

NINA NOBLE

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Welcome to a podcast from the Center for Emerging Media. I'm Marc Steiner. As we continue our conversations with people who are involved with the production of *The Wire*, the hit HBO series that aired its series finale on March the 9th, we're going to talk with someone whose name fans probably don't know. Or perhaps they do. She's never had a line on the show, but her contributions have been crucial to the success of the series. It's Nina Noble, Executive Producer. Now most people don't have a clue to what a producer does. Maybe they assume the executive producer is the slick guy in the suit who lines up all the money but never sets foot on the set. *The Wire* was known for breaking all kinds of molds, and this case was no different. As Executive Producer, Nina Noble was involved with the production on a daily basis. She was responsible for everything from getting permission to film on location to remembering characters' back stories. As she prepares to leave the project she's worked on from the beginning, she sat with me to discuss her experiences producing *The Wire*.

Welcome to another CEM Production, Center for Emerging Media, and we're talking now with Nina Noble, who's executive producer of *The Wire*, produced *The Corner*, she's worked on *Homicide*, *Basic Instinct*, *City Slickers*, *Bull Durham*, many many more, and she's gracing our studios. Nina, welcome, good to have you with us.

Thanks, nice to be here.

So now this is interesting to me, I've always, something that, we all see actors, and we talk to writers and creators, but productions don't get done without producers and executive producers, who are never seen. You see their name on the screen at the end credits, you know, and "Nina Noble" is there all the time. So what is it, for people, for people - I don't think people know - what does an executive producer do? What did you do on *The Wire*?

You know, I don't know what other executive producers do [laughs] you know, let me, let me start by saying this. My, uh, before this I was a producer, my credit was always "produced by," uh, my dad, who's in the business, was proud of that and has been a big fan of mine, following my career for a while, and when I called them and said, you know, "I'm now executive producer of the show," and he said "Really?" He said "That's too bad. How did that happen?" [laughs] And he thought, he thought it was a demotion. Because in his eyes the producer is sort of the one that gets things done and the executive producer is the one, I guess, in features sometimes is the one that gets the money, the one that puts it together, uh, in television it's a little bit different, it's the one who runs the show and is normally a writer. Like David Simon. Sort of writer, producer, creator, uh, overall visionary. In my case it didn't happen that way but it's taken Dad a little while to, to understand that this was actually a good thing.

What did he produce, by the way, as a digression.

So, I'm sorry...

Who was your dad?

My dad? My dad, my dad was a production manager and a producer of movies for many years, oddly enough was an executive at HBO, uh, in the 70s, for a couple years he was Vice President of Production, and at Columbia. And now still active in the business, teaches at the LA Film School - producing, production managing. And I was lucky enough last, last week actually to sit in on one of his classes, which was really fun. The students out there are learning a lot of stuff that I, you know, only learned by doing it, out there - you know I wish I knew this before I started. He told them that they should always take the sound mixer on location scouts because they'll always hear things that you don't, that the factory that's making noise like right across the street, you won't think of that, because you're thinking of everything else. So basically, what happens on *The Wire*, my job did evolve from when we started, uh,

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mostly due to the loss of our partner Bob Colesberry, who died at the beginning of season three. We'd been prepping season three and Bob died very suddenly. And David's, a big vote of confidence from David and from HBO that they put me in that position of taking over his responsibilities as well as continuing the ones that I had started with and at that point we brought in Joe Chappelle, who was a great asset as a Director/Producer. And he took over Bob's second-unit directing duties. And we sort of had to re-, reorganize. David said we were two legs of a three-legged table, and it was tough for a while, it really was a tough time for us, um, as a company and, you know, just our relationship, Bob and David and my relationship started on *The Corner*.

Is that where you met? Or you actually met on the Homicide, didn't you, before that?

No, well, I actually worked with Bob Colesberry on *The Natural*, Barry Levinson's movie years and years ago, and I was a production assistant and Bob was the production manager. That's the first time we met. And then coincidentally we were put back in touch with each other by HBO on *The Corner*, uh, HBO, Kary Antholis put us kind of all together. It was, it was an arranged marriage, as David would say, but an amazing one in that, we all, a busy show, we all had a lot to do and we had very little, uh, communication with each other, we just sort of all went and did our own thing and you know once a week or once every two weeks we'd kinda check in and found that we all sort of shared the same sensibilities and there was very little disagreement about how somebody else was doing things and just sort of naturally we divided this, this huge pie which was *The Corner* into different parts, and just did it. But I also have to say I've done a lot of different types of projects and different types of jobs and I decided early on that uh, in order to not be bored my goal was just going to be to learn something new on every job. It was very simple. And whether it was something about my job or something about how somebody else does something and that has really helped me to stay interested and not get burnt out and also made it possible for me to take this huge leap and sort of try to fill Bob's shoes in some way because Bob and David always sort of kept the door open for whatever you were interested in and I took the opportunity to you know, stay late and try to, try to learn new things.

Everybody you talk to who's been on *The Wire*, and even folks on *The Corner*, and mostly I've talked to writers and actors, for the most part - for the most part - there, ah, there is this kind of creative passion that they have about the work because it's so different from what you see on television and any other place. How is it, so somebody who's a producer or executive producer, somebody who does what you do, how much of that creative passion for the story itself do you find yourself becoming intimately involved with?

All of it. Except for, except I don't write the scripts, you know, the scripts come from David, but what's thrilling and terrifying about my job is that I, I get handed a script, you know, every two weeks, on *The Wire*, and then I have to make it happen. Usually I'll, I'll try to be involved somewhat in the early story meetings so that I'm aware of the whole plot for the season and what it's all about but I don't read all the early drafts, really just because I wouldn't be able to keep them all in my head. You know, so, they hand me the scripts, you know, maybe a couple days before the crew gets it and the director get it, and then, I, I uh, I figure out how to make it work, what's working, what isn't, I mean there are notes that I give at that point that go back and forth and then we try to execute it.

So to kind of really hone in on it, give me some examples of what kinds of notes you would give, a scene that maybe pops in your head or a script that maybe stays with you that you know you had to give some notes, there was some back and forth about what you might have to do, and what your ideas for changes were.

You know I try to keep my production notes separate from the creative notes, because in my head I can switch back and forth very easily, but other people sometimes can't quite as easily. Um, and so, the production notes would be anything from just location logistics, or you know, maybe a three page scene that's filmed at dusk, and you know dusk doesn't last that long, you know, things, things like that. Or things, *The Wire*, because it's a continuing story, it really required us all to become sort of historians in some way, toward, you know, by the end, and just keep all the details in our head and I always sort of

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kept – it meant everyone had to be thinking all the time. And I think that’s what got people passionate about it, as far as the crew members, is that they really all felt that they really did have a small part of this. Everyone really did have to think and it’s why we always had at least a writer and sometimes writer and producer on the set all the time which, which sometimes directors see as an interference but in our case it was a huge resource, you know, and that’s what we were there for. So sometimes the notes would be about uh, continuity. Of characters, of anything – the vehicle of – just, just things that, that didn’t track, things like that. But you know, I have to say David and his writing staff were very, are very thorough about trying to really keep all the characters true, and trying not to have too much influence outside.

So in many ways, your job, you were almost like the glue that held it all together. The different parts – you had to look at, you had to look at the entire picture of what was going on.

Yeah... I had a lot of help.

I’m sure you did. [laughs]

[laughs] You know, we had a great team of people around from Vince Peranio, our production designer, Alonzo Wilson, costume designer, people that have been with the show from the beginning. And that’s the extraordinary thing about this show. When we, uh, at the end of season five we produced a newspaper, and we, in this newspaper, had sort of the milestones of the show, and how many people had been with it, and we listed the crew members who had been with the show since the first day, and this is extraordinary considering that every year we didn’t know if we were coming back or not, and it was maybe four months, six months, eight months of not knowing. And, you know, people go on with their lives.

Right.

And they take other jobs and they do whatever, but everyone managed to, to get back, you know, when it was time to come back.

You know, the more I talk to people about this program, *The Wire*, and especially now talking to you, I mean, it’s, the rarity of this kind of thing taking place in television, maybe even in film, but it’s pretty profound.

Well you know what happened, the story line I think sort of was infectious in terms of all of our lives and how we live them that the idea, and I think it’s where David and I sort of came together even as early as *The Corner* was this idea of, you know, the dignity and worth of every person and every human, which is what he’s endeavored to, to show on the screen. To show the people who normally are not acknowledged, you know and my awareness after filming a lot of different places and starting out filming in New York City, where there are actual blocks where you can’t film now because the people are burnt out. The film office puts out a list every week of places which are do-not-film zones. And it’s because, because people have come in, film companies have come in and shown total disregard for the people who live there. And then, working in Wilmington, North Carolina – I lived in Wilmington for twelve years and did a lot of filming there and you know, saw from the, the other side, people coming in from LA or wherever, exploiting the town, and leaving. Leaving trash, not paying their bills, doing a lot of things and I sort of, you know, at some point thought, you know what, this, this guy who has this flower shop right here that we’re shutting down, his business is as important to him as ours is to us. And once you kinda understand that, of course it is! So we’ve always really tried to be good neighbors where we film. And that’s what sort of started, I think there’s been a lot of written, there’s been a lot of discussions about the community work that we do, and a lot of the things we’ve done, and that started with that premise, that on *The Corner* we found two neighborhoods basically where we were going to be occupying, occupying their streets for a period of four months. Like, repeatedly, every day, every night, shining lights into their windows and exhaust fumes and everything else.

You were going to be there.

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And we, I kinda thought, you know, we've got to do something, cause we're moving in, you know, we're moving into the neighborhood, so what do we do to be good neighbors, and tried to think about that a little bit. And I think because of some of those types of things, we've always, we've asked our crew and cast to do about 200%, always. It's not just, when you work on *The Wire*, it's not just that you come and you do your job, you're also asked to, you know, participate in benefits, our actors during the season have to go to schools and speak. I say "have to," I mean, they all did it so willingly, and so wonderfully. Chad Coleman who played Cutty started volunteering at a boxing gym here, you know, cause he had met some of the kids, and wanted to do some work with them. And so, when you talk to people on *The Wire*, it's like there's a sense of mission about this. Because of the work and the excellence of the writing but also because of, uh, just the family and the culture that we created.

So you say you lived in Wilmington, North Carolina for twelve years? What'd you do there for twelve years? Were you a producer then?

Assistant director. I, I, started working in New York for many years and spent a couple years in LA and then I went to Wilmington on a film and they put us up in a nice house on Wrightsville Beach and I decided not to leave at that point. [laughs] At that point I felt it was an incredible luxury to live in a small, historic, southern town and be able to work on films and there's a, there is a studio there, although for me it was kind of like at that point I was going to be traveling anyway, and so it was a really nice place to live, and there was something nice about not living where you work, because it meant you were really kind of off when you were there.

And you all stayed in Baltimore.

Now we've moved to Baltimore because of *The Wire*. I, the first season of *The Wire* I was commuting to North Carolina every other week, and that didn't work out too well. So we've come up here, and this is a great city. Really like it here. At some point, we had thought, my husband and I, our plan was to move back up to New York once the show was over, and you know, then sometime last year we had a conversation, and we just said "why?" [laughs]

I mean, Clarke Peters stayed here, at least he's here now, and Sonja Sohn has decided to stay.

Exactly, exactly, it's a good city. And for those of us that have kids, you know, it's been a good place for them. Sonja's at School for the Arts, my son is at School for the Arts.

Really? What are they taking, what are they in? Theater, or something else?

Uh, Sophia's an actress, Sonja's daughter, and my son's into, into set design.

Good programs.

Yeah. Well, I went to Music & Art High School in New York.

Ah ha! Right, right, right, the grandmother of all high schools for the arts in the country, probably. Were you in acting? What were you in there?

No, I was there for music. This was all sort of an accident. I never planned to be in this business. [laughs]

But you enjoy your work, you love your work, don't you?

Oh, I do. Yeah. I'm not suited to anything else. I mean, this is the only job I could get.

No one else would have you. [laughs]

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No, no, and one thing, you know, I always tried to, of course I have a lot of young people that are interested in the business and, and I enjoy talking to them about it and the one thing I always bring up, is you know, what I like about the business first, is I like to go to work at a different time and a different place every day, you know, and if you don't like that, and you can't deal with sort of the uncertainty of the work, uh, you know, you might want to think again because there's a lifestyle that goes along with this that's not for everyone.

There is an uncertainty to that lifestyle.

Yes, and there's, and there's unusual hours, and there's, there's just a lot. A lot of that.

Cause you have to pull twelve, fourteen hour days or more sometimes.

At least.

When you're in the middle of production.

Yeah.

So why, now that's an interesting question, I mean, why, I always hear people wonder about this, why it takes so long on sets. Why does it take forever to do a scene and do a production like this?

Oh, gosh, well on *The Wire* it's because, our, well, our scripts are very dense. I mean, there's a lot going on, and it got more so, there were more balls in the air, more worlds that we were juggling as we went along. I mean, at the beginning we had the first season. We had the cops, and we had, you know, the Barksdales, the drug guys. You know, and then the drug guys, um, originally the premise was that each season the policemen would stay the same and everything would, would change around them, and that it was the case that would sort of propel you into this new world. And, uh, but the Barksdales were so captivating that they were kept on Season Two, and then we also added the port, and the story of the loss of work in America, and the blue collar story.

I love that season. I really do love it – that was a great season.

Yeah, I do too. I mean now that's, you know that's just an, that's an example. I got this – Season Two, we had a meeting, you know, with the writers and Bob and I, and they said, OK we're going to do the story of the ports. Port of Baltimore. Said, OK. So what that means for me is I have to make some friends over there at the port and get permission to film there. And, and so this was the first time for David, I think, that he was dealing with a story that involved not just abandoned row houses and places where you could basically just walk in and film. So I wrote a nice letter to the ports, and I said, you know, we're doing this story, and we want to come down there and film and I got a very nice letter back that said no thanks.

[laughs] Then what'd you do?

OK, so [laughs] uh, so then we decided, we realized that we wouldn't be able to film at the port continuously because it's a working operation but the goal was to do a little bit of filming there, and this was Vince Peranio's idea, also, our production designer, to find a place that we could control and sort of marry the two. So we built, Frank Sobotka had a container office, and we built that on stage, the interior of the container. Uh, we then rented an unused place at South Locust Point, and built our own container village, bought all the used containers and hired somebody to move them around and made our little container village. But we still really needed the working port. We needed the cranes, we needed to see everything kind of moving, and uh, by renting that space I then became a member of the tenants committee of the Port of Baltimore. Private sector tenants committee, which had meetings every month. So I started to go to these meeting, you know, and try to get to know people and I, and you know, to me

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it's the same whether you're working in the ghetto or you're working at the port, it's to try to communicate with people on a human level and sort of shed all of your impressions of who they are because of what they look like or where they've come from, and so I went in there and the discussion was all about security, because it was right around the time when the Homeland Security Administration was being formed, uh, the regulations were changing there from one day to the next. And those guys, they really did have a problem. And I also had concerns about security and my own business and I also had concerns about getting the work done. And getting it done on time. Because that's what we get paid for, and that's also what they get paid for. And, and some of the issues that we were raising in *The Wire* about dredging, about the, uh, getting the grain elevator working again are important issues to them. Because really there's no reason to travel all the way up the Chesapeake to unload a ship in Baltimore except that they're the most efficient and the quickest. And that's, you save money by coming here as opposed to coming to Norfolk. But anyway, so in having all these meetings we did find some common ground, just sort of as, you know, as businessmen, you know. And eventually were able to gain the confidence of some folks there, in spite of the story line. I think in the end they felt that we had put an identity on their business, on their industry that, that wasn't there before. Nobody knows what happens at ports. I mean we know about airports and we know about trains but the port is not something that the average consumer uses every day. So, so we were able to film there on a limited basis and it really came out quite well when you see, you see everything moving, and then you're into the container village with Sobotka and it's really seamless. And we just had to work really quickly cause it was, you know, we had two hours or something like that, and so, um, we got that done and then at that point David said, said "You know that's really great, but wouldn't it be great if we could film on board one of the ships that came in?" And so that was my goal all season, was to get permission to film on a ship. And it happened.

You got it.

The last episode.

So the work that you do, especially let's say on *The Wire*, is pretty intense work. What's it like, what's it like for you to do that? I mean, I can just imagine the kind of intensity of a day for you.

By now I sort of know it's going to turn out alright, you know, so, so.... [laughs]

A little wisdom with time. [laughs]

Yeah.

That's good. I mean, cause I can, I can imagine, also kind of separating that out, you've got family, a husband, kids. Juggling all that together must be a pretty intense role for you.

I start early. [laughs] A friend came to visit for the weekend, she said "You're so organized!" I said, you know, but that's not a, not a character trait, that's just a requirement, you know, it's a necessity. So you just start early and kind of figure everything out. I have a good skill I can, uh, usually during the season I'm dreaming, I dream about work every night, about the next day, and I kind of solve all the problems, so when I wake up I sort of know

That's great. Literally, you're literally dreaming about things.

Yeah, if there's something I'm not sure, you know, how to deal with or how it's going to work out, yeah. By the time I wake up I pretty much know. But the other bad habit I have, you know, is in the shower in the morning I have, I have a lot of ideas. And it's usually things like, you know, maybe we should have an exhibit at the museum of industry, you know, things like, things that require a lot of work for other people, [laughs] pretty much. Cause I'll, I'll come in and I'll say, "You know what I thought of, I have this great idea! In addition to producing the show, why don't we produce a gala, a benefit for parks and people? You know, why not?"

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[laughs]

You know, there's a lot of people that think I'm crazy.

I think that my producers are now understanding that, that I'm not the only person that does that to people. That's a good thing. I'm glad you're doing this now. They need to hear this. [Laughs] On a smaller scale, on a smaller scale.

But these are things, these are things when I was an assistant director on the set I also, you know, would just try to amuse myself in some way. I did one show early on, it was a television movie, and I convinced the producer that rather than spend the money on the wrap party, that we would all switch jobs for one shot. First shot after lunch, no matter what shot it is, we're just all going to trade jobs. And people still talk about that to this day, cause, you know, you, I had to pull focus. And I decided that's the hardest job on the set.

And what is that job? What is "pull focus"?

The first assistant cameraman. The one that has to make sure the shot is in focus.

Oh, so is that how? I had no idea how that works.

The person that stands on the side of the camera, and he's turning that little dial? That's what, that's what he's doing. That's a hard job, and everybody sees your work, I mean it's apparent, you know, in dailies if you got it wrong.

That's wild. So the moving parts that you have to deal with is amazing. I mean, what you're just talking about right now.

Right. And that's why it was such a huge benefit for me being an assistant director and spending the time on the sets, and I also used to visit a lot of people when I was off. I'd go visit friends on sets that did different jobs, and you know, again that's sort of where I got this idea that everyone on a movie set has a very different perspective. And, and they, it's, it's - you get very much focused on a singular thing, you know, which is their thing and their responsibility for the show. And so, uh, I've never been intimidated by, you know, helping people to prioritize.

Uh huh. Because you understand it. You work it seeing it from their perspective.

Yeah. Yeah. And they, they understand that I'm going to help them balance that with everything else. All the other demands.

So the relationship now you have, ah, you also worked on *Generation Kill*, David and Ed's latest work that comes out in July.

Yes. *Generation Kill* is an amazing story based on the book by Evan Wright, and Evan was a journalist who spent six weeks with a, embedded with a Marine unit. The first ones to invade Iraq.

This is in the first war? Kuwait, or the war now?

Kuwait. And I was just captivated by the youth. I think people would be amazed by how young these guys are and I know that David Simon and Ed Burns have talked a lot about sort of the issues surrounding this book. For my part of it, because we were doing *The Wire* at the same time, we had to divide and conquer, which is often our motto. And so Ed really was the guy who was there to protect the story and who was there throughout the run. And, and what I mostly got involved with, I was co-Executive Producer on this, and mostly I was fascinated with the idea of young actors turning into soldiers, turning into Marines. And how that was all going to take place. And that was really a challenge for me. The Marines in this story are, are still alive, they're real people, and so I felt that it was even more important

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to honor them in some way. I mean, we all felt, uh, to get it right and have them credible as Marines and as Americans. A lot of them are played by Brits and South Africans and then Americans all together and so we sort of had this boot camp over there.

Literally, a boot camp?

A boot camp in rehearsals, uh, where one of the first rules that I made was that when you were in uniform you could only speak American. Because the South Africans tended to want to stay together, and the accent went out the window. But, but they're all great, and it's been a great experience for me to be able to just watch them sort of vicariously through the, the dailies that I get back and the cuts now that I've been receiving, to watch their characters evolve. And they've absolutely turned into these people. And I think what's so captivating about the, about this show besides the subject matter, which is really, really interesting, is the camaraderie between the guys and the chemistry.

So you, were you on the set the whole time, or you just stayed there for part of the filming, you said?

Right, I did the initial scouts, and the, uh the boot camp and rehearsals, and then I had to come back for *The Wire*.

And this was shot in Nabi, Nabmi... [laughs], Namibia and Mozambique?

Namibia. And South Africa. Because the terrain was changing as they were traveling from desert in Kuwait to the very fertile Euphrates. So, uh we had to find desert, and then tropics.

That's an expensive operation.

They tell us it's cheaper to film it over there. I'm not sure if that's true. [laughs] Remains to be seen.

So the fact that Ed Burns is a Vietnam Veteran, and had done his own combat, which is an interesting story in its own right when you get it, uh, had nothing to do with why he was the one at the lead of this?

Uh, I wanted to stay here. It was the last season of *The Wire*, and we knew that, and I just didn't feel it was, it was right to leave at that point. In a perfect world we would have done each show separately, but for many reasons they had to be done. And, uh, I think Ed was the guy, I mean he had a terrific camaraderie with the guys over there, Ed's such a good, a natural teacher. But really, you know, we've been talking about producing, and, ah, for me, you know the job of a producer is really to be sort of a chameleon. And that's what I try to do, is just see where I can be useful, and what I can cover. And so on *Generation Kill* it was one thing, and it was something else on *The Wire*, and it was something else on *The Corner*. So that's why it's sort of hard to define the job. I think a good producer is someone who can be flexible and just not have a real sense of, well, this is what I do and that's what I don't do.

Is that, this fluidity you're describing in terms of being able to move back and forth and do different things as a producer, is that something that on film and television that you do? Is it different doing it on, working with people like David and Ed on *The Wire* than it is doing with somebody else in terms of the flexibility of what you can do as a producer?

Well, of course, because it's, because you're filling the gaps, you're seeing what needs to be done, and obviously that has a lot to do with the people you're working with. I mean, on *The Wire* the writing was excellent.

Yes.

I always get good scripts and that's a wonderful thing. And, and so David and Ed and the rest of the producers don't normally need a lot of help in that area. They don't need me to help them write scripts.

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Maybe on another show I might, I might have to do that, I don't know. [laughs] So, so it's really just about troubleshooting and just seeing where you can be useful and where you can make it better. And I think the thing about *The Wire*, what excites all of us, you've talked to cast and crew and everyone, we all have the idea of striving for excellence every day. I mean, David and I have that feeling and we hopefully inspire others to feel that way, that every day you come to work and you try to do your best.

So what does Nina Noble do with a script? I mean, you don't direct, you're not writing it, you're not telling the actors how to act, so once you have the script in your hands, what do you look for, what do you do with it?

First of all, I have to say, although it's not my passion I have directed at times when necessary. I have a director's card. [laughs] No, I have directed when, when necessary, I try not to do any writing, and I have answered actors' questions about their characters when necessary. I really try, again that's part of being prepared, I really try to be, you know, prepared to cover anything I have to cover, although some things better than others I'm sure. But really I just, I try to make it better. When I get a script I'm looking for obvious things like once in a while David will name the character the same thing as someone who's come before, in fact we had one case where he named somebody Tay, I think it was Tay, in the fifth season. I remembered that we'd had someone with that name in the second season, so I had my staff looking for this person to see if he's still alive, still lived in Baltimore, looking for this person, and I come to David and I say, you know, good news, we found Tay! And he said, "What are you talking about? This is a brand new character," and he didn't even realize that he'd done that. So sometimes we take these things a bit little too seriously as far as the details. But I can give you an example, Season Three, David wrote this terrific story line of Stringer Bell now becoming a real businessman.

Oh right, I remember that, yeah.

And he's having a meeting with his staff. And he's following the Robert's Rules of Order. And he has, and people have to be recognized by the chair before they can speak. And he's being very proper in the way that he conducts this meeting. And I read this and I sent a note to David and I said, you know, "This is all, this is really terrific, this is great, but you know, what if Shamrock actually had the book? What if he had the book in his hand and he was like looking through this stuff." You know, and he did. He gave Richard Burton, who played Shamrock, the book, and, and Richard now is the, was, Shamrock became sort of the devotee of the rules. The arbiter of, uh, proper meetings. And so it's, you know, anything, from little small details to anything else, I just try to think about.

The way you describe it, it seems as if the two of you at least, and maybe you and Ed as well, but you and David have, uh, after all these years of working together must have developed some kind of rhythm almost, knowing one another, and what each other's thinking, and that's a very special relationship to have when you're putting a show together, it seems to me.

There's a lot of intuition on both of our parts. It was a little bit easier when Bob Colesberry was around. The three of us had almost a telepathic relationship I think, cause we didn't see each other very much, but still the work got done somehow between the three of us. And once, once Bob was gone and there wasn't a third person to sort of bounce ideas off of, it was funny because David and I had arguments for the first time.

That's interesting.

You know, there were, it was kind of funny. But yeah, we, you know...

So where are you all going now? Are you and David going to continue to work together? Do you have new projects on the horizon, or is this too early to talk about it?

Absolutely. I think, I think, I mean for myself, I've gotten a little spoiled by working with HBO, I think it'd be very difficult to go, to go work for someone else. They're so smart, I think, with the material, uh, and

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we have a great amount of autonomy that I don't know if we'd have somewhere else, in terms of the way we do our work.

That's really great. I mean the way the people, I've heard this about the people, the way that folks at HBO handle their creative side, the people they bring in to do these stories, the stories they buy, I mean, it's a really, it's a different kind of relationship than you'd have maybe with ABC or NBC or CBS, or...

Yeah. There's a lot of time spent in development at HBO, but once their shows go they really give them a chance. I mean, *The Wire* would have been cancelled probably within a couple episodes if we were, if we were somewhere else, and they give their shows time to grow, time to find their one or two audience members, time to find a few critics who might say something good about them, you know. [laughs]

Can I ask you a question? I know I talked to David and Ed about this and others, about what it is about a show like *The Wire* that obviously HBO kept every year, they made a decision we're going to keep it one more year, that the critics around the country loved, that had powerful acting, powerful writing, cinematography was amazing, the whole pieces fit together. And what it was that it didn't seem to grab hold of America in terms of viewership.

Um, first I think that it takes a commitment to watch the show. I think that, you, the people that appreciate, the reason people appreciate the show is because, uh, you have to think about it. You know, it's thought provoking. But some people don't want to do that. They don't want to, it's an effort, I think, although it's, it's a pleasure, at the same time it's an effort. I think a lot of people don't have the attention span any more for a show like this. And I think the fact that we have a Black cast is a big issue for a lot of people. The fact that we're in Baltimore is an issue for a lot of people. I don't know.

Well I think it was socially important and also just kind of wonderful and brave of the folks to take on this show and go do it. And finally to find a medium that would show it.

Well, for me, yeah, exactly, I think there's someone out there that knows how to fix the school system. Someone that maybe is not reading about schools and reading educational journals, but maybe they're watching HBO. Maybe they're watching *The Wire*. And it inspires them to be involved somewhere, in some way, in some of these issues. And it's wonderful to be able to, to deliver that.

It must be hard in some ways to see that go. Or were you prepared for it to go?

Not at all, I mean the best, the best thing was that David made the decision that this would be our last year and that HBO agreed, and we knew that going in, everyone knew it. Rather than finding out that you're cancelled at the last minute. So that was great that we were able to prepare, not only through the writing but you know, just for everyone's life to be able to plan that. And I'm not sorry, I mean this was the longest job I've ever had. Which is nice in some ways, but I'm definitely ready for the next thing.

What is the next thing? What are you going to do now?

You know, I don't know. We have, David and I are going to continue to work together. And we have several projects and it's just whatever script lands on my desk first, or whatever someone decides to buy first. You know, we'll dive into that.

That's great.

Yeah.

Well, this has been a lesson. I've learned a great deal. I think so have our people listening to this today. Anyone listening to it will learn a great deal about how, what it really takes to put a production together. Nina Noble, thanks so much.

NINA NOBLE

Thank you!

Lovely to have you here.

Thank you.

You've been listening to a production of the Center for Emerging Media. Our producers are Justin Levy and Jessica Phillips, engineering assistance from Liz Buckle, and thanks to Clean Cuts, Music & Sound Design for studio space. To hear more and learn more, visit us on the web at marcsteinerblog.wordpress.com, or just Google "Marc Steiner blog". And from the Center for Emerging Media, I'm Marc Steiner. Thank you.

-Transcript by Christina Arrison