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The Road To Emmy

Series Part 5, Page 4



From top left, clockwise: *The Plot Against America*; *Stranger Things*; *Yellowstone*; *I Know This Much is True*; *Hunters*; and *Ramy*.



Production & Post Recovery 14 From left: Sergio Lopez-Ferrero, Kate Morrison, Mark A. Lanza, and Mike Fantasia

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"The Most Urgent Filmmaking"

Last week in *The New York Times*, critic-at-large Wesley Morris wrote that "THE MOST URGENT FILMMAKING anybody's doing in this country right now is by black people with camera phones." These citizens chronicle utter tragedy and social injustice—including the death of George Floyd, 46, while in the custody of Minneapolis police. Morris observed that these bystander videos capture "the stone truth" and that "art is not the intent." They serve as proof of racism which has angered—and showed signs of mobilizing—the world, getting people to ask themselves what can they do to help stop the madness.

Which leads us in turn to our community-filmmakers spanning the ranks of entertainment and advertising. What can the pros behind and in front of the cam-

era do in response to the stark realities captured by "nonprofessional" videographers? What role can film, messaging and communication play in bettering society?

In this week's feature on how the industry is trying to recover from the pandemic, grappling with how to best resume production and post to some semblance of what had been normal, we find that

"Neither love nor terror makes one blind; indifference makes one blind." --James Baldwin

how to best respond to another plague—that of racism—has also been prominent in the thoughts of entertainment and advertising creatives and artisans.

Responses thus far have ranged from the symbolic to raising money for Black Lives Matter and other organizations, with one brand, Ben & Jerry's, putting forth a four-step proposal to meaningfully address what it perceives as "inhumane police brutality that is perpetuated by a

culture of white supremacy." Whether you agree with them or not, increasingly it's become evident that standing for something, doing good, being proactively involved represent much needed currency for brands if they are to meaningfully connect with people. What does your brand stand for? Numerous studies have found that consumers are drawn

to brands that help drive positive social change. They expect such advocacy from the brands they trust. But more importantly, we should expect such advocacy from ourselves and others in everyday life.

In the wake of Floyd's death, AT&T-owned Warner Media's brands changed their handles to #BlackLivesMatter and all posted the same James Baldwin quote: "Neither love nor terror makes one blind; indifference makes one blind."

POV

By Stefanie Soho



Directing In These Times, Under These Circumstances

Here's what I learned directing a spot for German e-commerce company Zalando during COVID-19. Just like the pandemic showed us the importance of family and friends, it was the same when picking crew and cast. It made you appreciate having people you trust around you, knowing they will work super hard to deliver the best they can.

For Zalando we shot on smartphones, GoPros and tiny speed drones that are officially referred to by many as "toys." As a former cinematographer, It is crazy what you can get out of this technology with the right cast, edit and a bit of a plan before shooting. Directing this project took me off set, and demonstrated that one can create strong atmospheres and stories with quite simple means.

Even more so now, having a good cast is crucial. We needed our cast to shoot scenes themselves, so it was important they also

felt like a "team" and not like "cast" only. We needed them to quickly open up, show us their house, be willing to redecorate and learn how to shoot their specific scenes (precision was called for, as some of the shots incorporated complex animation). Explaining physical directions in a room you only see on webcam fries your brain (left/right/higher/further/angle/tilt/closer my direction your direction...)

For me, connecting with the cast was a lot easier than expected. Being on video calls with them the whole time felt super natural and personal, probably because by now we're all used to being on these type of calls. We shared a lot of laughs, got them to understand the project and how we needed them to be a true part of it.

Videocalls and WhatsApp group chats proved both uber-productive and exhausting. You get stuff done, yes, but having a beer all by yourself at the "wrap" in front of your computer screen is actually very sad.

We forget, being on set is such a blessing and sharing spaces, touch and laughter really puts the magic in making films.

What I found magical was the level of trust I experienced. Everyone involved, including client and agency, had the feeling that we are all in this together, instead of just delivering a service. This was great. Everyone appreciated the chance of creating something special, in these times and under these circumstances, being proud of the outcome.

Director/DP Stefanie Soho is repped in the U.S. by Contrast Eye and in Europe via BWGTBLD. Soho turns out car work and uber-hip stories for top brands. Recent work include spots and branded content for Porsche, Mercedes, Levi's with Justin Timberlake, DJ Khaled for Snipes and the aforementioned "Together I Am Strong" spot for Zalando, having already garnered 2.8mm views on YouTube.

Creator, Director, DP, EP & Production Designer POVs

Insights into
Ramy, *The Plot
Against America*,
Stranger Things,
*I Know This
Much is True*,
Yellowstone
and *Hunters*

By Robert Goldrich, The
Road To Emmy, Part 5



From top left, clockwise: Ramy Youssef of *Ramy*; Matt (I) and Ross Duffer, creators of *Stranger Things*; Minkie Spiro (center) directs Jacob Laval (I) and Azhy Robertson in *The Plot Against America*; a scene from *Stranger Things*; Kelly Reilly (I) and Cole Hauser in a scene from *Yellowstone*; a scene from *Hunters*.

Ramy Youssef quipped that there's not a lot of blame to go around if his *Ramy* series (Hulu) on occasion misses the mark. Youssef, who first gained widespread recognition as a comedian, observed tongue-in-cheek that during stereotypical editing sessions, shouting can at times be heard. "Who the fuck directed this and why the fuck did the actor do that?" In my case," he laughed, "I'm the actor and the director."

Thankfully edit sessions go quite differently on *Ramy* as Youssef cited his close-knit working relationship with editor Joanna Naugle, lauding her level of "cool and temperament in the editing room." For that reason, Youssef said he's grateful to have Naugle as a colleague helping to shape the "editing voice" of the show. "She knows the takes I like, the timing I like." Youssef affirmed, "She understands the show and me."

Assorted viewers and critics have also come to not only understand the show but enjoy it—for its comedy, drama, emo-

tional resonance and relevance. Besides being its creator, writer, EP and lead actor, Youssef has stepped up his directorial involvement. He helmed one episode the first year, four this current Emmy-eligible season two.

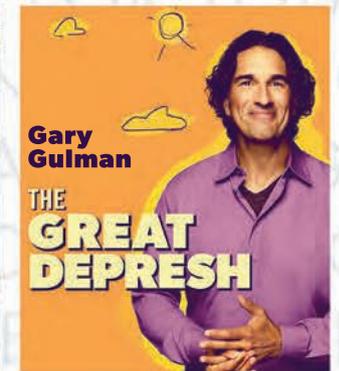
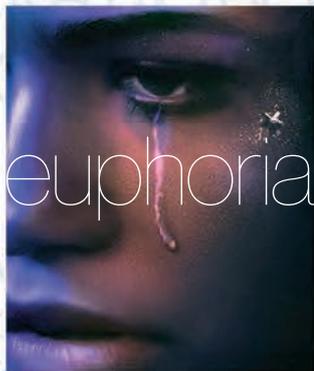
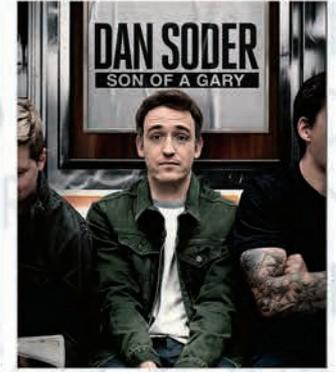
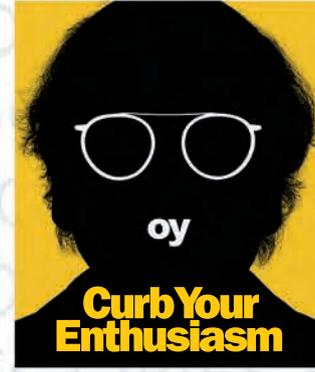
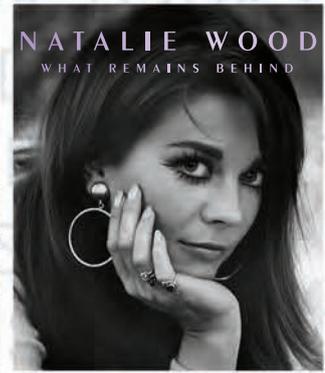
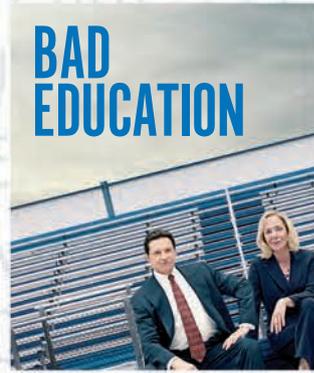
Appreciation of the show is reflected in Youssef winning the Golden Globe Award this past January for best actor in a comedy series. Last year, *Ramy* won the Audience Award for episodic fare at the SXSW Film Festival and was nominated for a Gotham Independent Film Award for Best Breakthrough Series.

Youssef portrays Ramy Hassan, a first-generation American Muslim who lives with his sister and Egyptian-immigrant parents in New Jersey. He's a twentysomething trying to find his way, coping with family pressure, looking to better define his religious beliefs and somehow balancing his old-world-values heritage with the desire to effectively assimilate. There's a touching comedy to the pain and awkwardness of everyday life, brought on by

his mix of good intentions and at times misguided, conflicted, crazy behavior.

Still, the protagonist and his family are likable people we care about and can empathize with. In a climate where Muslims are at times marginalized if not demonized, *Ramy* could be viewed as showing the common humanity we all share as we grapple with life. However, Youssef falls short of referring to his series in such idyllic terms, observing that *Ramy* is "about opening up conversations with those willing to have those conversations. You need to come to meet the show and be open to what the show is asking of you. It takes a willing participant for the next conversation that we're hoping to have as a show. I struggle with the notion that we're breaking down barriers. People can choose their own reality as to what they watch," he noted, adding that this isn't an era with a limited number of channels/networks where "you're going to get to know the Cosbys" no matter what. "We don't live there anymore. People curate

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Youssef Reflects On *Ramy*; Spiro Delves Deeply Into Plot

Continued from page 4

their programs to whatever point of view they have. We are nuancing conversations with communities who are going to engage with us.” Youssef doesn’t harbor hope that his show will open the eyes of those ingrained with negative feelings or who aren’t willing to abandon stereotypes. “I don’t have feelings of grandiosity in that sense.”

Ramy, though, continues to expand its horizons. For one, season two finds two-time Oscar winner (*Moonlight*, *Green Book*) Mahershala Ali joining the cast in a special guest role as a spiritual mentor to Hassan. Youssef said that Ali’s involvement naturally evolved. He recalled that Ali reached out to him to offer congratulations on the show. They struck up a rapport, hung out and then at one point Ali simply offered, “Let me know if you need anything.” Youssef then broached the idea of his coming aboard the series. Initial discussion centering on Ali appearing in one or two episodes grew as the character he was to portray, Sheikh Malik, started to get better defined. The character turned out to be a big part of the season story, translating into multiple episodes. Youssef said it wasn’t like the network was insisting on adding a big star but as it turns out *Ramy* got one.

Youssef too extended his directorial reach, helming multiple episodes. Like the casting of Ali, this naturally came to pass. Dating back to high school, Youssef shot his own work, bought cameras and began experimenting. He described himself as “that kid early on” who would get certified as a Final Cut editor. He loved making things interesting to him before diverting into performance as a working actor and stand-up comedian. But when it came to directing *Ramy*, Youssef said “all the instincts were there,” his having laid the groundwork for it growing up.

His affinity for diversifying and stretching creatively extends to offering that opportunity to others. For example, when season one cinematographer Adrian Peng Correia had to move on from *Ramy* to another commitment, Youssef decided that his successor would be Claudio Rietti, the series’ A-camera operator that first year. Youssef explained that he wanted “to keep it in the family,” seeing the value of “someone who understands the show,

how we operate as a crew. We had that history from doing the first season together and he wound up doing an amazing job (as DP on season two).”

As for the creative challenges he encountered on season two, Youssef related,



Mahershala Ali (l) and Ramy Youssef in *Ramy*

“Creatively you know you have to change things up (from season one). You also have to keep certain things that make the show what it is. It’s a really delicate balance of continuing to grow but, again, respecting the things that work about the show. We have an amazing core cast. Then we bring in an amazing two-time Oscar-winning actor. You need to figure out that recipe

noted that season two was based on “where these characters had landed from season one. I really had fun putting more plot into season two. I’m excited about future possibilities, to get to grow these characters a bit more.”

Minkie Spiro

Working with David Simon, known for his creative vision behind such critically acclaimed shows as *The Wire*, has been a career highlight for director Minkie Spiro. Their first collaboration was a 2018 episode of *The Deuce* and now their return engagement, *The Plot Against America* (HBO), a limited series co-created by



Hiam Abbass (center) in a scene from *Ramy*

and balance. How would he fit into the fabric of what’s already strong?”

Season one was a blank slate, much of which was based from a writing standpoint on stand-up material Youssef had been doing for awhile. By contrast, he

Simon and Ed Burns (his partner/comatriot on *The Wire*), has found a place in the Emmy conversation.

Making an awards season splash with a limited series is nothing new for Spiro who earlier this year earned her first ca-

reer DGA Award nomination for the “All I Care About Is Love” episode of *Fosse/Verdon*. This time around, though, she has a hand in rewriting history with *The Plot Against America*.

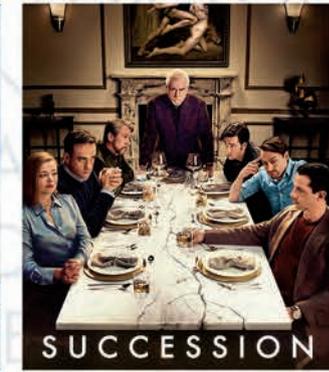
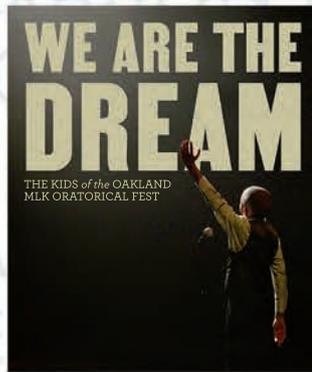
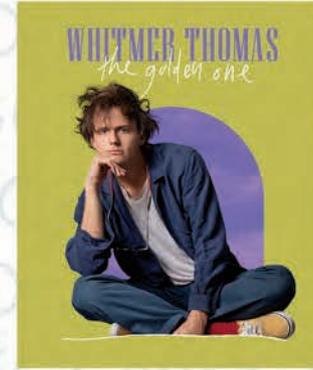
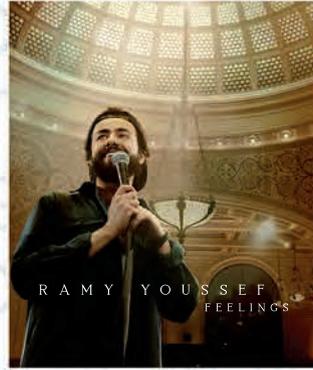
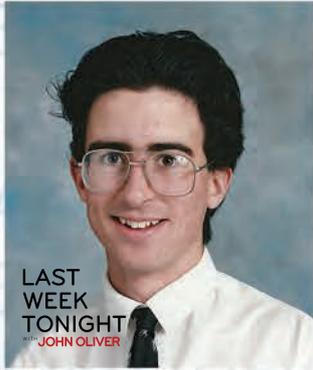
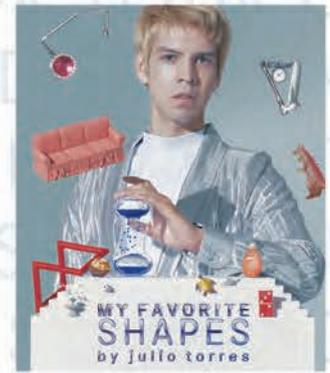
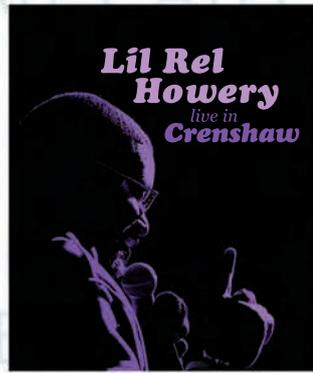
Based on Philip Roth’s novel of the same title, *The Plot Against America* features an ensemble cast which includes Zoe Kazan, Morgan Spector, Winona Ryder, John Turturro, Anthony Boyle, Azhy Robertson and Caleb Malis. The show imagines an alternate U.S. history told through the eyes of the Levins, a working-class Jewish family in Newark, New Jersey, who witness the political rise of aviator hero Charles Lindbergh, a xenophobic populist who defeats Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1940 presidential election and turns the nation towards fascism.

Spiro said that Simon reached out to her based on their fruitful prior experience. She described their work on season two of *The Deuce* as “an incredibly rewarding collaboration.” She said Simon came to value her vision and interpretation of the material, how she connected with the cast and did justice to meaningful moments in their first go-around. Spiro noted that she and Simon found themselves simpatico, perhaps in part because they shared a similar background in reportage and journalism. She cited his “deep soul” and “deep grasp of human nature and all its inherent flaws.” Spiro particularly admires “his ability to capture the grimness of life but with a deftness of touch. There’s always an undercurrent of humor in his work at the right moment. When you create work that can make someone laugh and cry in the same breadth, I’m a happy lady.”

There’s also a complementary dimension to their work as Spiro said that Simon looks to her not just to glean performances from cast members but also to take on a lead role visually. Spiro said that Simon has leaned heavily on her in their collaborations to bring visual stimulation to the story—an important dynamic, particularly in the context of a family drama which on its face is “a very internal piece. Having begun my life as a photographer, I always need to find cinematic touchstones to keep me visually stimulated and to sustain the emotional impact of a story.”

Towards that end, Spiro worked closely

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The Plot Against America

Continued from page 6

with such artisans as cinematographer Martin Ahlgren and production designer Richard Hoover. The latter worked on the first three episodes of *The Plot Against America*, which were all directed by

and the like, during that era. Yet while it wasn't period correct, the absence of red brings a new dimension when it does emerge, heightening the fervor of a Madison Square Garden rally for Lindbergh.

While this marked her first time work-



Anthony Boyle (I) and Caleb Malis in *The Plot Against America*

Spiro. (The last three installments were helmed by Thomas Schlamme.) Meanwhile Ahlgren shot the entire series.

Among the fine production design touches was eliminating the color red from the show until the opportune time. Spiro explained that red is a color that so obviously signifies fascism that she didn't want it to appear "until Rabbi Bengels-

ing with Hoover, Spiro had a track record with DP Ahlgren who shot a Hulu pilot for her a couple of years earlier. From that experience, Spiro knew she and Ahlgren shared an obsession with framing and composition. For *The Plot Against America*, a source of visual inspiration proved to be photojournalism from the 1930s, '40s and '50s, including the work of pho-



John Turturro (I) and Winona Ryder in *The Plot Against America*

dorf (portrayed by Turturro) infiltrates or assimilates into Lindbergh's camp." Up until that point, there's no red anywhere, which raised a bone of contention from the makeup department because red was a fashionable color, reflected in lipstick

tographers Robert Frank, Helen Levitt and Margaret Bourke-White who often used wider lenses close to the action with greater depth of field. These framings offered levels of depth that allow viewers

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Hot Locations

New Jersey Expands Film Incentives

Governor Phil Murphy has signed into law Bill A5580, which expands New Jersey's Film & Digital Media Tax Credit Program. The program has been extended for an additional five years, allowing incentives to remain in place until July 2028. Simultaneously, the annual cap has been raised to \$100 million per year, with a roll forward provision for unused credits. These improvements make a strong incentive program even more robust, and will attract an increasing



The *Enemy Within* EP Matt Coman (I) and Gov. Phil Murphy

amount of film and TV production. Just as importantly, entrepreneurs will be further encouraged to locate permanent support facilities in the state, such as studios, equipment rental houses and post production facilities.

Since the program's inception in July 2018, the state has attracted feature films such as Warner Bros' *Joker*, Netflix's *Army of the Dead* and Steven Spielberg's remake of *West Side Story*, as well as TV programs like NBC's *Lincoln Rhyme*, ABC's *Emergence* and HBO's *The Plot Against America*. As a result, revenue from film and TV production has increased almost 500% in just two years, and over 12,000 jobs have been created.

New Timetable For Calif. Incentives Program 3.0

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the timetable for application and allocation periods relative to California's next film and TV tax credit program (Program 3.0) has been delayed. Under normal circumstances, the California Film Commission would have held the initial allocation period in May, and then issue tax credit allocation letters on July 1.

However, now the application periods for recurring and relocating TV series has been pushed back to June 22-24, and to July 13-15 for feature/independent films. Credit allocation letter dates are now July 20 for recurring and relocating TV series, and August 17 for feature/indie films.

The application periods listed above are reduced to three days, and each will be followed by a five-day period during which all documentation must be submitted. The California Film Commission will not accept any new television projects during the TV application period, as the recurring TV category is oversubscribed. Recurring TV series will receive credit allocation letters upon submission of pick-up orders. The above schedule is subject to additional change due to COVID-19 and approval of Program 3.0 regulations by the Office of Administrative Law.

New features of Program 3.0 include: additional tax credits for local hire labor; a pilot skills training program to train individuals for careers in the motion picture industry; new bonus point categories to help projects elevate their Jobs Ratio score; and revisions to expenditure classifications which affect wage vs non-wage tagging.

Finding Westworld In L.A., Singapore, Spain

Before the virus-prompted production shutdown, season three of *Westworld* (HBO) managed to get in its share of location lensing—in Los Angeles, Singapore and Spain. DP Paul Cameron, ASC shot the season's first episode and then directed the fourth. Cameron used 35mm film for primary footage capture,

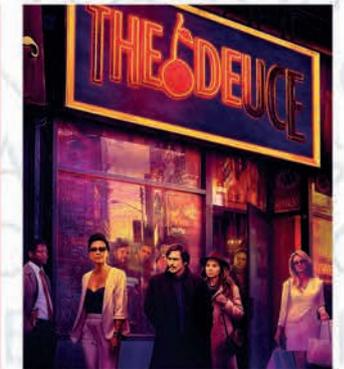
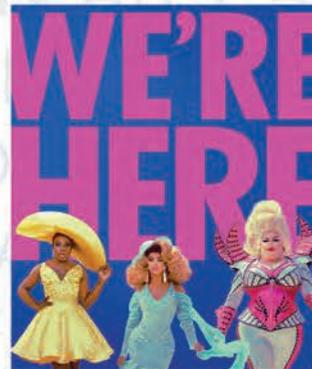
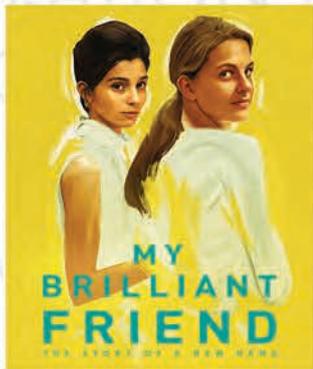
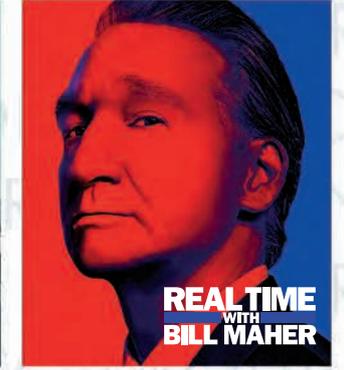
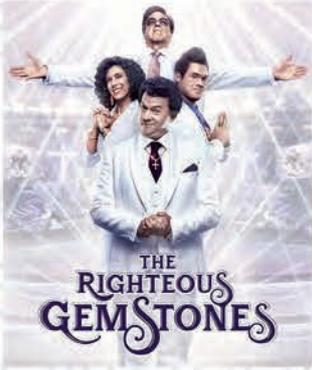
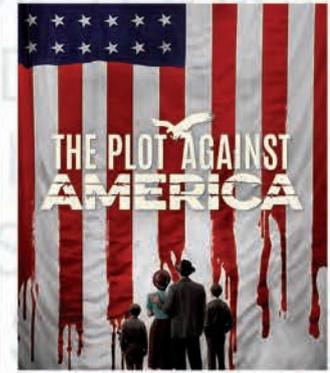
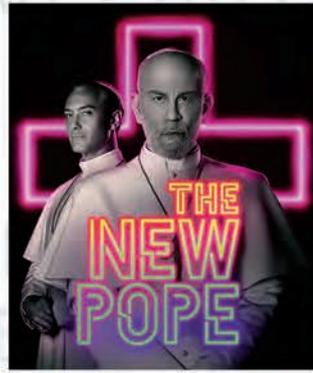


Paul Cameron, ASC

and heightened the dramatic narrative with stunning locations: downtown L.A., City of Arts and Sciences in Valencia, Spain, and Singapore's National Gallery and famed Atlas Bar. Other challenging elements of the episodes included wide drone shots, fight sequences, vérité-street photography, and traditional heli-aerials.

For the episode he directed—"The Mother of Exiles"—Cameron collaborated with DP John Grillo, one of the primary *Westworld* lensers.

Cameron has a rich *Westworld* history. He shot the series pilot, titled "The Original," for series creator/director/writer Jonathan Nolan. The "Original" earned Cameron his first Emmy nomination in 2017, as well as ASC Award and Camerimage Jury Award nods.



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Duffer Brothers Navigate New Paths For Stranger Things

Continued from page 8

to look about and find different areas of interest. This deep focus became part of the look differentiating *The Plot Against America* from other shows. Holding the foreground and background in focus can lend a larger than life quality to intimate

to refresh ourselves and remind us of our intentions.”

Spiro, who’s Jewish, needed no reminder of the importance of *The Plot Against America*. “This story felt very personal. My family is from Poland. My husband’s father is a Holocaust survivor,”



Winona Ryder in *The Plot Against America*

shots without having them lose their intimacy.

Spiro said she and Ahlgren made a look book for the camera operators, going through composition, framing, lens sizes, depth of field “so that they could see what we were trying to achieve. Two

related Spiro who noted that she continues “to gravitate to stories that resonate with me.”

She added, “This story felt so right to be tackling now. It’s a story that is so meaningful in these current times.”

With nationalism, demagoguery and



Anthony Boyle (center) in *The Plot Against America*

weeks into the shoot at one of our lunch breaks, we refreshed our memories with that look book. It’s easy to get carried away with the day and the usual challenges we face, which can cause you to take your eye off the ball and forget what your intentions were. This was a useful exercise

hate crimes on the rise, *The Plot Against America* sadly becomes a relevant, cautionary tale today. “It’s a project that maybe gets people to stop and think a bit about where we’re at—and that maybe it’s time for change,” said Spiro. “It made me realize that I had a duty as a person who

is making television. Your work has to entertain but if it can resonate and leave some sort of legacy, then you’ve done your bit trying to help things change for the better.”

This, she continued, helped to imbue the making of *The Plot Against America* with a sense of purpose. “Everyone cared about this project. Everyone came with their best game. It was a relentless, tough project. My job was inspiring people and never letting them feel crushed by the challenges.”

Spiro then shared what motivated her through all the challenges. “In generations to come, I want my kids and their kids to see what we did to help make a difference.”

Matt Duffer, Ross Duffer

Brothers Matt and Ross Duffer, creators and EPs of *Stranger Things* (Netflix), have between them six Emmy nominations for the show spanning the Best Drama Series, writing and directing categories. In its first two seasons, *Stranger Things* amassed a total of some 30 nominations and won six Emmys.

The Duffers hope to continue that Emmy tradition this year as the show continues to evolve, season three being one more akin to “a blockbuster movie” according to Matt Duffer. “Ross and I directed the first two and the last two episodes (of season three). We tried to up the ante in terms of visual effects, what we wanted to accomplish. This season was much

more ambitious in scale than what we had done before—a much higher number of visual effects shots and crossing storylines climaxing at the same time. We particularly wanted the final two episodes of the season to feel like a big movie. Still, while we have a generous TV schedule, it’s not like a movie schedule. We had to deal with so many logistics, were writing up to the last minute. We had done more pre-vis than ever before. We worked closely with a stunt coordinator. It was a much

more complex season than ever before in a lot of regards. And you don’t have the kind of prep time you do with a feature. In TV it’s like the train is going and you’re laying track as its moving.”

Perhaps the biggest lesson learned from this experience, continued Matt Duffer, was that “you cannot be micromanaging the visual effects process” with so many elements and considerations unfolding simultaneously. “It’s like trying to micromanage an actor’s performance. You need to find a great actor and leave them alone. The same is true for visual effects artists. Get the right artists and leave them alone.”

The right artist in terms of overseeing this work was sr. visual effects supervisor Paul Graff, an eight-time Emmy nominee, including a win for *Black Sails* in 2014. His last nod came in 2018 for *Stranger Things*. Matt Duffer credited Graff with bringing in Rodeo FX studio to take on “the heavy lifting” in season three.

Among first-time collaborators that the Duffers brought into the *Stranger Things* fold were director Uta Briesewitz and DP Lachlan Milne. Briesewitz made her initial mark as a cinematographer; she scored an Emmy nomination for the pi-

lot of *Hung*, a series for which she went on to direct several episodes. Matt Duffer said of Briesewitz, “She’s someone we’ve been wanting to work with for awhile.” He described her directorial turn on *Westworld* as “incredible...she crushed that episode. We had an



Stranger Things

amazing time collaborating with Uta (who helmed two *Stranger Things* episodes). She brought a new voice and a slightly different take on the material.”

Ross Duffer added, “She has a great personality, really respects the scripts, every line that’s in there. She wants to make sure she’s telling the story in the best way possible. She hits every beat you should want, is great with the actors. A minor character, Dr. Alexei (portrayed by Alec

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OZARK THE CROWN STRANGER THINGS MINDHUNTER
EL CAMINO: A BREAKING BAD MOVIE HOLLYWOOD GLOW
AMERICAN FACTORY BECOMING THE EDDY QUEER EYE
TIGER KING: MURDER, MAYHEM & MADNESS BLACK MIRROR
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DP Jody Lee Lipes Reflects On *I Know This Much is True*, And

Continued from page 10

Utgoff) started to pop during her episodes. She has a great sense of comedy.”

As for Milne, Ross Duffer recalled that the DP came to their attention via a recommendation from director/writer/pro-

duced Lamb’s book for TV and directed all six episodes.

The story follows the parallel lives of identical twin brothers, Dominick and Thomas Birdsey, portrayed by Mark Ruffalo. In episode one, paranoid schizo-

phrenic Thomas has a violent public breakdown as Dominick finds himself then stepping up to defend his sibling in unexpected ways. The series brings us into a family saga which goes back in time, a continuum starting around 1913 and extending into 1991, revealing betrayal, selfless sacrifice and forgiveness.

hemed by Cianfrance who’s handled in the ad arena by RadicalMedia. “Derek told me he was doing this show and wanted me to shoot it,” recalled Lipes who at the time was in the midst of lensing director Marielle Heller’s feature *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood*. “I couldn’t believe this was happening. I thought I was dreaming when I woke up that morning. I respect Derek so much. And when I found out Mark Ruffalo, one of my favorite actors, was involved, I felt lucky. I read the script and had one of those moments. This is my kind of story.”

Cianfrance, a lauded feature filmmaker (*Blue Valentine*, *The Place Between the Pines*) and DGA Award-winning commercials director, felt the same way about *I Know This Much is True*, having wanted “something of size and scope for TV for a long time,” explaining that he sought “more time and space than I’m allowed to have on a movie screen” for character insights, development and storytelling. “I didn’t want to do television where I was just going to direct one episode or be part of a writers’ room,” said Cianfrance. “I wanted to do it just like I made my movies—in this case a six-hour movie with these one-hour arcs throughout.”

Once he committed to take on *I Know This Much is True*, Cianfrance immediate-

Lipes. “He also shot a documentary about ballet that was really intimate.”

Cianfrance also remembered his collaborative experience with Lipes on the alluded to, stylized black-and-white Apple ad. “One of the gifts for me about making commercials is I get to work with so many different people,” noted Cianfrance who recalled that Apple spot introduced him to Lipes’ “big open heart, as big a heart to match his talent. When HBO greenlit this, he was the first guy I called. He became such a crucial partner to me.”

For Lipes, the two prime challenges posed to him by *I Know This Much is True* were the sheer marathon nature of the project, and the element of the twin brothers—bringing together Ruffalo’s separate performances of two distinctly different people, at times calling for the deployment of motion control to get them in the same scene. The Birdsey twins are 40 years old when we meet them. “They have 40 years of completely different life experiences and they look different,” related Cianfrance who quipped this couldn’t be pulled off with Ruffalo on camera in the morning and then coming back with a fake wig after lunch to portray his brother. Instead Ruffalo would portray Dominick and then go on hiatus to gain weight to later go on camera as Thomas, a chubby, deeply sensitive man who’s been institutionalized due to mental illness. The result is two markedly individual characters physically and emotionally, as construction worker Doomnick is a man’s man. Yet he too is damaged, consumed by guilt, a highly combustible caretaker for his brother.

“I had never done motion control before,” related Lipes. “This was a very complex motion control job.” Lipes credited VFX supervisor Eric Pascarelli, who started his career as a motion control operator, with being instrumental in helping him to accelerate his learning curve. At the same time, Lipes said it was key that he and Cianfrance “not be inhibited by the technology,” always driven first and foremost by “how we would shoot this scene if two real twins were in it.”

Weather and lighting were also pivotal, continued Lipes. You couldn’t reasonably rely on the weather to be the same for shoots that were months apart. So lighting and environment were elements that



Photo courtesy of Netflix

Gatén Matarazzo (l) and Joe Keery in *Stranger Things*

ducer Taika Waititi (an Oscar winner this year for Best Adapted Screenplay for *Jojo Rabbit*). Milne had shot writer/director Waititi’s *Hunt for the Wilderpeople*, which Ross Duffer described as “a movie that’s told at such a high level but has a sense of fun and heart to it. Lachlan really brings just that to the set besides his skill as a DP. He brings an energy to the set.”

Milne’s lensing included this past season’s final two episodes that the Duffers directed. “We had three units running simultaneously and he (Lachlan) would bounce around from unit to unit to make sure we got it all there. He maintained a calm throughout.”

While not at liberty to discuss season four in detail, the Duffers promised that the show will take on a different tone as all of the prior seasons have. Seasons two and three were certainly in sharp contrast—the former being dark with a fairy tale-type ending while season three was marked by fun yet ended on what many regard as the series’ darkest note yet.

Jody Lee Lipes

For cinematographer Jody Lee Lipes, getting the chance to work with writer-director Derek Cianfrance drew him to *I Know This Much is True* (HBO), a limited series based on the 1998 novel of the same title by Wally Lamb. Cianfrance

ly gravitated to Lipes. Cianfrance cited Lipes’ earlier lensing of the features *Martha Marcy May Marlene*, *Afterschool*, *Trainwreck* and *Manchester by the Sea*, as well as the TV series *Girls*. “I was really taken by the way he saw the world—and his connection with people,” said Cianfrance of



Photo by Atsushi Nishijima/courtesy of HBO

DP Jody Lee Lipes on location for *I Know This Much is True*

The cast also includes Melissa Leo, Kathryn Hahn, Juliette Lewis, Archie Panjabi, Imogen Poots and Rosie O’Donnell.

Lipes recalled Cianfrance reaching out to him one night via text in the wee hours of the morning. The two had worked together once on an Apple commercial,

ly gravitated to Lipes. Cianfrance cited Lipes’ earlier lensing of the features *Martha Marcy May Marlene*, *Afterschool*, *Trainwreck* and *Manchester by the Sea*, as well as the TV series *Girls*. “I was really taken by the way he saw the world—and his connection with people,” said Cianfrance of

Collaborating With Derek Cianfrance, Mark Ruffalo

Lipes obsessed over—with lighting helping to obscure any weather discrepancies.

As for the “marathon” dynamic, Lipes shot 114 days in a row, far and away his highest career tally—down the road there were also a pair of pickup days. “Our approach was simply one day at a time,” said Lipes so as to not get too overwhelmed.

Lipes deployed the Arricam LT 35mm film camera for *I Know This Much is True*. The choice to go the 35mm route evolved naturally given the story, which takes us from 1913 to 1991. Lipes explained that film is “really the only format that stands for and evokes that period. Even though this is a multi-generational story, there was a decision made early on that it should feel like one story. We shouldn’t be jumping into a different look for a different time period or characters. We needed one format that covered everything.”

Additionally, Lipes is well accustomed to shooting on film, which has accounted for the lion’s share of his long-form work. Cianfrance too is a custom fit for film, observed Lipes. “There’s something about Derek. His work feels very handmade. Film is the direct corresponding filmmaking tool I associate with that kind of taste and feel.”

Speaking of the overall feel, Lipes said the biggest takeaway from his experience on *I Know This Much is True* centered on working with Cianfrance and Ruffalo.

“Derek is one of the most impressive filmmakers I’ve ever been around. He works so hard. And Mark shows how the lead actor can affect the tone of what it feels like on set—the way he is as a human being. He’s such a warm person, really

wants to know everyone, wants to interact with everyone. That’s his fuel. He’s there longer than anybody, every single take. He’s the hardest working guy and one of the most talented actors alive. Watching him work that way and be that kind of person—and how that affected everyone—made me feel lucky to be on a film that had that kind of leadership, that kind of tone. It’s so rare.”



Photo by Atsushi Nishijima/AGF

Kathryn Hahn (l) and Mark Ruffalo in *I Know This Much is True*

Christina Voros

Already an established cinematographer, Christina Voros put her hat in the ring to serve as a camera operator on *Yellowstone* (Paramount Network) which debuted in 2018. This put her on the series from its inception, operating for DP Ben Richardson, a longtime friend. Voros was drawn to the opportunity to collaborate with Richardson as well as Taylor Sheridan who teamed with John Linson to create *Yellowstone*. Voros admired Sheridan’s

work, including his Oscar-nominated screenplay for *Hell or High Water*.

After operating that first season and with Richardson moving onto another commitment, Voros settled into the DP role for *Yellowstone*’s second year. “It was a perfect fit,” she assessed, noting that she had seen and been in on the birth of every shot concocted by Richardson and Sheridan, helping her to maintain as well

the patriarch of the Dutton family, owners of the largest ranch in the U.S. From the start, we see the Duttons fight to defend their ranch and way of life in the late 1800s—butting heads with an Indian reservation, land developers and grappling with medical issues, political ambition, and carefully guarded secrets that put a strain on the family. The series also has Native American storylines, which makes it atypical in series television.

Voros observed that in *Yellowstone* “the environment is a character as much as any of the human characters. It’s a very enormous and capricious character. One of the greatest challenges I felt came from working within what the natural world was giving us on any given day or season. We split shooting between Utah and Montana, always trying to create a monolithic geography that feels you’re in the same place even though you are states apart. There are also the challenges of the weather, the lighting, often shooting during magic hour in the mornings and evenings. You have this really big personality to deal with where weather and geography make the rules.”

Yellowstone is also marked by action adventure. Voros shared, “We’re always looking for new ways to shoot action on horseback that feels active—a mixture of taking in the glory of it all but also capturing that visceral feeling of the moment.”

The series also had Voros looking to innovate the flashback, which had become more critical to the storytelling in season two. She sought a departure from the flashback norm without making it feel

Continued on page 30

as add to the show’s visual continuity.

Voros’ evolution on *Yellowstone* continued on season three, which saw her direct a pair of episodes while not lensing any. Her DP on the episodes she directed was Jim Denault. Come season four, plans call for Voros to direct and separately shoot select episodes of *Yellowstone*.

Currently under Emmy consideration is Voros’ cinematography on season two. Her camera of choice for the show has been the ARRI Alexa.

Kevin Costner stars in *Yellowstone* as

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The New Normal: Can We Go Home Again?

Production and post biz may not be the same as industry in recovery deals with pandemic, social injustice

A SHOOT Staff Report



Photo courtesy of Warner Bros.



Photo by Erica Parise/courtesy of FOX



Photo courtesy of Warner Bros.



Photo by Miller Mobley/courtesy of FOX



Photo by Skip Bobay/courtesy of FOX

The expression “you can’t go home again” gained popularity as the title of Thomas Wolfe’s famous 1940 novel. The profound gist that resonated with so many was that if you try to return to a place you remember from the past, it won’t be the same as you remember it.

That may be true even for relatively recent recollections as the pandemic in just a matter of months has made an indelible impact on ways of life—on livelihoods and life itself. This also applies to our industry as a near-complete production shutdown has put employment on hold for many, leaving us to grapple with how we will recover, and how to smartly and safely bring production and post business back to life.

And there’s the further matter of dealing with social injustice as the entertainment and advertising communities look to take a stand against another plague—racism—with brands determining if and how to best address the Black Lives Matter movement and the issue of police brutality.

On the COVID-19 front, so much is

up in the air as reflected in the recent announcement of network fall 2020 primetime schedules. The future of original comedy and drama fare being heralded for the new season and beyond is no longer about whether content will register with an audience—but instead will it get made to begin with?

Fox for example has hedged its bet with three shows making the schedule in part because they were already made—a recycled season one run of *L.A.’s Finest* which debuted on Spectrum cable, and two series originally planned as spring debutantes—*Filthy Rich* starring Kim Cattrall, and the tech thriller *neXt* with a cast headed by John Slattery.

CBS is hopeful that production can resume sometime this summer but that’s far from a certainty. While maybe not all the shows will premiere on the target date of September 21, the network projects eventually being able to present a schedule that resembles what had been announced.

In formulating their schedules, net-

works had to make judgment calls on a new series’ prospects without having seen a completed pilot. In many cases, pilots didn’t come to pass due to the pandemic.

And with uncertainty surrounding the fall schedules, the major networks’ prospects for extending their four-year streak of garnering increased revenue for their primetime ad inventory is in jeopardy. The ad picture is being squeezed on both ends. For one, will there be enough new original programming produced to generate marketplace interest—and will live sports, a major ratings winner, even return, and if so in what form and to what audience response. Then there’s the plight of the advertisers themselves as different sectors will take time to recover—travel, movie studios, automobile manufacturers, restaurants—and thus figure to curtail their primetime spot investments.

Features, contracts

Feature film production and release dates (with the closure of theaters) have also been pushed back. In this week’s

From top left, clockwise: A scene from *In The Heights*, the theatrical release of which was delayed a year due to the pandemic; *L.A.’s Finest*; 72andSunny’s Kate Morrison; a scene from *Filthy Rich*; John Slattery in *neXt*; *In The Heights*; Eva Longoria in a stay-at-home hair coloring spot for L’Oreal Paris.

PRODUCTION & POST RECOVERY

SHOOT Chat Room, for example, director Jon M. Chu of *Crazy Rich Asians* fame noted that he was in post at press time on *In The Heights* (Warner Bros.), the feature adaptation of Lin-Manuel Miranda's Tony-winning Broadway musical starring "Hamilton" alumnus Anthony Ramos as Usnavi de la Vega, a bodega owner in the Washington Heights neighborhood of Manhattan. Per its original schedule, the film's post should have already been completed with *In The Heights* premiering this month in theaters. Now due to the pandemic, the movie won't hit the big screen until Father's Day in 2021.

For features, TV and all forms of content, insurance concerns also need to be addressed. Policies that cover losses due to production delays or budget overruns generally exclude COVID-19-related issues.

There's also the matter of union contracts currently being negotiated. The Alliance of Motion Pictures and Television Producers (AMPTP) has entered into talks with SAG-AFTRA for successor agreements to the SAG-AFTRA TV/Theatrical contracts, AMPTP and the Writers Guild of America have started master contract negotiations (on a remote basis) as a June 30 expiration of that current film and TV contract is looming.

Meanwhile the prospect of resuming film, TV and commercial production did get a boost last Friday (6/5) as Gov. Gavin Newsom announced that counties throughout California may reopen to filming as early as June 12.

The go-ahead came in the form of guidelines released by the state Depart-

ment of Public Health for varied venues, including schools, day care facilities and casinos. Within those guidelines was a paragraph pertaining to film and television, which read:

"Music, TV and film production may resume in California, recommended no sooner than June 12, 2020 and subject to approval by county public health officers within the jurisdictions of operations following their review of local epidemiological data including cases per 100,000 population, rate of test positivity, and local preparedness to support a health care surge, vulnerable populations, contact tracing and testing. To reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, productions, cast, crew and other industry workers should abide by safety protocols agreed by labor and management, which may be further enhanced by county public health officers. Back office staff and management should adhere to Office Workspace guidelines published by the California Department of Public Health and the California Department of Industrial Relations, to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission."

As *SHOOT* went to press, FilmLA, the nonprofit film office for the City and County of Los Angeles, was not accepting or processing any applications to film in Greater L.A. This underscores the fact that Governor Newsom's announcement does not authorize the resumption of on-location filming in Los Angeles County. That decision rests with the County, and will be made consistent with the recommendations of the County Department of Public Health.

Clearly, though, jurisdictions throughout the state, including L.A. County, are moving closer to permitting filming as officials on state and local levels establish timetables and terms for production's safe and responsible return.

FilmLA has asked—and is waiting to hear when—the County intends to reopen to production and on what terms. FilmLA has also asked its partner cities whether they plan to reopen when the County does. The County intends to proceed expeditiously, with FilmLA committed to sharing additional info when it becomes available.

Governor Newsom's announcement follows the June 1 release of new Health and Safety Guidelines, prepared by the Industry Wide Labor Management Safety Committee (IWLMSA) Task Force in concert with the AMPTP. These guidelines—first sent to Gov. Newsom and then New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo—can serve as a resource to state and local authorities throughout the country, but do not establish the final terms of reopening.

SAG-AFTRA released a statement which positioned the document as "an initial set of principles and guidelines that we all agree form a relevant and realistic first step to protecting cast and crew in the reopening of the entertainment and media industry in its two largest markets."

Provisions include regular, periodic testing of the cast and crew to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 being spread. Testing protocols are to be developed with and approved by unions and guilds. Every measure will be taken to maintain physical distancing between workers whenever

possible, as well as to promote regular hand washing/sanitizing and the use of personal protective equipment. All cast and crew will undergo mandatory diagnostic symptom monitoring, including temperature checks prior to arriving on set or at the workplace. Working while sick with coronavirus symptoms will not be permitted. There will be heightened cleaning and disinfecting of all workspace areas.

The guidelines call for the establishment of a COVID-19 compliance officer who will be on hand at the workplace and have the responsibility and authority to address issues as they arise. COVID-19 safety plan oversight and enforcement shall be the principal responsibilities of the compliance officer. These designated individuals will undergo specialized training on health and safety precautions, policies and procedures related to infection prevention practices including COVID-19 prevention, disinfection and PPE. Specific duties and responsibilities of the compliance officer(s) may include, but are not limited to, overseeing and monitoring physical distancing, testing, symptom monitoring, disinfecting protocols, and PPE education, protocols and adherence, and such other duties as may be determined by the employer.

All cast and crew shall be informed who the COVID-19 compliance officer is and how to contact him or her. In addition to the compliance officer, there should be a communication/hotline system to respond to all cast and crew safety questions and concerns (including pre-, post- and

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MPSE, ADG Make Plans

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off-production offices/spaces). The system shall allow for anonymous reporting.

Productions also should consider engaging a board-certified infectious diseases physician or infection preventionist with certification in infection control to assist with development of specific workflows and operational implementation.

The guidelines are in line with the goal of finding ways to get production and post

come up with. It appears to be a fluid situation where we make plans for multiple scenarios and go with the one we need to at the time. When this first happened we stopped almost all travel into the studios and interaction with mixers, picture editors, directors, and actors. Going forward I see loop group being an issue, we really need them to be able to interact in real time. Getting actors to the ADR stage will be a problem too, we need to set up series regulars with a way to do quality ADR in their own home. I hope at some point things will get back to normal, but we have to plan on the new protocols being developed, at least for a while.”

Similarly Nelson Coates, president of the Art Directors Guild, IATSE Local 800, noted that the organization--in addition to the protocols established by the Industry Wide Labor-Management Safety Committee Task Force--“is working with its members for craft specific recommendations to ensure the safety of our members in the workplace. These rec-



Mark A. Lanza

ommendations will expand upon social distancing and PPE to address how our members perform tasks such as conducting surveys of locations, and the sharing of large format drawings, plans and schematics.”

Individual organizations are weighing options and trying to figure out what’s best for their members and the industry at large. For example, Motion Picture Sound Editors (MPSE), which represents leading sound editing professionals worldwide, spanning sound effects, dialogue, ADR, foley and music, is looking to provide guidance for its rank and file numbering some 800. Mark A. Lanza, MPSE president, shared, “We have been discussing new protocols for editors to work at home studios as much as possible once work starts opening up again. Certain positions will still have to go to mix stages or ADR stages and we are working with studios to figure out the best practices going forward. We are also consulting with software developers for new tools to work remotely as much as possible.”

He added, “Well the game is changing daily and there are a number of big questions that will greatly affect any plans we



Nelson Coates

ommendations will expand upon social distancing and PPE to address how our members perform tasks such as conducting surveys of locations, and the sharing of large format drawings, plans and schematics.”

Coates further noted, “The industries must come to understand that these new protocols will all come with an increased cost but whatever that is, it will be far cheaper than the long-term impact of a second shutdown, either industry-wide or of a single production, if the virus starts to spread and cast and crew become ill. The workers of these industries must not be disincentivized from staying home if they

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ENERGY BBDO SERVES UP WEGGSDAY

Much like Taco Tuesday, WEGGSDAY embraces the popularity of marrying a day of the week with a popular food. A two-minute original music video--titled “Wednesday Is Officially WEGGSDAY!”--has been created to hilariously introduce the concept.



The animated video also highlights the versatility of eggs, reminding consumers that eggs are an incredible meal solution beyond just breakfast.

The American Egg Board created the work in partnership with Energy BBDO. The agency’s in-house unit Flare handled production, VFX/animation and audio, with Squeak E. Clean Studios serving as the music house.

2020 ANIMATION VIRTUAL SHOWCASE SET TO DEBUT

ASIFA-Hollywood recently announced its Animation Educators Forum (AEF) will release the Class of 2020 Animation Virtual Showcase highlighting creative work and final projects from animation graduates all over the country. The showcase is the response to limitations, placed by the current COVID 19 situation, on graduating animation students’ ability to exhibit and screen their final projects. The primary focus is to create a venue for celebration and exposure of their accomplishments. A secondary goal is for industry recruiters to gain access to the current student work and enhance local college’s recruitment opportunities.

The showcase link will be available on the ASIFA-Hollywood and the AEF websites beginning June 18. ASIFA-Hollywood sponsors the AEF and contributed funding to assist with showcase development.

“The showcase will include 200 student films, including 34 universities in 17 states in the USA and six countries. If successful, there are plans to expand the showcase each year to promote animation students’ work and continue to develop new platforms for this exciting venue,” said Michael Bonitatis on behalf of the AEF steering committee.

Bonitatis is the CEO and founder of the global, cloud-based Animation Liberation Studios, which promotes newly emerging artists and provides a “next step” to an animation career. Professor Patricia Galvis Assmus of the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, who came up with the idea for the showcase, teamed with Bonitatis to create this virtual showcase. Galvis Assmus has worked in experimental film and computer animation for more than 20 years in combination with her even longer professional involvement with experimental digital image creation started in Silicon Valley.

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE...

Serviceplan France has hired the creative team of Aurélien Bigot and Benjamin Le Coz who will work under the aegis of creative directors Daniel Perez and Hervé Poupon. Bigot has 10 years of experience in Singapore and France as an artistic director, and Le Coz brings seven years of experience as a copywriter in Parisian agencies. The creative team met in 2017 at Les Gaulois. Aligned in their conceptual approach and creative ambition, they decided to abolish the traditional art director/copywriter boxes which they consider to be constricting in order to join forces as “creatives”. It is under this status that they have been working for four years. Bigot and Le Coz have worked for such brands as Orange, Citroën, Nike, Renault, Krys and Transavia. Their latest campaign was “Vitesse de déconfinement” for Sécurité Routière (Road Safety), released on May 12 as France began to ease lockdown restrictions....



Bigot (l) and Le Coz

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Location Managers Guild, AICP Adopt Proactive Stances

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have been potentially exposed or become ill. Real issues, such as enhanced sick pay, must be addressed. We look forward to working with our brothers and sisters in Labor as we address those issues which must be bargained with our employers. Together we can return to work safely and, to the best of our collective ability, do so in an environment designed to guard against exposure to the virus. The health and safety of the workers in these industries, from producers to talent to crew, must remain at the forefront.”

Mike Fantasia, president of the Location Managers Guild International (LMGI), noted that his organization, by virtue of its global reach, is “uniquely positioned to receive and disseminate COVID-19 guidelines from around the world. Our LMGI members across the globe are directly involved in the formation of the back to work protocols in their respective regions, as many start returning to work. We are actively engaged in establishing the new normal. Our website (LocationManagers.org) is our mainstay for the growing compendium of international guidelines. We are posting a number of links on the site, including links to Proposed and Recommended Industry Guidelines and Protocols from all over the world, as well as links that provide information on emergency funds and assistance available in various regions. Our actively expanding member discussion/webinar ‘Coffee Tuesdays’ provides vital information in a rapidly evolving industry. From introducing companies with new sanitizing and pre-production tech-

nologies to film commission forums, we provide a platform for our members and business partners to seek information and offer guidance.”



Mike Fantasia

Fantasia continued, “The best practice we can offer is to not rush into starting a project without a full and complete assessment of the protocols applicable to the production. We need to ensure that the safety of the crew is addressed as well as the creative and logistic aspects. The process will undoubtedly have hills and valleys, but by learning from each others successes and failures we can promote the most current, effective technology for safe, smooth productions.”

As for his members’ priority, he observed, “Safety first has long been the guiding practice of the location department, the principal department on a production that interacts with all other departments. Now more than ever, the location department will be the focal point of assessing and assisting in the implementation of the applicable safety and

health protocols from scouting through the tech scout and into shooting. Production comes with a long history of problem-solving and this is not insurmountable. Yes, it is a many faceted issue, but bit by bit, we will solve all of the challenges ahead of us and return to work in a safe, healthy and productive manner.

Spot guidelines

On the commercialmaking/branded content front, the AICP has taken the lead with its COVID-19 Workplace Guidelines and Considerations for production and postproduction which at press time had been updated for a third time (marked as Version 4) since their initial launch in late April. There are new sections, including one on human resources considerations

and with planning in place,” said Matt Miller, AICP president and CEO. Miller noted that AICP’s members are nationwide, and timelines of when productions resume will remain fluid. For parts of the country, production can—and is—happening, using various forms of remote technology and most recently, small gathered groups; while other regions are still weeks away from any in-person shoots.

“With no direct guidance on safe work in our—or related—industries from any official body, it was imperative that we got in front of this curve to assure that our members had comprehensive guidance and safety considerations to be ready to work, when practical, with the safety of all personnel being the paramount concern,” continued Miller.

The guidelines are intended to assist the commercial production industry and its stakeholders as in-person productions and postproduction work begins to ramp up as shelter in place restrictions are lifted at federal, state and local levels. To create and update the guidelines, AICP staff collaborated with a working group of leaders in the industry and heard from many outside sources eager to contribute their thinking and expertise.

Miller said that these guidelines will evolve as production resumes, and feedback from real-world experiences is considered and collected. “Many of the recommendations in these guidelines and considerations represent a new approach to working. Many are here to stay, while some may be temporary or transitional,” said Miller. “Making sure we communi-

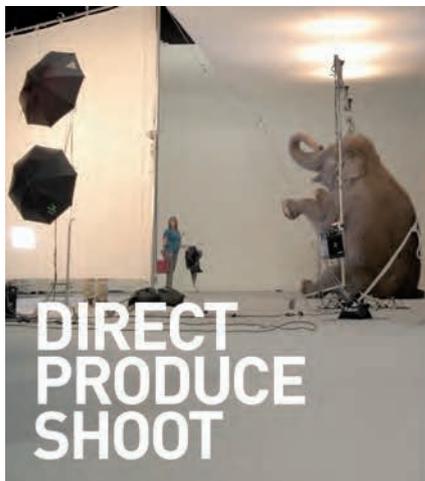
Continued on page 18



Matt Miller

and screening, as well as revamped items based on new information being released from many private and public sources.

“As responsible production resumes, including commercials, AICP and its members want to ensure that decisions are being made using sensible procedures



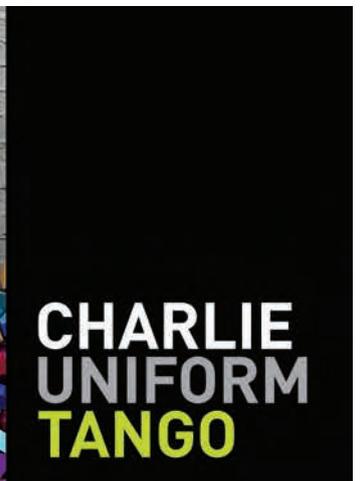
**DIRECT
PRODUCE
SHOOT**



**EDIT
MIX
SCORE**



**DESIGN
ANIMATE
FINISH**



**CHARLIE
UNIFORM
TANGO**

McCann, UM Studios, 72andSunny Share Takes On What

Continued from page 17

cate with all involved in the process is key to successfully adapting to the new normal, and keeping commercials and advertising content a safe, efficient, and viable industry. The basic premise of working with the safety of individuals in mind is a constant and should be informing all decisions from every sector involved in production and postproduction.”

Defining what's no longer normal

As for Thomas Wolfe's aforementioned adage, aspects of production figure to change as the pandemic lockdown eases. Providing a take on the new emerging reality during a session of MW Presents, McCann Worldgroup's global client content series, was Sergio Lopez-Ferrero, chief production officer, McCann EMEA, and managing director of McCann's Craft EMEA.

Lopez-Ferrero foresees distanced experiences becoming the new normal. And with sporting events and other attractions likely taking place initially with no audiences, he envisions new types of placements and media formats allowing brands to fill those empty venues. Post-production techniques may generate fake crowds or brands may treat the void as advertising space. Audiences, he continued, will get used to being situated in the best seat in the house. Lopez-Ferrero further conjectured that “collective VR will be a thing.”

Lopez-Ferrero noted that McCann surveyed more than 100 clients and found 71 percent viewed quality as the prime factor/concern behind their selection of production talent, followed by 65 percent citing production limitations and local guidelines as impacting their decision while 52 percent cited cost. The big change as compared to years past was that only 12 percent cared about proximity or specific locations as a determining factor. Lopez-Ferrero said that location, which used to be desirable for example in terms of keeping postproduction close to home, became “borderline negligible.” He thus feels that “projects with talent from different locations collaborating remotely will become the new norm.”

He also sees content makers becoming nano-influencers, further developing their social channels and growing highly

engaged followings. And while big production companies will focus on talent development and diversification, there will be growing new hybrid indie talent not affiliated with production houses.

Relative to tenor and tone of content, Lopez-Ferrero anticipates an increase in fiction-led global campaigns providing an element of escapism in difficult times instead of a constant reminder. He additionally expects a spike in celebrity endorsement fare and that product demos will be back but in a new format, making



Sergio Lopez-Ferrero

it real and achievable. On the latter score, he cited as an example a L'Oréal spokesperson Eva Longoria-starring video in which she colors her hair at home. To capture this while the world was isolating and traditional production options significantly limited, McCann NY and Paris gave Longoria two iPhones to direct the TV spot herself. A detailed pre-production book was fashioned to facilitate the process. The spot was shot in her home in Los Angeles with McCann Paris providing her with direction via Microsoft Teams. Longoria did her own hair and makeup and applied the actual L'Oréal Excellence Hair Color product to herself.

Julien Calot, executive creative director at McCann Paris, explained “it was important for us at McCann to adapt to global confinement, and to quickly find and implement new communication approaches. We asked ourselves, “How do we make a homemade film. Low key. 100% real.” L'Oréal Paris has always been by the side of all women, and that is what we wanted to show through this film.”

Lopez-Ferrero observed that the COVID-19 crisis “has brought a truth to light: campaigns are only as powerful as

the production team bringing them to life. Production at scale, organized, with people, process and tools opens the possibilities. He advises clients to: Be ready for a big change in formats and media; have a production strategy for your brand; and make sure it's a production strategy led by creative, powered by tech. He additionally offered three tips:

--Make the rules part of the solution. Production is adaptive. Make no assumptions about what is or is not possible. We will make it happen.

--Learn to play in uncertainty. Collaboration is the key to embracing uncertainty. Bring creative, strategy, channel expertise, and production together to engineer new solutions in a rapidly changing environment.

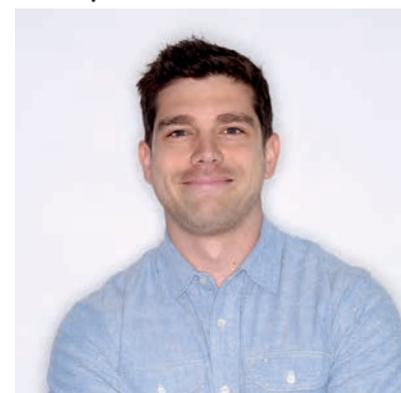
--And upgrade your tech. Make you life easier with production technology. A global, cloud-based production tech solution will change your life, and your inbox. It will make global reach possible and allow for brand centralization and consistency.

“The new new”

Brett Henenberg, SVP, global head of production at UM Studios (the content creation arm of marketing and media agency UM Worldwide), is no stranger to breakthrough work. He served as a producer on *5B*, named after the San Francisco General ward which opened in 1983 as the first full-fledged hospital unit dedicated to treating people with AIDS. Produced for UM Worldwide's client Johnson & Johnson, the documentary showed the positive power of nursing, continuing a theme which the brand has championed over the years. Directed by Paul Haggis and Dan Krauss via Saville Productions, *5B* debuted at the 2019 Cannes Film Festival as part of its Special Screenings lineup in May only a month later to win the Entertainment Lions Grand Prix, among other honors, at the Festival of Creativity.

Henberg observed that the virus pandemic hasn't altered his long-term thinking. He remains optimistic that UM's producers will continue to look for and uncover the best solutions for its clients. While there will be changes in the industry, he firmly believes UM will come back stronger. The approach, he continued, will be to “think philosophi-

cally about the long term and practically about the short term.” The short term, he conjectured will for example likely see an uptick in post-produced work. But in the big picture philosophically, in line with the momentum generated by *5B*, UM's priority is coming up with “the best ways to connect clients with audiences in moments that matter to them.” Thus Henenberg finds himself less interested in the new normal and more driven by finding what's new to “build on what we currently have.” He stressed that the ma-



Brett Henenberg

major push is not for a return to normal but finding “the new new,” namely new ways for clients to get their messages in front of audiences.

While not at liberty to discuss in detail what's new on UM's horizon, Henenberg noted that the shop is having conversations with a director which involves her interviewing kids and real parents, among others. In today's production reality, UM is exploring how to best realize that project, exploring a remote connection linking the filmmaker and her subjects.

Henberg said that UM continually is looking for new and meaningful ways to partner with creators. Prior to the virus crisis, for example, UM managed to wrap shooting of another piece of branded content--this time for a client that he couldn't identify publicly at press time. Postproduction is ahead of schedule.

As earlier reported in *SHOOT*, the film is based on a “Dear Santa” concept focusing on children who write letters to Santa Claus and the people who adopt their wishes and make them come true. The letters are traced back to their origin as audiences get to know the family stories and the motivation behind children's

Is Next, Lessons Learned

wishes, making for what Henenberg believes will be heartfelt viewing.

Henberg said that essential to the project, as it was to the success of *5B*, is the selection of the filmmaker. UM Studios gravitated to Dana Nachman whose 2018 feature documentary *Pick of the Litter* (which she and Don Hardy directed) was sold within 48 hours of its premiere at the Slamdance Film Festival and soon after was released theatrically by IFC Films. Now streaming on Hulu, the film follows a litter of puppies from the moment they're born, taking us on their journey to becoming guide dogs for the blind. The Walt Disney Company later sought out Nachman to remake *Pick of the Litter* as a limited original series for Disney+ which debuted earlier this year. She served as a showrunner on the series and directed three of its episodes.

Nachman's filmography also includes the 2015 release *Batkid Begins* (Warner Bros./New Line Cinema) which centers on 5-year-old Miles Scott who's recovering from leukemia. Scott's dream is to become Batkid and save Gotham City. His wish comes true as 25,000 people in San Francisco share the experience in a moving display of public emotion.

Connecting with Nachman is in line, said Henenberg, with the UM Studios' model which is centered on finding the right storyteller, an authentic voice. This quest will always be part of the UM process, pandemic or not.

Still, Henenberg thinks certain practical considerations and practices born out of the pandemic will stick around, such as working from home whenever possible, temperature checks of crew members, increased hand washing and the recommendations delineated in the AICP Guidelines for physical production. He also sees remote video villages from shoots taking hold, noting that "there are not too many clients who are going to want to fly themselves to a lot of productions coming up." So maybe the so-called video village will become a strong option of choice, facilitating two-way AV communication between locations with a live camera feed. This would enable client or agency to have access to set without having to be physically present. Virtually being on location, participants could discuss shots, keep track of schedules, stay up to

date with the latest changes, all in real time from the comfort of home or office.

Valuable lessons

While production over the past few months has been challenging to say the least, requiring members of the ad/film-making community to continually adjust and adapt, Kate Morrison, partner, director of production, 72andSunny, observed that working through the pandemic has had a silver lining which could prove invaluable as we move ahead.

She noted that trust among all parties has become even more key to getting a project off the ground and bringing it to fruition, buoyed by the reality that we're all in this together. Agencies and production companies are getting involved at a much earlier stage, having candid conversations about what's feasible. People are becoming better partners to make up in part for not being able to see each other face to face. There also seems to be a heightened empathy with people relating to each other on a different level, stemming in part from sharing the experience of being under a pressure that they hadn't experienced prior to the virus crisis. Still, said Morrison, they continue to strive to realize high quality work. "One of the key things I believe is that the creative emphasis should not be lowered. We are storytellers." That commitment to story remains steadfast, even if the process of getting there has become more difficult.

Morrison added that recent production endeavors have carried worthwhile lessons as you can see first hand what works remotely, and sometimes your perceptions can change. For example, Morrison earlier believed that there was no substitute for people being in the same office, having face-to-face creative conversations from which would spring concepts and approaches that might not have materialized otherwise. But she now marvels at the high level of creativity that can come from "people scattered all over the world" and that a "creative community" can exist without everyone always having to be in the same office.

At the same time, she finds herself missing being in an edit room, collaborating in person and helping to solve problems. "You miss some of the ca-

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Howling Music Marches in Step with Marine Corps and Wunderman Thompson



Happy Birthday to USMC

The Marine Corps marked its 244th anniversary in celebratory manner with the release of an ad campaign featuring its first-ever "birthday" running cadence. Conceived by Atlanta agency Wunderman Thompson and featuring a soundtrack composed and recorded by Howling Music, Nashville, the campaign centered on troops from the USMC's Parris Island, South Carolina performing the spirited call-and-response during close-order drills.

The cadence evokes the Marines' history and traditions. The visuals alternate between the marching soldiers and shots of intense training exercises, culminating with the corps' annual birthday ball.

Howling Music was tasked with recording the cadence live on the base with several groups of active-duty soldiers. The final, 4:10 video is featured on the Marines' YouTube channel and website.

Entries Open For CAS Student Recognition Honor

The Cinema Audio Society has opened applications for the CAS Student Recognition Award. Now in its seventh year, this honor comes with a \$5,000 cash award and is intended to encourage student interest in production or postproduction sound mixing, and to recognize individual students with exceptional demonstrated passion for the field.

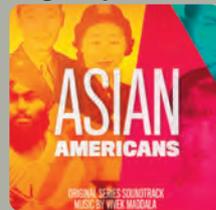
The selection criteria will focus on the student's short essays in response to application questions, along with a professor's recommendation letter. Finalists will be asked to submit a five-minute example of their work and a short explanation of their submission and their role in it. The five finalists will be invited to the 57th CAS Awards, on February 20, 2021 as guests of the CAS (travel expenses not included), where the Student Recognition Award recipient will be announced.

Eligibility for the CAS Student Recognition Award is open to any student enrolled in an accredited college or university. Students may be pursuing any major (indeed, many current CAS members majored in music, psychology, English, engineering and other fields), but should have a demonstrated interest and some experience in production and/or postproduction sound mixing for film and television. Applications must be received by November 16, 2020.

The application guidelines and details for applying, as well as any updates, can be found on the CAS website at: <http://cinemaudiosociety.org>.

Lakeside Records Releases Track For PBS' *Asian Americans*

Lakeside Records has digitally released the original series soundtrack for the PBS documentary series *Asian Americans* by two-time Daytime Emmy-winning composer Vivek Maddala. The music score reflects the series' exploration of two centuries of immigration and civil rights experiences by Asian Americans in the U.S. The docuseries aired last month on PBS and is now available for streaming on PBS.org and the PBS Video app.



Asian Americans soundtrack

The soundtrack album includes 84 minutes of key moments and themes from the sweeping music score, taking listeners on a stimulating ride that traverses gritty 19th-Century American textures and elegant European romantic motifs; 20th-Century jazz, soul, and rock; and modern-day brooding electronica. Splashes of musical color come from places as varied as Japan, Philippines, Korea, China, and India—all threaded into a cohesive musical fabric that transcends temporal or geographic boundaries.

"The *Asian Americans* series is a significant work in terms of both the quality of the filmmaking and the importance of the subject matter. I feel incredibly honored to have been invited to compose the music score... to craft a melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic voice for this vital history. The series directors, producers, and editors proved to be superb collaborators in this regard," said Maddala.

Brands Take A Stand; Creatives, Filmmakers Respond

Continued from page 19

maraderie of it," Morrison related.

Morrison hopes that a higher level of trust, empathy and open communication earlier will live on just as strong as the industry eventually moves past the pandemic toward some semblance of what had been normal. She also sees the op-

George Floyd was not the result of a bad apple; it was the predictable consequence of a racist and prejudiced system and culture that has treated Black bodies as the enemy from the beginning. What happened to George Floyd in Minneapolis is the fruit borne of toxic seeds planted on the shores of our country in Jamestown

together as a nation until we begin to grapple with the sins of our past. Slavery, Jim Crow, and segregation were systems of legalized and monetized white supremacy for which generations of Black and Brown people paid an immeasurable price. That cost must be acknowledged and the privilege that accrued to some at the expense of others must be reckoned with and redressed.

"Third, we support Floyd's family's call to create a national task force that would draft bipartisan legislation aimed at ending racial violence and increasing police accountability. We can't continue to fund a criminal justice system that perpetuates mass incarceration while at the same time threatens the lives of a whole segment of the population.

"And finally, we call on the Department of Justice to reinvigorate its Civil Rights Division as a staunch defender of the rights of Black and Brown people. The DOJ must also reinstate policies rolled back under the Trump Administration, such as consent decrees to curb police abuses."

Ben & Jerry's encourages white America to "collectively acknowledge its privilege" and "use this moment to accelerate our nation's long journey towards justice and a more perfect union."

As for entertainment companies, ViacomCBS networks ran a poignant eight-minute, 46-second video featuring the sounds of a person breathing accompanied by the statement, "I can't breathe." A video of Floyd's demise includes his uttering those same three words in a plea to Minneapolis policeman Derek Chauvin. However, Chauvin kept his knee on Floyd's neck; according to a criminal complaint the officer applied pressure to Floyd for eight minutes and 46 seconds.

"We dedicate this time to the victims of police brutality and the powerful movement fighting for justice," read a tweet from VH1, MTV and other ViacomCBS channels.

Meanwhile ViacomCBS children's network Nickelodeon went off the air for eight minutes and 46 seconds "in support of justice, equality and human rights." Nickelodeon also shared a Declaration of Kids' Rights which read, "You have the right to be seen, heard and respected as a citizen of the world. You have the right

**Trayvon Martin.
Michael Brown.
Alton Sterling.
Botham Jean.
Atatiana Jefferson.
Ahmaud Arbery.
George Floyd.**

McDonald's remembers the fallen

For once,
Don't Do It.

Nike's "Don't Do It" plea



Ben & Jerry's call to Resist

to a world that is peaceful. You have the right to be protected from harm, injustice and hatred. You have the right to an education that prepares you to run the world. You have the right to your opinions and feelings, even if others don't agree with them."

Netflix's Twitter account took on a serious tone in late May, imparting this message: "To be silent is to be complicit. Black lives matter. We have a platform, and we have a duty to our Black members, employees, creators and talent to speak up."

AT&T-owned Warner Media, which includes such brands as HBO, TNT and



Gabrielle Union (l) and Jessica Alba in L.A.'s Finest

portunity to find the best of both worlds, on one hand assessing and taking to heart the power of the in-person collaborative experience--and then doing the same relative to the power of the technology-enabled experiences that have become more prevalent as of late. Moving ahead with the best of both--and lessons learned from those experiences--can only help to build on the power of storytelling.

Social injustice

But how can the power of storytelling and brands standing for something be brought to bear on social injustice? That question has come to the fore as the world mourns African-American George Floyd, age 46, who died brutally while in the custody of Minneapolis police. Video of the act enraged and saddened people worldwide, triggering protests throughout the U.S. and abroad.

Issuing perhaps the strongest response from a brand was ice cream maker Ben & Jerry's which posted a statement that in part read, "The murder of George Floyd was the result of inhumane police brutality that is perpetuated by a culture of white supremacy. What happened to

in 1619, when the first enslaved men and women arrived on this continent. Floyd is the latest in a long list of names that stretches back to that time and that shore. Some of those names we know--Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Oscar Grant, Eric Garner, Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Emmett Till, Martin Luther King, Jr.--most we don't."

The brand then proposed four steps to address the issue:

"First, we call upon President Trump, elected officials, and political parties to commit our nation to a formal process of healing and reconciliation. Instead of calling for the use of aggressive tactics on protesters, the President must take the first step by disavowing white supremacists and nationalist groups that overtly support him, and by not using his Twitter feed to promote and normalize their ideas and agendas. The world is watching America's response.

"Second, we call upon the Congress to pass H.R. 40, legislation that would create a commission to study the effects of slavery and discrimination from 1619 to the present and recommend appropriate remedies. We cannot move forward

To Racism, Police Brutality

TBS, changed their handles to #BlackLivesMatter and all posted the same James Baldwin quote: “Neither love nor terror makes one blind: indifference makes one blind.”

Among the first advertisers to respond after the passing of George Floyd was Nike as its agency-Wieden+Kennedy in Portland, Ore.--created a :60 TV spot which urges the antithesis of the brand's

his kneeling during the national anthem at NFL games as a peaceful protest against police brutality and for racial equality. “Dream Crazy” went on to win the 2019 primetime commercial Emmy Award, among other honors.

Like “For Once, Don’t Do It,” a McDonald’s spot--this one from Wieden+Kennedy’s NY office--also deployed text to promote racial justice, shar-



Nike's "Dream Crazy"

iconic “Just Do It” slogan. The 180-degree slogan turn was embraced to address racism. Titled “For Once, Don’t Do It,” the spot encourages people to stop being silent, to stop making excuses and to instead be part of progressive change.

As protests sprung up around the country in response to the brutal death of Floyd, Nike’s stark, sparse TV spot broke on May 30. It consisted of just various lines of copy against a black background, followed by the Nike swoosh logo.

The opening line reads, “For once, Don’t Do It.” Subsequent lines of copy are: “Don’t pretend there’s not a problem in America./Don’t turn your back on racism./Don’t accept innocent lives being taken from us./Don’t make any more excuses./Don’t think this doesn’t affect you./Don’t sit back and be silent. Don’t think you can’t be part of the change./Let’s all be part of the change.”

The simple eloquence of the text struck a responsive audience chord. While advocating “Don’t Do It” on the surface seems foreign to Nike, not so is taking a stand on race--a prime case in point being last year’s lauded “Dream Crazy” spot, also from W+K, featuring Colin Kaepernick who was both praised and criticized for

ing the names of seven African Americans who died in police custody or due to race. The seven are: Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Alton Sterling, Botham Jean, Atatiana Jefferson, Ahmaud Arbery and George Floyd.

The McDonald’s message read in part, “He was one of us. She was one of us. They were all one of us. We see them in our customers. In our crew members. We see them in our franchisees. And this is why the entire McDonald’s family grieves. It’s why we stand for them and any other victims of systematic oppression and violence.”

The last line affirmed, “We do not tolerate inequality injustice or racism. Black lives matter.”

Increasingly it’s become evident that standing for something, doing good, being proactively involved represent much needed currency for brands if they are to meaningfully connect with people. What does your brand stand for? Does it stand for anything? Numerous studies, including a Havas poll, have found that the lion’s share of consumers are drawn to brands that help drive positive social change. They expect such advocacy from the brands they trust.

Framestore Serves as VFX Master Builder For LEGO Ad



Framestore's LEGO spot

The LEGO Agency, director David Mellor and production company HighlyUnlikely partnered with Framestore to provide a host of full-throttle VFX for a commercial titled “Drive What You Love.” Framestore delivered a range of environments, cars and effects for the playful thrill ride of an ad, which sees a LEGO builder’s imagination come to life for a high speed race through a house.

The CG-reliant project saw the Framestore team deliver a wide range of work; previsualization, realizing the design of one of the commercial’s cars and supervising the live action shoot before delivering any of the postproduction work. The VFX work included entirely CG environments and cars and digi-doubles of drivers as well as high-end animation and effects. The lighting and reflections effects work that can be seen throughout every shot of the ad--as well as a huge flour explosion--are perhaps the most subtle yet VFX elements on this project.

Compositing live action shots of the McLaren and Ferrari F8 into the live action or CG environments, Framestore’s team also meticulously rebuilt the cars in CG along with the other autos and all their LEGO counterparts. These assets were used in shots which required the cars to tear around underneath dining room chairs or across counter tops. “The cars--and their drivers--shift multiple times between live-action and CG digi-doubles and it’s a real testament to our team’s work that it’s almost impossible to spot the difference between them,” commented VFX supervisor Charlie Bayliss.

Lucky Expands Design, Animation Roster

Lucky has expanded through creative partnerships with a collection of designers, animation talent and storytellers at such concerns as Already Been Chewed (ABC) and Plenty. ABC helps to build businesses, launch products, and create immersive visual experiences for leading brands including Nike, Marvel, Under Armour, DC Comics, NBA, NFL, Vans and Tiffany & Co.



Plenty work for Samsung

Plenty designs communication, connecting brands to the present and prepares them for the future with a strategy-driven approach that contemplates clarity of message using design thinking as the key. Plenty produces animation, live action, and mixed media for agencies, networks and brands throughout the U.S., Europe, and Latin America, including Amex, Discovery, Disney HX, HBO, Oreo and Sonos.

Autodesk Releases 3ds Max 2021.1

Autodesk has released 3ds Max 2021.1, a feature-rich update targeted at modernizing and upgrading performance for artist workflows across design visualization and media and entertainment disciplines. Now available, 3ds Max 2021.1 introduces new texture baking advancements, increased capabilities for physically based rendering (PBR) workflows, and viewport and modeling tool enhancements. New 3ds Max 2021.1 feature highlights include:

- Texture Baking Improvements: New features include multiple UV tile baking and animation support, display of the active renderer, multi-edit of the output column, and improved frame buffer display of maps being baked.

- Arnold as Default Renderer: MAXtoA 4.0.4 includes a new AOV token system for organizing output, animation support for Alembic, and for bake-to-texture workflows, and faster shutdown after rendering massive instances. Users can now export scenes to USD files from the archive tab of the rendering options.

- Enhanced Modeling Features: Modeling tool improvements include a new extrusion experience for editable poly and the edit poly modifier, in addition to enhancements to the weighted normals modifier.

- Upgraded Render Settings: Default output size updated to HDTV 720p, and HDTV presets updated to 720p, 1080p, 1440p, and 2160p.

- Fluid Enhancements: New exposed fluid loader allows users to load and interact data with other systems and objects that operate within 3ds Max. Additional improvements include fixes to the velocity channel.

Director Jon M. Chu

Crazy Rich Asians filmmaker connects with Apple TV+ *On Home Before Dark* starring Brooklynn Prince



By Robert Goldrich

Bucking the so-called conventional wisdom that there would be minimal box office return for a feature with an all-Asian cast, director Jon M. Chu committed to *Crazy Rich Asians* which went on to not only become a huge hit but also a pop culture phenomenon. The critically acclaimed film's commercial success and groundbreaking accomplishments helped Chu earn the Motion Picture Showman of the Year Award at the International Cinematographers Guild's Publicists Awards in 2019 for his unique contribution to the art of movies.

One such contribution was to diversity. *Crazy Rich Asians* was the first major studio film with an all Asian cast and an Asian-American lead in 25 years; the last had been *The Joy Luck Club* in 1993. *Crazy Rich Asians* also departed from the action and superhero blockbuster norm, proving the major viability of a romantic comedy—which also had a multilingual script ranging from English to Cantonese to Mandarin.

In accepting the Motion Picture Showman of the Year Award, Chu said it was gratifying for the honor to come at a time of major change which he viewed as “only the beginning” of giving more diverse voices

the opportunity to be heard.

Fast forward to today and Chu is adding to his feature filmography—albeit at a delayed timetable due to unexpected circumstance. At press time he was in postproduction on *In The Heights* (Warner Bros.), the feature adaptation of Lin-Manuel Miranda's Tony-winning Broadway musical. Originally scheduled to debut in theaters this month, *In The Heights* has been postponed until June 2021 due to the pandemic.

Meanwhile Chu is making his mark in television—on Apple TV+ to be exact, directing the first two episodes of and serving as an exec producer on *Home Before Dark* based on the real story of child journalist Hilde Lysiak. Brooklynn Prince, known for her work in director Sean Baker's 2017 feature *The Florida Project*, portrays the young reporter (under the name Hilde Lisko). *Home Before Dark* centers on Hilde's relationship with her dad, a former investigative journalist in NY who loses his job, causing him to uproot his wife and kids, and return to his hometown of Erie Harbor. There Matt's family secrets come to be revealed as a cold case murder mystery and a recent homicide unfold with intrepid reporter Hilde on the case.

SHOOT: Provide some backstory. What drew you to *Home Before Dark* and how did the opportunity emerge for you to become involved in the series?

Chu: Joy (Gorman Wettels, executive producer) and Dana Fox (co-creator and EP) approached me about the story of the real Hilde Lysiak. I remembered having read her story years ago in the paper. She broke a story in a local newspaper, investigating a murder. I was drawn to how a little girl can have that kind of courage. From (Nobel Peace Prize laureate) Malala to (environmental activist) Greta Thunberg, there's a new generation of young women who are making an impact on the world. It was such an important idea they came to me with—a young girl saving us, dedicated to the truth of journalism. They knew I just had a baby girl and was a few months into it. This was a father-

daughter story with a sense of purpose. It's a true story when truth in journalism is more important than ever.

SHOOT: What was your approach to telling this story? What were the biggest creative challenges that it posed to you?

Chu: I thought about the story Joy tells of how she had to get the rights to the story. The parents gave it to Joy because she was the only one who talked directly to Hilde instead of focusing on the parents. That's the perspective of the show. This isn't a kids' show. We are not taking the consequences as light and cutesy. We're getting after the real truth, treating it as seriously as any Sherlock Holmes mystery or detective show. That was really important. We never looked down on her.

SHOOT: Which made the casting of

Brooklynn Prince essential.

Chu: Yes, she is the reason we were able to do this show. There's no other girl who can do that. How does a nine year old carry a show that adults will want to watch? She had to carry it and did.

SHOOT: Would you also tell us about why you gravitated to other key collaborators, specifically cinematographer Alice Brooks and production designer Nelson Coates?

Chu: Alice is one of my favorite people in the world. We went to school together. She shot my short film years and years ago. I was a little whippersnapper. She was older. I was able to convince her to work on my short. We've worked a lot together. She shot *The LXD: The Legion of Extraordinary Dancers* (TV series) and recently shot *In The Heights*.

I met Nelson on *Crazy Rich Asians*. We didn't have the biggest budget on that film yet he created this amazing world for us to play in (for which Coates won an Art Directors Guild Excellence in Production Design Award).

Home Before Dark was a very different world to create. He's a very good storytell-

er with a keen attention to detail. In creating the family house (in Erie Harbor), he gave us layers—layers which we peeled away to reveal more. The house became a symbol of the relationships within the family, helping to tell the story. I love that about him. He also did *In The Heights* for me.

SHOOT: How was your Apple TV+ experience? Was this your first foray into the brave new streaming world?

Chu: This was my first experience with streaming and one of my first TV experiences. I love the collaborative nature of TV in general, the way you can dive into characters.

I grew up (in Northern California) around Cupertino (where Apple is headquartered). It was a dream of mine to work with Apple. Making content for them was great, knowing they strive for excellence, quality over quantity. I enjoyed being involved as they are trying to figure out their voice in the content world. They are great creative collaborators. They said they wanted to make a great story—they stuck by that and supported it. We started shooting season two before season one came out.

“I love the collaborative nature of TV in general, the way you can dive into characters.”



Photo courtesy of Apple TV+



Martin Ahlgren (r)



Photo by Michele K. Stuart/courtesy of HBO

The Plot Against America



Michael Grady



Photo by Hilary B. Gayle/courtesy of Apple TV+

The Morning Show

Lensing *The Plot Against America* and *The Morning Show*

Martin Ahlgren Reunites With Director Minkie Spiro; Michael Grady Reteams With Mimi Leder

By Robert Goldrich

Cinematographers Martin Ahlgren and Michael Grady are in the Emmy conversation this season for their respective lensing of *The Plot Against America* (HBO) and *The Morning Show* (Apple TV+).

Both Ahlgren and Grady got the opportunity to shoot this work based on their prior collaborative relationships with women directors.

And while *The Plot Against America* and *The Morning Show* are distinctly different shows in terms of genre, feel and orientation, both tell stories that carry contemporary relevance.

Here are reflections from Ahlgren and Grady on their shows, their connections to and affinity for the directors involved, and choices of camera relative to doing justice to story and character.

Martin Ahlgren

Since he was a teenager in Sweden, Martin Ahlgren has been making movies—initially with a Hi8 video camera. In his formal cinematography education at the School of Visual Arts in New York, he shot assorted student films which in turn led to a start in commercials and music videos. After a decade working on campaigns for major brands all over the world and on music videos for such artists as The Rolling Stones, Beyoncé and Kanye West, Ahlgren took on longer form storytelling with indie features and TV. He earned an Outstanding Cinematography for a Single-Camera Series primetime Emmy nomination in 2015 for an episode of *House of Cards*. The next year

he was nominated for an ASC Award on the strength of his work on the pilot for *Blindspot*.

Now he's again in the Emmy fray for his cinematography on the HBO limited series *The Plot Against America* featuring an ensemble cast which includes Zoe Kazan, Morgan Spector, Winona Ryder, John Turturro, Anthony Boyle, Azhy Robertson and Caleb Malis. The show imagines an alternate U.S. history told through the eyes of the Levins, a working-class Jewish family in Newark, New Jersey, who witness the political rise of aviator hero Charles Lindbergh, a xenophobic populist who defeats Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1940 presidential election and turns the nation towards fascism.

Based on Philip Roth's novel of the same title, *The Plot Against America* was adapted for television by David Simon and Ed Burns whose collaborations in-

clude creating the critically acclaimed series *The Wire*.

Ahlgren was drawn to the opportunity to work with Simon and Burns, and to the story when he read the book in preparation for the assignment. He was enamored with “the idea of telling a story that’s really a drama but in the context of larger historical events taking place—and from the perspective of their effect on every single member of a family. It’s a subtle, interesting and emotional story being told. I read the first and second episodes (penned by Simon and Burns), compelled by the authenticity they always seek out in their projects, creating a world, characters and dialogue that feel authentic and real, that deal with the complexities of people.”

Ahlgren got the chance to become involved in *The Plot Against America* thanks to director Minkie Spiro who went on to helm the first three episodes

of the series and serves as an executive producer on the show. The two had previously teamed on *Crash & Burn*, a pilot for Hulu. “She was the one who brought me into the mix,” said Ahlgren, opening the door for him to connect with Simon, Burns and Thomas Schlamme (director of the last three episodes) to make a presentation as to how the cinematography for *The Plot Against America* should be approached.

Spiro told *SHOOT*, “Martin gets my sensibilities. I have an obsession with framing and composition and he understands my obsession. I needed somebody on board who would have that anal retentive attitude about precision and going for it. This became a labor of love. He’s a wonderful artist.”

A source of inspiration for the lensing of *The Plot Against America* was photojournalism during the 1930s, ‘40s and ‘50s, including photographers Robert Frank, Helen Levitt and Margaret Bourke-White whose work often used wider lenses close to the action with greater depth of field. These framings offered levels of depth that allow viewers to look about and find different areas of interest. This deep focus became part of the look differentiating *The Plot Against America* from other shows. Holding the foreground and background in focus can lend a larger than life quality to intimate shots without having them lose their intimacy. At the same time, this put more demands on other artisans such as production designers Richard Hoover and Dina Goldman. Ev-



Photo by Michele K. Stuart/courtesy of HBO

Morgan Spector (behind the wheel) in *The Plot Against America*

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Plot Thickens For Ahlgren

Continued from page 23

everything had to be more detailed in terms of production design in that “we weren’t going to be hiding things out of focus in the background,” said Ahlgren.

Ahlgren sought to hold as much as possible in focus, giving the audience op-

additionally had a highly desirable “filmic quality.” While history was rewritten for the show, the feeling that this new history look and feel as real as possible was essential, particularly when underscoring the story’s relevance today and some similar parallel contemporary choices facing us.



John Turturro (behind podium) in *The Plot Against America*



Turturro, Winona Ryder, Caroline Kaplan in *The Plot Against America*

tions of where to look. “It lets your eye linger over an image and find different things,” he explained. To achieve that goal he needed a smaller aperture as well as a smaller image recording area. He tested multiple cameras towards that end, ultimately deciding on a specially adapted Sony VENICE windowed down to a smaller sensor size and with a higher ISO, giving him the look and feel needed to do full justice to the character-driven period piece. Ahlgren said he had to find a camera that had “high enough quality” and resolution to deliver under these adapted conditions, including even in low light situations. He added that the Sony VENICE

Ahlgren estimated that only some 20 percent of *The Plot Against America* was shot in studio, most of that being the set which served as the Levins’ apartment. “Doing a show where 80 percent was on location recreating the 1940s in New York City, Newark and Greater New Jersey was a huge undertaking,” requiring close-knit collaboration among the DP, the production design and visual effects departments.

While most of the still photojournalism of past eras that influenced him for this series was in black and white, Ahlgren had “no doubt” that *The Plot Against America* should be done in color. He thus had a col-

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Penny Dreadful: City of Angels

DP COOKS UP LOOK FOR PENNY DREADFUL

When it came time for cinematographer John Conroy to develop the look for Showtime’s *Penny Dreadful: City of Angels* spin-off, he already had eight episodes of lensing the original *Penny Dreadful* under his belt. A major part of the look for the spin-off would come from using Cooke Optics’ S4/i prime lenses and re-

housed vintage Cooke Speed Panchro lenses. Conroy noted, “The original series was set in Victorian gothic London, while *City of Angels* is set in 1938 Los Angeles — a very different look. That gave us the opportunity to start fresh and create our own vision. For example, the original series was dark with action taking place in shadows, while *City of Angels* takes place in a very colorful era in a bright and sunny city. It truly was the difference between night and day.”

Conroy explained, “We used four ARRI ALEXA Mini cameras in 3.2K 16:9. We rented a full set of S4/i lenses — all 18 lenses from 12mm to 300mm, as well as two sets of rehoused vintage Speed Panchro primes in 25mm, 100mm and 135mm focal lengths. We did several tests at Panavision to make sure that the Panchros and the S4/i’s matched, with the goal of the two lens families looking seamless to the viewer by the time our colorist got done with the footage.”

Creator and writer John Logan was very specific about not wanting a noir look and feel, but rather embracing the 100-degree heat of Los Angeles. “Our mantra from John was ‘we gotta feel the heat,’” said Conroy, who added that “having 60-70-year-old optics that were designed in the 1920s really helped with that aesthetic.”

LIGHTSTORM DEPLOYS BLACKMAGIC

Lightstorm Entertainment used an extensive array of Blackmagic products, including the Teranex AV, Smart VideoHub 40x40 12G, ATEM 4 M/E Broadcast Studio 4K and more for their recent work during production for the *Avatar* sequels.

With the release of *Avatar* in 2009, the company once again proved that there were no limits in filmmaking. But just as the story of the Na’vi will evolve in the sequels, so will the technology behind the films. A key element is the ability to evaluate content as it’s being shot, rather than waiting until postproduction. “We evaluate live camera feeds in a manner as close to the theatrical experience as possible, so we can make real time decisions on set,” said Geoff Burdick, SVP of production services & technology for Lightstorm. “This saves time during



Geoff Burdick

shooting, benefits Weta Digital, our visual effects vendor, and helps streamline our postproduction and mastering process.”

This necessitated viewing live feeds from multiple 3D camera systems, simultaneously. “In the past, we viewed live and playback material in 3D HD at 24fps,” said Burdick. “Now, we acquire at 4K 3D, and feed through our pipeline at various resolutions and frame rates.” These include 3D 48fps in 2K and 4K, 3D 24fps in 2K and 4K, and 3D 24fps in HD.

Blackmagic Design provided a unique and comprehensive product set that allowed for numerous solutions throughout the pipeline. The key to the workflow was creating seamless viewing and playback, despite the massive amount of data necessary. Having the ability to review multiple resolutions and frame rates in real time allowed the team to remain in step with issues that may have gone unnoticed before, only to be found later in post.

One of Blackmagic’s simplest products became a production workhorse. The Teranex family allowed for a hybrid HD 24fps/4K 48fps workflow on set.

ARRI LIGHTS UP WITH GM IVANOVSKI

Ivo Ivanovski will join ARRI as general manager of business unit lighting, effective August 1. Together with GM Markus Lampier, Ivanovski will manage ARRI’s lighting business unit out of the facility in Stephanskirchen, Germany. Ivanovski will be responsible for demand creation including the areas of product management, application engineering, service, sales, and marketing. Ivanovski will report directly to Markus Zeiler, executive board member of ARRI.

DP Grady, Director Leder Maintain Their Collaborative Bond

Continued from page 24

or aesthetic that took its inspiration from black-and-white photography, impacting how he shaded the lighting and his choice of compositions.

versions. The transition was as seamless as possible. The arc continued.”

Michael Grady

Cinematographer Michael Grady got

“It’s all feature film quality,” he assessed. “There’s nothing different in terms of the quality of images and production value except you have to go faster. You need the ability to produce solid stuff over a shorter period of time and with movie stars, often a big group of artists. That’s the constant battle.”

Grady also had to maintain a balance between *The Morning Show* itself—the production realities of an a.m. news program, sometimes quite static and formal—and the filmic world where the characters reside. One world, for example, required the pedestal studio cameras of a morning show setup, capturing that on-air look. As for the overall Apple TV+ series itself, Grady gravitated to the Panavision DXL2 (8K) camera as well as the new Panavision Primo lenses. “I’m a Panavision guy in terms of customer service and at the time their DXL2 large format system was really brand new.” Apple, continued Grady, wanted “4K or above—now everybody’s caught up to this but at the time there weren’t a ton of choices.” Grady opted for the DXL2, an 8K large format which was “framed down to 4K for distribution.” He found the large format “amazing,” more akin to what still photographers have been doing “forever,” getting “depth of field” with the Primo lenses providing “a sense of an anamorphic image but in a

ever emotional moment may or may not be happening.” While an a.m. morning news show may be static and formal, the emotions in people’s lives can resonate, so he has to be prepared for all that and whatever falls between them in the storyline continuum. As the series unfolds, the complexity of the characters builds. In that vein, Grady said he found his experience of some 15 years-plus with Leder invaluable when it came to *The Morning Show*, relating that so much is “unspoken” between them but there’s a constant striving and a shared understanding whereby “the work gets elevated.”

That elevation is also rooted, he continued, in the show storylines which are topical and carry a sense of purpose, relevant to the zeitgeist of the #MeToo movement with the sexual harassment aspect as women have to cope with a workplace where men abuse their power. (In *The Morning Show*, viewers have made parallels to the allegations against Matt Lauer and his dismissal from *Today*, for example.) “It’s a tragic, sometimes weird story,” assessed Grady, adding that he’s had women tell him they have been emotionally impacted by the show. To move both men and women with a story, he said, is “pretty cool.” At the same time, there are comedic elements to *The Morning Show*. “If you’re going to make a 10-hour movie



Photo courtesy of Apple TV+

Jennifer Aniston in *The Morning Show*

But the overriding visual influence, stressed Ahlgren, was found in story and characters. “You try to figure out ways of telling the story in as captivating a way as possible without making it feel artificial, letting acting and the writing drive the scene, finding ways of telling the story emotionally with (directors) Minke and later Thomas (Schlamme). That drove our approach every day, finding some sort of emotional core to the scenes to help determine how we would approach things visually.”

Asked about adjustments he had to make working with two different directors on the same limited series, Ahlgren shared, “As Minkie’s block was ending, I was sort of gathering a visual library of things, themes to build on, cataloging to show Tommy where we had been.”

Ahlgren added, “Every director is going to approach it in their own way. It’s like when you have alternating cinematographers on a TV show. Everyone approaches it in their own way. You take someone’s creative approach and make it your own within set parameters. Alternating cinematographers may use completely different tools technically in terms of lighting and so on but somehow find a core in the show that is going to unify at the same time with what the other cinematographers are doing. Directors similarly have to live within the same language. Tommy (Schlamme) was involved from the beginning in con-

the opportunity to shoot *The Morning Show* due to his long collaborative track record with director Mimi Leder spanning such notable work as episodes of the lauded *The Leftovers* and the feature film *On the Basis of Sex*, the acclaimed biopic of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

Grady said of Leder, “Because of our friendship and the quality of whatever she’s doing, it was a no-brainer to again come together on *The Morning Show*.” Also attracting Grady to the series—which takes us behind the scenes of a morning TV network news show—was the chance to work with a stellar cast which included Jennifer Aniston (a Golden Globe winner for her portrayal of Morning Show anchor Alex Levy), Reese Witherspoon (as field reporter Bradley Jackson, a TV star on the ascent) and Steve Carell (TV host Mitch Kessler who’s fired after news of his sexual abuses at the workplace broke in *The New York Times*).

Grady has lensed multiple episodes of *The Morning Show*, including all three directed by Leder (the pilot, episode two and the season finale). For him, the prime challenge has to do with the inherent nature of high-end, well-written, ambitious TV fare whether it be of the network, cable or streaming variety. He came to see the full value of TV work based on his experience lensing HBO’s *The Leftovers*, which he regards as a career highlight.



Photo by Tony Rivetti // courtesy of Apple TV+

Reese Witherspoon (l) and Jennifer Aniston in *The Morning Show*

spherical lens. Everyone was super happy with the results.”

Grady observed that he tries not to get too bogged down by the technical. “You can’t ignore the technology,” he said but noted that his prime concern is simply having what he needs to “capture what

that brings out laughing, crying, all of that, then you’re onto something. That’s what makes this a really great job. Yes, there’s the pressure to do great work in a short timeframe but the crew is so amazing. Because of the expertise of all these people, the work shines through.”

Four Agencies Take Top Honors in Mobius Awards Four entrants in the 2019 Mobius Awards captured Best of Show (Grand Prix) awards. They represent four mediums: Package Design, Brand Identity, Commercials and Outdoor. The 2020 Mobius Awards opened May 28, introducing some new categories and an extended entry period. The competition final deadline is October 1.

Animal Inc. Releases A Series of Shorts Starring Pets at Home When social-distancing began in mid-March, actors, musicians and athletes quickly hopped online to entertain and advise from their living rooms. These face to face interactions helped ease our feelings of social isolation. But lockdown wasn't only affecting us – it was also a big adjustment for our pets.

SMPTE Hollywood Section Launches "Ask a Hollywood Expert" SMPTE Hollywood has launched a new webinar series aimed at young people interested in behind-the-scenes careers in the entertainment industry. Titled Ask a Hollywood Expert, the series features successful, young professionals, across a range of technical disciplines including post...

How To Set Up a Simple, Cost-Effective Remote Video Workflow axle ai has partnered with fellow industry leaders Cloudian and FileCatalyst to present a joint webinar on remote workflows for the media industry, a topic that has seen unprecedented interest since the advent of COVID-19. The 30-minute case study webinar by FileCatalyst, Cloudian and axle ai now online

EditShare Announces General Availability of EFS 2020 EditShare®, a technology leader that specializes in collaboration, security, and intelligent storage solutions for media creation and management, announced the general availability of EFS 2020, powering faster EditShare storage nodes and networks on...

Tlalnewood's Estudios GGM To Open Three New Soundstages Estudios GGM, Mexico's largest independent production facility, is unveiling three new soundstages as it prepares to resume production activity in June. Ranging from 10,000 to 13,000 square feet, the new stages will be the studio's largest and give it a total of nine shooting spaces...

Ntropic Innovates Remote Video Production Pipeline For Launch of the Matterport for iPhone The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has

been universal - affecting families, individuals, cities, towns and businesses in countless ways. For the marketing and advertising industries, this has meant an almost complete shutdown. But while traditional productions seemed impossible because of...
EditShare and Adobe Collaborate to Enable Remote Production and Group Editing Workflows EditShare

continues its collaboration with Adobe® to enhance end-to-end remote production and collaborative editing workflows.

Sound Lounge Sees Great Results With Real-Time Casting, Virtual Booth New York City's award-winning post production company Sound Lounge and its Casting Division have launched Virtual Booth, the first-of-its-kind real-time, virtual audition service amid the COVID-19 crisis.

Howling Music Marches In Step With USMC and Wunderman Thompson The Marine Corps marked its 244th anniversary in celebratory manner with the release of an ad campaign featuring its first-ever "birthday" running cadence. Conceived by Atlanta agency Wunderman Thompson and featuring a soundtrack composed and recorded by Howling Music, Nashville.

Director Ruben Latre's "Monster" Wins Best Film At The Quarantine Film Festival; "Silence" Released Online Ruben Latre of Hostage Films took The Quarantine Film Festival's call to action as a welcome storytelling challenge. The festival asked artists to make short films utilizing only their living space and the people with whom they were quarantined.
Contagious Director Brandon Bray Steps Behind, In Front and All Over The Camera for Realtor.com In a moment defined by quarantine and Zoom, it is no wonder commercial production has quickly become a mirror image of our circumstances. However, a new group of spots for Realtor.com, created via Huge, Inc., and directed by Brandon Bray of Contagious, looks and feels pre-corona, while keenly projecting the client's message: now, more than ever, people are being their realest selves at home and Realtor.com understands this new reality.

Periscope Post & Audio Partners With Unlock Audio To Provide Complete Sound Services For Games Periscope Post & Audio and Unlock Audio have formed a strategic partnership to provide integrated sound and music services for games.

Hula Post Supports "Prop Culture" Editorial Team Hula Post provided editorial systems for *Prop Culture* released on May 1, 2020 on Disney+.

Union's Chris Huth Helps Celebs #PassTheMic To Dr. Fauci and Others For hive and The ONE Campaign Edited by Union Editorial NY's Chris Huth, a new video was released, announcing the launch of #PassTheMic, a campaign featuring global health, economic and policy experts, frontline workers and celebrities joining together...

Cap Gun Collective Signs Director Blythe Haaga Commercial production and original content company Cap Gun Collective announced the addition of director Blythe Haaga to its roster.

Jigsaw24 Expands Via24 Cloud Services With Deployment of EditShare's EFSv EditShare announced that Jigsaw24 is the first UK-based EditShare reseller to deploy EFSv, enabling virtualized production and editing workflows in the AWS cloud.

Calabash Brings Sense Of Wonder And Excitement To Toy Ads Even amidst a global pandemic, the toy niche continues to thrive with numerous toy manufacturers reporting sales spikes since social distancing entered our collective lexicon. Supporting marketing initiatives for that demand are effective toy ads featuring animation, visual effects and design...

Rising Sun Pictures Marks 25 Years of Creating Movie Magic Rising Sun Pictures (RSP) today marks its 25th anniversary. It's another milestone for the visual effects studio which, from humble beginnings, has gone on to produce ground-breaking work for more than 150 motion picture and series productions, including some of the most popular and critically-acclaimed films of the past two decades.

DNA Launches #Hibernation Campaign For Rainier Beer Drawing on Rainier Beer's legacy as a quirky brand loved by outdoorsy beer drinkers, Seattle creative agency DNA has launched the "Hibernation Survival Guide" - a social campaign designed to help Rainier's fans stay connected to the outdoors while stuck at home due to Covid-19 stay-home orders...

Greencard Pictures Director Zac Stuart-Pontier Pens Love Letter To NYC's Quarantined Kids With "Better Together" Greencard Pictures debuted "Better Together," a short film designed to put a smile on the faces of quarantined families and kids of all ages. Directed by Zac Stuart-Pontier (*The Jinx, Martha Marcy May Marlene, Catfish*).

Award Winning Directors FRIENDZONE Sign With BUNKER BUNKER has signed

award winning Directors FRIENDZONE for exclusive US commercial representation. FRIENDZONE is Sundance Grand Jury Winning Director Steven Hoover, and nine time Vimeo Staff Pick and Cannes Lion winner, Director / DP Jonathan Bregel.

ALIBI Releases 8 New Albums of Production Music Recognizing that #NothingStopsCreativity, ALIBI Music Library ("ALIBI") has released eight new albums of production music for use by its clients in the television, film, streaming, advertising and video game industries.

"New Artificial Intelligence Tools Will Revolutionize The Visual Effects Industry!" Renowned Visual Effects industry veteran Helena Packer, currently marking her 30th anniversary year working within the VFX arena, is currently working to enhance the next era of the visual effects field by developing new tools which will utilize the powerful advancements in digital technologies offered by Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Ascribe.ai App for Mac and Windows Now Includes Dropbox Integration ascribe.ai, a free app which represents a breakthrough in affordability for AI-driven speech transcription of video and audio, is now available with a new Dropbox integration.

Free! Entire SCRATCH Product Line Through October 31, 2020 Assimilate is now offering its entire Scratch product line free to all creatives, starting immediately and ongoing through October 31, 2020. This includes all its advanced software tools for the entire on-set through post-production workflow – Scratch 9.2 color grading and finishing.

Seek + We Shall Find: Sonic Union Amps Up Free Music Search Resource SuperSonic Award-winning post production company Sonic Union has launched the next generation of SuperSonic, its free, fully-curated production music collection featuring over 600,000 curated tracks from 17 of the top music libraries.

AICP Updates Its COVID-19 Workplace Guidelines The AICP's COVID-19 Workplace Guidelines and Considerations for production and postproduction have been updated for a third time (marked as Version 4) since their initial launch in late April.

For the full stories [and many more], contacts info and videos with credits, visit SHOOT® Publicity Wire (spw.SHOOTonline.com). SPW is the best place to announce your news or video release to amp up the "buzz" among the entertainment & advertising industries motion picture segments' movers and shakers from Hollywood to Bollywood and from Madison Avenue to Cannes and beyond. To get more info on how to "Toot Your Own Horn" via SPW visit pr.SHOOTonline.com



To Count, Perchance To Stream

From quick bites of programming on the ambitious Quibi platform—championed by Jeffrey Katzenberg and Meg Whitman—to original and classic content spanning features, TV series and documentaries on the just rolled out HBO Max, streaming has launched into the marketplace in a big way as of late with a formidable field of new competitors, which also includes Disney+, Apple TV+ and NBC Universal’s upcoming Peacock, looking to catch up with Netflix as well as the firmly established Amazon Prime Video and Hulu, as well as a fortified CBS All Access.

Recent viewership numbers, though, make it a bit problematic if you’re trying to reach any definitive conclusions as to the state of the streaming consciousness—the elephant in the room being the pandemic. On one hand, the lockdown has been a boon for subscriber numbers. Yet at the same time, a high-profile launch has been hurt by the coronavirus right out of the gate.

On the former score, consider Netflix’s performance in Q1 of 2020. Picking up nearly 16 million global subscribers during the year’s first three months, Netflix could be viewed as an essential service in times of isolation or crisis. The strong showing more than doubled the quarterly growth that Netflix predicted for itself in January, prior to when COVID-19 necessitated stay-at-home orders worldwide, including in the U.S. Captive at-home audiences contributed greatly to the largest three-month gain in the 13-year history of Netflix’s streaming service.

Meanwhile Disney+ in its relatively brief existence has amassed in excess of 50 million subscribers. So as the economies in the U.S. and worldwide sink into recession, video streaming shows signs of thriving.

However, that’s not the case across the board as the coronavirus has stricken Quibi, hitting at the heart of its business plan which centers on short-form content—entertainment and news

fare in five to 10-minute allotments—made for people’s limited downtime during the course of a business day whether it be waiting in line at Starbucks or a doctor’s office, taking a quick break during the business day and during various other junctures. It’s intended to fill the void for people on the go who are too busy to sit down and stream TV show or movies.

Then the virus crisis dramatically changed that dynamic, literally stopping those on the go as shelter-in-place orders were enacted. This has taken its toll on Quibi’s projected numbers—even with the pandemic-sparked enticement of a free 90-day trial. Initial reports were that around 3 million to 3.5 million have installed the Quibi app, disappointing numbers for a heralded launch. Quibi has also revised its mobile-only mantra, making its original content for iPhone users available on TV screens where incremental chapters in a movie, for example, can be watched collectively as a whole, as can the platform’s TV shows.

Still, the promise of Quibi remains but will seemingly have to wait to be realized once daily life returns to some semblance of normal when people will go back to using their smartphones in a manner that inspired the platform’s creation.

Also on the positive side, talent has embraced offering installments of movies and TV in chapters of 10 minutes or less with such high-profile offerings as the 16-episode *Most Dangerous Game* starring two-time Oscar-winning actor Christoph Waltz (*Django Unchained*, *Inglourious Basterds*) and Liam Hemsworth, *#FreeRayshawn* with a cast headed by Stephan James as a black man framed by the police in New Orleans, and *Punk’d* featuring Chance the Rapper.

Filmmakers are adapting to creating for the Quibi platform. Director Tricia Brock, for example, came on board to collaborate on *On the Record*.
Continued on page 28

Numbers generate optimism, disappointment as marketplace unfolds during the pandemic

A SHOOT Staff Report



From top left, clockwise: Christoph Waltz in *Most Dangerous Game*; Drew Dixon in a scene from the documentary *On the Record*; Stephan James in *#FreeRayShawn*; Gina Carano in *The Mandalorian*

Lensing For Quibi; Production Of New Content Put On Hold;

Continued from page 27

rate on *Dummy*, a series that introduces us to an aspiring writer (portrayed by Anna Kendrick) who befriends her boyfriend's sex doll and the two take on the

Virus symptoms

While Quibi has been adversely impacted by the pandemic, other streamers and TV itself have generally benefited. And there have been instances where the



Anna Kendrick in *Dummy*

world together.

A prime challenge was the framing for mobile phone display. Brock explained, "We had to shoot it in a certain way so the framing would work if it was vertical or horizontal. The DP Catherine (Katie) Goldschmidt took that on like a champ. It was wonderful for me because she was so technically astute. Katie's pioneering spirit was perfect for shooting the first Quibi show. She had a monitor with her, and I had a monitor so I could also see the grid of what was in the frame and what wasn't. It impacted Katie's process but she so brilliantly handled it that I was liberated and able to focus on the creative. Occasionally they would say to me, 'If we do this set up, this, this and this will be out of frame.' Then we would adjust. But it didn't happen that often. As far as I was concerned, I was shooting it like a movie [100 minutes over those 18 days]."

Brock was well equipped to take on *Dummy*, in part because of her prior short-form episodic experience on *Margot vs. Lily*, Nike's first scripted episodic web series in 2016. There are parallels between *Margot v. Lily* and *Dummy*, according to Brock. "What Quibi shines a light on is you can go out to the market with much shorter content. They're pioneering this format just like Nike pioneered it in branded content."

closure of theaters during the virus crisis--fueling uncertainty over when cinema exhibition can safely resume--has pushed noteworthy content onto streaming platforms. For example the live capture of the Broadway show "Hamilton"--which had been scheduled to hit movie theaters in October 2021--will instead be streamed on Disney+ starting next month (7/3).

Lin-Manuel Miranda's hip-hop show about the life of founding father Alexander Hamilton won 11 Tony Awards and made assorted tours. The film was made at the Richard Rodgers Theatre on Broadway in June 2016, and stars all of the original Tony Award winners--Miranda as Alexander Hamilton; Daveed Diggs as Marquis de Lafayette/Thomas Jefferson; Renée Elise Goldsberry as Angelica Schuyler; and Leslie Odom Jr. as Aaron Burr. The filmed version was helmed by the show's director, Tommy Kail.

Yet the Hamilton film notwithstanding, there are downsides for streamers due to the virus outbreak. With many people out of work due to the COVID-19 crisis, they have had to carefully watch their spending. HBO Max, for example, costs \$15 a month, pricey compared to streaming services such as Disney+, Quibi and Peacock. For example, Peacock is an ad-supported streaming service offering a basic free tier, with around half as much content as the Premium version (\$4.99 a

month) and an ad-free Premium plan (for \$9.99).

And while services like HBO Max, Peacock and Disney+ have libraries of coveted content spanning TV shows and features, original content also figures prominently and is being impacted as the pandemic has shut down Hollywood productions. Originals are important for the role they play in bringing in subscribers and keeping them on board month after month. Disney+ boasts a beloved lineup of classic content but it too has generated buzz and subscribership through its original offerings with some conjecturing that *Star Wars* content on TV, for example, may prove more lucrative than feature films in the future. The *Star Wars*-inspired series *The Mandalorian* has become a marquee attraction on Disney+.

A long lapse in production as we know it could be felt not only this year but arguably more heavily in 2021. Apple TV+, for example, is sans a classic library inventory and wholly reliant on original content production, having already generated followings with *The Morning Show*, *Defending Jacob* and *Home Before Dark*, among other shows. Interrupting that pipeline could carry consequences over time.

Even HBO Max--which has a healthy inventory including classic TV series ranging from HBO's *The Sopranos* to *The Wire* and *Sex and the City*, favorites such as *Friends* and *The Big Bang Theory*, the *Superman* and *Batman* franchise feature films--also is counting on original content to attract subscribers. The recent production shutdown has, for example, postponed the rollout of such highly anticipated fare as the *Friends* reunion special which HBO Max heavily promoted.

Upon its launch just a couple of weeks ago (5/27), HBO Max had a slate of premium Max Originals that included: the scripted comedy *Love Life*, starring Anna Kendrick; Sundance 2020 Official Selection feature documentary *On the Record*; and Sesame Workshop's *The Not Too Late Show with Elmo*.

Further underscoring the role that original content plays in HBO Max are coming attractions. The next wave of titles arriving on the platform begins next week (6/18) with the debut of the entire first season of the unscripted kids adventure competition series *Karma*.

On June 25, HBO Max will premiere an original second season of the critically acclaimed DC Universe fan-favorite *Doom Patrol*; an original second season of Sesame Workshop's animated series *Esme & Roy*, taking preschool-aged viewers on learning adventures through *Monsterdale*; a brand new third season of the comedy thriller *Search Party* (the first two seasons will be available on the platform at launch on May 27); and *Adventure Time: Distant Lands--BMO*, the first of four hourlong breakout specials resurrecting the Emmy and Peabody award-winning franchise *Adventure Time*.

July 9 marks the premiere of the three-part docuseries *Expecting Amy*, an unfiltered and intimate view into comedian Amy Schumer's life on tour creating a stand-up special during her difficult pregnancy, directed and edited by Alexander Hammer, and the adult animated comedy *Close Enough*, a hilarious look at the surreal life of a millennial family living with roommates, from J.G. Quintel, creator of the Emmy-winning *Regular Show*.

On July 16, the multi-generational family docusoap *The House of Ho*, chronicling the daily lives of patriarch Binh Ho, matriarch Hue Ho, their daughter Judy Ho, their son Washington Ho and his wife Lesley Ho, Aunt Tina, and Cousin Sammy, lands on the platform.

On July 23, HBO Max will debut Cartoon Network Studios' animated children's series *Tig n' Seek*.

On July 30, HBO Max presents the U.S. premieres of the scripted comedy *Frayed*, which follows a wealthy Londoner as she travels back to the Australian home she escaped as a teen, and the unscripted heartwarming British animal rescue series *The Dog House*.

On August 6, Seth Rogen's comedy feature, *An American Pickle*, will world premiere as the first HBO Max original film on the platform under the Warner Max label.

"Shortly after the initial launch our monthly strategy kicks in, as we introduce great new originals every month throughout the year," said Kevin Reilly, chief content officer, HBO Max, president, TNT, TBS, and truTV.

"We want to provide audiences with a wide-ranging and consistent flow of high-

HBO Max's Original Plan; Peacock Struts Out Its Fare

quality programming across all genres,” added Sarah Aubrey, head of original content, HBO Max. “From scripted series and intimate documentaries, to premium animation for kids and adults, to feature

Law & Order: SVU, Downton Abbey, Yellowstone, Friday Night Lights, House, Battlestar Galactica, Psych, Parenthood, Monk, and Heroes.

When Peacock launches nationally on

Bernard and Lenina to grapple with the repercussions.

And for a sampling on the comedy side, Peacock struts out *Intelligence* which is set in the UK’s Government Communications Headquarters—a kind of weedier, geekier, more bureaucratic version of MI5 and MI6, where they tackle international and domestic Cyber Crime from a desktop. When a pompous maverick NSA agent Jerry Bernstein (David Schwimmer, *American Crime Story, Friends, Band of Brothers*) comes over from the U.S. to join the team, he enlists an inept and tactless computer analyst Joseph (Nick Mohammed, *The Martian, Ted Lasso, Christopher Robin*) in a power grab that threatens to disrupt the team’s ability to combat cyber terrorism.

The Peacock app will also feature daily

programming highlights from *Today, NBC Nightly News, Meet the Press, Noticias Telemundo, MSNBC, CNBC, NBC Sports, E! News and Access Hollywood*, and 75 streaming channels, including clip-based channels like the best Jimmy Fallon and Seth Meyers comedy sketches, the best sketches from the *SNL Vault*, plus news channels from NBC News Now and Sky News, and genre channels like True Crime, Reality Check-In and 80s Mix Tape.

“Our variety of Peacock Originals at launch demonstrates how we deliver timely and timeless content—no matter the genre or format,” said Bill McGoldrick, president of Original Content, Peacock. “We’re proud to establish our voice and are excited to build on our strategy to attract a wide audience to Peacock.”



Photo by Richard Termine/courtesy of Sesame Workshop, HBO Max

HBO Max's *The Not Too Late Show with Elmo*

length films from teams at the top of their game, our creators bring it all, each with their own unique take.”

Original content is also a key component of Peacock’s lineup, a complement to its library of blockbuster movies (the *Jurassic Park* franchise, *E.T., Meet the Parents*, and *Shrek*); comedy series like *Parks and Recreation, 30 Rock, Saturday Night Live, King of Queens, Everybody Loves Raymond, Tivo and a Half Men, Frasier, George Lopez*, and *Cheers*; and dramas

such as all first season episodes of *Brave New World, The Capture, Intelligence* and *Lost Speedways*; sports documentary *In Deep with Ryan Lochte*; and the entire full-length film *Psych 2: Lassie Come Home*. Additionally, Peacock Kids is home to new episodes of *Curious George* and two original series from DreamWorks Animation: *Cleopatra in Space* and *Where’s Waldo?*. Premiere dates for future Peacock Originals and exclusive content will be announced later this year.

On the drama front, Peacock’s *Brave New World* is based on Aldous Huxley’s groundbreaking novel of the same title. *Brave New World* imagines a utopian society that has achieved peace and stability through the prohibition of monogamy, privacy, money, family, and history itself. As citizens of New London, Bernard Marx (portrayed by Harry Lloyd whose credits include *Game of Thrones, The Theory of Everything*) and Lenina Crowne (Jessica Brown Findlay, *Winter’s Tale, Downton Abbey*) embark on a vacation to the Savage Lands, where they become embroiled in a harrowing and violent rebellion. Bernard and Lenina are rescued by John the Savage (Alden Ehrenreich, *Solo: A Star Wars Story, Hail, Caesar!*), who escapes with them back to New London. John’s arrival in the New World soon threatens to disrupt its utopian harmony, leaving

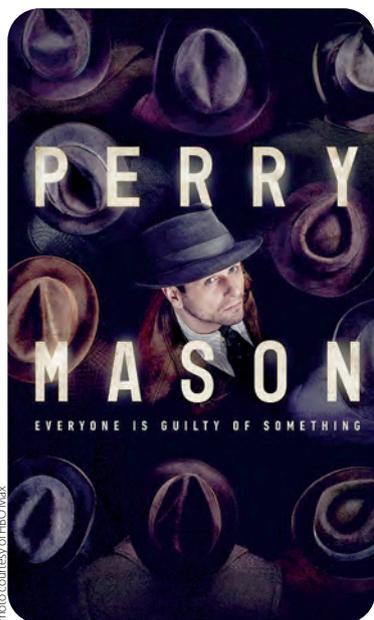


Photo courtesy of HBO Max

HBO Max's *Perry Mason*

Flash Back

June 12, 2015 The Board of Governors of the American Society of Cinematographers (ASC) has re-elected its slate of officers for another term. Continuing to serve in their roles will be Richard Crudo as president; Owen Roizman, Kees Van Oostrum and Lowell Peterson as vice presidents; Matthew Leonetti as treasurer; Fred Goodich as secretary; and Isidore Mankofsky as sergeant-at-arms.... Biscuit Filmworks has signed director Ruairi Robinson for commercial representation. He was previously handled by RSA and continues to be repped by Spy Films in Canada, Henry De Czar in France and Russell Curran in his native Ireland. Robinson's *Fifty Percent Grey* earned an Oscar nomination for Best Animated Short Film in 2002. He is also well known for the viral short, *The Leviathan*, and has built a reputation for his effects-savvy films. In 2006 he earned inclusion into SHOOT's New Directors Showcase.... Twitter CEO Dick Costolo, who helped turn the trendy messaging startup into a global town square, is stepping down amid criticism over the company's disappointing financial performance and a recent stock slide. Co-founder Jack Dorsey, who served as CEO during Twitter's early years, will temporarily take the reins while the San Francisco company looks for a permanent replacement....

June 15, 2010 Director Dave Laden, whose PETA PSA "Grace" was recently honored in the Public Service category of the AICP Show, has joined Hungry Man for worldwide representation. Laden helmed "Grace" via Über Content, his previous production house roost. Conceived by L.A. agency Matter, the PSA made SHOOT's "The Best Work You May Never See" gallery in Nov. 2009... Michael Goi has been elected to serve a second term as president of the ASC. The other officers are: VPs Richard Crudo, Owen Roizman and John C. Flinn, III; treasurer Matthew Leonetti; secretary Rodney Taylor; and sergeant at arms Ron Garcia. Members elected to serve on the ASC Board of Governors include John Bailey, Stephen Burum, Curtis Clark, George Spiro Dible, Richard Edlund, Stephen Lighthill, Isidore Mankofsky, Daryn Okada, Robert Primes, Nancy Schreiber, Kees Van Oostrum, Haskell Wexler and Vilmos Zsigmond.... Agency goodness Mfg., a Trailer Park company, has hired Carl Corbitt and Anja Duering as co-creative directors. They come over to goodness Mfg. from Wieden+Kennedy Amsterdam where they were creative directors on Nokia, a global account they helped double in under a year....

Voros Lenses Yellowstone

Continued from page 13

“too on the nose or over the top. One of the beautiful things that Taylor does in his writing is trust the audience to figure things out. The same is true for flashbacks. You don’t have to go seppia to tell people know. We went for a more subtle way of giving those scenes a flavor without taking you out of the story.”

Voros said that *Yellowstone* is “a glorious place to be a DP” in that Sheridan views a season as “shooting a 10-hour

Spielberg’s *Lincoln*, and production designer on Spike Lee’s *BlackKkKlansman*. For the former three, Beech earned Art Directors Guild Excellence In Production Design Award nominations.

However, Beech’s accomplishments are not limited to the feature film arena. He’s been active in television as well, most notably his recent turn as production designer on *Hunters* (Amazon Prime), which now has him in the Emmy Awards season banter. *Hunters* introduces us to



Kevin Costner (I) and Dabney Coleman in *Yellowstone*

movie.” Even with the stresses of time and budget, Voros noted it’s uplifting “to create something that feels deserving of being screened in cinema. The show’s creator wants you to go and seek that out. Taylor is so supportive of the DP’s job in terms of giving you what you need to maintain that gold standard.”

Curt Beech

Curt Beech’s body of work includes four films nominated for Best Picture Oscars, having served as art director on director David Fincher’s *The Social Network*, Tate Taylor’s *The Help* and Steven

Jonah (portrayed by Logan Lerman) who gets drawn into a shadowy band of Nazi hunters when his grandmother, a Holocaust survivor, is murdered. His benefactor and leader of this group is Meyer (Al Pacino), a wealthy businessman who also survived the Holocaust. Meyer’s home serves as headquarters for the Nazi hunters. Meyer’s grandmother, Ruth (Jeannie Berlin), has adopted Jonah. These and other interwoven characters are integral to a story that spans the late 1930s and then the ‘40s during the Nazi regime, as well as the 1970s’ in the gritty mean

Continued on page 31

street talk

Production company Birth, launched six years ago in Paris and Algiers, has signed directorial duo Zhang + Knight whose body of work includes music videos for such artists as Ghostpost, Nao, Sigred and EDEN. Zhang + Knight won Best New Director at the UKMVAs as well as the Kinsale Shark Awards. This year the directing team was selected for the BFI’s Flare mentorship program. Zhang + Knight have already wrapped their first project at Birth: Moroccan artist Meryem Aboulouafa’s “Deeply” music video for record label Savoir faire. The music clip reflects the emotions that emerge from Aboulouafa’s music, oscillating between sadness and lightness....

Cheil Worldwide has acquired Chinese social big data analytics service provider ColourData. Founded by a group of big data experts in 2014, the Shanghai-based ColourData has developed proprietary technology that helps it collect postings and comments from more than 5,000 social media, news and e-commerce websites, giving the company the ability to analyze buzz by geography, gender, and age group. It also features advanced, AI-powered natural language processing, real-time visualizations, and on-demand report generation. Cheil Worldwide has worked with ColourData on several social media digital marketing projects in China and moved to acquire the company after recognizing its competitive technology and high potential for growth. The acquisition empowers Cheil Worldwide to deliver more robust marketing analytics to its existing clients, while also enhancing its business development potential in China across a range of industries. The move will also contribute to the continuous growth of Cheil Worldwide’s digital business, which now accounts for over 40 percent of revenue. ColourData has supported the data-driven marketing activities of many global customers across varied industry verticals, including Samsung Electronics (IT), Pfizer (pharmaceuticals), and Schneider Electric (energy and automation solutions)....

rep report

Cinematographer Cory Geryak and editor Seth Baruch Flaum have joined Dattner Disputo and Associates (DDA) for representation.... DP Eli Arenson has signed with Innovative Artists for commercial and narrative representation. Arenson is based in L.A. and recently finished the film *Lamb*, shot in Iceland, directed by Valdimar Johannsson and starring Noomi Rapace. Arenson has worked often with directors Dexter Navy and Bunny Kinney, and brands including Jimmy Choo,

Estee Lauder, Nike, and Karl Lagerfeld.... Cross-cultural agency the community has brought on Anomaly alumnus Matthew Kline as its new executive director, growth & partnerships. In this role, he will oversee all areas of business development and public relations, spearheading pitches and fostering new partnerships for the agency. Based in New York, Kline will report directly to agency president Luis Montero. With 15-plus years of experience in business development and client services, Kline has a proven track record of ushering in effective partnerships. During his time at Anomaly, he contributed to new business wins including NBCUniversal’s Peacock, Microsoft, Huda Beauty, and Abbott Diabetes Care, while also building partnerships with organizations like the ANA and AdColor. Prior to that, Kline oversaw new business at Zambezi, helping the agency double its size over the course of his tenure by building and growing relationships with the likes of Foot Locker, Adidas, and Cox Automotive. He has a background in talent representation, having started his career at Todd Shemarya Artists and Creative Artists Agency in Los Angeles where he developed commercial brand partnerships.... Sophie Arnett and Katie McCambley have been promoted to joint heads of account management of MullenLowe in the U.K. Between them they have been with the shop for over 13 years, contributed to its best work, and have driven hyperbundling and many of the agency’s new business successes....

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Tackling Two Eras In Hunters

Continued from page 30

streets of New York. In this latter time, it's discovered that a band of escaped Nazis living in the U.S. have a new genocidal plot that the hunters must thwart.

Doing justice to these different time periods was challenging. Color played a part in contrasting the eras. Beech's research found that during World War II, rationing was rampant—including rationing of color in terms of what pigments could be used. In fact there was a government-issued swatch book with a seriously limited palette. This translated into flashback

lated Beech whose work had to show and reflect a sense of damage. On the street in front of Jonah's house, for example, there's a bombed-out car—not an unusual sight for the time. "We used the damaged vehicles as a visual cue to not only show a damaged city but that the characters are damaged as well—they are either carrying damage, bringing damage or creating damage in some form."

Damage is a theme, of course, that characterizes both eras depicted in *Hunters*. In the '70s, for example, stark graffiti was seemingly everywhere. The damaged



Al Pacino (l) and Logan Lerman in *Hunters*

sequences for *Hunters* being somewhat subdued, tonal and minimalist with browns and greens more prevalent.

At the same time, Beech helped formulate an overall color theory for the show—red, for example, signifying blood but not just Nazi red. Other characters too have blood on their hands. Yellow depicted innocence. Blue was justice. Green represented hiding as well as militancy. Gold was hubris.

This color scheme was reflected, for instance, in wallpaper and the color revealed when that paper starts peeling. As a Nazi hunter, Ruth for example has burgundy wallpaper with bits of red. But underneath that paper is yellow, the color of innocence.

New York in the '70s also presented a challenge for Beech who noted that "there wasn't a lot to be happy about" during that time. "The city was bankrupt, crime was high. If you got on certain trains, chances were that you'd get mugged. And Jonah's Brooklyn is nothing like the Brooklyn that exists now," re-

environment/backdrop created by Beech served as sort of a visual metaphor for the emotional damage caused by the war as well as in more contemporary times.

While the degree of difficulty was high in *Hunters*, Beech said his experience on the series reaffirmed his belief that "everyone does their best when the work is hardest. The art department was working on all cylinders. People reached outside their comfort zone. The project was harder than so many but that's what made it fun and gratifying."

Editor's note: This is the fifth installment in SHOOT's 16-part weekly series of The Road To Emmy feature stories. The features explore the field of Emmy contenders, and then nominees spanning such disciplines as directing, writing, producing, showrunning, cinematography, editing, production design, music, sound and visual effects. The Road To Emmy series will then be followed by coverage of the Creative Arts Emmy winners on September 12 and 13, and the Primetime Emmy Awards on September 20.



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SHOOT will compile the **2020 SHOOT New Directors Showcase Reel** and interview the directors for a special feature that will appear in SHOOT's Oct-Nov issue, ePubs, SHOOT Publicity Wire and nds.SHOOTonline.com, bringing worldwide attention to the work and the directors. In addition, the work will be screened for an audience of key ad agency, commercial & entertainment production industry decision-makers at **SHOOT's 2020 New Directors Showcase Event at the DGA Theatre in New York City on Thursday, October, 22, 2020**. Coverage of the event will appear on SHOOTonline and the weekly SHOOT >e.dition in October. The showcase reel and selected New Director Profiles will also be posted on nds.SHOOTonline.com which will remain public and be promoted across SHOOT platforms for at least a full year. See the 2019 New Directors Web Reel and Showcase website at NDS.SHOOTONLINE.COM.

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