

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****EMMY TALKS TO PRODUCERS OF OWN'S *QUEEN SUGAR* ABOUT REWRITING ENTIRE FIFTH SEASON TO REFLECT UNPRECEDENTED YEAR**

(**NOHO ARTS DISTRICT**, Calif. — March 23, 2021) — There were two things Oprah Winfrey knew when she read Natalie Baszile's novel *Queen Sugar*: It would make a terrific television series, and Ava DuVernay should create it. The producers and cast of the popular OWN drama, now in its fifth season, talked to *emmy* magazine about the evolution of the show. The award-winning official publication of the Television Academy hits newsstands March 23.

Winfrey was determined to get DuVernay on board to develop the series, so she invited the accomplished producer/director to her Maui home and hatched a plan to convince her. "I had placed the book in different places around the house," said Winfrey. "I'd have it in the kitchen. I had it by her bedside. I had it in the living room where we all sat; it would just be on a little table. And as often is the case when I love a book, I start talking about it, talking about it, talking about it. She couldn't hear it at first. She was like, 'What? What's it about? A sugar plantation in New Orleans?' And I was practically dancing on my head. I am telling you, it is really good!"

It didn't take long for DuVernay to engage. She read the book on the plane ride home and immediately wrote her first draft, but it took several rewrites before Winfrey gave her blessing. The compelling drama about a Louisiana family farming on the bayou now has an army of ardent fans.

In the *emmy* cover story "Sugar Rush," DuVernay reveals that the entire fifth season had been written when the pandemic struck; and simultaneously, police violence resulted in the Black Lives Matter movement. "It felt disingenuous to continue with the same story with the country, the world, the Black community going through such a singular time," said DuVernay. So, she developed a new story outline for the season, placing the show's Bordelon family right in the middle of this difficult and complicated time. Showrunner Anthony Sparks then rewrote each script. "We felt we had to do our best to have our characters live in this representative moment as much as possible. We also had to do it in a way that created a safe environment for our cast and crew."

DuVernay believes *Queen Sugar* will be a reflection of 2020. "My hope for the season is that it will be a time capsule for what this time was like for Black people and people overall," she says. "So we can look back in 20 years and say, 'This is who we were. This is us without comedy and without spectacle. This is who we were.'"

## **Additional feature highlights from the new issue include:**

- In "**She Reigns as Lane**," *emmy* talks to actress Elizabeth Tulloch about auditioning to play Lois Lane in *Superman and Lois*, the newest series in the CW's superhero universe. Tulloch shares how she honored Lois and her legacy and reveals what it's like being one of a respected group of women to tackle the role.
- *Coyote* director Michelle MacLaren, star/executive producer Michael Chiklis and showrunner David Graziano discuss the making of this human story about both sides of the border, now streaming on Paramount+, in the feature story "**Side by Side**."
- *Emmy* talks with OWN President Tina Perry about her commitment to delivering viewers what they want and need in a network. In "**Bringing Each Her Own**," Perry shares her conversation with Oprah Winfrey and their desire to develop programming around meaningful experiences and conversations while growing the brand in the unscripted space.

## **About *emmy***

*Emmy*, the official publication of the Television Academy, goes behind the scenes of the industry for a unique insider's view. It showcases the scope of television and profiles the people who make TV happen, from the stars of top shows to the pros behind the cameras, covering programming trends and advances in technology. Honored consistently for excellence, *emmy* is a six-time Maggie Award winner as Best Trade Publication in Communications or the Arts and has collected 52 Maggies from the Western Publishing Association. *Emmy* is published 12 times per year, and is available on selected newsstands and at [TelevisionAcademy.com](http://TelevisionAcademy.com) for single print and digital copies as well as subscriptions.

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