

APPENDIX

SPEAKER 1

Rashida Jones is Doing Her Part for Women in Hollywood

By Julie Miller

Rashida Jones has been *busy*. In the two years since the Harvard-educated actress co-wrote, produced, and starred in *Celeste & Jesse Forever*—the honest and nuanced breakup comedy with Andy Samberg—she and her writing partner, Will McCormack, have sold five pilots, all of which center on strong female characters. She’s starred in Steve Carrell’s TBS comedy pilot *Tribeca*, revisited *Parks and Recreation*, become somewhat of a social-media crusader against “the pornification of pop stars,” and launched a monthly relationship column in *Glamour*. In the midst of all of these endeavors, the actress also took up salsa dancing for Nick Frost’s new comedy, *Cuban Fury*, in which she stars as the comely office-mate who inspires Frost’s character to overcome his childhood dancing traumas.

Earlier this week, Jones called us to discuss her comedy crush on Nick Frost, how *Celeste & Jesse Forever* have changed the trajectory of her career, and her deep and abiding love for New Edition.

***VF Hollywood:* It seems like such an exciting time in your career because you are actively making more complex roles for women, with these five pilots [that] you and Will sold. At what point did you realize there weren’t enough good roles for women, and at what point did you have the confidence to do something about it?**

Rashida Jones: I didn’t grow up thinking that was the case, because my favorite movies had the best roles for women—*Broadcast News*, *When Harry Met Sally*, *Overboard*, *Private Benjamin*. So maybe that’s what made it feel like it was possible for me. Thinking that was the norm actually did me a favor by giving me confidence. By the way, I have been very lucky. Before I wrote a part for myself, I got parts that were fun and interesting. But I knew that that [Celeste] was the kind of part that people probably wouldn’t offer me. I was used to playing likable, affable-sounding boards? I wanted to be somebody that had a little more growth to do.

How have your career priorities changed after *Celeste & Jesse Forever*? Is acting still as important to you as writing and producing?

Celeste & Jesse was kind of an attempt to take my career into my own hands, but also see if I could get to another level creatively, and I feel really good about it. But it still doesn't change the fact that there aren't a lot of parts for women. And it doesn't change the fact that there are all of these great actresses competing for a few great roles. In that way, having that really steep learning curve—writing, producing, and starring in a movie—taught me that I could maybe do some of those other things. When there aren't a ton of options, it's good to make options for yourself.

All of your pilots feature women of different ages . . . you have characters in their 20s, 30s, middle-aged women, etc. Was that a conscious decision for you and Will—to explore all of these age sets?

We didn't want to develop things that had too much overlap creatively. And I think if there is any kind of mandate for our company [Le Train Train], it's that we want to have shows that can show the entire spectrum of being a woman. We want to show what it's like to be a teenager and a mother.

On top of all of this, you've re-teamed with Steve Carrell, your former co-star on *The Office*, to star in his comedy pilot, *Tribeca*. What is it like working with him again?

He's the best. There is nothing I can say except that he is probably one of the funniest people on the planet. He's the loveliest person and incredibly easy to work with. The only downside is that he is so talented that I just want to please him and be happy. But he has no control over that.

Whose idea was it to cast your real parents [Quincy Jones and Peggy Lipton] as your character's parents?

There was a scene and the casting director said, "Well who should play your parents?" And I said, "My parents should play my parents." That's how that went. [*Laughs*] But they are so good and so cute.

Which qualities do you think you inherited from your father and your mother?

My dad is very social and he really likes people. He's really big picture when he thinks about his life and the world. I think I inherited that. My mom is really cause-driven. She's a big believer in justice. She's incredibly empathetic. By the way, these are the qualities that I hope I inherited. She's an avid reader. She's incredibly curious. And she's a good communicator.

You're producing at least one of the projects with your sister, Kidada. How close are you?

She's my best friend. We are very close. We couldn't be more different, which is kind of the great thing about it.

Is it true that she got New Edition to serenade you at your last birthday?

Yes, that was amazing. That happened about a month and a half ago. It was the best thing that ever happened to me. It was a surprise. It was more of a favor than anything, because we kind of knew them back in the day when we were teenagers. But it was just pure joy. They sang everything: "Cool It Now," "If It Isn't Love," "Poison," "Can You Stand the Rain," "Sensitivity." My entire life can be defined by that group of guys.

What drew you to *Cuban Fury*, a dancing comedy, aside from the fact that you'd get to see Nick Frost in full-body sequins?

Nick and I met and kind of just liked each other so much so quickly so that was easy. Dancing is something that I've always loved and been enthusiastic about, which doesn't necessarily make you good. I am the first and last person dancing at the party always. I wanted the chance to learn to dance for real and take that with me for the rest of my life. But I didn't realize how hard that would be and how bad it would feel.

How intensive was the training?

We trained for a couple months, like seven hours a day. Spending that time with Nick was my favorite thing about doing the movie. And it's like anything, you feel like a good dancer and then you feel like a bad dancer and then you feel like a good dancer again. It definitely set off a huge love for me for it. I feel like I could still get better.

SPEAKER 2

Eva Green on Sunday Night's *Penny Dreadful*: "It's Cool To Be Crazy"

By Julie Miller

French actress and former Bond girl **Eva Green** has played no shortage of witchy women in her career—including a 300-year-old sorceress in *The Golden Compass* and Johnny Depp's supernatural seductress in *Dark Shadows*. But in the Showtime horror drama *Penny Dreadful*, the actress dials up the intrigue and mystique for her most enigmatic character yet. As Vanessa Ives, a Victorian-era spiritualist on the hunt for a woman being held hostage in some kind of demonic underworld, her character encompasses the duality of good and evil under a veil of secrets. And in Sunday's episode, "Closer than Sisters," we finally learn some of them.

Last week, we phoned Green to discuss the episode at length as well as the difficulties of playing crazy, Victorian psychiatric treatments, and her masterful séance scene earlier this season.

[If you have not yet watched tonight's show, do not read further.]

Julie Miller: Your character is so complex and full of contradictions. How did [*Penny Dreadful*] creator John Logan describe her to you when he pitched the character?

Eva Green: He didn't really have to. He sent me the first five episodes [scripts] and I kind of connected with the character straightaway and I loved that she had such an amazing journey full of twists and turns. You discover her secrets little by little. It's an extremely complicated character that I was lucky to be offered.

Other characters in the TV series are based on famous literary figures, like Dorian Gray, Frankenstein's monster, and Mina Harker. Did John say if Vanessa was based on any famous literary or real-life figures?

No, I mean, sometimes I feel like I am playing John Logan himself. *[Laughs]* It's a completely original, fictional character.

Did you consult any mediums or spiritualists before filming?

Oh yeah! I saw two psychics in Paris—one that kind of showed me how to spread the Tarot cards. I kind of got into that weirdly. I thought that was fascinating and if it's well done, it can give you some [insight] into how to make the right decisions. I spoke to people who had visions and said they can see the future. It's a bit scary but I completely believe in it now because I met a psychic who told me things [about my life] that nobody knows. She knew what had happened and told me what would happen in the future—so we'll see if she is right.

Vanessa's character is so offbeat, especially for a woman during that time period, and, at times, frightening. Where did you find this character inside yourself?

At the end of the day, she is a very tormented, torn human being and she is at war with herself constantly. She seems very smooth and in control, but underneath is all of this fire and all of these demons. She seems very cold sometimes and then she has these mad moments, especially for that time period. Victorian women were so uptight and almost seen like wax figures but she is kind of a rebel. She is ballsy and hungry to live, dance, and explore.

In [tonight's episode] you discover the background of Vanessa and will understand why she is like this and how she has all of these powers and how she is completely consumed by guilt after her betrayal of Mina, Sir Malcolm's daughter. And this guilt will manifest in a kind of sexual hysteria—or that's what people think has happened. So I have lots of absolutely insane scenes, literally, that I had to do and they were a challenge. I love extreme scenes—it's fun to let it all out rather than play the boring girlfriend or something.

What are some of the challenges of playing insane?

It's scary because of course you do explore the darkness inside you. It's cool to be crazy. It's fun and people might think I'm a weirdo. But it was full-on, let's say, and very demanding. I was completely shattered at the end of the day. But the crew was very nice and John Logan was looking after me like my dad.

Do you stay in character between scenes, especially for this episode where your character is going crazy?

Oh no! I need to laugh actually. It helps me to focus. I always find it so pretentious when actors stay in character. I like to have a great relationship with the crew. For those difficult scenes, I like to listen to a lot of music. It helps me concentrate and remain grounded.

Your character is subjected to some frightening psychiatric treatments common during that time period, including having a hole drilled into her brain to let what the doctors think are demons out. What kind of research did you do on the subject?

A lot. They used lots of water, freezing water, to kind of numb all of the senses. They used crude brain surgery. Women were not allowed to really express themselves—sexually, for sure, that was out of the question—but in any way. In this episode, we now know that the doctors and family think she is suffering from sexual hysteria but we know that it is this obscure force inside of her doing all of this damage. I am very visual so I looked at lots of pictures of women in hospitals during the time period. They were so scary that they were almost funny—women with their mouths very much open, looking very much like animals. It's a bit scary because we don't talk about sexual hysteria very much anymore.

Did becoming that unhinged for those scenes affect your personal life in any way? For instance, did you have nightmares?

When you do something like this you do become a bit more aware—wondering whether there are forces around us. But sometimes as an actor, you have to put up your armor [to what your character is experiencing] otherwise you will end up in an asylum. When you do a role like this, you do approach the dark side. Though, now I know all of my prayers in Latin so I can also fight the devil. *[Laughs]*

I have to ask you about the séance scene earlier this season, which was incredible. *[For those readers who haven't seen it, Green channels a series of men, women, children, and the devil, in a six-minute tour de force worthy of its own Emmy.]* How did you go about preparing for that?

My god, that was one of the most challenging scenes for me because I was worried I was doing too much. The most challenging things were the transitions actually, going from the little boy to the older boy and then to Mina and then the devil. I wanted to be understood and to be clear because it's so fast and very easy to look ridiculous [acting that out]. I made sure to have like four cameras on me so I didn't have to do it too much. It was hard though, to find the right recipe.

How did you even rehearse? Did you tape yourself?

I worked with my drama coach because by yourself you would drown in that scene. You need someone external who can help you a bit. That was very necessary for that scene. I also worked with John Logan and the director, J. A. Bayona, who was amazing. About two weeks before, we rehearsed that scene while playing really intense, mad music and trying to find the right amount of things I should do. J.A. was wonderful and if it had been another director, I would have been worried. For example though, in rehearsal, he gave me a rope and I was kind of pulling it. . . it helped me find moments, like where I was doing the child, and resisting. It helped me find the physicality. He's very physical, very Spanish, and he helped me channel all of these little people inside me. *[Laughs]*

What I noticed is there was a butterfly during that seance that was around for those two days [we filmed the scene] and then it followed me around for the whole shoot, for all eight episodes. It was like my little guardian angel. It was very weird. Everyone was laughing. It was like a *Penny Dreadful* butterfly. A spirit.

What do your friends and family think seeing you play this kind of insane character?

Well I am in France and it hasn't aired here yet so they have not seen it. But they know I work very hard. Actually I have not seen it either. I never watch anything I am in. I tend to be negative and it's better to kind of keep [your films and TV shows] at a distance, like it was a dream or something.

What can you say about Vanessa's development the rest of this season?

She wants to redeem herself and that obsession with redeeming herself gives her some weird power and makes her special at a time when women were so oppressed. You will see. She is unique by having this gift and for her it is very hard to give it up. You'll see what she wants to do with it in the last episode. Mina is the love of her life and she will do anything to rescue her wherever she is in the underworld. It's her cross to bear.

SPEAKER 3

John Turturro on Being Pimped Out by Woody Allen in *Fading Gigolo*

By Julie Miller

In John Turturro's new comedy *Fading Gigolo*, out in theaters this Friday, the filmmaker, Emmy-winning actor, and Coen brothers regular stars as a sensitive florist who begins moonlighting as a male gigolo at the insistence of his friend, and first-time pimp, Murray, played by Woody Allen. Somewhat incredibly, the collaboration—which marks the first time Allen has starred in a film without writing and directing it himself—was not brokered by an agent, manager, or a mutual friend in the business—but the duo's shared Manhattan barber.

In celebration of *Fading Gigolo*, we sat down with Turturro earlier this month in Los Angeles to discuss the intimidation that comes with working with a comic legend like Allen, Allen's charming dynamic with his on-screen children, and why it was a little awkward to have Sofia Vergara and Sharon Stone—who both play Turturro's clients—together in the same room.

In the film, Woody Allen chooses Dan Bongo as his pimp pseudonym. Where did that come from?

My father was a builder. Neither one of my parents are alive anymore, but I still have my father's phone book, of all the different trades, at my desk. Dan Bongo was a plasterer and I used his name. I also used Howard Virgil's name.

I love the story about how your barber brought you and Woody Allen together. Has he brokered any other film collaborations for you?

No, but he knew that Woody likes me and I liked Woody. He always thought we would be good together and that we would have an interesting dynamic. And then it just so happened that Woody liked my idea. And he gave me feedback on it. [The writing process] took a long time, but he helped me with the script with his editorial comments. And in the meantime, we did these plays, so I saw him in the theater every day. So that was helpful to capture his voice.

What were some of Woody's earlier critiques of the script?

He wanted it to be more nuanced. He could be brutal. And I didn't always agree with him. And he said, "Maybe you want to do this with someone else." And I didn't want to. Eventually, though, when he would send me his e-mails, I had to lay down and read them. I was like, "Oh, no, what is he going to say now?" He comes from the world of comedy and either the joke works or not. You have to get over it, though.

When he is not pimping you out, Woody Allen's character babysits about a half dozen children. His scenes with them are so charming and funny. Did they have any idea who Woody was?

No, not at all. They just thought he was an old man. I told them, "He's a legend!" He would joke with them, saying, "I can't work with you guys. You're amateurs." He loved it! Because people who are looked upon [with so much respect] want to be treated normally. Those kids didn't know how to play baseball and he taught them how to play baseball over two days.

One of the kids would step on his feet if he forgot a line, which he rarely did. He was like, "Why are you stepping on my foot like that?" The kid said, "Because you didn't say the fascism line." He was like, "Oh, my God, thank you!" If the movie had been a half hour longer, I could have made a feast with those scenes. I have all of these outtakes where he would say terrible things to them when they were pitching, you know, "That's the best you can do?" But they would get back at him. They would say, "You don't know anything. You don't know rap, or about this."

You brought Sofia Vergara and Sharon Stone, these unbelievably gorgeous women who seem to have such vivacious personalities, together for scenes. What was it like having them in the same room?

They didn't know each other. Sharon's probably used to always being the most beautiful woman in the room and now it's, like, equal. So it was a little [nerve-racking] at first. They had to get to know each other, and they didn't have any problems at all. But it was a little awkward because they had no time to rehearse together really, because of their schedules. Each one alone was very easy. If we had more time, we could have spent a day just fooling around.

Your character seems to understand women, their nuances, and their emotional needs very well in the film. And it seems like, to write and play that character, you would have to in real life as well. Would you say you are good with women?

I think that's probably true. I work with women a lot. I've lived with women, even as roommates. I had good relationships with my wife and with my mother. I'm able to work with someone who is really beautiful and say, "Wow, I'd like to really be with this person," but use that in a creative, constructive way. And not simplify it or reduce it to something else.

Women interest me and they always have. I used to listen to my mom with all of her girlfriends. I just think it's so under-used, and people have such a juvenile understanding of it after seeing the way it is exploited.

It's like you're 30 years old or 35, and it's over [for women in film]. Sometimes, [people are] just hitting their peak. You're starting to have real experience. There is a lot that can be captured and explored.

Were you always playing a gigolo and Woody Allen always playing a pimp when you were brainstorming this story?

Yes. I said, "Well, what if we were in the sex business, either getting into it or getting out of it." Woody said, "Let's start at the beginning." Originally, my first idea after having the Woody idea, involved Elaine Stritch, because she is [a] friend of mine. I worked with her, directed her in *Romance & Cigarettes*, and I did [the play] *Endgame* with her. I thought of her as a woman who is an 80-year-old nun, because Elaine is Catholic, and I used to always kind of fuck with her, bite her neck and stuff. She'd be like, "Don't do that with me! I'm very suggestible."

But my original idea was to have her as a retired nun who was a virgin who wanted to have sex before she died. And she had this whole relationship with [Turturro's character] Fioravante. And it didn't make it into later drafts, but there was a scene where she goes to the bathroom and washes her face and when she looks up, she is, like, 25 years old with the nun's habit with no clothes on. She comes out bare-assed and [gets] into bed. It blacks out. And then you see Elaine, 80, smoking a cigarette, saying, "Wow, that was it, huh?" And she is really disappointed. The guy was like, "Well you have to practice."

But Woody was like, "I don't know if you can really do that." That was just an image I had. But it is still in my mind. There are women who I grew up with, who are older than me, that I think are quite beautiful still. I like the idea. I just didn't know how to get to it with that beautiful fine line. That could be in the sequel.

SPEAKER 4

Michelle Dockery on *Non-Stop* and Spoiling *Downton Abbey* for Julianne Moore

By Julie Miller

This Friday, *Downton Abbey* star Michelle Dockery trades in Lady Mary's primness for her first proper action thriller, *Non-Stop*. In the suspenseful feature, which feels very much like *Speed* in the air, Liam Neeson plays a demon-plagued air marshal who must defuse a post-9/11 in-flight crisis with the help of a mysterious passenger (Julianne Moore), and two steely flight attendants played by Dockery and awards-season darling, Lupita Nyong'o. To discuss the film and *Downton*'s season finale this past Sunday, Dockery phoned us earlier this week.

V.F. Hollywood: Hi Michelle! How are you?

Michelle Dockery: I actually just got a call because my flight was changed. [*Over-dramatic movie-trailer voice*] I hope there's not a threat!

Well if there is, you will be prepared. It was so much fun seeing you in an action movie. Is that something you were looking for?

No! I loved the script, really liked the role, and the chance to work with Liam and Julianne—really, that was all it took. The fact that it was just a different genre from anything I've done before was just a bonus.

It was a new genre for Julianne too. Did Liam give you any kind of action movie primer before filming started?

He didn't have to because I love action films. I loved the *Die Hard* films growing up and the *Taken* movies. They're so entertaining, and I enjoy being on the edge of my seat.

Did you shadow any flight attendants to prepare?

Yes, we had a woman named Debbie who worked for Delta, whom we called "Debbie Delta." She did some very basic training with us and was on set in case anyone had a question. To be honest, we didn't get a chance to do any of the standard procedures because we got into the action pretty quickly.

I bet Debbie Delta was jealous of your chic flight attendant uniforms.

Weren't those great? Lupita and I loved those dresses, with our leather shoulders. I should have worn that dress to the premiere.

How was it working with Lupita?

Wonderful, we are really close friends. It was such a wonderful opportunity to be in New York for two months. That's the great thing about this profession—you meet people, some of whom you'll be friends with for life. We had an instant friendship, and I am so proud of her with all that's been happening.

I was very happy to see you get a good swing in at the end of the movie. Did that require action training?

I worked with [stunt coordinator] Mark Vanselow—who I think worked with Liam on 15 films—which was really fun. It's very different from anything I've done before. I would have done more, actually. I'm fascinated by the choreography of those fight scenes. It's quite amazing. It's like a dance.

Who was the biggest Downton Abbey fan on set?

Julianne, Julianne, Julianne. She was hilarious. Every morning, she would be like, "Hi! So . . . I just read that Dan Stevens is leaving. What happened? Does he die?" [*Laughs*] And I found it really hard to lie to Julianne because it's *Julianne Moore*, you know? She would sit me down and want me to go through all of the gossip. If she knew something about a storyline coming up, she would want to know about it. And for me, that was such a wonderful thing, because she is someone I look up to. She is very funny. She had me in stitches.

So what happened when she asked about Dan Stevens's character Matthew dying? You said it was hard to lie to her . . .

I just made this face . . . and [Julianne] said, "Oh nooooooooooooo!" [*Laughing*] I told her, "You asked me!"

This season we saw Lady Mary get down and dirty, very literally. How was it filming that pig scene?

I just knew that I had to go for it. There was something really liberating, actually, playing Mary and being completely covered in mud and falling over. I loved it. When I read that scene, I was like, “This is madness.” I remember coming out of my trailer in this beautiful purple dress, and the costume department was standing there with buckets of mud, and they were all wearing rubber gloves, and said, “Are you ready?” I was like, “Go for it.” They covered me completely. I felt like a kid again actually.

SPEAKER 5

Seth Rogen on *Neighbors*, James Franco, and Trying to Assassinate Kim Jong-Un in a New Comedy

By Julie Miller

This week’s comedy *Neighbors* marks Seth Rogen’s most mature role yet. Sure, his character still smokes pot, but he does so whilst raising a baby in the suburbs and waging war on his neighbors, a ruckus-causing frat house headed by Zac Efron, so that he and his wife (Rose Byrne) can continue their brand of green parenting in peace. Their unconventional strategy involves infiltrating the frat, and leads to raucous white-light parties, drunken hookups, and in one slapstick scene, it requires Rogen to actually milk his wife, whose toxic blood-alcohol level and broken breast pump, require him to make the best of a painful lactation situation. But still, some semblance of adulthood!

In celebration of this very funny movie milestone, Rogen phoned us this weekend. Among the talking points: Zac Efron’s surprising coolness, the secret about James Franco, and the challenges of trying to assassinate Kim Jong-Un in a Hollywood movie.

You and Zac Efron are so funny together in this film. When did you meet him and decide that he had the comic chops to pull off this film?

I met him a few years ago actually, and he impressed me in that he is very self-aware. He was able to kind of tell me exactly what I probably imagined him being like, which was ridiculous, as an older man who looks like me. [*Laughs*] But he has a really good sense of humor. And a lot of times when you meet actors like that, who aren’t self-aware, they are just kind of douche bags. But when I heard that they were thinking of Zac for the lead frat guy, I thought that was perfect. And Leslie Mann had worked with him in *17 Again* and said he was great.

There are a lot of frat parties in this film that look very fun from a viewer's point of view. But how tiring is it, to party as an actor, for 16 straight hours?

Um, it wasn't as great as it seemed. It got a little stinky. After a while you felt like you were in a mouth. But the extras seemed like they were really excited to be there, and that helped a lot. They were psyched about it.

What kind of preparation goes into milking an Emmy-nominated actress?

A lot of soothing conversation. *[Laughs]* No, that was probably Rose's least favorite scene. Understandably.

I assume those were prosthetic breasts.

Yes. And the scene was actually very technical because there was, like, a 300-pound guy underneath her, controlling the milk.

You have some frat hazing scenes in the movie that, unfortunately, seem pretty tame compared with the hazing stories we hear about in real life. Did you or the other producers have any hazing stories you used as inspiration?

Not me, but one of the producers on the film told us that the hazing scenes were pretty accurate. He had some pretty wild stories. I think something was inserted into his rectum at one point, during the hazing ritual *[Laughs]*.

Your character, like your characters in other films, smokes weed. And I feel like that has given you a certain reputation. Does it bother you that the public might perceive you as a person who very much enjoys his marijuana?

[Laughs] No, and it certainly makes it easier for me to smoke a lot of weed.

I've heard that people can be very productive after smoking weed. Do you indulge in that while writing or working?

I do, and I find that I am actually more productive because I don't mind that I am actually working as much.

Are you offered weed often by strangers?

Yes, all the time. It's pretty crazy how often. And it happens in somewhat risqué situations too. Like, people will just hand it to me on the street out in the open.

I've read that you have been writing jokes since a very young age. Where does your sense of humor come from? Are your parents funny?

Well they think they are. [Laughs] My grandmother was pretty funny. Very salty. I guess it might have come from my friends though.

How close are you with the Franco family at this point—you have been co-starring with James Franco for years now, have another movie coming out with him, and co-star with Dave Franco in *Neighbors*. Have you ever been invited to the family home?

No, but I would definitely go, if I was invited.

I think the public is kind of confused about how to perceive James Franco these days, because he is an actor, an artist, and somewhat of a performance artist. As someone who knows him, how would you describe him?

He is actually normal. I guess I can see where people might think he's weird, if they did not know him. But he is actually pretty normal. I've known him for so long. We just hang out and talk, you know. He's just a regular guy.

What's the story with his nude paintings of you?

I did not pose for those! And I have no idea. I am seeing him tonight. I will ask.

Next up, you and Franco star as characters who are asked to assassinate Kim Jong-Un in *The Interview*. When you are making a movie about assassinating a real-life dictator, what kind of notes do you get from the studio?

They would have very much preferred that we had written a fake dictator of a fake country, or a fake dictator of a real country. They really would have liked that. But we had to kind of convince them that he grounds the comedy, kind of, and it would be much funnier to use the real-life person.

How do you go about casting Kim Jong-Un?

He is actually played by Randall Park, this guy who plays an AT&T employee in *Neighbors*. We pretty much just told him to gain weight and get a funny haircut.

Do you have any paranoia about the real Kim Jong-Un seeing the movie?

At one point while filming, James leaned over to me and said, “You know, Kim Jong-Un is probably going to see this movie eventually.” That’s when it occurred to me. But I’d like to think that he would laugh at the movie and think it is funny. Maybe it will appeal to his ego, that he is being represented on the big screen [*laughs*].

SPEAKER 6

***True Detective’s* Grisly Murders, Rejected Hairstyles, and Big Hug Mug Backstory, from Director Cary Fukunaga**

By Julie Miller

While the networks drown in derivative, probe-by-number cop procedurals, HBO has given its viewers a substantial criminal drama to sink their proverbial teeth into this winter: *True Detective*. Starring Matthew McConaughey and Woody Harrelson as bickersome Louisiana State Police detectives, the anthology series’ first season follows the duo as they track a serial killer, navigate their own demons, and weave unreliable yarns about some of their rogue tactics in an interrogation room 17 years later.

Following the show’s latest installment this past Sunday, we connected with Cary Fukunaga, who directed all eight episodes of the season, to discuss Yellow King mythology, that epic six-minute tracking shot, and why he decided to show this week’s gruesome deaths.

Note: If you have not yet watched this past Sunday’s episode, “The Secret Fate of All Life,” you may want to save this interview for later—major plot points from the recent episode are discussed ahead.

Julie Miller: First order of business: Whose idea was it for Matthew McConaughey’s character to be ashing his cigarette into the Big Hug mug during those interrogation scenes?

Cary Fukunaga: The prop department gave me a bunch of options for mugs and that’s just the

one I chose. It's funny that it's become a big deal now . . . even my editor, Alex Hall, got a Big Hug mug for his birthday. The original is in my cupboard.

You cast Matthew McConaughey at the beginning of his “McConaissance”—before seeing any of his more recent dramatic performances in *Killer Joe*, *Mud*, or *Dallas Buyers Club*. Were you surprised by how well he was able to inhabit such a tortured character?

I wasn't surprised as much as I was thoroughly entertained. We did the interrogation scenes in two or three days . . . before we did the rest of the 2012 scenes. We actually did 30 pages [of dialogue] in one day. It was pretty badass to watch him monologue and go off into the camera. Up to that point, he had been playing a more buttoned-up [version of his] character [in the flashbacks], intense still but like a boiling pot of water.

Did you have conversations with him about how he was going to mentally prepare for the character?

We had conversations about the nature of the character but you can't micromanage a performance like that. The actor has to bring it. Matthew had his own preparation and he kind of looks at scenes like music. He has his own ways of locating his character, bringing himself into character and letting himself out of it. All of those interrogation scenes were on his shoulders—I just let the camera go.

I love McConaughey's long hair and mustache in the interrogation scenes. How did that look come about?

That was in collaboration with [series writer/creator] Nic [Pizzolatto] and hair and makeup, just getting a sense of what this guy might look like if he is working in a rural bar in the middle of nowhere and wasn't working too hard to maintain his physical or outward appearance. I had long hair at the time, so we played with the idea of him having a topknot but decided that just wasn't the right look.

You're coming off of back-to-back powerhouse episodes, between “Who Goes There” with that six-minute drug-den tracking shot, and “The Secret Fate of All Life” with the so-called shootout at Ledoux's. Can you talk about prepping last week's tracking shot a little?

I had a vague mapping of what I wanted to do for that sequence. But it took a while to get to the actual housing project where we filmed, just because there was so much red tape to get

permits. Once we got to the houses, we were able to copy the interior and create a really simple version on what of our sets—where we ate lunch and stored all of our props and furniture—we dug out a corner of that room and built the interior of that house so we could figure how that would work and we were able to rehearse that a lot. But the neighborhood itself, we didn't get access to until about a weekend or two before. I went through there with the first A.D. and the stunt coordinator. We did a bunch of runs to figure out what the path would be. We had a day and a half to rehearse while we were shooting so there was not much preparation.

And the shootout in this past Sunday's episode?

We built the set pretty close to a road—we learned our lesson early in filming about building our sets too far away from roads because it would rain and everything would be bogged down in mud. So we built this right behind set, we covered it with greens. In terms of coordinating the action, we brought out Matthew and Woody, we walked through the whole scene, and talked through some of the questions we might have. Those are some of the things that might slow you down in a fast-paced shoot.

What about the actual murders of Ledoux and DeWall? Had you always planned on showing them onscreen in all of their gruesome glory?

I didn't actually plan on shooting Ledoux's head getting blown up [when Hart shoots him]. [B]ut it seemed like [viewers] wanted to see this guy, this awful human being, taken down. Same thing with his cousin, who is blown up with the "Bouncing Betty." I get tired of watching movies where you see a landmine and it seems really fake. So a "Bouncing Betty" seemed like something that hadn't been done before. We actually constructed basically copies of [the landmines] . . . they would not blow up but they would spring up.

And what goes into making a guy's head explode on camera?

It's a mixture of the actor doing the action, a whole bunch of blood and brains, and then a little bit of painting of skull fragments. And someone created the prosthetic brain by hand. I wanted a skull fragment that felt like a swinging door, like a shutter, still on his head. That was pretty awesome too.

Were there any unscripted moments in this episode that made their way to the final cut?

Not really. . . we stuck to the script pretty closely. [*Pauses to think*] There were little ad libs,

like when Cohle was talking about hunting and Woody adds in those little lines about tracking. Woody does that a lot.

The story switches back and forth so much between years, actual events, and Cohle and Hart's versions of the actual events they are telling the detectives. Did you have a massive storyboard that everyone was constantly referencing on set?
You start to grasp it after a while. We knew those scripts inside and out. We had already done the interrogations so when it came time to film the scenes, we knew which were being remembered by an unreliable narrator. I knew what the action was supposed to look like and what they were describing, so we set it up so it would play against that as best as possible.

The show is so unpredictable, complex, and a contrast to all of these cop procedural shows on television where the investigation is so formulaic that it is almost predictable. Were you conscious of that while making the show?
I don't think I would have signed on if it was just a normal cop procedural. That's just not the kind of show I've ever watched. I'm attracted to a project because of the layers involved in a story. More layers means it is more of a challenge when making them.

What about all of this Yellow King mythology that's been spun out on the Internet, about the show's references to Robert W. Chambers's book of short stories *The King in Yellow*? How closely did you consider *The King in Yellow* when shooting these episodes?
I have the book. It's a great nod to those books and those kinds of authors. It's always nice when there are references to literature in anything. They're like Easter eggs, right? They're just little bits that add to the complexity and the reception and conception of a show.

I know that you aren't directing the next season, but are there two actors who you'd love to see in the next iteration of *True Detective*?
I have no idea . . . I guess it depends on what the story is.

Lastly, I read that you thought the title *True Detective* was "too pulpy" for the series. What were some of the other titles you guys bounced around?
I think Nic and I both liked this one version called *The Murder Ballads*, but he was more in love with *True Detective* in terms of the broadness of the anthology. Since we were creating a

brand, as much as we were creating a title for this series, we had to go more broad. Titles are tough. It's hard to find something that everyone likes. We spent hours trying to do just that.

SPEAKER 7

Courteney Cox on Making Other Actors Cry and Why She Didn't Use Kickstarter to Fund Her Directorial Debut

By Julie Miller

Among the first-time feature filmmakers at this year's Tribeca Film Festival is Courteney Cox, *Friends* alum, *Cougar Town* star, and possessor of a surprisingly ribald sense of humor. Her first film, *Just Before I Go*, which made its world premiere at the film fest last week, stars Seann William Scott as a man who postpones his own suicide to settle a few scores in his hometown—among them, telling off a verbally abusive school teacher (in her nursing room), consummating a flirtation with a former crush (who is now the overweight mother of five), and going head-to-head with a former bully (who now has a child with Down syndrome). All of this while bunking with his politically incorrect brother (played by Garret Dillahunt), his sleep-masturbating wife (Kate Walsh), and their closeted son (Kyle Gallner).

The actress phoned us last Friday to discuss her feature directorial debut; how her boyfriend (Snow Patrol's Johnny McDaid) and nine-year-old daughter contributed to the project; and how she dispensed some tough love to her lead actor.

***VF Hollywood:* I would never have guessed you had such a dark sense of humor. Where do you think you get that?**

Courteney Cox: This is absolutely, 100 percent my sense of humor. My brother and my dad are really kind of funny and inappropriate, but they don't mean to be. There is something about them, and Garret [Dillahunt]'s character in the movie—he is such a sweet guy, but is not even aware that what he is doing is inappropriate. I think Kate Walsh's character is kind of outrageous in the way she acts out in her marriage—which is what I loved about the film, the way people are reacting to typical things in humorous, different ways.

Speaking of Kate Walsh, she plays a woman who masturbates in her sleep. How do you even go about directing a sleep-masturbation scene?

Luckily, Kate was somebody who was game for anything. So she would add little bits to the movie where she pokes [her husband] on the leg to wake him up or puts her fingers underneath his nose, which everybody goes “Ew!” to when they see that scene. There is nothing she wouldn’t be willing to do. She understood what this character was going through, and to her it was like, “Fuck it.”

How did you get Diane Ladd to play an Elvis impersonator?

[Ladd’s daughter] Laura Dern is one of my closest friends. I have known her for years. I have gotten to know her mom over the years. And when I directed a short years ago for a *Glamour’s Reel Moments* [film series], Laura was in it and her Mom did me a huge favor by doing a voice for a phone message. She is such an amazing actress, and I sent her the script and she said she loved it and thought it would be fun to play an Elvis impersonator.

You funded this film yourself, even though some other actors who have had success on long-running television shows, like Zach Braff, chose to fund their directorial efforts through Kickstarter. Did you ever consider asking your fans for the money to make this movie?

I think I would have been uncomfortable doing a Kickstarter. Don’t get me wrong—I need to make the money back [on this film] if I want to direct another one. But I believed in this project that much. I initially tried funding like normal companies do—but it’s hard to get actors without financing and financing without actors. I could have gotten financing, I think, but it would have taken me a year or so and I knew after reading after the script that this was something I wanted to do right away.

Seann William Scott mentioned that you almost made him cry at one point on set. Do you remember that?

I do recall. Listen, I love Seann. He is such a talented person and he was so trusting of me but sometimes you have to remind him, “O.K., you trust me to direct you in this movie. I don’t want to hear any [reluctance]. Let’s go.” So I had to push him. He thought maybe his character wouldn’t do something. And I had to explain to him, “Yes, this character would do this,” and this is why. I was like, “You don’t know what [your character] would do.” And I said, “You have to trust me. Go for it and I will never ever make you [do something out of character] for a reaction or for a joke. It will be within the confines of who he is.” So it was

only because there was no time. So I said what I said. And he eventually got it. We hugged and we love each other and it was fine. He was amazing and I pushed him. Sometimes you have to push people to have faith.

Your ex-husband, David Arquette, has a very funny part in the movie. Was your daughter in the movie, too?

Yes, she plays one of David's character's kids. Also, Coco sang "Love Me Tender" at the beginning and end of the movie [over the credits]. I thought it was a perfect way to start the film, to have this little nine-year-old sing "Love Me Tender."

At what point did you decide that you wanted her to sing in the movie?

I had already licensed the song for the movie because Diane was going to sing it at the very end, but then I ended up using another song that kind of tied everything together. Since I already licensed "Love Me Tender," though, I thought I might as well use it—I mean, it's an Elvis Presley song. It goes with the theme of the story. So my boyfriend, Johnny McDaid, played the piano and he directed Coco and she sang the song. I actually had to leave the room so they could concentrate.

Does Coco want to be an actress or singer?

I don't think I could stop her if I wanted to. She says she is going to be a quadruple threat. She is going to be a singer, actor, fashion designer, and maybe a makeup artist. She has a lot of stuff to do.

The other night on the *Late Show with David Letterman*, you mentioned that there won't be a *Friends* reunion because you can't even get the cast together for a *Friends* dinner. I loved that it was you trying to organize the dinner, though—it seemed like a very Monica thing to do. And here you are with this film, directing an ensemble cast. Have you always kind of been the mother-hen type figure in all of your circles of friends and co-workers?

I have always been the person you come to to talk about stuff. I am very nonjudgmental. I even had that role as a kid, in my mom and dad's divorce. Everyone would talk to me about all their problems or all their issues. So I think that is why I like this movie so much, too. It's

all told in a nonjudgmental way, just showing different characters and how they all kind of grow and learn. There is lot of acceptance in this movie.

After directing this film, is there any part of you that wants to leave *Cougar Town* and television, and just focus on movies?

Yes, if I could just get jobs as a director, but no, because television thankfully helps me to be in a position to finance this film. So it's kind of perfect. Also, being on *Cougar Town*, which I hope gets picked up again, kind of has the perfect number of episodes a year. It is the perfect schedule that gives me time to direct and provides me the lifestyle in which I can do this. I didn't pay myself a dollar for this movie. If I did, whatever the rules were, I gave it right back to the movie. So yeah, I want to keep acting. But my passion for sure, in my life right now, is directing. I can't wait to do it again.

How is it being back in New York for Tribeca? Do people still call you Monica on the street?

I am Monica. I am Jules [from *Cougar Town*]. I mean, I am still "that girl from the Bruce Springsteen music video." It makes my head turn; because I am sure I look nothing like I did that long ago. Especially in New York, because there are so many Bruce fans. People love the Boss so much here.

SPEAKER 8

Larry Charles on His Controversial *Seinfeld* Episodes, *The Comedians*, and His Nicolas Cage Movie

The former *Seinfeld* writer reflects on his 32-year comedy career.

By Julie Miller

Larry Charles is the Emmy-winning *Seinfeld* writer responsible for many of the comedy's grimly hilarious story lines, and the two lost episodes of the series so controversial that they never aired. After directing *Seinfeld*'s co-creator **Larry David** on over a dozen episodes of *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, the bearded, Brooklyn-born comic writer executive produced *Entourage* and linked up with **Sacha Baron Cohen** for a series of big-screen mockumentary projects including *Borat*, *Bruno*, and *The Dictator*. (His comedic appeal is so

wide-ranging that both **Bob Dylan** and **Kanye West** reached out to him when they had ideas for comedy projects.)

This Thursday, Charles returns to television with *The Comedians*, an FX series starring **Billy Crystal** and **Josh Gad** as heightened versions of themselves who co-star on a fictional comedy show. Based on a Swedish series, *The Comedians* has tones of *Curb Your Enthusiasm* and *Seinfeld*, with characters fumbling funnily through questionable social situations that, in this case, often arise from their generation gap. In anticipation of the show's premiere, Charles phoned us from Morocco to chat about why it was funny to pair Billy Crystal with a bong, why those controversial *Seinfeld* episodes didn't work, and what he is hoping for the Osama bin Laden satire he is making with **Nicolas Cage**.

VF Hollywood: If nothing else, thank you for giving us a visual of Billy Crystal wandering around a grocery store high in *The Comedians* after smoking weed.

Larry Charles: [Laughs] I'm such a fan of Billy's and I tried to imagine, at this point in his career, what I might enjoy seeing him do. And deconstruct his persona a little bit. And he was very courageous about it and brave about it and went for it. . . . In the grocery store, we just sort of played. I remember getting there in the morning with Billy and literally walking down the aisles and going, "This'll be funny. That'll be funny."

There are four creators listed on the credits. How did that work out exactly?

It was based on the Swedish series and the Swedish series was very dark. It was about an older comedian and a younger comedian—the two guys play themselves. So we had the premise of the show already, which is a gigantic leap. And then it was about Billy and taking advantage of who Billy is and deconstructing that persona. I think Billy has reached the point of his career where he is looking for challenges. He is not just going to rehash the same things he's done. He can afford to take that risk even though he doesn't need to take the risk.

And then it was just about finding someone to counterpoint him. I knew Josh because we had been working on this other project—I had directed him on *New Girl* and we are working on this [Sam] Kinison movie together, and I discovered him to be this incredibly great improviser and incredibly supportive.

How far do you and Billy go back?

I was a writer on [the 80s ABC sketch-comedy show] *Fridays*. That was my first TV job when I was 22 years old. My first staff job. Larry David was on that show and he became my mentor, really, from that show. And we had guest stars on that show at the time. And Billy was doing *Soap* and he was one of the guest stars. So I met him and got to know him a little bit back then. So we have kind of known each other informally for about 35 years.

How does your comedy partnership with him differ from the partnerships you've had with Larry David and Sasha Baron Cohen?

I've been very lucky to sort of collaborate with truly comical geniuses. Billy has so many arrows in his quiver. He can sing. He can do impressions. He can be dramatic. He can be emotional. Besides obviously being funny with the script and off the cuff, he has a lot of weapons at his disposal. Sasha and Larry both do their things. But Billy's thing is very eclectic. He has a very broad range. If you watch him on the Academy Awards or in one of his movies, you see that he can move through a lot of different levels with great ease. And no matter how dark it gets, he has an ability to somehow keep it light, which is a quality that I think all great comedians have. That makes it very palatable to the audience. So you can take the audience down these darker paths because they trust him the way they trust **Jerry Seinfeld**, who is also willing to go down very dark paths, but just inherently kept it light. That combination is kind of an innate thing. You either have it or you don't, and Billy has that.

Do you feel that *Curb Your Enthusiasm* has inspired a new genre of television—I feel like there are more and more shows featuring well-known people playing fictional versions of themselves.

I would like to think that. I hope it has and I am proud to be part of that. I also think that there are a number of other sources as well that we're drawing on. *Louie* was a massive influence on the show as well. Before we were even writing the first episode, we would watch *Louie* and just come in and go, "Wow, did you see that episode?" He went from hilarious comedy to very dark places. He allowed the story to have a kind of stream of consciousness flow to it and I really, really admired that. That's something I aspired to . . . to break down the traditional stories and deconstruct them and see what's underneath the narrative a little bit and discover on the way. And *Louie*, I think, was kind of a natural child of *Curb* and *Seinfeld* and takes it one step further.

Speaking of comedy that goes to very dark places, you are somewhat famously responsible for the two controversial episodes of *Seinfeld* that did not air—one of which had to do with George making the observation that he had never seen a black person order a salad . . .

I did write an episode about George making an offhand comment about never seeing a black person eating a salad that comes back and explodes in his face. That's true, yes. The network wasn't comfortable with that, and I think you're probably also going to bring up the gun episode, which even had gone a little bit further. We had cast that episode, built the sets, began to rehearse it, and there was just a lot of discomfort. Both those episodes wound up not getting produced.

How do you feel about the episodes now that 25 years or so have gone by?

In retrospect, when I think back on it, it was early in the run of the show and I was still figuring out how to do this . . . and I think Larry and Jerry were very supportive, but I wish that I had figured out a way—because this is what Larry David is so brilliant at, both in *Seinfeld* and in *Curb*. . . he can take a premise that would basically not be a comedy or a comedic premise, and he finds a way to do that. I was very influenced by Larry and most of my *Seinfeld* episodes, I was able to figure that formula, crack that code so to speak. But in those two episodes, I knew there was something funny in them and dark at the same time, but I could never crack the code of those episodes and thus they were not quite ready to be produced. Even though I appreciate the fact that they almost were. I kind of understand why those didn't work out.

There is a very funny episode of *The Comedians* that deals with race in a clever way. Do you think you are able to joke about that because it is several decades later, because this show is on a cable channel versus a network, or just because you had a better story idea?

I think it's kind of a paradox ironically. I think in some ways, because of cable, because of language loosening up, and cable shows like *Louie* and *Curb* coming along, there is a lot of subject matter that you can deal with that you couldn't in the 90s. At the same time, there is even more political correctness in certain subjects, which makes it even more sensitive. And race is a certain subject that is always a sensitive subject. I think with that episode, we kind of just nailed that tone. You can relate to Billy and Josh wanting to diversify their workplace.

You can relate to Billy and Josh sort of being stuck in their old ways. You can relate to all of their discomfort and awkwardness in it. And that's why that episode really, really worked. And maybe that's why the *Seinfeld* episode . . . I wasn't able to do something that sophisticated at that time.

You mentioned that you want to explore some dark subjects in comedy that might make people uncomfortable. What do you think it is about your background that makes you willing to go to those places?

I'm from the part of Brooklyn that is the breeding ground for great comedy. I am very lucky that I just happened to be born there and grew up there. So you have Larry David. He is about 10 years older than me. He grew up like 10 blocks from me. **Mel Brooks** is from that neighborhood. **Woody Allen** is from that neighborhood. [*Catch-22* author] Joseph Heller is from that neighborhood. It goes on and on. Great comic minds.

There is a lot of hardship, a lot of darkness, a lot of anger, a lot of fear, a lot of the things that people are not proud to feel. But in order to survive it and transcend it and embrace it, humor becomes a tool to sort of protect yourself from it. It becomes your armor. You develop a verbal armor to deal with it. All of those guys kind of come from the same background. The subway was running. The elevated line ran above Brighton Beach Avenue. It was just hard to be heard. There was kind of a hierarchy of people preying on each other constantly. There were gangs. There was violence. It was very much like *Lord of the Flies* to some degree. I think that is where this paradox of this darkness and this very serious view of the world that I think I share with Mel and Larry and Joseph Heller and people like that as well as the comic voice that it sort of filters through.

I feel like you've worked with people who are kind of geniuses in their chosen profession but have a reputation for being difficult—like Larry, Bob Dylan, Kanye West. . . What is it about you that makes a good collaborator with these types of personalities?

Not to keep drawing on Brooklyn but in order to survive in Brooklyn, you have to deal with a lot of difficult people. People who are not being straight with you. People who lie to you or try to take advantage of you or bully you or do all kinds of things that are not nice and so you need to learn with how to deal with it or else you succumb to it. Me, I kind of learned how to deal with tough personalities and kind of enjoyed the complexity of these difficult

personalities. And I think the lessons that I learned in Brooklyn, I was able to luckily apply to my work.

Are you still in touch with Kanye?

I am in touch with him occasionally. He is so busy now. I still can't believe to this day that HBO turned down the show. It was super-funny. It had a great cast—**J.B. Smoove** was one of the regulars. I don't know that he would ever want to revert back to that now. He is someone who keeps moving forward and continues to explode in all media. I doubt I would be able to tie him down again to do a show like that, unfortunately. Although I loved working with him. The very first thing he ever said to me was, "I'm the black Larry David." He's very self-aware. Very bright. Very funny.

Has your sense of humor changed since *Seinfeld*?

I think it's evolved. I remember in the first season I was working there, I would often sit with Larry and I would go, "You know, I really don't see myself as a comedy writer." And he would say, "I wish you had told me that before." I think I see things from a slightly broader perspective than I used to. I'm not as desperate to succeed and ambitious as I was then, so I am more interested in getting deeper and getting inside of things more.

You are in Morocco about to film *Army of One* with Nicolas Cage, who seems to be another one of these brilliant-but-mad creative types. And there are so many shades of Nicolas Cage performances . . . what should we expect from him in this project?

Nicolas Cage is one of our great treasures in American acting. He is an iconic person and he is somebody who completely immerses himself, almost in kind of a parallel way to Sasha. He just immerses himself in a character. And I think, once again, people will be blown away. Their eyes will be opened. It will be a revelatory performance. I think it will also be supremely compelling and entertaining.

***Army of One* is based on a *GQ* article about a construction worker who goes out on his own to track down Osama bin Laden. What kind of tone will the movie have?**

I think it's definitely a comedy. It's definitely satire. It's got a lot of emotion. It's got a lot of suspense. It's got a lot of hilarity. And it's kind of absurd on a certain level. What I try to do

with these movies, and even with *Seinfeld* or *Curb*, I try to make them as dense as possible with ideas, notions, and concepts that you can revisit upon revisiting it. Like a great record. When you listen to a great record, you want to go back and listen to it again and again and again, and over the years, you have a different relationship to it, like a great Bob Dylan song. And that's how I am taking this.

SPEAKER 9

***Jane the Virgin*'s Gina Rodriguez on Breaking Ethnic Stereotypes and Her Golden Globe Nomination**

By Julie Miller

“Jane could [have been] a black girl, a white girl, an Asian girl,” **Gina Rodriguez** says of her charming character on the very clever *Jane the Virgin*, which earned the CW network its first-ever Golden Globe nominations last week, for best TV series, musical or comedy, and best actress in the same category, for Rodriguez. In addition to making awards history, the delightful series breaks down ugly ethnic and gender stereotypes with Rodriguez playing an ambitious young woman who won't let men or an unplanned pregnancy—(she was accidentally artificially inseminated with her boss's baby)—get in the way of her values or career plans. “She is positive and uplifting and funny and brave,” the Chicago-raised actress, who aspires to change people's perception of her culture, says, “*and*, she gets to be Latina.”

With a surprise hit series on the air, an award nomination under her belt, and bubblegum-pink billboards strung all over Hollywood, this holiday season is shaping up to be infinitely better than the actress's last—when she broke up with a boyfriend, fell out with a good friend, and found out that *Wild Blue*, the Fox Navy drama she was attached to at the time, was not being picked up . . . on Christmas Eve. In celebration of this turn in tide, and last night's mid-season finale, Rodriguez phoned VF Hollywood on Tuesday to talk about the series, her television father, Rogelio, and why she *might* be secretly, personally, rooting for Jane to reconnect with Michael, her character's wholesome detective ex.

***VF Hollywood*: Congratulations on your Golden Globe nominations! How did you celebrate?**

Thank you! It's very, very exciting. It's almost like, "Who did I fool?" There wasn't a moment to soak it all up [during the week] so my friends threw me a party on Saturday and it was lovely because it was just so much love in my group of friends. We are just striving to make our dreams come true. It was just so hopeful. And then I went home and took care of my boyfriend because he is sick. [Laughs]

Does he watch the series?

He does, and do you know what is interesting? A lot of people say [*Jane the Virgin* is] a chick show but you'd be surprised. All of the men I know and men I meet are like, "Oh girl!" See, men, they love the drama! My father is obsessed with the show too. He is a boxing referee. A super-tough man. He boxed the majority of my life. He is the ultimate man's man . . . super-macho, like I've seen him cry once in my life, at my grandmother's passing. And he is obsessed with the show. He is like, "Just tell me, Gina. Are you going to stay with Rafael [the hotel tycoon with whom Jane is romantically entangled]?"

Is there any part of you that is Team Michael?

It is super-difficult for me because I love both boys very differently. They are very different actors and people but they are both amazing. With Jane though, I don't know anything that is coming yet. The writers don't tell us. When I first started working, I shot like five or six episodes before Jane left the Michael character and I was so in tune to Brett [Dier, who plays Michael]. We worked so well together and we found this adorable relationship together. So to have a grasp on that as an actor, and then to come in at the table read and find out that Jane is leaving him, I was like, "What?!" I was looking around at the writers like, "Why are we getting rash here, guys? Was it that bad?!" I was like making excuses for Jane.

I feel like that was a justifiable reaction.

It was also my fear of starting to work with a new actor. Obviously I love Justin [Baldoni, who plays Rafael] and he is one of my best friends now on set. But to start doing that all of a sudden, and to have to fall for Rafael really quickly . . . We just had to find our own dynamic and after two or three episodes we found it. As a little spoiler/teaser though, there *are* a lot of flashbacks and flash forwards and dreams so you're going to be able to see Jane and Michael together again. Brett and I miss that so we are like, "Yes!," when we see that we have [relationship flashbacks in the script]. I love the Jane-Rafael [storyline] because it is such a

beautiful fantasy for every girl. But for Gina, me, as a human being, I kind of like Jane and Michael together. There is something super-wholesome about them. And I am not even a wholesome chick, by any means.

On a less than wholesome note: What is it like wearing a mermaid costume on a semi-regular basis? (Her character wears the costume occasionally during her job, as a cocktail waitress.)

I didn't realize that was going to be so popular. I also didn't know how sexy you'd feel in a mermaid costume. It was the most uncomfortable thing you can possibly imagine though. Once you fall into the water, it sticks to your body so you have to have people pull it off of your legs, then dry you off, dry your hair off, put you back into the costume and pretend like it never happened. It was, like, an 18-hour night of shooting, at, like, three in the morning freezing in Long Beach. I couldn't walk in the mermaid suit so someone would carry me around. I felt like such a diva.

Are you mentally prepared to play more pregnant, and deal with the physical challenges that come with it?

Oh girl, I am [filming] episode 15 and [Jane is] five months pregnant. I don't think anyone could have prepared me for that. Of course I get to take [the bump] off at the end of the day. I have so much respect for mothers and hope to God that I can procreate one day. But I put on that baby bump and it's hard for me to sit and get up. I get it . . . not fully . . . but I get the discomfort. And the clothes get tighter and tighter. But we have an amazing costume designer Rachel [Sage Kunin] who puts me in the prettiest dresses I've seen in my life. She should dress every pregnant woman alive because she is amazing at it. I feel like I am **Blake Lively** and am like, "This is the way I want to dress when I am pregnant."

On the subject of physical challenges, is Jane's abuela going to be O.K.? We saw her take a nasty spill down the stairs in last night's episode.

Oooh, I don't think so. I mean, I wouldn't have been able to take a fall like that.

My co-worker Joanna and I are kind of obsessed with your television dad, Rogelio, whom she listed as one of the best television characters of the year. He is charismatic, suave, looks great in purple—what is actor Jaime Camil like to work with?

He is the most amazing man you have ever met in your life. He is interesting, giving, generous, down-to-earth. He is way too young to be my dad but I feel like he takes care of me and he protects me. He has promoted the show with so much love. He's kind of the most amazing superstar you've ever met in your life . . . just being around him makes you happy. My boyfriend has a huge man crush on him. He jokes that we should have him over, open the door, and say, "Oh here, I have old-fashioned and I have a pizza in the oven." Honestly, he has the best wife and two amazing kids. I want to be Camil when I grow up.

In addition to being such a great character, Jane is culturally significant since she is one of the few Latina protagonists we've seen on television. How cognizant are you of the social responsibility that comes with that?

I grew up very similar to Jane. My grandmother spoke Spanish to me. And I responded in English. I was very much the two identities of both cultures that were very much important in my life. Then I went to college to become an actress and realized that I was viewed very specifically because of my brown skin which was interesting to me because I never looked at myself specifically because of my skin before. But I was limited to certain roles because of that skin. And viewed a certain way because of it. I don't want to say that I was saddened because I was still hopeful but I was very aware that the images I saw onscreen influenced the way I felt about myself.

In what ways?

There were four or five Latinas [on-screen] but I didn't look like the majority of them. I love J. Lo and I wish I had a booty like J. Lo but I don't look like that. I look like me and I am O.K. with that because I think I am beautiful. But there were images that I could not live up to in the industry. I wanted to make my image known—my image, which is relateable to a lot of people who might also *want* to look like J. Lo but look like me. [I remember] how much it mattered to me to see Latinos on screen who were playing characters of the doctors and the lawyers and the investment bankers because then it made me feel like I belonged to that demographic or could. Latinos are not just our nannies and our landscape artists, although both of those jobs are very admirable and pay a lot of money, thank the Lord. But that's not all we do.

So I knew as an artist that I needed to pick projects that broadened that appeal and that knowledge. And with what is happening with Eric Garner and these marches, we are clearly not living in a post-racist society. That is very evident to me and has been as a kid. Because of how Latinos were portrayed, people would expect them to be a certain way, to only speak Spanish, to have eight children, and to be on welfare. And that's terrible that that's the education. I am not a politician. I am not doctor or lawyer. So [I always wanted to change] people's perception with my art.

Have you passed on parts that you felt perpetuated that negative stereotype?

There have been a lot of roles that have come to my attention to audition for or test for that I had to say, "Not today," or, "Not for me," to because that would not be contributing to what I want to do in this world. So to be the first Latina on CW as a lead, to be the first show that gets nominated on the channel for a Golden Globe because of the *talent* . . . To have this happen, girl, this is the best thing to happen in the whole world. And not for me. It is for the 54 million people who live in a country who don't get to see themselves as the hero. Now Jane is a hero [and she is being recognized]. And not Gina—Jane, the character. She is positive and uplifting and funny and brave . . . *and* she gets to be Latina.

SPEAKER 10

Aziz Ansari on His Comedy Special *Buried Alive*, Romantic Relationships, and Getting Intimate with an Audience

By Julie Miller

In February, Aziz Ansari turned 30, a milestone reflected in his latest and most cohesive comedy special yet, *Buried Alive*. In the show, which the *Parks and Recreation* star toured last year and taped for Netflix in April, Ansari dissects the ridiculousness of modern romance, marriage, and parenthood, with anecdotes about his friends (on the subject of seeing video clips of their babies' first steps: "Look, I walk all the time; I'm not impressed") and occasional participation from the audience. After asking audience members to clap if they got married after knowing their significant other for less than two years, Aziz says, "We're all laughing because you're probably getting divorced. . . Did you lose a bet or something? I've had sweaters for two years and been like, 'What the fuck was I doing with this sweater? It's

so stupid looking. I can't believe I thought about living with this sweater *for the rest of my life.*”

Other subjects addressed: Grindr, online dating, courting a love interest via text message, and the horror of people marrying their high-school sweethearts. (On the latter, Ansari imagines their internal dialogue: “I don't think I'm going to run into anyone interesting in my 20s or 30s. I'm just going to lock this shit down now.”)

In celebration of his Netflix special, available now, Ansari phoned VF.com last week and told us his thoughts about marriage proposals, the fourth comedy special he has already written, and his very official-sounding food club.

Julie Miller: You've spoken to everyone from Charlie Rose to Grover this week—talk about a whirlwind press tour!

Aziz Ansari: When you go from Charlie Rose to Grover, you're really hit everything. Opposite ends of the spectrum but super fun. The Charlie Rose thing was weird because the other guests that week were Dick Cheney and Alan Greenspan. They were the bread to the Aziz sandwich.

Have any of your friends who inspired some of this material been offended by your cynical take on their life's milestones?

Well, not all of my friends are married or have kids, but the ones who have gone down that path kind of realize that they inspired that whole train of writing. When I've done *Buried Alive*, people come up to me after who are married and have kids and they still totally relate to what I'm talking about.

At one point in the special, you ask married audience members to share how they proposed to their significant others. When you were on tour, were you surprised by just how lame and underwhelming some of these proposal stories were?

When I started tour, I thought that 50 percent of proposals would be pretty romantic stunts, but it actually ends up being 10 or 15 percent. Most people do something very simple. Every now and then, there would be a stunt one. One of my favorite ones was a guy who said he got

a bunch of puppies to line up in the kitchen and they all had different shirts that spelled out, “Will you marry me, Katie?”

And I said, “Whoa! How did you get all of those puppies to line up?” And he was like, “Oh, I couldn’t. It was horrible.”

Then there was another one that involved a puppy. It was Christmas morning and the guy put a necklace with a ring around it on the puppy. And I was like, “Oh my god. So Christmas morning, she comes downstairs and a puppy with a ring on it runs up to her and—” and he said, “Oh, it wasn’t a real puppy. It was a stuffed puppy.” I was like, “Noooo! I want to go back to the reality where you bought her a real puppy. I don’t want to live in the world where you proposed with a stuffed animal.”

You’ve spoken in the past about being friends with Kanye West. How would you rate his proposal to Kim?

Oh, I saw that video! That seemed pretty grand. That was definitely more on the stunt realm to have all of that jazz ready. I’d say that was pretty good.

You’re very candid in this show about your fears and anxieties about romantic relationships. Were you ever hesitant about being that up front in a comedy routine?

Not at all. What I’ve discovered with stand-up is that the most personal is the most universal. I found that when I’m writing and I think, “Aww, I can’t say this . . . no one is going to relate it”—when I say those things, that’s when people really respond. To me, the best comedy is when a comedian reveals something super personal and weird and dark, and everyone can relate to it, but no one has ever said it themselves.

How do you keep track of all of your ideas for material? Do you keep it in your phone, in a notebook, or in a massive old-school filing cabinet like Joan Rivers?

Well, I’ve retired *Buried Alive*. But right now, I’ve written my fourth hour, which I will tour next year. As far as how I remember it all, I make, like, a set list of the title of each joke. And I have a notebook, but it’s more bullet points. I don’t have them all written out longhand anywhere. I do record all of the shows, though, so I can go back and listen to it if I want to.

But when I'm working on a new hour, I can remember it pretty well. But that Joan Rivers documentary!

Wasn't that great?

One of my favorite things that I have ever seen in a stand-up performance is that scene where she is doing some material about women and deafness, I think. And some guy in the audience interrupts her and says, "I have a deaf daughter and that is not right!" And she doesn't even wait a millisecond. She just goes, "Fuck you! I have a deaf mother. You don't tell me what I can talk about." [*Laughs.*] It was the most awesome thing ever.

You mentioned that you've already written your next stand-up special. What themes do you explore in that?

It's sort of about modern romance and what it means to be single in this era of technology and how does that change the way we treat each other and what it's like to try to find someone to settle down with in this era. I know that sounds very serious, but I promise you that it's a very funny show. I was on Conan yesterday and I kind of did a little sample of what it is.

I just think that it is a really frustrating time to be a single person, so I started exploring that. And I'm writing a book that's kind of a companion to the fourth hour. It will be a book that has some original research. It's like if the *Freakonomics* guys decided to do a book on relationships. But it will also have my sense of humor.

What kind of original research are you doing?

I've been meeting with all of these sociologists. It's not going to be an advice book telling people how long they should wait until they text someone. It's going to be more like, "When you text someone and they don't text back, why does that make us so nuts?" And then going to a neuroscientist and being like, "Hey, explain to me why this makes us go crazy. And what can we do about it?" Maybe there is an experiment to devise certain measures we can go to. It's me talking to really, really smart people about everyday dating issues.

You are openly skeptical about dating in modern society. Has the fact that you are now a celebrity or public figure made dating harder for you and, do you think, increased that skepticism?

Not for the reasons you'd think. Probably more so because I travel all the time or don't live in one place all the time. Those things make it difficult. The other stuff, though— people might think, "What if someone is trying to take advantage of you and just go out with you if you're famous?" One, that would be very obvious to spot. And two, no one has ever gone out with me and been like, "That's been fun. Can you buy me a car?" [Laughs.] That just doesn't happen. That's not a real problem. As far as fame goes, I think it just opens the door, I guess. Maybe someone sees me and recognizes me from my work and is more open to getting to know me. I'd rather someone want to date me because they respect my work than they think my face looks good. At least I earned the cred through my work, right?

Is it true that you're involved in a food club?

Yeah, that's me and two of my friends. We haven't done it in a while, but it's kind of stupid. We just get really dressed up and go to a nice restaurant. If we enjoy the meal, which we generally do because we pick a place we think we're going to like, we give them a plaque that has our faces etched on it in gold. It says "The Food Club has dined here and deemed it plaque-worthy." It's a really serious-looking plaque and all of the restaurants we've given it to have put it front and center. It's funny because people will walk into a restaurant and be like, "What the fuck is the Food Club? Who are these guys etched in gold?"

Lastly, how is your cousin Harris? We haven't heard about him in your material lately.

Harris is good. He is in college now. He is at N.Y.U. I think people sometimes get worried, like, "How's Harris? Is he O.K.?" because I haven't mentioned him. But the jokes I've done about Harris were years and years ago, when he was 12 or 13 years old. Now he's, like, in college. He's not like a sad-sack college kid, either. He's, like, thin and in shape and he dresses well. [Laughs.] He's a very fashionable young man, and I can only imagine that he is getting so much pussy.

SPEAKER 11

Hugh Jackman on Why He Shoots *Wolverine* Dialogue Scenes in the Morning, and What a Nice Guy Rupert Murdoch Is

By Julie Miller

Thirteen years after shooting to fame as Wolverine in *X-Men*, Hugh Jackman has returned to his star-making mutant role seven times, most recently to star in James Mangold's close-up of the character, *The Wolverine*, out last summer. Over \$400 million at the global box office later, the Marvel blockbuster debuts on Blu-ray and DVD this week, just as Jackman and Mangold mull over the possibility of another installment in Logan's onscreen career. Over a phone conversation to discuss *The Wolverine* Blu-ray release, Jackman told us what might keep him from reprising the superhero again, revealed why strangers expect him to be able to fire machine guns, and discussed his friendship with fellow Aussie and 21st Century Fox founder Rupert Murdoch.

***Julie Miller:* It's hard to believe that you've been playing Wolverine/Logan on-and-off for 13 years now. Do you ever get bored with him?**

Hugh Jackman: No, the opposite. I am enjoying him more than ever. It's funny because—I don't know if it's because I'm older, but now whenever I'm on set [director James Mangold] will go, "We will do all of your dialogue in the morning and your action in the afternoon" because you're just naturally grumpier in the morning. I'm more comfortable generally in film than I used to be and loving it. I know that the days are numbered and there will be a time that I am finished.

What about this talk of a *Wolverine* sequel?

I don't know whether or not I will do this next movie. I am really proud of this movie and I am excited to develop something with Jim Mangold from the beginning because that is a great ride. That's exciting, to see what we come up with but I have a very high expectation of what it would need to be [for me to star in it] and if it doesn't reach those, I won't be doing it.

So to clarify, is there a script for a sequel?

No there is not but Jim Mangold and I were literally on the phone last night talking about ideas but there is no script and no writer yet so it's a way off.

Where do you continue to find the anger and rage to play this character? It seems as though that would be very taxing.

It's frighteningly easy [*laughs*]. No, I'm being a little facetious. But I suppose as an actor, emotion is your trade. If you limited that to how you are in life or 90 percent of the time, then your range as an actor would be kind of boring. I am a pretty level-headed person but it's fair to say I have one of the simmering kind of temperaments. I am pretty even-keeled most of the time. It's like good therapy, playing this role.

Since starring as a superhero, do you find that people are more or less likely to start fights with you?

I presumed I was going to get fights picked with me all the time but it actually doesn't work out that way. I do get some guys slapping me on the back as though they are punching me but they are actually being kind, like, "Yeah, man!" I will never forget, though. I can't tell you who's it was but I went to a private shooting range in a guy's basement. There was a bunch of us there and he was giving everyone, girls and guys, some handguns—this and that—to try out. He kept looking at me like, "This is not for you, man. I've got something better for you."

I kept thinking, "You know, I'm just an actor, man." He ended up coming out with this *Terminator*, Arnold Schwarzenegger-style, massive machine gun that was almost uncontrollable for me because he thought of me as the real Wolverine. So occasionally [the Wolverine persona] doesn't work in my favor.

Did you go through with shooting it?

Yeah. I actually enjoyed it [*laughs*]. But there was not a lot of accuracy—let me put it that way. And unfortunately I had had a couple drinks which was probably not a good mix either.

To the public, you have this persona as a dashing song and dance man. How do you perceive yourself though?

I'm pretty boring generally. My wife says I am a classic Libra, which is a nice way of saying boring, I think. I'm very much attracted to tempestuous, passionate, up-and-down sort of people and I am really even-keeled as a person. If you look at all of the roles I've played recently, from Jean Valjean to *Prisoners* to *Wolverine*, I am attracted to way more extreme characters than I am in real life.

In the past, you've spoken about being good friends with Rupert Murdoch. Does he have a favorite movie of yours?

Knowing that he runs Fox, I'm guessing that it would be *Wolverine* since it has been very successful for the studio but I don't know. I am godfather to Chloe, his daughter, so we often go and see family films together but he's always very loyal and supportive. I know him more as a family friend though. We have Australian connections, obviously. I know his son well, so it's sort of more of a family basis. We actually don't talk business a lot.

What do you think people would be most surprised to know about Rupert on a personal level?

He is a very loyal person and, for example, he met my mum once, and about two years later remembered her name. It doesn't matter who you are in the room or if you are the important person in the room, he doesn't see people in that way. He remembers names of children and everyone. He pays attention to everybody and is very charming in that way.

SPEAKER 12

Sarah Silverman on Changing Her Comedic Identity and How the *Real Housewives* Inspire Her Deepest, Darkest Material

By Julie Miller

In the eight years since Sarah Silverman's last comedy special, the sweetly raunchy comedienne has co-created and starred on a self-titled Comedy Central series, written a memoir, won an Emmy (for original music, for the "I'm F**ing Matt Damon" song on Jimmy Kimmel Live!), *proven that she can act dramatically (in The Last Waltz), and merged comedy and politics in a series of hilarious online PSAs. Up next, the New Hampshire-born multi-hyphenate debuts an HBO stand-up special, We Are Miracles**, on November 23. In it, Silverman returns to her R-rated wheelhouse—topics include porn, rape, and oral sex—but this time she has a new persona. She spoke to The Hollywood Blog about crafting jokes on Twitter, her hope for Hillary Clinton, and why reality television is so depressingly ridiculous.

Julie Miller: How did you feel about being dragged into Kanye West's Twitter rant against Jimmy Kimmel last month? Are you going to use his endorsement of you being "a thousand times funnier" than Jimmy Kimmel on the back of your next book?

Sarah Silverman: I mean. . . no disrespect to either of them. It was a compliment that was a little tainted by the fact that it was made to hurt Jimmy, pretty much exclusively. It wasn't like it was a reviewer saying that I was funnier. . . not that that would be any better. We don't need to be compared. It was funny though and I'm glad they worked it out.

Moving on to the special, how long have you been accumulating material for this?

It's been a long time coming. I get frustrated because I can hone a joke forever and there are some things in that special that I think I have figured out better [since filming it] but I just have to let it go. After my first special, *Jesus is Magic*, I feel like I had a little bit of an identity crisis for a little while because you want to give the audience what they want. And what they want after seeing that special is to be shocked and be surprised. If you give them what they expect, and they expect to be surprised, they cancel each other out.

How did you get past that?

I had to really learn that comedy dies in the second-guessing. So I really started over with [my material]. I had to just eat shit and bomb and do [material] I think I am interested in talking about now. And not feel like I am beholden to one thing. So I feel like this special just reflects where I am now, which is what comedy should be. I think?

Do you mean you started over with your jokes, or are you talking about the overall tone of your material? Were you consciously trying to advance to a next act in your career?

No. For better or for worse, I absolutely do not think pragmatically about stand-up or my comedy. That's gross to me and I would never have that impulse. It's always what interests me now and what makes me laugh, and trying that out. After I did *Jesus Is Magic*, I really loved that arrogant ignorance. The ignoramous who is being arrogant. I brought that into my series, *The Sarah Silverman Program*. But the stuff I was writing just wasn't that anymore. So you might disappoint people who want what's familiar to them. But I'm older now. Listen, I still dress like an idiot but I can't be in my 40s in pigtails—as much as I want to be.

Is there one joke in this new act that you were always most excited to get to onstage? One that you know will kill with the audience?

No, there were sections that were more labor intensive. And there were other sections that were just more fun to do. Like, easy one-liners that just made me laugh. I guess the ta-da line. [Silverman jokes that the only way you can gracefully recover from vomiting after giving oral sex is if you say “ta-da!” immediately after, pretending like it was a magic trick.]

When writing a joke like that, what is the thought process for you? How do you even get to that scenario in your head?

I have no idea. A lot of times, I use Twitter to write jokes. And I really like it for that. Some things have to be a tweet, and they don't really expand well. But some I can make into something bigger. That was just probably like a stoned late-night tweet that tickled me. I watch all of this crap on TV. . . I swear, like the *Real Housewives* probably inspire the deepest of what I can offer for material. It's such a modern tragedy in so many ways.

It's existentially depressing and yet addictive.

It is *fascinating*. These are grown women who are behaving badly because, I think, they are getting direct approval and love for their behavior from these unseen producers. They are rewarded for bad behavior. And even though they are grown ups, there is this inner child that responds to that. It's so like the kid behaving badly for attention, even if it is negative attention. Ahh. It's amazing.

Which casts do you hate-watch the most?

I tend to watch New York and Beverly Hills. But I am no stranger to an Orange County or an Atlanta [episode].

I love that your darkest inspiration in comedy comes from the *Real Housewives*.

Definitely. Or like *The Bachelor* and *The Bachelorette*. It's so fake but it's also like there are real people out there who think they've fallen in love with someone after an accumulation of eight minutes. “He took me to a castle!” No, producers procured a castle. You're wearing a prom dress from JC Penney. And you're competing against 25 other girls for a stranger's

love. What part of this is not crazy? And they've got all of that hokey language like "journey." It's amazing.

Switching subjects, you recently told Maureen Dowd that you think Hillary Clinton should take a voice class. I had never thought about it, but that kind of makes perfect sense.

Don't you feel like that?! I think she's great. I love her. I just don't want to see her not succeed because of a dumb thing that is a totally superficial thing. You're triggered by the sound of her voice—it sounds like a mom yelling and the content gets lost. I think she is great. I am just very affected by visceral sounds and colors.

In what other ways?

My friend was just laughing at me because I love the Christmas color palette. I just love red and green so much. I don't have Christmas but I love the smell of Christmas. I have this pine-scented candle and my whole apartment smells like it. What does that have to do with Hillary Clinton? Nothing. Except that I react by visceral things.

So are you one of those people who walks into a Target in August and is not totally repulsed by the premature holiday decorations?

No, I still wish I could take a pill and sleep through the whole season. I do love the smell and color palette though. It's funny you mention Target because I have this red and green blanket that I got for like \$15 there, and I bought like three of them. Maybe it reminds me of New Hampshire? It feels like a camping blanket. And my boyfriend laughs at me because every night it is on my bedspread and I'm like, 'It's so pretty!' [*Laughs*] Did you know that this interview would be this fascinating?

SPEAKER 13

Emile Hirsch on *The Motel Life*, His *Bonnie and Clyde* Mini-series, and Playing John Belushi

By Julie Miller

Emile Hirsch has spent the last 12 of his 28 years testing his dramatic limits alongside such acting greats as Gena Rowlands, Laura Linney, Jodie Foster, and Sean Penn—his collaborations with the latter, *Into the Wilderness* and *Milk*, earning him the most critical acclaim. For his next project, *The Motel Life*, out on V.O.D. today, Hirsch veers into a more intimate indie direction with co-star Stephen Dorff, as a pair of drifter brothers whose bleak “motel life” existence is lifted only by their fantastical fictional adventures, told by Hirsch’s character and illustrated by Dorff’s.

In anticipation of the film, adapted by brothers Alan and Gabriel Polsky from the novel by Willy Vlautin, Hirsch phoned us last week and told us about his adventures with Dorff in Reno, Nevada, his upcoming *Bonnie & Clyde* project, and the John Belushi biopic he just signed up for.

***Julie Miller: The Motel Life* is such a gritty, intimate project about these two brothers, played by you and Stephen. Where were you in life when you found this project and thought this relationship was something you wanted to explore?**

Emile Hirsch: When I first read *The Motel Life*, I was in New Orleans filming *Killer Joe* with Matthew McConaughey. I read the script and I immediately connected with this story about two brothers who didn’t really have material wealth, but they had tons of wealth in terms of having love for each other. I found that it was a really sad story—and a very powerful sense of drama. These are sometimes my favorite kinds of movies and it doesn’t happen that often that you get to explore something this authentic. It was a drama that did not sell itself short and try to be anything it wasn’t.

You and Stephen have to summon this complicated, co-dependent brotherly relationship. How did you get to the stage where you could comfortably do that?

I feel like it was a really intuitive process. I don’t think that Dorff or I really overanalyzed it. It was more about just being in the moment and intuitively gauging it off of each other. Stephen is a really, really strong actor, so I just followed his lead a lot of the time.

Did you get to spend a lot of time hanging out beforehand?

Oh yeah. We spent a lot of time together just hanging out. We would visit casinos in Reno and restaurants and bars. We went all over that town together and kind of just explored a lot of it.

Do you guys have a similar acting process?

I don't know how similar our processes are. He might more than I do. It just felt like a very easy kind of thing. I don't even know if I have a process. I think it's changed and been altered so many times over the years.

In what ways?

I like to think that I've evolved in some ways as an actor. I like to think that there is an ease I have now that I didn't at the beginning, and that I can be a lot more comfortable in scenes and am willing to try different things. How confident are you in your acting? Is there ever a point where you think to yourself, during a scene, that you have completely figured it out? Yeah! But I've also felt that way and maybe been totally wrong. I try to just be instinctive. I try to think through scenes to a degree and think through who a character is, but I really do enjoy spontaneity in acting. I think the improvisational side of a performance is really strong and healthy.

You also just played Clyde Barrow in a two-part series airing this December.

I hadn't seen Warren Beatty's version. I had never actually seen that movie and purposefully stayed away from it [because] I didn't want to be influenced by his performance. And then when I actually saw the movie after I wrapped, I was so shocked. Because it was such a different interpretation of the role, and we had both probably seen and studied the same photos and history and accounts and came to utterly different conclusions.

Why do you think that was?

I'm not sure. My Clyde Barrow was kind of a serious, stoic badass tough guy. And Beatty's was more of a smiley, goofy, clownish kind of guy. We were like polar opposites in terms of our interpretations. [*Laughs.*]

And you just signed on to play John Belushi in Steve Conrad's biopic of the late comedian. Are you studying old Belushi tapes at this point? Where are you in the preparation process?

It's really early right now. I know that the announcement just sort of came out. I am just sort of wading into it, a little bit at a time. But I am really excited. It's pretty funny because everyone always told me I looked like Jack Black when I was younger and a lot of people always compared Jack Black to John Belushi. So I figure if I add a few pieces, I'll be right there.

SPEAKER 14

Crystal Heir Nadja Swarovski on Her First Foray into Film: Julian Fellowes's *Romeo and Juliet*

By Julie Miller

Stateside *Downton Abbey* viewers needn't wait until January for their next Julian Fellowes-crafted fix of period entertainment. This Friday, the writer's adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*—a more traditional tribute to Shakespeare than Baz Luhrmann's 1996 pop homage—arrives in U.S. theaters in a limited release. Starring Hailee Steinfeld and English actor Douglas Booth as the central star-crossed lovers, Fellowes's adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*, directed by Carlo Carlei, also features Paul Giamatti, Damian Lewis, and Stellan Skarsgård in supporting roles. One newcomer to the production, however, is Nadja Swarovski.

Great-great-granddaughter of Daniel Swarovski—founder of the family's crystal empire—Nadja is currently chairwoman of the company's production arm, Swarovski Entertainment. In an interview, Nadja told us about the company's progression in the film business, her involvement in the making of *Romeo & Juliet*, and her simple enough goal for Swarovski growing up.

***The Hollywood Blog*: I must ask—growing up a Swarovski-family member, were you raised in a crystal palace? How aware of your family's business were you as a child?**

Nadja Swarovski: I actually grew up in this little tiny cow town in Austria right next to the [Swarovski] factory. The factory was our playground. We were aware of it because our family

was the biggest employer in the region, however I eventually went to school in the States [at Southern Methodist University].

I remember in university whenever they'd call roll, they'd come to my name and they'd say, "Nadja. . . Nadja S." No one would even bother to pronounce that horribly unpronounceable last name! At that time there was not such a big consideration for the brand because it was more a business-to-business industry. It wasn't until the late 70s when we developed our own consumer brand. But for me, I was definitely on a mission to get the world to pronounce that last name.

Swarovski has been involved with film in the past, especially in costume and production design. Why did you decide to transition fully into film production now?

This is just a natural evolution for Swarovski since it is now over 100 years old and looking for new business opportunities. We are supporting so much creativity across so many different fields, from fashion, jewelry, architecture, and art. From supporting costume production, we just thought it would be the next logical step. We see this as an investment in creativity—not a financial investment.

Why did you pick *Romeo and Juliet* as your first film?

It really came to our attention from Julian Fellowes, who is a family friend. He mentioned that he adapted the script for *Romeo and Juliet*, and we thought it was perfect—it is a movie about love and beauty. These are the values we try to convey to our customers with our products.

You mentioned that Julian is a family friend. Do you have him on speed dial? How far do you two go back?

We go back about 20 years. We've always stayed in touch and his wife actually emailed me [about the movie]. It was great to hear from her but great about the content of that email. [Laughs.]

What aspects of production were you personally involved in?

We had a say in every element, but I have to say that in that arena, I deferred a lot to [producer] Ileen Maisel, being the new kid on the block. Having the chance to work with an expert and somebody who has so much experience was amazing. We worked with [costume

designer] Carlo Poggioli costumes. We sent some people from our product-development team in Austria to the set in Rome. They could choose whatever they wanted to work with. There was no pressure at all. If crystal worked with pressure, it doesn't work. Just because we are involved as producers does not mean that they have to use the crystal.

Did you enjoy being on a film set?

Yes, well, actually I commend everyone on set because it was shot in January of last year in Rome, which happened to be the coldest winter that Rome had experienced in 50 years. Sometimes the set had to be shut down. One scene was set in a monastery and the entire cast had to be taken down this hill in a snowstorm. There was major drama! But there seemed to be a very positive spirit and everyone was sticking together. It was amazing.

Was the experience of being a producer what you expected?

You know what, it was and I have to say that I have learned so much. I am usually used to working in one medium at a time whether it is fashion or architecture or design, but this is so multifaceted because you are dealing with so many departments at the same time. From the script to the set designer to the musicians, you have to make it come together like a big harmony, and that was something I had never experienced.

Where do you go from here with film?

Our mission statement is to really mirror the Swarovski values in film. Our product is something incredibly empowering to women. It is a very pure in the sense that we have a very strict quality control. Not one crystal leaves the factory with a scratch or bubble in it. What's most important to us is to look for the right partners, who have the same values as us, and then the subject matter—we are looking for things that might have to do with fashion or design or architecture or a story that may convey a positive moral or incredibly creative.

SPEAKER 15

Saving Mr. Banks* Screenwriter Kelly Marcel on Crossing Over from *Mary Poppins* to *Fifty Shades of Grey

By Julie Miller

Last October, British screenwriter Kelly Marcel shot from obscurity to international headlines when it was announced that E.L. James had handpicked her to adapt her bestselling erotic novel, *Fifty Shades of Grey*, for the screen. The choice had been driven by Marcel's attention to character, demonstrated in the short-lived, Steven Spielberg-backed sci-fi series *Terra Nova*, and now, in *Saving Mr. Banks*, which opens in limited theaters this Friday. The drama sheds light on the dark childhood history of P.L. Travers, the uptight Brit author who created beloved children's character Mary Poppins, and eventually—after decades of goading from Walt Disney—agreed to let him adapt her magical nanny for the screen. (Along with the compromise, according to the film at least, came a long list of caveats: No red! No animation! No pears in sight!) In celebration of the movie, which stars Emma Thompson as Travers and Tom Hanks as Disney, we chatted with Marcel over the phone last week about her research, her screenwriting mentor, and why it hasn't been so hard to cross over into erotic fiction.

***Julie Miller:* How were you introduced to *Saving Mr. Banks*? Did you know off the bat what a dark personal history was lurking behind the Mary Poppins creator?**

Kelly Marcel: I hadn't heard anything about P.L. Travers or her history until a producer came to me. She came me a brief write-up of P.L.'s childhood and the L.A. stuff and it was absolutely fascinating to me. There was a script by a lady named Sue Smith that was written in 2003, that developed a little bit.

What kind of research did you do?

Lots and lots of research. There was not a ton of stuff available information about Pamela. There is a great biography [*Mary Poppins, She Wrote: The Life of P.L. Travers*] by a woman called Valerie Lawson which helped me enormously. There was loads of stuff about Walt Disney so that research was easy. But it was not until we sold the script to Disney that I managed to get my hands on all of the tapes [from the original film's] the rehearsal room. It was fantastic to hear what happened inside that room.

Did you collaborate with Emma Thompson directly?

I did and John Lee Hancock, the director, is a big collaborator so he likes to have the writer on set every day. So I was there from crew call until wrap every single day and available to all of the actors whenever they needed to sit down and talk through anything.

In the film, P.L. Travers hates pears after a traumatic incident with them during her childhood. Where did that come from?

In the initial script by Sue Smith, there was something about pears and I think it is also from that biography. I don't know why it stuck with me but I then decided to kind of turn it into a big deal [laughs].

You've spanned sci-fi, dark comedy, and up next erotic fiction. What is the common thread to all of your projects?

I am a character writer and actually all of those pieces are character-driven pieces. I basically like to follow people.

Was the process of adapting *Fifty Shades of Grey* additionally stressful given how many loyal fans there are of the novel, and how anticipated the film is?

No. There is a book. . . there [was] a template to follow on that one. It's all laid out. So no, I didn't worry about it. I had E.L. James with me every step of the way and she is very, very tied to her fan base and she really wants to make the film that they'll be happy with. She knows her fans. She knows her audience. She knows her book, so having her around was invaluable because you can't really go wrong when the author is overseeing it. I think it was a great thing.

Did anything in adapting the process surprise you?

I think I was surprised by how lovely everyone was and how easy it was. Everyone was kind of allowed to do their job which you don't think is going to happen when it's so enormous like that.

What is your writing process like?

Most of the time I used to write in my shed in the bottom of my garden in England. But I live in L.A. now so I have the equivalent of the shed but in L.A. I don't really have a procrastinator. [I don't get this?] So I will do anything but write—I will do anything to not open up the documents. Suddenly washing up is my favorite thing to do. I have a friend who is a writer who has become an amazing mentor and his name is Craig Mazin. He does this amazing podcast with another writer called John August which is fascinating and very

helpful. Craig sat me down and was like, you need to just sit down and write three hours a day and it doesn't matter which three hours they are. Just stop sitting there thinking you have to write for the whole day. So I've been trying that and that is working for me. I have a new process and it is prescribed by Dr. Craig Mazin.

What are some of your favorite ways to procrastinate?

Walk the dog, watch things on the TV pretending that it's research. "Oh, I just need to see an episode of that because it is similar tonally to what I'm writing now." Cooking. Making cups of coffee. Literally anything. Oh, god, the dog is too cute. I have to go smooch his little face.

Did you watch anything on TV for reference while writing *Fifty Shades*?

Apart from the porn? Lots of porn. No, there wasn't really anything. I didn't for *Fifty Shades*. For *Saving Mr. Banks*, I did watch a lot of *Mary Poppins*.

Next, you're rewriting *The Little Mermaid*. What was it like switching gears between S&M and Ariel?

I don't know that it is switching gears because it is all character-led. P.L. Travers is difficult and has traumas in her childhood and is that way because of those. Christian Grey had traumas in his childhood and lives his adult way because of those. The Little Mermaid is also a kind of tragic, love-lorn figure, so they are all people that just have extraordinary stories that spin around them.