

## Interview: Jay Chandrasekhar, Kevin Heffernan of 'The Babymakers'

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CHICAGO – The comedy troupe Broken Lizard conquered the film world with their first feature, “Super Troopers” in 2001. Over the next decade, they followed up with the popular “Club Dread” (2004) and “Beerfest” (2008). Broken Lizard performers Kevin Heffernan and Jay Chandrasekhar (who also directs) go domestic in the new film “The Babymakers.”

This latest release features Heffernan and Chandrasekhar in supporting roles, with Paul Schneider and Olivia Munn playing a couple trying to breed, but finding too many obstacles along the way. The solution? Break into a sperm bank where Schneider's character made some deposits, and withdraw his specimen to save the day. Part heist film, part upper middle class fantasy, the Broken Lizard members add their own quirky sensibility to the mix of this high concept comedy.



Kevin Heffernan as Wade and Paul Schneider as Tommy in 'The Babymakers'  
Photo credit: Millennium Entertainment

Broken Lizard began in 1990 at Colgate University in New York state. Besides Chandrasekhar and Heffernan, it consisted of Steve Lemme, Paul Soter and Erik Stolhanske. After graduation, they performed in New York City clubs and on college campuses, but gradually the act shifted from the live act to movies. They got some film festival attention with their first feature, “Puddle Cruiser” (1996), and premiered “Super Troopers” at Sundance. Jay Chandrasekhar also directs many notable TV shows, and Kevin Heffernan has directed films (“Slammin’ Salmon”) and has done outside roles in TV.

HollywoodChicago.com spoke to Chandrasekhar and Heffernan last week during their promotional tour for “The Babymakers.”

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Jay, when did you first come across the screenplay for ‘The Babymakers,’ and what about the subject matter and comedy in the script got you involved to direct it?

**Jay Chandrasekhar:** This film came to me from Kevin. He acted in a film called ‘Strange Wilderness’ that Peter Gaulke and Gerry Swallow wrote. He gave ‘The Babymakers’ to Kevin, because we were working with Warner Brothers at the time. We showed it to Warners and they

loved it. The appeal was that ‘R’-rated movies in the past have been exclusively marketed to younger teenage boys. We decided to make a film that both men and women would want to see, a date night film, but still make it dirty and bawdy enough for guys who have loved our films, with a relationship in the center that would be appealing to women.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Kevin, the character of Wade – the best friend who is slightly off – is a film and TV tradition. Did you base the character on any type of neighbor character you’ve seen before or did you develop him through the script?

**Kevin Heffernan:** I’ve done variations of that guy in the past, like ‘Super Troopers’ and ‘Beerfest.’ [laughs] It was fun, because the relationship in the center of it was more grounded, which allowed our characters to be crazier, more of the comic relief kind of guys.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** You were working with two lead actors that are outside of the Broken Lizard ‘gang.’ How did you warm them up to the type of comedy and atmosphere of how you work?

**Chandrasekhar:** Olivia Munn was in Kevin’s film, ‘The Slammin’ Salmon’, and in that she was funny, quick and wrote her own jokes, and she is a huge ‘Super Troopers’ fan. She gets our rhythm explicitly. With Paul Schneider, there was a bit more of a sniffing process. He wanted to figure out if we were going to make a film that he could act in, and be grounded in. He was game to go where the funny was, but as an actor he wanted the relationship to be real.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Kevin, which role do you feel more comfortable in – as performer, writer or director – and why?

**Heffernan:** It’s like one of those things when you’re doing one, you want to be doing the other. [laughs] Like when it’s winter, you wish it were summer. I will do a certain job for awhile, like writing, and then I want to go back to acting. It’s exciting to change hats, otherwise I would get bored.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Which film company or production house do you guys primarily pitch to?

**Heffernan:** There are certain places that wouldn’t make the type of comedies we do, we have the ability to both pitch studios and find guys who will put up independent money.

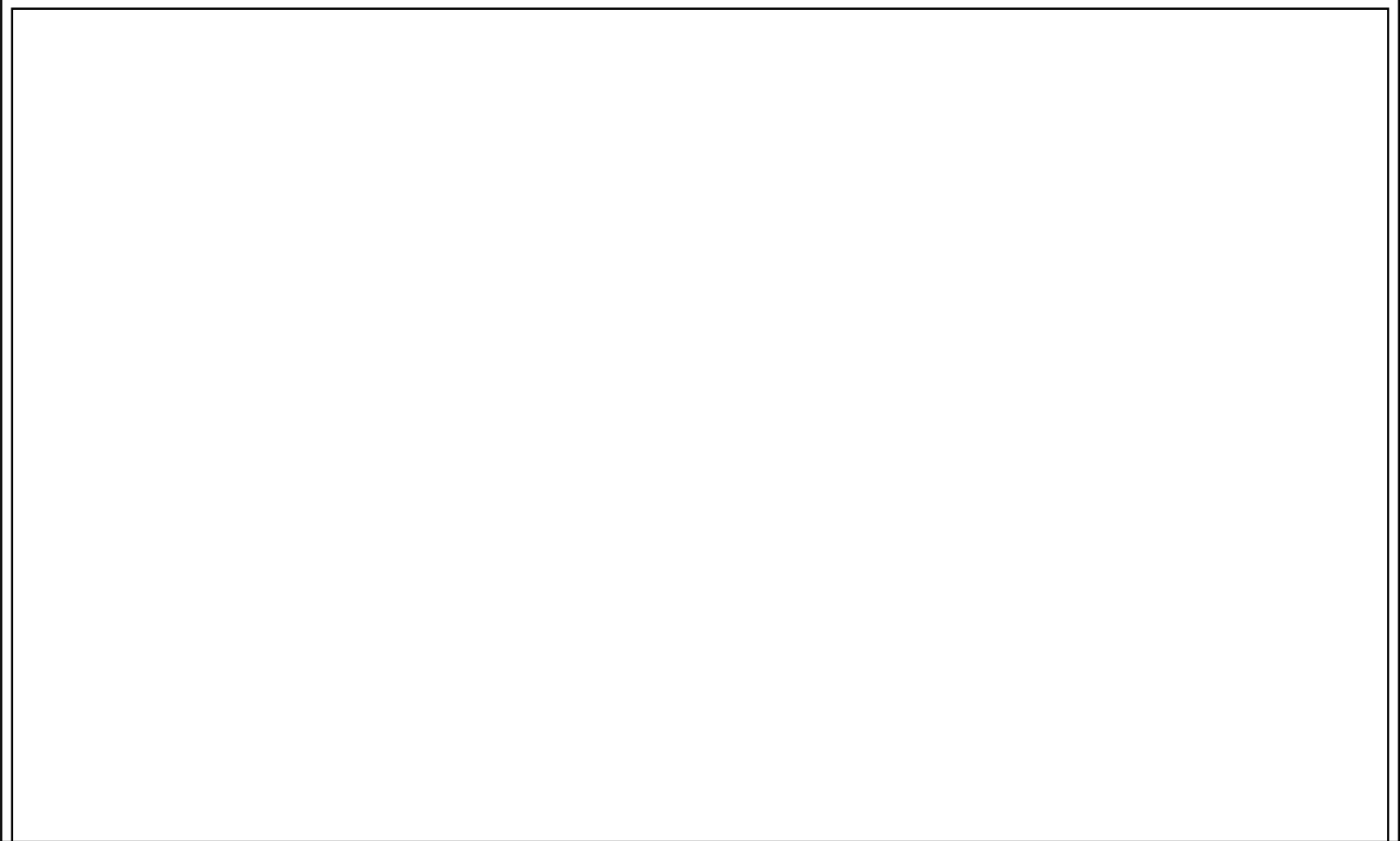
**Chandrasekhar:** We’re friends with the guys who are running the major studios now, they do get upset if we don’t tell them about our latest film, even though they would never buy it, because they might buy it.

**Heffernan:** The problem is a Warner Bros. or Universal will shy away from a movie called ‘Potfest,’ because of levels in corporate responsibility.

**Chandrasekhar:** We just have to be nimble and we also do have private sources of money. If you make a film – and if it’s good, and the studios see it – those studios will figure out a way to bring you back in. There is star power and international sales that they have to take into consideration.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Jay, this is your first domestic comedy, essentially about the American Dream of kids and the suburbs. Since you’ve been working in the movie and TV industry for the past 15 years, what intrigues you about the suburban life and how did you want that intrigue to come across in the film?

**Chandrasekhar:** I grew up in the suburbs, in Hinsdale, Illinois, in the 1970s. That is the way that children are raised in the suburbs, but in the 1970s I think there was a little more martini drinking and key parties. [laughs] That colored my view of the suburbs. There is an immense amount of funny stuff around getting married and having kids. If you think about domestic comedies in Hollywood, it’s soft and sweet and romantic, I liked the idea of approaching that topic and hitting it harder.







Jay Chandrasekhar Directs and Portrays Ron Jon for ‘The Babymakers’  
Photo credit: Millennium Entertainment

**HollywoodChicago.com:** The films that the Broken Lizards do seem to build an audience through DVD and cable viewings rather than the first initial viewings. What is it about your comedy that takes time for the audience to catch up to it?

**Heffernan:** People say we have a stoner audience, and we can’t get them off the couch. [laughs] It even happens at our live shows. Most comedy clubs rely on ticket pre-sales to plan there night. They always call us and say they hadn’t sold many tickets to our show. And then they get a huge walk-up crowd, because our fans just react differently.

We’ve met a lot of fans who liked us in college. They would like to sit around together in a room, drinking beer, and watch the movie. I don’t know if that is how things are changing, but that’s our audience.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Jay, you grew up in Chicago, but in the film you play an Indian thief. Who in your life inspires the ‘Indian’ character that you played in The Babymakers, and which part of the character is most like the inspiration?

**Chandrasekhar:** I got the accent from my uncle. He was a great guy who would occasionally fly off the handle, and would try to discipline us like he’d been disciplined in India, and that was often hilarious.

I was intrigued by the idea of Indians in America film and television, who often are just computer guys, doctors and cab drivers. They are never in fights, and they are never criminals. So I was developing a criminal who had a complex about the notion of Gandhi, and how people think all Indians are peaceful. If someone were to get into a fight with an Indian, they think they’d win. I’m here to change that. [laughs]

**HollywoodChicago.com:** What was the first breakthrough for Broken Lizard, that live show or film moment when everything changed and jumpstarted all your careers?

**Chandrasekhar:** It was that first screening of Super Troopers at the Egyptian Theater, Park City, at Sundance.

**Heffernan:** We finished the film at the lab in New York on the 15th of January in 2001. Nobody had seen it, except for Sundance and a few friends. I remember watching the first few scenes at the lab and thinking it wasn’t funny. Jay and I went back and forth on that. Two days later, when it premiered, it was like an explosion. The ovation was tremendous. I got very emotional.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** How did ‘Super Troopers’ come about from your live act and previous films?

**Heffernan:** We started with short films, with a student film that Jay directed. We then put together ‘Puddle Cruiser’ for about \$250,000. That was the ticket. We started winning festivals and getting agent interest. It didn’t sell, but it opened the doors to ‘Super Troopers,’ and we were able to capitalize on it.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Kevin, you come from a family of lawyers and politicians. When you got into comedy, how did you tap into that side to develop your comic persona?



Kevin Heffernan, Jay Chandrasekhar in Chicago, July 27th, 2012  
Photo credit: Patrick McDonald for HollywoodChicago.com

**Heffernan:** There is an element of politician in all comedy. My grandfather was the mayor where I grew up, and he was a very gregarious guy, a glad hander and a one liner guy. That's probably the roots of what I do.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Jay, You've directed many notable television shows. What is the key to working with the different and eccentric producers in that business, to deliver what they want?

**Chandrasekhar:** You are there to give them a great version of their show, which fits in with all the other ones. You can't change the style, you have to anticipate their rhythm, but ultimately I do my director's cut. I give it to them, with many trap doors to get out of whatever my cut has that isn't in the style. I try to give them the tools to keep making their show. I do the shows I like, so I fit well within what they want, and they hire you back.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Finally, in a fight between the Judd Apatow gang and Broken Lizard, what fighting techniques would be used and who would come out the winner?

**Heffernan:** It would be some sort of improv fight, maybe a game of 'freeze tag?' [laughs] I don't know who would win, but they certainly could drown us with their money. [laughs]

*"The Babymakers" opens everywhere August 3rd. Featuring Olivia Munn, Paul Schneider, Kevin Heffernan, Nat Faxon, Aisha Tyler and Jay Chandrasekhar. Screenplay by Paul Gaulke and Gerry Swallow. Directed by Jay Chandrasekhar. Rated "R"*



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