

Bobby Chase



Using Film & Humor to Make a Difference

COVER STORY

By Jenna Caputo

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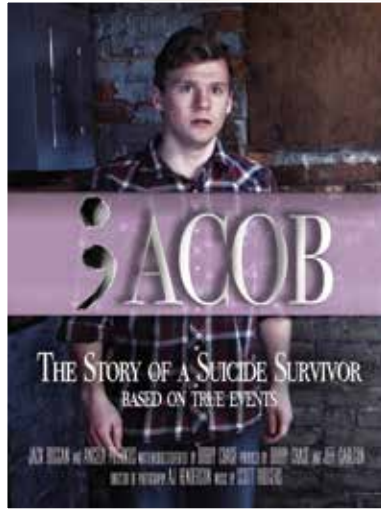
Film can be a medium for so many things. It can make us laugh and forget about the real world for a while, but it can also force us to face the uncomfortable; to feel emotions maybe we're not quite prepared for. It serves as a source of therapy. It can teach us about things we've never thought of before and help us to learn something new and to experience our world from our very own couches. It inspires us to make changes in our own lives or to do good in the world. It allows us to understand humanity and to comprehend ourselves.

Bobby Chase is a local filmmaker that has been using this medium to entertain and inspire for years, and now he's also using it to support a cause that is very near to his heart.

Originally from Mechanicville, Bobby enjoyed playing football, basketball, Nintendo and watching movies with friends. He would spend time with his family while everyone told jokes and stories to one another. He was fascinated with comedy and would often watch the great standup comedians of the time with his father and brother, even from a young age. "I liked to hear them laugh even though I didn't get some of the jokes at the time," he says. Those experiences always stayed with him. "I love to laugh and I love to create, so I think I am in the right business," he adds.

But it took him a little time to figure out exactly what that business was. He went to college at SUNY Plattsburgh originally intending to study audio production through their communications program. He thought he would go into sound design for film/television or that he would be a music producer. He found himself in a television writing class, where he wrote a spec script for the TV show, *Seinfeld*, as a project. He had a lot of fun writing it and realized that it came more naturally to him than anything in the math or science field. After completing more production classes, he began creating his own student films. One of his films, *The Last Supper*, which was a spoof on the famous painting using modern day technology and flash animation, culminated with winning the regional National Broadcasting Society award. These national awards are presented through the National Electronic Media Association and are the equivalent of the Emmys for college students.

He felt like he had found his calling and after graduation contacted local filmmakers to see if he could work for them for free to gain experience. He joined forces with director Jeff Knight, assisting with audio and editing work in order to better learn the craft and to network. Bobby worked on a few low-budget films before landing a job as a voice-over producer/video editor at Whitelake Music and Post, a local recording studio. He worked there a few years before moving to New York City to work full time in the freelance film industry. While in the city, he produced two web series and created multiple spec scripts for both film and television, which led to sit-down meetings with Hollywood production companies. While writing for a DVD review company, he also had the opportunity to interview actor,



Bobby at the premiere of *Jacob* at the Mechanicville Library.

Will Farrell, on a rooftop in Manhattan about Farrell's latest movie at the time, *Everything Must Go*. "He was really cool," says Bobby. "He was telling stories from when he lived there when he was on SNL and doing his Bush impression. He was really funny. He's a very intelligent man."


Bobby eventually decided to come back home and worked in the advertising department at CBS 6 as a video producer/director while he continued to produce his own work on the side. His web series, *Experi-Mates*, was selected to screen at the Hollyweb Festival in Hollywood, which resulted in meetings with a few producers at the Universal Studios lot. Nothing went through with that particular one, but he kept creating and one day was talking with some other industry friends: Dan Martin, Justin Alvis and Amanda Stankavich. Together, they came up with the idea of a situation comedy series about three thirty-somethings that end up back home with their parents, and the project took off. Season one of *Welcome Home* is now available through Amazon Prime and they're currently in the middle of shooting season two. Bobby is really excited about this new season. He said the overall quality is higher thanks not only to better equipment and a real budget to work with, but also to the


series really finding its niche and the writing, acting, everything clicking on a new level this time around.

Working in film definitely has its shortcomings and you have to be prepared for compromise at every level. "There is constant rejection," says Bobby. "And then when working with other people, there are many times in which you have to make compromises in order to keep the project from crumbling." But in the end, it's all worth it. "I love that every day is different. It's never mundane. There's a certain type of therapy when

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writing and creating something that helps with peace of mind. I also love that I get to collaborate with other talented people.”

In addition to his film work, Bobby is the Creative Director at Go Gonzalez, creating TV commercials and web content for their clients, as well as running his own production company, Next Evolution Media Production, where he focuses on TV and film production as well as producing other media and web videos for clients. His latest project, though, is a very personal one. His short film, *Jacob*, is based on his own experience as a suicide survivor; depicting the moment he found his brother’s body and how he managed to deal with it all. This was a film that has been living inside of him for 10 years since the tragedy happened. He always knew he wanted to touch on the subject, but wasn’t sure how.

“I was always big into comedy and movies,” he explains. “What inspires me as a filmmaker is the ridiculousness of the world that we live in and its often negative undertones. I had the misfortune of finding my brother’s body after he took his life. That’s a different kind of funeral. The tone is completely different. No one really knew what to do or how to react and a lot of them

seemed to look to me for some sort of leadership. I somehow managed to incorporate my sense of humor, somewhat changing the atmosphere. Everyone seemed more relaxed and started to speak more freely. It was there I realized I could use my background as a filmmaker and sense of humor in order to make people enjoy life again.”

Finally he found the right way to make this deeply personal film and it already won its first award at the People’s Pixel Project film festival on April 22nd. “I made it in hopes of being a positive message for others who had gone through a similar thing all while still giving some entertainment value. It’s honest, intense and has a great blend of lighthearted moments,” says Bobby. He used his own personal experience as the survivor and blended it with his signature lighthearted view of life to create something that is already helping others.

His goal is initially to start a much-needed conversation. “I just want people to talk about the situation. I’m sure there are many people that have gone through this. I’ve had a couple people reach out already that have attempted suicide before saying that it’s helped them.” And while it has also helped bring some closure to

Bobby himself, his work with this is far from over. While the film is making the festival circuit, Bobby is also raising money for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. *Jacob* will soon be available on Amazon along with a link to donate to the foundation directly from there as well.

Comedy and film have influenced Bobby’s life from the very beginning and he urges anyone interested in the field to persevere and to just go for it. Keep your eyes and heart on your goal and don’t give up. “Don’t listen to people. Listen to inspiration. Many people are going to tell you what you should be or need to be doing and it’s usually not in your best interest. There’s only one of you. You have a distinct voice. That alone has a huge price tag on it because it’s a rare commodity. Find your voice and run with it.”

For more information about the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, visit afsp.org. For more information about Bobby and his latest projects, visit www.nextevomedia.com. ■

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