

## Interview: Larry Ziegelman on Chicago Web Series 'Geek Lounge,' Screening on Apr. 19, 2017

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on April 17, 2017 - 8:34pm

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CHICAGO – The idea was to combine the TV series nerd culture of “Silicon Valley” with the back-and-forth bar banter of “Cheers,” and creator/director Larry Ziegelman came up with a natural composite entitled “Geek Lounge.” The web series will have a sneak preview screening and party at the Holiday Club in Chicago, 7pm on April 19th, 2017 (details below).

Larry Ziegelman is a veteran short film director who began that pursuit in 2007 with “Check Please.” In 2013, he broke through with a film festival favorite, “Little Man of Steel,” a riff on Superman and Lois Lane’s relationship. His twin brother Terry also works in the industry, and has collaborated with Larry on the shorts “Boom Boom” and “9 to 5 Feet Under.” Ziegelman describes “Geek Lounge” – his first web TV series – as a show that follows the lives of a group of friends as they sit around, sipping watered-down beers, and arguing over important issues like who is hotter, Catwoman or Dark Phoenix, and who would win in a fight between The Hulk and Superman.



Director/Creator Larry Ziegelman (upper right) with the Cast and Crew of 'Geek Lounge'

*Photo credit: Larry Ziegelman*

HollywoodChicago.com talked to Larry Ziegelman, in anticipation of the Sneak Preview screening, and talked about “Geek Lounge” and his film career.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** What was the origin of this idea? What is it about bar culture today that inspired you?



**Larry Ziegelman:** It came from my producer's boyfriend. There was a place in Chicago they used to go to, since closed, called Geek Bar. That sparked the idea, even though I don't go to bars these days, [laughs] but I loved that there could be a Geek Lounge with geek-type arguments. Imagine it's like a Quentin Tarantino film, but the whole thing is the pop culture and geek references. That was an interesting place to me, to put situations into.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Web series are all the rage right now. As a filmmaker, what makes the timing right for you, as far as evolving what you're doing as a media creator?

**Ziegelman:** I've made several short films, and I had a great time doing that, but I really wanted to do something episodic. This seemed like the best way to expand my craft and grow as a filmmaker. This format was a natural way to learn how to do a series, without doing a full television production. I liked the idea of keeping it simple with one location, but developing characters stories and comedy. It was a safe place in which to move forward.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** The web series format use structure that rarely goes beyond seven minutes. What is the challenge of doing a self contained short form, and keeping it consistent within the theme of the series?

**Ziegelman:** Just like any kind of storytelling, it has to have a beginning, middle and end. Now some web series don't do that, it's more of a series of sketches. Originally that's how I thought 'Geek Lounge' would be, a series of sketches. But then as the characters developed, it became a mash-up of the characters and those sketches, and so it ended being character driven as they were created. The important thing to me was to have characters that people would be interested in, and to tell their stories.



'Little Man of Steel,' Directed by Larry Ziegelman

*Photo credit: Larry Ziegelman*

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Let's talk a bit about your directing technique, since you came from doing short films. What changed in your style to create these short web series clips, as opposed to the other form of filmmaking?

**Ziegelman:** Well, the first challenge was I shot four episodes in one day. [laughs] My Director of Photography was asking for the usual coverage, and I just said, 'I can't, I have to move on.' I wanted to see how much I could do in a day, and I shot it with two cameras, which really helped.

I would have loved to have more time, but by the end of the shoot it came out like this – first day four episodes, next shooting day three episodes, the next day two episodes and by the end we had enough complexity to take an entire day for one episode. That's just how it worked out. I thought everything got more interesting.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** You did a long run on the festival circuit with your short film 'Little Man of Steel.' What did you learn through submitting and then attending film festivals, and what was your personal favorite moment during that run?

**Ziegelman:** The first thing I learned is that film festivals are an addiction, akin to playing a slot machine. Another thing was learning to let go. In the midst of these screenings I finally thought, 'the baby has been born.' It is what it is and it was done. At that point, I stopped watching the film and started watching the audiences. And one of the advantages was that my short was a comedy, and it played sometimes in a program with serious short films, heavy stuff. It gave the audience permission to laugh, and I think they appreciated that moment.

It was also very gratifying to get an award from Dragon Con. I started submitting to the top tier festivals, and worked my way to the niche

festivals, the comic cons and such. The audience for those festivals are the geeks and the fans. To win Best Fan Film, there was an appreciation directly from the people who love the genre. That was a great experience.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** You are a twin, and your brother Terry is also in the film business. In your collaborations with him on the short films ‘Boom Boom’ and ‘9 to 5 Feet Under’ did you find that you were of one mind, and how did that spill over from your childhood?



Larry Ziegelman of ‘Geek Lounge’  
Photo credit: Larry Ziegelman

**Ziegelman:** Terry and I are of like minds for sure. We collaborate well, because we’re on the same wavelength, but in some respects it can be a negative. At some point, I needed someone to compliment what we were doing, not duplicate it. [laughs] When we wrote and shot ‘Boom Boom,’ for example, we did divide and conquer. Because I had more experience, and he hadn’t been behind a camera at that point, I took the main action and he handled a lot of the background direction. But our collaboration works best when we co-write, because as I said we’re on the same wavelength.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** This is your sixth project as director, what do you think was your biggest leap as a filmmaker – from which project to which project – and what made that leap particularly notable?

**Ziegelman:** ‘Geek Lounge’ is the biggest leap, because it’s the biggest project as well. It was about creating characters, and having those characters last through ten episodes. I also loved working and collaborating with improvisational actors. I came up with the episode concepts, and would lay them out for the performers, then we would work shop the material. They ended up adding a ton of jokes.

Chicago has amazing improvisation talent, and in many ways it’s underutilized. I wanted to work with them, they’re right here, and it was a great resource. They wanted to make great episodes, so we worked together towards that goal. I gave them writing credits when they contributed in these workshops, and then would use that as the script on shoot day... but even then I encouraged them to stray if they came up something funnier.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** What are your plans for ‘Geek Lounge’ and how ideally do you want it to evolve it?

**Ziegelman:** I am realist, and have been doing this for a number of years without being ‘discovered.’ [laughs] I want to get the series online, get some eyes on it, and hope that the audience likes it, and get a following. If that happens, at the same time I’ll be entering it into film and TV festivals. My actors are moving on, and in some cases moving away. We raised the initial funds through a Kickstarter campaign, and I contributed my own funding, so I would need more backing. So basically it’s a calling card for me and my actors. It will show what I can do with a series, and help to discover the next level of Chicago talent.

*The Sneak Preview Screening Party for “Geek Lounge” will take place on Wednesday, April 19th, 2017 (starting at 7pm), at Holiday Club Chicago, 4000 North Sheridan Road. For more information, [click here](#). [18]*



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