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From the Executive Director

**What’s in a Name?**

The Picture of Health

PGA Bulletin

Member Benefits

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**FEATURES**

Case Study: Roger Corman

That 353rd producing credit may just be the one that puts him over the top.

The Price of Independence

The Hollywood odyssey of Walter Wanger.

The Spirit of Debra Hill

Celebrating the First Annual PGA Weekend Shorts Contest.

Producers Guild Awards 2012

Dante’s Many Peaks

Producer Dante Di Loreto keeps climbing.

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The Miami Herald
RENE RODRIGUEZ

BEST PICTURE

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

MONEYBALL

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PRODUCERS
GUILD AWARD
NOMINEE

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ON OVER 115 TOP 10 LISTS
INCLUDING

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BEST SCREENPLAY
One of the most exciting aspects of working with producers is their constant search for new ways to tell stories and reach audiences. This industry has never been a static one, and time and again, it’s been producers who drive the evolution of entertainment.

That evolution is evident in something as simple as our Guild’s membership. Twelve years ago, the PGA had less than 400 members, nearly all of whom were based in theatrical motion pictures. Today, we have grown to 5,000 members, extending both above and below the line. They produce content not only for motion pictures, but for television, live events, broadband Internet, gaming consoles, mobile devices, and even special venues like museum exhibitions and theme park attractions. But regardless of the vast changes in our media, the challenges remain the same: develop the story; gather the resources; execute the creative vision.

Our Producers Guild Awards have grown in tandem with our membership. For the first time, the Producers Guild will be recognizing work specifically created for news programming, sports programming, children’s programming and Web series. We’ve also acknowledged the growing number of reality and non-fiction television producers in our Guild by devoting three distinct categories to the format, representing Competition, Live Entertainment and Talk, and Non-Fiction programming.

But you’ll notice something different about our four new categories: In these instances, we honor productions as a whole, rather than individual producers. That’s not because the producers of those programs are any less deserving than the named nominees in our other categories. It’s because the Producers Guild takes nothing more seriously than whom it designates as worthy of producing honors. The names of our nominees are not handed to us by a production company, studio or network. They’re the result of an exhaustive process that digs deeply into the history of the production. The process is time-consuming and labor-intensive, and requires the seasoned judgment of veteran producers with vast experience in their respective media. And while the Guild’s membership is growing, we are not yet able to call on a sufficient number of (for example) master producers of Web series to guide the process. Until we can rely on such expertise, we cannot in good faith name individual nominees in those categories, better simply to recognize the production as a whole than risk honoring an individual who did not do the work of a producer.

But never forget the converse of that position: The individuals who proudly stand nominated for our Awards are the true producers of their projects, verified by their peers, colleagues and crew. They’re the ones who took the risks, who did the work, who made the story happen. And every Producers Guild Award is a celebration of that dedication and spirit.

**What’s in a Name?**

**“THE BEST FILM OF THE YEAR”**

David Denby

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**THE NEW YORKER**

**ON OVER 150 TOP TEN LISTS**

**“HUGO” UNLOCKS THE HEARTS OF ALL WHO LOVE THE MOVIES WITH A KEY FORGED BY GRAND ILLUSIONIST MARTIN SCORSESE.**

The film beckons audiences into a world of wonder through the eyes of a young hero, a world alive in new ways through Robert Richardson’s resplendent use of 3D. This dazzling adventure is also a meditation on life and loss, deeply rooted in the powerful role movies play in our reality. With a proper tip of the beret to early pioneers Harold Lloyd and Georges Méliès, we are reminded that each film is a gift, and that when the masters intone, “Come dream with me,” through the magic of the movies, we do.
Producers come and producers go, reflections of one another through the years. Squint hard enough at the output of, for instance, Scott Rudin, and one sees the reflection of David O. Selznick’s fastidiousness and refined literary tastes. Standing behind every Jerry Bruckheimer production is the ghost of Cecil B. DeMille’s passion for epic spectacle. The more things change, the more things stay the same, and so on.

Except when they don’t. And what we mean when we say that is that there is only one Roger Corman, and there will only ever be one Roger Corman.

Corman is a figure sui generis in the history of American cinema. A combination of fate, insight and ambition placed him at the pivot point between classic Hollywood’s studio era and the industry as it exists today. There are but a handful of individuals — Lew Wasserman is one; Roone Arledge another — for whom can make a legitimate claim as one of the godfathers of modern show business. Corman is among them.

50 years ago, if you had suggested to any of his contemporaries that the producer of Teenage Cave Man, Night of the Blood Beast and Naked Paradise would create the blueprint for the future of movies, you’d have been laughed out of the room. And to be fair, Corman likely would have joined in the laughter — to this day, he remains genial and circumspect about the revolution he helped to create.

But the facts speak for themselves: The testpote genre films that form the bedrock of today’s film industry are unmistakably derived from the drive-in fare of which Corman is the prime avatar. And the men and women producing, directing, writing and starring in those films — likely as not — broke into the industry because Corman figured they were worth taking a chance on. (Interested parties can hear more from them, and from Corman himself, in the recently released documentary Corman’s World: Exploits of a Hollywood Rebel.)

This is the 54th in Produced by’s ongoing series of Case Studies of successful producers and their work. Produced by editor Chris Green visited Roger Corman at the offices of his New Horizons Pictures for a remarkable discussion that included such topics as balancing entertainment with personal convictions, how to put together a reliable crew, and the challenge of making a movie feel like an LSD experience.
Awards 2012
Produced by

With a career like yours, it’s hard to figure out where to start. How did you find your way into the industry?

I was an engineering major at Stanford. My father was an engineer and I thought I would follow in his footsteps. I was writing for The Stanford Daily, and I found out that the film critics of The Daily got free passes to all the theaters in Palo Alto. So I thought I’d like to have those free passes. I wrote a couple of sample reviews and was taken on as a film critic. Then I started looking at films differently, and gradually I came to feel that film was more interesting than engineering.

When I graduated, I took the degree in engineering because I didn’t want to start over in another major. But the only job I could get was as a messenger at 20th Century Fox for $32.50 a week. I was the failure of the Stanford engineering class. I got the worst job of any graduate that year. [laughs]

So what was your first actual production, when you actually found yourself dealing with the logistics of equipment and human resources? How much did you know about the job going into that? Or was this just kind of a lark?

I knew a little bit because I’d written a screenplay called The House in the Sea and sold it to Allied Artists. I offered to work on the picture for nothing as an assistant to the producer if I could get an associate producer credit. They said, “Why not?” And I did, and I learned a little bit on that.

So I wrote another script, took the money from the sale of the first script and then went to some of my friends, who had graduated in my class at Stanford and had real jobs, and got them to invest. I think I got $4,500 for the script, and I raised a total of $12,000. I made a picture that I called It Stalked the Ocean Floor. The grand total of the budget, because a lot of it was deferred, was around $30,000. On that film, I believe I was the only producer/truck driver in the business. We shot the picture in six days. Because I had so little money, I parked the truck in front of my house and I would drive to the location before the crew and unload all of the equipment except the heaviest. Then at the end of the day, the grips would load the heaviest equipment back into the truck and go home. And I would stay and load the rest of the equipment into the truck and drive the truck home and repeat the process. A representative from the Teamsters came out to see the shoot and asked, “Who’s driving the truck?” And I said, “I am.” He was a good guy. He laughed and he said, “Alright, Roger. You are now an honorary member of the Teamsters for one picture only. On the next picture, you will have a Teamster driver.” Which I did.

So what year was this?

I think it was around ’55.

I’m curious, when is the last time you watched that movie?

[laughs] I haven’t seen it since it came out. I don’t know if a copy exists anywhere.

A lost masterpiece, most likely. But it was soon after that you went into business with American International Pictures.

My second picture was The Fast and the Furious, a title which I sold to Universal a few years ago, and they’ve done very well.
with that film. *The Fast and the Furious* was AIP’s first film. I had offers from several companies, but I could see the trap for a producer: You invested your money in a picture, then waited for the picture to earn the money back before you could do the next picture. Which meant you could do a picture a year or a picture every 18 months. Or if you were unlucky, never.

Sam Arkoff and Jim Nicholson were starting American International, and they had access to financing. So I said to them, “I will give you my picture, but I want the negative cost of my picture back. And then I want a three-picture deal. Each time I finish a picture, you’ll give me a pickup, give me my negative cost back, and we’ll share the profits. This will give you a minimum of four pictures to start your company, and will give me a steady supply of financing so I can go from picture to picture.

So how soon after that deal was brokered were you able to get your machine up and running? How many pictures did you deliver to them?

I think I did three or four pictures in the first year. It got up to the point where I produced seven pictures in one year. I was at the point where I was shooting during the day, casting the next picture during lunchtime and editing the previous picture in the evening. And I remember I got into bed one night and thought, “I have to sleep fast.” And then I realized it was on overload and I slowed down after that.

I’m curious, how did you decide, in the early days or even now, what films to make? Or maybe the question is, what films not to make?

One thought in particular came to me: You could go to any theater and see the majority of the audience was young. Yet the major studios, because they were tied to the star system, were casting their pictures with 40- and 50-year-old stars. So I not only addressed my pictures to that young audience, but I cast young people, generally unknowns, and I kept the subject matter geared towards a youth audience.

You developed a stock company who you could rely on, certainly in front of the camera, but I assume that extends to behind the camera as well. How did that team come together?

After I did my first picture, I made a list of everybody who was on the crew and put them into three columns. The first column was the best people on the crew; these were the people I wanted to hire back. The third column listed the people who weren’t very good, and I didn’t want to hire back.

So on my second picture, I hired back everybody who was available on the first list, a few people from the middle list and a few people that I had not worked with before. And I did that on every film, until by the fourth or fifth film, everybody on the crew was on my list of people who had worked exceptionally well.

Now the crew realized this, and there was great camaraderie among the crew and with me. The group became known informally as “the Corman Crew.” Normally, a producer will hire a director of photography, a sound man, wardrobe, props and so forth. But people would just hire “the Corman Crew” because they saw what I had put
together. And the crew took pride among themselves that they worked as a unit. It not only helped me because I had the best group working for me, it helped the other producers as well because they had a ready-made crew that was good, and that knew how to work together as a team.

I wonder how they even had time to work for anybody else, given your pace. But your epiphany about the youth audience is a great example of the producer as amateur sociologist. As you gained experience, did you refine your formula or approach?

There was always a certain theme to the pictures, which reflected my own beliefs. I have always been of the left/liberal/rebellious side of society. And youth, because they are youth, are generally rebellious. So the rebellion within me fit the audience. And it worked very well until, I think, my 17th or 18th picture. I had never had a failure. Every picture made money. It got to the point where I could go to American International or Allied Artists, and get financing based upon the idea. I felt very strongly about the issue of the integration of schools. And I bought a novel called The Intruder about the integration of schools in the south. And to my great surprise, everybody turned me down. So I thought, okay, I’ll finance this picture myself. The picture got wonderful reviews. It won a couple of minor film festivals. One of the New York papers said, “This motion picture is a major credit to the entire American film industry.”

It was the first film I ever made that lost money. At that point, I changed my methodology. I thought the film was a perfectly decent film. The reviews indicated it was a very good film. But the audience did not accept this film. From then on, I changed my philosophy to what I still work with today, which is that the film will be an entertainment first and will deliver to the audience the entertainment that the title and advertising promises. Beneath that surface entertainment however, on a subtextual level, there can be a statement or an idea that is important to me. But it is always beneath the surface. Some people may never notice the subtext. Others will appreciate the subtext and find that the film is a little bit more complex than what they anticipated. I have to admit, though, on some films, the subtext was non-existent. [laughs]

Could you give me a couple of examples of films in which you consciously put that dynamic to work?

In the 1960s, I made the first Hell’s Angels picture, The Wild Angels. It was the opening film of the Venice Film Festival. I spent a great deal of time in really personal research on The Wild Angels. Chuck Griffith, the writer, and I spent a lot of time going to Hell’s Angels parties, hanging out with the Angels. We were always welcome because we made a point of bringing the marijuana. Everything in the picture was based on something they told us. Now, in retrospect, some of those things they told us probably were either highly embellished or outright falsehoods. Nevertheless, even then, they came out of the minds of the Angels. So I was very excited about that picture. On the surface, it was the Hell’s Angels and their exploits. Beneath the surface, however, there was sympathy, or at least an understanding that the Angels were
the outcasts of society. They were rebelling against the society that had rejected them, and were creating a society of their own.

A year later, I made *The Trip* which was about LSD and the drug experience, which again was a comment on the counterculture, and ways of life that may differ from the mainstream culture. But on both films, I delivered on the surface what the audience expected to see. With *The Wild Angels*, they saw those roaring motorcycles, they saw the chases from the police and all of the other things they expected to see. In *The Trip*, I delivered, as much as I could, the experiences of an acid trip. As a conscientious filmmaker, I took one trip myself. And coming down, I realized this was beyond what any film could portray. But I portrayed it as well as I could. On that film, I introduced, as far as I know, the fastest cutting style that I'd ever seen during the psychedelic sequences. I actually got an award from the Editors Guild later on for introducing that style of editing.

When you talk about *The Wild Angels* and *The Trip*, the names that come to mind are Jack Nicholson and Peter Fonda, which I think is where the public face of the Corman approach starts to come together. The first was Charles Bronson.

**Really?**

I made a picture starring Charlie called *Machine Gun Kelly*. It was picked up by the *Nouvelle Vague* critics in Paris, and a French or Italian producer hired Charlie to come over to play the lead in a European gangster film, a little bit like Clint Eastwood. But he became a star in European films even before Clint, and then came back to America as an established star, the same way Clint did a few years later.

That’s fascinating; I hadn’t realized that Bronson was part of your original group. But in terms of giving a start to those people who are now pillars of the industry, how did you find them? How were you able to say, “Well, this guy can probably direct or star in a movie better than that guy,” and “this guy” turns out to be Jack Nicholson or Martin Scorsese?

Well, for one thing, I’ve done just about every job you can do. I’ve been a writer, a producer and a director. And as a director, I attended acting classes for a little while — not to become an actor, but just so that I could work better with actors. So having experience in all of those different areas, it gave me a way to judge people’s abilities in different areas and maybe, a little bit better than somebody else who had been specific to one area.

Is there anyone you can recall, even from the very beginning, that you thought, “this guy clearly has it going on”? Jack Nicholson. I met him in an acting class. And he was easily the best actor in the class; I thought he was brilliant. The surprise for me was how long it took him to become a star. I talked with him about it. I said, “Jack, you should be a star.” He said, “I agree with you.”

I can recall from the documentary that *Easy Rider*, the film that ultimately made him a star, is ironically a movie that you just missed having a piece of. *Easy Rider* was set up by Peter [Fonda] and Dennis [Hopper]. They co-wrote it. They were going to co-star. Peter was going to produce and Dennis was going to direct. They both had worked with me on a previous film, so they asked me to be executive producer; I would have a piece of the picture and help put the thing together.
I got the financing from American International, because they had done so well with *The Wild Angels* and *The Trip*. But one executive at American International made a mistake in the final meeting. He said, completely out of the blue, “We want the right to replace Dennis as director if he falls more than one day behind schedule.” And I could see the effect it had on Dennis and on Peter. After the meeting, I said to the executive, “You’re probably right in having some concern about Dennis, given his reputation and the fact that he’s never directed a film. But I’ve worked with him. He’s a highly intelligent and dedicated actor and a very good photographer. I will be working with him. He will make this film. And you have offended him with that request.”

Somebody, I think at Columbia, heard about this. And in no time, the picture had moved over to Columbia. And AIP and I lost our percentage of the film, because of that one executive’s statement.

Part of producing is diplomacy … knowing what to say when, and whom to say it to.

That’s right.

There’s a certain romance that has accrued to independent filmmaking in that era. Granted, you were making independent films 10 or 15 years before that era started. But certainly the era of *Easy Rider*, *The Wild Angels* and *The Trip* is looked back on as a golden age of independent filmmaking. Were you conscious of that then? Did it feel different to be producing films like *The Wild Angels* as opposed to *It Walked the Ocean Floor* or your early genre films?

I wasn’t conscious of it until the reception of *The Wild Angels*. In fact, somebody told me that before *Easy Rider*, *The Wild Angels* was the most successful low-budget independent picture ever made. And the reviews, the fan mail, the attention it got indicated to me, that we were on to something new. This was the time of youth rebellion, the counterculture, all of the things one associates with the ’60s. I, and others who were young, were part of the counterculture, and we made films that the major studios didn’t understand, that appealed to the youth rebellion. Now, by the ’70s, the major studios began to understand it, and they co-opted the movement. The major studios’ dominance increased with two films specifically. The first was *Jaws* and the second was *Star Wars*. When *Jaws* came out, Vincent Canby, the lead critic of *The New York Times*, said, “What is *Jaws*, but a big-budget Roger Corman film?” He was partially right. It was a big-budget Roger Corman film. But it wasn’t just bigger, it was also better.

And then when *Star Wars* came out, I realized that the major studios now understood much of what my compatriots and I had been doing all these years. And they made them bigger and better. And that started a slow decline in the theatrical distribution for low-budget independent films, because some of our mainstay product was now being done by the majors on bigger budgets and we couldn’t possibly compete. It took a while, however. It wasn’t until the ’90s that really started to fade away. I sold my studio in Venice, luckily when real estate values were going up. And we made fewer films, because we’d lost the theatrical market.
I think a portion of the audience is becoming satiated with these giant films and is ready for the intelligently made low-budget film. So we may be at the beginning of a renaissance for that type of film. Independent films may regain some of the importance they once had.

So given that we now have our own digital revolution going on, what are you excited about today? I think the potential for showing our films on the Internet is immense. There will still be some sort of gatekeeper, but essentially we will have 99 percent eliminated the middleman, and taken our pictures to the entire world.

Are you at all concerned that, just because of the way the Internet has evolved, people have become accustomed to getting content for free? Yes. I am concerned. I think that is a problem. I don’t have any particular solution to it, other than if your audience is the entire world, the charge for each showing of your film can be so low that it isn’t worth the bother to steal it. You might as well spend the few pennies and not get involved in all this stuff. That’s a somewhat Panglossian vision, I know.

What would you say to a young filmmaker or producer who is looking to tell meaningful stories and entertain an audience at the same time? What should they be thinking about? You must be aware of the commercial realities of the market. Yet at the same time, you must make films that you personally believe in. I would say just that.

Maybe to push it in a different direction, what leads to a bad film? In terms of your experience with the films that you’ve been proud of, and you’ve been less proud of, what has made the good ones good and the not-so-good ones not so good? It starts with the script. I have never seen a good picture made from a bad script. I’ve seen a few bad pictures made from good scripts. But that’s the breaks of the game. If the script isn’t right, you don’t make the film. And I look back to the films I’ve done and that failed, and in almost every one of them I can look back and recall thinking that the script isn’t quite there, but I think it’s okay and we can do a good enough job in producing the film that it will be a good picture. Those are mistakes I should never have shot. If I could go back in time and rework what I’ve done, the number one thing I would do, I would reject every bad script. I wouldn’t even say that, because I did reject every bad script. But I would reject every script that I thought was almost good enough.
Producer Walter F. Wanger (1894–1968) was a fascinating, colorful figure in classical era Hollywood. He started in 1919 at Paramount. His last film was the notorious Joseph L. Mankiewicz version of Cleopatra (1963), during which Liz (Taylor) and Dick (Burton) fell madly in love. Cliché as it sounds, Wanger’s five-decade career, complete with its bona fide Hollywood shooting scandal and a dramatic fifth act comeback, would make a great movie.

In spite of this track record, the 58 Academy Award nominations his films garnered (winning eight), and his work with every major studio except Warner Bros., few working in the industry today remember Wanger or have even heard of him. (He was not, for example, mentioned in Turner Classic Movies’ recent series Movies and Moguls). Yet Wanger’s career, with its roller-coaster rides to the top and steep drops, more closely resembles the experience of many of today’s producers than his better known, more talented, greatly and rightly admired colleagues — Irving Thalberg, Darryl F. Zanuck, Hal Wallis, Samuel Goldwyn or Wanger’s good friend David O. Selznick.

All these legends of Hollywood history enjoyed extraordinarily consistent and strong careers. They led major studios with a brilliant knack for tasteful storytelling (Thalberg and Zanuck) and they had bankrolls big enough to fund their independent operations (Goldwyn and Selznick). “The Lone Wanger,” as Vincent Canby called him in the Los Angeles Times in the early 1960s, had neither.

In spite of his limitations, an even dozen of Wanger’s 65 films were major box-office or critical successes: The Marx Brothers’ first film The Cocoanuts (1929). Queen Christina (1933), starring Greta Garbo. Fritz Lang’s You Only Live Once (1938), with Henry Fonda and Sylvia Sidney. John Ford’s classic Western Stagecoach (1939), the film that made John Wayne a major star, and Ford’s The Long Voyage Home, an experiment in art cinema. Alfred Hitchcock’s Foreign Correspondent (1940), the director’s second American film after Rebecca. Fritz Lang’s classic film noir Scarlet Street, starring Edward G. Robinson and Joan Bennett. Don Siegel’s Riot in Cell Block 11 (1954) and the original Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956). Robert Wise’s I Want to Live! (1958). And though most accounts don’t mention it, Cleopatra actually broke even with its sale to television.

Other of Wanger’s films were idiosyncratic, in pursuit of novelty on screen. (John Ford called him “a sensationalist.”) Being the first to do anything was always a selling point, especially in the 1930s. 1934’s Private Worlds with Joel McCrea, Charles Boyer and Joan Bennett, Don Siegel’s first film, is a particularly oddball film, with a Pagliacci plot. 1934’s Gabriel Over the White House, starring Spencer Tracy, is an itinerant film, with an oddball cast and a plot that is even more oddball. The Trail (1936) is a particularly oddball film, with a plot that is even more oddball. The Trail


1936 was the first film to use Technicolor on location. 1938's *Blockade* dared to treat the Spanish Civil War. Wanger's social problem films arose out of his realization during World War I that film was a powerful propaganda tool. But unlike those of, say, Stanley Kramer (1958's *The Defiant Ones*, 1967's *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*), Wanger's social problem films rarely clicked with audiences — they were, in fact, mediocre movies.

Then there were his Orientalist fantasies (Wanger, a theater expert in the teens, had been a fan of the spectacular Ballet Russes featuring Nijinsky), and after persuading Paramount in the early 1920s to buy *The Sheik* for Rudolph Valentino, he saw this combination of adventure and erotic intrigue as a surefire way to sell tickets. *Algiers* proved him right, as did the lesser known 1943 vaudevillian-flavored Technicolor *Arabian Nights*. (Other films, such as the 1945 *Salome Where She Danced* and the 1954 low-budget *The Adventures of Hajji Baba* for Fox in Cinemascope — not so much). *Cleopatra* was the big-budget culmination of Wanger's pursuit of spectacular, erotic fantasies.

Unfortunately, most of these films, whether politically minded or escapist, featured scripts that were at best implausible, and at worst tepid. (*Blockade* inspired many protests by pro-Francoists in the United States, even though the Production Code Administration would not allow the script to specify the film's location as Spain.) As with any producer, Wanger cherished countless projects that never saw the light of day. Several involved Greta Garbo comebacks in the late 1940s, such as a George Cukor adaptation of Alphonse Daudet's *Sappho* and Max Ophuls' film of Honore de Balzac's *The Duchess of Langeais*.

As the Garbo projects suggest, Wanger excelled at crafting vehicles for female stars under contract or on loan. Hedy Lamarr in *Algiers*, Joan Bennett in 1938's *Trade Winds* (for which she changed permanently from blonde to brunette), Ingrid Bergman in *Joan of Arc* and Elizabeth Taylor in *Cleopatra* are just the four most prominent examples — he was especially fascinated with the spectacle of women in positions of power. He did not neglect male stars: while independent in the 1930s, Wanger brought Charles Boyer and Madeleine
In December 1951, Wanger pulled and fired a gun on agent Jennings Lang in the MCA parking lot as Lang and Wanger’s wife Joan Bennett returned from a tryst in an underling’s apartment.

Certainly, other independent producers of the era such as Goldwyn and Selznick thrived. But in addition to being headstrong, Wanger had another strike against him: he had little business savvy. He rarely banked his income, choosing instead to invest his assets in the next project or use them to buy himself out of a contract. (Simply retaining the rights to his films could have put him on easy street with residuals from TV broadcasts.) Looking at his struggles working as an independent in the Hollywood of the 1930s and 1940s, one might conclude, as the frustrated German émigré master director Fritz Lang put it to Wanger in 1948, that “independent status is of no value whatsoever.” But Wanger had been so fortunate in all his endeavors through the late 1940s — not least in being able to invest his assets in Victor Fleming’s $4.5 million Joan of Arc (1948), distributed by RKO and starring Ingrid Bergman. This was an attempt to emulate Laurence Olivier’s success with An American Tragedy, Lasky’s semi-independent at Universal (1941 to 1947). He left Universal, then a minor producer-distributor, for RKO (1948) and Columbia (1949). Then he moved to Poverty Row, working at Monogram/Allied Artists (1951 to 1956), before rejoining United Artists under the umbrella of Joseph Mankiewicz’s production shingle, Figarro Productions. Thence to Twentieth Century-Fox for his grand finale.

In hindsight, daring governed by caution, the patience of a saint and the iron of a Cromwell.” For his own part, Wanger tended toward prophet, peacockmaker and spendthrift. This approach yielded up some fantastic films when talent came through — the Garbo, Lang, Ford and Hitchcock films best demonstrate this. (Until 1958, Foreign Correspondent represented Wanger’s most successful combination of message-making — in this case, pro-involvement in World War II — and entertainment). In this sense, Wanger was ahead of his time — an enlightened producer who left the filmmaking to the hired artists.

But if major talents could not produce, Wanger was at a loss, and this was incomprehensible to executives at Twentieth Century-Fox in the early 1950s when Cleopatra was underway. “You have to control a director,” he commented of Joseph Mankiewicz after the production was done, “and at the same time you can’t beat him down, otherwise you are going to ruin all of this individual imagination... It has to be done with sympathy, understanding, diplomacy and experience.”

Wanger also learned from Lasky the value of experimentation. One of his least fortunate story purchases in the 1920s at Paramount was Theodore Dreiser’s An American Tragedy. To this decision, he later recalled, his colleagues reacted “as if I’d bought something on venereal disease for Shirley Temple.” At the industry-dominating Paramount of the 1920s, such a costly mistake did not matter. After Paramount, such mistakes would do Wanger in.

In his time, Wanger was regarded as tasteful (and always impeccably dressed), globally minded and highly influential, most of all from 1939 to 1944 when he produced films for United Artists and Universal release. Off the studio lot, he devoted his time to persuading opinion leaders that Hollywood should be taken seriously: “The motion picture is potentially one of the greatest weapons for the safeguarding of democracy,” he told the press in 1939. As president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences beginning in that year till 1944, Wanger was at the height of his prestige; he even got FDR to address the 1941 Academy Awards by radio. He persuaded the Academy to add the documentary category to its awards in the early 1940s. (He would do likewise for the Best Foreign Film category in 1956). In 1939, Time magazine hailed Wanger as belonging “in the forefront of Hollywood’s crusade for social consciousness.”

He hit rock bottom 10 years later.

The downsizing for Wanger began in the late 1940s. Nothing he produced at Universal did well. In 1947, he invested all his remaining assets in Victor Fleming’s $4.5 million I Want to Live! (1948), distributed by RKO and starring Ingrid Bergman. This was an attempt to emulate Laurence Olivier’s success with Henry V (1945), which failed to break even. “It should never have been autobiography, I Blow My Own Horn: “The producer must be a prophet and a general, a diplomat and a peacemaker, a miser and a spendthrift. He must have vision tempered by hindsight, daring governed by caution, the patience of a saint and the iron of a Cromwell.” For his own part, Wanger tended toward prophet, peacockmaker and spendthrift. This approach yielded up some fantastic films when talent came through — the Garbo, Lang, Ford and Hitchcock films best demonstrate this. (Until 1958, Foreign Correspondent represented Wanger’s most successful combination of message-making — in this case, pro-involvement in World War II — and entertainment). In this sense, Wanger was ahead of his time — an enlightened producer who left the filmmaking to the hired artists.

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made by an independent,” he concluded too late, although it did gain him a special Oscar, only the second one he personally was ever awarded (the first was for his service as Academy President).

His next film, inspired by David Lean’s 1946 Brief Encounter (Wanger was a staunch Anglophile), was the last straw: with Max Ophuls’ The Reckless Moment (1949), starring James Mason and Joan Bennett, Wanger faced the prospect of bankruptcy. (The Reckless Moment was remade in 2001 as The Deep End, starring Tilda Swinton in the role Joan Bennett originated.)

Wanger’s prominent liberalism would get him into trouble in the late 1940s and early 1950s, when conservative politicians and industry workers would suspect him of being a Communist fellow-traveler, a development not unrelated to his financial difficulties.

At 57, Wanger for the first time in his charmed life despaired. In December 1951, he pulled and fired a gun on agent Jennings Lang in the MCA parking lot as Lang and Wanger’s wife Joan Bennett returned from a tryst in an underling’s apartment (allegedly the inspiration for the scenario of Billy Wilder’s 1960 The Apartment). Lang fortunately survived and continued agenting/producing major films (such as Clint Eastwood vehicles The Beguiled, Play Misty for Me and High Plains Drifter as well as Billy Wilder’s The Front Page) into the 1980s. The stunning Bennett (a star since the late 1920s) saw her career effectively end (The Father of the Bride movies being her last solid hits).

The scandal was enormous since it involved, in Time magazine’s words, “some of Hollywood’s shiniest showpieces.”

Wanger cracked wise when it was all over — “Everyone complains about agents in Hollywood; I’m the only one who did something about them.” Even though Wanger acted out of personal anguish, the Jennings Lang incident was indeed symptomatic of the rise of the agent as an undeniable power in Hollywood filmmaking — often to the detriment of old-school, single-threat producers like Wanger.

Yet Wanger was irrepressible. After serving a four-month term for his crime, he greeted the press upon his release with the comment that the American prison system “is the nation’s num-

Both films were inspired by Wanger’s feelings of paranoia and persecution resulting from his notoriety and what he considered a miscarriage of justice from the Lang incident. The perennial optimist had become a bitter critic of American hypocrisy.
Acclaimed filmmaker Debra Hill has left her legacy in patches all over Hollywood, inspiring writers, directors, and producers both inside and outside the horror genre that first brought her recognition. That legacy expanded even further this fall as the PGA’s first Weekend Shorts Contest saw nearly 250 entrants participate in a 52-hour film contest with the proceeds going to the Debra Hill Fellowship — a grant awarded each year to a student filmmaker completing an accredited graduate program in producing, and whose work, interests, professionalism and passion mirror that of Debra Hill.

“As big fans of horror films, especially classics, we really admire Debra’s work,” says Edgar Alvarez, whose film Hallowclay, won the inaugural grand prize. “For us, it is a great honor and fun experience to participate in a short film contest under her name.”

The contest’s runner-up, Faye Kingslee, who produced Group Ethos, echoes the sentiment.

“As a producer, you look to these legendary individuals as guides as far as how they mapped out the industry,” says Kingslee. “What Debra Hill left in film is remarkable. Participating in this contest that bears her name was truly an honor.”

Completing a short film in a weekend is an accomplishment in itself, and all who participated should be proud. As Bryan Nest, producer of the competition’s third-place film White Queen, attests, making a coherent story in a limited time, with required elements, pushed the teamwork of his group assembled from Chapman University students to new heights.

“Our initial reaction to the [story and thematic] elements involved a lot of expletives,” laughs Nest. “Creating a story in such a short amount of time really tested our group’s ability to collaborate. We learned to trust our first instincts and really trust each other’s sensibilities. We spent about three hours trying to decide which story to shoot, and that caused a lot of stress knowing that the film was due in a couple days.”

But that wasn’t the end of the team’s stresses. Nest’s team had to deal with losing actors at the last minute and insufficient lighting equipment for the actual shoot to properly create the “mood” of the piece. The crew turned to everything from table lamps and flashlights as sources to adequately light and shape the imagery for the Canon 60D camera they used.

Kingslee and her team found that converting footage down from the super high-res Arri Alexa camera took more time than they had allotted — which made them have to edit quickly on the more compatible Final Cut Pro software instead of their preferred Avid interface.

And for the competition’s winning film, which was a stop-motion animation, you can imagine the difficulties.

“Making a three-minute animation that requires 40,500 frames in such a short time is a big challenge,” says Alvarez. “But, the good thing about our ‘actors’ is that they wouldn’t get sick, they were always willing to do whatever the hand would say, they wouldn’t charge for extra hours and they wouldn’t eat or really demand anything at all.”
Awards 2012
Produced by

The winning shorts were announced November 15, 2011, and posted on the PGA website for the entire membership to view. Each of the top three finalists were awarded prize packages that in total eclipsed $100,000 worth of goods and services.

Alvarez won the top package that included Panavision’s donation of a camera package rental (valued at approximately $60,000), a $20,000 gift certificate from Cinelease, $15,000 gift certificate from NBC Universal, $10,000 gift certificate from Wildfire Post toward sound mix stage services, $6,000 gift certificate for sound and post supervising from Virtual Studio Services, $3,000 gift certificate from FotoKem for post-production services and a $500 gift certificate from Out of Frame for equipment rental.

The animator already has ambitious plans for using his generous prize package. “We are currently working on an animated project about the homeless in downtown Los Angeles—basing the story on the loneliness of a character’s daily life whose only company is his shopping cart,” says Alvarez. “It combines time lapse with real imagery and stop motion, and we want to make the entire film on the streets using the city as the scenery.”

Kingslee, who won second prize, is already looking forward to using her award, a mentoring session with producer Ian Bryce (Spider-Man, Transformers, Saving Private Ryan).

“The stars of ‘Bridesmaids’ are very funny.
The triumph of this movie and its comic ensemble has made a lot of money and taken on special cultural significance. ‘Bridesmaids’ has been hailed as a vindication of the rights and abilities of all women—not just those six—to make jokes, and thus a resounding rebuttal to what is supposedly a widespread assumption otherwise.”

A.O. Scott
The New York Times
The Debra Hill Fellowship wishes to thank the following industry sponsors for their generous contributions: Panavision, Cinelease, Universal Studios, Wildfire Post, FotoKem, Out of Frame, Anne-Marie Slack, PGA member Ian Bryce, the Studio System and Movie Magic.

The dedicated PGA Committee members who conceptualized this contest and diligently followed it through to its successful completion are (in alphabetical order): Carole Beams, Salvy Maleki, Erin O’Malley, Carla Patterson, Pixie Wespiser, and Steven Wolfe. A special-thank you and deep appreciation to Diane Salerno for aiding in securing sponsorships and ‘sealing the deal’, and to the entire PGA staff, in particular, PGA Executive Director Vance Van Petten.

The contest looks to have a successful repeat in 2012, so stay tuned to the PGA web feeds for information on all upcoming events throughout the year.

Carole Beams is the chair of the Debra Hill Fellowship Fundraising Committee.

Craig Erpelding is an MFA Directing candidate at DePaul University and intern for the PGA.

"Ian Bryce started his career from the ground up. It’s a testament to the time you have to put into this industry to get what you want out of it," says Kingslee. "Our plans involve getting our feature premise lined up in order to get Ian’s indispensable insight on how to get our project successfully produced and distributed globally — with his blessings. All we can tease for now is: think Talented Mr. Ripley meets Misery."

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"The Descendants’ paints a richly convincing family portrait at once painfully funny and profoundly poignant. Alexander Payne’s strikingly original film balances the intimacy of family tragedy with the expansive politics of dynastic inheritance in the year’s most human comedy. With the weight of paradise on his shoulders, George Clooney delivers an eccentrically elegant turn as the reluctant patriarch who must come to terms with how to let go and when to hold on."
On January 21, the entire industry will gather once again at the Beverly Hilton Hotel to celebrate producers, honor several legendary figures within the industry, and learn which of 10 outstanding motion pictures has the inside track in this year’s awards race. After two consecutive years that saw the Producers Guild Awards as the decisive turning point in a hard-fought Oscar campaign, more eyes than ever will be focused on the PGA this year.

Those eyes will have plenty to take in before the night’s final honor is presented. The Guild’s highest honor, The Milestone Award, will be presented to Les Moonves for his seminal stewardship of CBS and his role in expanding the possibilities of prime-time programming. The David O. Selznick Achievement Award in Theatrical Motion Pictures will be presented to Steven Spielberg, whose creative output remains the standard by which big-screen imaginative storytelling is judged. With its Norman Lear Achievement Award in Television, the Producers Guild honors Don Mischer, the medium’s premier producer of live events, whose work encompasses everything from the Oscars to the Olympics. Stan Lee receives the 2012 Vanguard Award, in recognition of his visionary reimagining of the comic-book medium as a 21st-century digital art form. Finally, the unflinching Bosnian war drama In the Land of Blood and Honey is recognized with the Guild’s Stanley Kramer Award for its fearless insight into that conflict’s cruelty and injustice.

Other changes are afoot at the Awards as well. Recognizing the increasing prominence of reality television within the industry and the PGA membership, this year’s Awards show features three competitive categories for the genre, ensuring an apples-to-apples comparison for programs in different formats. The Guild will also announce winners (though not present awards) in four new competitive categories: News Programs, Sports Programs, Children’s Programs and Web Series.

It’s guaranteed to be a memorable evening at the Producers Guild Awards and we look forward to seeing you there.
Sometimes we say that a race is wide open because saying so makes for a dramatic lead. And sometimes we say that a race is wide open because we have no bloody idea who is going to win.

In this magazine’s near-decade of thoroughly groundless awards speculation, we have never seen a race so wide open as this one. Usually, we know who the favorites are, and which dark horses are primed to sprint to the finish line. But is it possible to have a race with 10 dark horses?

One thing’s for sure, our PGA voters love their literary adaptations, whether they come from the children’s books of War Horse and Hugo, the book-club staples of The Help and The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo, the little-known (before its adaptation) family tale The Descendants, or perhaps most improbably, the true story of a baseball executive’s awakening to the virtues of statistical analysis in Moneyball.

The slate still leaves room for both Woody Allen’s latest, Midnight in Paris, and Michel Hazanavicius’ The Artist to transport us to the 1920s. Add in the big-hearted gal comedy Bridesmaids and the steely-eyed political drama The Ides of March, and you’ve got a bona fide head-scratcher of a race.

Pick a winner? We couldn’t even tell you which of these titles are likely to be in the top five. Yesterday, we were thinking War Horse. The day before that, The Help. Tomorrow, it could be Moneyball. But today is the day we go to press, and we’re out of time. And today feels like a Descendants kind of day. Remember, you heard it here first.
In what could be labeled as the year of the sequel for feature animation, this year’s selection of nominees surely do not disappoint, putting a fresh spin on familiar faces. The reemergence of such loveable characters as Po the panda in *Kung Fu Panda 2*, *Puss in Boots*, given his own spinoff from the popular *Shrek* series, and Lightning McQueen, in the second iteration of *Cars* will give the fresh animated faces from *Rango* and *The Adventures of Tintin* considerable competition. And while the trio of signature favorites is given a boost of support from franchise fans, *Tintin* and *Rango* share a spirit for adventure and unique creative conceptions that could bring them to the front of the pack. Guessing at a winner in this category is usually a simple matter of seeing which title has the word “Pixar” after it. But at the risk of apostasy, we speculate that this year the voters might succumb to a degree of Pixar fatigue. So we’ll go out on a limb and speculate that *Tintin’s* engrossing performance-capture animation and thrilling action will charm its way to a win.
THE AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING PRODUCER OF DOCUMENTARY THEATRICAL MOTION PICTURES

An incredible gallery of characters is showcased among this year’s nominees in the Documentary Feature category, from legendary musicians to the singular and extraordinary lives of a Formula One driver and a New York photographer, to a heartbreaking victim of science’s best intentions.

As in years past, one wants to make winners of all of the nominees, given the extraordinary difficulty and all too uncertain rewards of the documentary producer’s vocation. Surely, the Elton John and Leon Russell fans within the membership will stump for *The Union*, a candid look at the making of the duo’s collaborative album and the magic of the creative process. And those whose musical tastes lean toward hip-hop will line up behind Michael Rapaport’s behind-the-scenes account *Beats, Rhymes & Life: The Travels of a Tribe Called Quest*, which delivers a complex picture of an uncommon collection of artists. *Bill Cunningham New York* sketches a unique portrait of a man, a city, and the fluid boundary between the two, while *Senna* chronicles a figure no less extraordinary, a champion who won the devotion of millions and embodied the best of his sport.

But if we had to guess at a likely winner, we’d reluctantly pull the lever for *Project Nim*, a provocative and unsentimental inquiry not only into the tragic journey of a single primate, but the double-edged sword of scientific inquiry and the nature of what it means to be human.
Family drama would seem to be on the minds of the PGA’s long-form television producers, if this year’s slate of Wolper Award nominees is any indication. ReelzChannel brings its first-ever program to this category with The Kennedys, surely a vindication for the nominated producers, given the program’s much-publicized long and winding road to its telecast.

Sharing the limelight are three of the usual suspects, aka HBO Original Films. Cinema Verite, a poignant picture of the Loud family and its public disintegration, gives us a glimpse of the roots of today’s reality television culture. Mildred Pierce finds Todd Haynes re-imagining Michael Curtiz’s 1945 domestic noir as a lush, soulful melodrama. And while it veers well outside the household sphere of its fellow nominees, Too Big to Fail hits all too close to home with a compelling look at the leadership challenges surrounding the 2008 financial meltdown.

As we’ve observed in the past, this Award has come to seem like the personal property of HBO; the premium cable network has taken home the prize for 10 straight years now. But if there’s a nominee that stands a chance to derail the HBO train, it’s probably Downton Abbey, whose turn-of-the-century British inter-class drama has amassed a passionate following, and has just premiered its second season in the domestic United States. We can’t quite bring ourselves to bet against HBO, but we’d have to call it a neck-and-neck race between Mildred Pierce and the Abbey denizens.
Don't call it a comeback! Because it's not a comeback. This is new territory we're opening up.

For the first time in the history of this Award, all five slots are occupied by broadcast network series. While cable TV continues to dominate the hour-long drama and long-form categories, it's been the major networks that have proudly carried the half-hour comedy banner; PGA voters have even been so kind as to spread the wealth across all four of the major nets. And with the first-ever (and arguably overdue) nomination for CBS' *The Big Bang Theory*, the category even boasts a prime specimen of that vanishing species, the multi-camera sitcom.

*Modern Family* took the honor in its debut season last year, and there's no reason to think it won't repeat, even if its competition is slightly fresher this time around, with *Parks and Recreation* and *Big Bang Theory* earning their first-ever nominations, replacing mainstays *The Office* and *Curb Your Enthusiasm*.

And you'd be crazy to count out three-time winner *30 Rock*, or the passionate admirers of *Glee*. Still, we think the prize is *Modern Family*'s to lose.

**THE DANNY THOMAS AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING PRODUCER OF EPISODIC TELEVISION, COMEDY**

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Last year in this space, we took our dear PGA voters gently to task for nominating the exact same five series as it did the previous year. And while there’s something to be said for consistency, variety is, after all, the spice of life.

It is, to be sure, incontrovertible evidence of the agenda-setting power of this magazine that this year’s crop of contenders for the Felton Award includes (count ‘em!) three first-time nominees: HBO’s latest epic sagas *Boardwalk Empire* and *Game of Thrones*, and CBS gratifyingly grown-up legal drama *The Good Wife*.

The past few years, this category has been an easy one — punch the ticket for *Mad Men* and call it a day. But we think this year feels different. *Mad Men*’s relative absence from TV screens as it preps its fifth season (this nomination honors season four, which aired at the end of 2010) means it’s less on viewers’ minds as in years past. Whereas *Boardwalk Empire* just concluded a richly satisfying second season.

Much as we’re groupies for *Game of Thrones*, it feels like Terence Winter, Martin Scorsese, Tim Van Patten and company have the inside track. With period detail to match *Mad Men* and enough gangland intrigue to grab the many *Sopranos* fans still out there, *Boardwalk Empire* feels like a winning formula in the current hour-long drama field.

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**THE NORMAN FELTON AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING PRODUCER OF EPISODIC TELEVISION, DRAMA**

*Lionsgate*

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The past few years, this category has been an easy one — punch the ticket for *Mad Men* and call it a day. But we think this year feels different. *Mad Men*’s relative absence from TV screens as it preps its fifth season (this nomination honors season four, which aired at the end of 2010) means it’s less on viewers’ minds as in years past. Whereas *Boardwalk Empire* just concluded a richly satisfying second season.

Much as we’re groupies for *Game of Thrones*, it feels like Terence Winter, Martin Scorsese, Tim Van Patten and company have the inside track. With period detail to match *Mad Men* and enough gangland intrigue to grab the many *Sopranos* fans still out there, *Boardwalk Empire* feels like a winning formula in the current hour-long drama field.

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**THE NORMAN FELTON AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING PRODUCER OF EPISODIC TELEVISION, DRAMA**

*Lionsgate*

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THE AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING PRODUCER OF NON-FICTION TELEVISION

While the separation of the competition and live entertainment formats is sure to have ramifications in those categories, our Non-Fiction Television category has the same contours that it’s had in the past. Three of its nominees return from last year: Undercover Boss, Anthony Bourdain: No Reservations, and eventual winner Deadliest Catch. They’re joined this year — somewhat surprisingly — by a pair of anthology series in PBS’ American Masters and ESPN’s 30 for 30.

This is a more serious-minded set of nominees than in years past, and truthfully, we’re going to miss pulling for Kathy Griffin and her Life on the D-List. But it’s a tribute to our non-fiction membership that the programs they’ve chosen are a thoughtful and often gripping bunch, and proud standard bearers of their documentary traditions. (There’s more than one, you know.)

We think the anthology format is likely to work against the two newest nominees in terms of creating the critical mass of voters necessary to win the award. So this year, we’ll play it safe and go with Deadliest Catch (ironically, a show about a bunch of guys who decidedly don’t play it safe).
THE AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING PRODUCER OF LIVE ENTERTAINMENT AND TALK TELEVISION

Once upon a time, our live entertainment producers had a category all to themselves. But then our PGA — acting only with the best intentions — paired those programs with the burgeoning competition/game formats, and an unruly two-headed category was born.

This year, those formats are once again separated, as they should be. And truthfully, the amalgam didn’t hurt the Live Entertainment producers so terribly, as one of their own, The Colbert Report, took home the prize year after year.

This year, the four-time winner must square off against some programs that work the same territory. Saturday Night Live marks its latest renaissance with its first Producers Guild Award nomination since 2005. The 64th Annual Tony Awards enters the ring as one of the rare TV specials to be accorded a nomination. And don’t count out prior Producers Guild Award winners The Ellen DeGeneres Show and Real Time With Bill Maher, featuring two of the handful of funny folks that can go toe-to-toe with Mr. Colbert.

Still, we’re not proud. We’ll put our money on the Report. Now if only they would show up to accept the honor in person…

PROUDLY CONGRATULATES OUR 2012 PRODUCERS GUILD AWARDS NOMINEES

THE DAVID L. WOLPER AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING PRODUCER OF LONG-FORM TELEVISION

CINEMA VERITE
Zanne Devine, Executive Producer; Karyn McCarthy, Produced by

MILDRED PIERCE
Christine Vachon, Pamela Koffler, Todd Haynes, Executive Producers; Irene S. Landress, Co-Executive Producer

TOO BIG TO FAIL
Paula Weinstein, Jeffrey Levine, Executive Producers; Carol Fenelon, Co-Executive Producer

THE NORMAN FELTON AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING PRODUCER OF EPISODIC TELEVISION, DRAMA

BOARDWALK EMPIRE®
Terence Winter, Martin Scorsese, Stephen Levinson, Tim Van Patten, Executive Producers; Eugene Kelly, Co-Executive Producer; Howard Korder, Supervising Producer; Rudd Simmons, Producer

GAME OF THRONES®
David Benioff, D.B. Weiss, Executive Producers; Carolyn Strauss, Co-Executive Producer; Frank Doelger, Producer; Mark Huffam, Produced by

THE PRODUCERS GUILD AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING PRODUCER OF DOCUMENTARY THEATRICAL MOTION PICTURES

PROJECT NIM
Simon Chinn, Produced by

AND SPECIAL RECOGNITION TO HONOREES

LESLE MOONVES
MILESTONE AWARD

STEVEN SPIELBERG
DAVID O. SELZNICK ACHIEVEMENT AWARD IN THEATRICAL MOTION PICTURES

DON MISCHER
NORMAN LEAR ACHIEVEMENT AWARD IN TELEVISION

STAN LEE
VANGUARD AWARD

THE UNION
Cameron Crowe, Michelle Panek, Produced by

SPORTS PROGRAMS
REAL SPORTS WITH BRYANT GUMBEL

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Congratulations

Leslie Moonves
Milestone Award Honoree

A Hall of Famer with Many Milestones Still to Come

THE AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING PRODUCER OF COMPETITION TELEVISION

As noted elsewhere, the PGA has opted to restore a measure of sanity to the awards it distributes for reality television. Over the past several years, all five of the nominees in this category have been edged out for the prize ... by The Colbert Report.

If it seems unfair that competition series like these, which predominantly feature otherwise unknown casts, should find themselves up against a star-driven vehicle like Colbert, we agree with you. This year, those programs get a fairer fight. That’s reason for celebration right there.

That said, the relative lack of precedents makes hazarding a guess as to the winner even more hazardous. But speaking of hazards, The Amazing Race might just have the upper hand. Project Runway and Top Chef both pit creative artisans against one another. American Idol and Dancing With the Stars both test their contestants with performance challenges. In all four cases, the potential for vote-splitting looms large. But there’s nothing out there that’s quite like Race, whose casting routinely yields compelling teams to root for, and whose globe-hopping itinerary requires a level of production sophistication that its studio-based counterparts don’t. If anyone understands and respects the requirements of a production like that, it’s our PGA membership.
ANNOUNCED CATEGORIES

Perhaps the boldest changes to this year’s Producers Guild Awards are its four newest categories. Unlike the event’s other nine competitive categories, winners in these categories will be announced, but no formal award presentations will take place at the January 21 ceremony. The reasons for this decision are detailed elsewhere in this magazine (see the column from Executive Director Vance Van Petten, “What’s in a Name?” on page 6 of this issue), but to summarize the quandary: When you can’t be 100% certain of who produced a project, how do you know whom to give the award to?

But we don’t intend to let something like that stop us from boldly predicting a group of winners in categories that have never existed before this year. For News Programs, we’ll go with 60 Minutes, a previous winner at the Producers Guild Awards, though in an earlier category. For Sports Programs, we’ll back 30 for 30, also a nominee in the Guild’s Non-Fiction category. Among the Children’s Programs, you might ask, aren’t we a little grown up to be pulling for Disney Channel’s Phineas and Ferb? Yes. Yes, we are. Finally, among Web Series, we think that our TV Comedy voters will feel so guilty about defecting to Modern Family that they’ll throw this consolation prize to 30 Rock, and honor Jack Donaghy, Executive Superhero.

Texas Lutheran University

Congratulates Alumnus

DON MISCHER

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producer and director of television and live events

Recipient of the 2012
Norman Lear Achievement Award in Television

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Oh, how I love the smell of chlorine and lipstick in the morning.

The place: Venice High School. Why? Glee, the teenage Fox juggernaut, is filming — of all things — a water ballet number. Water ballet, Venice, underwater bikini girls… Where do I sign up?

This is what producer PGA member Dante Di Loreto does for a living. He takes images from the page and puts them on the screen, more specifically, translating the ideas of Ryan Murphy and giving them wings. The wish list today is pretty ambitious: have the main cast on a “floaty” in the middle of a pool, surrounded by underwater ballet dancers. As I sit for a while and watch a few takes, I have an odd feeling… Techno-crane, dolly and track, another cam on sticks, Eric Stolz directing (I’ve always liked him as an actor, but after watching him direct this scene and stay as calm as warm butter in July, I’m pretty sure he’s the coolest guy in Hollywood) and the playback over and over with Rihanna’s “We Fell in Love in a Hopeless Place.” But this doesn’t look like a hopeless place and the cast doesn’t look hopeless at all. They’re wearing the biggest smiles that a human face is capable of. Venice High School has been transformed into a bastion of classic cinema spectacle and water-flinging high kicks. It all feels absolutely and quintessentially Hollywood. Making it even more surreal for me is that Glee mainstay Dianna Agron was in a short I directed years ago and is now lip-synching her little head off. Gotta love showbiz.

Like Dianna, Dante Di Loreto started off as an actor. Unlike Dianna, his acting career didn’t put him on any billboards. Roles like ’Boy With Football’ in 1985’s Gotcha! and ’First Cop’ in not one, but two different shows can make this town feel just plain cruel.

The ‘90s were a transitional period for Di Loreto. Considering his timeline on IMDb, you can see how his acting career finally ground to a halt. After playing ‘Emcee’ on an episode of Cheers in 1991, nothing posts for almost the entire decade. That puts Di Loreto firmly in the ‘scrappy and committed’ category. In 1994, however, a very interesting project pops up called Waving, Not Drowning. It’s a short film, and the project has Di Loreto listed as the producer. (This might be a good time to re-read last issue’s “When Short Is Long Enough” about how a short film can launch your producing career.) This small project put Di Loreto on the path of the producer… the long, lonely, challenging, rewarding, brutal (stop me if you’ve felt all these this week), exciting road of the PRODUCER. And once he got on track, he gained momentum — real big crazy momentum — quickly.

In 1999, he produced Don’t Go Breaking My Heart, starring his former Gotcha! cast mate and future producing partner, Anthony Edwards. More credits followed, including an Emmy win for HBO’s Temple Grandin, starring Claire Danes. Now Dante is producing not one, but two hit TV shows for partner-in-crime Ryan Murphy: Glee and the much-buzzed-about American Horror Story. Here’s a quick interview with a very busy guy:

What are the challenges of producing two shows at once?
The two shows couldn’t be more different, and each has its unique challenges. Time is in short supply for both, each produced with very tight schedules. It can be a real mental scramble switching between them several times a day, but creative problem solving is the most exciting aspect of producing, and nothing is more invigorating then walking from Stage 16, where we are staging a full-cast musical sequence, to Stage 6, where we are burning Dennis O’Hare to a crisp.

What is the creative ‘connective tissue’ between American Horror Story and Glee?
Hopefully, each show is expanding the creative horizon of television. Both shows cause conversation and reflect current issues … fidelity, faith, sexuality, family. Regardless how extreme the situation, the characters struggle with very human dilemmas which any audience can relate to. Your daughter may not be dating a serial killer, but you may have legitimate concerns about her boyfriend.
What was your path to your current position?

I came to series television after producing long-form television, independent film and Broadway. Series television is uniquely challenging. It happens fast and once you commence, there is no stopping to catch your breath. You are never doing one thing at a time, so ADD can actually be an asset. Scheduling demands mean we may often be shooting multiple units, so between prep, production and post on the two shows, we may be juggling eight episodes simultaneously.

Is being an executive producer of one of the biggest shows on TV what you thought it would be?

It’s impossible to judge how this work will resonate over time. You hope you are crafting something which will endure creatively. It’s also good business for an asset to retain value in the long term. I’m blessed to work with the greatest creative minds in television and it is never, ever boring.

What still surprises you in regards to the show or the biz?

Happily, I’m surprised every day. Particularly on Glee, where we are often doing something never done before, so no one can tell us we’re doing it wrong.

The most inspiring moment of your career so far?

Watching 100 middle school students in the Bronx perform Lady Gaga. When a parent thanks me for an episode which addresses issues not seen on any other program. And watching Jessica Lange rehearse a scene is the greatest master class you could ever hope to attend.

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What’s next?

Whatever excites Ryan Murphy’s imagination. I am fortunate to work with one of the greatest creative minds working in any format.

In your opinion, what are the qualities that every producer should possess?

Patience — great things sometimes require great timing, and finding success may mean knowing when to wait. Perseverance — new ideas are not always the most popular. When Temple Grandin was nominated for 15 Emmys, my producing partner, Anthony Edwards, called and said, “Remember how easy it was to set up a movie about a middle-aged woman who saw the world through the eye of a cow?” Listening — this is the hardest to practice, but most questions answer themselves. A Teflon-coated ego — allowing others to enjoy the success of your labor doesn’t cost a thing.

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Has there ever been a time that creative has come to you with an idea that you couldn’t accommodate?

Happily, I have never had to say ‘we can’t do that’ to the creative team. We have had some enormous challenges with both shows as each has a very tight delivery schedule (the AHS finale wrapped nine days before air), but producing them in Los Angeles means access to the greatest artisans and craftspeople working in television, so regardless if it’s choreographing a water ballet or eviscerating corpses, we find a way to get the job done.

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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 network 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 56.5 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 Executive Director 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 and the Motion Picture Industry Health Plan is to check if the camera, grips, or sound crew?

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.

Self-Pay Plan: 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 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.

PGA HEALTH BENEFITS: STEP BY STEP

START

Do you have health insurance?

yes

Is it employer-paid?

yes

Do you work for an AMPTP signatory?

yes

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

yes

Does your production utilize a West Coast IA Crew?

yes

Have you been credited with 400 hours of such work over the past six months, assuming a 56-hour workweek?

yes

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

yes

Did your employer make the contributions?

yes

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

yes

You’re one of the lucky ones.

yes

Congratulations.

yes

Call Scott Brandt at (888) 700-7725.

yes

Is the coverage equal to or better than your current coverage?

yes

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

yes

Employee didn’t know how

no

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

no

Questions? Contact:

Employer-paid Plan

Kyle Katz (310) 358-9020 x101

Self-pay Plans

Scott Brandt (888) 700-7725

Self-Pay Plan:

Producers Health

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ber one scandal. I want to do a film about it.” He parlayed even that experience into a dramatic comeback that saw him produce the two terrific, hard-hitting low-budget Don Siegel films at Allied Artists: Riot in Cell Block 11 and Invasion of the Body Snatchers. 

*Riot* and *I Want to Live!* were, ironically, Wanger’s most personal films in several senses. He had never before been so involved in the minutiae of scripting and shooting one of his films. Furthermore, *Riot* was inspired by actual riots around the country and based in Wanger’s outrage over horrible conditions he had personally experienced, a film which took the hard-edged realism of previous prison films to unprecedented grittiness. *I Want to Live!*, besides providing a showstopping and Oscar-winning role for Susan Hayward, was such a vivid condemnation of sensationalist media and especially of capital punishment (the last 40 minutes show the preparations for Graham’s execution) that French philosopher/author and author Albert Camus wrote a forward to the French release version. Both films were inspired by Wanger’s feelings of paranoia and persecution resulting from his notoriety and what he considered a miscarriage of justice from the Lang incident. The perennial optimist had become a bitter critic of American hypocrisy.

The success of *I Want to Live!* relaunched Wanger into A-class Hollywood filmmaking. He convinced Twentieth Century-Fox to pay Elizabeth Taylor $1 million for *Cleopatra* and to finance a dazzling production design. Thus ensued the disaster that proved Murphy’s Law again and again: principal photography begun over and over without a completed screenplay, shooting in cold London, Taylor’s emergency tracheotomy, the shift to Rome, a home studio in turmoil, the hiring of Joseph Mankiewicz, who wrote script pages by night and shot them by day, inadequate spending controls, and of course, the Taylor-Burton affair. The studio blamed Wanger for not enforcing more production control and did not invite him to the premiere. Wanger blamed the studio for giving him responsibility without authority and in revenge published a stunning tell-all account of the making of the film, *My Life With Cleopatra*. John Ford wrote Wanger that the book “for the first time shows the making of a movie, with what you and I, the picture makers and creators, have to contend with.” Until his death in 1968, Wanger never produced another film (though he had projects aplenty).

The special reading Wanger requested at his funeral clearly spoke to his experiences as a producer in the old studio system. It was from George Bernard Shaw’s *The Doctor’s Dilemma*, the dying words of the amoral painter Louis Dubedat. It read in part: “I’ve been threatened and blackmailed and insulted and starved. But I’ve played the game. I’ve fought the good fight. And now that it’s all over, there’s an indescribable peace.”

Whether working on salary or as an independent, Wanger found his efforts obstructed in countless ways. But he believed in himself, in Hollywood and in art and in the invaluable work of the producer. His career, if little-remembered today, remains instructive. Even if Walter Wanger wrote just a bit of Hollywood history with his own hand, he lived a life that — ultimately and uniquely — embodied the arc of his profession and his industry for over 40 years.

Matthew H. Bernstein is the Chair of the Film & Media Studies Department at Emory University, and the author of Walter Wanger: Hollywood Independent and Screening a Lynching: The Leo Frank Case on Film and Television.
On the Horizon: Produced By Conference 2012

It’s almost that time of year again...

Feeling sated with awards season madness? Don’t worry, summer’s not that far off. And around these parts, summer means one thing: it’s time for the Produced By Conference.

As the premier educational and networking event for the producing profession, the Produced By Conference is a must-attend event for our producing community. And when we say “must-attend,” we mean it — the Conference has sold out every year of its existence, last year welcoming over 2,000 individuals through its gates. Whether you work in film, television or new media — and especially if you’re seeking to broaden your career to include more than one of those fields — the Produced By Conference has something to offer you.

This year, the event returns to Sony Pictures Studios, while the PGA is happy to share the event with a new partner: the Consumer Electronics Association (CEA) and the International Consumer Electronics Show (CES). Given their central role in showcasing the new technology that will shape next-generation storytelling, the Guild’s partnership with CEA/CES stands to give our members and Conference attendees a crucial advantage in positioning the next stage of their careers.

This year’s event will take place June 8-10, and will feature the same unbeatable mix of top-notch speakers, cutting-edge technology demos, incisive conference sessions, vendor exhibits, mentoring roundtables, parties and networking events you’ve come to expect from the last three go-rounds of the Produced By Conference (or PBC, if you want to sound like a PGA insider).

Registration will open in the spring, and like last year, the PGA is committed to providing for several hundred of its members to attend the event for free. That means that for the non-members reading this Bulletin, there’s enough time to get those application materials in and join the Guild before those free registration slots reserved for members become available.
**Member Benefits**

- Access to PGA employment listings, online résumé search, employment tools and job forums
- Discounted registration for Produced By Conference
- 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
- Listing of contact and credit information in searchable online roster
- Vote on Producers Guild Awards and receive discount tickets to the event, as well as DVD screeners for awards consideration
- Eligibility for PGA Mentoring Program
- Admission to special PGA pre-release screenings and Q&A events
- Free attendance at PGA seminars
- Arbitration of credit disputes
- Wide variety of discounts on events, merchandise, travel
- Complimentary subscription to *Produced by*

Over the years I have used just about every piece of equipment Clairmont Camera has ever owned; time-lapse film cameras to super high-speed digital cameras and now the Alexa. I love Clairmont’s custom gear and incredible service; it keeps me coming back! In visual effect shooting we always are inventing on the fly. With difficult setups like hanging off a 70-story building, complex driving rigs or doing “in camera” visual effects having equipment and service you can depend on is essential. I would recommend Clairmont Camera to anyone in the industry.

Sam Nicholson, ASC
Chairman / CEO Stargate Studios

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  * Car buying services through Autoland, Redbook, & Executive Car Leasing.
  * Our free checking account offers you both ATM and free debit cards with REWARDS.
  * We also offer CU Rewards™ for our VISA credit card.
  * Free Online Bill Pay and Money Management Tools.
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** Produced by Awards 2012

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- Used Auto Loan rates as low as 3.50%** up to 60 months
- (Contact Credit Union for details)

- Free access to over 28,000 CO-OP Network ATMs and 800,000 ATMs worldwide through links to the NYCE, STAR, Cirrus, Puls and Plus networks.
- Car buying services through Autoland, Redbook, & Executive Car Leasing.
- Our free checking account offers you both ATM and free debit cards with REWARDS.
- We also offer CU Rewards™ for our VISA credit card.
- Free Online Bill Pay and Money Management Tools.
- Real Estate loan services through West Coast Realty (personal consultation to determine what we can help you with).
- We offer guaranteed lowest loan rates for all consumer loans. We’ll meet or beat other approval rates from other financial institutions.
You make it. They take it. Let’s stop them. Thieves are making millions of dollars trafficking in stolen film and television. America has already lost 140,000 film and television jobs to content theft. Wages, benefits and residuals are all being hit hard. Now there’s a way to fight back. Creative America is a new grassroots voice for the entertainment community and anyone else who believes America must do more to protect our jobs and creativity. Join us. Sign up at CreativeAmerica.org and make your voice heard.