

SQ_InConversation_Ron&Bill_16x9_WIP_v4.0

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00:00:05:01	SCHUYLER	The singular auteur Ron Howard and his producer Bill Connor, two men who need no real introduction from me, except to just double down on our immense gratitude for you guys making time for this and for all of your recent work in Australia.
00:00:21:04	RON	Oh, it's a pleasure. Hi.
00:00:22:22	BILL	Thanks, Schuyler.
00:00:24:01	RON	We've had a couple of great experiences and, you know, and honestly, you know, kind of looking forward to the next, although we don't know what it is. It'd be great.
00:00:35:09	SCHUYLER	Well, based on your recent track record, we should, what, expect to see you back here in about six or eight months, right?
00:00:42:06	RON	It wouldn't surprise me.
00:00:44:15	BILL	That would be a nice rhythm to keep, for sure.
00:00:48:17	SCHUYLER	But truly, it has been really impressive for you to bring two back-to-back movies here to the Gold Coast and to Queensland. Can we just start by talking about that a little bit? Was that... Was this a filmmaking environment that you were aware of or how did that come to pass that you got into that rhythm?
00:01:03:21	RON	Well, there's an interesting reality in this that, you know, is, I think, pertinent to sort of this conversation and the work that you all are doing and Screen Queensland does. The, um... And Bill can remember kind of how we found our way to Queensland on 'Thirteen Lives' 'cause I don't have a clear sense of it, although I was...I was eager about it. I could talk about that as well. But having had a great experience on 'Thirteen Lives', it's interesting how there was a kind of a gravitational pull for us toward Queensland as a solution. And so very early in our process of trying to determine whether we could shoot in the Galapagos and once we determined we couldn't shoot the full production in the Galapagos, then where, and we then scouted another place that we'd worked, the Canaries. That was interesting but had some challenges. And as we began looking at all this, literally, we looked at each other as we were scouting these various locations and kind of said, "Queensland?" And it was top of mind because we just had this good experience replicating other parts of the world, and in that case, it was Thailand. But also recognising the...you know, the possibilities and, of course, buoyed by a great experience. And yes, the, you know, the financial impact on a movie or a television show is massive. And so that support means, you know, so much. I mean, it's an absolute calling card. But then there's the sort of the Aussie work ethic, the Aussie talent, and which we've, you know, and I've experienced that in front of and behind the camera for years. But those folks were always imports. In this case, we're the imports. And... But so I was, you know, I was looking forward to the experience. And on 'Thirteen Lives', it was every bit as satisfying as I expected it to be or more. And, you know, I got to just jump in and say that we at least match that on 'Eden'. So, you know, we're very happy outsiders and grateful to have been

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		included. But, Bill, I'm curious, take us through sort of how we landed in Queensland for Thailand, going back to 'Thirteen Lives'.
00:03:50:05	BILL	Well, you know, that was during COVID when we did it. So that was a tricky time, certainly. And both pictures have... Both 'Eden' and 'Thirteen Lives' have such strong exterior scene requirements that it really narrowed us down, especially the Thailand element. Thailand was not an option for us due to the COVID restrictions at the time. And, you know, the exterior of Queensland really proved to be a perfect cheat for us. That and the incredible incentives that you all have there and the really strong support of not only the federal group, but the Screen Queensland group, Jacqui and Naomi and the whole team at Screen Queensland, really kind of sealed the deal for us. You know, the abundance of locations, the strong crew base that Queensland had, and really what we were looking for in a cheat of Thailand was perfect working conditions for us. I think that spoke to us more than anything else.
00:05:13:11	RON	But did MGM... I mean, I seem to recall MGM saying, "Hey, here are a handful of places, you know, we'd like you to consider from, you know, an incentive basis."
00:05:25:12	BILL	Yeah, they definitely did. But, you know, really Australia was trumping all the time. And that's what drove us there. It also didn't hurt that we knew Sharon Miller from years ago. I knew Sharon back on 'Life of Pi'. And Sharon was also the line producer, as we know, on 'Eden'. And, you know, she's such a strong supporter of the Queensland area that I think that put it foremost in front of all the other locations.
00:06:03:12	SCHUYLER	That's great. And I, you know, from my personal experience, too, we all know that Queensland was a real refuge for film production during those COVID times with 'Elvis' and 'Thirteen Lives', but it was really heartening to see you guys bring another project here so soon. But even in your storied careers, 'Eden' seems to stand out in terms of how personal it is as a personal passion project for you, Ron, and also how independent it was as a film production. Can we... I think for this room full of producers and executives who are all trying to navigate the choppy waters of a changing business, I think it's really interesting to hear from guys like you who are also continually adapting and staying nimble in the way you put projects together. Is 'Eden' an example of your nimble footwork?
00:06:57:06	RON	Well, it's kind of an outlier in the history of Imagine because we generally are financed within the Hollywood system. 'Rush' is an example of independent financing, but when myself and Imagine became involved in Rush, Working Title was already in place and most of the independent financing existed already. So this was a new experience for me and Brian Grazer, but, you know, it's a terrific project and it is a labour of love. It's something, you know, I first learned about this story on a family vacation to the Galapagos about 15 years ago. And I

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		literally tapped out an outline for what I thought the movie version could be after reading a couple of books on the subject and some articles and things. Literally on my BlackBerry. So that'll just tell you how long ago that was. And began working on it and just sort of dreamed of making it and I really felt like, in a lot of ways, that audience tastes, sensibilities, creative appetites of talented collaborators, everything shifted to the point where this, you know, dark, suspenseful, philosophically infused character piece made a lot of sense to a lot of people. And it was a spec script that Noah Pink wrote with me. I mean, I wasn't a co-writer. We shared story credit. And so, yeah, it just sort of evolved to the point where I began just sharing it with some agents and seeing, you know, "Do you think your... Do you think any clients would be interested in this?" And so forth. And I almost wanted to be convinced that this was the time to make the movie. Once we could see that we could put this group together, Karen Lunder, one of the producers and also, you know, a mainstay at Imagine, has a lot of experience in the indie world. She used to work at FilmNation and other places that, you know...and understood those models. And we began, you know, putting it together. It's the first time that Bill and I have ever collaborated, you know, on the sort of the production side of building a plan. And I want to talk for a second... Maybe we'll get to it later, but just about the way Bill and I have worked over the years and kind of how this collaboration works, 'cause it's unique in some ways and I think...I'm surprised more people don't, you know, emulate it more closely, in fact.
00:10:03:06	SCHUYLER	Happy to talk about that now, or I don't know how candid you want to be, but, you know, saying that you started to circulate it slowly and put it together with a bit of an indie model, was that just the plan you wanted to pursue from the get-go? Did you consider putting it through a major studio or was this just something you always wanted to keep independent?
00:10:24:09	RON	I felt like it had to be independent. I really did. It felt like it's... It's, you know, it's a... Certainly when we began with it, it felt like, you know, a pretty risky project, not the kind of things that studios were choosing to finance. Then as COVID started to hit, you began to really realise that. But we then also recognised that if we were fully independent, which we were, we could also get a SAG waiver, which gave us an advantage, a competitive advantage at that moment. So at that point, we didn't even pursue, you know, the mainstream system. But it felt right. It felt right. Look, I, um... When I tackle a project, I want everybody to benefit, everybody who's involved. I want the creative collaborators to feel like they're glad they invested their time in this project with me, that they've been able to do work they're proud of. You know, I certainly want audiences to feel good about it if they choose to watch and be excited about it.

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		But, you know, I also want the investors to, you know, feel like they made a wise choice. And so I think this is the right way to do it. Interestingly, you know, back to Bill and I, we began working with this and we started reaching out to people who we knew who'd had a lot more experience in the indie production model than we have. And I won't say who it is, but, you know, a bona fide movie star who I've worked with, who's worked on the indie side, on like micro budget, very ambitious, creatively takes a lot of risks. Also, you know, mega, you know, studio tent pole stuff as well. And he'd worked with both Bill and I and he said, "You guys already operate that way. You just, you know... The thing that you need to do, which is to be really granular, communicate well, be nimble, be fast on your feet, you know, you guys already work that way and, you know, you won't have a problem." And, you know, I think we adapted well, but there was definitely a little learning curve for us. But it wasn't a very steep one, would you say, Bill?
00:13:00:10	BILL	Yeah, not at all. I mean, think probably the challenge for us in an independent model on this film was... I mean, it's what's happening with most scripts, I think, these days. There seems to be the same amount of pages, but 25% more scene. And maybe more than that. So that gets to be pretty tricky when, you know, the game is constantly, you know, do more for less money in fewer days, so... You know, even the difference between 'Eden' and 'Thirteen Lives', I think 'Thirteen Lives' was about a 50-day schedule, which was pretty amazing for the amount of water work that had to happen there and action work that also had to happen. 'Eden' is certainly more of a traditional drama, but just a ton of scenes, all exterior work. And we did that in 40 days. And I think a lot of that was driven by our independent model of what Ron just said, how we were going to approach the movie and how it had to be approached for that.
00:14:12:09	RON	And starting with Sharon, you know, we had the same conversation with everybody, you know, involved. And so people understood. They also understood, you know, what their rate was going to be on this movie. That, you know, the spirit of it. But they also recognised that on an above-the-line level, everybody involved was working on a kind of an indie model. And, you know, it turned out to be very exciting. Let me just get to this one. This is interesting to me, and I hope it is for everybody else. For a long time... I haven't worked with that many assistant directors over the years. I've tended to lock in on some people. Many years with a guy named Aldric Porter, who actually sort of trained Bill. And Bill rose up through the ranks in Aldric's system, became a second, and then he went off to first. And at a certain point, I had needed, you know, a first, and Bill was available and went for it. And we've been working together, you know, almost entirely since then. But with Bill, I finally instituted something that I'd wanted to do for a long time, which is get the assistant director to be on for the entire picture. Go early in prep, be a part of the producing team, have, you know, real engagement and understanding of the economics of what we were trying to do. And because Bill

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		was properly wired for this, has the taste for it and the instincts beyond all the production acumen and understanding, to carry on through the movie so that somebody working on the film with me closely was going to go the distance. And so... But yet still be the first assistant director, of which he's A-plus calibre. And so it's a little bit of a tricky thing, because suddenly you're asking an individual to still do everything that a first assistant director has to do and be cognisant of the sort of demands and what...sort of the agenda of what a first AD is supposed to deliver. And yet still have this deeper connection with both the director's sort of point of view of the movie and the film and a big, you know, emotional investment in the outcome beyond the shooting schedule. And I love that because I also, you know, am one of the producers of movies that I direct. You know, I'm on the team. And I do take that part of my job seriously. And I love that there's somebody... That we don't have to rely on a line producer to come down to the set and answer a question for me. There's, you know, right there, right in the middle of the decision as to whether we should keep shooting or whether we need to, you know, go ahead and wrap or, you know, what our options would be, you know, if we, you know, a scene that we're struggling with, if we abandon it and move to something else, what would it mean to the production on a cost basis and production? And Bill and I have begun to... you know, work so well that way. And it even allows me, quite frankly, to be able to use second units and splinter units a little more aggressively and ambitiously 'cause I have one more person to help me cover. One more person who's deeply knowledgeable of what the goals are, what the aesthetic is and so forth. And just having that one additional person right there in the trenches, a part of it all, helps monitor two units at once sometimes when that's useful. And it turned out it was very useful for 'Thirteen Lives' with all the underwater work and also 'Eden' because we had a lot of splinter work to try to get very short scenes with a high visual impact and a need to leave the parent location and go find an interesting place and take some time to do something. And, you know, it's hectic, it's ambitious and it really only makes sense, you know, if there's more than one person who's really dialled into, you know, the goals.
00:18:41:22	SCHUYLER	I mean, Ron, when you explain it that way, it makes a ton of sense. And as someone who in my role producing with Baz, I go the distance with Baz from the inception all the way through to the marketing. And Baz, like I know you do, he cracks quite a pace. So keeping up with Baz... So it's hard for me to wrap my head around doing that and also being the first assistant. And yet the way you describe it, it seems like I can't believe everybody is not doing this, but I guess everybody isn't Bill Connor. So, Bill, I want to hear from you about how you even manage that.
00:19:16:01	BILL	Well, you know, I think it kind of comes naturally with the job. Well, I should say, first of all, right about the time Ron was conceiving of this position and how we

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		work together, I was feeling that... I was feeling career-wise, not as fulfilled by just the role of the assistant director, because you are so deeply in it and you do care so much and you kind of get the, you know, the baby is born and then you have to say goodbye one day, taken away from me. So that was... And I'm sure you can appreciate that, Schuyler. That was something that I was looking to change because I didn't want to, you know, call wrap on the last day of shooting and not see the movie again until the premiere. And I kind of expressed this to Ron at the time and he was describing what he just discussed with you. And so it really... It felt like the right thing to me. You know, I really don't think it... I think it enables an assistant director to do their job better, because it's not like you're eliminating the line producer position or some other producer position. But it's in a more immediate, as Ron said, answer that can happen right there on the set on things that don't require calling someone down to set or conferring with a group of people. You know, we can move at the speed we need to. And, of course, when we need to involve more people and things, we definitely do that. So it's... I think it's a lot more...more of a natural way of...and more efficient, certainly, way of running a set and the movie.
00:21:16:11	RON	With a good outcome from a production standpoint, also. You know, it's hard to quantify these things, but, you know, we do ambitious work and, you know, and not a lot of overtime. We're able to be, you know, efficient. As I said, utilise splinter units in a very effective way. And there are, you know, some cost savings there as well. So I think it's really benefited the films that we've been able to work on together that way.
00:21:46:21	SCHUYLER	I'm sure. And I'm imagining not just through the production process, but beyond. I mean, I love the idea that after that huge investment of energy and creativity into the production process, being able to carry on that sort of repository of knowledge about the movie into post, because as we were just touching on, you have all these people who care deeply about the film. They know the film inside and out. They're sort of going every step of the way with the director. And then they all disappear. And you sort of lose that sort of collective knowledge base of your production team. So the continuity beyond production for having your AD stay on also seems novel and yet makes so much sense. You're in post now on 'Eden'. How is that going for you guys having, you know, bringing the built-in knowledge of the work you did in Australia into the edit?
00:22:40:06	RON	Very, very similar process. You know, in this case, we're working a lot remotely with Matt Villa and I have to say it's going great. That probably speaks more to Matt than it does to our process. He's you know, fantastic and doing a great job. I have a lot of involvement with Brian and Imagine. And, you know, and while I am all in on the movies that I have the chance to direct, you know, I also directed a documentary about Jim Henson. And week after next, I have to do a week of publicity and I'm going to be a little bit distracted. But the work doesn't, you know, it doesn't have to be curtailed quite as much 'cause there's a lot that Bill

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		can follow through on with Matt and whoever else. You know, the music department, Hans Zimmer, you know, all have relationships with Bill just as they do with me. And it really, you know, it really helps me do what I need to do, you know, with Imagine. And so that's, you know, exciting because I kind of like the action, but I want to make sure that first things first, that, you know, the project that I'm directing is always, you know, getting what it needs.
00:24:09:18	SCHUYLER	Bill, feel free to add to that. But I do also want to pick up on the mention of Matt Villa, the editor of 'Eden', phenomenal editor, longtime collaborator of Baz's as well. And what I'm interested in with regards to that is that with 'Thirteen Lives', you came, made a great production here, took full advantage of the production incentives. And it's terrific that that encouraged you to come back and do the same again with 'Eden' and more, because now you're doing post-production here in Australia. Matt, so everyone understands, Matt is working out of The Post Lounge in Sydney. So you guys are... Do you... How... What made you decide to not just double down on shooting movies here, but to bring more of your process to Australia?
00:24:58:02	BILL	Well, you know, the talent pool that you all have there now is astonishing. And it's kind of a no-brainer to think about doing post there with the great pool of editors that you have there and post supervisors. And Kath Raphael is our post supervisor down in Sydney. And it's just such a strong, plentiful pool of talented filmmakers that if you're able to... Obviously, a lot of times, you're involved with a relationship with an editor that you have been working with for years who obviously, you know, may not be Australian. But on this movie, the timing and how we, you know, needed to structure, budgetarily, the film, it made tremendous sense. And, you know, Ron, I'll let you speak to it, but it was... It seemed like certainly an easy ask to at least investigate the talent here. And, luckily, right away, we got hooked up with Matt.
00:26:15:06	RON	It's interesting, again, I'm seeing a kind of theme emerge in my own mind, you know, for I spent some time, a year or so, developing a project with Animal Logic and Zareh Nalbandian and, you know, the team there. Lots of design work and so forth. The project ultimately didn't go, you know, forward into animation, but it was a great learning experience for me. And in that, I, again, you know, with a trip to Animal Logic and spending a little time, you could just see and be reminded of the talent pool in post-production as well. And, of course, it makes sense. Look at all the films and television shows you make. It just becomes a kind of gravitational pull. The more people are compelled...people from, you know, outsiders are compelled to come and see because, you know, the incentives are there. So that becomes an easy... You know, it's a tie breaker. It's like, well, you know, yes, we've got to take advantage of that. That's the way that we can fulfil the potential of our project and then have these positive experiences, well, then just the deeper the talent pool grows. So it's sort of this self-fulfilling, you know, prophecy and this cycle that is, you

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		know, just makes so much sense. And, you know, and in recent years, I happen to have experienced it, really, firsthand from a couple of different directions.
00:27:46:20	BILL	And you hit on something, Ron, you know, the fact when we were doing 'Thirteen', it was obvious the growth that was going on in Australia, you know, New South Wales, Queensland...especially specific to visual effects. The visual effects houses that started popping up were strong, great houses. It always reminded me of the route that the UK took because they're certainly a powerhouse now, but they weren't always. And a lot of that base was built by the strong visual effects house that people started coming over and getting their visual effects work done there. And then the incentives got great over there and people started staying for the entire picture. And it's really a model that is similar there that I, you know, honestly, I think has catapulted you guys into competition with all the major production centres.
00:28:51:11	SCHUYLER	It's fantastic to hear, and by no means fishing for compliments for Australia and the industry, we want to hear critique as well. How is Australia doing at staying competitive and what could we be doing better to make sure that we get the next Ron and Bill show and not just get the production, but get more of it? How do we get... How do we increase our attraction within the process?
00:29:17:01	BILL	Are mozzies on the list or is that something we can't talk about?
00:29:21:06	RON	Yeah. We had a couple locations where we were... There was infestation. You know, look, I think it's continuing what you're doing, but that's actually saying a lot because, you know, that incentive remains really key. And, you know, as talented as everyone is, you know, as much as the infrastructure grows and the facilities present themselves, that only makes it an easier decision for anyone on the planet who wants to work on something. Because if they can... They can be more ambitious about what they want to do creatively. You know, the economics will allow for that. And there's no reason not to go there. I mean, you're going to be able to do your best work there. There's no compromise whatsoever. In fact, it's exciting and it's an advantage. People like Australia, by the way. Allow me to speak as a foreigner. There's nobody that doesn't like the idea of going to Australia. It's a long way, but if you can go and settle down, you guys have done a good job of exporting a culture that people feel a lot of affection for. It really does sustain itself, you know, through the experience. I mean, all the actors... I mean, everybody involved in 'Eden' and, you know, and 'Thirteen Lives', you know, the guys that were...that came over from Europe or the US loved it. You know, loved being there.
00:30:58:06	BILL	Yeah, it is great. And, you know, Schuyler, I'd say one of the pitfalls of growing so fast like you all are there is maintaining that strong crew base, because, you know, I think we've all shot in those places where you go and they can maybe service two big features or maybe a feature and a TV series. And then suddenly the experienced crew level drop with the third or the fourth or the fifth, even, you know, so... And with really the amount of productions that are flocking to you

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		guys, for me, I would say that we've been lucky enough. I mean, on 'Eden', we had a lot of returnees from 'Thirteen' and the ones who weren't returnees were just tremendous. But, you know, I think that's always a danger that you pay attention to nurturing and fostering that community to really sustain multiple productions. And I do think you're doing it. I mean, the folks at Screen Queensland and in New South Wales, you certainly see that happening, but it's something to always keep an eye on.
00:32:21:20	RON	And as a creative person, I would also just say that the more that the system, whatever that is, you know, again, incentives, local producers, you know, and talent, the more you work to keep doing stuff of your own at home, you know, the more this infrastructure is going to continue to grow as well. And you're also going to feed off of the experience that people are getting on these other productions that come in from the outside and maybe have a little more money to throw around or a little more time. But, obviously, you know, there's always been talent in Australia, an inordinate, you know, percentage of really talented people - actors, writers, directors and crew people. And it's, you know, it's really incumbent upon... I think even the European countries that sort of let this go have rediscovered the value of their culture. And so it's great that you have, you know, a system that will attract outsiders and, you know, people can come from India or England or Japan or the US or wherever and have a good experience working there. But vitally important that policies somehow continue to fuel, you know, homegrown productions with the Australian culture, you know, front and centre.
00:34:09:09	SCHUYLER	I think it's fantastic to hear that you feel like Australian culture, you know, our Australian cultural export is attractive and, you know, is building the Australian brand. So we'll definitely keep sending baristas and flat whites and Hemsworths across the pond to America and hope that you guys will keep coming to make movies here, you know, lured by the best Australia has to offer. But your bigger point, I think, is exactly where I'd love for the conversation to go, which is personally I'm very much a believer that the more import productions, especially it goes without saying if they're done at the calibre that you both work at, is only good for the local industry and for local producers to develop the crew base, to give emerging Australian acting talent opportunities before they have to leave these shores. It's an 'all boats rise' scenario from my perspective, but we need to be there as the Australian producing partners in that, you know, we need to take our responsibility in the other boat to make sure we're generating the highest-calibre work between these productions so that we do maintain that quality of the crew base and we unlock the benefits of it. So, you know, coming back to something we were talking about a little earlier with 'Eden' and independent financing, do you have anything you want to say for this room full of Australian producers about how to be more nimble, how to be more ambitious from the Australian work that we do here and create

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		international-quality work, you know, amongst ourselves?
00:35:57:02	RON	Well, again, this is not really, you know, where I live, you know, in terms of how, you know, these financing deals come together and how the projects come together. But Joel Edgerton is a great example of somebody who does understand it, and he and I spent some time talking about it. And, you know, as high profile as he is, as capable as he is of working kind of nonstop, he has never stopped generating projects and putting packages together. And, you know, you guys know all about that, but it does... And we're doing it here at Imagine. I mean, look, 'Eden' was that. As I said, Noah Pink wrote the script on spec and because this was not your sort of standard studio fare, so we didn't want the project to be bogged down in a development trap, which is often the case even though you get some money upfront, you know. It's, you know... So I think being super entrepreneurial and using the fact that you do have access to these incentives, that an Australian, you know, production is even a greater incentive, and then letting the outside world know about that so that, you know, they can choose to participate in some way. But your project, you know, is already a train going down the tracks because it's got its script, it's got its director, it's got, you know, some cast and enough money to make it, you know, real. And so I assume I'm saying something that sort of everybody in that room knows about already because I'm sure it happens all the time, but, you know, that's what leaps to mind. And I'm also, you know, recognising that my buddy Joel knows, you know, a lot about that kind of thing and has had, you know, a lot of experience with it.
00:37:59:09	BILL	I think the more push and play the experience becomes, especially as, like Ron said, you know, these days, productions are landing, they want to get going quick and, you know, the stronger infrastructure that you guys are developing with your producing partners too. We had a great experience on 'Eden' with Servo and Jon Kuyper and Marvin Saven and Dean Hood's company as our production services group. And, you know, just tremendous, tremendous support. It was really incredible. We have worked with Jon on 'Thirteen Lives'. He was our line producer on that. So we, you know, we felt comfortable working with Servo on this and it's, you know, having that strong... Coming to a place where maybe you have shot before, but maybe not that much and having that group of people that, you know, immediately you trust and have a proven track record on, you know, getting the job done is tremendous. And I think the more that builds up, it's really going to become bulletproof.
00:39:15:23	SCHUYLER	Well, look, it's great to hear these things coming from you guys. And, Ron, even though you say you're saying things that we, you know, might already know, and I think we all collectively, we know that Australians are an enterprising group of people. We overcome a small population and the tyranny of distance to get Australian culture and Australians travelling throughout the world. But I don't think we can hear enough, you know, being reminded of the potential of what we

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		could be doing, that how we can take that enterprising spirit and stack it and stand on the shoulders of the huge built-in advantages that our film industry has with our incentives at, you know, state and federal level. And, you know, I think being exposed not just to an American production coming and shooting on our shores, but an independently, entrepreneurially put-together production, I think, is really valuable for Australian producers to be exposed to because we can do that. Plus, as you said, with a moving train that has the momentum, the support, the financial backing of our, you know, of our various incentives. So I hope that we will do more, you know, we will take note of what you guys have done with 'Eden'.
00:40:30:22	RON	Well, I think what Bill mentioned and also, you know, alluded to means a lot and that is momentum. You know, the system moves too damn slowly all over the world, you know, including Hollywood. And the more...you know, a hub, or hubs as you have, you know, in Australia now, the more it can present to the world that here's a project and it's happening. This is a thing that's happening, whether it fully is or isn't. That's why you're all producers, you know. But if it's mostly happening...you could pass on the idea of saying, "Yeah, it's happening," and the detector wouldn't go crazy. It would just, you know... You know, you'd have to ask a follow-up question to at least determine. But that momentum is, to the extent that...that that could become a bit of a pattern, I think it's a real competitive advantage. And because, more than ever, Imagine is discovering this. And this is why we support... You know, it's why we launched Impact five, six years ago. And I know Impact's been involved in some, you know, several cycles in Australia of generating...working with talent to generate IP for TV shows and movies with some real success. We're, you know, pleased to be a part of that. The, um... I think it's about getting that material. And so when there can be a system to support writers, which is sort of what Impact's about, and directors, make it possible for them to be really productive without overspending, but giving an independent producer something to work with, something to run with that's tangible, align that with the incentives and the talent base and I think there's a, you know, there's a competitive advantage there. But it does sort of depend on an environment where, you know, projects can come to life and projects can get written and developed and fleshed out and move beyond the conversation stage or the outline into something just a little more tangible and packageable.
00:43:05:23	SCHUYLER	Ron and Bill, could you talk about Impact? 'Cause I think it's really interesting and perhaps something, you know, we need more of here in Australia to help to support the generation of IP and creative talent for the benefit of the producers in this room ultimately.
00:43:20:13	RON	Well, I wish Tyler Mitchell, our CEO, you know, was actually here because his sleeves are rolled up, he visited us on the set, you know, he really knows in a much more detailed way, you know, what's going on and when. I just know the last time I talked to him, he was really exuberant about what was going on.

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		But there's another aspect to Impact, which is an app, which is sort of connecting and linking crew members and talent together with the rest of the world to sort of have a community. And I know that crew members, some of our crew members and others, have really been applying it and finding it helpful, by all accounts. And so, you know, there's sort of two aspects. The other one is, you know, getting involved with the, you know, development process and sort of mentoring writers to, you know, flesh out their projects in a kind of a structured way. And so that in a short period of time, you know, they have something to go to market. And so I think Impact has found in Australia in both areas, you know, a really fertile ground with great collaborators.
00:45:07:07	SCHUYLER	If you're a writer and you participate in Impact or get support from Impact, you could then accelerate your development process with support and mentorship until you have something that you could then... Is it also connecting you with a producer or a director or is it just helping you to get your project to the next level?
00:45:27:16	RON	I think it varies. I think it varies and it sort of varies... The strategies shift a little bit country to country, a little different in the US than it is in Australia, it's a little different in the UK than it is, you know, in Australia as well. And so I'm not real sure about the, you know, the specific steps in Australia, so I don't want to misspeak. But generally... But the idea is to come up with projects and expose them to producers or, in some instances, producers can be sort of a part of a cooperative that's, you know, developing a project and they're not writing, but they're already aware of it. And, you know, and getting something that's makeable, that's packageable, that could be taken to a network, that could be taken, you know, to investors.
00:46:18:02	SCHUYLER	I think it's such an important part of the process to target and support because, you know, regardless of the territory and the culture, development is fraught. You know, I think producers feel an obligation to support the writers and the creatives who are generating the potential project that, you know, we would all aspire to make. But who's supporting the producers so that they can support those people? You know?
00:46:41:19	RON	Yeah.
00:46:43:01	SCHUYLER	It's an eternal challenge to have enough capital to have a robust development process. And also... I mean, when you mentioned that Noah was working on the script for 'Eden' on spec, how do you also engender this esprit de corps amongst everybody in that tight circle that we've all just got to go the extra mile together now because if we all do our jobs right, there will be a great project for us all to make.
00:47:09:20	RON	That's, you know, a huge ongoing question. It boils down to relationships in a lot of instances. But also there has to be a belief system that it can work. And, again, that gets back to, you know, a kind of a business culture that is robust and dynamic. And so even if it's not about investing, you know, a large sum in paying writers,

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		like, with first-look deals and things like the Hollywood system sometimes does, not so much anymore, but occasionally, but there's clear-cut evidence of support and, you know, and maybe there's a modicum of support that just kind of makes it more reasonable. You know, again, I don't want to be quoted here as sort of spitballing business models. But, yeah, it's a challenge. And as the business changes and evolves and, you know, and things like AI become a factor and other, you know, other things, all of these... People are going to have to be very nimble and very, very entrepreneurial in addition to sort of sticking...trying to be as original creatively as they possibly can. I think more than ever, you've got to cut through the clutter. And cookie cutter sort of formulaic work, you know, it won't really do that. And that's sort of the best defence about being usurped by AI is, you know, at the end of the day, AI is always just sort of reconfiguring stuff that's out there, that's been out there, that's been done. And I think humans still have a better chance of using their imagination, their experience. Maybe using AI as a research, you know, tool, you know, to help expedite the process. But at the end of the day, it's going to be that originality that continues to matter.
00:49:34:22	SCHUYLER	Without pushing you into talking about something, you know, ripped from the headlines, are you optimistic, ultimately, about that? You know, that human creativity, person-to-person collaboration, all these things that AI can't necessarily synthesise so readily, are you optimistic about that prevailing and AI becoming, I hope, a really useful and dynamic tool just like many of our other highly technical, you know, innovations that we benefit from?
00:50:06:12	RON	I think we're all going to have to learn to use AI and prove that we can use it and be pretty ambitious about that or get left behind because it's a tool, it's going to be here. Certainly unions and guilds and so forth will weigh in and we all want to, I think, support that, you know...those kinds of controls and strategies and policies as much as we can. But I think the excitement is learning, you know, what these tools can offer and how to help that make your work better, faster, make you more productive, you know, and recognise... And then you have to be really disciplined, I think, to not fall into some sort of a hackneyed pattern because, you know, the AI will make it look easy, but, you know, it's not real.
00:51:08:13	SCHUYLER	A tool, not a crutch, I suppose, in that sense.
00:51:11:15	RON	There you go.
00:51:13:00	SCHUYLER	I just want to touch on the other side, the crew and the connectivity between crew. Bill, I wonder if you have a perspective on that, having really come on a journey from being a production assistant to the AD department to producing. The industry is not one with clear pathways, necessarily, even from entry all the way through to mobility as you try and navigate a long and successful career like yours. What do people need to know to know that they can be mobile and the way they get into the movie business doesn't necessarily have to be set in stone?
00:51:50:17	BILL	Yeah, well, I think Ron's a good example of... It's funny we're talking about Impact and in my career, certainly when I got started, there wasn't something like impact, but Ron has always built into Imagine and in his relationships, you know,

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		fostering a strong group that moves along with him down the road. I started as a PA on 'Far and Away' with Ron and kind of worked up through the years through the assistant director ranks and then eventually start producing and being his first AD. And I think it's important for all of us as filmmakers to remember to build our talent pools up and the people around us and have them stick with us and find new people within our group that we can move up the ranks, you know. I think too often there's this notion of you get stuck into a job and that's where you are for your career. And for a lot of people, that's what they want. And for other people, you do want to keep moving on and becoming more knowledgeable and increasing the talent pool that you're already part of. And, you know, so I do think there needs to be more of that bringing up from within. And it's funny now that, you know, Ron, you guys have Impact because that's just that notion now being put into use more broadly for a lot of people. So it's great to see.
00:53:48:01	SCHUYLER	I couldn't agree more. And, personally, I benefited enormously from that coming into Bazmark 20 years ago as an assistant and being fortunate enough to be part of a very close-knit, dedicated inner circle around Baz and Catherine Martin where people can grow within their own careers but also find new ways to collaborate with them. A question for you, Ron, about whether you have a consistent director's assistant as well as your collaboration with your assistant director and producer. And, in fact, do you guys have a core team around you, you know, that is also kind of going the distance on one project or from project to project?
00:54:30:17	RON	I haven't had a consistent assistant. And some of that's intentional because I kind of like recruiting somebody who I think may be able to bring something to the project, maybe culturally or attitudinally or, you know, from a... And, uh... You know, sometimes I will work with people more than once and, you know, I know they're terrific and that they'd be a great fit in whatever the next project is and they're available. But that's not a role where, you know, where I've used it as a... I use it as a kind of a launch pad and I'm really rooting for these people to, you know, to find another place where they can move up even faster because I don't quite have the system here to, you know, to do that. Because Bill does... A, he's tremendously demanding of the people that he does bring into the production team, but he also has a lot of relationships that he likes to lean on when he can.
00:55:46:06	SCHUYLER	Bill, this is for you but I suppose also you, Ron, just talking about how you made those days work with tight schedules on ambitious movies, a lot of moving parts, big casts. You know, 'Thirteen Lives' and 'Eden' both fall into that category. How do you make a shooting day work, get what you need creatively but also not, you know, blow out into some kind of all-nighter?
00:56:11:02	BILL	Well, you touched on it, Schuyler, with your relationship with Baz also, but, you know, Ron Howard likes to move and we get a lot of work done in the day and it's kind of over the years become our expected model.

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		And so we both know very well what we're capable of and I think, you know, when we go into the process, Ron is deeply involved in the schedule and what work we're doing and I certainly take my crack at everything and present it to him. But it really speaks to that relationship between the AD and the director and how much prep can really make your movie. And I think we put a lot of time into analysing the schedule and the scenes and, you know, of course, as the movie comes along, as it starts to morph and change sometimes into something else, we are constantly re-evaluating that production plan. And, you know, I'd say every time we start day one, because of all that prep we've done, because of all that conversation we've done, both between Ron and I and the cinematographer and the department head, we usually feel pretty confident about the plan. We're never 100%, obviously, in our business, but I'd say every time we start, we feel good. We're going to... If we're not going to hit the mark, we're going to come very close to hitting the mark. And try and give us a little breathing room in those days too so it's not panicked shooting. That it's thoughtful, progressive shooting within the day. And I think we've done that over the years.
00:58:21:12	SCHUYLER	Ron, as a director, I'm sure, you know, nothing happens by accident. Everything, every subtle thing is deliberate. So this is a Zoom mise-en-scene question, if you will. We want to know, is that a camera made of bicycle parts behind you on the desk?
00:58:40:19	RON	There are a bicycle chain, but then there are a lot of other different things. This looks like a carburettor piece or something, and then there are just some gears. And so, yeah, that's pretty good zooming in on the Zoom.
00:59:05:00	SCHUYLER	Well, thank you for bringing us into your world of tchotchkes, and thank you for coming into our world today of the Screen Forever conference. Thank you for bringing all of your tremendous creativity and industry to our shores. We look forward to welcoming you back very soon, but a huge thankyou for Ron and Bill.