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Walter Parkes & Laurie MacDonald
"The business has changed absolutely."

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Earlier this year, back in the spring, I spoke to one of our members, Dan Paulson. He made a simple suggestion — that the PGA hold a town hall–style meeting where members could pose their questions to the Guild leadership in person.

We could see that this was a great idea. For much of its history, the Guild’s summer General Membership Meeting had served as that kind of open forum. But with the institution of the Produced By Conference, we had to admit that the General Membership Meeting was no longer the focal point it had once been; rather than raising knotty issues, most attendees seemed more eager to wrap up the proceedings and move on to the Conference Kickoff Party. (And who could blame them? Those parties were a blast.)

Hosting an effective town hall meant finding a way for all members to participate, not just the ones who could find their way to a meeting room in Los Angeles on a Saturday morning. Particularly, we knew we would have to serve our members in the PGA East, PGA Northwest, our National Capital chapter, and all across the country.

Finding a means to accomplish that goal wasn’t easy. Our biggest assist came from none other than SAG-AFTRA, who loaned us the use of their conference rooms in both their Los Angeles and New York headquarters, complete with a closed-circuit video link. I’m proud of the close ties our Guild has built with SAG-AFTRA over the past few years, and without the assistance of Hollywood Executive Director Ilyanne Kichaven and National Executive Director David White, it’s hard to see how our town hall could have happened. I hope we’ll have the opportunity to return the favor someday soon.

While we wished we could have extended the video link to all PGA members, the technical limitations proved too intractable. So we did the next best thing: invited all members outside of New York and Los Angeles to listen in via conference call, and submit questions or comments via text messages and e-mails.

When the officers and staff gathered bright and early (Los Angeles time, anyway) on Saturday, September 22, at SAG-AFTRA headquarters, we didn’t know what to expect. Would we be able to answer the questions that were posed? How many people would show up? Would we be facing an angry mob?

As it turns out, we needn’t have worried. True to the spirit of Dan’s original suggestion, our members rose to the occasion with smart, insightful questions that put the health of the Producers Guild (and not personal hobbyhorses) front and center. And our panel of respondents, which included President Mark Gordon, Vice Presidents Gary Lucchesi, Screech Washington, Peter Saraf, Rebecca Graham Forde and Chris Thomes, Treasurer Lori McCreary, Associate National Executive Director Susan Sprung and Supervisor of Communications Chris Green, did a tremendous job of keeping their answers direct, comprehensive and, above all, honest.

The result was the closest we’ve yet come to a 360-degree picture of our Guild, its strengths and weaknesses, and its priorities for the future. (You’ll find a summary of several of the most notable questions in the PGA Bulletin section of this magazine, on pages 54–55.) The morning left everyone I spoke to — officers and members alike — excited and energized to tackle the challenges ahead.

Time and again, I’ve said that our members are our single most valuable resource. This time, Dan Paulson proved that statement true — his terrific idea could change the course of the entire Guild. But the next great PGA idea just might be yours. So let us know about it, either at our next town hall (tentatively scheduled for next spring), or simply by sending us an e-mail. It doesn’t matter how you ask; we’re here to listen, either way.
If you work in this business long enough, you’ll encounter producers of every stripe and inclination. Even though the job of the producer encompasses all phases of production and requires collaboration with every facet of a project, most producers will admit to one or two aspects of the job that really get them fired up. Some producers live for deal-making and packaging. Some get most excited at the prospect of high-stakes problem solving in the pressure-cooker environment of physical production. Some strive continually to work with a variety of directors, “collecting” Oscar nominees like baseball cards.

Five minutes talking to the married producing team of Walter Parkes and Laurie MacDonald, and their particular passion becomes hard to miss. Parkes and MacDonald are development junkies.

That’s not to say they’re not producers in every sense of the title — finding the money, putting the elements together, scouting the locations, overseeing the shoot. But one gets the sense that given the choice, the pair would like nothing more than to be locked in a room with a screenwriter or two, bouncing ideas off the walls and each other, waiting for the moment when that airtight intersection of character, story structure and emotional impact comes into focus.

Individually and together, the team followed the lure of story all the way to the producer’s chair. Parkes’ prior gig was as a screenwriter himself, earning an Oscar nomination for writing WarGames, while MacDonald put in five years as a development exec at Columbia before she and Parkes went out on their own. That initial stint as independent producers took a memorable detour when Steven Spielberg tapped the duo to run Amblin Entertainment. The newly-minted execs had barely caught their breath before they found themselves at the helm of DreamWorks, the first movie studio in living memory to be created from scratch. Parkes and MacDonald served jointly as studio Presidents for more than a decade, finally leaving the executive suite behind in 2006. Since then, the duo has brought a wide variety of motion pictures to the screen, including Oscar-nominated adaptations The Kite Runner and Sweeney Todd, as well as the most recent installment of their Men in Black franchise, which they began developing prior to their term at DreamWorks. This fall brings one of their most anticipated releases to date, the gripping plane-crash drama Flight, starring Denzel Washington.

This is the 57th in Produced by’s ongoing series of Case Studies of successful producers and their work. Editor Chris Green spoke with Walter Parkes and Laurie MacDonald while sitting on the impressively comfortable couches of their Santa Monica-based Parkes/MacDonald Productions office, and enjoying a conversation that careened from the high-intensity development process behind Gladiator, to the virtues of working with first-time directors, to the singular vertigo that comes with all but waking up to find yourself Hollywood’s newest studio head.
You guys have actually three separate “origin stories,” one for each of you, and one for Parkes/MacDonald as a unit. What’s the Reader’s Digest version of how you came to be producers, both separately and together?

PARKES: I actually began in documentary film. I went to the graduate program at Stanford, where I started a movie that ended up being *California Reich*, a documentary that I made with my partner at the time, Keith Critchlow. The movie was well received—it was special selection at Cannes and was nominated for an Oscar. I later found out that a nomination without winning the Oscar meant you get the agent without getting the job. I actually had no skills that were relevant to anything here in Hollywood, other than showing that I could make a movie.

After a couple of what Laurie calls “those lost years in Hollywood,” a friend from college, Larry Lasker, and I came up with the idea for the script that became *WarGames*. We pitched it and when we sold it, for reasons I can’t really explain, we also had a deal to be producers on it.

What did that mean to you?

PARKES: Nothing, other than it was something to say. [Laughs] We knew that we put a lot of work into that script, and we wanted to be in a position to have something to say about how it was actually translated, which was a good theory until we got fired. Happily, we returned when John Badham came on the project.

Larry and I had a number of ideas for projects, and it became clear to us that some of them we would know how to write, and other ones would be beyond our abilities. And high on that list was Oliver Sacks’ book *Awakenings*. I thought it was an amazing book—it had been sent to me from a former Anthropology teacher—but we didn’t feel that we had the particular writing talent to serve that material well. We worked on the story for quite a while, but we eventually hired Steve Zaillian. This was before he was Steve Zaillian; it was maybe his second script. That was the first movie I produced, and it got nominated for an Oscar.

It was clear we had more ideas than we knew how to write, and I became very comfortable working with writers and to trying to have more of a bird’s-eye view as opposed to the singular focus that screenwriting required. That took me through the ‘80s until *True Believer*, with James Woods and Robert Downey, which was being made at Columbia Pictures, where Laurie was the production executive.

MACDONALD: We were together, as a couple, by then.

PARKES: We started working together on it, and it became a very productive creative collaboration. So that became the basis on which we decided that maybe there’s a way for us to integrate our professional lives and our family life in a way that could really be satisfying. So that’s how we started working together.

Okay. Circling back to Laurie...

MACDONALD: I came to producing from a different path. I had a great love of storytelling, literature and a lot of eclectic interests, but I didn’t know what on earth I was going to do to make a living. I visited a friend who was a sports producer at the local NBC affiliate in San Francisco. I just went to have lunch, and I discovered, okay, this is what I want to do. I wanted to be in that newsroom.

I loved the energy of it and I loved the idea of being able to find stories to tell. I had no journalism background. But I got a lowly PA job and worked in the newsroom for free and after moving up through the ranks, I ended up producing a very challenging nightly show in San Francisco that was a mix of taped pieces in the streets and a studio and an audience. I did that for nearly four years, but after the show was canceled, I decided I should either move to New York and continue my work in television, or take a shot at working in motion pictures in Los Angeles.

I had no background in movies, nor contacts. I had a friend of a friend who was working at MGM. So I ended up coming in and somehow talking my way into a development position with a producer named Victor Drai, and then quickly had the luck of getting hired by a studio — Columbia Pictures — as a creative exec about a year later.

So, unlike Walter, my true motion picture experience was as an executive for five years, initially, before we became producing partners. By 1988, we had been married about five years, and I was pregnant. We had just made *True Believer*,...
and I decided I didn’t want to be a studio executive and have children. We ended up staying at Columbia. Dawn Steel was then the head of the studio, and she said, “If you’re going to leave, kids.”

It was amazing. There was about 2 1/2 years between DreamWorks’ announcement in late ’94 and our release in ’97. If you recall, there were several stories in the press asking “Why is it taking so long?” Well, in those two years, we jointly made Men in Black, Zero, Twister, which was at Warners, while Steven was directing Lost World. And we were simultaneously trying to kick-start development and make the first DreamWorks movie, which was The Peacemaker, which we shot simultaneously with Men in Black. In fact, there was a two-week period in New York, the most fun and crazy period we’ve ever had, where Men in Black was shooting 7:00 to 7:00 nighttime, and The Peacemaker was shooting from 7:00 to 7:00, daytime. It was like the sign at the old coffee ship. Ships: “We never close.”

In this very short time, things are happening very quickly. Laurie, you’re transitioning from being an executive into being a full-time producer. Walter is making a transition from being a writer/producer into being an executive. How did you help other executives to take those new roles? What were the challenges for you guys?

MACDONALD: It was already close to being ready to go. We act work, and someone had the great idea, “Well, to motivate Lucilla dies. It was amazing. There was about 2 1/2 years between DreamWorks’ announcement in late ‘94 and our release in ‘97. If you recall, there were several stories in the press asking “Why is it taking so long?” Well, in those two years, we jointly made Men in Black, Zero, Twister, which was at Warners, while Steven was directing Lost World. And we were simultaneously trying to kick-start development and make the first DreamWorks movie, which was The Peacemaker, which we shot simultaneously with Men in Black. In fact, there was a two-week period in New York, the most fun and crazy period we’ve ever had, where Men in Black was shooting 7:00 to 7:00 nighttime, and The Peacemaker was shooting from 7:00 to 7:00, daytime. It was like the sign at the old coffee ship. Ships: “We never close.”

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MACDONALD: We were afraid that once we signed an executive to take it away from us. But Steven loved the project. So we actually brought Steven and Amblin in to Men in Black, which was great. Sony liked it because Steven was associ-
It's all about identifying mate-the same job. As a junior executive at Columbia, I was doing difficult during production. Luckily, we were able to convince Mark Johnston, a terrific producer, to come aboard and help out. Being the head of the studio comes with this baggage that I was probably not sensitive about. If the producer makes a suggestion, that's one thing. You're part of the group. 

**MACDONALD:** They can say, "No, we don't like that idea."

**PARKES:** But if it's the studio saying, "Come on, let's make this work," how do they know that I'm not saying, "Hey, let's make this work, because I'm the head of the studio?" And I never thought of it that way.

You don't want to be Jack Warner, basically.

**PARKES:** Right. So I think the real key was to be 100% clear. Certain movies, we were very much in the boat. On other mov-ies, which turned out absolutely great, we weren't.

Talking about *Gladiator* and *American Beauty* as the two ends of this spectrum, I admit that it sort of confounded what my expectations for what your role would have been. In *Gladiator*, you have Doug Wick and Ridley Scott, both prior Oscar nominees. You have Branko Lustig, an Oscar winner and the ultimate on-location producer. I would have thought that you could leave those guys to their devices, whereas *American Beauty* had a first-time screenwriter, a first-time director, and two producers with, at that point, only a handful of credits between them. I'd have thought that's where you want to be riding herd.

**PARKES:** American Beauty was a genius script that was writ-ten on spec. Either DreamWorks was going to make it, or someone else was going to make it; it had a life of its own.

**MACDONALD:** Also, we set out to make this fantastic script for $15 million. It was all there — the script and the voice and the story he was telling. Sam Mendes, Bruce Cohen and Dan Jinks were all on the rise. There wasn't much, creatively, an executive would have a lot to do with, except for casting. The vision was already there. But that other category of movies — *Men in Black* or *Gladiator* or big-scale, Hollywood movies — are very much both producer- and studio-driven, and need both sides to make them happen.

These days, do you approach the challenge of produc-tion any differently than you did before you took that DreamWorks job? And is that a result of having been an executive for 10 or 12 years, or is it a result of the culture of the industry having changed?

**MACDONALD:** That's a good question. In some ways it's all the same job. As a junior executive at Columbia, I was doing largely what we're doing now. It's all about identifying mot- ial and being able to develop a script that will attract great talent.

So on some levels it feels like exactly the same thing. You'll still make mistakes, and you'll get better at it, too.

**PARKES:** I don't think we get better at all.

**MACDONALD:** Well, you get better on some level.

**PARKES:** But that's what's so wonderful about the creation of story. It's kind of brand new every time, and you're capable of inspiration every time, and you're capable of the stupidest mistakes every time.

I mean, I've given lectures on the idea that all action comes from character, and yet I'm absolutely capable of spending six months working on something, until I realize we don't have a clue as to who the main guy is!

**MACDONALD:** Well, you'll go forward and forward a lot in developing something.

**PARKES:** But I do think you're onto something. The biggest thing I miss in terms of the power or access of running a stu-dio is that a producer has so little to say over the marketing of the film.

**MACDONALD:** And distribution approach and release date, and all of that.

**PARKES:** All of that. At DreamWorks, we were able to sit in the meeting and look at the trailers and say, "What are we doing? It's not good enough. Shouldn't we try X, Y or Z?" But now, even though we have great relationships with Sony and Paramount and DreamWorks and the people we make movies with, that's a place where the company protects their investment. You have some "advise," but you don't have much consent over the marketing issues.

But yes, the business has changed absolutely. I feel the difference in our job has less to do with the difference between running a studio and not running a studio, as opposed to what it was like to make movies in 2000 or 2001 as opposed to mak-ing them now. The box the studios are operating in is so small.
**MACDONALD:** The margins are so tough.

**PARKES:** This is a whole new world for us ... asking, how do we cast so we can pre-sell territories? How do you mitigate risk? How do you get on the radar of studios? Even their own development slots have become limited because so much of the energy is going into those huge tent-pole movies that they are servicing year in and year out. Those executives only have five or six other movies to spend money on.

**MACDONALD:** The one positive in the contraction of the business, I think, is that in terms of salaries, people are more realistic about what they expect. It would’ve been impossible 10 years ago, as a studio, to try to make a drama and ask everyone to take virtually nothing, and for them to do it. So as producers, you can put together movies in maybe more interesting ways and for lower budgets.

**PARKES:** We’re lucky because we still have a foot in both worlds. We still have a number of big movies that can kind of keep the doors open. But I think Laurie’s right that there is an unspoken understanding that if you want to do serious work, you’re going to do it under very different circumstances.

So, speaking of serious work, how long has *Flight* been in development?

**PARKES:** I think it started in 2005. John Gatins is someone we’ve known for a long time. He wrote and directed a lovely movie for DreamWorks called *Dreamer* with Dakota Fanning and Kurt Russell. It was kind of one of the last movies we helped push into production. During our transition out of running DreamWorks I think it was Adam Goodman and David Beaubaire who called to say, “You should read these other 40 pages that John wrote. It’s a very different kind of movie.”

And we read them, and I called John and said, “Whoa. Okay. Where did this come from?” So we decided, based just on those 40 pages, to try to make it.

**MACDONALD:** Talk about what would never happen today — the studio would never finance 40 pages of a really intense drama that starts with the most harrowing plane crash ever written.

**PARKES:** We worked with John for a good 18 months — he pretty much lived on that couch over there while we tried to help him find the movie. The script changed in very real ways, and got very close to the movie that eventually was made. But then DreamWorks was sold to Paramount. When that happened, DreamWorks kept a number of projects, and the rest went to Paramount. So now the project is at a new studio with all new people, and who knew what was going to happen?

We got a break then when Adam Goodman went to Paramount, and he’s done a very good job there. But still, *Flight* was not part of the business plan.

**MACDONALD:** Purely commercially, there’s no reason to make that movie.

**PARKES:** On the other hand, there’s every reason to do it for putting good work into the world. But from a producer’s point of view, it became very clear to us the only way this movie would get made was by attracting a level of talent that was so compelling that you couldn’t not make the movie. And by the way, Paramount was great about it. They went with it, despite the fact that in 2011, a movie like *Flight* was not part of any studio’s business plan.

So we’d have conversations every few months — “What should we do? What could we do?” I remember Laurie and I...
were downtown at the Bradbury Building, and we got a phone call from Ed Limato, a wonderful, old-fashioned agent who has since passed away. Ed told me he’d read *Flight*. “I think Denzel would be very interested.”

I said, “If you say so, Ed. I mean, there are only about 200 African-American pilots in the world, and this one is an alcoholic, but—”

“Oh, Denzel will love that!”

So then we didn’t hear anything for two months, until Ed called me and said, “He likes it very much. In fact, he’d like to call me.”

We weren’t going to pass that up. So we met Denzel at a restaurant in New York, and he did something no other actor has ever done with us in the past. He sat down and basically said, “I’m in.”

And I said, “You know, it’s gonna be a tough road. We’re not gonna make a lot of money on this.”

“Yeah, I know.”

“And we don’t have a director yet.”

He says, “Yeah, I know.”

MACDONALD: He was steadfast.

PARKEs. He had an instinct about this. There was a real emotional connection to it. But even then there were “miles to go before we sleep” because then we had to get the right director and it still had to be approved. But when Bob Zemeckis came aboard, then suddenly you’re at a blinking orange light, as opposed to a traffic jam.

A lot of producers talk about the importance of casting the director and what that means. That’s the defining choice that a producer will make on a motion picture. How do you approach that process?

PARKEs: We have a couple of principles. We have tended to try to work with either really new directors, or with “sovereign state” directors, like Steven, Ridley or Bob.

We made Gore Verbinski’s first movie, which was *MouseHunt*. Well, the great thing about doing Gore Verbinski’s first movie is not just that the movie’s good. But then you might make his second movie, which we did, which was called *The Mexican*, which didn’t really work, but was very interesting. And the thing about making his second movie is that you might make his third movie, which was *The Ring*.

So from a producer’s point of view, there is a value-add to breaking in new directing talent, because you’re creating relationships that can move on and do other movies. If you have a chance to work with a Bob Zemeckis or a Steven Spielberg or Ridley Scott, well, lock them in a room. But there’s a certain excitement that comes with a new director. Sam Mendes is another one.

The other thing that is so difficult is that the knife-edge of being a producer is that your first job is to get the movie made, but how do you weigh getting it made with the wrong director versus not getting it made at all? There are times when you’re just saying, “this doesn’t feel right,” and yet you’ve been here for months or years trying to get the picture made, and you can get it made now, and you can get your fee and you can actually have people see their work onscreen.

It’s so difficult; it’s such an all-or-nothing thing. We have been fortunate twice — *Collateral* is a project that we worked on for many years with Julie Richardson and Frank Darabont. We had several opportunities to make it with people who, for whatever reason, didn’t feel quite right. Then Michael Mann comes along from out of the blue, and he has this brilliant idea of having Tom Cruise be the bad guy, and thank goodness we waited. *Flight* was another example of having to wait for the right circumstances.

But you don’t always have the luxury of waiting. It is the single hardest issue for a producer, because it’s the moment you’re handing away your control over the destiny of the movie.

How did your deal with Abu Dhabi Media come together?

PARKEs: Laurie and I produced *The Kite Runner*, along with Bill Horberg and Rebecca Yeldham. Sometime afterward, I spoke at the Brookings Institution, and was asked to join cultural diplomatic mission called The U.S./Islamic World Forum, which goes to Qatar once every year. I met someone who was on the board of the Abu Dhabi Media Company, and asked for a meeting with a man who ran it at the time.

They had created production financing partnerships with a number of producers, including Hyde Park and Participant, but I said, “Actually, I don’t want production financing. I’d like to set up a development fund.”

This was because we felt that the range of projects studios were developing was becoming impossibly limited for how we’ve operated as producers. We’ve always found that if you develop good material — well, it’s like *Field of Dreams*: “if you build it, they will come.” So after a lot of conversations, they
Because we have so many folks who read the magazine and are trying to break through as creative producers, what would you say to them? What about their priorities be?

PARKES: I’d go right to a quote Laurie gave when she was interviewed for a “Women in Hollywood” for the old Premiere magazine: “the most powerful person in Hollywood is the one who controls the script that everyone wants to make.”

MACDONALD: In the end, it’s about identifying a strong idea and then making those key creative choices. You have to be pretty determined to get movies made, and you have to be ready for them to be passed on and for casts to come together and fall apart.

PARKES: The other thing I would mention is something I heard Peter Guber say to his class at UCLA: “Be interested in what you’re interested in.” We all have things we think are really cool, things which fascinate us. For whatever reason, I thought computers and genius kids were really interesting, and from that came WarGames. His point is, if you think something’s interesting, there are probably a lot of other people out there who do too.

MACDONALD: As opposed to trying to read a trend, or guessing what people are interested in.

PARKES: Yes — trying to guess what people would be interested in is really tough, because by the time you get that movie together and developed, people have moved on. I think informed instinct is the best guide.

MACDONALD: And a good story can be made at very different levels. The one very positive thing for people starting out today is the Internet. Even if it’s a 20-minute short, there is the ability to get something out there.

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put up a rather large $10 million development fund that gives us the ability to develop material independently, which is very cool because then we have the option of bringing a finished script to whatever buyer or financier is most appropriate.

They’ve been very happy with the relationship. About two years ago, we were coming to the close of our DreamWorks deal — they were no longer making enough pictures to justify our being there — so we sat down with the new leadership at Image Nation Abu Dhabi — two men named Michael Garin and Mohamed Al Muharik. We said that we’re going to have to find a new deal with a compatible studio, but their response was “Why not just go a hundred percent independent?”

So as a result of that, our overhead is paid for by our Abu Dhabi partnership, along with our independent development through them. We’ve also gotten involved in helping them build their local creative and production capacity; in fact, we’ve been working on an hour drama about the Abu Dhabi legal system.
The phone rings in Howard Gordon’s office. It’s his wife. “I was just talking about you,” he says. It’s 6:30 p.m. and Gordon is ready to go home, but he still has to take care of some details. He’s exec-producing a new TNT pilot that starts shooting in a little over a month, not to mention the numerous tasks related to the season premiere of Homeland, the multiple Emmy-winning hit show he created with Alex Gansa. “We have eight episodes shot, some are in post ... Sometimes I feel like the plate spinner on Ed Sullivan,” Gordon explains with a smile. But the various pressures don’t seem to be a burden for Gordon, a veteran writer and producer with credits ranging from The X-Files to 24 and who is just now hitting his creative stride with Homeland.

Howard Gordon grew up on Long Island and was a television fan from an early age. “I actually decided, secretly to myself, that I wanted to work on TV when I was 10 years old. I grew up watching television, I loved television, but where I grew up, even becoming an astronaut was more probable than working for TV,” he says. “I was always more interested in television as a medium, my tastes were fairly wide. I was a Star Trek fan but I also loved Room 222 and The Courtship of Eddie’s Father and Mission: Impossible and Johnny Carson. I mean, I loved television. I knew what was on every night.”

It was at Princeton University that Gordon committed to writing for television as a career, after meeting his friend Alex Gansa, now Homeland showrunner. “It was the end of my college career and I had nothing else to do, and I realized I hadn’t taken organic chemistry so I wasn’t going to med school.” After graduating in 1984, Gansa and Gordon traveled to Los Angeles and began writing, without any formal screenwriting training. “We didn’t own any scripts, we just had episodes that we taped on VHS and we deconstructed them on index cards,” Gordon says. To pay the bills, Gansa and Gordon set up...
After we saw Temple Grandin, Claire Danes was the first actor we wanted for this part. In our first draft, the character’s name was even ‘Claire.’

to go from here? “After the first season of 24, there was some talk of changing the show away from the 24-hour format, but we recognized that it just wouldn’t be the same show, so it was a challenge to find new stories that could work in that format,” Gordon says. “And I must say, I’m as proud of the last episodes of the show as I am of the first.” The series’ debut season won the Producers Guild’s top honors in TV drama, and in 2006, Gordon and the other producers of 24 scored the Emmy for Outstanding Drama Series.

“I always say, I’d rather work on a show — in any capacity — that has an impact on people, than create a show just to create a show. I stayed for a fairly long time on both The X-Files and 24, neither of which I created, but I felt like, if not the parent, then the midwife of those shows. The pilot process of a show is one thing, but the first year of a show is the second phase of its birth, it’s an extraordinarily exciting time and I’ve been lucky enough to be on that first year on a couple of shows.”

Gordon takes another phone call in reference to the TNT pilot. It’s scheduled to start shooting in six weeks, but he and the show’s other producers are still looking for a director who would be available at the right time. “When you’re hiring people, you really want to hire people you want to spend time with, because in this business there are a lot of long days. At first, it’s like going on a date with somebody or like putting together a band.” In the last season of 24, Gordon had the opportunity to hire and reconnect with his friend Alex Gansa; the two were soon looking for projects to collaborate on again.

The idea for Homeland originated with an Israeli TV drama entitled Prisoners of War, created by Gideon Raff. It was presented to Gordon and Gansa by Rick Rosen of WME (William Morris Endeavor), near the end of the eighth and...
Gordon and Gansa were very conscious of wanting to do something different from the high-octane intensity of 24. “We thought it was interesting, and the day after 24 wrapped, Alex and I started working on Homeland as a spec script,” Gordon says. In putting the show together, Gordon and Gansa pitched the show around town, but their first choice was Showtime, where President of Entertainment David Nevins was an old friend. “Showtime really saw how the premise of this show could sustain itself, and it’s great how hands-on they can be, since they don’t have a huge number of shows all at the same time.”

Prisoners of War is a drama solely centered on the reintegration of former prisoners into Israeli society; Gansa and Gordon recognized that their version would need a broader scope. “We knew it needed some kind of reinvention for an American audience. The story of the soldier returning from war is something that you don’t see on television, and it has a long tradition in storytelling all the way back to The Odyssey. But POWs aren’t a part of American culture in the same way they are in Israel. So first we added The Manchurian Candidate idea of a POW who might have been turned into a sleeper agent.” The result is the character of Nicholas Brody, played by Emmy winner Damian Lewis. Brody is a Marine freed from captivity after eight years, whose inner conflicts and uncertain motivations upon returning home fuel Homeland’s first season story arc. “We had to fight to cast Damian Lewis, and what convinced the network was seeing his performance in The Manchurian Candidate,” Gordon says, citing the 2004 indie film starring Lewis as a man struggling with stress and schizophrenia.

I always say, I’d rather work on a show — in any capacity — that has an impact on people, than create a show just to create a show.

The other major change from Prisoners of War was the addition of the character of Carrie Mathison, played by Claire Danes, a dogged CIA agent with personal and professional demons of her own. “After we saw Temple Grandin, Claire Danes was the first actor we wanted for this part. In our first draft, the character’s name was even ‘Claire,’” Gordon admits. “We wanted a character to be suspicious of Brody and what he might be doing, but we decided we wanted to underscore her unreliability. So you do that by making the character a woman, and a young woman, and a young woman who doesn’t get along well with her co-workers.”

In addition, Gordon and Gansa took Showtime’s suggestion to make Mathison even more problematic as a character by making her bipolar. “It was a great way to pathologize her obsessiveness, her isolation.” While television usually shies away from depictions of mental illness, Homeland has won accolades for how it’s handled Carrie Mathison’s situation. “She has this syndrome, but she’s not defined by it,” Gordon explains. The various chances that Gordon and Gansa took with Homeland paid off; the show was a fixture on critics’ lists of the best shows of 2011, and the series took home six Emmys, including two for Gordon, for writing and producing. As Gordon continues with Homeland and the numerous other projects he’s shepherding and developing, he’s content with how far he’s come. “I never came into this with any grand plan. The first goal was just to write an episode of television and get paid for it. Then, to get on staff, and to make a living, and work on good shows. Now, I’m just looking for things that speak to me.” His advice for aspiring television writers and producers? “The more I’m around, the less I know, so I’d say, pick the right colleagues, seek criticism, and listen.”

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Mayhem on the Field

How Two Sports Fans Turned Their Passion Into a Hollywood Success Story

by Randy O. Williams

Producers Mark Ciardi (seated) and Gordon Gray (right) on location for The Rookie

(Photos: Deana Newcomb)

The Rookie team captures the onfield action.

One was raised on the East Coast, a die-hard Yankee fan who could recite Mickey Rivers' on-base percentage in the playoffs and Don Mattingly's RBI total in game-winning situations. The other was reared in Southern California, a rabid Dodger follower who'd collect bottle caps as a member of the Dodger-Pepsi Fan Club, trade them in for tickets and then get his dad to take him to games early to see the players before batting practice.

Both grew up with dreams of becoming professional baseball players. During their rise through little league and high school ball on opposite ends of the country, neither could've known they'd become teammates in Hollywood and go on to become prolific producers of sports-themed pictures beginning with the acclaimed baseball movie The Rookie, featuring Dennis Quaid.

But PGA members Mark Ciardi, the pride of Piscataway, New Jersey, and Gordon Gray, a native of Torrance, California, as partners in Mayhem Pictures have produced such sports-themed movies as Secretariat, Invincible, The Game Plan, The Rookie and Miracle.

So for those looking to devise a game plan for a movie with a sporting canvas, its looking at the hard-earned lessons learned by the Mayhem producers, you'll find core elements that apply to all filmmakers, but there'll most assuredly be some unique to sports cinema.

“It's definitely a tricky genre to navigate,” forewarns Ciardi.

And for all their success, the back story of these producing partners include very humble underdog beginnings.

The two met through mutual friends in the late '80s. Gray was attending USC as a finance major. Ciardi had moved to Los Angeles to train for a shot as a pitcher on the major league roster of the Milwaukee Brewers, after attracting scouts as a crafty right-handed screwballer at the University of Maryland.

“I met Gordon through a mutual friend a few weeks after I moved here,” says Ciardi. He was still in college at USC. We became good friends over the years and he had a desire to go into the film business. He was 30. It was tough for him to get into doors, to get a foothold into the business without any experience, so we decided that he should not do it on his own. He called me and suggested we should produce movies. I kind of like said, 'So what do you have to do?'” chuckles Ciardi at the memory. “We did have friends over the years in various aspects of the film business. But we were not in the business. When we saw the success other guys were having, we felt like 'we could do it too.'”
Gray recounts what he was going through that led to his decision to become a Hollywood movie producer and start his partnership with Ciardi, who was satisfied that he gave it his best shot at becoming a major league pitcher (an experience that would later boost their fledgling producing careers).

“When I was 29, it was time to get serious. I thought about my passions, and the dominant interests of mine were movies and sports,” recalls Gray. “[I] thought about becoming an agent in the sports world. I had grown up with people who were in the mailroom atCAA. I got a vicarious experience with that aspect so I said, ‘Well, I’m going to be a film producer. ’Mark and I started shop in my garage.

The two nephews laid down some carpet, bought a computer, a couple of phones and a table, and then proceeded to spend all their time scouring published sources and all the scripts they could get their hands on for story material. They spent a few years in that garage. Their original mission statement was pretty straightforward — to get a movie made. That was it.

Without formal education in the producing world, the college grads began a crash course in the school of hard knocks, learning as they went along, the occasional hot deals that they would later boost their fledgling producing careers.

As they met with any writers and studio executives who would agree to meet with them, Ciardi and Gray started to develop solid stories from books, articles, anything. And that was it. They eventually got the rights and partnered with Disney. As a result of Mayhem Pictures “rookie” effort, The Rookie, becoming a hit, the producing duo were on their way in the Hollywood film game.

What The Rookie reflects is one of the fundamental responsibilities of a successful film producer — finding material. After all, it’s all about story.

Producers have to be clear when asking themselves — what’s the approach when deciding if a story has enough cinematic appeal? What are the criteria, the parameters or checklist for a script before one pitches the studio execs?

There are so many great stories. Anyone that brings a story, there’s gotta be tremendous merit to it,” says Ciardi, who immediately adds to his checklist: “You have to know not only the executive’s taste but also who the audience will be. Is it a big enough audience? Does it make financial sense? Is it too small of a story? Is it castable? Can it broaden out? A lot of things have to be answered so we have to really test it and really believe in it before we go into the studio and pitch it.”

Adds Gray: “First, we ask ourselves if we are passionate enough about this story to work on it for 5–10 years. We have to really feel if this moves us enough to commit the time, as we don’t get paid until the movie gets made. Have we done something like this before? Do we want to do it again? Does it fall within the studio’s parameters? Are we passionate enough to commit time and resources without knowing if it will ever get made? You have to feel it.”

You have to feel it. Down through history, some of Hollywood’s most eminent producers like Sam Spiegel, Hal Wallis, Robert Evans and Darryl Zanuck have talked about that feel, of trusting their gut instincts.

As a further history lesson, consider that Hollywood and sports have grown up together ever since Thomas Edison filmed a boxing match in the late 1890s. Hundreds upon hundreds of films with a sporting backdrop have been released since Mr. Edison’s kinetoscope opened things up.

And even though Ciardi and Gray did not set out intentionally to make sports movies, the Santa Monica–based producers have become very prolific in using it as a backdrop.

“In talking about what stories interested us initially, what we realized was that the stories we were drawn to had an emotional center, and the canvas of sports was a great one. It is a very effective backdrop. A lot of terrific stories come off the field, a court or a ring,” says Ciardi.

“It has to feel fresh to us,” says Gray. “Sports is just the canvas to tell the story about a character. You have to want to follow that person’s life on and off the field of play. Usually it has an aspirational/inspirational quality to it. It is about caring enough to join the lead character on his journey.”

One of the early lessons these producers have learned is that if it is going to play to the non-fan audience, it stands a better chance of overall box-office success.

“That’s the trick,” adds Gray. “You may not think so on the surface of it all, but most of these movies test better with women. Because they are moved by the journey of the character. They appeal quite a bit to women because they are emotional stories. Plight of the underdog.”

It should come as no surprise then that Mayhem has used underdog journey to their advantage in films involving ice hockey, football, baseball and horse racing, among other sports to solid success.

Still, as former athletes and lifelong sports fans, Ciardi and Gray are very cognizant of the fact that if a filmmaker does not get the action scenes right — even if they only in a sword fight and have only read about pirates, but most have thrown a baseball or shot a basketball,” says Gray, a former baseball player standing next to Ciardi, “you’ll take the audience right out of the picture.

“It is difficult to make a great sports movie, because most people consider themselves experts. You have to make every single aspect of the film accurate, otherwise you’ll lose the viewer right out of the movie.”

The searching for those stories that feel, of trusting your gut instincts.

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As a result of this demand for verisimilitude, a cottage industry has grown where sports competition experts like Mark Ellis, Allan Graf and Rob Miller train actors and athletes in second unit action to get the games right, as well as costume houses like Sports Studio that have team uniforms from many different eras covering the major sports.

Each of these movies is like a mini-boot camp. Re-creating a historic game that everyone has seen is tough. We have a terrific specialist (Mark Ellis) who teaches performers in the nuances of a given sport, for instance, designing and executing specific plays that lead to goals in hockey. But production designers also come into play,” says Ciardi. “They do tons of research examining photos, looking at old videos, finding details about old uniforms and equipment. Again you have to get not only the action but the whole atmosphere correct. So the audience isn’t just thinking about it; they are there.”

Another unique aspect of producing sports movies involves the fans.

While not every sports story demands it, all filmmakers have to provide scope and atmosphere. Fortunately, visual effects has reduced the need to bus in thousands of extras and keep them entertained between lengthy setups.

Today’s producers have an added option for those stadium scenes called a tiling effect. Tiling is where you take a couple hundred extras, sit them in a given section of the stadium, photograph them, then move them over and photograph them again, basically putting them in different areas, then duplicate them digitally. Then it is like tiling a shower, pasting these people you’ve created with your visual effects company all over the bleachers.

“You look at European territories and ask if that sport will play there. If that global appeal is limited, then you have to make the film for less. We always have that pressure on our budget.”

Of course, all this has to be done within a comparatively smaller budget because in large part, most sports stories have a limited global appeal. There are exceptions like Rocky, Bend It Like Beckham and Chariots of Fire, but most stories are about American sports like football, baseball and basketball (which does have some international appeal).

“You look at the European territories and ask if that sport will play there. If that global appeal is limited, then you have to make the film for less. We always have that pressure on our budget.”

Cameras take to the ice to shoot Miracle.

(Photos: Chris Large)
for the fact that there may be a limited international business for that film.”

Most sports movies fall in the $20 million–$35 million range, depending on cast and other elements. That’s fairly small when you look at the cost of other genres. While studios are looking for profitability, naturally they want films that have an extended life, long after a theatrical release. Time after time, filmmakers in this genre come through making their money back and more, so sports movies continue to be popular with studios.

But in these days of extended economic doldrums, Ciardi talks about some of the changes since they began and some of the biggest challenges producers of sports-themed pictures face now and in the foreseeable future.

“I think the loss of DVD sales is one big change since we began. Good sports movies thrive in the home-video market. They are movies that people want to own forever. Now with the market shrinking and people using other avenues, the numbers aren’t as big anymore. It certainly affects budgets as a result. So you have to be more prudent and realize that your domestic box-office take is an even bigger part of your business.”

After producing several acclaimed sports pictures (and more on deck), the Mayhem Pictures producing tandem lay out what they feel are the true keys to success in this enduring genre.

“Americans especially love a good underdog story,” observes Ciardi. “It takes a lot of building blocks to get to that point, but if a filmmaker constructs the story properly, delivering honest emotion and struggles that pay off in the end, there is a huge potential for success. For Rocky, it was about finishing the fight, going the distance. For Jim Morris (The Rookie), it was just about getting out there on that mound.

“It has to be an interesting story that goes beyond winning,” continues the Mayhem Pictures’ co-founder. “Secretariat and Miracle were movies that are about a lot more than just winning. What’s the journey to get there? Or if it’s a story more like The Rookie or Invincible where it’s not well known, well, then it’s a small victory at the end, but it’s a big victory for the protagonist and the people in their life. You can feel the same emotion in The Rookie after Morris strikes out that batter as you do for a country after the U.S. wins gold in Olympic hockey.”

In the end as they are currently developing stories involving baseball, running and college basketball, among other sports backdrops, Ciardi’s partner offers a simple reason for Mayhem’s success: Keeping their eyes and ears open in the world of athletics filtered through their seasoned film story instincts.

“Really,” he says, “we’re just regular guys who are sports fans.”
A Look at the Transmedia Experience The Lizzie Bennet Diaries

From the first moment you arrive at the Lizzie Bennet website, you know you aren’t just there to watch a typical Web series. The website states:

Welcome to the home of The Lizzie Bennet Diaries an online modernized adaptation of Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice.

Created by Hank Green and Bernie Su

You have two choices.

1. Enter the world of Lizzie Bennet by going to her Tumblr or YouTube
2. Stay on this site and find out more about the show and/or catch up on the story so far.

Catch up on the story from the beginning

It’s not often that classic literature is adapted into a Web series (or anything in digital for that matter). But that’s exactly what Bernie Su and Hank Green set out to do with their innovative video blog based on Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice. It has been blowing up on YouTube, with more than 2 million views in its first six weeks, and has received numerous press articles, developing a large and loyal online audience. It was also one of the biggest hits at Vidcon this year, where actress Ashley Clements was recognized as one of YouTube’s hottest rising stars. The Web series stays true to the Jane Austen novel’s main characters and to the story as a whole, but it does lean into the world of digital, and while the “foundational” narrative strain is exposed through episodic video, there is a prosenium of story dispersed to Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr and other social platforms. This approach, while not entirely new, does set a new standard in terms of execution. Creators Bernie Su and Hank Green are doggedly determined to tell a great story, and leveraging digital platforms is a tremendous asset in extending the backstory, side-story, and another ancillary stories that surround the world of Lizzie Bennet.

Su says of his new media endeavor, “Why digital? I guess because of the accessibility. Everyone talks about connectivity to your audience. That may be a canned answer but it’s true ... I like to tell stories. I didn’t come here to say it needs to be television, views and go be a film ... that doesn’t matter to me. I like to tell a good story, regardless of platform, but we connect to our audience pretty regularly on Facebook, Twitter, because we can. In this current marketplace it’s very freeing. I don’t have the interest to go onto a TV writing staff, not to say because I don’t want the money, but because the creative freedom here [in digital] is awesome.”

The effect of this freedom is pretty obvious. Lizzie’s YouTube channel boasts more than 93,000 subscribers and more than 7 million views. Her Facebook has more than 15,000 likes, Lizzie’s Tumblr has 17,805 followers and on Twitter, @TheLizzieBennet has 15,000 followers. In total, they have more than 7.4 million views and get about 1.4 million views a month — without a single media buy to drive traffic. And on top of that, this Web series is actually paying its talent — not a fortune, but at least their model is sustainable and helping the cast and crew to make a living instead of hoping that sweet equity will pay off with a roll of the dice and a lot of production hours.

Point of View

Social media distribution is nothing new for content in the digital space, but smart storytelling that leverages these digital platforms is, as Su says, “smart.”

“The world is our stage and social media allows us to reach our audience. Pinterest was a big part of one of our campaigns. When we had two characters following each on Twitter, that was a big deal in our universe. I’m not going to say it’s the future. I will say that it’s different. It’s new. It excites the audience and it excites us.”

That excitement has translated into a core storyline that is exposed through the ongoing video blog. Each segment is short, just like a video blog would be in real life. Then the Lizzie team complements that content through various social methods, allowing the audience to see the story from multiple perspectives.

“I have this thing where I like to see points of view. In shows like 24, you are limited by what the editor shows you. For us, the audience can choose who they want to follow.”

This multi-perspective approach has its challenges, though. The writing team is constantly considering what is too “meta,” and what rules apply. Lines of where the “world” of Lizzie Bennet ends can quickly become unclear, and the staff must push the limits while still maintaining character and story integrity. Lucky for them, they have Jane Austen’s story as a template to work with all along the way.

Kate Rorick, one of the staff writers, is very familiar with complex storylines. Having served as a staff writer for Law & Order: Criminal Intent and as a story editor for Terra Nova, she knows how to manage story points and where to break certain moments. She also draws from her background as a romance novelist (under the pseudonym Kate Noble).

“To tell this story that has so many universal themes in modern day, you absolutely have to tell it using social media and transmedia to properly make these characters come alive. And that’s not something that traditional TV is currently set up to do as well as they could.”

When it comes to sustaining disbelief using all these “transmedia” tools, there is a constant conversation with the writers. It is part of the DNA of the show, because in their version of Pride and Prejudice, Lizzie is creating a video blog as part of the storyline. Everyone knows that she has follows and posts in the social space all the time. They are very aware that the fourth wall is entirely broken, and when they are breaking story, they are thinking a great deal about how they can leverage various tools for exposition.

Rorick suggests, “We can break that beat with a tweet, and we can post something on Tumblr that can set something into motion.”

Su explains, “When we are writing, almost every prop has to be considered as a potential transmedia piece.”

In one story, Lydia, Lizzie’s sister, posts a resume online. Su has the prop department create a physical resume as
Laura Spencer as Jane Bennet

is a fan of Spotify, and we don’t have at the same time, one of the characters thought. Then it became the hot thing Pinterest hadn’t even hit its stride and wise, it’s all about driving core story. “nice to have” once in a while. But other-they stick to the essentials and perhaps a concern. It takes people and time to do it. the curation of story material becomes a with many different social platforms, the story can expanse the entire Internet budget become a natural limiter. When Facebook page for every character, nor is resources. Because they can’t make a

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A Little Too Meta
So is there the possibility that LBD could go too far down a digital path? The producers believe that there are several considerations that keep a balance with their experience. One big one is resources. Because they can’t make a Facebook page for every character, nor tweet every storyline beat, resources and budget become a natural limiter. When the story can expand the entire Internet with many different social platforms, the curation of story material becomes a concern. It takes people and time to do it. They stick to the essentials and perhaps a “nice to have” once in a while. But other-wise, it’s all about driving core story.

Su notes, “When we launched, Pinterest hadn’t even hit its stride and leveraging it became kind of like an after-thought. Then it became the hot thing so we absolutely included Pinterest. But at the same time, one of the characters is a fan of Spotify and we don’t have that. If we spend time to create these destinations, the fans would love it, but it comes down to “can” and “should.” I don’t know if an ancillary character’s list on Spotify gives you any-thing. The Pinterest campaign, that gave us a ton. It is whether the return is worth the resources.”

When it comes to returns on investment, Hank Green believes in the quality and quality of fans. “We give the fans an opportu-nity to go deeper. Not all of them will, but the ones that do will become higher quality fans, people who are more invested in what you are doing, and that has value just beyond your two-eyeball impressions. It has value in terms of merchandise, it has value in attracting those people for vari-ous things like a new Kickstarter effort, and that won’t go well if we don’t have high-level, evangelistic fans of the show. If they become fans of the characters, then they become fans of the actors and of the creators and the writers and that gets deeper than a one-show experience. It becomes an investment.”

Su agrees and suggests, “We all want to make the show the best that it can be, but there is a life beyond the show. Investing in fans, keeps them involved.”

It’s paying off for them. They contin-ue to see new fans come in droves. And many brand-new viewers (the series has been live since April) are binge viewing, watching two or three hours of content in one sitting.

Su says, “Episode one is about 50 videos ago, and it still plays as well as it ever did. In fact, it’s stronger now because there’s so much content that follows it ... Our daily view counts are where there were at the start, and growing.”

Su and Green want the show to be watched a year from now, five years from now. All the humor and all the heart of their show should come from their writing and characters, not current pop culture references. Instead of riding the wave of what’s trending, they want to set a trend by making content as good as they can.

Ashley Clements (who plays Lizzie) suggests, “The show is built that way and not only do we hear from viewers how they started and watched all the episodes
from beginning to end, but now want to binge view when they re-watch all the episodes."

Transmedia, Not Required

Su has a very strong opinion about transmedia, one he isn’t shy about explaining. “My view is that transmedia enhances but is not required.” He explains that should a social platform disappear, fall out of favor or be replaced by something else, his content would remain intact with the exception of a few pieces of ancillary content — all of which he indicates are archived as best possible on the main website.

Su continues, “A lot of my colleagues disagree with this. If you watch the episodes and never follow Lizzie on Twitter or on Pinterest and all that stuff, you will still get it all. You will have a great viewing experience, you can lean back, let the playlist run for 3½ hours, and you will have a good time. Those that want to dive in can consume the ancillary content and it will help make the characters feel alive, but it is not required.”

Green and Su know that the major investment is in the episodes themselves. There, they are guaranteed a strong return on investment and aren’t shackled to emerging platforms that could disappear in the blink of an eye. And this, it would seem, is the thread running through their secret sauce: evident and consistent quality of story.

It sounds so simple, but with technology always beckoning producers to focus on the tech, the latest gadget, the most current platform, story can sometimes get lost. The producers of The Lizzie Bennet Diaries keep that in mind at every turn. For their fans, it’s working. The quality, the immediacy, and the interaction — all of it is paying off, not just for the show, but also for the entire production crew and cast who aspire for careers beyond Lizzie Bennet and have hopes that this show is their springboard. As Clements notes, “It’s incredibly rewarding to have this immediate interaction with fans. Because the show drives them to Twitter and drives them to Tumblr. As of this morning, I had more than 5,600 Twitter followers, and when the show started I had zero. Those are all fans, and those are hopefully fans who will follow me for the rest of my career.”
“It’s exciting to be part of an adaptation of a novel that I love,” says Rorick. “I’m just as eager as our die-hard fans to see how things are being adapted to the digital world. We are not just doing a modern version of Pride and Prejudice; we are doing a Web version of it that is very conscious that it is on the Web. It’s a little meta that the show is part of “the show.” The discovery of the vlog [video log] by other characters within the story is an event that is unique to our version of the story.”

Michael Wayne, CEO of DECA, who is partnering with The Lizzie Bennet Diaries, shares his enthusiasm for how well things are going, but makes it clear that he is in this for the long haul with the show creators. “Our relationship isn’t just with Lizzie Bennet,” says Wayne, “It’s a long-term deal. We got together with Bernie and Hank to build a long-term business here. Hollywood, in general, has always been about having the biggest possible business, from the audience to the actor to the producer … I think it’s a hard thing for people that grew up with just movies and television to understand that this platform, this content and producer and writers and actors, are the exact opposite. The premium [experience] is in the connectedness and the one-on-one relationship. The Internet and YouTube have completely disrupted that entire way of producing and making content and storytelling.”

Su sits comfortably in his chair and looks at the crew in the room and pauses for a beat. “I like trailblazing, and I like doing things that people don’t normally do.”
Meeting Chbosky's producing team, you can see why he might think so. Chbosky's feature debut, was produced by the determinedly self-effacing team of PGA members Lianne Halfon and Russell Smith, along with John Malkovich, their partner in their 14-year-old company Mr. Mudd. Even the name of the company teases toward the secret agent vibe, without even so much as a “Producers” or “Entertainment” to tip off an unsuspecting public. Probably the only place that the pair can’t hide in plain sight would be the independent film community. With credits like Crusty, Young Adult, Ghost World and the Oscar-winning sensation Juno, Halfon and Smith can credibly claim membership in the small group of producers whose work has effectively defined American indie film over the past two decades.

Characteristically, Halfon backs away from the prestige label that so many of her peers rush to claim. “Creative Producer” seems like a strange title for us,” she admits, “since we’re very interested in and driven by practical concerns. It’s not just about assembling the elements, but actually making the film all the way through, on the line. We like to know what cameras we’re shooting on, where we’re mixing. Those are places where a producer can really make a difference.”

The sentiment is backed up by their fellow PGA member Mason Novick, who produced the two Jason Reitman/Diablo Cody collaborations, Juno and Young Adult, alongside them. “They’re not the we’ll-call-you-and-let’s-do-lunch kind of producers. They’re the let’s-go-make-movies producers. They can talk to the camera department. They can talk to production design.

They can talk to the writer. They can talk to post-production. They literally are on top of everything.

And though Halfon shies away from the creative producer title, the duo is deeply engaged in the creative producer’s chief task: finding great stories. The source for Perks of Being a Wallflower turned out to be close at hand. “After Juno,” relates Halfon, “we were looking for something to do. We really wanted to adapt a book. So we asked our assistant if he could pick one book that he’d want to see turned into a movie, what would it be? And this was the one.”

Neither had heard of the book before, but both were immediately won over by its openheartedness, its precisely rendered voice and achingly tender coming-of-age story. “We started tracking it,” Smith continues. “I think we may have tracked it longer than anything else we’ve ever tracked. But sometime after that, we were in a general meeting at WME. They were running down a list of their clients, and tossed out Stephen’s name. And it was one of those ‘wait, wait, wait — back up!’ moments.”

Chbosky by this time had been working in the industry for over a decade, adapting Jonathan Larson’s Rent for director Chris Columbus, and serving as creator and exec producer of the passionately admired but short-lived CBS drama Jericho. His primary reputation, however, rested on The Perks of Being a Wallflower, which had swiftly attained “modern classic” status in the YA literary canon after its publication in 1999. Over the course of Smith and Halfon’s tracking the property, Chbosky had been working intermittently on a screenplay adaptation, which he was determined to direct.

There was no consideration of trying to pry the story away from its author. Rather, the producers and would-be director entered into a careful dance to determine whether they had the same movie in their heads. “The book has a beautiful pitch to it,” Halfon observes. “It’s so delicate. But of course, directing, like writing, is a skill set. And we were concerned that he might not be able to render that delicate picture on a screen the way he had on the page.”

“For his part, Chbosky was immediately impressed by his potential collaborators’ bona fides. “Most producers I’d met didn’t stand out for me the way Russ and Lianne did,” he explains. “First of all, they’re very intelligent, overtly so. Right away I could appreciate their encyclopedic knowledge of movies, and our common appreciation for favorite directors. And they had done work that I personally admired, both separately and together.”

The trio took their time, meeting several times before determining to try and get Perks off the ground. All three testify to the honesty and forthrightness with which the group laid out its priorities. “They wanted to know that I was going to be a director who collaborated, who listened,” Chbosky continues. “And I wanted to make sure that they understood that for me, this...
Ghost World

For the story's sensitive protagonist and narrator Charlie, the filmmakers turned to another kid's fantasy veteran, Logan Lerman, who had played the title role in Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Lightning Thief. "The moment we saw Logan on tape," recalls Smith, "we knew he was the guy.

For the last of the film's three central roles, Sam's flamboyant, living-out-low stepbrother Patrick, the group had to dig a little deeper, watching readings from scores of young actors. "It was a very difficult role," reflects Halfon. "We already had the other two, but casting the third member of the group changes things. Ensemble casting means that it isn't simply a matter of picking your favorite people.

Despite seeing many more familiar faces, the producers found themselves drawn to a compelling reading from relative newcomer Ezra Miller, at that point best known for a preternaturally chilling performance opposite Oscar winner Tilda Swinton in We Need to Talk About Kevin. "Ezra's reading was so distinct, so different," Halfon continues. "There was something really striking about it." Despite Miller's lower profile and the pressure to cast a more recognizable face, the producers' intuition told them that this was a lead worth pursuing. To fortify their hunch, they asked all of our extras to bring 'vintage clothes.' And creating the sense of period wasn't just a matter of costumes, she continues. "It's the way kids carry their books to school. It's the fact that there's no cell phones. It's a subtle difference, but it creates a huge impact in terms of the way characters relate to one another.

Chbosky particularly appreciates the complementary strengths of the team. "Lianne has such a great grasp of detail and tone, while Russ has this tremendous sense of size and scope," he says. "For instance, in the scene where the kids are walking up to the first party... I felt under a lot of time pressure, trying to make the day, and I was ready to make it a smaller moment. Russ was the one who said, 'We can go bigger on this. Don't worry about the time.' And he was absolutely right. That scene could have felt like television, but Russ' input made it into a movie. He really understands what the camera can do, and..."

we had to make sure that Stephen was in a place where he knew that he was not shooting the novel.

We're shooting the script. Just this. Just the script.

When it came time for the cameras to roll, the producers found other ways to support their filmmaker. The first was taking advantage of the state and local production incentives that allowed the team to shoot in Pittsburgh, where Chbosky's story was set, and even in the neighborhood where the director himself grew up. "We wanted to get the feeling of that place," says Halfon.
They're not the we'll-call-you-and-let’s-do-lunch kind of producers.

They're the let's-go-make-movies producers.

The director came to treasure the soft touch of his producers. "Any director who also writes is bound to overshoot by at least 10%," he admits. "A less sensitive producer would fight you tooth and nail to prevent you from shooting an extraneous scene. But Russ and Lianne knew how important each piece has been to me, and they let me learn on my own.... When you get into the editing room, that's when you realize that it's okay to let go of that scene that they knew wasn't going to be in the movie six months ago."

Over the course of post-production, Chbosky appreciated the degree to which the role of his collaborators mirrored his own, and how their collective experience allowed him to translate his story to the screen. "During production," he explains, "the director's job is to look at the different cast members and speak the different 'languages' of those actors, particularly if they're driven by one method or another. ... You have to be the person who lets them go to that place, or pull them back. But in post, I became that actor, the emotional standard-bearer of the story, and Russ and Lianne became that fixed pole for me. I counted on their perspective to bring me back to solid ground."

When it came time to unveil the finished product, the producers admit to some trepidation. "We had an additional hurdle," notes Smith, "that being people who had read the book. Because Stephen has a trunk full of letters — a literal trunk full of them — from people who have read the book and responded so deeply to it. But there was a moment when we did a screening in Orange County, with a focus group afterward. We had 20 people in the group, 10 of whom had read the novel. When we asked them to compare the two, all 10 of them said that the film was even better than the book. When they said that, we looked over at Stephen, and we knew we had accomplished everything we had wanted to do."

"It's what we hoped we would deliver," agrees Halfon. "It's very different from the other high school movies we've done, Juno and Ghost World. Yes, it took a lot of discussions about how to get there, she smiles, "but we all had the same place in mind."

The director is ultimately (and somewhat mischievously) unrestrained in his gratitude to his producers. "I love giving Russ and Lianne compliments," Chbosky laughs, "because it makes them so uncomfortable. I can only imagine what everything I've said here is going to do to them."

"Because the truth is," he continues, "I'm getting more credit than I should be getting. This movie just wouldn't exist were they not so supportive, so sensitive and so patient, which is a quality that often gets overlooked. This is a movie where nice guys finish first. Russ and Lianne.... They're the nice guys."

LITERAL WALLFLOWERS

LITERAL WALLFLOWERS

LOGAN LERMAN AND EMMA WATSON AWAIT THEIR PERKS.
Bringing BIODIESEL to the Big Easy

PGA Green talked with Second Line Stages Director of Sustainability Diane Wheeler about bringing biofuel to the Big Easy. Diane was a film and TV producer in New York for 17 years, and developed her green-production skills on low-budget independent films. Today, New Orleans’ Second Line Stages is the first and only LEED Gold Certified production facility in the United States.

For those of us unfamiliar with the Louisiana film and TV production industry, can you give us an idea of its size and scope?

Since 2002, the industry here has grown from a few million dollars to hundreds of millions of dollars per year. The unions have seen close to 400% growth. We are seeing 30 films a year produced in the state, plus television and commercials. At Second Line Stages alone, we’ve had Django Unchained, Green Lantern, 21 Jump Street, among many others in the three years we’ve been open, and right now, we are in production with Lee Daniels’ The Butler and Spike Lee’s Oldboy.

What makes Second Line Stages so unique as a studio in its efforts to Go Green?

Our building and its systems have a lesser footprint than traditional facilities, so just by being here, and plugging into our building, productions are more efficient from an emissions standpoint. We have oriented our campus operations to janitorial services to waste management programs (including recycling, repurposing and composting) to green vendor partnerships. We also run green training seminars and participate where we can in evolving city environmental policy development.

How did you get involved in bringing alternative energy sources and biofuel to the film industry in Louisiana?

At the time that Second Line Stages was being conceived, we were inspired by the sustainability “best practices” now published on www.greenproductionguide.com and supported by PGA Green and the major studios. We saw the opportunity to integrate these ideas as we were designing our construction and operations. Looking at alternative fuels for our energy needs was an important part of that.

Did you have any allies in this effort?

Our friend and colleague, Andre Champagne, founder and CEO of Hollywood Trucks, was just then assembling the largest fleet in the south. His fleet now utilizes biodiesel, and he has implemented new technologies which include, but are not limited to, adding solar power and propane. Andre stated in early conversations that he wanted to really utilize biofuels and alternative energy sources in the fleet, and Hollywood Trucks has remained dedicated to this philosophy as the company has grown and evolved as an industry leader.

With several clean-energy alternatives available, why has Second Line Stages focused on biodiesel, in particular B5, as the fuel alternative of choice?

Every kind of production uses diesel for trucks, heavy equipment and generators. Biodiesel was not readily available commercially here, so that is where we started. We couldn’t build a filing station, as it was cost-prohibitive, but we found a nearby supplier who could deliver cost competitively.

There is a lot of dated mythology about biofuel. We’ve now done the research on blend levels and engine capabilities. Nationally, B5 is accepted as interchange-able with traditional diesel. When the federal government and the ASTM (American Society for Testing and Materials) upgrade that ruling — as they are projected to — to B10, B20 and above, fleet owners will hopefully find their comfort level with the higher blends. Some already have — CAT Entertainment, for instance, has generators that take B100.

What should productions be aware of when using biodiesel?

Make sure you use a high-quality product, manufactured to the ASTM standards for fuel production. Higher blend levels in colder climates (below 40 degrees) are not recommended. However, some cities like Portland, Oregon, have mandated use of B20 in all city vendor contracts with no adverse effects. Consult with your vendor to figure out the appropriate blend levels to use, given the climate and the specifics of their fleet.

Why use biodiesel at all?

Bear in mind that a film can use 10,000, 30,000, or more gallons of fuel, and you can do the math to determine how much you can reduce your carbon footprint. Here’s a quick look at CO2 tailpipe emissions reductions in use of 1,000 gallons of biodiesel:

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How has living and working near the Gulf, where environmental issues have been at the forefront of conversation, impacted what you do at Second Line?

In Louisiana, after Hurricane Katrina and the BP oil spill, the health of our coastline and the Gulf all set the stage for increased motivation to care for our environment. By necessity, there is focus on recovery, renewal, and growth in the city and state at this time. It’s challenging and exciting — there is a constant reminder of the ecosystem we are a part of, and that contributes to the cleaner future we are all working toward.

We have plenty to do to cultivate awareness and market interest with local and incoming crews, finding and sharing new resources, and offering opportunities for education. We are at the start of a transition toward making green production the norm.

We will continue to offer cost-effective options, encourage new habits, participate in solving availability challenges, all while serving producers’ primary need — to make their film well, on time and on budget.

–SKYE HILTON

Resources and Websites

Southeast Louisiana Clean Fuel Partnership
www.cleanfuelpartnership.org

For more information on the myths and truths about biodiesel, check out www.biodiesel.org

Second Line Stages: secondlinestages.com/biodiesel

Learn more about greening your production anywhere: www.pgagreen.org or www.greenproductionguide.com

Diesel to biodiesel emissions conversion link: www.biodiesel.org/using-biodiesel/handling-use/emissions-calculator

Generator fuel consumption chart: www.dieselserviceandsupply.com/Diesel_Fuel_Consumption

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50 Produced by Fall 2012

Fall 2012 Produced by 51
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 prime time 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.

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.

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

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

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

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<td>Congratulations. You’re one of the lucky ones.</td>
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<td>Call Scott Brandt at (888) 700-7725. Request a quote for Producers Health Insurance.</td>
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<td>Congratulations, you’ve got your employer make contributions into the Motion Picture Industry Plan on your behalf.</td>
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<td>Congratulations, you’ve got the employer paid health coverage. You must work 400 hours over the next six months (assuming a 56-hour workweek) to maintain your coverage.</td>
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<td>Contact your payroll or labor relations department. Request the MEPB participation form to give to your employer.</td>
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52 Fall 2012

Fall 2012 53
PGA TOWN HALL

On September 22, the Producers Guild held its first-ever town hall meeting, inviting all interested members to attend and ask their questions of the Guild’s officers and staff. Thanks to the generosity of SAG-AFTRA, the PGA enjoyed the use of its meeting rooms in both Los Angeles and New York, complete with a live video conference link to allow members on both coasts to participate in real time. Members who could not attend were invited to listen in to the meeting via conference call, and submit questions via text.

The town hall meeting covered a wide variety of topics, too many to cover in this space. Nonetheless, we are happy to summarize some of the questions and answers regarding the most pressing issues put before the Guild leadership.

How close is the PGA to getting full group health insurance coverage for its members?

If the standard of comparison is the coverage enjoyed by the Directors Guild and Writers Guild, then it is unlikely that the PGA will be able to secure equivalent coverage in the foreseeable future. This difficulty is principally the result of our non-union status. Given the contentious atmosphere of the industry labor situation, there is little chance that the AMPTEC would recognize the Producers Guild as a bona fide labor union, even apart from the still-standing decision of the National Labor Relations Board that disqualified the PGA as a labor union on the grounds that producers were supervisors and thus ineligible to unionize.

With so many obstacles in the path of unionization, this is not a situation, there is little chance that the AMPTP would recognize the PGA as a labor union on the grounds that producers were supervisors and thus ineligible to unionize.

Producers of commercial spots typically grapple with the same sets of functions and responsibilities as their counterparts in motion pictures and television; why are commercial producers ineligible to join the PGA?

That said, the Guild continues to aggressively pursue healthcare options for its members, through such avenues as continuing to advocate for expansion of non-affiliate coverage through IATSE (though this program has had its own trials of late). We also actively continue to engage in talks with other organizations to pool our membership for the purpose of creating a large group plan — such a plan would have more competitive rates and greater portability. While this plan would be self-pay, rates would ideally be low enough that a member could realistically negotiate with employers to make contributions toward the costs. Finally, the PGA has recently worked to secure Guild-wide discounts on a variety of common medical and dental procedures through Transparent Health Network.

Time and again, a producer will find and develop a project, ultimately securing a sale to a network or studio, only to be frozen out of the creative collaboration shortly thereafter. Is there anything the Guild can do to ensure that producers who dedicate years of their careers to discovering and developing projects are not forced out once a larger entity gets involved?

The overall process of developing or producing a project is often fraught with competing interests, and is rarely 100% just or fair. Likewise, it is not the Guild’s role to police the industry’s business practices, save for instances of illegal treatment of team members or gross workplace negligence. Ultimately, it is the producer’s responsibility to advocate for and protect her or his creative involvement after legal control of the project is passed. Principally, this takes place at the contract stage, and may be the subject of difficult negotiations. In response to members’ calls for assistance in this area, the Guild intends to create a seminar or workshop to educate its membership regarding these challenging contractual issues and ideally empower them to secure more consistent creative involvement in their projects.

The programming for PGA seminars and the Produced By Conference represents an invaluable resource; why is this content (or video recordings thereof) not more widely available to the membership via the PGA website?

We are happy to note that the Guild is presently engaged in a redesign of its website — particularly its content delivery capabilities. The new home page will feature significantly more video content, including seminars, conference sessions, salon and Q&A events, and related material. While the Guild, as a not-for-profit company, has limited resources for video production, we are seeking to leverage help from member volunteers and other supporters to create a robust content library. We hope to launch the new version of the content site by the end of the calendar year.

The Guild intends to create a seminar or workshop to educate its membership regarding challenging contractual issues and empower them to secure more consistent creative involvement in their projects.

Much has changed since then. The Guild has grown in size and prestige, and enjoys tremendous respect within the entertainment community. The Guild’s membership has come to encompass the broader producing team in both digital and traditional media. Furthermore, the artistic and technical requirements of commercial production have advanced significantly over the past several decades. Based on these factors, the Guild leadership determined that commercial producers represented a viable segment of the producing team, and agreed to consider anew the possibility of offering them membership eligibility.

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Member Benefits

- Access to all-new PGA Job Board, online résumé search, employment tools and job forums
- Discounted registration for Produced By Conference
- Full access to PGA website including events, calendar, social networking tools
- Eligibility for individual, family and small business healthcare options through Producers Health Insurance Agency
- Participation in the Motion Picture Industry Health, Welfare & Pension Plan
- Listing of contact and credit information in searchable online roster
- Vote on Producers Guild Awards and receive discount tickets to the event, as well as DVD screeners for awards consideration
- Eligibility for PGA Mentoring Program
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ACADEMY AWARD WINNING TECHNOLOGY
BY ANATOLY KOKUSH

EUROPEAN CINEC AWARD WINNING
BY ANATOLY KOKUSH
New Members
The Producers Guild is proud to welcome the following new members, who have joined the Guild since July, 2012.

PRODUCERS COUNCIL
HUDIE AYALON
GORDON BUENONIC
MARK BOAL
JEFFREY CHERNOV
GEORGE CLOONEY
JEREMY DAWSON
RICHARD DEVINKI
LINDA ELLEBEE
LIZZIE FRIEDMAN
JAMES GARBUS
HOWARD GORDON
KENNETH HALSBAND
CHELSEA HANDLER
JULIE HARTLEY
BRAD HEBERT
AARON KAPLAN
COREY LARGE
STEVEN LEVITAN
MICHAEL LUISI
BOBBI LUTHER
AMANDA PALMER
MARK SENNET
RUSSELL SMITH
MICHAEL SPILLER
MARK STEELE
JONATHAN STRAUSS
ROBERT WEINSTEIN
MIRI YOON
JONATHAN ZUCKER

NEW MEDIA COUNCIL
TIMOTHY CURRISON
KAREN FOSTER
JASON FRIEDLANDER
JOSEPH GOLDWYN
SEAN HALORAN
ADAM HENDRICKS
CARY OKMIN
ALLAN SMITH
MARK THOMAS
GALIT VATURI
MITCH YAPKO

Segment/Field/Story Producer
ERIN GAMBLE
KELLI KNIGHT
KENNETH SCHOCH
ENIDYA STERNS
SIUJU VIJAYAN
GARY S. WYNN

Production Coordinator
ASHLEIGH STANCZAK
RICHARD TUCCI

AP COUNCIL
Associate Producer/Production Manager/Production Supervisor
TRACEY ARNOLD
GAVIN BEHRMAN
KYLE BENN
JESSICA CARBONARO
DANIEL ENGELHARDT
MORGAN HARRIS
DANIEL OLLEK
MELUSSA ONEW
CINDY WHITMAN

Post-Production
STEPHEN BOWMAN
WILLIAM BURT
MARY FUKUTO
JACLYN LELEA
KATIE LILLY
LUIGI POLO
DAVID TOMLIN

Visual Effects
FAHED ALHABIB
ERIKA BURTON
NICHOLAS HYMAN
PATRICK KEARNY
TRICIA MULGREW

AWARDS TIMELINE
Please keep the following dates in mind as we enter this year’s awards season. All submissions are handled by the Guild’s awards website portal, which can be accessed via producersguild.org

October 19, 2012
Eligibility Form deadline for Theatrical Motion Pictures and Animated Theatrical Motion Pictures

October 26, 2012
Deadline for Notice of Producing Credits Form for Long-Form Television

October 29, 2012
Television Series and Digital Series Nomination polls open

November 9, 2012
Eligibility Form deadline for Long-Form Television

November 23, 2012
Television Series and Specials, Digital Series Nomination polls close

November 28, 2012
Producers Guild Awards nominees are announced for Television Series, Digital Series, Feature Documentary Motion Pictures

December 3, 2012
Theatrical Motion Pictures, Animated Theatrical Motion Pictures, Long-Form Television nomination polls open

January 3, 2013
Producers Guild Awards nominees are announced for all categories, including Theatrical Motion Pictures, Animated Theatrical Motion Pictures, Long-Form Television; final polls open

January 24, 2013
Final polls close for all categories

January 26, 2013
2013 PRODUCERS GUILD AWARDS at the Beverly Hilton Hotel
It was December 2011, and I’d decided it was time for a step-up in my career. Thus far, I’d had a successful run as a visual effects producer and supervisor in feature films, but I’d also been watching, listening and waiting for the right time and the right projects to produce. My partner and I had developed two feature screenplays, two TV series and a Web series. It was time to take the plunge and produce them.

I knew about the PGA Mentoring Program, but I’d never really thought about being part of it. Then it suddenly struck me ... why not? I’ve mentored many people over the course of my career, so why not be mentored in this next crucial step?

This all-encompassing side of producing was new to me and I wanted to avoid some of the pitfalls, educate myself and generally become a better producer. So in early February, I started the process.

By March, I had my assigned mentor and I was thrilled. It was Jeff Kleeman, producer and president of Big Kid Pictures. He had exactly the kind of depth of experience that I could really learn from.

We met and I peppered him with question after question, all of which he patiently answered. Jeff continued to answer my many questions over the course of our mentorship through emails, several meetings and phone calls. For example, I asked Jeff if I should enter the PGA ProShow, he replied, “What have you got to lose?” He was right — our screwball comedy/adventure feature Cargo Cult was chosen as one of the 10 international finalists; through the ProShow at the Produced By Conference, my partner and I made some absolutely wonderful contacts.

Jeff continued to mentor me in putting together a full presentation package, which included potential financing, synopsis, realistic casting and directors lists, and ways to produce the films in any number of markets. He has helped me think through difficult situations, political rats’ nests and an ongoing range of responses as we started to pitch.

His advice is always solid and given in a calm and patient way. The result — my projects are now getting attention, people are reading them and loving them. Best of all, I feel I’m now clearly on the path to producing them!

My mentorship experience went above and beyond anything I could have imagined. It has helped me become a better producer and pushed me to explore areas that I was not comfortable with before. Jeff is truly an amazing mentor and the Mentoring Committee did a great job pairing us. Thank you.

Now, if anyone is interested in hearing about my projects, please call...
### DEVELOPMENT WATCH - REALITY/COMPETITION

#### 2012/2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Title</th>
<th>Network</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AMERICA’S NEXT GEORGE CLOONEY</td>
<td>NBC</td>
<td>Nationwide talent search for the next George Clooney. Legal cannot clear any images of George Clooney or use his name or likeness in any way whatsoever. Cease and desist letters received 7/19 and 9/02. Fast track.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO WANTS TO BE A MARTYR?</td>
<td>CBS</td>
<td>International travel/adventure series in which players compete in deadly inter-faith challenges. First deceased contestant each week honored as the winning martyr. Johnny Knoxville to host. Currently casting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNTITLED TYLER PERRY’S OPRAH WINFREY NATIONWIDE TALENT SEARCH FOR GEORGE CLOONEY</td>
<td>OWN</td>
<td>Tyler Perry partners with Oprah Winfrey to do something on TV. Hosted by Gayle King. Strip version slated for late 2013 on soon-to-be-launched Tyler Perry-owned cable TV network Tyler Perry’s House of Cable TV.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNTITLED CHE GUEVARA</td>
<td>TELEMUNDO</td>
<td>Nationwide talent search for the next great Marxist revolutionary. Gloria Estefan to host. All wardrobe to be provided exclusively by Banana Republic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CELEBRITY COLONIC</td>
<td>VH1</td>
<td>Half-hour reality series in which celebrities patronize a popular Beverly Hills colon cleansing boutique. Danny Bonaduce to host. 52-episode order, format is pre-sold in Germany, huge back end potential.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HERE COMES THE WIDE</td>
<td>LIFETIME</td>
<td>30 American brides-to-be spend 30 days before their weddings locked in a Nigerian-style bride fattening hut. The bride that gains the most weight wins. Danny Bonaduce to host. Casting issues - cannot find any SoCal-based women who will agree to be in this competition. LA casting office relocating to Wisconsin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SO YOU THINK YOU CAN SELL AIR TIME?</td>
<td>TRUTV</td>
<td>Half-hour weekly show consisting exclusively of commercial breaks. Ordered to pilot. Not clear that format will support host, but Danny Bonaduce inquiring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNTITLED GANGNAM STYLE VIDEO GUY</td>
<td>MTV</td>
<td>Hosted by Mario Lopez. Ordered to pilot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HELLS ACTUAL KITCHEN</td>
<td>FOX</td>
<td>Intense, weekly competition in which award-winning Chef Gordon Ramsay screams at competitors as they try to prepare gourmet meals in a kitchen engulfed in flames miles beneath the earth’s crust. Exploring product integration opportunities with First Alert and Grossman Burn Center.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHATCHOTAALKIBOUT???</td>
<td>BET</td>
<td>Nationwide talent search for the next great talented, adorable-yet-sassy African-American child actor to become the star of an all-white sitcom and eventually get fired when no longer considered adorable. Hosted by the guy who played Cockroach on The Cosby Show. Produced by Emmanuel Lewis, Rodney Allen Rippy and the guy who played Cockroach on The Cosby Show.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 KIDS WITH A 200 LB. TUMOR</td>
<td>TLC</td>
<td>Weekly documentary/reality. Raising 10 kids can be a challenge, but it’s even more challenging if all 19 kids share a 200-pound tumor. Possible midseason replacement pending metastasis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STOP WATCHIN’</td>
<td>The CW</td>
<td>Nationwide reality competition series that challenges viewers NOT to watch the show. The viewer that watches the show the least wins. In talks with Bristol Palin to host.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>