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A CURIOUS MIND

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LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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A CURIOUS MIND

MR. THOMPSON: All right. Hello, everyone. We saw some people walking in, so I will speak slowly to introduce. I'm Derek Thompson. I'm a senior editor at *The Atlantic*. This is Brian Grazer, executive producer of many of your favorite movies and television shows and the author of the new book *A Curious Mind*.

Brian, my first question I think is a question that a lot of people in the audience have for you, which is the hair.

(Laughter)

MR. THOMPSON: How and why?

MR. GRAZER: Okay, this is going to take -- okay, all right, here we go. The hair -- well, my hair actually goes flat and it was -- when I started my career it was very flat. But I couldn't find a way to be distinctive and I was thinking about it. Like there were these action producers that they had beards, they were able to grow beards, they would get mad, they had bad tempers, they would throw things.

I couldn't grow a beard. I couldn't -- I didn't throw things. So that wasn't going to be my -- that wasn't going to be the thing for me. And then I went on and produced -- wrote and produced *Splash* and still I felt kind of like: "Okay, I did that, that was great," but didn't really feel like distinguished in any way.

And I don't know, one thing led to the next. I was swimming in my swimming pool with my daughter, Sage, at the time and I just popped my hair up like this. And she goes, "Oh, I love your hair, dad." I'm thinking: "What are you talking about?" "Oh, I love it like that." And I thought: "Okay, well, let's go see."

So we go into the bathroom -- this is what you want, the story --

MR. THOMPSON: That's what I want, yeah.

MR. GRAZER: -- to the hair?

MR. THOMPSON: This is what they want I think.

(Laughter)

MR. GRAZER: All right. So I go into the bathroom. I get some girly product that was around. Pop it up like a version of this. But I had much longer hair, so it was really -- and she -- my daughter just continued to go like, "This is great. I love this dad. This is so cool. You should always have it this way." She is four years old. But I thought, okay, you know.

(Laughter)

MR. THOMPSON: She is a visionary.

MR. GRAZER: Yes, could be.

MR. THOMPSON: Artistic visionary, yeah.

MR. GRAZER: So I thought I try it. The next day I wore my hair, which was spiked up like this but, you know, higher with more hair. And I could feel it was like a litmus test to people, that -- I mean literally at the end of the day it was this weird sampling that, if there was a bell curve, 20 percent on this side thought, "Well, that's really cool." Like, "How did you come up with that," you know.

And then there's the bigger part of it where I felt like people just going, "Why did you do that? What was that about?" And it was just a -- it just ignited curiosity. And then there was on this other side of the bell curve where for sure people thought, "You are such an asshole."

(Laughter)

MR. GRAZER: And I felt -- that was pretty powerful, but I thought, "You know, it's really" -- "I'm becoming distinctive with this hair and I'm going to stick with it."

MR. THOMPSON: Right.

MR. GRAZER: And so I stuck with and it has become kind of -- it's become me really. It's become, you know, certainly who I am. In fact I surf and this product that I use is a water soluble product, so it would go -- so it would flatten out. But I found this other product called Bed Head -- this is a long time ago -- so that when I surf, I can still know who I am.

(Laughter)

MR. GRAZER: Otherwise I wouldn't be sure. So my hair is still popped up. I mean -- and it's gone -- I mean it's -- people often ask about it. In every -- you know, different countries people know you are the guy with the hair, blah, blah. And I was in -- actually with six other guys -- there were seven guys. We decided we are going to travel around the world, do guy things together once a year.

The first place we went is Havana. And all seven guys were all pretty important guys: Les Moonves, a super important guy, runs CBS; Graydon Carter, editor of Vanity Fair; Tom Freston, Viacom -- just sort of this group. And we all secretly wanted to meet Fidel. I mean here in his country you want to see what this is going to be about. And we couldn't get an audience with him.

Anyway, one thing led to the next. We are all packed up ready to split because we got these false alarms like Fidel will meet you. And by the way, at that time you didn't say his name. You could go like this. That meant Fidel -- because it's a tough country there.

In any event, they say, "Shut the jets down, Fidel will meet with you guys." And we have this meeting with Fidel Castro, which was mind blowing: "We are going to have lunch with Fidel!" And sit down -- I'm sitting in the middle actually right next to Les Moonves and he is talking literally for three and a half hours straight. I don't --

MR. THOMPSON: Fidel is?

MR. GRAZER: Fidel is.

MR. THOMPSON: Yes.

MR. GRAZER: I don't think he took a breath. But we know this that he is one of the greatest orators of all time. He can speak eight hours, nine hours. So it's three and a half hours in and he looks -- and we are kind of winded just listening -- and he looks up and he points his finger at me and he says, "How do you do your hair?"

(Laughter)

MR. GRAZER: And so I, you know --

MR. THOMPSON: So he had the same first question that I did. Yeah, go ahead with that.

MR. GRAZER: Well, yeah, it's a good question. But he was interested and -- I mean I thought later in retrospect: "Well, it made sense." I mean he is a guy that's pretty magnetized by iconography. I mean he wears those fatigues and the hats and stuff, so like --

MR. THOMPSON: Yeah. I wouldn't have been surprised --

MR. GRAZER: No one can say when they come away from this panel that they had no takeaways, there was no self-help advise. We know the product, it is Bed Head, and that is how you make your hair look like this.

MR. THOMPSON: Yeah, that's how you do it. So in your career -- was looking back. You've been the producer of *Splash*, *Apollo 13*, *A Beautiful Mind*, *Frost/Nixon*, *8 Mile*, the TV shows *Sports Night*, *Arrested Development*, *24*, *Friday Night Lights* and now *Empire*. And I was reading this and I was thinking: "What is a producer?"

(Laughter)

Mr. GRAZER: Those are really good credits for a person you don't know who they are -- what it is, right?

MR. THOMPSON: Yes, indeed.

MR. GRAZER: Okay.

MR. THOMPSON: Yeah, right. The words are impressive and I want the definition.

MR. GRAZER: All right. So what a producer is -- well, I'm trying to synthesize, quickly synthesize it. A producer tries to hold the vision of what you do -- he tries to hold the vision of what you are trying to accomplish, whether it's a movie or a television show. And the vision is something that doesn't exist. It's based on this abstract idea: "I want to make a love story." It's about -- "but there's a mermaid involved in it."

Okay, what does that mean? What does that look like? So then -- the producer has a creative vision about what that looks like and is and then they have to have a parallel vision, an economic vision, and those two things have to align themselves. So they have to have a physical vision and a creative vision.

MR. THOMPSON: Right. And that's it.

MR. GRAZER: And, well, that's it. There's a little more to that. I mean I could -- you try to have a title that's arresting and you try to have a sentence that

defines what it is and then you draw a vertical line as to about that sentence, and every scene has to adhere to that vertical line. If it's off that vertical line no matter how funny it is if it's a comedy or how dramatic it is if it's a drama, if it's off the vertical line, it always gets cut out of the movie. So it's a waste of economics and it doesn't reach you or spark you emotionally.

And that's ultimately what movies or television are supposed to do, is there are supposed to ignite emotion. It's a cinematic form that is different than words, it's different than sound and so it's supposed to - - it's a magnifier.

MR. THOMPSON: Your new book, *A Curious Mind*, you talk about how from a really young age your grandmother taught you to be curious and you started to have these what you call curiosity conversations with individuals once every two weeks sometimes, sometimes less often. Can you help us understand what do you -- what is a curiosity conversation? How maybe it's different from an interview? And maybe -- you know, what have you gotten from this?

MR. GRAZER: Well, okay. So -- okay, when I graduated college -- I do this very quickly. I graduated college, I learned how to take tests, I learned how to get good grades. But about a month out of college in the summer I was supposed to go to law school. I got accepted at a law school. But I started -- something made me think like, "What did I learn," and I couldn't remember what I learned.

So if I couldn't remember what I learned in college, I couldn't identify it or speak to it, I thought, well, maybe I didn't learn anything. So I thought, "Well, how could I learn something?"

And then I felt -- well, there's this one professor that I thought was pretty outstanding. I mean my -- the population of what I could reach out to was very limited. I was kid that grew up in a tiny, tiny, little

world of suburbs. Now, I'm at college. I get out of college, ask this question to myself. So I think, okay, I will ask this professor. His name is Dr. Milton Walpen (phonetic). He had a class. It's about 300 -- it was about the size of this class; I don't know how big this room is -- 300 people.

And I reach out to him and he doesn't want to meet me, blah, blah, blah. I try to meet him. I eventually -- I just meet him at the end of his class so he can't avoid me. And I said, "I'm the guy that was in your class that wrote these letters to you. Can we meet, take 10 minutes?" He said, "I guess, but didn't you graduate?"

(Laughter)

MR. GRAZER: I said, "I did graduate, but I really will do anything just to have 10 minutes with you like one-on-one." Reluctantly he says yes. And I turn the 10 minutes into an hour and a half. And in that hour and a half I learned much more than I ever learned in college. So I thought what I'm going to do is I'm going to expand upon this and create it as a -- use -- and create a discipline where I do this every two weeks for the rest of my life or as long as I'm physically, intellectually capable of doing that.

And now it has been about 35 years where I do these curiosity conversations, which are -- where I reach out to somebody -- I create, you know, a project for myself -- I reach out to somebody that is renowned or expert in anything other than entertainment: so science, medicine, politics, religion, every art form, of course technology.

And I usually find the subject. I mean I'm not a savant. I'm just like any of -- you guys all might be savants.

(Laughter)

MR. GRAZER: But I'm just a person that has used this as an engine, a driver. So I've been doing this for -- and now you say: what are these conversations?

MR. THOMPSON: Yeah.

MR. GRAZER: What they are -- now, there's a method -- you can read this book, by the way. I have a book that's called *A Curious Mind* that's out here. You can read it. And it has the methodology of how to conduct one of these curiosity conversations. But this is slightly -- that's a slightly different question: what are they?

Once you've studied up enough about a person and you have created a strategy and you are in this meeting with a person, to me it becomes a real real-time event, where I'm not accountable to anything. My time I'm not accountable to it. And hopefully I've got that person so engaged that they feel no accountability. It's only about this moment.

And it's different than a computer, it's different than anything, because it becomes literally molecular. Because I'm watching you, you are shaking your head like this and I'm reading that. So it's a constant negotiation. You are using all of your focus and energy to try to learn something, some insight, usually what -- the secret. You are trying to learn whatever that person's secret is: the secret to their process.

MR. THOMPSON: And some of these conversations have led to movies. Can you a little bit about how a couple of these conversations led to *Apollo 13*?

MR. GRAZER: Okay, sure. Yeah, some of these have led to movies, but more often than not they have all started with the pure intention of just learning, just expanding each other's life. And that's now hard to get people to get on that page, because you are saying I'm not going to ask you for anything, there's no ask. So therefore there's not going to be "ask me" either really.

I'm not offended by it. Oddly enough, Watson of Watson and Crick (phonetic) had -- I met him, but he pitched me like three movies.

(Laughter)

MR. GRAZER: I thought -- it was so bizarre. But I'm okay with that. But mostly it's just a pure thing and you go about doing that. So you asked a --

MR. THOMPSON: *Apollo 13*.

MR. GRAZER: *Apollo 13*. I know I have digressed so much.

MR. THOMPSON: It's okay.

MR. GRAZER: I met -- it started off -- I met Sting, who is the lead singer of *The Police*, in 1983. So he is Sting. I hadn't yet produced *Splash*. I hadn't yet been nominated for an Oscar. I'm just a guy trying to be a producer and not yet successful. And he meets me; I get to meet him. And I have this great conversation with him. It's super interesting because he is not just a pop icon, but he is also -- he was a professor; he is a thinker -- and very interesting.

And then I must have reached him on some level, because about a year later he reached out to me and said, "I'm having a little barbecue with some interesting people, would you come?" I said, "Oh, my god, of course." I show up. There's a lot of people there. There were super powerful people. But there was this woman named Veronica Denegra.

Veronica Denegra is Chilean. She was tortured in a Chilean prison by the Pinochet regime because she was suspect to being subversive to their government -- probably not, but who knows. But she spent a year being tortured, every single waking moment being tortured.

So I was very curious about that and said, "Let's" -- "can we go for a walk?" And we went for a walk on the beach and I got to learn about it in the most granular fashion. She told me about all the -- how she was tortured. But more -- I didn't want to dwell on that once I really understood it. I wanted to understand how she survived.

And to make the story short, she survived by creating a story in an alternate reality. So basically she had real-time events and in order to not experience the pain on the profound level and unpredictable level that she was experiencing, she would escape it by this alternate reality in a story that she created that she was living like real life -- and that got her through it. So she survived.

So that was profoundly interesting to me. So I then started to learn through other people about just surviving torture, in fact different experts on teaching -- you know, marines, green berets, our State Department, you know, CIA, how to survive torture if that were to happen. I learned a lot about survival.

So now all of a sudden -- it's now 15 years later, some random moment -- I get this 12 page treatment written by Jim Lovell, an astronaut in *Apollo 13*. I know nothing about space travel or aviation because that just wasn't what I learned about. You know, I learned about other art form things. I didn't learn about that.

So I'm reading this thing. It's really foreign and hard to understand. But when it comes to survival, I'm like an expert. So I was able to relate to three men trapped in what's going to be a tragedy and reaching inside of themselves to find resources to get them to safety. That was -- my connection was deeply human. So I was able to call Jim Lovell, win this project -- because other people then wanted it for reasons that were different than mine -- and I then turned that into the movie *Apollo 13*.

MR. THOMPSON: Right.

MR. GRAZER: So that was an example of one of the events. Because I kind of view these -- you go.

MR. THOMPSON: Oh, I was going to say --

(Laughter)

MR. THOMPSON: -- you know, a lot of these conversations -- it was a great story. A lot of these conversations, you said, you know, don't turn into movies. Sometimes you are just like deeply interested in what this other person has to share. And I was wondering if you could share with us two of those stories, one sort of on the positive end and another maybe on the not so positive end, Princess Di and Isaac Asimov and his wife?

MR. GRAZER: Okay, okay, of course. I will do that quickly. Well, I'm interested -- first of all, the baseline in meeting somebody is I'm interested in capability, like just people exceeding what seems to be capability, their -- one's basic capability. So that's sort of a -- I have some tenets that sort of drive this. As far as those two people, Princess Di, I'm thinking, "God, I love to be Princess Di." I mean Princess Di was like the most famous woman in the world.

So I'm thinking, you know -- and she was thought of love, so beloved. And I start -- I had all these random ways of trying to reach people. So I'm literally like calling Buckingham Palace, like --

(Laughter)

MR. GRAZER: -- "Yes, my name is Brian Grazer. I'm a Los Angeles producer," you know, like -- and that never really got very far. That didn't work. And I wrote letters. And then I found people that knew a person that knew a person that knew a person, you know, you know. That didn't really work. But I'm feeling like -- I don't know -- "I don't want to give up on this thing."

So now it has been about two years and I have now produced the movie *Apollo 13* oddly enough. And we were then -- the movie comes out, it's successful and we are asked now to do a royal premier. I think, "Oh, my god, a royal premier! That could involve Princess Di."

(Laughter)

MR. GRAZER: So, you know, now my fantasy is like ignited and I'm thinking: "This is going to be awesome." But I'm thinking, "Okay" -- I'm thinking it through, "Well, Princess Di, she is with Prince Charles. But maybe they are not really getting along. Maybe he won't be there, you know, or maybe it will be both of them or maybe it will be the queen herself."

I don't know how -- they don't tell you. They just tell you what royal etiquette is. They give you all the rules of royal etiquette. You know, you don't want to violate these rules.

So anyway, we get there. It's Princess Di alone. No Charles. No queen. You know, that -- were there. Now, what happens is the movie ends and we have this black tie dinner -- about 200 people. And we go in there. I'm with Tom Hanks. I'm with Ron Howard. Jim Lovell is there. It's was a like huge -- like British aristocracy. And we fill the room and I sit down, Ron Howard sits down. Hanks, dat, dat, a da -- these people -- no one is in front of me.

I'm thinking, "What?" Then Princess Di walks in the room. She is sitting directly in front of me. I'm thinking, "She has thought of this. This is the sum total of all those little messages."

(Laughter)

MR. GRAZER: She was waiting for her moment.

(Laughter)

MR. GRAZER: But I mean like it just enacted all this -- well, I'm a movie producer. Don't think -- so in any event -- so she -- we all stand up.

(Laughter)

MR. GRAZER: All right, I can figure this out right away. So we all stand up -- everybody stands up because that was the royal etiquette: you stand right up. And she sits down. We all sit down. And it seemed -- everything seemed now as kind of slowed down, you know. But I think to -- slowed down. I mean we are all conforming to the etiquette of the country.

And so I think, "If we do this, I'm going to learn nothing, nothing will happen. I will have no connection." So I just -- they are pretty cheeky people, so I start telling jokes. I start trying to be funny. I'm making her laugh. She is animating and all things are good. I'm doing Hollywood gossip. I'm really connecting with Princess Di.

(Laughter)

MR. GRAZER: And like Hanks and Ron, I see their eyes. I don't want to really look at them. But they are like looking like: "You are so totally crazy," you know. But I'm just going with it. I'm in the flow of doing this thing. We eat the dinner and then all of a sudden it's dessert. So we get like a pastry, and I'm thinking, "I just don't like pastries." I wanted ice-cream.

(Laughter)

MR. GRAZER: So I think -- "do you think when I say" -- "do you think we" -- "do you think" -- "do you guys have ice-cream?"

(Laughter)

MR. GRAZER: And she like immediately looks to someone. All of a sudden a couple of scoops of ice-cream appear right there. So I swivel one of her -- one of my spoons over to her side. I take a scoop. I take another scoop. I ask if she would like a scoop of ice-cream. She takes a scoop. So right now I'm feeling like we are full-on on making out.

(Laughter)

MR. GRAZER: Because she is -- we are eating up the same ice-cream and it's the same exact thing. So I take another couple of scoops, da, da, da. Now, I have had like -- like 10 scoops of ice-cream we've been eating. I push it over: "Would you like another scoop?" She takes another scoop. So like this is amazing, this is unbelievable.

(Laughter)

MR. GRAZER: But I'm like now in a whole other altered state at this point -- until somebody comes over, whispers to her and basically says it's 5 to 12. And they -- she had to leave at 12:00 o'clock. That was it. So she left at 12:00 o'clock and that was the end of my whole Roman holiday story.

MR. THOMPSON: It's terrible.

MR. GRAZER: I did try to reconnect with her. It didn't really work. That was -- that's -- Princess Di. So that was -- but it was exciting. It didn't turn to any movie or anything, but it was a nice moment.

MR. THOMPSON: And what happened when you tried to talk to Isaac Asimov?

MR. GRAZER: So Isaac Asimov -- am I going over the pace? Are we doing okay?

MR. THOMPSON: Right, we are doing --

MR. GRAZER: Good.

MR. THOMPSON: I think we are doing fine.

MR. GRAZER: All right, good. Okay. So Isaac Asimov, probably the most prolific writer of science fiction ever, was someone also I wanted to meet. I read some of his science fiction. But he wrote like 600 books or something, including *I, Robot*, which is well known, also turned into a movie.

So I put a little time in a meeting with Isaac Asimov at least a year and I get the clearance that he will meet with me. So I get my little coach ticket, fly from LAX to New York. I immediately go to The Ritz-Carlton West Bar and I sit down. He and his wife walk in. I'm nervous. I'm excited. This is awesome. They sit down. "What do you want to drink?" "A couple of ginger ales." "The same thing," I say.

As they lift the drinks like this, she asked a question, he asked a quick thing. And she lays the drink down -- before it touches her lip, she says, "Isaac, we are leaving." I thinking, "How can we leave?" They are going, "We are leaving." "It's clear that he doesn't know enough about science fiction. It's clear he doesn't know enough about your work or robotics." Were gone. They just left. That's the end.

MR. THOMPSON: You weren't a PhD in robotics and so --

MR. GRAZER: I wasn't a PhD, no.

MR. THOMPSON: -- you couldn't have a conversation with Isaac Asimov.

MR. GRAZER: No. I guess I'm out of it. I thought: "Don't bring your wife next time."

MR. THOMPSON: Right.

(Laughter)

MR. GRAZER: No, but I thought -- but I did think I probably should have been better prepared, had a better access moment because --

MR. THOMPSON: Right.

MR. GRAZER: -- clearly that went -- whatever I said didn't work.

MR. THOMPSON: So I'm interested in --

MR. GRAZER: Okay.

MR. THOMPSON: You've made so many movies and TV shows at this point that have been successful and sometimes less successful than you hoped. Have you developed a kind of philosophy about what works in movies right now versus what works in television right now?

MR. GRAZER: Well, I do think there are -- look, I have no -- there's -- yeah. There's no magic formula. Everybody -- we all know that, no formula. And in fact I learned that -- a quick digression. After I produced *Splash*, which I mentioned I got nominated for an Oscar. I was very young. I produced it, made a lot of money. Everything was great. I still remember I wanted to do some other movie like after -- and I thought I'm like, you know, immortal: I should be able to do whatever I want.

I keep getting -- I got turned down again like I did on the *Mermaid* movie. I'm thinking, "This is just not" -- "I don't get it." But then I thought about Steven Spielberg, who is a really prodigy. That guy is -- he had done *Jaws*, *Close Encounters* and *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and is 20 -- he is like 20, and he got turned down for *E.T.*

MR. THOMPSON: Wow.

MR. GRAZER: It's like someone is always going to turn you down.

MR. THOMPSON: Right.

MR. GRAZER: Okay. So I don't know how that becomes anything. But basically nobody --

(Laughter)

MR. GRAZER: -- nobody knows for sure. But I think there is some basic tenets that I like to live by and I do feel like I have a much better chance of success if whatever I'm doing either in television or movies embodies some of those tenets.

First, I don't like to do things that are soft, you know, crony soft, because that equates to inauthenticity to me. Inauthenticity -- I just don't want to go down that way. It usually doesn't work. If it does, it's one of those really weird chick-flick movies that no one can explain but worked. You know what I mean?

MR. THOMPSON: Can you -- would you be willing to name one?

MR. GRAZER: No.

MR. THOMPSON: Okay.

MR. GRAZER: But there's -- but basically -- let's do television very quick because currently -- you know, I produced *24*, which became kind of the first --

(Applause)

MR. GRAZER: Thank you. Thanks. And that -- no, thank you. Which became like one of the first binge watching experiences and it was a very unique -- so basically I don't -- in television I don't ever want to try to reinvent the wheel. I just don't believe in reinventing the entire wheel, reconstructing, you know --

but I mean changing the spokes within the wheel is a good thing.

So Jack Bauer, of course he has a real job, a real franchise. He does a bunch of things that are very wish fulfillment oriented. That makes people excited, because wish fulfillment always works.

MR. THOMPSON: Right.

MR. GRAZER: I mean almost always works if it's based in some -- if you can root for the character. You have to root for the character and if you can root for the -- the rooting for the character is rooting for what they want.

Now, it's easier to root for what somebody wants if what they want is noble, if it has nobility within it. The other thing -- and I can -- if you can traverse to this TV series *Empire* that I do, it has music and it has -- the actors are performing music. Music is always fun if it's not bad music. So it's always fun. And if it's good music, I mean it's connecting, you root for the person that's performing it because it's earned success.

Everybody -- Americans particularly because of the Horatio Alger stories and American dream stories, we like to root for earned success. And usually there's alignment with earned success and nobility. So --

MR. THOMPSON: I want to ask about -- you know, on the one hand you have aspiration -- and I understand totally the idea of rooting through Jack Bauer and wanting to save America. Probably -- you know, when I look at your body of work, the thing that I probably spent the most time in my life watching is *Arrested Development*. These people are assholes.

(Laughter)

MR. GRAZER: Yeah. Okay, okay.

MR. THOMPSON: I mean I don't want necessarily what Gob and these characters want. I just think they are so unbelievably funny in the moment.

MR. GRAZER: Yeah.

MR. THOMPSON: I mean I really interested in *Arrested Development* not only for how it might subvert that tiny formula -- it's not a formula, but that tiny sort of motif --

MR. GRAZER: Equation or something.

MR. THOMPSON: Equation, sure. But I'm also interested in how you think about the success of *Arrested Development*, because it's one of these sort of weird modern hits which on the one hand isn't technically a commercially hit --

MR. GRAZER: Right.

MR. THOMPSON: -- it canceled after the third year -- and on the other hand is so beloved by a number of people that you have to call it a success in some way.

MR. GRAZER: Yeah. Yeah, well, I do call it a success in some way for sure that kids love that show. Anyone that watches it, that's gets engaged, is engaged for life.

MR. THOMPSON: Right.

MR. GRAZER: They are completely loyal viewers. It continues to reach the millennial generation -- you know, it reaches the millennial generation. It reaches kids. They tell other kids. No, it's fantastic. It's had -- and it had an impact on the culture and still does, which is all a win. It's awesome.

There are reverent, bigger than life kinds of characters with extreme hooks. And there's a couple of ways I can address this. Also, the loyalty is profound.

MR. THOMPSON: Right.

MR. GRAZER: I mean literally there were a couple of times I was threatened that they were going to shut down the show and stuff and literally picketers were picketing Fox Television. I mean you could see it on Pico Boulevard, people ferrying pickets on -- it was just they love the show so much.

The thing that you root for that lives inside of these -- what did you call them, assholes?

MR. THOMPSON: I did call them assholes, yeah.

MR. GRAZER: Okay. The thing that lives inside -- the thing that's deeply embedded or camouflaged underneath those assholes is family. You always root for family -- you always root for family. It's like -- so if you have a family in a show, you are going to always root for it even in the case of *Arrested Development*.

And then I have to be humble to -- humble enough to say that had they not been assholes, it would have been a big -- it would have been *Modern Family*, which it's not.

(Laughter)

MR. THOMPSON: Yeah, right, right.

MR. GRAZER: So it was very successful within its own limitations.

MR. THOMPSON: Right. Interesting. So I want to ask about -- you know, I think there's a sense of cultural criticism towards Hollywood right now --

MR. GRAZER: Okay.

MR. THOMPSON: -- that says that this is an industry that has actually lost its curious spirit, that you look back over the blockbuster hits the last 5 years,

last 15 years, they are all sequels, prequels, adaptations, reboots and Pixar. And so this is --

MR. GRAZER: What was --

MR. THOMPSON: And Pixar.

MR. GRAZER: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MR. THOMPSON: And, you know, this suggests to me that maybe Hollywood has lost a little bit of its bravery, that there is -- there is less of -- there is less willingness to take a big bet on a movie because they know that successful blockbusters based on comic book characters will do well and I feel like a lot of that entrepreneurial, you know, (inaudible) energy has gone towards television. Do you think that's a fair criticism?

MR. GRAZER: Yes. It is, yeah.

MR. THOMPSON: What happened?

MR. GRAZER: But -- I mean I want to say this too because I don't believe in biting the hand that feeds you, which would be -- in my case would be to make harsh criticisms like that.

MR. THOMPSON: And you are fed by both hands, TV and movies.

MR. GRAZER: Well, I mean because I'm grateful that I get to make movies and television shows. I'm really grateful and I'm sensitive to, you know, economic paradigms. But economic paradigms can have elasticity to them as you could see in the TV series *Empire*. Like there wasn't supposed to be an audience for *Empire*, but there became an audience for *Empire* and became -- every week it got better and bigger and bigger and bigger and it shattered that paradigm, which is great, great news. And somebody allowed -- the system allowed it to happen.

So that's why I say I don't want to bite the hand that feeds me because in truth they did do it. It's just much harder to get that done. But I give great credit to 20th Century Fox who stuck with me on *Arrested Development* as long as they could. And on 24 when the first two years were flat, no one gave a shit and in the third year it finally caught up and blew up and it had a really strange form to it, of course the graphics and the way it began. The same thing with *Empire*, it wasn't supposed to work really. It was good and it blew up.

It is a drag for sure that there's endless amounts of sequel. I mean definitely that's kind of a drag. But all of their paradigms tell them that they have to do that and they are the ones that feed the numbers and to make the paradigms and all that. And it's up to us to be persuasive and change that. But it's harder, yes.

MR. THOMPSON: Yeah. And you do think -- it does seem to me that as a result like even people who recognize that these are economic reasons -- it's not just that Hollywood wants to make sequels and prequels. It's audiences that are going to see them as well. So there's that feedback loop.

So we are living right now in what seems to be -  
-

MR. GRAZER: I could say something hopeful if you want.

MR. THOMPSON: Sure.

MR. GRAZER: No, you finish your thought.

MR. THOMPSON: Well, I was going to say that -- yeah, I will tee up the hope.

MR. GRAZER: Okay.

MR. THOMPSON: It seems to be, though, that we are living in a golden age of television made possible by

the fact that a lot of people who 20 years ago would be writing the next, you know, Oscar wining this and Oscar wining that --

MR. GRAZER: Right.

MR. THOMPSON: -- are now writing shows for Fox and Netflix. Do you think that overall the quality of storytelling has improved in video entertainment?

MR. GRAZER: Yes -- oh, definitely. It has definitely improved in video entertainment. I mean it sort of leads into exactly a version of -- but what I was going to say is that, you know, while they are going to continue making those giant tent poles while they can, there's so many more possibilities.

Unfortunately, the compensation is reduced currently. But I think everything goes -- comes in -- compensation cycles come in cycles. Like to me they are sort of -- they look to me like seven year cycles. If you can make quality entertainment or entertainment that gets people's attention as a YouTube event, as an Amazon short piece or as a -- you know, you will -- we will definitely wear down mediocrity. You just can.

MR. THOMPSON: Yeah.

MR. GRAZER: But there will be those movies still made, those event movies that are just louder, nosier -- you just put everything in a blender and throw it out there, you know. So there will be that. But the other thing is that: realistically with technology, I mean everything is going to be television.

MR. THOMPSON: Right.

MR. GRAZER: I mean at some point soon everything is going to -- probably everything will just be television.

MR. THOMPSON: I have a question about -- one more question about TV. And then there's just so many people here and you have so many projects and we have about 20 minutes left that I want to give you time to ask about your favorites. But in the TV question: you have on the one hand linear programming, your Foxs and NBCs shows that you watch live, and then you have shows like or programs like Netflix where you dump the entire season of *Arrested Development* all at once.

Do you have a strong preference for what's better because on the one hand it seems to me that being able to binge is beautiful, but on *Empire* people were coming back every week saying "what a great episode" and a week later "what a great episode" and the momentum seemed to build in a way that it's harder to build similar momentum when you dump the entire video book essentially all at once?

MR. GRAZER: Yeah, I totally agree with you actually -- I totally agree with you. Some things are great as a binge watching experience. Definitely *Arrested* could be -- I think is a really good binge watching experience for kids and -- I mean just -- I think it's great, just keep going to the next thing. But it's reliant on different elements.

I think *Empire* for sure is just better like creating anticipatory -- it's anticipatory almost live action event. It's so crazy that, you know, with each episode there's these -- there's like -- instead of Jack Bauer with one cliffhanger, there's like three insane cliffhangers where you go, "I can't believe Cookie just did that," you know. And if you know the show, it's just like -- so there's these -- there's predictable characters doing unpredictable things.

And I think that works better with social media talking about the event as the event is happening in real time or after the event how crazy it is and then all that anticipation building like how nuts is it going to be in the following.

MR. THOMPSON: All I want to say before we go to questions is --

MR. GRAZER: Which is kind of like a live action event.

MR. THOMPSON: Right. I watched 24 as a college sophomore in a dorm at Northwestern. I watched 20 hours of 24 in a row. So binge watching -- even -- you said that show is better to watch episodically. I think -- week to week I think is definitely better for one's health, because it's literally impossible to not watch the next episode of 24 and it's disastrous for sleep hygiene.

MR. GRAZER: Oh, that's funny.

MR. THOMPSON: So I think we've got about 19 minutes for questions, and I will just point out some people. The first one right here. And we have mics that are sort of running down.

SPEAKER: Where's it?

MR. THOMPSON: Oh, it was behind you. Sorry. Right there.

MR. MELINOV: A great presentation.

MR. GRAZER: Thank you.

MR. MELINOV: Loved the book.

MR. GRAZER: Oh, I don't see you.

MR. MELINOV: As a --

MR. THOMPSON: Can you please stand up?

MR. MELINOV: Oh, yeah. I'm Kurt Melinov (phonetic).

MR. GRAZER: Oh, there you are. Sorry -- sorry, sir.

MR. THOMPSON: Okay.

MR. MELINOV: I'm like the next shortest few in the room.

(Laughter)

MR. MELINOV: I'm a PhD clinical psychologist by training. And what my question is: is curiosity on a continuum where you start with interest, which is more of an adjective and an adverb, and go all the way to the end, where you are as sort of a verb. So there's people that are interested in card collecting or car collecting or whatever and then there's seriously people who are curious, which I think you are.

MR. GRAZER: I think that's an awesome way to think about it. I would agree with your -- that food chain, that analysis. I think there's -- I mean I looked at it -- I would -- I love the way you said that, because I think everybody has sort of a baseline curiosity. I mean in order to survive, to take your next breath basically, I think there's some curiosity involved.

But I think there are some people that, you know, are more exacting. They take it to another level and they -- and I like that you said you think of it as a verb, because I think of myself sort of that way. So yeah.

MR. THOMPSON: We got one over there.

SPEAKER: Hi. I wanted to ask you a question about your relationship with Ron Howard and other key people, because it seems like you've sustained it over a long period of time and there's some kind of magic that goes on with that.

MR. GRAZER: Oh, okay. Now, on Ron Howard, well, Ron Howard and I we have just this weird kind of beautiful alchemy that has evolved. But Ron Howard was in one of my curiosity meetings because for about two years I met people in the business before I really just said -- *Splash* was sort of the demarcation where I thought, "Okay, I have kind of made it. I can now meet people that are outside." But there was a -- so I met Ron and I saw him. He was just an actor on *Happy Days* and I wasn't even a big *Happy Days* person. But he was like an American icon from both *Happy Days* and from (inaudible), *The Music Man* also.

But he came in and he just had this aura about him and he just -- like this aura of goodness. It just -- it was palpable to me and I just thought, "What does he want?" He goes, "Well, I want to be a mainstream movie director." And I thought, "Well, there's literally no evidence that you can do this."

(Laughter)

MR. GRAZER: I didn't say that to him, but I thought it. But I thought, "You know, I believe in this person and so I think" -- I began to love him in what he wanted and so I could champion him. And that became this other thing, where he became a master filmmaker. And I think he -- I'm sure he loves me, but I think that he appreciated all these sort of things that you might see right now: like I have a tremendous amount of energy and enthusiasm about life. I look at life as this grand experiment. I'm completely captivated by it. I will kind of do anything.

I will -- I do think that all of these meetings -- I have faith that all these meetings, including this conversation right now, they go into this sort of constellation of ideas and people and events and I have faith that they interconnect -- and they do. And even if they don't directly interconnect, they interconnect in the fact that it helps me curate life and curate projects in a way that I wouldn't have ordinarily been able to do. And I think people believe in that.

I think I've gotten the competitive edge in life because I do that. And I think he see that. I think Denzel Washington, who I worked with twice, he chooses to work with me because -- it's not -- you know, I think when it's a jump ball, I think I get the tip because of this event. And it's whether -- Tom Hanks, five or six movies I've done with him, he can do with anybody. He is one of the biggest stars on the planet. But I think I get the tip on the ball with a lot of these people for that thing.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you.

(Applause)

MR. THOMPSON: Let's go over here.

SPEAKER: I'm curious about the changing formats of everything, getting smaller and smaller and into the Internet. You've been successful at these other production -- I mean that's an amazing description of how your process works, that last comment. It reminds me of Walter Isaacson's innovators and how he talks about how these innovative teams like an Intel, how they have a masterful group of all kinds of people who dream of something.

But now we are into these new formats and it seems to me that there's going to be so much production of so much -- in so many different ways. Can you talk a little bit about some of the things that are not necessarily happening on the big screen or on the square screen but are moving into all these other devices? And whether the storytelling -- is that where this is all going? Or can you help with the production, what that's going to look like?

MR. GRAZER: I will try to answer. It was -- let me try to answer that. I think that the planet -- okay, I think that the planet and the money on the planet like advertisers, the biggest companies on the planet whether it's Apple -- I mean I can name -- they -- because

of this disruptive element of where things are seen -- you know, the medium is the message. You know, like where are things -- what piece of technology, whatever the outlet or hardware is, I think all of these companies and all of the disruption that stirred everybody around to feel like "what do we do now," they have come to the point where, "Wow, story is everything, narrative is everything."

So whether it's the legacy that's embedded in GE with Thomas Edison that might not be completely evident to us because they have like 125 other companies that they are working on right now and Thomas Edison is quite a long time -- it's all a story. So I think that's a way of answering that sort of generalized question.

So if everything is a story, there's going to be an outlet for all of those stories, you know, whether it's mobile, which -- mobile is really impressive. I mean I just got this Verizon presentation which totally blew my mind. That's going to be like an end user for sure.

But it's companies themselves, you know, they are going to find other -- because companies themselves -- I'm doing this thing with GE. In fact I just referenced them. But they are doing this very unconventional thing because they just want to be associated with good things that are authentic.

So I'm doing a thing. It's called a break -- it's called -- it's called break through series: about one hour shows of problems on the planet and solutions to those problems and it's going to be aired on National Geographic.

I hoping they are really good. I think they will be good. But it's just a different way of getting your story, your message out there.

MR. THOMPSON: We had a question in the front and the mic won't be able to reach, so I will project it.

MR. GRAZER: Well, let's take here.

MR. THOMPSON: Well, let's take you.

SPEAKER: So first I have to say -- sorry.

MR. THOMPSON: Well, take both.

MR. GRAZER: Take both, take both.

MR. THOMPSON: Yeah. And then I will --

MR. GRAZER: No, you go first. Yeah.

SPEAKER: I connected with you on the ice-cream because I think it's food group. So that's the first thing. Second, in your curiosity conversations you say accomplished individuals (inaudible) conversations with the people that are like the spokes in a wheel that are accomplished in their (inaudible) but you might not have heard their names.

MR. GRAZER: A hundred percent. I mean I don't, you know -- and I can talk about that. I just -- you know, we have an hour in this audience and so -- but, no, for sure. Actually, there's so many times it's the person who have never heard of. I mean I literally met with Blake Griffin, superstar basketball player. And I said like, "Who do you trust?" This is a long story. We are not going to -- but he said, "I trust this guy. He has now become a sport agent. He is my sports agent."

This guy that wasn't anybody. He is still -- he is now Blake -- but he was an assistant -- really what he was was he is one of a hundred assistant DAs in Philadelphia making \$11,000 a year and waking up at 4:30 in the morning just to do it. I said to him, "How do you do that, man? Like how did you do that?" He said, "I somehow just felt like I was making a difference." And I thought -- it just reached me, you know.

So I do do that often, you know, meet people -- I mean recently I just flew -- I was in Budapest and had

to fly through Germany. And getting on this airplane Lufthansa, I was in line and I saw these three girls that really didn't have -- they didn't have a lot of charismatic energy or anything at all. Well, it was really crowded walking on this thing and these girls wearing dark clothes. Literally, you wouldn't look at them, but I just happened to because we were bumping through.

They had like tattoos like sleeves -- you know, like a sleeve -- going in their neck all the way down their body. And I thought -- and they were really beautiful, but you didn't notice it because you saw all these -- I thought, "WOW, this is" -- "I'm sure" -- "coming in from Berlin, I'm sure this is like a moment of something that I should know about."

Now, I didn't get the full chance to -- you know, like I just felt like this is -- I don't know, I just felt like it was a signal.

Or recently I was just with this girl -- I meet this girl Lizzie -- anyway, the number one girl skate broader on the planet. And I'm now connecting with her through text and I'm going to meet with her as soon as I possibly can.

But I have many people that are not successful at all. I could go on forever.

SPEAKER: Okay.

MR. GRAZER: Okay, thanks.

MR. THOMPSON: Go ahead.

SPEAKER: So your life has had such a tremendous series of successes and I wonder if there's one -- if you had one mulligan and one do over reflecting back whether it's personal or professional what would that be?

MR. GRAZER: Well, I have a lot of mulligans for sure.

(Laughter)

MR. GRAZER: Really I do in every category: movies, television and in life. So one movie -- you are never supposed to do this. This is going to get written about, right?

MR. THOMPSON: We are on the record. But I don't want you to --

MR. GRAZER: All right. Well, I mean I don't -- I mean --

MR. THOMPSON: -- edited yourself.

MR. GRAZER: Okay. Look, I made a -- I agreed to be part of a movie called *Cowboys & Aliens*. I don't like cowboys or aliens.

(Laughter)

MR. GRAZER: I don't like either. I don't relate to either one. But there's a lot of superstars, super superstar talent involved: Ron Howard; Steven Spielberg; the director of *Iron Man*, Jon Favreau; the writers that -- everyone is -- and they are, "We can" -- "we love it." And I remember having this one meeting, an early meeting, and they were talking about the title *Cowboys & Aliens*. And I said, "We are not really calling it that, are we?"

(Laughter)

MR. GRAZER: And they go, "Yeah, this is" -- "yeah, of course we are," like -- I don't get this all, like -- but I probably shouldn't have like agreed. You know, if they probably -- well, they could have made it without me, whatever. I just didn't get it. You know, like why do it.

And then there's -- every once in a while I rationalize quality. Like I -- you know, there's so many decisions you make and you are trying to do excellence. And you know what excellence is; we know what excellence is. We know what better food is versus not good. But you kind of -- you crave -- there's a rationalizing process like when you get, you know, "that's good enough." Anytime the light bulb goes "it's good enough," it's shitty.

(Laughter)

(Applause)

MR. GRAZER: So I have done that a few times.

MR. THOMPSON: Great. Way in the back, right there. Do you have -- great. Just right at the back. Yeah, by the wall. I'm trying to get range with --

SPEAKER: Thank you. Appreciate that. You talked about your interest in survival as one of the topics that you got deeply focused on. I'm back here.

MR. GRAZER: Oh, there, okay.

SPEAKER: Survival as one of the topics that you were very interested and researched a lot. I'm curious about what you are curious about right now or a couple of things that you are really thinking about researching, a tip of your interest and ideas?

MR. GRAZER: Well, off the top of my mind, a couple of very -- there's a lot of things. I met Elizabeth Holmes, who is I guess the youngest earned -- you know, earned billionaire in America. And she has created a way, you know, to advance our understanding -- our ability to access the letters in our genome, you know, sequencing.

And so I think we all want to know about that: like what we can do preventively, what is our genome telling us, how absolute it's all about. So I'm really interested in that. That would be like technology and medicine. I mean technology blows my mind because it just continues to do things that are unimaginable to me. You know, there are just these magical feats that are kind of -- that are to me unimaginable, just the capability of that.

So technology is a mystery and I'm really fascinated with that -- because what it does, it creates scope, you know. You know, Airbnb found a way to create scope within, you know -- instead of just going, you know, from room to room to room in hotels, blah, blah, blah, it found a different methodology. I think that's pretty cool. So, okay, I'm interested in that.

MR. THOMPSON: How about right over here in the middle. Yeah, that's the one.

MR. GRAZER: I'm also interested by the way -- sorry. Don't go.

SPEAKER: Okay.

MR. GRAZER: I'm really -- I mean which is a funnier subject, because that sounded like a downer. It's like I'm really interested in athletics. Like athletics is becoming so much more meaningful to people in terms of lifestyle and everything and I'm just -- I'm curious about it. It excites me. You know, the athletics, the lifestyle, how pimpy boxers can be. You know, like all the stuff that goes on. Okay, so -- all right.

(Laughter)

MR. THOMPSON: Go ahead.

SPEAKER: First of all, thank you so much for *Arrested Development*. I'm one of the millennial super fans that you brought up, so I love it. I've been

watching it like three times. My question is it seems like comedy these days tend to either be like *Modern Family*, as you mentioned, or more dramatic like (inaudible) *Girls*, which is really funny but kind of depressing. What are the chances of another comedy like *Arrested Development* coming out in the near future?

MR. GRAZER: Well, I think people will try to do -- if I heard that right --

MR. THOMPSON: What are the odds of another sort of purposefully absurdist, whacky, off the wall comedy as opposed to -- okay, I getting the thumbs up. Yes.

MR. GRAZER: Yeah. Oh, well, I think -- I mean you could help with that. I mean definitely people will try to do -- I think people want to do that. I mean --

MR. THOMPSON: Anything that's in that vein?

MR. GRAZER: Or *Breaking Bad* wasn't a comedy, but it was --

(Laughter)

MR. GRAZER: It broke every rule, you know. It's like people are defiant. They want to break rules and do things that are different. So I think there will be another one. Besides I'm doing *Arrested Development*; I'm doing another season. So I will be there as representing part of that.

MR. THOMPSON: How about right here. This gentleman on the side.

SPEAKER: A question about curiosity. Do you find that in your world competency follows interest or interest follows competency?

MR. GRAZER: Wow.

(Laughter)

MR. GRAZER: Oh god, that's such a hard --

MR. THOMPSON: Both is an out here --

MR. GRAZER: I think -- I don't know. For me I would go with interest. Competency will follow interest. That will be my personal way. Actually, that's kind of how my partnership with Ron Howard works. I'm highly competent at being interested --

(Laughter)

MR. GRAZER: -- and he is highly competent at taking my interest and what I have pioneered on to another level of depth.

MR. THOMPSON: Great. How about right down here. Why don't you just ask it and I will voice it.

SPEAKER: Do you ever get in trouble with the meetings (inaudible).

MR. THOMPSON: The question is: do people get jealous if they are not asked to be a part of the curiosity interview series? Does it create awkwardness if they haven't been asked --

MR. GRAZER: Sometimes -- well, it doesn't really create -- well, the only -- it creates awkwardness sometimes in that people they misunderstand what I'm doing and so they will slip in their agenda into what they think that is. And so they will go, "I want to be your next meeting." And then I will go -- and then they will say, "Will you do it?" And they will do it in large audiences like that. And I will say -- I try to be honest. I go, "Well, I don't know if I will do it. I might not."

Because they have to -- it has to be pure. If it's a purist thing and they can interest me the way I have interested others to meet me, then I'm on for it and people can do that with me. But much more often than not

it's they -- there is a real ask involved, like, "How do I create a hit TV series?" You know, like -- and I get upset about that. That makes me upset.

MR. THOMPSON: All right, last one, right here. It's you. And we have a mic running.

SPEAKER: Hi. I was wondering if with your daughter if you tried to purposely encourage curiosity in a specific way or anything?

MR. GRAZER: Well, I have four kids. I definitely try to instill curiosity in them. It doesn't work.

(Laughter)

MR. GRAZER: The only thing that has worked was I have accidented (phonetic) across a way that kind of worked, is that I say to them -- you know, curiosity involves a lot of things and there's generosity involved. You know, like if you say to somebody like how is your day or what's going on or you just do it, it makes them feel better than they felt before. It's like a generous thing.

It makes them -- and that sort of -- I think that somehow registered a little bit. And then they -- I think my kids have seen that people are very kind to me. You know, they respect my work and they are kind to me. And I think they are linking that to me being kind to them, you know, and being curious. And I have seen my sons be more curious lately.

MR. THOMPSON: Great. That's all. Thank you all very, very much.

(Applause)

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