

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***BIG SKY* EXECUTIVE PRODUCER ELWOOD REID TALKS BUILDING WOMEN, QUEER AND BLACK REPRESENTATION IN SEASON TWO OF THE ABC SERIES IN *EMMY***

(**NOHO ARTS DISTRICT**, Calif. — Sept. 9, 2021) — A conventional network series wasn't what David E. Kelley, the prolific writer/producer of *Big Little Lies*, *The Undoing* and many other acclaimed television projects, had in mind when he created ABC's *Big Sky*. After encountering delays with other networks, Kelley sent his script to ABC and was firm on two things: *Big Sky* would be a cable show, and it would be the kind where the unexpected happens. Executive producer Elwood Reid talks to *emmy* about the process of remixing the show's characters with the help of actors in the writers' room and the much-anticipated season two of the drama series premiering Sept. 30. The award-winning official publication of the Television Academy hit newsstands today.

Big Sky centers on a pair of detectives in Montana who are unlikely partners. While much of the show's narrative structure is adapted from the award-winning novel series "The Highway," by C.J. Box, Kelley elevated the complexity of *Big Sky* by remixing its characters. The books focus on rogue Montana detective Cody Hoyt, who is abruptly killed halfway through the second installment and passes the baton to his detective partner, Cassie Dewell. But in the TV adaptation, Kelley shifted Cody's murder to the end of the premiere episode signaling, he says, that "*Big Sky* is the kind of show where the unexpected happens, and no one is safe." He then reconceived Cassie as presented in the book as two characters in the show, pairing Cassie (played by Kylie Bunbury of ABC's *Twisted*) with another detective, Jenny Hoyt (played by Katheryn Winnick of the History Channel's *Vikings*).

In the second half of the first season, Kelley stepped back to a supervisory role; and soon afterward, Reid was tasked with demonstrating that *Big Sky* would not play by the usual broadcast rules. In the *emmy* cover story "**The Changing Sky**," Reid shares how the series evolved to bring stronger representation in the writers' room and on set. Reid told his cast, "We're a partnership. You have to tell me when something's not right." And that's what Winnick, who directed and coordinated stunts on *Vikings*, did. After talking to Reid about the necessity for female empowerment in front of and behind the camera, she helped direct numerous action scenes in season two of *Big Sky* to make them better and safer. "It's important to have that representation, especially for a show based on two female leads," Winnick says. "Elwood Reid is definitely on board with that."

The show also introduces Jesse James Keitel, the first nonbinary actor to play a nonbinary series regular on network television. Initially, Keitel had concerns with the language in early scripts surrounding their nonbinary, transfeminine character, Jerrie. So, they sat down with the writers and producers to recraft the character

into one that was more representative of the trans and queer experience. Soon afterward, Keitel was hired on as a trans consultant for season two.

"My job is to listen," says Reid. "You have to trust your actors. I trust them to speak up and tell me when something could be better." Likewise, Reid encouraged Bunbury to offer input to the writers crafting Cassie's response to corrupt police officers who wrongfully arrested her in season one; it resulted in one of the series' most powerful scenes to date. "I was just talking about what's important to me as a woman of color," Bunbury says. "I personally don't feel that I'm useful if I'm just being used for action and entertainment. I think we can use me for more purposes." Reid adds, "When it comes to issues that I know nothing about, but I have experts in my cast, I'd be a fool not to listen to them, not to let them take the wheel. My job is to get out of the way."

Additional feature highlights from the new issue include:

Jason Blum, founder of the horror-fronting production company Blumhouse Productions, reinvented the formula for Hollywood success by way of the horror genre. In "**All Fired Up**," *emmy* does a deep dive into Blum's journey and his recent endeavors to add television to his company portfolio through the Blumhouse Television division.

In "**Miracle in Madrid**," Álex Pina and Jesús Colmenar, creator/showrunner and director/executive producer of Netflix's Spanish drama *Money Heist*, discuss how its themes of social injustice, capitalism, love, feminism, loyalty and morality proved a winning formula, and share that when it comes to storytelling; there are no borders.

B. J. Novak, best known for his role as Ryan Howard on NBC's *The Office*, took a step back from acting to craft his new project, *The Premise*, an anthology series on FX on Hulu premiering Sept. 16. In "**Idea Man**," Novak shares with *emmy* his favorite aspects of the production process and how he served as the creator, executive producer and writer of all five episodes.

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 published 12 times per year and is available on selected newsstands and at TelevisionAcademy.com for single print and digital copies as well as subscriptions.

#

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