

Palisadian-Post

Serving the Community Since 1928

PAGE 9

THURSDAY, JULY 30, 2020 ♦ PACIFIC PALISADES, CALIFORNIA

\$1.50



Emmett Whitaker Delivers the Third Season This Summer

By LILY TINOCO
Reporter

Palisadian Emmett Whitaker is the mastermind behind “Survivor Palisades,” a parody of the CBS reality competition television series “Survivor,” where contestants compete at an exotic location for a cash prize.

“It is a game of ‘Survivor,’ but for kids in Pacific Palisades to partake in,” *Palisadian-Post* Junior Reporter Vanessa Masterson explained. “‘Survivor Palisades’ reveals how tough kids can be. The mental and physical challenges are difficult.”

Whitaker, who is starting ninth grade at Palisades Charter High School next month, has been working on the show since 2017. The first episode aired on YouTube in 2019.

Masterson explained the kids form alliances with the “tribes” and compete in physical challenges, which have included swimming and obstacle courses.

“The kids are resilient and strong,” Masterson shared. “They have to be clever, tricky and sneaky with their friends when forming fake alliances, and they have to work together and learn to trust each other.”

She added that they have to be “very

brave when making important choices and facing difficult decisions”—all of which will lead to them becoming the show’s sole survivor.

“It is so suspenseful to see who will get voted out next and who will go forward,” Masterson concluded. “I watched the first episode and was hooked. It was inspiring to see kids in a show that was made by kids, it made me think I could create my own show one day.”

Whitaker, a big fan of “Survivor,” was 11 years old when he decided to make a backyard version of the show featuring members of the community.

“I started doing that with my friends and family, and we filmed it,” Whitaker said to the *Post*.

Whitaker said that producing the show is no easy feat. One season can take between six to seven months of preparation, from raising funds, obtaining props, casting, location scouting and more.

And he pulls the ropes to make sure the show comes together: From planning, casting and editing—he does it all.

“I do it all myself,” he said about the process, “but I’m going to try to hopefully get some people to work with me the next time we do it.”

Whitaker said that he raises the funds for the show by babysitting, hosting neighborhood lemonade stands and doing extra chores. He uses the money for props.

Whitaker’s mother, Christine, said the show can also be a family affair. Both his parents have assisted moving props, setting up some of the game challenges and helping

with filming on the day of shooting.

Emmett’s older sister, Becca, a rising senior at Pali High, has also been an on-camera participant, as well as a camera person for the show.

When it comes to casting the show, Whitaker said his goal is to make sure that the contestants don’t all know each other.

“So I usually recruit some people who I think would be good,” Whitaker said about casting. “Or people will ask me to be in [the show] and by the end of it, I try to have the best fit that works for the team.”

Days of filming can go on for 11 hours and editing takes almost a whole year.

Episodes of the third season, filmed before the coronavirus pandemic prompted Safer at Home orders, are being rolled out this summer. The season features a total of 12 contestants—six fan-favorites and the rest are brand new faces who are faced with “a twist ... that could forever change how the game is played.”

The fourth season would have been filmed during this time, but plans have been indefinitely postponed. Filming was scheduled to begin the second week of March—the same week the city shut down.

“It’s been a lot of work and I’ve had to do a lot of preparation for it,” Whitaker said, “but it’s really fun when you get to do it and see that people are watching it.”

Anyone interested in tuning in to this season or catching up on past episodes can do so on YouTube at youtube.com/channel/UCGWmcsg3FpivGIZNRJr8MTA.

(Continued on next page)

Alphabet Streets Teenager Brings

SURVIVOR

to the Palisades



Emmett Whitaker with a contestant Photos courtesy of Emmett Whitaker



Casting votes

Junior Reporter Vanessa Masterson interviews Chloe Smigla, a season three contestant of “Survivor Palisades.”



Chloe Smigla

Vanessa: What was the most exciting thing you did?

Chloe: Starting out was exciting, I wanted to try my best and win. Also meeting the other contestants was really fun and exciting.

Vanessa: How did you get on the show?

Chloe: They reached out to me, but now people apply to the show.

Vanessa: Were any parts scary or hard?

Chloe: Some of the challenges were hard because some of the other kids were more athletically fit than I was. So

it was physically challenging, and also mentally challenging as well.

Vanessa: What was the hardest challenge for you?

Chloe: There was one challenge where we had to do planks on brick blocks and I could not last very long.

Vanessa: What was mentally challenging?

Chloe: It was very challenging to figure out alliances and who you could trust. It was a challenge because I had never met the other survivors before. It was definitely challenging trying to figure out who I could make alliances with—who I could trust and who would keep our discussions private. I really had to challenge myself to rely on my social skills to form alliances and keep them strong throughout the game.

Vanessa: Did you trick anyone?

Chloe: You'll have to wait and find out ... let's just say, I employed a lot of strategies to help advance my game!

Vanessa: Have you watched “Survivor” and if you have, is “Survivor Palisades” like the real show?

Chloe: I watched “Survivor” after I was on “Survivor Palisades” and I got very addicted to it! And it is so similar, everything down to the words that Emmett says while he is describing the challenges, the Tribal Council—everything is so similar to the real “Survivor,” it's actually incredible.

Vanessa: What was your favorite part about being on “Survivor Palisades”?

Chloe: My favorite part about being on “Survivor” was getting to test my social skills and to see if I could make strong alliances. And, if I could, could I keep them throughout the game long enough to help me survive and be the sole survivor.

Vanessa: Is it very professional? Is there a big crew with a lot of cameras and everything, or is it just Emmett with his phone?

Chloe: No no, there are a bunch of

people in the crew who are filming, around 10 people with cameras and helping orchestrate everything. Which is a lot for a show pretty much run by a kid. And Emmett was directing everyone, telling us when to go and what was going to come next, directing the other camera people and telling them what angles to shoot.

Every aspect of the show is run by Emmett. And last year for season two, they had a premiere and Emmett was completely running everything. It was amazing. Emmett was really on top of it and running everything, which was awesome.

Vanessa: So was the whole crew kids?

Chloe: Mostly yes, there were maybe one or two adults there, but mostly it was kids.

Vanessa: Wow!

Chloe: Yes, it was really awesome!

Vanessa: Thank you Chloe for taking the time for this interview!