

INSIGHTS & INNOVATION

TOP EXPERTS GENEROUSLY SHARED THEIR EXPERIENCES OF NAVIGATING A CHALLENGING AND CHANGING INDUSTRY AT THE 14TH ANNUAL PRODUCED BY CONFERENCE.

This June, the PGA's Produced By Conference returned to offer insightful and thought-provoking dialogue as top producers and entertainment executives gathered for the daylong event on the Fox Studio Lot.

The 14th version of the conference brought the industry's leading creative voices to the stage to share their thoughts about navigating and thriving in the ever-changing industry landscape. A series of panels discussed how to elevate projects, pivot to achieve success, and navigate the post-strike, post-pandemic, ever-evolving world.

Industry insiders spoke about some of the unique challenges facing producers in a rapidly changing entertainment landscape, and the strategies needed to adapt and succeed. Top TV buyers shared how projects went from pitch to screen, while leading producers described how to thoughtfully and safely incorporate AI into their productions.

From Pitch to Screen

Executives and producers leading successful series on HBO|Max and Fox participated in conversations on the processes and pathways that led to the making of each show.

Jeff Schaffer (*Curb Your Enthusiasm*) and John Wilson (*How To with John Wilson*) joined Amy Gravitt, executive vice president and head of HBO and Max Original Comedy Programming, to discuss their experiences pitching television shows, sharing the importance of conveying the comedic tone and direction of the series within the pitch.

Sarah Aubrey, head of Max Original Programming, invited J.T. Rogers and Alan Poul to the stage to discuss the development of the breakout Max original series *Tokyo Vice* and shooting the series in Japan—one of the most difficult places in the world to film. Aubrey was then joined by Lucia Aniello, Paul W. Downs and Jen Statsky of *Hacks*, who discussed the show's changing character dynamics on the heels of the critically acclaimed season three finale.

Howard Gordon, showrunner and executive producer



Lucia Aniello, Paul W. Downs and Jen Statsky discuss *Hacks* during their "From Pitch to Screen" panel.



Networking on the Fox Studio Lot.



John Wilson, Amy Gravitt and Jeff Schaffer.



Carolyn Giardina, Ghaith Mahmood, Lori McCreary and Renard T. Jenkins during "AI: What Every Producer Needs to Know."



"Elevating Your Project Using AI" panelists Joanna Popper, Jake Aust, Souki Mansoor and Joe Penna.



Attendees participating in the *Body of Mine* VR experience.

of the hit FOX crime anthology series *Accused*, joined Fox Television Network President Michael Thorn and Sony Pictures Television Studios Head of Creative Lauren Stein to talk about the exciting process of creating the hit show—and shared some tips for landing a pitch. Alongside moderator Stacey Wilson Hunt (contributing editor, *The Hollywood Reporter*), panelists discussed the development process and why Gordon's personalizing of his pitch convinced Thorn that he was the right person to tell this story.

The State of Producing

PGA President Stephanie Allain moderated a spirited discussion on the critical challenges faced by producers today. Mike Farah (@*after Midnight*), Lynette Howell Taylor (*A Star is Born*), Tommy Oliver (founder and CEO, Confluent Films), and Brad Simpson (partner, Color Force) shared how they remain focused and successful within an amorphous profession, emphasizing the importance of finding compelling stories and surrounding themselves with aligned partnerships.

AI: What Every Producer Needs To Know

Lori McCreary (CEO, Revelations Entertainment), Renard T.



PGA Create fellows at the conference with Guild staff.

Jenkins (president, I2A2 Technologies, Labs and Studio), and Ghaith Mahmood (partner, Latham & Watkins) joined Carolyn Giardina, senior entertainment technology and crafts editor at *Variety*, for a conversation on the practical, legal and ethical considerations producers face when using and including AI in their projects. The panelists provided insights into how AI is currently being used and some of the most important considerations that creatives must consider. Topics ranged from practical uses such as dubbing to implications for the next generation of producers.

The Future of Producing

This panel, moderated by PGA President Donald De Line, focused on how producers continue to innovate across the rapidly evolving film and television landscape. Roxanne Avent Taylor (CEO/producer, Hidden Empire Film Group), Greg Berlanti (founder,



Sarah Aubrey, J.T. Rogers and Alan Paul discussing *Tokyo Vice*.

Berlanti Productions), and Charles Roven (producer, *Oppenheimer*, *The Dark Knight* trilogy) discussed current opportunities, such as connecting with audiences more directly, the increasing demand for content rooted in real stories, and the emergence of new technologies. "People want content, and they can't make it without producers," Roven said. "The world needs us."

Elevating Your Project Using AI

Jake Aust (Chief Innovation Officer, AGBO), Souki Mansoor (creator community specialist, OpenAI), and Joe Penna (VP of Applied ML, Stability AI) conversed with moderator Joanna Popper (executive producer, *Breonna's Garden*, *Fight*



Back) about how producers are using AI to add value and make an impact across their productions, from indies to big-budget, and from development to production. The panelists discussed the practical uses of AI models to enhance the creative process, helping producers visualize and execute their vision.

A VR Experience

A unique bonus for this year's conference attendees was the opportunity to immerse themselves in the winner of the 2024 PGA Innovation Award, *Body of Mine*. This lauded VR experience allows one to step into the body of another gender and discover the stories of transgender individuals. By donning Meta Quest headsets, conference attendees got to experience stories of gender dysphoria and euphoria. ■

Recordings of select sessions can be viewed on the Producers Guild of America's YouTube page.

