



# BAYMAX!

"Baymax is obviously cute and huggable, which goes a long way. But he also has a pure heart and naturally does what we all aspire and even struggle to do—he helps people. Baymax reflects the best part of all of us."

*~ Scott Adsit, voice of Baymax*

## PRODUCTION BRIEF

Walt Disney Animation Studios' "Baymax!" returns to the fantastical city of San Fransokyo where the affable, inflatable, inimitable healthcare companion, Baymax sets out to do what he was programmed to do: help others. The six-episode series of healthcare capers introduces extraordinary characters who need Baymax's signature approach to healing in more ways than they realize. According to series creator Don Hall, who helmed 2014's Oscar®-winning feature "Big Hero 6," the idea of centering a series around Baymax was always rooted in the character's undeniable appeal. "He is pure of intent and pure of heart—even though he's a robot," says Hall. "He has one goal and one goal only: to help and heal his patients. He's resolute in that goal.

"Couple that with a design that is so simple: a round, vinyl guy with two blinking eyes—you just want to hug him," continues Hall. "There isn't a lot to work with in terms of expression, which was challenging but very much intentional so that the audience can project their own emotions. Add in the brilliant Scott Adsit, who's back as the warm, quirky, funny voice of Baymax, and you have a trifecta."

Producer Roy Conli, who served in the same capacity for "Big Hero 6," is a fan of Adsit. "Scott brings a humanity to our robot. He so fully invests in that character—it's delightful. Our recording sessions reminded me just how much he understands Baymax. He is Baymax—and he loves doing it."

According to Dean Wellins, who directs three of the episodes, Adsit's grasp of the comedy ingrained in Baymax is the key to his performance. "I always feel like the funniest characters are the ones that



never try to make anybody laugh—they're inadvertently entertaining just by being themselves. Scott is an extremely talented comedic actor who can deliver real entertainment and real humor by being Baymax in the truest sense."

The character's complexity stems, ironically, from his simplicity, says screenwriter Cirocco Dunlap, who wrote all six episodes. "He's so fun to write because he just says exactly what's happening," she says. "There's no nuance or human reasoning behind it. If you're embarrassed, he'll say quite publicly that your heart rate is elevated and your face is sweating, which just adds to the embarrassment. He doesn't assign meaning to emotion the way we do, but he will be with you every step of the way."

"Baymax!" explores locales both fresh and familiar in the San Fransokyo setting honed for "Big Hero 6." Conli says it was rewarding for the team to revisit the beautiful and beguiling city. "We sent teams out to Tokyo to sketch and study the details there," he says of the artists for the feature film. "The same teams went to San Francisco to explore. What grew from that was a universal city that still blows me away today. The street pattern is San Francisco, but the design element is Tokyo. That world is vibrant and alive, and it still lives."

Visual effects supervisor Mohit Kallianpur explains that the opportunity to reuse assets from the feature was exciting for filmmakers, but making that happen was a complex journey. "When we started looking at this series, seven years had passed since 'Big Hero 6,'" he says. "Technology changes rapidly so everything that we'd done required a lot of effort to make it work in our current pipeline. Once we converted it, we had to test it and validate the data. If it didn't work, we'd have to go back in and fix it."

Not only were the sets converted for the series, some of the main characters in "Baymax!" can be spotted as background characters in the film. However, the Disney+ series steers away from the heightened reality of "Big Hero 6," embracing, instead, an everyday existence for the healthcare companion. "His single-minded goal of helping others remains," says Hall. "We get to see how Baymax interacts—and sometimes interrupts the everyday lives of normal people."

According to producer Bradford Simonsen, the key to the success of the series is heart. "When we were in the room hashing out what these stories could be, we wanted to preserve the innocence of Baymax in these stories," he says. "We knew he needed to come across as wanting to do the right thing in the most naïve, humorous ways. What makes a great story are characters that you love, worlds that you want to be in and, ultimately, a story that you think you know what's happening, but in the end, it's slightly different than what you expected in a magical, wonderful, heartfelt way."

Each of the six episodes in "Baymax!" is about eight minutes in length. Episodes follow a central character with a problem that Baymax is determined to fix—that's what he was programmed to do,



after all—and a deeper issue Baymax detects, too. His help isn't always welcome, however, and characters learn that Baymax has much more up his white vinyl sleeve than they'd ever imagined. Dunlap found healthcare a timely and relevant theme—particularly because Baymax's patients are a bit reluctant to accept his healing offers. "There are a lot of reasons we might avoid treatment in real life," she says. "We're scared, we don't want to face reality, we can't afford the consequences—the denial runs deep. And Baymax—since his goal is to make you healthy—doesn't pause to let you catch up or prepare if his programming says getting better faster is the ideal outcome."

The series' episodes feature the voices of Scott Adsit as Baymax, Ryan Potter as Hiro, Maya Rudolph as Aunt Cass (Eps 1, 6), Emily Kuroda as Kiko (Eps 2, 6), Lilimar as Sofia (Eps 3, 6) and Jaboukie Young-White as Mbita (Eps 4, 6). Episodes are directed by Dean Wellins (Eps 1, 2, 6), Lissa Treiman (Ep 3), Dan Abraham (Ep 4) and Mark Kennedy (Ep 5). Says Conli, "Disney+ and a series like 'Baymax!' really opens the door for a lot of talented people to enhance their experience and share their creative points of view. The platform also affords us the opportunity to tell stories in different ways. The eight-minute format is something new for us—it's a great exercise in storytelling, and kind of liberating. Our films are joyous four-plus-year experiences. Working on a series like this is like skiing as opposed to hiking. We still go through the same rigor of working with the story trust and going through multiple screenings to get it right, but it goes a lot faster."

"Baymax!" debuts exclusively on Disney+ on June 29, 2022.

## **AN EYE FOR AILMENTS**

### **Baymax Sets Out to Heal, One Episode at a Time**

#### **Episode 1 – "Cass"**

Hiro's Aunt Cass meets her match in Baymax when an injury threatens to keep her from running the Lucky Cat Café. Director Dean Wellins helms the episode that returns fans of "Big Hero 6" to the bustling café where Cass is still operating at full speed. "She feels like she has to do it all," he says. "She's not only stepping in as a mother to Hiro, she wants to take care of everyone who walks inside the door."

But, says screenwriter Cirocco Dunlap, she pushes it too far, ending up with a bum ankle and firm orders from Baymax to stay off her feet. "Her whole identity is tied up in running that café," Dunlap says. "She's going to take care of those customers if she has to crawl on the floor to do it—and she does do that—especially after she sees Baymax dismally running the café for her. That's more painful than her ankle."

The result? A lot of physical comedy, says Wellins. "It was a really fun episode. And working with Maya Rudolph, who's back as the voice of Cass, was amazing. She just delivers."



### Episode 2 – “Kiko”

Baymax hears a telltale “ouch” as he’s cruising the streets of San Fransokyo. But his new patient Kiko, a character inspired by the Japanese American community, doesn’t welcome his assistance. In fact, she has no intention of addressing her aches or her fears no matter how many red lollipops Baymax offers.

“Kiko is a bit of a curmudgeon,” says Dunlap. “She doesn’t want to interact with anybody. Like a lot of people who find themselves alone later in life—or at any point in life—she’s really shut down emotionally. But as she gets enmeshed in this battle with Baymax to escape his help, she finds herself reluctantly starting to reconnect to the world.”

Adds Wellins, who helms the second episode, “At first glance, Kiko might come off like a quiet older lady. But she has a quick wit and a lot of fire. Emily Kuroda, who voices Kiko, was so good. She came in having never done a voiceover before and just killed it.”

What begins as a minor case of hip pain evolves into the kind of ache that a lot of people, including Kiko, work hard to avoid. “Baymax wants to heal all of her pain—both physical and emotional,” says Conli.

### Episode 3 – “Sofia”

Middle-school student Sofia is excited about an upcoming talent show when she finds herself in the midst of a major life change: she gets her period for the first time. Fortunately, Baymax is on hand with unwavering support. “Sofia is super confident and very comfortable in her own skin,” says director Lissa Treiman. “But even she isn’t quite sure where this new development leaves her.”

According to screenwriter Cirocco Dunlap, the whole team felt the topic was one they shouldn’t shy away from. “The story isn’t about being ashamed or embarrassed,” she adds. “That was so important to me. At one point, Sofia says, ‘I have my period!’ and her friend replies with something like, ‘OK, cool, but are you gonna do the talent show with me?’”

Adds Treiman, “We said, ‘This isn’t embarrassing, it’s biology.’ I was raised in a household where things like that were discussed very openly.”

Lilimar Hernandez lends her voice to Sofia. Says Treiman, “Her audition tape crushed it because she is clearly intelligent while still sounding like a young woman. She had the perfect vibe.”



The episode includes Walt Disney Animation Studios' first-ever choreographed yo-yo routine, performed by Sofia and her friend. "We didn't know if we'd have time for it, but one of the animators just knocked out the whole routine," says Treiman. "It's so cool."

#### **Episode 4 – "Mbita"**

Mbita is happily serving up his family's favorite fish soup in his food truck when he finds himself at a crossroads. Baymax pushes (and pushes) him to change for his own good—but for Mbita, change is hard. Says director Dan Abraham, "His whole life his mom and dad have served fish soup to the masses, and now he's finally taken over the family business."

But Mbita develops a massive allergy to his star ingredient: fish. Filmmakers debated how to showcase the allergic reaction. "It needed to be alarming, but not so off-putting that people don't want to look," says Abraham. "You want to feel for him while being able to laugh at the absurdity of it."

Despite the severity of the allergy, Mbita has no intention of accepting the treatment Baymax offers. Spoiler alert: it involves a needle. The patient goes to great lengths, covering miles of San Fransokyo streets, to escape the healthcare companion robot with an unending drive to help. "We leaned on the layout department and then animation, marveling at their ability to create those busy streets in a way that is action-packed, dynamic and cool," says Abraham. "The lighting department worked their magic, so that when the truck is flying down these streets, the sun comes between the buildings creating a strobing effect on the truck, which accelerates the excitement. Then add the sound, the effects and everything else and it's even better than what we had in our heads when we began."

Jaboukie Young-White voices Mbita. "He's just awesome," says producer Brad Simonsen. "He has great energy. His performance is big and fun—he's just a joy to work with."

#### **Episode 5 – "Yachi"**

Hungry cat Yachi fiercely resists Baymax's efforts to relieve her when she inadvertently swipes an earbud and gets it lodged in her throat. "She's a stray," says screenwriter Cirocco Dunlap. "She's all alone, scared and defensive, forced to fend for herself. Fear can make you pretty aggressive."

Whenever Yachi opens her mouth, the earbud emits excerpts from the local news or snippets of songs and advertisements, sending the cat into even greater panic. Baymax, determined to massage the feline's throat to eject the intrusion, just makes her anxiety and fear worse. Says Dunlap, "She's a cat. She doesn't know he's trying to help."



And who can blame her for being afraid? “Baymax towers over her,” says Mark Kennedy, who directs the episode. “Despite everything we know about this gentle, huggable robot, he looks terrifying to a scrawny cat.”

According to Simonsen, the solitary cat makes appearances in earlier episodes. “It’s not that she wants to be a loner,” says the producer. “She wants to be loved. Mark did a really good job of balancing the humor and the heart of this little cat. There are hysterical, slapstick moments with pushed, squash and stretch animation.”

Kennedy, who was instrumental in bringing Maximus and Pascal to life in “Tangled,” is known at Disney Animation for his approach to animal characters. “I like to treat these characters like they’re the smartest ‘people’ in the room—they’re just trapped in an animal’s body,” he says. “Yachi is this tough old street cat who doesn’t need anybody, but then we see she really does want connection in her life.”

### **Episode 6 – “Baymax”**

Baymax’s best patients come together in a frantic race to help the healthcare companion when he lands in a dangerous situation. Says Simonsen, “We thought it would be interesting to turn the tables and make Baymax the patient. It was a great way to close out the series—bringing back all of his patients to show how much they’ve been affected by him and how much they care about him.”

According to director Dean Wellins, the episode brings together characters who’ve—for the most part—only just been introduced. “Disney spends years developing a character for a single movie, but we’d only had a short time with our main characters. We were genuinely surprised to discover that when they banded together, forming this cool group of misfit heroes, they all became pieces of a puzzle. Each plays to the strengths that Baymax gave them in previous episodes.”

## **BIOGRAPHIES**

**SCOTT ADSIT (voice of Baymax)** won the Joseph Jefferson Award for his work at The Second City Theatre in Chicago. He still improvises at various theatres throughout the United States. Adsit has appeared in many television shows, most notably playing producer Pete Hornberger on NBC’s Emmy® Award-winning “30 Rock.” He also portrayed Greg Hart on HBO’s “Veep.” Adsit’s television credits include “The Walking Dead,” “Mr. Mayor,” “Search Party,” “The Goldbergs,” “The Office,” “Malcolm In the Middle,” “Huff,” “Alias,” “CSI: Miami,” “Friends” and “Curb Your Enthusiasm,” among others.



Adsit also appeared on the influential sketch comedy shows "Mr. Show" and "Tenacious D." He wrote, produced, directed and performed voices for Adult Swim's Emmy Award-winning "Moral Orel." He currently directs and performs voices for Adult Swim's "Teenage Euthanasia." He also voices the role of William in Netflix's animated series "A Tale Dark and Grim." Adsit performs the voice of Baymax in Walt Disney Animation Studios' "Big Hero 6." He has appeared in many feature films, including "St. Vincent" with Bill Murray and Melissa McCarthy, the Christopher Guest comedy "For Your Consideration," "We're The Millers," "The Informant," "The Bad News Bears," "Kicking and Screaming," "The Terminal," "The Italian Job" and "Lovely and Amazing."

**DON HALL (Created By)** began his career at Walt Disney Animation Studios in June 1995 as a story apprentice on "Tarzan." He served as a story artist on several development projects and productions, including "The Emperor's New Groove" and "Chicken Little" before becoming head of story for "Meet the Robinsons" and "The Princess and the Frog."

Hall made his directorial debut for Disney Animation's "Winnie the Pooh" and went on to direct "Big Hero 6," which won an Academy Award® for Best Animated Feature Film. He then served as co-director on "Moana" and worked on several development projects before his role as director on "Raya and the Last Dragon." He is currently directing Disney Animation's upcoming feature, "Strange World," which releases November 23, 2022.

Hall graduated with a BFA in drawing and painting from the University of Iowa and a BFA in character animation from California Institute of the Arts. After graduating from Cal Arts, he returned to the campus as an instructor in advanced story development.

Hall is a native of Glenwood, Iowa, and currently resides in Pasadena with his wife and two children.

**ROY CONLI (Producer)** previously produced Walt Disney Animation Studios' Oscar®-winning feature "Big Hero 6." Conli joined Disney Animation in 1993, and after assembling all the creative elements for "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" and launching the project, he relocated to France to oversee the contributions of the Paris-based animation team over the two-year production schedule. Upon completion of the film, he remained in France and guided production on the animated films "Hercules" and "Tarzan." Conli returned to the studio in Burbank to produce "Treasure Planet" and then served as producer of Disney Animation's 50th animated film, "Tangled." He is a member of the executive leadership team for Disney Animation.

Since 2014, Conli has also been a producer for DisneyNature films including "Dolphin Reef," "Elephant," "Penguins" and "Born in China." He is currently producing Disney Animation's upcoming feature, "Strange World," which releases November 23, 2022.





Born and raised in Los Angeles, Calif., Conli studied theater at San Francisco's prestigious American Conservancy Theater (ACT). A chance meeting with a group of creative talents from the Pasadena Playhouse led Conli to a position with the legendary theater and, ultimately, a four-year stint as director of operations. In that role, he initiated a restoration of the neglected venue and helped guide the theater to its official reopening in 1983.

Conli subsequently moved to Boston where he continued his education at Boston University and eventually earned an M.F.A. After graduation, he served as associate producer for the Camden Shakespeare Festival in Maine. In 1989, Conli joined the production team at the Mark Taper Forum, the leading regional theater in Los Angeles. Over the next four years he managed all special projects and new play development for the Taper, where he helped launch premieres of such award-winning plays as "Angels in America," "Jelly's Last Jam" and "The Kentucky Cycle."

**BRADFORD SIMONSEN (Producer)** brings his expertise and diverse experience in the worlds of animation and visual effects to his role as producer. He last produced Walt Disney Animation Studios' short film, "Us Again," which was included in the shortlist for the 94<sup>th</sup> Academy Awards® Animated Short Film category, and won the prestigious NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Short-Form (Animated). He first joined Disney Animation in 2012, and has served as associate producer on three Oscar®-winning features, "Big Hero 6," "Zootopia" and "Encanto," as well as the 2018 Oscar®-nominated film, "Ralph Breaks the Internet." He also produced the animated short film, "Weeds," which garnered festival acclaim and Academy consideration.

Among his notable live-action film credits are "Real Steel" and "Jack the Giant Slayer" (digital producer), "Alice in Wonderland" and "Big Fish" (digital production manager) and the animated films "Open Season," "Polar Express," "Beowulf" and the 2003 Oscar®-winning short "The ChubbChubbs!" (for which he also voiced the character of Meeper).

Simonsen attended the University of Washington School of Business in Seattle, where he earned a degree in Marketing and Human Resource Management. During that time, he was also active in the school's drama department as an actor and writer while he produced for the University of Washington's production programs.

Upon graduation, Simonsen moved to Los Angeles where he launched his industry career as an assistant director. He segued from production to feature film development with an assistant role at Jan De Bont's production company. This was followed by a role as director of production at Robert Redford's film banner, where he worked on such titles as "The Legend of Bagger Vance," "Spy Game," "The Motorcycle Diaries" and "The Last Castle" among others.





Developing an interest in visual effects, Simonsen landed a job at Sony Imageworks in 2001, where he coordinated the production of "The ChubbChubbs!" and went on to work as digital production manager over the next nine years. From 2010-12, he worked as a digital producer at the award-winning Digital Domain production company.

**CIROCCO DUNLAP (Screenwriter)** is the creator and Executive Producer of "The Hospital," an original animated half-hour for Amazon with Natasha Lyonne and Maya Rudolph's Animal Pictures. Her previous credits include "Russian Doll," "Waffles + Mochi," "Big Mouth," "Miracle Workers" and "Man Seeking Woman." Dunlap has also written features for Fox, Disney and Fox Animation, and her short film "Everything is Okay" screened at SXSW in 2018.

**DEAN WELLINS (Director, Eps. 1, 2, 6)** has had a long and distinguished career with Walt Disney Animation Studios, starting in 2000. During his tenure at Disney Animation, he contributed to numerous features and short films as an animator, story artist/writer, and director. Born on an Air Force base in Torrejon, Spain, and raised mainly in Dos Palos, Calif., Wellins studied art and design at the University of California at Davis, before continuing his education at CalArts, in their prestigious Character Animation Program. He started his professional career in 1996 at Warner Brothers, where he worked as a directing animator and story artist on "The Iron Giant," as well as a supervising animator on "Osmosis Jones." For his work on these films, he received three Annie Award nominations: two for Outstanding Individual Achievement in Character Animation and one for Outstanding Individual Achievement in Storyboarding.

After coming to work for Disney Animation in 2000, his first job was as an animator on the lead characters Jim Hawkins and John Silver for "Treasure Planet." Wellins quickly proved his talent not only as a gifted animator, but also in the areas of story and writing. During the development of Disney Animation's 2010 acclaimed adventure-comedy, "Tangled," he worked in close collaboration with Glen Keane, one of Disney's modern animation masters, on an earlier version of the film.

Wellins wrote and directed the 2015 short "Tick Tock Tale," and went on to work as a top story artist on Academy Award®-winning features "Frozen," "Big Hero 6," and "Zootopia" (for which he received an Annie Award in the category Storyboarding in an Animated Feature Production), as well as the Oscar®-nominated features "Moana" and "Ralph Breaks the Internet." He helped write the original story for Oscar® nominee "Raya and the Last Dragon," and served in a directing role during the preproduction on that film. He was also part of Disney Animation's executive and creative leadership team. Since completing work on the Disney+ series, "Baymax!," Wellins has been developing a non-Disney feature project with his longtime associate, Sergio Pablos, and SPA Studios in Spain.



In addition to his passion for filmmaking and animation, Wellins is an accomplished composer and songwriter. He and his wife, Teresa, reside in Santa Clarita, Calif., and have three sons.

**LISSA TREIMAN (Director, Ep. 3)** was born in the city of Los Angeles, Calif., and has never managed to leave. She's loved drawing from a very young age, much to the consternation of almost all of her grade-school teachers. At the age of nine, she saw and fell in love with the film, "The Lion King," and for the first time it clicked that this thing she loved so much was made by people who also drew pictures. After high school, she attended California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) School of Character Animation, where she had a great time and made two—in her words—terrible student films, and two mostly decent ones.

While in school, she landed two consecutive summer internships at Pixar Animation Studios, which helped to hone her interest in storyboarding. After graduating in 2007, she was accepted into the Trainee program at Walt Disney Animation Studios. Following that, she was promoted to full-time story artist, and has contributed to such popular Disney Animation features as "Tangled," "Wreck-It Ralph," "Ralph Breaks the Internet," "Frozen 2," "Raya and the Last Dragon," and the Academy Award®-winning features "Big Hero 6" and "Zootopia." The upcoming feature "Strange World" represents her first time acting as Head of Story on a film. She served as director for the "Sofia" episode of the "Baymax!" series for Disney+.

Throughout her life and career, Lissa has drawn inspiration both from animation and from comics. In her spare time, she has even made occasional forays into published comic work, providing the art for the first six issues of the Eisner Award-winning Giant Days for Boom! Studios, as well as writing and drawing the Eisner Award-nominated short comic Minotaar for independent publisher ShortBox.

Lissa loves dogs. All dogs. At the time of writing this she still does not know how to ride a bicycle.

**DAN ABRAHAM (Director, Ep. 4)** is a veteran story man, director and animator, who began his association with Walt Disney Animation Studios in 2005, when he started an internship which led to full-time roles at Disney Animation and Disneytoon Studios. Abraham wrote and directed the 2020 Disney+ short film "Once Upon a Snowman" alongside fellow writer/director Trent Correy. He was also a story artist on "Frozen 2," and the Academy Award®-winning "Encanto."

Abraham was part of the story team on the first five "Tinker Bell" direct-to-DVD projects for Disneytoon Studios, and as head of story on the 2013 animated feature, "Planes," he oversaw a team of eight story artists in the challenging assignment of bringing a wide range of plane characters to life. In 2014, he made his directing debut on the Disneytoon short, "Vitaminamulch: Air



Spectacular," which offered an all-new adventure featuring the colorful characters from the world of "Planes."

Abraham was trained in traditional animation at Sheridan College in Toronto, from which he graduated in 1993. From there, he launched his career at Heart of Texas Productions where he worked on films for Warner Bros. and DreamWorks Animation.

Moving to Los Angeles in 2000, Abraham worked as a clean-up animator and animator for Klasky-Csupo on a variety of commercials, and also illustrated interactive children's books and provided character design for The Learning Company.

**MARK KENNEDY (Director, Ep. 5)** was born and raised in Cupertino, Calif., and attended the very first classroom that ever had an Apple computer for the students to use. Seeing the first *Star Wars* movie in a theater at age 6 was a transformative experience for him, but didn't lead to an interest in film or storytelling at the time. He didn't have an artistic background and as a child rarely drew or had any interest in animation. In high school, on the verge of pursuing other careers, he developed a burning passion for animation and threw himself into learning as much as he could. A couple of years later, he applied to the Character Animation program at the California Institute of the Arts and was accepted right out of high school.

Kennedy spent three years in the Character Animation program there, learning from experienced industry vets and a very talented group of fellow students. After his third year, he was hired by Walt Disney Animation Studios and left to pursue his dream of working there. He was only 20 years old.

The first film Kennedy worked on was "The Rescuers Down Under." He also worked on "The Prince and the Pauper" and then transitioned to working as an animator on "Beauty and the Beast" and "Aladdin." Transitioning into the Story department, he worked as a Story Artist on "Hercules," "Tarzan," "The Emperor's New Groove," "Treasure Planet," "Home on the Range," "Bolt," "Wreck-It Ralph," "Frozen," "Frozen 2" and "Encanto." He served as Head of Story on "Chicken Little," "Tangled" and "Tangled Ever After." He was also credited as a Creative Advisor for his work on "Big Hero 6."

When Kennedy isn't working, he loves to ride his longboard, play video games, learn new things and spend time with his adult children.