

Hollywood Unscripted Ep 37 – Harry Bradbeer (Enola Holmes): A Stuck at Home Special

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Jenny Curtis: From CurtCo Media ...

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Speaker 1: There's no place like Hollywood.

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Jenny Curtis: Welcome to another special episode of Hollywood Unscripted: Stuck at Home. I'm Jenny Curtis and today, I'm virtually sitting down with an amazing director and an even friendlier person, Harry Bradbeer. Harry is a BAFTA and Emmy-winning director and producer. He's directed incredible shows that we're going to touch on today, such as Fleabag, Killing Eve, and Ramy, as well as the delightful new film Enola Holmes, coming this week on Netflix. Harry, thank you so much for joining us.

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Harry Bradbeer: It's great to be here. It's exciting. I love your podcast. I love it.

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Jenny Curtis: You're in London right now. Is that correct?

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Harry Bradbeer: I am, yeah.

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Jenny Curtis: I'm recording in Los Angeles where it's a bit apocalyptic, because we have wild fires all over California, not to mention a pandemic. So it's definitely a week.

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Harry Bradbeer: It's definitely been a week for you. I feel awful for you. I mean, it's terrifying. It sort of changes your whole attitude about our connections with each other. I think that's the way this whole pandemic has affected us. We've started to think differently about distance and intimacy, and these are kind of my stock and trade in my work, so it interests me a lot.

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Jenny Curtis: I want to jump in and start at the beginning. So your parents were in medicine. Is that correct?

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Harry Bradbeer: Yeah. My dad wanted to be a surgeon and he

ended up working with children. He was one of the people at the forefront of deafness in children. He loved children, he was a lovely man. It was said that no children ever cried in his surgeries. He just had a very gentle nature. And he met my mother when he was a medical student, and my mother was in medicine at that point. She dropped out of it after a while.

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Jenny Curtis: So coming from that background, how did you find the arts and realize that you wanted to be a filmmaker?

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Harry Bradbeer: I think for me, I grew up in Devon and it's a very distant place. And, really, your connection with the exciting world is through TV, and the occasional visits to the Odeon in Exeter. So I loved the cinema. In those days, the films used to run back to back. So you would go in, and if you were late for the film, you'd watch the end and then you'd watch the beginning, which I think scrambled my brain in a way, but it used to help me to understand how film narrative worked.

I watched a lot of television, but really what I wanted to be was an actor. I was kind of obsessed with it as a child. And one odd kind of incident really got me going into the idea of going into television, which was at Christmas, we used to go and visit my grandparents, and they never got on. They fought a lot and it was a terrible atmosphere. But there was one moment, after we had the meal, we'd sit down and we'd watch the Morcambe & Wise show on the TV. And the family that had been arguing and fighting, all suddenly start to laugh, it was a comedy show, and everyone was together. And there was such a warm feeling of connection and how these entertainers changed the whole tenor and atmosphere in the family. We found something, we linked, you sort of joined together on. And on the way back, I think I was about 8, I said, "When I grow I want to be in entertainment."

I went to school, did tons of plays there. Went to university, tons of plays there. And then someone offered me the chance to direct a play in this little tiny theater in the round. Do you know three quarters in the round, where the audience are all about it? And there was something about the perspective I had on the performances, and the control and encouragement of actors into certain kinds of performances, that presented shapes and frames for the audience that were so close to them, that it took me to think maybe I should be making films.

I wanted to get close. I didn't like the proscenium experience of the theater, I didn't like being miles away. I

couldn't stand going out for an evening and just spending an hour and a half with people shouting at me. I wanted to be there with the experience.

So there was a film society at my college, and I went down there and I asked if I can make a movie. He said, "Well, we can give you," I think it was 70 quid for 10 minutes of reversal film. Reversal film is like a negative, you just get one shot at it. You expose it, and then you develop it, and then you cut with it. It gets cut into pieces, cut to shit, and it's scratchy and awful, but you do get your film. And I made that. And it was actually a short film about a schizophrenic man who became a rather famous murderer in London in the 1940s and 50s, called John Reginald Halliday Christie.

And the way I found a way to tell the story was to have one actor play all the parts and make the actor to then address the camera. So that idea of breaking the fourth wall was right at the beginning of all of my interests. So I made that little film and thought, "Well, I want to be a filmmaker now. So what do I do?" And I heard about this exchange scholarship to the University of Michigan and no one else knew where the Foreign Studies office was, so I got it. And I picked shop at the University of Michigan for a year and made some short films and some TV, and it was my first impact of American culture of making art, which was so practical and gloriously immediate.

I had friends who were in film schools or doing Media Studies, they spent the first term studying Hitchcock, which is a wonderful thing to do, but studying theory and gender specifics in 60s French New Wave. And they just said, "All right, we're making a commercial this week." I said, "I've only just arrived!" And it was so inspiring. God bless them, they taught me a lot about how to make a film, how to put it together.

I think so much of filmmaking is organizing of your mind, in conjunction with a clear idea of what you want. And I learned early on that you don't need to do something complicated but you need to do something complex, which starts with a simple idea. And the things we made weren't tremendously good, but I learned a lot from it and I had a wonderful time.

So then I came back and looked for a job, and I started making tea in production companies and post-production houses. I mean, I was just asking them if I could do anything. And I was terrible at it. I mean, I was bad at getting out of bed. I didn't want to be a producer, I wanted to be a director, but it was the only way to start. And I soon ran into the ground and got fired. I was not the best production assistant, I think.

I wrote to this one connection, and this was John

Schlesinger, the director who directed *Midnight Cowboy*, one of the films that I'd watched when I was a boy and transported me. And the only reason why I wrote to him was, it was a film that changed my attitude to film and performance. Because if you've watched that movie, you start off with a guy with a fairly simple idea. He's arrogant and confident, he wants to go to New York to be an escort. And he doesn't get any of these things, his life collapses. And he ends up on a bus with a dead man in his arms, and it's the best thing that could have happened to him.

I was watching this film, everyone else had gone to bed, and I realized that films were about not what you wanted, but what you needed. A man seeking acknowledgement, validation, all these very *Fleabag*-y things, acceptance. He wanted to make money but, in the end, he found love. I have held that idea in my heart ever since, and in my work. So that's why I wrote to John.

My connection with him was that his grandmother came over from Germany with my grandmother, my Jewish side, my mother's side. My mother hadn't seen him since they were little children, playing together in the garden. And so she wrote him a letter, I wrote him a letter, and he replied and he said, "Come and see me." So on a snowy day in January, I went up to see John, in this great house in Kensington, a big house. And he was an extraordinarily little man, and lovely, and warm, and asked me what I was doing and what I wanted to do. I said I was a director, "And I'm a production assistant and I'm making tea and I'm not doing a very good job of it." And he had this quite imperial voice and he said, "Well, my dear boy, you must use your brain. If you want to write, you must write a script."

And I said, "Yeah, but I need to live." And he said, "Well, I'll give you some pennies if you read these scripts." So he wrote me a couple of scripts to read and I became his script reader and his researcher. So I worked for him, reading scripts, and I even researched an opera for him. He also introduced me to David Puttnam and Norma Heyman, and a number of other folks who gave me similar work. So that kept me going for a few years, while I wrote a script, which was based on a short story I had written on a visit to a friend in the country. And that turned into a little short film called *A Night with a Woman*, *a Day with Charlie*, that was, like all of the things that interest me, it was a love story, but about two men who had this unspoken love between each other.

And it was about a guy Harold, that was sort of me, I suppose, who was abandoned in London and went to see his old friend, who was played by Rufus Sewell, in the middle of Wales. And it had a kind of Hitchcockian feel to it, it was very emotional. It was about two lonely people finding

each other, which again is something that seems to come through my work all the time. And they end up dancing together.

It's a funny little film and Channel 4 saw it, back in the UK, and they loved it and they bought it. And that paid the bills for the film, and so I just made my money back, and they put it out. And that way, I got an agent and then I started working in TV.

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Jenny Curtis: Before we move forward, I want to go back to the letter you wrote to John Schlesinger. Do you remember what you said, other than the connection between your mothers?

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Harry Bradbeer: I think I spoke to him about how much his movies had meant to me. And I didn't really know how to approach it, it was so difficult because I didn't know who he was. I did what you were supposed to do, which was to say, "How do you do? Could you possibly spare me an hour of your time? I've always heard about you since I was little boy, and I love Midnight Cowboy and it's made a lasting impression on me for many, many years." The fun thing about John, I remember someone was asking me about him, they said, "Do you have an anecdote about John?" It was a journalist, yesterday. I said, "I'm afraid they're all filthy, all rude," because he was very funny and very naughty. But he did have this wonderful way of introducing me to people.

When he wasn't in LA, he would come into London and we'd go to the theater. And then afterwards, we would often go to the IV, which was, in those days, the exclusive restaurant that you could only get into if you were known to them. And there was a table by the door, where Noël Coward used to sit, which John and other notables would take. And they took it because then people, as they came in and out, would say hello. So you were kind of on a production line, the grandest production line of your life. Like the Queen, with people marching past and saying hello.

And I'll be sitting there, tucking into whatever I could eat, because I was so hungry, because I had so little money, and John would introduce me there. He would say, "You know Harry Bradbeer," as though you can't possibly be so ignorant to be unaware of this rising star. And so they would always say, "Oh yes, of course. Yes, absolutely." He managed to convince everybody that I was terribly important. It was very sweet.

So yeah, that's John. And we worked together for about four years and then, eventually, I took wings. So he sort of helped me in the nest and he fed me like a little baby bird.

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Jenny Curtis: I want to fast forward, just because there's so much I want to talk to you about.

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Harry Bradbeer: Yeah.

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Jenny Curtis: How did you get involved with Fleabag? And how did you meet Phoebe Waller-Bridge?

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Harry Bradbeer: There was a pilot and I'd been shown it. And Phoebe and the producer were looking for a director to take it on and develop it into the series. I saw the pilot and I saw her face, and there was a kind of recognition. There was something in her that I adored, as well as a mischief. There was a fierce intelligence and a fury in her performance. There was an energy that I hadn't seen in a while. So I said, "Well, I'll meet you."

And I didn't know this, but I was one of about 35 directors, I think, they saw because they couldn't quite get someone that quite met with Phoebe's mind. Anyway, I walked in and she said, "Well, what did you think of Fleabag?" And I said, "Well, I am Fleabag," by which I meant that this character is so relatable to me because she says what's in her mind. I just have logorrhea, I'm kind of a victim of an inability to be a very good liar. I tend to tell you the truth. And it's also that the truth is much easier to remember as well, I find.

So there is that honest truthfulness to her which I related to. And I asked her about what she planned for it. I said, "What happens at the end?" And she said, "Well, the truth is that her friend Boo, it turns out that she slept with this guy, that caused her suicide. So in effect, she killed her." And I said, "My god, that's Greek. That's rich, that's dark." I said, "There's a wonderful, dark sadness to this comedy." And what I didn't say before was that I'd never ever met for a comedy before, I'd just done drama, that my agent had said, "Why do you want to do a comedy?"

And I said, "Well, I don't really see this as a comedy. I see it as something else. Because it's funny, all of that works, it's stumbling on the apt with its tail wagging. I love it. But we must go like an (exudate)." I said, "I will go like an exudate for every ounce of vulnerability and pain in your character, because this story could be of epic proportions." There is something rich, universal, and very deeply meaningful, I felt, just from the little that I had seen. But there was no series written.

So what I ended up being was a kind of partner in the telling of that story, and the structuring of the series. And it really worked with a lot of me asking her questions about her experience. And she had such a clear understanding of that character. And I had a very clear understanding of how the story could be shaped. And so we worked beautifully together. It was an amazing meeting of minds.

00:14:15

Jenny Curtis: A Moment of Your Time, a new podcast from CurtCo Media.

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Speaker 4: Currently 21 years old, and today I'm going to read a poem.

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Speaker 5: I felt like magic extended from her fingertips down to the base of my spine.

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Speaker 6: You have to care of yourself because the world needs you and your voice.

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Speaker 7: Trust me, every do-gooder that asked about me was ready to spit on my dreams.

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Speaker 8: Her fingers were facing me.

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Speaker 9: It can feel like your purpose and your worth is really being questioned.

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Speaker 10: Ain't going to stop me from playing the piano.

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Speaker 11: She buys walkie-talkies, wonders to whom she should give the second (crosstalk) .

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Speaker 12: Pets don't love humans. We never did, we never will. We just find ones that are more (crosstalk) .

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Speaker 13: The beauty of rock climbing is that you can only focus on what's right in front of (crosstalk) .

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Speaker 14: And life. And so, our American life begins.

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Jenny Curtis: We may need to stay apart but let's create together. Available on all podcast platforms. Submit your piece @ curtco. com/ amomentofyourtime.

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Speaker 16: [singing].

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Jenny Curtis: I love that in your Emmy acceptance speech, you thanked Phoebe for coming into your life like a glorious grenade.

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Harry Bradbeer: A glorious grenade, she was.

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Jenny Curtis: I would love to hear more about your collaboration with her.

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Harry Bradbeer: Well, we are ruthless with each other. She cares completely about comedy, I care completely about pain, and the two things are necessary in life. It's like life is tragedy and humor together. When we first got together for that first cup of tea, I asked her lots of questions about what the experience was for Fleabag. I think the reason why it works is that I asked her a lot of questions.

Directors often will tell people what to do. I'm interested in what an actor feels about a character, because an actor is their first storyteller. And in this case, the storyteller was also the writer. So I tended to sort of use her like a sponge, I sucked all of her story out of her and then I interrogated everything for truth. She calls me her truth hound. I will listen to any pitch, but I will interrogate it ruthlessly. And that's why I say we have a really helpful fighting relationship. It's like a sister- brother relationship.

I call her my sister, she calls me her sister. That's one of our jokes. We are sisters. Because she thinks that there's a woman inside me, which probably there is. I mean, Jung would say there was. She's just like another bit of me. My mother was going to have another ... a little sister, and she couldn't, and I've always wanted one. And, somehow, Phoebe became that sister. But more practically about how it works, she would write a draft and I will encourage, criticize, build, and shape. Sometimes we role- play.

In the second series, we had Jenny Robins with us, we met on Killing Eve. She's an amazing story producer. So it's really the three of us all working together. I stand by the wall, and as ideas come up for scenes, I put them on Post-its and I stick them up, and I move them around and I try to find a shape. So, in the making of the second series, I remember how the midpoint became really important to me. The point when the priest recognizes that she is talking to someone else. That always had to be ... It's like a tent pole in a movie. And this was a movie in six parts, remember. That tent pole of discovery was there in the middle.

So, first thing that and then allowing the story to build around it. Phoebe had many extraordinary ideas, some which just never made it in there. We tried so hard to bring in the Tube Rodent. We love Jamie, but we couldn't find a way to put him in. In many ways, it's like just being in a writers room, except the director and the writer are working together, rather than a group of writers.

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Jenny Curtis: So since the beginning, you've liked breaking the fourth wall, as you said.

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Harry Bradbeer: Yeah.

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Jenny Curtis: And this tool develops from season one to season two, to where the priest acknowledges us. It felt like us, as the audience, was more a part of the story than being told the story.

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Harry Bradbeer: Do you mean the priest knows that she's talking to us? That notion?

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Jenny Curtis: Yeah.

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Harry Bradbeer: That was Phoebe's idea. That was the moment, I think for her, when she thought that she could do a second series, because the first series had completed in a kind of catharsis. She was someone who wasn't owning up to the terrible things she'd done. She owns up to it, it brings about a catharsis and a crisis for her, but it ends in friendship with the bank manager. So that felt like a beginning, and a middle, and an end.

And we went off to LA for the TCAs, and I remember sitting

in this Brazilian restaurant, talking about the possibility of a second series and there was nothing that could get either of us excited. And then, we went off into Killing Eve together and in the process of that, I think it was all ticking along in her head and, eventually, she came up with this idea of a priest. I think she felt there could be a love story and who harder to pick as a companion than a priest?

And the moment religion entered the story, that higher powers entered the story, special powers, and there was something about a priest who spends his life talking to god, recognizing someone who also talks to someone secretly, and who is, in some ways, metaphysical (inaudible). So when that came to her, that gave her the hope. And that was the thing that she pitched to me when we met for dinner, way before we started prep on Fleabag. She just pitched me this idea that it was going to happen right at the end of the first episode, that she met this priest, who at that point had Tourette Syndrome, actually, which I think was one of the things that I shot in the head.

She met him in his service and he started to eff and blind, and then she gets to talking to him. It wasn't quite clear how she was going to get around to talk to him, but she knew that relationship was going to come together. That existed. She knew that it began with a bloody nose in the restaurant and she knew about the priest recognizing her, and chatting away, and she turns to us and the priest says, "Where did you just go?" And when she said that, a tingle came down my spine. Because we had agonized a lot as to whether we could ever do a second series and that seemed to be a starting point.

I was very keen that we follow the love story aspect of it. I think that it was probably, this is again, me being very heartfelt and her being very funny, coming together, because I pushed her towards the love story with the priest, I think. I'm very soppy. I'm a very sentimental man. And when I said to her, at one point, "I think this is a love story and I think it's about her falling in love with herself," she could have said, "I almost vomited, but I think you might be right."

In fact, it took her a while to accept that. It's about a sort of yin and yang between her and I, in terms of structure and sensibility and support, something I loved as a director. I'd come in and out of TV, and here was the opportunity to really build and shape something with someone, and it was an amazing experience. As I said in the speech, it was a perfect storm of love and trust.

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Jenny Curtis: So for those of us who are huge fans of the show, we're obviously really sad that it's not coming back

for a season three, but I understand that it ended perfectly.

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Harry Bradbeer: Yeah.

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Jenny Curtis: Is it hard to let it go, though?

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Harry Bradbeer: No. No, because that ending is so perfect. It's really hard to not finish something properly. That's how. To walk away from a job thinking, "I could have done that better," that's the hardest thing. I think because the ending, in terms of her letting us go ... And again, that changed in various ways. At one point, we were going to pass on to another Fleabag. We had to cast someone else who could be that Fleabag. In other words, she had left us behind and we had to go and find someone else to follow. And that sort of dissolved in the development process, in the Post-it process, that whole thing.

The idea of her saying goodbye to the priest, it being the worst possible thing, but the best possible thing was that she had some understanding of herself. She loved herself. That's the ending of *Midnight Cowboy*, by the way. This guy loses the person he loves, dies in his arms, on a bus instead of a bus stop, and then he walks off into the distance a stronger person. That's the thing. She's strong enough to stand on her own two feet. And that's how *Enola Holmes* ends, by the way. It's all the same, you end up telling the same stories over and over again.

There's nothing more beautiful than helping a character to love and understand themselves, to accept themselves. Those are the best stories. They're called education plots in the McKee storybook. They might be redemption plots or rites of passage stories. I love those. But that was a rite of passage story of epic proportions, Greek proportions for her. And she ends up with her mother.

The statue was a lovely idea. I love that statue. Talk about collaboration, that statue was I think, initially, at the end of series one, she was going to throw it in the Thames and managed to bring it back. We found a way to bring it back. This is where we're structuring, we were as inventive as possible, "How do we get that statue back?" It turned out to be through Claire. And then, at the end of it, she gives the statue to the ... as the wedding was always going to be the last episode, and that statue then became the wedding present. And then we were wondering how we deal with that. Because now this statue, this precious statue, is now back in the hands of the godmother, which felt so right. Fair

enough.

But then Jenny had this idea, Jenny Robins, "What if the statue was actually modeled on the mother?" We'd never thought of this. This was like a week before we shot it, which is on the last week of filming, "Ah!" So then that became the scene when the godmother sticks one last saber right inside her and says, as she takes the statue, "Of course, I modeled it on your mother." I now hold this person that you treasure above all things, and I'm going to take it away as I've taken your father.

So then, the ending. Again, that was a relatively late idea, that the statue comes out of the bag. So she walks off with her mother at the end. And it's a organic way in which these things come together. But you can't make a better ending than that. So, it may reappear. I think Phoebe said, at one point, in the press, so I can repeat it, that she thinks she might come back when she's 50.

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Jenny Curtis: Yes.

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Harry Bradbeer: Because the menopause is so very interesting to us.

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Jenny Curtis: Between Fleabag season one and season two, that's when you and Phoebe went and shot the first and second episode of Killing Eve. Is that correct?

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Harry Bradbeer: Yeah. At the end of the first series ... I need to say series. We say series over here, not season. Dogs get in season. I'm going to make you say series from now on, sorry. No season.

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Jenny Curtis: I'll say series from now on.

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Harry Bradbeer: So we were finishing up and, again, it was around that time, the TCA's, and then I went off, I think, to ... Oh god, I can't remember what I was doing. I think I was recovering, probably. And we were chatting around Christmas time, and I had heard that she was doing the script for Killing Eve and that it was green-lit, and it was an award ceremony. And she sat and said, "Would you like to come to see us?" And I said, "What? Come to your writers room," and I guess hang out. And she was like, "No, like direct it," and I said, "I think maybe I would." She said, "You won't like it, though." And she

was very nervous of talking about it, because she said, "You won't like it. It's a thriller."

And it was like when my agent said, "You are not going to want to do this. It's a comedy." And when I said, "Well, no. I really do like thrillers and I am obsessed with Hitchcock. So just send me the script." And it was very different, the script, from what you actually see on the show and that quite a few things changed. But that first scene in the ice cream shop is, word for word, the same. And I'd got to the end of that scene, and I knew I wanted to do it.

And I knew what it was, I knew exactly what it was. It was about a woman studying the world while we studied her, and seeing the world through a very particular point of view, and that was to be focused and clear. And the encroaching camera, the probing camera. The idea that we could make what people talked about, but very rarely did, which is a psychological thriller. Overused word. Not often that greatly executed. But this was about a psychopath.

And then you had this DNA of these two women, of very different ages and experience and attitude. And that, again, I thought, "Well, I can see the love story in this," which, again, I tended to push and so, we embarked on it. And so, I met the producers and I told them what I thought, and we made the usual thing you do in a directors meeting. You have to come very clearly with your ideas and maybe a few images, and explain why you think this would work, and what to watch out for.

I always think when you go into a meeting, as a director, say to people what you love and then say to people what it needs. And tell people, because you have to work it up yourself, what you got to watch out for. It's like three things. And I tried to do so with that, and we went ahead and we started casting. And there was a moment, a terrible moment when there was a possibility that we might have the Sandra Oh part, Eve might be younger for her age because it could have been maybe sexier. But I was appalled by that.

I remember that was the one moment where I lost my shit and I said, "The DNA of this film is of this woman, who is going through the menopause, who forms this extraordinary relationship with this woman who's kind of at the other stage of her life." It's deeply sexual, deeply confused, and it's deeply empathetic. And Sandra was ... I wouldn't necessarily immediately have thought of her, but she was perfect. That was Phoebe's idea, it was a brilliant idea. I can't remember who thought of Jodie. But it was our first encounter with Fiona Shaw, who I now try to work with all the time, as does Phoebe.

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Jenny Curtis: She's in Enola Holmes, isn't she?

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Harry Bradbeer: She is, yeah. She plays a character, which I actually invented for her to be in it.

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Jenny Curtis: So, I'm curious to talk about directing a pilot versus directing later on in a series.

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Harry Bradbeer: Yes.

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Jenny Curtis: You're basically setting the tone for what subsequent directors will follow, is that correct?

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Harry Bradbeer: That's correct. Yeah, it's a big responsibility. I did one in America, in New York, *Ramy*. I just did the pilot. Just setting it up, is what we say. That doesn't mean that people can't take your ideas and make them better. They should, they should take what you've laid down and be smarter with it, really, ideally. But the basic casting, the tone, the design, all those choices ... There was one professor who said to me once, "Every single thing is a choice. Every color, every tiny detail," which I think is why I've become so obsessed with detail.

All of the details of that initial episodes, they establish the tone and feel. Particularly the tone, of course. That balance of comedy and tragedy, comedy and drama.

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Jenny Curtis: Jumping into *Ramy*, which, again, great show, but it's definitely a world far outside of yours. So how do you get into the head of the character and the head of the writer when you're directing a show that is so different from what you know?

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Harry Bradbeer: Well, I was just wrapping up on cutting *Killing Eve* when the *Ramy* script arrived, and the reason I loved it so much was it was a very different world. Brilliantly written. But, when I got on the phone to him, it's this thing, I have this obsession with pulling all the information out of the actor. Just sitting and listening, just listening. I said, "If you want me to do this, then the first thing I'd like to do is to come out and hang out with you for two weeks and go to the mosque with you. And meet your family," because these characters were clearly influenced and colored by his family and his friends. So, that's what

we did.

I think that's a pretty important reason why we worked together, because I clearly needed to do that research. So I go and (inaudible) in New York, we arrived, he picked me up from the plane, and we went to the mosque straightaway. It was a Friday morning, and we actually went to two prayer meetings. So, that was quite extraordinary. And then I met his family. And just as I predicted, it was a very informative few days. You have to understand the world you're working in and there's only one way of doing it, by diving in.

00:29:49

Robert Ross: Hi, I'm Robert Ross host of Cars That Matter. You might be wondering what makes a car matter and I have a feeling you already know the answer. Some cars have changed history. Some you can hear a mile away. Some have lines that make your heart skip a beat. If a car has ever made you look twice, then I think you know the ones that matter. Join me as I speak with designers, collectors, and market experts about the passions that drive us and the passions we drive. Cars That Matter, wherever you get your podcasts.

00:30:24

Jenny Curtis: Enola Holmes is coming to Netflix, September 23rd, this week, and it is a delightful mystery about the younger sister of Sherlock Holmes, played by Millie Bobby Brown, who is just awesome. But this is a film, where it appears most of your work is in series. So, what was the reason you were drawn to do this project?

00:30:44

Harry Bradbeer: I go for the script, I go for the character, and I was ready to dive into film. That's fair to say. But I dived into this because I loved the script I was sent. I was looking at TV scripts at the time, and this script came along and it was remarkable. Jack Thorne writes with a kind of elan, a kind ofchutzpah that had so much energy and confidence and eccentricity. And this little character, Enola, she grabbed you by the scruff of the neck and she just dragged you through this period.

It was about Sherlock Holmes, but it was about the Holmes family. It was a prism into him, from the sister. And it was clearly her film. I love the scale of it. I mean, you asked about movies, I've enjoyed the scale of this movie so much. I've loved building the world, of which there are many in this movie. It's challenging in a number of ways. I loved the challenges of the train sequence, the fight sequences.

The fight was particularly interesting to me, because I get very impatient with fight sequences in movies, because they don't have enough story in them. A bit like sex scenes, actually. They don't have enough story in them. It's just stuff going on. People moving and grinding around. And fight sequences can be the same, it's just the escalation happens in terms of whether we can have a bigger explosion or whether you can fall out of a higher building. The jeopardy is very much kept within life, death until you reach the end and someone who gets away with it.

The fight sequence here gave me an opportunity to tell an origin story in the middle of a fight. You've got her facing this apparently unstoppable foe in the form of Linthorn, the man in the bowler hat. And he's just coming to her, to tear her throat out, and she turns the camera and says, "Did I tell you about how a day's education worked with my mother?" And she starts to get ready to fight him, she talks about physics, and she talks about science, she talks about history, and then we had fight combat. And then you cut to the mother challenging and beating the hell out of this little six year old girl, and we intercut that fight with the childhood fight. So you're seeing what she learned as she's practicing it with Linthorn.

And that struck me as being a really fun way of telling a story and keeping the stakes high. But, also, it being more nutritious in terms of narrative and story and comedy, because you've fed them plenty of opportunities for humor. And the moment it gets serious, I'm always trying to make it funny. And the moment everything gets funny, I'm always trying to make it serious.

00:33:10

Jenny Curtis: You brought up breaking the fourth wall again, which, of course, is a huge part of Enola Holmes. Did you bring that to the project or was that written into the script?

00:33:19

Harry Bradbeer: No, it was there in Jack Thorne's script. It was his idea, again, because back to Fleabag, he had been given the books to adapt by Millie's sister, who with Millie had found the books originally. Jack Thorne, who you will know from his various films that he's been writing, but also, very famously, the Harry Potter play on Broadway, that has kind of broken all these records. Jack is so particular, he was wondering how he was going to tell this story, because this character had such a lonely adventure. And he was watching Fleabag and he thought, "Well, why doesn't she address the camera?"

So he put it in. And then, when I read it, my first

thought was, " Oh my god, if I do this movie, Phoebe is going to kill me. She's going to think that I've stolen her idea." In fact, I met her very shortly after and I said to her, " So it's about Enola Holmes, Sherlock's kid sister." She said, " Yeah."

"And it's going to be great fun. And she talks to the camera." She said " Oh what, like Shakespeare?" And I kind of relaxed and I thought, " Yeah, I mean, this has been going on for years." And the more I looked at it, the more I realized their own reasons to address the camera. But we're actually more in tune with Amélie. Her character is a lot more sort of disarming and slightly innocent and confused than Fleabag, and I felt that was a better reference for us.

There was something about this poor girl having no friends but us. And I love the idea that younger audiences, in particular, would feel like they were being invited to participate in this adventure and be complicit in it, and maybe in some of the decisions. So I felt for a family film, it had something very special. And I also love the fact that it's a brave woman, because she is like a woman, pretending to be fine, when in fact she's drowning. So her kind of bravura works against the awful things she's going through, and that's a contradiction I love.

00:35:05

Jenny Curtis: It is a family film, but it's so enjoyable because it's not one that talks down to your audience and like you said, she's a role model for kids to look up to. But also, she's a role model for all of us to look up to.

00:35:17

Harry Bradbeer: Yeah.

00:35:18

Jenny Curtis: I love, about 20 minutes in, and you're about to move into your second act, and she looks at the camera and says, " Our future is up to us," and then off she goes on this grand adventure.

00:35:27

Harry Bradbeer: I came up with that line, I'm proud to say. Because the mother didn't have much of a message for her before, apart from the money. And I thought, " There has to be something that sums up what the mother wants her to get out of this journey." But nothing too sappy. I like the idea that she was giving her a challenge. Everything the mother does is about making her stand on her own two feet. So, it's up to you. It's up to you to make this work. And I think, if this is what you're driving at, all of us, particularly those who are voting this year, have the future in

our hands in the form of the vote. And that's why every vote counts is in there, somewhere, I think.

00:36:01

Jenny Curtis: Yeah. I mean, they're really powerful messages for the modern day, but told in a period piece.

00:36:06

Harry Bradbeer: Great. Thank you.

00:36:07

Jenny Curtis: You mentioned your first short was a period piece. Have you done period pieces since then?

00:36:12

Harry Bradbeer: Yeah, I've done quite a bit of TV that was period. I did *The Hour*, which was about the early days of the BBC, that was set in the 1950s. The near past, I think is great. I love the near past because we see some elements, like early television in that case, we get to understand our own culture through an origin story, origin of TV, which is this thing that fascinates and controls us. But I've also done stuff in the 19th century. I did *Grantchester*, that was set in the 50s. I've done a few others.

I read *History* at university, so I sort of know a bit about the 19th century. And the detail of that period is interesting, it was the first ever consumer culture. So there's so much stuff and detail, it makes design a joy. But it also makes storytelling a joy because, of all the things, like the cryptic instruments that she has, that we researched, and that car, that three-wheeled car, that was a detail of the period that spoke of progress. And in a world where the country is mainly a place of refuge, there's quite a bit in that film in which progress and mechanics are a threat.

So, seeing Miss Harrison, Fiona Shaw, coming on that car felt like the future was coming. And that future is not the future that Eudoria, Enola's mother, wants. It's a future that's sharp and controlling and demanding and defining and confining, particularly for women.

00:37:38

Jenny Curtis: I want to talk a little bit about Millie Bobby Brown, because she does such a phenomenal job as Enola. What was it like working with her? And is there a difference working with a younger actor?

00:37:48

Harry Bradbeer: What I want in an actor is someone who can be alive and real in the moment, who doesn't get caught up in

technique. I've always loved working for younger actors for that reason, because there aren't some of the habits that some people can have. Some people can do it all. You watch Helena Bonham Carter, she is technically astonishing and also, on the turn of a sixpence, completely in the moment and will fire out her feelings through her eyes and expression and come to tears, as she does in the film.

Millie just came as something that was still quite raw, but with a good deal of technical understanding. And she's like a force of nature. She is spontaneous. Strong opinions, which I like. I love strong opinions from all my actors. I want to hear what they have to say and I want to hear what their ideas are, because I take a good idea from anybody.

Her particular skill, I think, is her bravery and her aliveness. She's tremendously courageous. Even if you're throwing her into a bucket or, in particular, the way she shared her emotions in the film. Again, I think rather like I work with Phoebe, I did encourage her to leak out her more sensitive fears than she might not ordinarily have done.

Partly because Jack's script, initially, she was almost like Superwoman. She was pretty Teflon. She was almost indestructible and performing quite extraordinary physical feats. I reduced that to somebody who nothing she did could not plausibly be done by someone. This isn't a film about magic and wands, it doesn't have that kind of glory like Harry Potter. This is about real people with their feet on the ground.

So it's a long-winded way of saying that I think she had a lot of the things that I want in every actor, but I also discovered she can improvise. There's a few lines in there, like when she suddenly would turn to the camera and say, "Do you have any ideas?" She's bringing us in, like she does in the boarding house. She's remarkable. And of course, it allowed me to have someone on the set who's also 16, the same as the character, because it had to come through that prism, that understanding. I was very interested, in terms of how we were going to explain this character to all of our younger audience. She was my channel into that and I often checked things with her.

00:40:04

Jenny Curtis: And this was her first real leading role. In *Stranger Things*, she's the beloved Eleven, of course, but she's part of a strong ensemble. And it appears in *Godzilla*, she was similarly a strong part of an ensemble. So, this was her first time really stepping forward and leading a cast.

00:40:20

Harry Bradbeer: Mm- hmm (affirmative).

00:40:21

Jenny Curtis: What was the experience like for her?

00:40:23

Harry Bradbeer: I think there were times when she was quite tired. I don't think that she'd expected quite that level of work, at times, though her days were restricted by the fact that she was still under 16. She was still 15. Only just 15, which is remarkable. So her days where she only had seven hours on camera but, of course, there's everything on either side of that. And she's still a young person who's not used to that kind of workload, which is much greater than Eleven. I think that from the moment we did the read-through, she controlled that run in that read-through. She was on it, she just dived in. And she had a view on Louis, and she was very clear, the moment she met Louis, that he felt right to her. These things are really important for us, because we need to know how that chemistry is feeling. So I'm glad that she wasn't a retiring violet.

00:41:10

Jenny Curtis: I want to jump over to the animated paper pop-ups.

00:41:14

Harry Bradbeer: I love those.

00:41:15

Jenny Curtis: They're really fun and bright, and they give the film this different type of energy from your other projects. Where did they come from?

00:41:21

Harry Bradbeer: They came in the cutting room. I had this amazing editor, Adam Bosman, who is just one of the hardest working and most lovely people in the business. I can't remember whether it was his idea. It sort of grew from graphics onwards. The pop-up characters you see at the opening of Basilwether, that came out of ... I started to play with graphics, because we needed ways of telling story that weren't really there. Like for instance, the initial first six minutes, you didn't see very much of Eudoria at all. She was a completely mysterious figure.

And so, you see a girl saying, "My mother's gone. Here are my brothers," and off they go. And then the brothers looked like they were having a real go at her and we couldn't quite work out why. It was like before you understood the extraordinary nature of her upbringing, you couldn't understand what her problem was, what their problem was, and what was

kicking this story off. Why this girl was facing such issues with her brother about conformity and behavior.

So, we tried to do some voiceover by taking pictures of Helena and the boys, and we stuck them on some old black and white photos, and we stuck them in front of a picture of the house. We did this sort of in the most basic way, Adam did it, and he made a very basic markup of this, and it had her voiceover underneath. And I thought, "We still need to see the father." So, we got some basic stock footage, but you got the father.

And it hit me, it reminded me of a Terry Gilliam, from Monty Python's Flying Circus, the idea of a little cowboy character falling on his side and dying. "My father died when I was three," bang. Then we put a bell over it. You can see how it developed. So, it started off with just a very formal image and idea with her voiceover, and then we started to move the characters around and it developed organically like that.

And so then, when it came to introducing Basilwether, we came up with this idea of the family and then all their servants. So we gave that to our graphics guy, and he went from there.

00:43:15

Jenny Curtis: This film was so much fun. You've got stowaways in luggage and fighting in the streets and pyrotechnics. Was there a particular scene that was a real blast to shoot?

00:43:26

Harry Bradbeer: I think I love when that fight goes into the bomb factory and she almost gets stabbed by Linthorn, and the corset saves her, because that was a kind of lovely microcosm of the movie. We had action, we had a moment where we really thought she was going to die, and this glorious reversal that involves, ironically, a piece of restrictive female clothing. And her address to camera, which I think she says, "I knew this would have a better use." I think that was the one of the funnest things to shoot.

I love the building of the worlds and I was surprised at how much I enjoyed the London street sequences, for instance. I mean, they all started with this idea. My designer found a picture of London in the 1880s and it was astonishing how crammed everything was together. We imagine it being so polite, but there were all these omnibuses, these like double-decker buses, where people sat on them precariously, they could have fallen off. I thought, "I want that."

And we went everywhere. We got every possible horse-drawn, large vehicle that we could find all over the country. We found these curious automobiles and other contraptions. It was an enormous day, building that world of London, because,

ultimately, it has a little bit of CGI to add to it. But it brought to life the idea of when I first went to London, when you're this little person and you're looking up, and people are staring down at you. This was the idea that I had fixed in my head from very early on, that this smaller person felt oppressed by it. I wanted it to be scary and I loved building that. It was hell to do, but I think we pulled it off.

So, it's those little challenges I love. I love the train sequence, even though it was on green screen. Because people ask me this, they say, "In television, you work in this small-scale Canvas, and then you work on this larger canvas," and that's absolutely true. I didn't find embracing that difficult, I loved it. But if anything, if I had to watch out for anything, it was becoming too in love with unnecessary pyrotechnics.

That crane shot that you spent half the morning putting together, that you don't use? That's the danger. That's where you waste your time, because you've got to get to the heart of every scene. And if there isn't a heart to the scene, then you probably shouldn't shoot it. It's just a piece of theater. It comes back to when I was in the theater, thinking, "I just want to be with these people."

So, that's why in the London sequence, really, while there's a lot of exciting atmosphere and scale, really, if you look at it, most of the time, you're either preceding and following her in a wide lens, either a 25 or 35, mostly a 25, so that you wrap her up in that environment. I mean, there I took a lot of cues, in some ways, from Kubrick, who liked to keep his background and his subject in the same focal length so that we felt that we were experiencing the entire world. It allows the world to wrap around the character and the face.

I'm always finding myself doing that, "I have to make a choice, what am I going to do?" I just want to make that character take me through that world. I want to sit in the driving seat of their mind.

00:46:28

Jenny Curtis: Is there something that landed on the cutting room floor that you really wished didn't have to?

00:46:33

Harry Bradbeer: There was a relationship which was deeper, which, if there's another movie, we'll look into, between her and the housekeeper, which was a shame, it was a sweet scene between them, which had to go. It was a beautiful scene, it was well put together, but the story didn't need it. You've got to get on with your story, you've got to be quite ruthless. The fireside scene where she talks with Tewsbury,

while he's cooked the mushrooms, that was about three times the length. And we cut that down.

When I first showed the movie to Mary Parent, who is our studio boss at Legendary, wonderful, extraordinary woman, no nonsense, we showed her the movie and I remember, at that point, she was scribbling like mad on her pad. I could tell I was going to get into trouble for this. Because there were moments that dragged, we needed a bit of cuts there. It was beautiful stuff between them, but it had to go.

00:47:23

Jenny Curtis: I do want to wrap up on my favorite question to end these with, what does it mean to you to have a life in storytelling?

00:47:31

Harry Bradbeer: Immensely lucky and privileged. I think not only is it a great responsibility, but what I really love about it is it never gets any easier. Telling a great story in screen is one of the hardest things. I'm wrapping my head around something that we're working on together, Legendary and I have another movie, Séance on a Wet Afternoon, that we're working on together. And I'm just straining my brain to work out how certain elements of it work. And it never gets any easier, which I hate. I really want it to be easier. But I love the fact that it's difficult.

A story is a very sophisticated and demanding element, which is, in some ways, very full of things that have to be unique. But if it's going to work, it has to be universal. And so, the best stories are so simple. They're more complex than complicated. They are simple stories that are complexly told. And this challenge of delivering the audience something that they wanted all along but, in a way they never expected, is the hardest damn thing.

And I love the fact that in movies, as a director, I get to be at the heart of that storytelling process and the heart of that development.

00:48:41

Jenny Curtis: Harry, thank you so much for joining me today. I have loved talking to you.

00:48:46

Harry Bradbeer: Thank you very much. It was great fun.

00:48:48

Jenny Curtis: Everyone should definitely go watch Enola Holmes. I smiled the entire way through the movie.

00:48:53

Harry Bradbeer: Oh, great.

00:48:54

Jenny Curtis: Thank you, Harry, and thank you for giving us so much insight into what you do.

00:48:58

Harry Bradbeer: Thank you for looking after me.

00:49:02

Jenny Curtis: Hollywood Unscripted was created by CurtCo Media. This special episode of the Stuck at Home series was hosted and produced by me, Jenny Curtis. With guest Harry Bradbeer. Co-produced and edited by Jay Whiting. The executive producer of Hollywood Unscripted is Stuart Halperin. The Hollywood Unscripted theme song is by Celleste and Eric Dick. Make sure to subscribe so you don't miss any special episodes of Hollywood Unscripted: Stuck at Home.

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