

#BehindtheSelfie with... Ari Kruger

 By Leigh Andrews

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This week, we go behind the selfie with Ari Kruger of Sketchbook Studios. He's co-creator and director of eight-part debut Showmax Original *Tali's Wedding Diary*, on air from 14 December.



Kruger, behind the scenes...

Tali's Wedding Diary was inspired by his own wedding to wife and star Julia Anastasopoulos, known to the nation as SuzelleDIY, which is now a full-scale brand and business.



#BehindtheSelfie with... Julia Anastasopoulos, AKA SuzelleDIY

Leigh Andrews 23 Aug 2017



Julia and Ari have since started production company Sketchbook Studios, which produces SuzelleDIY alongside an array of new characters and online content. Kruger has also worked extensively as a director for commercials, music videos and online content, with his short films gaining significant attention online and being played in film festivals around the world. Since introducing SuzelleDIY to YouTube, Julia and Ari have created more than 80 Suzelle videos with over 23 million views and Kruger has directed two Vimeo Staff Pick short films, *Focus* and *Jakkals13*.



#SAFilmReel April 2017: Tim Beckerling selects Ari Kruger's hilarious Jakkals 13

4 May 2017



1. Where do you live, work and play?

I live in Oranjezicht and work and play in our studio in Woodstock, Sketchbook Studios.

2. What's your claim to fame?

Being the co-creator of *SuzelleDIY* and having never been defeated in a thumb war.

3. Describe your career so far.

I started out as a 3D animator, working in post-production at The Refinery. I quickly realised that I wanted to get into directing so I started making short films on the side and used Tropfest, the largest short-film festival in Australia, as my annual deadline. After being rejected three times, I finally got in with a short film called Focus. I used that moment to make the move into directing.

I also started the popular YouTube channel *SuzelleDIY*, with my super talented then-girlfriend, now wife, Julia Anastasopoulos. Suzelle has really opened up doors for us and allowed us to work with brands in a liberating way. We also have our own production company, now and we've just made the first original show for Showmax, *Tali's Wedding Diary*.

4. Tell us a few of your favourite things.

I love running on a Saturday morning and having breakfast afterwards with friends or family. I also love a good hike on a Sunday with friends.

5. What do you love about your industry?

It's amazing to be able to earn a living from telling stories and making funny videos.

6. What are a few pain points your industry can improve on?

I think people are still confused as to the difference between content and TV commercials. It isn't just a difference of budget and that the final platform is online and not a TV screen.

It's the *process* that is different – there shouldn't be the usual rigmarole of a commercial with PPMs and lengthy approval processes.

With smaller budgets should come more creative freedom; that's where the content becomes great.

7. Describe your average workday, if such a thing exists.

I try go for a run before work, I'll come home and make Julia a coffee, then we roll down to the studio together.

At the studio, we're either shooting videos, editing videos, or strategising new videos to make. Our team at Sketchbook is like our second family, so it's always great to be there.

8. What are the tools of your trade?

My laptop, our studio space and having a sense of humour.

9. Who is getting it right in your industry?

I would say anyone that is pushing to make their own work outside of commercial work. I really believe that the way to stand out above the rest is through passion projects.

10. What are you working on right now?

We're in the final stages of completing our TV show, *Tali's Wedding Diary*, which is premiering on Showmax on 14 December. It's been great to have worked on a long-form project for the year, something that I could really sink my teeth into.

I'm really excited and a little terrified to be releasing it into the world soon!

11. Tell us some of the buzzwords floating around in your industry the moment, and some of the catchphrases you utter yourself.

Content. Bingeworthy. Adspend.

The phrase I mutter to myself most is to 'keep your blinders on' – it's a pearl of wisdom from Jimmy Iovine, where he refers to how racehorses wear blinders so they keep racing ahead and don't concern themselves by looking at the other horses to the left and right. It's all about keeping focussed on what you're doing.

12. Where and when do you have your best ideas?

My best ideas come to me when I'm in the shower or a passenger in a moving vehicle, train or plane. I don't get to be a passenger enough these days but it's so necessary as a way to turn off and let the mind wander.

13. What's your secret talent/party trick?

My secret talent is playing the jazz piano.

14. Are you a technophobe or a technophile?

Technophile. I'm always investing in new camera gear or lighting rigs for our studio.

15. What would we find if we scrolled through your phone?

Photos of the Molteno Reservoir as I run around there all the time.

16. What advice would you give to newbies hoping to crack into the industry?

Don't wait for anyone to give you the greenlight; just start making your own work as by doing that you'll create your own opportunities.

Simple as that. Visit the [Sketchbook Studios](#) website, as well as [Your Girlfriend](#) for more of Kruger's commercial work. You can also find him on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#), and keep an eye out for Tali's Wedding Diary on Showmax from 14

December.

*Interviewed by [Leigh Andrews](#).

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at [@Leigh_Andrews](#).

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