



# One Stop Doc Shop Live Sessions

## Week 2. Andee Ryder



### Introduction

*(Intro music starts – cinema film reel whirring, and countdown beeps)*

Hello and welcome to One Stop Doc Shop Live, a series that celebrates and encourages diversity in non-fiction filmmaking. In each episode, our guest will share their secrets on how to produce award-winning documentaries.

I'm your host Angela Clarke and this session was made possible with the support of Screen Alliance Wales, Ffilm Cymru Wales and BFI Network funding from the National Lottery.

My guest this week is multi-award winning producer Andee Ryder. Co-founder of Misfits Entertainment, Andee's feature documentaries have garnered numerous accolades, and have showcased at festivals around the world.

Misfit's first feature documentary **McQueen**, sensitively explored the rags to riches story of the British fashion industry's most tortured genius Alexander McQueen. In 2019, it picked up two BAFTA film nominations for Best Documentary and Best British film.

Their next feature documentary **Rising Phoenix**, explored the history of the Paralympic Games, and scooped two Emmy awards for Best Sports Documentary and Best Music Direction.

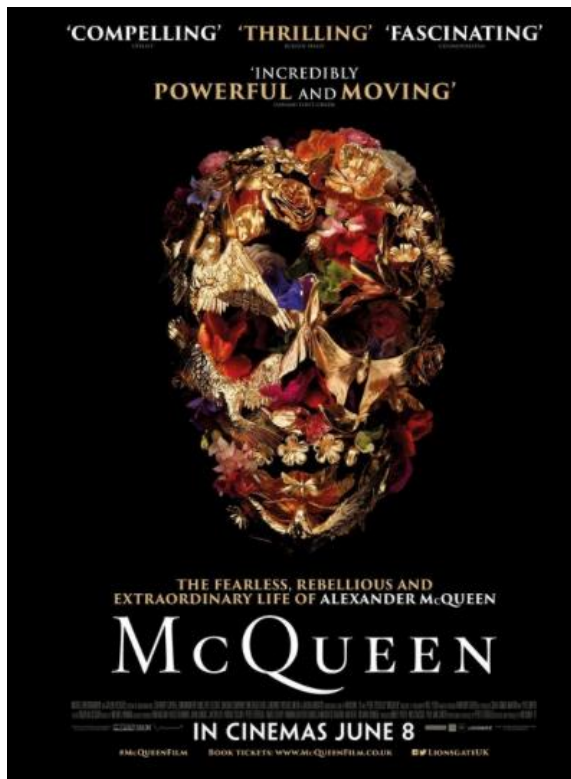
We talk about what it takes to make successful archive documentaries, the pressures involved in delivering fast turnaround projects as well as the trials and tribulations of producing during a pandemic.

Andee also discusses what qualities she looks for in talent when pairing up on projects, as well as the importance of learning from your mistakes.

I hope you enjoy listening.....



Rising Phoenix



McQueen

**Angela Clarke** – How did you get into producing? Did you study it? How did you come to this pathway?

**Andee Ryder** – I went to the University of Greenwich, and I got a general media and film degree, it's not a very good university (*laughs*). The course was okay, but I basically started trying to get into the industry afterwards, but it took me a long time, a couple of years until I got my first job. Before that I was working as a gardener for two years which I kind of really enjoyed actually so that was always a fallback!

Then I got my first job but in the meantime, I met up with a friend of mine who wanted to make films as well. And we basically just decided to make our own films together around our work, when we had time. And so I just made a few different short films, all zero budget. These were all fiction at the time. I did a couple of documentaries but just very, very small things. And then essentially, whilst working my way up the industry, my first ever job was on Time Team, do you remember that? The archaeology programme with Tony Robinson!

**Angela Clarke** - Yeah.

**Andee Ryder** - So I was just working my way up the industry, I stayed in documentary and I worked as a Researcher and Assistant Producer. I was working my way up there but I also worked in film. I worked in post-production quite a lot. I worked on Stardust, The Dark Knight & The Long Way Down. I started to get into editing, on the film side, it was a bit of a mix.

But all the time I was making my own films on the side. And then I decided to raise... Myself and Al Mackay who's now a really good drama director, he directs a lot of stuff like Cobra, and things like that, also a couple of episodes of Banana. We decided to raise some money and not actually do a zero-budget one and actually try and make a short film on our own. We tried to raise £15,000 and ended up raising £10,000, but we spent £18,000 (*laughs*) but we made a short film called **Bale**. It took me about two years after to pay off because we spent, like, £8000 more than we wanted to.

But it did really well and we got what was called the UK Film Council Completion Fund at the time. And that kind of launched my producing career really because the film got into over 100 festivals globally, good festivals, and it premiered at Edinburgh. Off the back of that, I then got offered another short film from a company which was then called Between the Eyes, but it's now called 42. So 42MP (Management & Production) you know, they're a really big company but really successful. But Rory and Ben, who ran it then, it was just Rory and Ben before they merged with Josh and Kate on the agent side, they got me in to do a short film because they'd seen **Bale**, and they liked it. Then, off the back of that short film, I then started doing music videos, and a couple of docs with them, stuff like that. And so that's where my producing started, was there. But the whole time I was always trying to make my own films, and set up my own

production company but I hadn't quite got there yet. But that's really how I got into producing. Yeah, that's where it started.

**Angela Clarke** - So did you, did you say you crowdfunded that? So **Bale** had a bit of crowd funding, was that how you raised the money?

**Andee Ryder** - It was crowd funding before it was done on the Internet, yeah! So it was, I mean, it was comprised of us putting in a little bit of our own money, when I say a little bit, like I mean a grand each or something. And then, we just got £50 here, £200 there, or £300 there! It was just off friends, family, randoms. We filmed it where we grew up, so we very much focused on trying to get people in the local area to fund it, you know, and just beg, borrow, steal a way but we managed to raise, in the end, it did get to £10,000 and then, like I said, we tried to raise £15,000 & spent £18,000 and so I had to pay off the £8,000 over the next two years. We actually burnt the set down on day two of five so that was a bit of a disaster! *(laughs)*

**Angela Clarke** - Burnt the set down?

**Andee Ryder** - Yeah not deliberately! *(laughs)* We'd got one of the UK film industry's most experienced SFX companies to work on it. They literally make mega movies like Ironman & Batman, and they burned our set down on day two of five by accident, which was traumatic! *(laughing)* Which is why we needed the UK Film Council Completion Money to finish it off.

**Angela Clarke** - To re-build the set? *(laughing)*

**Andee Ryder** - Yes. *(laughing)*

**Angela Clarke** - And so when did you set up Misfits Entertainment then? How long has that been going now?

**Andee Ryder** - Yeah so Misfits is four and a half years old now, as a production company. Basically, I met Ian through music videos, and we made our first film, **Alley Cats**, which is a fiction film. And we knew beforehand that we were getting on. Ian's old company that he founded, he co-founded Pulse Films with Thomas Benski and Marisa Clifford, and anyway we were getting along really well and he was saying that he was looking to move on from Pulse. So we basically said, well if **Alley Cats** goes well in terms of we're still talking afterwards and we get on and enjoy the creative and business experience of working together, we'd be interested in setting up.

So we basically set Misfits up in 2016, after we'd made **Alley Cats** and it did well. It's a film we're very proud of, and it was our first feature of any kind, documentary or scripted. It was a scripted film, and it did well, like financially, particularly in that we managed to pay back our investors, plus their interest. So that enabled us to set Misfits up off the back of that, really. So, yeah, that was in 2016.

**Angela Clarke** - So the first documentary feature that you produced was the double BAFTA nominated *McQueen* documentary about Alexander McQueen, the designer. So can you tell me a little bit about that project in terms of why you're interested in that subject and how did you get that off the ground?

**Andee Ryder** - Sure, yeah. So when Ian and I set up Misfits, we'd always said we wanted to do these international projects or international features. We were interested, primarily in scripted but we said, at some point, we would like to do some docs as well. Ian had done a couple, but I'd also worked in documentary a lot. I used to work at Darlow Smithson, Pioneer Productions, and I did a bit of time at Ricochet and various different documentary companies. So I kind of knew the pipeline and the process involved in making documentaries and I always enjoyed it so we just felt, when the timing was right, we'd do that.

And then it was very much a timing thing with *McQueen* really. We were having lunch with some friends of ours at Salon Pictures who are another London-based production company. We were literally just catching up and talking about how we could work together because we get on with the guys. And the idea of *McQueen* came up and we basically said that'd be really cool. Let's go away and do our research and check what's been done on it before because obviously you know, if it's someone well known, you think maybe there's probably been stuff done on them before.

So we went away and looked, and we could see that there was, what we called 'the obituary' movie, which was made one year after he passed which was very much a made-for-television doc which was a one-hour special. And if you look at it, you just felt it was a fairly quick turnaround TV one and so we thought actually, there's really nothing out there. So we thought there's an opportunity there, and we then looked more at the story. Ian is very much more of a fashion follower than I am; I mean obviously I knew a bit about a Lee McQueen, but not huge amounts.

So we did some research into whether we thought it would make a really good feature doc because obviously you think, 'Okay it's there, let's just double check', and obviously we just felt he's got such an amazing story, and obviously just an incredible, incredible artist, but there was a brilliant story behind all that and we just thought it had all the ingredients to make what would be a really, really brilliant doc and of course then we had to try and work out how we're going to make it and raise the money.

**Angela Clarke** - If people haven't seen the doc it's still available, I think you can get it through Now TV at the moment. I mean it's an amazing documentary and he's an amazing character because not only does he have a tremendous rag-to-riches story in terms of East-End boy coming from nothing, and you know he's quite different, very outspoken. He's a unique talent but doesn't always fit the mould of what the fashion world had at that particular time. But also what's interesting is, he's passed away, and so you have to build a big film around him, telling the story of who he is from just archive then.

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So I suppose when I was watching the film I mean, the credits at the end are just eye-watering. It made me think like, oh my God, how big was your spreadsheet with all your archive details because that's always in my head when I watch films. *(both laughing)* All of that stuff had to be documented somewhere because there must be hundreds of different sources because you featured a combination of stuff from the fashion houses, his own personal archive, snippets of interviews he did on TV and various other bits and bobs of shows or magazine shows and that kind of stuff.

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So, when you go to pitch something like that to get funding, how much access did you have to all that archive then? Had you scoped out what it was going to cost, how many of the family members had you reached out to? Talk us through that because I think that's what's difficult when you're starting out in this process is for people to understand how much or how little work do you need to do? What are film buyers expecting when you're pitching something like that?

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**Andee Ryder** - Yeah, it's a good question. I mean there's a lot of what not to do, in terms of how we approached *McQueen*. Again, it was our first documentary, and so I mean we tried to put together a budget of what we thought it would cost to make it, you know, which came in at about a million quid. And, and we felt, okay let's give it a go! We brought in Embankment Films as exec producers to help sell it. And the access side of things, I mean, we basically didn't have any access is the truth of the matter. And what we said, when people asked us if we had it, we just said we were talking to people, which we were. But we didn't ever say, "We've got it"! What we actually did is we turned it back on them.

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So, if a distributor asked us, or financier asked us, "Have you got access?", we said, "Well, you know, we need you to give us the money to get it". We kind of turned it back on them because we said these people are all important people, they're very busy and they didn't want to just get involved in a film that they think is just some random film that's going to go nowhere. And you know, obviously, it wasn't that long ago when he passed, you know, at the time it was about eight years when we started going to production from when Lee had passed. And, you know, obviously it's a very sensitive subject, and so we were unsure whether people would want to get onboard with a subject where it wasn't financed or things like that. So we basically just turned it back on financiers and said you know we need your commitment in order to get access.

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So that was how we worked on the access and, obviously with the archive we did some research on the archive. We basically spent a bit of money developing a treatment, and we hired an Archive Producer to do some digging and basically give us a good list of what stuff was out there. And, from what we looked at initially we thought, okay there's a lot of good stuff but we didn't get to the real nuggets until you really get going because a lot of the best archive in *McQueen* came from tapes that people had in their attic and things like that that you just get from talking to people as you're making the film. You know, some from contributors who get involved, and some from people who might not want to be filmed but they would give you archive and all of that stuff and so we had initial



archive that we thought was enough to make a film, and we felt we could get some people on board.

I mean we didn't ever get the brand on board, you know, it wasn't made in collaboration with Alexander McQueen the brand. But, yeah, but you know, we felt we'd tried to be very respectful towards his legacy and them and things so it was a sensitively approached film. We did also write a treatment. We learned how to do feature docs as a collective myself, Ian and Peter from doing *McQueen*. I've been involved in them before but not ones that I've produced personally on my film, and we like to say that we come at it from a scripted point of view. We approach all of our docs thinking how do we make these as cinematic as possible?

And that comes from the writing, the realisation, the visual treatment, the sound design and music. And it's the same with the writing. We have quite a heavily written approach, which some people get a bit confused about in docs because we basically write a treatment. And some people will say well, "How do you know you're going to get it?" And we say well, "That's our best-case scenario of what we're trying to do, and so you might not get every part of that, but that's the narrative we want to tell". And so, we wrote a treatment, and then did the archive research and then we start talking to financiers and things.

**Angela Clarke** - I was going to say I've worked in TV development for years and that's always what I've done. I've always written some sort of loose treatment because you just use it as a guide to help develop a narrative arc, don't you?

**Andee Ryder** - Yeah.

**Angela Clarke** - I mean, with that one, there's less likelihood of things changing that much because obviously, you are telling a past tense story, you know, so it's not, it's not like you were following unfurling action where you're not going to know where it's going.

**Andee Ryder** - Exactly, yeah.

**Angela Clarke** - I think with those things you can, kind of, map out exactly what you want and then as you go along, you're going to pick up those extra gems along the way from people that you wouldn't have known until you started to speak to some random cousin or a random friend that you didn't realise had a whole personal archive or footage that they filmed when they were all together so those things just build up, don't they?

**Andee Ryder** - Exactly, it's a roadmap. Our treatments are a roadmap of how we want to go about the film. We know more stuff will come out and you'll go down different little alleyways and things but essentially that's the blueprint roadmap to get us started. I should also mention we did a teaser as well. It wasn't very long - only like two minutes, two and half, I think, tops.

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But actually you know, I've made enough teasers now to say it was a strong one. It was well done. It really grabbed you, so essentially we had a treatment, a teaser and a budget that we had no idea if we'd raise, but we thought we'd give it a go. *(laughs)*

**Angela Clarke** - So you took that one to Berlin didn't you, to try and raise the money?

**Andee Ryder** - Yeah, so essentially, between Misfits and Salon, we talked to various distributors and sales agents that we wanted to try and get on board and then we brought on Embankment Films. We sent them the treatment and deck and then they had feedback and we basically made materials that we took to Berlin, EFM, as I call it, The European Film Festival in 2017! And we went there with the feedback from Embankment; they had fed back into our teaser. And, and if we're totally honest, and if Embankment are totally honest, we all just sort of said right you know let's try and raise the money and see how we go! We thought we might get like £500,000 or £600,000, that's what we thought maybe we'd raise and we'd just make it with that.

**Angela Clarke** - And also, I think what's interesting about yourself as well because you make fiction films *and* documentaries, your approach to raising money is to some degree a much better set-up because a lot of documentary companies do things a lot more piecemeal. They'll get a little bit of money for development, or a little bit of money to get the first chunk of production up and running and come back to raise the next chunk of money when it comes to the edit or post production etc. And it's interesting that you take a different approach to it. And I think to some degree that gives you a lot more creative freedom because you know exactly what your pot of money is at the beginning, so you know exactly what you can spend on things.

**Andee Ryder** - Yeah, yeah. Otherwise you're sort of spending as you go and it's difficult. I'm familiar with the more piecemeal approach. I've mentioned before we are also involved in a number of projects, and actually we're involved in two projects where they've used a more piecemeal approach as you describe, but because of our film backgrounds, in film you raise the budget you need to make the film, and you don't really start it until you have that budget in place.

There's obviously little bits of leeway, but essentially, let's say, the budget is £10 million you know you do a bit of development, but you don't go into production until you've raised the £10 million. And so we used that same approach with **McQueen** and to be honest with all of our documentaries. We essentially have a couple of stages if we need to maybe try and find or fund our own development. With **McQueen** we actually co-funded it with Salon, just the development process. And then that gave us the materials and deck and all the stuff that we knew would be needed to pitch it, so that's Stage One. However we fund that, or however we raise the cash, we always call that Stage One. And then Stage Two, is we raise the full finance for the film and we don't start it until we've done that.



**Angela Clarke** - And so how long then from raising your finance, you've gone to Berlin, it's been successful, and you've got your money. How long did it take you to then get from there to the endpoint in terms of delivery?

**Andee Ryder** - Berlin was a bit of a crazy experience because I always say maybe or hopefully this statement will change, but I think it's unlikely but it would be great if it did, but I don't think we'll ever raise money for a film as quickly as we did for *McQueen* again. It was very strange. So we went to EFM with all of our materials, and we raised the entire budget in three days with Embankment Films. They were fantastic, and they really did a great job, but it was just a crazy three days.

We came back on the flight and I'm not someone to celebrate unnecessarily but Ian and I just turned to each other and said we're definitely having a glass of champagne because you know that's a moment you've got to enjoy. And we'd raised the entire budget that we first set out to do which was just a bit surreal. So we came back, and then we're like right okay, we better work out how to make this film! And the mad thing is that we literally got the money at Berlin EFM in 2017, and we screened the finished film at Berlin a year later, so it was crazy! It was a really intense year, and all the while we were making a number of productions at the same time, we were only a small company, smaller then as well than we are now. And, you know, so it was, it was a really busy time 2017 for production. But yeah, it (*McQueen*) was literally finished in a calendar year.

**Angela Clarke** How long did you estimate you'd have in the edit for something like that? (*laughing*) Obviously you've got tons of archive, I mean I can't even begin to imagine how many hundreds of hours of footage you must've ploughed through! How long does that take? It would be really good if you could talk us through that. How did the edit go and what did you devote to that? And also doing all of that in such a fast space of time, but whilst not really having the family or any of his mates on board yet!

**Andee Ryder** - Yeah, it was terrifying. Absolutely terrifying. (*laughing*) I mean, the anxiety levels were just very high because, you know, we didn't really have anyone, and it was just you know we'd obviously raised this money to these really solid international distributors and, you know, we obviously back ourselves to make a certain quality of film but you know it was like, "Is anyone going to talk to us?"

**Angela Clarke** - Were you starting to get slightly sweaty?

**Andee Ryder** - Yeah! But gradually, obviously through perseverance, people did start talking to us. There was a funny thing though, when we first filmed people we often would run the camera for hours just in case as we didn't know if anyone else would talk to us (*laughing*). So, I mean, again, how we approached this was all a bit crazy. I've probably said that a few times now but you're probably getting the idea! I think we had an initial 14-week plan or something for the edit, but what we've very much learned about our approach is that's just

never going to be enough for a solid feature doc, particularly one that's based on archive. You just need time to wade through the hours and mountains of archive and structuring and so I mean we ended up editing in total, it was around 32 weeks. I mean actually it was a bit shorter than that but we did bring in, when we were starting to get a bit closer to our deadline, which was really fast and Cinzia (*editor*) just needed a bit more time, we brought in Otto to just literally help. We didn't have enough time, so we needed two editors to hit our deadlines, so that was a bit crazy as well. But I think if you were doing it in one, long stretch, it would have been about 30 - 32 weeks, somewhere around that.

**Angela Clarke** - Yeah, well, that's the thing, it's a big chunk of time. And as you say with those films, it's one thing to find the archives but then as you say, as you're meeting and speaking to different people then somebody else brings some other new footage so it's constantly 'put something in, take something out, put something in take something out'. And you know if people haven't seen it, you should watch it, it's so beautiful because there are lovely peaks and troughs throughout.

And because he is such an all-or-nothing character, you let his story breathe as well with the kind of five act structure where you've looked at the five big phases in his life; or his designs as it were, and the backreferences regarding where those have come from so it's really nicely put together. Obviously, as well, you're covering quite a big timeline with him going from a nobody, really, when he was just starting out in the very beginning, right the way through to where he was just before he passes away.

**Andee Ryder** - It's funny you should mention the five acts because it was originally six. But when we viewed the rough cut we all realized that, what was previously Chapter Five became merged into what was previously Chapter Four, so yeah, we called them chapters or takes but, yeah, that was, that was the structure.

**Angela Clarke** - Because it makes it easy to understand as well because you are jumping back and forth.

**Andee Ryder** - It's not entirely linear, *McQueen*. It feels like if you take a step back, it feels like it is because we go from the beginning to the end, but actually it does move in and out. Yeah. Time jumps about a bit, yeah.

**Angela Clarke** - But it, but it makes sense because what you're holding onto throughout is those themes where you're unpicking his personality, as it were. It's a good example of a really beautiful way to pull together a story. I sometimes think when you get those big feature docs centred around an amazing character, people sometimes feel the need to stick to a really linear narrative and then sometimes you can end up having a first chunk of a film that's not that interesting, because they aren't that interesting until they get going, but I think that's what works really well with yours is the fact that you get that sense of all those different component parts of his personality right from the off, and then

you drop in the back references of, kind of, 'Ah right, that was sparked from childhood' etc.

**Andee Ryder** – That does go back to a lot of the writing, you know, it was written like that when we wrote the treatment, which was essentially, it's about 10 - 12 pages for a couple of hours worth for a feature doc. That was in there already, you know. It was all there in the roadmap, so there wasn't a huge amount of deviation from that in terms of structure apart from, as I say, the Fifth Chapter merging into the Fourth.

**Angela Clarke** - I think also that's what's interesting about your company because you do that fusion of fiction and documentary.

**Andee Ryder** - Yeah, yeah, it's so hard. It's like what do you call them? They're all films, but it was a scripted doc.

**Angela Clarke** - It lends itself nicely to people not feeling beholden to telling a narrative in a particular way. He's a great character and the archive is amazing but what elevates something is turning it into a really engaging story. And it's not just making it a box-ticking thing. You've covered their life in a way that's interesting because it has peaks and troughs all the way through. If people haven't seen it, they should watch it because it's a great story even if you're not into fashion. It covers a lot of universal themes and he seems like a bit of a misfit in himself, he doesn't always fit in. There are lots of other themes within it so you definitely don't have to be into fashion to watch it, I don't think.

**Andee Ryder** – No, you don't. The litmus test for that was my brother who's a proper lad. He liked it and he was like, "Oh wow". He has that weird sort of attitude towards fashion but, but he appreciated it. You definitely don't need to be in fashion because my brother's definitely not!

**Angela Clarke** – *(laughs)* Should we be dissing your brother's style here?

**Andee Ryder** – No. It's fine! *(laughs)*

**Angela Clarke** – So that doc did really well for you and gets double BAFTA nominated. And then the next documentary you did at Misfits was called **Rising Phoenix**. So that was a slightly different proposition, and that one focuses on the backstory or evolution of the Paralympics. So again another big subject, in terms of offering you huge scope to sell it all over the world, because obviously the Olympics includes almost all the countries around the world that take part in the games. And so again, why that subject? How did you get involved in it? How did that one come about?

**Andee Ryder** - I mean, obviously, the name of the company is Misfits and you know we're interested in stories that are not just your obvious people, like the majority of films that have been made throughout time. And so it immediately appealed. It was interesting because **McQueen** was literally something that, that

we conceived from scratch, it was literally from an idea that we came up with with Salon. And so that was very much ours, whereas Paralympics, we've obviously got our own private slate of stuff that we'll get into a bit later, but on that one (*Rising Phoenix*) it actually was brought to us.

They were looking for a production company and a director to make it. And so, that came to us as a kind of, "We want to make a film about the Paralympics". They had a teaser, which was great. It was very emotional, a really good teaser. But, but they wanted to flesh out the story and make the film and they had already raised the finance on that one, fully, so it was fully financed and it was by people who work with the Paralympics a lot, so it was all funded through that and through private equity.

So although most people might think it's a Netflix movie, by the way Netflix tend to present their stuff, which is fair enough, they (Netflix) only acquired it on the rough cut. So it was already financed before and then we took it to buyers at the rough-cut stage. So that's how that one came about and we basically decided to look at it, obviously it was enticing because it was financed. So that's always a plus, but you still look to see if it's going to be creatively right.

One of the things we really liked about it was, you know, I remember having a chat, myself, Peter and Ian, and you know we talked about it initially. It was a tough story to tell, really difficult to tell because *McQueen*, in many ways, which was one of the things when we quickly realized with *McQueen*, it was such a basic story in so many ways. It's rags to riches, you know brilliant design, there was just so much. And of course that isn't taking away from the fact that, you know, of course you're getting close to the real man, but there was just a perfect story arc for *McQueen* that we were just like this is going to be a no-brainer for what will make a really cinematic feature doc.

But with the Paralympics it's hard. It's hard making films about organisations, it's really difficult because even though there's so much emotion within individual stories, you're essentially telling the story about an organisation. And so we actually really liked the narrative challenge of *Rising Phoenix*, the story of the Paralympics, because it was just like, "How are we going to do this?" It's really difficult, you know, to get that engagement and so that was the thing that actually enticed us the most because we thought it was just such a different thing.

And also from a point of view, we don't want to get pigeonholed because obviously you make *McQueen* and what happens is, you get approached by a million people saying, "Hey, do you want to make another fashion film?" Like, no, we don't want to only make fashion films and we're not in the industry just to make fashion films and *Rising Phoenix* was quite a departure from the fashion industry, you know, and so for that reason, it also enticed us. And, and it was also working with John Battsek of Passion Pictures at the time, whose new company is called Ventureland. John Battsek is one of the UK's premium feature doc producers. He's got a phenomenal CV so that was also enticing to work with John, and his company, because from our point of view, you know, we're still a fairly

13 young company, and we could, working with Passion, see how they do their business and pick up some stuff and try and make things which aren't quite as much of a shambles and a chaotic experience as **McQueen** was. So it was, it was very good from that point of view as well.

**Angela Clarke** – And also it's got that same, (*pauses*) it has an amazing energy to it, when you watch it. And I remember back in 2012, when the Olympics came to the UK and Channel 4 did that amazing trailer. They had that, you know, it was just tremendous, it was saying “Thanks for the warm up” and it just turned it right on its head. And I think, for me, that was the first time I think that people saw Paralympians on an equal par with Olympians.

14 Sometimes I find sportspeople can be difficult to interview because they're hugely focused, so you've got somebody that just gets up in the morning, eats their breakfast, eats their chicken lunch, exercises all day with a kind of tunnel vision and sometimes it's difficult to pull any emotion out of sportspeople. And then, when I saw the Paralympic thing, everybody that's taking part has a backstory themselves, there's another journey, there's another layer as to why they ended up in the situation that they're competing in the Paralympics and so that, I think, that helps humanise the people themselves and you get behind them.

And again, you have all these lovely interviews, it's a combination of some of the archive of how the Paralympics came about from the man behind it and what triggered it etc and what it means to people generally, but it's also the individual stories which in themselves are hugely remarkable and I think if you didn't have them in it, it would have been a very different film. They give the heart, and the warmth and the soul to it.

15 **Andee Ryder** – Yeah, exactly. Well, that was, that was what we felt that was the sort of emotional way in. Again, we realised like how much the work is about emotion and the emotional troughs of the film as you mentioned on **McQueen** and then we realized that with **Rising Phoenix**; we felt if you get the personal stories, it brings you in emotionally, rather than talking about the organisation. So that was our way in to sort of grip the emotional journey, really. And then you've got the central story of the Paralympics at the same time moving throughout, which again, I think Peter, primarily on the writing side, him and Ian worked really closely together on that. He did a great job on crafting this narrative, which was really tough. And then as they went through the edit, him and Ian, you know it moves again, it's not linear, it moves around. So again, really challenging. It was a really, really tough narrative film to make and we were very anxious about it from the start to the very end, but they did a really good job because it was, it was a tough story to tell. It was nowhere near as much of a, sort of, clear no-brainer narrative as the **McQueen** film was.

16 **Angela Clarke** - Well **McQueen** was much more of a, kind of, well, it had a fairy-tale element to it that people are much more familiar with, because he starts with nothing and then ending up with everything but ironically not emotionally because of all the other troubles that he had. But, on paper he'd



comes from nothing, a zero to hero story. But the Paralympics is a much more nuanced story to tell. One of the things that interested me was having made the Nat Geo Olympic Stadium documentary myself, I couldn't afford at the time, the Olympic footage was so expensive and even though we were making *the* one show for Nat Geo featuring the building of the 2012 Olympic Stadium in London, I couldn't afford any of the Olympic footage at all because it was so expensive. So with something like that like, in terms of budgets and stuff, how are you working out what you would need? And also, in the early stages, how many athletes had you worked out you were going to interview, like, how much of those things evolve as you go along?

**Andee Ryder** – Yeah, it's a good question actually, about the archive because one of the things that we looked at before, you know, saying yes we definitely would like to get involved with *Rising Phoenix* was the archive because we were like, you know, we need it. With *McQueen* we looked at it and said, "Can we get all of this fashion archive?" And we realised, through various different sources, we would be able to get enough of the fashion archive from different shows or people so that would be okay. We'd have to pay for it obviously but we knew we'd be able to get it.

With *Rising Phoenix* we were, like, you know, you can't just, like, blag this from different sources, the Paralympic footage it's only coming from one source and if you don't get it from that source, there's not a film really. Not one that we'd want to make anyway. And so that was, obviously, something we obviously had a key question about. But because it was coming from inside, you know, people who have been involved with the movement for a while, they essentially got the footage from the Paralympic Committee to be used in the film, and we were able to get it and work within the budget. When, you know, it wasn't an insane price you get, like, normally for the Olympics, like, it's just like 15-20 grand a second or something, you know, it's insanely expensive.

**Angela Clarke** – I think it was 30 grand a minute, off the top of my head.

**Andee Ryder** - Yeah, which is way more than you can afford on most feature docs or anything like that. They might use it in ads or something but when you need nearly an hour of it, you're like, "How do we do that?" So, yeah, we realized early on that was going to be available to us, and affordable. We got given a heavy discount because the film was about, obviously, supporting the movement itself. So, yeah, that was obviously a key part. And, I mean, in terms of characters, you try and look at who has got the best backstory. The best is the wrong word, but who do you feel would have the most compelling backstory to work with in the film and, you know, and obviously we wanted people who did achieve within the Paralympics, but also who had a story and, obviously, we wanted it to be global. We wanted it to include people from all over the world. From whatever backgrounds, you know, and we wanted it to be as eclectic as possible.

So it was coming at it from that point of view, and then working out, finding and researching the stories and I can't remember exactly how many contributors we ended up filming but obviously a few of them did hit the cutting room flo



13 unfortunately because we needed to bring the duration down and through discussions with Netflix a few had to go, so I can't remember the exact numbers but yeah....

**Angela Clarke** – So what kind of duration did that have in the edit then?

14 **Andee Ryder** – With *McQueen* the process was so crazy. We started editing that almost too early in the process, so the editor was twiddling their thumbs for a little bit. But I think in the end it was about 26 - 28 weeks for *Rising Phoenix*, something like that. And we, yeah, and we just planned it and we just went right the way through from start to finish. It was quite a streamlined process, the edit on that. It was obviously challenging like all films are to make, and we, like, everybody in the entire world had to deal with a pandemic in the middle of it, so we had to move from editing physically to editing remotely. We were finishing the film in the first lockdown, which was obviously the most intensive of lockdowns. And in terms of just the strictness we had to deal with that, as well, but everybody had to deal with that.

**Angela Clarke** – Well none of them are ever easy are they? And then the other thing I wanted to ask you about - I know you've also got a couple of films on your slate at the moment. You've got one called *Donna* by Cardiff filmmaker Jay Bedwani and you've also got another one by Claire Titely called *Sweepstake Hero* which looks absolutely bonkers. So can you tell us a bit about them? So they are projects that you haven't developed yourself from scratch, they're both independent filmmakers that have come to you and you're exec-ing them? So can you talk us through those two projects and how you met the filmmakers or how they approached you?

15 **Andee Ryder** - Yeah, I mean, they're both quite different actually because *Donna* is one we're very much more just consulting and exec-ing on. And *Sweepstake Hero* is one we're producing on, really. You know, we're hands-on involved and raising the finance on that one. *Donna* is produced by Dewi, who is the lead producer, or long-term producer on *Donna* and has raised the money, raised the finance and essentially we're there to support Dewi, bounce off, advise, connect him with some people, bring advice, so I might say you need this to work with that person or whatever, but essentially Dewi is driving that.

16 Whereas *Sweepstake Hero* came to us, where Claire had a teaser, I think, that was it, just a teaser, nothing else, no treatment, and she was looking for producers and we got involved and worked on updating the teaser with her; and we wrote a new treatment and went to raise money, so we full-on produced that one whereas, *Donna* was more of a consulting exec one.

**Angela Clarke** – And tell us a little bit more about *Sweepstake Hero*. Can you explain the story a little bit because it sounds, *(pauses)* well, you tell me what you can tell us about it because obviously it's still in the process of production so, what can you tell us?

**Andee Ryder** – Well, it's all out there because it's on the internet because Nasabe is a well-known person in Japan, and essentially, I mean, to give you an idea of what it was, it was originally, the working title was called *The Real Truman Show*. It is about someone who was on a live TV show for 18 months without knowing it in Japan in the 90s. He's called Nasabe, because it was an abbreviation because they said his face looks like an aubergine, and Nasabe means aubergine in Japanese. But essentially we took a long time, because Claire came to us with the teaser on that. And we were like, "This is great. Have you got the footage?" And she was like, "Yeah, maybe", and then it was like, "No", so we had to go and start talking to Nippon.

Now Japanese archives are challenging because only NRK, which is one of the big companies out there, kind of, understand international archive needs. Many of the others don't. Nippon is huge, they're a massive corporation but they don't really have an archive department. And so, so it's taken us a long time to secure the archive, and basically we wanted to secure the archive because it was a bit like the Paralympics film. This is going to make up nearly 50% of this film. We can't make it without it, you know, so we obviously had a couple of chats with the lawyers and said, "Can we use this footage under Fair Use?", "Probably not". Fair Use is all right if you're using something like under a minute, just a little bit.

But if you start using it for the bedrock of your production, it's not really legally going to fly. So it was, like, well, we have to deal with Nippon so we have spent two and a half, three years negotiating that with Nippon. It took a long time, a long time. But finally we got it and then when we got that, in the meantime, we actually found someone who wanted to finance the film, which is fantastic. So we've got the film fully financed at the budget we wanted to make it for which is great, I can't disclose what that is yet. *McQueen* is historical, so I'm happy to disclose that but on *Sweepstake Hero* I can't yet.

So we've been financed and it's in production. And Meg, who's the producer on it, she's producing it with me really, she's flying out to Japan on Thursday. She has to isolate for two weeks on the other side. It's our second shoot and so she's there but unfortunately Claire (director) can't go because of COVID. Meg has got dual nationality so she can go but Claire can't, which is a shame, so she's had to direct the entire film from her house. She's been on it for years, which is a real shame but also we're making it, so we're likewise really excited about making it and, yeah, hopefully it's going to be finished around about October/November.

**Angela Clarke** – When Claire reached out to you, she didn't have a huge amount secured, so it was just a case of trusting your gut and thinking, you know, as a producer there's something in that. Even just that line – "it's like the real Truman Show". Immediately people know what that conceit is, don't they? You know that you've got something you can sell and there's something engaging about it, that taps into that world of how we all live at the moment, with CCTV and constantly being watched and observed, type of thing, you know, so I suppose in a way what would be good for aspiring producers and directors to know is, what qualities are you looking for in somebody, when somebody

approaches you like Claire? What are you looking for in terms of, "Yeah, we're going to back that horse", That's what we're going to put our money into?

**Andee Ryder** - Um, first things first - are you a nice person and will we want to work with you for the best part of a few years? Because every film is like that, there's always a core 12 - 18 month period when you're making it. It depends how it's being made as well, if you're observing someone for longer, it might go on for longer but usually there's a core period and you know you'll be talking to each other for a few years, so do we want to be talking to that person for that amount of time? Do we connect with them? Do we think they're nice? That is generally really important to me and us. And so that's the first thing.

Then we think is the project great? I generally mean it we've been brought some great projects before but we just didn't really connect with the people that brought them to us. Not experience-wise, we just felt they didn't connect and so for that reason we just felt life is too short. So, there's that but if the project is great, then obviously that's like the second sort of thing we look at and then we look at - are they experienced and capable of making it?

You know, that's probably the third thing we then process or look at, but you know, you might say, if someone brings it to you and maybe literally they've made nothing, like nothing. You would say okay, well maybe they're not experienced enough, but they could be a producer on it and you would say, "Look we want to work with you on this, we love this, you're a nice person blah blah blah...but, you know, we just think you're not quite qualified", but also if they want to realise their project to the full, they should hopefully realise that it's sometimes better stepping away. And we're actually working with someone on a project like that at the minute, where they realised, they were humble enough to sort of say, actually with me attached you'll probably only be able to raise about £10k. Whereas, with someone else attached, we can hopefully maybe raise more, hit what we're aiming for, a sort of higher budget and so there's that.

But if they're like Claire, she had, you know, she's got some broadcast credits under her belt and so this is a first feature doc, but, you know, Claire immediately connected with us, she's great. She was developing this project for ages; she got the access. So you know if it wasn't her to direct, she'd definitely be a producer on it, but we looked at it and we felt she could direct it, and she's doing a great job as we're going through it. So we just try and assess it on that basis.

**Angela Clarke** - Yeah, I think that's the thing that's always difficult to know isn't it? At the end of the day, it's difficult, isn't it, you can develop a project, you can be super passionate about it and you've been punting it around for ages and ages but the reality is we work within a commercial framework in which people are putting a lot of money into films to get them made and so they obviously, understandably want their assurances, don't they? That there will be a team that are going to definitely deliver this because if you're going to put in £100k or invest a million pounds or whatever it is into a film, there's an expectation...

**Andee Ryder** - Yeah, it's a lot of money.

**Angela Clarke** – And you're right. I think it's interesting in terms of - all of us have to realise ourselves what your own strengths and weaknesses are and that you can improve those weaknesses by getting on board a production and doing a slightly different role and as you say, getting more involved in the producing element of it. It's such a big leap from making a 45-60 min doc up to a feature, you know? There is such a different expectation in terms of the kind of stories that you can tell, right the way through to the nuances of how you tell it and also how visual you can be, and what you're doing with the cinematography etc. In terms of being a producer, what are the qualities that have been most useful to you, that you've picked up along the way, or the skills you've picked up along the way in your own career that you've consistently relied upon in order to make the projects that you do?

**Andee Ryder** - I mean literally just being a hustler, I think, you know! It's like, you know, just getting involved in passion projects too. I struggle if I'm not passionate about something, I just really struggle if I'm not really into it, you know. I mean it's the same old, I'm sure everyone's heard this before, but producing is just hustling and just not really taking no for an answer, but knowing when to listen, you know. And knowing when to get guidance and just going down that, winding road of trying to find another way to make a project.

You get a lead and you're off one way or another, it's just persevering, you know but there is a quality to knowing when it's time to give up too. You know, not give up but when it's time to just maybe assess and put it on the back burner. Because sometimes...*(pauses)* I've got an example of trying to get an animation made about 10 years ago, which I've written, and I realised afterwards I don't make animation myself, and I mean animators tend to make their own films with their own buddies because they will help each other out and that's kind of a collective way to work, and I used to work in VFX as a producer, but still I just realised that this is not the time to make this film, and actually it's something I'm still interested in but it might maybe in 5, 10, 15 years time, it might be something I'll come back to. But I just had to put it on the back burner because, I was like, I'm not going to get this made for a long time. I don't have the right contact base now.

**Angela Clarke** - I think all producers say that. There's always a folder that you've got on your desktop of all the stuff that you've tried to pitch, but I think you're right, though, if you don't have a huge amount of enthusiasm at the beginning of a project. I think people underestimate how long things take to get to get away, you know? **McQueen** is such a rarity because that's such a fast turn around....

**Andee Ryder** – Yeah, it's very strange.

**Angela Clarke** - That's an anomaly isn't it? In many respects, in terms of, you know, these things can take, well, like all the other films you've discussed, they've all taken a few years to get to where you need to be to get the cash and

then you've got the logistics of actually making them, getting through a big massive edit etc. Getting it to the other side of delivery, which is probably much more on a par with what's more typical. I mean, I know each project is always different and it depends on the subject matter as well and the kind of zeitgeist as well I think sometimes.

**Andee Ryder** - That's actually what we often say about *McQueen*. We felt like with *McQueen*, there was an appetite for a *McQueen* feature doc to be made at exactly the time we decided to make it, you know? It was just timing. So much in life is about timing, whether it's personal life or business or whatever. And it was just the right time, you know, people were ready to talk, and people wanted to see a film about him and that combination enabled us to make that film, but actually you said one other thing, as a producer, the other thing I would say is, is to have multiple projects on the go!

You need to know when it's time to focus on one project, like let's say you get a film financed then of course, 95 to 99% of your time, your working day is going to be focused on that. But it's always good to have other things bubbling away, because as we all know projects can collapse at the last minute for whatever reason, so one of the things that really helped me, that helped with *Alley Cats*, even with my short films, and even now, our projects, we've got an insane amount of projects in development that we're working with and other stuff in production. You have to, and obviously even more now because the company is slightly bigger and there's more of us, but even when I was independent, you know, I had a collective of at least two films, you know, and you just tried to keep track of which ones are hotter than the others at any given time.

**Angela Clarke** - When you're juggling a couple of projects do you purposely try and pick projects that are different, so that you're not looking to get funding from the same pots of money, so that you don't have too many that are similar-ish in tone or story kind of thing? Do you, do you make a conscious decision to do that...?

**Andee Ryder** - Yeah, I suppose, yeah, if you've literally got something which is too similar and I think you're going to talk to the same people but then likewise, it's like you know, if you do one and it goes well people want another one... it's always a battle, you know, it's the same as being cast, you get typecast, and, you know, we got typecast with *McQueen* and stuff, so it can help you get more stuff made because you're showing consistency. But yeah, if it means you're talking to the BFI about two different projects, which are very similar, that might confuse things. I mean, particularly the soft money. But with private finances, you can talk to different people, but so much soft money probably needs to be clear in your approach.

**Angela Clarke** - This is such a precarious business, you know, and all the people I've spoken to along the way of, you know, doing this project, it seems to be that everybody has to muck away doing different jobs. It takes a while for everything to come to fruition, doesn't it? To get to the stage you're at now



where you can do that as a full-time job. That's your main source of income and you're not doing other side-hustles as well to make money because that's what people are required to do in the early days when you're trying to make films and build up a name for yourself and a reputation. So I guess, you know, what advice would you give to somebody that's just coming into the industry now? The landscape's changed quite a lot in the last 10-15 years where I think you've got more control to be able to film and edit your own things in a way that maybe you didn't have 10 or 15 years ago now. So what advice would you offer to aspiring producers and directors that are just coming into the game now?

**Andee Ryder** - Just try and produce and get, and get things made because you learn so much from making. I've learned so much from every film I've made and the ones, it's a cliché, but the ones that I'm least happy with how they've turned out, are the ones that I've learned the most from. Yeah, you know, I've got a few films, which I'm not the biggest fan of the final film, but I'm always proud of them. They'll eternally annoy me for not being as strong as I would have liked them to have been, but I learned so much from those ones, those are the ones you really remember the pain, you know.

So just get out there and make stuff. I'm sort of self-taught because I was trying to work my way up in the industry because I always wanted my own production company and so I was making films on the side while learning how to make films whilst working for other companies and so I kind of did a bit of both. But I think you know, for me, when I went out and made my own stuff because I was then the boss of my own productions. I was producing them and I was making my own mistakes which I was the one who had to answer for that and like going £8,000 over budget on *Bale*, it was traumatic for a couple years afterwards because I didn't have the money and I had to just you know hold off paying invoices and it was an awful, awful experience, but I'll never do it again. And so that taught me a lot that film. Yeah.

**Angela Clarke** - But that's the thing, isn't it, to some degree, there's no other way to learn that you have to just rip the band aid off and roll with it and then just hope that, you know, if you keep track of things as you're going along that things will fall into place in some sort of fashion essentially. And as you say, I think the essence of producing sometimes is, it is a bit of a wing and a prayer. You have to believe in your convictions and I think you have to care enough to get that film to the endpoint. And just constantly be engaged and to me it's all problem solving, isn't it? That's all you're doing, is just constantly problem solving and trying to work out how you make something. I think if you can solve problems and you can be a persuasive sales person...

**Andee Ryder** - You're right.

**Angela Clarke** - Yeah. And it's funny because I always think, you know, I was talking to another filmmaker about how they made their films and I was saying that I worked as a waitress for years and I've learned more about how to read people when you work in a restaurant situation because when somebody comes



in, you're immediately like what kind of person is this going to be, what kind of service do they want to have, and so how are you going to pitch what you're doing to them, it's how you earn your tips basically. And I think those skills have stayed with me through TV because then you've got those moments when you go into a room and funders are there and you have to work out what kind of person they are, how they want to be spoken to. Are they people that think, "I'm giving you two seconds so just cut to the chase and tell me what it is you want to tell me" or are they somebody who wants their ego massaged a little bit or do they want a little bit of chat? I think all of that reading body language comes from like doing those crappy jobs that we've all done over the years....

**Andee Ryder** – Yeah, yeah. There's no shame in having to do other jobs because if that's going to get you to where you want be, and you learn from those jobs, well, great. But for me, one of the challenges is like we all know what it's like working in an industry that's really consuming, it's not, it's not like you can sit around and take it easy. It's a very taxing job. You're trying to be a good Production Assistant or Researcher or Editor, so you can't take it easy because you won't get work again as a freelancer. And so, there is an argument for doing a job outside the industry whilst making your own films. It depends on what you want to do, if you work your way up industry, but, yeah, you know there's some people who just do other jobs that are not connected to the industry but are able to do it part time. They get more money from that and less stress, than they would from working in the industry and that enables them to have more time to do their own projects. I mean, it's tough working in this industry, you know, I worked in various different capacities, but I remember, one point, I didn't get any work so I had to deliver water. I was delivering, you know, water bottles. It was not long before, a couple of years before, I made *Alley Cats*. I was like, "I need some more money", and so I was water delivering for a couple of months. But yeah, you do whatever you can to get by.

**Angela Clarke** – Well, listen, thank you so much for your time today. I super appreciate it. And if anybody hasn't seen any of Dee's films *McQueen* is on NOW TV and *Rising Phoenix* you can see through Netflix at the moment, or you can go to the website Misfits Entertainment and all the links are there too.

Well, thank you so much for your time today. I really appreciate it, and good luck with the next set of films. I'm looking forward to seeing them when they come out. Hopefully it won't be as COVID-crazy and your poor director might actually finally get to Japan at some point.

**Andee Ryder** – Yeah, well, hoping we can go out for a screening because it's not going to happen on the production, but we want just to make the film, but hopefully we can go out and screen it in the early part of next year or something. That'd be nice.

**Angela Clarke** – You can go and enjoy the Cherry Blossom. Thank you so much, then, and it was lovely to speak to you. Thanks for coming along.

**Andee Ryder** - No problem. I really enjoyed that.

**Angela Clarke** - Thank you very much. All right. Bye. Bye.

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