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Masters

VISUAL GUIDE

A dramedy for television and streaming by

Max Mora





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STORY

This Is The Story Of Season 1

Of A SECRET FRATERNITY composed of powerful, regressive forces wants things to stay just the way they are, under their control, no matter what.

Of TWO FRIENDS, compelled to fight this system despite the impossibility of victory.

Of TWO CHILDREN, conceived for mythical greatness, standing on the shoulders of BLACK ATHLETES who came before them.

Of a disillusioned YOUNG MOTHER, trying to make life meaningful.

Of a CLUB MAGNATE, lurking in the shadow of his father's legacy.

Of a SPORTS AGENT, who will do anything to win no matter what the costs.

Of an EX BOXING CHAMPION who has 'seen it all,' and wields a secret power.

Of CORPORATIONS that want to placate everyone, and thus satisfy almost no one.

Of a cutthroat RECORD COMPANY one step behind the competition and ahead of the law.

Of the UPSHOT that occurs when the dark and fabled past clashes with the change-fuelled present to fight for a potentially golden future.

Of the CHARACTER we want to have (righteous, fearless, good, familial), versus the characters we must fight (cruel, greedy, shallow) to attain it.

The glory of the win, and the tragedy of failure...

OVERVIEW



Masters

Is an alternate history following two groundbreaking hip-hop executives as they stumble into a secret fraternity covertly controlling the entertainment industry. Season 1 follows their adventures crashing their record company into the conservative business worlds of politics, sports, and entertainment in the early 90's, transforming our culture forever.

The secret fraternity is masked by a country club called The Empalizada, akin to The Continental in the John Wick series. A neutral safe space where the corporate honchos of the day engineer history behind closed doors. Music as a cue to fix games, vast conspiracies: the west coast and east coast wars as a technique to juice record sales, a Bohemian Grove of industry insiders pulling strings to contour the world to their personal and profitable likings.

Season 1 stays mostly in 1990, but toggles to the 20's, 60's and 70s when narratively necessary. It concerns the tale of entertainment lawyer Darwin Hall and his friend, A&R executive Dutch Cohen, as Darwin becomes the first black member of Dutch's all white country club, supposedly to shake up the old mobbed-up power structure, but actually becoming a central part of it. They rainmake within the early 90's hip-hop scene forming their own powerful record label by changing the rules of the game, stealing great artists from the likes of Ice-T and Prince from the mafia who run the game by cheating, taking over the fixing themselves, on their terms. The season dips into the past to show snippets

Overview

continued

of relevant history including Morris Levy and Roulette records' framing and murdering of Sam Cooke and Bobby Fuller and their mirrorlike relevance to the murders of Tupac and Biggie, among others.

The title of the show is a triple entendre: the masters of the universe, master recordings, and racist history of professional sports, golf and the Masters golf tournament. Masters aims to map the synaptic connections between hip-hop, the mafia, the music business, and professional sports and how their heady brew has seeped into the culture at large.

Imagine if professional golf had been affected by rap as much as the NBA and the NFL... that Dr. Dre's halftime show happened at what was once called The Masters, on what was once a plantation – to as big of an audience. Imagine the cascade of cultural consequences that would have resulted from the survival of Tupac and Biggie, uniting their forces. This is a metaphor for the revisionist history Masters aims to capture.

Masters serves various purposes as a layered narrative about these interrelationships. Thematically, it offers multiple meanings through an argument about the racist and segregated history of America.

The characters populating Masters are caught in the middle of a fight between light and dark, comedy and tragedy. A drama about two lucky geniuses ascending to heights they never dreamed of, a drama about the once in a generation rise of a pair of barrier-shattering athletes and the parents that will do anything to make sure they succeed, the tragedy of the naivetes of great artists exploited by brutal business people.

It's also a comedy about struggle: It's the struggle to fit in when you're a fish out of water. It's the comedy of errors of struggling to win by any means necessary. It's the absurd truth of a behind-the-scenes corporate legal drama about the rise of hip-hop and sports to be the dominating forces in our culture.

The show is a combination of a variety of popular genres. It often feels like a terse comedy that can boil over into something explosive or uncanny at any moment.

Think how *The Sopranos* reaches through the screen when we are chuckling with baited breath, anticipating the detonation of violence, or how *Better Call Saul* sings when bleak comical behavior is fodder for laughs and a gloomy comment about the characters in their environment. Masters seeks the richness of those shows mixed with the social commentary of *The Wire*, but cuts it with a deeply developed sense of humor and absurdity to counter

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Overview

continued

the amount of tragedy, like Atlanta. In *The Wire* the understanding is that there is no growth possible in the game of cops and robbers, American exceptionalism is rotten, if not dead. That's tragic. Though a drama, tonally, *Masters* seeks to find light in the darkness of what is, drama in an alternate history that could've been and suspense in the hope of a future that still could be.

The overarching motif is the neverending innovation and race wars in the entertainment-ports complex and the culture of competition and conspiracy they engender.

Masters ducks cliché. Everyone's hands are dirty and no one leaves unscathed, no one is strictly good or evil. Things are complicated. The laughs are found in unexpected places, narrative believability is established through naturalistic dialogue and casual conversational comedy.

Visually, this will be unlike most corporate, legal, family, sports and music business shows in its ability to mash-up expectations, genres and styles. Envision the immediacy and electricity of Hype Williams and Guy Ritchie superimposed on the staid spheres of the boardroom and the courtroom. Or envision a Bergmanesque theatrical intimacy in the home, arena and locker room that makes us feel there with our characters. Or imagine a Wes Anderson-like whimsy in its attention to detail, cultural minutiae and costuming, an overall fastidious attention to detail in the world building, enchanting and suspending disbelief. *Masters* is all these things.

The metaphor is simple, life is like a golf match... to the death. Every stroke counts. Business is best left to the cut throat, the machiavellian and the genius.. *Masters* personifies the personal thrill of suspenseful drama, the hard won gratification of construing personal meaning from complex situations, plots and puzzles and the pleasure of laughing at the absurdity of it all. Unthinkable arcs create unlikely cultural transformations, making the future of entertainment a strange almost science fiction. Each episode links in a chain to that exhilarating and tickling alternate destiny.

Characters

Masters:

DARWIN Hall

Darwin Hall, Entertainment lawyer (b.1959)

(Majors/Lamar, Tyler the Creator, Ashton Sanders)

A criminal defense and family law attorney originally, who because of his instincts, good looks, gregariousness, connections and generosity has delved into entertainment law for the nascent early 90's hip-hop scene, angling to be first black partner of his firm because of his ability to attract and rain-make off this essentially new art form. Husband of Evelyn Hall.



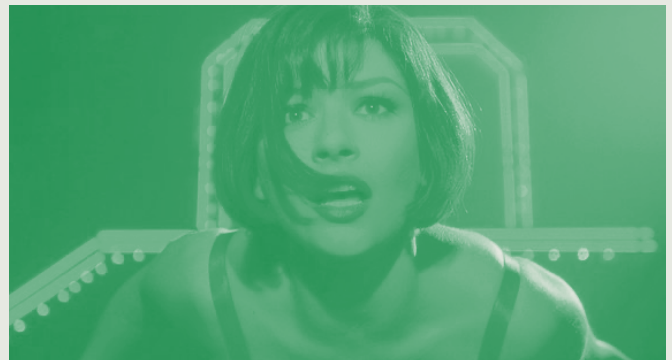
DUTCH Cohen

Dutch Cohen, A&R Mephistopheles records(b.1960) (Cosmo Jarvis), Ben Schnetzner, Andrew Garfield, Jonah Hill)

A west coast Lyor Cohen. A young up and coming manager and A&R. A 4 handicap with a mean streak who thinks of himself as a "do-gooder," but also someone who keeps it gully with his entourage.

EVELYN Hall

Ret. fashion designer, future mother (Nesta Cooper, Naomi Ackie, Camilla Belle, Aubrey Plaza) (b. 1963)



Dropout of UCLA at 19 to follow her dreams and work in the fashion industry, which she did for many years in the fashion district of DTLA, eventually pioneering her own cut and sew line of punky work dresses called 'Dressed to Kill' Sreetwise and ahead of her time. Happy as a mother and proud of her husband, however, she has long lasting resentments about not having a traditional courtship, having to leave behind her dream of fashion world stardom and their shotgun marriage resulting from a surprise pregnancy.



(b.1940) (Sandler, Carell, Murray, Ferrell)

Ben Brogan

A lean, mean, meticulous manager who has taken his father's club from its humble beginnings to being the nerve center of the entertainment business, not to mention one of the premier golf courses in Los Angeles. A fixer who plays in his own club championship. He's loved and revered while also being feared by the membership. He's a born and bred glad hander, but don't ever cross him.



Daryl Jackson

Empalizada Mgr. (b.1925) (Dave Chappelle / Forest Whitaker)

An ex-prize fighter who worked at Empalizada on and off his entire life. He's worked his way up from shoe shiner under Ben's father Jack to clubhouse manager and consiglieri to the fraternity. He's the power behind the throne, a tireless servant to the club's image and membership. He initially came up with the idea to use Empalizada as a neutral space for warring factions to make deals as he ran a similar enterprise for the east coast mafia. He is the keeper of club lore and secrets as well as the club's bookie and card dealer. Though initially skeptical about Darwin, he slowly becomes his friend and mentor over the first season.



Richie Sonnenschein

(b.1950) (Michael Shannon, Ben Mendelsohn, John Hawkes, Walton Goggins)

Richie Sonnenschein - One of the most famous trial attorneys in the country, known for his lightning-quick mind, relentless courtroom interrogations and insatiable self-promotion. He's a partner in multiple law firms and has written more than 15 books and has a show called, 'Polygraph' where he submits celebrities to polygraphs on live television.

Salvatore Pissano

A restaurateur, food importer-exporter, record business wheeler-dealer and international jet-setter, he stays at the best hotels, eats at the best restaurants, shops at the swankiest Beverly Hills stores, wears the most expensive clothes and jewelry, drives the fanciest cars, dates the flashiest young women and always carries a big wad of cash. His friends and business associates know him as a charming extrovert, a gourmet Italian cook who liked to host dinner parties at his Lake Encino home and someone who always seems to have another money making plan in the offing. But law enforcement knows him otherwise. They know him as a suspected East Coast Mafia figure whose activities for the last 20 years had been under near-constant investigation by the FBI, the Internal Revenue Service, the Drug Enforcement Agency and authorities in New York and Los Angeles.



Mephistopheles Fixer (b.1939) (Dice or John Turturo)



GARY "GOOD GOD THE SUPPLIER" Gordon

(b. 1968) (Schoolboy Q, Meek Mill, Asap Rocky)

A Compton gangsta rap prototype, an ambassador for a tradition, lineage, and history — who makes a whole lot of hard-as-hell rap songs and 'ignorant r&b' full of sober gravity and blunt force. Odd, he doesn't even want the credit for his own creation. He is not Good God the Supplier, no one man is. This is why he wears a ski mask made of gold. In Gordon's mind, GGS is a plural, a collective, the avatar of a posse, not a solo artist. He's written a soon to be hit, 'Tearz in an Impala' a drug dealer's love ballad to the lady who cooks the product with him — despite (or maybe because of) its unconventional and, yes, true inspiration.



ROY Badoff

Mephistopheles Label CEO (b.1940) (Eric Bogosian, Tracey Walter, Peter Stormare, Owen Wilson, Bill Fichtner)

Some describe him as the most powerful man in the music industry. Others describe him as Satan. Others as their best friend, 'their satan.' He's a Dennis Farina style boss. He sits at a comically long table at the top of Mephistopheles. An advisor he calls 'the oracle' with a crazy eye is constantly whispering in his ear.



CLIFF Robinson

(b.1950) (Michael Shannon, Ben Mendelsohn, John Hawkes, Walton Goggins)

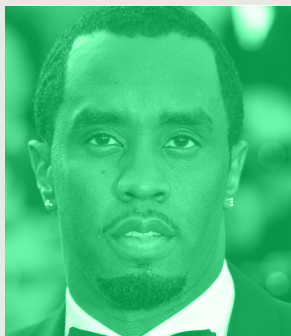
A baseball focused sports agent who represents mostly white players. He is one of the top three golfers at Empalizada , with deep resentments against everyone for a host of different reasons, especially black people. He was a failed professional baseball player because, in his eyes, he couldn't compete with the influx of black and hispanic players in the eighties. He's won the club championship the past three seasons and wants to keep it that way. He's incredibly competitive and was one of the most vocal members against Darwin's arrival. He secretly is leaking information to the press.



(b.1958) (Jessica Pearson, Hannah Ware, Kathleen Robertson)

MORGAN Bennett

A murdaic veteran prosecutor with a reputation for bulldog-like tenacity and a personality to match. In the course of successfully prosecuting a tax case, she learned that Pissaiolo had left his sausage company and was now working out of the executive offices of Mephistopheles Records, a division of the conglomerate that owns Worldwide Studios.



LOVE

The owner of G-Boy records. Groundbreaking EP, regarded as one of the most talented producers from the East Coast and the primary competition of the Masters. Born and raised in Harlem, Love started as a talent manager and producer for Downtown Records and built his way up to launch his own label; G-Boy. He's connected, he's Sharp, a fashion icon, and has no attachment to the Empalizada.



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SETTING

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LOS ANGELES

Los Angeles plays itself. A racially and economically redlined, litter filled megalopolis of haves and have nots. An outrageously beautiful gutter on the sea.



Crenshaw / Southside

A sleepy slice of lower middle class African American life wedged between Culver City where the movies are actually made, and the south side where poverty increases at an accelerating rate.

Los Feliz

The sleepy hillside home to Dutch Cohen's newly lonely bachelor pad at the bottom of the hill where the average income is \$50,000, as opposed to the upper slope where the creative class reaps 6 figures.

Malibu / Santa Monica

A strange combination of a hippy underclass and the uber rich. Home to Brogan Manor which overlooks Point Dume beach where owner 'Big Ben' drives shag balls into the ocean. Home to (Empalizada)

Downtown / Eastside

Historical, derelict, filthy, bohemian, corporate, desolate, and home to Sonnenschein law firm where Darwin works. He often goes into the street on break and hits milk cartons at targets like Tiger Hood.

Beverly Hills

Super rich, pristine, sleepy, boring, pretentious. Increasingly facing a crime epidemic, so paranoid and on edge. Home to the future Hall residence.



Empalizada

Based on Riviera CC, this upper crust hob nob spot for the rich and famous is struggling to adapt to new times as real estate costs soar and membership levels off.

Sonnenschein

An austere white shoe law firm with plush leather couches, gold statues and persian rugs in a monstrous all glass high rise.

The Muni

A run down, mucky, fairly depressing divot fest that is essentially the only resort for those on the south side without means.



The Hall Residence

A well kept and understated two bedroom ranch in Crenshaw reminiscent of both 90's sitcoms and Boyz n' the Hood.

Dutch's home and office

A once posh bungalow at the foot of the Los Feliz hills steadily begrimed in the absence of a female caretaker.

Brogan Manor

A sprawling megamansion on the hill above Point Dume beach, a spot for partying, plotting and long stares out the window.

Daryl's Shack

A spotless but modest ½ acre a mile south of Hahn state park in Crenshaw. It ain't much but it's an honest home that's fully paid off.

Robinson & Robinson

An austere post modern sports office ahead of its time with Herman Miller and Eames furniture and no visual indication that what they do is sports.



STRUCTURE

Masters

Visually this will be unlike most corporate, legal, family and music business shows in its ability to mash-up expectations, genres and styles. Envision the immediacy and electricity of Hype Williams, Cole Bennett and Guy Ritchie superimposed on the staid spheres of the boardroom and courtroom, bringing them to life, a Bergmanesque theatrical intimacy in the home, golf course and locker room making us feel there with our characters, and a Wes Anderson-like whimsy in cultural minutiae and costuming, an overall fastidious attention to detail in the world building enchanting and suspending disbelief.

The style and tone is neorealism with a dash of impressionistic, instinctive visual flair.

Whether the show is eight or twelve episodes or with episodes of fixed length, a season is a fully encapsulated arc within a 'season' of our main characters' lives roughly correlated with one athletic year

Season 1 stays mostly in 1990, but toggles to the 20's and the late 60s/early 70s when narratively necessary. It concerns the tale of entertainment lawyer Darwin Hall and his friend, A&R executive Dutch Cohen, as Darwin becomes the first black member of Dutch's all white country club supposedly to shake up the old mobbed-up] power structure, but actually becoming a central part of it. Dutch and Darwin rainmake within the early 90's hip-hop scene eventually forming their own powerful record label by changing the rules of the game, stealing great artists from the likes of Ice-T and Prince from the mafia who run the game by cheating and by taking over the cheating and fixing themselves, on their terms. The season dips into the past to show snippets of relevant history including Morris Levy and Roulette records' framing and murdering of Sam Cooke and its mirrorlike relevance to the murders of Tupac and Biggie, among others.



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SEASON 1

Masters

Plot A: Darwin Hall is recruited as the 1st black member of a famous nearly all white Hollywood country club, The Empalizada amidst the backdrop of the racist controversy at the '90 PGA championship. Meanwhile, club owner Ben Brogan jr. and manager, Daryl Jackson try to keep control of Empalizada while fighting a variety of financial issues and outside competition, reinvigorated by its purpose as a neutral territory for the entertainment business.

Plot B: Darwin and Dutch plan for the success of the record label unfolds: HereWeGo Records, with an ingenious idea: steal some of the best artists in the world and corner west coast hip-hop by re-recording the artist's masters and giving them ownership while simultaneously manufacturing the East coast West coast hip-hop war within the fraternity of Empalizada.

Plot C: Roy Badoff, Sal Pissaiolo and Mephistopheles Records use the East coast mafia to sell cutouts and run payola, as they try to dodge the feds while attempting to right their economic ship.

Plot D: Eve and Darwin Hall's marriage is a rollercoaster with the pressures of Darwin's meteoric rise and the decision to raise their newborn children, Ace and Tiger-lily, to take over golf.

Plot E: The evolution of black and mafia participation in sports and entertainment in America from the 1920's to the present, culminating with the murders of Sam Cooke and Bobby Fuller and mirror attempts on Tupac and Biggie.



Masters

TEAM

MAX MORA - Creator/Writer

Attended Calarts under master documentarian and filmmaker Thom Anderson (Los Angeles Plays Itself) an associate producer, location scout, and casting associate of two Bollywood films (Amul Baby and ABCD: The American Born Confused Desi) with Producer/Director Naveen Chathapuram (CA\$H, The Last Victim) and Producer/Production Manager/A.D. Charles Leslie (The Trial of the Chicago Seven, The Last Victim.) Worked as an associate for three years for their production company at the time called Indus Media Productions, which produced Brown Nation and Night of the Living Dead: Darkest Dawn. In his youth, he and his father invested in two of Director Terry Green's features (Heaven's Fall and No God No Master.) Max spent precious weeks on film sets mentored by Timothy Hutton, Leelee Sobieski, and David Strathairn among others. He has written four features ranging from sci-fi to comedy to noir, five television pilots and many treatments.

GARRIE AUDINO - Producer, Casting Director

Carrie Audino, EMMY Award winning Casting Director and Producer brings her 20 plus years of experience in the entertainment industry to all the projects she is involved with. She is 5 times EMMY nominated for her work on Mad Men and her exceptional casting work can also be seen on other shows such as Bosch, The Romanoffs, Parenthood, Fear The Walking Dead and The Terror, to name a few. With over 30 shows to her credit, many that have run multiple years on their respective networks and streamers, she has branched out over the last few years and began producing feature films such as Are You Here with Matthew Weiner, among others.

JOSH MORA - Executive Producer

Josh Mora is slated to be the Executive Producer of 3 additional projects (2 feature films and one serial) that are currently in development. He is also the Executive Director of Strategic Partnerships at Full Sail University. The myriad projects Josh has directed in his current role includes his oversight of the development of Full Sail's esports vertical. This encompasses the opening of the largest esports stadium and production facility on a college campus in the United States, the roll out of an athletic program featuring varsity esports teams currently competing on 11 titles, and an esports curriculum. Josh also created and developed the Dan Patrick School of Sportscasting, and has overseen the university's relationship with the WWE, which has contributed to the creation of the WWE's NXT Brand, and their Performance Center and Content Innovation Lab.

TEAM

CARRIE AUDINO - Casting Director, Producer

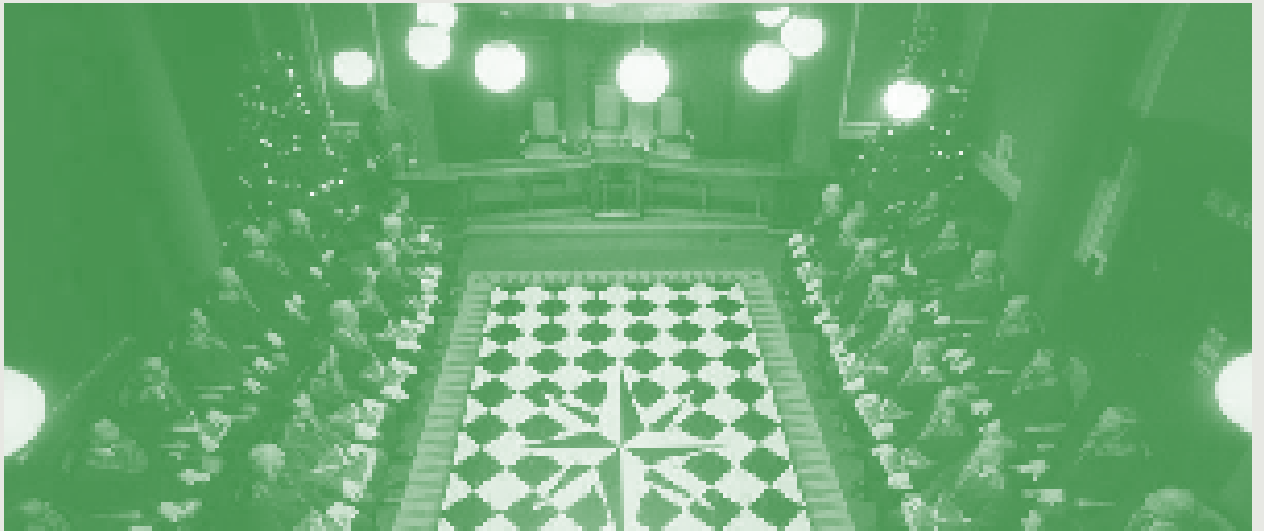
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ALI ABEDIN of Wallis Lane - Writer and Music Supervisor

Ali Abedin is a music producer, song writer, and performer that works closely with the 8 time Grammy Award winning team Wallis Lane. Ali started writing lyrics at the age of 12 and producing his own music by the age of 17. It wasn't until his twenties, while working with known artists, that he expanded on his creativity. It helped him hone his craft to be able to work across all genres of music. Having joined Wallis Lane and working with artists such as Kanye West, The Weekend, Drake, Travis Scott, and Her pushed Ali to see every angle of the creative process and how to apply it to music and film.

LESLIE BRATHWAITE

After leaving home to attend Full Sail, Leslie graduated from the Recording Arts program in 1992 and made his way up to Atlanta. It was there that he started assisting producer Dallas Austin, earning credits on albums like Boyz II Men's II and Outkast's Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik. From there, opportunities poured in, and Leslie established himself as a go-to mix engineer and producer – working with artists including Jay Z, Madonna, T.I., and more. Leslie's impressive list of GRAMMY awards include TLC's Fanmail (Best Rap Album), Brandy and Monica's single, "The Boy is Mine" (Best R&B Performance by a Duo or Group), Outkast's Stankonia (Best Rap Album), Pharrell Williams' G I R L (Best Urban Contemporary Album) and "Happy" (Best Pop Solo Performance, 2015) . He's still based in Atlanta today, where he continues to craft his signature sound and grow his admirable résumé.



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