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Les Misérables
THE MUSICAL PHENOMENON

BEST PICTURE
PRODUCED BY
TIM BEVAN
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“A SPECTACULAR ACHIEVEMENT.
ANCHORED BY POWERFUL PERFORMANCES
FROM HUGH JACKMAN AS VAJEAN,
RUSSELL CROWE AS JAVERT, AND ANNE
HATHAWAY AS FANTINE, IT RECONNECTS
THE MUSICAL TO THE NOVEL’S
NARRATIVE RICHNESS
AND MORAL VISION.
THANKS TO THE ALMOST EXPRESSIONISTIC
PRODUCTION DESIGN AND TOM HOOPER’S
EYE FOR SYMBOLISMA, IT INHABITS A
HEIGHTENED REALITY SOMEWHERE
BETWEEN PERIOD DRAMA AND
MOVIE MUSICAL.”
- ADAM GREEN, VOGUE

In this issue:
Mark Boal approaches Zero hour
Silver Linings Playbook fields its all-star team
Getting the most out of your back-end participation

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Winter 2012
Produced by
3

From the National Executive Director
Twelve Years Well Spent

The Company Line
Millennium Films
Going Green
Good Planet Media
The Picture of Health

PGA Bulletin
New Members
Member Benefits
Mentoring Matters
Victory Palmisano
p.g.a.
You've done the work. Now get the Mark.

Cover photo: Art Streiber

For more on the artistry and acclaim on this film go to www.FocusAwards2012.com

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"MOONRISE KINGDOM REMINDS US HOW TO BE ALIVE.
An enchanted ride of a movie with a dream cast. Wes Anderson links the everyday
and the extraordinary with virtuoso artistry. Hilarious and heartfelt.”
- Pete/er.end T/r.startaver/s.end, Rollin/g.end Ston/e.end

Directed by Wes Anderson
Written by Wes Anderson & Roman Coppola

Moonrise Kingdom
WINNER
BEST PICTURE

GOTHAM AWARDS

5 SPIRIT AWARD NOMINATIONS

BEST PICTURE
Almost 12 years ago, it was my good fortune to be offered the job as the PGA’s Executive Director. At the time, there was effectively one key goal for the members of this Guild: restoring legitimacy to the producer’s credit in an age of rampant credit proliferation.

Since then, a great deal has transpired. The most significant development has been the PGA’s explosive growth, which has surpassed even our most optimistic projections from those early days. That has necessitated a broadening of our collective mandate, encompassing not only credits, but jobs, health benefits, ongoing producer education and conditions in the workplace. Even so, credits remain, in many ways, the Guild’s signature issue. Over the past decade, our Officers and Board members have explored a variety of strategies and approaches to the credit issue, often ending in frustration.

Beginning last year, that began to change. Our Presidents, Hawk Koch (currently on a leave of absence) and Mark Gordon, building on the work of predecessors Kathleen Kennedy and Marshall Herskovitz, embraced the notion of a certification mark—a lowercase p.g.a.—which would be attached to the end of a “Produced by” credit that met the Guild’s standard of having undertaken a majority of producing duties on a motion picture. The infrastructure of a “certification process” was already in place. Thanks to the support of the Motion Picture Academy and other industry institutions, the Guild’s arbitration system—which determines which credited producers are eligible for industry awards—had already earned the respect of the studios and the producing community as a fair and impartial process.

The plans for the Producers’ Mark (as it’s now known) solidified with the support of more than 140 of the top producers working in motion pictures. Even the U.S. Department of Justice provided a rare business review letter stating that the Mark not only posed no threat to antitrust laws, but in fact, opined that the Producers’ Mark would be a healthy development for the industry.

This November saw the culmination of the Guild’s efforts. Columbia Pictures, Screen Gems, Universal, 20th Century Fox and DreamWorks Animation all signed formal agreements with the PGA agreeing to honor the Producers’ Mark on all of their films. The Weinstein Company, though not a signatory to a formal agreement, has likewise embraced the Mark, which can be seen on the producing credits of their 2012 releases Lawless and Silver Linings Playbook.

It has taken 12 years, but finally, audiences can look at a film’s credits and tell at a glance which individuals did a majority of the work of producing the film. That’s not to say that every film will carry the Mark—use of the Mark is 100% voluntary on the part of producers. But I can’t imagine a scenario where a producer wouldn’t want to have her or his work recognized by both the audience and their community of peers. No one works harder than producers. And finally, after 12 years of struggle, that work can be publicly acknowledged and verified.

Producers: The Producers’ Mark is real. We created it for you. All that’s left is for you to use it. And when you see that p.g.a. following your name, we hope you’re as proud as we are.
The television series showrunner’s transition from writer to producer is, theoretically, a delicate and complicated one. In the ideal case, an aspiring showrunner will gradually take on producing responsibilities in departments such as casting, production design and post. Finally, the day may come when that writer might— as a result of years of acquiring experience in various aspects of producing— take the reins as the showrunner of her or his own series.

On the other hand, maybe there’s something to be said for jumping into the deep end straightaway.

Jason Katims took on his first showrunning gig in 1996 on the series Relativity, which he created. His entertainment industry resume to that point: 18 episodes as a staff writer on a single hour-long series that had been abruptly cancelled after its first season. Some mitigating factors: 1) Those 18 episodes had the good fortune to be some of the most perfect television ever produced, comprising the run of My So-Called Life, today one of the most celebrated—and justly mourned—one-season wonders of our time. 2) Katims served his television apprenticeship under the famously nurturing team of Edward Zwick and Marshall Herskovitz, who served as executive producers on both My So-Called Life and Relativity, and provided their protege with an ideal environment within which to learn and grow as a television producer.

Like its predecessor, Relativity lasted one season. But the groundwork for Katims’ career was laid— he’s been an executive producer ever since, often running his own show. The sincere and savvy sci-fi/teen drama Roswell shortly followed Relativity. After a three-year stint working alongside David E. Kelley on Boston Public, Katims secured his legacy as the showrunner of Friday Night Lights, the small-town Texas drama that won as passionate a following as any show in recent memory. It’s hard to judge which is more impressive, Katims’ and his team’s skills as storytellers, or their ability to leverage the passion of the show’s fans sufficiently to remain on the air for five seasons, despite frequent rumors of imminent cancellation. The show capped its run with a pair of Emmys in its final season, for lead actor Kyle Chandler, and Katims, who won for his writing on the series finale.

“Jason is that rarest of creatures in Hollywood: he simply doesn’t need to project an ego,” observes Marshall Herskovitz. “He is warm and kind and wise, with a natural authority that allows him to lead without the need for intimidation. The result of this, of course, is that he gets the absolute best from the people who work for him.”

Today, Katims proves his mentor right on a daily basis, serving as the showrunner on NBC’s Parenthood, another big-hearted ensemble series with cinematic roots.

This is the 58th in Winter’s ongoing Case Studies of successful producers and their work. Editor Chris Green joined Jason Katims at the Parenthood production offices in West L.A. for a conversation that touched on the virtue of frankness in the writers’ room, the run-and-gun shooting style that allowed Friday Night Lights to stay on the air, and no shortage of commiserating over the fate of My So-Called Life.

Obviously, you came into producing from the writing track, but how did you find your way into the industry initially?

I went to Queens College in New York. When I was a senior, I took a playwriting class and everything clicked for me, so I started writing plays. I grew up in New York, so it was a good place to be for an aspiring playwright. I spent a bunch of years after college writing plays, trying to get them produced, as many struggling playwrights do. And then, after I’d been doing this for a number of years, I got a call out of the blue from Edward Zwick’s office. He got on the phone and he said, “I just want to let you know, I read a play of yours and I liked it.” And I said, “Oh, thank you.” He asked if I knew who he was, and I said, “No, I’m sorry I don’t.” And he said, “Well, by way of resume, I created Thirtysomething, I directed Glory...” And I said, “Oh, okay, I think you can stop there.”

You know, I sort of took it as, “Oh, that was a really nice call.” But after years of writing plays and trying to get them produced, you develop a kind of fatalistic attitude, like nothing will ever happen. But I spoke to my wife about it. My wife, who’s not in the business at all, knew exactly who Ed Zwick was. She’s like, “You idiot! Ed Zwick!” And then I told my friends; we were rehearsing a play that I wrote, working in the basement of my friend’s, grandmother’s house in Park Slope. My friend Larry Attile said, “Well, you need to get on a plane and go out there and meet him.” And I was thinking, “Well, he didn’t ask me to go meet him...” And Larry told me, “Believe me, you should do this.” So I did. I came out here for the first time and I met Ed and I set up other meetings with anybody that I knew. And that’s kind of how it got started. During that week, I met Ed and Marshall [Herskovitz], and they introduced me to Winnie Holzman, who created My So-Called Life. They were developing that show right when I was there. They gave me a script assignment and eventually put me on the show as a staff writer. And since then, I don’t think it has ever stopped. I’ve been working steadily since.
But right after that, I was under one roof, so I learned a lot. That was really where I learned how television was done. I got to spend time on set and meet everybody from all of the departments. Winnie brought me into a lot of what she was doing as a showrunner. I got to spend my graduate school. Everybody, Winnie, Ed, Marshall, and Scott Winant, who was the directing producer, was incredibly generous to me. Ed and Marshall and Winnie didn’t work with a writer’s room the way many producers do. They tended to work in smaller groups. But they brought me in, I guess because I was hanging around a lot, to the story meetings. Winnie brought me into a lot of what she was doing as a showrunner. I got to spend time on set and meet everybody from all of the departments. That was really where I learned how television was made. Everybody was under one roof, so I learned a lot. But right after My So-Called Life was canceled, Ed and Marshall reached out to me to see if I wanted to create a show, which was an insanely unexpected turn of events. Because my only experience on the staff of a show was as a writer, I had to work with the editor on a show to get results that you never would have expected: a performance from an actor, a director, a writer. It was an incredibly rewarding experience. It was so much work but it was a different level of learning because, at that point, I was the person that people were coming to. I was producing.

At that point, just hitting the ground in L.A., what did TV producing mean to you?

When I came onto My So-Called Life, I had never set foot on a set. So I like to say that My So-Called Life was my graduate school. Everybody, Winnie, Ed, Marshall, and Scott Winant, who was the directing producer, was incredibly generous to me. Ed and Marshall and Winnie didn’t work with a writer’s room the way many producers do. They tended to work in smaller groups. But they brought me in, I guess because I was hanging around a lot, to the story meetings. Winnie brought me into a lot of what she was doing as a showrunner. I got to spend time on set and meet everybody from all of the departments. That was really where I learned how television was made. Everybody was under one roof, so I learned a lot. But right after My So-Called Life was canceled, Ed and Marshall reached out to me to see if I wanted to create a show, which was an insanely unexpected turn of events. Because my only experience on the staff of a show was as a writer, I had to work with the editor on a show to get results that you never would have expected: a performance from an actor, a director, a writer. It was an incredibly rewarding experience. It was so much work but it was a different level of learning because, at that point, I was the person that people were coming to. I was producing.

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To what degree did you — or can you — separate the writing process from the producing process? Did you regard producing as something you had to do in order to facilitate the story, or was it something that intrinsically excited you in its own right?

You're right. I really can't tease the two things apart, the writing aspect from the producing aspect. The thing that's always been exciting to me about producing is the creative side, the fact that in television — and really only in television — is the writer in the position to have the final word. Obviously, the network, the studio and your partners are involved. But editorially, you are the one who has the final cut, and signs off on shows. And that part of it is addictive. So, in terms of the physical day-to-day production, I think that's about having great partners, working with great line producers, directors and UPMs. When you can find the people who have a similar approach to you, then the process is really wonderful.

How would you characterize your approach? What's your style like?

Well, I try to be very inclusive, and to really empower people and respect their instincts. I'm lucky enough to get to work with such incredible directors and actors and producers and department heads. I mean, I work with great people. I want to create an environment where this is something that we're making together. I like the idea of there being a feeling of shared ownership. When people feel like you're hiring them to bring themselves to it, you get results that you never would have expected: a performance from an actor, the way an editor has put together a sequence. Even on the level of producers solving production problems, I feel when people are empowered and trusted, you reap the benefits of their talents. It's about having enough confidence in your vision to allow it to be interpreted. When I'm with an editor, I try to avoid, for example, saying, "Could you cut back here, and then cut there and then hold for another 10 frames?" I try to say, "Here's what I'm missing. Here's the moment that I thought we would have, and I don't see it here." I'm asking, "Can you find it?" And then let them do it their way. So I think having a little humility is good, as a producer. You're dealing with people who are really great at what they do, who have put in an enormous amount of time honing their skills. It's about encouraging people to really be part of the creative process. If I didn't want to do that, I could be writing novels. The joy of what we're doing is that it's a collaborative art form.

Tracking back to Relativity, people spend their entire careers trying to make that leap from writing on their first show to creating and running a show. What was that like for you, being thrust into that position, so suddenly? It seems like there would be a tremendous learning curve. It was a tremendous learning curve.

What was hard, and what came easier?

I think what was hard was that I was still in the mindset that I had to write every word, that I had to do everything, and I think that made it very difficult. I was at
a time when my wife was pregnant with our first child and we were taking these Bradley childbirth classes. Driving up to this woman's house where the class was held, I would be on the cell phone all the way up to her doorway. And at some point in the class, they would turn down the lights, they would put on this music, and it was supposed to be this meditation for the moms to do. Every time they would do that, I would wind up falling asleep. [laughs] I was exhausted. It was definitely a trial by fire. People are coming from different points of view, and everybody has their own reasons to push one way or the other. I think that it's important for the showrunner to listen to the voice inside of his head and to make sure that the train is moving in the right direction, because the thing that's challenging is that people generally, like, listen to you. [laughs] And so when you talk, you have to be careful. It's an interesting problem to have. You have to be careful and specific about what you say. Because sometimes you say something casually, and boom, 40 people are off doing stuff, based on your offhand suggestion. So I find that the more clarity you have, the better. That's something that I've found to be helpful in a writers' room. It took me a long time, because writers tend to just want to please people. That's true of me as well. But when Parenthood was picked up and Friday Night Lights was picked up simultaneously, the writers' rooms were about 100 feet from each other. And I would walk from one room to the other and back. The first day of that was practically the worst day of my life. I totally felt like I was having an affair. [laughs] "I'll be right back, I just have to go see something in the other room..." But one thing I learned from that experience was to speak my mind even when it's not what they want to hear. When I'm in the writers' room and I'm listening to a pitch, I tend to want to say, "It's not exactly right, but let's try to figure out a way to make it work..." But because there were two shows going at once, I started to be more direct. For example, I'd say, "I don't think we're going to be telling this story on the show, let's move on." When I said things like that, I'd think to myself, "God, I'm being such a prick, I'm being so harsh!" But I received a lot of positive feedback from the writers by doing that, because they just want direction. If they get clear, concise instructions, they can do their job. They know they are not the showrunner. Anyway, that was one of the recent lessons I learned; and that's the interesting thing, you're constantly learning. That's one of the fun and great things about this job, there's never a point where you know everything. It's an ongoing process.
I want to talk a little bit about Roswell. It’s such an interesting premise and such an unusual, hybrid type of show. What did you think the challenges were, going in? And did those prove to be the challenges of creating this teen drama that’s also got this science fiction element?

At the time, I had finished Relativity, and had just started an overall deal with Fox. It was a very different world for me, because my only experience in television to that point was working with Ed and Marshall. And I realized once I was no longer working with them, that it was not that same world.

Yeah, that could be a rude awakening. Working with Ed and Marshall was not similar to working in television as we know it. They had complete creative and financial control. I only discovered that situation again once I started working with David Kelley, who had a similar arrangement.

For Roswell, I read this book called Roswell High and I thought it was really great, nothing like anything I had written or even thought to write. I’m not a big genre fan, I just don’t gravitate to that. But in Roswell High, I found a wonderful metaphor for adolescence. I thought the characters in the book were really compelling and interesting, I liked them and I liked the world. So, that’s how that show got started. It was a huge challenge in so many ways. It was the first time that I had to deal with a network and studio that were actively involved in the creative process. With Ed and Marshall, the network was involved, but I don’t think we even got notes when I was working with them. On Roswell, not only was I getting notes, it was on a show that could go into a lot of different directions. I was pushed by the network to go toward the alien aspect. In the beginning, the show mainly focused on the adolescent experience, not the alien thing.

For Fox, this was during The X-Files era too, right? I think it was around that time. I remember the head of the network at the time, who gave me a note through another executive. The note was: “Aliens, aliens, aliens!” Meaning, that’s the show you’re doing. You’re not doing a show about teenagers talking about their feelings. So, that was challenging. On top of that, we had a lot of visual effects, a lot of night exteriors, action sequences. All these things which are time-consuming and costly. But, I have to say, it was fun doing it. Once I embraced it, I found it really fun delving into the science fiction element of the show. I had a lot of great writers throughout the show that helped me with it, but I remember the second season in particular. Ron Moore came onto the show. That was incredible. We loved working together and learned a great deal from one another. I remember him having such confidence and bravery toward the science fiction elements of
I want to create an environment where this is something that we’re making together. I like the idea of there being a feeling of shared ownership. When people feel like you’re hiring them to bring themselves to it, you get results that you never would have expected.

Between My So-Called Life, Relativity and Roswell, you’ve worked on a lot of shows that were on the bubble and painfully didn’t quite make it. As opposed to Friday Night Lights, which spent its entire life on the bubble and, yet, somehow did make it. What happened? What was the difference that enabled that show to stay on, and ultimately reach a very wide audience? I don’t think anybody imagined it as an Emmy-winning show the year that it premiered, but lo and behold, there you are. What made the difference? I don’t really know. There’s just something about Friday Night Lights. There was a feeling when you watched it that you were dropped into this town and you were really there. Friday Night Lights was isolated from that superficial world. The show seemed real and true, contrary to a lot of material on television. I think part of it was the way the show was shot and where it was shot. We shot the show in Texas, where it is set. We never built a single location; that decision was made early on in the life of the show and became a critical part of the show’s creative success. There was always the feeling that we were in real environments and real places. And not only were we really in those places, but you felt them. I mean, think about the show; how many times did we start interior and walk outside into the world without ever cutting? We had three cameras going and we’d have one camera waiting outside, so we would just shoot continuously. The way we shot was unique. By the way, I don’t take credit for this. Peter Berg directed the pilot and that was how he did it, and we took that to heart. We never laid a mark for an actor, we never rehearsed, we shot with three cameras. The great majority of what we shot, not only was it handheld, but we were shooting both sides of a scene at once. There was no way an actor could say, “Okay, well, they’re not on me right now.” But I also think there’s something about Friday Night Lights where it was just a really special show. My So-Called Life was similar. And I think with Friday Night Lights, because we lasted so long, eventually somebody had to throw an Emmy at us. In part, I think it was the passion of the fans and critics. Also, the passion of people at the studio and the network, not necessarily the highest people, but, because there were so many fans in different departments who loved it, there was a desire to figure out how to keep the show on the air, which resulted in the DIRECTV deal that kept it alive. It was dead after the second season. It took a tremendous amount of effort from so many parties at both companies to try to figure out how to make that deal work. There was one other critical piece to the puzzle: the show was very inexpensive. I’d like to take the credit, and I’m sure many producers on the show would like to take the credit, but it was really about the efficiency of how it was shot. We started the first season as an eight-day shoot, like most one-hour dramas at
the time. We wound up finishing our days so fast that, eventu-
ally, we made them into 7.5-day shoots and then 7-day
shoots. We cross-boarded a lot so we could do two episodes
at once. By the end, we could shoot an episode in six days.
That was actually a little too fast; it wasn’t ideal. And it was
not an expensive cast. Most of the actors had never worked
before, so they didn’t have expensive deals. So our above-
the-line was reasonable. But the fact that we were able to
do the show on a budget that was closer to a cable budget
allowed that to happen.

When you’ve got a series that you sense is on the bubble,
does that change the way you address the show cre-
atively? Do you make decisions in order to keep it on
the air versus decisions where you would normally just
follow your muse?
I try not to have it affect the way I tell stories. Every once
in a while, you definitely will think, we are going to be off
the air for a month, so we should probably give people
cliffhangers or something like that. I do, to some degree,
think in those terms, but I always try to be honest with the
audience. I don’t appreciate shows that have false jeopardy.
As you’re breaking the story, there are natural, organic cliff-
hangers that will arise and I try as much as possible to lean
toward those. That said, we do block things out. Because
Friday Night Lights and Parenthood are both serialized
storytelling, we would block the season in movements of
episodes. So, anywhere from 3–5 episodes tended to take
you from one movement to the next.

It’s funny that Parenthood and Friday Night Lights are
both based on movies, but not really. They’re very loose
adaptations. How beholden do you feel you are to the
source material, in terms of your starting point and
resolution?
It’s actually a little different on both shows. On Parenthood,
I remember when I went in, I pitched Ron Howard and
Brian Grazer my take on the show. For both of them, Ron
and Brian, every time I talked about what was new, what
was different, and what was departing from the movie,
that was the stuff they were most excited about. So I was
really encouraged to make it my own. The movie was hugely
inspiring. It had a perfect foundation for a television show,
even more perfect than for a movie. The idea of four adult
siblings and their varying family units is exactly the same
in the television show as in the movie. But with the show,
I wanted to find ways to make it different ... make it feel
relevant now, twenty years later, as well as making it per-
sonal to me. So there were things that changed in my pilot.
There’s a stay-at-home dad and a working mom. You have
the Asperger’s storyline ... the characters are all really their
own people separate and apart from the movie. And I’m
very proud of that. I don’t think people are comparing it to
the movie. It stands on its own.

With Friday Night Lights, I think we really owe a lot to
both the book and the movie. The book started it all. That
world is just so fascinating and so many of the ideas and
the themes that are discussed and talked about in that book
were an inspiration throughout the course of the show. The
movie and pilot were both directed by Peter. There is a very
close connection between the television show and the movie
in terms of the visual style, the feeling of it, the world. I
feel like I can’t separate the show from the movie from the
book, they’re so interconnected. The one thing that’s differ-
ent about the show, that I’m so happy about, is that we set
the show in a fictional town, and none of the characters in
the television show are based on the movie or book char-
acters, who are real people. That would be really difficult
for me because I wouldn’t want to misrepresent people or
be tied down to a certain story. It’s also set in the present
day, which freed us to tell any story we wanted to, which
was great.

TV by its nature tends to be more ensemble-driven then
star-driven. How do you approach casting an ensemble?
It seems like a very complicated jigsaw puzzle and you
have to get all the pieces right.
Well, on Parenthood it was about wanting to find the pieces
that were going to be the glue. So, the questions were, who
were Adam and Sarah going to be? But, because the casting
going happened so fast, we weren’t able to say, “Okay, we’ll just
cast Adam, then we’ll figure everybody else out.” You’re cast-
ing everybody at once. And in the case of Parenthood, there
were 14 regular series characters. It’s a huge cast. There
are certain people who just walk into a room and you just
know they are the character, like Dax Shepard. He walked
into the room and I knew, “That’s Crosby!” Before he even
said anything, I knew he was Crosby. Then, you just hope
that you’re going to be able to work out a deal and that the
network agrees.

I love an ensemble cast. I think it’s such an exciting way
of storytelling. To me, one of the joys of Friday Night

ONLY ONE MOVIE THIS YEAR IS...
“BRAVE INDEED.”
CLAUDIA PUIG | USA TODAY
BEST ANIMATED FEATURE
PRODUCED BY Katherine Sarafian

“There’s just something about Friday Night Lights.
There was a feeling when you watched it, that you
were dropped into this town and you were really
there. Friday Night Lights was isolated from that
superficial world. The show seemed real and
ture, contrary to a lot of material on television.”
struggling with? What do you find challenging — with the understanding that that’s probably what’s exciting about it?

Well, I think every show has its own challenges. One of the things that’s been a challenge for me on Parenthood has been that when I originally wrote the pilot episode, I had been spending a lot of time on Friday Night Lights. There was tremendous amount of freedom on that show, from a storytelling perspective, because of the way we shot. We had this run-and-gun style; we were very fast. So I had this idea of shooting Parenthood like that, and it didn’t work, for a variety of reasons. We wound up being a very stage-bound show. We do go out on location, but we only have money to go out on location maybe two days per episode, give or take. And that has been a tremendous struggle, because my feeling from the beginning was that if these characters can’t go out into the world, then the show would turn in on itself very quickly. I felt that if you had 14 people talking in a kitchen too many times an episode ... no one wants to see that. So that was a challenge for us, but we’ve really managed to make it work. One part of the solution was that I had to rethink some of the storytelling. Can we tell this story in another way so that we’re not compromising the story, but we’re not out on location? Another part of it was our incredible production designer, Steven Jordan and his team. For example — the grandparents’ house. We were always planning on building the interior on the stage. But for the exterior, we were planning on going out and finding a house. Then Steven found this location on the Universal lot, and he said, “I think I can build the house here.” And they built the facade of Zeek and Camille’s house on the lot. And it’s just amazing ... when you go up there, you can literally turn 360 degrees and you’re there, at the house. And Universal, that studio is amazing. The things we’ve been able to find ... We’ve found baseball fields that we’ve shot at. We shot a camping trip there. We have all kinds of houses and neighbors that we’ve done there. And then, finally, having CGI and that sort of technology has allowed us to get the flavor of Berkeley into the show without actually going there. So many people, even people in the business, have just assumed we shoot the show there. They’ll say, “Oh, when are you going back up north?” So there’s been a combination of all of those things to make it work. But it was the kind of thing that I literally spent sleepless nights over. I just didn’t know how to do this show, until we figured out a way to do it. I think every show brings its particular challenges. But you try to not panic, and you find a way to make it work.

You’ve got this diversified portfolio of story. Exactly. You don’t know ahead of time which moments are going to really resonate. So that gives you some flexibility.

You’ve been doing this a while now, but in talking to other producers, the thing that excites them is that there’s always some kind of challenge. Even today, having done this for a long time, what are you
“How many times did you have to circumvent the crowds?” I ask Boal, who stuffs a piece of carrot muffin into his mouth, unsure of when he will next have a chance to eat. “Every day for weeks,” he says.

Boal, who has been working around the clock for the past year and a half, is currently rushing to finish the film while simultaneously eyeing distribution, PR, and marketing. He and Oscar-winning producer/director Kathryn Bigelow have clearly been through a war, if not the traditional kind. It’s been a swift-legged fight to craft an authentic, factual, and dramatic feature film about the most notorious anti-terrorist military strike in recent history, in as secretive and dangerous a production environment as one can imagine.

It all started on May 1, 2011, when, three months out from production on a new feature film about Osama Bin Laden slipping away at Tora Bora, Mark Boal heard the astounding news: Bin Laden had been killed by U.S. Navy Seals. He and Bigelow knew their current feature film project had to be scrapped. They also knew that if they pivoted to tell this new story, both of them would have to kick into high gear in order to strike while the topic was still fresh in the public consciousness, and to a lesser degree, before a television docudrama muddied the waters. (Voltage Pics beat them on this score.) So throwing out the entire script from Tora Bora (admittedly unable to use one word of it), Boal started his intense research for ZD30.

SECRECY AND DANGER

Two mondo challenges emerged. First, Boal was writing a movie about … well, let’s just say it — an impossible topic. A top-secret mission. Every important detail about the story was shrouded in secrecy. It was a mission spearheaded by the CIA and carried out by a covert unit of the military working in conjunction with undercover agents to hunt down the most-wanted man on earth. Somehow, Boal had to acquire access to firsthand accounts and secret orders to get the story right. A former journalist who had spent time in the Middle East, Boal put all of his research powers into play hunting down facts and using protected sources from his prior profession to connect the dots. (The fallout from his access to covert intelligence is another topic altogether, and no doubt makes for plenty of press.)

But it wasn’t just the story that was top secret. Standard production details that one would normally be able to research were likewise shrouded in mystery. References to location interiors such as the Islamabad CIA station, CIA black sites, and the Bin Laden compound (built to scale for zero dark thirty)
Stealth helicopters? Nobody had any idea what they looked like. One could only infer from a wrecked tailpiece how to construct the rest of it. Boal says his entire team had to become investigative reporters. As he observes, “You can’t just call up Western Costume and say, ‘We’re doing a movie on 1920s America. Send over all your top hats.’ I mean, you just can’t go out and find this stuff.”

But he did have some assistance, be it ever so formless. “The good thing is,” he admits, “even though no one’s really giving you the information, they will call you out if you get it wrong.” They, one can only presume, referring to his unnamed sources.

The second problem was the inherent danger of trying to shoot a highly sensitive story in a region that didn’t necessarily applaud the American victory. Again, with total authenticity as a charter, Boal and his crew shot in Jordan (birthplace of al-Zarqawi), Punjab, India (renowned for hijacking), and Pakistan (enough said). The movie was depicting the detection and murder of the highest ranking Taliban leader, in an area where an actual encounter with Taliban rebels was not out of the question. Depending on where the crew found themselves, mileage signs might read 25 kilometers to Iraq or 18 kilometers to Syria. The set for the Bin Laden compound was built 1½ miles from Israel. Bomb-sniffing dogs made an appearance on set for nearly all 70 days of shooting. “There were thorny security situations that had to be thought out and resolved on a daily basis,” says Boal. “It’s important to get it right when you’re making a movie about a terrorist organization that still exists.”

Documents obtained after the Abbottabad raid cited that Bin Laden’s lone objective was the destruction of the United States, letting all other enemies topple behind this kingpin. Boal’s cast and crew were by and large American (keep an eye on the SUV tailing you).

Did Boal personally feel like he was in danger — being the writer/producer of this story? “Personally, no,” says Boal. “I felt responsible for the safety of everybody working for me. I’m crazy though, I mean ... I go to war zones. I have either a low self-regard or a high tolerance for risk. But I worried for all the people who were driving to set every day.”

Due to the high-intensity region, shipping feature film materials from one Middle Eastern country to another looked like terrorist activity to almost every customs officer. ZD30 equipment, props and costumes were routinely delayed, costing enormous amounts of money and shoot days. When the crew left Punjab and arrived in Jordan, they were forced to shoot without radios, grip equipment, fake weapons, or military uniforms, and with only one quarter of their camera equipment. The grip department was creating makeshift tools literally out of popsicle sticks and lawn chairs. One demanding morning, Boal discovered that none of his actors had any pants to wear, so he ran around Amman trying to buy wardrobe. “It was basically an overgrown guerilla shoot on a medium-sized budget,” he concludes.
THE OBVIOUS QUESTION

The question that rises like a bubble in a champagne glass is: Why put yourself and everybody else through such danger and difficulty? What’s wrong with shooting in say, New Mexico? Already aware that “authenticity” was the team’s umbrella response, I press Boal on the matter. He comes up with four rapid-fire answers that undoubtedly reflect hours of deliberation, in short: budget savings, actor effectiveness, privacy, and an independent pile of cash.

First, Boal insists that the team got way more bang for their buck on screen. “There’s no way we could have re-created the street scenes we shot in Pakistan,” he notes. “Not if we had 500 million bucks.” Second, Boal felt that being in those actual locations lent something to the cast. It helped ground their performances, due to the persistent low level of insecurity and the feeling that they were strangers in a strange land, which is what the intelligence officers in Islamabad felt. Third, Boal claimed that there weren’t very many places in the world where they could build Bin Laden’s compound brick for brick — and not have the press watching them every step of the way. Lastly, Oracle heir-turned-angel investor Megan Ellison cash-flowed the movie — all of it. This allowed Boal, Bigelow and their keys to make the film without creative or structural boundaries. “There’s no studio that would have allowed us to make the movie the way we wanted to make it,” Boal explains. “It’s not a criticism. It’s just the way the business is put together. Studios don’t shoot in the Middle East for good reasons.”

One wonders if his crew members were suddenly double-checking their life insurance policies once on the ground in Amman. Boal asserts that he was upfront with all his keys about working really long hours and in really tough environ-
whose narrative is anchored by these nameless people who put their lives at risk every day. ‘It’s more about the lengths somebody will go to do their job. And what that means when the job is to find a terrorist.’

The other component to staying neutral was being able to avoid transactional arrangements that would unduly influence their movie. ‘You don’t do a deal with the CIA or the Department of Defense,’ Boal contends. ‘You don’t, at any time, compromise the integrity or put the independence of the film in jeopardy by getting into business with any government entity.’

TWO-TERM PRODUCER

With two feature film producing credits, Boal has already bitten off more than most normal human beings should be able to chew. Bigelow says of him, ‘He brings assets to the table that appear on the surface to be impossible, such as black powder into a war zone, Blackhawk helicopters — not one but four — with little or no impact on the budget. … And then there’s shooting in the Middle East, where a fragile and young film infrastructure requires a stamina and tenacity that would make one’s knees buckle. … I couldn’t have done this film without him.’ Producer and fellow PGA member Greg Shapiro, a mentor to Boal on The Hurt Locker, notes that ‘He has an uncanny ability to convince anyone that he will go to any length, burn any bridge, and spare no cost in pursuit of his singular focus to achieve what he believes is best for the movie.’

Boal is adamant that producing ZD30 was only possible because of the team that they put together. ‘I hadn’t ever experienced that level of craft, commitment and professionalism,’ he reports. ‘The Hurt Locker was a much more run-and-gun shoot, with three guys in the desert and some Humvees. But the production challenges on this movie were a lot more numerous and ambitious for everyone.’

Boal began producing out of necessity when Bigelow told him if he wanted to get it done, he’d have to do it himself. He quickly found that producing was a lot more enjoyable than writing. ‘Writing is lonely and horrifying and forces you to sit in a room by yourself for weeks on end,’ he says. ‘As a producer, there’s a million choices you make that are essentially creative choices. Each one has its own unique recipe and really impacts the outcome of the film. Even if it just seems to be nuts-and-bolts financial choices, it has a lasting effect.’

Lucky for audiences, Mark Boal is still at it and will be for some time — telling the challenging stories, digging down to the inner core of earth, if need be, to get to the facts, and surrounding himself with equally-talented partners. ‘I’ve never met anybody like him,’ says production designer Hindle. ‘Never.’ Hindle went on to heap praise on Boal and Bigelow for their undying focus and commitment, and for doing justice to this historic tale, under the most secretive and dangerous of circumstances. ‘It’s a story that needed to be told the right way, and they were the right people to tell it.’

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Gareth Neame follows his destiny to the worldwide smash Downton Abbey

“Sorry, I’m pausing one moment,” Gareth Neame says with a slight laugh. “I’ve literally never done this, but I’m getting last night’s ratings for Downton while I’m on the phone here.” Downton Abbey, the award-winning series that Neame developed and executive-produces under Carnival Films for ITV and PBS, was up against the second season premiere of Homeland, the show that just beat Downton for the Emmy for Outstanding Drama Series. A quiet moment passes as the producer and PGA member digests the news: not only did Downton keep its audience, but it won the night, even beating its lead-in, The X Factor, with a 36.8% share.

It’s rare enough to exceed expectations of a production; to exceed expectations of an entire genre is something else entirely. Yet such success has become characteristic of Downton Abbey, the purposefully modern production of a classically English genre that became a breakout hit for Neame, the ITV network and British television as a whole. The first season won six Primetime Emmy Awards, including Outstanding Miniseries, took home the PGA’s David L. Wolper Award for Long-Form Television (breaking HBO’s 10-year lock on that honor), and won or was nominated for an impressively varied selection of awards from Europe to China. Its second season earned Downton a place in the Outstading Drama Series category and a total of 16 Emmy nominations in what is being widely hailed as a golden period of dramatic television.

“As a British show, it’s even more of an achievement,” Neame adds, “because to have broken through the way it has in the U.S. — and to have broken through by being on public television, which is not anywhere anyone would have expected to find a show like this — it makes it all the more remarkable.”

For all its grandeur and success, Downton Abbey had a relatively simple start. Four years ago, Neame was working with writer and co-creator Julian Fellowes on adapting a contemporary novel for the screen. That project was never made, but the two men hit it off and were eager to work together. “I asked Julian, ‘Could I ever persuade you to revisit the territory that you were so successful in with Gosford Park, but to do it in an episodic television series?’” Neame recalls.

“I just thought if we could take this most British of genres,” he continues, “the English country house genre that audiences in the UK love and all around the world know to be expressly British — but make a show that has the contemporary pace of storytelling of a contemporary American series, I think it could be very popular if we got it right.”

“That really was the birth of Downton,” says Fellowes. “I mean, it was Gareth’s idea.” At first the writer was hesitant to return to the scene of his success, but the idea stayed with him. A few weeks later, Fellowes emailed some pages, in which many of the primary characters were already outlined. The development process flowed from there.

“All of it was very much a joint endeavor,” Fellowes continues. “Both of us wanted a world that was recognizable, wanted a world with cars and trains and phones and things. That was Gareth as much as me.” Those first few pages began what Neame calls the “very, very intimate experience” of developing the show’s scripts, in which he and Fellowes collaborate closely on every page. They complement each other in taste and style, which allows for a highly creative yet precisely-rendered world for Downton and a rewarding work environment for everyone involved, including producer Liz Trubridge, who completes the core creative team. “The three of us wanted to make the same kind of show from the beginning,” Fellowes states. “And I think that is part of the reason for its success.”

More than a success, Downton was an instant hit. “The first night’s ratings were unexpectedly huge, and the second week went up by about 25 percent or 30 percent,” Neame says. “So it was the second week when I realized that we had this massive hit.”

While no one will say creating Downton was easy — “I wouldn’t want you to get the impression that we just sit there smiling at each other over a cup of tea,” Fellowes warns — bringing the show to the screen was at least less difficult than it could have been, a fact that says more about Neame as a producer and a person than anything.

Neame tempers an easy confidence when speaking of his own projects with a genuine respect for the work of his peers. It’s clear that he takes his business seriously, although a characteristically British sense of humor sneaks into conversation often enough to threaten his straight-man demeanor. Neame’s colleagues compli-
ment him easily, making generous observations as if it’s the least they can say about him. “He’s got a tremendous eye for a good proj-
ect,” Trubridge says. “He knows what will work on television, and I think he has the ability, the talent, the intelligence to see it through. And he trusts his instincts — he’s very good at that.”

There’s good reason for Neame’s instinctive talent. His great-
great-grandparents were photographer and pioneer filmmaker Elwin Neame and actress and beauty queen Ivy Close. His grandfather, Ronald Neame, was an esteemed director, cinematographer and producer; and his father, Christopher Neame, was a successful film and television producer:

“I grew up knowing I was fourth generation and, from a very young age, realized it was my destiny to follow in their footsteps,” Neame explains. “It never occurred to me to do anything else.” Entertained by stories of filmmaking and a frequent visitor to his father’s sets, Neame stepped fully into the role with the weight of heritage behind him. Encouraged by his father and grandfather, he began at the bottom of physical production and worked his way up through the ranks. “I was incredibly ambitious and hard working, and [productions] wanted hard-working, young, energetic people,” he recalls. Neame worked as a PA, a location manager, an assistant director and more. “I saw it like an apprenticeship, so I didn’t really ever become expert in any of these jobs, but I did most of them. One of the things I like about producing is it’s the one job where you are involved in everything.”

In his mid-20s, Neame sidestepped into development on his way to producing, and he considers his varied experience on set and in development “a considerable advantage” in his career, although he admits a downside. “Some producers have no understanding of [physical production] and therefore, they can ask for the world,” he laughs. “I’ve had to try to forget a lot of the things I’ve learned because I don’t want to be too conscious of how things get done. I don’t want to limit ambitions I have because I know what’s going to be cheaper and what’s going to be more complex.”

In addition to practical experience, Neame brings to his work the valuable insights of the generations before him. In particular he recalls how his grandfather; a cinematographer; worked with his production partners, editor David Lean and producer Anthony Havelock-Allan. “Between the three of them, they all wrote the scripts and they produced together,” he explains. “They were all producers, but they all had slightly different expertise.” The story has stuck with Neame since his childhood and directly informs his approach to projects:

“I consider the key people on the team to be co-producers,” he explains. “I consider the production designer to be a co-
producer. The cinematographer I consider to be one of the co-
producers, so that you have this immediate team around you that you want to be involved in wider decisions outside their specific sphere of influence.”

The effect is empowering for the people he works with, and all the “co-producers” enjoy a strong feeling of ownership of the show. “I think it creates better results,” says Trubridge. “There is the feeling that nobody wants to let anybody else down, and that sort of ethos comes from the top. That’s where the high standards come from.”

There’s no question that Neame’s standards come from his desire to produce shows he’d like to watch. He’s a fan of TV and offers high praise of the shows Downton Abbey and Homeland keep company with, like Homeland and Mad Men. “Unlike a lot of producers, he watches a lot of television,” Fellows says. “So he understands what makes good television.”

That drive to create good programs has led him through a successful career on both sides of the Atlantic. He’s able to compare production in the UK versus the United States and take les-
sons from each. While impressed with the “mechanized” American system’s ability to turn out season after season of 22-episode series, he seems more at ease in the British system’s more civil, authorial approach. “In America, you buy a script or order a script, so it’s quite an industrial nomenclature that’s used,” he says. “Whereas in Britain, we commission a script, which is the same language you’d use if you’re asking an artist to paint a portrait or make a sculpture.

“In Britain, I don’t think we stifle creativity in the same way,” he continues. “I think we fuck up shows less often, by which I mean we do still fuck up loads and loads of shows, but it’s not so regimented here.” He offers *The Office* as a concept that probably would have been hard to launch in America. “Sometimes these sort of mad ideas can break through. So the creativity of British television is sort of in extremely good health.”

But Britain’s biggest television export at the moment isn’t a mad idea at all, unless the thought of revisiting that classic English country house genre one more time could be called mad. Somehow *Downton* has taken perhaps the most conventional British fare and made it feel not only new but relevant to the current climate. “There are so many stories that happened then, with conflicts and financial crises and family upheaval that are just the same now,” offers Trubridge. “I think those things mean that people can escape into a world where they’ve got to know these very accessible characters.”

“The genre has been given a full makeover, and it’s been made into a contemporary show,” says Neame. “So many millions of people around the planet believe they own the show and believe they are a part of it, so I’m very conscious of the fact that everyone is invested in it.”

And those millions of fans seem to respond most to the thing *Downton* offers over the other top series: “There’s romance in *Downton* in a way that I don’t remember from a TV show in a long time,” says Neame. “It wears its heart on its sleeve, and I think people don’t get to see that very often and love it. It’s unashamedly romantic.”

So, it seems, is Neame. He gives his all to the shows he produces, supported by a belief that his advances will be reciprocated. Whether in high drama, cool comedy or contemporary thriller, he falls for characters and feels for them as they navigate the twists and cliffhangers of their televised lives. Perhaps the primary reason behind *Downton’s* success is the same one behind Neame’s: he loves his job.

“I think show business is where he lives,” Fellowes says. “The interesting thing is that there are not many people who want to make good television that will appeal to a wide audience. Gareth combines both of those goals. So he makes good television — well crafted and well done and well produced — but at the same time accessible. And I think that’s a very rare gift.”

*Downton Abbey* may be Neame’s most successful endeavor so far, but he’s already hard at work to ensure it won’t be his last. Neame and Carnival are now known names, which means newly opened doors and greater possibilities. As he finishes editing the final episode of *Downton’s* third season, Neame is able to pause a moment and look ahead. He sees another couple seasons for *Downton*, but is already conscious of not taking it too far. He’s happily busy with three new series set to begin production and the fourth season of *Downton* already taking shape with Fellowes.

He describes working out the plot of the next season with a metaphor that extends well beyond the show: “It’s a bit like driving a car: you know exactly what is directly in front of you, and you can see what’s a few hundred yards ahead, and you also have a sense that when you go ‘round this corner, there will be something there.” He pauses reflectively. “I think we’re right in the midst of it at the moment.”

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**THE MOST ORIGINAL FILM IN YEARS.**

*CBS-TV, Bryan Erdy*
A tale that tangles the disheveled lives of a widowed woman, an OCD father and bipolar workout fiend, Silver Linings Playbook struck Gigliotti as a story that, with the right production company and producers, could be invigorating and insightful. On an airplane to the Oscars in support of their film The Reader, Gigliotti shared her earnest ambition to get Silver Linings Playbook off the ground with Harvey Weinstein. With the unique wisdom of a person interrupted during a long flight, Weinstein gently mumbled, “Yeah, okay, fine.” And with that, Silver Linings Playbook was a go.

Producing is, ever-increasingly, a team sport, and rather than undertake the project alone, Gigliotti opted to call on friends Bruce Cohen and Jonathan Gordon to produce alongside her. Both men are not only eminent producers in their own rights, but carry reputations as genuinely respectful collaborators.

“Do you want to get on an airplane tomorrow and go to Philadelphia?” Gigliotti remembers asking Cohen, “Bruce asked me what for and I said, ‘Silver Linings Playbook,’ and he said, ‘I’m packing my bags right now.’ And he literally got on the plane the next day. Jon Gordon subsequently did the exact same thing. That’s how we became the three musketeers. It took all three of us working flat-out to make it. It’s a complicated movie to make, and it has a lot of big personalities involved. It really took all three of us to get it across the finish line.”

One of the big personalities of Silver Linings Playbook is writer/director David O. Russell. Known for his passion, dark humor and on-set intensity, Russell found success with his most recent film, The Fighter, and was eager to extend his momentum.

“David’s scripts are for people that really love movies,” says Gordon. “You read these scripts and they are unlike anything else that you read out there. A lot of times, scripts like David’s can get chilled in the development process because the characters don’t do what you expect characters in movies to do. They do what people in real life do. It can sometimes make you uncomfortable and sometimes make you laugh and make you cry. He really has an uncanny ability to cut to the heart of the issue in his own way.”

In Russell’s Playbook, we first meet Pat Solitano (Bradley Cooper) in a mental institution, huddled over pages written to his lost love, his wife who has left him for another man. Unable to face the reality of his broken heart and broken marriage, Pat pursues a rigorous if misguided program of self-improvement that he believes will win back his estranged wife. At a dinner party, Pat meets Tiffany (Jennifer Lawrence); brutally honest, deftly cynical and recently widowed, Tiffany prompts Pat to dive into life by joining her in entering a dance competition and find himself by letting go.

“I loved that these were two people that you hadn’t seen before,” says Cohen. “They felt much realer and truer than the typical man and woman you see onscreen working out romantic issues. Also, it’s simultaneously so funny and so dramatic.”

The challenge and vitality of Tiffany and Pat drew immense interest from the Hollywood starscape, leaving the producers
to sift through scores of agents and actors to find the ideal Silver Linings couple. As Russell’s go-to man, Mark Wahlberg initially jumped on board to play Pat, but ultimately had to pass on the film because of a series of scheduling conflicts. Russell then suggested rising star (and native Philadelphian) Bradley Cooper, who readily took the part.

A series of actresses were considered for Tiffany, including Anne Hathaway, who while passionate about the script and the character, had to turn down the film to finish The Dark Knight Rises. While at her parents’ home in Kentucky, Jennifer Lawrence auditioned for Russell via the video-conferencing powers of Skype. Russell recorded the live feed on a shaky video camera and showed it to Cohen, Gigliotti and Gordon. Despite the unconventional roughness of the audition, Gigliotti described her performance as “electric.”

Gigliotti has a reputation for producing sagacious films with strong female characters leading complicated lives. Her work has proven that films that promote strong and dynamic women can be successful with the critics and the masses alike with The Reader, Shakespeare in Love, and Vanity Fair.

“Honestly, I don’t want to get on my ‘feminist soapbox,’ but I will do it,” laughs Gigliotti. “Hollywood is run by men, and men tend to discount the female demographic. Every time there is a successful movie with a strong female character in it, everyone acts surprised. They all ask, ‘How did that happen?’ Well, guess what? Women want to see their stories up on the screen, and women buy movie tickets.”

Social issues, community strife and domestic conflicts are thematic motifs in many of Cohen and Gordon’s previous films, as well. Cohen took home an Oscar for cutting through the corrosive apathy of suburban life in American Beauty and was nominated for another Academy Award for dramatizing the life of gay activist Harvey Milk in Milk. Similarly, Gordon grappled with social inequality in Good Will Hunting, and Kevin Smith’s political-ly-charged Red State.

Given the team’s collective knack for finding deep messages in intimate stories, Russell was the perfect fit for their team. “Part of [Russell’s] brilliance,” observes Cohen, “certainly with The Fighter and Silver Linings, is the method he uses, shooting nearly all of the big scenes of the film on Steadicam. The scene plays from beginning to end. There is no coverage. He doesn’t break it up to do close-ups or two-shots. He lets actors perform the scene in real time the whole way through, over and over again ’til everyone feels like they’ve got it. The actors feel much more like they are in a play.”
“We were looking for someone who would have great comic chops but you also could believe as part of this world,” notes Cohen. “We loved the idea of Chris Tucker, specifically because you might not think of him in this kind of movie. It isn’t about any one doing stand-up comedy. It’s about being part of an ensemble, and that’s what appealed to Chris. It was something he hadn’t done before, so we felt very lucky to get him.”

The casting of the film’s eccentric characters was pulled from the outline Matthew Quick laid down in his novel. Remarkably, Quick felt that if the book were ever going to be made into a movie, he would want Russell to be the one to tackle it, even though the two did not meet until shooting began.

“Matthew had a great respect and deference for David to make this story his own,” says Gordon. “It was really incredible, because normally you see writers who are so protective of their work and get so upset over changes. But Matthew came out one day to set and was watching it. You could see in his eyes this pride of his work coming to life and also the excitement in someone taking his work and making it their own. Since the shoot, Matthew and David have enjoyed a very close relationship, and obviously both have had a lot of similar experiences and connection to the mental health communities. There is a strong bond there, beyond just as artists, but also in terms of their own personal experiences.”

Silver Linings Playbook expertly delineates the reality of anxiety, therapists, antidepressants and addiction in contemporary American life. Cohen, Gigliotti and Gordon were drawn to the depiction of psychological disorders not as tragedy but as the “high notes” to life itself, and found enlightened perspectives in Russell’s depiction.

“There was an early line drafted in the script where characters are talking about mental disorders and one character says, ‘Just treat it like you treat a diabetic,’” recalls Gigliotti. “It’s about treating these people as essentially normal people, just like you and me. One of the things that Donna, Bruce and I have talked about is how Pat and Tiffany, in a lot of ways, are the most ‘normal’ characters in the movie. The characters around them are the crazier characters. It’s so easy to paint people with a broad brush, who’s ‘crazy’ and who has the perfect life and who doesn’t. It’s not as simple as we’re inclined to reduce it to. I think what the story really is saying about mental health is to treat everyone the same.”

To further set the idiosyncratic, live-wire tone of Silver Linings Playbook, a film that includes both ballroom dancing and family fastfights, legendary composer Danny Elfman stepped in to create an original score.

“Harvey Weinstein had asked, ‘What about Danny Elfman?’” remembers Gordon. “He’s the best in the world, so we all looked at each other and said ‘great,’ and then Danny came on. Danny put his own mark on the film. The whole score is composed of guitar, bass and drums. It is very much a ‘source’ kind of score, it lends itself exactly to David’s aesthetic.”

Pulling their carefully-chosen team together, Gigliotti, Gordon and Cohen are eager to share the genius and creativity of Russell, Cooper, Lawrence, De Niro and the rest of the crew and cast while relatively downplaying their own contributions. But from a dusty script about a dysfunctional family and a challenging, nuanced love story about accepting the pain that comes with being alive, the three managed to harmonize one of Hollywood’s most admired directors, an all-star cast, and the leading composer in the business.

“As a producer I don’t think there is anything more exciting than doing a movie that people are really touched by,” muses Cohen. “It entertains them in a significant way. That’s my hope, and the reaction we have been getting so far from people who have seen it. I hope they really have a beautiful experience with it and really want to share it with the people in their lives.”

In discussing Silver Linings Playbook, one gets the sense that not only do Gigliotti, Gordon and Cohen have encyclopedic careers as powerhouse filmmakers, but that beyond their professional responsibilities, they genuinely love movies. All three have an intuitive understanding of what can make even the most intricate story universally moving.

“As a producer and filmmaker, the only thing you hope for with any movie is that somehow or another, all the hard work that you have done reaches out into the audience and makes them laugh or it makes them cry, or in this instance, it makes them do both,” observes Gigliotti. “If you have characters that are authentic and you are giving the audience an authentic experience that moves them in some way, then it doesn’t really matter if there is a boom mike in the frame. They don’t care, because it’s not what they are looking at. What they are looking at is emotional experience — going to the movie theater and sitting in darkened room with a lot of other people because they want to feel something.”

“ONE OF THE MOST AMBITIOUS FILMS EVER MADE.
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Winter 2012 Produced by
The PGA Northwest presented the 4th Annual Guild and Grapes trip to the wine country during the weekend of October 19–21, 2012, which has become a signature event for the chapter as well as one of the premiere events for the Guild at large.

A group of 21 PGA members, their spouses and significant others descended on the City by the Bay en route to Napa Valley for a weekend of exclusive wine tours, gourmet food and fellowship. From a networking lunch on Friday to a farewell breakfast on Sunday, fellow producers engaged in lively discussions while participating in one-of-a-kind tours and activities designed to engage the mind as well as the palate. And while the food and wine is always exceptional, the most memorable part of the trip is the company — producers from all areas of the industry with a genuine desire to meet and engage with their colleagues, building the foundation for lasting friendships and future collaborations.

The weekend began literally in a fog, as a number of morning flights from Los Angeles were delayed due to visibility at San Francisco International Airport. Despite the clouds and chilly weather, the networking lunch on Friday was a success, with lively discussion while participating in one of a kind tours and activities designed to engage the mind as well as the palate. And while the food and wine is always exceptional, the most memorable part of the trip is the company — producers from all areas of the industry with a genuine desire to meet and engage with their colleagues, building the foundation for lasting friendships and future collaborations.

Then the adventure began in earnest, as G&Gers continued on the journey to Napa, led by our fearless leader, Brandon Grande, Chair of the PGA Northwest. As the luxury coach braved the Friday traffic, a great sense of anticipation was fermenting. In the early evening, we reached our base camp for the weekend — the sprawling Silverado Resort with its circular drive leading to a stately mansion encompassing the lobby, restaurants and bar. This scenic 1,200-acre retreat comprises a township of condos and suites, a PGA championship golf course and clubhouse (the other PGA), tennis courts and a full-service spa facility. The friendly staff was only too happy to arrange a pickup from your room to the clubhouse, frequently in a golf cart.

Our first stop was a welcome reception and dinner at Raymond Vineyards. It’s hard to imagine a more beautiful setting, as we toasted each other and the journey ahead with drinks and appetizers in an outdoor garden surrounded by lighted trees and a sparkling pool. This was followed by a spectacular dinner including vegetable roll appetizers with lemon grass dressing, a entree of short ribs osso bucco with polenta and spinach gratin sides, and a hazelnut cake dessert. The wine pairings were also excellent, especially Raymond’s full-bodied 2009 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, a well-balanced Cabernet with excellent structure, integrated tannins and a smooth, elegant finish.

The mirrored banquet table was dressed for royalty and set among the winery’s stainless steel fermenting tanks. Our host and proprietor, the wildly happy Jean-Charles Boisset, welcomed us with a hand-raising, sing-a-long song in French and an eyebrow-raising reference to the carnal pleasures he had enjoyed atop the very table where we were seated.

The role of the French chef was played convincingly by Raymond’s Chef Michel Cornu, seemingly straight from central casting. His prodigious culinary talents were matched only by his overflowing enthusiasm and personality.

After dinner, the group retired to the aptly-named “Red
Room” for conversation and, in one instance, a game of chess. The only things missing were the cigars. This would all seem to be a fitting end to a perfect day, but G&Gers have boundless energy, and upon returning to the resort, some were inclined to continue the evening at the hotel bar, which was unexpectedly hosted, to everyone’s delight.

Brandon Grande has been a part of Guild and Grapes since the beginning, first as a member of the event team, and this year organizing all aspects of the weekend. As the event has expanded and become more elaborate, Brandon has risen to the challenge, using his Bay Area resources both within the Guild and his professional network to gain access to new and increasingly unique experiences.

For Brandon, producing events like Guild and Grapes is one of the reasons he joined the Guild in the first place. “It’s not about me,” he said. “It’s about the people we represent, and hopefully about being an ambassador for the Bay Area as the Chair ... It makes me want to outdo myself and really offer a great experience for everybody.” This was certainly evident by the itinerary for Saturday, an almost breathless series of private tours, wine tasting and culinary extravaganzas.

First stop was Keever Vineyards, a boutique family-owned winery set on a hillside. While we sampled a Sauvignon Blanc and a Syrah, their flagship wine is an Estate Cabernet. We tasted the 2009 vintage (Yountville) that shows tremendous potential. Siblings Jason and Ashley Keever have a passion for wine that is reflected in the way they talk about the process, the meticulous details of the winery, and their exquisite care of the property and facilities. The 2009 Syrah was a standout, with aromas of berries, black licorice, sage and lavender, and a complexity on the palate that evolves into a smooth but dense finish.

Next we visited Trinchero, famous for being the most recent boutique label of Sutter Home, one of the earliest and most well-known wineries in Napa. Its rich history is surpassed only by its fascinating architecture and décor. The VIP tasting room was especially memorable, accented by a kind of modernist medievalism. Seated at the massive banquet table, one could take in a wall of ceramic hats, a panel of melted candles, and various sculptures of wood and rope. Everyone was intrigued by the winery’s “aroma wheel,” where guests make a game out of guessing the various aromas associated with wines following a blind sampling. Trinchero’s 2009 Cloud’s Nest Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon was one of the most structured and balanced wines of the weekend, earning 92 points from Robert Parker.

In the afternoon, TurnKey HD sponsored a picnic lunch for G&Gers, which gave us an opportunity to rest and clear our palette. Joel Newman, the owner and founder, introduced himself and his company, which provides customized production services. A walk-through of one of his mobile production vans provided a preview of some of the equipment and services TurnKey HD offers, from camera, grip and electric kits to a mobile digital-editing suite.

A highlight of Guild and Grapes is the unique opportunity to meet, network and meaningfully engage with fellow PGA members. This was the second trip for PGA National Executive Director Vance Van Petten and his wife Stacy, who look forward to relaxing and spending the weekend with members in such a unique setting. “Wine loosens things up,” said Vance, “and it’s always a lot of fun — but especially for me, it gives me a great opportunity to meet the members personally, and really assess what their needs are, what the Guild is doing for them, and what more we can do for them.”

After a quick coffee break in Calistoga, it was on to the historic Charles Krug Winery, established in 1861 as one of the first wineries in Napa Valley. In 1943, the land was purchased by Cesare Mondavi, and has remained in the Mondavi family ever since under the stewardship of Peter Mondavi, Sr. and his sons Marc and Peter, Jr. Although the winery is currently undergoing extensive renovations, we were able to tour some of the older buildings, including a cavernous room that still houses a towering vintage wood fermenting tank. Unlike many other wineries, Charles Krug has extensive grounds and gar
dens, making it an excellent venue for hosting events. The restored 1881 Carriage House was a highlight of the tour, with its soaring cathedral ceiling and floor finished in old-growth redwood. Of the many wines we tasted, the 2009 Generations, an estate-bottled reserve blend, was an excellent example of the old and new Bordeaux styles coming together.

Traveling with fellow producers, the journeys from winery to winery can be just as enjoyable as the destinations. Walk down the aisle of the coach in transit and you will hear fascinating conversations, including production war stories, lists of favorite movies and television shows, career aspirations, stories of world travel, and observations that the coach may have just inadvertently left the Napa Valley and entered Sonoma. It’s a great time to learn unexpected things about fellow PGA members and staff. (Who knew, for example, that Vance Van Petten is an expert on the color blue?) Brandon proved adept at keeping the troops entertained. In the official G&G “Name That Producer” Trivia Game, prizes were awarded for guessing the identities of PGA members from their bios and credits.

The culmination of this extraordinary day in the wine country was a family-style Italian dinner at the Coppola Winery. We were especially fortunate to have Adrian Carr on the tour with us, a film and television director, professional photographer and husband of PGA member Rosemary Marks (not necessarily in that order). In addition to his impressive photojournal of the weekend, the evening at Coppola began with a group portrait on the steps of the main entrance. Set against a treasure trove of iconic props and memorabilia from Coppola’s astonishing body of work, G&Gers enjoyed a generous meal including Caesar salad, veal & kale rollups, Mrs. Scorsese’s lemon chicken, grilled vegetables and mashed potatoes. And somehow there was room for dessert, which included a lemon tart and chocolate expresso mousse.

We had nearly escaped the weekend without the spotlight of public speaking, until Vance offered an opportunity to win a special prize (later revealed to be a limited-edition PGA leather portfolio). The game was to address the assembled as a candidate and describe the first thing you would do if you were elected president. G&Gers took turns making passionate, informed and articulate speeches on topics from education to healthcare to immigration reform. After submitting blind ballots, Chandra Simon was elected president on her platform of instituting a far-reaching energy policy to end our dependence on fossil fuels and dirty coal, and move to sustainable energy sources like wind and solar power. Simon, who has a master’s degree in environmental science, has been producing documentaries and non-fiction television on environmental issues for 10 years. Having recently relocated to the Bay Area, she plans to join the PGA Green Committee for the Northwest Chapter. Vance was quick to note that he would definitely vote for a candidate if he/she were a producer, “because producers get things done!”

After a sleepy ride back to base camp and a good night’s rest, G&Gers packed their bags and joined together for a final breakfast before returning to the hustle and bustle of life in the entertainment industry. There were thanks and acknowledgments all around to Brandon and his team for organizing this amazing weekend and bringing us together as a community of producers to celebrate the fruits of the vine, the bounty of the earth, and our fellow PGA members and guests.

PGA member Lisa Yenko and her mother, costume designer Sarah Bardo, were the weekend’s Guild and Grapes veterans, having attended all four events. They continue to be impressed with the evolution of the wine-tasting extravaganza over the years, noting that people have become more comfortable more quickly since the first trip in 2009. Lisa encourages PGA members to mark their calendars and save the date. “It’s a special weekend,” she said. “The scenery is beautiful, there’s great food and wine, and we get treated like royalty. We look forward to it every year.”
Presenting a line of cameras designed to shoot anything at every level of production. From the C100 and C300 with their incredible low light performance, to the high resolution 4K image quality of the C500 and 1D-C. Cinema EOS delivers everything including a range of resolutions and recording options for optimized image capture, a Super 35mm CMOS sensor, and compatibility with our full line of EF lenses and new PL-mount and EF-mount Cinema lenses. The complete Canon Cinema EOS System. Now, the world truly is your stage.
How does one create a suspenseful thriller in which the audience already knows the ending? It was a unique challenge faced by the team responsible for *Argo*, but as producer Grant Heslov will tell you, with a compelling story and the right personnel, the job is far less daunting.

“When you’re producing a film like this, you find a kernel of something, and you see the potential of it,” Heslov explains. “You see the end product in your mind, and your job is to realize that.” The film that Heslov and his colleagues were ultimately able to realize is the declassified story of CIA operative Tony Mendez, and his daring plan to free six Americans from Tehran in 1979. After Iranian militants stormed the U.S. Embassy, six employees of the State Department managed to escape to hide out in the Canadian Ambassador’s home. With their lives at stake, Mendez crafted a caper in which the rescue team would pose as a movie crew for a fake science fiction film entitled *Argo*.

It’s a rich story, to be sure, but as Heslov would surely profess, that is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to making a quality film. “In this case,” he notes, “it was about finding the underlying material, finding the right writer, getting a script that we felt really strongly about, and getting a director that could then make the film we imagined from the first moment we thought about this.” That director turned out to be Ben Affleck — who also stars as Mendez — and his vision helped create a film that has garnered both wide critical praise and commercial success.

“Ben turned out to be a great partner,” Heslov shares. “He turned out to be one of those directors that allows a lot of input from a lot of people ... and not just from me, but from the cinematographer on down. And he’s able to filter out and take those bits that make sense.” It stands to reason that Affleck’s collaborative style as a director would resonate with Heslov, as the latter has spent the majority of his career working in tandem with another of Hollywood’s most famous leading men, George Clooney.

Heslov was born and raised in the Palos Verdes area of Los Angeles, and he began his entertainment career working as an actor while attending the University of Southern California. He was taking an acting class at the time, and it was there that he met Clooney, now his longtime business and writing partner, as well as close personal friend. In what has become a wonderful piece of Hollywood legend, Heslov actually loaned Clooney a couple hundred dollars to get his first set of headshots. The two men have come a long way from the rigorous life of struggling actors, thanks in large part to their cooperative relationship. “Mostly, I work with George,” says Heslov, “and we have a real shorthand in the way that we work. We’re very collaborative because we mostly write the stuff together.” That partnership helped the duo garner an
Heslov's experience across different roles in the industry undoubtedly helped to prepare him for *Argo*. As with most historical dramas, the ultimate challenge lay in maintaining the perfect balance between doing justice to the events that occurred while at the same time juggling the cinematic elements that make for a quality film. In the interest of properly capturing the story’s essence, Heslov, Affleck, and Clooney (who also worked as a producer on the film) were in constant contact with Tony Mendez, himself. “I talked to Tony when we bought the article [on which the screenplay was based],” Heslov says. “Once we bought the article, we also optioned a chapter out of Tony’s book that dealt with this particular incident, so he was a consultant on the film. I talked with him, co-written), although he does continue to act in many of the films he is involved in.

In 2009, Heslov made his feature length directorial debut with the film adaptation of *The Men Who Stare at Goats*, which starred Jeff Bridges, Ewan McGregor, and of course, Clooney. While most first-time directors might feel pretty nervous being entrusted with a $20 million budget, Heslov seems to have been better prepared than most to make the leap. As he says of his prior cumulative experience, “I learned a lot through osmosis, just being on set. I would try to soak up everything; I was like a sponge. I think what I learned most was how to create an atmosphere where everyone can work and do their best work, without a lot of tension. I think that those are the best kind of sets, and where the best work gets done. There are some people that believe that if it’s chaotic and crazy and people are yelling, out of that comes good art and good work. While I believe that it can happen that way, it doesn’t have to happen that way. We’re so lucky to get to do what we do, to make it a drag seems counterintuitive.”

John Goodman and Ben Affleck confer on the set of *Argo*.

Heslov, like many success stories of the entertainment industry, has become a Hollywood jack-of-all-trades, having worked as an actor, producer, director, and writer. Though he spends the majority of his time behind the camera these days, Heslov’s work as a producer/writer/director has been directly impacted by his time as an actor. In fact, the first project that Heslov ever wrote and directed was inspired by a unique experience that he had had in the acting world. A short film titled *Waiting for Woody*, it’s the story of a Woody Allen fan who goes to audition for the eclectic director. Regarding a bizarre series of events that befell him, Heslov recalls, “My experience going to audition for him was like something out of a Woody Allen film. I was taking the subway there, it was summer, it was hot, and I got a bloody nose and bled all over my shirt. But I was almost an hour early, so I went and bought a new shirt. Then, when I got there, I couldn’t get in because they didn’t have my name, and they didn’t have the right information from my agent. And when I finally got in, and I was sitting there with all these weird people in the waiting room, everything from a midget to this unbelievably hot chick wearing snakeskin leather pants.” The experience was so unique that Heslov felt compelled to put it on paper, and thus began his writing career.

Though he relished the experience of writing and directing *Waiting for Woody*, Heslov continued to act in small roles for the next seven or so years, racking up credits in everything from *The Scorpion King* to *True Lies*. Then, in 2005, he sat down to pen *Good Night, and Good Luck*., beginning his transition away from full-time actor. Since then, Heslov has stuck largely to writing (*The Ides of March*, *The Monuments Men*) and producing (*The American*, *Leatherheads* and *Memphis Beat*), in addition to the titles he’s produced by Winter 2012
and then the writer [Chris Terrio] talked with him a lot, and went and visited him a bunch. When Ben [Affleck] came on, he met with Tony and went to Tony's house, and they went to the CIA together. Tony also came to shooting, so he was pretty involved.” According to Heslov, Mendez and his family even make a small cameo in the airport scene when Affleck's character is leaving for Tehran.

Despite working hard to portray as many of the details as accurately as possible, there were some clear artistic liberties that are taken in the interest of ratcheting up the suspense. The pacing, particularly in the third act of the film, departs a bit from the historical accounts, but Heslov is content with how the film ultimately balances the truth and the suspense. “We wanted to make sure that we were getting things right,” Heslov says. “And when I say ‘getting things right,’ I don’t mean that every beat of our story matched every beat of [Mendez’s] story, but that things looked right, and that the spirit of the operation was intact.”

Though Argo is largely billed as a thriller, the film does have its bits of lightheartedness, mostly provided by John Goodman and Alan Arkin, who play the producers in the fake production company set up by the CIA. Though the majority of the films that Heslov is involved with tend to be dramatic, he remains a huge fan of comedy. “I love comedies,” he adds. “I wish that we could find some comedies to do, but it’s hard to find ones that are funny and aren’t just silly. The comedic elements of Argo are really up our alley.” The laughs in Argo mostly come as a self-aware critique of the ostentatious nature of the movie industry, with Goodman delivering lines like “So you want to come to Hollywood and act like a big shot without actually doing anything? You’ll fit right in.”

The humor creates a more complex and varied story, which ultimately helps make the suspense toward the end even more palpable. Visually, the film does a remarkable job of creating an accurate portrayal of the time period. From the cars, to the costumes, to the constant smoking, Argo’s viewers are instantly transported back to 1979. Even the color saturation feels native to the ’70s. The level of accuracy is made fully apparent in the film’s credit sequence, which presents a juxtaposition of the passport photos of the six actual U.S. diplomats with the passport photos made for the actors in the movie; the similarities are incredible. When asked if casting decisions were made in the interest of having the actors physically resemble the people they were portraying, Heslov responds, “Some of that was just dumb luck, and some of that was great hair and makeup work.” The sequence is beautifully tied together with a voice-over from President Jimmy Carter praising the efforts and bravery of the diplomats and Mendez. Interestingly, that soundbite is not actually from 1979, but was collected by the filmmakers specifically for the movie. “Ben had the idea of talking to Carter, which I thought was a brilliant idea, and a great touch.”

Despite the success of Argo and all the other projects he has been involved with, Heslov is not resting on his laurels, and he is currently hard at work on two major projects that look to be very promising. The first is an adaptation of Tracy Letts’ Pulitzer Prize–winning stage drama August: Osage County. Heslov and Clooney are involved as producers, with John Wells directing and Meryl Streep and Julia Roberts attached to star. In addition, Heslov and Clooney are co-writing their next screenplay, The Monuments Men. The World War II–era film is set to star Clooney, Daniel Craig, and Cate Blanchett, with Clooney once again donning the director’s cap. With those two projects taking up the majority of his time, Heslov has yet to figure out what his next project as a director will be. “I’m not looking too much past [those projects] at this point,” he admits, “but I definitely want to get behind the camera again.”

Given the significant success of Heslov’s career as a producer, this magazine can only counsel: Take your time.
Producer Share Participations

Exercising Audit Rights

by David Robinson

Producer share participations, which are a back-end stake in the financial performance of film and television productions, have long been a formal component of a producer’s overall compensation. This is the first of a series of articles designed to educate and make sense of this complex area of expertise, arming you with valuable information that will enable you to maximize the value from your participation deals. In this first installment, we discuss the process of exercising your audit rights with the film studios. Exercising your audit rights is a producer’s frontline defense in optimizing value from your producer share participation.

If you have a producer share participation in your film or television show, you may be wondering whether you should exercise your right to audit the studio. There are many considerations that go into a determination to audit. Among those considerations are when to audit, how to go about performing an audit, who performs the audit, and what to expect during the course of an audit.

One myth to dispel is the notion that the studio will somehow be offended at the prospect of your audit. I mean, after all, producers are always chasing that next project and wondering whether notice of an audit with a particular studio will sour studio relations. The answer is no — a typical audit is not an offense to the studios. In fact, most studios have an entire department set up just to handle these audits, as they are fully expected for product that is in the black. The studio perceives these chores as routine, even through the settlement of any audit claims raised.
To get started, you will want to take a look at the most recent participation statement issued by the studio. Is the statement currently showing a stated profit? I say “stated,” as any profits are contractually defined based on standard studio definitions included within the agreement, and may not necessarily be a true reflection of the actual profit or loss generated by the product. Case in point, the now infamous Art Buchwald vs. Paramount case in which Paramount reported a participation loss to Buchwald even though the film at the time grossed $350 million. Paramount settled the case out of court instead of having their participation accounting methods closely scrutinized by the court. If your participation statement is in fact showing a profit, which are reflected by amounts currently due the producer, then it’s on to the next criteria.

Has the show ever been audited before? If the answer to that is no, and the participation statement is reporting profits, then there’s a high probability that it’s worthwhile to perform an audit. However, a key ingredient is the defined statute of limitations (as defined in each agreement) as to the timing to provide proper notice to the studio to audit. Each producer share agreement specifies the necessary timeline in which to submit formal notice to audit to the studio in order to secure your rights to audit a specific period of time. Most agreements contain a 24-month statute, which means you have 24 months from the date of issuance of a participation statement to provide formal notice to the studio that you object and intend to audit, and will cover the 24-month period leading up to the notice. For example, if your theatrical film was released on June 30, 2004, and the studio issued a participation statement for the two years ending June 30, 2006, then you would have needed to provide a formal written notice to the studio by June 30, 2008, to secure the audit period of inception through the audit date. Once the studio receives and accepts the formal notice to audit, they will begin tolling the audit period from the date of the notice until commencement of the audit. There is no cost to filing a notice with the studio. It merely shows intent and secures the audit period. When in doubt, file, as you can always elect to forgo the audit once it comes up in the studio queue.

If the show has been audited before, you will want to take a look at the issues raised in the prior report, and consider whether an additional audit is justified based upon the performance and issues identified in the prior audit. Since each audit period covers a limited period of time usually ranging from three to 10 years, there can be multiple audits of a show covering subsequent periods. Older agreements tend to be beneficial to audit time after time. That’s because the older terms usually do not define new markets such as new media, and even home video. So there is significant room for interpretation on the part of the studio, which will inevitably take positions that are in its own favor. An audit in these circumstances will refine the
producer’s share reporting to conform with the intent of the agreement on these points.

An example is the application of defined distribution fees to new market revenues. When the home-video market was neither conceived nor defined in an older agreement, the studio will likely apply the highest distribution fee mentioned in the agreement. Your legal representatives, who may even have negotiated the deal, may have a counterpoint to that and have knowledge of what the intended distribution fee was to be on undefined markets, which could even be as little as zero. Other reporting inconsistencies include the application of a royalty to home-video gross receipts, versus reporting full cost basis where 100% of home-video gross receipts are reported less related distribution costs. These differences could result in millions of dollars difference to the producer. An audit in these cases will ensure that the studio reports these new markets properly in the statements both past and going forward.

So you’ve now determined that the statement is in profits and the timing is right. The next factor to consider is the relative value of the producer’s share to probable audit costs. This is a fairly straightforward cost/benefit consideration. Let’s say you produce your producer’s share, as defined by the agreement, is 5% of net profits. And let’s say the expected cost of an audit is $30,000. In this case, you would need to realize a minimum of $600,000 ($30,000/5%) in findings on the audit engagement to cover the cost. Now compare that figure to the top-line revenues, distribution costs, and investment costs reported in the participation agreements. Your legal representatives, who may even have negotiated the deal, may have a counterpoint to that and have knowledge of what the intended distribution fee was to be on undefined markets, which could even be as little as zero. Other reporting inconsistencies include the application of a royalty to home-video gross receipts, versus reporting full cost basis where 100% of home-video gross receipts are reported less related distribution costs. These differences could result in millions of dollars difference to the producer. An audit in these cases will ensure that the studio reports these new markets properly in the statements both past and going forward.

Once you’ve determined that an audit makes sense, you’ll want to contact a CPA firm that specializes in this area. It’s critical that an appropriate specialist is involved, as you will only get one crack at the audit period in question, and missing certain issues or claims can result in the loss of millions to the producer. If you have legal representation or a business manager, your representatives will likely know who to best to engage. If you have no representation at the time, you may want to ask the studio for suggested specialists as they tend to have a good feel for which auditors are efficient and effective.

Now let in line and wait! As you can imagine, the studios are in no rush to service these audits, which typically result in cash payouts. The studio departments that run these engagements are in many cases understaffed. So be prepared to wait one to three years for your audit to come up in the studio queue. Once your engagement comes up in the queue, the studio will notify your auditor and the engagement will commence. As with the wait times to commence an audit, the timeline to fulfill the audit by the studios are also delayed and usually take anywhere from six to 18 months for the studio to fulfill most requests submitted by your auditor. (The engagement would truly take about two to four weeks if all requests were fulfilled by the studio shortly after submission, but again, the studios are in no rush to fulfill the audits.) And in many cases, the evidence provided by the studio is limited and certainly redacted to further limit the ability of the auditor to effectively raise claims. A skilled auditor will have the necessary relationship with the studio to move the audit along effectively, and also know how to deal with the limitations of available evidence.

Upon completion of the audit, a report is issued to the producer and her/his representatives, which in turn is submitted to the studio. The studio will take another three to nine months to schedule the first settlement meeting, at which time all parties meet to discuss the issues and claims raised in the report. From this point forward, the process moves relatively quickly to final settlement. The timing of settlement is also dependent upon the types and materiality of the claims raised in the report. If the claims raised are based on complex issues, and the amounts claimed are unusually significant, then the studio may take more time to work through the issues and settle. Rarely do these engagements move to litigation. As previously noted, the studios deem these engagements as routine, and so they work toward settling in the normal course of business.

In the next issues of Produced by, we will cover various current issues resulting in the most significant claims, and even litigation these days, including related party self-dealing that occurs with vertical integration, and reporting of new media revenues such as ad-supported online streaming, and online video on demand.

David Robinson is a Senior Manager in the Motion Picture & Television Participation Services Group of Green Hasson Janks, bringing more than 20 years of experience to the benefit of producers in the performance of participation audits.
As consumers migrate from hard copies of DVDs and Blu-ray to the digital world, the behavior of consumption is radically changing, including the creation, distribution and consumption of what has been called "DVD extras." Just over 12 years ago, a DVD buyer was lucky to get a director’s commentary on her favorite movie. In fact, she often had to shell out extra money for the special collector’s edition. Over time, extras have become a critical marketing tool, ending up on almost every disc as a way of getting the consumer’s attention and proving that anything could help generate more sales in a declining market. This created a real boom around extras content and many producers have spent the last 10 years making a living creating some extraordinary work. Businesses such as trailer houses found that advanced electronic press kit packages and the “making of” featurettes were extremely lucrative and quickly ramped up departments to accommodate the growing studio needs in this area. But as the market transitions to renting and buying movies from Netflix, Hulu, FlixFling, iTunes and Amazon, "DVD extras" may not have a place to live — yet.

Top digital delivery destinations like Netflix are constantly working to improve their user experience, expand their movie libraries and differentiate their experiences. A lot of these distributors are focused on quality of the main content, which is improving fast and may soon disappear as a differential. So what, then, would they be able to offer up in order to be competitive? It is likely they will simply port over all the featurettes and extras that had been destined for DVD disc 5.

But if DVD extras, content can be a differentiating factor, and even if these new platforms want the content, will the studios keep producing it? Last year, Disney’s CEO Bob Iger admitted on the TV show Charlie Rose, “What we must do is make the product available to [consumers] under flexible or expanded circumstances.” He suggests that if a product is not available when and how someone wants to watch it, they will easily find something else to watch. And in such a competitive and shifting landscape, any differentiator can help.

Corey Reeser, PGA member and Head of Creative Content at Herzog & Company, agrees. "People ask me if DVDs are going to be around in five years. Whether they are or not, I believe that the need for the content is not going away. How they consume it may change, but the need for content is there.” Reeser would know. At Herzog & Company, he has produced entertainment marketing and digital content for properties including Lost, the Pirates of the Caribbean franchise, and the recent Halo 4: Forward Unto Dawn digital series.

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Jay Williams, PGA member and longtime producer of creative “extras” content, concurs that “the content model has shifted for sure. The studios are asking for more and more content … For animated movies and higher-end CG movies, the studios are looking for special animation packages to be created that can be incorporated into their AV campaigns and used to customize content. [But] in general, custom-
new media

increase as this space evolves. But the money is certainly not going away.”

JM Kenny, PGA member and Vice President/Executive Producer of Content at mOcean, suggests that not only is the work continuing, but the content is increasing in both volume and length. “I am working on pieces right now that are 10 minutes long,” notes Kenny. “I produced a massive amount of content for the Rock of Ages DVD recently. I think we did close to three hours of materials. One was 28 minutes long. One was 16. And the studio was behind it a thousand percent. They haven’t shied away from content or asked for a two-minute pod. They want a lot more.”

The challenge is simply doing more with less. While the dollars aren’t disappearing, they are smaller than they were in prior years. Williams notes that “Clearly the biggest challenge is shrinking budgets and the demands being placed on the producers to keep doing a lot more with a lot less. I think the producers are going to have to be more creative with their approach and figure out more ways to incorporate brands in an organic way that doesn’t take away from the viewing but actually enhances it.”

“It was really explosive growth for creative content and continued until the economic collapse in 2008,” he adds. “While the creative content demands continued, the budgets were nearly cut in half. This really began to give rise to brand-funded content that continues today.”

When one gets to Netflix, at least at the time of this writing, there is no beachhead for this content. There is no menu in Netflix filled with ancillary, derivative content. So where the heck does this “bonus” content go?

Answer: Everywhere.

Reeser confirms, “The value is seen as being inherent to the brand. Whether it is iTunes, the Web, Crackle, wherever, the content can go everywhere, not necessarily tied directly to the home-entertainment content itself. It’s part of a greater marketing strategy.” But getting noticed in the great big world of digital everything is quite a challenge. Stepping up the creative is critical to getting attention on various platforms, especially given the importance of social sharing.

Williams suggests, “I think the VOD and the digital download model is still being figured out as it relates to creative content. To me, this is where there are some real opportunities for the future of creative content. DVDs made adding content to the disc easy to access, especially Blu-ray.

“Consumers don’t want to wait for the additional content to download in addition to their movie. They

JM Kenny directing Jackie Chan for Around the World in 80 Days extras content.

PGA member Bill Sarine (right) with brother and partner Doug Sarine.

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Williams notes that while "extras" really super-serve the fans, moving forward, ancillary content serves a more important and wider role. "Fans will always lead the charge as it relates to the titles that appeal to them. However, second-screen content can create experiences beyond the film. Imagine making a purchase of a star’s jewelry or clothing, right from the film. Or co-viewing with family members from across the country and sharing content that could be selected from a menu on an app. I do think we are going to see this model take off quickly, given the number of smartphones and tablets now in the marketplace.”

Sarine believes that the whole entertainment tent can create experiences beyond the film that relates to the titles that appeal to the audience of all demographics. It will continue to be a "way in" for a new audience and stories, “extras” content may enable creative vision around brands and stories, “extras” enable creative vision around brands and stories, “extras” can be selected from a menu on an app. I do think we are going to see this model take off quickly, given the number of smartphones and tablets now in the marketplace.”

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In his office on the Warner Bros. lot, surrounded by pre-production art from his newest film, Cloud Atlas, veteran producer Grant Hill remains soft-spoken and calm. "You never know what kind of challenges you're going to get into, in this business," he says, "but you have to always keep working, never stop because something seems too big." Grant Hill has served as producer and co-producer on some of the most logistically-complex films of the last 20 years, from the massively turbulent production of James Cameron's Titanic, to the 279-day shoot for the Matrix sequels, to the epic visions of Terrence Malick's The Thin Red Line and The Tree of Life. Through all of these productions, Hill has had a simple attitude toward his work: "It's all about serving the director's vision, protecting the vision of the material and getting the maximum amount of value out of the resources you have available."

Hill grew up in small-town Australia, northwest of Melbourne, but movies were long an integral part of his life. "I was always attracted to the big-screen Westerns, very cinematic films, pretty much anything John Huston did. David Lean's pictures, Kubrick...I can tell you the seat I sat in at University for Apocalypse Now...but it was all totally divorced from any idea that I could be involved in film, it was just entertainment."

Hill found himself entering Australia's film industry somewhat unexpectedly. "By accident, I did a law degree in Australia," Hill chuckles. "And then I didn't really feel comfortable in it as a choice of vocation and went traveling instead. I worked in a bunch of different places in Asia and the Middle East and went back to Australia at a loss for what to do. And a friend asked if I'd be interested in being location manager on his film." Hill found himself entering the Australian film industry just as the country was achieving international recognition for its talent and its locations, with directors such as Fred Schepisi, Bruce Beresford, and George Miller launching their careers.

"I loved being a location manager," says Hill. "It's one of the best jobs on a film because you walk between the practical side, organizing locations and making sure everything goes right, and the creative, since those locations are chosen in conjunction with the director and production designer. Plus, you have to be self-motivated, because you're often a department of just one or two people." Hill worked as a location manager and unit production manager on a large number of productions, not just in Australia but across much of Asia and the Pacific. In the early 1990s, he was encouraged to try his hand in Hollywood. Immediately, Hill was working on challenging productions, from the tragic set of The Thin Red Line to the logistically-difficult South African shoot of The Ghost and the Darkness to Titanic at Fox's Rosarito studios. "It was fantastic, diving into the deep end, both figuratively and literally," laughs Hill, who worked as co-producer and unit production manager on James Cameron's film. "It was an incredibly difficult picture in a lot of ways, but it also opened many doors. Threatened to shut a few, for a while, he chuckles.

Soon, Hill was working on another film shot in his native land. "Toward the end of Titanic I got a call one day from Terry Malick, he was doing surveys for The Thin Red Line and a lot of the people he was working with were people that I knew." Malick, who hadn't directed a film since 1978, was preparing to shoot his multi-character World War II epic in Australia, and needed a producer with experience on exotic locations and technically complicated sets. "I said to myself, 'right, that happens a lot, a guy that hasn't made a film in 18 years that you don't know calls you up.'" Hill recalls with a smile. "And I basically finished in Rosarito on Sunday afternoon and on Sunday night I was on a plane with Terry and his crew. It was fantastic."

Working with Malick on both The Thin Red Line and 2011's The Tree of Life gave Hill the opportunity to collaborate with one of the most idiosyncratic directors in Hollywood, and one with a famously improvisational, free-form shooting style that doesn't adhere to traditional screenplay rules. "Terry is very generous and amazing to watch," Hill says. "He had been working on this project that became Tree of Life since the '70s and he had this huge notebook of thoughts and photographs and ideas, it was phantasmagorical in its scope, all these references to planets and revolutions," Hill recalls. In order to make The Tree of Life, Hill and producer Sarah Green had a tougher time selling the movie to executives and investors. "It was hard to get people a vision of something that is so unusual and so broad, compared with The Thin Red Line that was based on a novel — there was a structure. What we did was take this gigantic notebook of Terry's and produce a document, a glossy production book of elements that we put into order and broke down into three or four major segments and showed investors that. It was a powerful document and you could at least look at it and go ‘Oh, hmmm, I see what you’re doing.’"

Malick's loose, improvisational shooting methods also proved to be unique. "There are a lot of days when you might not know what's being shot," Hill says. "But the caveat is that it's very method-based, it's just a different method. Terry knows where those places are in the movie where he will need to improvise or see things happen to know what he wants. So you just have to translate that into a schedule where you know that you're going to start a body of work on this day in this place, and on another day, you're going to have finished it. Maybe you've shot everything on the original schedule, maybe you've shot very little of it, but whatever it is that Terry needs, he will have gathered it and can move on."
It was shockingly down to the wire, perhaps even more than I suspect the directors were aware of. It was one of those things where I was thinking, maybe I can delay telling them we don’t have the money until tomorrow and maybe something will happen overnight.
With two separate crews, problems that would normally be complicated on a film of this scope were magnified. "How do you do makeup? That’s a big question in itself, but now you’re doing two versions of everything. So you have to decide on the designs but also how to shoot it, and how it’s going to work physically and emotionally," says Hill. "Do you take Frank Griebe and John Toll, both great cinematographers, and just push them together?"

After four weeks, the movie seemed to be feasible. "We had a preliminary schedule, a preliminary budget and preliminary designs, but most importantly, we had the idea that this could work as a way of producing this film.”

By this time, however, it became clear that financing for the film was going to be difficult. "The studio [Warner Bros.] had been very supportive but they weren’t going to be able to spend the money that would be required," says Hill, who began raising financing with producer Stefan Arndt by selling territorial distribution to Warners in the United States and via Focus Features internationally. "It very quickly became clear that selling territories and getting some equity investors was not going to be enough," recalls Hill. "We'd been reducing the script, we'd been reducing the budget and got to the point where everybody felt that if we went below this level, we're in danger of not being able to do this film justice.”

Pre-production began on Cloud Atlas even before all of the necessary financing had been raised, with Hill and Arndt taking the lead while the Wachowskis and Tykwer immersed themselves in the creative side of the production. At the same time, since the writer/directors were also producers, floating the film’s pre-production through their own companies, they couldn’t be divorced from the financial realities. "It’s a really fine line you have to tread," says Hill. "You can’t expect directors to work effectively if they don’t feel the right degree of security. You can’t really relate the day-to-day events to them because you don’t want them to lose focus ... On the other hand, you have to make sure they know the salient information at certain points to be informed, so that was pretty tough." Finally, through a patchwork of finding sources, the film’s budget was raised, albeit just barely in time, according to Hill. "It was shockingly down to the wire, perhaps even more than I suspect the directors were aware of," Hill says. "It was one of those things where I was thinking, maybe I can delay telling them we don’t have the money until tomorrow and maybe something will happen overnight," Hill remembers with a grin.

As Hill reflects on his career, he takes note of how unpredictable it’s been. "It’s not a trajectory that I think you could have planned," he says. "There’s a common thread in that I’ve been on a lot of logistically-challenging pictures that were all out of the U.S. I think I was lucky that I had spent a lot of time working in new and different environments."
Overcoming the Great Wall in Cultural Differences

by Randy O. Williams

With the Chinese government expanding its foreign film quota and a booming theatrical market projected to hit $5 billion by 2015 (China’s building an average of 3.5 screens each day), the Santa Ana winds are increasingly blowing east from Hollywood.

Despite a physical separation of more than 6,000 miles between Los Angeles and Beijing and a more significant gulf surrounding the vast historical and cultural differences in storytelling tradition as well as the hurdles of overcoming modern political sensitivities, never before have Western filmmakers had more opportunity behind the Great Wall than they do today. Given the simple fact that within the next few years, China will become the world’s biggest movie market, American producers are taking advantage of expanded access to more market, as well as the newly-installed Chinese government’s mandate to make culture (e.g., cinema) a priority.

Still the question looms, at its core, what do Hollywood and China offer each other?

“It’s a combination of things,” says producer Sid Ganis. “For opened, they have about 1.5 billion people, most of them up to speed on the contemporary world with interested eyes and ears concerning movies, and film has become a very important part of Chinese culture.”

Adds producer/director Brett Ratner: “Obviously, the box office is tremendous right now compared to when I did Rush Hour. There were a smaller number of films then, and a smaller amount of participation. Now there are more films and a higher split. I can see a movie opening here at $20 million and in China at $100 million. I’ll tell you that China and Russia, which were two markets that did not exist when I did the Rush Hour films, are driving the business right now.”

From the Chinese perspective, what Hollywood offers is the American filmmaker’s knack for creating higher production values, as they want their products to play worldwide. To ensure outlets, they are also going after American distribution companies, evidenced by the Wanda Group purchasing all those theaters from AMC. So clearly, the Chinese want to be in the worldwide production/distribution business which America has pioneered for decades.

In his book, Americans Idol After Iraq: Competing for Hearts and Minds in the Global Media Age, Oscar-winning producer and PGA member Mike Medavoy talked in essence about cultures competing beyond their borders, with China right in the mix.

“It’s pretty clear since they translated my book that they are taking that to heart,” laughs Medavoy. “The Chinese would definitely like to expand their culture. They’ve got a 6,000-year-old civilization. They have a past, present and future history and they’d like to present all of it.”

David U. Lee, a USC graduate and groundbreaking film producer based in Los Angeles and Beijing whose credits include The Forbidden Kingdom, Shanghai and Inescapable, talks a little about the current dynamics that are affecting this aspect of the industry and why China is rapidly becoming a player.

“With the U.S. domestic summer box office being as bad as it was, thoughts turned about what direction to go. A few years ago, a handful of filmmakers got ahead of the game getting out into emerging markets like Russia, India and China. Now those places are part of a big driving force for American-based producers who need to make films that travel. And the China film market has been leading the way for the past 5–6 years with no signs of slowing down, so producers need to make movies that get a piece of the Chinese box office.”

Be it production or distribution, by any measure the Chinese film industry is going through very rapid growth and major changes in its fundamentals. Whereas 12 years ago, films were either art films or thinly-veiled propaganda films, they now are trying to be more market-oriented.

“If you have Battleship- or Transformers-type films grossing $30 million upward to $70 million–$80 million and even $100 million in China, you can’t ignore that,” points out Lee, who is currently working on a romantic comedy with fellow producers Nanshun Shi and Faye Yu from a story written by Ron Bass called arranged.

“[Hollywood] studios want to hedge their bets,” Lee continues. “There are some China-friendly gestures being represented in some of these Chinese films that traditionally wouldn’t exist. At the end of Alice in Wonderland in mentioning the sequel, that Alice is going to China. That never existed in any of the Alice in Wonderland stories! Why China of all places? That was planted in there. So for the studio producers, that makes sense as their angle.”

Beyond the possibility of reaching a mass potential audience hungry for a greater range of stories, the tremendous growth in the film business in China involves other factors as well. In addition to luring producers with more theaters and streaming video, the country offers “a whole range of new possibilities — from new locations to many new story possibilities, to new talent,” says Hong Kong–based producer Nanshun Shi, whose movie A Simple Life won six awards at the 2011 Venice Film Festival.

Many U.S. tentpole films are looking at getting 20% of their box office from China, but one of the advantages of working within the Chinese system is that if the film is a
co-production, film rentals become 42% instead of 25% for imported films.

“That is a huge difference!” points out Shi, adding, “If U.S. films were to shoot more in China, I think the production system and the infrastructure would fall more in line with international practices sooner.”

And it is that co-production designation that is most alluring to the Western producer:

“Right now, coincidentally, I have produced the biggest budget Chinese film to date, *Chinese Zodiac* starring Jackie Chan,” says Ratner. “It is a co-production with Jackie. It’s an action film written, directed and starring Jackie about a treasure hunt to travel the globe to bring back the bronze head statue of the 12 Chinese zodiac animals, which were stolen by the French and British — true story — from the imperial summer palace in Beijing. Shot in eight countries for $60 million (which is unheard of for Asian movies), it’s scheduled for worldwide release this December.”

While Ratner, in partnership with a South Korean conglomerate, CJ Entertainment, is aiming for another co-production for his upcoming East-meets-West buddy action comedy, *The Golden Age: The Lost Treasure of Zheng He*, there are certainly challenges for Western producers to obtain that designation, including not only maintaining editorial control over story, but financing as well.

Given the need to work within China’s comparatively strict government vetting process over what kind of stories can be filmed as part of the more lucrative co-production designation, American producers have a lot of hurdles to deal with. For example, the state-owned China Film Group, which oversees the release of imported movies, has been scheduling U.S. films from identical genres on the same release dates, aiming to limit their total grosses and boost the percentage of box office generated by Chinese-made pictures. For instance, China Film Group decided to open the Sony’s *The Amazing Spider-Man* and Warner Bros.’ *The Dark Knight Rises* on the same date. Even so, Hollywood pictures still far outpaced local productions in the first half of 2012.

Companies that desire to have their movies distributed in China submit them to SARFT (State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television) several months before their U.S. launch date in hopes of getting permission to open there and an optimum release date. There is no official appeals process and unofficial lobbying efforts by studio representatives in Beijing have been unsuccessful. The MPAA has thus far been unable to persuade Chinese authorities to change their policies beyond expanding the foreign quota from 20 to 34 titles.

That is not likely to change soon, as China can’t allow itself to be seen as being dominated by Hollywood. American producers shouldn’t be surprised, after all. This is a market where noncommercial considerations, including political ones, carry significant weight.

“The Chinese authorities have recently taken a stronger stand on competition not only in entertainment, but other businesses as well,” says Medavoy. “That stranglehold and unfairness of the trade issues I think will continue. We will have to fight it. But what is clear to me is the worldwide Web is going to open up more product. The question then becomes, how do people make money off it?”

Still, success is evident on the screens in China. *The Expendables 2*, which did not get a co-production designation, has done very well throughout China. A lot of the film’s success can be attributed to the popularity of ensemble casts, which are common in Chinese productions (this ensemble includes Hong Kong action star Jet Li and Chinese actress Yu Nan), as well as Chinese filmgoers’ enthusiasm for stars who may be considered less current in the United States.

What is undeniable and what savvy American producers are aware of is the Chinese consumers’ surging appetite for Hollywood and Hollywood/Chinese productions. Chinese moviegoers have been patronizing American movies in record numbers. And Western producers continue to flock there for what Ganis observes is the simple fact that “not only is there

Above: Producer/director Brett Ratner with Jackie Chan. Left: David U. Lee (middle, standing) on set with creative team, including cast member Kevin Spacey (seated left).
Fujifilm Corporation, Hideyuki Shirai, Katsuhisa Oozeki
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The award was given to FUJIFILM Corporation for the design and development of ETERNA-RDS for use in the archival preservation of film and digital images.

"The Chinese people are very hungry to see other movies that they have not been able to. Definitely, both worlds are going to benefit from working together."

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The potential for making money, but the potential for telling great stories is there as well."

One of those stories is being produced by PGA member Raffaella De Laurentiis, whose experience working with the Chinese goes back to the late '80s. "I was the first to shoot there. It was Tai-Pan in 1986. Now more than 25 years later, I go to produce the first English-speaking movie entirely financed by the Chinese. The film will be an adaptation of The Cursed Piano, a novel by Chinese author Bei Lu. It is a love story set against the backdrop of Japanese-occupied China at a time when Shanghai offered refuge to Europe’s persecuted Jews."

Continues De Laurentiis, who has other Chinese-associated films in development. "This movie I’m producing with Mike Medavoy, and when he called me knowing I had done a lot of producing in Europe and China, I was excited about this unique opportunity to be in from the start. We didn’t even have a script, which required more than two years of work. Even the way Americans and Chinese do script notes is different. Given the language difficulties and translation process, it takes a long time to understand and execute. But it is all slowly coming together."

"It will be groundbreaking in many ways," continues De Laurentiis, "apart from the fact that it’s based on a true story that has never been told. What is unique about this film is that it is the first time a Chinese studio is 100% financing a foreign-language film. The film will be shot in English by a Chinese director, I think they felt the movie was not a true Chinese movie. Some of the words spoken by Christian Bale in the movie were not of that era."

When Sid Ganis first visited China in 2008 as president of the Motion Picture Academy, part of his role was to help them get acquainted with Westerners and Western moviemaking. As a veteran film producer (Mr. & Mrs., Akeelah and the Bee) and former studio global marketing executive, Ganis talks about nuances in motion picture viewing of foreign films.

"Part of the challenge is our culture being willing to accept the fact that it is okay to read subtitles when you go to the movies," he observes. "All over the world, most cultures are willing to read subtitles. I agree, seeing a dubbed movie isn’t the best way to watch it, but I do believe we Americans should understand that there is more than just the English language in this world. So part of it is us getting used to watching films not made in English. And just as important, the quality of work coming out of China has to be up to the standards of what moviegoers expect both in terms of production and story."

The Out of the Blue Entertainment chief adds: "Just like we make great films, mediocre films and once a while a lousy film, so do the Chinese. But more and more we are seeing very interesting movies coming out of China, starting years ago, like when Farewell My Concubine zoomed to the top. I’ve noticed that there are quite a few talented young filmmakers coming out of China. Lots of them speak English well. When I ask where they learned it, most simply say ‘television.’ Now they’re learning it in school.”
Certainly if one spends time in China, it is clear that the sword-and-sandal epics and martial arts themes are quite prevalent across all media.

“I think Chinese audiences are growing weary of watching big period pieces. If you watch Chinese television, they have soap operas on all the time, and they are period settings,” says De Laurentiis. “The Chinese people are very hungry to see other movies that they have not been able to. Definitely, both worlds are going to benefit from working together. It is just hard to find the right story.”

Ah yes, the elusive story.

While stories set in the martial arts genre are among those that foreign producers have been able to replicate, producer Lee, whose upcoming films include a gritty Asian-American version of Scarface starring one of China’s hottest action stars, Donnie Yen, talks about another aspect of Hollywood filmmaking that will be more of a challenge.

“When China makes a war film or romantic comedy, anything Hollywood already does … Those movies won’t work anywhere. Audiences around the world will just choose to watch the Hollywood version because it has bigger movie stars, the budgets are better, the effects are superior and it has more marketing power,” states Lee. “Stars like Tom Cruise were built on millions in negative costs and marketing power, plus they have the power of his entire body of work. No other country can compete with that. You could put the biggest star in China into a $200 million movie, but it will be impossible to replicate what Hollywood does. American stars have been built through generations of films.”

Because of course, Hollywood doesn’t just make American movies. They make movies that sell the most tickets around the world, and have for decades. Hollywood studios don’t set out with the goal of creating a story that represents America’s core values and culture, but rather to tell stories that will sell the most tickets worldwide. Yes, there are some films that will do better domestically and have more American themes to them, but by and large, Hollywood studios need to produce films that have a broad global appeal. The American film industry is a well-oiled machine that has been in business for a long, long time.

Lee, whose producing arrangement with Perfect World Pictures, a wholly-owned independent Chinese company, represents one of the first-term deals that exists in Hollywood between an American producer and a Chinese studio, sums up the state-of-the producing business between the United States and China.

“While China has recently produced some of the most expensive films ever made in their native language, as a distribution and marketing platform, China’s film business is nowhere near Hollywood. It is going to take many years for China to get there. So while China has award-winning filmmakers, as a business, as a way of making a product that travels, it has a long way to go. But they’re learning fast, and they’re learning a lot from Hollywood producers.”

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A TRUE CLASSIC, starring a royal collection of the most brilliant and accomplished British actors alive.”

— Rex Reed, THE NEW YORK OBSERVER
Where do I take my project to get it made? What studio, network, major production company, or potential producing partner will give me fair consideration? And who will I find there? Are they producer-friendly? Will they do business with me? When planning your strategy, every producer faces these questions.

This is the first installment of “The Company Line,” a new department in Produced by, aiming to give you some current inside information that can help you in your decision-making when it comes to trying to set up your project. And as we’ve discussed, there are producer-friendly entities that are more accessible than the seemingly monolithic studios. But every company in this business needs new projects, and our Guild provides the core of professionals they look to, to bring them content.
Film & Digital ARGO-ing Together!

If you look at people who have really been successful over the long run, they remember two things: 1) They remember it’s a business first, and not just a hobby. And 2) They have repeat business. If you don’t have repeat business, you’re dead. And nobody comes back because they’ve had a terrible experience.

But when you have repeat business, that’s a new one. But the point is, the market is changing, the bar into Millennium, he confirms, “Yep, that’s a new one. But the point is, the market is changing, the bar is higher, and so if I can help out a little bit, I do. But it’s been good, really a pleasure.

"What’s been really interesting," he continues, "is how many people I know, who came in here and had a terrible experience."

Regarding the much-anticipated Gerard Butler big-budget action film Olympus Has Fallen that Gill brought into Millennium, he confirms, “Yep, that’s a new one. But the point is, the company figured — and very correctly — that the market is changing, the bar is higher, and so if I can help out a little bit, I do. But it’s been good, really a pleasure.

"What’s been really interesting," he continues, "is how many people I know, who came in here and had a terrible experience."

Gill reflects on his first 16 months at the company, where he has had a chance to put his mark on the company’s recent slate. “For me, Millennium’s an important place for me to work, which I can’t say has been a hallmark of my career,” he observes, to much collective laughter. “This is the opposite. They’re good human beings, and they’re good at what they do.”

As further evidence of the company’s recent direction, he notes, “I walked in at a truly advantageous time. They had already made Playing for Keeps, they had already made The Big Wedding, they had already made The Expendables, obviously they had made The Expendables.

A recent executive addition that indicates this new emphasis is veteran studio executive and producer Mark Gill. Gill, whose career track started at Sony, served as head of Miramax LA, and later as president of Warner Independent Pictures, where he guided such releases as Argo-ing Together!

Though they are working with major filmmakers such as Michael Bay, we tried to get a sense of whether they would still work with the smaller and mid-range producer, Trevor Short, Millennium CFO, chimes in: "For us, it’s not about smaller producers or bigger producers; it’s about movies, and we make movies that we can sell... If somebody walks in the door with a decent project, it’s got the right elements, if it’s got some legs to it, we’ll certainly look at it. A smart producer with a smart project can get it made here."

Gill continues: “To give you an idea, we have baby producers two years out of college, right up to Michael Bay’s company calling us. We’ll talk to anybody. Every time you’ve decided you know where your good projects come from, there’s always something else that surprises you.”

Film and Digital do go together; just ask Rodrigo Prieto, ASC, AMC.

For shooting “Argo”, Rodrigo chose Clairmont Camera to fulfill his diversified camera needs. Rodrigo’s extensive package included Arricams in both 4-perf and 2-perf configuration, Arri BL4 2-perf, Arri 435 2-perf, Arri 235, Alexa Plus, and a wide assortment of anamorphic and spherical lenses. Kudos to Rodrigo and his creativity; thank you for choosing our tools!

Andree Martin
VP Technical Services

Michael Condon, SOC
VP Digital Division

www.clairmont.com

Film & Digital ARGO-ing Together!

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www.clairmont.com
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Regarding Olympus Has Fallen, it should be noted that the project was first read in February, the script was ready in April, and they were shooting in July, with a release set for April 2013. Few film companies can be so nimble. Says Davidson, when they decide to make a project, all four “are all over it” to push it forward.

Clearly, watching the interplay within this quartet, all four have unique skill sets, all have contributed to the company’s current success, and all exhibit camaraderie and a sense of humor in a tough business.

And as it is a tough business, from an indie producer’s standpoint, you wouldn’t be doing badly at all to get your project set up and made at Millennium’s boutique movie factory on Wilshire Boulevard. There is a sense that their goals are the same as yours and mine: to make a good picture with a good chance of commercial success. And after all, isn’t that what it’s all about?

From left: Avi Lerner, Boaz Davidson, Trevor Short, and Mark Gill of Millennium Films
GOOD PLANET MEDIA: Inspiring the shift to sustainable, healthy and ethical living through media

Like many producers passionate about the environment, Michael Kaliski felt one of the best ways to create change was to create films with an environmental message. But after years of producing “conscious content” that seemed to reach only a niche audience, Kaliski had an epiphany: to reach a larger audience, he had to get the message of sustainability into films and shows people were already watching. He chose to focus on some of the most important, yet subtle, messaging found in film and TV — advertising — with the goal of inspiring people to make better consumer choices for the planet.

It started with a simple idea — “What if we have Brad Pitt drinking out of a reusable water bottle in a film instead of drinking a Mountain Dew out of a plastic bottle?”

“We imitate what we see in real life and on screen,” observes Kaliski, “and that’s where we take our social cues from, our heroes. And our heroes aren’t just Iron Man; our heroes are Julia Roberts in a romantic comedy. I think this initiative could create a massive shift … which is crazy to say, but I think it has that potential.”

For Kaliski, that massive shift began with his founding of the first-ever, green-product-placement company, Good Planet Media. Good Planet places and integrates healthy, sustainable and ethical products in films, TV shows and digital content with the goal of inspiring people to make better consumer choices for the planet.

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Good Planet Media is already finding success in Hollywood placing green products like Monte Vibiano wine and O.N.E. Coconut Water in the film Expendables 2 and Chico Bags and Hint Mints in Long Time Gone. Green-product placement isn’t limited to just products. Kaliski recently signed California vegan restaurant Café Gratitude as a client, getting it featured in an episode of The New Normal on NBC.

It wasn’t long before Kaliski landed the product of his original, Brad Pitt-based concept: a reusable water bottle! After signing “the anti-bottle” company Vapur and placing their bottles in a few productions, it was only natural to offer the crews the use of the bottles too. Kaliski is well aware of the rampant use of plastic water bottles in production and hoped the use of the reusable bottles would divert some bottles out of the trash. The producers and crew were receptive and soon he was being asked to help green productions in addition to his green product placement services.

Grow Planet Media jumped right in and has greened a variety of productions including Fox’s Touch, a David LaChapelle ad for Clinique and a Ben Folds Five Fraggle Rock music video. In his work, Kaliski often uses PGA Green’s green vendor database GreenProductionGuide.com as a trusted resource. But Kaliski and his team learned that there’s more to greening a set than finding the perfect organic caterer. “On set, we are eco-production ninjas,” he smiles. “We don’t want to disrupt the flow of production. Producers are often worried we will be a ‘tree-hugging gorilla in their midst’ that will slow everything down.”

Another worry of producers? You guessed it: budget. But Kaliski confirms they often end up saving the production money in unexpected ways. For example, Good Planet Media recently greened a series of commercials for Old Navy. The biggest hurdle to greening that production was also the biggest object on set — a massive system of giant tubes for actors to slide down. (Numerous poor souls went into the slide wearing baggy jeans and came out happily wearing perfectly-fit jeans, of course.) The production tried to sell the tubes to a sci-fi show for a fraction of the value, but the sale didn’t happen. It would have required a significant cost to dismantle and haul away the tubes, not to mention the cost to the environment of having it sit in a landfill. Instead, Good Planet Media arranged to donate the slides to MUSE School in Calabasas through his partnership with Lauren Selmen at Ecowations. MUSE School happily accepted the donation and gave the production a tax write-off of $67,000 for the value of the tubes. It was a true win-win: The production was sustainable and saved money on the haul-down, the value of the write-off more than covered Good Planet Media’s fee and the school kids got a new playground. Most importantly, the Earth had one less massive pile of junk sitting in a landfill.

“When all the pieces come together on a production, when our products are being used and we’re reducing the impact on the planet, it’s really satisfying,” Kaliski says. “But what really gets in my heart is when people come up to me on set and thank me for what we’re doing, because they’re aware of how wasteful their own industry is and want to do something about it but don’t know how to start. The ripple effect is very exciting.”

While the visual of a major star like Brad Pitt drinking from a reusable water bottle in a film no doubt influences millions of people, maybe Kaliski’s passion and vision have just as much potential to create a massive global shift toward conscious choices on set … one crew member at a time.

RACHAEL JOY

Michael Kaliski (left) with musician Ben Folds.
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 Vance Van Petten at (310) 358-9020 x104.

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

### If I qualify, is my employer required to approve my coverage?
Unfortunately, no. However, the cost to the employer is reasonable enough that many employers will approve the coverage. Additionally, standard practice has dictated (though again, not required) that once a production begins making contributions to the Health Plan for one producer, it will make those same contributions for any eligible producer on the show, provided coverage is requested in a timely fashion.
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 another self-pay coverage), it would be worth your while to investigate the options you may have through the PGA self-pay plans.

Do you have health insurance?

Is it employer-paid?

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

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

Congratulations. You’re one of the lucky ones.

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

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

Do you work for an AMPTP signatory?

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

Do your production utilize a West Coast IA crew?

Have you been credited with 600 hours of such work over the past six months, assuming a 56-hour workweek?

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

Did your employer make the contributions?

Congratulations, you’ve got employer-paid health coverage. You must work 400 hours over the next six months (assuming a 56-hour workweek) to maintain your coverage.

Employee didn’t know how

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

Questions? Contact:

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

Self-pay Plans
Scott Brandt  (888) 700-7725

PGA HEALTH BENEFITS: STEP BY STEP

START

Do you have health insurance? yes

Is it employer-paid? yes

Are you typically credited as Producer/Produced by, Executive Producer, Associate Producer or Post-Production Supervisor? 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 600 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

Congratulations, you’ve got employer-paid health coverage. You must work 400 hours over the next six months (assuming a 56-hour workweek) to maintain your coverage.

Employee didn’t know how

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Do it employer-paid? no

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

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

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

Do you work for an AMPTP signatory? no

Do you work on a theatrical motion picture, primetime network program, or primetime dramatic first-run syndicated program? no

Does your production utilize a West Coast IA crew? no

Have you been credited with 600 hours of such work over the past six months, assuming a 56-hour workweek? no

Request that your employer make contributions into the Motion Picture Industry Plan on your behalf. no

Did your employer make the contributions? no

Employer didn’t know how

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

They say you could practically drop the camera here and still get great film. Amazing backdrops will do that, but we’re not going to try to get by on good looks alone. We’ve also offering a 15% incentive. No wonder they just shot Django Unchained and Modern Family here.

Visit www.filmwyoming.com to find out how.
With the holidays approaching, the PGA once again came together to celebrate one thing on the night of December 4: a great year in producing. Once again, the West Coast PGA Holiday Party was held at the elegant Luxe Hotel. With excellent food, friendly company, and the exciting chance to win a bonus gift via the prize drawings, everyone stayed late into the evening, enjoying conversations with colleagues and reflecting on their year.

As each member entered the party, they were greeted by delicious food provided by the Luxe Hotel. Even better, each dining table was graced with a winter-themed cake provided by A Wish and a Whisk. (The cakes were so pretty that most attendees didn’t suspect they were real until the guests cut into them.) As the evening progressed, each table was greeted...
And what would a PGA holiday party be like without the joy of winning at casino games? I lost my money at blackjack while I saw lots of members raking it in at the craps and roulette tables. The prizes in the final drawing spoiled everyone, ranging from a stay at Planet Hollywood in Las Vegas, to GM loaner vehicles, to Le Clafouts gift certificates. Additional drawing prizes were provided by Tony Burch, Massage Envy of Beverly Hills, Panera Bread, Cheese Store of Beverly Hills, Bristol Farms, Murad, Globe Trottoys, The Redd Collection, Caesars Palace Las Vegas, JW Marriott Las Vegas Resort, and Delta Airlines.

Whether you won or not, the decor of nutcrackers, a sleigh and giant wreath from Almost Christmas Prop Shoppe, marvelously atmospheric lighting by PRG, and a snow machine from Blank Extreme Entertainment, provided a wonderland that was a gift in itself.

Coordinated by the PGA Events Committee under the guidance of Vicente Williams, and executed by PGA volunteers and staff, the event left producers celebrating late into the evening without a care in the world.

And why shouldn’t they? The next PGA gathering wouldn’t be until after the new year. This truly was a glorious send-off to an exceptional year for our producing community.

–RYAN WILLIS
New Members
The Producers Guild is proud to welcome the following new members, who have joined the Guild since October, 2012.

PRODUCERS COUNCIL
SHANNON ARELLANO
RICK AUSTIN
VALARIE BENNING BARNEY
JOE BERLINGER
NANCY BERNSTEIN
CATHY CAMBRIA
HEIDI CHRISTENSON
VANESSA COIFMAN
MOLLY COOPER
MICHAEL COSTIGAN
PAUL COYNE
KATHRYN DEAN
MEGAN ELLISON
MICHAEL FOX
JAMES FRAIOLI
LIANNE HALFON
JONATHAN HAUG
DOMINI HOFMANN
M. ELIZABETH HUGHES
GEOFF KEIGHLEY
AIMEE KRAMER
ROB LAPLANTE
CYBIL MALACHI
CASEY MORTENSEN
SCOTT NEMES
SALVADOR PEREZ
AIDA RODGERS
PILAR SAVONE
DAVID SCHAPIRO
JEREMY STECKLER
ERIC UPSHUR
DANIEL WAGNER
MARGARET WHITTON

NEW MEDIA COUNCIL
KRISTIN BOUSQUET
JAY BUSHMAN
GOLDIE CHAN
RYAN COPPLE
VICTORIA CORDOVA
UKME EMEM
CHRISTINA FERGUSON
ALISON FOLINO
JONATHAN HAUG
CHRISTIAN HEJNAL
MICHAEL KATZ
REBECCA KINSKEY
SETH LADERMAN
GERI LOGAN
KRISTYN MACREADY
COREY REESER
BRIAN SCULLY
RICHEE SOLOMON

AP COUNCIL
Associate Producer/Production Manager
KATHARINE CULPEPPER
NIKI DELONE
RON FELLAH
LARRY GOLDSTEIN
LILY GRIDER
CHRISTOPHER LEAHY
LINDA MARR
REBECCA MUH
BILLY PATTERSON
DIANE PERROTTA

SARAH PLATT
DARIA SCOCOMMARO
KARLA TORRES
REAVES WASHBURN
SALVATORE VINCENT DE PAUL
ZANNMIO

Segment/Field/Story Producer
ANGELA CHIU
JACLYN DALTON
WENDY ENGLISH
TALIA HARARI

Production Coordinator
JULIA MORGAN
MELISSA RAY
MARGARET SMITH

Post-Production
CHRISTOPHER ADAMS
JILL BREITZMAN
LOWELL DUBRINSKY
DUSTYN GOBLER
MILDA HARRIS
LIZA SCHROEDER

Visual Effects
KAREN MURPHY
WILLIAM POWLOSKI

Member Benefits
• Access to all-new PGA Job Board, online résumé search, employment tools and job forums
• 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
• Full access to PGA website including events, calendar, social networking tools
• Eligibility for individual, family and small business healthcare options through Producers Health Insurance Agency
• Participation in the Motion Picture Industry Health, Welfare & Pension Plan
• Eligibility for PGA Mentoring Program
• Listing of contact and credit information in searchable online roster
• 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

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Upon my acceptance to the PGA, the first thing I did was sign up for the Mentoring Program. (Okay, the first thing I actually did was send out a Facebook blast proudly proclaiming I was a new member of the Producers Guild — and then I signed up for the Mentoring Program!) Having just closed out three years as a senior producer for Disney’s digital division, I decided to focus my efforts on independent projects. This seemed an opportune time to seek out a mentor. After getting to know me via a friendly interview, the Mentoring Committee perceptively suggested that Lynn Hendee (Ender’s Game, The Tempest) might be a good match for me. After the interview, I pretty much floated back to my car as I imagined meeting with Lynn, gathering as much wisdom as possible in the spare minutes she might have to talk to me.

About a month later, I got an email congratulating me on my mentor pairing with Lynn Hendee! After screaming aloud with excitement and frightening my sleeping dog half to death, I immediately composed an email to Lynn asking if she might be able to spare 15 minutes to talk with me. Given her great successes shepherding films from script to screen, I was eager for the chance to hear from Lynn about her experiences. Not only did she respond within minutes, she made the time to meet with me that very week.

Meeting Lynn was wonderful. Per the suggestion of the Committee, I came prepared with specific questions regarding two different projects I have in various stages of development. Lynn instantly put me at ease, and took nearly an hour out of her day to talk with me while in production on Ender’s Game. She asked about my background and graciously listened as I described my producing journey thus far. Generously sharing some of her own stories, Lynn offered priceless insights and advice about my general path as a producer, and proposed specific ideas about how to move my projects forward. Since that first meeting, I have been to visit her several more times, each a better experience than the last. I implemented some key advice Lynn offered, and I find myself encouraged to be on the right path to reach my goals. Lynn is not only a top-notch producer; she has been a sensational mentor. She always finds a way to make herself available in the midst of her busy schedule, and she is genuinely invested in my success as a producer.

In an industry that can be voraciously competitive, the PGA, and specifically the Mentoring Program, foster a necessary sense of community, and encourage generosity amongst producers. My experience with the PGA Mentoring Program has been terrific from start to finish and has become an invaluable asset in my professional journey. I wholeheartedly recommend the Mentoring Program to anyone who may be considering it. Moreover, anyone who has the great fortune to be matched with Lynn Hendee is in for a real treat.
What is the Producers’ Mark?
One of the Producers Guild’s most important goals is to ensure that producers are recognized for their work. The Producers’ Mark is a certification mark that is issued by the Producers Guild. The Mark is indicated by the lowercase letters p.g.a. following the “Produced By” credit of those producers who performed a majority of the producing duties on a given film.

How does the Producers’ Mark help you?
It’s taken several decades and the support of hundreds of the most respected producers working today to provide this process for certifying — for both the audience and the industry — that you put in the hours, days, weeks, months or even years producing your motion picture. Once you have earned the Mark, not only do studios, financiers and partners know that you have hands-on producing experience, but you are automatically eligible for award recognition if your film is nominated for the Oscars, Golden Globes or Producers Guild Awards.

How do you get your “Produced By” credit certified with the Producers’ Mark?
FIRST, GO TO PRODUCERSMARK.COM
The distributor or “owner” of the film must initiate the process through the Producers Guild’s secure online system. Over the course of the process, the Producers Guild will solicit input from all producers on the film, as well as a variety of third parties intimately involved with the production. Using the same arbitration system that determines eligible producer nominees for awards consideration, an impartial panel of experienced producers will make a determination as to which producers — often, there will be more than one — performed a majority of the producing duties on the film.

Do you have to be a PGA member to receive the Producers’ Mark?
The Producers’ Mark is available to all producers, regardless of Guild membership, but only for theatrical motion pictures. The Producers’ Mark is unlike the membership designations (for example, A.S.C., A.C.E., C.S.A.) which denote an affiliation with a professional organization.

Which studios and distributors honor the use of the Producers’ Mark?
At present, the companies that have agreed to honor the Mark include Columbia, Universal, 20th Century Fox, DreamWorks Animation and Screen Gems. You can expect more companies to sign on soon, and you should request that your own studio or distributor agree to honor the Mark.

What does it cost to get the Producers’ Mark?
Nothing. Certification for the Producers’ Mark is free of charge.