

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**REESE WITHERSPOON AND KERRY WASHINGTON TALK
CHANNELING THEIR OWN MOTHERS FOR HULU'S *LITTLE
FIRES EVERYWHERE* IN EMMY®**

(**NOHO ARTS DISTRICT, Calif.** — March 23, 2020) — For costars Reese Witherspoon and Kerry Washington, Hulu's *Little Fires Everywhere* was a passion project born from the love of Celeste Ng's poignant novel that inspired the new limited series. *Emmy* talks to the stars and the author about the relationships that inspired their roles and the unique cinematic twist to the ending.

The award-winning official publication of the Television Academy hits newsstands March 24.

Ng dreamed of Witherspoon's involvement in the adaptation before the book was even published and became an instant bestseller. While watching an episode of HBO's *Big Little Lies*, the author turned to her husband and said, "Wouldn't it be amazing if Reese Witherspoon read my book and wanted to option it and then wanted to star in the adaptation?" In a leap of faith, Ng sent an advance copy to the actress/producer, but it was actually newly hired Executive Producer Lauren Levy Neustadter at Witherspoon's company, Hello Sunshine, who first read the novel. "It's a really beautiful exploration of humanity, of race, of class and of interpersonal relationships seen through the lens of the '90s," says Neustadter. "It's incredibly relevant to the world that we live in today."

Once the wheels were in motion, production moved quickly; the Hulu series wrapped within two years after the release of the book. "This just may be the only thing that's ever made me believe in manifesting things into the universe, speaking them into existence," says Ng.

In this month's *emmy* cover story, "**Hearts Afire**," Witherspoon and Washington discuss how their own relationships as both daughters and mothers shaped their roles. Witherspoon channeled her own mother for the part of Elena Richardson. "I don't know why it never occurred to us until we were almost into production," Witherspoon says. "I was like, 'I'm playing [my mother] Betty!'" But it was her real-life role of mother to a teenage daughter that made the writing so powerful. "It's so difficult to articulate what motherhood means, and there are so many passages in the novel that did," Witherspoon continues. One of the passages she found particularly meaningful was, "It was like training yourself to live on the smell of an apple alone, when what you really wanted was to devour it, to sink your teeth into it and consume it, seeds, core and all." "It's such a vivid way to describe the loss of your children as they grow up," she adds. "My daughter was applying for college back then, so it hit me like an arrow in the heart."

When it came to casting Washington as Mia Warren, who is not African American in the novel, Ng says, "I had initially *wanted* Mia to be a woman of color, I just didn't feel like I was the right person to write that. [Lauren and Reese's] idea to cast Kerry told me they were looking at the book in exactly the right way." Washington was immediately captivated by the material. "Reese sent the book to me while I was still filming *Scandal*," she says, "And that book *owned* me." The actress also "unlocked" the character of Mia by referencing her relationship with her own mother, even incorporating some of her idiosyncrasies.

Early into production the writers debated whether to set a match to the book's original ending, a plot point given away by the author on the very first page. Neustadter recalls, "Reese had said, 'How do we build up the mystery?' So, one of the things I pitched was that we should have a different ending." The twist, which will surprise even book readers, is also author approved. "It wasn't what I was getting at," Ng says, "but I like it."

Additional feature highlights from the new issue include:

- In "**Sisters in Song**," *emmy* talks to the women behind the voices in *The Clark Sisters: First Ladies of Gospel*, Lifetime's new movie about the biggest-selling female gospel group in music history.
- The OWN anthology series *Cherish the Day* is an eight-episode intimate look at 24 hours in the lives of two people falling in love. In "**Forever and a Day**," costars Xosha Roquemore and Alano Miller share their character inspirations and the challenges that come from telling a love story that spans eight years.
- *Emmy* talks with Heidi Klum and Tim Gunn, post-*Project Runway*, as they await the premiere of their new Amazon series, *Making the Cut*. "**The Brand Tour**" takes a peek at the fashion competition in which winning designs go on sale immediately in the Amazon Fashion marketplace following the conclusion of each episode.

About *emmy*

Emmy, the official publication of the Television Academy, goes behind the scenes of the industry for a unique insider's view. It showcases the scope of television and profiles the people who make TV happen, from the stars of top shows to the pros behind the cameras, covering programming trends and advances in technology. Honored consistently for excellence, *emmy* is a six-time Maggie Award winner as Best Trade Publication in Communications or the Arts and has collected 52 Maggies from the Western Publishing Association. *Emmy* is available on selected newsstands and at TelevisionAcademy.com for single print and digital copies as well as subscriptions.

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For issue/coverage contacts:

Carla Schalman
carla@breakwhitelight.com
310-827-3169

Stephanie Goodell
stephanie@breakwhitelight.com
818-462-1150

breakwhitelight for the Television Academy