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How 'Extra' Evolved Past Tabloid History and Became a Trusted Brand Over 30 Years

By Rande Dawn ▼

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When “[Extra](#)” interviewed Harrison Ford at his “Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny” premiere in June, the show was proceeding as usual: The actor, the reporter, the branded microphone, the cameras. Then suddenly everything changed — “Everything Everywhere All at Once” Oscar-winner Ke Huy Quan bounded into the frame and reunited with his co-star from 1984’s “Temple of Doom.” The moment went viral, and “Extra” had another feather in its cap.

Once in a lifetime get? Not if you’re “Extra.” For the past 30 years, the syndicated entertainment news show

has made its business chronicling every cultural event. There is the episode with Burt Reynolds, shot in the studio parking lot following a blackout; segments featuring a 19-year-old Taylor Swift singing; and a young Kim Kardashian vacuuming her family's store. More recently, the show can point to host [Billy Bush](#) — who jumped time zones in a day to go from covering Queen Elizabeth II's funeral in the U.K. to covering the Emmys in America.

“Extra,” distributed by Warner Bros. TV, has produced more than 9,000 episodes, been on over 14,000 red carpets and logged more than 79,000 celebrity interviews. It's become so much a part of its audience's daily lives that producers can report fans coming up to them at airports and singing its name: “Extra! Extra!”

“‘Extra’ is a trusted brand,” says Jeremy Spiegel, exec producer and 27-year veteran. “Our show is distinctive from other shows because while we don't take it too seriously, we take the work seriously. Celebrities trust us. And we create moments.”

“In an ever-changing media landscape, it's no easy feat to remain on the cutting edge of entertainment news the way EXTRA has for three decades,” adds WBTV chairman and CEO Channing Dungey. “The longevity of the Emmy-winning show and its commitment to covering the best of pop culture is an incredible testament to the work of the entire EXTRA team, led by Theresa, Jeremy, and Billy — hats off to them.”

When it premiered in 1994, “Extra” was crafted to be a fresh take on the concept of a nationally syndicated entertainment news magazine show. The idea was to draw in younger viewers and co-brand with then-Time Warner properties: Entertainment Weekly, People and Time. An early segment, “Celebrity Traffic,” used the “beep-beep” of WB's Road Runner cartoon as a cue.

And the look was designed to contrast with “Entertainment Tonight,” which had dominated the market since its 1981 premiere. “Extra” featured anchors walking around the set instead of sitting parked behind a desk, constantly moving cameras and Dutch-tilt shots.

“I think we made a few celebrities motion sick while doing interviews,” jokes supervising producer Mike Miller, who's been with the series since its first season. (The show has a remarkably enduring workforce: Spiegel says “60%” of the staff has been with the series for 15 years or more.) “It was an MTV/‘TRL’ vibe — that was a huge influence,” he adds.

The series broke ground in another way, hiring E! host-producer Arthel Neville to co-anchor with Detroit-based reporter Dave Nemeth. Neville became the first Black woman to host an entertainment magazine show in early prime time syndication. “The entertainment community was open to something new,” she says now via email. “‘Extra’ delivered, and still does!”

Nemeth notes that we “were all creating this show in real time while navigating a sea of unknowns. It was thrilling, and we knew we had something special.”

But “Extra” has never stayed in one place for long, and the birth of “Access Hollywood” in 1996 ushered in the first in a series of changes. Neville and Nemeth were out; Brad Goode and Libby Weaver were in, followed by Maureen O'Boyle, and the show became more pop culture news with a tabloid angle.

“Recently, we did a story on Selena Gomez and talked about watching her break into tears in her documentary,” he says. “In those days... there were very tabloid-y, crazy stories, and not exactly the kinds of

tastes we have now.”

Over the ensuing seasons, the show shifted hosts (Leeza Gibbons, Dayna Devon, Mark McGrath, Maria Menounos and Mario Lopez have all done stints) and tones, eventually settling into its current iteration of covering breaking entertainment and pop culture news. It has been hosted by Bush since 2019.

Selena Gomez visits the set of entertainment television show “Extra” hosted by Mario Lopez.

Toby Canham

While “Extra” evolved, the idea of news and entertainment began to blend: The series could both cover the death of a queen and the 9/11 terrorist attack at the World Trade Center, as official news outlets carved out room for entertainment stories.

“We watch the local and national news and see stories we would normally only see on ‘Extra,’” says executive producer Theresa Coffino, who has been working on the show for 23 years. “It’s weird to see outlets like that taking a page out of the ‘Extra’ playbook. But there’s definitely a thirst for entertainment news.”

Over the years the show has relocated its stage, from Victory Studios (Glendale) to the Grove at the Farmers Market (Los Angeles) to Universal CityWalk (Universal Studios Hollywood) and now to Burbank Studios (Burbank), the former home of “Access Hollywood.” That last move arrived amid other shakeups in 2019: Distributor Telepictures signed the show with Fox television stations (after a long run with NBC-owned stations), and former “Access Hollywood” and “Today” correspondent Bush became the new host.

“‘Extra’ is the little engine that could and still is doing,” says Bush. “We reinvented with me here. I communicate directly, I speak the truth, I wink at the audience — but when it’s serious, I pivot.”

Bush was also integral to keeping the lights on during the pandemic lockdown; he says he convinced Warner Bros they were an “essential service” that required a “skeleton crew coming into the show every night... and they never pre-empted us.”

Yet another pivot, it seems, for a show that knows how to play and to cover the game. Not that every shift has been smooth sailing — returning to more straight celebrity coverage after the tabloid era in 2003 meant the show had to “start from scratch,” says Spiegel.

“We had to rebuild relationships; we were not welcome on red carpets, and one by one, we had to show every studio, every publicist, every celebrity that we were the show that they could trust,” he says. “That’s a badge of honor we wear to this day.”

The extra effort has paid off. Today, the show has bureaus and correspondents in Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Nashville and New York; and it’s a two-time Daytime Emmy Award-winning program. “Extra” has spun off several other series. But “Extra’s” latest challenge isn’t coming from a new series — it’s about convincing audiences that they provide more than what passes for news on social media.

“You watch ‘Extra’ to go deeper and get the full story with the full context directly from the celebrities, and things you don’t see in clips,” says Spiegel. “If we can’t advance the story or bring something unique to it, or if we feel the story is superficial or not accurate, it doesn’t go into the show. We respect our viewers too much. And honestly, Billy will not cover a story that isn’t a real story.”

And that’s the real territory to conquer as “Extra” heads into its next 30 years: Remaining relevant as a TV entertainment news program, even as the concept of what television means shifts around them. But “Extra” gives its audience something very few amateurs on social media can — consistency and depth. After all, while the “Indiana Jones” reunion clip might end up on TikTok, the full interview is on the show. Viewers know they can count on that.

“We’ve never missed a show,” says Coffino. “That includes power outages and floods in the newsroom.”

Clearly, “Extra” is here to stay.

“Every day we are up against the feed,” says Miller. “No matter what happens between the morning meeting and the time of that feed, the show will get done regardless. The show must go on.”

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