

PICTURE-PERFECT PUBLICITY

With her new PR and consulting agency, Laura Sok, Advertising and Marketing Communications '06, brings exposure to independent films

By Winnie McCroy

Laura Sok was a fresh-faced 17-year-old when she arrived at FIT in August 2002, yet the

creative industries already ran through her veins. Sok's father was an ad exec for brands like Timex and PVH, and her grandfather had run an old Warner Brothers movie palace. Sok's first job was in her uncle's video store—but now she calls the shots at her two-woman film publicity and consulting agency, Track Shot.



Laura Sok.

In June 2023, she and her former IFC Films colleague Kate McEdwards teamed up to create Track Shot and work “on films and with clients we believe in,” Sok says. First-year highlights include placing two films at Cannes; and in January, the firm sought distribution for Steven Soderbergh’s thriller *Presence*, which premiered at Sundance. In one of the major deals of the festival, they teamed up with the sales agent to get the film acquired by Neon, the indie film studio notable for distributing the past five Cannes Palme d’Or winners.

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possible to be the best advocate for the film."

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Sok landed a major distribution deal for Steven Soderbergh's *Presence*. Movie still by Peter Andrews.

As a boutique PR company, Track Shot tailors strategies to help independent films succeed. This means providing many more services than a typical movie publicist. They run national and regional campaigns doing film festival publicity, distribution strategy, events and special exhibitions, budget consulting, talent handling and logistics, relaying industry updates to markets via trade releases, and unit publicity (inviting journalists to set during shooting).

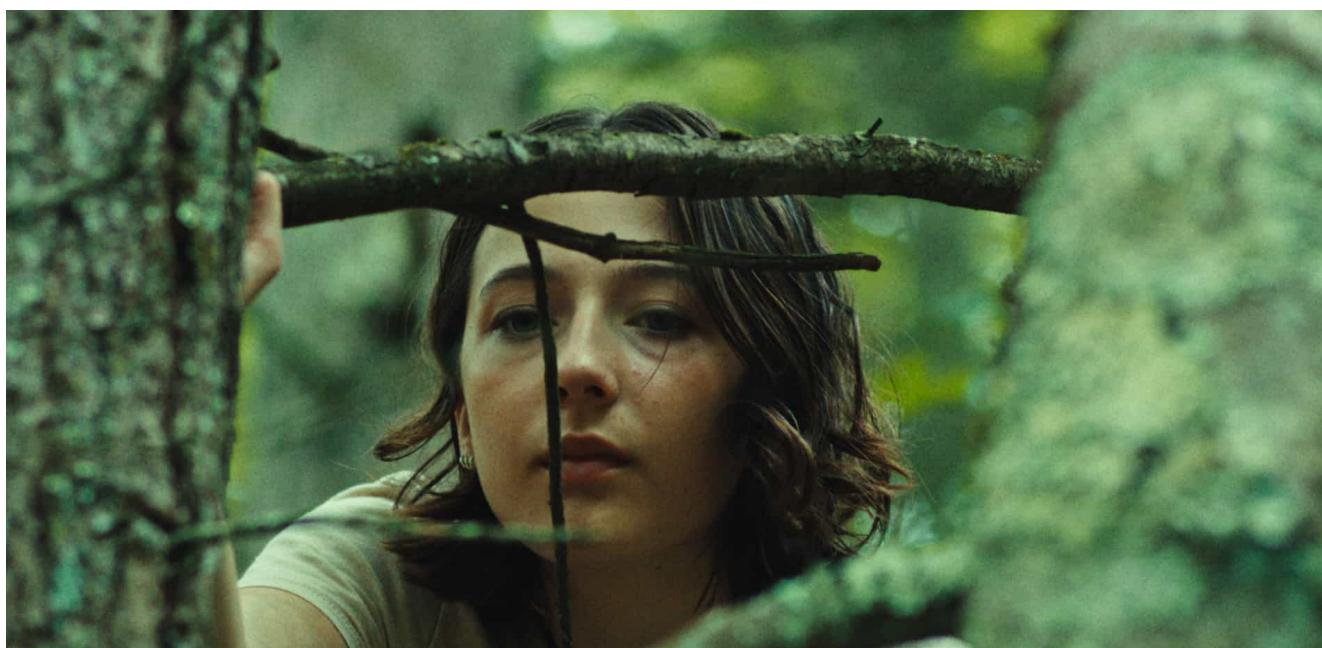
They advise on marketing materials including trailers and posters—both on what makes a compelling image and the ideal moment to release it. Their combined experience working on hundreds of films has taught Sok and McEdwards every beat to hit. Track Shot creates press notes and seeks champions from their carefully cultivated network

of critics, an undertaking that has become more difficult as publications assign fewer film reviews and amateurs compete via YouTube.

Next, they set up interviews with “a whole ecosystem” of press agents, media buyers, and journalists. “You have to make a lot of noise if you’re not supported by a large studio with a huge budget. Just one article or review won’t make something a success,” says Sok. “My job is to get involved as early as possible to be the best advocate for the film.”

Studios get countless film pitches. Track Shot works to get distributors interested in their films so they will want to acquire them. Sok does this by identifying journalists interested in that genre or director, getting them excited about the film, and then persuading them to review the film and write about the talent. She shares that positive press with distributors, so they’ll also want to see the film and potentially give it a theatrical release. Track Shot also places films with appropriate streaming services ranging from Amazon Prime to Google Play, as “big streamers are rigid on what content they will take, while others have more wiggle room.”

Another success story is A24’s queer-themed supernatural film, *I Saw the TV Glow*. It entered Sundance with a distribution deal already in place, so Track Shot’s job was to build hype for the theatrical release. “The strategy was different because we’d worked for six months prior to publicizing it,” Sok says. “When you see a movie on opening weekend, you don’t realize how many months have already gone into reviews, features, bookings, and TV interviews.”





Sok helped get the indie darling *Good One* into the lineup at Cannes. Image courtesy of Metrograph Pictures.

Most rewarding for Sok is seeing her clients' success—like India Donaldson, whose directorial debut, the queer coming-of-age drama *Good One*, was the only film invited to both Sundance and Cannes. It was screened in a New Directors/New Films slot by MoMA and Film at Lincoln Center, after which a distributor picked it up and released it to art house theaters in August 2024. “It’s a dream scenario for a first-time filmmaker,” Sok says.

Even if contracted later in a project, Track Shot can continue PR for months, especially if the film’s a hit. After festival season, the Emmy and Oscar awards races heat up, and Sok and McEdwards hunt for innovative ideas, such as planning drive-in movie releases for several IFC Films during Covid.

Sok’s talent for ingenious problem-solving started early. “I had an eye into the creative side of commercials and marketing while I was growing up,” Sok says. “I didn’t know exactly where that would take me, but I was good at writing and design, and I knew I wanted to be in New York City. That always sparked for me.”

As a teen in FIT’s Presidential Scholars Program, she saw motivated students making the most of their time. She followed their lead, dedicating three weekdays to classes and studying, and then interning at Time Out New York, Revlon, and Brooks Brothers, fine-tuning her passions. To earn pocket money, she worked coat check in a club.

After graduation, Sok got a job as an assistant at New Line Cinema, and she was on her way. By age 21, she was working on studio projects like *Hairspray* with John Travolta and Michelle Pfeiffer. From there, she furthered her career at Cinetic Media, Oscilloscope Laboratories, and Cinedigm Entertainment. She even lived in the Netherlands, consulting for International Film Festival Rotterdam.





Universal Language. Courtesy of Oscilloscope Laboratories.

Sok found she loved the independent film ecosystem most. She'd had an early production assistant gig at IFC Films and was hired years later as their vice president of publicity, collaborating with McEdwards to handle dozens of films annually. That's where the two realized they wanted to get back to the nitty-gritty of indie films.

So Sok and McEdwards teamed up, founding Track Shot and choosing films that spoke to them: smaller films made by people they trust and can collaborate with, rather than sprawling epics with a lot of fingers in the pie. "The best thing about running your own business is, if a project's not a fit, you don't have to take it," Sok says.

McEdwards says it's a privilege working with people you trust implicitly on projects you love: "At the beginning, it was about challenging ourselves to build the work environment we wanted by collaborating with filmmakers on their releases, getting in touch with the transformation of our industry during the pandemic, and rediscovering the love we spent so many years nurturing from a new perspective. I think we've achieved that."

Running a relatively new boutique PR agency means the pair must occupy every role from chief cook to bottle washer, staying two steps ahead and preparing for the unexpected. Sometimes it's working back-to-back 20-plus-hour festival shifts. Sometimes it's logistical, like finding an actress' lost luggage in Singapore, or the time an Oscar-shortlisted director was stuck in London, and Sok scrambled to get him to L.A. for an Academy members' screening.

Other times it's downright visceral, like when an Austrian director got food poisoning before her Sundance film premiere but couldn't bear to miss it. The director stood onstage for the introduction and pictures, then crashed in the greenroom while Sok retrieved Pedialyte and Popsicles. The woman recovered in time for the next day's screening, thanks to Sok's team.

"In the entertainment PR industry, you must be able to jump into the fire at an early stage, multitask, and keep a cool head, because anything can come at you," says Sok. "If the unexpected happens, well, we're all human—just think quick and do it with a smile."

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