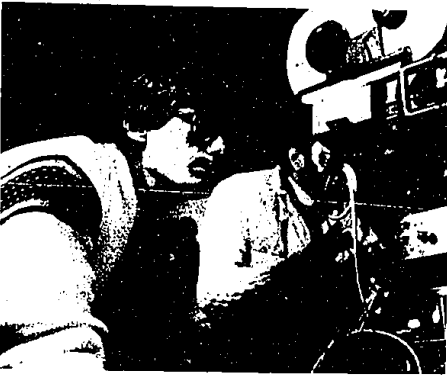


Television director talks about filmmaking career



(Above) Harry Winer, who has found success as a TV director, has directed a pilot for a series called "Two Marriages" that will be shown in late August or early September on ABC-TV. He also is director of the first show in the "Goodnight Beantown" series this fall.



Winer appears on the set of "Hart to Hart," for which he has directed, with star Robert Wagner, actor Lionel Standen and a stuntman.

By Maide Portnoy
special writer

Uncharacteristic? Undignified? Perhaps. But there he was, a normally calm, respected television director, lying on the floor of the set of the new "Goodnight Beantown" series laughing and crying.

"Most of the time I'm calm on the set, but the pressure is so intense," admits former Detroit Harry Winer, "that I occasionally break down into hysterics." (Winer's parents are West Bloomfield residents Melba and Sidney Winer.)

The mentioned outburst was caused by an actor, with only one line to deliver, who was holding up the works. On first take, he couldn't remember the line, on second take — a total blank. At this juncture, Winer conferred with and reassured the actor, who insisted he was now ready to deliver that one line.

"Sixty people were looking at him now, and I was trying to contain myself," said Winer, who noted that every minute means money in his business.

"Cue lines came up, he opened his mouth to say his line and burped. I was on the floor laughing and crying with tears streaming down my face, and the cameraman couldn't stop because union rules say I have to say 'cut.'"

OVER BREAKFAST in the lush, green dining room of the Westwood Marquis Hotel in Los Angeles, the successful 35-year-old director and owner of a new film production company talked about his summer-of-1983 decision to go into filmmaking.

It wasn't easy for him to tell his parents that he was pitching his law school plans for a career in film. Even today Winer vividly remembers their "anguished look of frightfulness." Once their initial reaction subsided, however, they were totally supportive, and that fall Winer enrolled in the University of Southern California's graduate film program.

"That Winer opted for film over law was hardly surprising to anyone who had observed him closely during his undergraduate years at the University of Michigan. It was a combination of contributing factors.

"At that time," he said, "I was seeing pictures like '2001' and found myself seeing the overwhelming power of mass media to inspire thoughts. So many of the thoughts and actions in my life were shaped by film."

It was also during his U-M years that

Winer and some friends wrote, directed and produced an original film for a fraternity-sorority competition. Winer laughs as he tells about the homemade film, a musical without synopsis, which was first prize. He had to sit in the projection booth with his thumb on the tape recorder slowing down the music.

AS A UNIVERSITY student Winer also actively campaigned for and traveled with the McCarthy-for-President campaign which provided a rude awakening for the young idealist.

"My experience with politics," he said, "convinced me that changes could not be made legislatively. Constituents had to be reached at a basic level to change attitudes." And, according to Winer, one way to reach them was through the medium of film.

Then, too, the fact that Winer's parents were founders and active participants in the Center Theater at the northwest Detroit Jewish Community Center, left an "indelible impression" on their son.

He remembers his first role at Center Theater.

"I was one of the children in 'Anniversary Waltz' and it was the first time I really acted, the first time I let myself go into my imagination and enter a world I had in part created. . . . Whatever that was, in a 12-or-13-year-old mind. I wanted more of it. . . . All this approval for just doing something I felt was totally imaginative."

AFTER THREE years at the University of Southern California, he left school with only a few remaining master's credits and accepted an American Film Institute directing internship wage on the basis of a graduate film he had done. As an intern he worked with director John Schlesinger on "Day of the Locust" and from this experience received "great encouragement to press on."

But Winer's success story is hardly an overnight one, and he continually makes the point that it took him a long time to make it as a TV director. "I came out here in 1969, and it wasn't until 1980 that I was working regularly in a job where I was gainfully employed as a director."

WINER'S FIRST actual break came when a film he co-wrote and directed, "One of a Kind," starring Diane Baker, was sold to ABC-TV as an after-school special.

"Finally," Winer said, "here was my

calling card into the industry, but it was a year and a half before my first job came. It surprised me, but in this business nothing surprises me. It becomes a winnowing process."

His first TV directing job was in January 1980 for an episode of a series named "Stone" starring Dennis Weaver.

Since that time, Winer, who, like most of the series directors works on a free-lance basis, has directed episodes of series like "Ten Speed and Brown Shoe" with Ben Vereen and Jeff Goldblum, "Mr. Merlin" with Barnard Hughes, "Hart to Hart" starring Robert Wagner and Stephanie Powers and, most recently, three of five episodes of "Goodnight Beantown" pilots for a series to be aired in the fall with Mariette Hartley and Bill Dwyer.

Mariette Hartley, confides Winer, is

the easiest person to direct, while the most difficult is Stephanie Powers who he further confides, is independent and hears no other point of view than her own. He finds "R.J." (Robert Wagner) "an absolute delight, the star with the sense of humor."

WINER and his wife, Eileen, a teacher of metaphysics and a writer, are not Hollywood party-goers. "We have chosen not to participate in that way," Winer says.

Because of long business hours and the new company (Light Works Magic) the Winers are forming with private investors, they prefer to get away from it all in their leisure. They recently purchased a home in Big Sur and, in addition, soon will trade their Bel Air home for what Winer calls a "New York apartment in Los Angeles."

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