



51st Nashville Film Festival
OCT. 1 -7, 2020 | ENTER NOW! | FILM & SCREENPLAY



MOVIEMAKING ▾ MOVIE NEWS FESTIVALS



LATEST ISSUE ▾ PODCASTS

The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*



DIRECTING



By **Josh Ralske**

Published on June 20, 2014

SHARE

TWEET

COMMENT

The multi-award-winning Kelly Reichardt has produced work of such routinely superb quality that it eluded



Latest



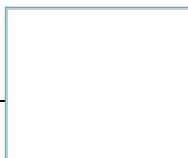
Film Distribution Vet Liz Manashil Explores the Future of a Post-Pandemic Film Industry

BY LIZ MANASHIL | MAY 29, 2020



Everything You Need to Know About HBO Max — Including Why It's Not Available on Roku

Sponsored by Sperry



Introducing the PLUSHWAVE Collection

LEARN MORE

Our all-new PLUSHWAVE technology puts ultra-cushioning on your feet. A light fit design with flex grip stands up to whatever the day brings your way.

mainstream she's considered.

She's justly revered by discerning film critics and festival programmers, and these days, thanks in part to Michelle Williams' outstanding work in *Wendy & Lucy* and *Meek's Cutoff*, A-list actors are eager to work with her. And yet, as you'll read below, there's a disheartening precariousness to her filmmaking career.

Will *Night Moves* change that? It's another thought-provoking, engaging, and beautifully rendered film, and features wonderfully true-to-life performances from Jesse Eisenberg, Dakota Fanning, and Peter Sarsgaard. Eisenberg plays Josh, the



Instagram



The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*



a dam in Oregon, with Fanning and Sarsgaard as his possibly less committed cohorts. Gorgeous imagery and great acting are not new to Reichardt's work. This film, though, also has a suspenseful environmental terrorism storyline that could hook audiences who might not be enamored with stories of moral ambiguity, presented in a deliberately paced, meticulous style. It moves and looks like a Kelly Reichardt film, but it also plays like a thriller, with a sustained sense of foreboding that's new to her work.

Josh Ralske, *MovieMaker Magazine (MM):* *I've been a fan of your work. I saw River of Grass at the Public Theater, when*



Moviemaking



Skin Deep: The Battle Over Morgellons Director Pi Ware on Documentary vs. Reality TV

BY PI WARE © MAY 14, 2020



Hollywood Told Me No, So I Told Myself Yes — By Deon Taylor

BY DEON TAYLOR © APRIL 24, 2020



The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*

SHARE TWEET

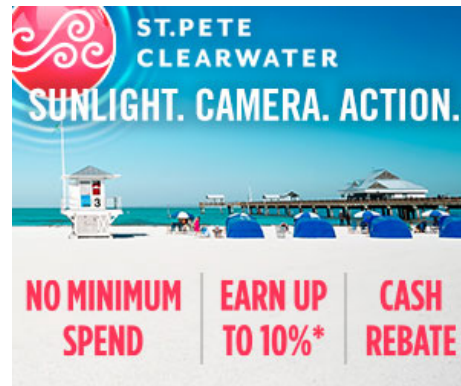
Kelly Reichardt
(KR): Oh my gosh, that was our first ever screening.

MM: *I loved the way it took these familiar genre elements and did something totally unique and different with them, and I see that as a thread throughout your work.*

KR: Genre gives you a plan, so that's the easy part of it. It also comes with expectations, like in the case of *Night Moves*. Whether audiences realize it or not, they know when certain things are supposed to happen, and when that itch doesn't get scratched, it can bring the audience with you. Even if it's just a matter of jerking people awake a little bit in a quiet way. It's

Comments

- Linda Nelson on *At the Drive-In* Loved Drive-In Theaters Before It Was Cool
- MATT on The Irishman Slang Explained: Your Guide to the Vig, Candy, Going to School, and Painting Houses
- Phil on The Best Online Film Festivals of 2020, Presented by FilmFreeway



MovieMaker RSS

Film Distribution Vet Liz Manashil Explores the Future of a Post-Pandemic Film Industry
May 29, 2020

Everything You Need to Know About HBO Max — Including Why It's Not Available on Roku or Amazon Fire TV
May 29, 2020

MovieNews: We Are One Surprises; the 8 Words That Inspired *Vast of Night*; Shane Carruth's Mysterious Trailer
May 29, 2020

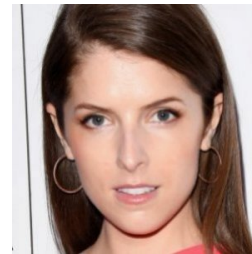
The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*

SHARE TWEET

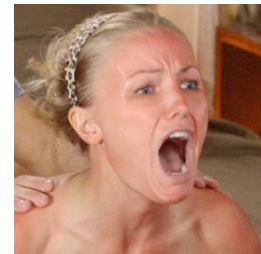
genre film. It's just, you know, I watch movies, too, and there's a seduction there, but they are so filled with heightened moments, and there's an unexplored way of working in that framework. These last four films which I've done with Jon Raymond, his writing is filled with ambiguity. That's part of why I'm so drawn to it. It's pretty misty. I think if you have a really strong frame, you can play around further with ambiguity without it being a mess, without people getting lost.

MM: *Is it easier to make a film now, to get a film made. I know that you can get name actors, and...*

KR: I made *River of Grass* in 2001 and



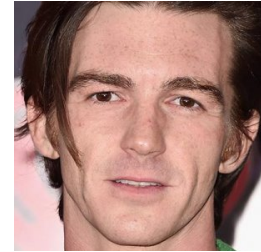
We Now Understand Why Anna Kendrick Refuses to Do Nude Scenes



The Worst Movie Remakes of All Time



Why Ruth From 'Ozark' Looks Familiar



Child Stars Who Sadly Still Think They're Famous



Celeb Couples Whose Age Gaps Are Kind of Grossly Disturbing



It's Finally Become Clear Why Hetty Disappeared From 'NCIS'



The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*

SHARE TWEET

really not easy for a long time, and I think some of that has to do with me. I really didn't have the skills. And I'm not saying I do now; I have these producers that have the skills. I had the scrappy, fighting part that you need to get a film made, but I didn't have the skills that you also need to win people over. Just the more delicate...

MM: ...*Self-promotion?*

KR: Not self-promotion, but just not facing the world with your dukes up so much. When I started it really did feel like a boys' playground you had to bust your way into, and I think some of that has changed. And I teach now [at Bard College; previously at Columbia



The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*



SHARE



TWEET



my livelihood isn't dependent on getting a film made... Just being able to keep those things separate.

Old Joy was an art project that I went out and did with friends for two weeks, and it was gonna be whatever it was gonna be. And they've really grown in small ways. That was a six-person crew, and *Wendy & Lucy* was a 13-person crew, and then *Meek's* was more involved, but it was still... They've all sort of felt like, "We're going away, off the grid with this group of people, and we'll see what happens."



Michelle Williams in *Wendy and Lucy*

There's more at stake than there

The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*



SHARE



TWEET



small way, and the fact that actors wanna be in the movies helps for sure. It's probably the main thing. And also just, you know, working with a lot of the same people over and over again, and getting in sync with those people.

With *Meek's* for sure, when I was in the desert and looking through the camera, those women with those huge bonnets where you can barely see their faces, I thought, "Wow, this is really beautiful. But enjoy it, because you will never be allowed to make another film." I really thought I'd never make another film. I was prepared for that, and it always feels like the whole thing feels like a sinking ship in some way. I'm



The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*



SHARE



TWEET



turned off again,
so every time you
make one, it just
seems so lucky
that you
somehow pulled it
off. I can't imagine
myself putting all
my eggs in that
basket the way I
did when I made
River of Grass. I'm
never gonna be
that desperate
about filmmaking
again. It's just too
destructive, you
know? It's too
bruising. And too
many things are
out of your own
control. I just
don't wanna put
my fate in that
many different
hands anymore.
But I keep my
head low and try
not to look at
whatever the
conversation is
about the industry
and what's
happening. If we
can do it, it's
amazing.

MM: *And you're
not one of these
filmmakers who
is always looking*



The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*



SHARE



TWEET



KR: Well, I like to have a project. If you go off, it forces you into an adventure, and I can be a very solitary, super-still person when that doesn't happen.

So I like it because it engages me, and I like waking up with something to work on. I do like having a project to work on. I don't like a big open space with no project. But it's very integrated in life. It's like, "These are my friends I'm gonna go scouting with Neil Cott, my producer, we go "scamping." Camping and scouting. And scouting takes a long time, and finding stories to work from takes a long time.

MM: *I read in the press notes about how you and Jon Raymond*



The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*



SHARE



TWEET



seems like a very organic process.

KR: Yes. We're very close and we hang out all the time. So it's just a natural conversation about what ideas you have. We're actually taking a break right now. He's working,.. Well, he's had two kids in the time we've been working on this film. [*mock annoyance*] "Blah blah blah." Something about putting food in the mouths of somebody or other, whatever! So I was, for the first time, sort of scouting around for stories. I've been in this comfy spot where as soon as I'm finished editing, Jon goes "What about this?" "Yeah! That sounds cool!" But [*looking for material*] is also good. I'll try something outside



The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*



SHARE



TWEET



MM: *Do you get job offers to direct things?*

KR: [*snorts derisively*]

MM: *No?*

KR: No.

MM: *Would you consider doing, say, television if it was out there?*

KR: I really wanted to direct an episode of Mike White's *Enlightened*. I loved it.

MM: *Yeah, it was great.*

KR: I went out to California to meet him, and tell him how much I loved the show, and when I was telling him how much I loved the show, I was in Portland at the time, and I was explaining how I'd turned Todd Haynes onto it, and we were watching it every week, and Todd loved the show.



The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*



SHARE



TWEET



to my hotel room.

And as I was walking, Todd called me and was like, “Hey, guess what?” [laughs] “Mike White and those guys just called and offered me an episode of *Enlightened*.”

MM: *Oh, man.*

KR: I know. And he did make a really beautiful episode of it, so I sorta got to live it through Todd. But I loved that show. And I loved Todd’s episode of that show, but I was also jealous.

MM: *That doesn’t seem fair.*

KR: Well, Mike was like, “We’re trying to convince them the show’s not too indie. I can’t even bring your name up.” You know? He was pretty honest about it, but that was the first time I really felt the



The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*



SHARE



TWEET



yeah.” But mostly, I’m such a sort of one trick pony. I’m not one of these people who write, and make a show, tweet, whatever people do. They do a million things. I mean, I do teach. I have a job.

MM: *You’re still at Bard?*

KR: Yes.

MM: *I went there. It’s very exciting for me to see John Pruitt’s name in the credits.*

KR: John Pruitt! That’s my super colleague that I love. Are you in touch with him?

MM: *It’s been a while. But he was one of my favorite professors there.*

KR: Me, too. And Peter Hutton’s still there and Peggy Ahwesh. That’s the thing. It’s a really unique



The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*



SHARE



TWEET



and it's a way to



keep exploring.
And you feel like
you're fighting
against the tidal
wave of pop
culture. So as long
as that lasts, it's
nice. So I don't
usually go out
seeking things
because I'm
usually just so... I
do like having a
project, but it's
easy 'cause no
one's beating
down my door
either.



*MM: Another
thread through
your career is
how tied in
landscape is with
the narrative—
how intrinsic the
landscape is to
the work.*

KR: I never really
found a great way
of talking about it,
I have to say. I
just, in life,
because I teach at
Bard, then
whenever I'm not
teaching, for the
past more than a
decade, I've made
these trips to

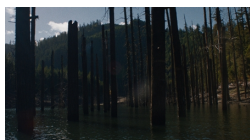


The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*

SHARE TWEET



the dog, you know, Lucy, and she doesn't fly. So I do this drive. I did it four times last year. And my family always—since we were kids, I lived in Miami, and we used to go from Miami to Montana in the summer, camping. And in college I used to do the drive away. So I feel like I've kind of been on a 50-year road trip, which I'm actually really exhausted from. I'm always like "This is the last time."



The murky wilds of Oregon in *Night Moves*

MM: *Last time going back to Oregon?*

KR: Last time just driving, schlepping across the country. I feel like I've seen it. I know it. Then of course when I get there I



The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*



of time scouting,
which is a
different kind of
driving, and I like
that, but just the
lonely drive back
and forth across
the country — I
feel like I'll give
that up. And
anyway, I know
that on one level
it feels like futile
wasted time, but I
know it also is a
way to figure a lot
of stuff out, when
you're driving. But
I could find other
ways. But I know
that's worked its
way into the films.
I know it's on my
mind.

I think of growing
up now, just
looking back, and
my dad being a
crime scene guy
and having these
crime scene
photos all around,
that I don't know
why were even
allowed to look at.
But it's always
about the
landscape first. As
a crime scene
report is: Here are



The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*



SHARE



TWEET



went on here.

Here's the front yard. The gate is open. The front door is open.

There's a fingernail on the carpet. You know, and then it gets into the minutiae. But it's wide. They're wide shots, and I don't know if that has anything to do with it.

Or just growing up in Florida, with the flat, flat land of white houses.

Everything that's not that still seems other to me, even though I haven't been back to Florida in a long time. But think of the northwest vs. Miami. Those are some extreme landscapes. I don't know exactly. I'm really drawn to Robert Adams and Stephen Shore and that school of film that shows sort of a footprint. I mean, *River of Grass* opens up



The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*



SHARE



TWEET



Everglades so I know it's been on my mind for a long time, but I don't really know what to say about it.

MM: *Well, I think the crime scene thing is a fascinating way to look at it, because it's not just pretty scenery. It feels so organic to what's going on in the lives of these characters, and their response to their environment. It's interesting to look at that as like, part of an investigation. That makes sense to me.*

KR: Yeah, I remember taking a photography class when I was young, and just the idea that there was a telephoto lens, the whole idea of soft focus and short depth of field.



The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*



SHARE



TWEET



much foreground, middle ground, background. It's all right there. Who really knows? I know it's in the movies. You wonder how the lucky things in life happen. I did read Jon Raymond's book, *The Half Life*. It's not like it totally fell in my lap, and I had met him through Todd Haynes, and then I thought, "Oh, I could never make this book; it's too big. But I like how this person writes, and I like how the characters are so much a part of their space." So I did seek him out, but it's also luck. It kind of all seems lucky now, looking back. If Todd wouldn't have moved to Oregon, who knows how it would all have gone. Him leaving New York seemed like such a huge loss, and then it ended up opening



The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*



SHARE



TWEET



MM: *I've always seen your films as being political, but it's not on the surface. This is the first time that you deal with the politics of the characters.*

KR: Or maybe we could say it's the characters' politics. For us, when we were working on the script, we always talk about the bigger themes, and then there's a point where that conversation sort of has to go away. I think of them as character films, in this case about political people. When we started, Jon was interested in the idea of making a film about a fundamentalist, and watching that fall apart. And this world just seemed much more interesting than exploring a world where the



The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*



SHARE



TWEET



made a film about somebody in the Tea Party or something. But it also started with the idea of this farm we wanted to shoot on. That was an early idea.

It's funny. All the films seem, in my mind... When I made *River of Grass*, it was like, [disgusted activist voice] "The wetlands! Aargh!" *Old Joy* was like [same voice] "George Bush is becoming president!" It always seemed like there was this pressing thing, and then Steven Meek's story just seemed so of the moment on so many levels. My biggest worry not working with Jon Raymond — and he can still read the scripts — is that I need to be pulled back sometimes, making sure I don't overstate



The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*



SHARE



TWEET



could, left to my own devices...

MM: ...*Make something that's more pedantic?*

KR: ...I could get into danger. I'm sort of a good cop on my own, but I have it in me. I hear myself sometimes in conversation, or when I'm in the classroom, and I'm just like, "Oh, shut up. OK, so you listen to NPR. Shut up. What do you know that nobody else knows?" But I think if you're writing with someone, you get the freedom of putting that out there, knowing that someone's gonna say, "You can't do that." I'm so in that rhythm with Jon. It will be different to make something without him, and I don't wanna make a political film, in the way of a film that's trying to say



The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*



that's trying to ask something.

MM: *So are you saying Jon Raymond definitely won't be involved in developing your next...?*

KR: Oh yeah, it's not happening. I'm working on something without him and he's working on something without me. It's all there. I think he's gonna do something with Todd Haynes actually. He's working on a novel. And raising some kids. [*makes a face*] Whatever. I can't keep everyone on my "Hope you enjoyed the good times, 'cause there's no financial benefit in it" boat forever. People will stay for as long as they can. It's different for crew people, because they can go and make



The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*



SHARE



TWEET



eventually call and say, [*desperate*] “What are we doing next? I just did four commercials.”

MM: *And actors can do studio films, and...*

KR: Yeah. I mean, even I don’t wanna live the way I live so [laughs] no one else does either. I’m just a solo person. You couldn’t live like I live and have kids.

MM: Can you talk a little bit about how these characterizations develop, particularly Josh in *Night Moves*. Was any of it based on real people?

KR: Yeah, little bits. There’s so much of it out there. I grew up in Miami when Angela Davis was having her trial. I remember being really fascinated



The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*



SHARE



TWEET



what happens with radicalism. Why can't the Black Panthers last? What went wrong with the Weather Underground? The '70s into the early '80s, it just seemed like there were hijackings in the newspaper all the time. There were just a lot of hijackings, and then also just *Crime and Punishment* was probably one of the bigger go-to things for Josh, just in understanding Josh. And *American Pastoral*. There are so many literary ways you can go.

The research is all really fun. And then of course, environmental groups. Just starting with the question, for ourselves, why aren't we out blowing stuff up?



The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*



SHARE



TWEET



Dakota Fanning, Jesse Eisenberg and Peter Sarsgaard



MM: *Well, the movie provides sort of an answer for that.*

KR: Yeah. But that was a question. If we're really going over the cliff, why aren't we all out blowing shit up? And also just asking, how can you be an activist in a post-9/11 world? Is there any room for any dissent at all? So we start really big, and then it gets whittled down. Also, it's a lot of looking at people in our own lives, different traits from everyone we know. Everybody's sort of a salad of a bunch of different things.

MM: *Right. It's a really unique performance for Jesse Eisenberg, because it's so internal. You're always trying to*

The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*



SHARE



TWEET



says something, you don't really know. He's very enigmatic, but in a very quiet, and that's not how people generally think of that actor.

KR: Right. Well that was one thought, too. If your protagonist is sort of a super-secretive person who's only accessible through other people... How are people when they're alone vs. how they operate in a group. When they have a goal, and they're so sure about it and there are things to do, it's a narrower path. You're going through your checklist. And when that opens up into something that's not in your hands, how do you deal with that freefall, and you don't have the group for.



The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*



SHARE



TWEET



also, that he sort of loses.

KR: Yeah, there are lots of different communities: the community of the farm, the community of the activists who get together to show films and talk about things. Yeah, there are different communities and then there are subsets of community.

MM: *And then there's just Josh, by himself.*

KR: And then there's being alone.

MM: *The character Sean in the film seems like sort of the conscience, in a way. He has this very set idea that his small-scale approach to all the problems of the world is a more effective way of dealing*



The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*



SHARE



TWEET



Josh doesn't ever try to defend his actions to anyone. After it happens, it's all about self-preservation. He never tries to rationalize what he's done.

KR: Sean is probably idealized in that group, being the farmer, and Josh within his community would be kind of one-upping Sean. There are all these different levels. One person, growing your own food and homeschooling your kids, not taking any energy from the government seems radical. To someone else, it's burning a cheese license, and to someone else, it's blowing up a dam. But I think he's so sure of his rightness that he doesn't question it, and the group allows for that,



The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*



SHARE



TWEET



he's surprised the morning after that he's not more celebrated.



MM: *These three characters are so distinctive and so alive in the way they interact with each other, the way they move. Could you talk briefly about working with the three actors? I was shocked to read in the press notes that you met Peter Sarsgaard on the set.*

KR: Yeah, we had only spoken on the phone. We were both stressed when we met. It's always bad because actors are in their own world: "I'm gonna do it like this." "Nice to meet you. OK. Get rid of the glasses. Get rid of the hat. You're not doing that." "What?!" They've already worked, so you're

The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*



SHARE



TWEET



sent them all kinds of stuff: films, books, pamphlets, newspaper articles, whatever. So I had the least amount of time with him, but he had already read a lot of the stuff. Jesse, of course there was no end of research that he would want, and it's really fun research. There's a lot to look at. He went and lived on the farm, stayed in the yurt. And Dakota said she never opened the box. *[laughs]* So you're not really working it all out. Jesse and I would run a scene together, but they're not all three talking to each other until you're on the set. And the first scene we did with them, we did in the pouring rain. *[laughs]* I try to romanticize it for myself, like "This is the way it



The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*



SHARE



TWEET



this!" 'cause it's just like, what we have.



MM: *I would totally buy that.*

KR: I guess on some level so do I. The productions have no more of a net than whatever's happening in the movie, for all these films, and the actors are not off in a camper waiting for us. We need all hands. Jesse has to drive the truck whether he's on camera or not. There's this "in it" kind of thing. There are rough patches for sure. One of the biggest gifts is if an actor comes with their own ideas and is fully willing to trust you. That's asking for a lot, and when people are that way, it's a really big gift. Peter did something: He will do a character in - lot of different



The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*

SHARE TWEET



had that experience before. It was really scary on set and it was really fun in the editing room. I was just like, wow.



Sarsgaard plays Harmon in *Night Moves*

MM: *You were able to figure out his character...*

KR: ...On the go. But that's how it always is. Michelle [Williams], it's always halfway through the shoot she's like "I think I get it. I know who she is." There's like a search. Again, I romanticize it for myself: "That means the characters are not easy to sum up." That's just how it is.

MM: *It makes sense. And it makes sense that they have these disparate approaches*

The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*



SHARE



TWEET



KR: ...Yeah, they're totally not alike.

MM: *Just the way that they interact, like that diner scene, the way they talk to each other, her being sarcastic, trying to find a way in, socially, and him just quiet and then shutting her down with a single word, and Harmon being so lackadaisical about the whole thing.*

KR: It's sport, for him.

MM: *It's really interesting, that dynamic, and feels very authentic.*

KR: Well, thanks. Thanks for writing about the movie.
MM

Night Moves is currently in theaters, courtesy of Cinedigm. All *Night Moves* pictures courtesy



The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*



A slightly abbreviated version of this interview appears in our Summer 2014 issue (on stands June 24, 2014), alongside an interview with *Night Moves* actor Jesse Eisenberg. Read Josh Ralske's interview with *Night Moves* DP, Christopher Blauvelt, [here](#).



RELATED
 TOPICS: [DAKOTA FANNING](#), [ENLIGHTENED](#), [JESSE EISENBERG](#), [JON RAYMOND](#), [KELLY REICHARDT](#), [MEEK'S CUTOFF](#), [MICHELLE WILLIAMS](#), [MIKE WHITE](#), [NEWS](#), [NIGHT MOVES](#), [OLD JOY](#), [PETER SARSGAARD](#), [RIVER OF GRASS](#), [SUMMER 2014 ISSUE](#), [TODD HAYNES](#)

CLICK TO COMMENT

More in Directing



The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*

SHARE TWEET



The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*

SHARE TWEET





The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*

SHARE TWEET





ERS LA



The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*

SHARE TWEET





The 50-Year Road Trip: Kelly Reichardt on *Night Moves*

Facebook SHARE Twitter TWEET Email icon



Copyright © 2020 MovieMaker Magazine.

