

Interview: ‘The Other Two’ Cinematographer Charlie Gruet on Innovating Season 3’s New Visual Style and Directing Special Guests

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Fans of *The Other Two* breathed a collective sigh of relief when news of its third season emerged in late 2021. The scathing industry satire had already endured the difficulties of filming its second season during the COVID-19 pandemic, but *The Other Two* is nothing if not adaptable.

Cinematographer **Charlie Gruet** has been with the show since its first season, taking on directing duties across seasons 2 and 3. “Season one was on Comedy Central,” Gruet points out. “It was more of a broadcast flavor. It was broken up and it was paced to be [an] exact 22 minutes.”

The show became a Max Original in August of 2021, joining similarly-minded shows like *Barry* and *Hacks* on the streaming service. “Once it moved to HBO, that freed up some creative juices. There was so much more that we could do.”



Photograph by Greg Endries/HBO Max

Season 3, which releases new episodes onto Max every Thursday, makes the most of that creative freedom, taking larger dramatic swings and rendering uniquely heartfelt moments for its characters. Beyond even the personal journeys sketched out for siblings Brooke (**Heléne Yorke**) and Cary Dubek (**Drew Tarver**), *The Other Two* features emotional moments for characters such as **Josh Segarra**'s Lance and **Brandon Scott Jones**' Curtis.

Gruet directed episodes six and seven of this third season, key episodes in the conflict between Curtis and Cary.

“For the Curtis character and Cary, there’s been a coattail effect. In season one, as Chase is launching into stardom, Brooke says to Cary ‘oh, ride the wave.’ And Cary does ride the Chase wave a little bit. He’s trying to get pulled into celebrity through the gravity of Chase, and we don’t see Curtis doing that, but Curtis is being kind of pulled into a higher level of work through Cary. I think the Cary-Curtis dynamic explores jealousy between friends. You want to be happy for your friends, but also it stings sometimes when someone who is like you gets something that you don’t or wins out a job that you were competing for. That’s what happens to Cary this season. He loses out on a job to Curtis, and he can’t believe it. So it does bubble over, and what ends up happening this season is Cary is possessed to succeed. Through this season, Cary goes off the rails, and Curtis is always there to stick by his buddy.”

Episode six of this new season includes an especially humiliating moment for Cary, throughout which he still struggles to accept Curtis' friendship and support, leading to a deeper rift between the two characters that comes to an emotional head in episode seven.



Photograph by Greg Endries/HBO Max

“Brandon Scott Jones and Drew Tarver have great chemistry and great comic timing. We were able to really flex the muscle of being emotional and being open and vulnerable and deceitful. Cary had to lie to his friend and get caught, and then be defensive about it. Those were all emotions that we don't really explore too often in the show.”

Of course, season 3 is still heavy on the laughs, and Gruet was fortunate enough to direct a couple of hilarious cameos from **Ann Dowd** and **Simu Liu**. “You always want to treat special guests a little bit precious, but there's a moment where Simu has to get on all fours and Cary has to get on his back and ride him like a horse. But Simu didn't bat an eye. He was like ‘yeah, let's do this!’”

Moments such as that one only scratch the surface of just how absurd *The Other Two* is willing to get in its third season. Having served as cinematographer on episodes 1-4 and 8-10, Gruet notes a few key differences in the show's visual style as it pursues everything from a *Pleasantville* spoof to a demonic possession that seems to overtake anyone who learns that Chase Dubek (Case Walker) is finally 18.



Photograph by Greg Endries/HBO Max

“In season one, Brooke and Cary are the other two, and they’re outside the bubble of fame looking in. So we approached that from a cinematography standpoint where we’re a little bit more removed, little bit longer lenses, little bit more voyeuristic. And then as we got into season three, Brooke and Cary are now inside that bubble of fame. And so our cameras are now a little bit closer in proximity to the characters, and we experience what they’re experiencing, as opposed to seeing them experience it.”

This intimate shift in perspective is what ultimately justifies the show’s commitment to more surreal and dramatic beats. It was important to Gruet, as well as the show’s creators Sarah Schneider and Chris Kelly, to reinforce the humanity of the show’s characters, identifying everything around them as the true source of craziness. After all, *The Other Two* may be about a famous family, but Gruet recognizes “a relatability” in Brooke, Cary, and the rest of the ensemble that keeps viewers coming back for more.

“The characters themselves have quote-unquote succeeded, at least to what the public might sense. But the characters we watch as a viewer are just people like us, and they get into problems and make bad choices like we all do.”

Listen to the full conversation with Charlie Gruet below.

