LAST SPRING, WHEN AMC’S CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED SERIES Mad Men RETURNED TO TELEVISION, THE SHOW’S CREATORS worried that its 17-MONTH HIATUS WOULD COST THEM MANY VIEWERS. THEY COULD HARDLY HAVE BEEN MORE WRONG.

CRITICS HAILED THE SEASON PREMIERE, AND MILLIONS TUNED IN TO THE LIVES OF DON DRAPER, ROGER STERLING, AND JOAN HARRIS.

THE EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS AND WRITING TEAM BEHIND MANY OF THESE STORY LINES, HUSBAND AND WIFE ANDRÉ JACQUEMETTON AND MARIA JACQUEMETTON (COM’85), CAME TO Mad Men THROUGH THEIR FRIENDSHIP WITH CREATOR AND SHOWRUNNER MATTHEW WEINER.

THE THREE MET IN A LOS ANGELES WRITING GROUP WHEN THEY WERE ALL WORKING AS ASSISTANTS, RECALLS MARIA JACQUEMETTON.

“We would pitch to each other, and if one of us was working on a particular script, we would exchange pages, give notes, and just act like a support group,” she says. “Over the years, various members of the group found success. At the time, André and I were writing for Star Trek: Enterprise, and Matt gave us the spec for Mad Men. We said, ‘If you ever get this going—we don’t know where we’re going to be or what we’re going to be doing—we would love to work on this show.’”

Five years later, AMC picked up the show, and Weiner called. Their work on the show has earned them four Writers Guild of America Awards as well as three Emmys for Outstanding Drama Series.

In March, the Jacquemettons screened an episode from season four of Mad Men and discussed their careers on campus as guests of the Cinematheque series, a College of Communication program that brings filmmakers to campus. They talked with Bostonia about their careers, what it’s like working with each other, and their advice for anyone looking to write for film or television.

Writing for Mad Men
Alum, husband talk shop at BU

Bostonia: Describe your collaboration, and what it’s like to work with your spouse.
ANDRÉ JACQUEMETTON
Where do we start? Essentially, we can’t be in the same room together. We’re writing for Mad Men so it’s really a question of speed, and for us it’s about dividing the work. Maria will take the A story, for example, I’ll take the B and C story. It’s trying to get a draft together as quickly as possible and chiseling down the statue and trying to get the voices correct, the story right, and handing it in in a timely manner.

MARIA JACQUEMETTON
When he says we can’t be in the same room together, he’s talking about when we actually sit down at the computer. We literally, aside from when we’re typing at the desk, spend every other waking moment together, so it’s misleading to start that way.

ANDRÉ JACQUEMETTON
It is and it isn’t. We’re not the type of couple that can face one another and have desks that face one another. We both go off into our separate corners and write.

MARIA JACQUEMETTON
The point he’s talking about is when we’re ready to write the script. When
Their work has earned them four Writers Guild of America Awards and three Emmys.

we’re actually breaking the story, particularly on a TV series, we are physically in the same room with each other and a bunch of other writers, and we come up with story outlines together and then we get sent off to write. And at that point, we sort of go into our separate corners.

As head writers and executive producers on Mad Men, do you still have your work rewritten or cut altogether?

ANDRÉ JACQUEMETTON
Absolutely. You know, when you become the showrunner of a series, it’s your voice and it’s your show. Mad Men is very much Matt’s show, so it’s his prerogative to change stories, change dialogue, change whatever he wants of your script. You have to remember that you’re there to support him and that’s part of the job. Essentially, you’re there to pitch stories, to write scripts, but ultimately, every decision lies with the showrunner, so he can change whatever he wants.

What advice do you have for aspiring writers trying to get into the business?

MARIA JACQUEMETTON
Write. We are asked for advice all the time by students and people who say they want to be writers. They come to us with one spec or one screenplay. Don’t come to us with one script—come to us when you’ve got five scripts and they’re the best you can do on every one, because the competition is super-fierce. The more material you have and the more you write, the better you’re going to get and the more chances you have of actually landing your foot in the door.

I think that is one thing we see all too often: writers get their first job on the show and they’re so happy to have that job that they just work there, and on their hiatus go traveling, backpacking around Mexico. Then they come back to the show the next season and they’ve written nothing.

Well, there’s someone who’s sitting at home writing three specs in that time period, someone whose work is going to have personally come along farther and will have three original samples they can send out and possibly sell, someone able to cast a wider net. With the economy the way it is, you’ve got to be able to cast a wide net. With the economy the way it is, you have to be able to cast a wider net. With the economy the way it is, you have to be able to cast a wider net. With the economy the way it is, you have to be able to cast a wider net. With the economy the way it is, you have to be able to cast a wider net. With the economy the way it is, you have to be able to cast a wider net.

ANDRÉ JACQUEMETTON
I would add to that, build a thick skin. This is a business that’s ruled by a lot of naysayers, so you’ve got to be able to deal with rejection. Get back on your feet right away and keep writing and keep pushing, keep calling people and keep thinking of ideas.

And even though the odds are against you and people keep rejecting you, you’ve just got to keep going and persevere.

AMY LASKOWSKI

President Names Task Force on Ice Hockey

Report on team culture due this summer

In the wake of sexual assault allegations against two BU hockey players last winter, President Robert A. Brown has convened a special Task Force on Men’s Ice Hockey to assess the culture and climate of the hockey team and to recommend ways to ensure that they are wholly consistent with the values and mission of the University. The 16-member task force, cochaired by Jonathan Cole, chair of the Academic Affairs Committee of the BU Board of Trustees, and Jean Morrison, University provost and chief academic officer, will draw on the knowledge of recognized experts in a broad spectrum of fields.

“We have assembled a task force with deep expertise in issues that the group will address in its deliberations,” says Brown.

In a memorandum sent in March, Brown urged the task force members to reach out to faculty, staff, and students, including hockey players and other student-athletes, and to consult alumni and outside experts. The president said the assessment should compare the academic performance of hockey players to that of other students and student-athletes, examine the hockey players’ engagement in student life as it compares to others, and scrutinize the disciplinary history of the team compared to disciplinary practices in the larger student community. He asked that the task force report be submitted this summer so that necessary changes can be made early in the fall semester.

“We will take whatever steps are necessary to restore the community’s confidence in our men’s ice hockey program,” says Brown. “We will ensure that the standards we set for our student-athletes are consistent with our mission, core purposes, and aspirations, and that those standards are consistently applied.”

Morrison says that the task force assessment is unrelated to the University’s judicial efforts or the state criminal process to determine the guilt or innocence of the hockey players who have been charged.

“This is an institutional effort to look broadly at potential issues with regard to the culture and climate of the ice hockey team,” she says. ART JAHNE