

695 QUARTERLY

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Features

Shooting the Cover.....	9
The Best Person for the Job.....	12
A Career.....	18
The Utility Sound Tech	21
Life on the Frame Line	26
Strikenado.....	30

Cover: Women of Local 695
Photo: Metoyer Photography

Departments

From the Editors.....	4
From the President.....	5
Our Contributors.....	6
From the Business Representative.....	7
News & Announcements	10
<i>Wireless class & iHeartRadio</i>	

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From the Editors



by David Waelder

We are pleased to bring attention, long overdue, to the women members of our Local. Cabell Smith tells of her adventures in a changing environment beginning in the early seventies. Working news for NBC in New York, she came in contact with all the major players in that turbulent time from a *Man on a Wire* to mafia hits. Coming to Los Angeles, she joined Local 695 in 1992 and pursued a career as a commercial Mixer. Mary Jo Devenney had an equally circuitous path in her career and credits some of her success to an independent-minded cast member named Two Socks. Peggy Names and Jennifer Winslow provide a spirited defense of the Utility Sound position. Finally, we have Rosa Costanza Tyabji's compilation article that introduces us to nearly two dozen women in the Local today.

Also, check out our account of the strike action against Asylum Productions and *Sharknado*.

Finally, this issue marks my last as managing editor of the *695 Quarterly*. Richard Lightstone, one of the original editors and longtime partner in this venture, will assume the responsibility of managing editor for future issues. The last six years have been a challenge, an opportunity to expand my horizons through contact with the many disciplines represented by the Local and a chance to grow with the enterprise. I thank you.

Fraternally yours,
Eric Pierce, Richard Lightstone
and David Waelder

From the President



Welcome to the spring edition of our 695 Quarterly.

We are seeing large and enthusiastic turnouts at our meetings, organizational drives and in the formation of a number of committees.

This real growth in rank-and-file participation is an affirmation of the true spirit in our professional community. It is being widely recognized in the larger entertainment world and we are benefiting; the word is out.

In this issue you will see an important recognition of the professional women in our ranks. Their strength, history and contributions have always been integral to our progress and we are grateful for the voices contributing to this issue. Please take note: *professional* is the key word here as gender is only one aspect of this group of very seasoned pros. Some of these members are true pioneers in breaking down workplace barriers, past and present. However, the common thread of this diverse group is their excellence at managing their successful careers.

Because the stewardship of our history has long been a personal interest of mine, I am delighted to announce the formation of a History Committee chaired by Andy Rovins. If you have any interest or materials that may relate to this endeavor, please be sure to contact Andy at history@695.com.

Finally, I'd like to express recognition and gratitude to David Waelder for his long years of service as one of our editors. Almost fifteen years ago, we asked David to come and help edit our nascent newsletter, the precursor of the current *Quarterly*. He generously jumped right in and journeyed the often-complex task with grace. He has stepped down and handed his responsibilities to another of our long-serving editors, Richard Lightstone.

Thank you, David, and congratulations, Richard.

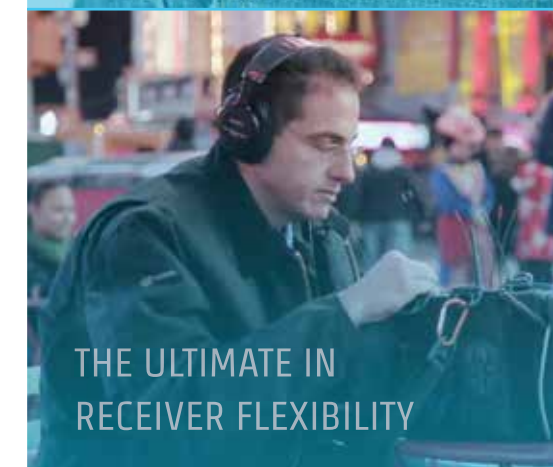
Spring is here. **Carpe diem!**

Warmest regards,

Mark Ulano, CAS, AMPS
IATSE Local 695 President

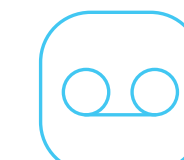


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Our Contributors



Rosa Costanza Tyabji

Rosa Costanza Tyabji has worked for over a decade as a Sound Mixer, as a Boom Operator and as a Utility Sound Technician. She has worked on locations in North America, India & Africa. Rosa is also a producer of films, music videos and of Grammy-selected music albums. She co-owns and operates an independent record label (Limitless Sky) and publishing company. She is a voting member of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (NARAS) and is a publisher-member of ASCAP and BMI. She is the third generation of her family to work in TV and film, and grew up immersed in the behind-the-scenes processes.

Peggy Names

Peggy Names picked up her first fishpole after graduating with an MFA from USC in 1975. She joined Local 695 in 1977 as the first female Boom Operator. During her career, she has worked as Boom Operator and Utility Sound Technician on many commercials and television shows, but her main area of expertise lies in motion pictures. Her credits include *Oz the Great and Powerful*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *The Hangover Part II*, *Castaway*, *Minority Report* and *Enemy of the State*. In December, Ms. Names was elected to her second term as Trustee of Hollywood's IATSE Local 695. She is retired now after thirty-nine years, but her son, Alex Names, is forging his own path in sound.

Jennifer Winslow

Jennifer Winslow became a member of Local 695 in 1990, after working as a Utility Technician on films in Los Angeles and Dallas, Texas. She has been a Boom Operator on feature films, commercials and episodic TV, and recently has been working as a Utility Technician, while she raises her (fourteen-year-old) twins. She has worked on many films, including *Problem Child*, *Lone Star*, *Spiderman 2*, and *Be Cool*. Her television credits include *Chicago Hope*, *Cold Case*, *Star Trek Deep Space 9*, *The Pretender*, *7th Heaven*, *Family Affair*, *The Secret Life of the American Teenager* and *The Neighbors*. Jennifer holds a Bachelor of Arts from UMASS Amherst and a certificate in screenwriting from UCLA. She enjoys writing and is happy to be a contributor to the *Quarterly*.



From left:
Peggy Names and
Jennifer Winslow

Cabell Smith

Cabell began mixing in the 1970s in New York, beginning in news, moving to documentaries, then features and, after the birth of her two children, to commercials. She moved to California in 1991, retiring in 2006. She now divides her time between Los Angeles and the Virginia Piedmont, where she manages a farm. She has just finished writing her first book, a mystery set in central Virginia. Mindful of how much our technology has shrunk with the advent of handheld devices, the plot revolves around "a geeky female journalist detective and her smartphone!"



Mary Jo Devenney

Mary Jo Devenney has been a Boom Operator and Sound Mixer on films and TV shows for more than thirty years. She enjoys being paid to witness wonderful entertainment firsthand and being in a position to capture it for others.



David Waelder

David has recorded sound for films for several decades and has been an editor of the *695 Quarterly* since its inception six years ago.



Photos courtesy of the respective contributors except Rosa Costanza Tyabji.
(Photo: Nora Schäfer)

695 QUARTERLY

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Television Engineers,
Video Assist Technicians and
Studio Projectionists

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From the Business Representative



Where Is Local 695 Heading?

Lately, our Local has seen a dramatic surge in member participation. Yes, we've had big turnouts at recent membership meetings, the last several of which have seen twice as many members as we used to have. But it's much more than that.

Last month, our members took a lead role in the *Sharknado 3* job action, packing the picket line with Sound Engineers, Video Engineers and Projectionists, sending an unmistakable disincen-tive to this and other Producers who set out to abuse their crews.

Also last month, our Local, and more than twenty Local 695 members on the crew, came through to deliver a decisive, last-minute knockout punch to NABET's attempt to steal NBC/Universal's *iHeartRadio Awards* broadcast from an IA contract.

Last summer, after our members flooded the mailboxes of California Assembly members and walked the state house halls in Sacramento, our persistent efforts were rewarded with pas-sage of a powerful new Film Tax Incentive program that, over the next few months, will have a dramatic impact on film job growth for our members. And, with AB 1839 under our belt, we intend to continue to play an active role in state politics as a member of the CIC (California IATSE Coalition, formerly the EUC, Entertainment Union Coalition). Under the CIC, we'll be taking on issues that will positively affect our members at work and in their personal lives.

With new technology, Local 695 Engineers have done nothing less than transform the way motion pictures and television shows are produced and exhibited. Harnessing the potentials of digital technology, Local 695 Sound and Video Engineers now have more options and more flexibility to record and play-back, enabling them to deliver more services to the employer than ever before. That means more equipment requirements and a bigger workload for both sound and video, and we have contract language that requires proper man/woman-power for both. For the Sound Engineers, if you are asked to work with a two-person crew, you must direct the production to the Local to request a waiver of the Utility Sound Technician because no Local 695 member can waive any provision of the contract, including the Utility Sound Tech. For Video Engineers who are being asked to perform more and more services on production, you can have an assistant if you point the employer to *Para-*

graph Fifty-six of our contract. Better yet, call the Local and ask for assistance. We have been very successful in demonstrating to the employer the added benefit of an assistant for the Video Department. So for both sound and video, *you* can make the difference.

Without question, the members define this Local's future. And there's so much more we can do working together in partner-ship. How involved are *you* in your Local? On what commit-tees will you participate? This is your future. The answer to the original question is simple: "Where is Local 695 heading?" Where *you* take us.

Scott Bernard
Business Representative

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Shooting the Cover

Peggy Names recruited her friend, retired cinematographer Julius Metoyer, to take a picture of as many of the women members of Local 695 as they could assemble in one place. They scouted locations together and settled on Brookside Park in Pasadena for its rugged, terraced look and its accessibility and available parking.

With assistance from Linda Skinner and Nikki Riordan in the office, Peggy compiled a list of the 146 women members and invited each of them to participate. The first couple of attempts ran into some conflicts with the Academy Awards, rain and the K-Tek open house. When everything finally clicked, the ranks had thinned a bit but the attendees were a good representation of women active in the various disciplines of the Local.



Julius Metoyer at work.
(Photo: Mark Ulano, CAS, AMPS)

- | | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Rocky Quiroz | 11. Patrushkha Mierzwa | 21. Mihaela Jifcu |
| 2. Alexandra Gallo | 12. Veronica Kahn | 22. Felicia Starkey |
| 3. Anna Wilborn | 13. Sunny Meyer | 23. Gilah Friedberg |
| 4. Carrie Sheldon | 14. Victoria Thoma-Bowes | 24. Jackie Summers |
| 5. Valeria Ghiran | 15. Shawn Holden, CAS | 25. Rita Rubalcava |
| 6. Amanda Beggs, CAS | 16. Sarah Chilson | 26. Chantilly Hensley |
| 7. Peggy Names | 17. Cara Kovach | 27. Lisa Gillespie |
| 8. Jennifer Winslow | 18. Yvette Hill | 28. Mary Jo Devenney |
| 9. Susan Moore-Chong, CAS | 19. Elizabeth Alvarez | |
| 10. Rosa Costanza Tyabji | 20. Kathryn Ballard | |



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NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Wireless Class

The RF Microphone Clinic, taught by Thomas Popp, packs ten years of wiring skill into a one-day class. Being able to wire talent quickly and effectively is an essential skill in today's movie and television environment. In this hands-on class, Thomas teaches set etiquette and addresses wardrobe challenges, unique wiring problems, wind protection—all the black arts of microphone concealment tech-



Thomas Popp

niques. Due to the close interaction, seating is limited. Check the Education and Training resource at **695.com** or contact **edu@695.com** for class dates.



Hands-on class

(Photos by David Waelder)

In Memoriam

MICHAEL D. DAVIS
Utility Sound Technician
August 29, 1982 – January 9, 2015

SALVADOR OLIVAS
Projectionist
April 29, 1941 – March 20, 2015

Erratum

The Fall 2014 edition of the *695 Quarterly* correctly identified Ray Lindsay, Edward McKarge, William McKarge and Ric Teller as members of the production team responsible for *The 56th Annual Grammy Awards*, an Emmy-winning special on CBS. However, we failed to indicate with bold type that they are all members of Local 695.



iHeartRadio

NBC/Universal reversed direction and restored the IATSE contract for the live broadcast of the *iHeartRadio Awards*. Many of the engineers working these award shows are IATSE members but, last year, NABET took the job away from us and they wanted to do it again this year. That contract was conspicuously inferior to the IATSE agreement and more than twenty Local 695 engineers working the show would have had to make concessions for NABET. Most particularly, they would have been forced to forgo contributions to

their Health and Pension plans through MPIPHP. Local 695 acted quickly and sent out an email to the membership encouraging anyone affected to contact NBC/Universal and express their reluctance to working under a contract that didn't meet their health and welfare needs. NBC/Universal management reconsidered their options and, on March 23, only days before the scheduled broadcast, they restored the IATSE contract. It's a good outcome from vigilance at the Local and active participation of the membership!

Fellowship and Service Award

We swell with pride at the announcement that Joe Aredas Sr. is this year's recipient of the Fellowship and Service Award from the Motion Picture Editors Guild (MPEG). He received the award at a dinner at the Sheraton Universal on May 2. The Fellowship and Service Award recognizes an individual who embodies the values the Guild holds most dear: Professionalism, Collaboration, Mentorship, Generosity of Spirit and a Commitment to the Labor Movement. Joe Aredas is one of our own, having



Joe Aredas Sr.

served Local 695 as Assistant Business Representative from 1980 to 1987, and his son, Joe Jr., presently serves as our Field Representative. Joe Sr. has served in many other capacities including on the Board of Directors of the MPEG, on the Board of the Motion Picture Pension and Health Plans, as Vice President of the California Labor Federation and others.



Maurice Sydnor looking over the wares at John Maynard's booth.

(Photos by David Waelder)

Phillip Le Gault, left, with Paul Vik Marshall, CAS.



LA Sound Mixers Flea Market

The first of what will hopefully be a regularly scheduled production sound flea market meet took place on Saturday, February 28, 2015. Chris Howland, a Local 695 member, organized the event and invited anyone in the sound community to bring in gear they were no longer using. Glen Trew, also a 695 member as well as an equipment retailer, graciously provided space (and rain protection) at his new Burbank location and a taco truck was available for refreshments. Twenty-five sellers offered gear ranging from cables to mixers to more than a hundred shoppers over the three-hour event. There were bargains to be had and many deals were completed.

Sharknado Strike List

These 695 members, and some prospective members, recorded their names on the sign-in sheets at *Sharknado* picketing locations. We are grateful to them, and others who may have walked the lines without signing in, for their participation.

Laurence Abrams	Ashley Holland	David Pattee
Andrew Adams	Chris Howland (2 times)	Brandon Pert
Jon Ailetcher	Tim Jones	Chris Polczynski
Lena Al-Khatib	Kelsey Jonikas (2 times)	Ken Pries
Agamemnon Andrianos (3 times)	Justin Katoni	Orson Rheinfurth (3 times)
Joe Aredas (2 times)	Martin Kittappa	Eva Rismamforoush (2 times)
Eric Ballew	Johnny Kubelka	Dennis Schweitzer
Kevin Bellante	Jason Kubota	Robert Schuck
Scott Bernard (2 times)	Phillip Le Gault	Carrie Sheldon
Thomas Cassetta (2 times)	David Levine	Brenton Stumpf (3 times)
Wesley Claggett (2 times)	Armando Macias	Bartek Swiatek (2 times)
Devendra Cleary	Ashley Maria	Matt Thompson
Travis Cote	John Maynard (2 times)	Sabi Tulok
Brian Curley	Brian McKinney	Rosa Costanza Tyabji
Thomas Curley	Adam Mohundro	David Waelder (4 times)
Neal Doxsee	Reza Moosavi	Susan Waelder
Alistair Duff (4 times)	Steve Morantz	Robert Wald
Noel Espinosa	Caleb Mose	Troy Wilcox (2 times)
Sara Evans (2 times)	Timothy O'Malley (2 times)	Jennifer Winslow
Evan Freeman	Jonathan Orr	Frank Zaragoza
Dennis Hammermeister	Saif Parkar	

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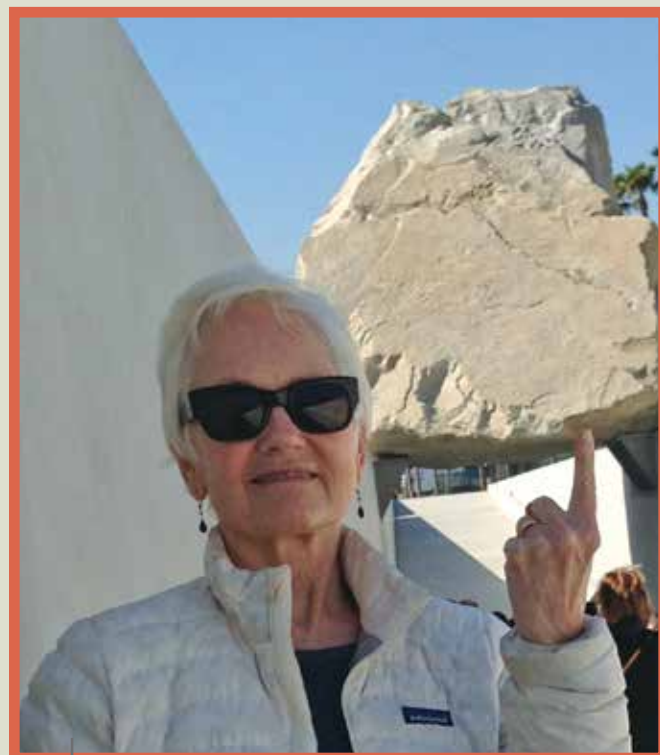
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*Assembled and edited by
Rosa Costanza Tyabji*

Embarking on the creation of this article has allowed me to investigate and to understand better the dynamics involved in being a gender minority in this field. My hope is that this article also lends you greater insight on how far we women have come, and how far we have yet to go.

In November 2014, I organized a group of Local 695 member-sisters to gather to discuss our shared professional experiences for the purpose of creating this article. It was a sublime yet charged atmosphere, beneficial to all participants. Cabell Smith, one of the first women to join IATSE (Local 52) as a Sound Mixer in 1974, was laughing with new



Cabell Smith



Rosa Costanza Tyabji. (Photo: Jacopo Annese, PhD, Director of The Brain Observatory)

member and Y-1, Eva Rismanforoush, who joined in 2014. There was much networking and camaraderie as we got to know each other.

Prior to the November meeting, I sent requests for stories, quotes and anecdotes of working life to all the active women members in IATSE Local 695. More than thirty people responded to participate in this article.

Chartered in 1930, Local 695 has nearly 2000 members working in the fields of Production Sound Technicians, Television Engineers, Video Assist Technicians and Studio Projectionists. The presence of women working in those fields has been slowly growing since the first woman knocked on the door in the 1960s. In its first fifty-five years,



Eva Rismanforoush and Rebecca Chan shooting *PAPA*. (Photo: Dennis Schweitzer)

the number of women members grew from none to only eight percent. It is encouraging to see that this year, nearly twenty-five percent of new members are female.

Peggy Names, a member since 1977 and one of the first female Microphone Boom Operators, prepared these statistics with help from Linda Skinner and Nikki Riordan in the office. “Every new production brings new faces,” Peggy mused, “sometimes those faces are surprised to see a woman working in sound, even in the year 2015. We look forward to the day when people stop saying, ‘I’ve never seen a woman sound person before.’”

We found the commonalities we have, yes as women, but also as professionals networked in our organization, Local 695. All members play an important creative role in the production world. Just as utilizing the necessary technology needed by our department for any given project may change, it is understood that the personnel needs may also change with production type and complexity. As an example, women often gain employment as Utility Sound Technicians when a project has women and/or children in the cast, when the personnel needs create that opportunity.

Working together on *Grace Under Fire* (1993-1998), left to right: Phylliss Bailey Brooks, Rus Axsom, Brett Butler (star), Lisa Schway, Azhar Aluqdah, Yasmin Muniz

We share a collective gratitude to those who opened the doors of possibility and employment in this technical art, and an appreciation of the tenacity and perseverance they employed in our shared craft.

“We are grateful to our Local for opening its doors so willingly to us,” Names states. “We think we have the best brothers any sister could have. The trailblazers may not have known there were any obstacles before them, but we were tenacious and paved the way for the future generations of women in Local 695.”

Her words are an understatement. In our artistic and scientific field, the backgrounds we bring are diverse, as are the paths we’ve taken to gain experience and employment as technicians. Here are a few stories showing that diversity:

Phylliss Bailey Brooks (joined IATSE in 1981) is a Y-8 Boom Operator primarily using the Fisher for multi-camera TV: “My very first semester at USC studying TV & film, I met a Unit Manager (a recent USC grad) working on *Good Times* for Tandem Productions. She assisted me in getting a job as a page working on the lot at Metromedia Square on shows like *All in the Family*, *One Day at a Time* and *The Jeffersons* ... My first engineering job was as a cable puller on *Good Times*, but wow, some folks weren’t quite ready for me! A young, black, female with my eyes wide open, but soon those that weren’t keen on the idea in the beginning became my best mentors.”

Michele Wolfe (1980) is one of only four female Projectionists in Local 695. “I worked as a cashier and candy girl at the Sunland Drive-In Theater. I was lucky to meet another union projectionist in 1972 to teach me the trade. At that time, you needed a license to work because of nitrate film. I received my license and became the second woman to join Local 150. I started out in the theater Local and paid my dues by working the porno houses in the Valley. So I became



a Studio Projectionist. I feel very lucky to be a union member in a great industry that has provided me a good living for forty years.”

Jillian Arnold (2012) is a Y-4 doing data asset management and data capture. She shares: “My first shooting/media managing job was with the RED camera for NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory. We were shooting parachute tests for the Curiosity Mars Rover at one of the world’s largest wind tunnels ... I felt very lucky to be working alongside some of the most seasoned and intelligent men in the country. I started out doing media management from camera cards to field hard drives, and now I operate the Pronology ingest control application, an all-encompassing media ingest and management software.”

Rita Rubalcava (1974), a Y-9 Videotape Operator, began her career in the newly inaugurated Engineering Training Program at KCET after being their first female Videotape Librarian. She recalls, “After taking a three-year hiatus for parenting, I rejoined the workforce as a freelance Videotape Operator in 1986 and my first production was *Family Ties*. After more than forty years, I am still in the workplace and currently working on the Disney show *Liv and Maddie* and CBS’s *Mom*.”

Rosa Costanza Tyabji (2007), a Y-1, gained an apprenticeship on the Universal cop drama *New York Undercover*, arranged through the Institute of Audio Research, where she received her certificate in recording engineering. She apprenticed with the late Bill Daly on the Universal Studios soundstages in NYC. Rosa remembers: “*New York Undercover* was very popular at the time and it was exciting to shoot on locations all over the city for a show with such strong public support. I helped Bill as a utility person, making BNC cables and soldering connectors on busted wires. Much of the professional work ethic I still carry comes from that experience.”



Jillian Arnold



Rita Rubalcava



Michele Wolfe

“Apprenticeship programs are so rare these days. We need to bring them back to train the next generation, whether tied to schools or guilds or otherwise.” Rosa has given lectures on location sound for students enrolled in the film/video program at the Orange Coast College.

“No matter where you learn your craft, who you work with, or where you work, we all adapt to the parameters of each style of film, TV program, documentary, commercial, reality show or event for which we provide our services.”

Rosa adds, “Working as a Sound Mixer has gifted me with amazing life experiences: From recording around Zanzibar with a Nagra, on set of a South African MNET TV show in 2000; to following the Dalai Lama and documenting through the Golden Temple in Amritsar, India; spending six weeks on and off of seagoing vessels in Mendocino; or hiking the border of Tennessee carrying a portable kit plus all expendables for a documentary. Each of these productions presented situations demanding immediate assessments and action. I draw from my background the problem-solving tools with which to solve new challenges.”

Emmy winner **Gail Carroll-Coe** (1996) joined as a Y-8. She cites her ability to anticipate and adjust her responses as a key reason she can meet challenges. “I love challenges and embrace being able to anticipate problems in order to solve them without holding up production and, more importantly, getting the best sound possible. I immediately communicate the information needed as it arises on the set to those concerned: the Mixer, the Director and/or Producers. I try to accomplish this by keeping calm and thinking rationally. One of my favorite sayings is, ‘Panic is not our friend.’ Last year, I did a movie with a Director (actor-turned-first-time-director) who told me he was extremely happy I stood my ground when needed and that he loved my negotiating techniques ... whew!”

Patrushkha Mierzwa (1983) is a now-retired Y-8. Her love of production as a whole gave her this perspective about her work: “Boom operating is a perfect storm of crafts; it requires knowledge of nearly all the other filmmaking disci-



Gail Carroll-Coe

plines. Because Boom Operators often work next to the camera, they become the default sound representative on the set, and the one to relay essential information. Sound is one of the few departments that does not directly support the visual (camera), so it is important to help educate our brothers and sisters that our contribution does not take away from that, but imparts a valuable layer for the audience.”

Upgrades and updates, shifts and changes in our electronic toolkits are the norm in our lines of work—something that we all roll with to stay current as we utilize our knowledge in the field. Here are some anecdotes and observations:

Kim McCall (2003) is a Y-4 working in video/24-frame playback, currently at Warner Bros. on new show *Blunt Talk*. She recalls, “I started my career in an analog world. Going all the way back to using quad, to one-inch tape reels. Editing and shooting on 3/4-inch tape to beta. Then learning the old 24-frame standards conversion and color correcting to playback on set syncing up film cameras using the old CE or Barton box and phasing that old bar out of the modified tube TV ... It was a challenge for all of us to switch over to the HD 23.976 world. Always trying to keep up with new technology. Of course, you could write a book on this subject alone.”



Patrushkha Mierzwa

Nicole Zwiren (2013), a Y-1, has an MFA in sound design, so her knowledge of audio post informs her work as a Location Sound Recordist. She shares: “Mostly I am a bag Sound Mixer, which requires a lot of stamina, luck, skill and tact. As a Post-Production Sound Mixer, I know how difficult it is to remove background noise, so I make sure that all sources of noise in my control are handled to make for the quietest set possible. I prefer to use wireless lavaliers on actors when I know there will be problems with background noises.”



Kim McCall
with her buddy,
Wilson



Nicole Zwiren

Lisa Gillespie (2007), a Y-8, agrees with Nicole: “I went to Columbia College in Chicago, where I did location sound. I worked in their sound studio. I was a part-time student and an employee, checking out equipment to students. I mixed films with the Nagra. I also did Foley recording and Post Production. I always have Post Production in mind when I work.”

We are all team players by our natures or we would not gravitate toward this business. We are all also singular in how we do what we do. Meeting each other, creating the open discourse about our work, and having a reliable pool of referrals that we trust are key. Networking works.

Alexis Schafer (2009) went from being a Y-13 Service Sound person to a 7A, Utility Sound. She gained the bulk of her understanding from day-playing with various talented Mixers who started as Utilities. Alexis highlights her ability to make connections: “I have made friends with my fellow 695 members and have gone to numerous BBQs and other events, but some of the most beneficial friendships I’ve made are with individuals in other departments. Understanding how these different departments contribute to the production has become a valuable asset in my ability to get my job done.”

Amanda Beggs (2013) joined as a Y-1 Production Sound Mixer, with encouragement from mentors: “I’ve had the amazing honor of getting to network with the other Mixers I’ve looked up to and tried to emulate since I first realized I wanted to go into this field. Shawn Holden, a Y-1 Mixer, let me accost her at Location Sound one day. I was so thrilled to meet the woman who I absolutely feel is blazing the trail for women like me.”

Jane Fleck (1981) is a Y-4 with multiple qualifications, a Video Engineer/24-Frame Playback/Sitcom Sound Recordist.



Lisa Gillespie and Carrie Sheldon. (Photo: Katrina Marcinowski)

Her take is to “network relentlessly, if the networking does not feel right, rethink what you are asking. Doing for others is part of networking; it is always a two-way street. The woman who hired me for my first job in Los Angeles a zillion years ago recommended me for a job in the last five years as well. Stay in contact, say hi when you can, send thank-you notes when someone helps you out.”

We make strides for all women who may be interested in the technical processes of production, the electronic arts, so cooperation together is tremendous. There is a responsibility to be always at your best. This awareness was expressed by all in different ways.

Jillian Arnold describes her view: “As a woman, I am very mindful that I have to be on my game. I believe I need to know all aspects of my craft well. Therefore, I spend quite a bit of time training and studying on my days off. I often feel I can’t afford to make a mistake without it reflecting poorly upon me, and my gender. Some may say I’m too hard on myself, but I think that I have to be as good as the best.”

Cabell Smith, a pioneering female Sound Mixer, reflects on her thirty-plus year career: “A word of advice—if they offer to carry it for you, let them! I retired in 2005 or 2006, after two hip operations and a back operation. So, I am serious. You really don’t have that to prove anymore.”

Lisa Schway (1993) is a Y-7A, part of a unique team that started in Carsey-Werner Productions’ run of classic TV. The team was a standout for having four women on the floor, as a sound department in a multi-camera studio environment. Technicians Azhar Aluqdah (1996) Y-7A, Yasmin Muniz (1990) Y-8 and Phylliss Bailey Brooks completed the crew.

Alexis Schafer



“Currently, women make up less than ten percent of the membership of Local 695, though we trust that there will be more women attracted to work in our technical fields of the industry.”

Lisa sets the scene: “In the late eighties, four of us ‘audio girls’ made up the audio floor crew while working on *Grace Under Fire*. We were comprised of two Boom Operators and two Boom Pushers. The four of us knew at the time what a special bond we had and that we were so fortunate to have such a supportive and positive team.”

Yasmin Muniz, one of the two Y-8 Fisher boom specialists from that same team, had her first TV run in 1983 on *Mama’s Family*. She is grateful for her career path “... coming from multi-camera, which is the most stable of all the jobs, we have regular hours. Working on features is grueling. Doing anything single camera is grueling. I respect you who do that work immensely. I was fortunate to have started out in sitcoms.”

Phylliss expands the conversation and says, “My quest now is to continue to be a positive image on set, and to mentor as many young women pursuing this work as I can. This opportunity has given me so much and I continue to be eternally grateful.”

We are having a great exchange within our community regarding the expansion of professional skills, sharing tales of different production styles, expanding job opportuni-

Amanda Beggs



Jane Fleck

ment were stacked against us. First, we modified a sound cart for beach mode by installing bicycle tires and then made two sets of B-unit ‘run and gun’ style harnesses. We got waterproof cellphone cases and made them fit on transmitters. We added extra shrink-wrap to connectors on cables and to antennas. Our maintenance was immediate, with boom poles being disassembled and cleaned daily. Other than a zodiac-type boat being capsized and dumping my Boom Op in the ocean, we came out of the shoot just fine.”

Currently, women make up less than ten percent of the membership of Local 695, though we trust that there will be more women attracted to work in our technical fields of the industry.

We look forward to continuing this conversation and to drawing new voices into the dialog. Some one-liners to wrap up:

Eva: “I keep a positive attitude; nothing is an obstacle, just a challenge in determination.”

Jillian: “For me, being a woman in the tech world is a non-issue. The screensaver on my phone is a Steve Martin line: ‘Be so good, they can’t ignore you.’ I live by these words.”

Rosa: “Location audio recording is a fusion of art and science in the world of film production. I have always felt my work to be a part of the creative process on set, and negotiated potential difficulties using creativity and flexibility.”

ties and experiences, keeping the right attitude and swapping stories from set life. Wisdom hard won through adversity has no substitute.

Rosa recalls: “One of the greatest challenges I met was when filming on the ocean, in fishing boats and sailboats and on the beach. All the elements in the environ-

Glossary of Y Classifications

The Y numbers specify particular union work classifications as defined in the contract.

- Y-1** – Production Sound Mixer
- Y-4** – Supervising Sound or Video Engineer
- Y-7A** – Utility Sound Technician
- Y-8** – Microphone Boom Operator
- Y-9 & Y-13** – Sound and Video Service Person

Eva says, “Coping under pressure? I never take anything personally. The prime directive is to do your job exceptionally well while keeping a great attitude. Even if that means throwing on a flashlight and a pair of latex gloves to kill an ice machine in a dive bar ...”

Amanda: “I love my job so much and can’t see myself doing anything else, so I’m excited to see where my career takes me. I like bringing something new to the table as far as not being what people expect in a Sound Mixer.”

Theresa Radka (2006) Y-1: “When I am told, ‘I’ve never seen a woman do this,’ I get over my shock and my pat answer is: ‘Well, they needed the best person for the job.’”

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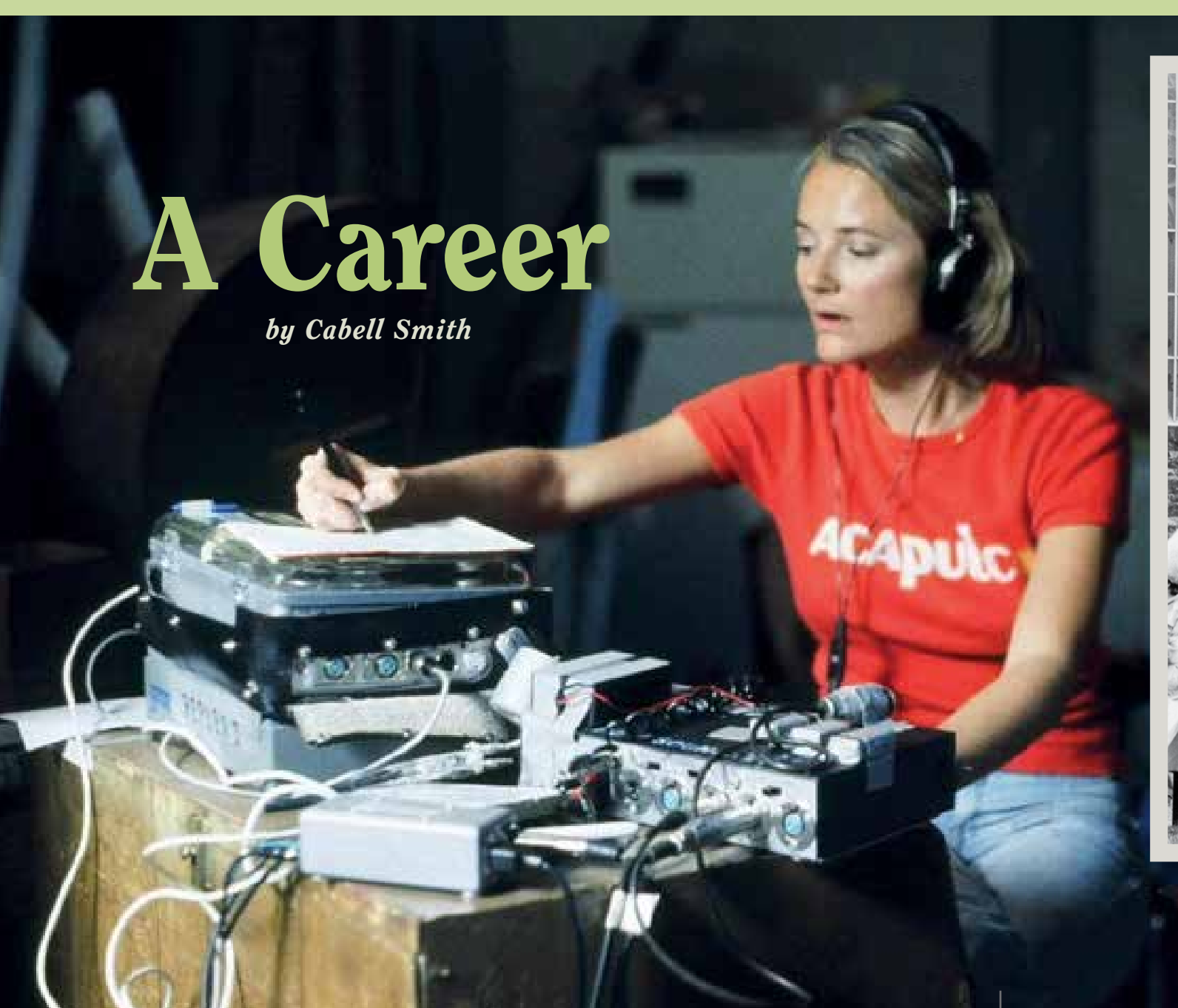
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A Career

by Cabell Smith



Mixing a commercial in 1983

I spent my entire working life in an alternate universe. I was terrified every day that someone would find out that I would have paid them for the fun I was having! As a big fat plus, I was there when a paradigm shifted. To be present at change for the better is a very powerful tonic! Weird prelude: as a nine year old, my best friend Susan's father was an engineer (I clearly remember the pens and pocket protector) at the world-famous Bell Labs. Bell's engineers invented the transistor, created the laser, the solar cell, and countless other transformative technologies and have won at least a dozen Nobel Prizes. One day in the late 1950s, her dad came home with a portable tape recorder, maybe an Ampex 600?



With Boom Operator Kim Ornitz on *See How She Runs* in 1978

Adjusting Joanne Woodward's microphone on *See How She Runs* in 1978

In 1972, a cameraman friend's regular sound tech was not available (always the point of entry, right?) and he asked me if I wanted to learn to do documentary sound. We took the Nagra III and a Sennheiser 805 and went into Central Park. I put on my first pair of Beyer DT 48s and bang! zoom! Truly the earth moved, and reoriented itself, around my head! What a rush of tone and volume and clarity and precision. And, by changing the position of the mike, I could control this new enormous universe. I was hooked.

I began trying to build a resume, and track down jobs that would be paying jobs. Up to now, I was working on friends' films for free and occasionally working for WNET, the New York PBS station. I went through the Producers-Production Companies section of the *New York Motion Picture TV Directory*, calling every single company asking for a chance to work for them.

Usually the response was a flat "no." However, in December of 1971, I got a call from a woman (!) at the Canadian Broadcast Corporation. The American Academy of Sciences was having a symposium in Philadelphia between Christmas and New Year's, and the CBC needed someone to go and record the talks. I was thrilled to have my first paying job, which meant my first time in a hotel on my own, my introduction to the concept of per diem.

The travel arrangements were especially exciting: arrive at world-renowned cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead's office in the Museum of Natural History and travel to Philadelphia with Ms. Mead in her limo! I spent a glorious week "tying in" to the soundboard with my rented Nagra III and listening to Margaret Mead, Louis Leakey and Carl Sagan talk about their latest research. It was a very cool beginning!

Susan and I took to this wonder, and immediately recorded our songs and little plays into this amazing device to the long-suffering delight of our parents. Who knew that sound recording would be my life and my delight?

I came to the World of SOUND via the independent film community and the Women's Movement, which were intertwined in New York City in the early 1970s. Women were beginning to produce and direct independent films, and many wanted to work with women technicians, of which, of course, there were none.

In 1970, I was invited to join a womens' consciousness-raising group. We were seven; with a grant from the New York State Council on the Arts we purchased a Sony Portapak—a revolutionary new portable video camera and video tape recorder. We were going to tape our sessions; we were going to make our own TV! We wrangled through the technology, each of us mastering the camera, sound and editing for programs about women's health issues, many of which were broadcast on Open Channel, New York's new public access cable outlet.



In China, working *The Other Half of the Sky: A China Memoir*, directed by Claudia Weill and Shirley MacLaine in 1973



On 3 by Cheever "The 5:48," with Boom Operator Jim Perdue in 1979

Around the same time, John Chester, Chief Sound Engineer for Bill Graham's rock venue Fillmore East, gave a class on basic electronics for women. Ohm's Law, capacitor, resistance, condenser microphones, proximity effect—now I could define and understand my new universe. Many of my male counterparts came to sound via the music world. They were knowledgeable about electronics and sound. John's course was a godsend. I could now hold a conversation with another sound person, and understood more than "plug this into that."

In March of 1973, NBC-TV News hired me as a Sound Technician. NBC, a closed IATSE Local 52 "shop," was dodging a legal suit regarding hiring of women at the time. All men, solidly union, and I was neither. There was no other woman working in a union shop on a day-to-day basis. A news (film) crew consisted of three people: camera, sound & electric. We captured the story for our producer and the on-camera talent. Being on a news crew in New York City was hugely exciting. My crew was the first on the scene when Philippe Petit walked on a high wire between the towers of the World Trade Center. I was there when Secretariat won the Belmont Stakes to capture the Triple Crown, and hung a microphone on Mickey Mantle for the Old-Timers' Game.

We went from opening the trunk of a Caddy in the depths of Brooklyn to discover a dead body, to a shootout at the Mosque in Harlem, to trying to set the microphone at the right height for a news conference with both NY mayoral candidates: John Lindsay, 6' 4", and Abe Beame, 5' 2".

We usually covered two stories a day. After filming each story, a dashing Teamster on a motorcycle rushed our

sound-stripped film back to "30 Rock" for its developing bath—"into the soup"—for "film at eleven!" Between stories we usually had time for a lunch at one of New York's best restaurants. If our morning story found us in Brooklyn, we headed for Lundy's in Sheepshead Bay. We prayed to stay in Manhattan on Thursdays for the creamed spinach at the Brittany du Soir. Many of these restaurants, like the technology and leisurely pace of news gathering, have disappeared.

Most guys thought I something of an oddity—why would a woman WANT to do this job? But I don't remember any nasty incidents. I don't know what went on behind my back, but I have the feeling that because technical jobs are so easily evaluated by ones' peers—either you're doing the job or you're not—there really wasn't much of a fuss.

Within a year, NBC was hiring other women technicians, on staff and freelance. I think we were successful because we were not particularly didactic about politics. We were doing our jobs alongside the men. Just being there was political. And politics was all around us. By 1974, NBC and the other networks could wrangle an all-woman crew for countless stories about women in prison, women's examinations, rape—stories that would have been unheard of, and thus unheard, a few years before.

After about a year on the job, one of my colleagues came up to me and said, "Hey, you know, my sister could do your job." I remember just smiling ... The light bulb had gone off! The opportunity to work and make a decent living doing something you love is truly transformative. I'm grateful it happened for me, and grateful that I was able to facilitate that experience for others.

The Utility Sound Tech

by Peggy Names and Jennifer Winslow

You might ask, "Why does a professional Sound Department need a Utility Sound Technician, anyway?" By the end of this article, written by two long-time Boom/Utility Techs, you will be wondering how any sound crew could function without!

The Utility Sound position is hard to define because it has so many facets. The job requires immeasurable amounts of knowledge and a LOT of multitasking. It is both technical and physical. Being able to think on your feet is not only important, but can save the day. We are always problem solving, which helps prevent those dreaded words, "Waiting on Sound!" Although we are often invisible, you can bet we are working hard to keep production flowing.

The history of the job goes back to the early days of "talkies" when yards of sync cables were needed between sound and camera. Today, with innovations in technology, the job has morphed and the title has evolved. We once were called "Cableman" or "Cableperson" and "Second Boom Operator"; now we are called "Utility" which is short for

Booming a commercial in the '70s with a 415 and Ryder aluminum pole. Peggy Names says, "All that gymnastic work on the uneven parallel bars paid off with those heavy poles."

Utility Sound Technician. We are one and the same; we are the third person on the sound crew.

Basically, as a Utility Sound Technician, you have to know how to boom, guard precious equipment from harm, manage distribution of audio, be an expert with wireless microphones and transmitters, know how to do playback, move heavy equipment from one place to another (endlessly), know how to fill the Mixer's chair when nature calls, think like a detective to find unwanted noises, "play well" with others to achieve cooperation, be aware and alert at all times, blend like a chameleon to

your Mixer and Boom Operator's style, know when to speak and when to be quiet, have great organizational skills, know basic electronics, know how to interact with the talent and that's just the tip of the iceberg ... whew!

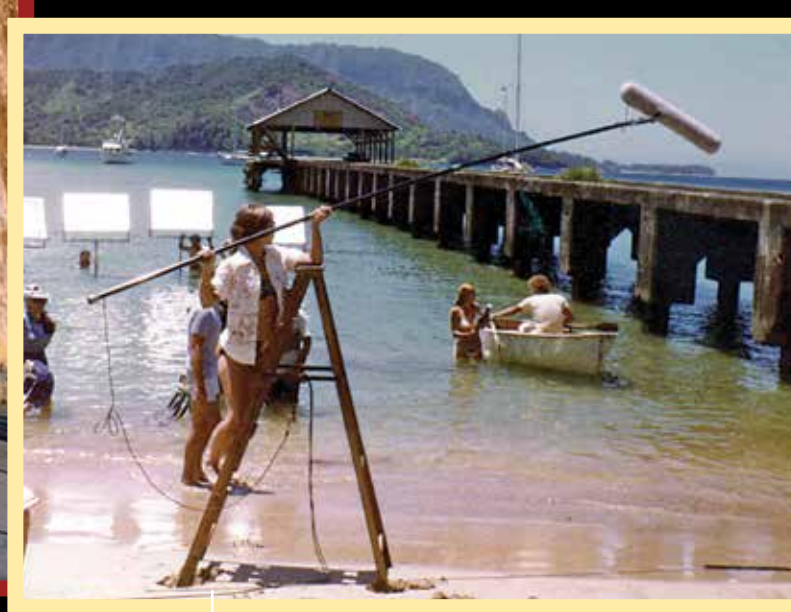
Jennifer: As a Utility Sound Technician, I have a lot of detail work. On an average shooting day, Utility handles things like checking and changing batteries in all equipment, setting up the carts, running cables, powering up the Mixer's equipment, setting up the boom poles, and many other tasks. We



Jennifer Winslow on location with mixer Bob Wald in 1991



Peggy with Raul Bruce and Ron Judkins on *Amistad* in Puerto Rico



Peggy booming *Acapulco Gold* in 1978



Jennifer booming on location with Eyal Gordin and Michael Listorti



Jennifer on location in Texas with Matthew McConaughey and Caroline Otis

put **Foot Foam** and **Silent Steps** on noisy heels of principal and background actors. We lay rugs on floors to catch footfalls and tape them down so no one trips. I have a tape roll on the follow cart, or sometimes on my belt, which is especially handy if I'm booming. When I work as an **A2** on multi-camera shows, the duties are similar, but we rely on different equipment with their own particular challenges.

We have a unique awareness of our environment on stage and on location. While our Boom Operator is working out moves and cues, and the Mixer is getting the mix just right, we may be stealthily moving around the set seeking and destroying all unwanted noises. Having a refined sense of hearing helps to identify and choose the best method to squelch the sound source. When something goes wrong, e.g., radio transmitters need to be tuned to a new frequency or the recording device freezes, that's our cue to act. There are times we must run to the truck (an organized truck is a must), find a piece of equipment and get it to set quickly so the problem is fixed as soon as possible.

At any moment, we may have to drop what we are doing, and focus our attention on another, higher priority. We call it "putting out fires" on the set. The ability to refocus is a must-have skill. Knowing how to prioritize these split-second decisions comes with experience. Our eyes may not be on the set at all times, but we are tuned in to every little noise, our ears working overtime. We are always looking and listening, anticipating and planning for the problems the next setup might present.

Jennifer: Early in my career, I worked with Mixer Bob Wald. He was very organized and professional. He had a "cheat sheet" printed out for his Utility that outlined the Utility Tech's duties. I found it very helpful to have a written reference, especially while working long hours. Our department counts on us to remember many things like: jamming the slates and **Lockit** box with timecode every four hours, keeping fresh batteries in transmitters, running the bell and light cable on stage and

managing noisy electric appliances on location. Many of us use additional reminders for location work, especially with refrigerators. While the Locations Department is ultimately responsible for restoring order at the end of the shoot day, it's good discipline for each department to leave things as they found them. To be sure we restore settings, some Utility Techs put Post-it reminder notes on their follow cart, while others place their car keys in the refrigerator. I put bright camera tape on my iPhone with FRIDGE written on it, as a reminder to make sure the units are on when we leave a location.

We watch and listen for door slams on dialog, clomping footfalls, plates that rattle, chairs that squeak, lights and ballasts that hum, props and special effects that hiss, boom and bang. Dealing with all these noises requires cooperation from other departments. Many an ADR session has been spared by working with the Grip Department to quiet the moves of the camera dolly and with the Location Coordinator to chase down a leaf blower.

Peggy: One of the more sticky situations involves the "herd of elephants" that accompany the Steadicam ... Me: "Would you mind taking your shoes off or wearing booties?" Camera Operator: "You want me to WHAT!?!?" Then imagine the delicacy required to ask the Costume Department to change the pantyhose of the actress because the swishing noise of her legs rubbing together on each step is drowning out the dialog! Okay, I have to admit that the diplomacy required for this was above my pay grade! When Mixer Bill Kaplan gave the Director the bad news, he threw up his arms and said, "You want me to tell the actress that her thighs are too noisy!?!?" True story!

Sometimes second booming can be more challenging than first. We are often called in on take two when it becomes evident that the blocking or overlaps require more than one microphone. What this means for us is that we drop everything, run in with our boom gear, get clued in on our assignment, find a place to operate and boom our asses off with no rehearsal! We must pay attention properly so that being called to duty will not be a surprise.

Second boom work is increasingly in demand as it is now commonplace to play the overlaps (when actors speak at the same time) and mic off-camera dialog for ease in editing, allowing the Director more creative choices in performance. Booming isn't easy, and knowing when to use a ladder, stand on an apple box, climb up into the **greenbeds** (on stage) to boom is extremely important. Boom operating can be nerve-racking at first: your arms shake a lot in the beginning, you don't want to be the one to screw up the take, you don't know where to place your body or the pole, camera moves freak you out, actors can be unpredictable, but eventually you build new muscles, learn lens sizes, develop a good rapport with the camera crew and Dolly Grip, drop the fear and it becomes second nature—and fun! Booming requires knowledge of the camera movement, the size of the frame, lighting, blocking of the actors and dialog cues. Obstacles can be thrown in your path at the last moment so you have to be flexible. Booming is such an important skill to learn well. There is so much more to booming, but that is another article in itself.

Jennifer: I have worked on many shows with Mixer Mark McNabb. He always makes sure (in his deal with the UPM) that his Utility is hired on at boom rate, because of the heavy second booming. I worked on *Family Affair* with Mark and Boom Operator Raul Bruce, where I second boomed every day. One time I was booming a big scene with actor Tim Curry. My kids were young (they were like little petri dishes of germs), and I had a cough left over from a cold. I tried to suppress my cough during a take but couldn't, so I timed it out and then coughed on Tim's off-camera dialog. I was blue (and red) in the face! The minute the camera cut, Tim walked over and, with a smile, gave me a cough drop from his pocket. He told me he grew up as a preacher's son. He had to sit in the front row of church with his mother every Sunday. If he ever coughed during his father's sermon, it was extremely embarrassing and, to him, it was worse than death! He was so empathetic and kind. Even though my kids are healthy teenagers now, I carry cough drops in my kit, because you never know when someone else on set may be struggling to stifle a cough during the take!

Playback has become much easier since the days of the Nagra and the pinch wheel. Digital playback has many advantages: now playback can be performed on a laptop and the cues are much tighter. We are skilled at running playback should an unexpected need arise or the use is minimal, like playing music to set the mood in a scene. Being proficient at playback makes you a more valuable member of the sound team because you are available to perform this work on a moment's notice, especially on distant location. For these small units of playback it is often easier to have someone close to the project run the playback and call in another Utility Sound Tech to fill your shoes. If the playback is of paramount importance, like lip-syncing actors to a piece of prerecorded music, or a song-and-dance number, then we call in the big guns! Along with big guns comes big equipment. The Utility Tech is assigned to help with the placement of the playback speakers and run a multitude of cables. This sometimes requires a lot of schlepping and grunt work. Always ask for help if speakers need to be hoisted to the greenbeds. Promise the grips they can play their music through them at lunchtime and you will get all kinds of cooperation.

Peggy: I have done more than my fair share of digital playback beginning in 1997. The late Mixer, David Ronne, introduced me to a whole new world of possibilities. Together, we created our own click tracks using the clave (rhythm instrument) as the guide with an accent on the second beat for the dancers and shifted the thump track to compensate for distance from the speakers to the dancers. We jumped from one part of the song to another on tempo, all on-the-fly. Latin music can be especially challenging because the rhythm is fluid. When I play back dialog, I have to think like the actor would so that the timing of the delivery is spot-on.

The improved quality of wireless microphone technology has mostly done away with the yards and yards of sound cable that were regularly laid out. It is still good to know how to use the XLR cables, just in case the RFs crap out (yes, that's a technical term!). When, where and how to lay the cable can be critical

for safety, avoidance of interference from electrical cables and dimmers, and flexibility when things change on set and you have to reroute equipment. Coiling cables is an art. “Over, under, over, under” is like a mantra to many of us. You do not want to fight with a hundred-foot XLR, wrapped the wrong way, trust us! Many hours have been spent untangling and cleaning mud and gunk off the cables. We are happy that we are no longer called a Cableperson!

Peggy: Working with Mixer Ron Judkins and Boom Operator Bob Jackson on *Minority Report*, we had to run cables three stages away with communication both ways and that was just one crazy situation on that movie. With Mixer Bill Kaplan on *Crimson Tide*, we had a snake running to a pulley hanging from the top of the stage to the set which was on a gimbal twenty feet off the floor. From there, we had a **break-out** to eight cables. I had to climb all over the top of the submarine set like a monkey and poke the wires in holes to Boom Operator Earl Sampson, who then set the plant microphones. The metal structure of that set was screwing up our radio transmitters and the obstacles prevented most booming. Mixers Edward Tise and Kirk Francis are the boldest Mixers out there, flying with no net. They carry not one cable on the cart. Times are changing.

Electronics can be very finicky and, if not given the proper care, are unpredictable. Wireless booms and radio microphones can act up and wreak havoc at any given moment. Utility Technicians are in charge of making sure the equipment does not have bugs so the sound is clean and causes no delays. Capturing the sound is hard enough without those headaches! If a plant microphone is in a bush or other exposed position, we make sure no one accidentally kicks it, stomps on it or sprays it with water. When supplies are getting low, we order more. God help us if we run out of AA batteries.

We make sure that everyone who needs to hear the soundtrack has a way to do so. This could be anything from a remote speaker in a car or Dimmer Operator’s room, to an earwig in the actor’s ear. The biggest chore occurs daily when trying to wrangle twenty or more receivers (**Comteks**) and headsets used by the Director, Script Supervisor, Producers and Writers on set. When guests drop by from time to time, we provide Comteks for them to listen as well. We are often asked for Comteks at the last minute, for example, when the Camera Operator needs to take a cue from dialog. We keep close track of headsets and hope the equipment will be returned to us at the end of the scene or day. It is our responsibility to ensure these devices are operating properly and some of us take it hard if batteries fail or Comteks go missing. We are continuously surprised at some of the strange places we’ve found Comteks at wrap!

Radio microphone use has expanded in the new age of digital filmmaking. With requests from Editorial to deliver all the actors’ voices on individual tracks, compounded by the actors overlapping, and multiple cameras moving and holding different shot sizes, comes the ubiquitous use of radio microphones.

An increasing practice for the Sound Department is to wire everyone and boom what we can. The Boom Operator needs to stay on the set, to work out the shadows, obstacles, dialog cues and moves. We are increasingly asked to wire actors in their trailer, so the Utility Tech goes off to the trailers to wire the actors. Some of us carry a “radio mic kit” with **transpore** tape, **overcovers**, **moleskin**, leg, ankle bands and waistbands, sewing kit (you often don’t get “intel” on what wardrobe they will be wearing), scissors and any other tools that can make the wiring go smoothly. Upon arrival back at the set, we get ready to boom and find that the dolly move has changed and there is a light placed right where the Second Boom was planning to operate. Trusting and relying on your Boom Operator is mandatory, especially when you have to find a new position. Often while we are booming, we must jump into action on the front line, if the lavalier microphone needs adjustment or an actor’s Foot Foam falls off, or if a door needs to be silenced with WD40. Having strong nerves and knowing set etiquette is a must, especially when all eyes are on you as you hurry to correct the problem.

It is not uncommon for more than five actors to show up at the sound cart all at once for wiring. Utility Sound Technicians that can wire like lightning, make it disappear like a magician, with ingenuity, good humor, confidence, grace and outstanding results, are worth their weight in gold. Working closely with the Costume Department to ensure the wardrobe is not damaged and the actor’s comfort is not violated is important, even when the AD is calling for “Picture!” Doing the job the right way the first time prevents mishaps and spoiled takes. We have been told many times that women and children feel more comfortable with a female working under their clothing. This may be one reason why women are drawn to this position and Local 695 has seen an increase in the number of female applicants in recent years.

Jennifer: When I wire a young child, I will ask them if they like spy movies. (They usually do!) I tell them to imagine they are like “Spy Kids,” or a secret agent and then I remind them not to touch the pack or the microphone and blow their cover! It also helps to strike up a conversation so the parents know you are professional and puts them at ease, and it can keep a kid from fidgeting and hitting the lavalier during the take. I have worked with Mixer Sam Hamer on shows where many

children needed to be wired. Sam has said he’s impressed at how the kids not only sounded good, but respected the radio microphones and equipment. It’s my secret, but I’m happy to share my tricks.

Peggy: With the fluid nature of filmmaking these days, the Utility Sound position has become much more crucial to getting the job done. On my most recent films with Mixer Petur Hliddal, I was hired on before the consideration of the Boom Operator, specifically for my skill set in the Utility Sound position. It is unusual for this position to take priority but when a movie is heavy on wireless, additional communications, mobility and the unforeseen, then it makes sense. It is a misconception that going wireless should require fewer people. I see the trend of adding a fourth person to the sound crew in the near future ... it is a challenge to keep your hands clean to attend to the wires on actors while also laying carpets, throwing **hog’s hair** under drips, swinging a boom around, applying Foot Foam and running cables. Mixer Simon Hayes regularly has a five-person crew ... hmmm ... food for thought.

For the people who think Utility Sound Technicians are a luxury position, that can’t be farther from the truth. Ask anyone who has mixed or boomed shows without a Utility Tech; it is almost impossible to get the same high-quality production track. The sound quality suffers and the production suffers. Utility is indispensable at almost any budget-level project. We save the production plenty of time and money. Productions that know the importance of hiring a Utility Sound Technician are usually five steps ahead and they might even have a headset waiting for them when they come to set!

The bottom line is that the Utility Sound Technician position more than pays for itself. We are proud to have a career doing what we love, with interesting people who are unique, smart and funny. It’s also fun working with actors, traveling to different locations and knowing that our work has helped make the finished product, the soundtrack, sound just that much sweeter.



Jennifer on set with mixer Bruce Perlman

Glossary

Silent Steps: Small tips made to fit on high heels to quiet them.

Lockit: A timecode clock that can be remotely mounted to equipment. The Lockit is a trade-named product from Ambient but is often used to refer to similar devices from Denecke and others.

Foot Foam: Flat rubber adhesive-backed sheets cut to fit the bottom of shoes.

Comteks: Most commonly used receiver for a listening device.

Transpore: A medical tape frequently used to attach lavalier microphones.

Moleskin: A cotton fabric with a soft pile on one side. The favored brand, Dr. Scholl’s, is available with adhesive on one side making it useful as applied padding for a microphone.

Overcovers and Undercovers: Adhesive wind-screens made for lavalier microphones.

Hog’s hair: A woven filter material commonly used in air conditioners. It serves the purpose of dampening the sound of falling water.

Greenbed: Called green because of their color, they are suspended scaffolding for mounting lighting and grip equipment above the set walls, also used for boom microphones in multi-camera shows.

Break-out: The distribution end of a “snake cable.” The snake carries multiple lines in one conduit and the individual signals break-out in a fan at the end.

A2: An Audio Assistant.

Peggy working *Desperate Housewives* as Utility Sound Technician with son Alex Names booming.



Jennifer on set with aliens from *Star Trek DS9*

Life on the Frame Line

by Mary Jo Devenney

1. INT. FILM SET—FIRST DAY OF SHOOTING

FRIENDLY CREW MEMBER

Hello! You must be our script supervisor.

ME

*If I am, we're all in big trouble.
Can you guess what I do?*

FRIENDLY CREW MEMBER

*Gee Mary, Set decorator? Props? Medic?
Teacher? Dialog coach?*

ME

*I'll be your Sound Mixer.
Call me "Mary Jo" and no one gets hurt.*

I don't mind not looking like the person that people expect to see. I love being on a film set. It's home. It's comfortable. I know what needs to happen there. Years ago I was catching up with a friend from film school who was working in Post, and he laughed, "You're a total set animal!" He was right.

As a kid, I watched a lot of movies. I was an only child till age eight and went to an all-girls' school whose vacation time was always longer than at my friends' neighborhood schools. With much time to fill, movies became my friends too. After a women's college in Massachusetts (What was I?—Nuts?), I drove from suburban Phillie to USC film school to experience co-education for the first time. Surrounded by film lovers, I totally fit in. We were making movies! The ultimate project for most of us was a class called 480. This course had five to seven student crews make sync-sound 15 to 20-minute mini-features. I shot one, recorded one and wrote and directed one. A couple months later, a classmate called to say he was "bailing" on a boom job and I should apply. They didn't ask if I'd ever done it professionally, and I was off to Rochester, NY, to boom *Fear No Evil*, a horror movie that shot for nine weeks. I had the distinction of being the only crew member



Booming *The Fourth Wise Man* in 1985



Mary Jo with her crew, Utility John La Page on the left and Boom Operator Kevin Kubota on the right



On *Invaders From Mars*, 1986. (Photo: Rory Flynn)



Historian Shelby Foote helps adjust my Nagra strap on the set of *Memphis* in 1992



Adjusting Lea Thompson's radio microphone on *Casual Sex* in 1988, with assistance from daughter Roma. (Photo: Luke Wynne)

flown in from LA who was working for a totally deferred salary. I got \$53/week per diem. As far as I was concerned, I'd arrived. This was before video assist and video village, so the Director, Script and I haunted the frame line during shots. Having just directed my own (student) film, I made lots of suggestions to the forgiving, first-time Director (What fun!). The last week of shooting, the Mixer had a tiff with the Producer and left. With a locally rented Nagra, a 415, a smart PA to boom and much apprehension, I mixed the last two days.

Back in LA, I couldn't find a production job and wound up working at Richard Einfeld Productions, a little sound house. I did sound transfers, ¼" tape to 16 mag and 35 mag. I also auditioned and sold sound fx from a ¼" library that Einfeld had compiled with partner Frank E. Warner, the Supervising Sound Editor on some of the biggest films of last half of the twentieth century. I'd get calls to transfer some sound effect for *Being There*, and send it over to his editing room. On his next project, he came in and had me put tapes on the Ampex. "Get that loon (the bird) track out and load it backwards." Then he'd manipulate the tape with his hands, slowing and 'wowing' it while I recorded it to 35 mag stock and voilà, it became the sound of a punch that would land on De Niro's face in *Raging Bull*. As cool as this was, I found myself listening during transfers to what the crew guys said before "action" and after "cut" on the set of *Roadie*. I knew I should be on a set.

I was lucky to have a former co-worker remember me in a good light. The Key Grip on the New York film recommended me to Anna DeLanzo, an experienced Boom Operator who was about to mix a low-budget movie for Cameraman/Writer/Director Gary Graver. She needed a Boom Operator and hired me. I have repeatedly discovered that you can

never guess who might recommend you. It could be the usual suspects: UPMs, Directors, Post Production people, or it could be anyone from Grips or Accountants to DPs or ADs. On the film in question, one of the actors was Gene Clark, a veteran Boom Operator who worked with great Mixers like Jim Tanenbaum, CAS. So there I was: booming a Boom Operator for a Boom Operator. Both Gene Clark and Anna DeLanzo knew more about what I was doing than I did. I learned so much from them about the art of booming (and it is an art as well as a technical exercise) and this time I was actually getting paid a little! I loved/love booming.

When I didn't get calls to boom, I would mix. Ron Curfman was a Mixer of shows like *Dallas* and a shrewd businessman. He owned a little recording studio and told me and others that if we got mixing jobs, he'd make sure we had enough equipment to make it worth our while. Then he'd get the contract to do the sound transfers and the syncing of dailies to make it worth his while. If you needed work, you could make \$10/hr performing these jobs on other people's shows. A group of us met through him, boomed for each other and shared work. Decades later, several of us are still in touch and still sharing jobs.

I got to work on *The Executioner's Song*, an NBC miniseries that was nominated for the Sound Emmy. I also got to work on a movie in Spain called *Hundra*, the making of which was much more entertaining than the movie itself. I would plan the setup and then the Producer/AD would turn on the Nagra while I boomed.

OK, so in the midst of this I got pregnant. Would that affect work? I described booming to my doctor and he assured me that I was healthy and that prenatal kids are very well protected and I could stay as active as I wanted. So I did. Never



Booming on *Invaders From Mars*, 1985. (Photo: Eric Lasher)

On the set of *Television Parts*, with Russell Williams in 1985. (Photo: Henry Diltz)

considered petite, I ‘passed’ as non-pregnant for months, then entered a phase that still makes me laugh. People would look and I could see that they were about to ask if I was ... but they’d stop themselves, realizing how embarrassing it would be if I answered, “No, not pregnant; I’m just a big girl.” As time went on, work got interesting. There was a lot of twisting sideways to keep my stomach out of frame. When moving between C-stands and the camera lens, what used to be accomplished with a gut suck now required deep knee bends to pass my neck through the tight spot. Maybe it was hormone-induced, but in the middle of a shot I’d think, I’ve got this guy totally on mic ‘and’ I’m making a human being. Talk about multitasking!

I was three weeks into the TV movie *Murder: By Reason of Insanity* and no longer ‘passing’ when, after the second sixteen-hour day in a row, I cried “uncle.” I was too tired. I’d had Laurie Seligman (great Boom Operator) standing by and asked her to take over. That was May 8. My daughter, Roma Eisensark, was born May 18. To this day, she knows when to be quiet on set.

That July, Russell Williams II asked me to work with him on Cannon Film’s *Invaders From Mars*. “You bet!” I said. Not only was it always fun to work with him, but this precious, beautiful infant, while priceless, came with a big price tag. *Invaders* shot for twenty weeks. The lovely Louise Fletcher let me use her motor home as a bottling plant (don’t ask). A couple movies later, I got to work on the last five weeks of another non-union Cannon film, *Masters of the Universe*, with Ed Novick. Cards were signed. Cannon agreed to go union if there could be deals for projects under

six million dollars, and with that, the union tier system was born. After seven years of knocking on 695’s door, I was in! (And I don’t believe Cannon ever made another movie in LA.)

I must interject a side note here as a few people who have seen this writing in progress feel that the sound person/motherhood dynamic is important to my story. I was as lucky in parenting as I was in having the strength to work pregnant. My husband, Dave, is a writer and a wonderfully committed parent. He worked at home and carried the ball when I worked long days or nights. Of course, he did turn more to short stories during Roma’s first year and she could sleep with her head next to a Smith Corona electric typewriter. I think we all enjoyed my times of ‘unemployment’ when I could take over the caregiving. The three of us went to Philadelphia when I boomed *Mannequin* and Seattle when I mixed *The Chocolate War*. I had all the advantages of anyone with a work-at-home partner unlike many of my sisters and brothers in the business. Single parents are beyond heroic!

In the fall of 1989, Russell Williams was mixing the fourth month of *Dances With Wolves*. The show was going to go an extra month. (“Thank you” to the headstrong wolf playing Two Socks!) Russell had plans that would conflict, so he tapped me to come and finish the film. I still get goose bumps when I remember reading the script on the plane to South Dakota. It was great. I inherited the wonderful Boom Operator Albert Aquino, who, sadly, we lost three years ago. Everyone was friendly; there was just one problem. Most of what was left to shoot were tepee interiors. The plan was for the Special FX crew to do gas campfires via hissing pipes that the cast would sit around. I approached the DP,

Dean Semler, not knowing then that this great Australian bear of a man was as much of a collaborative filmmaker as he was a visual artist. “Would it be possible to use real fire for these campfires?” I asked. “There’d still be noise but it would be the right noise.” “Well, that’s my main light source for these scenes,” he said, but “I’ll check with the FX guys to see what’s possible.” We went with real fire! Camera people have since told me that the visual warmth of real flames looks better than the bluish gas fire. Maybe it wasn’t a concession made for the sake of sound, but it’s been a great argument when I tell camera that one guy who went along with my request got an Oscar. So did Russell, and he mentioned me in his acceptance speech.

I could go on like this for another twenty-five years but, out of compassion for the reader and a realization of the size of this magazine, let me say that I have kept working to this day. Let me share some of my conclusions about being in our field.

A film is created in the editing room but, on set, we’re making the raw material. I’m always trying to hand over silk material from what is often a sow’s ear environment. It’s hard to re-create an actor’s magic if we don’t get it when it first happens, so capturing that moment is the goal. When we succeed, the magic and the budget both benefit. If the sound is good, I drive home happy even if the day’s been physically tough, or emotionally unpleasant. If I know the sound will need some fix in Post, I’m unhappy no matter how comfy the shooting day was.

As sound people we’re often at the mercy of others, so I try to speak everyone’s language. Working with every department (and understanding their goals and tools) will get you much further than many of the newest gadgets you can buy. (I am, however, grateful for radio microphones that work as originally promised decades ago. I’m also grateful for digital recorders with as many tracks as I have microphones so that Post can perfect my real-time mix. I’m particularly grateful that digital recorders won’t allow me to accidentally record over that last printed take that the Director asked me to cue up.) Being a woman might help in dealing with wardrobe and finding creative ways to hide microphones. Actresses are the people who most often say they’re glad I am a woman. I mention that I’m a recovering soccer mom and will leave this person looking neat. I suppose that’s proof that we’ll all play the stereotype card when it’s useful. But like all preconceptions, nothing’s true all the time. I try to evaluate mine often and dispel preconceptions about me. With a new crew, I always try to demonstrate that I understand what Camera, Grip and Electric are up against. It’s good to point out that the genny should move before the cab’s engine has stopped, and I always thank the people who have to lug out more heavy cable to reach it. There’s a line in the movie *The Imitation Game* that expresses my experience so perfectly. Joan Clarke explains why she’s been friendly to a co-worker

that Alan Turing consistently antagonizes. “I’m a woman doing a man’s job,” she says, “I don’t have the luxury of being an ass.”

I talked to Brent Lang for a *Variety* (July 29, 2014) article about the small representation of women below-the-line in production. He asked if I was paid less for the same work. I said, in a sense, “yes” because I tend to get lower budget shows as a Production Mixer. Not only is there less money for sound but, as the budget falls, getting good sound tends to be harder. This is because of all the other money compromises, like worse deals on locations, older equipment used by other departments, smaller staff and shorter schedules. Of course, the boys work these shows too, but it sure feels like they move on sooner. (Again, nothing’s true all the time.) The positive side of low budget is the chance to master knowledge of new wave equipment and practices that will make their way up the production ladder—wide-and-tight, RED camera, ‘D’ cameras, etc.—before the rich producers start to use them. It’s also a chance to be available for the occasional innovative or true “labor of love” film where you can feel very appreciated and integral to its success. I’ve been lucky to see some really good movies while I was recording them. (Including two movies that my husband wrote and produced, one of which was *Monkey Love*, a comedy starring Jeremy Renner in 2004. Yes, shameless plug.)

My parents chose a girl’s school partly to round out their little tomboy. It probably had the opposite effect. If you wanted to do something, there was no one to stop or slow you down by “helping” you. It wasn’t the place to learn about gender norms. There was no reason not to be a leader. You could be the president of the dramatic club or on the school paper or on the varsity basketball team. If there was a drawback, it was that I didn’t learn to navigate a system that treats you as different or less acceptable. I still work at understanding why people would object to you doing whatever you’re able to do. When we get out of the pass-van on a location scout, it feels a lot like taking the field as a member of a team on which I’ve earned my spot. I loved that feeling in school and love it now.

The bottom line is, it’s a great job. If it’s taken a bit more time and work because of artificial obstacles, I figure you just take a little extra pride in what you do achieve. I owe a tremendous debt to the 695 “brothers” that I’ve worked for, and with. I was going to list them but it’s a very long list. I cheer their successes and those of my ever-increasing number of sisters.

PS: As I write, it is over a year since the loss of my friend and mentor of longest standing, Lee Strosnider. He was perfectly generous and professional. He would explain equipment and rent it to me at all hours knowing I’d pay when possible. His stories and nuggets of advice were as interesting as they were long. I miss him.



Day 5: North Hollywood. Scott Bernard with the 695 picketers. (Photo: Tom Colvin)

Strikenado

by David Waelder

The Asylum is a production company specializing in ultra-low-budget projects that capitalize on trending events with titles just this side of copyright infringement. They made *Transformers* in 2006, capitalizing on the pending release of *Transformers*, and, in 2008, they made *The 18-Year-Old Virgin*—well, you get the idea. In 2013, they had a feeding frenzy with *Sharknado*, a film based on the premise of a cyclone vacuuming up sharks in waterspouts and depositing them to run amok on land.

No film that makes money could ever be too silly to have a sequel and *Sharknado 2: The Second One* soon followed. Sharks still rained from the sky but this time there was a difference: there was an IATSE contract. (We don't know if the sharks were represented.) And the film went on to enjoy the highest ratings on the Syfy network for an original movie, according to IATSE Assistant Motion Picture Director Vanessa Holtgrewe.

Like many ultra-low-budget agreements, the *Sharknado 2* contract provided that wages would be adjusted if the budget exceeded an agreed level. The budget puffed up like a jellyfish and the film made lots of money but the cartilaginous producers slipped out without paying the whole tab. And when they started production on *Sharknado 3*, it was without any IATSE participation, as if the negotiations of the previous film had never happened.

There's nothing funny about working these shows; they're long hours—low-wage slugfests. By the fourth day on *Sharknado 3*, the grips were circulating a signature document seeking IATSE representation. The vote was 24 to 1 in favor of union representation and, when production refused to negotiate, the crew walked on March 3. Alistair Duff, the Sound Mixer hired for the show, joined the picket line and promptly posted a notice of the job action on the LA Sound Mixers Facebook group where there was already an active series of posts about the event.

Response to the challenge was outstanding; the production found pickets wherever they went. From Tuesday (March 3) through Sunday, there were pickets every day at The Asylum offices and adjacent editing suite in Burbank, at Blue Cloud Ranch in Santa Clarita and at a location in North Hollywood. The participation from Local 695 members was particularly strong. There were times when half the picketers were 695 members. Four replacement sound crews were brought in and, one by one, each was turned and joined the picket line. We heard reports of Zoom recorders being taped to a pole in an effort to record some sort of scratch track.

On Sunday, March 8, *Sharknado* wrapped out of the North Hollywood facility and moved on to Washington, D.C., where they also encountered pickets. They did not have an easy time. Organizing a show that is determined to resist and only shoots for a few weeks is exceedingly difficult and, under cover of darkness, *Sharknado* slipped out of town without a contract. But there was blood in the water and no business as usual for a production that disavowed its commitments, disrespected its crew, dishonored its responsibilities.

Photos by David Waelder unless specifically credited



Blue Cloud Ranch. Joe Aredas, Local 695 Field Representative, with Russell Nordstedt, Local 80 President. (Photo courtesy of Joe Aredas)



DAY 2

Day 2, top left: At the editing facility in Burbank. Below left: At The Asylum offices, L-R: Lena Al-Khatib, Chris Howland, Caleb Mose, Armando Macias



DAY 3

Blue Cloud Ranch in Santa Clarita



DAY 4

Above: North Hollywood, Jennifer Winslow and Hovak Alaverdyan on the picket line. Right: James Ridgely juggling to entertain picketers



Sharknado crew wrapping out of North Hollywood

DAY 5



Whether you're capturing audio on a quiet soundstage or in a packed-out stadium, Sanken has a shotgun solution to fit your needs.

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