

Interview: Director Eric Bednarowicz on the Premiere of ‘Carpe Millennium’

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CHICAGO – Eric Bednarowicz is a young Chicago filmmaker who has a long resume of production experience. “Carpe Millennium” is his short comedic film making its world premiere at the Charleston, South Carolina, International Film Festival on April 10th.

The short comedy has a universal theme – the overriding desire to lose one’s sexual innocence. The twist is that the young male virgin in the film is trying to do this before the turn of the millennium on New Years Eve, 1999. To complete the mission, he decides to up the seduction ante by expanding a few movie production credits to include friendship with a known action film star. This seems to be working out well, until the film star decides to show up at the party.



Seize the Day: Scene from Eric Bednarowicz’s New Film ‘Carpe Millennium’
Photo Credit: © 2010 Carpe Millennium

Carpe Millennium stars Steven Yeun (of Second City’s touring company), Max Lesser (TV’s “According to Jim”), “CollaborAction” company member Angela Sprinkle, international model Colleen McGovern, Amanda Tanguay (of Radio City’s “Christmas Spectacular”), and Joel Wasserman (star of Kenny Chesney’s CMT Video of the Year “Don’t Blink”). Voice-over is by veteran stage actor Will Casey.

In anticipation of Carpe Millennium’s world premiere, HollywoodChicago.com interviewed Eric Bednarowicz, the producer, writer and director of the short comedy. He reflected on the film, the festival scene and his general experiences in the world of movie production.

HollywoodChicago.com: Was there any event or incident that inspired you to write ‘Carpe Millennium?’

Eric Bednarowicz: Not one particular incident, but several elements that were character traits in myself and others. It is a work of fiction, but it

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is a personal story in the context of the plot about trying to have control over a situation, but having no control in some circumstances. It's about a loss of virginity, yet at the end of the day it really overcoming the fear of the unknown. There were two diverse elements – raising the stakes sexually in losing your virginity and the adrenalin rush of the turn of the millennium – to slam together in creating a nightmare comedic scenario.

HC: How were your casting choices essential in making sure you got the right comic feel for Carpe Millennium?

EB: It was a difficult process. Eventually getting the right cast was a testament to Kim Williams at David O'Connor Casting here in Chicago. They gave me maybe four actors I couldn't use, and 35 that were perfect. I had to go through and figure out what I would see from each actor, and to match them with the part at callback. That drew out the process quite a bit, but it made me sure that I got the actors I wanted and very humble that I got the right ones. We got all of our first choices, except for the character of Sean Blackstone. Our first choice was Kevin Spacey.

HC: How close were you to getting Spacey?

EB: I actually called his manager up and tried to get him into Chicago for half a day of filming. They kept asking me to call back, so I assumed that they read the script. Ultimately, he couldn't fit it into his schedule.

HC: This is your second directorial effort. How are you changing or evolving as a director as you get more experience?

EB: My first short film was "Emergency," and when I look at the two back to back I was able to make Carpe Millennium more to my satisfaction in regard to the performances, which is really more of what the director should be doing. With the first film there were so many other factors I was privy to, we were doing night shoots, streets had to be blocked off, etc. All the things that distracted me from complete satisfaction. But after wrapping that first film, I did think I experienced everything I needed to learn.

HC: What do you think in the most important part of the process in putting together a successful short film – for example pre-production, rehearsal, shooting – and why?

EB: I would say writing. It is the blueprint and foundation of the film. If you spend a lot of money, time and effort, and your script is not up to par, it will make the other process parts not worth it. From there story boarding was important, I made sure that every part was mapped out. There is never too much preparation.

HC: Do you allow for improvisation on set or do you find it easier to stick to script?

EB: I do allow for improvisation, I allow for at least one take for that, and if there is any point where I'm biting my lip to keep from laughing, then that's a good sign. The character of Jake in the film, for example, has a part where he had to keep hitting his head against something. The scripted reaction wasn't working, so he said, why don't I just say 'f**k.' [laughs] That just seemed natural.

HC: As a younger filmmaker that grew up in the VCR/DVD era, what do you find interesting about the evolution of both feature films and the type of short films that you've done and been involved in?

EB: I think the new media has opened a lot of doors for me. For one think, we didn't shoot on film, so if I was making this 20 years ago I couldn't have afforded to make it. We did DVDs to send out for this one, but I'm anticipating that future films will be sent to festivals ready to upload, with a pass code. Most people who see new, starting out films today will have seen them online. That is a global audience, as opposed to the physical media of exhibition and audience that shows up.



Eric Bednarowicz at the Sundance Film Festival
Photo credit: © 2010 Carpe Millennium

HC: You are in the process of landing several film festivals. Besides finding an audience, what are you or the production hoping to get out of the festival showings?

EB: For me as a director, I want to know what the audience likes about the film, what the 'red meat' and 'bread and butter' of it is, both in terms of bringing it to the audience and finding the audience. It is a process for me to learn who thinks like me and who finds what I find funny. Also I want to start a momentum to get financing for a feature version of the film.

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HC: You've been involved with a variety of film sets and media. What assignment did you find the most unusual and what impressed you most about being part of a big set like the 'Dark Knight' shoot?

EB: One thing I learned from large scale productions is how to delegate. From my first film to Carpe Millennium I increased the number of crew members, with the idea that I would have a machine that functions, so that I wouldn't have to worry about smaller details, and concentrate on looking at monitors to see what my audience would eventually see.

As far as unusual assignments, I worked on a film where my job was to sort garbage, the plastic from the aluminum from the banana peels, because it was a very green set. [laughs]

HC: Where do you see the Chicago filmmaking scene in five years? Do you think it's still possible for the town to get some major permanent production action?

EB: I do think so. For right now, it's at a point of limited production, not permanent. The State of Illinois has to get the tax incentives to 'above the line' costs, meaning the actual physical financial output for actors and directors. Which is a major cost for big budget features.

Lower budget features come here, because everybody is making money on the back end, if the film gets picked up. On mid-level productions, 10-12 million, money goes more into creative talent, which has no tax incentive. So those type of production companies don't have an incentive to work here.

On the plus side, Chicago has a lot of crew members in the city, who can handle multiple productions and they coordinate with each other. It's a tight knit community is a well-oiled machine. Everyone knows the standard here, there is no learning curve.

HC: What inspired you to get into filmmaking?

EB: I wanted to get into filmmaking, and directing in particular, because of the control over the creativity. I originally thought I wanted to be an actor, but then I realized you really only have control over what you do, your individual performance. So the transition went to an interest in directing. I want to craft every beat and moment to a form that feels human to me. Film is the medium for that.

"Carpe Millennium" premieres April 10th at the Charleston International Film Festival. Featuring Steven Yuen, Max Lesser, Angela Sprinkle, Colleen McGovern, Amanda Tanquay and Joel Wasserman, directed by Eric Bednarowicz [For more festival showings and film information, click here.](#) [17]



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