

HOLLYWOOD REPORTER

WOODY V. MIA
INSIDE THE MAKING
OF HBO'S EXPLOSIVE
NEW DOCUSERIES

**AARON SORKIN
EMERALD FENNEL
KEMP POWERS**
AND THE WRITER
ROUNDTABLE

**DISNEY AND THE COST
OF 'CANCEL CULTURE'**

**'I HAD TO WIN
MY AGENT BACK'**
JOEL STEIN'S TIPS
FOR WRITERS ON
THE WGA BREAKUP
MAKE-UP

REGINA RISING

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TALKS TO GINA PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD ABOUT THE STRUGGLES
AND AMBITIONS OF BLACK FEMALE FILMMAKERS:

'GIVE US A LITTLE WINDOW,
WE'RE GOING TO KICK IT ALL THE WAY OPEN'

FOR YOUR
OUTSTANDING PRODUCER OF
LLOYD LEVIN, p.g.a. • JON

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INCLUDING
OUTSTANDING CAST
BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR CHADWICK BOSEMAN



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BEST
BEST DIRECTOR
SPIKE LEE

"THE BEST PICTURE"

COLLIDER

"★★★★★"

A CONDEMNATION OF THE PAST
and a call for change."

BBC



CONSIDERATION

THEATRICAL MOTION PICTURES

KILIK, p.g.a. • SPIKE LEE, p.g.a.

CHOICE AWARD NOMINATIONS

INCLUDING

T **PICTURE**



BEST ACTOR
DELROY LINDO

BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR
CHADWICK BOSEMAN

3 **WINNER**
INCLUDING
BEST PICTURE
NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW AWARDS

RE OF THE YEAR."

ASBURY PARK PRESS **CIC** CHICAGO INDIE CRITICS
DIVERSITY IN FILM CRITICISM

"★★★★★"

SPIKE LEE HITS A NEW CAREER PEAK.

He's made one for the ages."

RollingStone



BLOODS



FILM.NETFLIXAWARDS.COM





"So often you're asked, 'What do you want your legacy to be?' And I'm like, 'I don't fucking know. I'm trying to get through Tuesday,'" says Regina King. She was photographed Jan. 14 at The Paramour Estate in Silver Lake.

Alberta Ferretti coat and shorts, Paris Texas boots, Bulgari ear cuff and ring, Cartier earrings and bracelets.

Photographed here and for the cover by **Matt Sayles**

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GOLDEN GLOBE AWARDS NOMINEE

BEST PERFORMANCE BY AN ACTOR IN A TELEVISION SERIES (DRAMA)

MATTHEW RHYS

3 CRITICS CHOICE AWARDS NOMINATIONS

BEST DRAMA SERIES

BEST ACTOR IN A DRAMA SERIES
MATTHEW RHYS

BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR IN A DRAMA SERIES
JOHN LITHGOW



“SUPERB ACTING”

VULTURE

“A TV ICON
IS BORN
*matthew rhys
is terrific*”
TVLINE

“EXQUISITELY
RENDERED
crime noir”
INDIEWIRE

“*matthew rhys is*
EXCEPTIONAL”
ROLLING STONE

“A STANDOUT
PERFORMANCE
from john lithgow”
TV GUIDE

“SUPERB
*perfectly lays out
an expanding mystery*”
THE WASHINGTON POST

HBO | FYC

PERRY MASON

NOW
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18 His role in *The Mauritanian* required Tahar Rahim to lose more than 20 pounds in less than three weeks. "When you're fasting, your emotions are completely different, you get extremely sensitive," he says.

30 The Invisible House in Joshua Tree, on 90 acres, has its own 4,000-foot mountain and shares a half-mile border with a national park.

40 "It was not very long ago — I'm talking, like, 24 months ago — that it was very easy to get away with telling any story about any group of people if you're white, and not having anyone from that group involved in any way, shape or form, and having zero accountability," says screenwriter Kemp Powers. He was photographed Jan. 5 in Los Angeles.

CORRECTION
Padre Padrone, not *3 Women*, won the Palme d'Or at the 1977 Cannes Film Festival (*THR* 2/10).

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION
IN ALL CATEGORIES INCLUDING

**BEST
PICTURE**

**GOLDEN GLOBE® AWARD
NOMINEE**

**BEST ACTRESS
IN A MOTION PICTURE - DRAMA
ANDRA DAY**

**BEST ORIGINAL SONG
"TIGRESS & TWEED"
written by RAPHAEL SAADIQ & ANDRA DAY
performed by ANDRA DAY**



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**CRITICS CHOICE AWARD
NOMINEE**

**BEST ACTRESS
ANDRA DAY**

**BEST SONG
"TIGRESS & TWEED"**

**BEST HAIR
AND
MAKEUP**

ANDRA DAY A **LEE DANIELS** FILM

A **hulu** ORIGINAL FILM

**THE UNITED STATES VS.
BILLIE HOLIDAY**

FEBRUARY 26 **hulu**



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CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar • Austin Hargrave • Wesley Mann • Carol McColgin • Miller Mobley • Ramona Rosales • Andrew Weitz

Elisabeth Deutschman Rabishaw
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Victoria Gold
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REPRINTS & PERMISSIONS Wright's Media (877) 652-5295, email MRC@wrightsmedia.com

OPERATIONS

PRODUCTION MANAGER Stacey Rigney

HEADQUARTERS

11175 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90025

PHONE (323) 525-2000 • EDITORIAL EMAIL THRnews@thr.com • ADVERTISING (323) 525-2013

NEW YORK 475 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017

PHONE (212) 493-4200 • FAX (646) 654-5637 • NEW YORK SALES OFFICE (212) 493-4193

SUBSCRIPTIONS

U.S. (866) 525-2150 • OUTSIDE U.S. (845) 267-4192 • hollywoodreporter.com/subscribe

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FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

KALEY CUOCO

GOLDEN GLOBE AWARDS NOMINEE

BEST PERFORMANCE BY AN ACTRESS IN A TELEVISION SERIES - MUSICAL OR COMEDY

SAG AWARDS NOMINEE

OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE BY A FEMALE ACTOR IN A COMEDY SERIES

CRITICS CHOICE AWARDS NOMINEE

BEST ACTRESS IN A COMEDY SERIES

"A PHENOMENAL PERFORMANCE

BY KALEY CUOCO"

ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

"KALEY CUOCO IS
**IRRESISTIBLY
WATCHABLE**"

COLLIDER

"KALEY CUOCO'S
PERFORMANCE IS A
**PITCH-PERFECT
COMBINATION
OF HIGH-ENERGY
FRANTICNESS & REAL
EMOTIONAL INSIGHT**"

VULTURE

"KALEY CUOCO IS A
MARVEL TO WATCH
EVERY SECOND
SHE'S ONSCREEN"

CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

"A STAR TURN
FOR KALEY CUOCO...
**BRIGHT, GLOSSY
& POSITIVELY
BUOYANT**"

THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER

"A CAREER-BEST
PERFORMANCE
FROM KALEY CUOCO...
HIGHLY ENTERTAINING,
ENJOYABLY TWISTY"

ROGEREBERT.COM

"KALEY CUOCO'S
**REMARKABLE
PERFORMANCE
IS A
BREAKTHROUGH**"

THE NEW YORKER

max | FYC
**THE FLIGHT
ATTENDANT**

NOW
STREAMING

HBOMAX

EMMY® AWARD WINNER — MARK RUFFALO
FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

MARK RUFFALO
GOLDEN GLOBE® AWARDS NOMINEE
BEST PERFORMANCE BY AN ACTOR IN A LIMITED SERIES

SAG AWARDS® NOMINEE

OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE BY A MALE ACTOR IN A LIMITED SERIES

CRITICS CHOICE AWARDS NOMINEE

BEST ACTOR IN A LIMITED SERIES OR MOVIE MADE FOR TELEVISION

“mark ruffalo gives
TWO PERFORMANCES OF A LIFETIME”
TIME

**“AN EXTRAORDINARY
ACCOMPLISHMENT**

*mark ruffalo skillfully
draws two distinct characters
that feel deeply connected”*

TV GUIDE

**“SPECTACULAR
ACTING**

*a career-defining
performance”*

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

*“mark ruffalo is
ASTOUNDING,
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DOUBLE ACT*

*we’ve seen in the grand
‘actors playing twins’ oeuvre”*

THE DAILY BEAST

*“a tour de force
for mark ruffalo
A TREMENDOUS
PERFORMANCE”*

THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER

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**I KNOW THIS
MUCH IS TRUE**

NOW
STREAMING

HBOmax



↑ **Music**
Under Hypnosis

The startup buying mega music libraries. p. 12

Labor
Back Together

Joel Stein mends ties with his agent. p. 12

Heat Index



Chen Sicheng

The director's comedy-mystery sequel *Detective Chinatown 3* opens to a record-breaking \$397.2 million during the Lunar New Year holiday in China.



Susan Rovner

After scrapping episodes over the summer amid BLM protests, the NBC chief is ending *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* with a 10-episode run delayed to the 2021-22 season.



Mona Sutphen

Spotify plans to add the former Obama White House deputy chief of staff for policy to its board of directors as the audio platform hits 155 million paid subscribers.



Jeff Bezos

On Feb. 12, Maryland became the first state — likely to be followed by others — to pass a tax on digital advertising. The mogul's Amazon may go to court to challenge.

Showbiz Stocks

↑ **\$469.70 (+7.6%)**
ROKU (ROKU)

A job listing posted by the streaming platform hinted at an original content strategy, turbocharging its shares.

↓ **\$36.95 (-3.6%)**
WARNER MUSIC (WMG)

Despite a strong quarter driven by TikTok, Instagram and Spotify, the record label's reliance on third-party platforms spooked shareholders.

Feb. 9-16

The Report

Behind the Headlines



Disney's *Mandalorian* Firing Ignites 'Cancel Culture' Clash

The ouster of Gina Carano from the *Star Wars* show draws the ire of the political right wing and marks an inflection point for Lucasfilm, whose star was warned repeatedly about her social posts

BY AARON COUCH, TATIANA SIEGEL AND BORYS KIT

It's a plot twist that no studio relishes: One of its high-profile stars sparks outrage with a controversial social media post. On Feb. 10, *The Mandalorian's* **Gina Carano** became the latest member of the Disney fold to do so, joining a list that includes **Roseanne Barr**, **James Gunn**, **Letitia Wright** and **Liu Yifei** — each drawing varying degrees of action or inaction from the studio. And no studio faces greater scrutiny over its decisions than the family-friendly Hollywood giant.

In Carano's case, the move to cut ties had been brewing for some time. In the months leading up to Disney's investor day presentation Dec. 10, Carano's agents at UTA were negotiating for the actress to receive a sizable bump for a planned spinoff of Disney+'s *The Mandalorian* that was to star her fan-favorite character, *Cara Dune*. The actress, who sources

say made \$25,000 to \$50,000 per episode of *The Mandalorian*, was poised to be touted during the presentation, in which **Kathleen Kennedy** announced 10 new *Star Wars* shows, including *Rangers of the New Republic*, a series that seemed tailor-made for Carano.

But Carano was nowhere to be found during the lengthy presentation. In the lead-up to the event, Carano had become a lightning rod among *Star Wars* fans and a headache for Lucasfilm, after a series of tweets in which she mocked mask-wearing, suggested voter fraud occurred during the 2020 election and shared posts that some viewed as transphobic. "She was originally in that presentation when they announced all those things, and they pulled her off of it," a source tells *THR*.



Kennedy

Two months later, the deal for her spinoff is dead, as is her relationship with Lucasfilm and UTA, both of whom dropped her after she shared a post suggesting that being a Republican today was akin to being Jewish in the time leading up to the Holocaust. Disney declined comment beyond Lucasfilm's initial statement describing Carano's posts as "abhorrent and unacceptable."

Still, Disney's decision to show Carano the door has prompted cries from the right, including from Sen. **Ted Cruz** and pundit **Ben Shapiro**, that the studio acts when the left is upset. Paired with events in 2018, when then-ABC president **Channing Dungey** called out as "abhorrent" a tweet from **Trump** supporter Barr that likened **Obama** administration alum **Valerie Jarrett** to a primate, such claims have publicists advising clients to steer clear of politics,

Illustration by **Hartley Lin**

The Report

Behind the Headlines

especially anything leaning right.

"I don't know what people at Disney personally believe or don't believe with regard to politics, but as a corporate entity, they want to stay as trouble-free as possible. And anything that's going to offend the left is a problem," says crisis PR rep **Juda Engelmayer**. "I have clients who are making an extraordinary effort to post what the social left wants to see."

Black Panther star Wright's December tweets, which amplified a U.K. minister's video that questioned the safety of the novel coronavirus vaccine and disparaged trans people, also garnered criticism, as did an August 2019 social media post from *Mulan* star Liu, who offered support for Hong Kong police during the government's crackdown on pro-democracy protests. Sources say neither actress was talked to by Disney, which opted to let both matters blow over. (Wright deleted her Twitter account and Liu steered away from the subject

in the months leading up to *Mulan's* release). Politics, however, seemed to play a role in Disney's move to sever ties with Gunn in 2018 after right-wing personalities resurfaced offensive, nearly decade-old tweets that included such eyebrow-raising jokes as: "I like when little boys touch me in my silly place." At the time Gunn reiterated an apology, stating on Twitter: "Many people who have followed my career know, when I started, I viewed myself as a provocateur, making movies and telling jokes that were outrageous and taboo. As I have discussed publicly many times, as I've developed as a person, so has my work and my humor." One year



Gunn

later, Disney brought him back to direct the third installment of Marvel's *Guardians of the Galaxy*.

The decision to banish Carano from the Disney kingdom went higher than *Mandalorian* creator **Jon Favreau** and was made by Lucasfilm executives. Carano, sources say, had repeatedly been warned by those around her about her social media behavior, with the actress

even noting publicly in September that her *Mandalorian* co-star **Pedro Pascal**, who has a trans sibling, educated her about the use of pronouns after a social media flare-up. "She knew it was going to alarm people," says one person in her orbit of her recent posts. "Why would you put Favreau in that position?"

Carano's ouster had a domino effect, with Hasbro ending production on its popular *Cara Dune* action figures. (Hasbro says there are "no current plans to create more" *Dune* products.) Amazon appears to have pulled most of its *Cara Dune* toy merchandise. Meanwhile, the *Dune* action figures are selling on eBay at prices well above the original ones.

Insiders say *Cara Dune* wasn't part of the *Star Wars* series next up, a *Boba Fett* spinoff, but expect that the character will be recast down the road, for both story and merchandising reasons. For her part, Carano will be producing a film with Shapiro's *The Daily Wire*. "I am sending out a direct message of hope to everyone living in fear of cancellation by the totalitarian mob," Carano stated Feb. 12. "I have only just begun

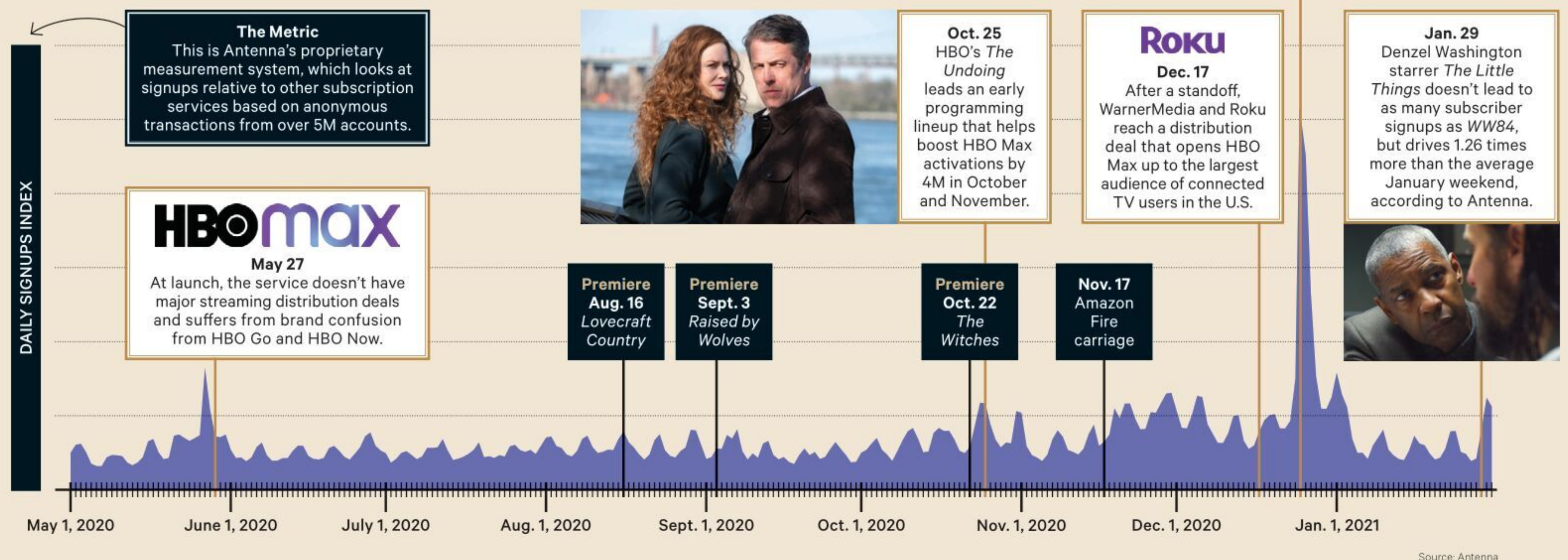
using my voice which is now freer than ever before, and I hope it inspires others to do the same."

Carano's firing comes at an inflection point for Lucasfilm, which has been criticized for not more strongly defending *Star Wars* sequel trilogy stars **John Boyega** and **Kelly Marie Tran** from racist bullying online over the years. On Jan. 23, the company signaled a shift when it put out a statement of support for **Krystina Arielle**, the host of *The High Republic Show*, after she was subjected to racist bullying and threats.

Industry observers note that for companies such as Lucasfilm, taking a stance against offensive behavior sends a signal to both employees and fans from marginalized backgrounds that they are valued. "You need an inclusive and welcoming tone set from the top," says **André Carrington**, author of *Speculative Blackness: The Future of Race in Science Fiction*. One manager who has outspoken clients and has dealt with elements of cancel culture is advising those who are vocal to cool it down politically. Says the manager, "If you're too far on both sides, it hurts you." **THR**

HBO Max's Uphill Battle: What's Been Moving the Needle So Far

The back-to-back releases of limited series *The Undoing* and *Wonder Woman 1984* helped boost WarnerMedia's service to 17.2 million activated accounts. Analytics firm Antenna breaks down signup trends as the studio unleashes its 2021 film slate on streaming **BY NATALIE JARVEY**



5 CRITICS CHOICE
AWARDS
NOMINATIONS

BEST PICTURE
BEST ACTOR **RIZ AHMED**
BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR **PAUL RACI**

SAG AWARDS®
NOMINEE
BEST ACTOR **RIZ AHMED**

NATIONAL BOARD
of REVIEW
WINNER
TOP TEN FILM OF 2020

AFI
AWARDS
WINNER
TOP TEN FILM OF 2020

GOLDEN GLOBE AWARDS®
NOMINEE
BEST ACTOR^{DRAMA} **RIZ AHMED**

the gotham
AWARDS
WINNER
BEST ACTOR **RIZ AHMED**

IndieWire
2020 CRITICS POLL
WINNER
BEST PERFORMANCE **RIZ AHMED**



“‘Sound of Metal’ is
PROFOUND, INNOVATIVE, HEARTBREAKING,
uplifting and even a little breathtaking.
RIZ AHMED IS SUPERB”

● USA TODAY

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FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION IN ALL CATEGORIES INCLUDING

BEST PICTURE
BEST ORIGINAL SONG

“Green”

Written and Performed by
Abraham Marder



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STUDIOS

Under Hipgnosis: Mega Music Libraries

A former music manager's startup has bought more than 100 publishing catalogs, including a 50 percent stake in Neil Young's, as well as hits performed by Rihanna and Shakira. Now it's eyeing \$1 billion-plus more **BY GEORG SZALAI**

What do **Shakira, Michael Bubl , Metallica** and **Neil Young** have in common? Some or all of their hits have recently become part of the growing portfolio of Hipgnosis Songs Fund.

The Notting Hill, London-based company was founded in 2018 by **Merck Mercuriadis**, a well-connected former music manager for the likes of **Elton John, Beyonc ** and **Guns N' Roses**. Artists selling catalogs have been a theme of the pandemic, and Hipgnosis started 2021 with a flurry of acquisition news, including deals with Bubl , **Fleetwood Mac's Lindsey Buckingham** and magnate **Jimmy Iovine**.

Financial terms of individual deals are typically not revealed, but in all, Hipgnosis has spent a whopping \$1.75 billion on 129 catalogs, accumulating 60,836 songs. Among them are modern hits, such as **Ed Sheeran's** "Shape of You" and **Rihanna's** "Umbrella," and evergreens like



How I Made Up With My Agent

Twenty-two months after leaving his WME rep amid a union standoff, TV comedy writer Joel Stein calls WGA president David A. Goodman for tips on mending the relationship: 'You can blame me'

Guest Column

I don't know if you've ever experienced the pain of being told that you can't talk to the most important person on your representative team because your union disagrees with his agency about packaging. It is the kind of loss you can only understand if you've emailed an executive's assistant all by yourself to re-reschedule a meeting. So I was thrilled on Feb. 5, when the WGA announced that it had settled with the final agency it was negotiating with, WME, which had represented me. I could finally reunite with my agent of 20 years, Richard Weitz, a man my wife calls God for the deals he's gotten me. At least I hope that's why.

To my shock, some writers aren't going back to their agents, having gotten used to applying for their own jobs and negotiating their own salaries, like people in every other single industry in the entire world. But even

though my lawyer, **Jared Levine**, did a great job negotiating a CBS pilot for me last year, I never considered not rehiring my agent, **Richard Weitz**. I knew all the opportunities he has gotten me, how much he's taught me, and how much I liked telling my family that I have a Hollywood agent. Still, before I took Richard back, I wanted to make sure his other clients were returning. After all, I had fired him solely because other writers did. I wanted to make sure I was once again doing what all the cool writers were doing.



Appel

Family Guy co-showrunner

Rich Appel told me that, sure, he had pranked WME every few months by asking to have his contracts forwarded to "Jay Park" or "Matt Jacobs" or some other agent he made up. But he had already reunited with Richard. "After 15 years, we have become friends. And as

enjoyable as it was to fire a friend once, it seems excessive to do it twice," he explained.

After talking to Appel, I found out that the decision wasn't only mine to make. At all. Agents are not taking back all their clients now that we can't be packaged and are only worth 10 percent of what we make. Especially clients such as me this past year, because 10 percent of zero isn't a lot.

I had to win Richard back. Sure, he and I have been through a lot together over 21 years, but he's also been through a lot with **Tina Fey, Ricky Gervais** and **Ramy Youssef**. He might not remember what he and I have been through. And since our parting, our careers diverged even further. During the pandemic, Richard and his daughter **Demi** became famous, throwing star-studded online concerts, raising more than \$18 million for charities, while I had been a guest on several podcasts.

Plus, it was possible that Richard was bitter about our breakup. The guild announcement said that "WGA and WME have also agreed to withdraw the legal claims each has brought against the other in federal court." I had apparently sued Richard in federal court, which sounded like some real irreparable *Kramer vs. Kramer* stuff. Plus, when I sold that

Illustration by **Jiaqi Wang**

“Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This)” by **Eurythmics**.

The company, which employs 78 people, has raised money via its IPO and share placements, and also has a debt facility. To keep up its shopping spree, Hipgnosis unveiled plans to raise more funds, and on Feb. 5 started with about \$100 million via new shares issued, to work through a pipeline of more than 1 billion pounds (\$1.37 billion) in potential deals.

It is betting on revenue gains from the continued growth of music streaming, which has done well amid the novel coronavirus pandemic (accounting for 18.2 million pounds, or \$24.9 million, in company revenue for the six months ended Sept. 30), even though another key part of the business, performance royalties from concerts, bars and other sources (\$19 million), has taken a hit amid lockdowns.

It’s also focusing on better “song management” to grow its synchronization business (\$9.4 million), which puts tracks into movies, commercials and video games. While music giants often have one executive managing 20,000 songs, “we’ll have

500 to 1,000 songs per person,” Mercuriadis says.

Hipgnosis pays creatives an up-front fee for their catalogs and then collects money from streaming, song placements and other uses of the music. Mercuriadis says musicians “may receive contingent bonuses based on revenue growth” of their titles. Where Hipgnosis doesn’t own 100 percent, as in the case of Young, “the artist continues to receive their pro rata share” of revenue.

Hipgnosis’ stock, which has traded near its 52-week high, has attracted big institutional investors who want to avoid market volatility. “Most Hipgnosis investors are looking for predictable income,” explains Liberum analyst **Conor Finn**.

Says Mercuriadis, “I compare songs to gold and oil. They’re predictable and reliable, but songs aren’t affected by politics or pandemics. If you’re living your best life, you’re doing it to a soundtrack of great songs. If you are experiencing challenges, you are taking comfort and escaping.”

The space has experienced a broader gold rush. Recent deals have included **Bob Dylan** selling

his catalog to Universal Music and Primary Wave buying the catalog of **Dan Wilson**, who has written songs for the likes of **Adele**. Experts cite artists’ estate planning and the growth in streaming as key drivers. The pandemic, Mercuriadis adds, “has accelerated that process because a lot of artists couldn’t tour.”

Hipgnosis’ acquisitions have become more expensive over time, but Mercuriadis doesn’t worry that he could be overpaying. “Songs are still available at attractive prices because we had 16 years of technological disruption,” he says. “These are very valuable assets.”

SNAPSHOT

COMPANY Hipgnosis Songs Fund

NAME Based on the moniker of the U.K. design firm known for creating Pink Floyd and Led Zeppelin album covers

REVENUE 64.7M pounds (\$88.5M) for the fiscal year ended March 2020, 50M pounds (\$68.4M) for the six months ended Sept. 30

PROFIT 25.2M pounds (\$34.5M) for last fiscal year, 10.3M pounds (\$14.1M) for the following six-month period

ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS INCLUDE Nile Rodgers, The-Dream, Starrah, Dave Stewart

And Mercuriadis has a “secret sauce,” says **Mark Mulligan**, music industry analyst at MIDiA Research. “Because he is so well connected, he can often get deal flow before anybody else, or can even persuade people to bring their catalogs to market.”

Maybe that’s why Young, usually shy about commercial considerations, sold Hipgnosis a 50 percent stake in his catalog of 1,180 songs. Respect is also key. Says Mercuriadis, “I’m never going to go to Neil and say, ‘Here’s \$2 million to do a McDonald’s commercial,’ because he would lose total confidence, and it would cheapen his songs.”

Mulligan says investors’ view on Hipgnosis’ stock depends on their trust in its catalog valuation by an independent firm and the upside in streaming.

Mercuriadis is bullish: “What’s the most valuable real estate on Monopoly? It’s Boardwalk and Park Place. We keep buying Boardwalk and Park Place.” **TJTR**



Back together: Writer Joel Stein (right) had left his agent, Richard Weitz, in April 2019 amid the WGA-agency standoff.

CBS script, I didn’t put 10 percent of my earnings in escrow to give to WME later, as some writers did. I didn’t do it because I am very cheap, the union rules disapproved of it, and in order to figure out what escrow is, I would need to hire an agent.

I had no idea how to approach Richard after all this. So I called the person who put all of us writers in this position, WGA president **David A. Goodman**, who, like apparently everyone

in Hollywood, had been a co-showrunner of *Family Guy*. “You can blame me,” Goodman suggested. “Say, ‘Who is this guy? The guy who owes everything to **Seth MacFarlane**? He’s a total loser. No one heard of this guy and I have to listen to him because no one else wants to be president.’”

Goodman advised that I kiss up to Richard, while at the same time talking myself up. “Tell him, ‘I was able to sell a pilot script to CBS on my own, but you would have gotten it picked up.’ It’s like dating. You have to make them feel needed but also feeling you’re valuable.” I asked him if that’s what agents really want. “If I knew that, we would have been able to figure out this agreement a while ago,” he said.

Five days before Valentine’s Day, I mustered my courage to call Richard one afternoon. He picked up right away, giving me hope. I started off by blaming Goodman, but Richard had only nice things to say about him. I tried the thing about how I sold a pilot script myself, but would have gotten it shot if he had repped me. I waited for him to feel both my need and my value. But Richard just said, “Of course I would have gotten it shot.” This was not going well.

Then he got real. A lot of people think Hollywood is phony and shallow. But

Richard called me on my birthday when we separated. He talks to my wife on the phone. His father has called me about my books. His daughter has talked to me about her college applications.

Our relationship wasn’t just about packaging, fees and business. It was also about Richard’s ego. I was valuable because I wrote articles about him. “And I appreciate your loyalty that you’ve been on all 40 of my Quarantunes to make sure you weren’t out of sight, out of mind. And my dad is a huge fan of your books and articles and would be disappointed if I didn’t take you back.”

He reminded me that one night last fall, I had asked if he’d take me back when this union fight was over. He announced that he would if I wrote a great script, publicly apologized and got a haircut.

I had done two of those things. “And I’m working on the script,” I told him.

“OK,” he said. “I’ll take you back.”

“Do you believe that part about the great script?” I asked.

“No,” he said.

I’m about to have a career again. **TJTR**



Goodman

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2 CRITICS CHOICE DOCUMENTARY AWARD NOMINATIONS
INCLUDING BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY

THE TRUFFLE HUNTERS

ALL CATEGORIES INCLUDING
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A FILM BY
Almodóvar



THE HUMAN VOICE

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION
BEST LIVE-ACTION SHORT

WITH
TILDA SWINTON

FEINBERG FORECAST

The Long and Winding Road to Oscar Night Grows Narrower

As the Academy winnowed the field in nine shortlisted categories, excitement is beginning to mount BY SCOTT FEINBERG

Director



Regina King

One Night In Miami

The supporting actress Oscar winner for 2018's *If Beale Street Could Talk* once again proved her versatility — and got in a plug for her theatrical directing debut — when she hosted the Feb. 13 edition of *Saturday Night Live* to upbeat reviews.



Picture



Music

It earned a surprise Golden Globe comedy/musical nom, but **Sia's** directorial debut has been the subject of controversy ever since, with organizations that address autism criticizing its portrayal of an autistic character under restraints, played by a neurotypical actress.



Original Song



"Io Si (Seen)," *The Life Ahead*
"Free," *The One and Only Ivan*

The list of song finalists includes these two tunes that were written or co-written by Oscar ceremony regular **Diane Warren**. She is angling to be a nominee for the sixth time in seven years and 12th time overall (but has yet to win).



Original Score



Mank, *Soul*

Two of the shortlisted scores were claimed by these two films, composed by *The Social Network* Oscar winners **Trent Reznor** (right) and **Atticus Ross** (they also worked with **Jon Baptiste** on *Soul*). The pair are Globe and Critics Choice nominees as well.



Documentary Feature
International Feature



Collective, *The Mole Agent*

The first, a Romanian doc about that country's health care industry, and the second, a Chilean doc about a nursing home, landed on both doc and international film lists. Only two films, 2011's *Pina* and 2019's *Honeyland*, have ever accomplished the same feat.



Live-Action Short



The Human Voice

This film adaptation of the **Jean Cocteau** play, written and directed by **Pedro Almodóvar** and starring **Tilda Swinton** as a woman about to lose a lover, made the shortlist. Almodóvar's longtime distributor, Sony Pictures Classics, plans to release it in select theaters March 12.



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2021 HONOREES



VIOLA DAVIS
DESERT PALM ACHIEVEMENT AWARD, ACTRESS
MA RAINEY'S BLACK BOTTOM
NETFLIX

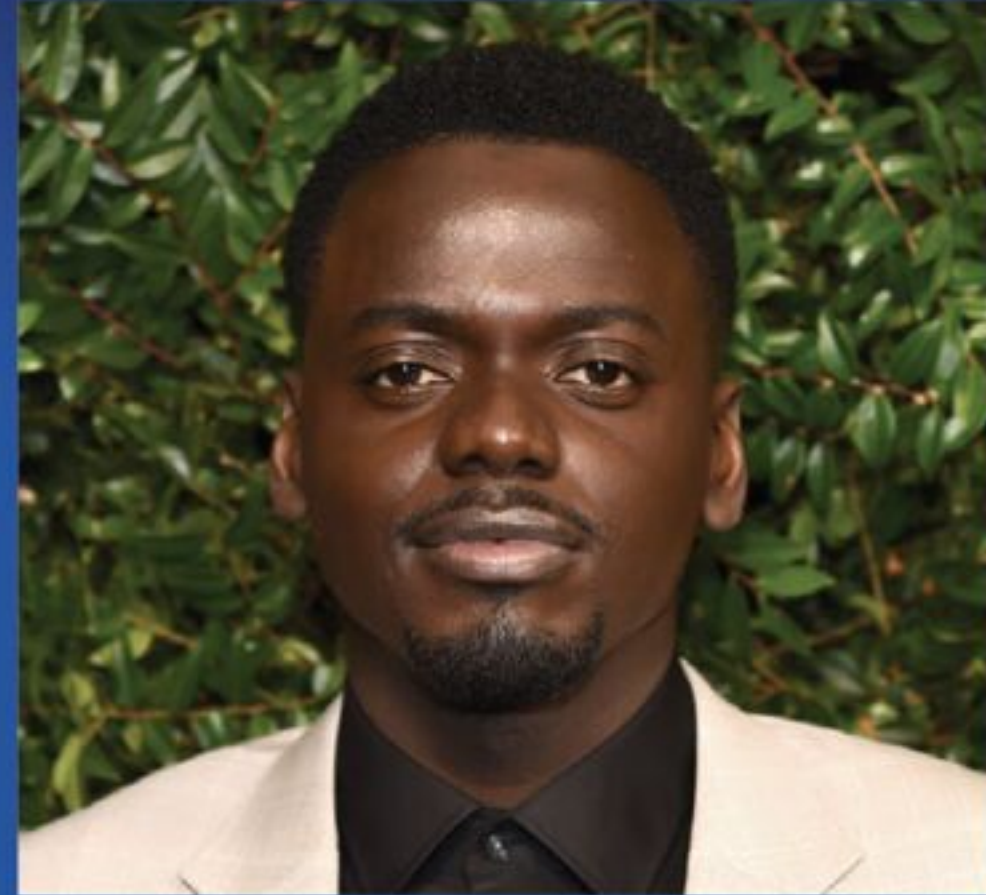


PHOTO BY DIMITRIOS KAMBOURIS @ GETTY

DANIEL KALUUYA
INTERNATIONAL STAR AWARD, ACTOR
JUDAS AND THE BLACK MESSIAH
WARNER BROS.

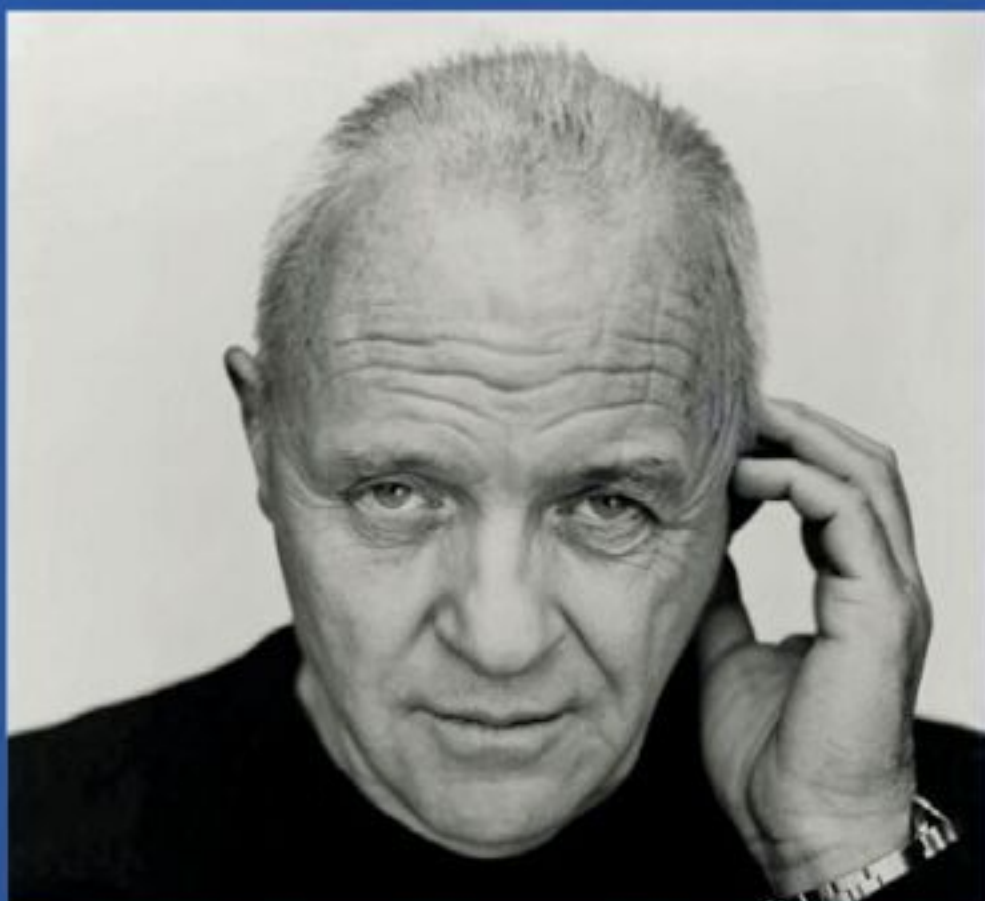


YUH-JUNG YOON
SPOTLIGHT AWARD, ACTRESS
MINARI
A24



PHOTO BY MYRIAM SANTOS

ANDRA DAY
BREAKTHROUGH PERFORMANCE AWARD
THE UNITED STATES VS. BILLIE HOLIDAY
HULU



ANTHONY HOPKINS
CAREER ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
THE FATHER
SONY PICTURES CLASSICS

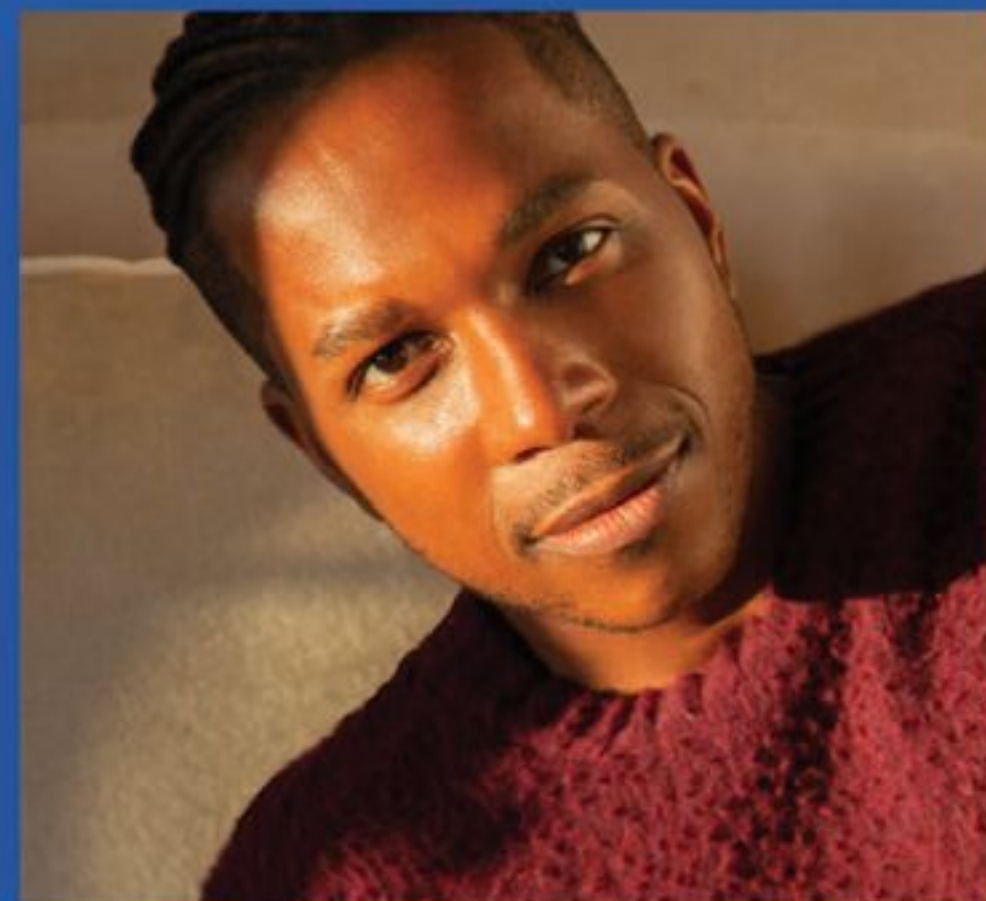


PHOTO BY TONY DURAN

LESLIE ODOM, JR.
SPOTLIGHT AWARD, ACTOR
ONE NIGHT IN MIAMI
AMAZON STUDIOS



RIZ AHMED
DESERT PALM ACHIEVEMENT AWARD, ACTOR
SOUND OF METAL
AMAZON STUDIOS



PHOTO BY JAKE SIGL

CHLOÉ ZHAO
DIRECTOR OF THE YEAR AWARD
NOMADLAND
SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES



PHOTO BY GISELE SCHMIDT

GARY OLDMAN
CHAIRMAN'S AWARD
MANK
NETFLIX

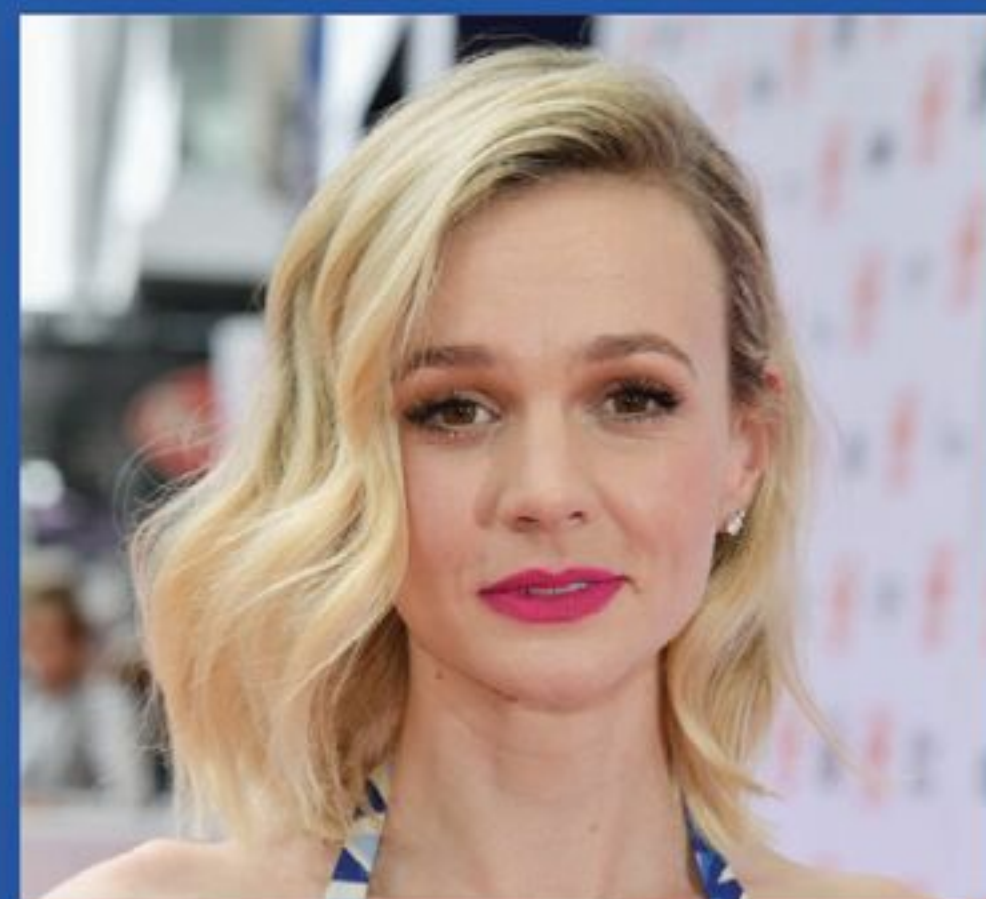


PHOTO BY GEORGE PIMENTEL

CAREY MULLIGAN
INTERNATIONAL STAR AWARD, ACTRESS
PROMISING YOUNG WOMAN
FOCUS FEATURES



THE TRIAL OF THE CHICAGO 7
VANGUARD AWARD • NETFLIX
WRITER AND DIRECTOR AARON SORKIN. CAST INCLUDES: SACHA BARON COHEN,
JOSEPH GORDON-LEVITT, MICHAEL KEATON, FRANK LANGELLA, YAHYA ABDUL-MATEEN II,
EDDIE REDMAYNE, MARK RYLANCE, JEREMY STRONG AND MORE.

PSFILMFEST.ORG



7 Days of DEALS

Who's inking on the dotted line this week

WHY HBO MAX IS GOING ALL IN ON ADULT ANIMATION

Deal of the Week



Bloys

When HBO Max paid \$500 million for exclusive domestic streaming rights to *South Park* in 2019, it was for very good reason. The Comedy Central series, owned by ViacomCBS, was to have been the cornerstone of the WarnerMedia-backed streamer's adult animation slate, which is now coming into focus.

On Feb. 10, HBO Max — overseen by HBO content chief **Casey Bloys** — went straight to series on three adult animated comedies: a revival of MTV darling *Clone High* (picked up for two seasons), the *Scooby-Doo* prequel *Velma* and *Fired on Mars*, based on an original idea. They join a slate that includes *Harley Quinn*, new takes on *Gremlins* and *The Boondocks* and the original entry *The Prince*. Four more adult animated shows — from the likes of **Michael B. Jordan**, **Ed Helms** and **Brian Michael Bendis** — also were put into HBO Max's development pipeline, and an adult-focused *Game of Thrones* animated series is on the table as well.

HBO Max isn't alone in pushing into the adult-focused animation space. Netflix, with *BoJack Horseman*, *Big Mouth* and *Disenchantment*, invested an estimated \$1 billion (yes, *billion*) for rights to bring **Roald Dahl's** beloved works to life in animated form. Disney's Hulu, which shares WarnerMedia's *Rick and Morty* with HBO Max and has *Family Guy* and *Bob's Burgers*, offers *Solar Opposites* and an *Animaniacs* revival. And Disney+, home to



Clone High reunites Phil Lord, Chris Miller and Bill Lawrence with writer Erica Rivinoja.

The Simpsons, has an adult animated show from Marvel due this year.

While animated shows might take longer to craft, they are cheaper to make than scripted originals and can be safely produced during a pandemic. They also repeat well on streaming platforms with a timelessness that makes them easier to bring in new audiences. And, in success, they can lead to lucrative merchandising deals. Case in point: *Rick and Morty* — which launched in 2013 — is a multi-billion-dollar franchise, joining such stalwarts as *Family Guy*, *The Simpsons* and *Bob's Burgers* with toys and apparel.

For HBO Max, the animated slate helps check another box as the platform seeks to program for all audiences. Bloys tells *THR*, "This slate is a great complement to the fan favorites we already have on the platform and an important investment in ensuring that HBO Max is a destination for adult animation content." — LESLEY GOLDBERG



Claire Danes

FILM

The Woodsman's **Nicole Kassell** (WME, **Management 360**) will direct an adaptation of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* for New Line.

Zawe Ashton (CAA, **Untitled**) will play a villain opposite Brie Larson in Marvel's *Captain America 2*.

Lily Gladstone (APA, **Authentic**) has joined Martin Scorsese's thriller *Killers of the Flower Moon* alongside Leonardo DiCaprio and Robert De Niro.

Maria Bakalova (CAA, **Insight, JupiterLights**), **Karen Gillan** (UTA, **Jackoway Austen**) and **Pedro Pascal** (WME, **Anonymous, Jackoway Austen**) will star in Judd Apatow's pandemic-inspired comedy *The Bubble*.

A Studio Is Born From Chernin, Ex-ESPN Exec

Big Deal

Connor Schell, ESPN's former head of content, is getting into business with Chernin Group founder and onetime Fox COO **Peter Chernin**

to launch an unscripted content studio Feb. 10. Schell will serve as CEO of the unnamed studio.

Chernin Entertainment is the sole investor in the venture, with Chernin and partner **Jesse Jacobs** spearheading the deal. Chernin Entertainment president **Jenno Topping** will oversee the collaboration between Schell's studio and the rest of Chernin's portfolio.

The initial project for the studio is



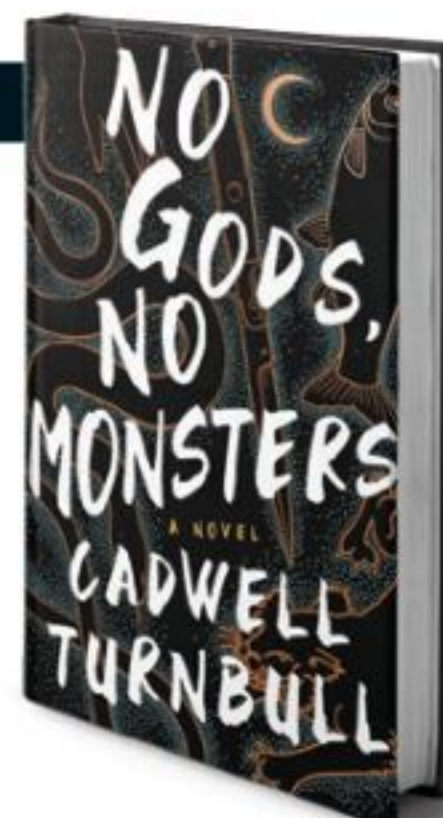
Connor Schell (left), Peter Chernin

outside of the sports realm: a documentary following Inspiration4, the first space mission to be undertaken by all civilians, as trained by **Elon Musk's** SpaceX. The film will be a co-production with *Time* magazine's Time Studios and the marketing firm

Known and will have exclusive access to the upcoming space mission.

At ESPN, Schell served as an exec producer on the ESPYs and oversaw the *SportsCenter* franchise and documentaries including *O.J.: Made in America* and *The Last Dance*. He left in November amid a restructuring that saw parent Disney cut 500 positions from the sports behemoth.

Chernin says the market is active for the type of content Schell is looking to produce. He notes, "[Schell] brings us a track record and instinct for creating culturally resonant and commercially viable content at a time when demand is high and supply is low." — ALEX WEPRIN



Rights Available! Hot new books with Hollywood appeal BY MIA GALUPPO

No Gods, No Monsters (BLACKSTONE, SEPTEMBER 2021)

BY **Cadwell Turnbull** AGENCY **ICM Partners**
This fantasy grounded in realism features a diverse cast of POC and LGBTQ characters and takes place as monsters decide to reveal to the world that they do exist after what appears to be a case of police brutality in Boston.

The Glow (RANDOM HOUSE, 2022)

BY **Jessie Gaynor** AGENCY **UTA**
The satire follows a publicist, who, in order to save her job, begins working with Cass and Tom, a gorgeous couple who run a "wellness retreat" that is trading off of a cult of personality for illicit financial gain.



Pascal

Will Eubank (CAA, **Anonymous**) will direct a *Paranormal Activity* reboot for Paramount Players, written by Christopher Landon.

Godzilla vs. Kong's **Adam Wingard** (CAA, **Grandview**, **Morris Yorn**) will co-write and direct a remake of *Face/Off* for Paramount.

Jack Black (WME, **Sloane Offer**) has joined Kevin Hart and Cate Blanchett in the adaptation of the video game *Borderlands*.

TELEVISION

Pedro Pascal and *Game of Thrones'* **Bella Ramsey** (the U.K.'s **Conway van Gelder Grant**, **Gang Tyre**) will star in HBO's series adaptation of video game *The Last of Us*.



Ashton

Rose Rollins (**Innovative**, **Elevate**, **Meyer & Downs**) will star in a women's basketball drama series for Spectrum and BET.

Dawn Porter (ICM) will direct *Red Summer*, a feature documentary on the 1921 Tulsa race massacre, for National Geographic.

Jamie Chung (**Gersh**, **3 Arts**, **Morris Yorn**) and **Oscar Wahlberg** (**Andrew Wilson**, **ThruLine**) have joined Showtime's *Dexter* revival series.

Supergirl's **Melissa Benoist** (UTA, **Anonymous**, **Frankfurt Kurnit**) has signed an overall deal with Warner Bros. TV.

Outlander EP **Ron Moore** (CAA) has inked a



Patty Jenkins' new Santa Monica cottage was built in 1926.

multiyear overall deal with Disney's 20th Television, moving from Sony.

DIGITAL

Donald Glover (WME, **M88**, **Ziffren Brittenham**) and **Phoebe Waller-Bridge** (UTA, the U.K.'s **Hatton McEwan Penford**, the U.K.'s **Independent**, **Ziffren Brittenham**) will star in a *Mr. & Mrs. Smith* reboot series for Amazon.

Claire Danes (WME, **Signpost**, **Ziffren Brittenham**) has replaced Keira Knightley on Apple drama series *The Essex Serpent*.

Tye Sheridan (WME, **Mosaic**, **Goodman Genow**) has joined *The Tender Bar*, which George Clooney is directing for Amazon.

Game of Thrones creators **David Benioff** and **D.B. Weiss** (CAA, **Hansen Jacobson**) are developing a series adaptation of the novel *The Overstory* for Netflix.

George C. Wolfe (CAA, **Loeb & Loeb**) will direct *Rustin*, a biopic of civil rights activist Bayard Rustin, for Netflix.

THEATER

Amber Ruffin (**Brillstein**, **Morris Yorn**) has joined Matt López to adapt *Some Like It Hot* as a Broadway musical comedy.

REAL ESTATE

Patty Jenkins (**Compass**) has purchased a three-bedroom home in Santa Monica for \$3.5 million.

— COMPILED BY KIRSTEN CHUBA

\$2.6B

Big Number

Walt Disney's disclosed hit to its theme parks division in its recent financial quarter due to the pandemic's global impact.



Tina Mabry, director of *Mississippi Damned*, signed with WME.

Jamila Wignot, director of doc *Ailey*, signed with CAA.

Chris Wagner, a co-exec producer on Fox's *The Masked Singer*, signed with A3.

FaZe Clan, the esports organization, signed with UTA.

Deborah Ann Woll, featured on Netflix's *Daredevil*, signed with ICM.



CASE Marvin Gaye family vs. **Pharrell Williams**

WHY IT MATTERS

On Feb. 12, in a coda to the landmark "Blurred Lines" case, a federal judge rejected a bid by Gaye's family to have Williams, **Robin Thicke** and other defendants pay \$3.5 million in attorney fees and costs. In 2015, Williams, Thicke and a song publisher were ordered to pay nearly \$5 million for infringing the copyright to Gaye's "Got to Give It Up."



2 SAG AWARDS NOMINATIONS
BEST ENSEMBLE
BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR LESLIE ODOM JR.

6 CRITICS' CHOICE AWARDS
NOMINATIONS INCLUDING
BEST DIRECTOR REGINA KING
BEST ORIGINAL SONG
"SPEAK NOW" MUSIC AND LYRICS BY LESLIE ODOM JR. & SAM ASHWORTH

3 GOLDEN GLOBE NOMINATIONS
INCLUDING
BEST ORIGINAL SONG
"SPEAK NOW" MUSIC AND LYRICS BY LESLIE ODOM JR. & SAM ASHWORTH



"LESLIE ODOM JR.'S VOICE AND LYRICS SERVE AS A SALVE AS WELL AS A CALL TO ACTION DURING CONTENTIOUS TIMES"
Rolling Stone

"THE BEST MOVIE OF THE YEAR"
USA TODAY

"IMPECCABLY CRAFTED ON EVERY LEVEL"
Los Angeles Times



AFI WINNER 2020 TOP TEN
WINNER ROBERT ALTMAN AWARD SPIRIT AWARDS
WINNER GOTHAM AWARD BREAKTHROUGH ACTOR Kingsley Ben-Adir

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION In All Categories Including
BEST PICTURE
BEST ORIGINAL SONG
"SPEAK NOW" MUSIC AND LYRICS BY LESLIE ODOM JR. & SAM ASHWORTH



AMAZON ORIGINAL MOVIE

ONE NIGHT IN MIAMI...

About Town

People, Places, Preocct

PERSON OF INTEREST

Tahar Rahim

Playing a Gitmo detainee in *The Mauritanian* has earned him a Golden Globe nom. By Sharon Swart

The Oscar-nominated prison thriller *A Prophet* first threw the international spotlight on **Tahar Rahim** in 2009. Now another film involving incarceration is drawing fresh praise for the French actor. In **Kevin Macdonald's** *The Mauritanian*, based on the memoir *Guantánamo Diary*, Rahim, 39, plays Gitmo detainee **Mohamedou Ould Slahi** in “a gripping central performance,” as *THR's* review put it. His work just garnered him a Golden Globe best actor nomination.

But Rahim notes that his “two beautiful parts set in prison” are poles apart — in *A Prophet*, his character murders another inmate to appease a Corsican mobster, while *The Mauritanian's* Slahi is held for years without charges and is tortured.

The new STX film — released Feb. 12 and co-starring **Jodie Foster** — follows Slahi's fight to be set free from Gitmo post-9/11, when the **George W. Bush** administration's suspicions of his involvement in the attacks led to a brutal 14-year detention. “Fortunately, I had almost 10 years to forget about my first [prison] movie,” says Rahim. “One thing I didn't have to find was how to occupy a small space.”

The role required Rahim to master dialogue in American English, classical Arabic and Mauritanian Arabic and to lose more than 20 pounds in less than three weeks by eating mostly hard-boiled eggs and chicken breasts. “When you're fasting, your emotions are completely different, you get extremely sensitive,” he says. “It was not the usual way of acting, where I take my emotions and pull them out. This time it was so strong, my emotions led me somewhere.”

Rahim, who grew up in the northeastern French city of Belfort, also stars in the new BBC/Netflix series *The Serpent* as serial killer **Charles Sobhraj**. Among Rahim's upcoming projects is another tangle with the Corsican underworld: a French Netflix series with filmmaker **Cédric Jimenez** about the brothers behind the French Connection heroin network. “Just when I thought I was out, they pull me back in!” Rahim jokes, doing his best *Godfather* impression. **THR**

“Vulnerable and frightened, threatening, potentially aggressive, charming and sweet. Tahar imbues this character with all of these attributes almost simultaneously. And utterly convincingly,” says director Kevin Macdonald of Rahim.





From left: Protesters in the city of Amritsar in Punjab decried new farm policies on Dec. 13; Rihanna.

Stars 'Stand in Solidarity' With Indian Farmers

Rihanna is among those calling attention to protests in India over farm laws that could devastate livelihoods

After **Rihanna** tweeted “why aren’t we talking about this?!” on Feb. 2 about ongoing farmers’ protests in India, other Hollywood names are putting a spotlight on the struggle. Since November, nearly a million farmers have gathered on the outskirts of New Delhi to protest government reforms they say will damage their industry and drive down prices. The government has deployed tear gas, internet shutdowns and paramilitary forces against the protesters.

Others bringing attention to the issue include **Padma Lakshmi**, **Trevor Noah** and **Mindy Kaling**. In response, India’s Ministry of External Affairs blasted “celebrities and others” for their “neither accurate nor responsible” comments.

Mehdi Hasan, host of Peacock’s *The*

Mehdi Hasan Show, says Bollywood stars have remained mostly quiet because they’ve “lined up behind Prime Minister [**Narendra**] **Modi**, most likely due to government pressure.” He adds that stars can help pressure the government. “We should all be talking about it. There is shared DNA between what is happening in India and what the U.S. experienced under **Trump**.”



Hasan

Adds actress and activist **Sophia Bush**: “We are witnessing a global swing toward consolidation of power over workers — farmers, warehouse workers, health care and front-line workers, the people who keep us — all of us — alive. I believe we have a responsibility to stand in solidarity as they fight for their rights.” — REBEKAH SAGER

FIRST LOOK: MEOW WOLF ARRIVES IN LAS VEGAS



The collective Meow Wolf — creator of Santa Fe’s immersive art experience House of Eternal Return (which counts **George R.R. Martin** as a creative contributor and financial backer) — is readying its first expansion. On Feb. 18, it debuts Omega Mart inside Las Vegas’ retail and entertainment complex Area 15. With more than 325 artistic contributors (including **Brian Eno** and **Santigold**), Omega Mart invites visitors inside a grocery store stocked with surrealist products, then on to a maze of spaces filled with sound and digital content and multidimensional art. Creative director **Corvas Brinkerhoff** says Omega Mart is projected to see some 1 million visitors a year post-pandemic — as of now, attendance will be limited in accordance with state guidelines. — MELINDA SHECKELLS

Slides inside the 52,000-square-foot Omega Mart, which encompasses 250 projects.

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2 CRITICS’ CHOICE AWARDS
NOMINATIONS
BEST COMEDY
BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS MARIA BAKALOVA

“THE BEST FILM OF THE YEAR”

The New York Times

“IS ‘WUHAN FLU’ THE MOST DANGEROUS MOVIE SONG EVER?
IT’S REALLY ABOUT AS PUNK-ROCK A SONG AS HAS EVER BEEN CREATED”

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WRITTEN BY ERRAN BARON COHEN • SACHA BARON COHEN • ANTHONY HINES



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About Town

Heard Around Hollywood



Audience members of Dan White's show *The Magician* have included (clockwise from top left): Reese Witherspoon, Ariana Grande, Doug Emhoff and Chris Rock.

Rambling Reporter

By Chris Gardner

Abacadabra! Virtual Formats Lead to Booming Magic Shows

Magicians and mentalists are having a moment during the pandemic. Among the hot shows are virtual offerings from **Justin Willman** (known for Netflix's *Magic for Humans*), **Jason Suran** (whose Zoom readings have been praised by **Alan Cumming**) and **Helder Guimarães** (whose show *The Future* is presented by the Geffen Playhouse). **Dan White's** consistently sold-out Zoom show *The Magician* (tickets are \$129), though, likely holds the honor of having most star-studded audience of late, with attendees including **Hillary Clinton**, **Kim Kardashian**, **Katy Perry**, **Sacha Baron Cohen** and **Gwyneth Paltrow**. "Magic is inherently social and unexpectedly physical. So, the challenge here was preserving that feeling and creating that social experience," says White of performing on Zoom. "A lot of those audience members are heroes to me, so there's a huge pressure to make sure they have an incredible experience."

Gina Carano's Vegas Gambling Biz Family

MMA star turned actor **Gina Carano** — who was booted from *The Mandalorian* by Disney after her social media post likened being a Republican today to being Jewish during the Holocaust — comes from a powerful Nevada clan. **Howard Stutz**, executive editor of *CDC Gaming Reports*, tells *THR* that her family is "deeply rooted" in northern Nevada. Gina's late grandfather, **Don**

Carano, founded Eldorado Resorts in the 1970s, not to mention the Ferrari-Carano Vineyards & Winery in Healdsburg, California.



Gina Carano hugged her father after an MMA fight in 2008.

Her father, **Glenn Carano**, played quarterback for the Dallas Cowboys for seven seasons before segueing into the family business. "[Don's] sons took over Eldorado Resorts, and they grew it into an amazing gaming company," says Stutz. Last year, Eldorado finalized its merger with Caesars Entertainment, renaming itself Caesars and creating the largest casino and entertainment company in the U.S. (The family stake is valued at more than \$725 million.) Glenn now serves as senior vp operations for the company's east region, and many of the Carano offspring hold executive positions in the firm.

Hemsworth: Out of Range

It was reported in December that upstart management-brand development company Range Media Partners had added **Chris Hemsworth** to its roster, reuniting the actor with his former CAA agent, Range co-founder **Jack Whigham**. But Hemsworth's tenure with Range has proved to be short-lived. According to a source, Hemsworth had planned to have Range handle his branding opportunities but has now exited Range — "fairly or not" — because of what is characterized as overreach by the new company on matters CAA should have been handling. Another source, however, counters that Hemsworth's decision came after he made the move to consolidate his business under one roof. Multiple sources confirm that Hemsworth and Whigham remain on great



Hemsworth

terms. Hemsworth, who runs his Centr workout app, is filming the next installment of his Marvel Cinematic Universe franchise, *Thor: Love and Thunder*, for director **Taika Waititi**.

'Avalanche of Offers' for Inauguration Poet

Amanda Gorman's inauguration appearance has resulted in an "avalanche of offers" for the 22-year-old poet, according to an industry source. The opportunities are said to cover everything from fashion and beauty to magazine covers. Gorman, who on Feb. 7 was the first poet to appear on a Super Bowl telecast, also was on the cover of *Time*, and she is said to be weighing how to proceed amid the deluge while finishing her books, *Change Sings: A Children's Anthem* and *The Hill We Climb and Other Poems*, both due out Sept. 21. She is repped by Writers House, WME, IMG Models and the law firm Gang Tyre. *THR*



Amanda Gorman



An Instagram post for the new "Future First" Reels Challenge.

Social Action

During Black History Month, Instagram has been highlighting and promoting shortform content as part of its yearslong #ShareBlackStories initiative. The platform is now taking it a step further by enlisting *Queen & Slim* filmmaker **Melina Matsoukas** and talent from Howard University for a new program called the Instagram x Share Black Stories "Future First" Reels Challenge. Students from the school's Department of Media, Journalism and Film will create visual ideas of Black excellence, and five, selected by Matsoukas, will receive \$10,000 to support costs associated with

mounting their work. The students will be mentored by Matsoukas and Howard advisers and educators. Furthermore, the storytellers will have their content earmarked for sharing across the Instagram platform. "Having the ability to create in these spaces and have hundreds of thousands, or millions of people, immediately be able to see, react, respond and be affected by your work is so powerful," says Matsoukas. "I am filled with gratitude for this opportunity to mentor the next generation of artists, share what I've learned and to learn from them, too." — C.G.



Matsoukas

Got tips? Email rambling@thr.com

- 1 Joel Kinnaman and Kelly Gale
- 2 Mackenzie Ruth Kelly
- 3 Travis Merriweather
- 4 Mary Wilson



Hitched, Hatched, Hired

Inside the industry's celebrations and news

Engagements

For *All Mankind*'s **Joel Kinnaman** announced his engagement to model **Kelly Gale** via Instagram on Jan. 18.

director at Scenario PR, and husband James Kelly welcomed daughter **Mackenzie Ruth Kelly** on Aug. 24 on Long Island in New York.

drama head **Marc Resteghini** to U.S and global head of development and hired **Laura Lancaster** as head of series on Feb. 10.

content executive Feb. 10.

CAA Sports hired **Samira Zebian** and promoted **Rob DeAngelis** and **Rob Slocum** to global co-heads of property sales Feb. 15.

CAA upped **Bryant Barile**, **Albert Lee** and **Stephanie Smalling** to agents in its motion picture literary department Feb. 10.

Travis Merriweather was upped to senior political strategist at ICM Partners on Feb. 8.

James Cuthbert was hired as president of LL Cool J's Rock the Bells company Feb. 10.

Tim Richards, CEO of European cinema giant Vue, was named British Film Institute chair Feb. 11.

FlynnPictureCo. promoted **Chanel Bowling** and **Shelby Thomas** to directors of development Feb. 10.

Nick Royak was appointed vp development for U.K. production firm MSR Media on Feb. 10.

Deaths

Mary Wilson, a founding member of The Supremes, died Feb. 8 in Henderson, Nevada. She was 76.

Lynn Stalmaster, the only casting director to receive an Academy Award, died Feb. 12 in Los Angeles. He was 93.

Chick Corea, the preeminent jazz pianist and winner of 23 Grammy Awards, died Feb. 9 in Tampa, Florida. He was 79.

French screenwriter **Jean-Claude Carrière** died Feb. 8 in Paris. He was 89.

Births

Lauren Peteroy Kelly, senior account

Congrats Amazon promoted

Danny Barton joined UTA as a sports



"Voter turnout is the best remedy to voter suppression"
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Produced by
Liz Garbus, Lisa Cortés, Stacey Abrams, Dan Cogan

BEST ORIGINAL SONG

"Turntables"

Written by Janelle Monáe
Nathaniel Irvin III

George "George 2.0." A. Peters II

2 HOLLYWOOD CRITICS ASSOCIATION
BEST DOCUMENTARY
BEST ORIGINAL SONG "TURNABLES"

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VARIETY

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ALL IN THE FIGHT FOR DEMOCRACY



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Yes, I Did Say That!

A look at who's saying what in entertainment
Compiled by Emily Hilton



“Joss has a history of being casually cruel.”

CHARISMA CARPENTER

The actress, on Twitter, opening up about the harassment she says she endured on the sets of Whedon's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel*.

“For these outlets, it's a game.”

MEGHAN MARKLE

The Duchess of Sussex, in a statement to *THR*, commenting on her legal victory over the U.K. tabloid *The Mail on Sunday*, three days before announcing she and Prince Harry are expecting a second child.

“I know I failed.”

JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE

The entertainer, on Instagram, apologizing to Britney Spears and Janet Jackson after a new round of criticism came his way following the release of Hulu's *Framing Britney Spears*.

“I know it inspired girls my age at that time.”

BRANDY

The singer-actress, to *People*, recounting how blessed she felt to be the first Black woman to portray Cinderella in the 1997 film version of the Rodgers & Hammerstein musical, which became available on Disney+ on Feb. 12.



“I've been trying to do *Grace and Frankie* for years.”

DOLLY PARTON

The actress and musician, in an interview with Lorraine Kelly, announcing her reunion with Jane Fonda and Lily Tomlin (the three worked together on 1980's *9 to 5*) on the final season of the Netflix series.

“I got my show back.”

DAVE CHAPPELLE

The comedian, on Instagram, revealing that *Chappelle's Show* will be returning to Netflix after the streamer removed it at his request because of a royalties dispute with Comedy Central.



“I tried to go to a very personal level.”

LEE ISAAC CHUNG

The writer-director, to *THR*, discussing his film *Minari* as a way to grapple with his family history and different concepts of the American dream.

“I see many parallels at Beachbody with the work we did at Disney.”

KEVIN MAYER

The former TikTok CEO and Disney executive, in a statement, citing the boom in the fitness industry as the reason behind the acquisition of Beachbody by Forest Road (his SPAC with former Disney COO and CFO Tom Staggs).

FLASHBACK!
Did I Really Say That?



DEC. 12, 2020

“I'm glad that more and more people will continue to see themselves represented on the show.”

CHRIS HARRISON

The *Bachelor* host commented to *THR* on the show's increased diversity. Harrison announced Feb. 14 that he would take time away from the reality series after defending a contestant who reportedly was photographed at an antebellum-themed fraternity formal.



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-Owen Gleiberman, *VARIETY*

"AN IMPRESSIVELY IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE. SKILLFULLY DIRECTED BY ROD LURIE."

-Ann Hornaday, *The Washington Post*

"EASTWOOD EXCELS IN THE KEY ROLE OF STAFF SERGEANT CLINT ROMESHA."

-Peter Travers, *RollingStone*

"ORLANDO BLOOM AS A DETERMINED COMMANDER AND CALEB LANDRY JONES AS A WOUND-UP SPECIALIST DELIVER NEAR-CAREER-HIGH PERFORMANCES."

-Glenn Kenny, *The New York Times*

"THE SHEER ART OF THE FILMMAKING HERE IS EXCEPTIONAL. IMPECCABLE SOUND AND CINEMATOGRAPHY."

-Pete Hammond, *DEADLINE*

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Creative Space

Nahnatchka Khan

With a new sitcom about The Rock, the veteran showrunner explores her love of wrestling and her uphill battle to get her unique intersectionality on camera
By Lesley Goldberg



Setting up shop at NBCUniversal after more than a decade at 20th Century Fox, where she created ABC's series *Fresh Off the Boat* and *Don't Trust the B— in Apartment 23*, Nahnatchka Khan is kicking off her next era with a somewhat surprising passion project: a sitcom based on the childhood of Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson.

But it's a surprise only if you don't know Khan — “Natch” to her friends and colleagues. The 47-year-old writer did not grow up in a Hollywood home

Nahnatchka Khan was photographed Feb. 4 at the Fierce Baby offices in Hollywood.

— she was born in Las Vegas and raised in Hawaii — but she and her brother Nick, who decamped from CAA in 2020 to serve as president of WWE, sought out industry careers after being reared with a love of film, TV and, particularly, professional wrestling. “It was big in our household,” says Khan, who draws parallels between herself and Johnson. Her source material and fellow executive producer on

the series was raised ringside by his father, the late wrestler Rocky Johnson, before his own days on the circuit. “We were fans watching on TV, but he was in the locker rooms with these guys.”

Amid a pandemic that has slowed the development pipeline at her Fierce Baby production shingle — and stalled a formal wedding reception for Khan and fellow writer Julia Bicknell (*The Haunting of Bly Manor*), who married in November 2019 — *Young Rock* premieres Feb. 16 on NBC. Via Zoom in February, Khan opened

up about the notes she gets from Johnson, showcasing queer and Middle Eastern experiences, and plans to collaborate with her wife.

What does a note from The Rock look like?

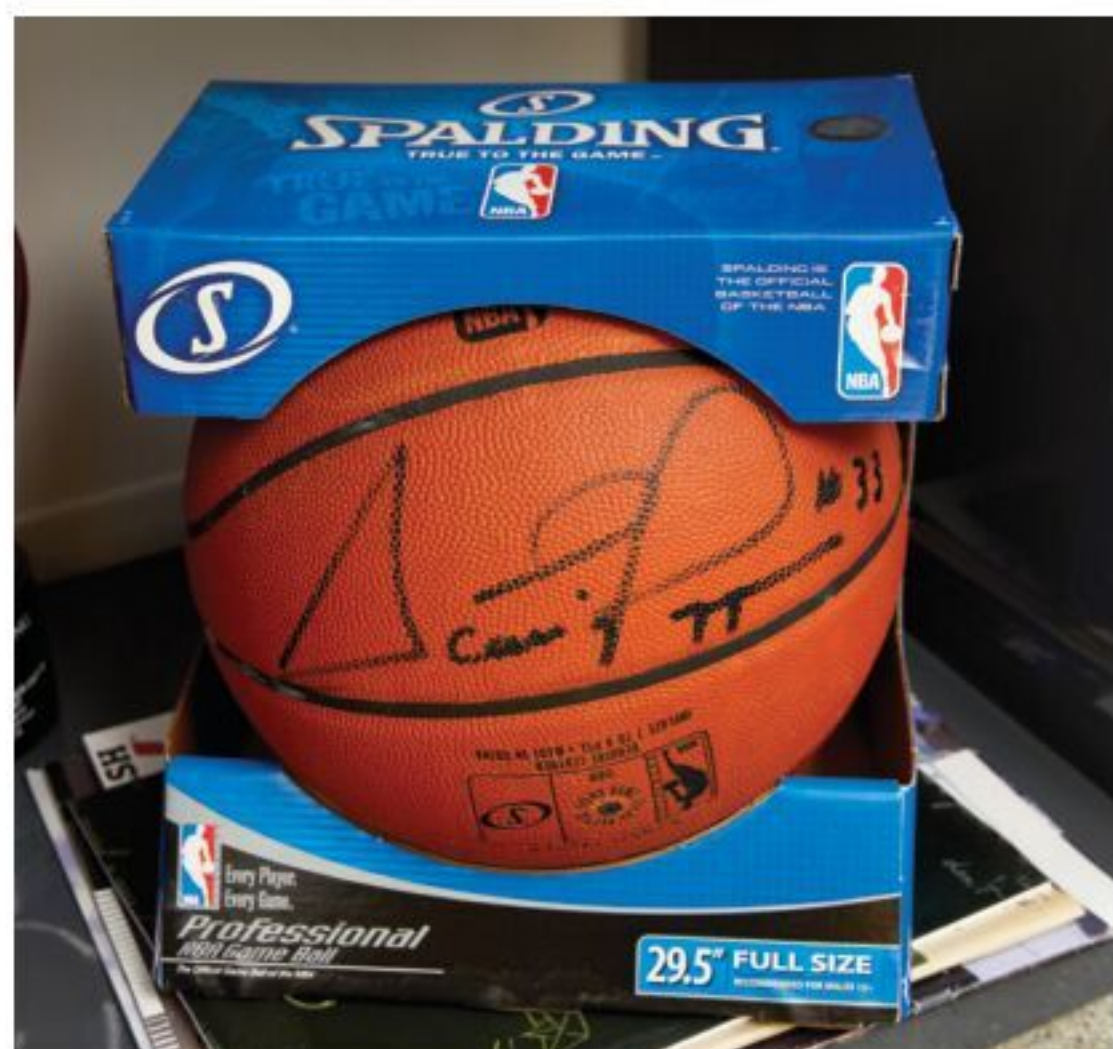
He sends amazing audio notes. I've got a lot of audio messages from him going through the scripts and talking through stories. It's the best way to get notes from Dwayne.

NBCUniversal streamer Peacock is the new home for WWE. Are

Photographed by **Claudia Lucia**



Mementos from Khan's TV work, including a guitar from Charo, who appeared in the *Don't Trust the B— in Apartment 23* finale, as well as a signed basketball from Chicago Bulls legend and *Fresh Off the Boat* guest star Scottie Pippen.



the companies working together around *Young Rock*?

We talked about doing a WWE throwback night to support the storylines in *Young Rock*. There's so much opportunity there.

Your parents emigrated from Iran, and you have done a lot of work for Asian Americans in entertainment. What do you want to see in terms of more nuanced portrayals of Middle Easterners in comedy?

I would love to find a project that showcases the Middle Eastern experience, because there aren't

many. *Ramy* is a great example of his personal background, life and family. Being Persian, being a woman, being gay, there is a lot of intersection there that is so specific to me, and I am interested in telling some version of that story.

What were your cultural touchstones growing up?

I gravitated toward funny women. I loved *Laverne & Shirley* when I was a kid, and I didn't quite know why. When you don't have your exact representation anywhere, you make it fit. As queer people, you can put yourself into straight rom-coms, into straight storylines you can imagine — whereas the people that those movies and shows are made for probably don't have the reverse experience. When you're used to tailoring it for your purposes, that's something that I have done my whole life. I want to get those stories out and show people different lenses that they can see these stories through in the projects that I do now and the people whom I work with.

Your first writing credits were on kids' shows. What were some of your low points in that space?

It was a challenge to get female-centric kids' shows out there. We were excited to tell stories that centered on young girls. We took it seriously because all you heard about at the time was that girls will watch boys' shows but boys won't watch girls' shows.

You've been outspoken in the past about being the only woman in the writers room early in your career. Looking back, what were the biggest challenges?

Trying to center female characters, like I'm doing on my own shows now. [Asking things like,] "When the men leave the room, what does she do? Let's just start there: Who is she?" That was a challenge to get people on board, that female characters can be just as funny, just as interesting, just as surprising. A lot of us were pushing that rock up that hill.

How did that experience shape you as a writer and producer?

The first show I created, [ABC's] *Don't Trust the B— in Apartment 23*, was born from that. I wanted

to tell stories about this wild character [played by Krysten Ritter] living in New York who apologizes to nobody, who had the morals of a pirate, and you just wanted to be with her. There is something compelling about that.

You're one of the few out lesbian showrunners. What kind of responsibility do you feel to amplify voices and change the portrayal of LGBTQ characters?

We've got a few projects in development on the TV and movie side that center on queer characters and queer stories in new and exciting ways. There is a difference when I watch stories with



queer people behind them. The kinds of stories and characters that are created ... you feel like you know these people and they feel nuanced and real. That is our challenge: How do we get these stories to people who need to see them? Hopefully we're going to get a few of those up and running, with great queer storytellers behind them too.

Any plans to collaborate with your wife?

We have written a movie that hopefully we'll get going. We have this idea of trying to do a dark comedy about female rage and what that looks like. Maybe for Netflix.

NBCU has a new consolidated executive structure. Do you get a say in which outlet you pitch for, or is that decision made for you?

It's a collaboration and depends on the show. We don't want to pitch a show everywhere. Our goal is to figure out the right place for it and people who are passionate about these stories and want to make the same show we do. [The rebooted] *Kate and Allie* [landed at NBC] because the idea of female friendship was something that we all gravitated toward. There was an article that came out recently that said 60 percent of U.S. women said they would rather be quarantined with their best girlfriend than with their spouse, which was fascinating. It will definitely not have two white leads this time.

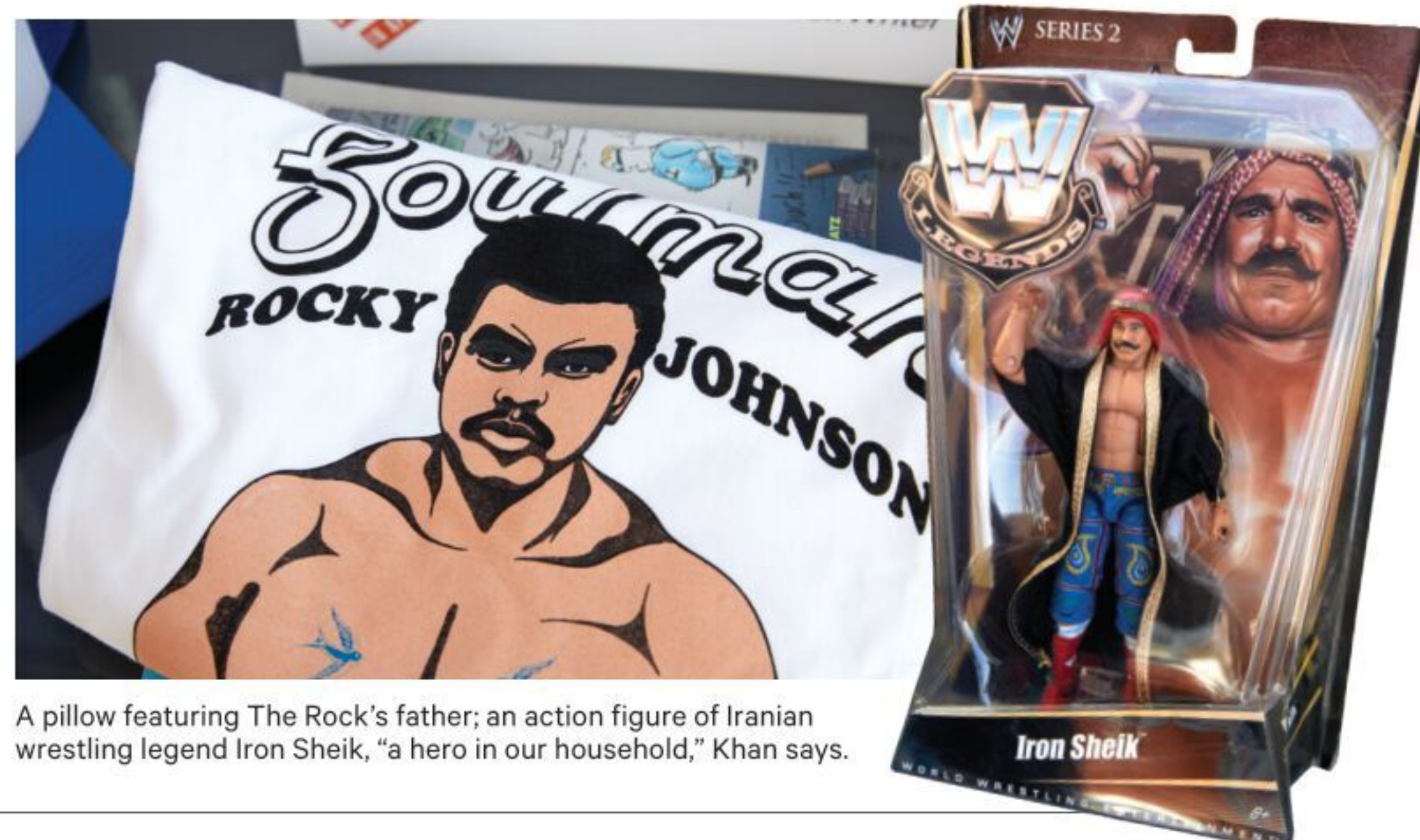
What is the first subject you would discuss if you could hold a meeting of showrunners tomorrow?

How do you like communicating with actors through two face masks and a face shield? It's very challenging.

What is the last thing that made you laugh out loud?

In the last episode of season two of [Hulu's] *PEN15*, Maya is talking to her crush in a restaurant and then randomly is just holding a chair out of nowhere. Had to rewind! Why is that so awkward and real?

Interview edited for length and clarity.



A pillow featuring The Rock's father; an action figure of Iranian wrestling legend Iron Sheik, "a hero in our household," Khan says.



FILM | MIA GALUPPO

Teenage Dream: Young Adult Hits Become Netflix's First Franchises

While superhero and monster movies are the hallmarks of traditional film series, so far it's largely young love that's sparking sequels at the streamer

Teen movies just stopped being made and it sucked," says Matt Kaplan, the 36-year-old producer behind Netflix's ultra-popular *To All the Boys I've Loved Before* film series. "Having worked at Lionsgate and other film studios, they for the most part were franchise-building, and they weren't focused on this type of film." The irony is that Kaplan, through his company ACE Entertainment, has turned that type of film into a franchise.

Kaplan had offers from four studios for the first *To All the Boys* film. But the producer, who at the time was running the film division of media company Awesomeness, had just released another teen film, *Before I Fall*, theatrically and was overwhelmed by its performance.

Instead, he took the film to Netflix. It's an obvious choice now, but in 2017 the romantic comedy had yet to be deemed "revived," film head Scott Stuber wasn't even a year into the job, and the backbone of Netflix's feature slate was its exclusive pact with Adam Sandler.

"To their credit, [Netflix] really had a vision for how to grow this trilogy," Kaplan says. "Ultimately

MIA GALUPPO is a film writer for The Hollywood Reporter.

they had the reach, and they were able to help us garner attention on social media immediately."

To All the Boys set the benchmarks against which future streaming features would be measured. The movie became proof that a Netflix feature could break talent, as it did with the film's stars, Lana Condor and Noah Centineo. And it marked the first time that talent's social media followers were used as an indication of a film's popularity in lieu of hard viewership data, with Netflix touting Centineo's 13.4 million jump in Instagram followers during its 2018 third-quarter earnings report.

With the Feb. 12 debut of *To All the Boys: Always and Forever*, the trilogy becomes the first completed major film series built for streaming. In its opening weekend, the movie sat at the No. 1 spot in the U.S. on the streamer's "Top Ten" feature. Since the August 2018 release of the series' first installment, Hollywood has seen the launch of many streaming services, but it remains unclear what place, if any, serialized filmmaking will have for them.

Several of Netflix's big-budget, high-concept features — the ones most akin to traditional theatrical franchises — have had sequels put into development,

like the Will Smith starrer *Bright* and the Russo brothers-produced *Extraction*. But the majority of the streamer's sequels — and the only ones to actually be produced thus far — have come from the YA (*The Kissing Booth*) and holiday (*The Princess Switch*, *The Christmas Chronicles*) genres.

The studio infrastructure necessary to produce a movie like *The Kissing Booth* compared with one like *Bright* is wildly different, and Netflix doesn't negotiate sequel options into its talent deals on features. Instead, the streamer turned studio opts to wait and see how a title performs on its service. This means that any subsequent films spark a new round of negotiations that — like the first round of dealmaking — can be protracted and expensive, with the need to factor backend and other residuals into paydays.

Further complicating matters, industry insiders note, is the fact that streaming doesn't have a direct box office equivalent. It's more comparable with subscriptions than viewership, which can make sequels' success harder to quantify. "When there is a huge hit movie at the box office, the sequel is almost always guaranteed to make some sort of money," says one feature film producer who has worked with Netflix. "In

The *Bright* sequel hasn't materialized, but *To All the Boys* and *The Princess Switch* series have each produced a third installment.

the streaming model, the sequel could literally get you zero new subscribers because if the same set of people that watched the first movie will watch the second, they are already subscribed."

Buoyed by the pandemic, Netflix added 8.5 million subscribers in the fourth quarter of 2020, for a global total of 203.7 million. For Netflix, which announced 70 original features ahead of its fourth-quarter earnings call, retention is growing increasingly important, and one draw of franchise filmmaking is building audience loyalty. "People like familiarity," says Shawn Robbins, chief analyst at Boxoffice.com. "There is the reliability factor that is the goal of both studios and theaters." The streamer already has found major success in building audience loyalty with its prestige series — like *The Crown* and *Stranger Things* — but, without ready access to IP of the Marvel or DC variety, it has to build out its own feature library.

Ultimately, it's too early to determine whether franchise filmmaking will have a place or purpose on sister streaming services. But for Netflix, 2021 will bring audiences the third installments of *Kissing Booth* and *Princess Switch*. Summer breakout comic book adaptation *The Old Guard* and upcoming action thriller *The Gray Man* (from directors Joe and Anthony Russo and stars Chris Evans and Ryan Gosling) are believed to be potential franchise starters, with the latter seen internally as akin to a Jason Bourne or Jack Reacher series. Plus, during its pandemic buying spree, Netflix also picked up a ready-made film series with the R.L. Stine trilogy *Fear Street*, from Disney and Chernin Entertainment. All of which could be a sign of more to come.

After all, as one producer notes, when it comes to streaming, "What is the difference between a sequel and a season two?" **VIR**

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THE RACE | GREGG KILDAY

Oscar's Old Boys' Club: Are the Doors About to Open?

The Academy's directors branch has long resisted nominating women, but with talents like Chloé Zhao, Regina King and Emerald Fennell, that could change

The directors branch of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has been put on notice. One of the most notorious set of Oscar stats is the fact that during the whole of its 92-year history, the Academy has nominated only five women for best director. There has never been more than one woman nominated in a given year. And only one — Kathryn Bigelow for 2009's *The Hurt Locker* — has ever won.

But this year there are more viable female candidates than ever knocking on the door. The Hollywood Foreign Press Association and the Critics Choice Awards have both nominated three of them: Chloé Zhao for *Nomadland*, her portrait of a wandering woman seeking liberation on the road; Regina King, for *One Night in Miami*, her account of the meeting of four Black icons in 1964; and Emerald Fennell, for *Promising Young Woman*, her comedic thriller about a self-styled avenger. Film Independent's Spirit Awards went even further, handing noms to Zhao and Fennell as well as to Eliza Hittman for her abortion drama *Never Rarely Sometimes Always*

GREGG KILDAY, former THR film editor, writes about awards-season movies for the magazine.

and to Kelly Reichardt for *First Cow*, while earmarking its Robert Altman Award for King, her cast and the film's casting director.

If the Academy's nominations, which will be revealed March 15, don't prove similarly welcoming, there's sure to be an outcry.

Historically, though, the Academy's directors branch, traditionally one of the most insular of the organization's 17 branches, hasn't taken its cues from other awards groups. When the Globes nominated and then gave its best director award to Barbra Streisand for 1983's *Yentl*, the branch gave her the cold shoulder — even though, by that time in its history, it had awarded Oscars to other actors turned directors, like Robert Redford (for 1980's *Ordinary People*) and Warren Beatty (for 1981's *Reds*). Other Globe nominees who have gotten the Academy's cold shoulder have included Streisand (again, for 1991's *The Prince of Tides*), Bigelow (for 2012's *Zero Dark Thirty*) and Ava DuVernay (for 2014's *Selma*).

The Directors Guild — a much larger group than the Academy's directors branch given that it includes assistant directors and unit production managers — has also been somewhat more inclusive in recognizing women directors. It bestowed a nomination on Randa

Haines in 1986 for her *Children of a Lesser God*. Like the Globes, it recognized both Streisand for *Prince* and Bigelow for *Zero* as well as Valerie Faris, who shared directing credit with Jonathan Dayton on 2006's *Little Miss Sunshine*.

Of course, then was then, and now is now. And like the rest of the Academy, the directors branch — long characterized as an aging boys' club — has been working to diversify its ranks. It now has 564 members, many newly drawn from the ranks of international directors. Recently invited new members have included *The Farewell*'s Lulu Wang and *Honey Boy*'s Alma Har'el, and the percentage of women now stands at 24.1 percent. Presumably, the influence of the old boys is shrinking.

And if there ever was a season that favors advances by women, it's this season. The disruptions and postponements caused by the COVID-19 pandemic mean that previous nominees, like *The French Dispatch*'s Wes Anderson, and winners, like *West Side Story*'s Steven Spielberg, will be sitting this one out. And that opens the door wider for new voices.

Certainly Zhao, after her critically lauded 2017 feature, *The Rider*, is poised to graduate to the next level. She's already earned directing prizes from film critics in New York, Los Angeles and from the National Society. *Nomadland* was named best feature and scored the audience prize at the Gotham Awards. And it made its debut at the Venice Film Festival, claiming the Golden Lion Award, which also served as a stepping stone for *The Shape of Water*'s Guillermo del Toro and *Roma*'s Alfonso Cuarón, who both won directing Oscars.

King also could be in an advantageous position. The winner of the supporting actress Oscar for 2018's *If Beale Street Could Talk* (not to mention a quartet of Emmys for her TV performances), she's making her theatrical directing debut with *One Night*, after having directed lots of TV. And, though the directors branch may have snubbed Streisand back in the day, it has since seen fit to honor such actors turned directors as Kevin Costner and Mel Gibson as winners.

It may be a harder reach for Fennell. A prolific British actor (she appears as Camilla Parker Bowles on the most recent season of *The Crown*) and writer (*Killing Eve*), she's making her feature directorial debut with *Promising Young Woman*. Still, on rare occasions, the branch has reached out to embrace a groundbreaking first-timer, as it did with John Singleton for 1991's *Boyz n the Hood* and Benh Zeitlin for 2012's *Beasts of the Southern Wild*.

So if the Academy's branch shuts the door on most of those possibilities, then the question is likely to be, "If not now, when?" **THR**



From left: Directors Regina King, Emerald Fennell and Chloé Zhao have all been nominated for Golden Globes.



Far left: Daniel Kaluuya as Fred Hampton addresses Black Panther Party members. Above: Kaluuya's Hampton surrounded by followers. "The tale is based very much on the truth and the telling of the story from the people who lived it," says DP Sean Bobbitt. Left: LaKeith Stanfield (left), as an FBI informant, meets with Jesse Plemons' agent.

BEHIND THE SCREEN | CAROLYN GIARDINA

Plunging Into the Turbulent Politics of the '60s

Working with director Shaka King on *Judas and the Black Messiah*, cinematographer Sean Bobbitt schooled himself on the politics of the decade in order to create a 'realistic representation,' full of color, movement and youthful energy

Describing his first pairing with director Shaka King, cinematographer Sean Bobbitt says the helmer wanted to bring a reality to *Judas and the Black Messiah*, the '60s-set film in which William O'Neal (played by LaKeith Stanfield) becomes an FBI informant and betrays Fred Hampton (portrayed by Daniel Kaluuya), leader of the Illinois chapter of the Black Panther Party. "It's not a documentary. He was looking for a reality, a recreation of that period, and a very intimate approach to the characters," the director of photography says of the Warner Bros. drama, which, after its Sundance premiere earlier this month, is now available on HBO Max.

King compiled hundreds of still photographs from the period, which informed the film's look. In

CAROLYN GIARDINA is THR's tech editor.

their research, King and Bobbitt also watched such documentaries as the PBS series *Eyes on the Prize*, which includes an interview with O'Neal (clips from the interview appear in the movie).

Bobbitt, perhaps best known for shooting *12 Years a Slave* and for his longtime collaboration with its director, Steve McQueen, read deeply about the period as well. "Although I am an American, I've spent almost all my life outside America, and in the '60s I was living as a child in Saudi Arabia and in England, and so really had no idea about this story," the DP admits. "In a way, I felt very guilty. This is the history of the country I was born in. And so that's what spurred me on to educate myself as to the background, the history of this story and the politics and the social conditions of America in the mid- to late '60s."

Black-and-white photography was briefly discussed, but King

felt that would be "too on the nose. We were looking for a realistic representation of the period, but with life in color," says Bobbitt.

Judas was shot on location in Cleveland, with an ARRI Alexa LF (large-format) camera and ARRI DNA lenses in a 2:39 widescreen aspect ratio. "The lenses are cool and funky. They have an old look to them, which was as far as we



Bobbitt

felt we should go for period," Bobbitt says.

King and Bobbitt worked closely with department heads including production designer Sam Lisenco. "A lot of the color concepts had already been worked out, and then as we started looking at locations, there were further colors that came alive, which we embraced and incorporated into the look of the film," says Bobbitt, citing the use of color in the location used for the Black Panthers' headquarters.

"The rooms and the hallways were painted this bright green. Initially, as we walked in, it was like, 'Oh God, this is too much,' but it hadn't been repainted much since probably the '60s, and that green started to become a recurring theme in various locations, so it's something that we wanted to embrace. It becomes almost a subtle linking factor between a lot of locations associated with the Black Panthers."

Bobbitt also aimed to keep the camera moving, often using a dolly and Steadicam. "We were looking for a liveliness. They were young people and they were quite active," he says of the members of the party, "so we were looking for a constant movement of the camera as a way of keeping the story literally moving forward, so that when the camera was stopped, it had a very strong subliminal effect. And I think it was very effective." **THR**

Style

Real Estate

Joshua Tree Is Booming Exponentially'

As creatives seek an escape from the big city, prices jump and cutting-edge architecture rises in the High Desert area: '75 percent of my clients are investors from L.A.' By *Hadley Meares*

During the golden age of Westerns, film crews would often make the two-and-a-half-hour trip to the Morongo Basin in San Bernardino County to shoot in the pristine, rugged desert. In 1946, actor **Dick Curtis** decided to monetize the location and banded with movie cowboys **Gene Autry** and **Roy Rogers** to create a wild West film location and settlement that they named Pioneertown.

The real cowboys already living in the area (north of what is now Joshua Tree National Park) weren't too pleased. "Back when Pioneertown Corporation was hauling in potential land buyers and weekend tourists from Los Angeles, they set up a little ambush just as the buses got into town. A gang of armed men would ride up along the bus and force it

to pull over," says Pioneertown historian **Kenneth Gentry**. "They'd raid the bus and rob the driver. That was thought of as a fun way to introduce people to town."

Despite the renegades' best efforts, artists and iconoclasts would go on to homestead in the area, enamored by what film producer **Chris Hanley** (*Spring Breakers*) calls the "artistic freedoms in a rural High Desert minimalist setting of alone-

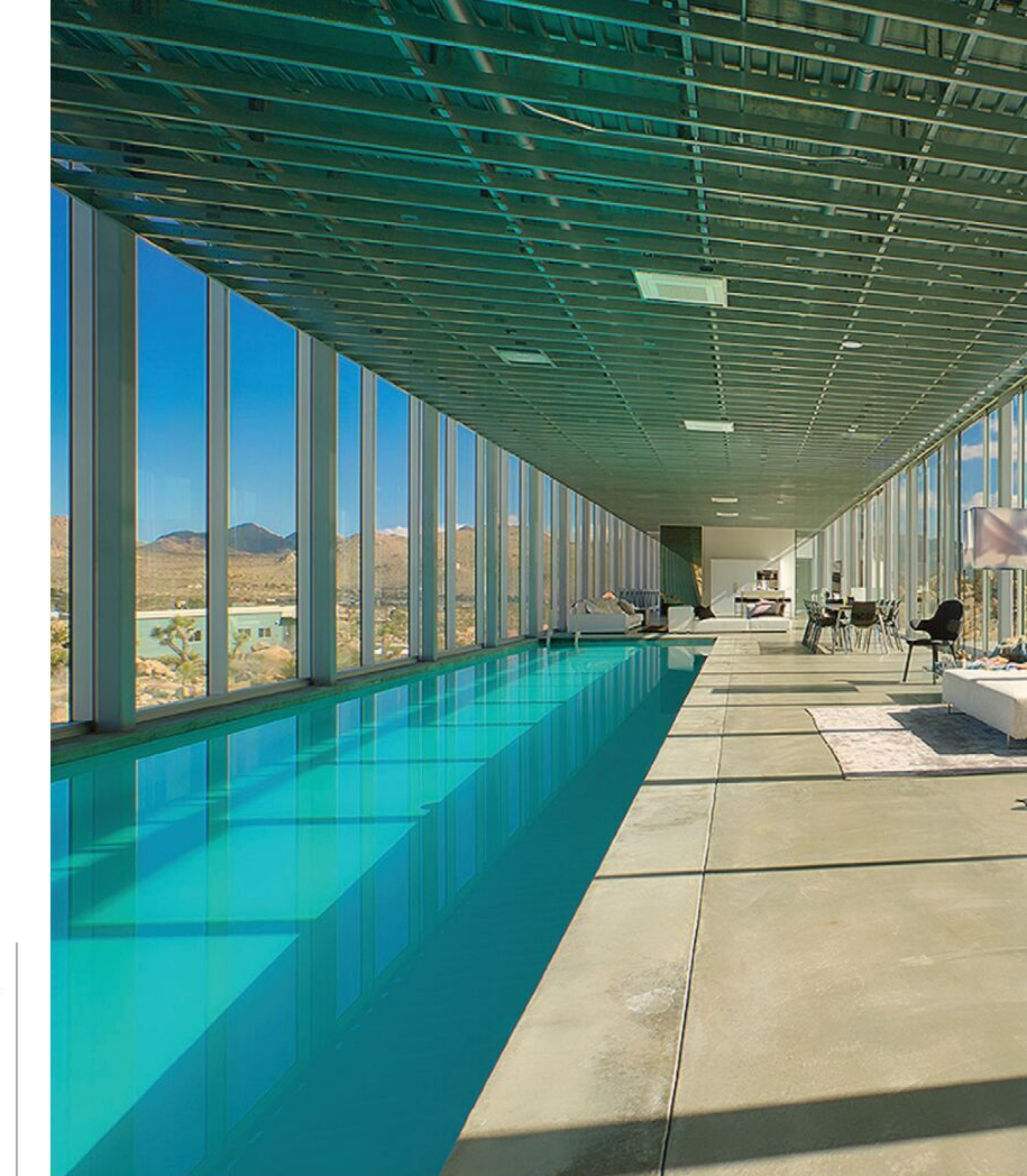
ness." Early Joshua Tree converts included actress **Ann Magnuson** and artists **Andrea Zittel** and **Ed Ruscha**. UFO enthusiasts and theorists like **George Van Tassel** — creator of the area's famed Integratron (a midcentury structure used today for sound baths) — also were drawn to the



Momoa



Above: Mane Street in Pioneertown. "To step out of the chaos of the city and all that noise ... it's amazing," says artist Jessie Keylon, who moved to the area in 2016 from Thousand Oaks and started a gallery. Right: Pioneertown's Red Dog Saloon opened in 1946 and reopened in 2020.



desert's legendary "vibrations." Musician **Gram Parsons** died of an overdose at the Joshua Tree Inn in 1973, only to have his cohorts burn his body in the desert.

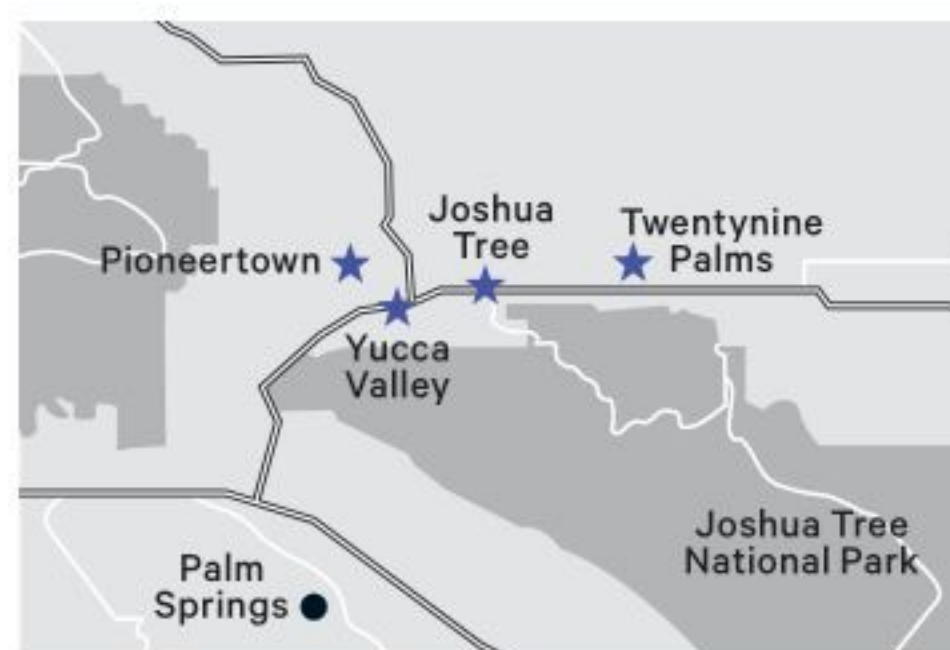
In recent years, music producers have flocked to the High Desert, building compounds that often feel like a *Mad Max* summer camp. They include the famous Rancho de la Luna Studio, built in 1993, which has hosted everyone from **Queens of the Stone Age** to **Iggy Pop**.

Today, Joshua Tree (with a year-round population of about 7,500),

nearby Pioneertown (roughly 400) and the surrounding areas are in the midst of a land-buying boom, mostly driven by creative L.A. city slickers eager for a simpler life — and revenue from Airbnb. "I've seen land prices go up six- or sevenfold every couple of years," says **Mike French**, who along with his brother **Matt** has owned the historic Pioneertown Motel since 2014.

Adds broker **Bryan Wynwood** of Joshua Tree Modern, "I've been extraordinarily busy for five years." His clientele has become more and more affluent as Hollywood A-listers and heavy hitters have escaped to the desert, pushing prices out of many old-timers' reach. "It's not like the entertainment industry just discovered us yesterday," he says. "Designers and grips have been out here for 20 years."

However, many of these folks would be unable to afford their homes today. "Ten years ago, this was a heavily depressed market with countless houses under \$100,000. Some of those houses, if carefully remodeled with high aesthetic value, are [now] selling for over \$400,000," Wynwood



INVISIBLE: BRIAN ASHBY/HAWK; BLACK: COURTESY OF HOMESTEAD MODERN; CASITA: COURTESY OF RICH & SARA; COMBS SALOON: JENNIFER CAPPUCCIO/MAHER/ZUMA PRESS/NEWSCOM; MANE: IRFAN KHAN/LOS ANGELES TIMES VIA GETTY IMAGES; MOMOA: STEVE GRANITZ/WIREIMAGE; LETO: KEVIN MAZUR/GETTY IMAGES FOR THE MET MUSEUM/VOGUE



1 Now listed on Airbnb for \$2,661 a night, the Invisible House includes a 100-foot indoor pool. The design was inspired by Mies van der Rohe skyscrapers and the monoliths of Stanley Kubrick movies.
 2 Hawk and Mesa, a two-bedroom house by architect Jeremy Levine and available for rent through Homestead Modern, is set on 120 acres. From \$749 a night, homesteadmodern.com
 3 The two-bedroom Black Desert House (featuring floor-to-ceiling windows and a disappearing-edge pool) in Yucca Valley also is part of the Homestead Modern portfolio, from \$2,400 a night.
 4 The Joshua Tree House Casita, a 1958 two-bedroom rental; \$328 a night, thejoshuatreehouse.com



explains. According to stats supplied by **Marcelle Dunn** of Century 21 Showcase, the median listing price for a four-plus-bedroom home in Joshua Tree is now about \$920,000. Among those who own homes in the area are Facebook exec **Matt Jacobson** and producer **Tim Disney**.

In 2011, 1.4 million people visited Joshua Tree National Park, a favorite rock-climbing spot for the likes of **Jared Leto** and **Jason Momoa**. By 2019, park tourism had more than doubled, reaching nearly 3 million.

Dunn partially credits the tourism spike to the rise of social media. "**Beyoncé** and **Jay-Z** had a video [2014's *Run*], **Miley Cyrus** posted a picture — boom," she says. "We're getting out of L.A.; we're going to Joshua Tree. It's a thing to do. We're hashtagging it." Others credit **Paul McCartney's** surprise performance at the legendary Pioneertown music venue Pappy & Harriet's in 2016 and U2's album *The Joshua Tree* back in 1987 for increasing the area's visibility.

The architectural freedom offered by the desert has proved

a powerful lure to hemmed-in cosmopolitans. "People build cabins as well as 5,000-square-foot masterpieces," says French. There is also the enticement of renting out these homes. According to the website AirDNA, there are 927 active rentals in Joshua Tree.

New to the rental market is the astounding Invisible House, a long-mirrored residence designed by Hanley and architect **Tomas Osinski** that looks like a horizontal



Leto

glass tower. Noted L.A. architect **Jeremy Levine** recently completed Hawk and Mesa, a vacation home built out of recycled lumber in historic Pipes Canyon outside of Pioneertown.

Hospitality company Homestead Modern offers 40-plus short-term rental properties in a 20-mile radius around Joshua Tree National Park, with prices ranging from less than \$250 a night to more than \$3,000. "We offer luxury bath, body and bedding products like you find in finer hotels. We also have a team that acts as a High Desert concierge to bring experiences in-home, ranging from stocking a kitchen to arranging private chefs, private yoga instructors, massages and sound baths," says Homestead Modern founder **Dave McAdam**.

The pandemic has supercharged interest in the area. "Anyone who was thinking of moving out here

just pulled the trigger," French says. Those looking for homes or land can expect a highly competitive seller's market. According to **Madelaine LaVoie** of Cherie Miller and Associates, prices in the past year have gone up an astounding 30 percent, fueled in great part by buyers from L.A. "Joshua Tree has evolved in 12 months exponentially ... as an extension of L.A.," notes Hanley. Adds Dunn, "In the past six months, 75 percent of my clients are investors from L.A. looking to relocate or to live there indefinitely — now that they are working remotely for who knows how long."

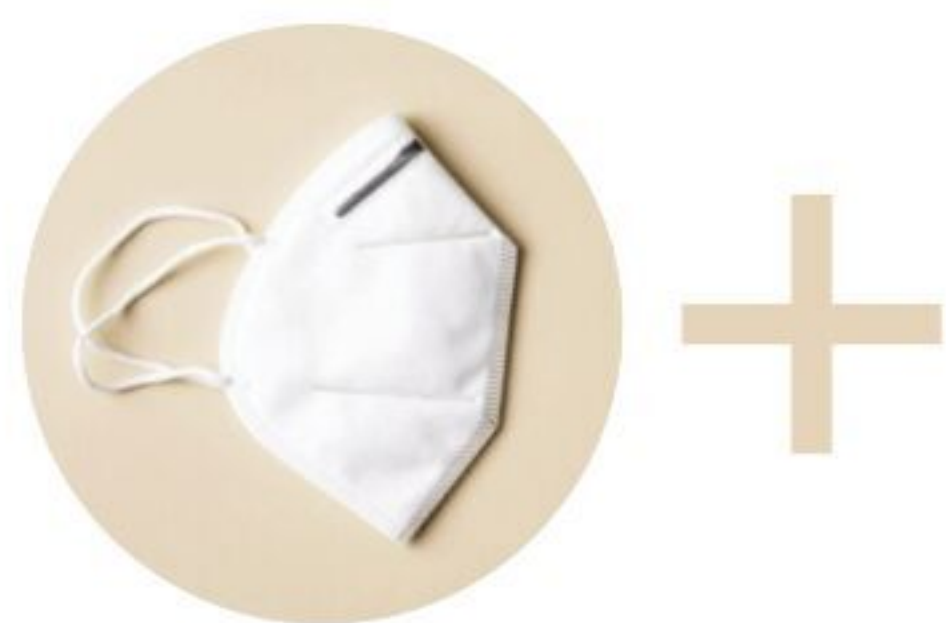
Not everyone is so happy with the influx of city dwellers, especially those who are buying up land for short-term rentals. "If I am being honest, I am a bit disgusted with how much of Pioneertown has changed since I got here," Gentry says. "The majority of people who move here are aiming to make a buck, not to get away from it all."

But for many exhausted urbanites, the desert offers a tantalizing space to reimagine their lives. "You know someone who's been in L.A., who's been a producer and they've been working like crazy — they don't like it anymore," Levine says. "They don't like that lifestyle, so they say 'I'm going to go out there and I'm going to open a cool coffee shop, a pottery store, it doesn't matter. I'll just be an artist.'" **VIVA**



Style

Fashion



Doubling Up in Style

By Laurie Brookins

Face coverings continue to top the list of must-have accessories for 2021, especially with the CDC's Feb. 10 recommendation to combine a cloth mask with a medical mask for maximum COVID-19 protection. With MSNBC's **Tiffany Cross**, **Kerry Washington** and Secretary of Transportation **Pete Buttigieg** all rocking double masks, designers from L.A. to Italy are offering options in everything from signature logo prints to remnant fabrics to maximize sustainability.



Pete Buttigieg



Jennifer Lopez



Tiffany Cross



CFDA x Mara Hoffman

A three-mask set (including this Hoffman print) benefits the British Fashion Council Foundation Fashion Fund and Council of Fashion Designers of America diversity, equity and inclusivity programming; \$18, bagofethics.org



The Great

The L.A. label's double-layer cotton masks are made from remnant fabrics. With every purchase, one is donated to Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center; \$12, at The Great, West Hollywood, and thisisthegreat.com



Tory Burch

The designer's mask set of five seasonal prints directs \$10 to pandemic research at UC Berkeley's Innovative Genomics Institute and the Tory Burch Foundation; \$35, at Tory Burch, Beverly Hills, and toryburch.com



Tadashi Shoji

The Lylah mask is made in L.A. of floral-embroidered lace and features a pocket opening for a filter; \$42, tadashishoji.com



Tom Ford

Tonal non-medical mask is made in Italy of jersey knit with the Tom Ford logo in silk jacquard; \$95, tomford.com



Black Halo

The Stretch Techno lined mask in Sherbert Blossom is made in L.A. and features a removable matching neck strap; \$35, blackhalo.com



Trina Turk

Zorah mask in Boca Chica Floral Duponi print is made in the U.S. of remnant fabrics in cotton, viscose and Lycra; \$24, at Trina Turk, Palm Springs, and trinaturk.com



Balmain

Ivory and black cotton-knit mask is made in France and features the Balmain monogram; \$295, balmain.com



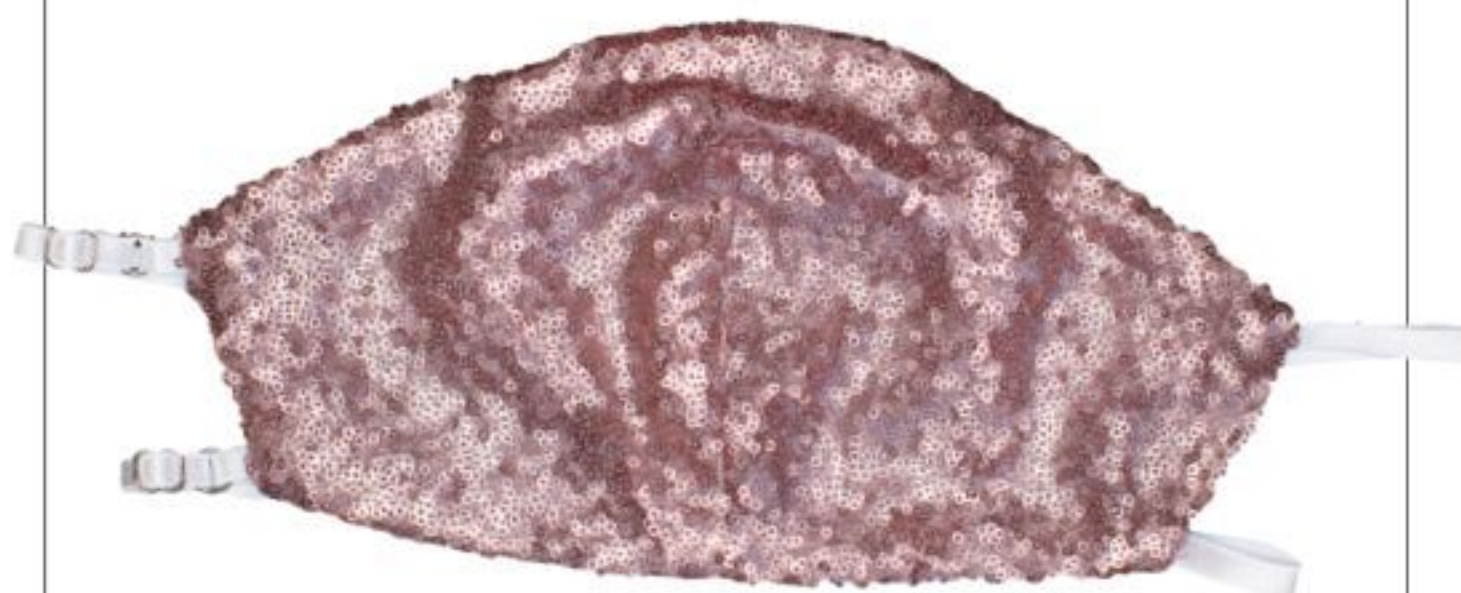
Louis Vuitton

Virgil Abloh's LV Friends mask features playful illustrations on Louis Vuitton's iconic Monogram print and comes with a bandana and drawstring pouch; \$490, louisvuitton.com



House of Bijan

Matching the label's tie prints, limited-edition silk masks are handcrafted in Italy and come with two washable liners; \$465, at House of Bijan, Beverly Hills, and bijan.com



Katie May Neu

Jennifer Lopez has been spotted in the sequined Disco Ball masks made in Los Angeles by this bridal designer; \$26, katiemay.com



Monique Lhuillier

Made in L.A., this all-cotton mask is crafted in the Tuileries print that's become popular with Lhuillier's bridal clients; \$25, at Monique Lhuillier, L.A., and moniquelhuillier.com

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‘
YOU GIVE US
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WE’RE GOING
TO KICK
IT ALL THE
WAY OPEN
,’

REGINA KING IN CONVERSATION WITH GINA PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD

WITH *ONE NIGHT IN MIAMI* THRUSTING
KING INTO THE AWARDS CONVERSATION,
SHE WRESTLES WITH HER AMBITION,
HER SUCCESS AND HOW BEST
TO USE HER MEGAPHONE

PHOTOGRAPHED BY MATT SAYLES

"Once the pandemic hit, I had a little pout session," says Regina King of viewers not being able to see her directorial debut in theaters as she'd intended. She was photographed Jan. 14 at The Paramour Estate in Silver Lake.

Styling by Wayman Bannerman + Micah McDonald
Alberta Ferretti coat and shorts, Paris Texas boots, Bulgari ear cuff and ring, Cartier earrings and bracelets.



T

here was no pre-Zoom huddle about wardrobe, yet fellow filmmakers Regina King and Gina Prince-Bythewood both pipe in virtually on an early February afternoon, sporting sweatshirts embossed with phrases appropriate to the conversation they would have.

Prince-Bythewood's reads: "A credit to my people." King's: "Ambition."

"We've got to remind ourselves," says Prince-Bythewood, from her home in Los Angeles.

"Exactly," offers the *One Night in Miami* director, also in L.A., before borrowing a line from renowned writer James Baldwin: "Our crown has already been bought and paid for, all we have to do is wear it."

Prince-Bythewood, 51, has ostensibly signed on to interview King, 50, an Oscar- and Emmy-winning actress turned first-time feature director with the Amazon Studios drama, but it very quickly becomes a back-and-forth about everything from the politics of ambition to the challenges of raising Black sons. The two have known each other casually for years — in fact, it was the *Old Guard* director who recommended King's *One Night in Miami* director of photography, Tami Reiker — but they've grown considerably closer during the pandemic. They're both a part of what is now a standing Saturday Zoom gathering with an enviable group of Black female artists who converse about anything and everything, according to its participants.

Still, the opportunity for something a little more intimate presented itself on this day because, once again, King has been thrust into the awards conversation. After more than three decades in front of the camera, her breakthrough came with back-to-back roles in 2018's *If Beale Street Could Talk* and 2019's *Watchmen*, which earned King her first Oscar and fourth Emmy, respectively, and the full attention of the industry. She followed up by moving behind the lens, directing an adaptation of Kemp Powers' stage imagining of conversations among four prominent Black men — Cassius Clay, Jim Brown, Sam Cooke and Malcolm X — for Amazon. Her deft handling of the material scored widespread praise and could, if all goes right, make her the first Black female directing nominee at April's Academy Awards.

So, fittingly, Prince-Bythewood, whose other directorial credits include *Love & Basketball* and *Beyond the Lights*, kicked off the hourlong chat with a discussion of Black excellence. — LACEY ROSE

GINA PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD It's interesting that you're wearing that shirt because it's one of the first things I wanted to talk about. I don't know if you saw it, but Serena Williams just dropped that incredible flex ...

REGINA KING I didn't.

PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD OK, so, she's going through her trophy room, and first of all there's so many that she's trying to remember, "Wait, how many French Opens did I win?" And then there was a second-place trophy, and she's like, "Ah, nope, no second place in here, we don't do second place," which is my mentality, no doubt. For the last couple of years, you've

been humming at this different level, and it's always been building to that, but I want to know, do you feel that? That you are touching greatness right now?

KING I guess I have a hard time with phrases like that. Because what is that? It's subjective. There are moments that I feel like I've always been great. (*Laughs.*) And then there are moments that I feel like there's no such thing as greatness being a certain thing. Sometimes I look at people like Serena or Beyoncé, and I don't understand how you can actually sleep and be able to put out what they put out. Like, how do you have the time to be you?



PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD

PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD Mm-hm.

KING Then I think of people like Chadwick Boseman, and I'm like, "He's the best of who we are, I mean, as human beings." It almost feels like that is a whole other level of [greatness] because his heart was just so big and he managed to live so selflessly. I remember the last time I saw him and knowing now what he knew then and how he was able to make me feel like the most special person in that moment, that working with me would be at the top of his list.

PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD Wow.

KING And after we finished talking, how he just stopped and held my hand and looked into my eyes,

and in that moment, he made me feel so special. And to have a heart big enough to do that, knowing that I'm probably not going to see him again, is a level of selflessness that I do know. So, back to your original question of do I realize that I am operating on a level that feels comparable to what greatness may look like, I guess I don't know.

PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD I rarely use the word "great" ...

KING Yeah, I know. (*Laughs.*)

PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD But the other thing is, any time any of us, as Black women, even speak of it — I mean, think about Serena, who said early in her career, "I want to be number one," and people came at her hard.

KING Hard.

PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD And said she was arrogant. But there's nothing wrong with that ambition. That ambition is good. And for what we do, the difference between good and great is miniscule. And it's those who take it, just do the little extra. And so, with Chadwick, his extra was his heart and selflessness. And I know I'm throwing a big word on you, but for those of us on the outside, it's a special thing to watch because you now have an assumption of greatness. When you do something, we are assuming it's going to be up here (*holds her hand high*), which is pressure, of course — and some run away from that kind of pressure and let it crush them, but you seem to thrive on that.

KING Yeah. I feel like just as Black women, we are so conditioned to not feel that it's OK to want to be great. Hence how I came into my whole response when you asked that question. But also, something I find often with Black women is that you give us a little window, we're going to kick it all the way open and take that moment. And sometimes it can be perceived as taking all the air out of the room or, "Wow, she is so big, she's so [loud]." But it's also the very thing that makes us unique; it's the history of what the Black woman has had to endure that has become part of our DNA. So when you see that window just crack open, you push through.

PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD Yeah.

KING I know you come from a



Left: King on set with Eli Goree (as Cassius Clay) for her feature directorial debut, *One Night in Miami*. Above: Goree in the film.

PREVIOUS SPREAD: HAIR BY LARRY SIMS AT FORWARD ARTISTS; MAKEUP BY LATRICE JOHNSON; THIS SPREAD: MIAMI; PAT TTI PERRIER/AMAZON STUDIOS (2); PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD: PHILLIP FARONE/GETTY IMAGES.

Says King, "As Black women, we are so conditioned not to feel that it's OK to want to be great."



family that also embraces and celebrates being a Black woman, but when you go out of the comfort of your family, of your own home, Black women are the least celebrated human beings on the planet. So, when you hear people [say], "Well, why are they excluding other people out of the conversation or out of that praise or another person is not worthy of that praise, too?" We're not saying that, it's just that you have never praised us, so we've got to create a space that's just for us because no one seems to want to include us in theirs, even though, going back to history, we've taken care of other people's children after we've had our children taken away. There is something very powerful about the love that a Black woman provides. And that is the DNA we're connected to.

PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD And all of us at some point are looking in the mirror and hating what we see because of what we've been pushed and taught. You get those questions often, like, "Knowing what you know now, what would you tell your 16-year-old self?" But the fight that I have to tell our stories and center us in our stories, knowing how fucking hard it is, and to sit in these rooms with people sitting across from me telling me that they don't get it or the stories don't matter, I'm fighting for that little 16-year-old girl. I feel like I've been in a sustained fight for 25 years in this industry.

KING Oh yeah.

PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD And of course, I've had great victories, but with that, there's some soul-crushing shit that went into it, too. There's so few of us who have been able to crack through. And as you said, when that little crack is there, it's not just pushing through that with all our weight but then holding it open and reaching back and making sure more of us can get through there.

KING It's such a delicate line to walk because you don't want to express what you feel in a way that it deters people from wanting to actually listen or be an ally. I find myself constantly thinking as I'm talking to make sure I'm choosing my words wisely and still being honest to myself. Because I understand that in

order for us to actually witness a change in our lifetime, we have to express how we feel, who we are, but also do it with grace so that we can receive all of the different people who are needed to truly make that shift happen.

PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD Listen, I haven't reached greatness yet, but I always reach for it. And we've got to have that mentality. We have to show up, and we can't fail so that others can come after us. And it's interesting because I said that in an interview, and I got pushback that that sounded a little arrogant. And again, it was that thing of people not understanding what it is for us to navigate this industry. You have to be everything. You have to be graceful, you have to fight. ... You're like a shark.

KING (*Hums Jaws theme.*)

PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD Who's your crew? The people who will watch your stuff, who will be honest with you, who will champion you when you need it?

KING My mother, my son and my sister are those people. My sister, Reina, is in the industry, but she's

Left: Picking up the best actress Emmy for HBO's *Watchmen*, King honored Breonna Taylor and urged viewers to vote. Right: Accepting her Oscar for *If Beale Street Could Talk*.



keeping it real. And my mother is definitely grounding, always pushing me to dig a little deeper emotionally. And then my son, Ian, he's 25, but in some ways he's 12 and in other ways he's 92. (*Laughs.*) So I have a really strong triad that helps me to hold myself accountable and be honest with how I'm feeling in the moment. Because sometimes I feel myself trying to push the emotion down. During the pandemic, I've discovered just how much pushing the emotion down away, protecting myself, that I've been doing — I

don't think I've cried more since I was probably 14. It's been cathartic in a lot of ways.

PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD So much of what I do, too, is influenced by my sons and how they view me. I want them to be proud of me — to be able to brag about their mom. You used the word “grounding,” and that's them because they're so honest. I was more scared to show them *The Old Guard* than anyone. What if they were like, “This is corny, Mom, your action sucks”? Also, so much of what we do is being away from them. And so, if I'm going to be away, it's got to mean something, it's got to be about something.

KING A thousand percent. Ian has seen three or four cuts of *One Night in Miami*, and I remember the first time I was like, “So the color hasn't been done, this is just my first [cut] ...” And then I was like, “I can't believe I am doing all of these disclaimers to this child.” (*Laughs.*) But what he thought meant so much. So often you're asked, “What do you want your legacy to be?” And I'm like, “I don't fucking know. I'm trying to get through Tuesday.” But I guess that's what you want: You want your young men to be proud of you because, in a lot of ways, they are your legacy. And if they are taking pride in you and what you're putting out there, that's going to transfer to how they move in life.

PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD Right. I was offered something before *Old Guard*, I'm not going to say the name of it, but it was a famous book, and the first one made a ton of money. And they came at me hard, and I kept turning it down because I just didn't respect [the material]. But they kept coming

with more money and more money, and I was really saddened when my older son was like, “Mom, you can't turn that down. You see how much money that is.” I was like, “Oh my God, where did I go wrong? Don't you see the projects I have done, there is nothing in this realm. I couldn't even take you to the premiere of this because I'd be embarrassed.” So clearly I need to do a little more work. (*Laughs.*) But hopefully the fact that he saw what I turned down settled in because he wants to do music, and I need him to have that same mentality of, you're putting something into the world, you should have something to say. You can't put out bullshit even though I know you're 19 and you're still trying to find your voice. I'm hoping I've imparted enough that you do understand that what we do with our pen and our camera has so much power.

KING Ian is in music as well. He's producing songs and he's written lyrics for other people, but now he's finally starting to write his own lyrics and actually singing.

PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD Wow.
KING Yeah, which has been really interesting — watching him finding himself, and he still is. And with some lyrics he'd written, I was like, “Whoa, whoa.” But that's [as his] mom, so I have to go, “OK, pause, take it in. He is expressing what he is feeling right now in this moment, and his expression, his passion, his feelings should not be squelched.” It was a good lesson for me to step back and not be a mom and all, “Oh my God, you're going to put that out there?” Like, no, listen to what he's saying. It's not easy being 20-something going through heartbreak. I've been there before, girl. (*Laughs.*)

“You know I am never going to stop being an actress,” says King. “I like to act the fool too much.”



PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD And in the way that we bring our lens to our work, that is what our boys are doing. I'm not living his life; I'm not going through life as a 19-year-old Black man in this time. For me, it wasn't until *The Old Guard* where journalists asked me about what my Black female lens means. Do you feel you are bringing that to your work? And as a director, do you feel like your Black female lens brings something totally different?

KING I've been asked that question as well, Gina, and you know how I've answered it? "Absolutely. But what my Black female brings to it is different than what Gina's Black female lens brings to it." We could tell a story that could be about the same subject matter but be a different perspective. So, when I get hit with that question, I challenge that person to understand that: one, you would never ask a white male director that question; and two, that that is the reason why we need more [of us]. So many stories are told through the white male gaze — they feel so familiar all the time because we've gotten all of their different perspectives. We've gotten more different white male perspectives than we've gotten different Black female perspectives or different Asian male perspectives. It is unfair to try to put Gina and Regina in the same box just because we are both Black and female.

PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD I don't know what it is going to take for the industry to understand we are not a monolith. But the one thing I get excited about as these years progress — and again, the numbers when you really think about it are still dismal — is just the different types of movies, the diversity of subject matter and voices and lenses that we're starting to see. That's what's exciting to me. I think about the movie *Miss Juneteenth*. I don't know if you saw it.

KING I haven't gotten a chance yet.

PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD [Channing Godfrey Peoples] brought me into this world that I had no idea existed, this Southern Black beauty pageant. But it was that that was so exciting: I could've never made that movie, whereas *Love & Basketball* was my life, so

I was able to bring that. And *One Night in Miami*, yes, it's about four Black men, but it's about so much more than that. Give me just one thing that proved the importance of you being in the director's chair for that movie?

KING When I read the script, I saw my son in these conversations. I could hear him and his Black friends. Growing up, I definitely had more Black friends than anything else. Sure, I had white friends and a couple Mexican friends, but the majority of my friends were Black. And for my son, it's like the rainbow coalition, his friends. And when he was younger, he was always paying attention to our conversations,

and he asked me, "Why when you guys talk" — you guys being adults — "do you always have to ask what color someone was?" And I was just like, "Wow, OK," and I said, "because it helps to put things in context." He didn't know what I meant, and I tried to explain it, but he really didn't get it. He was around 11 or 12 at that time. In high school is when he started to understand and see it in context. Around the 11th grade, his rainbow coalition started to shift to be more Black.

PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD Yes.

KING And it was because certain things were happening in conversations that were making him go, "Woo, OK, this doesn't

THE RISE (AND RISE) OF REGINA KING

Before settling in behind the camera, King built a career that brought her Emmy and Oscar gold

1985
227 →

King's Hollywood career began as a teen, when she landed a starring role as Marla Gibbs' daughter, Brenda, on the hit 1980s sitcom *227* (right), which aired for five seasons on NBC.



seasons of the underrated cop drama from John Wells. She also made her directorial debut on the show, helming an episode in 2013.

break from playing "mom" characters.

1991

Boyz n the Hood
Eager to break out of the sitcom mold, King scored a role in John Singleton's 1991 drama *Boyz n the Hood*. "I knew I was so much more than Brenda, and I just needed an opportunity to show it," King has said.

2015
American Crime
She appeared in all three seasons of John Ridley's ABC anthology drama, *American Crime*, winning back-to-back Emmys for her work.

2019

Watchmen
With the mega-hit *Watchmen* (below), King proved her leading-lady chops, picking up a fourth Emmy for her star turn as police officer Angela "Sister Night" Abar. It was her second collaboration with showrunner Damon Lindelof, with whom she'd worked on *The Leftovers*.

1996

Jerry Maguire
At 25, she played Cuba Gooding Jr.'s shrewd, supportive, tough-talking wife in the 1996 hit *Jerry Maguire*. "I saw that this was the time to be looked at as a woman, not as this girl," King has since said.

2018
If Beale Street Could Talk
King earned her first Oscar for her stirring performance in Barry Jenkins' 2018 film, *If Beale Street Could Talk*. Ironically, the role came along shortly after King had told her agent she wanted to take a



2009
Southland
King played a detective on five

feel right." Certain things that some of the white boys would say that he was like, "Yo, you shouldn't feel comfortable saying that." And the fact that they were made him feel like, "OK, well, I am clearly doing something that is misleading because they think that that can actually come out of their mouths." And then his first time getting pulled over, having that experience. And don't get me wrong, he still has friends of all colors, but he started to see some nights it needed to just be me and my brothers. And so having witnessed that journey for him, I could hear that these were possible conversations they were having. And they were conversations I know my father and my uncle were having. But also, me, being a celebrity, I could relate to the conversations from a space of, "What is your social responsibility supposed to be when you have a platform? Am I Black enough? Am I too Black?" Just having those conversations with, like, Tisha [Campbell] and Tichina [Arnold], and I mention them because they are the ones I've known the longest in this business — since we were teenagers. So, I really connected to [the script] on an emotional level, and when I met Kemp [Powers], the first thing I said was, "I feel like this is a love letter to the Black man." And he was like, "You get it."

PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD I've said it before, but I loved the film.

KING Thank you, sis.

PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD I love that you did it, and I know we don't do it for [this], but I love the love that's coming at you and the respect for you as a director. You made this jump, and obviously you've been [directing] TV, but this was a jump, and it never felt like a leap — it felt like just a step that you took. I'm just incredibly proud of you, but I also feel like, "Uh-oh, did I miss my chance for us to work together?"

KING Oh no girl, it's got to happen. You know I am never going to stop being an actress. I like to act the fool too much. (Laughs.)

PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD All right, good, I'm writing now ...

Conversation edited for length and clarity.

"If I'm being honest, I felt relieved to not have to ask a single Black person to go to a movie theater and risk their life to see my damn movie." Kemp Powers
Photographed by Sami Drasin
on Jan. 5 in Los Angeles

'You're different.'

RADHA BLANK
EMERALD FENNELL
SAM LEVINSON
KEMP POWERS
AARON SORKIN





We want to work with you'

Five top screenwriters on the struggle and satisfaction of finding their voice, harnessing their power and fighting to get their stories to screen

By Scott Feinberg

"I wanted to look at what happens when seduction culture isn't seduction culture, it's abuse – and also make it funny."
Emerald Fennell | Photographed remotely by Sami Drasin on Jan. 8 in London

Ask a collection of celebrated screenwriters if they've found it harder to get work done during this crazy time, and any subsequent confusion can be forgiven.

"Are you talking about COVID? Are you talking about the insurrection? Are you talking about *everything*?" asks *The Trial of the Chicago 7*'s Aaron Sorkin, one of five convened via Zoom for *The Hollywood Reporter*'s Writer Roundtable on Jan. 12, less than a week after the U.S. Capitol was raided.

"Take your pick," offers Radha Blank, writer, director and star of *The Forty-Year-Old Version*. Blank's found herself in an ongoing struggle to come up with new ideas during the past year. "People who look like me aren't making it out there, and I can't help but see myself in them and their experience, whether it's COVID or Black Lives Matter," she says. "So, there were times when I felt, if I'm being completely honest, a little self-indulgent to be thinking about making film."

By contrast, Sam Levinson conceived of, wrote, directed and released his film *Malcolm & Marie* entirely during the pandemic. His TV series, HBO's *Euphoria*, had shut down filming in early March, and he and the show's star, Zendaya, were eager to get back to work. Their early lockdown conversation, per Levinson, ended with him saying: "If I can write something, and we can do this in a safe manner where we're quarantining, then maybe we could take what we've learned and share it with the rest of the community."

Over the course of an hour, the trio — along with Kemp Powers, who adapted his own play, *One Night in Miami*, and co-wrote and co-directed Pixar's *Soul*; and Emerald Fennell, the writer-director of *Promising Young Woman* — dove into a wide-ranging conversation about the benefits of helming their own work, the complicated emotions of shifting to a streamer and the politics of who can (and should) tell what story.

All of you, save Sam, embarked on these films assuming people were going to see them on the big screen. How have you processed that not being possible?

KEMP POWERS We're really lucky that we have a device to get *Soul* out to people the way that Disney+ allows us to do it. I don't ever want to seem like I'm being thankless, but, at the same time, we made it to be on a big screen.

SAM LEVINSON I know it's not the way it was intended to be seen, Kemp, but being able to sit in bed with my 4-year-old and my wife on New Year's Eve and watch *Soul*, and to pause it and talk it through with my 4-year-old, who had so many questions and was so in awe of it, was such an unusual and beautiful experience that I think made the film more profound for him and for me as a father.

POWERS If I'm being completely honest, I felt relieved, considering that Black people are inordinately affected by COVID, to not have to ask a single Black person to go to a movie theater and risk their life to see my damn movie.

Aaron, your film was originally set up at Paramount, but ended up with Netflix. How did that happen?

AARON SORKIN Back in the spring, I was on a call with Jim Gianopulos, the head of Paramount, and at the end Jim said, "Listen, we've done some market research to try to find out when people are going to come back to movie theaters. The first group of people that are going to come back are people who think that COVID is a hoax." I agreed with Jim that chances are the Idaho militia was not going to show up for the film on its

opening weekend, and that we might be in trouble. We wanted the film to come out before the election, not because we thought we could persuade anybody or affect the election in any way, but because right now is when we're talking about these things. So Jim said, "Should we check out what the streamers' appetite for the film would be?" And Netflix came along and made an offer.

Emerald, you took an uncommon path to your first screenplay.

EMERALD FENNEL My first job out of university was acting, and quite quickly I realized I was going to have a lot of time off. (*Laughs.*) I was on a TV show in England [*Call the Midwife*], and in the hiatus every year I wrote a book. The first two were horror for kids, that famously popular genre. The most recent was a dark comedy for adults. So I was doing those two things alongside each other, and then an amazing writer named Jessica Knappett read my most recent book and asked me to come work on her TV series [*Drifters*], and it went from there. But I've always written more than anything, ever since I was small, and always horrifically violent. There was lots of my parents being called into offices asking if I was OK.

POWERS Wow.

FENNEL I realized that if I really wanted to make something, I needed to make it — not just write it, but direct it too. And in order to do that, I made a short film [*Careful How You Go*]. That went to Sundance in 2018. And it was off the back of that that I was able to convince people I could direct *Promising Young Woman*.



RADHA BLANK
The Forty-Year-Old Version



EMERALD FENNEL
Promising Young Woman



SAM LEVINSON
Malcolm & Marie



KEMP POWERS
One Night in Miami / Soul



AARON SORKIN
The Trial of the Chicago 7



"I need four walls really badly. The idea of going outdoors scares me in a script." Aaron Sorkin
 Photographed by Peter Yang on Jan. 6 at the Four Seasons in Beverly Hills

Radha, what inspired the "Radha" in your film, and your decision to play her?

RADHA BLANK This is probably my first and last acting job — I have too much respect for actors to even call myself an actor. I'm playing myself, so even calling it a character — 75 percent of the film is real. We shot in my apartment. That is my annoying big brother. That's my father's music, my mom's artwork. It came out of adversity. I'd gotten fired off a film, and I wasn't necessarily a "young" writer, but I was new. I'd just gotten into the guild, and it was such a big deal that I get this screenwriting credit. I was devastated, but it gave me the fuel, like my

character, to create something that was my own. I was like, "I'm going to write, direct, produce and star in a web series so I can't get fired." Two weeks before we were going to shoot, my mom passed away. She and I were very close, and I scrapped the project because I was like, "If my biggest champion and cheerleader isn't here to see it, then I'm not interested." But I had created all this music on Garage Band, and I just started going out and performing it. I did that for two years — that was my catharsis. Then, when I came back to look at the web series, it felt like it was a millennial's platform, and that's when I started transforming it.

That's an example of a film about something deeply personal. Aaron, I don't believe that was your experience on *Chicago 7*.

SORKIN In 2006, I was asked to come to Steven Spielberg's house on a Saturday morning — and just to be clear, that's not common. He said he wanted to make a movie about the Chicago Seven. I said, "Sounds great. Count me in. It's a great idea." I left his house, called my father and asked him who the Chicago Seven were. I had a lot of learning to do. There are a dozen or so good books about the Chicago Seven, and there's a 21,000-page trial transcript. But most critically, I got to spend time with Tom Hayden [the activist played by Eddie Redmayne]. Eventually I wrote the script, which then went through the hands of every member of the DGA. Steven decided he was going to produce it but Paul Greengrass should direct it, so I was with Paul for a while. I was with Ben Stiller for a while. And others. But the movie kept not getting made. That kept going on until Trump ran for and got elected president. Steven said the time to make this movie was now. By then I had directed my first film, *Molly's Game*, and he was sufficiently pleased with it that he thought I should direct *Chicago 7*.

Is it purely coincidental that many of the best Sorkin scripts take us into a courtroom — *A Few Good Men*, your stage version of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and now this?

SORKIN Listen, I'm a playwright who kind of fakes his way through movies and TV shows, so things like *One Night in Miami* — plays that are movies — I love. They say if you're bringing home a new puppy, you should get a crate that's just big enough for the dog to be able to turn around in, but no bigger because those confines give the puppy a sense of security. They like being in that tight space. I'm the same way. I need four walls really badly. The idea of going outdoors scares me in a

script — you know, writing "EXT." scares me — so riots and violence and action was new territory for me. Also, in a courtroom the elements of drama are so clear. The intention and obstacle are clear. The stakes are clear. The jury is a stand-in for the audience — the jury knows as little as the audience does, so there's a reason for exposition. And the dynamic between a lawyer and a witness who's being cross-examined is the essence of drama.

POWERS I've got to challenge you, Scott, on his best scripts being courtroom dramas, because in terms of a model for how to do a biopic, I consider *Steve Jobs* the gold standard.

SORKIN Well, I really appreciate that — and I would like the rest of you to talk about what you like about my work, too. *(Laughs.)* But that was a really good example of the puppy crate. I didn't want to start with a little boy looking in the window of an electronics store and go through all of that, so I just got as small as I could. I said, "What if I just wrote a play with three real-time scenes, and they each take place in the 40 minutes before a product launch, backstage? And let's give him some intentions and obstacles."

POWERS I will be stealing that structure, just to make it official right here.

SORKIN I promise you, I didn't invent it, so have at it.

Kemp, you wrote the play *One Night in Miami* back in 2013, seven years before it became a screenplay.

POWERS When I wrote the play, I had no intention of ever adapting it into a film. Some of the things that Radha discusses in her film about being a Black playwright forced me to decide, "If I'm going to get this story out, I guess theater's not going to be the medium." Because people questioned the viability of that story as a play. That's the irony of seeing some critics say it's too much like a play as a movie. It's like, "Oh, you



"I know that as a white filmmaker, if I'm writing a Black character, there is going to be a little bit more scrutiny." Sam Levinson | Photographed by Damon Casarez on Jan. 6 in Los Angeles

must not have been there when it was a play." They said it wasn't worthy of being a play because "nothing happens in the room."

BLANK It's a loop.

POWERS I'm like, "No one ever saw *12 Angry Men*?" (Laughs.) I saw it as an opportunity to have this discussion that I think Black folks have been having since way before that night, and are still having now: "What, if any, social responsibility does the Black artist, singer or athlete have to his or her people?" And then translating it into a film? I didn't even want to option it, but the play hit walls and people didn't want to produce it because it wasn't "viable." We got nominated for an Olivier Award, but it didn't transfer to the West End. Even though you're

breaking records and selling out runs, the viability of your voice is questioned. I was moving into Hollywood and I was getting to the point where I felt like my screenwriting capabilities were good enough that I [figured], "I'll option it now if I get a chance to write it myself," because I also was concerned about what Hollywood would do to this story. There were people who were like, "You did it all wrong. The only person anyone cares about is Ali. No one knows who these other guys are." "Malcolm X is too controversial." You're told all these things by people who know so much more than you do, and it makes you question your own voice. Pete Docter hired me [for *Soul*] at Pixar after reading

my play *One Night in Miami*, so that thing that people said didn't work was the [same] thing that made what I saw as "the house of master storytelling" interested in my voice. They were like, "You're different. We want to work with you."

Emerald, I'm curious: Was *Promising Young Woman* inspired by the #MeToo movement?

FENNELL The #MeToo movement made people more open-minded about making something like this, a subversion of the revenge genre. But no, I started writing it a while before. I wanted to talk about a kind of gray area that was not a gray area, when I was growing up, in mainstream studio comedies: girls waking up

not knowing what happened to them the night before and going on a walk of shame, and guys filling up a girl's red cup at a college party because they need to lose their virginity. This is just stuff that happened. I wanted to look at what happens when "seduction culture" isn't seduction culture, it's abusive — and then also make it funny. For me, it was, "Well, if you're going to talk about this stuff, it not only needs to be deeply serious, but it needs to be accessible and it needs to be pleasurable to some degree, because that's part of its trap."

Sam, how did you decide to focus on a couple dealing with relationship problems while working in the same field?

LEVINSON I knew it had to be a movie that took place in one location with two actors, just for safety reasons, and I wanted it to be a relationship piece, so I thought, "What's a terrible thing that someone can do to their partner? Well, they could forget to thank them at the premiere of their film." Which is something that happened to me. I thought it was an interesting way to kick off this relationship. And then I thought, "Well, what if he forgot to thank her, but the movie was also based on her? What does that do? What does it mean when you're a writer and you're taking parts of someone else's life and not acknowledging them? What role does authorship play in it? How does that affect a relationship, the resentments?" I just kept trying to dig deeper into this fictional relationship.

One of the hot-button debates in this industry is about who can or should tell which stories. We saw it with Oscar winner *Green Book*, a film written and directed by white people that dealt with race in a way that some found problematic. More recently, there's been back and forth about an upcoming biopic about the Chinese concert pianist Lang Lang after it was

announced that Ron Howard was going to direct it. Some said, “How can Howard understand Lang Lang’s experience?” Lang Lang, I should note, is a producer on the film. I want to talk this through: It’s not always the most comfortable conversation, but I think it’s important. Radha, since gatekeepers are directly addressed in your film, can we start with you?

BLANK Sure. It’s not my decision who should tell what story. There was a time when I was performing a solo performance piece called *Happy Flower Nail* about all these different women in a Korean-owned nail salon in Brooklyn, and I played all the

characters — the Korean woman, the Jamaican lady — because when you’re inspired, when the calling comes on you to tell a story, you have this urgency around getting this thing out of you. I do think there are ways to tell other people’s stories responsibly. But if you’re going to do a story that is not germane to your culture, do your due diligence to make sure that people who are from that culture have a response to it.

Sam, did the fact that you, a white man, would be telling a story with two protagonists of color give you pause?

“I do think there are ways to tell other people’s stories responsibly. But do your due diligence.” Radha Blank
Photographed by Schaun Champion on Jan. 18 in Baltimore



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LEVINSON When I sat down to write this, I knew I was writing for [Zendaya]. And then I had to think about, “Who can go toe-to-toe with Z?” Because she’s such a formidable force, I can’t have someone who’s got, like, a boyish sensibility, because she would snap that person like a twig. And so the only person I could think of was John David Washington. I knew his work. His sister Katia is someone I’ve worked with as a producer. And he was the only voice that I heard. So now I was sitting down to write a story about a filmmaker and his partner, and he’s a Black filmmaker in Hollywood. I try to take something that feels true to me and honest to me and put it into a character, and I have faith that throughout the process of going over the script, reading it and rehearsing it, that whatever doesn’t feel true, whatever doesn’t work, whatever it might be, we’re going to figure that out in the room. I know that as a white filmmaker, a Jewish filmmaker, if I’m writing a Black character, there is going to be a little bit more scrutiny, and I’m good with that because I’m good with the process. And I knew going into it that I had two great actors, but I also had two great producers in them, and a lot of different voices.

Kemp, how did Pixar first broach the idea of working with you on *Soul*? Your association evolved.

POWERS It was a 12-week writing assignment that turned into several years of my life. This is a really complex issue. Of course, the internet and social media are always going to take things

to the point of extreme outrage. If you listen to them, then I, and most Black filmmakers, aren’t even “Black enough” to do “Black movies.” To me, what’s important is that there are just opportunities created. It was not very long ago — I’m talking, like, 24 months ago — that it was very easy to get away with telling any story about any group of people if you’re white, and not having anyone from that group involved in any way, shape or form, and having zero accountability. That’s fucked up.

BLANK Yeah.

POWERS Now, I think the desire of some people to overcorrect for that makes them say, “If it’s not a Black writer and director and producer, then it doesn’t work.” And it’s like, “Slow your roll on that one, too.” But that’s the place that it’s actually coming from. I came on board *Soul* two years into the film’s development, so the question people should be asking is, “Wow, with no Black people involved, you guys [worked on] the film for *two years* before a discussion even started about inviting a Black artist in?” Now, once I got in and started working, it quickly became clear to my collaborators how valuable my presence was — and I have to say, not just for the Black characters. That’s the other thing the internet will do — they’ll make it seem like everything in *Soul* with Black people Kemp did, and everything else Pete did. The reality is there’s no scene in that film that me, Mike [Jones] and Pete didn’t write or rewrite.

Conversation edited for length and clarity.

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The
Hunters

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BY
TATIANA SIEGEL



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WITH THEIR EXPLOSIVE NEW HBO DOCUSERIES *ALLEN V. FARROW*,
AMY ZIERING AND **KIRBY DICK** CONTINUE THEIR LONGTIME
MISSION OF AGGRESSIVELY PURSUING MORE EVIDENCE TO HOLD
ALLEGED SEXUAL PREDATORS TO ACCOUNT

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"Kirby and Amy are willing to tackle the biggest monsters and are scared of nothing," says *Allen v. Farrow* executive producer Dan Cogan of directors Amy Ziering (left) and Kirby Dick (below). The filmmakers were photographed Feb. 6 in L.A. Right (from left): Woody Allen, Dylan Farrow, Mia Farrow and Ronan Farrow circa 1992.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY RYAN PFLUGER

Amy Ziering and Kirby Dick are locked in a battle of wills during a music session with a group of editors in early February. The directors are wrestling over a key moment in the four-and-a-half-hour docuseries *Allen v. Farrow* when the titular Mia Farrow confronts a chillingly calm Woody Allen during a never-before-heard phone conversation recorded by Allen back in 1992. Farrow launches in about their 7-year-old daughter Dylan's claims that he molested her.



"I just don't like the piano, the constant piano. It makes it sort of workaday," says Dick. "Remember the tone, what we came from. Things are happening, and then you go to a phone call, which is much more intimate. But the same instrument is doing the same thing. Would it be weird to pull out the piano and bring back the violins, the strings?"

Ziering counters, "It's good, Kirby. Let's move on. Let's agree to disagree."

The Zoom session grows more heated as Dick pushes back, enlisting editor and writer Mikaela Shwer in his defense. But Ziering's got supervising editor Sara Newens in her corner. "It's actually stunning. It's perfection. What am I missing? What is your issue? I don't even understand," says Ziering. "I'm going to die on this hill. Sorry."

The filmmakers reach a stalemate and agree to revisit the issue later. After all, the clock is ticking. In just two and a half weeks, the explosive *Allen v. Farrow* will launch on HBO, and the pair is racing to the finish line on a project they've made in secret over the past three years. Beginning Feb. 21 and airing in hourlong installments over four consecutive Sundays, the series offers plenty of bombshells, including the allegation that Allen and Soon-Yi Previn, the adopted daughter of Farrow and late musician André Previn, were in a sexual relationship while she was still in high school, and the holy grail of the Farrow-Allen narrative — never-before-seen video shot by Farrow of young Dylan recounting the alleged abuse. Allen has maintained that he never molested Dylan. The doc marks the first time Farrow has publicly discussed her former partner and collaborator in decades

Mia Farrow
(center) with her
children (from left)
Daisy, Fletcher,
Soon-Yi, and Lark,
circa early 1970s.



and features Ronan Farrow, who once tried to dissuade his sister from participating.

Long before #MeToo punctured the Hollywood consciousness, the documentarians tackled the powerful, among them Harvard Law School for 2015's Emmy-nominated campus rape doc *The Hunting Ground* and the Pentagon for *The Invisible War*, an exposé on sexual assault in the military that was nominated for an Oscar in 2013 and won two Emmys the following year. But nothing they've undertaken before compares to *Allen v. Farrow*, which reexamines one of the most high-profile allegations of incest ever.

Featuring scores of people who have never before gone on camera to talk about the subject — including many who were at Farrow's country home on that fateful day in 1992 — the series delves into the custody trial of the century and its impact on the woman at the center of the narrative, the now-35-year-old Dylan Farrow, as well as its broader reverberations.

"It really is a mirror to our society at large," says Ziering. "The way these crimes go unpunished and all the reasons they do, the way that all of us are unwittingly and wittingly complicit to some degree. Woody's persona disarmed all of us. We have this celebrity culture, and that gives them this shield of impunity. We imbue them with a certain trust and a love and then can't believe or hear the cognitive dissonance. We give their crimes cover."

Adds Dick: "He was like, 'I'm just this disheveled guy who is caught in the headlights. This vicious woman has come after me.' He is always painting himself as a victim, which again is classic. People who are accused of sexual assault, that is the first move they make. It's like, 'I am the victim because I have been falsely accused.'"

The genesis of *Allen v. Farrow*, which marks Ziering and Dick's first-ever docuseries, winds through the Harvey Weinstein saga. In 2016, the year before Weinstein was outed as a sexual predator thanks in part to Ronan Farrow's Pulitzer Prize-winning exposé in *The New Yorker*, Ziering was a member of the Sundance jury and was seated next to future Weinstein accuser Rose McGowan at a festival-sponsored dinner. "I don't know who she is. She doesn't know who I am," Ziering recalls. "I said, 'I did *The Hunting Ground*.' She goes, 'Oh my God, can we talk?' Rose tells me her whole story about Harvey."

A few months later, Ziering met with another soon-to-be accuser, Ashley Judd. They began pitching the Weinstein project around town, and "everyone said no," Ziering notes. So they moved on. Then #MeToo hit. "My cellphone explodes, and everybody is

But Herdy continued the conversation with Dylan and discovered some court records associated with her case that had never been made public. "I called her and I said, 'I think there is so much more to your story, and I feel that you're being, rightfully so, very guarded,

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"WOODY'S PERSONA DISARMED ALL OF US. WE HAVE THIS CELEBRITY CULTURE, AND THAT GIVES THEM THIS SHIELD OF IMPUNITY. WE IMBUE THEM WITH A CERTAIN TRUST AND A LOVE AND THEN CAN'T BELIEVE OR HEAR THE COGNITIVE DISSONANCE." AMY ZIERING

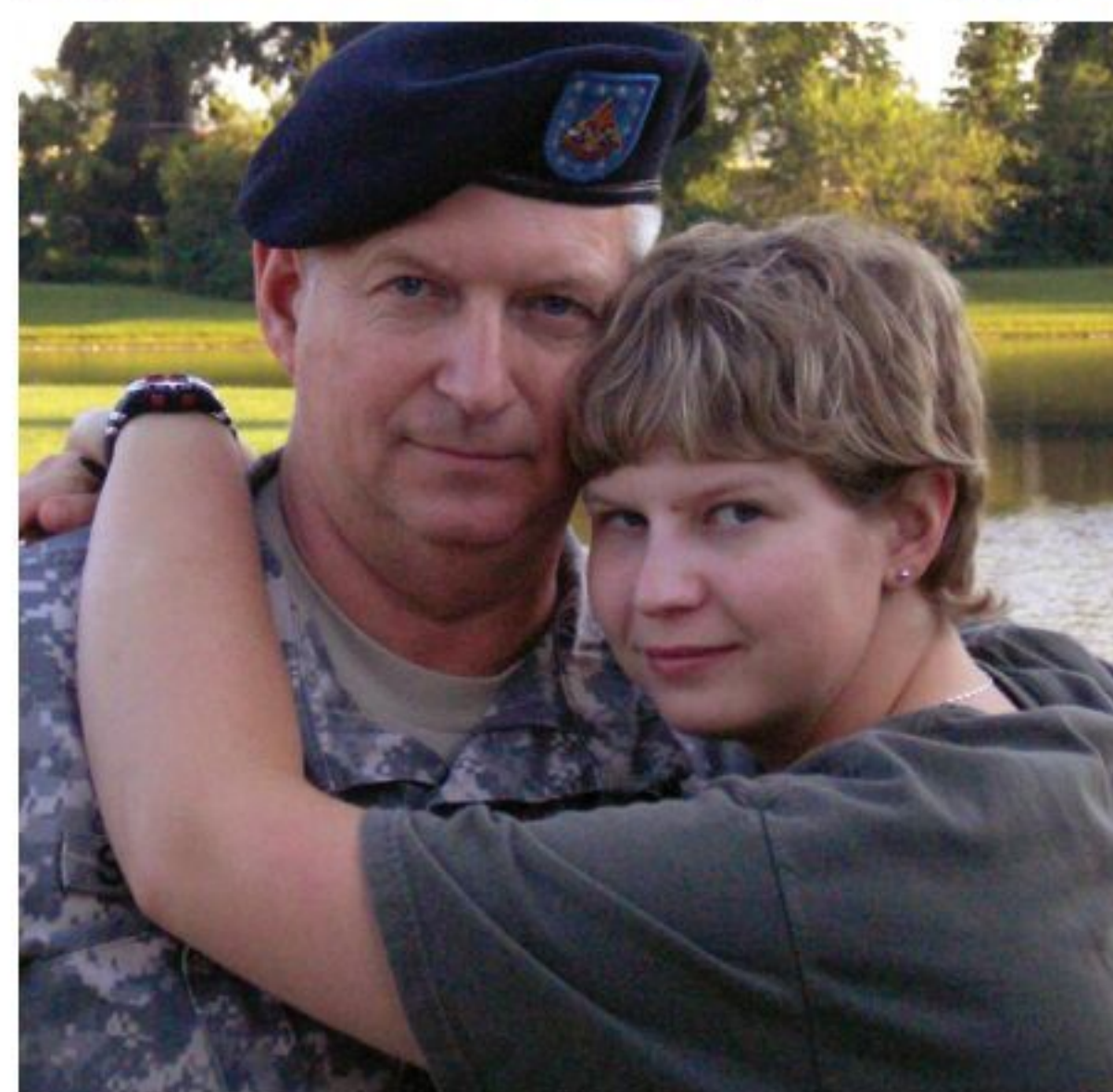
like, 'Remember that thing you pitched? Would you guys still want to do something?' " she adds. That's when Amy Herdy, the lead investigative producer at the pair's Jane Doe Films, suggested they pursue Dylan Farrow. Tara Lynda Guber, wife of Peter Guber, had once hosted a screening of *Invisible War* and promised the pair seed money if they decided to pursue a project on incest. Dylan Farrow's story could bridge the Hollywood #MeToo backdrop with Guber's call for an incest deep dive.

Still, enlisting Dylan Farrow wasn't easy. "Ronan was working against us in the beginning," says Herdy. "He did not want Dylan to do an interview with us, and he advised her to not do it. I think he felt that it wasn't going to do her any good, that it was just going to subject her to more punishing backlash and ridicule and hate mail. And who needs that, right?"

and I really need you to try to trust me and open up and tell me everything that you possibly can because I would like to dive down the rabbit hole with you on this," Herdy remembers. "There was a brief hesitation, and then she said, 'Let's do it.' So that day she started giving me names — 'This person can corroborate this, and this person knows about this, and this person was a friend of the family and they saw this.'"

In January 2018, Dylan Farrow sat for the interview, the same week that Ziering interviewed former hip-hop executive Drew Dixon, who detailed a harrowing claim of sexual assault at the hands of mogul Russell Simmons. Ziering and Dick worked simultaneously on both projects, with the Simmons exposé *On the Record* finishing first. (It premiered at Sundance in January 2020 to raves after Oprah Winfrey dropped out as an executive producer 15 days prior

From top: Dick (left), Drew Dixon and Ziering at Sundance 2020 for *On the Record's* premiere; *The Hunting Ground*; *The Invisible War*.



and cited “inconsistencies in the stories” of the accusers.)

For Dick, Winfrey has never given a sufficient explanation for pulling out.

“Our interest was to stand by the survivors who were courageous enough to come forward and tell their story,” says Dick of the nine Simmons accusers featured in the film. “It was an unfortunate situation, but, no, I don’t think she has given the complete story.”

Like Simmons, Allen was a powerful, beloved figure with a legion of A-list defenders. But long ago, Allen solidified the narrative as a he said/she said, with a tidy explanation for his daughter’s accusation: that she had been coached by her mother in retaliation for him falling in love with another of Farrow’s daughters, Soon-Yi Previn. With no PR machine behind her, Farrow was largely branded a scorned and desperate woman. Few were aware of some of the more disturbing elements of Allen and Previn’s relationship. These include testimony by Allen’s housekeeper that she found what she believed to be semen stains on the sheets and condom wrappers in the wastebaskets after Soon-Yi’s visits to his apartment while Soon-Yi was still in high school.

“They were entering into territory that the public thought they understood, that had been out there for years, for decades, and they were going to come back and tell an entirely new story than anyone had ever imagined was true,” says Ziering and Dick’s frequent collaborator Dan Cogan, an executive producer on *Allen v. Farrow*, *On the Record* and *Hunting Ground*. “And that is a very big challenge. It is one thing to introduce people to an issue or a problem that they are not aware of. It’s another thing to say to them, ‘These assumptions you have had for 20 years that you think are settled? They’re totally wrong, and here is the truth.’ But Kirby and Amy are willing to tackle the biggest monsters and are scared of nothing.”

Mia was reluctant to participate but eventually acquiesced.

“She said, ‘I’m only doing this for my daughter. Never in a million years would I do this otherwise. I wanted this all to go away. I’m done. It’s past history,’” says Ziering. In fact, Mia was so loath to go on camera, she showed up wearing a shabby black sweatshirt on the day of her interview. Ziering balked.

“I was wearing a silk blouse. I took off my shirt, got a shirt from a crewperson, gave her my blouse, she puts it on,” says Ziering. “For the next three years she called me the silk blouse lady.”

As time went on, Mia became more engaged and opened up her basement to Herdy, who

found audiotapes recorded by Mia. All the while, Herdy worked her own sources involved with the twin investigations looking into the molestation claims — one in Connecticut and one in New York City — as well as the custody case. (As the allegations swirled, Allen sued for custody of Dylan and Moses Farrow in a case he eventually lost.) “There were several sets of records reflecting different aspects of this case. I started trying to ferret out where they were and how to get them. And there was more than one method of getting them, and I think that is pretty much all that I can say about that,” says Herdy. “But we were uncovering documents that no one had seen before.”

In June 2018, Herdy says she made the first of two requests to interview Allen for the project. His team never responded. When

asked by *THR* about the docuseries, a spokesperson for Allen declined to comment.

HBO quietly acquired *Allen v. Farrow* in summer 2020, as the project was reaching the finishing line. HBO has a long relationship with Dick, a CalArts grad and a married father of two, having released his 2004 Academy Award-nominated doc *Twist of Faith*, a film about sexual abuse in the Catholic Church.

“It’s the kind of storytelling we seek out — deep dives into the complexities of a story that may seem well known in order to illuminate larger issues of our time,” says Lisa Heller, co-head of HBO Documentary Films, of *Allen v. Farrow*. HBO also is launching a companion podcast hosted by Ziering after each episode that will feature new material.

Ziering, a divorced mother of three and a self-described “lapsed academic,” first teamed up with Dick when she was getting her Ph.D. at Yale in comparative literature. She never finished her dissertation and instead collaborated with Dick on the 2002 doc *Derrida*, about French philosopher Jacques Derrida. After their take on the man who originated the form of analysis known as deconstruction, they shifted their focus to the topic of sexual abuse, becoming the premier team in the space. Or, as HBO Documentary Films co-head Nancy Abraham says, a “deep commitment to exploring difficult stories with sensitivity and rigor.”

All of Farrow’s surviving children with the exception of Soon-Yi, who remains married to Allen, and Moses, an ardent supporter of his father, participated in the documentary — some on camera and some off. (Both Soon-Yi and Moses declined to be interviewed for *Allen v. Farrow*.) At this point, only Mia, Dylan and Ronan have seen the finished series.

“All three of them could not believe that we had captured everything that we had,” says Herdy. “They were just so incredulous that we had gone to the depths that we had gone, that we had all the details that we had, that we had all the documents that we had, that we had all the interviews that we had. I think none of them realized that we were going to be able to put together something as monumental as we did.”

As for Ziering and Dick, they’re ready for a change of pace. They are currently at work on *Not So Pretty*, an HBO Max docuseries about toxic chemicals in cosmetics. “I hope [*Allen v. Farrow*] will be an awakening and a moment of reflection about celebrity culture, incest, misogyny, the whole cluster of patriarchal power,” says Ziering. “But I am also hoping that our next few projects might take us away from this wheelhouse a little bit. That would be a nice emotional shift for me.” **THR**

The Shortlists

DOCUMENTARY FEATURE

'A Love Story About a Man and an Octopus'

Among the 15 shortlisted documentaries, My Octopus Teacher eschews the traditional nature-film format to capture the unusual bond between a burned-out filmmaker and a cephalopod

BY CARITA RIZZO

Celebrated for his 2000 film *The Great Dance*, South African documentary filmmaker Craig Foster found himself, a decade later, exhausted from the pressures of trying to survive as a documentarian. Feeling a sense of detachment from the outside world as well as the people closest to him, Foster attempted to rekindle his passion for life by free-diving in the freezing temps of the Atlantic, vowing to do so every day for a year. It was there, in the kelp forest outside his home on the Western Cape, that he encountered an octopus that would help him reconnect with life, both above and below the surface.

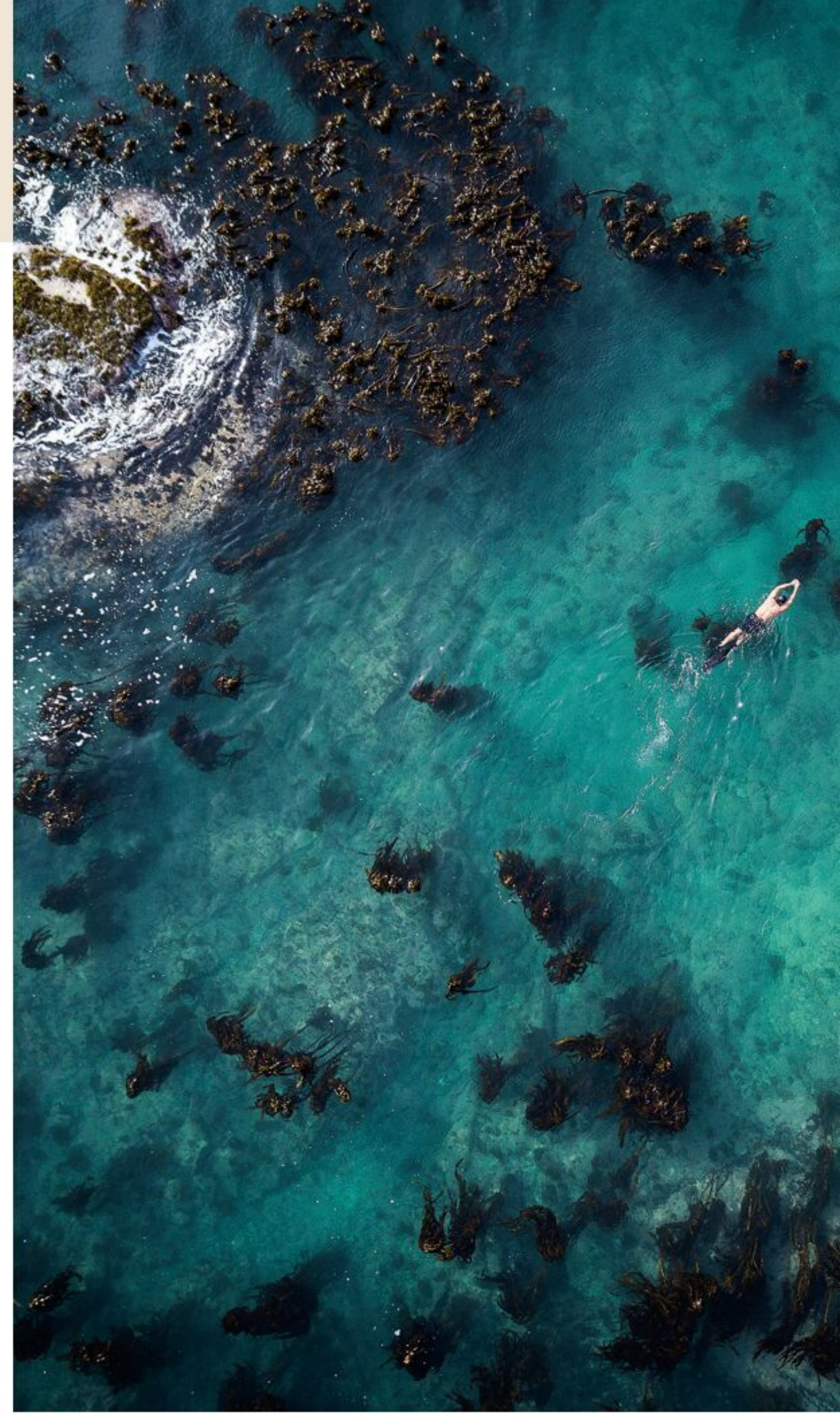
Foster and his friendship with a cephalopod are the subject of Netflix's first South African nature documentary, directed by first-time South African filmmaker Pippa Ehrlich and British documentarian James Reed. Fellow free-diver and conservation journalist Ehrlich

was introduced to Foster's story in early 2017, after diving with the documentarian for about six months. By then, Foster's year with the octopus had come and gone, but the experience had been meticulously documented by Foster and his friend Roger Horrocks, a blue-chip underwater cameraman he would frequently free-dive with. "He hadn't told me much about it, I just knew that he'd had a very meaningful experience with an octopus that he had visited regularly," says Ehrlich. "The opportunity that we had to tell a story that wove feelings and science together in this way felt serendipitous."

The real challenge for Ehrlich and Foster was going through the hours of material and assembling a narrative that wove together the unlikely parallels of a burned-out documentarian and a common octopus in the Great African Sea Forest. "Our original treatment was much broader, and we probably cut the

beginning of that film 50 times," says Ehrlich. "But once we started telling the story of the octopus, the narrative just told itself." Feeling that there was even more they could convey with the material, the two contacted Reed, whose 2015 film *Jago: A Life Underwater* had won several accolades, including the Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival's Grand Teton Award. "It came completely out of the blue," says Reed. "They sent me a clip of all this amazing footage. I was trying not to be interested and just got really sucked into it. It was just fascinating."

Contrary to conventional blue-chip nature documentaries, where the action is observed at a vast distance through long lenses, *My Octopus Teacher* is an up-close-and-personal



OCTOPUS: TOM FOSTER/NETFLIX (2); VIKANDER: DAN MCFADEN/ID ENTERTAINMENT/ROADSIDE ATTRACTIONS; MOORE: ID ENTERTAINMENT/ROADSIDE ATTRACTIONS; THEIF: GUANDA; COURTESY OF NEON; HUNTERS: COURTESY OF SONY PICTURES CLASSIC; AGENT: ALVARO REYES/SUNDANCE INSTITUTE; COLLECTIVE: COURTESY OF MAGNOLIA PICTURES; NOTTURNO: COURTESY OF CINE ART.

Documentary Features From Around the Globe

These international contenders in the doc race tell universal stories of tradition, resilience and speaking truth to power



The Painter and the Thief
NORWAY



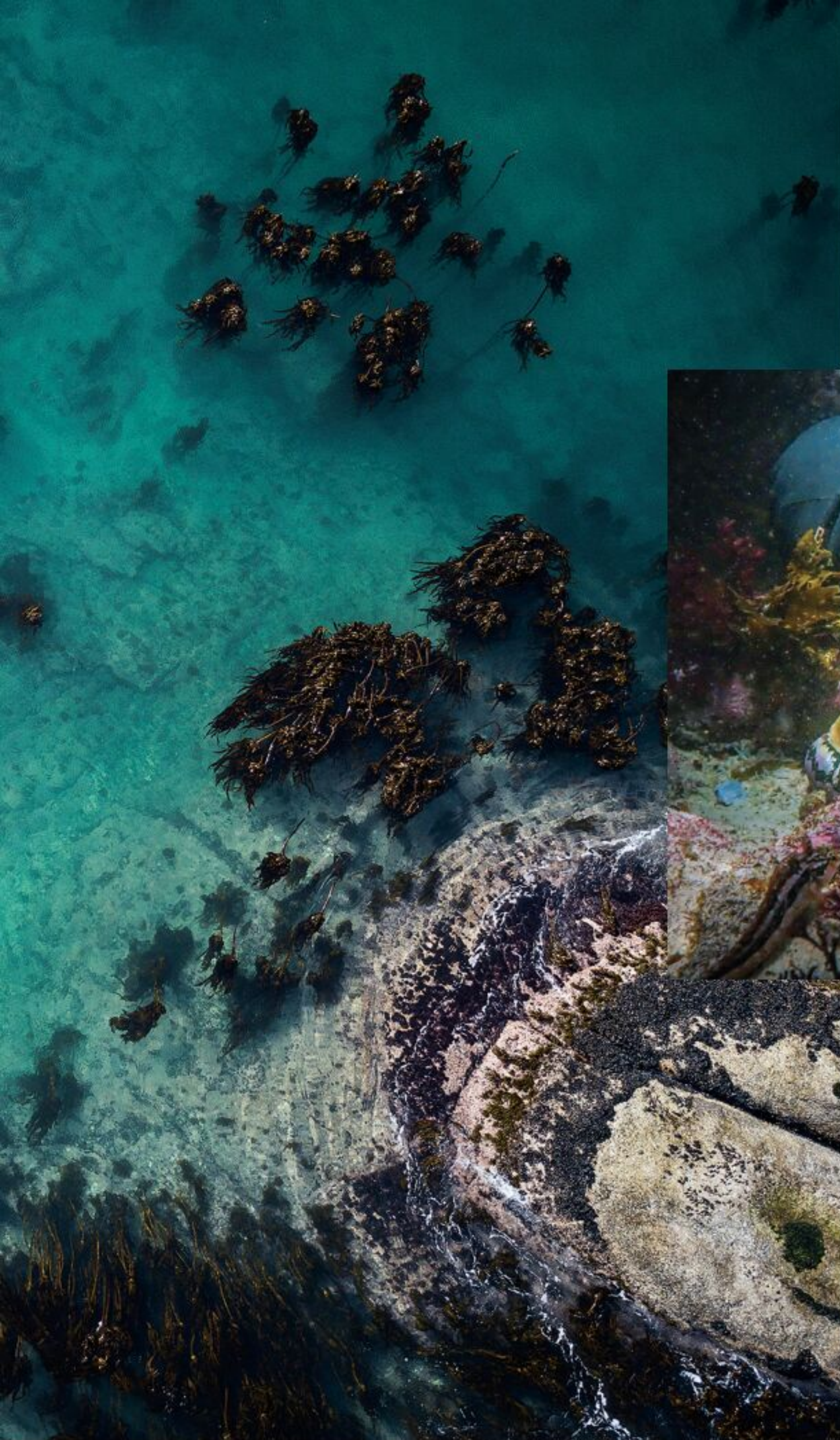
Gunda
NORWAY



The Truffle Hunters
ITALY



The Mole Agent
CHILE



"The opportunity that we had to tell a story that wove feelings and science together in this way felt serendipitous," says filmmaker Pippa Ehrlich of Netflix's *My Octopus Teacher*, which debuted on the streaming service in September.

view of a friendship between two species. "That was the amazing thing about what Craig did — he didn't spy on her," says Reed. "Purists of old might have thought, 'Well, that's not the way to do natural history. You shouldn't be interacting with the animal.' But I think that's a very dated view. And I think if you're responsible, like Craig is, that bravery to reach out and let them decide whether they like you or not is what *Octopus Teacher* is all about."

To Reed, it was clear that what the film was missing was the inclusion of Foster, who at this point was the narrator of the story but not the focus. "There was no point in imposing anyone else's understanding of it," he says. "There were two people in that relationship,

and she couldn't speak, but in all the footage she was expressing herself. My view was that we needed to base the film around Craig's testimony of what happened."

For three days in Cape Town, Reed interviewed Foster about his underwater experience, which formed the frame of the finished film. To his surprise, he found himself getting emotional listening to Foster tell the story of how his relationship with the octopus reignited his connection to the world above the surface. "If you're interested in human psychology, you're drawn in because of how Craig deals with his mental health issues and how he comes to terms with this relationship," says Reed. "If a man can make friends with an octopus, it says a lot about what we should be able to do with societies and different social groups. He bridges the gap that people thought was impossible."

A recurring conversation throughout production was whether to take a more traditional approach and make the documentary an issue-based conservation story. "That was something that I was fighting hard against the whole way," says Ehrlich. "There are a lot of very important films that fill you with the truth about what [humans] are doing to the natural world, and where we're headed as a species if we don't change things. But something that I learned in my experience as a conservation journalist is that if you focus too much on the scary stuff, people tend to turn off." What Ehrlich hoped to achieve with *My Octopus Teacher* was to reach a broader audience, one not normally drawn to nature documentaries. "It feels a bit strange to say 'Let's make a love story about a man and an octopus,' but if an outsider comes in and finds the idea acceptable, then you can really run with it." **TJR**



Collective
ROMANIA



Notturmo ITALY, SYRIA, IRAQ, KURDISTAN, LEBANON

HAIR & MAKEUP

A Feminist Icon,
Four Ways

For *The Glorias*, the hair and makeup team was tasked with transforming several actresses into Gloria Steinem



Oscar winners Alicia Vikander (left) and Julianne Moore are two of four actresses who play Gloria Steinem in Amazon's biopic.

When Gloria Steinem finally came to the set of *The Glorias*, the Amazon movie chronicling her life and directed by Julie Taymor, hair and makeup artist Judy Chin wasn't sure she'd have the guts to meet her. Chin, along with Miia Kovero and Adrien Morot, had never met the feminist icon but had been studying her face for months. "It felt so strange to have been staring at her images from her entire life, and then suddenly have her there," says Chin.

Chin, Kovero and Morot are on the shortlist for *The Glorias*, which joins nine other films up for a makeup and hair nomination. The trio worked on four actresses — Julianne Moore, Alicia Vikander, Lulu Wilson and Ryan Kiera Armstrong — who would play Steinem through the years. "They look very different from each other, but I tried to tie them together a bit, bring their skin tones a little closer together," says Chin, who added freckles to Wilson that then carried through to Vikander. "Julianne's face shape is very different, so I would contour her face to try and mimic Gloria's a bit more. And Julianne has really arched brows, so I camouflaged her brows and made them more straight."

Steinem is well known for her signature appearance, which included flowing, straight locks with a middle part, which Kovero was able to re-create. "It was really fascinating to research all her looks, from the *Playboy* bunny look to after she had the blond streaks put in," she says. "I loved playing with all those colors and changing the style."

Moore also had to play Steinem, who is now 86, for her later years, which required that Morot create prosthetics for about 60 percent of her face, including neck, cheek, eyelid and jaw pieces. "It's always a balancing act of giving her the essence of Gloria while not taking away from Julianne," he says.

And while the trio haven't spoken directly to Steinem about her impressions of the film, they've heard that she was happy with the way she was captured onscreen. And it turns out Chin did get to meet her that day on set: "At one point, she was standing completely by herself, and I thought, 'This is my cue,'" Chin says. "I worked up the nerve to say hello, and to thank her for all that she's done. And she was completely lovely." — REBECCA FORD

ORIGINAL SONG

'That's My Revolution'

H.E.R. reflects on her Super Bowl performance and her powerful song from Judas and the Black Messiah



Left: H.E.R. performing at Super Bowl LV. Right: Daniel Kaluuya and Dominique Fishback in *Judas and the Black Messiah*.

People are talking about H.E.R., who recently rocked Super Bowl LV with a soulful rendition of "America the Beautiful" (with a guitar solo that would have made Prince smile) and whose groovy throwback "Fight for You" can be heard in Warner Bros.' *Judas and the Black Messiah*, about the 1969 police assassination of Black Panthers leader Fred Hampton. The 23-year-old Grammy-nominated virtuoso with the acronym for a name — it's pronounced "her" and stands for Having Everything Revealed — spoke to *THR* from her Miami recording studio about her goals of achieving representation and revolution through music.

Congratulations on your Super Bowl performance. It was a highlight of the game. Thank you so much. It was the highlight of my career as of now, because it was so much fun. I was really nervous, but it looked like a full crowd. It was like the first time I really performed in front of a crowd since the pandemic, so it was a really special moment.

Your song "Fight for You" from *Judas and the Black Messiah* reminds me of classic Curtis Mayfield. How did it come about? We were listening to Marvin Gaye, Curtis Mayfield, we listened to a lot of Sly and the Family Stone, some of my favorites. I picked up the bass thinking about this theme of fighting for something. Because there's so many things that Fred Hampton was fighting for and that we are all still fighting for. That was the idea of the song, but I just really wanted to represent all the storylines in the movie — not just the struggles of being Black in this country at that time. The song felt like it needed to take you back but also remind you of what's happening now.

You tweeted about Fred Hampton: "His revolution inspired my revolution." What did you mean by that?

For my generation, we have a responsibility to continue to do his work. People will watch the movie and hopefully it will make them want to start their own kind of movement and start their own kind of revolution and make change in the way that you can make change. It doesn't mean starting a whole organization like the Black Panthers, but even just through my music in telling these stories, that's my revolution. — SETH ABRAMOVITCH

Interview edited for length and clarity.



INTERNATIONAL FEATURE

Genre-Bending Tales of Fearless Women

While wildly different on the surface, Guatemalan ghost story La Llorona and French lesbian drama Two of Us defy audience expectations to offer affecting portraits of female empowerment



Two of Us FRANCE

For years, when I was going around trying to get the film financed,” says Filippo Meneghetti, about his French Oscar entry *Two of Us*, “I would tell people: ‘This is a melodrama, but I’m going to shoot it like a thriller.’ That was always my plan.”

The story of *Two of Us* — which follows a pair of elderly women who have been secret lovers for decades, only to be pulled apart when one of them suffers a debilitating stroke — could have been milked for pathos. Instead, Meneghetti’s tale of “exclusion and self-censorship” unfolds like a Hitchcock film.

“I didn’t want to push any kind of overt emotion on the audience,” Meneghetti says. “The thriller gives you the possibility of having your audience be more proactive, because they discover information piece by piece.”

It all starts sweetly enough. Nina and Madeleine — played, respectively, by German screen legend Barbara Sukowa and Comédie-Française veteran Martine Chevallier — maintain the front of being “old friends” who conveniently live in twin apartments facing each other across a small landing. Nina spends every night with her beloved “Mado,” but tiptoes back to her place when Madeleine’s grown children show up, maintaining the illusion that

their late father was their mum’s one true love.

Madeleine’s stroke and hospitalization turns the landing into a wall. Nina is forced to retreat to her empty flat. When her lover returns, it is behind a locked door and under the watchful eye of a slightly shady caregiver. This is where *Two of Us* shifts into full thriller mode, as Nina plots to win her woman back, whatever it takes. This is also where Sukowa, furious and fierce, comes into her own, outwitting the caregiver and confronting Madeleine’s children with the truth. When they slam the door in her face, she chucks a rock through the window. The suspense



Meneghetti

comes to a head when Madeleine is institutionalized, and Nina sets out to spring her.

The plot keeps the movie moving forward, but Nina and Madeleine’s love remains at the core of *Two of Us*.

By the film’s poignant final scene, it’s clear that Meneghetti has pulled the old bait-and-switch. It was a love story all along.

“I used the thriller elements to make the audience focus on that and forget what age the actors are, forget this is a same-sex relationship. To see it’s just love,” the director says. “But love is complex. It’s contradictory. In love, you have obsession, you have secrets. Those things are what makes Nina burn for Madeleine. And those things are at the core of any good thriller.” — SCOTT ROXBOROUGH

La Llorona GUATEMALA

Guatemalan filmmaker Jayro Bustamante’s acclaimed horror thriller *La Llorona* follows the story of an aged military general who is haunted by the ghost of an indigenous woman whose children his army may have massacred. But the film is ultimately more interested in the women the murderous patriarch comes home to — and their own relationships with the vengeful ghost — than the evildoer himself.

“I wanted to tell the story from the feminine point of view, because in a way, women always play the most interesting role during war and its aftermath,” Bustamante explains. “They are the ones who end up looking for their sons or daughters, and calling for justice.”

La Llorona begins as the general, Enrique Monteverde (Julio Diaz), is standing trial for crimes of genocide committed against Guatemala’s indigenous Mayan people when he was the country’s president. Amid the turbulent legal proceedings, the general returns to his family’s stately colonial home. There, his elegant wife (Margarita Kenéfic) is his staunchest defender, insisting that the Mayan women in court accusing the former leader of ethnic cleansing are nothing more than lying, greedy prostitutes. His doctor daughter (Sabrina De La Hoz)

can’t so easily dismiss the testimony she’s heard, however, while her own daughter, the general’s grandchild, is readily inclined to believe the allegations that are seemingly everywhere on the internet. Meanwhile, the moon seems to be full every night and the wind is rustling in the palm trees — cue the wails of La Llorona.

The legend of La Llorona, the crying woman, is an old, precolonial tale told throughout Latin America. “In the story of the Mesoamerican people, La Llorona was a kind of princess of divinity, almost like a superhero, who cries because she has visions of the future,” Bustamante explains. But with the arrival of the Spanish, the original stories were mixed with the mythology of Medea and Christian orthodoxy, and La Llorona “was made into a very misogynistic legend,” he says.



Bustamante

In most later versions, which have repeatedly served as source material for horror flicks (including, loosely, in the *Conjuring* franchise), La Llorona became a Mayan woman who drowns her own children out of despair after she is romantically duped by a dashing colonialist — and God’s punishment is that she must cry and stalk the earth for eternity. Says Bustamante: “In our film, we wanted to reclaim the story to make her more of a seer again, and give her the voice of all the Mayan people.” — PATRICK BRZESKI

Shortlisted Facts



VFX

Welcome to Chechnya is the first documentary to ever make the VFX shortlist. And *Soul* is the rare animated film to be listed in the category. Only three animated films (*The Nightmare Before Christmas*, *Kubo and the Two Strings* and 2019’s *The Lion King*) have ever been nominated in the category.



Song/Score

Several artists find themselves on the shortlists more than once: Atticus Ross and Trent Reznor for the scores for *Mank* and *Soul*; **John Legend** for original songs “Never Break” from *Giving Voice* and “Make It Work” from *Jingle Jangle: A Christmas Journey*; Harry Gregson-Williams for *Mulan*’s score and original song “Loyal Brave True”; Daniel Pemberton for scoring *The Trial of the Chicago 7* and co-writing its song “Hear My Voice”; and **Dianne Warren** (who has been nominated 11 times) with “Io sì (Seen)” from *The Life Ahead* and “Free” from *The One and Only Ivan*.



Shorts

The live-action shorts list features several behind-the-scenes big names: Tilda Swinton stars in Pedro Almodóvar’s first English-language project, **The Human Voice**; Oscar Isaac stars in *The Letter Room*, which is helmed by his wife, Elvira Lind; and Sean “Diddy” Combs and Adam McKay produced *Two Distant Strangers*. — REBECCA FORD



THE MAKING OF

Nomadland

Oscar winner Frances McDormand and indie auteur Chloé Zhao joined forces on windswept Western plains to create a modern-day odyssey of the dispossessed surviving on the edges of the American dream BY TATIANA SIEGEL

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2

On the day of the 2018 Indie Spirit Awards, Frances McDormand, Peter Spears and Chloé Zhao converged at McDormand's Los Angeles apartment to discuss collaborating on a film. McDormand and producer Spears had recently optioned Jessica Bruder's book *Nomadland*, a nonfiction ode to baby boomers forced to live in campers as a result of economic hardships, and Zhao was their first choice to direct. Later that day, McDormand would win a best actress Spirit Award for *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri*, while Spears' *Call Me by Your Name* was facing off against Zhao's *The Rider* for best picture. But on that cool March morning, there wasn't a hint of competitiveness.

"She was wearing overalls," Zhao recalls of her first impressions of McDormand, 63. "She's very fashionable and she made that overall feel like a whole trend. Just looking at her, the iconography of Frances McDormand, whether it's a police uniform or overalls — my mind was going 1,000 miles an hour of what would [*Nomadland* protagonist] Fern look like. Could we create another iconography through her?"

While McDormand may have set the stage with that outfit, the fact that the women were like-minded about the material sealed the deal. "Immediately, it was very much Fran and I realizing that we have a lot in common, that the things that attracted us to the book are very similar," Zhao adds. "We realized we wanted the same things."

Within six months, Zhao, McDormand and Spears hit the road and embarked on the \$4 million to \$6 million Searchlight film's five-month shoot. The unconventional road trip movie coiled through punishing landscapes in five states — Arizona, Nebraska, Nevada, California and South Dakota. The cast comprised a few professional actors like David Strathairn, McDormand's longtime neighbor, mixed in with the real people who populate Bruder's book. At the center is McDormand's Fern, a woman left destitute by America's throwaway attitude toward the aged, and her relationship with the road.

The *Nomadland* journey actually dates back well before that March 2018 meeting. Bruder began reporting on the nomadic senior phenomenon in 2011 and wrote a 2014 cover story for *Harper's* that introduced such real-life

characters as Swankie, Linda May and the movement's guru, Bob Wells. The *Harper's* piece served as the basis of her 2017 book, *Nomadland: Surviving America in the Twenty-First Century*, which caught the attention of a literary agent at UTA, where McDormand is represented by Spears' husband, Brian Swardstrom. McDormand and Spears teamed up to option the book while it was still in manuscript form.

Just as the book was about to be published in September of that year, McDormand slipped out of a Toronto Film Festival press junket for *Three Billboards*, for which she would later earn her second best actress Oscar, for a screening of Zhao's contemporary Western *The Rider*. "She called me immediately and said she thought she might have just seen a movie by a director that we should strongly consider for our movie," Spears recalls.

Zhao, 38, a Beijing-born, London-educated filmmaker, had been itching to make a road movie set in the American West, but says, "I wasn't familiar with what the road meant to people of Fern's generation, and that took on a whole different meaning. A whole way of life was disappearing for that generation, and that intrigued me."





Once Zhao signed on, she began working on a script. Or, more aptly put, a non-script. “I don’t really ever feel like I had an artifact that was a script,” says McDormand. “We had scenes that were written, but it was much more of a blueprint, I think, for Chloé than it was a script per se. Not a script like a traditional script.” Working with nonactors, she explains, “I was always trying to be like, ‘Oh, maybe I can help. Maybe I can say something and help them talk.’ And what Chloé really needed me [to do] was just to be quiet and be there and be a part of the architecture of the scene.”

Weather dictated how the shoot was planned, considering the extremes in the American West. The first scene took place in Badlands National Park. Zhao insisted on South Dakota as the

first stop, given her preference for the September light there, having shot *Songs My Brothers Taught Me* and *The Rider* in the state during that month — both with *Nomadland* cinematographer Joshua James Richards at her side.

While the badlands offered a familiar backdrop for Richards, the Arizona wasteland tested his sanity. “The smooth desert was a challenge over a period of time,” says the British cinematographer. “Staying at a Best Western Hotel every night, you know, with a gas station next door and trying not to drink yourself to sleep.”

On another film, the experienced actors might have retreated to their tricked-out trailers, while the nonprofessional actors likely would have sequestered themselves, but the two groups banded together seamlessly. “Chloé created for everyone, actor and nonactor alike, a space that was based on patience, compassion and just curiosity about the lives of everyone,” says Spears.

In March 2020, just as the novel coronavirus pandemic hit, Zhao began editing the film. It was a tricky proposition given that she was also in postproduction on the Marvel movie *Eternals*, so she alternated between the two films.

By then, Zhao was seeing her vision near completion. A relative newcomer, with just two features under her belt, she’d successfully steered it alongside McDormand, a legend and at the top of her craft, who herself sometimes ceded control of the material that she’d first championed.

“You’re seeing a movable object meets unstoppable force,” says Richards of the McDormand-Zhao dynamic. “As a result, it’s fireworks. But it’s also two human beings, two incredibly talented, powerful women, and they were both dedicated to telling this story. Watching how they were able to navigate that collaboration was really inspiring. It crossed cultural lines and it crossed generational lines.”

Rebecca Keegan contributed to this report.



3

1 Frances McDormand (far left) filming in the Badlands of South Dakota, the first stop on the *Nomadland* shooting schedule. “We were greedy and we wanted to capture as much of the American West as possible,” says Chloé Zhao.

2 Filming McDormand as Fern, an itinerant worker, outside the van that serves as her home on the road.

3 Zhao, with cinematographer Joshua James Richards, was inspired by films like *Easy Rider* and *My Own Private Idaho*, as well as the photography in the book *Raised by Wolves*, about homeless kids living on the road in and around Los Angeles.

4 The unflappable McDormand, an Oscar winner for *Fargo* and *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri*, whiled away the time waiting to film a nude scene in a creek by playing a game of travel Scrabble.

5 McDormand, Richards and Zhao focus on a close-up.



4



5

Reviews

Television



Mia Farrow with her son Ronan (left) and daughter Dylan, who accused Woody Allen of molesting her in 1992.

Allen v. Farrow

Kirby Dick and Amy Ziering's four-part HBO docuseries prosecutes the case against Woody Allen in ways more emotional than intellectually persuasive **By Daniel Fienberg**

For the past decade, filmmakers Kirby Dick and Amy Ziering have been on a righteous crusade, casting light on institutional failures to confront sexual abuse and giving a platform to survivors. They've exposed rot in the military (*The Invisible War*), on college campuses (*The Hunting Ground*) and in the music industry (2020's *On the Record*). Each documentary has concluded with a list of the accused and implicated who declined to be interviewed — unsurprisingly, as one can hardly imagine how it would behoove an alleged predator to appear in these movies. Dick and Ziering are filmmaker-advocates who may

have begun their journey screaming into the void, but a cacophony has since risen up to join them.

In that light, it's easy to see why the Woody Allen/Mia Farrow saga would be an appealing subject for Dick and Ziering. In 1992, Allen was accused of molesting his adopted daughter Dylan, then 7. The allegations, which Allen repeatedly has denied, resulted in neither criminal charges nor an outright exoneration and, for many years, seemed not to stick to the Oscar-winning director at all. But Dylan; her mother, Mia; and, most recently, her brother Ronan have brought the allegations back in books, op-eds and press

interviews. Their persistence has generated ever-growing traction.

Dick and Ziering's *Allen v. Farrow*, a four-part HBO docuseries, marks the latest step in the dissemination of their narrative. Using Dylan's account of what happened as its centerpiece — supported by newly presented documents, audio and video recordings (the doc isn't great at clarifying what exactly is never-before-seen/heard and what's merely been resurfaced) — it's a harrowing watch. But there's a difference between criticizing the survivor and criticizing the project constructed around her, which is important to note because Dick and Ziering have made choices that don't always work and built arguments that aren't as convincing as Dylan's own words.

In its first hour, *Allen v. Farrow*

AIRDATE 9 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 21 (HBO)
DIRECTORS Kirby Dick, Amy Ziering

charts the Woody/Mia partnership from romance — they were together for 12 years but never married or officially co-habitated — and professional alchemy to eccentric blended family to nightmarish accusations and revelations, which included Woody leaving Mia for her adopted daughter Soon-Yi. Allen's relationship with Soon-Yi — they've been married for 23 years now — is inextricably linked to the subsequent molestation allegations; Woody accused Mia of fabricating the charge, and brainwashing Dylan into believing it, out of a desire for vengeance.

Dylan's story, told mostly in the second and third hours, is unwavering and unflinching. The directors frequently pair her words with haunting footage of the family's Connecticut

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farmhouse, where the alleged abuse occurred. In contrast to joyous home movies of the huge Farrow family cavorting around the house and its adjacent lake, the shots of the empty home are murky and chilly, with happy family photos taking on a ghostly air when accompanied by Michael Abels' mournful score. Dylan's recounting of the alleged assault, filmed by Mia just days after it was reported to have occurred, is graphic and deeply disturbing.

Dick and Ziering set out to debunk common arguments made by Allen defenders. The Yale-New Haven Hospital report on Dylan — a primary piece of supporting documentation for Allen's contention that Dylan either wasn't being truthful or had been coached by Mia — is discredited by experts; the filmmakers also put Allen's victory lap after Connecticut prosecutor Frank Maco decided not to bring charges, despite "probable cause," in proper context (Maco didn't want Dylan to have to endure the pressures of taking the stand).

But they aren't as thorough with refutations when it comes to "the other side." Moses Farrow has accused Mia of abuse and claimed Dylan was lying. Family members here call him a liar, and move on. Any claims made by Soon-Yi are even more critically dismissed, and there's an occasional viciousness to how she's treated in the doc. (Believe them or don't, but the dynamic within the Farrow clan is unquestionably more complicated and fraught than what is acknowledged here.) Neither Moses nor Soon-Yi participated in *Allen v. Farrow* — nor did anybody who voices even superficial support for Allen. Rather, Allen is represented by passages from the audiobook version of his recent memoir as well as phone conversations with Mia that the latter surreptitiously taped in the wake of their breakup. And it has to be said: Nobody defends Woody Allen worse than Woody Allen.

Dick and Ziering clearly thought the case they were building here

was such a slam dunk that hubris set in. There is an evisceration of psychiatrist Richard Gardner's theory of "parental alienation syndrome" (according to which a child rejects one parent because the other parent demonizes them), the implicit basis for Allen's defense of himself. But it feels like a topic that would have been better explored in its own doc. A family friend ventures several unsupported assumptions and pieces of unqualified analysis. Carly Simon pops up for no reason, contributing little expertise or insight. The doc makes arguments about how Allen escaped consequences, and some are plausible, like the idea that the New York media was in the bag for the city's native son. But if you're going to imply that the amount of money Allen productions brought into the Big Apple was enough for him to wield a vast amount of influence, there has to be receipts.

Less convincing still is the second episode's use of Allen's filmography against him, relying mainly on a cursory analysis of *Manhattan* and a montage of unsavory Allen-film tropes. Few at this point will claim that Allen's romantic fixation on much younger women onscreen (and off) isn't unsettling or that his relationship with Soon-Yi hasn't given those storylines a disturbing inflection. But suggesting that Allen's films "groomed" audiences to accept his sleeping with his girlfriend's teen daughter, and that that was a smokescreen for sexual abuse of a minor, is a reading of psychology requiring expertise beyond that of a cultural critic talking head.

These missteps limit the intellectual heft of *Allen v. Farrow*. The emotional heft, however, is sustained right through to the cathartic finale, in which Slate writer Lili Loofbourow sums up perhaps the overarching thesis of Dick and Ziering's oeuvre: "So much of this is about our willingness to not know the thing so that we don't have to deal with it." Even doubters have to deal. **THR**



Will Smith hosts a six-part look at the constitutional amendment that promised — though often failed to deliver — all citizens "equal protection of the laws."

Amend: The Fight for America

Will Smith, Laverne Cox and more bring history to brisk, engaging life in Netflix's docuseries about the 14th Amendment **By Inkoo Kang**

The United States was founded in 1776, but the modern America we live in today, argues Netflix's six-part docuseries *Amend*, was born in 1868, with the ratification of the 14th Amendment in the wake of the Civil War. Intended to grant citizenship to the formerly enslaved, the 14th, by promising all citizens "equal protection of the laws," has offered an obstacle-choked path toward equality for Black Americans and other groups of color, women and LGBTQ people. According to host Will Smith, the amendment is "the center of the promise of America."

Yes, Netflix's maximalist programming ethos has led to one of the biggest movie stars in the world anchoring a six-hour elaboration on a single constitutional amendment. *Amend's* blinding star wattage is furthered by the likes of Mahershala Ali, Samuel L. Jackson, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Laverne Cox and Yara Shahidi, who dramatize excerpts from historical documents on a spare set, often to powerful effect. At the very least, the series proves that PBS topics need not be presented with PBS staidness.

Perhaps it's just as well that *Amend* debuts during the pandemic, when the quality of schooling has slumped for most students. Brisk yet meticulously researched, the series makes as lively as possible the rhetorical hair-splitting within the courts that tends to have an outsized impact on the populace. Using talking-head interviews with historians and legal scholars, the first three episodes are dedicated to the two steps forward and one step back of racial progress since Reconstruction; the remaining installments discuss how the promises of the 14th were expanded in later decades and centuries to include the rights of women, LGBTQ individuals and immigrants.

Executive produced by Larry Wilmore, *Amend* might be most valuable in bringing history alive through strikingly presented archival materials, hyper-expressive animated sequences, even those celebrity readings. It's approachable and digestible — and unless you're a history buff or a law school grad, you'll probably learn something new.

AIRDATE Wednesday, Feb. 17 (Netflix)

FEATURING Will Smith, Mahershala Ali, Samuel L. Jackson, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Laverne Cox, Yara Shahidi, Daveed Diggs, Sterling K. Brown, Joshua Jackson, Diane Lane, Tig Notaro, Samira Wiley
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40 Years Ago, Dolly Parton Crossed Over With ‘9 to 5’

At 75, Dolly Parton has all but achieved sainthood. Beyond her immeasurable contributions to the American music canon, she has donated well over 100 million books to children worldwide through her Imagination Library program and provided \$1 million in seed money that led to Moderna’s COVID-19 vaccine. But 40 years ago, the country music icon was having her first taste of crossover success — in both movies and the pop charts. The project was *9 to 5*, a comedy whose premise came from Jane Fonda, who’d worked with a real organization called 9to5 that sought to improve conditions for women office workers. Fonda, Lily Tomlin and Parton — in her first film role — filled out the cast as a trio

of secretaries who plotted revenge on their chauvinist boss (Dabney Coleman). Parton was enlisted to write a title song for the project, which she did while on set. As she tells it, the sound of her acrylic nails tapping on a desktop gave the song its typewriter-like percussion line. But it’s the explosive chorus — “Working 9 to 5 / What a way to make a living!” — that made the song such an earworm. The film was released the week before Christmas in 1980, and *The Hollywood Reporter* raved in its review that it was “as merry as any movie in the marketplace this season” and that Parton “more than holds her own as a well-stacked secretary” in a part that “takes full advantage of Parton’s proven persona as

a good-hearted, Tennessee-twanged dame.” *THR* predicted the film would “mop up,” and indeed it did, making \$103 million domestically, or \$327 million in 2021. The cherry on the sundae came two months later, when “9 to 5” reached No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 — Parton’s first time there — on Feb. 21, 1981. (She’d do it again in 1985 with her Kenny Rogers duet “Islands in the Stream.”) That same day, she kicked off a \$350,000-per-week Las Vegas residency (a record fee at the time) at the Riviera Hotel. Her early dates were canceled due to laryngitis, but the show eventually went on, replete with a drawbridge castle set created by production designer Bill Morris. — SETH ABRAMOVITCH

LAS VEGAS REVIEW

Dolly Parton

Riviera Hotel, through March 4

It seemed obvious that 1981 was to be the year that indigenous American music form — good ole Country — would finally secure a place along the strip marquees. After all, in just the first two months the town has seen Willie Nelson, Kenny Rogers, Mel Tillis and Dottie West. But if there were any lingering doubts about the music’s permanency here, they were dissolved in the rich and endearing warmth of Dolly Parton’s debut performance last Friday night.

She was a bit shaky at first. There were four days of laryngitis and the hovering specter of a difficult out-of-town tryout of the show working on her nerves.

Sore throat notwithstanding her singing was clear and strong, ably supported by her singers and musicians.

The country girl credits her sources — the mountains and her family — in

From left: Lily Tomlin, Jane Fonda and Dolly Parton at the December 1980 premiere of *9 to 5*. Inset: A Feb. 25, 1981, review of opening night of Parton’s Las Vegas residency noted the singer’s laryngitis.

The Hollywood Reporter, Vol. CDXXVI, No. 7 (ISSN 0018-3660; USPS 247-580) is published weekly; 40 issues — one issue in May and July; two issues in October; three issues in September and December; four issues in January, February, June, August and November; and five issues in March and April; plus 22 special issues: 5 in January; 1 in February; 2 in March; 1 in April; 7 in June and 6 in August — by The Hollywood Reporter, LLC, at 1175 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90025. Periodical postage paid at Los Angeles, CA, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send all UAA to CFS. Non-postal and military facilities, send address changes to The Hollywood Reporter, P.O. Box 125, Congers, NY 10920-0125. Under Canadian Publication Mail Agreement No. 41450540, return undeliverable Canadian addresses to MSI, P.O. Box 2600, Mississauga, ON L4T 0A8. Direct all other correspondence to The Hollywood Reporter, 1175 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90025. Subscription inquiries: U.S., call toll-free (866) 525-2150. Outside the U.S., call (845) 267-4192, or email subscriptions@hollywoodreporter.com. Copyright ©2021 The Hollywood Reporter, LLC. All rights reserved. THR.com PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

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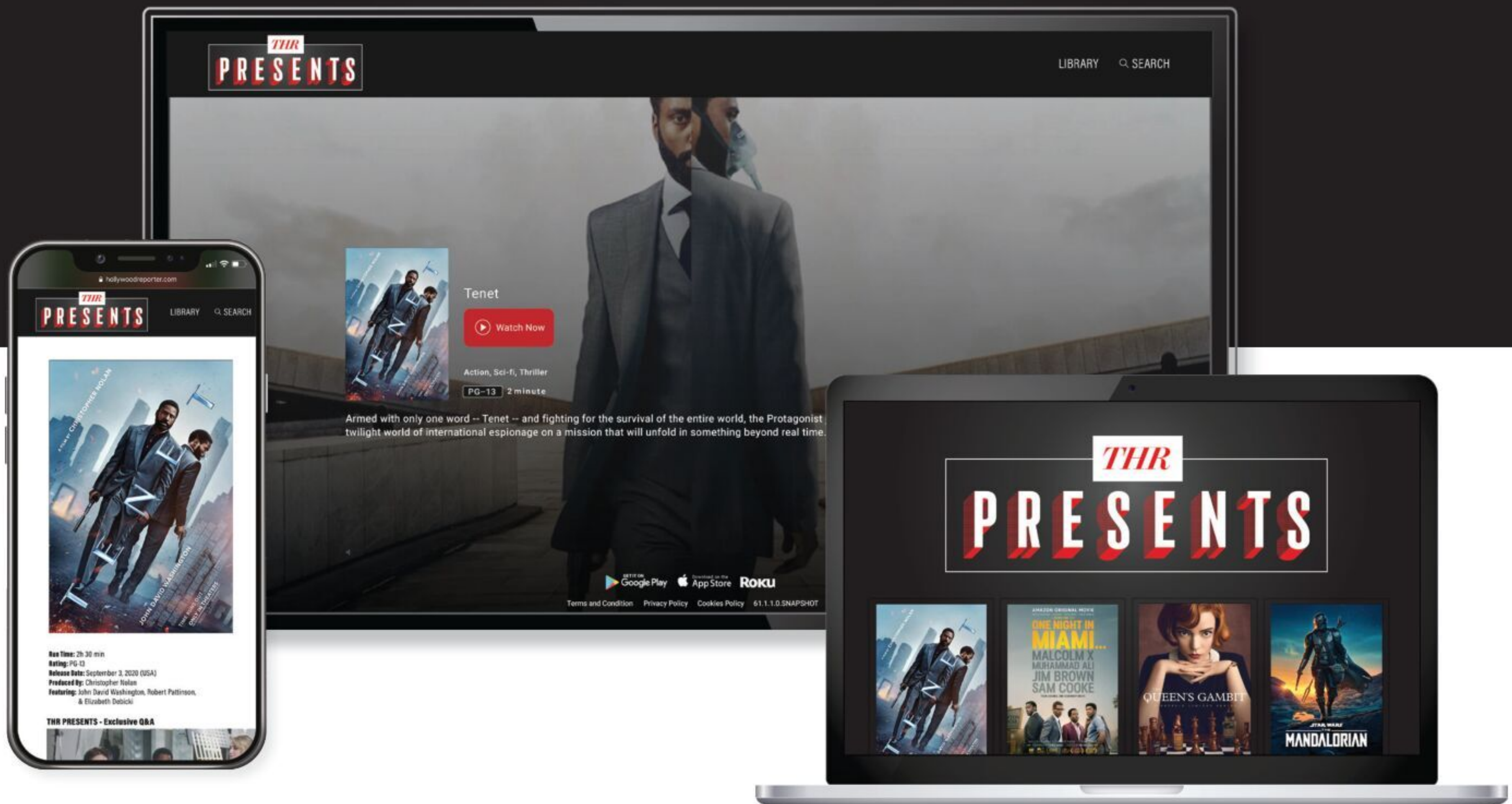
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