

# Charlie Gruet On Shooting That Bonkers ‘Pleasantville’ Tribute for Max’s ‘The Other Two’

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June 21, 2023



Have you ever had that experience when you are watching a TV show or movie and you think to yourself, ‘This was made solely for me!’ I have that feeling almost every week while watching Max’s gloriously silly third season of *The Other Two*. Steeped in the industry more than ever, this comedy allows itself to take the biggest of swings, and that cannot be more evident than in episode four lensed by cinematographer Charlie Gruet. You want a tribute to 1998’s *Pleasantville*? This one’s for you.

Gruet and I couldn’t help but talk about the absurdity of *The Other Two*—it was a natural starting point. He has been involved with the show from the start, and he acknowledges how the comedy keeps getting bigger and bigger.

“I’ve been with it since the beginning, and season three is just amazing,” Gruet says. “It was hard in the sense that the scripts were big on the page, especially compared to season two. There are more distinct set pieces, and we are taking bigger creative swings. This season is crafted with more emotion, and I think that’s what’s really hitting for the viewers.”



(Photo: Greg Endries/HBO Max)

*The Other Two* has had breakneck speed from the very beginning, but the scope of the third season posed some new challenges for the cinematographer. The Chris Kelly/Sarah Schneider comedy adds a lot more locations and longer, larger set pieces. The schedule needed to be meticulously thought out.

“The greatest challenge for me as a cinematographer is that we had to cross board all ten episodes, and we didn’t shoot it once episode at a time,” he says. “When we cross board, we would schedule scenes from, for instance, episodes five then seven then ten all in the same day, and that happens because of things like actor and location availability. There’s things that happen this season where the characters might be at the beach so we had to shoot that in September instead of December. That was the biggest challenge in keeping track of how the flow of the season’s arc was happening overall for the pacing and the characters, and that translates to whether we are going handheld, static, or Steadicam. There’s lighting choices involved with that. If a character goes down a downward slope emotionally. The speed of the cut episodes reflect the breakneck speed of how we went about shooting it.”

If you love the Gary Ross film *Pleasantville* (unashamed fan right here!), you will immediately take note of the recreation of a particularly iconic scene. In Ross’ original film, Tobey Maguire’s character paints Joan Allen’s face with black-and-white make-up so she fits back into the confines of the sitcom realm she lives in (seriously...just watch it...). *The Other Two* lovingly parodies that scene with Drew Tarver and Dana Delaney. It’s glorious.

“Chris Kelly and Sarah Schneider told me about that episode last spring. Sarah directed it, and she very clearly laid out frames that we needed a black-and-white acquisition but there would be a color element in it. That had to be clearly defined so we knew where they would go in our schedule. There are clearly tributes to the original film where we tried to mimic and

parody from Pleasantville exactly. There are some iconic moments from that movie that we wanted to recreate. There is a shot in the courtroom where there is a reflection in someone's glasses and it's in color—we did the same thing. We did something similar where in Pleasantville the Tobey Maguire character puts makeup on Joan Allen's character. We tried to mimic that shot-for-shot.

That episode specifically was different than the whole season, but, from a cinematography standpoint, the camera has a little bit more life to it. It has a handheld vibe for most of the season, and we do that to give it more of a voyeuristic feeling. When we were in the Emily Overruled/Pleasantville vibe, we tried to be static or be on a dolly, and then when we go to the other story with Brooke, we go back to being handheld. This is more of a global note to the cinematography of The Other Two, but in season one, we really stepped the cameras further back and used longer lenses. We wanted to observe Brooke and Cary from afar as if the camera was in the bubble with Chase Dreams and Pat and looking outward to see how the others were being affected. By season three, everyone is in that bubble, so the camera is slightly closer to the characters physically.”



(Photo: Greg Endries/HBO Max)

Gruet stepped behind the camera as a director for one of the third season's most ambitious episodes, "Cary Gets His Ass Handed To Him." The family wants to give Pat (Molly Shannon) a normal night out, so they re-create an Applebee's on a soundstage. As Pat begins to suspect something is up, the situation slowly devolves in a balanced way. Gruet directs the episode with flair and never allows the farcical nature overcome the emotional current of the episode.

"It all starts with the scripts, and episode seven was so fleshed out. What I tried to do with that episode specifically is that once we get to Applebee's, it becomes an ensemble piece. When everything falls apart, I broke that up into little scenelets. There was no way that we could film a master of a several page scene, and there were some clear beats that I felt we could extract to film them and then film the coverage to move onto the next beat. That was

important to me because I felt like that in order to keep the pacing up for that whole sequence, I felt like I needed to truncate them to get the performances. Once all the beats are laid out together, it can flow a little bit faster. There were so many physical things happening like plates coming out or people getting up that I thought keeping track of that was going to be difficult.”

The Other Two *is streaming now on Max.*

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