

ABC NEWS, MEGYN KELLY DISCUSSED 'GOOD MORNING AMERICA' ANCHOR JOB

Megyn Kelly, who has anchored Fox News Channel in the afternoon and at night, may have considered trying her hand at mornings - at another network. Kelly and ABC News discussed the idea of bringing the Fox News anchor over to co-host the Disney network's "Good Morning America," according to two people familiar with the talks, which at this point are not believed to be likely to come to fruition. Other ideas to bring Kelly to ABC News were also broached during these conversations, these people said.

ABC and Kelly held "a handful of exploratory talks" in 2016, according to one of these people, with the latest taking place as recently as a few weeks ago. However, ABC's interest in the scenario has "cooled," this person said. The conversations made clear to Kelly that she would be added to the on-air team at "GMA," but not take a spot away from Robin Roberts, who co-anchors the morning program with George Stephanopoulos and Michael Strahan.

"There has never been an offer of any job," ABC said in a statement. "End of story." Vanity Fair previously reported that Kelly and ABC News had held discussions. A spokeswoman for Kelly said the anchor was presented with many opportunities and is taking time to mull her decision.

Entertaining offers

Kelly, who hosts the popular "Kelly File" on Fox News' primetime schedule, is entertaining offers from a handful of rival outlets, according to people familiar with the matter-part of an agreement with her employer that gives her a window to hear outreach from other networks. Most of the talks remain preliminary in nature, and none are guaranteed to result in her leaving the 21st Century Fox-owned network, where she is believed to be under contract to work through July. Kelly, who has three young children, is said to be concerned most about what's best for her family. She could well stay at Fox News, where she is believed to be seeking approximately \$20 million a year-a top-level salary in the TV-news business that would be hard to match elsewhere.

ABC may have thought Kelly might lend "GMA" a boost in its never-ending morning news battle with NBC's "Today." In recent weeks, that fight has become even more intense, with "Today" beating "Good Morning America" in total viewers for the week ended November 28. "Today" already regularly wins more viewers between 25 and 54, the demographic most coveted by advertisers, but a defeat in the total-audience category would strip "GMA" of its ability to tout itself as America's most-watched morning program.

To be sure, "GMA" leads "Today" this season, but

by a narrow margin of just 129,000 viewers. ABC has made significant tweaks to "GMA" in recent weeks. On September 6, the network added popular host Michael Strahan to the program on a full-time basis, adding him to the show's opening with Roberts and Stephanopoulos. Producers have also tweaked the last half hour, adding a live audience to the proceedings.

CNN last week was cited by The Drudge Report as making an attempt to woo Kelly to its fold. A spokeswoman for the Time Warner network declined to comment at the time.

At 21st Century Fox, parent of Fox News, Kelly's continued presence has been seen as a nod to a rising generation of audience that is interested in a greater diversity of viewpoints. Her willingness to grill Republican guests and push back on conventional wisdom has won plaudits. That view could have a time frame attached to it: Rupert Murdoch, executive chairman of 21st Century Fox, told The Wall Street Journal in October that Kelly was important to the network, but that he hoped to come to terms with her "very soon." He also noted that Fox News has "a deep bench of talent, many of whom would give their right arm for her spot." — Reuters



Journalist Megyn Kelly poses at The Hollywood Reporter's 25th Annual Women in Entertainment Breakfast at MILK Studios on Wednesday, Dec. 7, 2016, in Los Angeles. — AP

'Celebrity Apprentice' Press Conference: Schwarzenegger Defends Trump's Producer Role, Mark Burnett Ducks Questions

"The New Celebrity Apprentice" host Arnold Schwarzenegger indicated Friday that president-elect Donald Trump could have had close involvement with the show's producers or NBC on production of its upcoming season, which was shot during the presidential campaign.

Taking questions from a small group of reporters following a press conference Friday at Universal Studios, Schwarzenegger was asked whether Trump, who will retain an executive-producer credit on the upcoming season, was involved with production on the rebooted show. "Not with me," he answered. "It could easily be that he was involved with NBC or with Mark Burnett, but not with me."

Schwarzenegger indicated that Trump's level of involvement in the franchise going forward is yet to be decided. "I think that he has to work it out how much he wants to participate or not," he said. "I think this a question that you should ask him, because he could just be sitting back, being a silent partner or whatever."

During the press conference, Schwarzenegger compared Trump's continued involvement in the NBC reality-competition series to his own transition from film actor to governor of California more than a decade ago. "It's no different than when I was running for governor and I was governor," Schwarzenegger said. "My credit on 'Terminator' stays the same." He added that he continued to collect royalties from his film work while serving as governor.

No appearances

Not appearing at the press conference Friday was executive producer and series creator Mark Burnett. An invite sent to press one week ago noted that Burnett would appear alongside Schwarzenegger and the show's contestants. As Variety reported exclusively Thursday, Trump will retain an executive producer credit on "The New Celebrity Apprentice." It remains unclear how much Trump will profit from the series, but his per-episode rate is expected to be, at minimum, in the low five figures.

Trump will receive payments through MGM, which produces the reality-competition series and where Burnett is television chief. "Mr. Trump has a big stake in the show and conceived of it with Mark Burnett," Trump spokesperson Hope Hicks said in a statement Thursday.

Schwarzenegger said that he knew when he agreed to take over the role as host of the series after Trump vacated it to launch his presidential campaign last year that the



President-elect Donald Trump throws a hat into the audience while speaking at a rally in a DOW Chemical Hanger at Baton Rouge Metropolitan Airport, Friday, Dec. 9, 2016, in Baton Rouge. — AP

now-president-elect would continue to serve as executive producer. "I knew that from the beginning that he's executive producer on the show," said Schwarzenegger. "That was on the credit when you watched the show."

Asked Friday about Trump's prospects for success in the White House, Schwarzenegger, a fellow Republican, pleaded for patience. "I think you have to give him a chance," he said. "I don't think you can judge anything after one month. Let us watch him go and get started before we start to judge him." Schwarzenegger also refused to address questions about whether he would use his involvement in the show as leverage to influence Trump politically, or whether Trump would try to use his own involvement in the show the new season of which has already been shot-to try to influence its content from the White House. "I don't get into hypotheticals of 'what is if Trump calls?' or 'what is if Trump says this?'" he said.

Appearing on Fox News this afternoon, former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, who advised Trump during the campaign and was a considered as a potential running mate, criticized the president elect's decision to serve as a producer on a television show as he prepares to take office. "He doesn't need his name in print. Donald J. Trump is going to be the executive producer of a thing called the American government and he is going have this huge TV show called leading the world," Gingrich said to Fox News host Neil Cavuto. "The New Celebrity Apprentice" premieres Jan. 2 on NBC. Trump will be inaugurated as president Jan. 20. — Reuters

'Duck Dynasty' Producers Committed Massive Fraud and Self-Dealing, Lawsuit Contends

Deirdre and Scott Gurney, the producers of "Duck Dynasty," have officially been terminated by ITV following a fraud investigation, and a claim has been filed in California Superior Court. "Following a meeting with Scott and Deirdre Gurney, the Board of Gurney Productions has been left with no alternative but to terminate their employment and file a lawsuit in the Superior Court of California on the grounds of self-dealing, fraudulent concealment and breach of contract," according to a statement from a Gurney Productions spokesperson.

"As announced on Monday, Emmy-winning producer Craig Armstrong has been appointed interim CEO of Gurney Productions and has the full ground support of ITV America's senior team. Under his leadership, all Gurney Productions shows and development will continue to be produced by the company's strong team of producers. Armstrong, along with his producing partner Rick Ringbakk, is co-founder and co-CEO of 5x5 Media, which continues to operate as before." "It's very much business as usual and our brilliant production team remains focused on making and delivering great shows."

The Gurneys sold a 61.5% stake in the company to ITV in 2012 for \$40 million, but remained co-CEOs of the firm. The suit alleges that in August, the Gurneys secretly set up a new company, Snake River Productions. In September, the new company bought distribution rights to "Northern Territory," a reality show, from Gurney Productions, according to the lawsuit. That transaction-for \$3.6 million-inflated Gurney Productions' EBITDA, which

had the effect of artificially boosting the value of the Gurneys' remaining minority stake in the company, the suit alleges.

"Every dollar that the Gurneys spent to purchase rights from the Company through Snake River would have been paid directly back to the Gurneys several times over through distributions and under the terms of the Operating Agreement's buyout provisions," the suit claims.

Distribution

In October, the Gurneys took a distribution from the old company in the amount of \$1.4 million, which the lawsuit alleges was the

direct result of self-dealing. At the September board meeting, the suit claims that Deirdre Gurney disclosed a higher-than-expected EBITDA. The board queried her, focusing in on the "Northern Territory" rights sale. The suit alleges that she pretended not to remember the name of the company that had acquired the rights. It was only after the meeting that ITV discovered that the rights had been sold to Snake River, and that the Gurneys were the owners of Snake River, the suit alleges.

This discovery prompted ITV to launch an investigation. ITV discovered that two employees-Josh Puga and Tara Delaney, who is Deirdre Gurney's sister-had been trans-

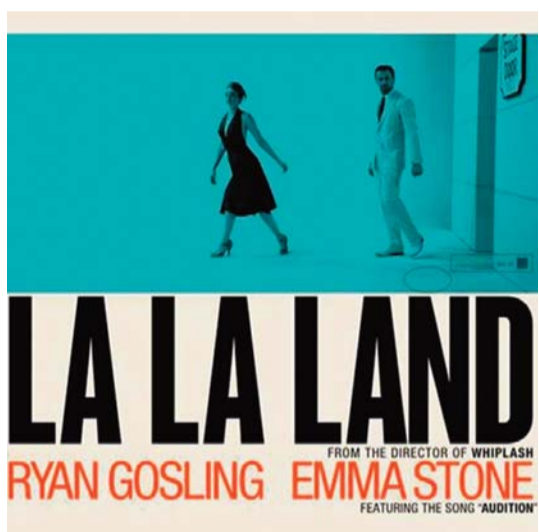
ferred to the payroll of Snake River, even though they still worked for Gurney Productions. That also had the effect of increasing Gurney Productions' EBITDA, enhancing the value of the Gurneys' minority stake, according to the suit.

The lawsuit also claims that the investigation found that the Gurneys had charged hundreds of thousands of dollars in personal expenses to the company, including travel costs, mortgage payments, childcare payments, groceries, dues at the Manhattan Country Club, helicopter rides, boat expenses and pet supplies. The suit alleges that the Gurneys charged \$542,000 in personal expenses to the company as of September 2013. Despite promises to repay the personal expenses in 2014, the company was not reimbursed, according to the suit. The suit alleges that the Gurneys repeatedly told the board that the expenses had been repaid, and that the board only discovered that the expenses remained unpaid in September 2016.

The suit also alleges that Scott Gurney took an improper \$350,000 distribution from the company in January 2016, and the board only learned of it in September. The Gurneys could not be reached immediately for comment. — Reuters



Cast members of Duck Dynasty in a promotional photograph in Los Angeles. — AFP



'LA LA LAND' EXPECTED TO LEAD GOLDEN GLOBE NOMINATIONS

Nominations for the Golden Globes will be unveiled Monday with critics expecting musical "La La Land" to lead the pack ahead of "Moonlight," "Manchester by the Sea" and "Lion." In a departure from last year's awards calendar, the announcements come before the influential Screen Actors Guild nominations, making them the first major bellwether of momentum going into the Oscars race.

The Globe nominations, set to be made at the crack of dawn in Beverly Hills, are decided by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association (HFPA), a group of entertainment journalists who are wined and dined by publicists.

There has been controversy in the past over the category placement of films, with last year's inclusion of "The Martian" and "Joy" in comedy/musical raising eyebrows. But awards prediction site Gold Derby has Damien Chazelle's "La La Land" uncontroversial both a musical and a romantic comedy-comfortably in the lead in several races. "Normally the Globe voters like to spread the wealth among a lot of different films, but I could honestly see it winning the film award and for Ryan Gosling and Emma Stone," managing director Chris Beachum told AFP. "It's got a very good shot at 'directing' and maybe the score or song categories-it could do really well."

Experts say Kenneth Lonergan's unflinching "Manchester by the Sea," which has won acclaim for its central performance by Casey Affleck, has been getting the most recent attention on the drama side. Another frontrunner is Barry Jenkins's coming-of-age story "Moonlight," with cast members Naomie Harris and Mahershala Ali in with a shout for acting nominations.

Tolerance of scandal

"Lion," Garth Davis's drama about a teenager adopted by an Australian family who searches for his long-lost blood relatives using Google Earth, is also expected to earn several nominations, including in acting for Dev Patel and Nicole Kidman.

The Globes will be the year's first big test of Hollywood's tolerance of scandal, with Nate Parker's "The Birth of a Nation" seen as firm awards material until news emerged of a historical acquittal over rape allegations by a woman who ended up committing suicide. "Will they separate the art from the artist? Will the film be able to stand on its own or will the very mixed reviews of it sink its chances?" writes Eric Anderson of the AwardsWatch.com blog.

Denzel Washington, nominated on seven occasions, looks a good bet to earn a first directing nomination for "Fences" but faces competition from "Silence" director Martin Scorsese who won in 2012 for "Hugo."

Emily Blunt could get a sixth acting nomination for "The Girl on the Train" while French screen siren Isabelle Huppert has turned heads with her commanding lead in Paul Verhoeven's "Elle."

Viola Davis ("Fences"), Ruth Negga ("Loving") and Natalie Portman ("Jackie") are all strong contenders for this category, however. Among the television prizes, FX's "Atlanta," about two cousins trying to make it big in hip hop, looks a good bet for best musical/comedy after earning acclaim for its ten-episode debut season in the fall.

HBO black comedy "Divorce," should also be in the running, as should its star Sarah Jessica Parker, who already has four Golden Globes for "Sex in the City." The 74th Golden Globe Awards will air on NBC live coast-to-coast from the Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills on Sunday, January 8 from 5:00-8:00 pm PT (0100-0400 GMT Monday), with talk show host Jimmy Fallon presenting. — AFP