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“We took a gamble and the gamble paid off.”
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The Producers Mark has arrived.

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The Little Miss Sunshine producer rises in the East.

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Editor’s note: We are pleased to introduce our readers to our guest columnist, Susan Sprung, the PGA’s Associate National Executive Director. Vance Van Petten will return to this space in our following issue.

It’s been four months since I arrived at the Producers Guild. As a welcome present, Vance has offered me the opportunity to write this issue’s Executive Director’s column. If I were a writer, of course, this would be a great gift. But that is not what I am. So if I am not perfectly eloquent, forgive me for groping for words that express the truth — that the gift is, in fact, the chance to meet and work with all of you.

Of course, I haven’t quite met all five thousand of you yet, but the whirlwind that was the preparation for the Produced By Conference gave me the chance to meet quite a few. And to all of you — from the Conference Co-Chairs, to the PGA staff, to those who participate as speakers, moderators, producers, and volunteers — I offer my sincere thanks. Every one of you has been generous and welcoming to me, even as you have shown yourselves to be selfless in support of each other and tireless in your defense of the producer’s role in this industry.

It’s hard to imagine a more exciting way to begin my career at the Guild than by helping to organize the Produced By Conference. As the coverage in this magazine illustrates, the Conference was an incredible experience, with more than 1,400 attendees and featuring 125 speakers across 25 sessions, with topics that covered the spectrum from getting independent films made to the future of original programming. Add in a dozen mentoring roundtables, a thriving ProShow project market, the unique Image Capture Assessment Series (ICAS) and two evening networking receptions, and you have a recipe for an event that wasn’t simply about sitting still and listening to some panel discussions, but a wholly immersive weekend experience. And while joining the PBC team in the middle of pre-production was like jumping into the deep end of the pool despite barely knowing how to swim, the graciousness and professionalism of our team made that transition a painless one.

What I admired most about the Conference was the way our members worked together not only to educate and network, but genuinely to inspire one another. No one in this business can realize their goals without the help of others, and I see the Produced By Conference and the Producers Guild itself as places where all members of the producing team can come to get the assistance — and the inspiration — necessary to turn their creative visions into reality.

I hope I can continue to help the Guild create more such opportunities for our members on a regular basis. You are, after all, our greatest resource. Your collective dedication to your dreams isn’t just inspiring to your fellow members, but to myself and the rest of the PGA staff as well. So please allow me to encourage you to stop by, e-mail or call and let me know your thoughts. Because there’s no such thing as too much inspiration.
If you were in the audience for a screening of *The Magic of Belle Isle* (released by Magnolia Pictures in July) or *Lawless* (from The Weinstein Company, this August), then you were among the first to see the initial credits certified by the PGA via the Producers Mark. And if you haven’t yet been able to take in either of those fine films, don’t lose too much sleep over it; more certified credits are on the way.

**WHAT IS THE PRODUCERS MARK?**

It’s a lowercase p.g.a. that follows the “Produced By” credit of a feature film producer, and it indicates that the certified producer performed a majority of the producing functions on the film. Determinations as to which producers are eligible to receive the Producers Mark are made via the Producers Guild’s arbitration system — the same system that has been used to determine eligible nominees for producing honors at the Oscars, Golden Globes, BAFTAs and, of course, our own Producers Guild Awards.

The PGA is currently engaged in ongoing negotiations with several studios regarding widespread adoption of the Mark on studio features. But just as they so often have in the past, independent companies like The Weinstein Company and Magnolia have served as the trailblazers. Independents have always been quick to acknowledge the crucial role that producers play — even as the economic realities of independent production increasingly force films to offer contractual producing credits to non-producers such as financiers and managers. But the independent world’s embrace of the Mark has been gratifying. We applaud their foresight and urge their colleagues in the studio arena to follow their example.

And of course, we wish to applaud five outstanding producers: PGA members Lori McCreary and Alan Greisman, as well as their colleague Rob Reiner, and PGA members Douglas Wick and Lucy Fisher. Those five names are the very first in our industry to carry the Producers Mark, and the pride and humility they have demonstrated in the face of that distinction reflects well on their profession as a whole.

It’s worth noting that one of those individuals, Mr. Reiner, is not (yet) a member of the Producers Guild. Unlike similar designations by such groups as the A.S.C. and C.S.A., the Producers Mark does not denote membership in the Guild. Limiting the Mark in that way would defeat its purpose. Much as we’d like to drive our membership numbers upward, the essential values the Mark protects are the fairness and accuracy of credits. After all, it’s not as though the tremendous amount of work that Rob Reiner did on *Belle Isle* somehow “doesn’t count” because he’s not a PGA member. If you perform a majority of the producing functions on a film, you have earned the Producers Mark, end of story.

We’ve heard a lot from our television-based members, asking about a Producers Mark for television. We would love to make that happen. But first, we need to walk before we can run.

But for now, one more tip of the hat to our pioneers — thank you Lori, Alan, Rob, Doug and Lucy. And thank you to Magnolia and the Weinsteins, for standing up for the dignity of producers everywhere.

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*Produced by Rob Reiner, Alan Greisman, and Lori McCreary.*
There’s an unfortunate propensity to regard the entertainment industry and the city of Los Angeles as all but synonymous. It will surprise no one to learn that the worst offenders in this regard tend to be citizens of Los Angeles and its environs.

We can think of no better rejoinder than simply to point out the more than 1,100 members of the PGA East, most of them based in the New York metro area. With more than 20% of the Guild’s membership comprising a group of dynamic production communities stretching from Boston to D.C. to Louisiana, the growth of the PGA East over the past decade has been one of the Guild’s unqualified success stories.

Taking the reins of the PGA East following his election in June, new PGA East Chair Peter Saraf is faced with the either daunting or gratifying challenge (depending on where you’re sitting) of building on the work of such prior Chairs as John Hadity, David Picker and Nancy Goldman. Saraf brings some native advantages to this assignment. More than any of his predecessors, he can trace deep professional roots within two of the region’s dominant constituencies, independent feature filmmakers and the documentary/non-fiction community. Moreover, having previously served on the PGA East’s Executive Committee, he takes on the job with a strong understanding of the region’s administrative and organizational challenges.

Did we mention that he’s also, y’know … an acclaimed filmmaker? Perhaps best known for the much-loved shambling road-trip comedy Little Miss Sunshine (for which he received both an Oscar nomination and the PGA’s top motion picture award), Saraf is the producer of some of the most intimate and distinctive independent features of the past several years, including Sam Mendes’ Away We Go, Liev Schreiber’s Everything Is Illuminated and the spiky comedy Sunshine Cleaning with Amy Adams and Emily Blunt. He’s currently in post-production on the deities-run-amuck project Gods Behaving Badly, the feature directorial debut of Saraf’s producing partner, Marc Turtletaub.

This is the 56th in Produced by’s ongoing series of Case Studies of successful producers and their work. Produced by editor Chris Green recently spoke with Peter Saraf, who held up his end of the conversation from his and Turtletaub’s Manhattan-based Big Beach Films. The wide-ranging chat touched on everything from the producer’s Oscar-winning mentors Jonathan Demme and his father, documentarian Irving Saraf, to the ways in which the diversity and energy of New York inform his films, to the surprising value of restaurant experience in launching a producing career.
So, just starting at the beginning, talk a little bit about your background and how you found your way into the business. Why producing as opposed to some other branch or specialty?

I grew up in San Francisco. My father is a documentary filmmaker, who was one of the people who started the special projects department at KQED, the local public television station in San Francisco. That was a legendary documentary film division. They made an extraordinary number of incredible films. My dad documented the '60s in San Francisco, was in the south at the height of the civil rights movement, spent six months in Cuba in 1968 making a film about Fidel. He generated a huge body of extraordinary work, and from that time a very vibrant and active documentary film community in the Bay Area was born, one that is still very strong to this day.

My dad did that for about 20 years or so before being lured over by Saul Zaentz to help start his film company. And he worked with Saul for a long time as I was growing up. I remember him working on One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest and Ralph Bakshi's live-action/animated Lord of the Rings. Eventually, he left to concentrate on his own films with my step-mother, Allie Light. Together, they have made some great documentaries, including one for which they won the Academy Award, In the Shadow of the Stars, in 1992.

I've loved movies for as long as I can remember. My dad and I, growing up, our ritual was we would see at least one movie every Saturday, usually a double feature. From a very young age, he would take me to the revival theaters in San Francisco and we'd see double bills of Godard or Truffaut or Lindsay Anderson movies. Or see Charlie Chaplin festivals and Buster Keaton festivals...all these movies. I just grew up steeped in cinema. I worked with my dad as a PA on some of his shoots when I was in high school, but I never really considered myself as somebody who grew up in the film industry. Making movies was just something my dad did as his job. He just turned 80, is battling ALS and is still working on a movie!

I went to college at Wesleyan University where I majored in theater. A lot of people I was in school with ended up being very successful in the film business — Joss Whedon, Michael Bay, Jon Turtletaub, Paul Weitz, Shari Berman and many others. At the time, I was very passionate about theater, but not very clear on what I wanted to do with my life.

After graduation, I was invited to work with a theater company in Indonesia, so I went there for almost a year. I returned to the States with the intention of moving to New York to go to film school. But I stopped home in San Francisco, where my sister was opening a restaurant and...
needed help. So I ended up staying for a year and a half and helping her run the business. Oddly enough, it was this detour that indirectly led me to producing. I had no experience running a business, but I threw myself into it and found that I had an aptitude for it.

Eventually, my girlfriend at the time, who is now my wife of 20 years, and I decided to move to New York for her to go to graduate school. I used my experience running the restaurant to con my way into a job doing accounting at the Museum of the Moving Image. And then I used that job, and some PA experience, to con my way into Jonathan Demme’s company, Clinica Estetico, as the office manager. So the restaurant gig that got in the way of film school ended up being the thing that got me my first real job in the movie business.

And there I had the opportunity to work with Jonathan Demme and Ed Saxon. That was my film school. I spent a decade with those guys, and they were extraordinary mentors to me. The office was a very small office, four or five people. And right after I started, we went into production on Philadelphia. Jonathan and Ed asked me to produce a documentary about the real person on whom the Antonio Banderas character was loosely based; that was a film called One Foot on a Banana Peel, the Other Foot in the Grave. I had no idea how to produce a documentary, but I learned it as I went along. That was one of the great gifts of Jonathan and Ed — they put faith and trust in people. There was a lot of guidance along the way but it was really like, ‘Hey, just go do this. You'll figure it out.’ And I did. And so through the years I continued to produce some documentaries with them.

Were these shorts or features?

These were feature docs. We produced a documentary directed by Jo Menell and Angus Gibson which was the life story of Nelson Mandela, filmed during his presidential campaign in '94. That was a film that ended up getting nominated for the Oscar. We did a number of documentaries down in Haiti, one of which was called The Agronomist, that Jonathan directed that I am really proud of. I got to learn a lot on Philadelphia and Beloved. The first narrative feature that I took an active producing role in was a film called Ulee’s Gold, directed by Victor Nuñez. And then we produced Adaptation, and Jonathan’s movie The Truth About Charlie.

Working at Clinica, I got the opportunity to learn from some of the greatest people who have ever worked in this business — Kenny Utt, Ron Bozman, Gary Goetzman, Craig McKay, Carol Littleton, Tak Fujimoto, Rachel Portman. The list is endless. What an education!

So it was an extraordinary period of learning and growing in film. I had never had an awareness of what a producer was. Working with Jonathan and Ed I found myself being given the responsibilities of a producer. And I not only found that it was something that I could do and that I had a certain amount of aptitude for, but I also found that it was something that I really loved doing, and something that played to a lot of my strengths and a lot of my interests. But it was a surprise to me. I always say it’s something that I sort of stumbled into. But it’s been an extraordinarily satisfying and fulfilling career, so far, doing that. I get paid to make movies — how absurdly lucky is that?

Mentoring is such a big topic for the Guild. What were some of the lessons or values you took from them that you try and pass on to the producers that you’re now mentoring?

In retrospect, my first real mentor in film was my dad. When I started working in the film business he said to me, “I bet you know a lot more than you think you do.” And he was right. He never called himself a producer. He’s a director, cinematographer and editor. But he is also a producer — he has always made movies happen, created film companies that otherwise wouldn't exist. By example, he taught me the greatest lesson for any producer which is that there is nothing that you can't do if you try hard enough.
Jonathan and Ed were my first professional mentors. They gave me the opportunity to be a working filmmaker and it was through their generosity and openness that I discovered that what excited me about filmmaking — putting projects together, developing ideas into scripts, facilitating directors’ visions, casting, budgeting, scheduling, editing, mixing, scoring, marketing, every part of the process. I love every step of the process so producing is where I get to have a hand in everything and it’s very fulfilling for me.

But there’s a humanism to Jonathan’s work, and an eclecticism that is reflective of who he is. He’s an extraordinarily warm and generous and incredibly enthusiastic human being, who has this love of people and this passion for life that’s really infectious. That obviously finds its way into his work, but it’s also how he works with other people. And so he embraces people and takes them into his fold and nurtures their strengths and helps guide them. And that’s something that I hope I’ve taken from him, and from Ed as well, who was very much a part of that whole culture. I hope that I treat people with the same respect and generosity that I experienced from those guys.

After 10 years of working with Jonathan and Ed, it was time to move on. I was out there working as an independent producer, which as we all know is tough. I was trying to put together some projects and get some good material and really infectious. That obviously finds its way into his work, but it’s also how he works with other people. And so he embraces people and takes them into his fold and nurtures their strengths and helps guide them. And that’s something that I hope I’ve taken from him, and from Ed as well, who was very much a part of that whole culture. I hope that I treat people with the same respect and generosity that I experienced from those guys.

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Given your thematic inclinations, do you have an approach to script development, either individually or collectively?

Every movie is different. And we're not shy about where a good story comes from. There have been projects that have come to us that remained largely intact. On Little Miss Sunshine, the draft that Michael Arndt wrote is pretty much the draft that got filmed. And that was a film that just hit on all cylinders and was perfect for us, and was the first film that we did together after Everything Is Illuminated. In a lot of ways, it exemplified what we were trying to do. So we were very lucky to have that project happen so early in the formation of the company.

What we're shooting for in every Big Beach movie is to make something that is a transformative experience for the audience. That's a tall order and one that we can't hit very often, but that's the goal. We think that audiences want an original, intelligent, entertaining experience when they go to the movie theater and that's what we're trying to deliver. That kind of movie might be a comedy, it might be a drama, it might be contemporary or historical, but for us it all comes down to wanting to tell stories that are complex and real, but ultimately uplifting, hopeful, revelatory, inspiring and that send people out of the theater energized. Again, it's a small target and we don't hit it every time, but that's where we're aiming.

Talking about Little Miss Sunshine, that's the movie that, in some ways, put you guys on the map...

Oh, without a doubt.

Of course, it wasn't just you guys, but as everybody knows, there were five producers involved. What was that like, working with your fellow producers? At what point did you get on the train? And what did you do once you were on it?

Michael Arndt wrote the script on spec. It was his first screenplay. He brought it to Ron Yerxa and Albert Berger, who he knew because he'd worked as Matthew Broderick's assistant on Election, which Ron and Al produced. Ron and Al brought the script to Marc Turtletaub and David Friendly who were partnered in a company together called Deep River, which was a company that they had formed several years before I met Marc.

Marc and David loved it. They bought it from Michael and set it up at Focus, and soon after, with Ron and Al, attached Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris to direct it. When Marc and I were making Everything Is Illuminated and starting to talk about a new company and what we wanted to make, he told me that his favorite script that he'd ever been involved with was Little Miss Sunshine. I knew the script and loved it as well. And so we decided to try and buy the script back from Focus and make it independently. And to their great credit, Focus agreed to do that.

Given your thematic inclinations, do you have an approach to script development, either individually or collectively? What do you do once you're on the train? And what did you do once you were on it?
So we financed the movie independently, made it without distribution and took it to Sundance, where we very successfully sold it to Fox Searchlight. People make a big deal about how Focus made a mistake passing on the film. But you have to remember that they were not alone. Every single studio and specialty division passed on that screenplay. We tried to get a partner and everybody passed.

What were the justifications they gave? It was an R-rated comedy; at the time, there was a lot of collective wisdom that said that R-rated comedies weren’t commercial. It was an ensemble piece without a star; how are you going to sell an ensemble? Especially to foreign territories? It broke all the rules of what an easily financeable film should be. But we just loved it and always thought that there would be an audience for a really original, funny film that was full of heart, with these great characters going on this wonderful journey. So we took a gamble on it and the gamble paid off.

So within that group of producers, how did you find your role? We all worked very well on it together. I was the last one in. Those guys obviously were involved with the development of the project for five years and got Jon and Valerie attached. When I came in, it was about getting the script ready to shoot, casting, figuring out the production plan. Marc and I were very active during the shoot and post. But all five of us had different responsibilities and all five of us worked on it together very well.

Could you talk a little bit about New York? What has drawn you to New York, and how has the culture in New York informed the kind of movies that you try to make? I visited New York for the first time, I think, when I was 10 years old. And I was completely captivated by the city. For whatever reason, this was where I wanted to live; that was always a goal of mine. I love living here. I love the energy of it. I love raising my family here. I think it’s a great city for kids. Professionally, there’s a small but very dedicated and tight-knit community of filmmakers here. It’s a very different culture from the film business in Los Angeles, which I think can be all-encompassing. I think it’s pretty easy to live your life in Los Angeles in a world in which most of the people that you know and socialize with and work with are all in the film or TV business. Whereas here, that’s not the main industry of this town. Most people here don’t work in the film or TV business, and so I think that changes the work.

I love L.A., but personally, I like living in a place where I’m surrounded by people and events and a world which is not about making movies. And I love being in a pedestrian city. We all take public transportation. We all share the parks and the museums, and the streets, in a way that forces us all to cross paths with people from all different walks of life, cultures and languages and everything. Now, that can be enormously taxing and frustrating and infuriating, but also is incredibly vibrant and rich and energizing.

And that’s probably the main thing that I love about New York. We’re forced onto this tiny little island with millions and millions of other people where we all interact with each
other and we all survive together, for better or for worse. And that just personally gives me a creative energy and a spirit that I think informs my work, and that, I think, is really important for me. So I love that about living in New York.

Particularly if you’re dedicated to telling stories about unexpected personal connections, New York would seem to foster that.

Yeah. So you can’t avoid it in New York. Like I said, that’s not always easy, but I think you’re right. I think that forced connection does help you think about those kinds of stories, what brings us together as a people.

Well, on a day-to-day level, one of the things that we hope brings people together is the Producers Guild. How did you find your way to the Guild?

I joined the Guild in 2003 and I remember thinking, “Wow, there’s a club for producers!” I thought that was great. Because producing can be a very lonely existence. Even when we’re working with other people, we can feel quite isolated. When we’re working on production, it’s all-consuming and it takes over our lives. And when we’re not making a movie or television show, we’re always thinking, “What’s next? And that can be an isolating and lonely existence, professionally.

And so I was attracted to the Guild because, like I said, I came into producing without really knowing what a producer did. Without that knowledge, I didn’t have that respect for the craft of producing and the artistry of the process. The idea of an organization that would educate people about what producers do and protect their interests, that would advocate for the profession of producing…that was really attractive. The Guild afforded an opportunity to interact with other producers, whether at screenings or seminars or any event where you get to share experiences, share knowledge. I like to say that we may not be a collective bargaining organization but we are a collective advocacy organization. We are a group of people who support one another, advocate for each other and advocate for our profession. And that, to me, is a wonderful thing.

And so now you’re our new Chair in the east.

I am the new Chair in the east, indeed.

I’m somewhat surprised to find myself in this position, and very humbled and honored. But I was approached four years ago to run the Executive Committee as a member at large, and that led to my official involvement with the Guild. I served on the Executive Committee for four years. And then a few people asked me if I would run for Chair when the previous Chair, John Hadity, had term limited. I didn’t expect that, but it led to this challenge. I officially took over in June. So it’s all very new.

There are a lot of strong people who built the PGA East into what it is now, and a ton of heavy lifting has been done before me. So I find myself in that privileged position of stepping into a really strong, well-organized group. I owe a tremendous amount to the people who formed the PGA East, Nelle Nugent, John Schwally, Harvey Wilson and Kay Rothman and their colleagues, and to the Chairs that came before me, Nancy Goldman, David Picker and John.

I’m honored to follow in their footsteps, and hope I can live up to the legacy that’s given us more than 1,100 members, and a lot of strong programming and a really great infrastructure.

So, going forward, what are your priorities for the chapter?

I just want to coast on their success, you know? (Laughs.) No, I’m going to work hard to build membership to help make the Guild stronger. We have a wonderful group of folks downtown in the D.C. area who are really passionate organizers. I think they’ll eventually become a chapter of their own. We have a lot of interest down in Atlanta, in the Louisiana region, as well as up in Boston and Rhode Island and Pennsylvania as well. So the reach of the PGA East is really starting to spread very, very fast, and that’s exciting.

We really want to nurture the growth of the PGA wherever there is a working community of filmmakers. But we want to do it carefully and make sure that we don’t expand too quickly. So we’re trying to identify people in those regions that can be strong leaders and builders of a PGA chapter where they are. That’s one of the goals.

Of course, working on jobs and employment is so critical right now, when the industry is changing a lot. How can our membership keep working? And how can we protect a really strong, professional class of filmmakers so they can earn a living doing what they do?

I’m going to work hard on trying to get membership benefits. That’s one priority. I’m hoping that I can work with the folks who’ve already done a lot of hard work on this and see if we can crack some of the problems that have prevented us from providing the kind of health benefits that our membership really needs and desires. And those are priorities for me.

Well, that’s a full plate right there. Yeah, it is.

So, before I let you go, I want to return to mentoring for one last moment. What would you say to emerging producers who are in the position that you were in 15 years ago, trying to find their way and build a career in this industry as a producer? To your way of thinking, what should those professional priorities be?

I would say, as a producer, you have to be flexible in so many ways. You have to be open to new and interesting challenges. I mean, that’s what we do. And I think you have to do that in your own career as well. You have to be open to new opportunities. Even though it may not be exactly what you set out to do, you might learn something from that project or that person.

But for me, the thing that has helped me most along the way has been finding the people with whom I shared a sensibility. I have been extremely blessed to be mentored by amazing people and to have learned from some of the best in the business. And I am still learning.

I think that for people starting out and who are identifying the things that they’re passionate about, who’s making those kinds of projects? How can I work with them? What can I bring to the table to help those people do what they’re doing, and how can I learn from them? I’ve always felt that if I were able to bring a certain amount of passion and hard work and diligence to make their lives and jobs easier, I can add value to what they’re doing. So find those people whose work you can build on and help to take better, and then learn along the way and do it yourself.
Competition to be accepted among the class of 20 players for the Hollywood camp was intense and according to Friday, “drew far more applicants than openings.” The entry qualification process was aimed to test the player’s true commitment to entertainment and required, among other things, writing a critical essay on a motion picture that inspired them to explore a career in filmmaking. The players’ essays covered a fascinating array of films such as *Slumdog Millionaire*, *Black Swan*, *Crash*, *The Godfather* and even Kurosawa’s 1950 classic *Rashomon*.

“We are not turning them into filmmakers in a few days,” explains New York–based producer Friday. “Our program was to provide them with an introductory understanding of the various crafts of filmmaking. How do you break down a script for budgeting? How do you rehearse with actors? When the plan calls for three scenes, how can you tell your story with time for just one scene? What impact does an editor have on the final product? As producers — and many of these guys are aspiring to become producers — you want to have a general concept of the various moving parts of what goes into making a film.”

The NFL Hollywood program provides a natural evolution of connection and integration for individuals who may excel in one field, but who also hold a passion to explore opportunities in another field. The program provides a useful path through the often intimidating prospect of starting out in show business. “Being a former athlete at the college level (a running back at the University of Washington), I have seen a lot of athletes lose money trying to do entertainment ventures,” says PGA member Jeff Clanagan, who lectured at the camp.

The program was born out of a meeting between Film Life CEO Jeff Friday and Baltimore Ravens linebacker Terrell Suggs at a film festival produced annually by Friday down in Miami. It was funded by the Player Engagement Division of the NFL (an educational arm which also offers programs in broadcasting, business and music for current and former NFL players), which revealed NFL players’ most common ambition was becoming a successful Hollywood producer after their playing days.
“What happens is that they’re approached by people who are not the most knowledgeable sorts, trying to induce them to invest. It often turns out to be a losing proposition,” says the producer, who has worked on entertainment projects with former NBA great Shaquille O’Neal among other athletes. “I thought this program would help rectify that. It is a program that gives an athlete an overview of how the movie industry works and what the economics are. But it also provides an understanding of the different crafts involved in the behind-the-scenes operations of filmmaking — something all effective producers need to have a sense of.”

While football has been known as the school of hard knocks, so has Hollywood. Among the lessons learned from the inaugural NFL Pro Hollywood Boot Camp is the newfound respect these players gained for the role of the producer. Part of what the Hollywood professionals conveyed in the curriculum (involving lectures, panel discussions and hands-on filmmaking), is that in finding the right story, financing, production, distribution, casting and marketing, successful producers are a lot like a combination of a great NFL coach, GM, team owner and league executive rolled into one. Finance, creative, line — so many variables come into play that the players fully grasped what this craft entails.

“Roger Bobb, a former executive producer for Tyler Perry who now has his own production company, and Robert Townsend (Los Americans, Diary of a Single Mom) were among those who presented us with all the different facets of being a producer,” reports Ahman Green, the Green Bay Packers’ all-time leading rusher. “They are the first and last person on the project. Producers make sure the train runs on time, with a ton of responsibilities on everything from budgets for catering, to dialogue changes, to locations permits and foreign marketing posters. They gave us tips on everything. It was eye-opening.”

A couple other camp attendees shared their new impressions of what a successful Hollywood producer needs to be. “Being a creative producer, you’ve got to put ego aside and be able to juggle many different personalities with a lot of money at stake,” observes Jon Alston, a former NFL linebacker. Adds Tennessee Titans safety Jordan Babineaux: “The producer is the heart and soul of the project. They are there at the genesis, working with the writer and with studio marketing people in distribution matters.”

On the flip side, Hollywood veterans who participated in the camp were a little surprised by the knowledge these NFL players already possessed about show business. “I was very impressed by how many had already begun getting involved in producing films,” says panelist Zola Mashariki, Senior Vice President of Production at Fox Searchlight Pictures, whose credits include this year’s indie hit, The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel. “Their varied film tastes and their passion came across from the opening presentation. Developing, financing, acting ... the full spectrum was represented by the players at the camp. It was great to see just how aware they were of the industry operations, not just the glamour side. They showed a strong desire to learn.”

Even Troy Vincent, the NFL executive who coordinated the program, was surprised to learn that “many are already in the business. One says he’s been writing the last 10 years for film. ‘It was my childhood hobby,’ he told me. Are you kidding me?”

Indeed some have made forward progress with their Hollywood careers hoping to score in their new field of play. Former NFL defender Alston, through his own produc-
tion company, Dream America Pictures, has written, directed and produced a feature called *Red Butterfly.* Currently in post-production, the filmmaker describes it as “a gritty underground New York crime thriller.”

Still performing at a high level in the NFL (despite a recent foot injury), Terrell Suggs, a five-time Pro Bowl linebacker, has also enjoyed some early success in filmmaking. The first movie Suggs wrote and produced, a short entitled *When Beautiful People Do Ugly Things,* was accepted at last year’s Cannes Film Festival.

“It is a pretty amazing feeling to get your inaugural effort in Cannes,” says the one-time NFL Defensive Player of the Year. “I said to myself, ‘Yeah, I think this is for me.’ Movies are going to be my business after I’m through sacking quarterbacks.”

Such examples of cinematic creativity and initiative have impressed the NFL’s coordinating executive. “It shows the level of talent out there,” says Vincent. “We just don’t think about these ‘stars on Sunday’ in that fashion.”

Other attendees garnered a definite direction they want to pursue after their playing days are done as a result of this experience.

“I’m interested in the business side as a producer,” says St. Louis Rams’ All-Pro running back Steven Jackson. “This [camp] helped me achieve my goals in learning how to identify a good script and seeking out investors for a story I feel is commercial.”

The franchise’s all-time leading rusher knows exactly the kinds of films he’d like to produce after he hangs up his spikes. “I’d like to present cultural studies,” says Jackson, who often travels in the off-season gathering material and studying different cultures. “Educating the viewer, through cinematic storytelling, that while we may not know about each other, we are a lot more similar than we are different.”

Another player ready, willing and able to take on producing after his playing days are done is defensive back Will Blackmon, a member of the reigning Super Bowl champion New York Giants.

“We are already in the tough world of show business,” notes Blackmon. “We are on stage every weekend! We know...
toughness. Our contracts aren’t guaranteed and our careers can be ended by injury at any time,” he points out. “I have been on injured reserve three of my seven seasons, with multiple surgeries on top of that. So to overcome that and come back and help my team win a Super Bowl, that’s tough to do. I’ll be ready for Hollywood.”

Clanagan agrees that “the discipline they get from football will serve them well [as producers],” says two-time NFL All-Pro Green. “We come out of that experience having that fight in us,” says two-time NFL All-Pro Green. “We’re used to dealing with people telling us ‘no’ or ‘you can’t,’ so we have that mental discipline and strength to work through all the rejection.”

“Football teaches you some very pertinent skills that lend themselves well to Hollywood,” says Yale graduate and former San Francisco 49er tight end Nate Lawrie. “One is the fact that you learn to take a beating and get back up. The film and TV industries are very tough businesses and if you don’t know how to take some lumps, you probably won’t make it very far.”

Adds Lawrie: “Football also teaches you the importance of playing your role. More so than in other sports, football players have to be willing to toil without the promise of acknowledgement. Football players understand this.”

Producing, like football, is a team endeavor. And so the program didn’t end after the curtains fell on the fourth day. “By the last session, we were pairing players with Hollywood professionals for a mentoring program,” explains Friday. “They asked the players, having gone through the program, if there was a particular craft they wanted to explore further. From there, we will pair them up with a professional from that field. We asked the mentors to commit to a one-year period where they stay in touch with the player and bring players in on their active projects.”

For these ‘stars on Sunday’ like Suggs, they’re aiming to succeed in show business like their Hollywood heroes. “Being a successful producer, there are so many variables that come into play,” observes Suggs. “That’s why my hero is Harvey Weinstein. Words can’t describe his genius for picking films to be a part of. I don’t think he is given enough credit. If I meet him, I’ll be like a little kid meeting his favorite football player,” says Suggs, who is in post-production on his first feature film, The Coalition.

The experience perhaps can be best summed up by the Packers’ Green, a former NFC Rushing Champion and Offensive Player of the Year: “Producing is hard work,” he recognizes. “You have to be a jack-of-all-trades with a solid understanding of the wide range of the filmmaking process. This camp has provided greater illumination in just what it takes to succeed in this demanding position. What I’ve learned and observed is that leading film producers and stars in the NFL certainly share a key trait, and that is an immeasurable drive.”

Producer-director Robert Townsend, one of the camp’s instructors, came away highly impressed by this first class of graduates. “I applaud the NFL for creating this vehicle for the players to get an education. It’s a real hands-on approach to what it takes to write, produce and direct television and film. The players have shown real ecletic tastes, and they are passionate about film. Out of this program you might get the next Weinstein and an NFL player winning an Academy Award.”

Lofty goals indeed, but that’s what crossover players strive for — success at the very highest levels.
The crisp air at Sony Studios was perfect for the Kickoff Party which included complimentary wine, beverages and outstanding food. Against that perfect backdrop, outside attendees mingled with a host of members emerging from the PGA’s General Membership Meeting. The soirée continued into the night, but many retired at a reasonable hour to be fully prepared for the day ahead.

Christopher Nolan and Emma Thomas were among the speakers opening the conference on Saturday morning, on the glamorous Wheel of Fortune stage. It was during this panel that Mr. Nolan described his early filmmaking days in London, noting that his project’s entire cast and crew consisted of just six people—that’s all the team could cram into a single London cab. Mr. Nolan also spoke of his preference of film to digital imaging, believing it to be superior for both filmmakers and moviegoers. Significantly, he made clear that The Dark Knight Rises would be his final contribution to the Batman franchise.

During the “Marketing Innovation” session, it was fascinating to learn of the crucial role marketing plays in a film’s ultimate success. Amy Powell of Paramount spoke about the importance of creating a heightened experience for the audience such as having Justin Bieber surprise moviegoers at his film Never Say Never, or only screening Paranormal Activity at midnight, so the experience of the film embeds itself more deeply over the course of a presumably sleepless night. This is the type of creative thinking that can catapult a horror film with a low five-figure budget to gross more than $100 million domestically.

There are those who have wondered whether or not it’s feasible to mount a producers’ conference every year. This is show business after all, where there are no guarantees. But the facts speak for themselves: Once again, the Produced By Conference sold out. After all, what producer wouldn’t want to attend a weekend with such brilliant speakers and the widest scope of content to ever grace the PBC? As good as the event looked on paper, the reality far outstripped the hype. A ground-level view of the June 8-10 weekend looked something like this...

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National Board member David Picker (left) with PGA President Mark Gordon.

Larry Gordon (right) enjoys a friendly exchange of ideas with PGA National Executive Director Vance Van Petten.

PGA President Hawk Koch chats with surprise visitor David Fincher in the GM Speakers Lounge.

“Game Changers” panel: (from left) Mark Johnson, Douglas Wick, Ceán Chaffin, moderator Michael Shamberg, Michael De Luca.
Between sessions, it was exciting to visit many of the great sponsor booths arrayed along Main Street. A person could educate himself regarding anything from lighting a set or filming in New Zealand to creating a custom trailer, all while enjoying a complimentary Krispy Kreme donut and an ice-cold Coke.

The “Franchise Building” session held that afternoon was similarly engaging. Lorenzo Di Bonaventura postulated that the increasingly global exchange of entertainment will result in more international concepts and models finding their way into the United States, as opposed to the more traditional expectation of the United States as the primary exporter of such ideas. In that same discussion, Nina Jacobson spoke of losing her Hunger Games director, Gary Ross, for the franchise’s subsequent releases, noting that such instability is one of the risks of the producer’s profession.

In Sunday’s “Passion Projects” session, attendees got to hear two of Hollywood’s most formidable storytellers speak of the films for which they felt a profound personal connection, and the lengths they would go to get those films made. Brian Grazer spoke of his practice of meeting with accomplished professionals from varying backgrounds, from quantum physics to environmental policy to high fashion, as accomplished professionals from varying backgrounds, from quantum physics to environmental policy to high fashion, as accomplished professionals from varying backgrounds, from quantum physics to environmental policy to high fashion, as accomplished professionals from varying backgrounds, from quantum physics to environmental policy to high fashion, as accomplished professionals from varying backgrounds, from quantum physics to environmental policy to high fashion, as accomplished professionals from varying backgrounds, from quantum physics to environmental policy to high fashion, as accomplished professionals from varying backgrounds, from quantum physics to environmental policy to high fashion, as accomplished professionals from varying backgrounds, from quantum physics to environmental policy to high fashion, as 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“Exposure to many of the world’s greatest producers via several terrific venues on the Sony lot was a one-of-a-kind experience.”

1. Matthew Toomey of Sony discusses sustainable production practices in the “Greening Screens” session.
2. National Board member John Hadidy (left) with PGA member Paul Stankes.
3. ICAS organizers Lori McCreary (PGA) and Dave Stump (ASC).
4. From left, Kodak representative Kim Snyder, producer Emma Thomas, producer-director Christopher Nolan.
5. Graham King and Walter Parkes prepare to take the stage for the session “Small World: The Challenges of Global Production.”
6. Moderator Chris McQuirk introduces a session on digital cinema.
7. Lionsgate Vice Chairman Michael Burns answers a question.
8. Speakers Allen DeBevoise, Andy Forssell, Robert Kyncl and Roy Price discuss (you guessed it) the future of original programming.
9. Speaker Mark Cuban holds court.
10. Conference Co-Chair Rachel Klein welcomes speaker John Rondinelli of Packet Video.
12. Finalists and organizers of the PGA’s ProShow project market.
13. Panel for the “Million Channel Universe” session (from left) Moderator Tim Shey, Michelle Phan, Chris Hardwick and Doug De Luca.
14. Conference Co-Chair Gary Lucchesi introduces a Conference session.
Earlier this year, when Iranian filmmaker Asghar Farhadi accepted his Best Foreign Film Oscar for A Separation, he eloquently spoke of “a rich and ancient culture that has been hidden under the heavy dust of politics.” As his statement reverberated throughout the world, it left a lasting impact on the hearts and minds of people everywhere. Although Iran is not an Arab country, it was a landmark moment for all filmmakers in the Middle East as they collectively celebrated the power of cinema. The universal themes explored so intricately in that film showed everyone that great storytelling is a staple of what diverse people in this region are all about. The PGA’s Diversity Committee embraces that same ethos.

Enter Deb Calla and Karyn Benkendorfer, co-chairs of the highly successful “Power of Diversity” Workshop, who traveled to Jordan for the first time to expand their flagship brand and support an international group of emerging talents. Currently in its eighth year at the PGA headquarters in Los Angeles, the program “is designed to foster the development of aspiring producers who bring diverse perspectives to television, film and digital media.” Because this was a unique opportunity to further harmonize our affiliation with the Royal Film Commission of Jordan, the program began an extended, one-week, special session in Amman, Jordan, offering its training to a select group of producers and choosing one candidate to participate in the LA program. With the help of the RFC, a group of candidates from around the world was assembled to participate.

Candidates for the program were carefully vetted based on their submission packet and qualifications as emerging producers. Individuals were chosen based on solid potential to succeed in the program’s rigorous curriculum. Since there was only one week to cram in what is ordinarily a 10-week course, long days were planned in order for the co-chairs to get a feeling of who would be best suited to continue their studies in the LA POD program.

While the craft of producing entails story development, pitching, packaging, financing, marketing, knowledge of how distribution really works, along with the impact of social media in today’s challenging environment, each candidate had to be well-versed in comprehending the web of issues all producers face when creating content for the screen. In the end, Linda Mutawi was chosen as the most promising candidate for the LA program.

Fortunately, I was able to accompany Deb and Karyn to Jordan and have them share their experiences, while I sat on the daily sessions to provide added support for the material being discussed in class. Since neither of them had been to Jordan before, they weren’t sure what to expect upon arrival.

Karyn recalled her excitement as she landed at the Queen Alis International Airport, “I was ecstatic to be in Jordan. It had been a dream since I was 11 years old. I wanted to see Petra after reading about it in a history book.” She would finally have the opportunity while also sharing her passion for producing.

Deb’s feelings were more mixed. “I was a little hesitant,” she admitted. “I’m Jewish and American and being in an Arab country made me a bit anxious, but I was looking forward to the experience.” Still, she relished the chance to view a whole new culture. “So much discord goes on in the world because of tensions in the Middle East, that I saw the trip as an opportunity to experience for myself a little of the reality. After my first hour in Amman, I knew I would be safe and looked forward to getting to know the workshop participants and the country.”

Deb and Karyn wasted no time meeting the candidates who were living in Jordan. “I was surprised to see candidates from Ireland, Japan and France,” Deb said. “Then I realized...
Jordan is like any other country. What I mean is, it is part of a global world.”

What struck them most about the participants was the fact they were all very supportive of each other. This collaborative spirit inspired the filmmakers to be more interactive during the daily sessions. “As they talked about their projects their passion was evident for the stories they wanted to tell,” recalled Karyn.

Naturally, this allowed Deb and Karyn to provide the participants with the most relevant workshop content to enhance their respective skills. Although the students needed to develop their stories further, given the competitive landscape of filmmaking, Karyn was impressed by each participant’s individual goals. “They weren’t about money, power or greed,” she notes, “but about how to get it done and out into the world.”

This was particularly evident when Deb and Karyn had a chance to follow up with two of their former students. After participating in the LA program in previous years, Ibrahim Abdelhaq and Ahmad Al-Khatib returned to Jordan. They felt that the instruction they received in the LA workshop greatly enhanced their approach to their projects from concept to creation. The insight they gained has made both of them stronger producers, enhancing their job prospects in the region.

Despite abundant zeal, the biggest challenge currently facing all filmmakers in the workshop is distribution. Lacking a healthy set of options for distributing their content, the students were very curious about how they could get their films released in theaters. Since there aren’t many options for theatrical distribution, most assume that once their film is made, they can screen it in one of the Gulf region film festivals (i.e. Doha, Abu Dhabi, or Dubai) and then hope their film will be picked up for distribution outside the region.

Having had the privilege of sitting in the workshop in Amman, I was struck by the desire of the filmmakers to tell the stories that were most relevant to them and their own culture. However, I also noted that if they wished to be commercially successful filmmakers, their projects needed to transcend cultural boundaries. Their challenge lies in telling stories that are compelling for an international audience while retaining the distinctive qualities of their ethnicities. It’s fine to play to a local audience, but in order to grab the attention of international distributors, the content needs to have enough universal appeal so that people everywhere can embrace it as their own.

One of the most important tools for leveling the playing field for filmmakers lacking distribution is a proper social media campaign by which to build brand awareness for their projects. Deb and Karyn focused a lot of time on guiding the participants to embrace the power of social media in marketing their films. As Deb observed, “It is imperative for anyone who deals in the creation and distribution of content to have a platform that they can access and build on.”

Emphasis was also placed on creating social media campaigns for financing, since access to meaningful capital is scarce and budgets are miniscule. Nonetheless, films are being made. Producers in the region have been very resource-
ful in getting their vision up on the screen, even if that screen is smaller than they may have wished for their projects initially.

When I asked Karyn and Deb about their final thoughts regarding the program's future, both were extremely optimistic. Karyn felt that it was the dawn of a new frontier in reaching out to fellow storytellers from the Middle East, where their zest for sharing their experiences was matched by their respect for helping one another make their films a reality. "To see and really hear the stories that need to be told can only create a better understanding," she says.

Deb's vision is to expand the program: "My wish is for the program to include other countries and peoples of the region in the future. I believe that content creators understand the importance of creating relationships rather than feeding on hatred and misconceptions." She also encourages collective collaboration. "I would like to see content come out of producers and writers in the region coming together to tell their experiences. I think if producers in the region could really unite, their impact and strength would grow exponentially."

Following up on Deb Calla's comments above, I wanted to address a key issue for content creators in the Middle East: censorship. As a creator of content, the importance of relationship-building may often run aground when the material may seem "culturally insensitive," bordering on politically and/or socially unacceptable. In many Middle Eastern countries, this may hinder a production from moving forward; not so in Jordan.

I sat down with Ms. Nada Doumani, the Communication and Culture Manager of the RFC in Amman, to gain some insight on where the RFC stands on promoting itself outside its borders to international filmmakers. Since there are many misperceptions about “censorship,” she assured me that Prince Ali has gone to great lengths to allow filmmakers of all nationalities to freely make their films in Jordan without the burden of censorship or “pre-screening,” at least when such content has nothing to do with Jordan specifically. By encouraging filmmakers everywhere to consider Jordan as a backdrop for their stories, Prince Ali wishes to foster the same "Power of Diversity" that our co-chairs envision for their program in Los Angeles.

Following up on the Best Picture Oscar-winning film The Hurt Locker (shot almost entirely in Jordan), Kathryn Bigelow returned to Jordan to shoot her upcoming feature Zero Dark Thirty, about the Navy SEAL Team Six operation to assassinate Osama Bin Laden. This serves as ample confirmation that no matter how sensitive the subject matter may be, Jordan welcomes projects that freely allow the content creators to tell their stories, unencumbered by having to edit their scripts to obtain government approval to shoot.

Jordan's motto is "We invite you to create." This delicate balance between artistic freedom of expression and tolerance is what makes Jordan so unique in the Middle East. This is especially significant considering that it's located in an area of the world consistently portrayed in the media as unstable. The PGA’s affiliation with the RFC is a testament to the fact that when it comes to making films and building relationships, there is no separation.

Kayvan Mashayekh is the Middle East/North Africa representative for the PGA International Committee and the producer of The Keeper: The Legend of Omar Khayyam.
The Hiring Line

The economy has been nothing if not sluggish. Producers, much like everyone else, often find job-hunting creeping to the top of their “to do” list. When there is work, producers need to be able to find it.

That’s why the Producers Guild of America is proud to present our newly constructed and proprietary Job Board.

Headed by three of the savviest and most industrious Guild members you’ll find — New Media Council Chair Chris Thomes, Producers Council member John Ziffren, and former AP Council Chair Jeffrey Lerner — the undertaking to build a Job Board worthy of our membership has been extensive and sometimes all-consuming. Close work with inimitable Supervisor of Communications Chris Green and assiduous project manager Brian Liscek has made good on the promise of customized functionality to best serve Guild members and their potential employers.

Utilizing input from across the Guild’s vast spectrum — including both employers and team members — the PGA has constructed a Job Board interface that makes applying for jobs easier than ever. Just as importantly, it gives employers a simple, streamlined means of finding exactly the team member they’re looking for via such functions as comprehensive and flexible searching capabilities, internal applicant organization and messaging, and up-to-date availability information for prospective team members.

From Los Angeles and New York to all 50 states and international locations, the PGA Job Board connects the right producers and producing team members with a wide array of quality jobs and employers. Whether you are a PGA member looking for your next job or you are an employer looking to connect with the best producers in your field, the PGA Job Board 2.0 is here to serve.

Use it well, and keep on working…

New Features

With the new Job Board, PGA members can…

- List each of their credits separately, including primary and secondary titles, dates, company name and show/production title — all of which are sortable and searchable by employers.
- Include any personal information they want, though members always have the option of keeping addresses and phone numbers private.
- Upload a variety of resumes or documents to their profiles, selecting which ones to include for each specific job they apply for.
- Fill out their profiles with “Employer Search Preferences,” including up to 10 different formats or media of expertise, and up to 20 different domestic and international locations.
- Set their profiles to include when they next plan to be available for work, so a member can more efficiently look for her or his next job (or have their next job find them!) while still working their current gig.

Meanwhile, employers will enjoy lots of new features, too, such as...

- Vastly expanded search and sort capabilities. Now you can search the membership and sort results based on format/genre, locations worked, previous credits, and availability for work.
- A convenient “home” screen. If you have posted multiple jobs, you can now manage all positions from the same screen, easily sorting candidates into “save” or “decline” lists.
- Confirmations. Every time you post a job, or a PGA member applies for an open posting of yours, you’ll get a confirmation e-mail alerting you. Of course, you can opt out of this feature if you like.
- Internal messaging. You can now respond to potential applicants (and they can respond back) via the Job Board system itself, so you can make your initial contact while keeping potentially sensitive information, such as your e-mail address, confidential.

Anyone can register for an employer account. Only PGA members may login as job-seekers.
A CONVERSATION
With PGA Member Lesley Chilcott

One of the most celebrated documentarians working today, Lesley Chilcott is the recipient of the 2001 Producers Guild Award for Outstanding Producer of Documentary Theatrical Motion Pictures for Waiting for Superman, and the producer of It Might Get Loud and the Academy Award–winning An Inconvenient Truth. “Going Green” very much appreciates her willingness to take the time to share her experiences in green production with us.

PGC Green: Do you consider it part of your responsibility as producers — with our access and reach — to take the lead with being green?

Lesley Chilcott: Ours is an inherently wasteful industry. We create temporary worlds and we tear them down, so the trick is to try and minimize your footprint in any way possible. I do think that part of your responsibility as a producer is to give back or mentor. That can be volunteering at a non-profit, or sometimes it’s just easier to do little green things every day.

Tell us about your non-profit unscreewaamerica.org.

I started it in 2008 to encourage people to convert your regular, now old, incandescent light bulbs to LEDs. Un-screw your regular light bulbs and screw in more energy-efficient ones. The site is also to educate that CFLs and LEDs that we like in the light review section. I bought 50 different light bulbs and tested them and found about 18 to 20 that I liked and that had a nice quality of light.

Do you use a carbon offset calculator on your productions?

Yes, I use one from Native Energy. When we calculate certain things in our industry, we don’t often calculate all the pollution and waste we create. More so than other industries, we have the opportunity to reinvent ourselves every time with every new job. How are we going to do this and be mindful of the environment? Say we learn that people from different departments didn’t mind carpooling to the set or location — it saves us money and it’s less waste.

If there’s not a reduction in emissions, then are carbon offsets really a solution?

If you’re just buying carbon offsets at the end of the job, then that is ineffective because you’re thinking about ways to reduce as you go. I advocate the idea of having an Eco-Captain on every job. It can even be a P.A./Eco-Captain. One of the biggest successes I’ve had is to ask my crew on the first day of shooting, “What could we do differently? What can we give you to help you to use less waste?” And The Eco-Captain gives me a report at the end of the job.

Tell us a little bit about An Inconvenient Truth and carbon offsets.

An Inconvenient Truth was the first move to put carbon offsets in its end credits. What you want from your carbon offset company is a company who can prove that their donation actually made an offset project happen, as opposed to it was happening anyway and they gave it a little bit of money. It’s an eco project that would not have happened without the funding from carbon offsets. In the industry it’s known as “additionally.”

What’s the journey been like with An Inconvenient Truth?

Laurie David, Lawrence Bender, Scott Burns, Davis Guggenheim and I had this project. Starring: Al Gore — Subject: global warning — Format: slide show. (laughs) No one, least of all us, expected this to turn into an Academy Award–winning movie, a screening at Cannes, standing ovations at Sundance. Now, six years later, the movie is required viewing in several countries—in junior high and some high school curricula. Other countries have always been ahead of us on reducing their carbon footprint and relating their connection to the environment. They have instituted concrete steps to lower their impact.

Has there been a shift in awareness?

When we came out with the movie in 2006, magazines were doing their first “green” issues and the timing was very good. There were new reports from the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) and multiple articles from The New York Times and people were more vocal about it. Environmentalists had been working on this for years, but in May of 2006, this sort of all came to a head. All of the polls indicated that awareness increased drastically. Now six years later, there’s definitely been a huge slap. What remains positive now is that most large companies have sustainability officers and people have realized it’s good for the earth and good for their bottom line to put green practices into their business plan. The cat’s out of the bag and can’t be put back in ... but there’s still a lot of work to do.

Do you see producers — especially those concerned about the environment — as pushing boundaries?

I do. I am a person who finds producing very gratifying. I think that with all of the entrenched interests and historical ways of doing things, you do have to push boundaries in production and come up with less wasteful ways. One of the biggest conflicts right now is that all of the projects, no matter the medium, happen so last-minute. When things happen last-minute, you tend to skip the eco-step because you don’t have time; you’re busy just trying to pull off the job. If you have your standby things that you always do on a project no matter what, then continue to do those things — but take a few seconds during the job to ask what else you can do.

Is it personal accountability that ultimately makes the difference?

It is — it’s definitely personal accountability, but I don’t think you should do it in a vacuum. You know if you have your Eco-Captain or you have a couple of other people who are just as concerned as you are, then four heads are going to come up with a better way than one.

Tell us about your work in documentaries — what inspires you?

I think that when you have a chance to tell a story or someone’s story and you’re able to show a type of truth — a side of them that people didn’t know — or even an experience — there’s something so gratifying in doing that. Once you get to show somebody’s truth that maybe people didn’t know about—that in a way is the ultimate story.

What would be your ultimate green story?

I would like it so that phrases like “greening your production” no longer exist. Ultimately, PGA Green and other initiatives disappear because being eco-minded is inherent in all of the decisions that we make. The Eco-Captain would be obsolete in 10 years because all of these things would be designed into what we’re doing ... not only because it’s good for the environment, it’s good for the budget too.

Thanks, Lesley!

Thank you! Please keep up the good work!

Lesley Chilcott’s 3 Easy Green Tips

• If you are not already, try using a file-sharing program like Dropbox. If everyone has access to the same files for a particular job, it cuts down on printing needs, especially color printing, as all the files are accessible to everyone who needs them.

• Elect someone on your crew to serve as the Eco-Captain; on longer jobs, you can rotate this role to different team members. Get feedback from your crew on what can be done.

• Eat/serve less meat in catering and craft services. I’m not saying to eliminate it, just replace some of the meat options with healthier non-meat ones. This cuts down on food waste, food miles, and environmental impact.

 PGA member Lesley Chilcott
IN MEMORIAM

Over the last several months, our Guild lost three of its iconic figures. Two were past Presidents of the PGA; the other was honored with the David O. Selznick Achievement Award, the Guild’s highest honor for motion picture producers. All three had a tremendous impact on our industry, and all three were fiercely supportive of the Producers Guild and its values. It’s our honor to pay tribute to them here.

RICHARD D. ZANUCK

There are only a handful of producers who could boast the universal trust and respect of the Hollywood community. Dick Zanuck was one of them. Studios trusted him to protect their most valuable investments. His producing colleagues trusted him for peerless counsel, born of immense experience and innate fairness and common sense. Above all, his creative teams trusted him to serve the best interests of their motion pictures, a duty which he fulfilled again and again with boundless energy, clear-eyed intelligence and a true passion for his craft and his industry.

His career is a virtual parade of milestones. His first film, Compulsion, made at age 24, won Best Actor awards at the Cannes Film Festival for all of its three of its lead performers: Dean Stockwell, Brad Dillman and Orson Welles. In 1962, he became the then-youngest studio head in Hollywood history, taking the reins at 20th Century Fox when he was only 28. His stewardship of Fox resulted in perhaps the greatest run in the studio’s history, turning out Best Picture winners and generation-defining films with regularity, including titles such as The Sound of Music, Patton, The French Connection, M*A*S*H, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid and Planet of the Apes.

Shortly thereafter, with his close friend and producing partner David Brown, he formed The Zanuck/Brown Company, one of the most celebrated independent production companies of the past 50 years. Only two years after its founding, it produced a Best Picture winner in The Sting, with Zanuck and Brown serving as executive producers. A year later, the duo produced The Sugarland Express, the big-screen debut of a promising young director, Steven Spielberg. The following year, the team produced Jaws, the first film ever to gross $100 million; it revolutionized Hollywood’s relationship with its audience and ushered in the era of the modern blockbuster.

With Brown, Zanuck continued to demonstrate an instinct for stories that married critical acclaim to popular response, such as multiple Oscar nominees The Verdict, and multiple Oscar winner Cocoon. In 1989, shortly after the dissolution of The Zanuck/Brown Company, he produced Driving Miss Daisy, a film he “literally shamed Warners into making.” It won numerous Oscars, including honors for actress Jessica Tandy, writer Alfred Uhry, and Zanuck himself, a distinction he shared with his wife and producing partner, Lili Fini Zanuck. The Zanucks and Driving Miss Daisy hold a special place in PGA history as the first-ever winners of the Producers Guild Awards, at that time called the Golden Laurel Awards.

Over the past dozen years, Zanuck’s career entered a remarkable third act, as he teamed with visionary director Tim Burton to create a half-dozen of the most inventive and imaginative films in recent memory, including Sweeney Todd, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory and this year’s Dark Shadows. Outside of his collaboration with Burton, his credits included such recent hits as Yey Man, Clash of the Titans and Road to Perdition, which he produced alongside his son, Dean Zanuck.

Zanuck, along with David Brown (who passed away in 2010), received the Guild’s David O. Selznick Achievement Award in Theatrical Motion Pictures — its highest honor for feature film producers — in 1993. Two years earlier, he and Brown received the prestigious Irving Thalberg Award from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, making Zanuck — in conjunction with his father, Darryl F. Zanuck — part of the only father/son pair so recognized.

While his credits are the stuff of legend, the man behind them took immense pride in the hard work and day-to-day tenacity required to bring them to the screen. Above all, he was recognized as honest, direct, and the epitome of professionalism. “There’s not anything that happens today that I haven’t been through in one form or another,” he told this magazine in 2010. “Because of that, I cannot be bluffing by either side, by the studio hyperbole or the people making the film."

The loss of that breadth of experience alone would be treasurable in itself. But the loss of the man who embodied that wisdom with such dignity and authenticity is incalculable. We can only say that we were lucky to have Richard Zanuck here to show us precisely what a producer was meant to be. But it’s up to us to live up to the example he provided for so long, and so well.

NORMAN FELTON

We are sad to report the passing of another giant among our profession, as longtime PGA member and former Guild President Norman Felton, the producer of such series as Dr. Kildare and The Man From U.N.C.L.E., died on June 25, at age 99. A television producer whose roots stretched back to the earliest days of the medium, Felton got his start directing live television in New York, including such series as Robert Montgomery Presents (for which he won an Emmy in 1950), The United States Steel Hour and The Alcoa show. He first stepped into the producer’s role on Studio One in Hollywood (another program he had directed for) and never looked back.

Shortly after assuming the producer’s chair, he brought the popular radio and film series Dr. Kildare to television. The program found a lasting home on the small screen, defining the medical drama for decades to come with its uncommonly empathetic characters, absorbing human drama, and nuanced interplay between stars Richard Chamberlain and Raymond Massey. Felton was the driving creative force behind the long-running series’ success, credited as executive producer on every one of the program’s 191 episodes.

A few years after the television premiere of Dr. Kildare, Felton introduced Robert Vaughn as Napoleon Solo in The Man From U.N.C.L.E., the standout espionage series that ran for 105 episodes. Felton was again credited as executive producer on each of them. Today’s multi-platform producers can recognize a forebear in Felton’s expansion of the U.N.C.L.E. universe, as the producer both introduced the shorter-lived series The Girl From U.N.C.L.E., starring Stefanie Powers, in 1966, and took the innovative step of packaging each of the series two-part episodes (along with a modest amount of new footage) as full-length feature films for release on the international market.

Later in his career, Felton turned more fully to feature-length storytelling, producing a string of acclaimed long-form television projects throughout the 1970s. Marriage: Year One with Sally Field, Baffled! with Leonard Nimoy, and And Your Name Is Jonah with James Woods and Sally Struthers are a few of his most well-regarded MOWs.

Felton was one of the true gentlemen of his profession, universally respected (even beloved) by his peers, and a dedicated PGA member, serving as Guild President (along with David Dortort) at the height of his career, in 1967-68. He received two lasting honors from the Producers Guild: In 1997, he received the Charles FitzSimons Lifetime Membership Award for his service to the PGA. And in 1990, when the Guild first presented competitive awards in television, the PGA Board of Directors christened the first such honor The Norman Felton Television Producer of the Year Award. And though the Producers Guild Awards have changed greatly through the years, including the addition of many new television categories, he remains the namesake for the Guild’s Norman Felton Award for Outstanding Producer of Episodic Television, Drama.

Even into his 10th decade, Felton was an honored presence at PGA Awards shows and major events, as warm-hearted and gracious in his retirement as he was in his career. He is already missed.
One of the most respected television producers of his generation, Bob Finkel first broke into the business as a director of several of the notable comedy/variety and genre series of the medium’s golden age. After earning his stripes on such programs as The Colgate Comedy Hour, Green Gulf Theater, City Detective and The People’s Choice, Finkel stepped into the producer’s role in 1959 on The Dinah Shore Chevy Show, a series he continued to produce and direct for the next several years. His career as a producer would crest over the next decade and a half, as he produced The Andy Williams Show during the mid-1960s, then capped off the decade as the executive producer of Elvis, the instantly legendary Elvis Presley comeback special on NBC. A few years later, in 1972, he pulled off a rarely-seen “double play,” producing both the Oscar and Emmy Awards broadcasts.

In the later part of his career, he continued to break new ground in variety television, producing some of the signature programs of the 1980s, including Circus of the Stars and the now-classic John Denver and the Muppets: A Christmas Together. Bob also made a successful return to the director’s chair, helming episodes of such series as Barney Miller, The Bob Newhart Show and McMillan and Wife. His final credit, the television film Have You Seen My Son? starred Lisa Hartman Black and was broadcast on ABC in 1996.

Over his more than four decades in the industry, Bob earned the high esteem of his peers. At the apex of his career, from 1969-1971, he fittingly served as President of the Producers Guild of America. In 1994, he became only the fourth PGA member honored with the Charles FitzSimons Lifetime Membership Award for his outstanding service to the Guild. We hope that all of our members who knew Bob will continue to share their memories of him with other friends and colleagues. And if you were one of the less-fortunate ones who never had the opportunity to meet Bob, we recommend that you make a point of hunting down Elvis, and enjoying the work of a true master of the medium.

Mr. Finkel is survived by his family, including a grandson, Drew Baldwin, who is also a member of the PGA.
The Complete Filmmaker’s Guide to Film Festivals: Your All Access Pass to Launching Your Film on the Festival Circuit

by Rona Edwards & Monika Skerbelis

Reviewed by Jennica Schwartzman

This book also breaks down the difference between a producer’s rep, a sales agent, and a buyer’s rep — a group of folks I couldn’t have distinguished quite so perfectly until now. Explaining which one a filmmaker may need, when a filmmaker may need one, and if he or she ever wants to go down that path helps empower the filmmaker to make her or his own choices. The Complete Filmmaker’s Guide does an amazing job of presenting optional personal journeys, and fun ideas that allow the filmmaker’s creative side to run wild!

Like many filmmakers, I am in the middle of different phases (pre-production, post-production, and a festival run) on several different projects. I was immediately able to put into action some key principles from several different chapters. Everything in The Complete Filmmaker’s Guide to Film Festivals can be applied to every part of the film production process; it’s about being completely prepared and working smarter.

The “Q&A with Distributors, Producers, Acquisitions, and Reps” is a chapter that could be made into a book all by itself. This is the part that will make a younger filmmaker dream bigger and a more experienced veteran pay attention. It’s important to learn from people who have gone before and listen to the simple things that can trip up any filmmaker. Edwards and Skerbelis truly have made a complete guide, recognizing that all filmmakers can and should learn from the experiences of those around them. A filmmaker can choose to take away career- and paradigm-altering advice from this section alone.

I highly recommend reading this book with a pad of paper, pen, and sticky notes close at hand. The Complete Filmmaker’s Guide to Film Festivals presents a ‘way of thinking’ that changes a single major film project into a series of projects that bleed together into a blossoming career with no stops or losses. Read this book, keep it close, use its amazing resources, reread it again to unlock even more insight, and then buy it for your producing partner. Seriously.

Jennica Schwartzman is the executive producer of the forthcoming feature Gordon Family Tree and Managing Partner of Purpose Pictures.

The Complete Filmmaker’s Guide to Film Festivals is the number-one teaching tool I would recommend to any new filmmaker, producer or student of the industry. This is not a field guide to pick up right before a filmmaker’s first trip to an exciting film fest — this is the first book a filmmaker should read while in pre-production on her or his first feature!

Yes, as the book states multiple times, the producer’s motto should be, “work begins after the film is made!” But Rona Edwards and Monika Skerbelis take this statement one step further throughout the book. Every single step of the production process should be undertaken with the festival circuit in mind, and when festival time comes, using the Guide will make the rest of the process that much smoother!

Edwards and Skerbelis’ guide appeals to my inner academic. I found myself dog-earring every other page — making lists of ‘exercises’ to do, then excitedly discovering they had already created a section for pre-festival exercises at the end of each chapter! These exercises prompt filmmakers to push themselves in directions they may not have thought of, forcing them to consider how to approach their

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Your PGA Health Benefits

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

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

Am I eligible?

To be eligible for the program, you must...

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

How many hours do I have to work to qualify for coverage?

To qualify for the Industry Health Plan, a producer must be credited with 600 hours (automatically computed at 56.5 hours per week) within a six-month qualifying period. To maintain coverage, he or she must be credited with at least 400 hours for each subsequent six-month period. If a member becomes ineligible, his or her eligibility for benefits will be reviewed every month until he or she accumulates enough contribution hours within a six-month span to re-qualify for benefits.

I’ve determined that I qualify; how do I get my coverage to start?

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

My company isn’t an AMPTP signatory. Am I out of luck?

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

If I qualify, is my employer required to approve my coverage?

Unfortunately, no. However, the cost to the employer is reasonable enough that many employers will approve the coverage.

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

Self-Pay Plan: Producers Health

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

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

PGA HEALTH BENEFITS: STEP BY STEP

START

Do you have health insurance?

- Yes
- No

Is it employer-paid?

- Yes
- No

Call Scott Brandt at (888) 700-7725.

Request a quote for Producers Health Insurance.

- Yes
- No

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

- Yes
- No

Questions? Contact:

Employer-paid Plan

Kyle Katz (310) 358-9020 x101

Self-pay Plans

Scott Brandt (888) 700-7725

Take a look at the options you may have through the PGA self-pay plans. If you qualify for a plan that suits you. Even if you currently have coverage, it would be worth your while to investigate the options you may have through the PGA self-pay plans.
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
- Admission to special PGA pre-release screenings and Q&A events
- Free attendance at PGA seminars
- Arbitration of credit disputes
- Wide variety of discounts on events, merchandise, travel
- Complimentary subscription to Produced by

Up to 62.5% on accredited qualified BC labour expenditure.

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For more information

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Call: (888) 444-1059
Email: Sergio@computerrentals.com
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Computers, Office Equipment and more for all your Production Rental needs
PGA Elections
We are pleased to report the results of the most recent PGA election for Officers and Council Delegates

Officers
Presidents:
MARK GORDON
HAWK KOCH*
Vice President - Motion Pictures
GARY LUCCHESI
Vice President - Television
HAYMA "SCREECH" WASHINGTON
Treasurer:
LORI MCCREARY

Producers Council Board of Delegates
DARLA ANDERSON
TIM GIBBONS
RICHARD GLADSTEIN
GARY GOETZMAN
BRIAN GRAZER
JOHN HADITY
ALEXANDRA SCHWARTZ
PAULA WAGNER
HARVEY WILSON**

New Media Council Board of Delegates
LAURA ALLEN
JENNIE BOURNE
GARY BRYMAN
CAITLIN BURNS
TO JEFFERSON
UNJOO NA
RENEE ROSEN Feld
BRYAN WARMAN

AP Council Board of Delegates
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER/PRODUCTION MANAGER/PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR CATEGORY
KAREN COVELL
SAVA K. ELIS
PAMELA KELLER
JETHRO ROTH KUSHEL
VICTORIA SLATER

PRODUCTION COORDINATOR CATEGORY
RJ HUME

SEGMENT/FIELD/STORY PRODUCER CATEGORY
LINDSAY LILES
DOUG REID

POST-PRODUCTION CATEGORY
DEREK BARTHOLOMAUS

*Elected to serve the remainder of Lori McCreary’s term, given Ms. McCreary’s election as PGA Treasurer.

In light of his recent election as President of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Hawk Koch has taken a full leave of absence from the PGA Presidency until the completion of his Academy term.

**Elected to serve the remainder of Hawk Koch’s term.

In a letter to the members of the Guild’s National Board of Directors announcing this leave of absence, Hawk wrote: “Thank you all for the support and generosity you have shown to me over the years that we’ve worked together on behalf of our profession. Next year, I look forward to rejoining you on our National Board of Directors. Notwithstanding this new recognition of bad news. In order to avoid any conflict of interest arising from his simultaneous service as the President of two different organizations, Hawk has announced his taking a full leave of absence from his duties as President of our Guild. Until the conclusion of Hawk’s Academy term in 2013, Mark Gordon will act and be recognized as the sole President of the Producers Guild.

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We are proud to salute our PGA President, Hawk Koch, on his recent election as President of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. It’s a tremendous honor and a great reflection on the leadership that Hawk and his fellow President Mark Gordon have demonstrated over the course of their first term as PGA Presidents.

Of course, with this good news, there is a measure of bad news. In order to avoid any conflict of interest arising from his simultaneous service as the President of two different organizations, Hawk has announced his taking a full leave of absence from his duties as President of our Guild. Until the conclusion of Hawk’s Academy term in 2013, Mark Gordon will act and be recognized as the sole President of the Producers Guild.

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AWARDS TIMELINE
Please keep the following dates in mind as we enter this year’s awards season. Since the PGA does not have the resources to actively solicit submissions from individual producers and/or productions, please note that it is incumbent upon the producer, network or production company to submit their productions to the Guild for consideration. All submissions are handled by the Guild’s awards website portal, which can be accessed via producersguild.org

September 21, 2012
Deadline for Notice of Producing Credits Form for Digital Series

September 29, 2012
Deadline for Notice of Producing Credits Form for Feature Documentary Motion Pictures, as well as submission of screeners for Feature Documentary Motion Pictures

October 5, 2012
Deadline for Notice of Producing Credits Form for Theatrical Motion Pictures and Animated Theatrical Motion Pictures

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 closed

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 Beverly Hilton Hotel

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

Final polls close for all categories

2013 PRODUCERS GUILD AWARDS at Beverly Hilton Hotel
New Members
The Producers Guild is proud to welcome the following new members, who have joined the Guild since April, 2012.

PRODUCERS COUNCIL
DEBORAH ALPERT-ORRALL
KEVIN BLOOM
BILL CIPOLLA
KEVIN FITZMAURICE COMER
JASON CONNELL
ANDREW FIEDLER
TONI GONZALES
RAY HABOUISH
MICHAEL JACKMAN
ANDREW JONES
ALLEN KELMAN
BARTON KIMBALL
SAM KORKIS
BRYAN LORD
MICHAEL MANDAVILLE
DANIEL MEAGHER
DARREN MILLER
MATTHEW MILLS
LUCY MUKERJEE
SARAH POAGE
D’ANGELA PROCTOR STEED
NICHOLLE CELISTAN
MIKELL IVEY
DAN KUVALAXIS
MARC SONDHEIMER
KATE SPENCER
DUSTIN WALLACE
STEPHEN WRIGHT

NEW MEDIA COUNCIL
BRIAN BERBERICH
GEORGE BLOOM
MARC CARLIN
ANITA DAUGHERTY
MIKE DAUT
SEAN HAMPTON
JEFFERY MASINO
JULIA RHODES
ELI WEISMAN
JEFF WINKLER
MAX WORTHINGTON

AP COUNCIL
Associate Producer/Production Manager/Production Supervisor
KEMAR BASSARAGH
NICHOLLE CELISTAN
MIKELL IVEY
DAN KUVALAXIS
MARC SONDHEIMER
KATE SPENCER
DUSTIN WALLACE
STEPHEN WRIGHT

Segment/Field/Story Producer
MINA ADIBPOUR
MATT BASORA
BRETT DAHLENBURG
MEREDITH ELLIS
QUINCY FIELDS
LAUREN GAFFNEY
DIANA E. GONZALES
DEONDRA GOSSETT
GREG PACE

Production Coordinator
LAURA ALTMAANN
NARIKA CELISTAN
ALICE KIM
SHARON LOPEZ
JOSEPH MYERS
ASHLEIGH STANZIAK
ROSANA TOMAS

Post-Production
KYLE CHRISTENSEN
JOHN MABRY
DREW PAONESSA
JOHN POSTLEWAIT
WALLAINE SARAD

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JILL DEMBY GUEST

After happily serving many years on the Mentoring Committee, I decided to apply for a mentor and experience the process myself. Being a writer at heart, I was interested in learning about being a show creator in episodic television. While producing documentary content for DVDs, I’d spent ample time on TV series sets for The West Wing, The O.C. and others. It seemed like well-run shows were like extended families and that over time fans, too, would come to know and love a series like a good friend. I wanted to know how that originated.

I was lucky enough to get Emmy-winning Alan Sacks as my mentor. He started out in the 1970s as co-creator and executive producer of Welcome Back, Kotter, the show that helped launch John Travolta’s career. Then he made a documentary on His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Next, he gravitated to Disney Channel movies (as his daughter was becoming a ‘teen,’) including the breakout Jonas Brothers’ Camp Rock franchise.

In our first meeting, when I told him I was looking to work on episodic TV, he immediately asked, “Why don’t you create a series and I’ll guide you through the process?” Instead of talking about steps, he thought it was better to take them. My first assignment was a flowchart of the series. I went to work creating characters, their arcs and the architecture of the series and its flow.

Two weeks later, I presented a colorful flowchart and copy for a trailer to promote the show. It was such an empowering moment to have something concrete to show and a support group to help it grow. Alan was impressed with the work and gave excellent feedback. He asked me to work on the main character’s back story. We then went over the next steps and I went back to work.

At our next session, he had more great feedback. He suggested I further refine the character arcs and start building episode stories. I went back at it, taking the next steps to structure a bible for the series and move forward with development and a writing team.

Even though our official mentoring sessions have ended, I continue to improve the project, guided by Alan’s support. I won’t forget the fun and the absolute high it was to work with such a professional. I felt totally at ease, like I had found my true creative path. Alan was a guiding light, and the Mentoring Program gave me a window into the way he worked. To me, it was a perfect match and I will be forever grateful.