Jazz Tangcay: Hello. Good afternoon, and we are going to go live to everybody on Zoom. I'm Jazz Tangcay, Senior Artisans Editor at *Variety.* Thank you so much for joining us today virtually and in the room. So excited to be here today for this press conference on *The Handmaid's Tale*. I want you to give it up for everybody as I call them out because we've got the incredible cast here. And, of course, yeah. So, let's welcome out Josh Charles who plays High Commander Gabriel Wharton. Here's your round of applause. Come on. Ever Carradine, who plays Naomi. Sam Jaeger as Mark. Amanda Brugel as Rita. Madeline Brewer as Janine. We've got O-T Fagbenle as Luke. Come on. I want this applause to be enthusiastic, people. Aunt Lydia herself, Ann Dowd. Serena, Yvonne -- oh, my gosh -- Yvonne Strahovski. And executive producer, director, June Osborne herself, Elisabeth Moss. I'm so sorry. I'm so excited to be here today.

Elisabeth Moss: Hello, everybody.

Jazz Tangcay: Hi to everybody in the room and virtually. I'm so excited. I'm also wrecked from that season finale, the series finale even. What an incredible performance from every single one of you. I mean where to even begin? I mean, Elisabeth, congratulations directing episodes one and two and that -- closing it out with ten. How are you doing? How are you feeling today?

Elisabeth Moss: I'm good. Thank you. I'm good. I'm excited to see these guys. I've been trying to ask every single one quickly what they've seen and if they've seen the finale yet. And some have and some haven't, and we're watching it tonight, so I'm very excited for everybody to see it.

Jazz Tangcay: Oh, wait. Raise of hands. Who hasn't seen the finale yet? Oh, my gosh. So, we're going to have to change some of these questions because --

Elisabeth Moss: No, wait. Now, we shouldn’t spoil these?

Yvonne Strahovski: But we were there for it. I mean

Elisabeth Moss: But how many -- okay. I'm going to take over. Sorry. How many people know the last scene, though? That's the question. Yeah. I see only two of them.

O-T Fagbenle: Well, if what you told me is going to be -- you told me.

Elisabeth Moss: You're supposing I told you the right thing.

O-T Fagbenle: Oh, yeah. Because I know what you like. Double-fake. Pump fake.

Ann Dowd: I haven't seen it. I can't wait.

Madeline Brewer: Like, I think what happens and what was redacted, I think. But I don't actually --

Amanda Brugel: It's now everywhere online, so it's hard to escape it. Like, I know what you say, and I know what your face does just because of the pictures.

Elisabeth Moss: Should we spoil it for them, guys?

O-T Fagbenle: Yeah. Yeah. It's all right. We're going to --

Jazz Tangcay: We're good to spoil this? Okay. We're going to go all-in.

O-T Fagbenle: Spoilers allowed.

Jazz Tangcay: I mean you could've changed things in the edit room. To your point, like yeah.

Elisabeth Moss: Change it before tonight.

Woman: Watch out.

Jazz Tangcay: All right. First of all, I want to welcome Josh Charles to this season because I was so excited when your casting was announced. And what a character you turned out to be. Can we talk about how you got onto the show and were you like a huge fan before it started?

Josh Charles: Enormous fan of this entire group of actors. I think they're extraordinary. And yeah. I was thrilled to join it. I'd worked with Lizzy before, and I was very honored that she asked me to come join it because I know how important it is to her, and it was great. I'm just trying not to fall in this chair. That's all I'm trying to do.

Yvonne Strahovski: They're very slope-y, aren't they?

Josh Charles: The tiki torches didn't arrive but we do have the chairs, and we'll always have them.

Jazz Tangcay: Love a director's chair. But, Elisabeth, I heard you had something to do with Josh's casting where you sent him an email. Tell us about that.

Elisabeth Moss: Yeah. When it came up, Commander Wharton came up, he was the first person that I thought of, and, luckily, everyone else was very much aligned. All of our executive producers were like, oh, my God. Do you think we could get him? And I was like, well I kind of know him. I kind of just worked with him. And I had a great conversation with him for about 90 minutes I think was our first chat.

Josh Charles: Yeah.

Elisabeth Moss: And it was actually incredibly helpful creatively to all of us. His questions and kind of things that he was probing and things that he was sort of wondering about as far as where it was going to go for this season. We actually ended up being able to incorporate a lot of that into the show which was super, super helpful. So yeah. It was a no-brainer for me. It was just a matter of whether or not he was going to say yes.

Josh Charles: Yeah. I was, like I said, just absolutely thrilled to come join. I mean this group of actors, I love ensembles. I really do. And watching the show before I joined this group, it's just extraordinary work across the board. Specific, grounded, clear, and so that was very daunting to join. But Lizzy promised me everyone was nice, and they treated me very well.

Jazz Tangcay: Well, this show has had an incredible impact on everybody, audiences, and I'm sure all of you. So, in a single word, I'm going to start with you, Josh, and work up the line. Like, what was the impact? How would you describe the impact that *Handmaid's Tale* has had on you?

Josh Charles: Can you start with Ever? I'm nervous now because I already talked.

Jazz Tangcay: Okay, Ever.

Ever Carradine: One word?

Jazz Tangcay: Maybe in a sentence.

Ever Carradine: Thank you. It's been the job of a lifetime. It's an honor to be a part of this show. I pinch myself every day. That's three sentences.

Sam Jaeger: I would say elevated. I have been -- what I've done as an actor and as an artist, this show elevated me. I feel like I'm a better actor now than I was when I started this show. So, and that's a testament to the people here.

Amanda Brugel: I would say it changed my belief in myself as a woman. My strength in myself personally.

Madeline Brewer: I spent that whole time of trying to think of like a pun about an eye, and I think after nine years, I've ran out. I've run out of them. No. This has been -- I've grown up as Janine and with Janine. I've become a better woman and friend and daughter and future mother. Everything about life is better because of being with all of you.

O-T Fagbenle: Wow. Beautiful. I think -- I mean there's so many words but educated. I feel like I got -- I learned a lot about acting and about filmmaking and about politics and about -- you know, I think I came out smarter than I went in. It was already starting at a low bar, so some progress.

Ann Dowd: I would say the word is peaceful because we all left it on the field, as they say. Gave it everything we had. And we did it. And now, it's over. So, gratitude and peace.

Yvonne Strahovski: This is hard. I mean I echo what everyone said about becoming a better artist and a better person and more rounded I think in politics and everything that this show stands for and what it represents and just I think an absolute privilege to have been a part of this and have these amazing artists to work with as scene partners and to have never died a creative death because of that because of you guys. And everyone behind the show and the mechanics of it. That's way more than one sentence. Sorry.

Elisabeth Moss: I think I learned -- or what I'll take from it is what these people represent here on stage and also all the people who made this show or were a part of the show for the past nine years have taught me how it's supposed to be and how when something really matters to you, how hard you work at it, and I've been so inspired over the past nine years seeing how important it was to every crew member and every cast member to do their absolute best work. And I watched it this final season, and it was the most extraordinary, inspiring thing to see the personal integrity of these people. It mattered so much to them that they pushed themselves and do their absolute best and leave it all out on the field, like you said. That is when -- when I think of this show, that's what I think of, not necessarily the storylines or the characters or anything like that. I think about the people behind the show and the people here on this stage and just the

pure heart that they brought to it. And I hope it's just the beginning of many, many years of being able to work with all of you and all the people that we've worked with and continue working like this. I can't do it any other way now.

Jazz Tangcay: Josh, I'm coming back to you.

Josh Charles: Oh, geez. I thought you'd forget. Because I joined the show -- I'll just add I was inspired. Inspired by a group of artists who had been working together for close to a damn decade. And still care. Still brought it. Still loved each other. I mean that's -- made a few TV shows. The fact that these people all really genuinely like each other. And there's, surprisingly, a lot of laughter on this show is just a testament to the quality of people and the quality of actors and writers and crew.

Jazz Tangcay: Amazing. Okay. This is a question from Jeff Ewing who says the relationship between June and Serena hits an important part of the series, and what changed Serena's heart and why does June make peace? Spoiler alert.

Elisabeth Moss: You mean when she helps me?

Jazz Tangcay: Yeah.

Yvonne Strahovski: I mean I think June is the personification of the feeling and the knowledge and everything Serena needed to understand -- I'm not going to articulate this in a good way but whatever Serena needed to understand about what she had done in the past, June didn't let up. And she also never stopped believing in Serena which I think is an important part of this. It's not that she hounded her continuously in an angry way. It's that she truly in a loving way also believed that Serena was capable of coming around and changing. And although I personally don't necessarily believe that Serena was that redeemable in the end because I have my own interior monologue about this thing but I do think that because June was the living embodiment of the effect and the consequences of what she had done that she did come around -- I think having a baby also helped in Serena's mind because, suddenly, the stakes are a lot higher when you have a child. But in the end, I think this is what ultimately made an impact, and she truly, in that moment, understood that she has to do the thing that June's been doing the whole time, and that is make a brave and courageous decision that is truly difficult not for her own benefit but for the benefit of the greater good.

Elisabeth Moss: What was my part of it? Something about peace, was it?

Jazz Tangcay: Why does June make peace?

Elisabeth Moss: Oh, with Serena? I think because June -- let's see if I can articulate this. It's for Noah, really. It's for her son. That she knows that he needs a mother who has been forgiven by June in order to be raised to be the man that he should be. And I think June also really believes in Serena like I do. And I think I'm probably a bigger fan of Serena than you are. And I think she -- it's more important that she is forgiven. It's easier for her to do that than to hang onto it. She doesn't need to hang onto it.

Jazz Tangcay: Beautiful. Ann, I'm going to start with you. This is a question from (inaudible @ 00:12:57), who is a (inaudible @ 00:12:58) member from the Netherlands. What was the most important thing you hope that people have learned from *The Handmaid's Tale*?

Ann Dowd: Oh, boy. Never give up. Never stop resisting. What you love is worth fighting for, and you're never alone.

O-T Fagbenle: Dang, Ann. You killed that answer so hard. You really answered that question so well.

Josh Charles: Drop the mic, there, Ann. Just drop it.

Ann Dowd: Thank you.

O-T Fagbenle: My goodness.

Jazz Tangcay: O-T, did you want to add to it?

O-T Fagbenle: No, no. I want no part of it. Perfection is perfected.

Jazz Tangcay: This is from (inaudible @ 00:13:46) who is a (inaudible @ 00:13:48) from Argentina. The series remains the best example of how easy it is to strip women of their rights. Its relevance is real in many countries, including mine. Are you aware of the importance of your work in this regard? Elisabeth, do you want to start with that?

Elisabeth Moss: I think we have always been incredibly proud, honored, humbled by the recognition for that. It's something that we don't take full credit for, I believe. I hope it's okay I'm saying we. Please disagree if you do. Margaret obviously wrote this incredible source material and put this gift there for us to kind of pick up and continue to unravel. So, we don't take credit for it but it's something that I think we all have never taken for granted and respect very much that we have anything to say about something that is I think deeply important to all of us.

Jazz Tangcay: I love that. How do you say goodbye to your characters at the end of nine years? What was that process like letting go? I mean, Ann, you technically haven't said goodbye but you know?

Ann Dowd: Lucky me.

Jazz Tangcay: But how do you do that? Yvonne?

Yvonne Strahovski: I think I'm still doing it. I think I'll be doing it until the fall when that feeling comes around where my body goes, oh, it's time to go to Toronto and be in the winter and play this character again. It feels really weird. This is really hard. I don't know about you guys but it's a lot of unexpected grief to let go of the character. And these characters have been with us for almost ten years. And a lot of us, like Maddie said, have grown throughout 30s or throughout whatever with these characters and yeah. So much life has happened as well. And the art imitating life and back and forth and this is personally what Serena has taught me is just so much. It's just really hard. I'm going to be crying about it forever.

Madeline Brewer: It's sort of like an unraveling of -- yeah. It's still happening.

Amanda Brugel: I wouldn't say it's the character because the character is -- because we've had just the opportunity to be with them for so long, I feel like Rita will always be with me. Like, I can summon her at any time. She'll always be with me. And just the physicality and just -- that's so internalized now. It's the saying goodbye to the people. It's the knowing that we're not going to have another FYC together, this group of people. It's the saying goodbye to the -- sorry. We're never going to do this like this again, and so that's the mourning process because, like, not unlike Josh said, we like each other. We really do, and we really have created such a strong bond, and that bond will hopefully still be there, right?

Elisabeth Moss: Yes, yes.

Amanda Brugel: Okay. Answer my phone calls. But it's the saying goodbye to the people.

Jazz Tangcay: Madeline, what about for you?

Madeline Brewer: I was just -- no. We've just seen -- I think I was in such denial. I was like, I'm good. Like, it's been a long time. I'm ready to go. I'm good. We've been doing this for long enough. I've known this character. I'm ready to move on. When we started this job, my frontal lobe was not cooked yet. I was 24. I mean and we've seen

engagement and marriages and babies and divorces and hell yeah. And we've seen a lot of life happen with each other and for each other, and so it's like letting go of that and also like -- when I did ADR for the final scene, my final scene really with Charlotte -- don't ever -- don't say Angela. Angela. I know you want to. It just hit me like a tidal wave, the gratitude that I feel for this girl and this experience, and I'm starting to realize that this doesn't come along every day, it really doesn't. And like Lizzy said, I want to do this like this forever. It's the only way I want to do it.

Jazz Tangcay: Ever, what about for you?

Madeline Brewer: I'm unemployed now.

Josh Charles: I mean I'm going to echo a little of what Yvonne said. Like, so much of being an actor is like -- we're like circus people. We're carny folks. We go all these different places and meet different people, and this show has been like a staple in our lives for almost a decade, and these people have been a staple in my life, and it's been like a -- it sounds so cheesy but it really is like coming home. Like, going back to Toronto and being together with these people is like coming home. And so letting go of Naomi is much easier than letting go of all the experiences that we had and the thing that we all made together that I'm so proud of, and I'm so proud to be a part of this with all of you. I think you're all amazing. All come for dinner maybe tonight.

Elisabeth Moss: Going to write a season seven. We'll film it in our basement.

Sam Jaeger: Please set it in Hawaii.

Elisabeth Moss: (inaudible @ 00:19:39), yes.

Yvonne Strahovski: Coconuts and (inaudible @ 00:19:41).

Ann Dowd: I just wanted to add being fortunate enough to have Lydia still in my life. I miss my family. My dear ones. And to be on set and look around and they're not there, I love them, and I miss them very much

Elisabeth Moss: Yeah.

Ann Dowd: And there's an alarm ringing in my purse. How annoying is that? I do beg your pardon. There'll be no more sharing of what that alarm is for. Pardon me.

Jazz Tangcay: I love it. What about for you?

Elisabeth Moss: I forgot what the original question was.

Jazz Tangcay: How do you say goodbye?

Elisabeth Moss: Oh, yes. I have not. That was my answer to Yvonne when she was like how are you doing? And I was like, oh, no. I just don't do it yet. I have not been able to at all. I think partially because it's shockingly and terrifyingly recent how recent we finished episode ten. We literally did the final sound mix for it like I want to say three weeks ago. So, it's very recent that we actually did finish the episode. And, so, I haven't had any time to even think about saying goodbye. I think tonight will be very cathartic for me to see it, to see nine and ten on the big screen for sure. But I also feel like you said, Maddie, like, I just feel like the character lives on inside of us. It really doesn't die for me. But it is the people and working with this particular alchemy, this particular group that will be hard to say goodbye to but we're just going to have to do something again. I love working with the same people over and over. So I'm like let's just get the band back together.

Jazz Tangcay: Let's do it. A year from today, let's come back here.

Elisabeth Moss: I'll be submitting us for a season seven for an FYC, regardless of whether or not there is one.

Yvonne Strahovski: Can we make it the comedy musical version?

Elisabeth Moss: Well, obviously, that would be our version. Like Taylor's version. Yvonne and Lizzy's version. It's all music.

Yvonne Strahovski: Lots of dancing.

Elisabeth Moss: All dance.

Ann Dowd: I was going to say dancing.

Jazz Tangcay: (inaudible @ 00:21:54) the Fleetwood Mac scene in episode ten and getting -- that moment was such a beautiful moment. Do you want to talk about filming that?

Elisabeth Moss: Yeah. Finding the song was the difficult part. It was something that Bruce and I knew that we had to agree on, and we had to agree on it before we shot it which could not -- can sometimes be tricky. And he was convinced we were going to get into a fight about it. He was convinced it was going to be the thing that like broke us

apart and we were never going to speak together again. Because we've managed to remain friends for nine years which is pretty incredible for an actor and showrunner, and I said we're going to be fine, we're going to be fine, we're going to be fine. And I listened to -- I found this song, Landslide, one night, and it came on, and I was trying to find a karaoke song. And I was like I think this is it, and I texted Bruce. I said, what about Landslide, like, the original version? And he was like, I cannot believe you just said that. Yeah. That's perfect..

Jazz Tangcay: Oh, wow.

Elisabeth Moss: I was like I told you we wouldn't get into a fight. And the filming of it was so cool obviously. It was very meta because we were kind of working together in a group, us women, that had not gotten that chance for a while. And, so, it was really fun and special and I mean, God, what you see in the episode is just what it was. It was a beautiful moment for us, I think.

Ann Dowd: Pardon my asking, how do you find the music? Where do you start?

Elisabeth Moss: I just looked on my phone. I just looked literally on like karaoke playlists on Apple. Yeah. One night when we were filming at the Red Center. I think when we were doing that big scene in episode eight.

Ann Dowd: Oh, my gosh.

Elisabeth Moss: And I was in my trailer on some lunch break or something, and I was listening to -- trying to find a track for karaoke, and that came on. I was like this -- because it needed to tonally fit the show because I knew we wanted to play it outside of the karaoke scene as well. So, it couldn't be something that might be a lot more fun for us at karaoke and that we would do but it had to be something that tonally fit the show. And the lyrics, if you listen to those Landside lyrics. You want to hear something fucking nuts? So, the episode aired Monday, May 26th, right? Also Stevie Nicks's birthday.

Woman: No way.

Ann Dowd: Oh, wow.

Elisabeth Moss: Isn't that crazy? I know. I just found that out. It kind of makes sense.

Madeline Brewer: Like, that makes perfect sense.

Jazz Tangcay: And to be such a beautiful moment and a perfect song. This is a question from Emmanuel (inaudible @ 00:24:25). In what ways has working on the series changed you and your views about the world and the times we live in right now? I'm going to start at the end and work up. That means you, Josh.

Ever Carradine: You can't get out of it twice. You had one pass.

Josh Charles: What was the question? I'm sorry.

Jazz Tangcay: It's from Emmanuel, who is a critic (inaudible @ 00:24:45). In what ways has working on this series changed you and your views about the world and the times we live in right now?

Josh Charles: That the world -- when this show started, and when I started working on the show this year, seemed to really kind of go in a complete circle. So, I think just the idea that, you know, history repeating itself and this story just seemed even more important and alive today. So, I guess that would be it. That's a tough question for me.

Ever Carradine: Yeah, it is.

Josh Charles: Best I could do since you put me on the spot, Jazz.

Jazz Tangcay: You did great.

Josh Charles: Okay.

Jazz Tangcay: Ever?

Ever Carradine: I need you to repeat it because I was listening, and then I forgot.

Jazz Tangcay: In what ways has working on the series changed you and your views about the world and the times we live in right now?

Ever Carradine: Oh, my gosh. Listen, when we started filming this show, Obama was still president. We were living in a very different America, and, you know, I think Margaret Atwood says everything that's in the book happened somewhere. It's not just -- it's not fiction. She takes this from real life, and I think we used to have to look a lot further outside of our country to find the things that we see in this book, and now they are closing in on us and the states around us. And, so, I think it's really like it comes back to June's quote of even in a slowly burning -- you can do it better than I -- slowly warming tub. You're boiled to death. Like, keep your eyes open and stand up to

injustice. I know it sounds silly but I really think that the message of the show, resistance and hope is from the beginning to the end of the series, and I think it's the most important thing. You can't give up hope, and you can never stop resisting injustice. You just can't.

Sam Jaeger: I feel like one of the principles we live by as actors is empathy. We are empathy machines. We gravitate toward understanding people that we would not have to try to understand in any other line of work. And the world changes in all these painful ways sometimes, and it is our job to try to understand where the other side lands. And for me, I just think as other people dig their feet in and try to hold onto the power they have, it's my job to try and entrench myself in compassion and understanding. And that's what we've done on this show which is you get to see a character played so beautifully by Yvonne, a character that is so easy to hate, and you love her. You find ways of loving her, and that's the thing I carry with me about this show is it is a way that makes you see the other side and how people make decisions.

O-T Fagbenle: When you say you love her, you mean you or the character?

Sam Jaeger: C, all of the above.

Jazz Tangcay: (inaudible @ 00:28:19).

Amanda Brugel: For me, what changed how I view the work and particularly the time that we're in now is how important what we do is, how meaningful. And being an actor for 30 years, while I know our jobs are important, it was always kind of fluffy to me. Like, it's fun. We get to pretend. Like Ever said, we're sort of puppets or we're a part of a circus. But it means something particularly now to tell stories, to tell them with integrity, for people to see an extended version of themselves fighting, standing up against something. And so what this show did was teach me the importance of being an artist, the importance of television, the importance of this industry, particularly, the importance of storytelling on a high level so that other people feel connected and they don’t feel lost or silly.

Madeline Brewer: Something that I have picked up and taken with me which might just be very specific to Janine because of her relationship with June, but that is the absolute necessity of like sisterhood and of community. You know, we pick up each other's slack. There would be no Janine past I mean episode three of season one without June supporting her and just holding her head above water. And I've realized that in our lives, especially witnessing global atrocities, you can burn out, and the way we continue to fight and stay in the fight and continue to resist is we hold each other's head above water when we ourselves are exhausted from fighting. And I take that with me.

O-T Fagbenle: That was profound. That was great.

Madeline Brewer: I'm smart, O-T.

O-T Fagbenle: No. Seven years, and now I'm -- so, what was I saying? I think for me, Luke is a refugee. He's been forced out of his home by a brutal regime, and he's forced to emigrate and another country has to take him in and say, yes, we see that you're suffering and it's by no cause of your own, and we will make a home for you. And all of that is so real and relevant to lots of -- and it's so easy sometimes to think of refugees as others or just people who are not like us, and I think it just gave me -- not that I thought like that but just being Luke really gave me a kind of much more visceral experience of what it might be like to experience something like that and compassion for where that's going all over the world right now.

Jazz Tangcay: Ann, what about for you?

Ann Dowd: I was riding my bike in Union Square a few years into the series, and I saw a group of handmaids protesting. And I went to stop them. I just went to Lydia quickly, and I thought they'll pay it -- what are they doing? They're crossing in the middle of the street. And, of course, they paid no mind, but what I learned from that experience is that you have to participate. It's not enough to do the show and feel great, although that's a dream. Boy, is it ever a dream. You got to get out and do something. You have to. It's our civic duty, if you will. And that's what I learned from watching those young girls out there. It was beautiful.

Jazz Tangcay: Wow. Yes, you can applaud.

(Applause.)

Yvonne Strahovski: A little bit of what everyone's saying. I don't think it's every day that as actors or artists -- like, television actors, that you're sort of thrust into this role of representing politics and world events in a lot of ways, and I don't -- I mean I speak for myself. I certainly wasn't prepared to be thrust into this kind of a situation where we ultimately have had to -- I mean go deep within ourselves also and have somewhat of an awakening perhaps or just a realization of how this show does imitate life and where we stand and how powerful art can truly be. I mean it's such a reminder of why art was created in the first place. I mean it's not just a creative expression. It says something to the world. And the fact that this says, this show, starting with Margaret Atwood and what you said, Lizzy, and what we've been privileged enough to do here and this symbolism that this show has taken on and what it stands for and how it connects back

to us as artists personally, that's really been a beautiful kind of a thing to not just be part of something just because it's entertaining and fluffy and, you know, it's cool to watch or whatever. This really has set the bar in a very different way, and this show is truly meaningful globally because of what it represents.

Elisabeth Moss: Gosh, okay. I mean everything they said. So beautiful in so many different ways. The only thing I could add I guess is that, you know, I think you're sort of put with this group of people for nine years, and we're all really different I mean a lot of us believe the same things and want the same things but we all have very different experiences and come from different backgrounds and have different ways of dealing with what we want, and I think the thing that I believed before but really saw making this show behind the scenes and then also what was in the show as well which always inspired me too. I'm inspired by June, and I'm inspired by many of these characters -- is how strong humanity is, you know, and the different ways of fighting that these characters have, whether it's small, whether it's sometimes Rita's smaller acts of resistance, remembering her family and that obviously end in beautiful, much larger active resistance for her which is wonderful to June's much more forward-facing acts of resistance, you know? Maddie with Janine growing into this fighter, you know, who gets her daughter back. There have just been so many ways that I feel like these characters have shown how beautiful and strong humans can be. And I think it has left me with a very hopeful feeling for us, and it's because of these people and who they are off screen and what they've brought to their characters which is a very, very real thing.

Jazz Tangcay: Beautiful and the hope definitely. You feel that every time you watch it. So, this is a question from Rick Hong, who is a Critic's Choice member, and this is for you, Elisabeth. Was there anything specific that you learned stepping behind the camera as a director on the series?

Elisabeth Moss: Yeah. How important acting is, honestly. That was truly the thing that I learned really early on. Like, I had been acting for so long that for me, it became a little bit second nature. Not always easy. That's not what I'm saying at all but definitely something that I've done for many, many years, like 30 years. And, so, I kind of like thought I'd be much more interested in the visuals and the cinematography and all the tricks and the cameras and things like that, and I am, and I was but when you plan something with this really cool piece of equipment and it looks great and then you have a close-up of Ann Dowd's face being Aunt Lydia and bringing you full Ann Dowd, you go, oh, the only thing that matters is Ann Dowd, you know? And that's something that -- and it's true and it's true for all of these actors. I learned so quickly that when you have a good actor and you have that performance, that is the most important thing. And it makes everything work, and it makes things that you didn’t think were going to work work, and it makes things that you thought were going to work even better. They

surprise you. I mean giving notes or thoughts -- not even notes, like thoughts to these actors, ideas to these actors, and then seeing them digest it, you go back to the monitor, you sit down, and you watch what comes back out is like one of the most extraordinary pieces of artistic sort of brilliance I've ever seen. So, I think that for me, that was the number one thing I still am astounded by is just how important that performance is, you know?

Jazz Tangcay: Speaking of that, in the finale, I love the scene in the camp with Noah with June and Serena. Talk about shooting that scene, and Elisabeth, you working both as an actress and director to get this incredible performance and just that moment.

Yvonne Strahovski: Wasn't it one take?

Elisabeth Moss: Our last scene.

Jazz Tangcay: The last scene.

Elisabeth Moss: You're talking about our last scene?

Yvonne Strahovski: Last scene in the series?

Elisabeth Moss: Yeah. Intent. Right? Like, at the bus? Yeah. The bus. I got to tell you that I knew we had the scene after her side because it was a very difficult scene to shoot for very boring practical weather reasons. It was snowing on her side and then blue sky on mine. And, so, we had to bring in a snow machine on my side, and it was not pretty. It was a nightmare but I was fine and relaxed because of her goddamn performance and that scene, I knew we had the scene, and I just had to kind of record my side of it and feed her the lines. Go ahead.

Yvonne Strahovski: I mean my take away from that day is the weather.

Elisabeth Moss: It was a very big part of the day.

Yvonne Strahovski: And Sam was there. Sam was wearing a T-shirt and a little jacket. I was like what are you doing? I was wearing four pairs of thermals squeezed under whatever else I was wearing. It was so cold. It was so cold. Couldn't feel my face move. But the scene, I don't know. Someone asked me about this scene just today, earlier, and it's -- I don't want to say it's easy but it kind of was because we've spent, all of us, between action and cut, we have built these characters and built these relationships, and we have spent the time together more than what is on the show because we do the scenes over and over again, and we digest this so much, and we

have lived in these shoes, and we've just earned the emotions, I think. So, by the end, knowing that this was the final moment and knowing that -- at least for Serena, her journey this season was to get the forgiveness. I mean it was -- it was all there, and to have an extraordinary scene partner like Lizzy as well. I mean this has just been amazing to have this time.

Sam Jaeger: One of the sweetest things about that scene is we were so rushed to do it, and yet you still have to get it right even as cold as it is. And watching it, I was reminded, you know, just watching the exchange and being honored to be in this moment with you two, I thought about my favorite quote is, "Life is an adventure in forgiveness." And for me, I see that that's one of the -- at the epicenter of that relationship, that we need that, and it's not so much about the catharsis of getting revenge on all these people who've wronged these women. It's about these women being strong enough to take that on and forgive and move on and ascend I think in a way.

Jazz Tangcay: Okay. This is a question from Critic's Choice member, (inaudible @ 00:41:08), and this is for you. *The Handmaid's Tale* has often mirrored real-world political shifts. In directing the finale, how conscious were you of current global events, particularly threats to women's rights and how did that influence your approach if at all?

Elisabeth Moss: Yeah. I mean I think from the beginning, from reading the pilot, the reason why I wanted to do this show was because I felt like it was about this woman's absolute intent and need to survive for her children and, you know, specifically for her one daughter at the time. And, it's been the same for me the entire time up until the end, up until that last episode, up until that last scene. The show has always been about that for me personally. I think that -- I don't write the show, so I don't necessarily write to the what's happening out in the world but for me, the personal fight that June has of intending to have a better future for her children and for other peoples' children in the next generation, that's the entirety of what this show is for me personally, playing June. And I bring that into my directing, you know? I don't think -- I don't separate June from being a director. I think she's -- playing her is probably my greatest strength as an actor. So, I like to take from it as much as I can but yeah. It's always been there for me. It's never been different, whether I've been directing, producing, acting, it's always been about that.

Jazz Tangcay: Amazing. I want to come back to something that Ann said about cycling through Union Square, in New York, and seeing handmaids dressed up.

Ann Dowd: Yes. Yes.

Jazz Tangcay: And this is a question for anyone on the panel who wants to answer this but has there been a moment, whether it's seeing a moment like that that's really impacted you or a fan reaching out, saying this has actually changed my life? Has anybody had a reaction or -- go for it, Madeline.

Madeline Brewer: Particularly, actually, in season one, it might've been episode two, Birthday. It was that one and then another one. Sorry. There's so many episodes. We've been doing it a long time. But I had so many women in my Instagram DMs just talking to me about motherhood really. Saying, like, I don't know if I could ever do that or the thought of having my child taken from me. It's really been in the comments the real life stories of people relating to or trying to relate to the characters and trying to put themselves in the shoes of our characters has been so beautiful to see them relayed and to feel like they're reaching out to understand us and this. And I think it just makes the world a more beautiful place. Yeah. That has been -- it's astounding every time. It floors me every time I read one.

Amanda Brugel: The response to Rita this season has been overwhelming of like -- at airports or on the street or DMs or just messages, mail, like handwritten letters of people who see themselves as quiet survivors. A lot of ties to cancer survivors. Like, just unexpected ties and bridges to people fighting in their lives but fighting quietly and finding a representation of that onscreen and feeling like they align with it and then really just getting attached to the character and the story. And it's been like overwhelming this season, and the personal stories that are shared quite publically or the personal stories that are shared in the grocery store, and it's been beautiful but you feel how necessary it is for people to see themselves. Again, I'm echoing myself -- for people to see themselves and their stories being told. Because people have been very emotional about it.

Ever Carradine: And, also, I just have to add that in a post-Rowe America it has been an incredible thing to see these *Handmaid's Tale* outfits be the costume of resistance. It's sort of blown my mind -- the same as you, Ann. Sometimes, here, in Los Angeles, one day, someone texted me, and they were like there's handmaids hiking in Runyon Canyon. And I was like, what is happening? It might've been a Hulu PR thing. I'm not sure but I just think it's incredible. I think it's just -- it's been really a magical thing to see happen.

Jazz Tangcay: That's the impact of the show. Thank you for the show and your incredible performances and, you know, the answers to your questions this afternoon, insight into your process. Thank you, everybody, on Zoom for tuning in and for everyone in the room and thank you again. And enjoy episode ten tonight, the finale.

Elisabeth Moss: Thank you, guys.

Jazz Tangcay: Thank you, everybody.

Yvonne Strahovski: Thank you, everyone.

Ann Dowd: Thank you so much.

[END FILE]