

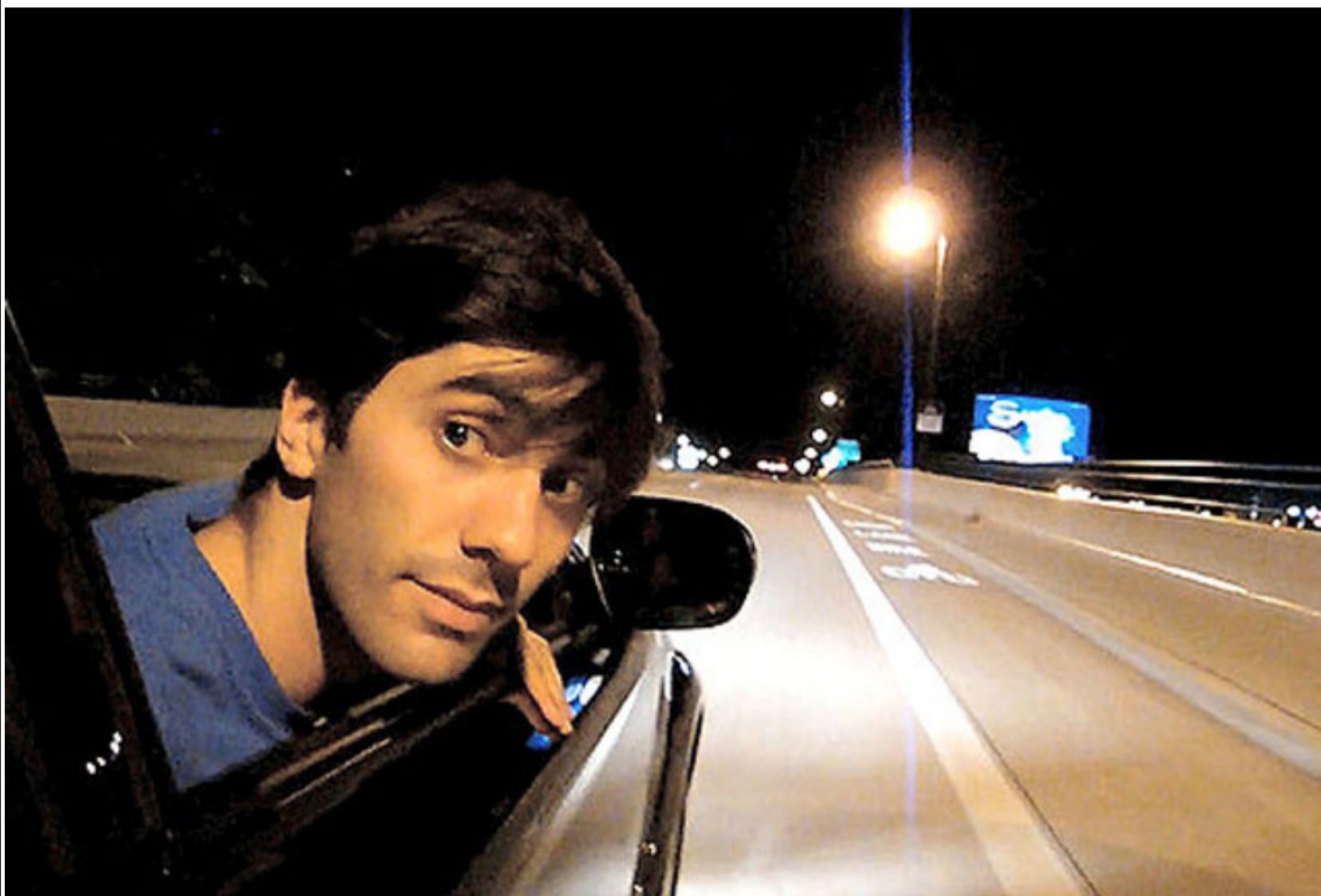
## Interviews: Nev Schulman, Ariel Schulman, Henry Joost of 'Catfish'

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on September 24, 2010 - 12:27am

- [Ariel Schulman](#) [2]
- [Catfish](#) [3]
- [Henry Joost](#) [4]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [5]
- [Interview](#) [6]
- [Michigan](#) [7]
- [Nev Schulman](#) [8]
- [New York City](#) [9]
- [Patrick McDonald](#) [10]
- [Social Media](#) [11]
- [The Virginity Hit](#) [12]

CHICAGO – One of the most provocative new films of 2010 is the strange and beautiful “Catfish.” As a testament to the current age of on-camera exploration, the true story focuses on New York photographer Nev Schulman, as he receives a package in the mail, which begins a journey that takes him to a relationship he thought he’d never have. Brother Ariel Schulman and Henry Joost are the “directors.”

The term directors is in quote marks because Schulman and Joost simply shot Nev with video cameras virtually everyday as his incident unfolded. What began as a hunch that something might come of the contents of the mailed package, ends up with a road trip towards a destination unknown. What is remarkable is that the old adage ‘truth is stranger than fiction’ becomes a spotlight at the end of a long dark tunnel.



On the Road: Nev Schulman in 'Catfish'  
Photo Credit: © Universal Pictures

Also remarkable is the fact that the video team continues to chronicle their lives. In the interview conducted in Chicago on September 20th, the boys taped me while I recorded them, Nixon be proud. What transpired, while Ariel ironed his shirt, was a poignant discussion on the nature of real events culminating to create Catfish.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** The first and obvious question is what spurred you to turn on the cameras in the first place regarding the film? Who’s decision was it and what was the most intriguing element of the circumstance that said, let the camera roll?

**Ariel Schulman:** We sort of had this pact between the three of us that we are compulsive videographers and Nev is a compulsive still photographer. So we made this deal a while back that he would photograph our lives if we videotaped his. He’s a willing subject and a muse, and the camera is always on. So he got this first painting from a superfan and that was very interesting, more interesting than most of the stuff we filmed.

**HC:** When all was said and done, when you got back from Michigan after all the revelations had been made, did you know you had enough for

a feature-length documentary or did it occur to you later?

**Ariel:** We had enough for a feature-length documentary in Vail, Colorado, when the story really twisted and broke. It was clear that something was at the bottom of it, and we had no idea what. But we realized no matter what we discovered, it would be interesting because it would be the truth.

**Henry Joost:** We actually thought we needed supplemental footage, so our first instinct was to shoot talking head interviews with all the people involved. We ended up throwing those out in the edit because we didn't realize we had enough footage to tell the story as it happened.

**HC:** Nev, very few people like a camera stuck in their face at all times, and your annoyance came out several times. With the technology available to most anyone to do this sort of thing, what advice would you give about being a subject like this in an intense camera-in-your-face environment?

**Nev Schulman:** I wouldn't recommend having the most emotional and heartbreaking experience of your life captured on video. But I do think there is an opportunity with the ever-present record light in our lives to go outside the comfort zone and do something that you might not always do. You have to be careful because of the permanence, even in digital video technology.

**HC:** The base premise of this film deals a lot with Facebook and our online society. What did you all learn about the voyeurism of Facebook going through this journey, and are you ready for the next phase of connection once your film becomes known?

**Henry:** One of the things we learned in retrospect is that anybody on Facebook is manipulating the way they appear to the world. Because of the way it works if you choose one photo over another, you are curating how you want the world to see you. So in a sense it's something we're all doing, too, and there is a spectrum to how we're doing it, which you see in the movie.

Now it's strange because after we have screenings, particularly for Nev, people come out of the movie feeling like they know him, so they send him a friend request. So now he's dealing with hundreds of friend requests.

**HC:** Nev, a lot of the film deals with your personal rules of attraction and psychological/sexual intuition. Again, having been in this journey, what did you learn about yourself in the context of your own gravitational pull for finding a mate?

**Nev:** That was probably one of the biggest discoveries in the process of watching early cuts of the film and really going back to inspect a romance that I'd had, because you don't normally do because it's painful. I learned a lot, the basis of which was that I was distracting myself from my life in New York City, and in a way choosing an easier route towards love, which was to do it in a way that felt best. Having someone who is so into you and flattering you, at times telling you things that might be too good to be true, but building myself up and participating in the fantasy as much as anything else.

I learned that certainly when it comes to romance, it takes a lot of hard work and it's not generally something that comes easily. When you do the hard work, and spend time with someone, that's when you grow emotionally and connect.

**HC:** What I found ironic in your production is that a simultaneous but fictional rendering of the current online scene, *The Virginity Hit*, comes out at the same time. What is awesome of course is their film is fictional, with set up shots and retakes. Yours was not. Were you pleased with the coverage that you all were able to maintain, or was there a shot you felt you missed that distressed you once you were going over the footage?

**Henry:** I think we did a pretty good job. Ariel and I both started out as editors, so we had a sense about what coverage we needed.

**Ariel:** We have learned some lessons over the years, which are download as often as possible in case you lose your camera. All the things we learned came together on *Catfish* so we could capture things. Like we'd been warming up our whole lives for this.

**Henry:** Also there is a great lesson, one of Albert Maysles [documentary maker] tricks. If you feel the impulse to cut the camera, just wait 5-10 seconds, that is when something is going to start up again.



Ironing Out the Details: Ariel Schulman, Nev Schulman and Henry Joost of 'Catfish' in Chicago, September 20th, 2010  
Photo credit: Patrick McDonald for HollywoodChicago.com

**HC:** There is a lot of rumors about this film, that it isn't real. What is your answer to that?

**Ariel:** We're not that smart. [laughs] Not clever enough to have written it.

**HC:** We have the ability to be our own press agents through Facebook and other voyeur glimpsing text and online circumstances. Obviously your film shows the danger of this. Are there any advantages in your view or are we frittering away our precious lives on social networking?

**Nev:** Facebook is a great tool, it's still a good way to share photos, reconnect with old friends and gather people together. But everyone needs to think about the amount of time they're spending on it and think about the paradox that even though you're 'connecting' with all these people just being online and being on a computer means you are by yourself. Ultimately, face-to-face eye contact is much better.

**Henry:** There seems to be a disconnect between the way we communicate online and the way we communicate in person. The more we Tweet, the more we're on Facebook, the more we feel what we do and say can be edited and we can control it. In a way it prepares us less for actual interaction because you don't know what is going to happen when you're out on the streets with friends. It's making us shyer.

**HC:** You are all adventurous people with lots of traveling behind you, and this film is about people who necessarily don't get that opportunity. If we don't get that opportunity in life, what has this journey taught you about how to live life in an everyday, stuck-in your-own realm situation?

**Nev:** I think it's a beautiful example of the power of expression. The movie ends up being about an artist who has a voice and seeks an audience. And does it in a very contemporary way. For me, it also dispelled what I thought about the landlocked states in this country and the people who live here. I was incredibly impressed with the talent and passion of the people there, artistry and creativity exists there as much as anyplace else.

**HC:** How did your all previous backgrounds in film, mostly dance and photography, give you a basis for the delicate angles and coverage you had in 'Catfish,' and what was your proudest moment in the film having to do with pure camera shot coverage?

**Ariel:** We spent a lot of times interviewing people in all walks of life for short documentaries. I'm very proud of the way we handled the sensitive human interactions in Catfish, in terms of our personalities and how we capture it on film.

**HC:** The origin of the title for the film came from an unlikely source. What makes the average person a philosopher and do you think every experienced soul has a perspective enough to share that type of wisdom?

**Henry:** Yes. [laughs] In this case, there is a sense of spirituality that really lends itself well to this story. Having a different perspective than our own turned out in fact being the inspiration for the title of the film.

**HC:** How strange is it going out on a press tour to talk about an incident in your life that actually happened?

**Ariel:** I ask Nev that all the time, because he's out there showing his face and answering questions about a movie that is just about him. It isn't fiction, it isn't a character, these are mistakes he made, the decisions he makes, people he has met and the story he lived. People identify with him, so you meet a lot of people with which you can share this story.

**Nev:** My activities for the last six months is to basically relive my life from two years ago. It's very strange, but at the same time you hear about actors who do the same thing, talking about a film they did years ago, and it doesn't mean anything. In this case, it was an intensely personal, exciting and crazy experience, so I don't get bored talking about it.

*"Catfish" continues a limited release in Chicago on September 24th, check local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Nev Schulman, Ariel Schulman and Henry Joost, directed by Henry Joost and Ariel Schulman. Rated "PG-13"*



[13]

By [PATRICK McDONALD](#) [14]  
Senior Staff Writer  
HollywoodChicago.com  
[pat@hollywoodchicago.com](mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com) [13]

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