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Carol Mendelsohn

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Celebrating a century of Stanley Kramer.

A Human Race
An international team steers Rush across the finish line.

Naked
Story to revenue using the direct-to-consumer video.

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At this point, I harbor sincere hopes that most of our readers know what the Producers Mark means: that the producer whose credit carries the Mark performed a majority of the producing functions on the motion picture.

In case there is any uncertainty about the process by which a producer’s credit is certified, please note that as far as films developed and released in-house, the agreements are binding. All such films will be submitted for Producers Mark certification automatically by the signatory distributors. The same rules do not apply to negative pickups. In the case of such acquisitions, the studio or distributor has the option to submit the film for certification—and we very much encourage them to avail themselves of that option—but they are not required to do so.

However, producers should note that while the studios are required to submit their films for certification, the application of the Mark to individual producing credits is voluntary. Here’s how it works:

1) A studio or distributor, as required by the terms of its agreement, initiates the process by submitting a Notice of Producing Credits to the Guild. Included on that document is contact information for all individuals credited as “Produced By.”

2) Each of those producers is then sent an Individual Producer Eligibility Form. To be considered for certification, a producer must complete and submit this form. (We’ve worked very hard to make our forms as producer-friendly as possible.) Remember, use of the Mark by producers is voluntary. If you choose not to submit the form, you won’t be considered for certification. Obviously, we encourage all producers to submit their forms for certification. But the choice is always up to the individual producer—as it should be.

So if you’ve completed a picture for one of the companies listed above, you can expect to receive an e-mail from the Guild—that e-mail contains a link to your individualized and completely confidential Eligibility Form. You can complete and submit the form online and be done with the process within a few minutes. I wasn’t kidding when I said we try to make it easy.

On the other hand, if you are producing your film independently and do not yet have a distributor, it is incumbent on you to negotiate with the film’s copyright owner to submit a Notice of Producing Credits (found at producersmark.com) in order for the film to be certified with the Producers Mark.

But for their part, our studio partners have stepped up to the plate. Now it’s up to you to make the Producers Mark your own. Dozens of your colleagues have already been certified (see page 62), and many of the year’s biggest holiday releases—including August: Osage County, The Wolf of Wall Street, American Hustle and The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug—will carry the Producers Mark. Producers have finally dealt themselves a winning hand, and it’s time to go all in.

This summer, our Guild was proud to announce that it had signed separate agreements with all major studios to utilize the Producers Mark on the feature films internally developed and released by those studios. Since then, we’ve worked hard to sign agreements with all of the “mini-majors” to certify their producing credits, as well. At present, the list of studios and distributors whose films will carry the Mark includes:

Columbia Pictures Industries
Dimension Films
Disney Feature Animation Studios
DreamWorks Distribution Co.
DreamWorks Animation
Lions Gate Films
Lucasfilm, Ltd.
Marvel Studios
Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pictures
New Line Productions
Paramount Pictures Corp.
Pixar Animation Studios
Screen Gems Productions
Twentieth Century Fox Film Corp.
Universal City Studios
Walt Disney Pictures
Warners Bros. Pictures
The Weinstein Company

All In

Produced by

FROM THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

by Vance Van Petten

SOUND STAGES
LIGHTING AND GRIP RENTAL
PRODUCTION OFFICE SPACE
EDITORIAL SUITES
EXPENDABLES AND OFFICE SUPPLIES
HIGH SPEED DATA AND VOICE CONNECTIVITY
MILL AND STORAGE SPACE
SCREENING ROOMS
GLOBAL CUISINE BY GARY ARARIA, RESTAURANT CATERING AND EVENT PRODUCTION
PARKING STRUCTURE W/BASECAMP
3 WALL CYCLORAMA 50’ X 100’ X 50’ X 25’H

STAGE SPECS:
STAGE 1 127’ x 105’ x 35’ (13,335 Sq.Ft.)
STAGE 2 127’ x 105’ x 35’ (13,335 Sq.Ft.)
STAGE 3 127’ x 105’ x 35’ (13,335 Sq.Ft.)
STAGE 4 127’ x 105’ x 35’ (13,335 Sq.Ft.)
STAGE 3/4 254’ X 105’ X 35’ (26,670 sq.ft.)
STAGE 5 112’ x 92’6” x 35’ (10,360 sq.ft.)
STAGE 6 98’ x 92’6” x 35’ (9,065 sq.ft.)
STAGE 7 112’ x 72’6” x 27’(8,120 sq.ft.), 3 wall cyc
MILL (19,110 sq.ft.)

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Last year, at the Monte Carlo Television Festival, the CBS series CSI: Crime Scene Investigation received the International Audience Award. Judges don’t select that award; viewers do — millions and millions of them. Stated simply, the award is given to the most-watched television series in the world. In 2012, CSI won that award for the fifth time.

Let that sink in for a moment: Five years as the most-watched television show in the world. This, despite several major changes in the series’ principal cast, and stiff competition from numerous other series, including its very own spinoffs.

The evidence would suggest that someone is doing something right.

If this Case Study were an episode of CSI, this would be the moment to insert some high-tech, VFX–enhanced forensic work, zooming in on the DNA evidence, the traces of blood, sweat and tears found on every script, every set. After a suitable combination of analysis and legwork, we’d build to the climax, the big reveal.

Carol Mendelsohn did it.

A veteran television writer who refined her craft under the guidance of legends like Stephen J. Cannell and Aaron Spelling, Mendelsohn was tapped to serve as the showrunner of CSI from its very first season, in 2000. The creative heart of the show came from first-time TV scribe Anthony Zuiker, and the high-energy, propulsive spirit of the series from entertainment grandmaster Jerry Bruckheimer, but from day one, it was Carol Mendelsohn at the center of the storm, keeping the enterprise together. Thirteen years, two spinoffs and countless awards later, Mendelsohn still holds down the fort, week in, week out.

There’s no guarantee that a great writer will prove to be a great producer. But great writers often bring under-appreciated skills to the producer’s chair — notably, the ability to listen. As Mendelsohn attests, she heard the voice of the show, and by that listening, knew what CSI wanted to be. Judging by the record, it wanted to be great television, and Carol Mendelsohn led her team to make it so.

This is the 62nd in Produced by’s ongoing series of Case Studies of successful producers and their work. Editor Chris Green was warmly welcomed into Mendelsohn’s office on the Universal lot for a talk that ranged from the inspiration of The Thin Man, to the challenge of creating a spinoff, to the subtleties of electrocuting a pickle. (Hint: Those sweet pickles ain’t gonna cut it.)
One of the great things about interviewing producers is that you get these great origin stories. What’s yours? How did you come to be a producer?

I've had a lifelong love affair with television. I was raised by a TV set. I remember the day that the first television arrived at our apartment in Chicago and changed my life. It was a big wooden box with a little screen and it went in our living room. There were only a couple of shows on TV back then, but I watched so much television that my parents had to buy a second TV set because they were sick of me living in the living room. I am probably the youngest person ever to have had a television in their bedroom. WGN was on Channel 9 in Chicago. It played all these old movies late at night, and I refused to go to sleep.

Are there particular shows or movies that you can remember watching as a kid?

*The Thin Man*. I loved William Powell and Myrna Loy. I still watch *The Thin Man* movie series before the start of every *CSI* season. It inspired me. There were a couple of really good detective shows too. Like *The Thin Man* TV series with Peter Lawford, Mr. & Mrs. North with Richard Denning. I loved to go to the movies, but I loved watching old films on television more. There was just something about a television set. You asked me about the origins of my being a producer. Clearly it was being a writer, making up stories in my head. I would sit in study hall when I was in high school and I would make up episodes of *The Big Valley* and *The Virginian*. I usually cast myself in a role. [laughs] But I would really produce them! I would worry about wardrobe, sets, everything, including commercials. I'd watch the show in my mind. All those years spent daydreaming TV episodes, I guess I was writing and producing television even back then. I just didn't know it.

There’s a big difference, of course, between writing stories in your head and writing them for real as a professional. What happened in the meantime that enabled you to actually make that happen?

When I graduated from college it was really hard to get a job. My father was a lawyer in Chicago; I grew up around lawyers. And as much as I loved to write, it was sort of expected that I would go into his profession. So I went to law school and graduated from the National Law Center at George Washington University. I stayed in Washington and practiced law for five years. I had this friend who was the receptionist at the law firm we shared space with. She would move up to the desk on my floor in the afternoon, and I would pitch her TV shows. It was still all I could think about.

So I started to take classes at night. The American Film Institute had an office at the Watergate, where my office was. I could work until almost 8 p.m., and still make it to class. And that’s how I started writing. And eventually, I just decided I was going to move to California and be a writer. It was what I wanted more than anything. I just had this passion to make TV. My father was less than pleased. He wanted me to have a good job. I didn’t understand what a writer did all day.

So where and when did you land in town?

I landed in ’82. Prior to that, back in D.C., I had written a script that was kind of an homage to *The Thin Man*. Through a friend of a friend, the script got to MTM, Grant Tinker and Mary Tyler Moore’s company. And I got a call. I’m in my apartment in D.C. and it’s “Hollywood” calling. A development executive. And he said he liked my script. The MTM exec said, “We have two shows on the air. You may want to write a spec script for one of them.” I had no idea what a spec script was. But he sent me some samples, and I wrote an episode of *Lou Grant*. By the time I finally got it to him he said, “Sorry, Lou Grant is getting canceled.” Oh, yes, the disappointments. [laughs] I should have written that *Hill Street Blues* spec.

But I moved out to Los Angeles anyway. And while I was volunteering on a student film at AFI, I was writing my next script, the one that actually got me all my work. Back then, the wisdom was, write a script for the show that you love. You may never sell it, but it’ll be a great spec. So I wrote an episode of *Remington Steele*. I knew it needed a hook. So it was a mystery about an elephant framed for murder. And there was an elephant chase at the end, not a car chase. The bad guys were chasing Laura and Remington, and they were all riding elephants. Even now, as a showrunner of *CSI*, I can’t imagine the look on my line producer’s face if I told him I needed three elephants for a chase scene. And that script got me my first job on *Fame*.

Ultimately over the course of my writing career, I was fortunate enough to work for two producers, who really let me observe how to be a producer. One was Stephen Cannell and the other was Aaron Spelling. My first staff job was on *Hardcastle and McCormick*. Stephen had a screening room and we would watch dailies with him. Stephen would tell us what was working and what wasn’t working. And we got to listen in when he called the set. Anytime you can be in a room with a great writer or producer—or in Stephen’s case, both—you get to learn from the best. And when problems develop on the set and you can watch someone like Stephen solve them, you just absorb all that. And learn from it. What works, what doesn’t.

Now Aaron was the consummate salesman. A grand master. Aaron loved the business. He had an unwavering enthusiasm for what we do. I once went with Aaron to pitch a pilot at CBS. The head of drama development, Jonathan Levin (who later ended up President of Spelling Entertainment), didn’t buy it in the room. Aaron refused to leave the building. We went out to the reception area. Sat down. Reworked the pitch. And Aaron went back in Jonathan’s office and sold the “new” show on the spot. And that’s a great producer.

That’s Aaron Spelling for you.

Aaron always said, when you’re producing a TV show, you can’t overlook even the smallest detail. You can’t drop the smallest stitch. Because the cumulative effect of all those dropped stitches makes the difference between a good TV show and a hit TV show. I’ve never forgotten that. When I see a stitch dropped, I deal with it. I never say, it’s okay, it’s just one little stitch. I attack it head on. And that’s what Aaron did. And he had hit after hit. And he had so much fun doing it! You teach
Produced by

1999/2000 development season, Nina was head of drama development at CBS. She called me; she wanted to do a soap opera. She partnered me with another writer, Susan Berman, and we wrote a pilot about a family-owned, off-strip, Vegas casino. Sort of *Dynasty* in Vegas. It didn’t go. But Nina called me again and said, “We want to keep you in the CBS family.” That call changed my life. She sent me all the scripts of all the shows CBS had picked up, but before I could even finish reading them, she called yet again and said, “We need you on *CSI*.” The pilot had been written by Anthony Zuiker, who had never worked in television; just a few years earlier (Anthony loves to tell this story) he’d been driving a tram at The Mirage in Vegas. It didn’t go. But Nina called me again and said, “We want to keep you in the CBS family.” That call changed my life. She sent me all the scripts of all the shows CBS had picked up, but before I could even finish reading them, she called yet again and said, “We need you on *CSI*.” The pilot had been written by Anthony Zuiker, who had never worked in television; just a few years earlier (Anthony loves to tell this story) he’d been driving a tram at The Mirage in Vegas. Nobody at the time knew or even imagined that *CSI* was going to be a huge success and eventually a huge franchise. But I loved Anthony’s script and his show spoke to me. So what gave me my ability to be a really effective showrunner people by just wearing your relationship to the work, how you carry yourself. He made it the most exciting job in the world and you were always proud of your show.

So having learned the ropes from guys like Stephen and Aaron, how did you ultimately find yourself running *CSI*?

Well, I worked on a lot of TV shows. For a long time I wrote only action/adventure, high-testosterone shows. No one would hire me to write a female-driven show, because the networks thought I could only write for men. Lee Majors once asked me, “Where did you learn to write like a man?” [laughs] He meant it as huge compliment. It was Aaron who overlooked my resume and gave me a chance, with some prodding from my fellow writer and good friend, Chuck Pratt. I spent five years on *Melrose Place*. My first co-showrunning job was with Chuck on its last season. Chuck had been with the show from the beginning and it was such a finely oiled machine that I can’t say how much I really added to the mix. Mostly it was just doing what I’d been doing. But I really became a producer on *CSI*, and that was because of Nina Tassler.

I had worked with Nina Tassler at Warner Bros. The

At the *CSI* 300th Episode Family Picnic; (back row, from left) supervising producer David Rambo, cast member Jorja Fox; (middle row) director Frank Waldeck, director/executive producer Danny Cannon, Carol Mendelsohn; (front row) director/executive producer Louis Miltom, cast member Robert David Hall, creator/executive producer Anthony Zuiker.

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on CSI started with my being a writer and hearing the voice of the show. And by listening to the voice of the show, I knew what the show wanted to be, and I knew how to get it there, how to produce it. I earned my stripes showrunning CSI. It was trial and error. And even though we’re now in our 14th season, every night before I go to bed I ask myself, “Okay, tomorrow, what curveball am I going to be thrown?” And I’m usually way off the mark. Because, most of the time, you don’t see the curveballs coming. Hasn’t stopped me from worrying about it. [laughs]

Let me hear you talk a little bit about the evolution of the show, especially in that first season. It takes any show a little while to find its precise voice, though CSI had the benefit of being a hit from the start.

Anthony Zuiker was partnered with Bruckheimer Television. He wrote an incredible and subversive pilot script. And Jerry Bruckheimer and Jonathan Littman, the President of Bruckheimer Television, hired an incredible director, Danny Cannon. And a great cast. Danny had a real vision for the show. Unfortunately, Danny left us after the pilot. And we weren’t doing that well without him. I got to work the first day of prep for Episode 1. One of my writers came running into my office. He informed me that “Our line producer’s assistant is cold-calling agencies and saying, ‘I’m from CSI. We’re in the first day of prep on Episode 3, and we don’t have a director. Do you have anyone available?’”

Well, there’s your curveball for the day. So I wasn’t the most experienced producer back then, but I knew there was no way we were going to have a director that day. And we just lost a day of prep. In that moment, like a bolt from the heavens, I knew we needed Danny back. All I had to do was find him and convince him to come back. And I had to get Jerry Bruckheimer, Jonathan Littman, Billy Petersen, Marg Helgenberger, the studio and the network to sign off… And I’m so aware that every hour that ticked by, my problem was growing exponentially.

Well, I got everyone to sign off. And now it’s about 11:30 a.m. I get a hold of Danny. I say, “We really need you. You’re the only one that can save us. You’re the only one who can direct a great episode with only six days of prep. And to be honest, we haven’t been able to replicate the pilot.”

I’ll never forget, Danny said, “Well, I’m going into a feature meeting right now. Maybe I can call you back in four hours.” Four hours! I’m pitching my heart out like Henry Kissinger trying to negotiate the Paris Peace Accords, and now I have to wait four hours. Those were a long four hours. But, true to his word, Danny called me back, and said he was in. I may have been flying by the seat of my pants but I knew that without Danny, we would never make it through Season One.

So Danny was in place. Ann Donahue had written the script for Episode 3, “Crate and Burial.” Great title. Danny gave it a unique visual look, and Ann’s writing, as always, was fantastic. And we started to find our show.

I know that Ann has been a key member of your team from the start.

When I was looking to put together the writing staff, the only upper-level writer/producer that I wanted was Ann Donahue. I didn’t know her personally, but I was a huge fan of her writing. It was one of those instinctual decisions. A showrunner needs to trust her instincts at the launch of a new show. All those initial decisions are “make it or break it.” And I was criticized
You try to move heaven and earth to let a show be what it wants to be. And that’s the one thing I will always fall on my sword for. But you have to pick and choose your battles.

So while we were struggling to keep up with production and get the episodes written we were still learning. There was really something special about our team. Everybody put their egos aside. Everybody was willing to teach and learn. We were all in the trenches together. Doesn’t mean there weren’t fights or issues. But I lived by one rule: Always do what’s best for the show. If you make every decision based on what is best for the show, you’ll always make the right decision.

Are there times you can recall when you felt genuinely torn between something that you wanted, or the team wanted, and the executives wanted? It’s really, really hard for me to tell Anthony he couldn’t do it. He was so passionate about it. But I said, “I promise you, we will do it by the end of the season.” And then maybe it was just something that I was doing as an actor. Because I felt like together we could do anything, solve any problem. We felt like the Beatles must have felt. It took the whole band to make a hit. And that was working 24/7. But I wanted to find the head of the gorilla in a big tub of popcorn. And BAM!, it’s got the head of an albino gorilla in it. And then we find the rest of his body on the side of a road later. Anthony had to really chase his dream, and that was actually in a textbook, absent the tub of popcorn, etc.

It’s Anthony’s show, he wrote the pilot. But I had to tell him, “We can’t lead off Season One with a story about a headless-albino gorilla.” He was just so passionate about it that season, shining a light on exotic animal trafficking. The first season of a show is so precarious. You can’t afford to get off on the wrong foot, story-wise.

I wonder if you could discuss the reciprocal challenge… Once your show has been on for a few seasons — or more than a few seasons — how do you maintain that energy and vitality that comes with discovering the show? It seems like that would require a different skill set.

Well, we did talk a lot about sophomore slump. But it helped that as a group — cast, crew, writers — we were never satisfied. We always thought we could do better. So every episode, we would set the bar higher, and try to get over it. And that’s how we approached Season Two and beyond. For instance, one of the things that I was not happy with was the sound design of our show. We’d go to the mix stage, listen to playback, and it would sound fine. Then we’d watch it on air and it was like listening to a different show.

At the time, there was a show airing on PBS, Second Sight, a British mystery starring Clive Owen. The sound design on that show was incredible. Everything was crisp, clear and separated. And I thought CSI should sound just as good. I called Jerry and Anthony and they said, “Send a copy of Second Sight over to our offices.”

It was back in the day of VHS tapes and I didn’t know how to make a copy. So Jerry sent his feature team to my house, and they watched Second Sight on the sofa in my den. On their recommendation, we changed mix teams. And CSI went on to win sound mixing and sound editing awards. So that was a case where the show wasn’t as good as it could be. A show that looks great should sound great. We were always looking at those ways to keep the show from getting stale and the visual style. As the seasons went on, suddenly our CSI shots, which were very inventive at the time, were being copied by other shows. So we made a collective decision to evolve them. At the beginning of every season, we have a creative meeting with our in-house directors, writers, producers, editors, VFX team. And we talk about how to advance the look of the show, how to keep it fresh. And a lot of the time, it has gone, how to be subversive, how to stay ahead of the pack. CSI has always been collaborative. One person can’t figure it out. We put everybody in a room, and let our imaginations run wild. That’s how we come up with most of our best ideas.

Of course, in pretty short order, CSI became a franchise. Needing to create a new show that walks the line between mandate and freedom, and familiarity seems like it would be a pretty involved process. How do you work to transcend the DNA of the series into this new setting?

Jerry, Anthony, Jonathan, Ann and I got called to Leslie Moonves’ office during the third season. We were pulling the CBS lot on Fairfax. Ann pulled up to the gate ahead of Anthony, who was in a big pickup truck with his rap music pumping. Ann told the security guard, “He’s with me. We’re here for a meeting with Mr. Moonves.” And the security guard said, “Oh, you’re here about the spinoff.” Now we didn’t know why we were going to Les’ office, but the guy at the gate did.

So we were kind of prepared by the time we got upstairs. The marching orders were that Ann and Anthony and I were going to write the spinoff. Danny was going to direct it. It was going to be a true spinoff and come off of one of our episodes. It was daunting, to create a whole new show and really differentiate it. To write an episode that starts in Vegas, but ends in Miami with a new cast. In the beginning, everybody said, “Just make another CSI, but in Miami.” Well, it’s not that simple. Every show has to have its own personality, its own unique DNA.

During the first season of CSI: Miami, the logistics of producing two shows became almost impossible. Production for the mothership was based in Santa Clarita. The Miami offices were in Manhattan Beach. We were spending so many hours a day commuting up and down the 405 that the shows might as well have been filming on different coasts. Anthony loves to tell the story of how we were headed to the Miami stages, I was driving. We had spent most of the day in Santa Clarita. He looked over at me and I was asleep at the wheel. It was only for a few seconds, but it was long enough for us to make the decision to move the Miami editors up to Santa Clarita, and eventually the Miami writers as well. They had dual offices. It was clearly a life-or-death decision.

For instance, one of the things that I discuss is the dual offices. It was only for a few seconds, but it was long enough for us to make the decision to move the Miami editors up to Santa Clarita, and eventually the Miami writers as well. They had dual offices. It was clearly a life-or-death decision. Our creative discussion started there as well; we didn’t want to be a second Miami Vice. We all loved the original. Miami Vice set a look and a feel that made everyone, including me, want to go to Miami on my next vacation. But when you go to Miami and look for some of those iconic hotels and clubs, they don’t exist. Early on as producers, we realized that we were creating our own Miami, the Miami that represented the vision of our show, incredibly gorgeous and Bruckheimer-worthy. “If you build it, they will come,” right?

In terms of the stories, we always said that Vegas, it was about the night. Miami was blue skies. You go to Vegas to get lost. You go to Miami to be seen. And so it’s beaches, bikinis and fancy clubs, and Horatio Caine in his sunglasses. They became as iconic as the show. Fans created drinking games around those glasses. And that’s a tribute to David Caruso. He and Horatio were a perfect match. Adam Rodriguez, Emily Procter… They became as iconic as the show. Fans created drinking games around those glasses. And that’s a tribute to Donahue agreed to take over the show and become the show-runner, which solved that logistical problem. Until CSI: New York came along.

To what degree did you grapple with creating CSI: Miami in the shadow of Miami Vice? After all, before CSI, that was probably the last procedural that was an instant hit and changed the look of everything on television.

It’s interesting you mention Miami Vice. Our creative discussion started there as well; we didn’t want to be a second Miami Vice. We all loved the original. Miami Vice set a look and a feel that made everyone, including me, want to go to Miami on my next vacation. But when you go to Miami and look for some of those iconic hotels and clubs, they don’t exist. Early on as producers, we realized that we were creating our own Miami, the Miami that represented the vision of our show, incredibly gorgeous and Bruckheimer-worthy. “If you build it, they will come,” right?

In terms of the stories, we always said that Vegas, it was
More than a show

The mothership was set in Vegas, but initially our marching orders were to make it “Anywhere USA.” Which is why we always started the episodes with the camera flying over the Strip and then veering off into the bushes. It was only over time that it became distinctly Vegas, telling stories that could only be told in Vegas. CSI had found its own voice. Miami needed to as well. It just took everyone a while to realize it. Eventually, CSI: Miami had its own look and feel and unique stories. As for “Wet Foot, Dry Foot,” like the albino gorilla, we moved it to later in the season. And it’s still one of my favorite episodes.

As a producer, you try to move heaven and earth to let a show be what it wants to be. And that’s the one thing I will always fall on my sword for: But you have to pick and choose your battles.

As a producer, there are things that have nothing to do with physical production or guiding the writers or being a liaison with the network. It’s a people job, where you have to put yourself in the shoes of the people you work with, get behind their eyes, and respect and value their opinions. Even if you don’t share them. People need to be heard. You can’t impose your will on other people. Truth be told. There have been days when I just wanted it all to go my way. Because that’s easiest for me. But dictators get overthrown. TV isn’t like making a movie. Three months and you can say goodbye forever. CSI is in its 14th season. We all have to work together tomorrow, the next day, next year.

How did you respond to that?

The show wanted to be about its milieu, Miami. It wanted to be more than just CSI picked up and dropped in another city.

I don’t think you can be both domineering and effective. I work with talented, creative, experienced people. All of them pros. My job is to create an environment in which everyone wants to contribute, and no one is under pressure to play it safe. An environment which is expansive, not contractive. That’s what serves the show. The fun, the true satisfaction of producing CSI all these years, has been the creative collaboration. Season Two, Josh Berman and I wrote the show’s first electrocution story. The electrical department served as our technical advisors. There was a point at which the crew didn’t believe that an electrocuted dill pickle would light up like a neon sign. So our prop guys did a test just for the crew. It worked — provided the pickle was a kosher dill. There’s nothing like that level of collaboration and passion. It’s the engine that drives CSI.

Whether in features or television, producers always have to work with writers. Having been on both sides of that fence, how did you approach that aspect of the job? Because writers can sometimes be… delicate creatures. To say the least.

Truth be told, there have been days when I just wanted it all to go my way. Because that’s easiest for me. But dictators get overthrown. TV isn’t like making a movie. Three months and you can say goodbye forever. CSI is in its 14th season. We all have to work together tomorrow, the next day, next year.

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Writing is rewriting. Every CSI script gets rewritten, either by the writer with notes from the showrunners, or by the writer with one or more members of the staff. Anthony and I revrote a lot of scripts, but the writer was never excluded from the process. The writer was always in the room with us, usually together with one of our former CSIs, slash writer/producers. CSI scripts are tough because of all the science and the twists and turns. I always tell the writer, nobody’s in it alone. It’s a collaboration. If there’s a problem, we’ll solve it together.

It worked for Anthony, Ann and I. It still works. And that’s the fun of the job, being creative together. As a result, many of my writers have become producers and showrunners. My first assistant, Corey Miller, is now the showrunner of CBS’ Reckless. One of my other former assistants, Tom Mularz, is now a supervising producer on CSI.

My writers are all better producers than I am. We always have a writer on set. It’s something Billy Petersen started. It’s not easy being in the cross-hairs, set down in the middle of the real deal, but the CSI writers learn how to produce and, by doing that, they become even better writers. That’s one of the things I’m most proud of on CSI, that all my writers are great producers. They’re smart and they understand that everybody on the show has an important job and we couldn’t do it without each and every member of the team.
Sinking Outside the Box

Neal Dodson and Anna Gerb produce a wordless, one-man maritime epic

“Every producer is a little bit of a control freak,” says Anna Gerb, producer with Neal Dodson of the new film All Is Lost. “And to work on a project like this, that’s outside of your comfort zone, is professionally and personally challenging and exciting. It’s not an overstatement to call All Is Lost risky; the second film from director J.C. Chandor is decidedly different from his risky; the second film from director J.C. Chandor. It’s not an overstatement to call All Is Lost risky; the second film from director J.C. Chandor is decidedly different from his

All Is Lost is a contemplative, nearly wordless portrait of a single man’s journey of survival, relying on the performance of screen legend Robert Redford to carry the audience through a story of waves, wind and water. Plus, one can’t forget that mov- ies set on the water have included some of Hollywood’s biggest debacles. “As producers, we’re holding our breath for the whole film shoot,” says Dodson. “But everything lined up and it was an incredibly rewarding experience.”

Neal Dodson and Anna Gerb first collaborated on Margin Call, J.C. Chandor’s freshman feature, but their experiences as producers go back many years. “I come from an acting background,” says Dodson. “I worked as an actor in New York and L.A. I did plays, soap operas, but I always had a produc- torial side and finally decided to focus on that. I went to work for a producer at Warner Bros. and did everything from answering phones to taking meals with studio heads, and finally I decided to start my own company,” Dodson says. In 2008, Dodson and his friends Corey Moosa and Zachary Quinto formed Before the Door Films, named for an acting exercise Dodson and his friends Corey Moosa and Zachary Quinto formed Before the Door Films, named for an acting exercise

Anna Gerb says it was a harmonious shoot. “J.C. approaches filming with the eye of a producer,” Gerb says. “Our job was largely to protect him from the stresses and do a lot of problem-solving.”

All Is Lost was shot in New York over 17 days with a cast that included Kevin Spacey, Jeremy Irons, Demi Moore and Stanley Tucci, as well as producer Zachary Quinto. It premiered at the Sundance Film Festival, where it was promptly picked up by Lionsgate. It received numerous awards, includ- ing an Independent Spirit Award for Best First Feature and an Academy Award nomination for Best Original Screenplay. Despite the film’s low budget and tight schedule, Dodson and Gerb say it was a harmonious shoot. “J.C. approaches filming with the eye of a producer,” Gerb says. “Our job was largely to protect him from the stresses and do a lot of problem-solving.”

by Jeffrey McMahon

Producers Neal Dodson and Anna Gerb with writer-director J.C. Chandor.

(Photographs: Richard Foreman)
pitched the idea to me and Quinto and our foreign sales agent, and on a napkin he drew boats and shipping containers and rafts. He said, ‘That’s the movie, an old guy on a boat, that’s the story I want to tell.’ My first reaction was, ‘really?’ He could have made something like Margin Call but with guns, but instead he decided to take a left turn,” Dodson laughs.

The unusual nature of All Is Lost extended to Chandor’s final screenplay for the film. “Instead of a standard screenplay, he gave us a 31-page prose document with no dialogue,” says Gerb. “I read it in my office with J.C. in the room and I was overwhelmed. I felt seasick, it was so intense.” Despite the project’s unusual nature, both Gerb and Dodson recognized the potential of the film. “Things that make you the most nauseous and fearful turn out to be the most rewarding,” says Gerb.

The first piece of the puzzle to get the film made was to cast its sole character, only referred to in the script as “Our Man.” Chandor knew early on who his top choice was. “J.C. met Redford at After their Sundance premiere and before its release, Chandor was already at work on his next project. “I first learned about All Is Lost when we were in Berlin,” Dodson says, recalling Margin Call’s international premiere at the 2011 Berlin Film Festival. “J.C. hadn’t written the script yet, he just

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Best Original Screenplay. “We took the film to the market at the Berlin Film Festival 2012 and within four hours, we were able to pre-sell the entire world,” Dodson says. “J.C. went personally to Liongate, to Steve Beeks, who had green-lit the purchase of Margin Call, and he bought the U.S. rights.” With the film’s budget raised, pre-production could begin.

Most indie films don’t have the challenges this one did,” says Gerb. “We had a full marine unit, a full VFX crew, major safety considerations, two DPs, plus we were trying to shoot everything consecutively. So it was a major logistical puzzle to make sure everything was going to work on our schedule and budget.” Central to the shoot was to find a facility that could handle the film’s production needs — a place to crash a sailboat into a shipping container, to throw it into a dangerous storm, to flip it, capsize it, and sink it — without damaging the Academy Award–winning actor on board. The solution turned out to be Baja Studios, the huge facility built for James Cameron’s Titanic. “They had been booked for several productions that then didn’t actually shoot there, so they were looking to show that they were still open for business,” Dodson says. “We were able to negotiate a very good deal based on that.” Additionally, the crew needed to move between several different shooting locations. “We spent 31 days shooting in Mexico, which is the only place we could have three different boats in three different tanks,” says Gerb. “We went out into the ocean off Ensenada, L.A. and Long Beach, and to the Bahamas.” The Bahamas portion of the shoot was based on the recommendation of underwater director of photography Peter Zuccarini. “When we were talking about getting these underwater shots of the raft and sea life, he said he knew exactly how to get them with a team he’s built up in south Florida and the Bahamas.” As a result, Redford is accompanied by a number of exotic fish and marine life — and ultimately, a number of dangerous sharks.

Shooting such a technically complex film on an independent scale meant that Gerb and Dodson had to be especially careful with the film’s resources. “J.C. storyboarded the entire film. We had 400 or 500 frames mounted around what we called our ‘war room.’ We used that as our bible,” says Dodson. “We had three identical sailboats that each did different things, in three different tanks, and a crazy chart showing which boat was in which tank on which day.”

As the shoot commenced, Gerb and Dodson’s new anxiety was about the safety of their leading man — a 76-year-old actor being thrashed around by wind and water. “Bob had days when he did not want to put on the soggy sneakers. He was pretty bruised,” recalls Gerb. “But he did all the underwater work; he kept getting hit with water blasts and wave machines, he ended up with double ear infections. We tried to make it as easy on him as possible; one weekend, we sent him to a spa to dry out. It helps that he’s so physically fit. He was pretty bruised,” recalls Gerb. “But he did all the underwater work; he kept getting hit with water blasts and wave machines, he ended up with double ear infections. We tried to make it as easy on him as possible; one weekend, we sent him to a spa to dry out. It helps that he’s so physically fit. He just kept wanting to do more.” It may have not been an easy shoot, but Redford’s commitment to the role has been paying off, with many critics calling the performance some of the best work of the actor’s long career.

All Is Lost had its world premiere this May at Cannes and has already rolled out at several other film festivals, including Telluride and the New York Film Festival. And Dodson and Gerb are already hard at work on their next collaboration with Chandor, A Most Violent Year. “It shares some DNA with mentors like The Godfather, as a family tale, a business tale, and a tale of violence in a big city,” Dodson says. Gerb and Dodson are in pre-production looking toward shooting in the spring.

In addition, Gerb and Dodson are proud to use the PGA Producers Mark on All Is Lost. “I just joined the PGA,” says Dodson, “and Anna’s been a member for a while, but we came aware of the Mark when we saw it used on Lawless. The way that we produce, we’re very much side-by-side with the director all the way through color-timing and sound mix, and it means a lot to have that work recognized, that there’s a job that producers do.” Gerb adds, “It distinguishes our contribution in a way that’s important. I get emotional when we were approved, and as soon as my pen came with my name on it, I danced.”

Producing is something that both Dodson and Gerb take very seriously. “It’s a tough business,” says Gerb. “You have to be tenacious, read as many scripts as you can to hone your own gut and instincts, because there’s no one way to make anything, no formula.” Dodson agrees: “People mistake creative freedom for anarchy, but being responsible financially and creatively gives you more freedom. Getting the cash for a film is only a part of what we do. But you have to keep learning and hiring people who know more about these things than you do.”

Anna Gerb and Neal Dodson on location in Baja for All Is Lost.

(Photo: Richard Foreman)

There are some things green screens just can’t do. Inspire, for example.
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Courageous, Independent, Creative, Integrity, Humanitarian, these are some of the words that come to mind when considering Stanley Kramer, a producer's producer and the man in whose honor the Producers Guild of America presents the Stanley Kramer Award at its annual awards ceremony each year. This award “recognizes an achievement or a contribution that illuminates provocative social issues in an accessible and elevating fashion.” In other words, it’s given to a socially conscious filmmaker or film that best exemplifies Kramer’s legacy of bringing social issues and subjects to the screen. The award was first presented in 2002, with some of the past recipients including Precious, An Inconvenient Truth, Milk and The Great Debaters.

Kramer passed away in 2001 and this year, we celebrate the centennial of Stanley Kramer’s birth. It’s an ongoing celebration with film retrospectives screening across the country, including one at UCLA (where Kramer donated his papers way before it was fashionable to do so). A newly restored print of the rarely seen Death of a Salesman, starring Fredric March, Mildred Dunnock and Kevin McCarthy, kicked off the festival this summer.

Kramer grew up in New York’s Hell’s Kitchen where young men had three options: 1) become a priest in order to survive there; 2) be a prizefighter to get out of there; or 3) succumb and become part of a gang, and most likely end up in jail. Being an outsider even then, he chose another option in spite of those rough and tumble beginnings — he chose education.

The son of a single working mother, a considerable stigma in those days, Kramer entered NYU at the young age of 15, determined to rise above his meager beginnings. An admirer of the New Deal, he wrote Eleanor Roosevelt a letter and counted her as a key influence on both his life and the values that drove his filmmaking.

Arriving in Hollywood for a paid writing internship at 20th Century Fox in the early 1930s, he began his career doing odd jobs during the Great Depression (including writing and film-editing for MGM, Columbia and Republic Pictures) until World War II broke out. His employers at the time, Lewin and Loew, gave him the title of “associate producer” so he could enlist in the hopes of working in the Army film unit making training films before he was drafted. It was there he met Carl Foreman, with whom he ended up partnering in an independent production company after the war, along with publicist George Glass and comedy writer Herbie Baker.

While still in the service, he bought two Ring Lardner stories, which would serve as the basis for the first productions for his own independent film company following his discharge. While the first, So This Is New York (1948), was not a box-office success, the second proved otherwise. Starring a young unknown named Kirk Douglas, Champion not only catapulted Douglas to film stardom but put Kramer on the map as one of the first significant post-war independent producers.

Because he wanted to make movies that excited him, he remained fiercely independent and refused to bow to the bottom line of the studios. Of course, he wanted his movies to do well. What good is the message if no one gets to hear or see it? But he made movies that challenged the belief systems and the conventional wisdom at the time, and that’s neither an easy task, nor is it encouraged by bankers and studio execs. It certainly doesn’t promise widespread popularity or tremendous wealth.

But Kramer was a producer in the true sense of the word, at a time when producers ruled the roost. In Kramer’s era, a film was the producer’s vision, from inception to completion, and they put the team together. While this remains true today, and serves as the basis for the PGA’s definition of a producer, the director’s on-set role has in substantial part eclipsed the producer’s. As the institutional balance of power shifted, so did Kramer, directing many of his productions with great success. Any Stanley Kramer Production had his stamp of approval on it. He was not only creative with the material, but he had to be creative in selling it to financiers and promoting it after it was in the can. Sometimes production required creativity simply in getting the actors to the set.

While making Home of the Brave, based upon the play about anti-Semitism by Arthur Laurents, he changed the lead role from Paul Muni to Anthony Quinn and Stanley Kramer on the set of The Secret of Santa Vittoria. (Courtesy of United Artists and the Stanley Kramer Private Collection)
character to an African-American. In order to proceed, he kept the script under wraps and swore the cast and crew to secrecy. Even the studio didn’t know what he was up to. Carl Foreman and Kramer came up with a phony title, *High Noon* — a title he would eventually use again. Every day, James Edwards, the lead actor, would lie down on the floorboards of his car as it drove him to and from the studio lot. When the movie opened, it was one of the most picketed films in film history. Kramer exhibited this kind of courage, tenacity and creativity throughout his career. He was fearless.

A fiercely independent filmmaker who preferred to work outside the studio system, except for a tempestuous three-year stint with the legendary Harry Cohn, Kramer’s legacy of films include *Death of a Salesman*, *The Defiant Ones*, *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner*, *Judgment at Nuremberg*, *It’s a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*, *Wind*, *High Noon*, *The Wild One*, *On the Beach*, *Ship of Fools*, "Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner*, *The Caine Mutiny*, *Inherit the Wind*. His widow, PGA member Karen Sharpe Kramer, disagrees with her husband’s statement. “Stanley was extremely modest about himself and his work,” she said. “But I think it’s a mistake in dealing with social issues and assuming you can’t change people’s minds.” And if you look at his films, you might be inclined to agree with her, not him.

*On the Beach* explored nuclear holocaust at a time when everyone believed that bomb shelters in their backyards would protect them from radiation. Kramer’s film showed otherwise. Premiering worldwide on December 7, Pearl Harbor Day, kings, queens and heads of state came out to see the film on its opening night. Not long after, talks of disarmament began at the United Nations.

With *Bless the Beasts & Children*, Kramer explored the senseless killing of animals, notably buffalo in the state of Arizona. When it was discovered they were shooting there, the production was thrown out of the state and had to finish up the movie on Catalina Island. Stanley promoted the film among young people and at universities to great success, touching the chord of revolution and making it a cult classic. That film opened the door to outlawing the killing of buffalo in Arizona.

Let’s not forget about *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner* — a film that explored interracial marriage with an all-star cast toplined by Spencer Tracy, Katharine Hepburn and Sidney Poitier. Once again, Kramer kept the script under wraps, afraid that if Columbia knew the complete story, they’d shut him down. Instead, he told them it was a love story (which of course it was, just not the kind of love story the studio imagined). Production had already begun up in San Francisco when the studio pulled the plug, on the premise that Spencer Tracy was too ill and uninsurable. Never one to take anything lying down, Kramer came up with a brilliant and creative solution that the studio could not refuse. He knew Tracy well, having made four movies with him, and knew how to work with him in spite of his illness. Kramer went to Katharine Hepburn and told her he was willing to guarantee his salary to insure Tracy for the film, and if Kate did the same thing, the studio would be legally compelled to let them continue. The studio had no choice but to go forward.

When the movie was released, it premiered at a single theater in Westwood, where the studio had hoped to bury it, but they didn’t bargain for the college students who lined up around the block to see the film. When Kramer asked some of the students how they felt about the film, they opined that Kramer was very old-fashioned; they were way ahead of him and really didn’t consider interracial relationships to be a significant issue. But Kramer replied, “I know you don’t. But I didn’t make this film for you. I made it for us. For us, who can’t deal with it.” At the time of *Guess Who’s Coming to
for Best Screenplay. Sidney Poitier recalled, “It was a fabulous experience that galvanized, for me, a career I had never dreamed possible. The Defiant Ones, Pressure Point, Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner were films that pushed the limits of the status quo and changed the game of the film industry, not to mention, the world, considerably.”

Kramer, indeed, had a keen eye for talent. Kirk Douglas (Champion), Marlon Brando (The Men, The Wild One) and Grace Kelly (High Noon) as well as Poitier among some of the many talents whom he helped propel to stardom. He also took chances with established stars allowed them to play against types, such as Tony Curtis in The Defiant Ones, Fred Astaire in On the Beach, Gene Kelly in Inherit the Wind and Judy Garland in A Child Is Waiting and Judgment at Nuremberg. The industry and the public thought he was crazy casting these actors, but the choices were typically vindicated by award nominations.

As a humanitarian, he truly believed in justice, truth and the value of a single human being, and his movies reflect that. But he was also a family man — in fact, family came first. He was home every night for dinner at 6, no matter what. Karen Kramer still marvels at his integrity, how he never criticized anyone or said an unkind word about anybody, yet made films that were painfully aware of our human (and national) shortcomings. The honesty in his films and the way he lived his life continues to inspire countless storytellers. It’s been 100 years since Stanley Kramer came into the world. And 100 years from now, his legacy of conscience, commitment and craftsmanship will be just as vital as it is today."

The Stanley Kramer Award

We are honored to list here the recipients of the Producers Guild’s Stanley Kramer Award recognizing an achievement or a contribution that illuminates provocative social issues in an accessible and elevating fashion.

2002 I Am Sam
(Marshall Herskovitz, Jesse Nelson, Ed Solomon, Edward Zwick)

2003 Antwone Fisher
(Todd Black, Denzel Washington)

2004 In America
(Arthur Lappin, Jim Sheridan)

2005 Hotel Rwanda
(Terry George, A. Kitman Ho)

2006 Good Night, and Good Luck
(Grant Heslov)

2007 An Inconvenient Truth
(Lawrence Bender, Scott Z. Burns, Laurie David)

2008 The Great Debaters
(Todd Black, Kate Forte, Joe Roth, Oprah Winfrey)

2009 Milk
(Bruce Cohen, Dan Jinks)

2010 Precious
(Lee Daniels, Gary Magness, Sarah Siegel-Magness)

2011 Sean Penn
(recognizing a career of humanitarian work)

2012 In the Land of Blood and Honey
(Tim Roth, Leonardo, Angelina Jolie, Graham King, Tim Moore)

2013 Bully
(Lee Hirsh, Cynthia Lowen)
The seasoned filmmakers that brought you such acclaimed movies as *A Beautiful Mind*, *Frost/Nixon*, *The Damned United* and *Cinderella Man*, among many others, have taken on a genre that has proven elusive in Hollywood, indeed in global cinema history: the auto racing movie.

*Rush*, now playing, is essentially a dual-character study in contrasting personalities based on the biography of Austrian Formula 1 champion driver Niki Lauda, and pivoting on the horrific 1976 crash that almost claimed his life. Mere weeks after the accident, he got behind the wheel to challenge his British rival, James Hunt.

The genre is ripe for rediscovery; the best racing films were made more than 40 years ago. And even then, filmmakers found it hard to combine the speed, glamour and excitement of that world with a compelling story. *Le Mans* (1971) with Steve McQueen and John Frankenheimer’s *Grand Prix* (1966) were superb in capturing the racing atmosphere (indeed the latter won three Academy Awards: Best Effects-Sound Effects, Best Film Editing and Best Sound), but critics rightfully felt both fell short on story.

Looking to thrill the senses via a compelling narrative and realistic period racing, a team of European and Hollywood filmmakers have teamed up to produce what they hope breaks through a long pileup of forgettable auto racing pictures.

So despite the major challenges of *Rush* being a period film and the fact the sport has enjoyed limited appeal in the United States (long a key for financing and distribution), the producers talked about how their passion for the project kept them on course, beginning with a script they all liked and then persevering to secure the financing to turn that script into film.

It really helped that the initial producers had deep personal ties to F1.

“*Rush* producer Andrew Eaton of London-based Revolution Films. "As Ron Howard says, ‘If you wrote that script as a Hollywood story, no one would actually believe it.’ Plus, given all the health and safety issues these days, the doctors would have prevented [a driver from attempting Lauda’s rapid comeback].”

Morgan, who also wrote football’s *The Damned United*, reveals that what drew him in was something he felt was more universal, and a feature of some of his other film credits, a theme of rivalry.

“In order for me to find the story interesting, it was never going to be based on what happened on the track, but based on their chemistry and broader elements that would make up a good drama,” says the screenwriter. A Brit married to an Austrian, Morgan saw some interesting parallels involving national pride as he kicked the story about in his mind.
struggling from an early point in their career. In the story of mastery, I like are the themes of heartache, the pain, the story of mastery. I like sports stories about mastery. And within a sports film, explains the Beverly Hills–based veteran producer. “One is Morgan’s script. A film with any kind of sports backdrop, but was intrigued by the movie ‘Cinderella Man,’ well knew the challenges of making a film onto the scene. Morgan wrote the script on spec with no interest in the project. Despite those on board feeling excited about the story he’s currently working on, the project gathered speed with the Imagine filmmakers onboard. Despite Morgan’s passion for the story, he was determined to write the story regardless of budget. Morgan proceeded to meet Lauda (a friend of his wife) “over lunch” in London. It felt like a real natural one to me. So I was living in Vienna at the time and just now moving to London. So it was that clash between Austria and England. We were living in Vienna at the time and just now moving to London. So it was that clash between Austria and England. I’m English and married to an Austrian. Morgan continues. “I’m English and married to an Austrian. Peter is a master at writing to people at odds and their emotions. And Peter is quite brilliant at writing rivalries. So believing in a story that goes beyond Formula 1.”

The film flew out of the pits into another gear when the Imagine filmmakers got lucky on two fronts in getting the green light. Casting quickly came together when “two guys, driven by reasons of their own, got to the same place.” The Cross Creek executive saw parallels to another sports film with British elements in it: “Charities of Fire,” in which “two guys, driven by reasons of their own, got to the same place.”

As for casting Lauda, Berlin-based actor Daniel Brühl (Good Bye Lenin!, Inglourious Basterds) not only had performed in many German-language films but in fact, was the actor Morgan had in mind the whole time he was writing the script. “Brühl was probably the only guy that could ever have done that role,” adds Fellner. “He is from that part of the world, the right age, has some international notoriety and is a film actor of great stature.”

Morgan illustrates how his hunch was correct: “Ron [Howard] would send me dailies and I’d show them to Niki’s lifelong friends and family. They’d say stuff like ‘That’s weird…’ So, when did Niki have time to dub in his voice? These are people that lived with him, blood relations, and they couldn’t separate him from the actor. Brühl is magnificent.”

Verisimilitude is key to any period movie, including accurately capturing a well-known figure’s voice and appearance, but especially to scenes in sports pictures. So the actors were put through a rigorous training program by the film’s precision racing coordinator, Niki Faulkner; and his team of veteran drivers who would perform much of the wheel-to-wheel, high-speed scenes doubling for the actors.

“It was a frosty British winter, which made for some dicey conditions on the track. It certainly was more exciting,” recalls Faulkner, who stars in the popular BBC show Top Gear. “In early training, a rear wheel had not been put on properly in one of our make-shift pits, so Daniel sped away on three tires. A sprint, but no injuries. However, I do think it brought the actors to realize this can be a dangerous sport.”

To get a sense of the sport’s speed and power, the actors also went through an elaborate F1 simulator in London. Faulkner recalls an early session where Hemsworth came out “looking a little green,” but overall, the coordinator praised the duo as quick learners.

Growing up more as a surfer near Melbourne before moving up to the Northern Territory down under, Hemsworth recalls his initial foray into the F1 action. “I remember the first time I got into one of those cars and there’s the incredible roar of the engine and the whole thing is vibrating,” he says. “You are locked into this little cocoon and
your shoulders are rubbing the sides of the cabin and you feel that this car is an extension of your body. There's such a sense of power because it's right at your fingertips, but you also realize how vulnerable you are because of the precarious nature of the machines. It's an incredible feeling.”

To prepare for the role, Brühl devoted himself to studies of Lauda's autobiography To Hell and Back and watched anything and everything he could find about him, in addition to spending time with the former racer himself. 

"There was so much to do," says Brühl. "On my own, I did a Formula 3 course in Spain right after getting the good news, to get a feel of what it is like to be in a racing car. And then I met Niki, I met Ron a couple of times, I did some tests in cars with Chris." But the role presented other challenges for Brühl.

"There was a [prosthetic] mouthpiece," the actor explains. "There was special effects makeup [for after Lauda's crash]: there was a wig; it was all sort of things. But it all helps. The mouthpiece just changes your face and the way you talk. I had to get used to that. And also the first time that I got this special makeup, it took five or six hours. The first time, I fell asleep and then woke up and saw myself with this heavily burned face, and it was a shock for a second or two. And because [the makeup] was uncomfortable, it also helps because, you know, it must have been so painful. Especially around the eyes, it was pretty uncomfortable. That was good. It gave me something to play with."

Faulkner's training regimen included studying vintage footage of drivers and racers from that era, how racers prepare themselves for race planning meetings, how to eat and train, how to deal with the media from a time management and mental focus point of view and visualization techniques which are shown in the film with Hemsworth (as Hunt) mentally going through the course at Monaco.

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Another most fortunate happenstance for the producers was the discovery and passionate participation of a group of racers who actually owned and maintained F1 cars from that period. So between the replica cars (built by three separate companies: WDK Racing, Mirage Motorsport and Rob Austin Racing), and the enthusiasts, the production was able to start a complete grid of '70s-era cars for the racing scenes.

"Without spending $100m on CGI or real cars, capturing that racing world is real tough," says Fellner. "We got lucky with a brilliant group. Enthusiasts came out of nowhere to lend us their real cars, build replicas, and Peter Chang of Double Negative here in London added great special effects."
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Facts are hard to deny, though we do try.
We’ve all experienced the impact of denying facts on set; the casualties can include budget, schedule, performance, quality or worse. And so we learn to listen. It’s when change is slow or the impact is not immediate that things can sneak up behind us.
Welcome to the exclusive year-long series ‘Naked: Story to Revenue Using the Direct-to-Consumer Video,” where I will share with you the ups and downs of creating a digital-age entertainment property (and its path to revenue) from scratch.
You may remember me from my previous articles in Produced by, “The Virtual Threshold” and “VIRTUAL Meets REALITY.” The first, a documented view into the first-ever live 3D Virtual Star Trek Convention (Vit-Con), the second, a proselytization of digital convergence. While the 3D virtual convention platform as I envisioned it did not take off, the for-
mat did make possible deep person-to-person social connec-
tion based around a passion. Now, Facebook has surpassed 1 billion users, and social networks abound, connecting 2 41 billion of the world’s inhabitants using the Internet. Practical convergence is here to stay, with the technical infrastructure making everything dreamed of possible.
I was amongst the very first signups of America Online. In fact, the rep nearly cried when I dropped AOL because they were too slow to evolve. Since the early ’80s, I have been obsessed with possibilities of “story” in a digital age.
My mind was abuzz with what was about to be enabled. From my modest home just outside Atlanta, GA, in Inman Park, I was developing treatments for story-based shows using the forecasted digital capabilities.
When I arrived in Hollywood, all the studios thought I was delusional.
In 1999, after being re-routed into children’s interactive CD ROMs (remember them?) for Disney, I got my chance. It was a small glimmer of hope as the technology infrastructure was starting to show promise. The delusion was now seen as merely peculiar and hopeful.
I led a project for General Motors’ Concept: Cure that won a Webby for daring to express a website in a new way. We wrote and pro-
duced a character-driven, forked-story series of videos, then designed and programmed a 100% video website.
The lead character walked on “stage” (the website), back to the audience, speaking to a Greek chorus of characters, only to be surprised that the viewer (website visitor) was there. She took the viewer from video-to-video (page-to-page) accompanied by flash animations of cars with special design-
er features being auctioned for cancer research. It may seem modest today, but at the time, the project pushed the limits of every aspect of Web-based production.
Ever since, we’ve seen the delivery path to our viewers change with an ever-growing list of disruptors impacting our “business as usual.” Last-mile connectivity, speed, bandwidth, advanced Internet browsers and video players, and computing power have all impacted delivery, production, distribution, and even financing.
As reported by Plunkett Research, traditional media is now losing shares while digital media is becoming the norm. Entertainment companies are being forced to evolve in order to deal with new technologies and new demands from consumers.
“The Third Screen” (smart devices) has been another major factor in entertainment and media, and may soon take over as the “First Screen.” As 2013 began, there were 321 mil-
lion wireless subscriptions (for cellphones, tablets and other devices) in the United States. Broadcast Internet-connected U.S. homes and businesses totaled about 96 million, while digital cable subscribers in the United States sat at 46.7 mil-
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Ladyes are all reported to have used digital SLRs. I'm sure shots from digital phones have been used in much more than just the news.

Our smart devices, TVs, DVDs, A/V receivers, tablets and phones all bring content directly to the viewer, when and where they want it.

Talent notwithstanding (and it nearly always matters) the door to the club may actually be more open than we think. And I know, money will splay those doors even wider.

I have waited patiently for this day to come. History has taught us, if you embrace technological advancement and add the sophistication of storytelling, you can be heard and will be rewarded.

When I watch House of Cards, twice all the way through so far, it didn't matter when or where or, for that matter, on which device. I seamlessly moved in space, iPad to Smart TV to iPhone and back... I lived and breathed story, which device. I seamlessly moved in time and space, iPad to

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The Guild

To Let It Blend? Comedian Ray William Johnson

The top 50 YouTube channels (shows) alone have garnered more than 320 million subscribers and nearly 70 billion total views in just one life — respectively comparable to traditional TV.

Even more powerfully, direct video allows the content owner to have a personal connection with the viewer. This manifests in four ways: views, subscriptions, comments and shares, creating a measurable index of viewer engagement.

Views. In over-the-air or cable broadcasting there is no direct connection between the content owner and the viewer. There are rating systems projecting viewership in reach and share. Views it the closest in comparison, but views are not projected or extrapolated; they are real collected data.

Subscriptions. Imagine every viewer of your TV show can send you their phone number to indicate their dedication to the show and offer you a means, and permission, to call them to remind them to watch. That would be nice!

Comments. This is a real-time, continuous two-way, focus group. Only there is no intermediary interpretative analysis. Real viewers with direct comments in real time for every video (or episode).

Shares. Now that they're viewed, and perhaps subscribed and commented on, with a single click they can pick from 10 social networks through which to share the video (or episode) — with everyone they know. TV must be envious of this built-in marketing.

Any TV series would kill for the level of engagement even one of the Top 50 YouTube channel enjoys.

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Felicia Day observed in Chris Green's wonderful article in the July-August 2013 Produced by, "[Direct video watchers] expect an active connection... on an ongoing basis. You're committing to people."

While producers have always claimed to create for the audience, this is a different paradigm, a real two-way commitment. And with responsibility comes great power.

If we can embrace the audience, they will propel us where we want to go. Per Liz Lemon, "I want to go to there."

I've been told that there are many revenue avenues available. The list is as long as you would find in a mature industry:
crowdfunding for production costs, sponsorships like Microsoft did for The Guild or Elle Walker got from Procter & Gamble, the appearance and hosting fees that keep Justice flying from coast-to-coast, on-demand custom merchandise without capital outlay only a click away, not to mention direct advertising and shared advertising from YouTube or selling private subscriptions like The Young Turks (TYT). Even multichannel network agencies and collectives have popped up to help, many of them backed by millions in VC funds.

I will explore them all.

And I'm ready to go. I've chosen to work with beautiful and talented women who want to launch a lifestyle brand driven by entertainment and inspired by TV as we have known it.

I have produced Kim Castle's work on a CBS affiliate show I created, as well as in the theater and on speaking platforms. She has a modest Web presence driven by her previous passion, brand communications. She's referenced on more than 40,000 websites, has 5,000+ friends (with 2,000+ waiting) and 9,900+ fans on Facebook, and 3,500+ followers on Twitter. She has done industrials, regional and national television and commercials. And given her comedy background, I know it will be fun!

In this series I will share the ups and downs, the data and the bullshit, pitfalls and opportunities in the digital landscape, the journey of guiding a talent to viewer-accepted content, and the creation of sellable-show format, leading to revenue as quickly as possible.

No telling where we will land by the July/August 2014 issue, but you will see it all.

The next installment will tackle a content development boot camp experience, revenue methodology and distribution strategy research, with excerpts from interviews with digital industry players. And of course, the opportunities or land mines that cross my path.

If you have questions or suggestions of what you think I should do or research for all our benefit, please let me know — vito.montone@whycom.com.

See you next issue! ☺️
At their best, the stories of 44 Blue Productions take full measure of the depth of human courage and heartache while staying true to the heart and decency that animates the day-to-day lives of its subjects. Run by husband-and-wife team Rasha and Stephanie Drachkovitch, the production company homes in on the complexities of life to weave stories of such disparate subjects as inmates, parolees, military families and struggling businesses. Movie stars, grand sets and glib writing are among the fictions that the Drachkovitches work to avoid, remaining invested in the authentic drama of their characters’ lives.

On the corner of Vineland in Studio City, the offices of 44 Blue are quiet and unassuming. Rasha’s office has a large window that faces the street and a dark blue wall flanking one side of the room. With a warm smile and friendly demeanor, Rasha has arrived straight from the airport after a shoot in Toronto. Rasha enthusiastically explains the concept of 44 Blue’s latest show, Wahlburgers. After spotting a Google alert about Mark and Donny Wahlberg’s plans to open a second outlet of the burger joint run by their brother Paul, Rasha’s wheels started turning. A family that includes a New Kid and a movie star with a horde of outspoken Bostonian family have the makings of reality gold.

Because both Mark Wahlberg and 44 Blue are represented by William Morris Endeavor, making contact was relatively simple. A fan of 44 Blue’s prison show Lockup, Mark agreed to meet with Rasha. After settling on a family-focused concept, with cameras following the Wahlberg clan as they develop Wahlburgers in Toronto, the show was bought by A&E and is set to air in early 2014.

Wahlburgers feels like a surefire win for 44 Blue, but the path to getting a reality series from concept to network is not always so simple. Rasha and Stephanie have spent countless days, weeks and months chasing eccentric personalities or offbeat narratives only to come up empty-handed.

“One thing we have learned — and these are painful lessons of being in the business for almost 30 years — is that the wild goose chase shows can take a lot of time, a lot of energy,” says Rasha. “We get caught up in passion projects, and we go down a road with a lot of our own development money, and it takes six months to a year before it pans out. Either we can’t get a deal signed with the person, someone beats us to the punch, or sometimes it turns out that it might be a good article or good story, but it’s not a good show.”

A few weeks ago, Rasha met with a 450-lb white rapper named Jelly Roll in Nashville, after seeing a Gawker article about the rapper’s album Whiskey, Weed & Waffle House. Jelly Roll took Rasha to his favorite hometown bar, “Losers.” Fearlessly embracing even the most absurd situation in the quest for a good story comes naturally to both of the producers.

“We are with real people,” says Stephanie, “and learning about their world and are given the opportunity to see worlds that we would otherwise never be able to see.”

Whether or not Jelly Roll ends up headlining a reality TV franchise is still to be determined. By Rasha’s lights, the rapper is definitely provocative, but is he engaging enough to sustain an entire series? The job of the 44 Blue production team is not only to find unusual personalities, but to create a compelling story arc around them. Rasha acknowledges
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Produced by
the difficulty in crafting a show around just one person; 44 Blue considers the environment, neighborhood and daily interactions of the world they’re proposing to enter.

“It’s challenging to find real people with real stories that can sustain a series, because with scripted shows the bar is high,” says Stephanie. “They have great actors, every line is crafted and the camera angles are all right there. Whereas with reality, you really have to create the situations and get the trust of your cast to bring it together for real.”

With *Married to the Army*, 44 Blue’s show about military wives on the OWN Network, Stephanie made special effort to honor the lives of her cast. “You are in real people’s lives,” says Stephanie. “They are not just playing someone on TV. It’s who they really are. Their life is usually crazy before we entered it, and it usually stays crazy around the show. But of course when we leave, their life still goes on. We always want to keep that in mind.”

Rasha and Stephanie stress the importance of creating a show that extends beyond what may be the initial shock of its premise. Upon hearing a pitch for a show, a network’s first question is often where the story will go in season two, three and four.

For Rasha, that only emphasizes the importance of gauging what each network is looking for and having a primed pitch for executives. “The first five minutes of the pitch are either going to make it or break it,” he says. “It’s body language. It’s really a pulse that we find. They are going to determine in the first five minutes: ‘I’ve heard it before,’ ‘I want it,’ or ‘I can’t wait to get to my lunch.’ They really will figure it out quickly.”

Because reality shows are developed a year before debuting on a network, the art of originality often requires savvy forecasting. Throughout the year, 44 Blue has around 40 or 50 projects in development, might be shifting, giving them some breathing room as they sense how the climate is.

Rasha notes that while shows like *Storage Wars*, and *Pawn Stars* were ratings giants for a time, the trend of “what-you’ve-got’ shows has taken a dip… If something works, then everyone wants a copy of it,” says Rasha. “*Honey Boo Boo* worked, and everybody wanted their own crazy, train-wreck family show.”

According to Stephanie and Rasha, the accessibility of a show often depends on the audience’s connection to the real lives of the people on screen. The producers observe that it’s often the case of the audience feeling like they are “one bad decision away from that situation.” Alternatively audiences respond to the concept they call “my life plus,” that is to say, an average life with an extreme additive.

44 Blue’s longest-running series, *Lockup*, combines both the edge and the heart that represent the company’s trademark. In prison, Rasha notes, there are no second takes. “They are extreme characters,” says Stephanie. “But what I always hear from people who watch is that they appreciate how it gives people in that situation a voice, and it shows them in a way that has never been shown before.”

Not only does 44 Blue create shows from scratch, they’re often given the charge of injecting life into a fading concept. With their years of experience in the format, both Rasha and Stephanie have developed a keen intuition for what characters or plot twists can make a story work.
With a background in journalism, Stephanie has utilizes her fact-finding talents to ensure the authenticity of each series. “I started out liking non-fiction,” reflects Stephanie. “I have always been attracted to the real story. The journalism background just translates to television. Instead of writing a 5,000-word story, I’m going out with a camera. It’s on film instead of paper.”

As 44 Blue juggles workflow and accuracy, digital distribution continues to reformat the TV business. Acknowledging the success of Netflix’s jump to original programming with House of Cards and Orange Is the New Black, Rasha is excited by the potential for having more platforms for reality TV and is keenly observing where the social discussion is going.

The powerful flow of the ever-present viewer commentary continues to connect audiences more deeply with TV shows. Rasha cites the example of A&E’s Duck Dynasty to illustrate the importance of audience interaction. “It was about guys with beards running around. It had a pretty good ratings, but not a smash. Through social media, they started to get this huge uptick. Now the numbers near 11 million.”

Creating that conversation is a key component to finding an audience to embrace a series. 44 Blue has a vested interested in making a series “live outside of itself” observes Rasha. Whether it’s pit bulls, hairstylists or athletes, 44 Blue digs deep to ensure the audience finds a meaningful edge in each series. “Instead of being a train wreck for train wreck’s sake, if the casts have heart, they are more relatable,” says Stephanie. “It makes you want to root for them, relate to them and empathize with them when they go through a rough patch, as opposed to making fun of them. It connects a little bit more.”

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“Networks will call us and say, ‘we are trying to crack this idea,’” says Rasha. “This came to us... the producer is kind of junior... We want to put him with someone who can zero in on this, because it’s already kind of gone through some development.”

To be clear, 44 Blue does not shy away from a challenge. Whether it’s gaining entry to an international prison or the Transformers 4 set in Hong Kong, Rasha and Stephanie find a way to make production spin forward.

“We are always very honest with the people that we work with,” says Stephanie. “We tell them we need full access, we need you to open up your world for us, and trust us that we are going to tell your story in a way that is honest and truthful. And we do.”

For the producers, holding up their end of the bargain means staying on top of story developments to make sure cameras don’t miss any key moments. With Animal Planet’s Pit Bulls and Parolees, the production crew is on call to capture Tia Torres, the show’s lead, rescuing a dog from a highway or meeting a family for an adoption.

As a husband-and-wife team, Rasha and Stephanie divide and conquer to make the most of their individual strengths and rarely executive-produce on the same projects. The Drachkovitches ensure their staff never receives mixed notes, and seek each other out when a storyline feels stuck. Maintaining a deep respect for each other’s projects, they fill in the gaps for each other as needed.

“We have a different way of approaching the shows, but at same time, telling a compelling story about it,” says Rasha. “Steph will be working on a show, get to a challenge in it, and ask me to come take a look at it.”

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A few years back, the location scouts for Twentieth Century Fox selected a quiet beach on Jekyll Island, Georgia as a location for the production of *X-Men: First Class*. Its unique topographical characteristics made it ideal — perfect size and slope, with a gorgeous dune area, natural beach grasses, and a prairie with cabbage palms and live oak trees behind. The distance from the road to the ocean was short, making it very attractive to the location manager and transportation team. They got permission to film there and soon, trailers and crew began pouring onto the island.

The script called for crashed aircraft on the beach amid hundreds of giant, non-native palm trees, a vast submarine beached up on the shore and fires burning all around. That's just what the camera saw — behind the scenes, there would be a fleet of trucks, trailers, cranes, and earth movers, driving on the beach and parking on the prairie behind the set. That's standard gear for a big movie, but not for a little beach. Since it was home to rare shorebirds and a nesting area for threatened loggerhead sea turtles, Jekyll Island residents didn’t want to see it all torn up.

“If you decide you’re going to nuke a place, you have to have a plan for what you’re going to do afterward,” said Stuart Bryan of Environmental Services in Savannah. It was up to Bryan and his colleagues to put it back together again.

Location manager Maida Morgan was the first responder on the debate. “The hardest part was getting the local NGOs and the Jekyll Island Authority to trust us,” she said, “and we wanted to convince them that we were worthy of their support — with everything from traffic engineering to dune sculpting.”

The locals were familiar with the X-Men franchise, and knew too well that an action movie could be a fairly high-impact visitor to a delicate ecosystem. Morgan had also worked on several big-budget action features up and down the coast of Georgia and Florida — Armageddon and Glory among them — and she had some experience working with local naturalists to protect threatened habitat and wildlife. “We made dozens of presentations to local residents, improving the plan each time. It took time, but I think they were pleased in the end.

They also diapered all the hazardous connections — hydraulic and fuel lines — so there were no oil spills anywhere, not even a drop.

“We went out and bought plants in local Georgia and Florida nurseries,” recalled Bryan, “mostly sea oats, salt meadow cord grass, bitter panicum and muhly grass and dozens more species of native grasses. We replanted more than 30,000 plants! To ensure their growth during a drought, we also installed a sprinkler irrigation system. We tilled the beach so the sand would not be too compacted for sea turtles to nest.”

Some challenges were more difficult. "Part of the set was Styrofoam. When they hauled it off, there were these little balls of Styrofoam all over the beach. Also, plastic zip ties and bits of metal. It was like archeology work — the workers were pulling the sand through a screen to extract all foreign objects."

“Jekyll’s a very special place, one of my favorite islands along the Georgia Coast. It’s a wild island, and when I go back there and hike along the beach, I don’t want to hide my face I want to know we left it better than it was when we came.”

Mike Demell and his team from Environmental Services were on the case from the beginning — right down to testing the quality of the sand which the production brought in to re-sculpt the beach. “We brought in 10,000 cubic yards of sand — tested for grain, size, color, suitable for what that natural beach would be,” said Demell.

“We give a lot of credit to Fox,” continued Morgan. “Their head of sustainability, Lisa Day, was involved in the details of this restoration plan from a very early stage. She and the head of production, Mike Hendrickson, said they really wanted to ‘get this right.’

"Going Green..."

**Jekyll Idyll: Bringing Back a Beach**

After the *X-Men* Fly Away

The producers of *X-Men: First Class* re-sculpted and replanted a beach on Georgia’s Jekyll Island — adding two crashed aircraft and a beached submarine, all ablaze.

The locals familiar with the X-Men franchise, and knew too well that an action movie could be a fairly high-impact visitor to a delicate ecosystem. Morgan had also worked on several big-budget action features up and down the coast of Georgia and Florida — *Armageddon* and Glory among them — and she had some experience working with local naturalists to protect threatened habitat and wildlife. “We made dozens of presentations to local residents, improving the plan each time. It took time, but I think they were pleased in the end.

They also diapered all the hazardous connections — hydraulic and fuel lines — so there were no oil spills anywhere, not even a drop.

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debris — but we got it all." The end result: a completely clean site.

“It was a challenging project, but Fox really met that challenge,” observed Demell. “They found the funds and they made it work.” He mentioned he’s working on another big studio production coming to the Georgia coast this fall, and expressed concern that their budget allocates only a small fraction of what Fox allotted to their restoration.

Says Morgan: “This was unusual for a studio to make that commitment on the front end, knowing what it would cost on the back end. It was very classy!”

This fall, there were hundreds of loggerhead sea turtle nests on Jekyll Island, and five of them were right there, in the footprint of the X-Men: First Class set where the planes crashed and the fires burned. The sandwich terns and black-bellied plovers were also back in force, and went about their business like no X-Men ever did battle there.

Local naturalists are happy it turned out so well, and so is the production team. “The Georgia coast is beautiful, it’s God’s country,” effused Morgan, “and if the natural beauty of this stretch of it is now restored, then... well, yay!”

—KATIE CARPENTER

Environmental engineer Mike Demell (left) describes the ambitious dune restoration project to local naturalist Eric Draper.

Member Benefits

- Vote on Producers Guild Awards and receive discount tickets to the event, as well as DVD screeners for awards consideration
- Admission to special PGA pre-release screenings and Q&A events
- Discounted registration for Produced By Conference
- Access to all-new PGA Job Board, online résumé search, employment tools and job forums
- Full access to PGA website including events, calendar, social networking tools
- Eligibility for individual, family and small business healthcare options through Producers Health Insurance Agency
- Participation in the Motion Picture Industry Health, Welfare & Pension Plan
- Eligibility for PGA Mentoring Program
- Listing of contact and credit information in searchable online roster
- Free attendance at PGA seminars
- Arbitration of credit disputes
- Wide variety of discounts on events, merchandise, travel
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Easy to get to. Hard to find.
David Picker’s career is the one you wish you had. His enter-
ing collection of stories Musts, Maybes, and Nevers — A Book About the Movies is his first-person account of an eclectic career as a studio executive and film producer.

A combination of luck, timing, smarts, and hard work put him at the table as part of the team — and it always was a team, he stressed — to bring to the screen some of the seminal films of the second half of the 20th century: Tom Jones, Midnight Cowboy, Last Tango in Paris, and the Beatles’ A Hard Day’s Night and Help! (Insert squeals from 10-year-old me: Help! Help! Help!) Deals were sealed by a (Insert squeals from 10-year-old me: Beatles’ “Hey Jude”)

That David Picker would work in the movie business seems inevitable. His grandfather was Charlie Chaplin and Bob Benjamin acquired 50% of the company from owners Charlie Chaplin and Mary Pickford, with the proviso to buy the balance of the company if it turned profitable within a few years. Their tactic was simple: They would finance independent productions, and once they gave their approval of script, budget, director and cast, the producer(s) would have total control of the project. UA would not see dailies and in fact, often did not see any footage until final delivery. Only if the film went over budget would UA have the right to step in.

In 1976, Picker joined Paramount as President of Production, where he initiated the development of projects including Grease, Up in Smoke, Ordinary People and Saturday Night Fever. None of these projects, however, went into production during his tenure, as they were often dubiously attributed to another regime. In 1985, David Puttnam asked David Picker to join him in running Columbia Pictures, then owned by the Coca-Cola Company, which George Lucas admits would have led to Star Wars. He will occasionally break the fourth wall on a movie screen held in the palm of one’s hand. But, in his Final Thoughts, he pondered: “Will there always be a screen watched by 900 pairs of eyes held in total absorption by the creative efforts of a group of dedicated artists? I sure hope so.”

In this new era — the first half of the 21st century — the nature of the film industry and media in general has changed. (I don’t imagine David Picker ever anticipating his audience watching A Clockwork Orange on a movie screen held in the palm of one’s hand. But, in his Final Thoughts, he pondered: “Will there always be a screen watched by 900 pairs of eyes held in total absorption by the creative efforts of a group of dedicated artists? I sure hope so.”)
Your PGA Health Benefits

PGA members have a variety of healthcare options available to them. While none of them represents a “perfect plan,” many members will be able to improve their coverage or the cost of their coverage through their PGA membership. Members may take advantage of two options: Employer-paid coverage and self-pay coverage.

Qualifying for Employer-Paid Coverage Through the Motion Picture Industry Plan

Am I eligible?
To be eligible for the program, you must:
- Be credited as an executive producer, producer, associate producer or post-production supervisor;
- Work for a company that is an AMPTP signatory, or signatory to Motion Picture Industry Health Plan;
- Work on a theatrical motion picture or primetime television program; some primetime cable and syndicated series also qualify, as do productions for which an AMPTP member agrees to make contributions; and
- Work on a production that utilizes a West Coast IA Crew.

How many hours do I have to work to qualify for coverage?
To qualify for the Industry Health Plan, a producer must be credited with 600 hours (automatically computed at 60 hours per week) within a six-month qualifying period.* To maintain coverage, he or she must be credited with at least 400 hours for each subsequent six-month period. If a member becomes ineligible, his or her eligibility for benefits will be reviewed every month until he or she accumulates enough contribution hours within a six-month span to re-qualify for benefits.

I’ve determined that I qualify; how do I get my coverage to start?
Contributions are not automatic; they must be directly requested by the producer. Producers request contributions by signing and submitting a participation form within 60 days of starting eligible employment. If the producer does not submit a signed participation form, he or she will be deemed to have waived his or her right to contributions with respect to the job. Participation forms should be provided by the employer upon request. If you have difficulty obtaining a form, contact PGA National Executive Director Vance Van Petten at (310) 358-9020 x104.

My company isn’t an AMPTP signatory. Am I out of luck?
Not necessarily. If you are employed by a company that is a signatory to both the IATSE Basic Agreement and the Motion Picture Industry Health & Welfare and Pension Plans, you can request that they make voluntary contributions, even if they are not members of the AMPTP. This request has been granted many times, but can be difficult to secure. A good way to know if your production has signed on to the IATSE Basic Agreement is to check if the camera, grips, or sound providers are union.

If I qualify, is my employer required to approve my coverage?
Unfortunately, no. However, the cost to the employer is reasonable enough that many employers will approve the coverage.

Additionally, standard practice has dictated (though again, not required) that once a production begins making contributions to the Health Plan for one producer, it will make those same contributions for any eligible producer on the show, provided coverage is requested in a timely fashion.

If the producer is also an owner of the signatory company, qualifying hours are computed at 66 hours per week.

Self-Pay Plans: Producers Health

In a perfect world, every PGA member would qualify for employer-paid coverage. For those who do not qualify, the PGA offers self-pay options which, because of our group status, are likely to offer better rates than what most members can find on the open market.

The Producers Health Plans are available nationally. If you’re currently without health insurance, we encourage you to call immediately to see if you qualify for a plan that suits you. Even if you currently have coverage (particularly other self-pay coverage), it would be worth your while to investigate the options you may have through the PGA self-pay plans.

Questions? Contact:

Employer-paid Plan
Kyle Katz  (310) 358-9020 x101

Self-pay Plans
Scott Brandt  (888) 700-7726

PGA HEALTH BENEFITS: STEP BY STEP

START

Do you have health insurance?  

yes no

Is it employer-paid?  

yes no

Are you typically credited as a Producer/Produced by, Executive Producer, Associate Producer or Post-Production Supervisor?  

yes no

Do you work for an AMPTP signatory?  

yes no

Do you work on a theatrical motion picture, primetime network program, or primetime-dramatic first-run syndicated program?  

yes no

Does your production utilize a West Coast IA crew?  

yes no

Have you been credited with 400 hours of such work over the past six months, assuming a 60-hour workweek?  

yes no

Request that your employer make contributions into the Motion Picture Industry Plan on your behalf.  

yes no

Congratulations, you’ve got employer-paid health coverage. You must work 400 hours over the next six months (assuming a 60-hour workweek) to maintain your coverage.

Contact your payroll or labor relations department. Request the MPIH participation form to give to your employer.

Employee didn’t know. Now?  

yes no

Did your employer make the contributions?  

yes no

You should sign up for the PGA plan. The more members sign up, the lower the average costs, and the better the benefits.

Call Scott Brandt at (888) 700-7725. Request a quote forProducers Health Insurance.

You’re one of the lucky ones.

Congratulations. Request a quote for Producers Health Insurance.

Stay with your current plan, but consider getting another quote next year, or if your current coverage changes.

Request a quote for Producers Health Insurance.
Introducing: The Doc Club

The PGA is proud to announce its new once-a-month documentary screening series called THE DOC CLUB. Typically screening the first Thursday of every month at the ArcLight Theater in Hollywood, the series is curated by producer/director Lesley Chilcott, who also graciously serves as Chair of the Guild’s West Coast Non-Fiction Documentary Committee.

Please join us next month (PGA members only, please!) for a screening on Nov. 7 at 7:30 p.m. for China Heavyweight, produced by Yi Han, Bob Moore, Zhao Qi and Peter Wintonick. Immediately following the film, all attendees are welcome to attend a special salon reception in the ArcLight bar. To RSVP or learn more, please contact kyle@producersguild.org, and be sure to keep an eye on the PGA’s weekly e-mail newsletter for news about upcoming screenings.

IN MEMORIAM

EDDIE MICHAELS

Our previous issue went to press too late to report the August 8 passing of Eddie Michaels, following a long struggle with brain cancer. One of the industry’s true gentlemen, Eddie with his company, Insignia PR, served as the Producers Guild’s public relations counsel for most of the first decade of the 2000s, and played a pivotal role in the PGA’s resurgence over that span. Over the course of his work on such events as the Producers Guild Awards, the creation of PGA East, the Guild’s Truth In Credits campaign, and the formative years of the Produced By Conference, Eddie demonstrated time and again the skills that made him one of the very best in the business. With a soft-spoken demeanor that belied his tenacity on behalf of his clients, Eddie was instrumental in re-shaping the Guild’s image from an elite social club to a thriving forum for producers and team members working in every medium and format. We at Producers Guild were by no means Alone in receiving the benefit of Eddie’s work on behalf of the Guild while also fielding savvy and inspiring pitches for feature stories on his producer clients. Though the PGA and Insignia parted ways several years ago, it’s hard to overstate the impact that Eddie’s work had for our organization. He was a great publicist, and an even better man. Consequently, a conversation with Eddie Michaels was one of the great pleasures this business had to offer. And at this magazine, we are deeply sad that we won’t have any more of them.

WILLIAM FROUG

On August 25, our industry lost William Froug, a writer-producer whose credits effectively spanned the first half of television history, encompassing such diverse credits as Playhouse 90, The Twilight Zone, Bonanza, Gilligan’s Island and Charlie’s Angels. Significantly, Froug served our Guild as one of the founding members of the Television Producers Guild (a progenitor of the Producers Guild which merged with the Screen Producers Guild to form the PGA), and subsequently as a Producers Guild Officer and Board member in the 1960s and ‘70s. Also an active member of the WGA and a founding member of the Caucus for Producers, Writers and Directors, Froug played an active role in the industry and Guild politics of his day, including an active stand against the encroachment of writers into producing credits in television, and a forceful — and in its time, successful — advocacy against the PGA’s potential affiliation with the Teamsters as a means of securing union status. Even after his retirement from active production, Froug continued to serve the industry he loved, teaching in the screenwriting programs of both USC and UCLA, ultimately receiving a tenured professorship from the latter. Students of the industry and our Guild’s history would do well to investigate his 2005 memoir, How I Escaped from Gilligan’s Island... And Other Misadventures of a Hollywood Writer-Producer, which contains numerous anecdotes about his efforts on our Guild’s behalf. A true citizen of our industry, we’re proud to salute his commitment to the PGA and honor his legacy of service, collaboration and professionalism.

Meet HELOC, the strangely wonderful Home Equity Line of Credit from First Entertainment Credit Union. HELOC is here to help make your home better. With rates as low as 4.0% APR*, the choice is yours. You can expand your deck, build your dream kitchen, or remodel is both. There’s never an application fee and approvals are fast! Apply today.

*APR=Annual Percentage Rate. Member’s actual rate determined by credit history, loan-to-value and owner occupancy, using the Prime Rate, which is subject to change. Rates as low as 4.0% APR based upon credit history, FICO score, combined loan-to-value and occupancy. Maximum APR is 18%. No points, appraisal fees, or out-of-pocket fees. All applications are subject to credit approval. Apply by August 31, 2013. Offer expires 5:00 p.m. Pacific Time. Rates as of 8/27/13 in the Wall Street Journal. Visit firstent.org/heloc2013 or call 888.800.3328
New Members
The Producers Guild is proud to welcome the following new members, who have joined the Guild since August 1, 2013.

PRODUCERS COUNCIL
JAY HU AHN
LAURIE APELJAN
SUSAN BANKS
ALLISON BELL
ALECIO BRAVO
JOANNA BRENNER
ROBBIE BRENNER
ADAM BRET
CARY BROKAW
BEN COOK
JOHN CORSER
STEPHEN DAVID
TENNESSEE EDWARDS
ROBERT FERNANDEZ
JANET GRILLO

TOMMY HARPER
PAUL HART-WILDEN
LISA HENNESSY
Hudson Hickman
JORDAN HORDWITZ
BELINDA JACKSON
MATTHEW JACKSON
DANIEL KALAN
TIMOTHY KELLY
VASILIKI KHONSARI
SCOTT LEVENSON
MORGAN NEVILLE
SETH PIEZAS
MICHAEL ROSENBERG
CHRISTOPHER SEPULVEDA
BRAD TURNER
MIKE WEBER
CANDACE WHITE

NEW MEDIA COUNCIL
MAN ASKWITH
SARA BORDO
KEITH CLARK
BRAD COMBS
OLIVIER DELFOISSE
LAUREN DEFLURER
KENNETH HUMPHRIES
MARK MILLER
ERICA FRIGGEN
ROBERT SCHIEFERNIE
JIM STEWARTSON
Rae UMSITED
JON VIDAR
PETE WAIKAT

Segment/Field/ Story Producer
JOANNE AZERN
TRICIA HORN
CARA KARP
KARLA MARV
KARA POTHER
CATLIN RADERMECKERS
MARISSA STEEN
JASON STEVENSON
JOSEPH TOBIN
SAM WASSERMAN

Production Coordinator
ELIZABETH ALTON
GEOFFREY MCDARCY
ERIC MILLER
JILL PENUEL

Post-Production
RYAN BOSCH
COURTNEY LILES
CHRIS NGUYEN-GIA
ERIC PETERS
LIZ RICHARDS
MICHAEL WISE

Visual Effects
MICKEY LEVY
BOB LOWERY
TONY MEAGHER
MARK SOPER
MAGDALENA WOLF

AP COUNCIL
Associate Producer/ Production Manager/ Production Supervisor
HEATH JACOB BALDWIN
DAVID BURCH
KEVIN BUKBAUM
ROBERT COHEN
MARC COLABELLI
LOGAN LEBKAM
RENEE NEWHAN
CHRIS OLIVER
BO PALNIC
SHEA PARKER
IAN WAGNER
COURTNEY WILLOCK

Lucy Mukerjee
by Lucy Mukerjee

I entered the movie business after years of working with authors as a fiction editor for a publishing house. The highlight of my job, aside from discovering new talent, was being able to call the writers and tell them that their book was going to be published. In my subsequent decade of experience in feature film development, I’ve been lucky enough to usher a great many screenplays into production — 19 films and counting. I’ve had a unique journey into producing and becoming a member of the Producers Guild was a significant milestone for me.

When I joined the Guild, I checked the box to apply for a PGA mentor, because I thought this would be an opportunity to find a role model. I hoped to be matched with a producer who had successfully climbed the ranks of the entertainment industry recently enough that their advice would be most pertinent, and even more importantly, someone who had achieved longevity in this business while also maintaining their integrity. How does a film or TV producer continue to stay relevant without getting jaded?

The day of the interviews with the Mentoring Committee, I was struck first by how many of my fellow PGA members had applied for this opportunity, and second by how diverse the group was. Not one person had the same background or goals. The Mentoring Committee’s efficient system of brief one-on-one interviews was straight to the point. The team listened carefully and asked questions in order to clearly understand my needs and expectations.

When the Committee matched me with Mark Ordesky, I knew I had hit the jackpot. I have to admit, the prospect of meeting the producer of The Lord of the Rings made me geek out a little. But more than anything, I was so pleased to have one-on-one time with someone who has successfully navigated the studio system as an executive and then transitioned into running his own production company. With similar goals of my own, I couldn’t have hand-picked a better mentor myself.

Mark has been down-to-earth, gracious and candid — ideal qualities in a mentor. We’ve already met for lunch several times, and the second time he even brought along his producing partner, Jane Fleming (also the President Emeritus of Women In Film). It was such a pleasure to be able to benefit from both of their brilliant minds and get some juicy details on their upcoming films!

Through talking with Mark I came to understand the importance of aligning myself with writers and directors whom I genuinely believe in. (Mark is best known, of course, for being Peter Jackson’s longtime champion.) I was inspired by his encouragement to trust my instincts when it comes to the films and filmmakers that matter to me. Mark’s advice helped me realize that having passion for this work is crucial, and that’s why I chose to focus on supporting the advancement of minorities in the film industry. I consider myself an advocate for filmmakers who have been marginalized by the studio system, whether they are LGBTQ+, people of color, or women. After all, I can check all three of those boxes myself.

As for my mentor — Mark has generously served as a reference for me for several filmmaker lab and grant applications, and we have arranged to sit down once a quarter over the course of the year. I’m very happy with the Mentoring Committee’s choice for me and I’m pleased to report that there have been tangible results already.

At this summer’s annual Produced By Conference, my passion project, Jack of the Red Hearts, was selected as a ProShow Finalist. The film is now fully financed and will shoot in March 2014. This was made possible by the support of the Producers Guild, but specifically by the Mentoring Committee pushing me in the right direction. Thanks so much. I’m extremely grateful!
The Producers Guild proudly salutes the producers who have been certified with the Producers Mark thus far in 2013. (The list below includes only films that have received a commercial release at press time.) Certification via the Producers Mark indicates that the producer undertook a majority of the producing duties on the motion picture.

ALL IS LOST
Neal Dodson, p.g.a.
Anna Gerb, p.g.a.

APPARITIONAL
Andrew P. Jones, p.g.a.
Linara Washington, p.g.a.

BATTLE OF THE YEAR
Beau Flynn, p.g.a.
Tripp Vinson, p.g.a.

BLACKFISH
Andrew P. Jones, p.g.a.
Linara Washington, p.g.a.

BLOOD BROTHER
Danny Yourd, p.g.a.

CARRIE
Kevin Misher, p.g.a.

CINEMABILTY
Jenni Gold, p.g.a.
Jeff Maynard, p.g.a.

CLOUDY WITH A CHANCE OF MEATBALLS 2
Kirk Bodyfelt, p.g.a.
Pam Marsden, p.g.a.

THE CROODS
Kristine Belson, p.g.a.
Jane Hartwell, p.g.a.

DARK SKIES
Jason Blum, p.g.a.

EPIC
Lori Forte, p.g.a.
Jerry Davis, p.g.a.

FAST & FURIOUS 6
Neal H. Moritz, p.g.a.
Clayton Townsend, p.g.a.

THE FIFTH ESTATE
Steve Golin, p.g.a.
Michael Sugar, p.g.a.

GENERATION IRON
Edwin Mejia, p.g.a.
Vlad Yudin, p.g.a.

INFORMANT
Stephen Bannatyne, p.g.a.

LAST I HEARD
Kevin Kelly, p.g.a.
David Rodriguez, p.g.a.

THE LONE RANGER
Jerry Bruckheimer, p.g.a.
Gore Verbinski, p.g.a.

LONELY BOY
Troy Daniel Smith, p.g.a.
Alev Aydin, p.g.a.

MONSTERS UNIVERSITY
Kori Rae, p.g.a.

PLANES
Traci Balthazor-Flynn, p.g.a.

PLUSH
Jason Blum, p.g.a.
Catherine Hardwicke, p.g.a.
Sherryli Clark, p.g.a.

THE PURGE
Jason Blum, p.g.a.
Sebastien K. Lemercier, p.g.a.
Brad Fuller, p.g.a.

THE RELUCTANT FUNDAMENTALIST
Lydia Dean Pilcher, p.g.a.

R.I.P.D.
Neal H. Moritz, p.g.a.

THE SMURFS 2
Jordan Kerner, p.g.a.

THE TIME BEING
Richard Gladstein, p.g.a.

TURBO
Lisa Stewart, p.g.a.

WE ARE WHAT WE ARE
Jack Turner, p.g.a.
Linda Moran, p.g.a.

WHITE HOUSE DOWN
Bradley J. Fischer, p.g.a.
Harald Kloser, p.g.a.
James Vanderbilt, p.g.a.
Larry Franco, p.g.a.

WHY WE RIDE
James Walker, p.g.a.
Bryan H. Carroll, p.g.a.

Make certain your next credit carries the Producers Mark. See producersmark.com for details.