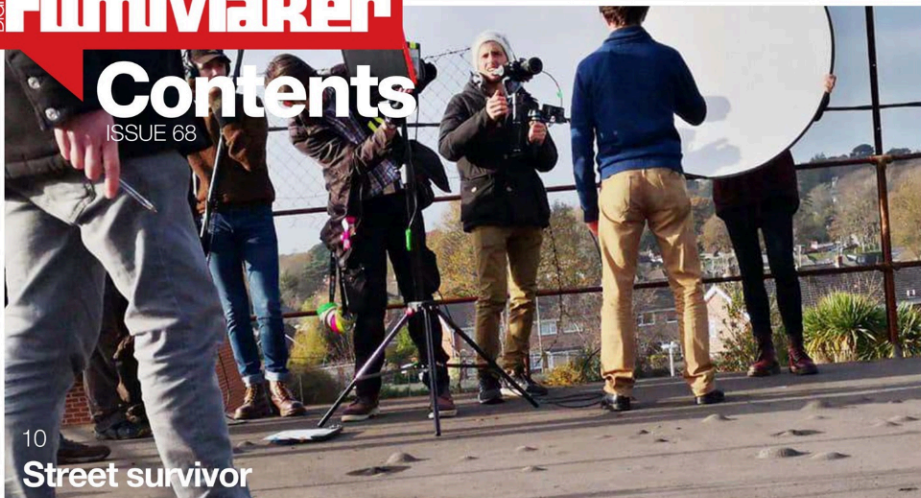


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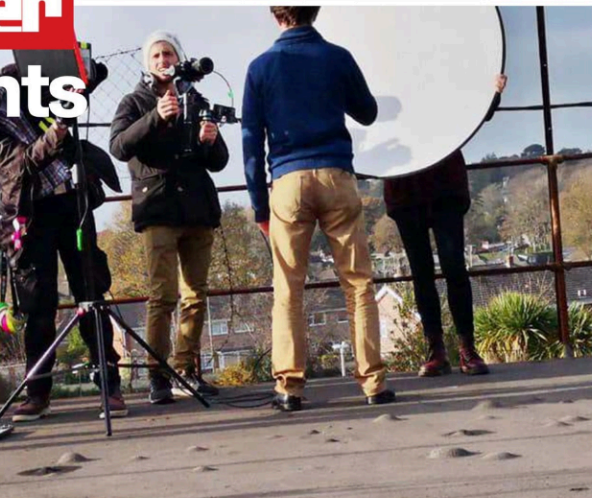
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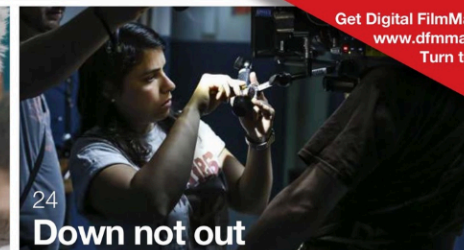
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SUPPORT ACT

Nick Psinakis takes time out from his production schedule to talk about his latest filmmaking project *My Best Friend's Famous*



"We believe strength and originality of story and characters are at the core of any great film," reckons moviemaker Nick Psinakis, "something Hollywood has recently tossed aside for CGI special effects and lousy remakes. We want to support and encourage the underdog because we are the underdog, the real independent filmmaker making

movies completely outside of the Hollywood system. For the last decade we have been able to make high-quality, low-cost productions thanks to advances in technology and a little good old-fashioned hard work. We believe in giving back to the community. By sharing our story, hopefully we can inspire and empower other filmmakers to take the leap and make a film. There really hasn't been a better time to be an independent filmmaker. We shouldn't be in competition with one another, but rather come together to support and encourage each other."

Built strongly

Nick's production company, Four Eighteen Films, has been around for about 8 years. Up until this point, they had independently

produced various projects from idea to completion. "They have spanned all different genres including sketches on FunnyOrDie, Music Videos, Short Films, TV Spec Pilots, Web-series, Sizzle Reels, EPK's," he says. "While we had worked on other people's feature films in varying capacities, My Best Friend's Famous marks our first feature film as a company. These prior projects eventually taught us a workflow that we were able



to apply to a feature film. Kevin Ignatius and I founded Four Eighteen Films. On this particular project we operated with an extremely small crew consisting of ourselves along with a DP and sound guy. For bigger days we would bring in a PA, Swing or just some friends to help out."

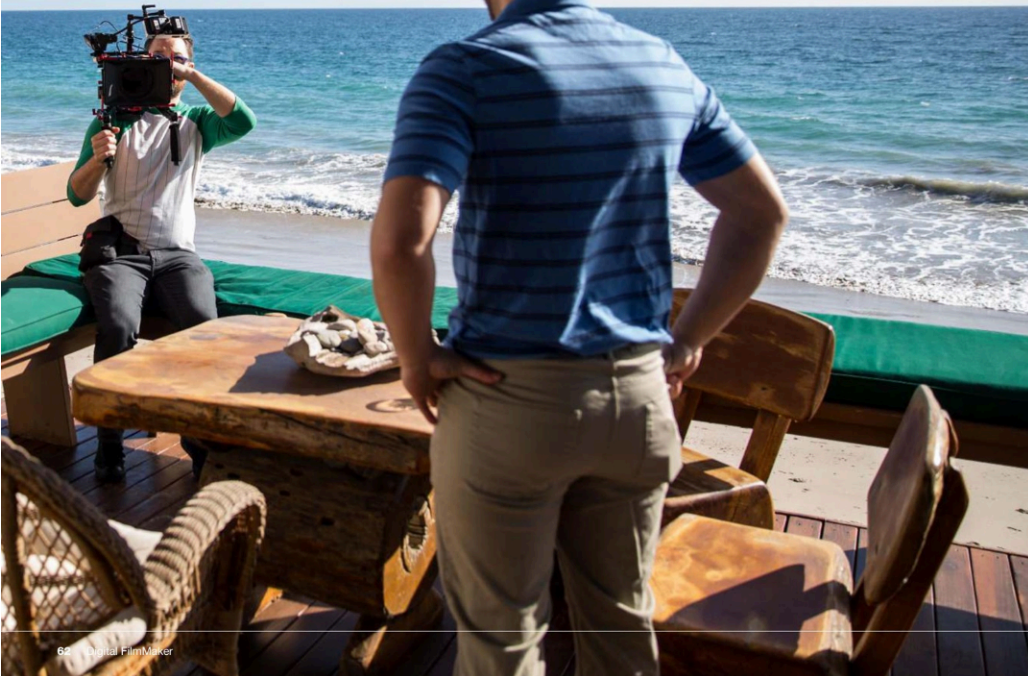
Great outcome

"It all worked out pretty well," adds the filmmaker.

"Kevin and I have known each other for over 10 years and have both studied intensive theatre on both the acting and directing side, so we trust each others opinions very much. My part-time job is as a video editor so that was a big monetary saving right there. I was clearly editing the film. Quinn has shot almost

"These prior projects taught us a workflow that could apply to a feature film"

all of our stuff and is a good friend. Kevin has studied music his whole life and is an amazing musician in his own right. He teamed up with Paul Lupario and the two made all the original



music in my apartment while I edited the film. It was a very similar process to our previous work just on a larger scale. It's also important to note that two of our extremely good friends that also act in the film helped us land Ryan O'Neal (Oscar

put up with it however, mainly because he's terrified of change. Things take a crazy turn when his slothful, less-talented best friend, Freddy James, lands a starring role on a hit TV show.

"My Best Friend's Famous is a dark comedy that follows Sean Reilly"



Sean and Freddy moved to LA together over a decade ago and not much has happened for either of them, until now. As Sean tries to fit into this new world, his own insecurities and jealousy prove to be too much for him to handle when he meets Bradley Mason Weatherman, the egocentric, spray-tanned male star of the show that is threatening his childhood friendship. Yes, he has three names. At the end of the day Sean feels like most of us do, lost in the areas of love, career and relationships when everyone else seems to have it all figured out.

Quirky plot

My Best Friend's Famous is a dark comedy that follows Sean Reilly, an earnest, self-deprecating, thirty-something that's best described as a walking cliché. He's trapped in a dead-end catering job and relationship with a girl that treats him horribly. He continues to

Inspired choice

"Kevin and I wrote it together and while there are some of my own personal experiences mixed in there, I think it came from our shared adjustment moving from the East Coast and



"Myself along with Kevin, Quinn and Paul all worked together to make the film happen," he explains. "We reached out to colleagues, friends and family managing to get all but two locations for free. We re-wrote locations and situations to fit resources that we had available to us. Our good friends at Pegalo Pictures came on and helped out as well. The production itself was a little unorthodox. We started with our main character's scenes (all those where he appeared

living in Los Angeles," says Nick. "We initially wrote it as a larger big budget broad comedy that we were trying to sell to a studio. When we finally decided to make our own feature, we looked at all the scripts that we had written over the years. My BFF was one of the only ones that could be adjusted for a micro budget and proved to be our best option. We were able to re-write it for locations and resources that we already had here in LA. We really wanted to tap into the feeling of that regardless of talent, effort or good intentions sometimes you just can't seem to catch a break. To make matters worse, the person who seemingly floats through life without a care in the world, somehow gets everything to fall into their lap. We think that's super relatable."

Familiar path

Nick and his colleagues produced the film under their Four Eighteen Films banner and approached it similar to their previous short films.

characters, set pieces and so on as we moved forward. This saved money, but ultimately took much longer and is why production stretched out over eight months."

Keeping cheap

Budget, unexpectedly, was thin on the ground too. "We owned our own camera and sound gear, so that was obviously a big saving but we planned it that way," furthers the filmmaker. "We spread the shooting schedule out over the course of 8-10 months, which wasn't ideal but it allowed

"Post-production was all done in my apartment in LA with the exception of post-sound"

alone), pulled all of them out of the script, planned them, then shot them. We then added one additional character, a girlfriend for instance, pulled all those scenes, planned them and shot them. We continued to build up to the scenes with more



us to re-group, save up some money and shoot the next chunk of the film. Post-production was all done in my apartment in LA with the exception of our post-sound mix, which we outsourced. Everything else from editing, colour correction and original music was all done by us. We shot with a Sony A7 RII with one Schneider Xenon 35mm lens. Besides the fact that we

already owned this equipment there was some method to the madness. We were shooting a indie comedy, so we knew most of the shots would be loose and handheld so we didn't necessarily need a lot of lens variation."

Cost effective

"This also saved us on time during production," adds Nick,



"never having to change lenses. The Sony A7 has a Super 35 mode that we used as well. This gave us essentially something comparable to a 50mm to compliment the 35mm. The Sony A7 also has interior 4K recording. With a 128GB card you can pretty much shoot all day without dumping footage; another time save. Also, we were delivering the film in 2K. For the time being almost all deliverables are 2K not 4K, so this allowed us to punch in on shots in post to cover any mistakes we may

of incurred from such a micro-budget shoot with minimal crew and time. We never relied on it and still got all our shots on our shot list, but it proved to be super helpful in post especially in instances where locations required us to have hard outs with limited shoot time. Other than that we had a Came-TV cage, follow focus and shoulder rig with matte box. Plus a Small HD onboard monitor with HDMI out to a small directors monitor. As far as sound goes we had a Zoom F8 mixer with a Rode



Support act



NTG4+ Shotgun Mic and a couple of Sennheiser G3 lavs. And that's it."

Long haul

Considering that limited budget Nick sounds suitably please with the end result. "I guess only time will tell, but it was definitely the most challenging project we have taken on up until this point," he notes. "Kevin and I started mostly in comedy with sketches and pitched quite a bit of comedy TV projects. We got burnt out a bit and did two sci-fi shorts, so I guess it came back full circle. I can say that we are very proud of the film and what we were able to accomplish with almost no money. We hope people get the opportunity to see it and it moves them in some way. We finally finished post-production this week! Picture is locked, colour correction and

sound mix are done. We've been actively submitting it to film festivals as a work-in-progress, but to be honest I don't have much faith in these festivals anymore. It seems like a money grab."

Rich pickings

"I'll never quite understand how a Hollywood movie with a \$10-million budget, big stars,

"I can say that we are very proud of the film and what we were able to accomplish"

a studio attached and a Netflix release following the festival is now called an indie film," adds Nick. "I mean what's the point? I thought these festivals were

created to find undiscovered talent. It's a bit disheartening considering how great the early days of film festivals were for finding new voices, but with technology changing so fast I'm excited for what's ahead for indie filmmakers and I believe it's going to be geared toward self-distribution. We are currently researching and learning about all options we have to get the film out to the masses. The important thing is that there are options, maybe more than ever before. The tricky thing is figuring out how to turn a profit."

Positive feel

The filmmaker says they have had very positive talks with various kinds of distributors and thankfully people have really responded well to the film. "We're at a place where we want to make the best possible

decision for our film and not rush into anything," furthers Nick. "I think that's the hardest part. It's natural to want to take any offer that's out there, but we're trying to learn from our past mistakes and be more selective. Who really cares about this film and wants it to get out into the world? That's what we need to find. Depending on which distributor we go with, we will eventually have that whole marketing conversation, assuming we do go with a traditional distributor. Some filmmakers are having tons of success self-distributing their films and using Facebook ads to promote it all over the world. So that's definitely an option as well. I think the first step is to recognize similar films that have had success and research what was able to work for them. That gives you a starting point and it's



need more time and money."

Early influence

"I grew up with all great 80's comedies," adds Nick on the point of what got him started. "Everything from John Hughes films to National Lampoon. Caddyshack, Ghostbusters, Ferris Bueller's Day Off, Coming To America, Revenge Of The Nerds... there are too many to name, but I think that's where movies started for me or my interest in them. There's just something about laughter, especially when you share that with a theatre full of strangers... it's different, it's exciting and it was an escape for me. It's a shame people aren't seeing as many comedies in theatres anymore. I hope that changes. While comedy was always of major interest and love of mine lately I've been into darker sci-fi

"Right now we are in the very early stages of developing our next feature film"

and horror films. We made two shorts in that genre prior to this feature, so I feel comfortable with it. I'm pretty certain that Four Eighteen Films will be making a horror/thriller next. I also just like to mix it up in general. You put so much time and effort into these things, you need a break. After two years of trying to figure out what's funny and why? Seeing the cut day after day you're like 'okay let's change it up'. And vice versa, after blood, guts, murder and heavy drama I'm sure you are craving something lighter. I think it's a very logical, natural thing to jump around genres, but of course the Hollywood powers-that-be don't like that. They want to put you in a box, like 'you're the comedy guy' or 'you're the horror guy'. Don't let them do it! David Gordon Green is really great about doing both and so is Steven Soderbergh." ■

not as intimidating."

Other ventures

Meanwhile, Nick is keeping himself occupied working on other projects along the way. "I was lucky enough to be an Associate Producer on another feature film titled International Falls," he says. "Starring Rachael Harris and Rob Huebel and directed by Amber McGinnis that

is currently doing very well on the film festival circuit. It recently won the Grand Jury Prize at the Seattle International Film Festival. I'm also acting opposite Angela Sarafyan from HBO's Westworld in my dear friend Mick Thyer's new narrative podcast. I'm hoping it will come out on iTunes next year. As for Four Eighteen Films, we are in the very early stages of developing our next

feature film, which will most likely be a sci-fi horror/thriller set in a small town in the Northeast. Every project has its own challenges. Many of us wear a lot of different hats, so depending in what capacity I'm working on any given project, that really dictates those specific obstacles. But, I will say generally speaking that it almost always comes down to time and money. Meaning, we

