

Interview: Larry Ziegelman's Chicago Web Series 'Geek Lounge,' Screening April 17, 2018

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CHICAGO – Getting to the next step of any new creative project is the goal, and creator/director Larry Ziegelman has done it. One year after premiering his new web series, “Geek Lounge,” he has completed an entire season, and is ready for the festivals. The idea behind Geek Lounge was to combine the nerd culture of “Silicon Valley” with the back-and-forth bar banter of “Cheers.” He will screen the entire series on Tuesday, April 17th, 2018, at the Den Theatre in Chicago, FREE and open to the public. [Click here](#) [22] for details and ticket information.

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.” Here is how Ziegelman describes “Geek Lounge,” his first web TV series... “Imagine a place for those who have passions for anything and everything geeky, whether it’s sci-fi, super heroes, gaming, mythology or technology, this is their safe haven. A place where geeks can go to drink, to laugh, to debate, to flirt, or just to be themselves.”



'Geek Lounge' Screens in Chicago on April 17th, and at the 12th Manhattan Film Festival on April 23rd, 2018

Photo credit: Larry Ziegelman

HollywoodChicago.com talked to Larry Ziegelman last year about "Geek Lounge," and here is that interview again in anticipation of its Tuesday screening in Chicago, and its U.S. premiere at the 12th Manhattan Film Festival on Monday, April 23rd, 2018.

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 a 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.

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?



Larry Ziegelman of 'Geek Lounge'
Photo credit: Larry Ziegelman

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 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?

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 with the collaboration of improvisation actors. I came up with the episode concepts, and would lay them out for the performers, then we would workshop 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 with something funnier. So basically 'Geek Lounge' is a calling card for me and my actors. It will show what I can do with a TV web series, and create discovery for the next level of Chicago talent.

For information on the official U.S. premiere of "Geek Lounge" at the 12th Manhattan Film Festival, 9pm on Monday, April 23rd, 2018, [click here](#). [23]



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