

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****CAST OF ABC'S *SPEECHLESS* TALK REDEFINING THE RULES AND FACING DISABILITY WITH HUMOR IN APRIL ISSUE OF *EMMY*® MAGAZINE****Unconventional Comedy is Raising Awareness in Untraditional Way**

**(NoHo Arts District, Calif. — April 10, 2017)** —ABC's *Speechless* is redefining the rules for comedies on broadcast television by tackling real-life issues with humor while bringing diversity — specifically people with disabilities — to the forefront. In the latest issue of *emmy*® magazine, the cast discusses the challenges of producing a show with tonal complexities that often include wrenching emotional scenes and irreverent humor in the same episode. The award-winning official publication of the Television Academy hits newsstands April 18.

The ABC comedy stars Minnie Driver as Maya DiMeo, a mother who moves her family to a wealthy suburb to provide a better life for her son, J.J., a high school student with cerebral palsy, played by newcomer Micah Fowler. *Speechless* is one of the few broadcast-network comedies to feature an actor with a disability as a series regular.

Showrunner Scott Silveri, who grew up with a brother with a disability, was committed to involving the disability community in every level of production and was determined to make a show that was funny and entertaining. "If it was too glib, it would have given the people with this disability short shrift, but I thought, 'Maybe we can go for both big silliness and sincerity,'" Silveri says.

Based on the widespread critical acclaim it has received, *Speechless* appears to have gotten it right. Driver tells *emmy* that the show and her character are "written with such irreverence and insight into what it is to be in a family that has special needs."

Each episode addresses challenging issues in a smart, comical, kind-hearted way. "It's funny, because when I watch the show, there's such an ease to it, but it's a difficult show to do because you're making these big turns," Driver says. "There will be physical comedy, then these emotional moments. They'll be brief, and you have to go there. It's not easy, but it's challenging and that's why I like it. It's not just, 'Go for the joke and break'. It's myriad and varied and plays on different levels of emotion."

Because J.J. does not speak, Fowler must rely on facial expressions and body movements to give voice to his character instead of dialogue. "We have had days

where the tone is serious and even heartbreaking in one or two scenes, and then light and comedic in the next scene,” Fowler says via email.

The other cast members are realizing the show’s impact as well. Actress Kyla Kenedy, who plays younger sister Dylan, in the series says, “I was at Chick-fil-A and a man came up to me and said ‘You are the only reason my son has smiled in months.’ His son has cerebral palsy, and this man said he could never find anyone to relate to on television. Plus he’s home-schooled, so he doesn’t know people like himself. I started tearing up when he said that because stories like that make everything worth it.”

Additional feature highlights from the new issue include:

- The unapologetic and vastly entertaining **Chelsea Handler** discusses her mega-deal with Netflix, her desire to use her talk show to educate and reveals whom she’s not interested in talking to on her show in “**Chelsea Handler’s Higher Purpose.**”
- In an interview with Ron Howard and Brian Grazer, producers of National Geographic’s first fully scripted series **Genius**, debuting April 25, *emmy* explores the making of the ten-hour biopic starring Geoffrey Rush as physicist Albert Einstein.
- In “**Those Vying Wives,**” *emmy* showcases the women of Showtime’s **Billions** in a stunning fashion layout featuring Maggie Siff and Malin Akerman.

**Readers can catch behind-the-scenes video of the cover shoot with the cast of *Speechless* on [TelevisionAcademy.com](http://TelevisionAcademy.com).**

*Emmy*, the official publication of the Television Academy, goes behind the scenes of the industry for a unique insider’s view. It showcases the scope of television and profiles the people who make TV happen, from the stars of top shows to the pros behind the cameras, covering programming trends and advances in technology. Honored consistently for excellence, *emmy* is a six-time Maggie Award winner as Best Trade Publication in Communications or the Arts and has collected 49 Maggies from the Western Publishing Association. *Emmy* is available on selected newsstands and at [TelevisionAcademy.com](http://TelevisionAcademy.com) for single-print and digital copies as well as subscriptions.

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