

**Show Bible:**

# **PUNCH THE SKY**

An Hour-Long Airline Themed Drama...

(...with a comedic flair!)

**Created for Cable Television (or) Online Platforms**

**By**

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**Logline:** *An hour-long airline themed drama series about two flight attendants who work for two competing airlines in which the CEOs and corporate brass go to war for the alpha position of the airline industry.*

## INTRODUCTION

**PUNCH THE SKY** is a workplace drama, infused with a comedic flair, about a host of characters trying to carve out a living in the stressful world of the U.S. Airline Industry that also answers a question that's been on everybody's mind lately: *"what the hell happened to airline travel and why has it become so god-damn awful?"*

By diving deeply into the lives of those who work for two competing airlines, while chronicling the business machinations and deal-making of the top brass – whose decisions not only affect the lives of their workforce, but the passengers who fly on their airplanes – **PUNCH THE SKY** will be the end all be all television series about airline travel in the U.S., both past and present.

The series tells the tale of two flight attendants from two competing airlines, and their bosses who fight to keep each airline afloat amidst the cutthroat competition of modern commercial aviation. We follow the trials and tribulations of our main character, **MICHAEL SALVATORE**: a *newbie* flight attendant, in his mid-20s, for an up-start economy airline called "skyHigh! Airways" who stumbled into the career because, well, he needed a job, the airline was hiring, and couch-surfing and low paying temp gigs in Los Angeles really weren't working out for him.

Michael's *mentor* in this strange new world of commercial aviation is a flight attendant from "Sky High's" main competitor "**Onyx Airline**" named **RENEE FONTAINE**: a seasoned vet in her mid-40s who's been doing the job for 20 years and has had her share of heartaches and headaches all over the world, especially dealing with her union duties and the ever-changing legacy carrier that's already gone through a few bankruptcies.

While we follow the personal dramas of these two working class characters from episode to episode, we also get a glimpse into the inner-workings of the corporate side of the airline *biz* through the twists and turns of their top brass when the CEO and President of Michael's up-start company go head-to-head with the CEO and top brass of Renee's legacy carrier as they battle for territory and the upper-hand to gain the lion's share of profits in an industry that takes no prisoners and shows no mercy.

Herein lies a tale reminiscent of one of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies: "*Julius Caesar*." **PUNCH THE SKY** chronicles the rise and fall of **PETER ELDRIDGE**, the Airline Industry's latest "*It*" boy and start-up genius who, over a five year span, creates an entirely new *brand* like no other, only to be ousted by his right-hand man and airline President **PAUL DAVENPORT** and his Board of Directors after an infamous winter storm event that left passengers stranded for hours on a tarmac at JFK. Thus, the rise and fall of Peter Eldridge is the centerpiece of this drama, as seen through the eyes of Michael Salvatore and his airline colleagues (known as: "**In-Flight Crews**") who are the frontline of Eldridge's army of workers that spend their working hours bringing the flying public, safe and sound, back home again.

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### THE CONCEPT

#### *("Why This Show?")*

**PUNCH THE SKY** is an hour-long television series that chronicles typical working class people in a job that is not so typical. Unlike other service industry jobs that cater to both high and low end clientele (such as working in a restaurant or a hotel), people employed in the airline industry spend their working hours at 35,000 feet and end their day (or night) in hotel rooms across the country far from their home base. Their lifestyle is unique and their circumstances slightly more heightened than those who spend their working hours bound to the ground in one location.

Capitalizing on the public's fascination with the lives of airline employees, and the curiosity most people have about what it's like to do this particular job for a living, **PUNCH THE SKY** answers those burning questions, and more, by giving the public a realistic bird's eye view into the inner-workings of an industry in which the business stakes are high, the lives of the employees are complex and sometimes tragic, and the stress can often take its toll on their relationships and their physical and mental well-being as they try and maintain a lifestyle that keeps them away from home for days on end. Not to mention the underlying danger that can strike at any moment and change their lives, and the lives of those who love them, forever: plane crashes, terror attacks, furloughs and bankruptcies.

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## EPISODE FORMAT

Most episodes will start with Renee's voice-over, or Michael and Renee sending each other an IM, or talking to each other on their cell phones about their latest misadventures. Renee commonly provides airline lingo and explains the sociology and psychology associated with airline life via voice-over narration. Meanwhile, the inner-workings of the airline *biz* will be explored by the ongoing competition between the top brass (and their underlings) that run the competing airlines.

Aside from the multi-character plotlines and story arcs for those that work for the two competing airlines, some episodes will revolve around a passenger (or passengers) storyline. Here the format takes its cue from the popular HBO drama "**Six Feet Under**" wherein the opening consisted of a death that the Fisher family took care of at their funeral home. **PUNCH THE SKY** will sometimes open with a passenger, or a group of passengers, trying to get somewhere and how their lives intersect with Michael and his co-workers, while the continuing drama of each episode plays out through the B, C and D **story structure**.

In terms of the drama happening with the top brass of the two competing airlines, Michael and Renee's characters are similar in nature to Lucius Vorenus and Titus Pullo from the HBO historical period piece "**Rome**" in that we, the audience, follow their triumphs and struggles while the political drama continues among the power elite; and the inevitable toppling of "**Caesar**" unfolds in the boardrooms and through the media, as the saga of "Peter & Paul" and their up-start airline "Sky High" competes with **BOB SCHILL**, the CEO of legacy carrier "Onyx Airline", and other airline top brass that move in and out from year to year, competing for territory.

Though there will be scenes that take place inside an airplane, or in an airport terminal, the majority of the storytelling will transpire in normal every day settings: apartments and homes, boardrooms, hotels, bars, etc., as we follow the lives of average, and not so average, working class folks dealing with the daily grind of living in a time of stagnant wages, fierce competition, confusing relationship dynamics, constant media exposure, and a volatile political climate. Issues involving sex, alcohol and drug abuse and dependency, bad press, sexual identity and gender politics, career crisis, racial tension, political arguments, and threats of litigation are all baked into the cake of a drama about both working class and white collar characters struggling to make ends meet and keep their personal lives on track.

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## CHARACTERS

### ***(All About the Main Character: Michael Salvatore)***

Michael Salvatore's conflicts are more of an internal struggle; a battle with personal demons that stems from being a young man not quite at ease with the world he now inhabits. Michael is a bit of a lone wolf who doesn't fit into any traditional paradigm. He's navigating in a world of rampant casual sex and lonely nights spent in hotel rooms at a time when, for one reason or another, he's having difficulty making meaningful connections with women, or even engaging in meaningless sexual encounters. He's a creative type trapped in a world of traditional working class folks who are mostly living from paycheck to paycheck. So the lack of intellectual or stimulating conversation (a majority of his time spent on the job is with women who devour tabloid or glossy women's magazines and gossip like high school mean girls), as well as being a single straight male in an occupation dominated by women and gay men, begins to wear on his emotional state.

Michael is also convinced that his real life hasn't yet begun; he's unable to commit fully and emotionally to the life in which he's currently engaged, having dreamed his whole life of a career filled with fame and fortune that he shares with the ideal woman. Being part of the "In-Flight Crew" at "Sky High" only intensifies his disconnection and detachment not only from his surroundings but his own inner-journey as well.

Michael's family dynamic is one of an Italian-American from Queens New York. His mother is a devote Roman Catholic, and his family is packed with male cousins (who work mostly in *trucking*) that are prone to violence, racial intolerance and homophobia. Michael lost his father **JOHN SALVATORE** (half Italian, half Jewish) at an early age to cancer. Michael constantly battles to control his temper and has been known to get into a scuff or two when he's had one too many drinks. Michael occasionally receives visitations from those who have died in plane crashes, or from his deceased father, or other phantasmagorical fantasy elements (that add a touch of heightened realism in terms of the **visual style** to the production value of **PUNCH THE SKY**).

Previous to Michael landing the gig, he suffered from turbulence anxiety and a fear of flying. In his pre-airline life, he would white knuckle it every time he stepped onto an airplane and absolutely hated turbulence. Michael overcomes his discomfort with flying over time via exploration into various therapeutic, meditative and spiritual practices. But he still has pangs of anxiety if the turbulence gets *really* bad, which he needs to hide from passengers who look to him for comfort.

The first season arc has Michael grapple with his dependence on marijuana and difficulty dealing with women, both romantically and sexually. Michael tends to meet women with a lot of issues; a common theme among both flight attendants and actresses (the two worlds he inhabits). At one point, Michael makes a bizarre decision, prompted by a “*spiritual moment of clarity*” to remain sexually “*pure*” in order to understand the spiritual and cultural intricacies of the multitude of attractive “Sky High In-Flight Crew” females that share the charismatic Christian religion of their CEO and founder Peter Eldridge.

But, when all is said and done, Michael really just wants to get some action and is continuously presented with a wide-array of sexual seductions; from the bevy of available younger “In-Flight Crew” just barely out of high school, to the sexy MILFs in their 40s and 50s who wish they could return to their high school days, to the seductive and available female passengers he serves. For Michael, there is always a Hilton or a Marriot just a van ride away where he hopes to resolve some of his unresolved sexual tension.

Adding to Michael’s struggles, some of his closest family members have little value for what he has decided to do with his life. His temper still flairs on occasion, and he’s experiencing writer’s block as he flies back and forth between New York and Los Angeles where he encounters successful people working in the Entertainment Industry; the Industry he’d much rather be a part of than that of the life of a “*flight gypsy*”.

Above all, a common theme in Michael’s life working for “Sky High Airways” is that most everyone just automatically assumes he’s gay, including his homophobic cousins. Coming from a traditionally Roman Catholic Italian-American family, this identification is more of a badge of shame and indignation than an opportunity to embrace the more open-minded “*not that there’s anything wrong with that*” approach.

Michael is haunted by tragedy from his past, a fatal car crash that killed the love of his life (**LISA**, who appears often as a ghost), which turns him to therapy and is the cause of much of his anxiety and loneliness he suffers that continues to plague him throughout the course of the series.

Lastly, since Michael is new to this whole airline thing, he finds the lifestyle unbearably lonely and on a few occasions, Michael’s battle with bouts of depression (due in large part to the fatal car crash tragedy) get so out of hand that he contemplates throwing in the towel on life in very dramatic ways.

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***(A Little About Our Narrator: Renee Fontaine)***

Renee’s storylines, on the other hand, are more akin to a lighter feminine **tone** found on HBO’s popular hit “**Sex and the City**” in terms of **theme** and **style**. Since Renee’s life outside of the airline gig is that of a woman whose life long dream has been to break into the world of cabaret performance and Broadway musicals, there will be fantasy song and dance numbers on occasion.

Whereas Michael works for a start-up, low cost, so-called budget airline in economy class, Renee and her close circle of female co-workers often times work the first class cabin on international flights for a legacy carrier that harkens back to a time when “*Stewardess*” was a glamorous, prestigious and enviable occupation for women. These women have long since lost their pedigree status; as their company continues to falter and devolve into a coarse, unfeeling, uncaring bureaucracy, they continuously wonder why they even bother to keep up the charade?

*[\*Note: Renee’s character is based on the real life experiences of Rene Foss, author of the book “Around the World in a Bad Mood: Confessions of a Flight Attendant.” (Both Renee and Michael will be discussed a bit further under the heading: **Recurring Characters and Secondary Storylines**).]*

**THE SAGA OF THE COMPETING AIRLINES**

Although Michael is our main protagonist – and Renee is our narrator and the glue that holds together all the multiple plotlines that will be woven seamlessly throughout this meditation on modern day travel – the primary narrative arc of **PUNCH THE SKY** is the war between the competing airlines. Therefore, the *real* star of the show is the U.S. Airline Industry itself.

However, central to this drama – and often times comedic turn of events – is the charismatic and all over the place leadership style of Peter Eldridge, juxtaposed with the methodical and measured approach of his counterpart Paul Davenport. Although their relationship starts out friendly, they drift further and further apart over time as their managerial styles and approach to the airline business ultimately leads to a contentious betrayal that ousts Eldridge from the very brainchild he created.

### ***(The Peter & Paul Dynamic)***

*[\*Note: Peter Eldridge is based on jetBlue Airways original CEO David Neeleman, a Mormon from Salt Lake City, who suffers from A.D.D and conceived the airline's brilliant marketing schemes; and its original President Dave Barger, a seasoned airline veteran, who many considered to be the one who kept the nuts and bolts of operations in place.]*

Peter & Paul (*yes, the Biblical overtones are intentional*) are the “Sky High” version of jetBlue Airway’s original founders David & Dave (*who both were given their walking papers by the airline’s Board of Directors*). Therefore, Peter Eldridge is a larger-than-life family man, committed to a strict charismatic Christian faith, teeming with ideas and idealism, and whose main goal was to create and run an airline with a kind heart and soul that cares about the well-being of its customers. While Paul Davenport is an openly gay pragmatist with the practical touch and attention to detail whom eventually becomes the *Brutus* to Eldridge’s *Caesar*.

### ***(The Legacy Competition)***

On the other hand, “Onyx Airline” is an example of corporate excess and a reminder of the days when Carl Icahn took over TWA and merged it with American Airlines. There will be recreations of congressional hearings in which the CEOs of the Major airlines took their complaints to D.C. to ask for a government bail out. There will be storylines involving pilots for “Onyx Airline” asking their CEO why he took a pay raise when they are being asked to take a pay cut? All the while, “Sky High” will continue to be a thorn in the side of corporate brass at “Onyx Airline” – and their ruthless, but always entertaining CEO Bob Schill – throughout the life of the series.

### ***(The Dark Horse)***

In season three, a dark horse arrives in the form of an Australian based company when its charismatic CEO, and playboy tycoon, **DONOVAN LIVERMORE III** (*based on Richard Branson of Virgin Atlantic*) launches an American version (of his popular Australian brand: “**EROS AUSTRALIAN**”) called “**EROS AMERICA**” as a direct assault on “Sky High Airways” territory. Because “Eros America” promises the same low costs, but with more luxurious and hipper amenities, Peter & Paul find themselves facing the biggest threat to their survival yet!

Thus we get an insider's view into the inner-workings of a competitive industry where the livelihood's of the employees constantly weighs in the balance. Where rising fuel and high operation costs, weather delays, furloughs, pensions, \*union strikes (*\*"Onyx Airline" is Union; "Sky High Airways" is not*), fatalities, and the aftermath of 9/11 all contribute to the high stakes gamble of running an airline.

Where Peter & Paul more than have their hands full trying to keep their fledgling airline afloat while providing excellent service for their customers and adequately compensating employees like Michaels and his fellow "In-Flight Crew".

Where flight attendants and pilots occasionally drink too much, sleep around too much, sacrifice way too much sleep as they hop from one time zone to the next; living a nomadic, gypsy lifestyle of \*crashpads (*\*apartments full of bunk beds similar to college dorms for commuters accommodating anywhere from five to 20 airline personnel at a time*), reserve schedules, and the occasional weather delay, or worse, emergency landing!

### **EPISODE STRUCTURE**

The majority of episodes will involve:

- Michael's ongoing relationship hassles and various love interests; spiritual quandaries; doubts about continuing on the job; issues with co-workers, supervisors, and family members; growing loneliness and constant exhaustion; run-ins with passengers; visiting friends all across the country on his layovers; occasional surrealistic dreams and visitations from crash victims and dead relatives, etc.; and a story arc in which he's offered to work for a private jetliner that caters to a high profile clientele.
- Renee spilling the beans on the inner-workings of the airline industry and the various terminology and psychosis associated with the life of a *"flight gypsy"*; dealing with the threat of lay-offs and bankruptcy; coping with her failed romances; dividing her time as a flight attendant and a fledgling cabaret performer; getting to experience international travel; and engaging in the occasional fantasy song and dance number that adds a degree of old school musical theater to the proceedings.
- Peter & Paul's ongoing battles to keep the airline competitive and their operations running smoothly while dealing with their own personal lives and career twists and turns.

- Secondary character storylines involving a host of flight attendants, pilots, supervisors and their family life outside of the Industry (*various storylines will disappear and then reemerge as we are introduced to new characters*).
- Passenger plotlines.
- “Onyx Airline’s” ongoing trauma (*mostly handled humorously in Renee’s storyline; and slightly more dramatic in Peter & Paul’s storyline*).
- The encroaching threat of Donovan Livermore III’s airline “Eros America” launching and invading “Sky High’s” turf (*beginning in the third season*).
- Special guest appearances and storylines (*see: **Guest Stars!***).
- Storylines involving how the Airline Industry is portrayed in a larger world context; such as extensive media coverage in the press and online, as explored in:

### THE “RIPPED FROM THE HEADLINES” EPISODES

Special episodes will be devoted to stories based on actual events such as:

- Historic plane crashes · Airline mergers and scandals · Terrorist threats and hijackings · Holiday travel debacles · Pilots arrested for flying while intoxicated · Passengers being arrested and dramatically taken off of aircrafts captured via cell phones · Hurricanes and other weather related travesties and...
- **September 11<sup>th</sup>**: it is impossible to avoid the fact that 9/11 changed the Airline Industry forever. Much of the changes to airport security and the installation of armored cockpit doors, etc., came into effect as a direct result of September 11th. Past cable series, such as “*Rescue Me*” on FX, focused on the aftermath of 9/11 on the psyche of New York City firefighters. But not much homage has been paid on television to flight attendants and pilots who were key players in the events of that day. **PUNCH THE SKY** will honor their memory and pay tribute to their heroics.

### SEX, DRUGS, ALCOHOL... (and Why Music Matters)

**SEX:** flight attendants and pilots are known, for better or worse, as a rather promiscuous bunch. Pilots have often been labeled as misogynistic, egocentric and prone to cheat on their wives. So why not explore these alleged stereotypes to either diffuse these myths or validate them?

“Have you joined the Mile High Club?” is as common a line used when discussing life in the Airline Industry as the titillating title of the book “*Coffee, Tea or Me?*”. The BBC nighttime soap “*Mile High*” focused primarily on the saucy goings on of flight attendants and their dramatic relationships. The U.S. equivalent **PUNCH THE SKY** will delve much deeper into the motivations, loneliness, insecurities and overall restlessness that contributes to the sexual activities of flight attendants and pilots from a much less *soap-opera* perspective and will be grounded in a much more realistic approach to dramatic television in terms of **tone** and **style**.

**DRUGS & ALCOHOL:** because of the lifestyle they live, flight attendants and pilots have been known to hit the bottle. On occasion, they’ve popped one too many prescription pills or have taken one too many bong hits, and even though random drug tests are an Airline Industry standard, some haven’t been successful in kicking their old habit while on the job. The series will take on this tragic subject since alcohol and drug use has ruined the lives and livelihoods of many a pilot and flight attendant.

**MUSIC:** will play an important role in the **format** of each episode. A particular song may also be the title of an episode and underscore the theme of the episode that’s played as a reoccurring signature throughout; a particular piece of music or song may also begin the show or play over the end credits. (*For example, much of Michael’s main conflict is this idea that he’s waiting for his real life to begin. That’s actually a song by former front man for the ‘80s era Australian band “Men at Work”, Colin Hay.*) The music highlighted throughout the series will set the **tone** for each episode.

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### **A WHOLE NEW YORK THING**

What the two airlines share in common is that they are both based in New York. Airline employees come from all over the country and commute from their homes to their base. In this case, their base is New York. Therefore, the New York attitude and lifestyle will be just as much a part of the overall **style** and **tone** of the series.

More specifically, Queens will be a central location. Neighborhoods like Kew Gardens and Astoria have been prime spots for airline crashpads for years. A hidden culture exists in these places where flight attendants and pilots mix it up with firemen, cops, working class types and even Mafioso wannabes at their favorite local bars during happy hour and late night booze fests.

***(A Little Bit About Ethnicity/Casting)***

Another element of the “Sky High” culture is its eclectic and diverse ethnic mix. Being an airline that also serves the Caribbean Islands (specifically Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic) there’s a high percentage of Hispanic and Latin, African-American and black Caribbean, Filipino and Asian, as well as the average white girls from all over the South, or from Upstate New York, etc. In terms of **casting**, there are ample opportunities for a wide range of diversity among the secondary and minor characters, day players, and passengers from episode to episode.

**THE GENERATION GAP** (*“What’s Your Seniority?”*)

For many flight attendants and pilots, “Sky High” is not their first airline; some of them were hired after being furloughed by “Onyx Airline”. Since the company is pretty much a newbie to the Airline Industry, many of them have to start all over again. Within the Airline Industry, one word stands out:

**“Seniority”**: is key to where you fit in among the pecking order. An airline employee’s seniority determines how good of a schedule they get each month and their pay scale. Since “Sky High” is a start-up airline that does not discriminate, a sixty-year-old retired fireman may be working side by side with a twenty-one-year-old recent college graduate.

Michael – along with a few of his fellow young, single, straight male co-worker (known as: **“One Percenters”**) – often discovers that the generation gap actually plays to his advantage; he’s able to befriend older female flight attendants and pick their brains for some classic stories about what it was like to fly in the early-’70s and late-’80s during the real sex and drugs era of the Airline Industry. Michael’s also able to, on occasion, get lucky with a few older women on the prowl!

Meanwhile over at “Onyx”, Renee finds that her seniority doesn’t carry the same weight as it used to since older flight attendants (known as: **“Senior Mommas”**) have grown more territorial and younger flight attendants have become even more of a threat. Plus, Renee’s not getting any younger and this causes her a bit of anxiety in terms of both her acting pursuits and in her love life.

**CINEMATIC STYLE**  
**AUTHENTIC “REAL-LIFE” STORYTELLING &**  
**LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION**

***(This Beautiful Planet We Call Home)***

Amid all the chaos of the daily grind that entails flight delays, maintenance mishaps, turbulence, lines at security, TSA drama, holiday travel, terrorist threats, weather related events and fatal aircraft tragedies... there is the beauty that surrounds us. Adequate time will be spent showing the breathtaking scenery of a sunrise or sunset at 35,000 feet, a full moon that lights up the sky on a clear night, the view from the cockpit during a red-eye when everything is quiet and a bit mystical, the majesty of the Rocky Mountains, the southern California shoreline, the Manhattan skyline, the palm trees of Florida and especially the international cities that Renee gets to explore on occasion. Each episode will give any **director of photography** ample opportunity to capture the visual poetry that can be found when viewing the world from above 30,000 feet, as well as on the ground.

***(Living in the U.S.A: The Passengers)***

“Sky High” is predominantly a domestic airline. Although it serves parts of the Caribbean, its main source of income comes from shuttling commuters between the east and west coast, the northeastern corridor and a huge source of revenue, Florida. Therefore, locations are central to the overall feel of the show and are as essential as any character. In essence, this series is an exploration of modern day life in the U.S., and a meditation on the theme of lives constantly in motion. The transient existence of flight attendants and pilots is also a metaphor for loneliness and isolation in the Technological Era.

But it’s also an examination of the cultural zeitgeist. The United States of America is a country that varies from region to region. There are some noticeable difference between a crowd headed for Seattle and a predominantly retired group returning to West Palm Beach. Flight attendants are acutely aware of these cultural differences. When you say, “*West Palm*” to a flight attendant, it means something very specific; a certain archetype instantly springs to mind.

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Much of the rawness and grit found in **PUNCH THE SKY** will come from its willingness to tackle racial, political and socioeconomic differences among airline passengers; it won't shy away from exploring the underlying tensions caused when groups of people from different races, classes, sexual orientations, economic groups and regions of the country (and the larger world) are trapped in a metallic fuselage hurling through space at 500 miles per hour for long periods of time.

***(Reserves, Crashpads, Commuters, Pub Crawls and Relationships)***

What makes the lives of flight attendants and pilots different than the average working class person is that their job is also a lifestyle choice. Similar to time spent in the military or in college dorms, there is a fraternal/sorority order to things. Every flight Attendant or pilot must spend either a short or extended period of time on “**reserve**”. An “In-Flight Crew” or pilot working for “Sky High” could only be on reserve for two months; at “Onyx” it could be 15 years!

Much of their time away from home, living in a crashpad with several other attendants or pilots, is spent sitting reserve and waiting for the phone to ring. This can be an agonizingly tedious amount of time, or it can be extremely active. Either way, they're never quite sure where they'll be heading from day-to-day.

**Commuters**, like the passengers that fly on “Sky High” and “Onyx Airline”, come from all over the country, and the world, and bring to the workforce their own set of cultural values, religious backgrounds and political persuasions. A portion of the series will examine what it's like when these different groups of people come together to live in close quarters, sit reserve at airports late into the night and meet at their local pub to commiserate over the days events.

Since television series are about characters and their relationships, **PUNCH THE SKY** is chock full of both. Whether it be a storyline focusing on: a mother who has to leave her young children at home while she hops around the country for days at a time and occasionally cheats on her husband; or a gay pilot who is still trying to win the favor of his World War II hero father; or a female flight attendant who shares a crashpad with the pilot she's dating while his wife and kids live in a city hundreds of miles away; or a male flight attendant dating multiple partners at the same time – sometimes from within the same company – and the awkwardness of having two of his lovers (be they male or female) working the same trip with him – guaranteed there is bound to be drama! Through Michael and Renee's storylines, we encounter all of these scenarios, and more.

Each episode brings the audience into contact with a wide array of secondary character storylines and plot twists.

***(Airports, Hotel Living, Airline Rivalries and the Occasional Ménage à Trois:)***

A large percentage of flight attendant and pilot's lives are spent hustling through airports or sleeping in hotel rooms all around the country, and the world. Therefore, the airports, hotels, and the goings on in their rooms behind closed doors will be just as essential to the plots of each episode as the cities they travel to and the passengers they meet along the way.

Since the Airline Industry is somewhat of a community unto itself, there is a shared camaraderie among the employees of competing airlines. Therefore, it's not uncommon for a flight attendant from "Onyx" to live in a crashpad with a pilot from "Sky High". Since many airlines share the same hotels, flight attendants and pilots from competing airlines will often meet together in hotel bars to share a pint and exchange stories. **PUNCH THE SKY** will add an additional twist to the proceeds by throwing in a rivalry or two into the mix; and longstanding beefs that lead to the occasional bar brawl or two.

And, on occasion, a lonely, horny, veteran female "Onyx" *Stew* may share a bottle of wine and a hotel room with two hot young stud *One Percenters* from "Sky High"!

***(Everyone is Gay!)***

Although this is less of an issue for female flight attendants, it's generally assumed that every male working "In-Flight Crew" is gay. This can also extend to supervisors working on the ground, or in the case of Paul Davenport, to top corporate brass. Much like the theater world, the Airline Industry is a virtual hotbed of gay activity and has increasingly embraced gay culture. Gay men dominate in a field once exclusively inhabited by single women. Therefore, almost every episode will include gay themes, gay lifestyle and gay characters; whether they are male or female, passengers or top brass. Storylines will be dedicated to the relationships of gays and lesbians, and how straight characters react to their gay counterparts (both negatively and positively). This includes the occasional pilot who is either still in the closet or openly involved with a partner.

***(The Two Taboos; Religion...)***

Just as essential to the overall tone and style of the series are the cultural differences that exist between flight attendants, pilots and passengers and how much religion plays a factor.

Examples of how religion plays a role in the day-to-day activities at “Sky High”:

- Those Hasidic Jews traveling between New York and Burbank continue to be a mystery to the naïve young Lutheran “Sky High In-Flight Crew” friend of Michael’s from Minnesota; so much so that she tries to befriend one in her Queens neighborhood, where she shares a crashpad with some slightly amoral, somewhat promiscuous, ultra cosmopolitan veterans.
- An older African-American female Born-Again Christian from Orange County California tries to convert Michael, while also trying to sell him on Herbal Life.
- A Muslim passenger thinks Michael and his fellow “Sky High In-Flight Crew” are against him when they ask him if they can put his coat in an overhead bin; at which point he causes such a scene that the flight is delayed and the police come to escort him off the plane, which gets captured by an I-Phone, leading to a media firestorm.
- CEO Peter Eldridge considers his spiritual life essential to the way he runs his airline, while Paul Davenport occasionally grapples with his own lack of religious/spiritual fortitude because of his openly gay lifestyle.
- A prophetic pilot, who splits his time as a preacher at a Baptist church, reads and quotes scripture from his bully pulpit in the flight deck, which leads to a lawsuit.

***(...And Politics, Politics, Politics, Politics!)***

Politics becomes a factor mainly during election time. At “Sky High” and “Onyx”, the majority of pilots are members of the Republican Party; many are ex-military and, on average, predominantly white males from the southern region of the United States. If you walk into the pilot’s lounge at either New York airport, it’s a good chance they’ll be watching the Fox News network.

Meanwhile, the majority of “In-Flight Crew”, made up of a wide array of ethnic backgrounds and a large percentage of gays and females – who are paid significantly less than the good old boys that work in the flight deck – vote Democratic, and many of them never advanced beyond a bachelor’s degree (if they even went to college). The difference between the politics of these two groups causes conflict and tension come election time when certain members of “In-Flight Crews” visit the flight deck at 35,000 feet, or when they decide to engage in romantic relationships.

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### TIME SPENT IN TRAINING AND THE GRADUATION CEREMONY

Michael's initial introduction to the Airline Industry is his time spent at the School of In-Flight in Florida before earning his wings. The first few episodes of the first season will involve his training experience and the relationship he develops with his first romantic interests.

Training presents the perfect opportunity to explain why a flight attendant is not just some waiter in the sky. A great deal of time spent in training for both attendants and pilots is to learn what to do in an emergency situation. Already nervous about flying and doubting whether he's up for the challenge, training becomes an emotional rollercoaster for Michael as he's shown video footage after video footage of plane crashes and emergency procedures. Because of this, his graduation day ceremony is that much more bittersweet; for Michael, it is a symbolic rite of passage and the beginning of a new adventure and entry into a brand new world.

### A LITTLE SONG AND DANCE: THE MUSICAL NUMBERS

It's not uncommon for flight attendants to also be struggling actors and musical theater performers. Working for an airline provides them with flexibility in their schedule. Even though the gig isn't as location friendly as working at a restaurant or bar, there are ample opportunities to fly coast to coast to attend auditions.

Big musical numbers were a production staple once upon a time. There's something about the history of the Airline Industry that rekindles a nostalgic feeling for those old '50s and '60s era romantic comedies involving stewardesses wearing pill box hats, silk scarves and white satin gloves. Since Renee's other life involves performing a cabaret show about her life as a flight attendant, **PUNCH THE SKY** will occasionally throw in some variety to the proceedings by adding a "fantasy" musical number, or just showing Renee performing live on stage in a small cabaret.

*[\*Note: an example would be to have Renee imagine a musical number involving a **\*guest star\***, such as Liza Minelli, who is seated in her first class section.]*

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**THE SECOND SEASON FLASHBACK:**  
***(A Trip to the Past; the Way Things Used To Be)***

*(Provided that **PUNCH THE SKY** gets renewed for a second season)* much of the episodes will harken back to any earlier time in aviation. The second season will explore the life of a stewardess who started working for a fictitious, defunct legacy carrier *(based on TWA back in 1971)*. Each episode will weave a plotline that takes us through all of aviation history, with a season opener that will go all the way back to the days of Wilbur and Orville Wright. It will center on a recurring secondary character, and friend of Michael's from his initial training class; a sexy woman in her late-50s who now works for "Sky High" named **JULIA EVERWOOD**.

While Julia regales Michael with stories about the good old days of sex, drugs and international travel pre-9/11, we'll flashback to her tale beginning in the early '70s and work our way to the present day; stopping for a considerable time in the '80s when corporate raiders, in a hostile take-over, sold off her airline and left her unemployed, until she joined "Onyx" in the mid-'90s.

*[\*Note: Although Julia's story will be central to the arc of the second season, the present day stories that began in the first season will continue into the second. The past and the present will collide as the **format** of the show loosens and we jump back and forth in time and place; exploring the ever evolving nature of the Airline Industry from the perspective of flight attendants and pilots that are most affected by the various missteps made by middle and upper management.]*

***(And Guest Stars!)***

Although this will hardly be a "Love Boat" knock off, there is ample opportunity to invite name recognizable actors and talent to guest star in various episodes. A Star would be a perfect passenger to fly in Renee's first class section to Paris, or sit in the front row on one of Michael's flights to Los Angeles *(playing either a television version of themselves, or a fictitious passenger)*.

Many Stars are actually trained airline pilots, such as John Travolta; so a humorous twist would be to cast such stars as Travolta, or leading men like George Clooney or Tim Robbins, to guest star as pilots playing against type as conservative Republicans and ex-military fly boys for an election themed episode. The same can be said for younger, popular, "quirky" actors from the independent film world, such as Christina Ricci, Adam Goldberg or Parker Posey (to name a few) to guest star as a fellow flight attendants working a trip with Michael for an episode.

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## RECURRING CHARACTERS AND SECONDARY STORYLINES

### *(The “Stews” of “Onyx Airline”)*

Renee is one of three lead characters among the “Stews” (the group central to this series) who will dominate all storylines involving “Onyx Airline”; her two best friends, **CINDY** and **SHEILA**, often join her on her misadventures.

Renee is brassy, perky, optimistic, funny, street smart and flamboyant; she’s not afraid to tell you exactly what is on her mind, and has a sharp tongue and sardonic wit when needed. Renee enjoys her relationship with Michael and sees him as a younger brother type. She’s somewhat baffled by his decisions, especially when it comes to women, so she keeps him at a bit of a distance; not getting too close for fear he may start to like her as more than just a mentor and a friend. What she has in common with Michael is a love for theater and acting.

Renee’s mother was a *stewardess* back in the days when women wore those pillbox hats and satin gloves. She’s originally from the Midwest and remains close ties with her family and is loyal to her friends. Everyone at “Onyx” enjoys working with her because she’s a straight shooter who’s gained the respect of top brass and her fellow employees. Yet she’s weary of the Airline Industry politics, so she tries to avoid getting involved with company squabbles and co-worker drama and constantly has to bite her tongue when passengers act completely insane.

And then there’s her love life. Renee suffers from a common dilemma in that she always seems to attract married men and horny pilots! She shares this problem with her two friends...

**CINDY COLE:** Renee’s best-friend and occasional roommate. Originally from Akron Ohio, Cindy moved to Los Angeles and started working for “Onyx Airline’s” west coast base before transferring to New York where she uses Renee’s couch as a crashpad. She’s younger than Renee, and therefore Renee treats her like her younger sister. She’s been in between apartments in both New York and Los Angeles; she also spends time taking care of her ailing mother in Ohio.

Cindy and Renee are partners-in-crime when it comes to both acting (as Cindy joins Renee in her cabaret act) and flying; they try and stay as close as possible both at home and on the road. Cindy is a tall, beautiful, wholesome blonde with a bit of a ditzy side, yet her earthy realism keeps her grounded; she’s in her early-30s when we first meet her. Her weakness is her overly trusting nature.

Cindy's a nurturer and a good listener and has a habit of falling for men that are either on the rebound or seeking a shoulder to cry on when times get rough. Sometimes this gets her into hot water, especially when Renee gets involved. Renee is often baffled by Cindy's decisions concerning men and what Renee refers to as "*Cindyisms*" (*Cindy's off the cuff witticisms that are strikingly Midwestern and brilliantly comical without Cindy actually attempting to be funny*).

**SHEILA THOMPSON:** rounds out the trio that includes herself Renee and Cindy. She's a little older than the two and has been at Onyx five years longer than Renee. A beautiful African-American woman in her late-40s when we first meet her, Sheila is tough around the edges, but kind at heart. Her take no prisoners approach to life, and deep understanding of the inner workings of the Airline Industry, makes her the perfect representative for the Flight Attendant's Union, which pits her against Onyx Airline's CEO Bob Schill.

Feared and respected by both passengers and colleagues, Sheila is often the one person Renee turns to when times get rough. Sheila is a commuter from Chicago, where she was originally based; she also occasionally stays with Renee when she's in New York. Sheila often contemplates throwing in the towel on the Airline job and doing something else for a living. Sheila is the den mother who often lends a helping hand to younger flight attendants that need some extra guidance navigating through the bureaucratic maze that is "Onyx Airline".

***(The "Sky High Airways" Crew; Michael's World)***

Aside from Michael, **PUNCH THE SKY** is a series dominated mostly by female characters. However, in Michael's world at "Sky High", we'll be introduced to female and male (both straight and gay) "*flight gypsies*", pilots, supervisors, cousins, and friends. With each new "In-Flight Crew" (or "*flight gypsy*") introduced, possibly for more than one episode, they will also disappear (as is often the case in this line of work) for several episodes. Yet a few of them will have storylines that will be followed quite consistently from episode to episode and will be considered recurring secondary characters. Most of the female characters that orbit around Michael are: his sister **LAURA SALVATORE**, his mother **LIZ SALVATORE**, as well as co-workers, aunts, cousins, love interests and bitter enemies.

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## THE BEHIND THE SCENES OPERATORS

### ***("Sky High Airways" Top Brass)***

**PETER ELDRIDGE, CEO:** *(as previously mentioned, Eldridge is modeled after jetBlue Airway's CEO David Neeleman)* originally from a "state out west", Eldridge spent time as a Christian missionary, worked as a travel agent, joined the management team of a low cost carrier, flirted with the idea of starting an airline in America with Australian multibillionaire playboy Donovan Livermore III before pulling Davenport from a legacy carrier and creating "Sky High".

Eldridge is a handsome family man in his mid-50s with a genius IQ. At the beginning of this series, he's the new airline "It" boy among the press and Wall Street. As the series develops, his off the cuff remarks get him into trouble with his detractors, and his "In-Flight" army either reveres him as a champion of the working class or a savvy businessman who panders to his customers to ensure a healthy profit. Talk of his genius is part of the "Sky High" mystique that starts during training and infiltrates the entire corporate culture.

**PAUL DAVENPORT, PRESIDENT:** *(as previously mentioned, Davenport is based on jetBlue Airway's president Dave Barger)* is a tall blue-eyed white guy in his late-50s from the Midwest, and a family entrenched in the airline business, who wears glasses and is usually dressed in casual business attire; blue button down shirts and Khakis.

Davenport, an openly gay professional who lives in Manhattan, started out as a pilot in the '80s flying charter planes. His relationship with Eldridge is a bit of an awkward arrangement because he's a lapsed Catholic who has an on again off again connection with his faith and sometimes marvels at Eldridge's commitment and how it plays into the corporate culture. The two men come from different worlds; Davenport is all about the Airline Industry, whereas Eldridge is a businessman and marketing genius at heart. If Eldridge is the mystique of Sky High, Davenport is the airline guru who knows what works and what doesn't based on years of experience, trial and error. He's a compassionate man and that makes him an empathetic employer. For the most part, the pilots have the most respect for Davenport because he's one of them.

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**(“Onyx Airlines” Top Brass)**

Because “Onyx” faces impending bankruptcy when the series begins, its leadership has changed hands several times over the course of Renee’s 20 years with the company. When the series begins, the reigns of the company have been handed over to:

**BOB SCHILL:** is the current CEO of “Onyx Airline”; a bearded and robust southerner in his mid-60s who wears glasses and speaks with a deep southern drawl. Schill’s a straight shooter with a fierce competitive streak. He’s also a genius when it comes to airline management and corporate politics, and was pulled in by the Board of Directors and Stockholders to save “Onyx Airline” after “Sky High” cut into its territory. Schill single-handedly created “**Triumph Air**”; a low cost carrier owned and operated by “Onyx” to go head to head with “Sky High”. Schill is working through his second divorce and has a take no prisoners approach to pretty much everything in his life, including his relationship with his co-workers, family members, and friends. His major beef when we first meet him is with the unions that he feels are sucking the company dry.

**CAPT. PHIL NORRIS:** is the head pilot at “Onyx Airline” and a friend of Renee’s (they had a romantic thing for a while a few years back). A former Air Force pilot in his early-50s, Phil is a good guy with a strong sense of character, but he’s developed a drinking problem over the last few years. The stress of the job is wearing on him and he’s holding on by a thread. Phil often goes toe to toe with Schill who Phil resents for dipping into the pilot’s pension and asking them to take a pay cut. He’s also the representative for the pilot’s union, which is the main thorn in Schill’s side.

**(“Eros America”)**

**DONOVAN LIVERMORE III:** *(as previously mentioned, Livermore is based on Richard Branson)* is an Australian playboy and billionaire who moved to London in his twenties to start a media empire. He dabbled in aviation in South Africa and Europe before starting a successful international airline based in his hometown of Sydney. At one time, Livermore discussed going into business with Eldridge so the two are friendly competitors. He makes an appearance in the first season; but he doesn’t begin to loom as a threat until the third season. Livermore grows in importance as a character when he creates “Eros America”, with headquarters in San Francisco. However, he is mostly bogged down in legal woes, which causes Peter & Paul to monitor his activities closely (keeping their friends close, and their enemies closer).

***And finally...***

### **NON-AIRLINE RELATED CHARACTERS**

The majority of the non-Airline characters, aside from passengers, will consist of husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters of “Sky High” and “Onyx Airline’s” top brass, flight attendants and pilots. Renee’s family will be connected mostly through telephone calls and occasional visits back home (and will be fleshed out at a later date). However, central to Michael’s storyline is his relationship with his family members that will show up from time to time, especially in the beginning of the series when Michael moves back east to begin his grand adventure working for “Sky High Airways”.

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