

ON THE MARK

THREE PRODUCERS PULL BACK THE CURTAIN ON THE WORK THEY DID TO EARN THE PRODUCERS MARK.

Innovation and dedication are requisites for any producer applying for the Producers Mark. But to earn the Mark, those producers must also demonstrate that they performed, in a decision-making capacity, a major portion of the producing functions on a motion picture.

Because each project offers its own unique set of circumstances, the challenges and triumphs vary wildly

across budget, talent, location, distribution and more. But the denominator common to each producer who receives the Mark is the quality of their contribution to each phase of production—development, preproduction, production and postproduction.

Here, the producers of three forthcoming features share details about their Mark-certifying work.



Director Jon Turteltaub on location with producer Amy Baer and Matthew Broderick, who costars in *The Best Is Yet to Come*.

The Best Is Yet to Come

Amy Baer, p.g.a.

The Best Is Yet to Come, written by Allan Loeb and directed by Jon Turteltaub, is based on a heartfelt 2019 French comedy. The new English-language version, which was produced by Amy Baer and Dmitri Rassam, remains true to the original plot: Two longtime friends embark on a bucket-list road trip after a huge misunderstanding between them, rushing to repair family relationships and embrace life while they still can.

THIS FILM IS A REMAKE OF *LE MEILLEUR RESTE À VENIR*.

HOW DID YOU DECIDE WHICH ELEMENTS OF THE ORIGINAL STORY TO PRESERVE VERSUS WHICH TO REINTERPRET?

When I first watched the film, I had just started running Landline Pictures, a (former) label for MRC. It was a perfect fit for my mandate: movies for an older audience. It was rare to find a comedy that fit that mandate.

Le Meilleur Reste à Venir is about two lifelong friends, both in their late 50s, taking stock of their life choices relative to each other. Usually, movies targeting an older audience dwell on the hardships of aging or offer broad comedic takes on “senior citizens.” I

loved that it respected the two main characters and had an authenticity to it. It’s a classic French farce while also being emotionally deep.

It explores male friendship, something we don’t often see on screen. It also dives fearlessly into existential questions about mortality, friendship, legacy and purpose, all while being a very funny film. Most of the film was suitable for an American adaptation.

WERE THERE CULTURAL NUANCES FROM THE FRENCH VERSION THAT WERE CHALLENGING TO TRANSLATE?



Jon Turteltaub, Amy Baer, Matthew Broderick and Mary Louise Parker on set.

The biggest challenge for the American adaptation was the central farce. The comedy's conceit is a massive misunderstanding between two best friends. Without giving too much away, the movie's central conflict rests on each character thinking the other is dying and being afraid to disclose this information because they fear confronting mortality—their own, as well as their best friend's.

For French audiences, the outrageousness of farce as a storytelling mechanism is more standard and accepted, as is the tonal balance between comedy and drama. American audiences tend to be more literal; movies are either funny or dramatic, silly or emotional. But life is both, and we wanted to capture that aspect of the original.

Director Jon Turteltaub, screenwriter Allan Loeb and I agonized over whether an American audience would accept two characters essentially lying to each other for two acts of a movie. But Loeb adapted this story element in a very elegant way.

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES IN PRODUCING A REMAKE VERSUS AN ORIGINAL STORY?

Remakes come with built-in expectations. Will you live up to the original? In our case, the original film was not widely released outside of France, so we didn't have the fear of "don't ruin this" hanging over our heads. Generally speaking, remakes are fun to tackle because, by definition, something worked the first time, which is why you are remaking it. There's a baked-in element of "this works," which you don't necessarily have when producing a wholly original story.



Amy Baer on location.

The Devil Wears Prada 2

Wendy Finerman, p.g.a.

Almost 20 years after making their iconic turns as Miranda, Andy, Emily and Nigel, Meryl Streep, Anne Hathaway, Emily Blunt and Stanley Tucci return to the fashionable streets of New York City and the sleek offices of *Runway Magazine* in the eagerly awaited sequel to the 2006 phenomenon.

The Devil Wears Prada 2 is produced by Wendy Finerman, and executive produced by Michael Bederman, Karen Rosenfelt and Aline Brosh McKenna. The film reunites the original main cast with director David Frankel and writer McKenna, while introducing an all-new runway of characters.

HOW DID YOU APPROACH NEGOTIATIONS WITH RETURNING CAST MEMBERS?

The foundation of any film, especially one involving returning cast, is a strong script that excites people creatively. There had been ongoing conversations for some time about how much the landscape—both culturally and within the story’s world—had evolved since the original film. Once a solid concept was in place, it became about sharing that vision with the key cast members and making sure they felt there was something meaningful to return to.

Negotiations were less about convincing people and more about aligning schedules and expectations. Many of the actors had gone on to have very successful careers, but there was a shared appreciation for the original project that helped bring everyone back



Anne Hathaway, Meryl Streep and Stanley Tucci are back as Andy, Miranda and Nigel.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF 20TH CENTURY STUDIOS



together. Strong representation and collaboration across all parties also played an important role in getting everything across the finish line.

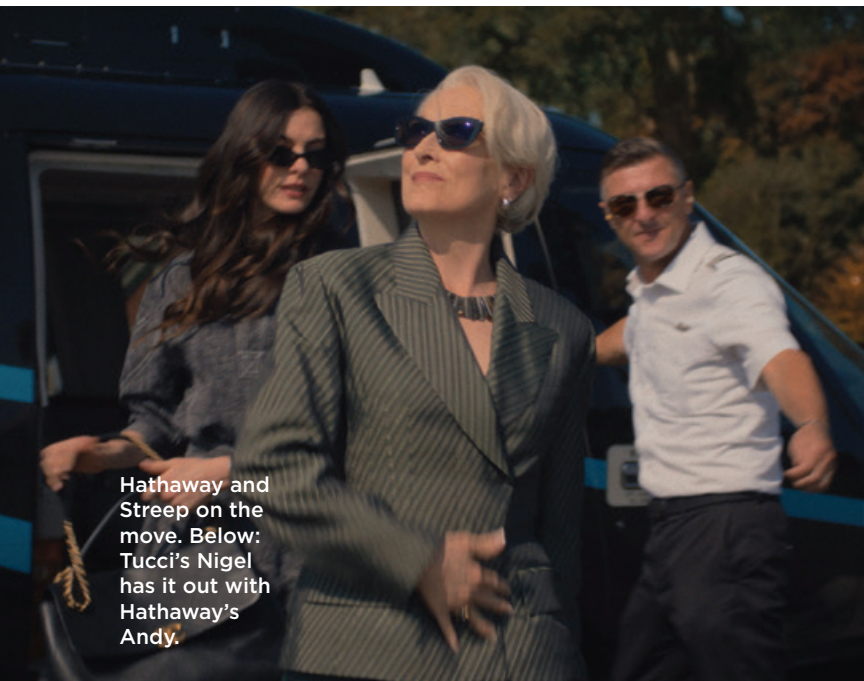
WHAT CONSIDERATIONS GO INTO CONTINUITY WITH CHARACTER ARCS WHILE ALLOWING ACTORS TO EVOLVE THEIR PERFORMANCES?

The first consideration was that it's 20 years later—where are they now? Miranda Priestly is holding on by her

fingernails. We knew Andy was out pursuing her career as a journalist, and Emily, as many fashion editors proceed with their career, was head of a major brand. Nigel, the dutiful lieutenant, remained by Miranda's side. That dictated where we met them. But we were also dealing with women who had children and husbands, who were thinking of having children, who were more mature in their work environment in handling stress and crisis, and women who had gained life experience.

WHAT MADE NOW THE RIGHT TIME TO REVISIT THE STORY? HOW DID YOU BALANCE NOSTALGIA WITH THE NEED TO CREATE SOMETHING CULTURALLY RELEVANT FOR TODAY'S AUDIENCE?

We knew it was the right time because the media world has changed drastically. Print media was no longer the same. Digital media is at the forefront. The people of power had huge challenges to face—that the world was immediate, not monthly. Fashion



Hathaway and Streep on the move. Below: Tucci's Nigel has it out with Hathaway's Andy.



Wendy Finerman on set of *The Devil Wears Prada 2*.

became instant. Whatever came out on the runway was immediately mass-produced by large discount chains. This was a very fertile environment to present these monumental changes.

During the entire process, from script development to filming, we were very aware to always tip our hat to the past and acknowledge the present day, because the themes of the film are still based upon doing a great job, and the love affair and wish fulfillment that fashion can provide to everyone.

WERE THERE ANY UNEXPECTED OBSTACLES THAT REQUIRED SIGNIFICANT CREATIVE OR OPERATIONAL PIVOTS?

This time around we were dealing with major actors with complex schedules shooting other movies. Trying to find a window of time to film this movie was truly a hurdle. Each one of them had commitments that were firmly in place before we were even greenlit, so we really had to juggle a lot to figure out how we could have a comfortable and reasonable schedule to shoot. But it wasn't just shooting. We needed a



significant amount of time for prepping our wardrobe, hair and makeup looks, and other normal preparations.

I will also say that we were able to reassemble most of our crew and department heads. The fact that we had all stayed friendly and had been in

contact and worked with one another on other projects, really made it easy. We were able to jump in right from the start, which created synergy to help make everything go smoothly.

We were a family reunion on all fronts.

Evil Dead Burn

Rob Tapert, p.g.a.

The latest incarnation of carnage and demonic mayhem in the world of *Evil Dead* follows a widow's attempt to seek solace with her in-laws in their secluded family home. Their quietude is destroyed when a misguided decision lures Deadites, as the titular characters are known, to them, giving a new meaning to familial dysfunction.

Along with Sam Raimi, *Evil Dead Burn* is produced by Rob Tapert, who has produced all six installments of the *Evil Dead* franchise. Romel Adam, Bruce Campbell, Lee Cronin and Jose Canas executive produced.

WITH EVIL DEAD EVOLVING ACROSS DECADES, HOW DO YOU MAINTAIN CONTINUITY OF VISION WHILE ALLOWING REINVENTION?

A lot of it has to do with letting go, not being overly precious, and not forcing filmmakers to stick very closely to what was done before. We are dealing with the world of the supernatural, of the unexplainable, so it's important for me to offer filmmakers a large sandbox in which to play.

In that regard, there is always going to be some feeling of anthology to the *Evil Dead* films. *Evil Dead Burn* has a decidedly French flair. It also has connections to the past films and an expansion of the mythology.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF WARNER BROS. STUDIOS



Producer Rob Tapert
(center) on the set
of *Evil Dead Burn*.

THE ORIGINAL *EVIL DEAD* WAS FAMOUSLY LOW-BUDGET. HOW DID THOSE CONSTRAINTS SHAPE YOUR PRODUCING PHILOSOPHY LONG-TERM?

Although the *Evil Dead* movies are now with major studio partners, they are, as far as franchise pictures go, still relatively modest in their budgets.

The challenge is to balance the ever-spiraling cost of modern moviemaking with maintaining the creative scrappiness of the original *Evil Dead*, and bringing in the movies at a financially responsible number. It takes a lot of planning and cultivating crews that I know and can trust.

WHEN STEWARDING A FRANCHISE, HOW DO YOU EVALUATE RISK VERSUS BRAND INTEGRITY—ESPECIALLY WITH REBOOTS OR NEW DIRECTORS?

Over the course of four decades, I have been the on-set shepherd for the franchise. Not just the movies, but three seasons of the TV show *Ash vs Evil Dead* as well.

By and large we allow the filmmakers to deliver their own vision of an *Evil Dead* movie. There are certain parameters in which we want them to operate—ancient incantations, supernatural possession, demons that revel in causing pain and who know your deepest secrets—but within those bounds we give them as much freedom as possible. It's a tricky thing—you want to be calculated in



the risks you take, but you also have to recognize that this is a creative process; you have to trust your gut and not overanalyze.

Working with first- and second-time directors on the movies has been incredibly rewarding and equally challenging. Young filmmakers bring energy, style and a vision that is unique. This is what the *Evil Dead* franchise needs in order to keep evolving. However, there are certain things I learned many years ago—like set pieces are slow, take time and should go to a second unit. The directors are always resistant to anyone else shooting

their vision. I don't like saying, "I told you so," but sometimes those words come out of my mouth. Luckily, we build schedules that allow for a few misfires.

Most young filmmakers have no understanding of the studio system and marketing. My team helps them learn and navigate how to work beyond the independent filmmaking world. The studio is not an enemy, but a great tool that young filmmakers need to understand how to work with and use properly.

CAN YOU SHARE A MOMENT WHERE A PRODUCTION

PROBLEM REQUIRED A DISTINCTLY PRODUCER-DRIVEN SOLUTION RATHER THAN A CREATIVE ONE?

We shot the movie in New Zealand, where the weather is unpredictable and constantly changing. You get all four seasons on any given day. What this means for production is that shooting on location and outdoors can become a real nightmare for the schedule and the budget. My solution was to film in controlled environments and on sets and stages as much as possible, and not allow ourselves to fall prey to the elements. ■