

Bryan Root writer/director/editor

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Biography

I was born in 1964 in Berkeley California a few months before my family moved East. Apart from one year in Columbia, South America and six months in Carmel Valley, California, I spent my whole childhood in rural New York State and graduated from Ithaca High School in 1982. I studied painting and film at Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia (which had no formal film program) and graduated in 1986 with a BFA in graphic art and design.

After art school I worked a variety of art and film jobs in Philadelphia, New York, St. Louis, and South and Central America. Between 1986 and 1991 I wrote, directed, produced and edited "The Benefactor" (cinematography by Will Dailyrest), made "Wishing Well" on an optical printer I built myself, and was invited to attend the American Film Institute's directors program in 1991. I made three short films there, won the Ashley Amulis Scholarship for directing those shorts and was one of the eight directors invited to return to AFI for the masters program in 1992. I was ridin' high!

That summer, while working on my thesis script, I came down with shingles (chicken pox of the central nervous system) and – under the painful influence of that disease – I wrote a disturbing sci-fi action script, "Man In Space," loosely based on "Huckleberry Finn," the Old Testament, and "The Origin of Species." The AFI selection committee roundly rejected it. The director of the program, Deszu Magyar, called it a "piece of shit," and advised me to "throw it away."

When I came back to AFI in the fall of that year, I directed "Laura Sobers," a film written and produced by Wayne Reynolds. The film was a sharp stylistic deviation from my own scripts and inspired a shift in my own writing – toward realism and gritty character-driven stories.

Since film school I've finished three feature screenplays, "Pareznfiction," "The Return of the Housepainter" and "Dirty Habit." Despite my professor's advise, I developed "Man In Space" into, "Spacerex.com," an apocalyptic rock-opera about a deluded musician who believes that robots from a future white-collar crime syndicate, intent on ending the world, are out to get him. And he may be right. That project, still unfinished, lost steam after 9/11. Now NPR's "Morning Edition" makes the hyperbolic paranoia of my main character seem tame, and what used to be clearly insane left-wing lunacy in my story has all come true. Therefore I am not inclined to make light of multinational conspiracies anymore.

My wife, Anna, became a producer in 2003 by refinancing our home and putting me up to making a feature. Even with the kid's college fund, we had very little money, so I quit smoking pot, shelved "Spacerex" – which had become an un-producible morass of ideas – and wrote a minimalist psychodrama set almost entirely on an elevator. The result, "Dirty Habit," (Winner – Best Drama Feature, Atlanta Underground Film Festival) was written in 2003, shot (mostly in my garage) in 2004 and finished (in my garage) in 2006 – all while I was working full-time as a set dresser on the ABC sitcom "The George Lopez Show." (for which my department won an Emmy in 2004).

I have just moved, with my wife and kids, to Trumansburg, a small town in Central New York near my hometown of Ithaca, where I can be close to my family and Mother Earth while maintaining a small basement apartment in LA where I can return periodically to work.