

This Mortal Coil

THE WOODY/MIA HBO DOCUMENTARY — What to Watch For

FEBRUARY 7, 2021FEBRUARY 17, 2021 ~ RBWEIDE

By Robert B. Weide (<https://twitter.com/BobWeide>)



So many people have asked for my response to the announcement that HBO will soon be airing a 4-part documentary about Woody Allen and Mia Farrow, that I promised to provide one in a Twitter thread. I started to do so, before realizing that threads are limited to 25 separate tweets. Having exceeded that limit, I decided to paste it all back together for another blog entry.

In brief, the past work of these filmmakers indicates this will be a well-balanced piece that will give both sides fair treatment in a genuine attempt to get to the objective truth.

HA-HA-HA! Just kidding. Okay, for real...

First of all, I don't want to be one of those people who condemn someone's work before they've seen it. I can't stand it when others do that. However, I do think there are enough "knowns" about this work to reach a few likely conclusions, aside from the fact that there will be a lot of lovely aerial drone shots. I haven't seen the past work of these filmmakers, but I know they return repeatedly to the topic of sexual assault. And good for them. This is a topic that needs to be illuminated whenever possible and I believe that people who are guilty of it should be called out in a loud voice. *If* they are guilty.

I am myself a documentary filmmaker (https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0004332/?ref=nm_sr_srg_0), so I know the tricks of the trade. I know how easy it is to create the illusion that you are being objective, while absolutely manipulating your audience to accept a specific agenda. Frankly, every time you decide where to place your camera, or what part of a photo to zoom in on, you are imposing a point of view on your audience. I'm not saying this is wrong. In fact, it's virtually unavoidable. It's not something I worry much about, since my documentaries have been rather non-controversial artist profiles. But if you're trying to sway an audience, there are devices at your disposal that the average audience will never be consciously thinking about. I recently posted a trailer on YouT (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c0aU77BxdZE>)ube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c0aU77BxdZE>) for my upcoming documentary, and numerous people told me how they cried at the end. I always chuckled to myself because I knew it was simply the music that coaxed their tears. (If I had added sinister music, those same people would have told me about the tension they felt.) But for films on controversial subjects, there are subtle ways to make it look like you're asking an audience what they think, when you're actually telling them what to think.

As a viewer, think of yourself as a juror at a trial. Anybody can sway an audience by presenting one side of a case. But could you, as a juror, render a fair verdict by only hearing from the prosecution and not the defense? Of course not. Not only would you need to hear testimony from both sides, but each of those witnesses would have to be cross-examined to give you the full picture. And that's where these filmmakers will likely fail you. It's not a question of what they include. It's a matter of what they leave out.

For all the years that Mia, Dylan, and Ronan Farrow have been having their say on mainstream and social media, I've never seen them put in a position where they weren't in control over who was questioning them, so I've never seen them have to hold up under cross, so to speak. Now, in this documentary, there might be some very "soft" cross questions to make it look like the interviewers are going for the truth, but these will likely be questions where the responses are already known, creating the illusion of due diligence. (And if the answer doesn't suit the filmmaker's needs, it can always be left on the cutting room floor.) I know several people who could question these three Farrows (plus D.A. Frank Maco, "reporters" Maureen Orth and Andy Thibault and others) that, in five minutes, would turn each of them into Cmdr. Queeg in "The Caine Mutiny." (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CLUZ0Nv7UH4>).

Addendum added 2/16/21: I can't vouch for the specifics, but this image was just sent to me, showing an email dated 2013 from Producer Amy Herdy, asking someone to participate in a film which would be called "The Hunting Ground," about sexual crimes on college campuses, from the same filmmakers behind the Woody/Mia series. To encourage their participation, Herdy clarifies, "We do not operate the same way as journalists... there would be no insensitive questions or the need to get the perpetrator's side." I give them credit for not claiming to be journalists, but also point out that they apparently make no distinction between "perpetrators" and "alleged perpetrators." They alone decide who are the perpetrators, who are the victims, and then go on to act as judge, jury, and executioner. One stop shopping!

Academy award nominated film team seeking interview

A Herdy [alherdy@hotmail.com]

Sent: 11/21/2013 1:44 PM

To: carroll_law@hotmail.com

I'm sure you and the young woman in the FSU case in question are being besieged right now with interview requests. When the dust settles, we hope you will consider ours. We do not operate the same way as journalists--this is a film project that is very much in the corner of advocacy for victims, so there would be no insensitive questions or the need to get the perpetrator's side.



Ask yourself why Ronan Farrow blocks anyone who ever questions his statements on Twitter, no matter how polite or well-informed they are. (This is the same Ronan Farrow who wrote an editorial for *The Hollywood Reporter* asking why Woody Allen isn't asked "the hard questions.") Why did Ronan Farrow never respond to my Tweets offering a \$100k donation to the charity of their choice (<https://twitter.com/BobWeide/status/1007338181853732864>) for a shred of "evidence" of any number of his provably false claims? When Ronan and I were both invited to debate the issue live, on stage, at the SoHo Forum in NYC, I responded, "Fly me out and put me up, and I'm there." (<https://twitter.com/BobWeide/status/1242589310336913408>) Ronan declined to even respond. Ronan is a lawyer and a Pulitzer Prize winner for investigative reporting. I won a prize as "Most Outstanding Student" from the Rotary Club when I was in 8th grade. So what is he afraid of? He knows I could effectively rebut every single statement that comes out of his mouth on this matter. But pair him with a friendly interviewer who doesn't cross examine, and he remains Mia's blue-eyed Golden Child. If Ronan were to try this case or testify in a court of law, under oath, I assure you, he would be sweating like Rudy Giuliani. I don't know if hair dye would run down his face, but I reckon those blue contact lenses would pop right off his eyeballs.

I won't re-litigate here any of the specific points I've made in my past writing, but it's worth repeating that Dylan Farrow could still take Allen to civil court in Connecticut and sue him for every penny he's got. The statute of limitations won't expire until Dylan turns 48. (<https://www.cga.ct.gov/2020/rpt/pdf/2020-R-0007.pdf>). (Ronan could even be her lawyer!) But we'll never see this happen, because their case would evaporate quicker than the Trump lawsuits claiming

election fraud. Their charges make good, juicy copy, but in a court of law, they have nothing. Just ask yourself why the Farrows keep trying their case in the media and the court of public opinion, rather than a court of law?

When HBO lists the participants in the film, I see no one representing Allen's side — no lawyers, advocating journalists, researchers, colleagues, etc. (But thank God they got Carly Simon, who, I'm sure will blow this case wide open.) The filmmakers will gladly tell you that they approached Moses Farrow, (<http://mosesfarrow.blogspot.com/2018/05/a-son-speaks-out-by-moses-farrow.html>) Woody Allen (<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/09/opinion/sunday/woody-allen-speaks-out.html>), and Soon-Yi Previn (<https://www.vulture.com/2018/09/soon-yi-previn-speaks.html>), but "they declined to be interviewed." Of course, they did. Considering the filmmakers' history, why would any of them participate in such an obvious hatchet job or even give them the time of day? Considering my own history, if I announced I was making a documentary, and approached Mia and Ronan and Dylan and the Dishonorable Frank Maco for interviews, what do you think their response would be?

See how it works?

I can even tell you that Woody and Soon-Yi weren't approached until the tail end of December. So after three years of assembling their film, do you think the filmmakers were sincere about wanting to include their point of view, by requesting an interview during the final days of post-production, just prior to delivering their film? Do you think they wanted balance in their film, or do you think they just wanted to be able to say they were asked? I'm guessing they will probably present selective clips of past interviews with Allen and excerpts from his memoir (https://www.amazon.com/Apropos-Nothing-Woody-Allen/dp/1951627342/ref=sr_1_1?crid=27Y0O3CXWHLJK&dchild=1&keywords=apropos+of+nothing+woody+allen&qid=1612767408&s=books&sprefix=apropos%2Caps%2C219&sr=1-1). (which Ronan unsuccessfully tried to cancel (<https://www.mediaite.com/opinion/ronan-farrow-being-allowed-to-kill-woody-allens-book-deal-is-absurd-hypocritical-and-dangerous/>)) to make it look like they are presenting his side, but I'm also guessing someone will then negate this information, without being properly cross-examined. (By the way, I'm pretty certain that if Woody had been approached by a serious investigative filmmaker who was a thorough researcher without an agenda, he would have gladly granted an interview and waived any editorial approval.)

Several people have actually asked me if the filmmakers approached me about doing an interview. Uh, what do *you* think? The last thing they want is to shoot an interview with a veritable fact machine who could dispute every single point they're hoping to score over four hours.

And frankly, shame on HBO. I have a long history with them that includes developing the series "Curb Your Enthusiasm" on which I used to executive produce and serve as the principal director. I'm even directing an episode for the new season right now. I also created two films for their previous documentary regime — one was an Oscar nominee (https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0175844/?ref_=nm_flmg_prd_6) and an Emmy winner. Ironically, they even wanted my 2011 Woody Allen documentary (https://www.amazon.com/Woody-Allen-Documentary/dp/B0064NTZKI/ref=sr_1_3?dchild=1&keywords=woody+allen+documentary&qid=1612749794&s=movies-tv&sr=1-3), which instead wound up at PBS' "American Masters." I'm not suggesting they owe me anything at all, but I will say that last year, I offered up to HBO a new documentary I had just completed and couldn't even get a call returned. Maybe nobody wanted to look me in the eye. And by the way, isn't Ronan on payroll at HBO? I know he was paid a tidy sum for some sort of production deal, (<https://variety.com/2018/tv/news/ronan-farrow-hbo-1202661525/>), but I don't remember anything coming out of it. Is this film his make-good? I genuinely don't know.

In the tens of thousands of words I've written on this case, have I relayed everything I know? Not by a long shot. Aside from the summaries of the official investigations that cleared Allen (<https://radaronline.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/yale-new-haven-hospital-allen.pdf>), in CT and NY, (<https://www.nytimes.com/1993/10/26/nyregion/agency-drops-abuse-inquiry-in-allen-case.html>), the most compelling evidence of his innocence comes from reading the entire transcript of the 1992 custody hearing (Allen vs Farrow, 1993). I assume these filmmakers had access to these same documents, since they actually named their film after the case. I wonder what they'll make of the fact that virtually every witness who testified on Mia's behalf (nannies, tutors, babysitters, friends) all have extremely contradictory recollections concerning the "day in question" – each one's testimony virtually negating the others. What will they make of the fact that according to the general timeline suggested by the witnesses, as well as records from Allen's car phone, it would have been literally impossible for Allen to have had time to commit the alleged act of which he was accused (which was never rape — you know that, right?). Piecing together a timeline from the testimony, Allen likely arrived at Mia's home only about 15-30 minutes before Mia arrived. It's as if Mia's witnesses all agreed on the crime, but forgot to coordinate their stories. Over four hours, maybe the filmmakers will take the time to explain that.

Finally, I ask my Twitter followers to please not expect any postmortems from me following the broadcast, as I don't plan to be watching. I had enough of screaming, "Bullshit!" at the TV during four years of Trump and his lackeys. My blood pressure is excellent, and I'd like to keep it that way. I'd just as soon watch a series extolling the virtues of QAnon. The right filmmakers could make even that movement look reasonable and balanced.

If you see things in the film that raise questions, please don't bring them to me, as I'm busy finishing a Curb episode and my Vonnegut doc (<https://www.facebook.com/KurtVonnegutDocu>) and caring for a sick loved one. But there's someone on Twitter with the handle @Nadie_lo_dijo (https://twitter.com/Nadie_lo_dijo) whose entire page is devoted to debunking disinformation on this subject. That would be a good place to bring your questions. (English is not Nadie's first language, so allow for some clunky translations.) @bloodoftheland (<https://twitter.com/bloodoftheland>) is also a good resource, as is @levine2001 (<https://twitter.com/levine2001>).

If you make it through 4 hours of the HBO doc, and have another 2 1/2 hours to spare, consider watching Rick Worley's "homemade" YouTube video, **"By the Way... Woody Allen Is Innocent."** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=muyaCg2dGAK&feature=youtu.be>). No beautiful drone shots, but plenty of information you likely won't find on HBO.

Before signing off, let me leave you with some of my past writing on this subject. **Here's the piece I wrote for the Daily Beast** (<https://www.thedailybeast.com/the-woody-allen-allegations-not-so-fast>) in 2014 that had such a strong impact on so many readers, they no longer wanted anything to do with me.

Here's my blog piece from 2016 called **"Hard Questions for Ronan Farrow."** (<https://ronanfarrowletter.wordpress.com/2016/05/30/hard-questions-for-ronan-farrow-an-open-letter/>).

Here's another blog piece from 2018 called **"Q&A with Dylan Farrow."** (<https://ronanfarrowletter.wordpress.com/2017/12/13/qa-with-dylan-farrow/>).

Here's a lengthy 2-parter, jam-packed with important info, called **"The Truth About Woody Allen."** (<https://ronanfarrowletter.wordpress.com/2019/04/08/the-truth-about-woody-allen-part-i/>). Read both parts. It will answer a lot of your questions about this case.

And here's a recent collaboration with Rick Worley which proves what a bullshit artist Ronan Farrow is on this matter. Consider **"The Rise and FAiL of Ronan Farrow"** (<https://ronanfarrowletter.wordpress.com/2020/07/20/the-rise-and-fail-of-ronan-farrow/>) to be a "must-read" companion piece to the HBO series.

But if you read only one piece, it should probably be @MosesFarrow's (<https://twitter.com/MosesFarrow>) first-person account, **"A Son Speaks Out."** (<http://mosesfarrow.blogspot.com/2018/05/a-son-speaks-out-by-moses-farrow.html>) (<http://mosesfarrow.blogspot.com/2018/05/a-son-speaks-out-by-moses-farrow.html>) It's Moses' account of growing up in the Farrow household, living with Mia's abuse, and his first-hand recollections of the "day in question."

Thanks for reading/listening and keeping an open mind. And, uh... *enjoy the show?*

Cheers,

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February 8, 2021

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