

FACING THE FUTURE TOGETHER

THE 15TH PRODUCED BY CONFERENCE OFFERED INSPIRATIONAL REFLECTIONS ALONGSIDE PRACTICAL GUIDANCE WITH THE OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL-IMPORTANT, FACE-TO-FACE INTERACTION WITH PEERS.

WRITTEN BY LUKE BUGBEE



Hwang Dong-hyuk (right)

LEFT: SQUID GAME COURTESY OF NETFLIX. RIGHT: ADOLESCENCE COURTESY OF NETFLIX

In May, the 15th Produced By Conference provided a welcome opportunity for the producing community to come together on the Universal Studios lot to share experiences reflecting the current state of producing, thoughts on what the future may hold for productions both indie and studio, and conversations around the biggest questions on everyone's minds—namely, financing and AI.

FROM PITCH TO SCREEN

Cocreators-writers-executive producers Stephen Graham and Jack Thorne joined journalist and cultural critic Rebecca Sun to talk about their Netflix series *Adolescence*, already Netflix's

second-most-watched English language series of all time. Graham and Thorne described the process of conceptualizing and writing the show, and the difficulties of shooting each episode in a single continuous take—an ambition accomplished thanks to the commitment of a stellar crew.

Squid Game writer-director-producer Hwang Dong-hyuk shed light on the recently released second season, now Netflix's most-watched non-English television series of all time. Hwang touched upon the challenges of evolving the series' storyline into one with multiple timelines, and the balancing act of expanding the show's universe while remaining true to the suspenseful roots that originally hooked fans.

Jack Thorne, Stephen Graham and Rebecca Sun



Jack Thorne, Stephen Graham, Hwang Dong-hyuk, Rebecca Sun and Susan Sprung



Jeff Wachtel and
Abhijay Prakash



Christine D'Souza Gelb
and Cynthia Littleton



George Strompolos, Bryn
Mooser, Barbara Ford
Grant, Andrew Morrison
and Joanna Popper

TOP LEFT: EARTH MAMA COURTESY OF A24, TOP RIGHT: THE BRUTALIST, COURTESY OF A24, BOTTOM LEFT: BABYGIRL, COURTESY OF A24

FINANCING THE FUTURE: NEW MODELS RESHAPING PRODUCTION

Cynthia Littleton, coeditor in chief at *Variety*, moderated a conversation on the current landscape of financing for projects across formats and platforms with panelists Christine D'Souza Gelb (cofounder of 2AM and executive producer of *Babygirl* and *Earth Mama*), Abhijay Prakash (president, Blumhouse), and Jeff Wachtel (CEO, Future Shack). The producers candidly discussed the difficulties of selling projects, the importance of continuing to find and support new auteurs and storytellers, and the complexities of working with and around the rise of self-made content creators on platforms such as YouTube and TikTok.

PRODUCING WITH AI TODAY

Joanna Popper (executive producer, *Masters of Light*, *Project 2029*) moderated a panel featuring Andrew Morrison (producer, *The Brutalist*, *Funny Face*), media and entertainment industry advisor Barbara Ford Grant, Bryn Mooser (CEO and cofounder, Asteria), and George Strompolos (CEO and cofounder, Promise) on how AI might alter the industry going forward. They shared experiences and perspectives on the benefits of using AI, including the ability to create content at a much lower cost, and offered arguments to dispel fears over AI removing the human element of art. While the panelists emphasized that using AI is not a must for industry pros, they stressed the importance of maintaining a solid understanding of the technology so as to capitalize on it as ethically as possible.

THE FINE PRINT OF AI

HOW PRODUCERS CAN PROTECT THEMSELVES AND THEIR PRODUCTIONS

AI was a popular topic during this year's Produced By Conference. Word among the membership spread quickly following the session, recommending the top 10 questions producers should ask when utilizing AI. We've excerpted those questions from the session "The Fine Print of AI," along with tips producers should consider to mitigate their risks when using AI.

"The Fine Print of AI" session also covered issues producers should consider around indemnification and model terms for restrictions on the use of outputs.

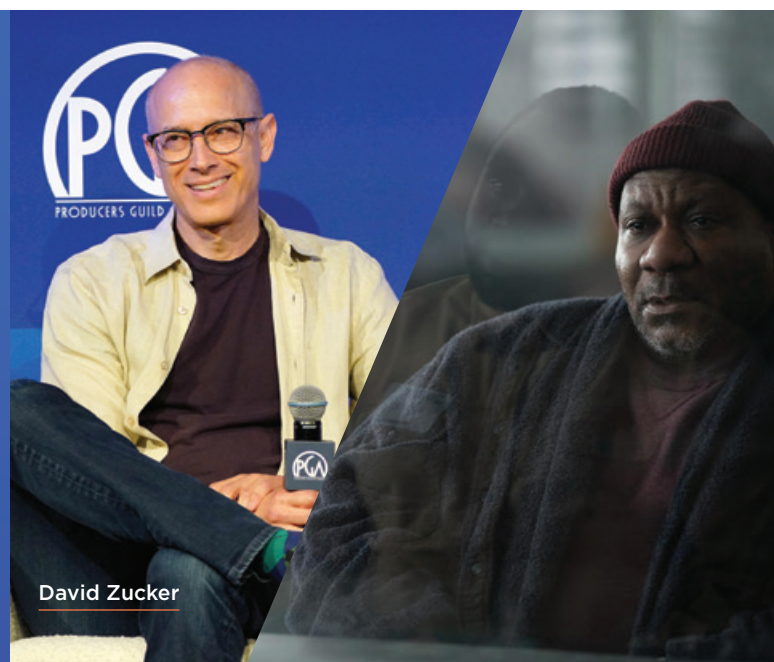
Special thanks to Lori McCreary (CEO, Revelations Entertainment and cofounder, FoodFight USA) and Ghaith Mahmood (partner, Latham & Watkins) for participating in the session and to McCreary for the lists. The session can be found on the Guild's YouTube channel.

TOP 10 QUESTIONS PRODUCERS SHOULD ASK WHEN UTILIZING AI

1. Are the AI providers' training datasets licensed?
2. Who owns the AI-generated content (output)?
3. Will the AI provider indemnify you from output infringement claims?
4. Will producer's data be used to train AI provider's model?
5. Will AI providers reuse our content?
6. Where is AI providers' data stored and governed?
7. Does producer retain exclusive rights and copyright for output?
8. As a producer, are you union-compliant?
9. Can producer track and audit their own team's use of AI?
10. As a producer, are you replacing any guild labor?

RISK-MITIGATION STRATEGIES FOR PRODUCERS

- Use AI models trained on licensed datasets
- Include AI-specific clauses in vendor and talent contracts
- Maintain output/change logs and AI usage reports
- Avoid tools with vague reuse or training policies
- Collaborate with unions when integrating AI into workflows



David Zucker



Susie Casero, Lori McCreary, Kathleen Grace, Ghaith Mahmood and Susan Sprung



Samantha Quan

AI AND THE FINE PRINT

Ghaith Mahmood (partner, Latham & Watkins) and Kathleen Grace (chief strategy officer, Vermillio), and Lori McCreary (CEO, Revelations Entertainment and cofounder, FoodFight USA) dove deeper into the ethical use of AI given the inevitability of the technology becoming much more common in the years to come. They emphasized the importance of grasping legalities from the very start to provide a foundation for properly licensing AI-generated content.

THE STATE OF PRODUCING

Sharon Waxman (founder-CEO-editor in chief, The Wrap) moderated a robust panel featuring Justin Wilkes (president, Imagine Entertainment and producer of *Jim Henson: Idea Man* and *After the Hunt*), Carolyn Strauss (executive producer, *The Last of Us*, *Somebody Somewhere*), David W. Zucker (CCO, Scott Free and executive producer, *Dope Thief*), Samantha Quan (producer, *Anora*, *Red Rocket*), and Sarah Timberman (executive producer, *Fleishman Is in Trouble*, *Justified: City Primeval*) that touched upon top-of-mind issues for producers. These included how to accommodate budgets ranging from the lower end for indies up through major studio pictures, challenges and triumphs of dealing with executives, and the continued struggle to get the green light

Carolyn Strauss, Justin Wilkes and Sharon Waxman



Sarah Timberman



TOP RIGHT: FLEISHMAN IS IN TROUBLE PHOTO BY JUDY KALLERUS / COURTESY OF FX NETWORKS; BOTTOM LEFT: JIM HENSON; IDEA MAN COURTESY OF DISNEY; THE LAST OF US COURTESY OF HBO MAX

Stephanie Allain, Donald De Line, Mike Farah, Susan Sprung and Michelle Byrd



for completely original projects. The panelists sparked hope by sharing recent success stories reflecting the many positive ways the industry is changing and the dogged adaptability of producers.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Wrapping up the conference was a panel focusing on the Producers Guild's role in shaping the industry's future, featuring PGA copresidents Stephanie Allain and Donald De Line, board member Mike Farah, CEO Susan Sprung and associate national executive director Michelle Byrd. The group described recent efforts undertaken by the Guild to improve the livelihood of producers and to benefit

the industry in general, including health care initiatives, advocating for a stackable federal tax incentive, and the anti-harassment Set Etiquette Training Program offered for free to independent productions with 20 or more cast and crew. The leaders were excited to announce the launch of the SAG-AFTRA Producer Portal, the latest resource to come out of the long-standing collaboration between the two guilds. ■

Recordings of Produced By Conference sessions can be viewed on the Producers Guild of America's YouTube channel.