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Bonnie Arnold

“I never minded working hard.”

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The End of an Era
Sunday April 5 10/9c

AMC
Big changes are coming!

Working in entertainment, you’ve probably heard that sentence more times than you can remember. Ours is a dynamic industry. Producers are constantly in search of new audiences and new ways to reach them, embracing emerging formats and platforms, forecasting the future and then trying to make that future happen. The truth is, grappling with big changes is almost the producer’s native state.

Our Guild has reflected the industry’s major shifts of the past 15 years in its membership, its programming and benefits, and its public voice. Soon, you’re going to be seeing another big change. This magazine itself will be receiving a top-to-bottom redesign, including new departments, new recurring features, a new look and feel… an entirely new aesthetic. The magazine you now hold in your hands is the last issue of what will soon be known as the “old” Produced by.

If you are — like me — a big fan of the “old” Produced by, you could be forgiven for worrying about big changes coming to the magazine you love. Allow me to reassure you. The magazine’s longtime editor Chris Green is guiding the redesign, and you can expect Produced by 2.0 to maintain the same high standards that Chris has upheld for the publication. Despite his editing Produced by for the vast majority of its existence, it’s a little-known fact that Chris actually wasn’t involved in the creation of the magazine, having joined for its fourth issue. (For the record, this is the 73rd.) As his interviews in this magazine and at our west coast Q&A sessions have shown, Chris has an insightful and nuanced perspective on the creative and career challenges that producers face. You can count me among the expectant masses excited to see what sort of publication he’ll create for the PGA, given a clean slate. Maybe he’ll even let me keep this column…

Excited as I am for the magazine to come, it’s with no small regret that we are parting from many of the dedicated and talented people who have helped to build Produced by from a 16-page experiment into the coffee table and office mainstay that it’s become. Jeff Ingle, our publisher, is one of the most reliable, straight-shooting and decent-hearted vendors in Los Angeles. Dan Dodd has served as a highly creative and savvy ad sales director on our behalf. Without Jeff, Dan and their tremendous team at IngleDodd Media, there’s no way that Produced by could have flourished the way it has. For their years of service to the Producers Guild, they have my lasting gratitude and, I hope, your business.

That said, I remain focused on the future. For instance, if this column carries over to our new format, I wonder if I can put in a request for a new photo? After working so long around producers, I’ve learned to dream big…
There are moments — a bunch of them, it seems — over the course of Bonnie Arnold’s career in the industry when someone says to her something like: “You know what? You should meet [important producer or executive]. He would like you.” And you think: Of course. In the moment, as she says it, it seems like the most obvious statement in the world. Of course Person X would like Bonnie Arnold, whose easy southern charm is hitched to a straight-shooting directness born of hundreds of hours on set. Spend two minutes talking to her, and you’ll come away wanting her on your team. If you’re not yet a fan, you will be in a few pages.

Arnold’s career has a kind of textbook quality to it, in which small jobs and connections lead to big jobs and subsequently to really big jobs. Over the course of honing her production chops on a variety of films and television programs that shot in her native Georgia, Arnold made an impression on veteran producer and ex-studio head David Picker — an individual named as a key mentor by more than a few of our cover story subjects over the years. With Picker’s encouragement, Arnold found her way to Hollywood and began working in production at Columbia Pictures. Her subsequent career itinerary gave her a comprehensive grounding in studio filmmaking, even depositing her in the middle of two of the 1990s’ most memorable films: Kevin Costner’s Oscar juggernaut *Dances With Wolves*, and the first feature outing of an upstart animation studio called Pixar; *Toy Story* stands as Arnold’s first picture to carry her credit as “Produced by.” That film signaled one of the great career left turns you’ll find among the producing ranks. Arnold, who fell in love with the rough edges of on-set physical production, now stands as perhaps the industry’s most accomplished producer of computer-generated animated features. Having steered DreamWorks Animation’s *How to Train Your Dragon* to great acclaim as the studio’s signature post-*Shrek* franchise, she’s recently joined the executive ranks as DreamWorks’ Co-president of Feature Animation. Somebody up there likes her, apparently.

This is the 71st of Produced by’s ongoing series of Case Studies of successful producers and their work. Editor Chris Green met up with Bonnie Arnold on the DreamWorks campus mere weeks after her executive promotion. The conversation nearly outlasted the batteries in his digital recorder, bouncing from her transition into animation, to what she learned from legendary producer Ray Stark, to the pivotal moment of seeing Pixar’s very first *Toy Story* test footage.
So, how did you find your way into the industry and into producing?

I grew up in Atlanta, Georgia. At the time, movie producer just wasn’t a job that was on the radar when you’d ask some- one what they wanted to be. So it never really occurred to me. But I liked going to the movies. It was a family thing. I grew up with the Elvis Presley, Annette Funicello and Frankie Avalon, and Hayley Mills movies. Rock Hudson and Doris Day, Natalie Wood and Robert Redford were some of my favorites. I remember going with my parents and grand- parents on big outings to see The Sound of Music and How the West Was Won and Mary Poppins. But I never connected the passion of seeing films with something I actually could pursue as a profession. I was interested in history. It was the Watergate era and investigative reporting was the “it” profes- sion. So I decided to study journalism.

After I graduated from the University of Georgia, I went to Boston University, which had a one-year master’s program in journalism, and a very ambitious internship program. I wound up at WGBH, the public television station in Boston, as a production assistant on a radio documentary for NPR. That was the first time I started to understand the machina- tions of the production process. I ended up coming back to Atlanta, getting a job at the Georgia public television station, and working for a producer on two films for the first season of American Playhouse on PBS. On our first film, King of America, I flew up to New Hampshire and I drove myself to the set in the middle of nowhere. I walked into the produc- tion office the first day of filming and I fell in love. It was the first time I’d ever been on a movie set, and that was it. I was hooked, hooked, hooked. That was when I knew what I wanted to do in my life. I wanted to work in the movie busi- ness and no matter what, that’s what I was going to do.

At that time, Georgia had a small but thriving movie industry, thanks in significant part to Burt Reynolds, who really enjoyed shooting in the state. I connected with the state film commission and started working in production. Movies, commercials, industrial films… I did a little bit of everything. I realized two things: One, that it was hard work, and two, that I didn’t mind it. In fact, I loved it.

That’s a nice thing to discover about yourself.

I think it was to my advantage that I became a bigger fish in a smaller pond. When producers wanted to hire local, they called me. I was able to get jobs on the higher-profile projects because there weren’t a lot of people on the list. The first big Hollywood film that I worked on was The Slugger’s Wife. It came to Atlanta based on the fact that Columbia Pictures had recently been bought by The Coca-Cola Company, which was based there. Producer Ray Stark and director Hal Ashby and cinematographer Caleb Deschanel all came to my hometown. It was like Hollywood South.

What role did you have on the crew?

I was a production office coordinator. The Slugger’s Wife was made for about $25 million, a huge budget for the early ’80s. I got to work very closely with Ray Stark and watch him every day. He was a Hollywood icon, who had worked with everybody from John Huston to Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor.

I’m curious, what was his style like, as a producer?

He was really kind to me. We laughed a lot together. When he would go home to Los Angeles for the weekend, he would leave me his credit card and say, “Take everybody in the production office out to dinner.” I was able to watch him with the director, line producers and the studio… He was on top of it all. I think as you develop your style as a producer, you realize how you borrow a little from this one and a little from that one. Sometimes, I would bring a problem to Ray. And he might not do anything. At first, I thought he was procrastinating, but I realized it wasn’t inaction, he had a plan. You don’t have to act on everything at the moment. Sometimes it’s actually smarter to wait it out. Something will go wrong and you’ll think, oh no, I’m going to have to fire somebody, or take some kind of drastic action. That’s not always true. I learned that from Ray.

That’s a valuable insight to arrive at early in your career.

A year later, Columbia did a big premiere of The Slugger’s Wife in Atlanta, and I was hired to help coordinate that event. More fun with Ray and the gang. My next Hollywood film was The Mosquito Coast. I was first hired to organize a location scout in north Georgia. They wanted a produc- tion person to pick up the creative team at the airport in a van. I was 25 but looked about 15. The location scout crew included Jerome Hellman, Saul Zaentz, Harrison Ford and Peter Weir. When they met me, the first thing Jerry Hellman says is, “Are you old enough to drive?” [laughs] It was an amazing group, and I spent the weekend as their driver/PA/location scout, listening to them talk about their plans for the film. It was a real treat and a great learning experience. I was eventually hired as the US unit produc- tion coordinator.

At that point, I was coming to realize that I wanted to be a producer. I wanted to move to Hollywood. I was making a plan to go west, when I got a call from the Georgia Film Office. “There’s a producer here and he wants to meet some- body that can start right away in the production office.”

The producer’s name was David Picker. There was no IMDB then, so I looked him up at the library. David had run Paramount and UA, but at this moment in his career he was producing this small film called Leader of the Band. I thought to myself, “I need to know this person.” He had a great reputa- tion as a producer, and this was an opportunity to work closely with him on this small film.

After we had been working together for a couple of months, David asked me about my career goals. I said, “I want to be a producer in Hollywood.” David observed that for that to happen, I would need to leave Atlanta. A few weeks later, he came into my office and told me, “Bonnie, I just got called by David Puttnam. He’s going to run Columbia Pictures and he wants me to be the President. The minute we finish shooting here, I’m going to relocate from New York to Hollywood. If you get yourself out there, I’ll put you to work at Columbia.” Opportunity was knocking at my door.
I helped wrap the film expecting to leave Atlanta as soon as I was done. But a few days before I was set to finish the film, I got a call from another producer, Sandy Lieberson. He said, “David Picker told me to call you.” As it happened, the first movie that David Puttnam and David Picker greenlit was a movie that David Puttnam had been producing. When Puttnam took the studio job, he turned the movie over to Sandy. Sandy told me, “David had such a good experience in Atlanta, we’re going to come film it there. And David told me I ‘had’ to hire you. I hope you’ll meet me and work with me for the next six months.”

On some level, I was a little disappointed at the possibility of delaying my move. But I met Sandy, and I knew it was a good decision to stay in Atlanta a while longer. To this day, Sandy and David Picker are still my mentors. The movie we did was called Stare and Bait. It was Daniel Day-Lewis’ first movie in the United States. I had to start by getting him into SAG! [laughs] It was such an interesting cast that also included Joan Cusack, Will Patton and Harry Dean Stanton, and was directed by Pat O’Connor, who remains a dear friend of mine.

When David Picker came to Georgia to visit the set, he assured me that he was saving a place for me at the studio as soon as the movie was done. In June of 1987, I packed up my little car and moved out — Beverly Hillbillies-style — to Hollywood.

What a cool way to start your Hollywood career. I felt so fortunate. And sure enough, I came out to Hollywood and got a place to live, and went knocking on David Picker’s door. My first assignment was a Ridley Scott film, Johnny Utah. We spent about four months prepping the film. But as fate would have it, David Puttnam and David Picker abruptly left Columbia Pictures and Dawn Steel, the new studio president, shut the picture down.

My next film was back with Sandy Lieberson. He was doing a project in Jamaica, The Mighty Quinn, with Denzel Washington. It was one of those situations where he called and said, “Can you get on a plane to Jamaica tomorrow? I don’t know how long you’ll be here. Just throw some stuff in a bag and come down.” Sandy knew I was a good trouble-shooter and that film had a lot of logistical issues. The first problem I dealt with was that they had to fly their film every night to the lab in Miami, then ship it to the cutting room in London. This was at a time when a lot of drugs were going back and forth between Miami and Jamaica, and the authorities kept wanting to confiscate the exposed film every night!

I spent the whole first week on the phone with customs in London trying to track down the film from that particular week of shooting!

That was great preparation for my next job. When I got back to LA, I reconnected with Ray Stark. He told me, “I’m doing this project in Mexico. You should think about doing it.” The film was called Revenge, directed by Tony Scott and starring Kevin Costner. At that time, Kevin was just becoming a big movie star. Ray told me they already had a production office coordinator, and I couldn’t be a production manager because they had to hire local crew in Mexico, but that
I worked very closely with the state film commission. Another one of my jobs was locating Native American rodeo riders throughout the West to participate in the buffalo hunt. I was just putting my little fingers in the dam in every spot imaginable. At one point, we had to shoot a scene in which the soldiers had killed a lot of game, to make the prairie look real. The script called for lots of dead animals. We couldn’t afford a bunch of faux animals that would look real, so we decided to dress the set with road kill. We hired “dead animal wranglers” to collect road kill from around the state. Believe me, no one wanted to ride back from the set in her truck!

Every day was a challenge, but Kevin assembled a great crew. We were there for more than 100 days, so we saw every type of weather and every type of production challenge. It rained, it snowed, it was blistering hot. The whole state and the crew rallied to make it work.

One hundred days is a pretty long shoot, by any standard.

I was honest with him, and tried to tell him I didn’t know it all yet. I said, “I think that you’re that person who could best do this job.” And I said, “I know it sounds like a given, but computers don’t make movies, people do. It’s still about people. It’s still about storytelling.” At the time, it felt risky. But it was a small group, and I liked that. Like I said, I never minded working hard. So I rolled up my sleeves and dove in. It was three and a half years, but somehow, we all figured it out.

Now that we have 20 years of CG feature animation to draw on, has your approach changed at all? I know it sounds like a given, but computers don’t make these movies, people do. It’s still about people. It’s still about artists. I’m not an artist, but I know good storytelling. And I feel like I’m good at bringing together the right people in the room in order to get the story onto the screen. Right now, I’m collaborating with Dean DeBlois, who was the director and writer for How to Train Your Dragon 2 and will do the same for Dragon 3. My goal is to help him get to the best version of the story he wants to tell. I’ve lived in this Dragon world for a long time, so it’s an extension of my brain. I feel like that’s a unique position to have.

Family, I had a meeting at Disney. They were looking for people to line produce some of their live-action movies. We were talking for a while, someone asked me if I ever considered animation? They suggested I meet Peter Schneider, who was running Feature Animation. “He would really like you,” they told me. So I met Peter, and he went on to tell me about a project that they had in pre-production. The first one was called Simba, at the time, but it became The Lion King. That one already had a producer, Don Hahn, a great producer and an amazing colleague. Peter then goes on to tell me about this little, hetty movie they were going to make with this company up in Northern California. “It’s going to be all CG,” he told me, “and you have this effects background, so you might be a good fit.”

I was honest with him, and tried to tell him I didn’t really have an effects background. I said, “I don’t know what I would bring to the party.” But he asked, “Would you consider meeting the director? It just so happens he’s going to be here tomorrow. I think you might like him.” So the next day, I’m driving from the west side up to Disney, one of those rare days in LA when we had torrential rain. It’s an awful day, and I’m wondering, “Why am I doing this?” But when I got to Disney, I met John Lasseter. We talked for hours. We had a lot in common. We liked the same movies, the same TV shows. And I realized that after talking with him that I knew how to launch a movie. I knew those steps. That was the piece of the puzzle that Pixar didn’t have at the time.

After John and I had talked and Peter came back in the room, I said, “I understand what you can bring to this.” But they needed to know two things: I wasn’t available to start for six months, and I wanted a producer credit. A number of months went by as I finished a show at Columbia Pictures. Peter called again, in the early summer of 1992. “We’ve met a lot of people, but part of this deal is that we have to find someone who Pixar and Disney can mutually agree upon. We all think that you’re that person who could best do this job.” And they agreed to make me a producer on the project.

Believe it or not, I hesitated. Animation still left a little off my track. I called David Picker. He said, “Bonnie, it’s really hard in Hollywood to get a producing credit on a film that you didn’t develop. If nothing else, you’re going to come out of this with a producing credit on a studio picture. And you’ll have done something that nobody else is doing.” At the time, it felt risky. But it was a small group, and I liked that. Like I said, I never minded working hard. So I rolled up my sleeves and dove in. It was three and a half years, but somehow, we all figured it out.

What were the biggest challenges on that film? I mean, that’s such a well-remembered motion picture.

We had so little money. I think our original budget was something like $17 million. When you think of the scope of that movie, $17 million was nothing. I did a little bit of everything. I started out as the advance person, the first person to go and warn everybody in South Dakota that the “circus” was coming to town. I worked very closely with the location manager and...
No one knew how it would all turn out, but I remember seeing that first test and thinking: *If we can at least do that for 80 minutes, we’ll be doing good.*
Producer Leslie Greif takes his shot with a classic genre and a cutting-edge release strategy

by Michael Ventre

When Leslie Greif worked as an NBC page on Dean Martin’s celebrity roasts many years ago, he got the opportunity to meet John Wayne. “I was very excited,” Greif said. “I told him I wanted to do a Western. He said, ‘Don’t talk about it. Just do it.’”

Apparently, advice from an iconic figure in the pantheon of the American oater resonates more intensely than the usual Hollywood cocktail-party tip. Greif, the founder and CEO of Thinkfactory Media, has since gone on to amass a set of credits as vast as Monument Valley, including *Walker, Texas Ranger* and the recent History miniseries, *Hatfields & McCoys*, which became the number-one entertainment telecast of all time on ad-supported cable.

Now he is in the throes of another tryst with the Old West. Greif is executive producer of a new History offering, *Texas Rising*, about the Texas Revolution and formation of the Texas Rangers, which premieres on Memorial Day, May 25, on cable. But in a twist, the first two-hour installment of *Texas Rising* will be shown in roughly 500 movie theaters on May 20, prior to its television airing, an effort to explore new marketing territory and perhaps reshape the landscape.

“What we’re trying to do,” Greif said, “is to create a viewing experience for people to come watch these shows.”

Opposite page: Executive producer Leslie Greif oversees production on location in Durango, Mexico. Above: Leslie Greif (right) with director Roland Joffé.
When the premiere rollout takes place, it will do so in theaters...

This is an experiment. We’ve never done anything like this before. We weighed the risk versus the reward and felt it was a worthy thing to try out.

The Texas Rising filmmakers are off the logline: "Everyone is familiar with the Alamo. The Alamo was not the end. It was the beginning. This is that story." Presented in either four or five 2-hour installments (editing was not complete at press time) and shot in CinemavScope, Texas Rising is a multi-tiered, multi-character epic that boasts a star-studded cast led by Bill Paxton and will focus on Texas’ independence from Mexico and its eventual addition as a state.

"This is an experiment," explained Dirk Hoogstra, president and general manager of History. "We’ve never done anything like this before. We weighed the risk versus the reward and felt it was a worthy thing to try out. It's kind of, 'We'll see.'" Just the in-theater promotional value itself is a huge driver for us," he added, regarding the trailers already showing in theaters. "We will end up having something like five or six months of in-theater promotion for our series."

Fathom is co-owned by the AMC, Cinemark and Regal theater chains and presents many such special entertainment events through satellite delivery, including performances by the Metropolitan Opera, ballet, classic films, concerts and comedy shows. The idea of showing the Texas Rising premiere in theaters came out of discussions with Greif and friend Lee Roy Mitchell, Cinemark’s Chairman of the Board.

Tim Warner, CEO of Cinemark, feels the shared experience is a strong selling point for the Texas Rising premiere and other similar events. "This is the first time this platform has been used to launch a series," Warner observes. "But we have done several events like this where there is a natural fan base. It’s someplace where fans can experience something on a big screen, in a big format, but come together with like-minded people to have a shared experience."

If it’s a hit, Warner expects to see more of it. "I was talking to AMC for Breaking Bad," he recalls. "I was too late for it, but it would have been a great way to finalize Breaking Bad. A fan base builds up, but there’s no place for fans to go to have a shared communal experience." While Hartfields & McCoy was in post-production, Greif was asked by History if he had any other ideas for epic-sized projects in his back pocket. Naturally, he chose another Western-themed story. The story folks — including Nancy Dubuc, President and CEO of A&E, who owns History — asked him to get cracking on it.

"I’ve always been a fan of the Westerns," Greif said. "I just think the myth of Texas is something that goes not just to the heart and spirit of America, but it transcends America and goes to the heart and spirit of all people. It’s kind of a metaphor for liberty and new hope and new life. I think that’s why the Western has always worked so well around the world."

Greif cut his teeth in the entertainment business working as a page at NBC for Bob Hope, Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr. and others. He worked on network shows like Chico and the Man and once babysat for Lassie.

"I always had a passion for the business," he shares. "I had the fondest memories. I was one of the younger pages at NBC at the time. The glamour, the excitement, the energy, the camaraderie... It was all just something I found wonderful and infectious. Watching Mr. Hope and Mr. Martin and all those guys, you felt they were in a club you were itching to be a part of. It was a great learning experience and an opportunity, and it molded and shaped so much of me as my life in show business evolved."

Like many film buffs, Greif is an admirer of the indelibly classic Westerns, like the celebrated collaborations between John Ford and John Wayne. So when he began to ponder Texas Rising, Greif wanted it to play out on as large a canvas as possible.

When the premiere rollout takes place, mounted by Fathom Events, it will do so largely in theaters in areas where there is already a strong interest in the topic — Texas naturally, the Mexico and its eventual addition as a state.

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"I’ve always been a fan of the Westerns," Greif said. "I just think the myth of Texas is something that goes not just to the heart and spirit of America, but it transcends America and goes to the heart and spirit of all people. It’s kind of a metaphor for liberty and new hope and new life. I think that’s why the Western has always worked so well around the world."

Greif cut his teeth in the entertainment business working as a page at NBC for Bob Hope, Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr. and others. He worked on network shows like Chico and the Man and once babysat for Lassie.

"I always had a passion for the business," he shares. "I had the fondest memories. I was one of the younger pages at NBC at the time. The glamour, the excitement, the energy, the camaraderie... It was all just something I found wonderful and infectious. Watching Mr. Hope and Mr. Martin and all those guys, you felt they were in a club you were itching to be a part of. It was a great learning experience and an opportunity, and it molded and shaped so much of me as my life in show business evolved."

Like many film buffs, Greif is an admirer of the indelibly classic Westerns, like the celebrated collaborations between John Ford and John Wayne. So when he began to ponder Texas Rising, Greif wanted it to play out on as large a canvas as possible.

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To that end, he tapped director Roland Joffé, the 69-year-old Brit whose credits include *The Killing Fields* (1984) and *The Mission* (1986).

“I was very fortunate to work with Roland,” Greif says. “He’s of an age and comes from a time in movies when they really knew how to make epic films. We shot this entirely on location in Durango, Mexico, going back to where (Sam) Peckinpah shot *The Wild Bunch* and *Pat Garrett & Billy the Kid*, and John Wayne shot *The Sons of Katie Elder*.”

Because they were working on a television budget, the filmmakers on *Texas Rising* roughed it in some ways, eschewing fancy catering and RVs for more modest amenities. The crew was especially challenged.

“We were in remote areas,” Greif explains. “We went for months where everybody rolled up their sleeves, without cell phones or Internet communication… We didn’t have all the bells and whistles of modern motion pictures.

“Roland had our crew carrying cameras 20, 30 minutes, hiking up mountains,” Greif continues. “We had distant crews living on locations, like the old John Ford days. What makes this film so exciting for me is that there was a tremendous amount of heart where we went back and mounted this picture, where we have fond memories of those 40s and 50s Westerns. I think it comes through.”

In some ways the production splurged, hiring Academy Award-nominated composers Bruce Broughton and John Debney to score the film, with help from a full orchestra. Greif and his team were also able to convince Texas native and country music legend George Strait—born in Poteet, about 30 miles south of San Antonio and the Alamo—to record the title song.

*Texas Rising* features little CGI, said Greif, save for correction, opting instead for features like battle scenes with real stuntmen and real equines. “We have full battles,” he says with some pride, “with 800 people on horses.”

History seems pleased with the attention to detail and the commitment to authenticity. “It’s always been a popular genre over time,” Hoogstra says. “What I love is that Leslie and Roland Joffé really embraced it. They came to me early on and said, ‘We want to shoot this in Cinemascope. It’s going to be 2.35’. I immediately did the thing network people do, which is worry about it. ‘What does that mean? Is the black bar going to be too big?’

“It harkens back to John Ford and some of these epic Westerns,” Hoogstra echoes his producer. “Those kinds of things, those touches, the way it was filmed and shot and edited and scored, really is a direct inspiration from the classic days of the Western.”

It has been declared in Hollywood in recent years that the Western is kaput. But then something like *Unforgiven* or *Deadwood* or *Hatfields & McCoys* or even *Django Unchained* comes along to rebut that notion.

“The Western isn’t dead,” Greif is adamant. “I believe every genre is viable if you go to one truth: Tell a great story. Let us go to a world and a time and go on a magic carpet ride and go back. Whether we go forward into space or back into the Western or period dramas. People love great stories… It always take exception when somebody says a particular genre is dead. Pirates came back. Nobody wanted to do a pirate movie. Then *Pirates of the Caribbean* came along, and… wow. So it’s really about telling a great story.”

Everyone involved hopes *Texas Rising* is embraced by audiences who cherish those halcyon moviemaking days of breathtaking vistas, larger-than-life characters and stirring action sequences. And they hope it starts with the Fathom premiere in theaters.

“This is the first time something like this has been done,” Cinemark’s Warner says. “Leslie should be congratulated. Not only is he a great producer, but he is willing to expand everybody’s thinking about how to bring this to the marketplace.

“After this launch,” he adds, “I think you’ll find a lot of people will follow his footsteps.”
Tenacity Forever!

The 26th Annual Producers Guild Awards

by Scott Sorrentino

Producers gathered at the Hyatt Regency Century City to celebrate the outstanding work of their colleagues at the 26th Annual Producers Guild Awards on January 24, 2015. It was an evening that featured several debuts: Gary Lucchesi and Lori McCreary attended the event for the first time as PGA Presidents, and event chairs Ryan Murphy and Todd Black deftly took the baton from predecessor Michael De Luca, raising the bar for what was already the best guild awards show of the season.

The catchword of the evening was “Tenacity,” and in support of that theme, the show featured brief interstitial interview segments (complete with Birdman-inspired drum kit underscore) with such heavy hitters as Brian Grazer, Jason Blum and Nina Jacobson. It was an inspired and often hilarious addition to the program — one we’d love to see return in future years. (All of the interstitials are available for viewing on the Producers Guild YouTube channel.)

The awards presentation commenced on a note of healthy defiance. The first award, for Outstanding Producer of Animated Theatrical Motion Pictures, was presented to Dan Lin, producer of The Lego Movie, a film that despite critical acclaim and huge box office, was overlooked by the Motion Picture Academy. A similar cheer of defiant approval greeted the announcement of the award for Outstanding Producer of Documentary Theatrical Motion Pictures. PGA members honored the producers of Life Itself, the poignant and uplifting feature celebrating the life and work of film critic Roger Ebert. Like The Lego Movie, the acclaimed documentary went unrecognized by the Academy, prompting producer/director Steve James to note, “I’ve been a member of the Academy for about seven or eight years… I think I want to join the PGA now!”
Among the lifetime achievement honors bestowed annually by the PGA, 2015 was a year that found the Guild honoring two of its own: Gale Anne Hurd and Mark Gordon. Gordon was introduced by one of his most accomplished colleagues, Shonda Rhimes, whose Shondaland banner flies over ABC's entire Thursday-night prime-time schedule. Referring to Gordon as "her dragon" (yes, he breathes fire), she presented him with the 2015 Norman Lear Achievement Award in Television. Gordon's acceptance speech embraced the producer's spirit of invention, including images that photoshopped himself and his friends and mentors into stills from some of his favorite television series.

The David O. Selznick Award for Achievement in Theatrical Motion Pictures was presented to Gale Anne Hurd, a long-deserved honor that ironically comes at a moment that finds her overseeing one of the most popular television series in the world. Introduced by Edward Norton, Hurd spoke passionately about piracy's threat to the entertainment industry, and paid tribute to her late mentors Debra Hill and Dawn Steel, who she credited with paving the way for her career.

We congratulate our 2015 winners:

1. Milestone Award honoree Jon Feltheimer.
2. Reese Witherspoon and Clint Eastwood before the show.
3. Team Boyhood (from left): cast members Ellar Coltrane, Ethan Hawke; producer/director Richard Linklater; producer Cathleen Sutherland. (Photo: Jordan Strauss/Invision)
5. Event Chairs Ryan Murphy and Todd Blunt.
6. PGA Presidents Lori McCreary and Gary Lucchesi. (Photo: Jordan Strauss/Invision)
One of the highlights of the evening — and apart from its climax, surely the most tweeted — was Jennifer Lawrence’s epic introduction of Lionsgate CEO Jon Feltheimer, recipient of the Milestone Award. In a speech that was richly self-deprecating, warmly appreciative and very evidently willing to deviate from the teleprompter, Lawrence dispensed the effortless charm that’s made everyone in Hollywood wish they were her best friend. “I normally say no to these [award presentations] because of my crippling anxiety and the unbreakable bond between woman and couch,” Lawrence opened. “But when I heard it was for Feltheimer, I had to say yes… because I just assumed I was contractually obligated. And then when I found out I wasn’t, I had already picked out this dress.” Feltheimer may have been honored with the PGA’s most prestigious award, but having to follow Jennifer Lawrence was surely the toughest gig of the night.

Another of the evening’s memorable snapshots came with Norman Lear’s presentation of the 2015 Visionary Award (sponsored by Delta Air Lines) to Brad Pitt, Dede Gardner and Jeremy Kleiner of Plan B Entertainment. The obvious mutual admiration between Lear and Pitt was created one of the evening’s most genuine moments, with Pitt’s recollection of Lear’s progressive series as an inspiration when growing up in the “belt-buckle of the Bible Belt.”

As the evening drew to a close, the show found Bryan Cranston pulling double duty, first accepting the Norman Felton Award in Episodic Television Drama for the final season of *Breaking Bad*. Cranston recalled being asked if he knew, in its early seasons, if *Breaking Bad* would become a hit. Of course he didn’t, he quipped. “You only know that your show is a big hit when the location signs start getting stolen.” Cranston walked off stage left and almost immediately re-appeared again stage right, this time as the presenter of the night’s final honor, the Darryl F. Zanuck Award. “It’s so good to see all of you here tonight!” he re-greeted an appreciative crowd.

Regarding his surprise appearance as a presenter, he continued, “I know what you’re thinking… Someone dropped out.” With a contrite nod, he admitted, “Okay.” The room fell silent with anticipation. You could see the correspondents from *Variety* and *Deadline* shift to the edge of their seats as Cranston prepared to announce the winner of the Zanuck Award, an honor that has fore-shadowed the Best Picture Oscar winner for the last seven years. Most agreed it had boiled down to a two-film race between *Birdman* and *Boyhood*, with many feeling that *Boyhood* had the edge. But true to form, the PGA upended the traditional wisdom and established a new Oscar front-runner, as *Birdman* was triumphant.

Producer/Director/Co-writer Alejandro González Iñárritu accepted the award with grace and self-effacement; joking that his collaborators picked him to speak because “they wanted me to make you laugh with my bad English.” In his films, Iñárritu frequently celebrates artists, and that same passion animated his acceptance, championing the “individual voice” of all the nominated films, stories that that “wouldn’t exist without the individual expression behind them.” It was a gratifying affirmation for a daring film, one whose reputation was cemented several weeks later with its (now predictable?) Oscar win. Proving once again that, if you want to be the first to really know which way Hollywood is voting, you’d better get yourself to the Producers Guild Awards.
Mark Ovitz takes a stand on the right way to do business

by Matthew Dessem

Producer and PGA member Mark Ovitz is an unlikely firebrand, having studiously avoided talking to the press since the early 1980s, when the Los Angeles Times quoted him out of context. But over the course of his career, he’s always felt a responsibility to both younger producers and the crews who have worked for him. So now he’s speaking out publicly in hopes that our industry will rally to improve working hours that are too often unhealthy, unsafe and inhumane. We met at his home in Malibu to talk about his history in television, and the future he’s challenging his colleagues to bring about.

With a career that stretches more than four decades, Ovitz didn’t arrive at these positions hastily. He can date his interest in entertainment to a specific, unlikely moment: a woman fainting. Born in Chicago, his family moved to Encino when he was an infant. Like many Valley kids, he found work at Universal Studios Tours. At the time, the tour included a brief walk through a dressing room near the soundstages. As one of the tour groups emerged into the sunlight, a guest collapsed. Ovitz, working nearby with another group, and concerned about heatstroke, was attempting to administer first aid when the indisposed guest opened her eyes and exclaimed, “He can walk!”

As it happened, none other than Raymond Burr — starring at the time as a wheelchair-bound detective on NBC’s Ironside — had just emerged from one of the nearby stages, on his own two feet, no less. Ovitz remembers telling her, “Yes, ma’am, he can walk. He’s just acting as Ironside.” And that did it. “It was at that moment that I thought, ‘Oh, I get it. I have to tell stories and make television shows. Because this is too much fun.’”

From that moment, Ovitz began a concentrated study in television that has never really ended. Universal was his first classroom: “I wandered into the wardrobe department. I wandered into editing bays. I wandered into writers’ offices. I wandered into soundstages. I watched sets being built, and watched them get torn down. I watched how things were catered... just kept watching everything.” Some lessons ultimately revealed dead-ends — the main thing he learned from talking his way into an appearance in the Western Stunt Show was that he didn’t want to do stunts. Likewise, his education in special effects makeup ended abruptly when a fake scar was applied to his arm. (He fainted, he recalls with a laugh.) But later, as a producer, the bits of knowledge he picked up wandering around the back lot came in handy — he knew how a wide variety of practical parts of film and television production actually worked.

At San Diego State, Ovitz put together a personalized curriculum for a budding producer: a triple major covering everything he thought would be helpful: film & television, of course, but also psychology — which he thought would help him read people better — and public administration, to learn how large organizations like studios functioned. But when he graduated in the early ’70s, he hit the job market in the middle of a recession.

With nothing available in his field of choice, Ovitz landed what he describes as “a very, very, very low-level, meaningless job” at film distribution company Avco Embassy. Meaningless or not, he approached the job as strategically and systematically as he had his education, making a point of being the first to arrive and last to leave, and positioning his desk so that the executives had to walk by it on their way in and out of the office. Before long, he’d moved up to a post in cooperative advertising and attracted the attention of Bernie Korban — his “boss’s boss’s boss,” and the first of several crucial mentors in his career. When Korban left Avco Embassy for Ciné Artists, he brought Ovitz along. But the company didn’t last. Ovitz recalls a long hallway full of offices slowly becoming emptier and emptier until only he and the president were left.
Ovitz with a dinosaur puppet from Terra Nova, shot in 2010 in Australia.

But on April 21, 1977, a year to the day after they’d reported his joining Ciné Artists, Variety broke the news that Ovitz had been hired at Paramount as manager of daytime programming. Several years out of college, he was finally in television.

A characteristic Hollywood executive shuffle once again threatened to derail his budding career, but Ovitz managed to hang on through the hiring of Gary Nardino as President of Paramount Television Productions and the new president’s attendant housecleaning. When the dust cleared, Ovitz held a desk as Nardino’s administrative assistant. Scaling the television ladder took him five years. After a year on Nardino’s desk, the position of Manager of Current Programming was created for him. Ovitz’s job had him interfacing with producers, writers and directors on behalf of Paramount Television, making sure shows came in on time and on budget.

By 1982, he’d risen to Senior Vice President of Creative Affairs. This was a golden age for the company; a few of the many shows Ovitz worked on were Taxi, Webster, Shogun, October Road, FlashForward, Perception and Mail to the Chief. He remembers his first time on a mixing stage, thinking, “Wow, you know, I really wasn’t involved in my kid’s upbringing, or I got divorced because I was never home.” Even in a single day’s shooting, his strong recommendation is to try to maintain reasonable hours. The improvement in energy and morale is immediate and palpable. “They’re always happy about it,” Ovitz confirms. “I’ve never had one person come to me and say, ‘Man, I really wanted that double time.’”

Ovitz’s commitment to improving working conditions comes from the close bonds he’s forged with the people he’s worked with. “After a while, you start using the same people over and over again because you’ve created a family,” he explains. He’s been just as careful about choosing the people he works for. “I would really do my due diligence to find out who people were before I would say yes. For the last 10 years, I’ve only worked with nice people.” Helping others on their way up, relentlessly trying to improve working conditions, and prize the niceness of collaborators are perhaps atypical traits for a producer, but Mark Ovitz has never tried to fit the stereotype. “My career,” he says, “has been about creating a family to work with and working on what I thought was fun.” Maybe it’s time to follow Ovitz’s lead, and begin treating our workplace families with the respect and consideration that the word represents.

He’d always had an open-door policy for anyone who worked for him, but as a producer-for-hire, Ovitz has jumped with both feet into the PGA’s mentoring program. He meets with individuals, selected by the Guild’s Mentoring Committee, to discuss television production and gives them access to whatever he’s working on — taking them to mixing stages, the editing room, on set or in production meetings, all while providing career advice and strategy. Sometimes, he’ll even put together a plan to follow up with him the next time he’s in the city. “I asked thousands of questions,” he recalls. “I used to drive these three men crazy every day.” He has always been appreciative of the gift of such mentors at that time of his career. “I’ve been passionated about production work as a process of continuing education, for everyone from producers down to grips, and confesses to have little patience for people who don’t commit.

“If you’re in this business of entertainment,” he asserts, “you should know the history of the entertainment business. You should know the history of television or movies... You should have an opinion on the AFI Top 100 film list if you want to be in the movie business. You should have seen them all. And if you haven’t, then you shouldn’t be in the business. You should be a student of it for all time. And I feel that way even if you’re in the third hammer or electrician on a show. If you want to be in our business, don’t treat it as if you’re working in a bank. Treat it like it’s something exciting, and love what you do.”

But there can be a dark side to the kind of commitment that our industry asks of its employees, and at least one sense in which Mark Ovitz wishes the industry were perhaps a little more like working in a bank. “I believe the number of working/shooting hours that we work in our business is really outrageous, and I’ve been pretty vocal about it,” he explains. “I made a career out of making sure that my crews didn’t shoot more than 12 hours. Because if you’re shooting 12 hours, the majority of the people are there for longer than 12 hours. It’s unsafe and it’s unhealthy.”

Ovitz believes that production schedules should be designed around 10-hour days. By the end of the week, cast and crew are exhausted, the quality of the work suffers, and, most of all, it becomes impossible for team members to enjoy anything like a normal life. The core philosophy behind his passion for fairness is that “they can have lives. Because to Ovitz’s eye, the long-term stakes are much higher than simply hitting an aide or staying under budget. For the crew, working reasonable hours means nothing less than ensuring, as Ovitz puts it, that “they can have lives. No one should wake up when they’re 65 years old and go, ‘Wow, you know, I really wasn’t involved in my kid’s upbringing, or I got divorced because I was never home.” Even in a single day’s shooting, his strong recommendation is to try to maintain reasonable hours. The improvement in energy and morale is immediate and palpable. “They’re always happy about it,” Ovitz confirms. “I’ve never had one person come to me and say, ‘Man, I really wanted that double time.’”

Ovitz’s commitment to improving working conditions comes from the close bonds he’s forged with the people he’s worked with. “After a while, you start using the same people over and over again because you’ve created a family,” he explains. He’s been just as careful about choosing the people he works for. “I would really do my due diligence to find out who people were before I would say yes. For the last 10 years, I’ve only worked with nice people.” Helping others on their way up, relentlessly trying to improve working conditions, and prize the niceness of collaborators are perhaps atypical traits for a producer, but Mark Ovitz has never tried to fit the stereotype. “My career,” he says, “has been about creating a family to work with and working on what I thought was fun.” Maybe it’s time to follow Ovitz’s lead, and begin treating our workplace families with the respect and consideration that the word represents.
What’s our ending? That’s the question that producer and PGA member Christina Lee Storm and director Scott Leberecht were stuck on. Their short film, Life After Pi, chronicled the stunning bankruptcy of Rhythm & Hues, an Oscar-winning visual effects company that had been a stalwart of the LA film industry for decades. Ironically, the dilemma facing the documentary mirrored the mindset of those inside the company: Everyone was asking, “What’s next?”

“Even though there was a company that bought Rhythm & Hues,” Storm tells Produced by, “we didn’t know what that meant. So it was, ‘How do you end the movie?’”

The idea for the documentary grew out of the moment in February, 2013, when Rhythm & Hues founder John Hughes announced that after 25 years and two Academy Awards, the company was no longer able to meet its expenses. It was a shocking announcement to the staff of more than 200. At the time, Storm was a manager of Digital Production for the firm.

“It was a surprise. You never think that it’s going to happen. Then it does, and it takes your breath away,” she recalls.

Not only did the company have eight feature films in production, they had not one but two films up for an Oscar in the Best Visual Effects category, Life of Pi and Snow White and the Huntsman.

“As someone on the executive level, you have to think about your employees and being a leader to them,” says Storm. “It was hard. We were trying to keep up morale because we had projects to finish.”

Leberecht, a director of narrative short and feature length films, was working in the art department at the time. In an effort to understand the company’s downfall, he began documenting interviews with key staff members. Storm jumped on board and together they decided to follow the story wherever it led. “We set out to do a five-minute video that we would post on YouTube… It was important for people in the industry to understand what was happening, and we wanted to get the story right. ”

Just two weeks after the bankruptcy announcement, Rhythm & Hues won the Visual Effects Academy Award for its work on Life of Pi. After the victory at the Oscars, Storm and Leberecht knew they had the title for their film: Life After Pi.

After more interviews and several rounds of revisions, the film had grown to 30 minutes. But how do you make an “industry insider” story compelling for those on the outside? It was exactly the type of project the PGA West’s Rough Cuts program likes to tackle.

Rough Cuts, chaired by members Pamela Keller and Robyn Symon, offers producers one thing that many films desperately need but can be difficult to get: honest critical feedback.

The program began in 2008 as an offering of the Documentary/Non-Fiction Committee as a way to screen documentaries that needed a fresh set of eyes. Last year, Keller and Symon formally established Rough Cuts as its own PGA committee and expanded the mission to include all genres and formats, including Web series, movie trailers and animated shorts as well as documentaries and feature films.

The process is straightforward. A producer submits a rough cut to the committee. After reviewing the submission, the committee hosts a live roundtable discussion with the producer and her or his team. Through small, informal groups, the program works to foster a supportive environment where industry peers will review works-in-progress with a constructively critical eye.

“It’s not a bashing session,” says Symon. “The comments from our participants are offered with a sense of nurturing. Everyone’s on the same team; we want each other to succeed.”

“We interview our filmmakers before their project goes to the panel,” adds Keller, “and caution them to take away what they can.”

That approach seems to be paying off with producers. Sean Hoessli brought his feature film Palm Swings to the group in February of 2015. “It was like having a focus group of seasoned producers reviewing your work from an outside perspective,” shares Hoessli. “Their insightful and constructive feedback, both artistic and commercial, helped shape the movie in an extremely positive way.”

PGA’s “Rough Cuts” Program Gives Life After Pi Its Hollywood Ending

by Ian Wagner

What’s our ending? That’s the question that producer and PGA member Christina Lee Storm and director Scott Leberecht were stuck on. Their short film, Life After Pi, chronicled the stunning bankruptcy of Rhythm & Hues, an Oscar-winning visual effects company that had been a stalwart of the LA film industry for decades. Ironically, the dilemma facing the documentary mirrored the mindset of those inside the company: Everyone was asking, “What’s next?”

I’ve found that producers, by nature, are problem solvers... I felt very much supported, coming out of Rough Cuts.”
For many filmmakers, Rough Cuts marks the first time that anyone outside of the production is seeing a cut. To create a comfortable environment for the producer(s), the screenings are kept small and targeted. “One thing we always strive to do,” notes Symon, “is make sure we have participants who have experience in the same genre or format as the work-in-progress we’re critiquing.”

The feedback participants have been known to find the sessions very helpful in applying a critical eye to their own projects as well. “Having the opinions of people who are not close to the project or the filmmakers can be an invaluable experience. That type of objectivity is hard to come by,” says line producer and panelist Rami Rank.

In the spring of 2014, just a few months after Storm and Leberecht began the project, they were ready for outside eyes. A film that began as a five-minute educational video had grown into a 30-minute expose about the struggling VFX industry in Los Angeles. And because neither Storm nor Leberecht had produced a documentary before, they needed to know if people outside of their VFX peers would connect with the story. They brought Life After Pi to Rough Cuts and had a lengthy discussion about the strengths and weaknesses of their edit.

“I think the key thing that we learned is that people wanted to see more VFX,” says Storm. “To us, it’s just what we do. But sometimes you forget how fascinating it can be to outsiders. The other valuable insight we got was confirmation that our story was clear. Sometimes when you’re ‘in the hole,’ editing, you don’t know if it’s clear. But it was really good to hear that we were telling a solid story.”

For some producers and directors, it can be a challenge to hear criticism of work that they’ve become deeply invested in over the course of years. Storm was relieved to find the process relatively painless, which she attributes to the professionalism of the panelists.

“I’ve found that producers, by nature, are problem solvers,” she says. “We are trying to reach a goal. I never felt that I was being attacked… It was very much the opposite. I felt very supported, coming out of Rough Cuts.”

Producer Rami Rank echoes these sentiments. As a panelist, he is deeply aware that the projects he reviews are the result of many months of hard work. “At our hearts, producers are storytellers,” he observes, “and so the majority of notes are often about the story. What makes sense and what doesn’t are at the center of the talks. The experience offers a fresh perspective for the filmmakers on their projects and gives them a forum to bounce ideas off the panelists about directions they may want to go.”

The group also offers suggestions on how to best market the film, and the intimate setting of the event provides an excellent opportunity to network with like-minded filmmakers.

After leaving Rough Cuts, Storm and Leberecht incorporated the changes suggested by the group and released a trailer. Soon after its release, it was picked up by The Hollywood Reporter and immediately started generating buzz. When the film— which was entirely self-funded— was finished, they opted to share it for free on YouTube to stay true to their educational intent. The response was immediate and overwhelming. The film hit 100,000 views… then 200,000, then 300,000 and today has been viewed more than one million times.

While Rhythm & Hues may not have gotten a typical Hollywood happy ending, Life After Pi certainly did.

Encouraged by the response, Storm and Leberecht submitted the film to the Santa Barbara International Film Festival and were surprised to learn that they’d not only been accepted, but that it would also screen in competition. Life After Pi went on to win the festival award for Best Documentary Short.

“It’s all been amazing,” Storm said, following the win. “We give Rough Cuts a lot of credit for their support.”

Robyn Symon notes that the group is eager to expand. “We’re excited about inviting acclaimed producers from hit movies, TV series and other genres to offer feedback to our filmmakers and we also want to find cool new venues to hold screenings.”

But Christina Lee Storm has a simple question for producers who may be considering to bring their projects to Rough Cuts: “You’re basically getting a room of 10–15 other producers for an evening to come and speak to your film. How many times do you get that opportunity?”

To join Rough Cuts, submit a project or participate as a feedback participant, email the committee at pgaroughcutswest@gmail.com.
Several years have passed, and while years of living dangerously, there’s still a question of what to do next. Environmental film festivals have been a popular way for filmmakers to engage festival goers in conversation about climate change. There’s been a huge upswing in the number of offerings on the subject of climate change, and it’s still not commensurate with the size of the problem.

Anyone dropping into America from another country or another planet would get the distinct impression that few people who matter are terribly worried about climate change,” observed Joe Romm, a science advisor to Years of Living Dangerously, and founding editor of Climate Progress. “Climate change has mostly been an invisible issue for several years and the message of conspicuous consumption and business-as-usual reigns supreme.”

Documentary directors gathered at a panel to discuss how to grow their audience and maximize impact. Ken Berlin of Climate Reality reminded them that “in the climate change arena, everything we say is quickly contradicted, so we must improve how clearly we communicate about this issue.”

His boss Al Gore chimed in from a video feed: “Stories matter — we have an obligation to future generations to tell great stories on film that can resonate with wide audiences and inspire lasting action.”

In terms of reaching the huge international audience, it’s still hard to beat a bona-fide Hollywood blockbuster. Although studio tent-pole movies about climate change are still in short supply, every now and then one can surprise us. A single scene in Christopher Nolan’s Interstellar may take less than a minute of screen time, but in that moment, it sent a powerful message about the importance of climate change to millions of people around the world.

The characters are standing in a field of dead and dying crops. Matthew McConaughey observes that when the atmosphere “changed,” the resulting chemistry was a new mix of nitrogen and oxygen more populous with blight than with people. The food supply crashed, while asthma went epidemic.

“I don’t know if the little drop I add to the glass of water will make a difference,” he muses, smiling. “Maybe I can add two or three. But I do know one thing: if I never add any drop at all, the impact I will have will be zero.”

The panel moderator, Ashlan Cousteau, asked the filmmakers what advice would they give to the next generation trying to tackle this issue on film. The answers came back as we’ve come to expect — better characters, stronger stories, more music. The one I like the best goes like this: Young filmmakers, don’t do what we did! Don’t relax in the knowledge that your box-office numbers and ratings at least didn’t suck, and move on. Stay with it, do more, do it better, and do it again, and then again, hit it harder, adjust your approach, and do it again, say no to the limo and the big lights and the rock-and-roll lifestyle, and get back out there and don’t give up until, well, change is the only possible result.

—KATIE CARPENTER
Los Angeles was full of Oscar excitement on March 3 and the Producers Guild was toasting the winners right along with it. The 3rd Annual Oscar Viewing and Recruitment Party co-hosted by the PGA’s AP Council and New Media Council was an amazing event, giving producers an opportunity to gather and celebrate the year in film, network and introduce potential members to the Guild.

250 members and guests posed for photos, sipped champagne as the stars arrived on the red carpet, feasted on appetizers and enjoyed watching the Oscars at Planet Dailies in the original Farmer’s Market.

PGA and FilmL.A. sponsored the event. Paul Audley from FilmL.A. and staff were on hand to meet members, answer questions and give advice. Piper-Heidsieck sponsored the Red Carpet Champagne hour. Passion Roses supplied the beautiful roses that adorned the tables.

Special thanks to New Media Council members Emily Barclay Ford and Abby Keller for the inspired decorations, as well as to AP Council members Kate Lilly for the planning food & drink; Carole Beams, Jethro Rothe-Kushel and Vincent DePaul for the drawing and giveaway prizes; Pam Keller and Joe Morabito for organizing the volunteers and Megan Mascena Gaspar, who coordinated and MC’d the evening.

Early applicants for membership to the Guild and their PGA sponsors were entered into a special drawing. J. Baker and Lorin Williams each won Final Draft software, Caswell-Massey products and a Planet Dailies gift certificate. To date, 35 people who attended the event have applied for PGA membership.

Gift bags were given away during the commercial breaks which included products from Kari Feinstein Public Relations, Jonathan Hair Care, a bracelet from designer Shantra, image consultation from Nadine Jolson (Jolson Creative), Oscar posters and gift cards from GBK, The Grove and designer Sue Wong. Our winners were Gregory Carter, Beth Dewey, Lesley Dyer, Shanon Glaser, Christina Jo’Leigh, Brian McLaughlin, Nic Novicki, Jennifer Salazar, Alyssa Silver and Jason Waters.

Once again the Producers Guild correctly forecasted the Best Picture winner as Birdman flew away with the Oscar statue. No one left the PGA Oscar Viewing Party empty-handed, as gift boxes with a PGA business card holder and key chain were handed out as people dodged the rain and headed home or to other parties.

–MEGAN MASCEÑA GASPAR

Editor’s Note

As you hopefully have read in Vance Van Petten’s column, Produced by will be undergoing some pretty big changes very soon. I haven’t been in the habit of penning regular notes in this version of the magazine, and I expect that’s a policy that will continue to be true following the magazine’s re-design. In his column, Vance properly salutes Jeff Ingle and Dan Dodd as great collaborators who played major roles in the creation and growth of this publication. But speaking as the guy in the trenches putting the magazine together, I need to mention some other names.

The amount that I and this magazine owe to the entire team at IngleDodd Media, past and present, is incalculable. Jody Ingle deserves the credit for every deadline I actually hit. Mike Chapman saved me from hundreds of typos. Gilda Garcia, Ruth Kaplan, Lynda Karr Mitsakos and Erica Christensen made every issue look fantastic. Michael Gaiser, Jennifer Dodd, Timothy Fitzpatrick and the rest of the team tracked every last fractional ad. All together, they took a guy that didn’t know what he was doing and made a halfway decent magazine editor out of him. In the process, they became my friends as much as my colleagues. Thank you, each and all. It’s been a tremendous run. My gratitude knows no limits, and I’m going to miss every one of you.

–CHRIS GREEN
New Members

The Producers Guild is proud to welcome the following new members, who have joined the Guild since December, 2014:

**PRODUCERS COUNCIL**

Kevin Abrams  
Lucas Alkoch  
Betsy Almquist  
Dorothy Alper  
Thomas Alpert  
Ben Banz  
Kate Barry  
Herb Bazin  
John Battsek  
Alexandra Beatrice  
Jesse Berger  
Bill Berry  
Stuart Besner  
Michael Black  
Jonathan Block  
Carl Borack  
Amanda Bowers  
Bert Brandt  
Rob Burnett  
Barbie Castro  
Sherry Clark  
Craig Zisk  
Juha Wuolijoki  
Michael Wigert  
Elana Wertkin  
Michael Vieira  
Nick Vartanian  
Dominique Telson  
Fallon Jethroe  
Andy Horwitz  
Eric Hedayat  
Jessica Goldstein  
Anthony Girard  
Charlyn Giampa  
Sally Garbarini  
Simon Emanuel  
Janelle Eagle  
Evan Weintraub  
Elvis Hutton  
Sloane Cooper  
Alicia Clark  
Mykal Burns  
Emily Berens  
Jay Hoffe  
Lisa Curtis  
Gaelan O’Brien  
Scott Daniel  
Kris D’Souza  
Emily Treat  
Tyrrell Shaffner  
David Schatanoff  
Kaila Roti  
Robert Pereyda  
Kimberly Panunzio  
Ilene Merenstein  
Robert May  
Alex Lee  
Caitlin Kazepis  
Victoria Heric  
Ken Furer  
Craig Derrick  
Jennifer Connelly  
Christopher D’Angelo  
Richard Dean  
Jamey Denenberg  
Cody Dempic  
Ken Furin  
Victoria Hern  
Michael Hendgen  
Catina Kazapis  
Tarla Khan  
Alex Lee  
Alison Marcia  
Robert May  
Jene Merenstein  
Terence Myers  
Kimberly Panzanillo  
Robert Peeryda  
Keyvan Peymani  
Koia Rob  
David Schatofan  
Tymal Shaffner  
Jianfeng Siao  
Paul Snow  
Rebecca Snow  
Emily Tone  
Etteotte Vargas  
Dino Vindros  
Dan Wienstra  
Erik Wong  
AP COUNCIL  
Associate Producer/  
Production Manager/  
Production Supervisor  
Aneu Almall  
Rob Baker  
Jason Baustin  
Monica Lee Belas  
Emily Berens  
Cassandra Bohle  
Marc Burns  
Brandon Burrows  
Andrew Cava  
Alicia Clark  
Shane Cooper  
Brandon Crawford  
Trenten Dempsey  
Janelle Eagle  
Simon Emanuel  
Sally Garbarini  
Charlyn Gamsa  
Anthony Grand  
Jessica Goldstein  
Carolyn Gray  
Daron Green  
Eric Hedayat  
Ashley Holt  
Andy Horwitz  
Falak Jethroe  
Declan Joyce  
Andrew Kelley  
Jennifer Lyons  
David Malloy  
Reilly Oliver  
Melissa Pasiewyching  
Ricardo Ramos  
Sarah Roth  
Abby Roe  
Alison Rosa  
Christina Rowell  
Michelle Rubenstein  
Jenica Salcedo  
Andy Schetter  
Jen Schiller  
Pawan Srinivasan  
Christine Treibel  
Larry Weisberg  
Segment/Field/  
Story Producer  
Sarah Bernard  
Scott Brodmann  
Grayson Brooke  
Lindsey Bury  
Maylin Christensen  
Niki Clark  
Heather Crowe  
Andrew Doyle  
Erin Eichinger  
Keith Haskel  
Peggy Healy  
Nicholas Hendrick  
Jennifer Lewis  
Sundee Manusaks  
Michelle Feinari  
Joseph Ramos  
Hannah Richardson  
T.J. Sams  
Andrew Stryker  
Pasti Tapias Limon  
Stacy Thappenthong  
Christina Wise  
Production Coordinator  
Micha Basko  
Lisa Curtis  
Jayson Elinore  
Ryan Guellke  
Austin Lapierre  
Scott Martin  
Matt McCready  
Mary Phelan  
Michael Uppercino  
Em Vital  
Dinan Walnut  
Post-Production  
Michael Bench  
Althanas Berkley  
Steve Boyadzhyan  
Michael Bryant  
Jason Chu  
Dillon Gerrill  
Mitchei Grobman  
Taylor Hingtgen  
Christy House  
Mark Konnevel  
Francesca Mannix  
Tara McSherry  
Christina Pencer  
Susan Schauer  
Brett Shumway  
Makoy Vond  
Visual Effects  
Wesley Barker  
Todd Israould  
Isbrowt Abraham  
Amon Manor  
Kim McDonald  
Victor Scollato  
Sean Tompkins  

**NEW MEDIA COUNCIL**

John Heard  
Robert Henry  
Dustin Hinz  
Jay Hoffman  
Brad Holman  
Thomas Hutson  
Andrew Hutton  
Sal Iraray  
Messica Jacobs  
Peter Jayson  
Jandre Jones  
Steven Jones  
Daniel Kamali  
Amy Kaufman  
Oll Kezar  
Simon Klemeny  
Judy Key  
Lotti Knowles  
Jordan Krause  
Tom Lessaday  
Kirsten Lea  
Teddy Leifer  
Tod Levine  
Amanda Lewis  
Ben Limberg  
David Linde  
Jane Lipsky  
Wendy Lister  
Cynthia Lowen  
Carl Lucas  
Mark Manuel  
Bruno Marinaro  
Eve Main  
Mark G. Mathis  
Paul Matheski  
Andrew Milano  
Laura Michalchyn  
Mark Milton  
Paolo Morales  
Peter Morgan  
Kurt Meuller  
Julius Cho  
Martyn Ness  
Christopher Newman  
Elizabeth Newman  
Zach O’Brien  
Marvin Perlman  
Matthew Pencipicanico  
Lauren Pfleder  
Peter Plueck  
Kip Pierce  
Caleb Pinkett  
Vincent Rasta  
Loretta Ramos  
Nick Rappaport  
Kirsty Robson  
Michael Robbinson  
Claire Rusick  
Prosodie  
Haim Saban  
Dan Scalco  
Kirk Saduski  
Steve Samuels  
Zack Schiller  
Jordan Schur  
Oren Segal  
Jim Seibel  
Jeffrey Shaw  
Bob Shaye  
Jon Sil  
Kirk Simon  
Ron Simons  
Samuel Slater  
John Sauinha  
Stephanie Soschitch  
Adam Spiegelman  
Mark Stewart  
Niki Smith  
Graziya Taylor  
Dominique Telson  
Noti Vantarian  
Sonya Vaughn  
Michael Weiner  
Agatha Warren  
Michael Wechsler  
Evan Weintraub  
Elisa Werther  
Michael Wigert  
Juna Woolipali  
Craig Zisk  

• Vote on Producers Guild Awards and receive discount tickets to the event, as well as DVD screeners for awards consideration  
• Discounted registration for Produced By Conference  
• Admission to special PGA pre-release screenings and Q&A events  
• Full access to PGA website including events, calendar, social networking tools  
• Arbitration of credit disputes  
• Access to PGA Job Board, online résumé search, employment tools and job forums  
• 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  
• Wide variety of discounts on events, merchandise, travel  
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Winner of the George Mason University Healthcare Award for the Circle of Friends® memory program for Mild Cognitive Impairment. Provider to the NFL Player Care Plan.
I was fortunate to be selected as a part of the 2014 cycle of the PGA Mentoring Program, where I had the opportunity to connect with film producer Helen Estabrook. I was very excited to be paired with Helen, who has been involved in films such as Juno, Labor Day, Men, Women & Children and most recently, the Oscar-winning Whiplash.

When I applied to the Mentoring Program, I requested to be mentored by a female producer working in films with character-driven storylines — and with Helen, I was not disappointed! At the time, I was working as an associate producer on reality television shows such as Lindsay and Street Outlaws. I wanted a female mentor who could guide me toward my goal of working in independent films and help me become better educated on making that career path as a woman in a male-dominated field.

I introduced myself to Helen through emails and we made a plan for lunch. After we sat down together, she discussed the importance of putting together the right team of actors, producers and staff, all of whom have to have a similar vision of the film they want to create. She stressed the importance of aligning yourself with like-minded people who share similar goals for the final product. It was great to hear about the process from development, to production, to completion. Helen even suggested I reach out to an additional production contact of hers to help me understand that side of the process. I had a couple of informational meetings with her colleague; it was helpful, even inspiring to see the work that her friend was producing and the different path that she has taken.

Later, I had a follow-up lunch with Helen after I had some good news for her. I had a new job working in visual effects! I was excited to share this news of my position and the new skills I was gaining. I received some helpful advice on how to work more confidently and navigate in a field that is not commonly driven by women. Helen also gave me ideas for some books and material to read that would help me in my professional journey.

It was a great experience to have the opportunity to connect with Helen Estabrook. Getting a glimpse into her world of producing helped me to focus on new goals, and I am now excited to be working on a new documentary, my second. The PGA Mentoring Program is a great way to connect with our experienced peers, and I’m very thankful to Helen for taking time out of her packed schedule to accommodate me. I have walked away inspired and hopeful for the future in my producing career!
The Producers Guild proudly salutes the following producers whose credits have been certified with the Producers Mark. This list includes films that have been released through the first three months of 2015.

Certification via the Producers Mark indicates that a producer undertook a major portion of the producing duties on the motion picture.

**BLACKHAT**
- Thomas Tull, p.g.a.
- Jon Jashni, p.g.a.
- Michael Mann, p.g.a.

**THE BOY NEXT DOOR**
- Jason Blum, p.g.a.
- John Jacobs, p.g.a.

**CINDERELLA**
- Simon Kinberg, p.g.a.
- Allison Shearmur, p.g.a.
- David Barron, p.g.a.

**FIFTY SHADES OF GREY**
- Michael De Luca, p.g.a.
- E.L. James, p.g.a.
- Dana Brunetti, p.g.a.

**FOCUS**
- Denise Di Novi, p.g.a.

**GET HARD**
- Will Ferrell, p.g.a.
- Adam McKay, p.g.a.

**HOME**
- Mireille Soria, p.g.a.
- Suzanne Buirgy, p.g.a.
- Christopher Jenkins, p.g.a.

**HOT TUB TIME MACHINE 2**
- Andrew Panay, p.g.a.

**INSURGENT**
- Doug Wick, p.g.a.
- Lucy Fisher, p.g.a.

**IT FOLLOWERS**
- Rebecca Green, p.g.a.
- Laura D. Smith, p.g.a.
- David Robert Mitchell, p.g.a.

**JUPITER ASCENDING**
- Grant Hill, p.g.a.
- Lana Wachowski, p.g.a.
- Andy Wachowski, p.g.a.

**THE LAST FIVE YEARS**
- Lauren Versel, p.g.a.
- Richard LaGravenese, p.g.a.

**THE LAZARUS EFFECT**
- Jason Blum, p.g.a.
- Cody Zieg, p.g.a.

**MCFARLAND, USA**
- Gordon Gray, p.g.a.
- Mark Ciardi, p.g.a.

**MORTDECAI**
- Andrew Lazar, p.g.a.
- Johnny Depp, p.g.a.
- Christi Dembrowski, p.g.a.
- Patrick McCormick, p.g.a.

**THE SECOND BEST EXOTIC MARIGOLD HOTEL**
- Graham Broadbent, p.g.a.
- Peter Czernin, p.g.a.

**STRANGE MAGIC**
- Mark S. Miller, p.g.a.

**THE WEDDING RINGER**
- Will Packer, p.g.a.
- Adam Fields, p.g.a.

**WILD CARD**
- Steven Chasman, p.g.a.

Make certain your next credit carries the Producers Mark. See [producersmark.com](http://producersmark.com) for details.