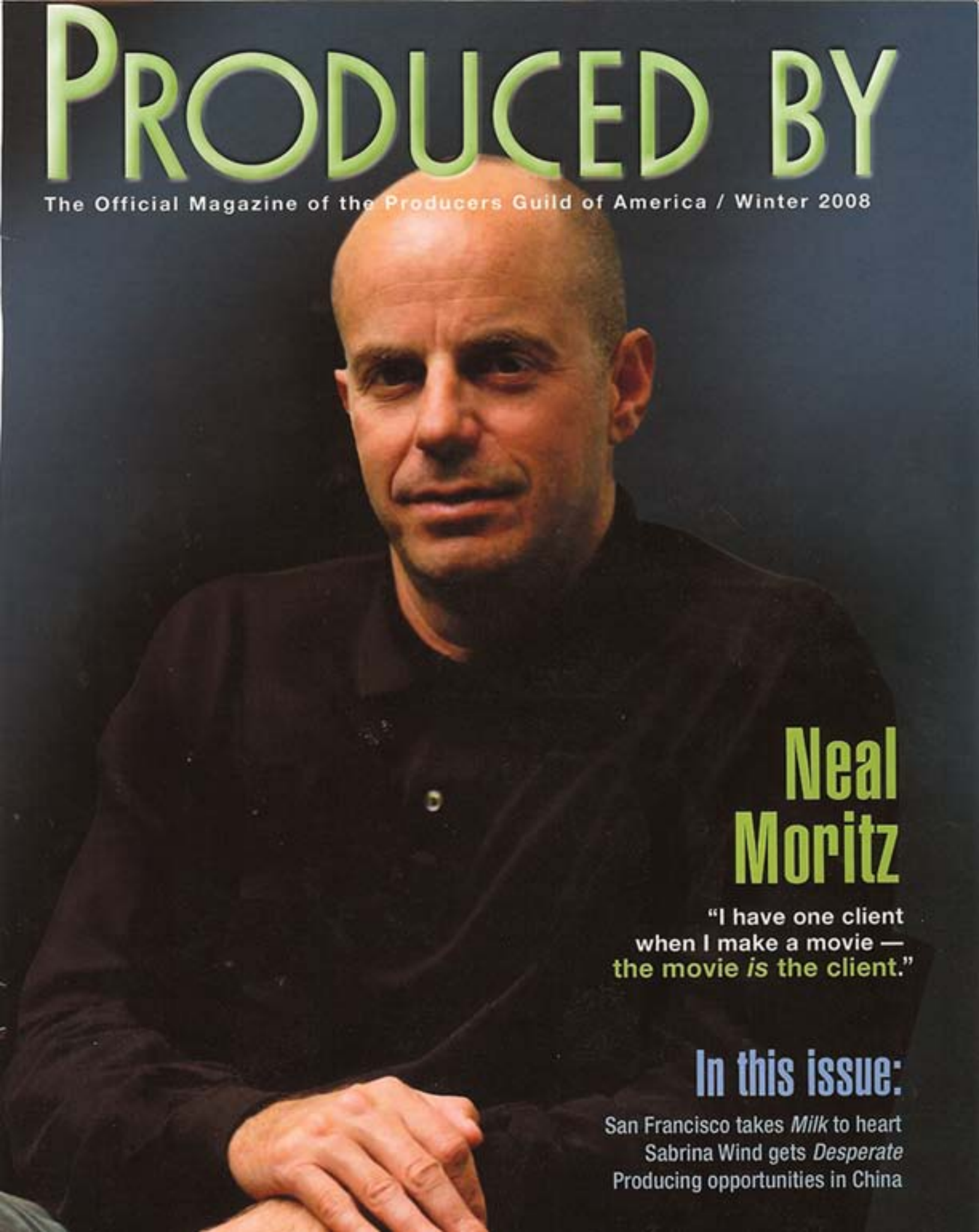


# PRODUCED BY

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A portrait of Neal Moritz, a bald man with a serious expression, wearing a dark polo shirt. He is sitting with his hands clasped in front of him. The background is dark and out of focus.

## Neal Moritz

"I have one client  
when I make a movie —  
the movie *is* the client."

### In this issue:

San Francisco takes *Milk* to heart  
Sabrina Wind gets *Desperate*  
Producing opportunities in China



# scenechronize

## takes the next step

by Rae Contreras

**When crewing up for a new production, you might ask yourself: “Who was that awesome makeup artist I worked with a couple of years ago?” You spend the next four hours digging through dusty wrap books in a basement. You find your makeup artist, but now your back hurts from rummaging through all those heavy folders and you just want to lie down.**

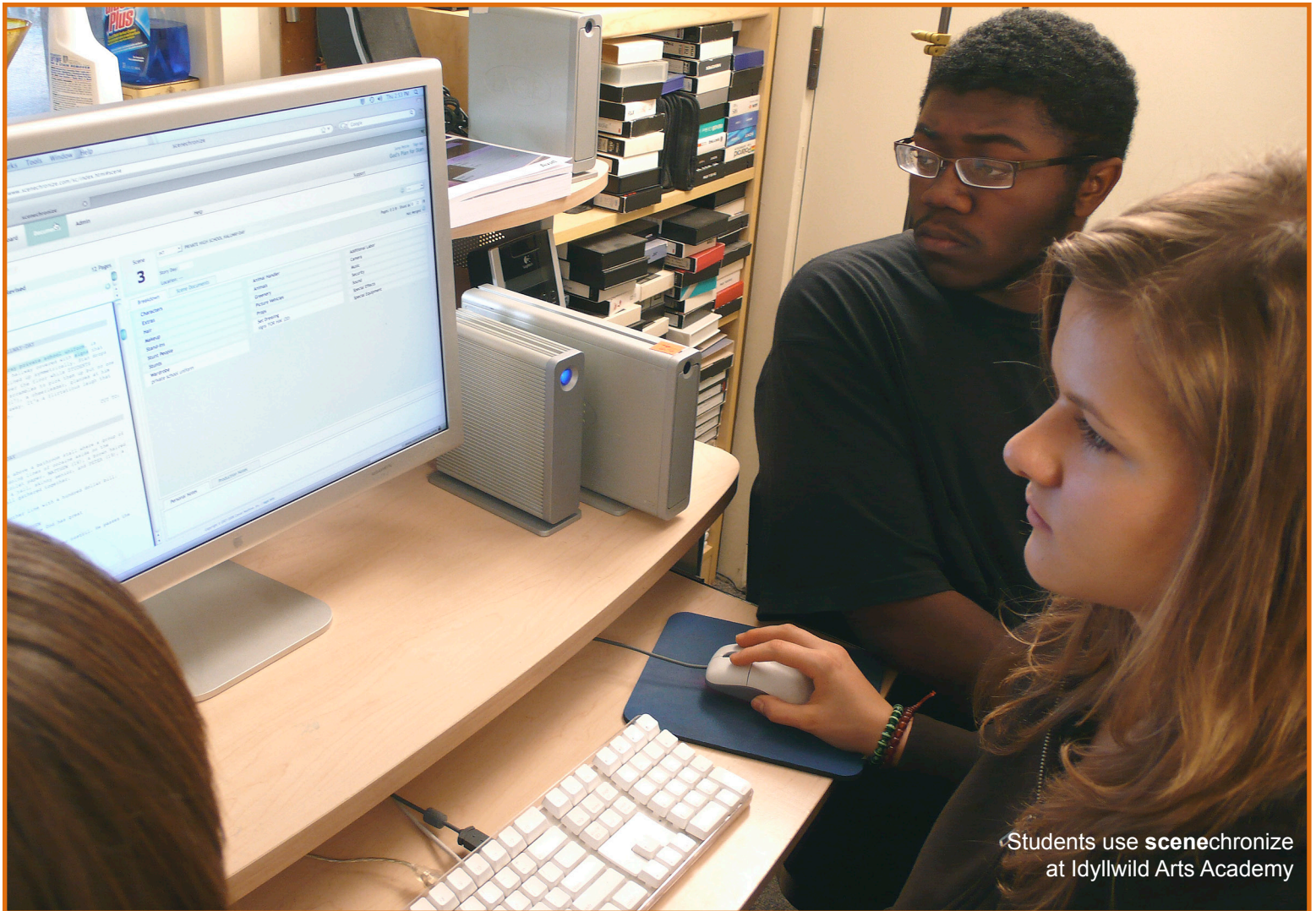
Finding that makeup artist is only a click away with a new program called **scenechronize**, a product that creators hope represents the next generation of production software. While there are other products available that have digitized aspects of production (scheduling for example), **scenechronize** aims to expand the capabilities of a production team in a multitude of arenas. Using a Web interface, it organizes the script, locations, casting, breakdown elements, and schedule. Tools have been specifically created for the assistant director, line producer, above-the-line and below-the-line crew. Each team member has access to his or her own department, while the UPM or line

producer maintains a big-picture view, with the option to share that information with other crew members on an as-needed basis. “People can see the project change in real time and always have access to the correct version,” says Darren Ehlers, who cofounded the namesake company. In a nutshell, all relevant and current production data is available to any crew member, anywhere at any time.

Ehlers and partner Hunter Hancock met six years ago while working at a consulting company. They parted ways, each going on to work for different clients, but ended up working together again years later. With the revenue they generated from their client, they decided to form their own company. The goal was simple -- develop a tool that would make it easier for a team to do its work. And with a steady cash flow from their day jobs, they had their opportunity. After many prototypes, they ended up with a promising software platform but no concrete idea what it could be used for. Before they could call it a product, they needed to find a niche. As it happened, a production-related consulting opportunity came along. “We thought: Here’s a team-based problem; how can we fix it?” says Ehlers.

They set about researching the ins and outs of production. “We started by placing ads on Craigslist,” recalls Ehlers. “We basically said, ‘If you’re a first AD, we want to talk to you. If





Students use **scenechronize** at Idyllwild Arts Academy

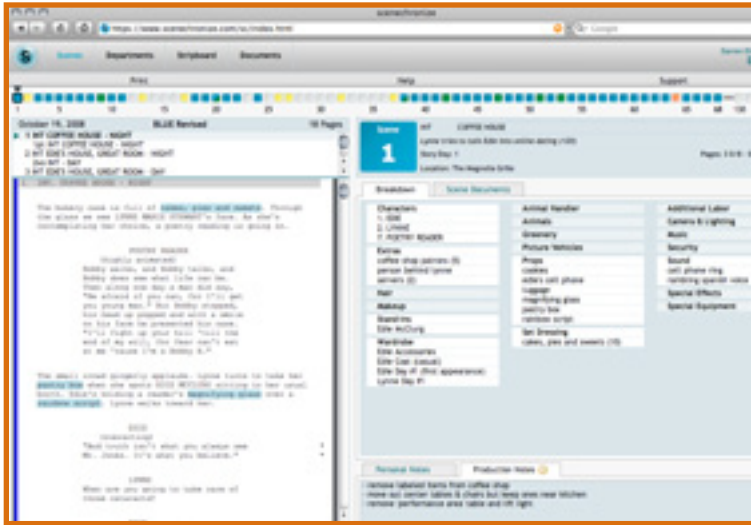
you're a UPM, a casting director ... all the critical jobs.' We brought them in and recorded them and asked them questions about how they did their job, and what frustrates them."

They compiled all the interviews and made mockups based on what they heard. To find out if they were on the right track, the same group was called in again and shown Powerpoint slides. With the comments they received, Ehlers and Hancock proceeded to build the first version of the application. To extend their research, they formed a product advisory team made up of a former line producer, veteran executive producer, casting director and an actor, and the product really began

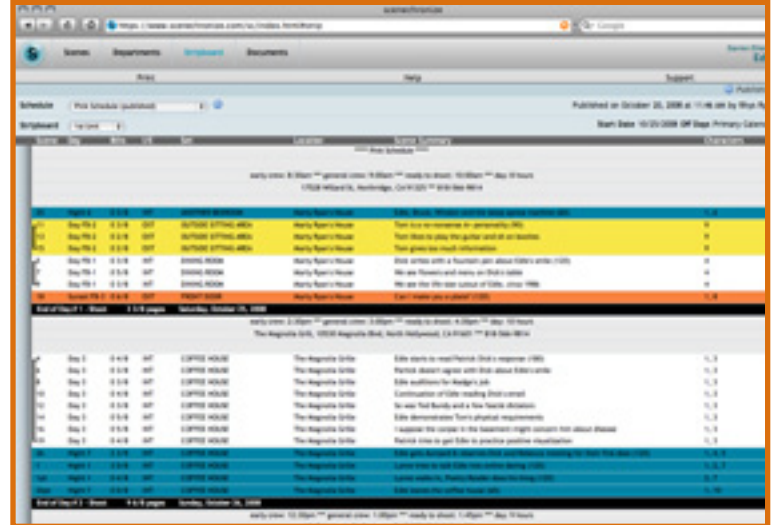
**“the program ‘reads’ a script and organizes a lot of information for you even before you have begun breaking down your lined scenes.”**

to take shape. About a year and half ago, the company assembled a dinner with 10 line producers, UPMs, and first ADs and presented an early version of **scenechronize**. Working off all the feedback from the dinner, they were able to release the beta version last January.

**scenechronize** is “enterprise” level software intended to serve independent as well as big-budget films. Hancock and Ehlers have conducted more than 400 demos and received enthusiastic responses, with attendees left wanting to know how to use it immediately. PGA member and **scenechronize** user June Petrie is impressed by the program’s apparent



A page showing the breakdown of a scene.



The scenechronize stripboard page

intelligence. “What’s truly remarkable,” she observes, “is that the program ‘reads’ a script and organizes a lot of information for you even before you have begun breaking down your lined scenes.”

Users appreciate **scenetime**’s potential to eliminate communication and collaboration errors. Ehlers notes, “a good example is handling script revisions. During production, if a crew has been shooting for 10 hours and they get a script revision, it can take anywhere from two to six hours to process that. We can reduce that to an hour. When there’s a script revision, the program generates a report for each user, showing everything that has changed - every scene and every line, every character -- anything that has changed, we tell you in this report.” This method, compared with a tired crew member doing revisions after a 12-hour day, assures fewer mistakes.

As for possible glitches on their end, the company has implemented safeguards to prevent them. “We’ve got seasoned engineers, some of the best in Silicon Valley,” assures Ehlers.

The program has the added benefit of “greening” productions. Users can cut out courier fees and countless paper copies of call sheets, script revisions, etc. Coordinators and ADs can tell anyone asking for a new call sheet, “Get it online,” and rest assured that the right version is posted.

On the marketing front, Ehlers considers filmmakers critical to their success and focuses on them more thoroughly than on studios. The software enjoyed a successful premiere at Sundance last year, with the team signing up a few projects and 80 people in attendance for their first party -- not bad for a debut. The company also made certain to have a presence at SXSW. Ehlers says people they talk to at festivals often

come back and say, “I remember seeing you guys at SXSW or Sundance, can I try it now?” The word-of-mouth has continued to garner them new jobs.

The company’s dedication to improving the production workflow is evidenced by the training they provide to newcomers and students. A month ago, they trained PAs to use **scenetime** so that they could hire them on projects and arm a new generation with the program. Students, who are already savvy with computers, are naturally drawn to it. Says Ehlers, “They think, ‘how else would you manage production?’”

An instructor at Idyllwild Arts Academy (IAA), June Petrie got wind of the program, saw a demo, and has integrated **scenetime** into her curriculum. “We were thrilled when we were able to convince **scenetime**’s Rhys Ryan to allow our students to work with what we consider is groundbreaking software,” say Petrie. “As PGA members on IAA’s faculty, Ira Abrams and I wanted to teach, through classroom instruction *and* with a complementary software program, the 9 P’s of Pre-Production: Proper Pre-Production Planning Prevents Piss Poor Post Production.” According to Petrie, students find communicating with their crews and teachers a breeze. “For instance, if a student location manager wants to send the student director several examples of possible locations, she/he can attach and post pictures within the software and get a response from multiple department heads quickly, wherever they happen to be.”

With **scenetime** formally being launched this winter, Ehlers says 2009 will be about building awareness and the group will again be a presence at festivals and film schools, while PGA members and guests should look for them at the Guild’s own Produced By Conference in June. 