

Ben Hall on Revolutionizing Sustainability in Filmmaking | Transcript

00:02

Charlie

Welcome to Green Building Matters, the original and most popular podcast focused on the green building movement. Your host is Charlie Cichetti, one of the most credentialed experts in the green building industry and one of the few to be honored as a LEED Fellow. Each week, Charlie welcomes green building professionals from around the globe to share their war stories, career advice, and unique insight into how sustainability is shaping the built environment. So settle in, grab a fresh cup of coffee, and get ready to find out why, Green Building Matters.

00:33

Charlie

Hey, everybody. Welcome to the next episode of the Green Building Matters podcast. Every week I interview someone in this sustainability movement. But you know what, it's not just buildings. And today I've got a special guest, one of my close colleagues that's a good friend of his. I've got Ben Hall on today, we're actually going to talk about sustainability and the film industry. I think everybody's going to really enjoy this interview. Ben, how are you doing today, man?

00:57

Ben

I'm good, thank you. How are you today, man?

00:59

Charlie

Doing great, doing great. As we're in this kind of transitional spring, I think it is here. You're in Georgia, I'm in Georgia, just outside of Atlanta. And it's like we have that fake yellow snow on the ground right now. For those just

curious, Georgia gets all four seasons though. Ben, I usually ask my guests take us back, where'd you grow up and you know, maybe go to school and early part of your career.

01:22

Ben

I grew up in this little town outside of Tallahassee, Florida called Marianna. And so I was a small town kid and I just love films, love movies. When I was three and four years old, I'd reenact entire films in front of my parents. But I would play the close ups with my face and then my action figures would be the wide shot. Even at that age, it was for some reason just very much embedded in me. And when I was 11 years old, I actually, funny enough, up until 11 years old, I thought I wanted to be an architect, but I realized that I couldn't draw and I'm not very good at math, so that didn't work out for me. 11, I realized I could go and make movies for a living. I was watching some behind the scenes on some of the Star Wars films like most people my generation have done, and I just, I realized, hey, I already do this on my off time. Why not make this a career? And ever Since I was 11 years old, I've been pursuing work in entertainment in film and filmmaking. And so I went off to film school at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, Southern Winston Salem, North Carolina. It's a really great program. Peter Bogdanovich, who was a county award nominated director, was my mentor, as was Michael Chapman, who was the director of photography for Taxi Driver and Raging Bull. So I had a really great experience there. We were making about four films a weekend there every weekend. And four of those films I directed.

02:46

Ben

Actually I directed more than that, but four of them were like that from start to finished, made something good and. I graduated from there in 2013 with a degree in a bachelor's of fine arts in filmmaking. And within two days of graduating, I was in Los Angeles. I'd gotten an apartment with some friends

and were going at it, trying to make our way in the world. So that's my short backstory.

03:10

Charlie

That's amazing. Florida, getting over to North Carolina and just those early mentors. But you really knew what you wanted to do. I want to unpack that more and I'm actually just. Later you'll have to educate us. You know, I'm used to just DVD and Blu Ray with all the bonus features. Seems like it's harder to get to the bonus features these days. I'm just kind of curious. In films, is there still a lot of that content but you got to go find it somewhere else, you know?

03:35

Ben

You're right because the deviant Blu Ray market is kind of non existent at this point for the mainstream. Those kind of secondary content pieces just, they don't exist. They don't exist in a package deal. Like, like you said you had to kind of like go up in YouTube or elsewhere to kind of find them. I thought they shortened them. I mean, back in back 20 years ago, they were making three hour documentaries on Lord of the Rings and Star Wars films. That just doesn't really exist that much anymore. You are correct. I just have to kind of find them where you can get them.

04:07

Charlie

Alternate endings. All right, so you know, you told us where you knew you were going to get into film and you've done that. I understand through our mutual friend Brian, you're passionate about sustainability. Did show up in your career later. Was it more in your personal life? And you try to sprinkle it in. Like when did sustainability kind of show up in the work you do?

04:27

Ben

In 2004, a movie came out called the Day After Tomorrow. A very silly film. But it was my first moment that I recognized the concept of climate change and global warming. And unfortunately I do, at the end of the day think that film probably set most of the country and most of the world back in the way they think about it because it just presents in a very silly way. But I will say it was the first time I was like, hey scientists are saying that we are headed for calamity. So that just was kind of always in the back of my head. I thought about that film a lot. I liked it quite a bit at the time and I haven't seen it in several years, so I don't know how to feel about it now.

05:06

Ben

But that was always in the back of my mind that, hey we are as a species, as a planet in trouble. And when you start thinking about things differently. Did I start thinking about things differently at 13, 14 years old? No. It wasn't until I graduated college, moved out to Los Angeles and just kind of started to see, just in small doses, just some of the things that were going on out there to try to avert climate change or at least start to mitigate it. And so I kind of, during that time it just, I just became more and more obvious to me as I was working on films just the amount of waste that was happening and just in general how I was just a wasteful person and I was driving a car that was definitely 25 miles to the island at best kind of thing. So I just started thinking about these little things in the years after I graduated college and started researching them a little bit. I ended up buying my first car that I purchased by myself was a Prius. And I was like, hey, I know this will be a little bit better for the environment, but definitely better on my gasoline bill. So these are little things. And then as the years went along, I just, I started really just thinking about like, hey, how can I use plastic less? Or if I am going to use plastic, make sure I'm buying something that's going to be there for years. Not just one time, single use plastic, that kind of thing. You know, obviously I, I'm very thankful. My parents were the kind of parents who are like, if you're not using a light, turn it off. Just these basic practices. I tried to

kind of push to the limits. And then in my career in film over the last couple years, I learned that Netflix and several other studios had these green initiatives.

06:40

Ben

And I just realized that seemed like a very purposeful opportunity for me to move into as I was kind of getting burned out on the grind of being in production on major films. And so once I kind of saw that, I was like, let me really deep dive into this and see where I can go with it and see what I can learn and you know, for my personal life, for the films that I'm making. And also just because it is a worthy cause to Tron.

07:04

Charlie

I love that I started personal first. And you're trying to see where you can work it in. I know here in Atlanta and here in Georgia. George, let's talk about this for our listeners. Where Ben and I are based. There are a lot of movies and TV shows that are being filmed here and edited here. And I don't know how Ben, that's been going on for 10 years. How long has Georgia been a hotspot for film?

07:27

Ben

Yeah, I think the first time I remember really hearing that things were popping up here more regularly was probably 2010. So yeah, 15 years. And I think by, yeah, by 2013, 2014, it was definitely really cooking to the point where by the late teens I was getting more job offers in Atlanta than I was in Los Angeles. So that was that Speaks volume cnn.

07:50

Charlie

Big leading indicator there. Georgia for our listeners did a really good job

around that same time with electric vehicle tax credits, but also the film studio tax credits. And I think that was an extra incentive here. And maybe the labor pool's a little less expensive, but it's created kind of a sub economy here. It's been amazing to see. And there's actually a LEED certified movie studio not too far from here, so I want to hit on that. But how about mentors? You mentioned a couple mentors there where you're going to college. What an amazing opportunity. Have you had some other mentors along the way?

08:22

Ben

It's funny, I think about this often and to be honest with you, not really not the kind of mentors I'm seeking and wanting. I, I'm very much, I've been really honestly just kind of distraught that there's not more people there to really help lead me along. It's a very dog eat dog world in the film industry. But I will say that although I haven't inherently had the mentors I want in the film career that I'm pursuing writing and directing, I have had just some really great personal, almost family-like mentors that I worked with early on in my career, one person, his name's John Hampion. He actually is one of the executives at Lucasfilm these days doing a lot of the Star Wars films. And he was the first production coordinator that I worked for. I was actually technically still in college. And he was just someone who just always was very helpful and just kind and earnest with me and was just very. Just gave me a lot of great career advice. Not so much on writing and directing and just in general making films, but just on how to navigate the industry. And I always, I've always appreciated that. And then I had another good friend who was kind of like me. I called her my LA aunt and her name's Ellen Foin and she's a very prominent prop master who was one of those kinds of people who. I walked on the set that I met her on and I was delivering a package for her and she literally, if I remember correctly, she literally grabbed my hand as I was walking where she's like, where are you going? Why don't you just hang out for a while, watch what's going on? It was that kind of thing. She was great. And we're. I'm still very close with her, so I've had these mentors that have just been good for me on a personal and on

just a base level career. How to say, just kind of like a base level talking about career advice for career. But I'm honestly still very much looking for a mentor that can really kind of help take me the rest of the way. I want to go.

10:15

Ben

And definitely some of the people that I've been working with, one of my producers on my last two feature films that I directed, he's definitely been a mentor, but he's from the investment capital world. His name is Landon Thorne. And so on that level, just talking about money and just being very helpful in that regard, he's been great. But once again, I am seeking a mentor who can really help me navigate my aspirations in writing, interacting and producing films.

10:41

Charlie

Now give us a peek into the writing, directing, producing. Like, you ended up in LA as one would. Getting out of school, I want to go to film. How do you break into that? I think I get it a little bit as an actor, but I'm not sure with your discipline, like how do you get that break, I guess.

11:00

Ben

Exactly my point with what I was talking about with the mentorship is you don't break in you either are and you aren't. There is no working your way up. Like I mentioned earlier, I come from a very small, fairly conservative small town in the sense that you work your way up and start a company in One position and 10 years later maybe you're the vice president or something of that nature. It doesn't work that way in the film industry, unfortunately. At least not from where you can enter the industry to actually becoming a creative head in some way. I can only point to one or two cases in the last 50 years where I've actually seen that happen. it's complicated. It's very complicated. So that's a complicated question.

11:38

Ben

Like I said, either you are or you aren't. I decided that I was going to be. And so I just slowly but surely, after kind of a grassroots effort, raised money to make my first feature film as a director. And over the course of about a year, I cobbled together about \$37,000. Some of it was my own money, some of it was a loan I took out with a friend, some of it was from other friends. And a couple people just were willing to throw me some money. And I made my first feature film and we got it out there on Amazon and it's doing pretty well for what it is. And that film led to the next. Once again, like it just got in front of the right people. And so that's kind of been the trajectory.

12:16

Ben

And I've just now directed my third feature film here in Atlanta and up in LJ actually. And so one post production for that and that's gonna hopefully premiere in September of this year. So it's. You either are or you are. You either go for it and pull everything you can into it or you. Or you just don't really get it; it's complicated. It's. It's frustrating to say the least.

12:38

Charlie

Oh, man. Well, hey, thank you for telling us that part of the story and it sounds like you're resilient. I grew up in Blue Ridge, one town from Elgin. Yeah, can't wait to see that film.

12:48

Ben

Do you know the people there at Swan Drive in?

12:51

Charlie

Swan Drive in. It's like two for our listeners. There's like two drive-ins in the whole state of Georgia. One off in my small hometown. That's great.

12:59

Ben

It's the oldest in the nation, actually. The oldest operating in the nation. I just emailed them yesterday. I'm hoping to show it there in September.

13:08

Charlie

Oh, man. Let me know the dates.

13:10

Ben

I'll be there.

13:11

Charlie

This is cool, man. Our listeners, I hope you're enjoying this. Okay, so let's kind of get going with the career here. What are some of your proudest accomplishments?

13:20

Ben

My proudest accomplishments I think are the feature films I've directed. Like, I'm very proud of that. That's exactly what I set out to do. And it's definitely not a scale I'd like to do it at completely. But it's definitely been a great stepping stone and start for me, which has been exciting. And then I'm a father, I've got a three year old daughter, so that's a big accomplishment for me. And, and then I. This, this one's an accomplishment, at least in my mind. It's hard to measure. But I talking going back to this mentor concept, since I really haven't had the mentor that I've been looking for, I very much try to

mentor others that are younger than me and that are also trying to do the work I'm trying to do because I realize the of mentorship there.

14:02

Ben

And so there's been quite a few people that are even just about two or three years younger than me and then some considerably younger that I've been able to really help them in their career and shape where they're going. And one such person actually just produced a film that actually got into the South by Southwest Film Festival this past year. So that was really cool and very special to me. I was like, hey I was glad to be a hand in helping him kind of navigate where he needs to go. And it produced a pretty great opportunity for him.

14:31

Charlie

Way to lean in and be that mentor maybe even earlier than someone thinks. But we all have something, even if it's just encouragement, right, Ben? It's just. Just listen, ask good questions, peel back the onion, peel back. And so I love that. And congrats on being a dad. I love being a dad. I've got three boys. They're 16. Oh man. 13 and 11. So we got a full house. Okay, so that's a great background. Let's go to the present day. So what's keeping you busy day to day? What's a day in the life of Ben right now?

15:01

Ben

I can't go into too many details because I am under several NDAs right now, but I am working for a major studio that everyone would recognize in the sustainability department. As I mentioned, I spent a decade out in Los Angeles in production, meaning I was what's called an office production assistant. And then I moved my way up to a union production coordinator. So basically what that means is you're about third in line to the producer of the show. You're just helping orchestrate how a project is being made on a

day to day basis. And that's quite a grind when you want to ultimately direct, write and direct and you're just not getting those opportunities at that scale.

15:39

Ben

So once I had the opportunity to go and work in sustainability and be this kind of sustainability advisor on studio productions, that just opened up a lot of doors for me of just having something a little bit more purposeful to do and also still getting to interact with a film crew from everyone from the producers to the directors on down. So I was just on a project here in Atlanta for the last two years. One of the longest projects probably ever and definitely the longest one I've ever been on. And it was quite fun. And I was in that role as the production sustainability advisor.

16:13

Ben

So we're just really focusing on how we can substitute generators with batteries and other clean tech opportunities tying into power grids because film sets run off of massive generators so we're trying to cut that, eliminate that and mitigate that. On my day to day, like I said, I'm working directly for a studio, I'm not actually on a production right now and I'm in house with them, helping them just kind of do some work on the sustainability front with what I've learned from this project I just did. And then on top of that, I'm in post production with my third feature film. So we just did what's called a picture lock, which means we've cut the movie all together and we've locked it. We're not going to make any changes.

16:53

Ben

And now we're going to go in and actually clean up this, put in sound effects, put in our music and color, time it. So the way we're doing it, because we're all doing part time, it's going to be about a four month process. I said, that puts us up to around September premiere date.

17:10

Charlie

I love this peek into your world. And this is fascinating. I am so curious about the length of films and then I want to ask sustainability questions. Has that evolved and attention spans over the last 10, 15 years of filmmaking? It seems like next thing you know, I mean, the big hits are like three hours and then some movies you got to keep them less than 90 minutes. Do you go with a time target or. No, just get the story told. I mean, you're. How do you look at it?

17:38

Ben

For me personally, at the scale and stage I'm at right now with these little independent films that I'm. I'm directing, yeah, I'm definitely trying to keep it between 75 to 90 minutes because I do feel like anything over two hours, like you're going to need Robert De Niro, you're going to need Brad, you're going to need somebody really going to hold you there I do think if you get into the bigger question. Have Americans or maybe worldwide audiences, has their attention span dropped? I don't doubt that, but I think when it comes to narrative filmmaking as it still exists, I think run times are really are dictated by the story and who's involved and at what scale you get to make it, you know.

18:23

Charlie

Thank you. Anybody you hope to work with one day? I haven't even got to my bucket list questions, but. Curious. You got a lot of time?

18:30

Ben

Oh, man, that's a really good question. I actually got to work with quite a few people that I've wanted to work with. So in the capacity of being a director, I

really would love to have Steven Spielberg as a producer. I've actually got to meet him, which has been really cool. I've got to meet him a couple times, actually, but I think that would be really great to have him once again looking for a mentor, to have him, an executive producer on something that I think would be really fun. And I don't really think about actors that way too much. There's definitely actors I absolutely adore and love, but I don't. I never have. Once again, it's about the story. If the story makes sense for whoever to be in it then I would go for it. Like Michael Keaton, for instance. I think he'd be someone I'd love to work with and although I don't plan to make too many commies, I'd love to work with Jim Carrey just like some people that I truly enjoyed growing up watching.

19:22

Charlie

Somewhat close in age. So I'd. I'd say the same. That's amazing, man. Sustainability. A couple more questions there. And I know you're just speaking as Ben here as a sustainability enthusiast, but what are a few tips on how to green up? Film, location or an office? What are some things you're seeing that are actually working?

19:42

Ben

It always comes down to the human element. If you've got a crew that are willing to actually give this stuff a shot, it will most likely succeed and probably succeed beyond what you're expecting. It also takes a crew that is. Let me rephrase it. It also takes a director who understands what his crew has to do for him in order for these things to work out. Because if you have a director who comes on the set and is constantly changing his mind about very tactile things, all of a sudden that generator you didn't need, you now need it so it's just this kind of, this game you can start playing if you're not careful. So it comes down to the people and the personalities. Definitely.

20:23

Ben

With the advent of LED lighting, we now have less amperage, less wattage lights that we run. So therefore you can run these setups on battery power and for longer periods of time. So definitely replacing generators with batteries, first and foremost, tying in when you have an opportunity. So the project I was just on for the last two years, we actually kind of camped out at this physical location outside of Atlanta. That was an old facility, I won't go into too many details. And it had a nice three phase power panel. So we just tagged right into it and that was our power for the set. You know, we only had to run one generator instead of three. So it's looking for those kind of opportunities. Solar is a big thing. We actually. There's a company here in Atlanta called BI Productions. I can speak to this. And they're out in Madison, Georgia, and they are actually building solar cast and crew trailers. And more importantly, they have set up a system called the solar ring, which is allowing these trailers to be interconnected to a big battery in the sender. So basically when we set up a film, you set up base camps where you have your actors and your crew kind of hanging out when they're not on set. It's just kind of, just a general, kind of a meetup area. And for the project I was just on 75% of the time, and were able to run that off of solar and battery power instead of a generator. So it was a huge win. It's being built here in Georgia and they're shipping them out around the country and into Canada, which is grim.

21:55

Ben

So utilizing solar and battery tech has been a huge plus. Some studios focus on waste management more than others. But definitely when it comes to waste management, going the route of using compostable materials for your catering. So that way, at the minimum if it's just going to landfill, at least it will hopefully decompose quicker, cleaner. On this last project we did, we actually were using compost now as our compost vendor. So we're actually composting thousands and thousands of pounds a week or, sorry, a month of materials that would normally go into landfill. So those are just a couple

things. Tying in batteries, composting, obviously if you can do recycling to some extent.

22:35

Charlie

Also the director and leadership say, hey, we're going to do this is how we're going to do it.

22:41

Ben

It starts from the top. And people have to be aware. And honestly, that's been the biggest challenge, is making sure that the people at the top are aware of what's being asked to the people below them. Because if you try to do this from the middle, it just. You just get middling results. It's this kind of fact.

23:01

Charlie

Thank you for that. Let's talk about the future. Usually I'm asking, like, green building questions, what's trending? But, how about just in film what are you kind of excited about? What are you reading up on what's next in your industry?

23:15

Ben

It looks like hydrogen power is well on the way for the film industry and that's very exciting. And it's being. It's being utilized quite frequently in the UK right now, and then some tests are happening around the world in other areas where we haven't done much with it here in the. In the US yet, and I'm not exactly sure why. I'm sure there's various protocols it has to go through, but hydrogen seems just like a really great opportunity because no matter how you slice it, batteries are always going to be limited. No matter how far we push them, they will be limited. They do not self generate, but hydrogen

has the same concept as a true generator, where it can generate its own power and the actual residual emissions are incredibly minuscule in comparison to.

24:01

Ben

And obviously it's diesel or anything else and for the most part, as I understand it pretty much does just offset water, clean, drinkable water. So I think that's most definitely a big task for the future of the film industry because it is, like I said, it is really difficult to push crews to want to utilize technology that is not self generating, that is not going to take care of itself. At the end of the day, you're really having to babysit this battery and make sure it's charged every night, blah, blah, that kind of thing, you know. So I definitely think batteries are still going to be a part of this. And of course, as we build them bigger and better and with more capacity, they're going to get to a good place.

24:39

Ben

But I think from what I can see, hydrogen is really on the forefront as a really great power source for mobile filmmaking.

24:48

Charlie

Okay, here. Well, let's shift a little bit to kind of the rapid fire part of the interview. Just want to get to know you a little bit more. What would you say is your specialty or gift?

25:00

Ben

I think I'm really good at leveling with people. And that's not necessarily really good. That's not necessarily saying I'm not good at communicating with people. But I do think that I have a way of being able to really just meet

people where they're at, where they are and look them in the eyes and kind of tell them the truth and they'll hear it whether they like it or not. I feel like I've got a talent for that.

25:23

Charlie

Is there, do you find it's best to say, hey, Ben, can I give you some feedback? And there's permission that you can level. How do you prime it before you're like, hey, here's what I really want to say.

25:35

Ben

I'm still figuring that out. Like I said, I'm good at leveling, but maybe not always communicating.

25:43

Charlie

It's going to ask for permission. Can I give you feedback or can I make an observation? Once there's a little bit of permission.

25:51

Ben

I definitely try to lead with the question, I definitely try to leave the question and I definitely want to, I try to come in with a smile on my face and, and usually if I really know I'm walking into a situation, I try to kind of self-deprecate. Go ahead, just walk in as the dummy and kind of try to kind of tame down the expectations and then go from there. And that's served me well in the past.

26:14

Charlie

So do you have any good habits, routines, rituals that help you stay on point?

26:19

Ben

I'm a Christian, I pray quite a bit. That's been big for me and I don't have any. I actually, I. I usually try to stay away from habits and naturals, to be honest with you. Overall, I just. I feel like it keeps me spontaneous if I'm not just in a rut all the time and in the same thing. But that's me, though. I can't really think of anything. I think the only habit I have is I'm always thinking. I'm always thinking, which. Which isn't always healthy. I have to really regulate that and but I'm trying to always keep thinking about what's next. What's next, what else do I need to be doing here? And that seems to kind of keep me in a good professional motion.

26:56

Charlie

Let me unpack that more. Because I think there's a lot of busy business professionals that would kill to have more time to think. I mean, I know the times I actually schedule in my calendar literally margin or thinking time, and I know that's what it's for instead of just more busy work. So if you really have that time to think, I think that's a huge advantage. Now, how do you capture something good? Do you have a great memory? Do you write it down? Do you type it up? Like, what's your catch?

27:24

Ben

I definitely. I definitely type up and write things down as much as I can because, weirdly enough, I do have a really good memory. But when it comes to small details, it's kind of straight. It's kind of a catch 22. I don't know, there's sometimes I just. I lose the small details, but the big pictures there. And so, I mean, one thing is, for me, since I am a filmmaker, like, I mean, I can. I can watch things in my head. Like, I can create a movie of what's going to happen tomorrow in my head.

27:49

Ben

And so that allows me this ability to just kind of constantly be thinking, because I like watching a movie of what I'm thinking about so it helps me kind of pace out and think things through and just allows me to imagine things so whether I have time to think or not, I don't know. I just. I. I think what I'm able to do is I'm able to have a conversation with you here, but also be thinking about something else and playing it through in my mind and that's just. I don't know, it's just something I'm just able to do. And like I said, it's not always healthy. It's not always a good thing.

28:21

Ben

Sometimes I should be completely focused on my daughter rather than thinking about something else and so I have to really sometimes clamp that down and. And kind of alleviate that. That need or want or desire to just be constantly thinking and constantly kind of problem solving in my head.

28:38

Charlie

I'm a fan of the bucket list. Not everybody has a bucket list, but could you share what are one or two things on your bucket list? Maybe some adventure travel, write a book. I don't know what's on the bucket list.

28:50

Ben

My wife and I have been trying to go to London since 2020, but 2020 happened, and then we had a daughter and then we moved and so we just. We. We've been dying to go to work, but we've never been. So we want to go to London. That's one for sure. And then I. One of the things, too, is that I'm trying to get to the point where I can get the finances too. To do what's called tier one feature film, which is like a. About a \$3 to \$4 million project

and so that's something I definitely want to do, is kind of one of my next steps.

29:21

Ben

And on top of that, I'm actually really interested since I'm in a very unique moment in time, in the position that I'm in to actually direct the first, essentially net neutral feature film. Actually direct the first film that is as sustainable as it is humanly possible to be right now, that's something I'm really interested in. Anyone out there listening who's interested in motion pictures and motion picture finance, I'd be very interested in making my next picture greener than anyone's ever done it before, because I have the knowledge and the experience. So that's something that's kind of a bucket list thing for me. Yeah. And just in general, I do want to travel more. Now that the Pandemic has summer down, I'm kind of getting into my true adult years. I'm hoping to travel more.

30:11

Ben

And I just got back from New York City last week, which was a lot of fun, so.

30:16

Charlie

Well, maybe we could help crowdsource it here with some of my podcast listeners. The greenest film.

30:21

Ben

That would be great. Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. Well, listen, I'm. Like I said, I'm making. I'm making good mainstream movies on. On nothing, so I'm very capable.

30:31

Charlie

You're doing it, and I know you're really going to pull that off, man, I'm rooting for you. And this is amazing. One last thing about geography. You know, you spend time in la, always got a lot going on. We mentioned Atlanta, we mentioned Georgia, New York, but there's a two or three, really locations that have picked up a lot of filming. Right. So Georgia, you said New York. Where else are you seeing a film?

30:52

Ben

Yeah, well, let me rephrase the New York part. New York, for the particular studio I'm working for right now is on fire right now. There's just a lot going on. But I don't know if that's overall. But yeah, Albuquerque, New Mexico has become a big hub as of late because of tax incentives as well. Just like Georgia up in Canada. Vancouver, Toronto, they've been very active for years in New York City. And those are kind of your main hubs. Once in a while, something will go through Chicago. Once in a while, sometimes go through Miami. But besides that those are your main hubs in North America.

31:28

Charlie

Okay, good. Thanks for that reminder. Just a couple more things here. Is there a book you'd recommend? If not a book, maybe a documentary. Doesn't have to be about buildings or sustainability, just something kind of inspiring your listeners might want to check out.

31:42

Ben

Inspiring? I. I did. The book I just read, I wouldn't have to call inspiring, but it was quite good. I think it. It very much speaks to our modern times right now. It's the parable of the Sower, the Octavia Butler book. It's pretty sharp and it's. It's strangely accurate a lot of ways about our time right now. He's

not as written 30 years ago, so that was quite good. I would recommend that book for sure.

32:10

Charlie

Okay, we'll put links to that in the podcast. Show notes. Thank you. I'm also going to definitely put a link to your IMDb so everybody can check out cool stuff. Two last things as we start to wrap up here. Ben, as you look back on your career, is there anything you wish you'd have known earlier?

32:28

Ben

I do wish I had known that the film industry is not meritocracy. I wish I had known that it really was never expressed to me until I truly got into it. And you know, and that really, I think I would have thought about things a little bit differently had I realized, hey, I'm not going to go in at a studio and 15, 20 years later be directing for them. It just, it just doesn't work that way. So that's something I wish I had known probably within that first year of college so I could start thinking things through a little bit differently. Yeah, that's a big one. You know, the film industry is probably in this most unstable point it's ever been.

33:03

Ben

Just between just the strikes that have happened, the threat of AI and just in general kind of what you were alluding to earlier, just people's tastes and just what they're looking to do and how they're looking to do it is changing. So I guess I do wish I knew more about those trends earlier. Like, I wish I was paying attention to that kind of stuff earlier than. I mean, I'm on low length of the game.

33:30

Charlie

Okay. Those are two really good ones. I think they'll help someone else that's listening, so thank you for sharing that wisdom. So, last question. Let's say someone listening is jumping in this case to the sustainable film production side of things. Any words of encouragement for someone just now jumping in?

33:48

Ben

Yeah, I think the words of encouragement, I would say is that I think filmmaking is the best sector in the world to be playing around with green tech. Because I mean, we are the industry that is supposed to challenge and inspire and entertain. So therefore we should be the first ones to do it in a sustainable manner. You know, like, I think that there's just so much room for opportunity and where there is money in the film industry, there is money. You know what I mean? So it's like, let's put that money to good use and pushing this technology. So I think it's a good industry to be in when it comes to sustainability. Just because it's like I said, like we are the, we are supposed to be the beacons of our society.

34:35

Ben

So let's like, let's hold that industry to that.

34:38

Charlie

You know, you have say you're a stakeholder there too. What a fun conversation. I think all of our listeners, they're really enjoying this conversation. It's a little different than our norm, but you really showed us sustainability in your industry and industry I only knew a little bit about. So, Ben, thank you for telling your story on the Green Building Matters podcast today. Hopefully, Brian, grab some coffee soon and we'll be looking for your films coming up. Man. Thanks for spending time with us.

35:04

Ben

Absolutely. Thank you so much.

35:08

Charlie

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