>> Delbert Whetter: So hello everyone. My name is Delbert Whetter, and I'm a member of the board of directors of RespectAbility, a non-profit organization fighting stigma and advancing opportunities so people with disabilities can fully participate in all aspects of community. I will start by describing my appearance and will ask each of the participants to do the same. So my hair is gray, slightly peppered with glasses. I'm wearing a brown shirt. And we have live captions as well. You'll be able to see at the bottom of your screen a CC button. That's the way you can see the captions and that link is available in a separate link on the chat. I also wanted to thank Hulu and RespectAbility for making this event possible by supporting this platform for deaf professionals from the entertainment industry to share our experiences, our knowledge from working in the film and TV industry. Today we will talk about a show that has earned a lot of critical accolades lately. The show's called Only Murders in the Building, which you can stream on Hulu. Now one of the greatest things about this show is how it approaches disability inclusion and representation. They wrote a deaf character and cast an authentic deaf actor to play the role. In a recent show they showcased this character and ASL dialogue in an almost entirely silent episode. Wow. RespectAbility always encourages creators to think more broadly on how disabled actors can play any role, whether the character is written with a disability or not. In a recent show, they cast Tony award winner Ali Stroker who's a wheelchair user to perform in a guest role where her disability has nothing to do with the story or the plot. That's wonderful! I also wanted to mention briefly that a central theme of this show is the podcast industry and its massive popularity. I would like to share some facts that some of you may not be aware of. There are over 2 million podcast shows. There are over 84 million podcast episodes. I mean that's a lot. Over 68 million people listen to podcasts every month. That is a lot of content, full of information and knowledge. But most of them are not accessible to deaf and hard of hearing people. So if you enjoy podcasts or are creating podcasts, I encourage you to ask podcast creators to add transcriptions to the podcast so that deaf and hard of hearing people can enjoy and learn from them too. To start off I will introduce the film producing partner, Jevon Whetter, who also happens to be my older brother. Jevon is a graduate from the American Film Institute, AFI, where he earned his MFA in production. He also earned an MA in theater arts from San Diego State University. Now he is a filmmaker and professional of ASL and Deaf Theater at CSUN. Jevon wrote a film screenplay for Flash Before The Bang which earned honors from Film Independent, Producers Guild of America, SFFILM, and the Writers Guild of America. So -- so now, to you, Jevon!

>> Jevon Whetter: Hello everyone, I'm very excited to be here with you. We have two amazing guest with us and we'll have this opportunity today to be with them. The first one is James Caverly, his nickname is apparently Joey, this is his name sign. And the second guest that we have is Douglas Ridloff, and his name sign is here on side of the face. Now I want to give you a little bit of their bios so you know -- first of all, what I look like. So I've got red hair, some white showing now I suppose. I have a navy blue polo shirt that is buttoned, and I'm wearing glasses. So now let me introduce James to you, or Joey Caverly. So he is well-known for playing Theo Dimas in Only Murders in the Building, which is the most watched comedy series on Hulu. He also made an appearance in Chicago Med, that was on season four, and a Bennet Song Holiday. Now he is an award-winning stage actor, having toured with the National Theater for the Deaf for many years. And he also had the opportunity to work on Broadway and many regional theaters as well, just not as an actor but also a writer, director, producer for stage. Now our second guest, Douglas, has worked as a consultant in ASL for -- also from films and television and A Quiet Place is one of them. Quiet Place 1 and 2. He also worked with Marvel's The Eternals, which is a new movie that's going to be coming out soon. He's also had the opportunity to work on Saturday Night Live, on Hawkeye, which is a TV series under Marvel, and also Only Murders in the Building. He is a poet, a visual storyteller, creating original works in American Sign Language, and he's been featured on NBC News, Circa, HBO, Vice and CNN. I'd like to welcome both of them to our stage. Hello!

>> Douglas Ridloff: Hello hello!

>> Jevon Whetter: Now before we go on, could you please describe yourselves, what you're wearing for our audience who may not be able to see you?

>> James Caverly: Hi, I'm Joey. I'm wearing a button-down gray shirt. I'm a white male with a beard, a very short beard, and my hair is in a form of slicked back style. And gosh, I've got an incredibly busy background and I've got a bookshelf with tons of books.

>> Douglas Ridloff: And I am Douglas. I'm a white bald male with a black beard with a white goatee. I have on a white button -- excuse me, a blue button-down shirt with a fireplace in my background that is a form of white.

>> Jevon Whetter: You know I always think that in a fire side chat -- I think, you know, what is it that we should bring to a fire side? What is it? Of course! We bring our marshmallows. Does everybody have their marshmallows? Everybody have theirs?

>> Douglas Ridloff: Let me get my marshmallows.

>> Jevon Whetter: Okay, you've got yours. You're ready to go? Your Hershey's bar?

>> Douglas Ridloff: And what are we forgetting?

>> Jevon Whetter: And your crackers?

>> Douglas Ridloff: Fire.

>> Jevon Whetter: Nice. So I'm really excited to be able to have these two people of Only Murders In The Building, which is about a podcast show as I mentioned, and its very interesting to have this conversation. So we know that deaf people typically don't use podcasts. It's a hearing thing, right? They're able to hear the podcast. So we're learning more about podcasts through this show. So have either one of you experienced podcasts before? Never?

>> James Caverly: No.

>> Douglas Ridloff: This is Doug speaking. So one person reached out to me about doing a podcast with me, and I said "hey, look, okay, that's fine. But you know I'm deaf, right?" And so they were like, "I know, I know, but I really love your work, your poetry, and I'd like to -- to bring that into this podcast." And so they began asking me how we could do it and how we could make it accessible. And so we did have some talks. We brought in an interpreter to voice from ASL to English and be my voice in the podcast. However, what ended up happening was that we needed to add transcripts to also include with the podcast. So it will be released -- I'm happy to say -- in January or February of next year. And so hopefully this is a groundbreaking thing in the world of podcasts.

>> Jevon Whetter: This is Jevon. So Joey, do you have anything to add about podcasts -- you mentioned a podcast.

>> James Caverly: Joey here. No, I've never been in a podcast myself. I have heard there are more podcasts out there and they're becoming more accessible for deaf and hard of hearing people, with transcripts provided. So they're making additional features available, which I think is great. I think NPR is doing that for their podcasts already, so I think that's really a nice feature.

>> Jevon Whetter: Yeah it used to be my parents who are deaf, you know, of course there was no radio back in the past, that was a hearing thing. So there was no access to radio. So hopefully in the future podcasts will have transcripts. That would be great, thank you. Now I'd like to focus this conversation to productions. As we all know, film production has three phases. We have the pre-production, followed by the production, the filming, and then the post-production. So I want to focus on these respective aspects and get you to talk about each one of these separately. I'm sure there are a lot of people who don't know much about how to produce a film, so I think we'd like to start with Joey. What is your experience? How is it you got your role and how did all this come up for you? I'd really like to know your process.

>> James Caverly: Sure, Joey here. My agent sent me information about the show Only Murders in the Building, and they told me about who the producer was and I heard Steve Martin was -- when I found out Steve Martin was involved, I thought that would be a wonderful great. I took the audition, I got a call back, it was all handled through Zoom. So that was really a first experience for me to audition using Zoom. But I think the whole experience went well and a few weeks later I was cast. I got the role!

>> Jevon Whetter: Congratulations -- this is Jevon -- congratulations! Now Douglas, how is it that you got involved in this production as the ASL consultant? Did you get this opportunity prior to Joey joining the production team or afterwards? Curious.

>> Douglas Ridloff: During the time of Joey's audition, John Hoffman, who is the creator and producer of Only Murders in the Building, reached out to me and said, hey look, we need an ASL consultant because we have one episode that has heavy usage of American Sign Language. And there were two or three potential actors cast for the role, and one of them was Joey. And I mean, without a doubt there was a very close resemblance to Nathan Lane, and I was like, "you've got to pick him, it's got to be him." So I knew Joey before this production and he's just a beautiful person. And so when I connected with Joey, after that we decided to work together and the script was sent to me to read through and break down and translate for two actors, the first being Nathan Lane and the second being Liv, who is the --

>> James Caverly: Zoe.

>> Douglas Ridloff: Yes, Zoe, yes. And so I was in the role of translating the lines for the two of them. And we hadn't met until right before the start of shooting. And so we had worked prior to that.

>> Jevon Whetter: So I'm curious. As ASL consultants, people would imagine that, you know, it seems that hearing producers would think that an ASL consultant would be for the hearing actors, but what is your perspective on that? Is it also for deaf actors, or hearing and deaf people? Either one of you can answer.

>> Douglas Ridloff: Joey go ahead.

>> James Caverly: Oh no, Joey's saying, you go first Doug. Oh all right, I will speak, I will speak. I think it is imperative to have an ASL consultant like Doug. I think that the assessment of culture that is brought with the language, the time period, the regional signs that might be needed, I think that ASL consultant is imperative for that. When I first sat down with Doug and we spoke, I asked him if there were any specific New York City signs I should know about, because I had just moved to New York in the recent past and I really wasn't familiar with what might be a regional sign in New York. You know, that New York City accent, what would that look like in sign language? And so Doug was able to give me the -- that kind of information. So it's so valuable to have an ASL advisor like Doug working with me as an actor. So everybody in the cast, whether they're deaf or hearing, benefits.

>> Douglas Ridloff: Absolutely, I agree with you Joey. If the entire production is made up of hearing individuals, there's a definite need for a consultant who is deaf, not a hearing ASL consultant, but more specifically a deaf consultant or advisor involved with the production to work with the deaf characters just like Joey and many others, and for hearing members of the production as well. Now for a deaf character with a New York accent and lines that are maybe not able to be easily understood at face value, my role is to help translate that line and understand the meaning behind the line. And for some actors -- for some deaf actors, sometimes they're easily able to pick up on that, and sometimes it does require some expansion and translating. And for [hearing] actors who have to learn signs, then there's definitely a need for an ASL consultant to be involved and to help translate the line and understand their language of -- their level of language proficiency. And so with [Nathan Lane] and Joey's character interacting with each other on set, talking a little bit more about how they will interact and okay, so when did this character learn sign language, and how they're able to communicate with each other and -- that feeling of of getting the sense of fluency and maybe their -- this person grew up using oral language as their primary language [and learned to sign later]. And so there are varying levels of fluency in American Sign Language and so I think that's really important too, to incorporate -- to have an ASL consultant be involved and work with the director and talk about deaf culture tendencies, and the differences in ASL, and what angry signs look like, or what quiet signs mean, or bold signing, or very intimate signing. And so really being able to advocate and support and provide that cultural information in a safe space -- is vital. And so that's the role of an ASL consultant.

>> Jevon Whetter: This is Jevon. I couldn't agree with you more. I think there are a lot of hearing people who realize that just by speaking, you know, there are intonations in spoken voices. There's inflection, there's pitch, you know, how fast or how slow a person may speak. But people may think that sign languages are just monotone, you know, that they only exist on one level. So it's very important -- and now that I think about it, people know that ASL, you know, we have ASL consultants. We also have ASL dialogue coaches. So what is the difference? What would be the purpose of having one or the other? Why is it necessary to have an ASL coach and an ASL consultant or a ASL Dialogue Coach? What would be the difference? Joey, I think you might be able to offer some perspective?

>> James Caverly: Joey here. There are a lot of names associated with what that ASL person might do, right? Consultant, coach...a lot of that has to do with the amount of work that the individual might have to put into the translation or work. For example, if an actor already knows American Sign Language, if they already know it, that's a different requirement. The consultant may be just looking and giving some advice. Compared to another actor who is cast who knows absolutely no American Sign Language, has no understanding of deaf culture, well then that person's responsibilities have just increased. And so I've seen director of artistic sign language used as another name for what that person does. And that person brings all of the resources and their knowledge of culture, regional accents, as I mentioned, or the time period and their signs, that the [show] is based on. So with these different names for the position, I think comes the different responsibilities that are required.

>> Jevon Whetter: Douglas, did you want to add?

>> Douglas Ridloff: Absolutely this is Doug. So I've worked in several productions [and struggled] with the different titles and I got to the point, after a couple of productions, I now understand where the levels are. Sometimes there's an ASL dialect coach. They focus specifically on translating lines and that's all. And they look for signing errors and approach the actor with corrections and/or fixes. For example, if the person is not knowledgeable with how to sign in a particular language -- to show a particular version of signed language, they can talk about how to make the signs authentic and look more authentic, if that person is not a native user. And so it's not -- they're not involved with pre- or post-production, and that's an ASL dialect coach. The ASL consultant is part of pre-, during, and post-production. And during post-production, well especially during COVID, they would send me information to review and send back and get my continued advice and consultation synchronization with the lines. Sometimes there are bad takes, and there may be other takes that are better and I work with the script supervisor so they are aware of them during production. And so we -- work with those. And then with pre-production, sometimes there's involvement with the casting process and informing the casting director that this person has enough skill or ability level to basically pick up sign language. And so there's that -- knowledge that the role brings overall as an ASL consultant. So that's the main difference between the two. Now for a DASL, otherwise known as the Director of Artistic Sign Language, I feel thats relevant more to stage performances, but that's just my perspective on that.

>> James Caverly: Joey here. I think the concept of an ASL consultant or coach is a relatively new idea, and I want to say that perhaps the idea of having an ASL consultant for stage or television or film -- I think we didn't have those 10 or 15 years ago. So I think the deaf community has recognized the value of that position, and we are finding more and more ways of defining what those titles' responsibilities and roles might be. And so we are trying to pinpoint ourselves what is the best title to be used for different positions and roles.

>> Jevon Whetter: I know that in earlier conversations we talked about consultants and ASL coaches, that your job was very significant, and it depended a lot on collaboration with the director, if they're open and willing to listen, Even with [an ASL consultant] in there, it may not always work. The director may not be open to their feedback. Did you ever have any experience working with any director who was either very open to the ideals or very resistant to them? Would you mind sharing those experiences if you can?

>> James Caverly: Joey here. I've experienced both of those in two different productions. I've experienced a production where I was the ASL consultant for a television show. And unfortunately, I would have to say the director was very resistant or was guarded with the idea of collaborating with me. And I understand it. This was her project, her baby, she wanted full control. I completely understood that. But to include a deaf character on the screen and not have the full understanding of ASL or deaf culture, especially if the character has a relationship with other characters that takes time, collaboration [and open-mindedness]. So I was very fortunate with this production, Only Murders in the Building, because I had a wonderful director and wonderful writers, John Hoffman and Cherien Dabis was the director for that episode. They took a lot of time before we ever started rolling to sit down and have discussions with me. And I could share all of my concerns about the script, about the dialogue, about character choices. We could really have some open, transparent discussion of perspectives on the character of Theo. And I felt very included as an actor. It's hard sometimes as an actor to speak up, because you aren't -- you do feel intimidated. And sometimes as the only deaf character in a cast, it's very hard to make sure that that representation is authentic. If everybody else in the room is not a good collaborator, it can become much harder for us to do our jobs well. So in this production, Only Murders in the Building, it was a terrific experience. Oh, my cat is over here, sorry! My cat's making an appearance. I'm throwing a marshmallow.

>> Douglas Ridloff: You should give the cat a marshmallow!

>> Jevon Whetter: Yes let's do that!

>> James Caverly: Anyway, we had a wonderful team. So they all -- everyone took the time to sit together and make sure it could -- all the changes could be made to make the story effective in the best possible way for my character.

>> Jevon Whetter: This is Jevon. Now I'd like to move on to the subject of translation. You know that hearing actors who work with English dialogue will read the dialogue and just deliver it in spoken English exactly as it's written down. But what people may not realize is that deaf actors are expected to also translate that English dialogue into American Sign Language. And so to be able to do that is a different process, because ASL has different grammar, different structure. Of course American Sign Language and English are different languages. So what is your perspective in that process? Do you think it's easier for actors in general, or do you believe that, you know, it requires a lot of help? And who would need that help? Or are there those with your experience who feel they don't need that help? So I'll start with Douglas and then I'll go to Joey.

>> Douglas Ridloff: This is Doug speaking. Every script is different, but I want to talk about specifically about Only Murders in the Building, there's a lot of humor, sarcasm -- and that made it challenging in working on the translations in comparison to other productions I've worked on, there were several lines where Joey and I met and we really had to break down the language and what the meaning was behind the line and how to sign one of the lines between -- that Zoey had: pity me, pity you. And so its how to translate that line but still follow the intention of the line that's in the script, and being able to deliver that in American Sign Language and have it still be applicable, and get to a place where we both feel good about it. I think sometimes there's attempts to be funny but its a miss, like, I hate those fucking people.

>> James Caverly: Oh Joey's saying yes, I remember that.

>> Douglas Ridloff: Yes. That guy who worked in the building

>> James Caverly: The doorman, right, it was the doorman.

>> Douglas Ridloff: Right. He signed I cheese you people or something. And I think there was an attempt to have the humor in the ASL matching up with the humor in English, and it really just missed the mark big time. And so I reached out to the producers and suggested different options, and so they were able to make those changes and to get it close enough to match the humor. And so that's really really important for me as an ASL consultant to break down that language. And Joey, as an actor -- many deaf actors run the gamut in terms of being able to read and write a script and perform in this beautiful American Sign Language but don't have a strong background in English and so they do need a little bit more support with the script and -- understandably so if it's not their first language, written English and -- ASL is their first language, it only makes sense. But I know that English follows hearing norms and so it's -- it can sometimes be a struggle for deaf actors, so it just depends on their level of English proficiency and it really is individual to the actor and their ability to understand what's been -- what's being presented and -- and what needs to be translated.

>> Jevon Whetter: Joey, you wanted to add?

>> James Caverly: Joey here, yes. I always make a point of people that I work with telling them that ASL and English are two completely different languages, and each one has its own structure and grammar. There are some ASL expressions that are really hard to put into English, and there are some English expressions that are hard to put into ASL. In translation, sometimes some things are lost. And we were fortunate to have our writer, John Hoffman. He was willing to change any line that wasn't easy to translate into ASL. He was so responsive to us and we were -- I was so grateful for that. I think it's important that writers be aware -- those writing scripts and want to have a deaf character, I love the idea that they're writing that. But they have to understand that it's complete -- ASL is a completely different language. And they might write something in English that they think is really a clever beautiful metaphor but is really hard to then translate into American Sign Language. So I really want to say it's so important to have that understanding that is so [instrumental] for writers to have.

>> Jevon Whetter: Jevon is saying yes, sometimes when actors have an audition -- they have a cold reading where they give you the script and tell actors on the spot, they expect actors to just it right now and be ready to just go in and audition, which you know, cold reads, people don't realize that that puts what you could say double pressure on an actor, right, especially on a deaf actor. So for talent, there needs to be the opportunity for them to have time to prepare. So I want to ask how much time do you feel is important to give an actor to prepare their translations and then perform? Some people might think that 30 minutes would be appropriate, some people might think an hour or a day or two? What do you guys think?

>> James Caverly: Joey here. I think at least a day, at the minimum. If you get the material and -- you need to have plenty of time to understand what it is, to talk with your peers, to understand any English to ASL translations that might be necessary before you can go ahead and really get ready to rehearse.

>> Douglas Ridloff: This is Doug. I would say it depends on each actor. Some actors need more than a day, and I welcome that. If there's, you know, a partner I have or a really good friend that I could quickly share the lines with and get feedback on, it just depends. It depends on the actor's level of access to people who can help. I would say sometimes I've been given 12 hours to work through the lines, and so I would say it really just depends on the individual.

>> James Caverly: Joey here. I think that perhaps more professional actors might need less time.

>> Douglas Ridloff: Right, right.

>> Jevon Whetter: Jevon here. Well could you imagine Shakespeares? I mean, I would imagine that would take a lot more time, because we have old English, we have to figure that out into layman terms for today's time, and then go into ASL, so that's triple the work right there.

>> James Caverly: Yes. Joey says Google is your best friend.

>> Jevon Whetter: Right, right. Sometimes you have new, up and coming actors. Working with young deaf actors. So have you had to work with actors who are young deaf actors who are just getting into the business?

>> James Caverly: Joey's saying yes.

>> Jevon Whetter: Do they need more help, or do you think they were able to do the work on their own?

>> Douglas Ridloff: I would say a new actor and also depending on age. I've worked with very young talent and it happens that they may not be fluent in American Sign Language. Maybe they use Signed Exact English, and so maybe they need a little bit more time and attention to work through the lines. And so I present to them an ASL version of a line, and they give me their Signed Exact English version, and so then I can then mirror it back in ASL. And then we find a common ground where we meet in the middle where it becomes their ASL line. And so those types of actors may need some support in that area. Now if there's another actor who is working for the very first time, they are completely green to this process and script translations, but they -- they are new to film or television and they're making eye contact and thinking about character emotions, all of the elements that create this intersection of the character on screen. There's a lot of elements that I can provide to support all of those different elements to make it work with a new actor. And so with this type of actor, more support would be needed.

>> Jevon Whetter: This is Jevon. I think we've had a lot of conversation about pre-production but now let's actually turn to the production and the filming. You know, now with COVID especially, how is it that you guys were able to do your work which requires such proficiency? We know that for example deaf actors, oftentimes they'll need interpreters on set, so let's talk about the actual part of filming, you know, Now we've prepared the lines, we've got the translations done, what's next? Joey, would you like to address this?

>> James Caverly: Yes. I've always had an interpreter on the set with me. And of course it takes a little bit of educating the cast and crew on how to work with the interpreter, how to interact with me using the interpreter. And I would say theres always that first week of -- the crew and. the cast having the deer in the headlights look, you know, they don't know what to do, everybody quickly becomes -- comfortable with it. And I might take on the role of an educator at times for the first few days when I'm called to set, in teaching everybody how we use the interpreter. And then once the shooting starts, my interpreter will find a place to hide behind furniture, or step away from the room during the actual take, or -- stand behind the camera in my sight line so that they can give me my cue -- or the cameraman will give me the cue if the interpreter is out of [sight]. So in my work experience with interpreters, that's what I've encountered.

>> Jevon Whetter: Douglas?

>> Douglas Ridloff: This is Doug. I'd like to add that there shouldn't be multiple different roles that the deaf actor has to take on. The actor is there to act, full stop. It's really not the talent's responsibility to educate. When hearing talent comes in there's no education aspect of their job. They are able to focus on their work to get better and best at their craft. And so if I'm the deaf actor, I'd say I'm not here to be your helper. Make them get an ASL consultant, make them get or hire a deaf producer or hire folks to be involved with the production to pave the way for deaf talent, make it easier for actors to show their skills and focus on that craft alone. I think the industry really really needs to have a couple -- maybe you know one or two deaf professionals in the production to make sure that this experience is successful, it runs smoothly, and makes the actor more comfortable with focusing on their job at hand. I think this is a really really vital piece of information. In my previous experiences with two productions, at Hulu and --

>> Douglas's Interpreter: This is the interpreter, I missed the other production, is it Hawkeye?

>> Jevon's Interpreter: Yes.

>> Douglas's Interpreter: Thank you.

>> Douglas Ridloff: It was different, one was New York based. The other was based in Atlanta and there was a lot of COVID testing three times a week, and then we needed to be wearing our face masks at all times. I sat during filming with the directors and script supervisor observing through the monitors and having a lot of personal communication -- a lot of going back and forth, sharing information on what needed to be improved or fixed in the ASL dialogue. Now with Hulu, for Only Murders in the Building I worked from home and so that was --

>> James Caverly: You worked from home?

>> Douglas Ridloff: Yes I worked from home. And that was an issue because Joey was there on set alone and I wasn't allowed to be there in person. So they gave me a monitor through which I was able to participate live while they were shooting, and if I saw issues, I called the interpreter, via FaceTime with the interpreter to then communicate that information to talent. And so you know, it was -- everything did work out beautifully and I think the system worked and We had wonderful interpreters involved, who were great. We had skilled actors involved and having this great team helped. So what if there wasn't a great team? That would make things impossible. It'd be just utter chaos, and so it's really important to also have a good team that's a vital part of it as well.

>> James Caverly: Joey here. And it's great that Nathan Lane did his homework as well. [Laughter]

>> Douglas Ridloff: Oh, I cane whipped him until he got his ASL right.

>> Jevon Whetter: This is Jevon. Hey, you know, it's important, you know just, Only Murders in this Building, has multiple directors. Obviously you need to make sure that each director is in sync, and that there's collaboration, that you're on the same page. You know in television you typically will have multiple directors to film different episodes, so how do you make sure everyone is aligned?

>> James Caverly: Joey here. I was involved with four episodes. I had two different directors in -- I was in the second episode and the third episode there was a different director. And so each time, it is a re-education process with the new director, and I would have to say that's the cross that we carry, that's -- right, I will carry that cross for the rest of my professional life. We will always -- we just have to, I see you Doug, I know.

>> Douglas Ridloff: But I hope it doesn't happen in the future. We've got to beat down the doors and let them know that -- look, hey, actors have power to change the dynamics of this. ASL consultants don't have that power like the actors do.

>> Jevon Whetter: Jevon's agreeing.

>> Douglas Ridloff: And I've seen it, and I try to tell every actor I work with, you have the power. They hired you, they saw your talent, so you let them know that if you want to see my talent blossom on screen then I need deaf people involved with the production behind the scenes to help me blossom.

>> James Caverly: Amen. I'll say amen to that, Joey says.

>> Jevon Whetter: This is Jevon. As best practices we need to raise the bar. If you want inclusion, you need to make sure real jobs are given to deaf directors, deaf writers, deaf producers and invest in their talent Instead of just bringing in a deaf person in the show as a gimmick we need to make sure there is a real commitment to do that. So hopefully in the future we'll be able to have that. Now for the sake of time I'd like to get to issues of editing. Many people realize that there is collaboration [with ASL consultants] in production, writing and developing the show, certainly while you're filming and producing the show. But people forget about the editing room. So -- is there collaboration [with ASL Consultants] there as well? Oftentimes editors are just one or two people in a room making those decisions that don't know ASL, working with shots that have ASL -- one shot may be good and the other not so good, maybe a shot cut off a sign or the dialogue isn't in frame, but they don't know which So how do you solve these editing challenges in the editing room?

>> James Caverly: Joey says this is exactly where an ASL consultant should be involved in every aspect of a production, from start to finish, from pre-production, through the actual filming, to the post-production - all three phases - to make sure that there is authenticity on that screen, and to make sure that signing on the screen looks right.

>> Douglas Ridloff: And I'd like to add -- this is Doug -- Ive worked on many productions, my first one, they didn't really ask me to be involved post- or pre-, they only asked for translations. However they did ask for me for assistance on their movie trailer, and I gave support on the trailer, to make sure that the ASL was approved, but for the movie itself there was no involvement with that, because I was the ASL dialect coach. Then on the second film, they did ask me to read the script beforehand and all of that. And so in my other two productions after that, I think the problem starts -- in the beginning I get the script, and then during production, the storyline changes, the vision changes, and so there's some tweaks that happen to match the vision. And so what's important is getting the angles and the shots and approaching the folks behind the camera to talk about what works for a close-up and what doesn't. Sometimes if it's too close, then the ASL gets cut off, or sometimes its fine if some signs are out of frame, if the audience can still make out the dialogue so I want to ensure that the important parts of the ASL is captured, and also get some 'insurance' from wider shots For post-production I can explain what looks good, what looks great, and then let the script supervisor know. And they make their report in terms of which is the best take and which is the worst one. And so when that's done, they deliver that information to the post-production editor that can become another new story -- it's another new story. So it's like the game of telephone. The information changes hands so many times and there can be a lot of misunderstandings that happen, and so then when when I finally see it, there may be some misalignment with what was previously communicated about the takes. And so, I think there are many possible situations that can come up during the editing process, and many that I don't -- I'm sure I'm not even aware of. But in terms of giving feedback, sometimes I'll see the same thing happen again, and then I'll give feedback on the same issues with ASL thats hard to make out and sometimes they'll say thats the best take they had, then it's like oh gosh, as an ASL consultant this makes me look like I didn't do my job proficiently enough, and so it reflects on me. And so what -- you know, its beyond our control like, it is what it is. This is the final product we have. And so I think it's really important, just like Jevon mentioned, we need to raise the bar. If you're using deaf actors and have a lot of ASL dialogue and incorporating it into pre-, during, and post-production, then I think you really need to hire a deaf producer to give full support to the deaf actor and also to support the director, support the entire production team, throughout the editing process. And so as it goes back to my initial point that the ASL consultant really doesn't have that much power. And actors like Joey may not be able to step in and speak up, uncertain if or when to do so, or can't choose which battles to fight or, you know, maybe if I pick too many battles to fight then maybe Hollywood will decide, you know what, it's too much work to deal with these deaf actors and not want to work with us-- concerned that this can give others the wrong idea about what it's like to work with deaf talent. So we really need to raise the bar and insert more deaf people in roles behind the camera in production.

>> Jevon Whetter: Jevon here. Now as a filmmaker myself, I know that with hearing actors -- if we find that the voice or audio isn't right on a shot, but the footage or performance is good, the solution is often to do ADR [additional dialogue replacement]. In other words, just have, like, a voiceover overlay as an easy fix, and people think that's just so easy you just have the actor voice-record replacement dialogue But with deaf actors performing ASL dialogue, if theres a mistake there's no ADR option to fix the dialogue. You're stuck with what you got. You have to be perfect.

>> Douglas Ridloff: Or you have to re-shoot it.

>> Jevon: Right, so its important to have eyes on the performances during the shoot, or you know, if it isn't done right then you have to go back and reshoot it, and of course all that is really expensive So obviously yes, it is important to have somebody there through the entire production, from beginning to end. So let me see now. We have a few minutes left. I want to see if we're open for any Q&As. I know people may be wanting to just ask you questions as panelists. So Del, would you I guess go through the questions, or let me know what questions our audience members would like to ask? So I would wait. Let's see if I see any questions come up. You can use the raised hand feature. You can also post your questions in the chat if you'd like.

>> Douglas Ridloff: This is Doug. I wanted to mention to you Jevon, in terms of saving cost, hiring one or two consultants to work during pre-production, it really makes a lot of things easier for post-production, and it does save the company a lot of money.

>> Jevon Whetter: Yes?

>> Delbert Whetter: Well I have a question if you don't mind!

>> Jevon Whetter: Okay Del.

>> Delbert Whetter: So one area that isn't discussed often is marketing and promotions, the PR, the press, the interviews. Do you have any personal experience, as a deaf person, what advice would you give to hearing executives, studios, on how to best approach the press tours, any publicity aspects involving productions with deaf talent?

>> Douglas Ridloff: This is Doug speaking. First make sure that everything is accessible, subtitled, captioned. Some of interviews, I notice that there are no captions, and then we have to bug them to say hey, do you mind adding captions? Sometimes they'll reach out for interviews and everything seems to be worked out, but they forget about the interpreters. So they have to know that when they reach out to a deaf person. They should have an interpreter on deck, or be prepared, or the deaf person can share their recommendations for sign language interpreters. So they need to have those resources ready. [Crosstalk]

>> James Caverly: Joey here. I would like it if the studio would come to me and ask me which interpreters I prefer to work with. I do not want the studio on their own to go out and find interpreters to bring to the set. I want to have control over that, and give the studio the names of people that I trust, that know me, that know the technical terms that I use, or that are used to working on set. So I prefer to have people I know, interpreters that work with me. And then that makes the work so much easier for everyone in the room.

>> Delbert Whetter: This is Del. One thing that I've learned is that when we request an interpreter, we can request an interpreter who is a "strong voicer", a person who is proficient in interpreting ASL to spoken English. Sometimes an interpreter may be a good fit, or may not be great voicers, so interpreting agencies may know which of their interpreters have that special skill set to expertly interpret ASL to spoken English in real time on live TV or radio, just something I think that's important to keep in mind that you can request - a "strong voicer" - because those are the interpreters that, you know, you want to have while deaf talent are being interviewed on camera so they can be at their best. Now let me ask, are there any other questions?

>> Jevon Whetter: This is Jevon. I have a question for James. When you auditioned for Theo, the role of Theo, were you selected as a deaf actor, or were you selected and then the role was changed to a deaf character? Was that decision made prior to your casting, or how was that navigated, you know, how did that audition -- of course there's barriers that might come up in that process, so if you could tell us about that.

>> James Caverly: Joey here. John Hoffman, who created the show, wanted the character of Theo to be deaf. They decided that. So the casting call was sent out looking specifically for a deaf actor. And I'm happy that my team or -- they selected the people, the casting office did a great job of bringing in deaf actors. And I was very happy for that. Often I have seen roles go to speaking actors, hearing actors, which is really frustrating. When I auditioned and my tape was sent in, because I had to do a self tape for the audition, the casting office reached out to me and wanted me to do the callback through Zoom, and they asked me what interpreters do I want for the callback. And I thought that was really nice. So I submitted my preferred list of names of interpreters, so then I didn't have to worry. I mean in Zoom, I know we're not worrying about meeting somewhere in person, it's from the comfort of your own home. So they found an interpreter for me for my callbacks, and they had a reader that they used, another actor. And I could talk with that person and we could discuss and decide on our signing and we'd redo it. And that's how that procedure went.

>> Jevon Whetter: This is Jevon. So we have one minute left. Very quickly, could you please tell us what the next projects you're working on, if you're able to mention them, or what are your plans now and after? We'll start with Doug first and then we'll go to Joey, so what's next for you both? What's in the works now?

>> Douglas Ridloff: Tell me which one -- for career-wise or my next project?

>> Jevon Whetter: Your next project, what's next for you?

>> Douglas Ridloff: I'm working currently on a Marvel project and that's coming up soon in the very near future. So keep your eyes open for that.

>> Jevon Whetter: Can't wait to see that. And Joey?

>> James Caverly: I know that season two of Only Murders in the Building has been announced, and I am hoping that I will be involved in that. We will have to wait and see if the writers keep Theo in.

>> Jevon Whetter: Yes please, don't die!

>> James Caverly: And there are two more episodes left of Only Murders in the Building. Well, one was released today, so there's only one more after today.

>> Douglas Ridloff: That's right, it's Tuesday, one was released today.

>> James Caverly: Yeah and I do have a project for Summer 2022, Joey is saying. I'm going to be working with The Music Man, the musical. And I'm going to be doing the lead role of The Music Man.

>> Delbert Whetter: That's fantastic, this is Del. Now one final question. How does one find an ASL coach, or how can people make sure an ASL coach or ASL consultant is qualified. That's a question that was asked, anyone can answer.

>> Douglas Ridloff: Well this is Doug. Hey, first look at their IMDB and see their credits, and see what movies or films they worked on, and see if -- what you think about the sign language, and if it qualifies as up to par for what you want. But I think some movies don't really have great quality outcomes, and so you kind of have to watch out for that too. But that's a good start. And fortunately you can ask people in the industry that have worked with those ASL consultants to see if they were a pleasure to work with, easy to work with. And if they say oh gosh, you know, this person was terrible, you know, you can kind of narrow it down from there.

>> James Caverly: Joey here. Deaf people in the industry already do know who's wonderful to work with and to have on the set as an ASL consultant. So I think you have -- you get the word out and you ask other deaf actors. I think it's easy to find somebody who's qualified.

>> Delbert Whetter: This is Delbert. I encourage Hollywood to please give deaf ASL coach or deaf ASL consultant, credits for their work, make sure you mention them, it doesn't have to be on-screen credit, it can just be database credit like on IMDB or studios' internal credit system, they need to be able to build a track record because as mentioned this is a relatively new field there is a lot of catching up to do so building a track record by being credited for their work really helps them establish a reputation and build industry awareness. Any last comments Jevon?

>> Jevon Whetter: This is Jevon. For people who want to learn how to find resources for working with people with disabilities, I'd recommend RespectAbility's Hollywood Disability Inclusion Toolkit. It's a resource on working with people with different disabilities, a great starting point as a guide. And so that's one other option that people can take.

>> Delbert Whetter: This is Del. Great. Well we'd like to wrap it up, I hate to wrap this up. It's been a wonderful conversation. I'm sure we could do this forever, maybe make this a weekly thing. Maybe we should create a podcast. I don't know we'll see we'll have to see about that. But I'd like to close by just giving you some information that every Tuesday and Thursday night in the month of October, we're gonna be hosting panels just like this. From RespectAbility's website, you'll get a lot of information about what we plan to talk about. In the chat you can click there to see all the events that are coming up, that's just coming up on the chat. So we thank you for coming and goodbye. And make sure you have your marshmallows!

>> James Caverly: Goodbye!

>> Jevon Whetter: Bye everyone, goodbye.