



FEATURE

GROSSE MISCONDUCT EVERYONE NEEDS TO START WATCHING IMMEDIATELY

BY MICHEL KHORDOC

Looking for a web-series to binge watch right now?

Get your popcorn ready and tune in to *Grosse Misconduct*.

Released on the heels of Ryan Murphy's groundbreaking 1990s musical series "Pose", which features the largest LGBTQ cast in the history of scripted television series, *Grosse Misconduct* is a six-part digital series created by out actor Colby Ryan and co-written with his writing partner, Anne Schroeder. *Grosse Misconduct* depicts an eccentric Human Resources team as they navigate personal and professional struggles under the leadership of their high-maintenance director, Mitch Grosse (played by Colby Ryan). It is a workplace comedy that veers from the dramatic to the absurd. The show uniquely features four lead characters, two of which represent the LGBTQ community, and are played by Colby Ryan (creator/writer/exec producer and a gay actor) and Pooya Mohseni (Iranian-American transgender actress/activist). We sat down with Colby Ryan to talk about the web series; LGBTQ representation and creating original and authentic content the digital age.

Can you start off by describing what the series is all about?

Sure! "*Grosse Misconduct*" is a six-part digital series that depicts an eccentric Human Resources team navigating personal and professional struggles under the leadership of their high-maintenance director, Mitch Grosse (played by me). It features four lead characters, two of which are part of the LGBT+ community.

How did you and Anne Schroeder come up with the idea for the show?

Anne and I met in a class, started socializing and decided to create our own content. The idea of a workplace comedy web series appealed to both of us, since you can have such a wide range of characters in that setting. I've had an alternate career in Human Resources - my last role was as Director of Human Resources at the corporate office of Calvin Klein - and I suggested we focus on an HR team where the leader is completely incompetent at his job.



COLBY RYAN

Since an HR department sets the bar for workplace behavior and provides guidance for all employee issues, we found a lot of humor in that contrast.

six part digital series
GROSSE MISCONDUCT
www.grossemisconduct.com



What goes into creating each episode?

Anne and I brainstormed about situations and scenes we wanted to explore, and then determined an outline of where each of the four lead characters begins and ends the season. We met on a regular basis, either in person or via FaceTime, to set the framework for each episode. Then we divided the work and individually focused on fleshing out each scene with dialogue. We'd send each other drafts, and re-group to share thoughts about what worked and what didn't. Anne and I have different voices, but they blended well and it was a very collaborative process. The biggest challenge was our commitment to keeping the episodes brief - they're each 5 to 7 minutes long. We wanted to pack as much story and character into each episode as possible, and still appeal to people on the go who are looking to laugh for few minutes during lunch break or their commute. You can have a short attention span and totally gobble up "Grosse Misconduct" with no problem!

You've created such colorful characters; do you feel like you can relate to your character in some ways, or that you're similar in any ways?

Thank you - we love them all! Yes, I can relate to Mitch in some ways, definitely. We are both gay men of a certain age who've dealt with our share of insecurity and feelings of inadequacy. We are both very sensitive. But Mitch displays an almost naive kind of self-centered behavior, and makes no effort to disguise how moody and petulant he can be. He's childish at times. Deep down, he does care about others - he just misplaces his empathy on occasion and must be reminded when he's being especially thoughtless. I, on the other hand, try to be sensitive to others' feelings and energy...sometimes; I wish I could let it all hang out like Mitch!

What makes Grosse Misconduct a MUST SEE webseries?

This is not your routine workplace comedy, folks! We are proud to feature a gay man and a transgender woman as two of our leads, but there is no "coming out" story here, and no gender identity struggle. We are spotlighting LGBT characters in a narrative that



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shows how alike we all are, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. We support the representation of the full spectrum of our LGBT+ communities, and “Grosse Misconduct” features characters that are identifiable and relatable to ALL audiences. And while it’s a comedy, the series veers from the absurd to the dramatic at times. I mean, one of the characters is a chicken, ok?? “Grosse Misconduct” is more than it first appears. You will laugh, you will be engaged, and you will be moved.

GM has a few LGBT talents, both in front of and behind the camera. How do you feel having LGBT people involved in the process affects the show?

It all comes down to representation and authenticity. The more LGBT+ voices and viewpoints you have when creating a show that features leading LGBT+ characters, the more accurate and heartfelt the portrayals, and the more clear your mission becomes. The best part for us was the combination of cisgender, heterosexual, homosexual, transgender, older and younger hearts and minds coming together to create something very special and real. Our workflow and collaborative spirits were fully aligned - it was such a dream to work with them all and I want to do it again!

Grosse Misconduct stars Iranian/American actor, Transgender advocate, Pooya Mohseni. How did you meet her and why was it important for you to create a lead role for her?

We decided to make one of the lead roles, Alicia, a transgender woman, and focused on finding a transgender actress who could imbue the character with strength, compassion and class. In doing our research, we immediately gravitated towards Pooya Mohseni after seeing clips of her work and articles about her experience as a trans actress - we knew she could bring all the qualities to Alicia that we

envisioned. I reached out to her, asked her to read the script, and after one phone call, the match was made. We were thrilled to include a major character who is transgender, and an Iranian immigrant, but for the focus to be on her relatability as a human being - to show viewers how similar we all are deep down, and to not make Alicia’s transgender identity the core of her narrative.

Speaking about representation, what do you see as the current climate for the creation of LGBTQ content in Hollywood - an industry that has seemingly been open to the LGBTQ community. Do you think that we have reached equality in this arena or do we still have ways to go?

I’m very pleased with what we’ve seen in just the last six months, as representation matters! “Will & Grace” and “Queer Eye” are back, and we have “Pose”, “Champions”, “Instinct” with lead LGBT characters on TV, a beautiful coming of age story for a gay teen in “Love, Simon” - I mean, it’s terrific to be a part of this movement towards inclusivity for the LGBT+ community, but we must be vigilant. It’s great that Hollywood is so open, but without support throughout the country, the overall effect is weakened. Complacency is death, and the current administration is definitely not our ally at this time. We’ve come a long way, but no I don’t think we’ve reached equality. Those of us who live in NYC, LA and other major cities may have the luxury of being sheltered from some of the current threats to our LGBT+ communities, but make no mistake - there’s much work to be done. We’re creating strong building blocks in entertainment, but we must continue to reinforce the foundation and never stop telling relevant LGBT+ stories and sharing our hearts and minds.

Again, while there seems to be an overwhelming embrace of a culture of diversity & inclusion with LGBTQ-centric narratives and characters popping up in movies these past few years, we still



see Hollywood giving LGBTQ roles to cisgender actors (Jared Leto in Dallas Buyers Club, Jeffrey Tambor in Transparent). How do you feel about it and what needs to be done to change that trend?

I can see both sides, but we do need to move the needle here, and I think it will be easier to do so if more and more LGBTQ+ actors, specifically transgender actors, are given opportunities and exposure. Obviously, studios and producers are looking at the bottom line - if there's not a strong selection of transgender actors with the popularity to bring major viewers to a project, I understand why some of these choices were made, and I think Jared Leto and Jeffrey Tambor both succeeded in bringing those characters to three-dimensional life, so they did their jobs. We need more projects to be produced, to be green lit, to give opportunities to up-and-coming LGBTQ+ actors who have great potential, so they'll be ready for a major film/TV show to cast them - so that they'll already be part of a conversation and be top of mind for the right roles. We need LGBTQ+ voices behind the scenes, in development stages of new projects, to ensure they stay on the right track and represent the community while doing justice to the project. The talent is out there - go get it!

What are your thoughts on all the web-series that have and continue to be created and streamed online?

I think it's been a natural progression as the industry has become more splintered in terms of the types of content we view, and the methods by which we view it. Attention spans are so short these days, and a well-produced, well-packaged web series that cuts to the chase can have the same impact as a good TV show or film. Now that I've created one, I can say it's been a phenomenally educational experience - learning about all aspects of pre- and post-production, the casting process, writing challenges, location scouting...it's left me so much better prepared for whatever hurdles I'll encounter in the



future. I've never felt so proud to have created something - all artists should have that feeling.

Online streaming has created a formidable opportunity for indie talent to showcase their work but also access a wider audience while promoting a diverse range of stories. How would you say GM fits into that picture?

As a workplace comedy, "Grosse Misconduct" appears to fit snugly into a category we've seen before - but look closer and you'll see the stories and characters can satisfy many other palates when you need a quick fix - there's real drama, a salty-mouthed chicken, pop cultural references, a major scene featuring 2 characters sitting on toilets, geriatric porn, and the sweetest Amish couple you will ever see in film/television. So our series actually fits into many pictures in the world of streaming content - it's for everyone!!

What are your film(s) influences? Who inspires you?

I love film in general, almost all genres (can't do horror films, my imagination just drives me insane). My sense of humor is pretty warped, so I'm all about "War of the Roses" and the Todd Solondz film "Happiness". I loved the newness and energy of "Pulp Fiction", the intensity of "Requiem for a Dream". As an actor, I was gutted by "Dead Poets Society" (I'm crying now just thinking about it) and the ecstasy/agony of the forbidden love in "Brokeback Mountain". Any

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film or filmmaker that is focused on examining the human condition, in all its complexities and the dark corners that make us who we truly are, that's what inspires me. That's what unites us, if we're not afraid to look in the mirror.

Who in the film/TV industry would you like to collaborate with?

Oh wow - Ryan Murphy please!! I'd love to be on one of his brilliant shows. Scott Rudin has such great taste in film projects. Dan Bucatinsky is so smart and multi-talented. To be directed in a play by Joe Mantello?? - Heaven. In terms of actors, I'd love to trade barbs with Sean Hayes on "Will & Grace" or to share a stage with John Benjamin Hickey or David Hyde Pierce.

What are your goals for the show? Will there be longer episodes, guest stars, etc.?

We want everyone to watch "Grosse Misconduct", and if you are entertained, please share it with friends and spread the word! We are currently writing Season 2, which will likely be in a similar format and length. Longer episodes? Perhaps, especially if we are able to partner with a distributor or investors that can help facilitate that.

Guest stars? You never know - we've established that pretty much anything can happen in the offices of Grosse & Foster, so stay tuned!

What else should we know?

Yes, the slap I received in Episode 2 was 100% real, with no sound effect added...and we shot that moment about 10 times, to get all the angles we needed. I regained feeling in my left cheek sometime the next day.

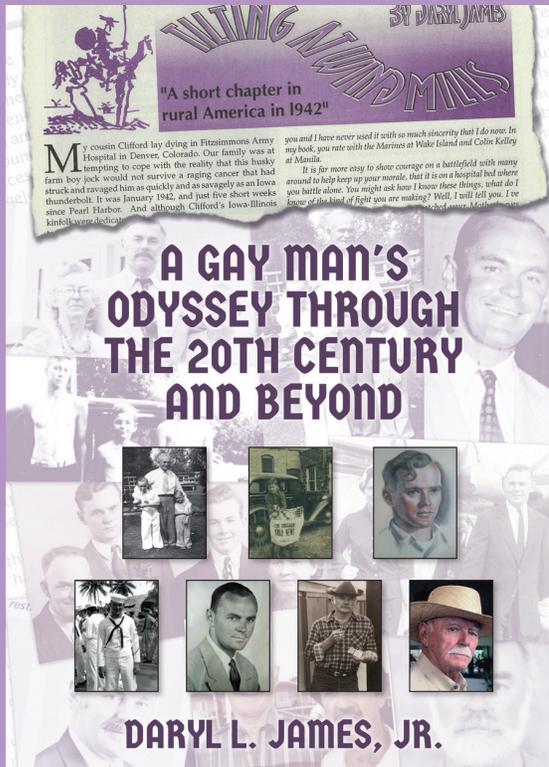
What is the one question that is missing from this interview that you wish I had asked?

Who was the most difficult performer you worked with on the series?

Mr. Fuzzles, who is first introduced in Episode 1. It was non-stop complaining about his lack of airtime, the fact that he had no lines, and he took great offense to his character's fate in Episode 6. His attorney has been in touch, but we think we'll beat the personal injury lawsuit.

FOR MORE INFO: www.grossemisconduct.com

Daryl's story is a history like none we've heard before. We learn what it was like to be a gay man in the Depression in Middle America, when he was "outed" his junior year of high school. The terror of being set-up and arrested by the vice-squad in L.A. or being preyed upon by violent homophobes in Chicago. He is a proud veteran of both WW II and the Korean War, where he served as a radio man doing top-secret work in places like the Amazon and the island of Guam. He built his career in publishing and advertising through the 1950's, 60's and 70's. He worked on Madison Avenue and Hollywood. He survived both McCarthyism and the AIDS epidemic, suffering great loss as a result of each. His stories and the stories of the men and women he has loved strike a huge chord in our society today. Like Forest Gump, Daryl has been on-the-ground and present, recording the details of many of our most amazing historic times and events.



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