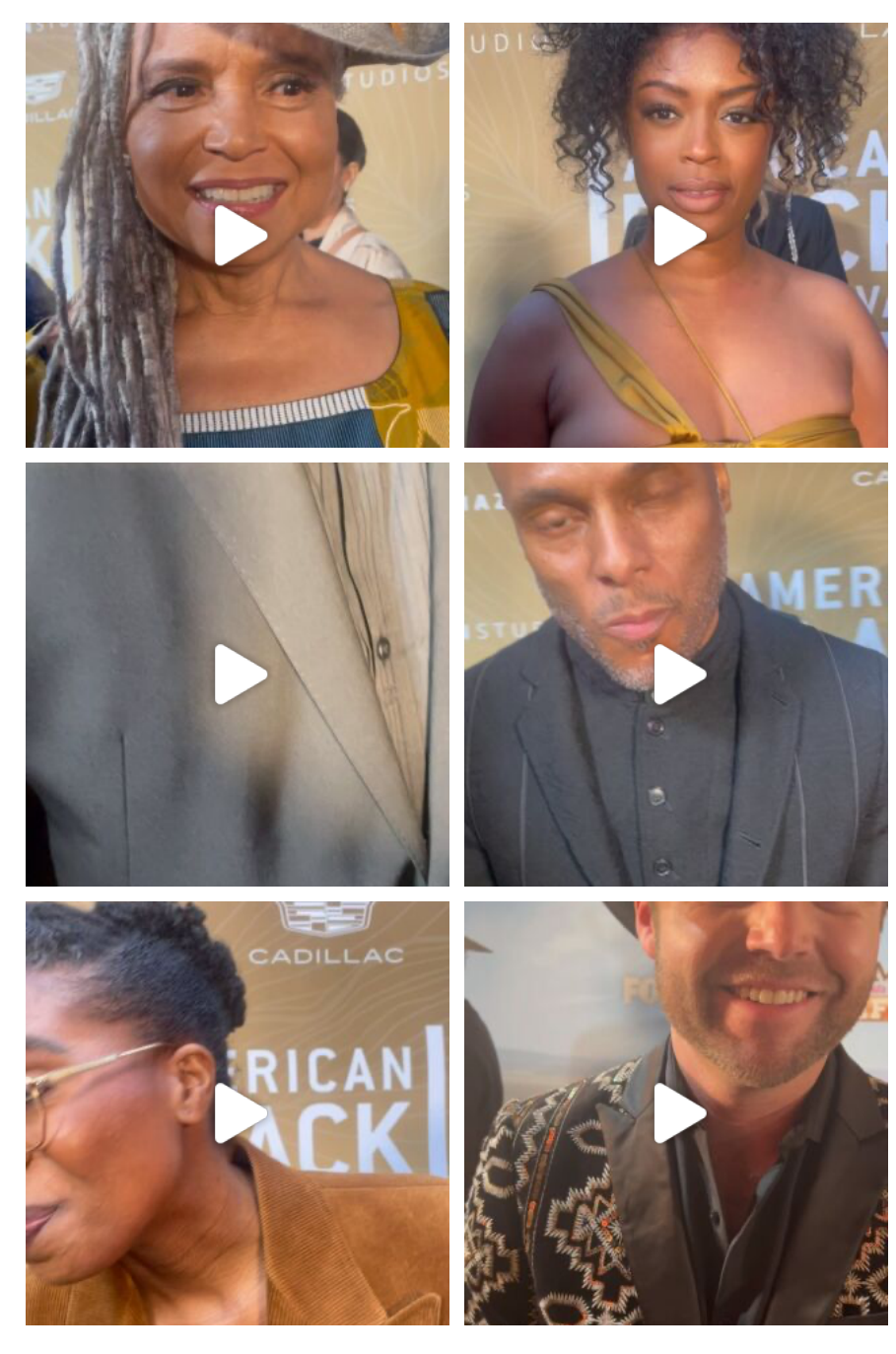


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