

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

THE 16TH PRODUCED BY CONFERENCE TOOK ON THE MAIN ISSUES FACING PRODUCERS TODAY IN A STIMULATING SERIES OF THOUGHT-PROVOKING SESSIONS.

WRITTEN BY
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From shifting finance models to the emergence of new AI technologies, there's no question producers today are encountering unique challenges and opportunities—which is why the 16th Produced By Conference was notably timely. Featuring sessions with top producers and entertainment executives—and held sustainably on the Universal Studios lot in May—the conference provided an opportunity for insightful and thought-provoking dialogue.

A FIRESIDE CHAT WITH JASON BLUM AND JAMES WAN

"The reason these movies are connecting with young people the way they are is that these people are thinking about directing in a different way," said Jason Blum, CEO and founder of Blumhouse-Atomic Monster, regarding the recent success of *Obsession* and *Backrooms*. "They are so homed in and focused on making stuff for their audience." He spoke along with James Wan, filmmaker and founder of Blumhouse-Atomic Monster, and PGA President Stephanie Allain. They noted that this generation sees testing as an opportunity rather than an imposition and is using the in-depth feedback that platforms like YouTube offer.

THE NEW MUST-SEE: PRODUCING THE FUTURE OF TV – SPONSORED BY YOUTUBE

Creator-producers Michelle Khare and Brittany Broski discussed storytelling approaches for modern audiences, including eventized viewing and using unconventional interview formats to build trust and loyalty through authenticity and direct engagement. The two creators emphasized a tactic referred to repeatedly throughout the day: Build global audiences that feel personally invested in the content. Said Khare, “I consider myself a producer first, and producers are the quarterback of the team. You have to understand everything.”

A FIRESIDE CHAT WITH TOM QUINN

CEO and founder of NEON Tom Quinn noted that “there are many places in the world where you can find extraordinary work” and expressed his company’s belief that “artistic merit and cultural relevance should and must exist in equal measure” as he discussed the future of producing with NBC’s senior Hollywood reporter, Rebecca Keegan.



Michelle Khare
and Brittany
Broski



Tom Quinn and
Rebecca Keegan



Jed Weintrob, Joanna Popper, Jennifer
Howell, Nik Kleverov and Julina Tatlock

THE STATE OF PRODUCING

“Content used to be king. Now, community is king,” said Joy Gorman Wettels (founder of Joy Coalition and executive producer of Netflix’s *Little House on the Prairie*) in conversation with Charles Roven (founder of Atlas Entertainment and producer of *Oppenheimer*), Mike Farah (executive producer, *Between Two Ferns with Zach Galifianakis*), and *Variety* co-editor in chief Cynthia Littleton. They examined the current state of producing, how the role is changing, and strategies that are helping producers move projects forward, including independent financing models, the creation of mini studios and engaging audiences.

AI AND PRODUCING: ADAPTING TO NEW TECHNOLOGY

Joanna Popper (CEO, Laurel Beach) led a conversation with Jed Weintrob (CEO and cofounder, 30 Ninjas), Jennifer Howell (CCO, Deep Voodoo and supervising producer, *South Park*), Julina Tatlock (cofounder and chief creative officer, 30 Ninjas) and Nik Kleverov (CCO at Native Foreign) about how producers are adapting to the latest technology and driving innovation in their workflows and business models through the practical integration of AI. As Kleverov said, “There’s no magic button. You need creatives more than ever, and creative storytellers will win.”



Cynthia Littleton, Charles Roven, Joy Gorman Wettels and Mike Farah



Sara Murphy, Michael De Luca and Susan Sprung

A FIRESIDE CHAT WITH MICHAEL DE LUCA

Cochair and CEO of Warner Bros. Motion Picture Group Michael De Luca sat down with Academy Award-winning producer Sara Murphy for a lively discussion centering on how the common definition of IP needs to be changed. "I actually think IP is talent," said De Luca. "I don't think Batman is IP. I think the artists and writers over the decades who did that comic book are the IP."



Will Schildknecht and Lori McCreary

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: THE TERMS & CONDITIONS

AI tools are becoming increasingly integrated into development, production, post, marketing and distribution. Lori McCreary (Revelations Entertainment CEO) and Will Schildknecht (partner, Latham & Watkins) explored how this integration is happening, along with key questions that producers should be asking as they engage AI vendors and workflows.



This photo and below: Two producers giving their all to The Art and Craft of Pitching panel



THE ART AND CRAFT OF PITCHING

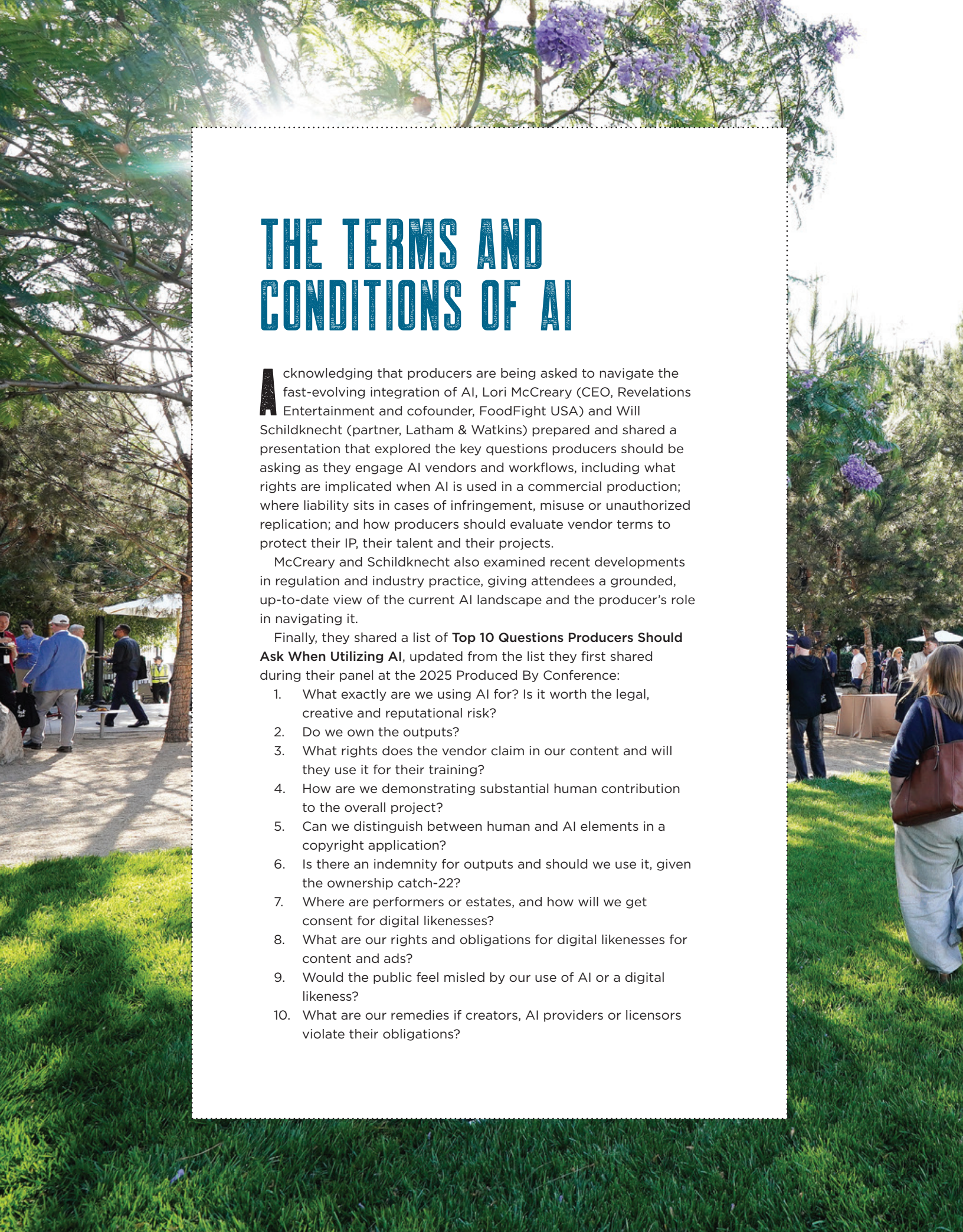
In this engaging live pitch session featuring three PGA members and moderated by Joe Farrell (executive producer, *American Vandal* and producer, *Weird: The Al Yankovic Story*), Bob Greenblatt (founder, The Green Room), Chris Slager (president of film at Fifth Season and executive producer, *Friendship*), Donna Gigliotti (producer, *Hidden Figures* and *Silver Linings Playbook*), and Vivian Cannon (executive vice president of drama development at Universal Television) offered feedback on pitches and outlined the nuances of pitching film versus television.



Tommy Oliver, Joe Lewis and Jana Winograd

THE FUTURE OF PRODUCING - NEW MODELS, SPONSORED BY WRAPBOOK

We're in "a period of transformation, a period of evolution," said Tommy Oliver (producer, *Fancy Dance*), in a lively conversation with Jana Winograd (CEO, aTwist) and Joe Lewis (CEO of Amplify Pictures and executive producer, *100 Foot Wave*), led by Lucas Shaw, media and entertainment managing editor of *Bloomberg News*. They noted how producers are creating companies designed for a new era and adapting to a shifting landscape. "Producing is about figuring it out, whatever it may be," said Oliver, "and it's about being proud of what comes out the other side."

The background of the page is a photograph of a park. In the foreground, there is a lush green lawn. In the middle ground, several people are walking along a path. In the background, there are tall trees with green leaves and some purple flowers. The overall scene is bright and sunny.

THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF AI

Acknowledging that producers are being asked to navigate the fast-evolving integration of AI, Lori McCreary (CEO, Revelations Entertainment and cofounder, FoodFight USA) and Will Schildknecht (partner, Latham & Watkins) prepared and shared a presentation that explored the key questions producers should be asking as they engage AI vendors and workflows, including what rights are implicated when AI is used in a commercial production; where liability sits in cases of infringement, misuse or unauthorized replication; and how producers should evaluate vendor terms to protect their IP, their talent and their projects.

McCreary and Schildknecht also examined recent developments in regulation and industry practice, giving attendees a grounded, up-to-date view of the current AI landscape and the producer's role in navigating it.

Finally, they shared a list of **Top 10 Questions Producers Should Ask When Utilizing AI**, updated from the list they first shared during their panel at the 2025 Produced By Conference:

1. What exactly are we using AI for? Is it worth the legal, creative and reputational risk?
2. Do we own the outputs?
3. What rights does the vendor claim in our content and will they use it for their training?
4. How are we demonstrating substantial human contribution to the overall project?
5. Can we distinguish between human and AI elements in a copyright application?
6. Is there an indemnity for outputs and should we use it, given the ownership catch-22?
7. Where are performers or estates, and how will we get consent for digital likenesses?
8. What are our rights and obligations for digital likenesses for content and ads?
9. Would the public feel misled by our use of AI or a digital likeness?
10. What are our remedies if creators, AI providers or licensors violate their obligations?



GOING GREEN

The PGA continued to highlight its focus on sustainability by partnering with Universal Studios to host the event on a 100% renewable energy-powered lot. The Guild also offered conference attendees the chance to win a custom Universal GreenerLight bag—created with upcycled marketing backdrops from across the 2025 Universal film slate—by participating in a quiz to test their sustainability knowledge based on facts presented on screens throughout the venue.



ASK ME ANYTHING ROUNDTABLES

Seasoned producers led Ask Me Anything Lunchtime Roundtables for conference attendees. Hosts included Hawk Koch, executive producer, *Wayne's World*, and producer, *Keeping the Faith*; Ellen Goldsmith-Vein, founder and CEO, The Gotham Group and producer, *Springsteen: Deliver Me From Nowhere*, *Juror #2*; David Friendly, producer, *Little Miss Sunshine* and executive producer, *Queen of the South*; Jay Roewe, SVP of Production, Global Incentives and Production Planning, HBO/Warner Bros. Discovery; Ash Sarohia, producer, *The Gallerist*, *The Freshening*; Alex Garcia, EVP of Creative Affairs at Legendary Entertainment and producer, *Kong: Skull Island*, *Godzilla vs. Kong*; Sev Ohanian, founder, Proximity Media and producer, *Sinners*, *Searching*; Carol Mendelsohn, showrunner and executive producer, *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* and executive producer, *The Faithful: Women of the Bible*; Erica Lee, president and partner, Thunder Road and producer, *Sicario* and *John Wick* franchises; Poppy Hanks, EVP of Development and Production, MACRO Film Studios and producer, *Freaky Tales*, *Blue Bayou*.



RECEPTION

After official conference programming wrapped, guests mingled and enjoyed great food during a networking reception cohosed by Universal Production Services.

