

## **What was your inspiration for creating the film?**

I wanted to direct a feature and I was tired of being dependent on other people to say yes. I had seen a number of tweets from Edward Burns about these \$8000 feature films he was making. Paying actors the minimal amount, shooting on a 5D with limited crew and just doing it. I looked around me and I realized I had everything I needed to make a feature: access to talent, equipment, crew, locations, and more. So, I asked myself, why I wasn't doing it.

LAYOVER, the story of a girl stuck in a city for 12 hours, was an idea floating around in my head, I thought it was something that could be made for literally nothing, and so I put pen to paper and started developing it out to direct for no-budget.

From a creative perspective, I was really attracted to the nature of being lost in a big, unfamiliar city. I spent a lot of time traveling in college, often alone, and there was something incredibly lonely about it and incredibly freeing and I thought about trying to capture that in my adopted city of Los Angeles, with a character who was not from this country.

## **What was the hardest part of making something low budget? What was the easiest?**

The hardest part of making something low-budget is simply not having enough money to fairly pay your cast and crew what they're worth. I'm not afraid to ask but I hate asking people to work for nothing or almost nothing. And the cast and crew of LAYOVER did just that. In the end, they were all passionate about it and really loved the project, which made it infinitely easier, but I still hate not being able to compensate people for their time.

The easiest part about making something low-budget is that I don't answer to anyone. I'm able to develop, shoot and edit exactly what I want without interference. Now, that can be a double-edged sword as sometimes a little restraint and editing are called for. However, what it really allows me to do is work in a collaborative environment where I have the final cut. Thus, the only people you're getting notes from or working with are those who are equally invested in and equally in love with the film.

## **How did you develop the filmmaking strategy you used?**

Largely, it's born out of not having much money. I've never been able to throw money at a problem and the audience doesn't care what your budget was. So, I've developed a filmmaking aesthetic and approach that works for me on low-budget projects, allows me to shoot a ton of coverage without going overboard and gives it a style that feels unique to me and how I see the world.

I also really prefer to operate and I operated on 99% of LAYOVER. So, what you're getting is my very particular and very specific POV on this film. That is, I

very much wanted this to feel real, like we were following them around and I was very influenced by French New Wave cinema of just going and doing it. Capturing what you can and making it work. I like the spontaneity you get from working like that.

### **What do you hope to achieve with this film?**

In it's simplest terms, I wanted to make my first feature and not have it be terrible. In a little bit grander way, I wanted to prove that you could make a feature for as little budget as he had and NOT have it be two characters in one room. I wanted to aspire to the French New Wave directors and get out there and just do it, no matter what.

### **Why did you choose to submit your film to the Seattle International Film Festival?**

I was born and raised in Seattle. Travis, my producer, was as well. In fact, we met each other in elementary school. As such, SIFF felt like the perfect venue to World Premiere our film. The timing worked out for it to be the first festival we submitted to and we feel very fortunate that the programming team saw something in our little film to include it in this year's program. We could be more excited to be showing our debut feature film at our hometown film festival.

### **The independent film business is a difficult one. What keeps you motivated?**

Mainly, what keeps me motivated in the independent film business is that thanks to advances in equipment and technology, I can think of it less as a business and more as a passion. I can take my Canon 6D and Final Cut Pro editing software and go out and make a movie. And I can make it so cheaply that whether it makes money or not has no bearing on my ability to create. And working at the budget levels I am, I have completely freedom to make the movie I want to make. I answer to no one else. That doesn't mean I'm not collaborative and looks to others for opinions but I'm not in a position where I have to acquiesce to anyone else's creative input. So, mostly, I get to treat it like art and a passion instead of a business. For now, at least.

### **What didn't you get done when you were making your film?**

Layover was such a great process in that we shot on weekends. So, it never really impacted very much, although I certainly saw less of my wife and both her and I would have liked and with some shooting days taking place on Sunday night, I was definitely late or calling in sick a couple Mondays.

### **If you weren't a filmmaker, what kind of work do you think you'd be doing?**

Good question. *Something* in the industry. I just don't think there's any other job for me in which I would be happy. Even if I had an executive job in Hollywood, I

would probably be just as unhappy as I would be anywhere. I realized early on that this is what I wanted to do and what, I felt, I was born to do. I've never considered anything else.

Though, for a brief moment, I did want to be a fighter pilot.

### **What do you think most inspires the filmmaker process?**

I think it's different for every filmmaker. For me, it's "is this a great story?" When I lock in to a great story, or a different story or an interesting story, I get really excited and really inspired. And it's really easy for me to tell when I'm really interested in something and when I'm not.

### **What advice do you have for aspiring filmmakers?**

Start making things. You're going to fail. A lot. I have countless short films I never finished. You only learn by doing. The barrier for entry these days is so low that you're better off buying a Canon 5D, getting Final Cut and start shooting.

But the flipside to that is to not think that what you're currently making is very good. Don't get lost in your own genius. That can be incredibly damaging. The truth is, in the beginning, you're just not very good. It's no different than any other skill.

Layover came about because I was tired of waiting around for other people to give me money. I wasn't interested in playing that game. And over the years I had built up enough credibility, skill and connections to finally say, okay, time to make a feature. But rather than waiting for others to tell me when I could make it (via money, casting or whatever) I just went and did it. And I'm going to do another and another and another.

### **Which filmmakers have most influenced your work?**

One of the great things about having access to digital cameras and editing equipment back when I was first learning (more than 10 years ago at Bellevue High School) was you could experiment. I made a ton of films that were in the style of others I had seen (*The Usual Suspects*, *American Beauty*, *Star Wars*, *Magnolia/Boogie Nights*) and I got to figure out what worked best for me.

The filmmakers that have most influenced me have been those who have managed to make films on their terms in their own way: Michael Mann, Steven Soderbergh, John Cassavettes, Christopher Nolan, Paul Thomas Anderson. I can put any of their movies on all day long and be happy.

### **What sparks your creativity?**

A great story that I feel I can tell in my own way.