

Hanging Out at The Waterhole

Making Movies in Reno

WRITTEN BY JENNIFER RACHEL BAUMER

So there are these three friends living in Reno; they've been friends since college and they're still hanging out together, but they're post-college now, trying to figure out what they want to do and juggling their changing relationships as one gets engaged and another just found out his girlfriend has been cheating on him. Not like he's been the best boyfriend, but still – he didn't expect that. They're working on careers, adjusting to significant relationships with significant others rather than just each other. Core groups are changing, splintering and reforming, but there's still The Waterhole, where they keep ending up night after night with the same people, having a beer, hanging out. This may not necessarily be the healthiest path.

But it is the plot to *The Waterhole*, a movie script Nathan Cole wrote about 10 years ago when he was in his 20s and still in college. He's been trying to get it produced since then, and now the movie is in pre-production. Casting is taking place in Los Angeles, financing is coming right out of the piggy bank and things are moving for making a movie in Reno.

Wouldn't be the first time. People have been making movies in Reno as long as they've been making movies. In 1917, the silent movie *Should She Obey?* about blackmail, desertion, divorce, forced marriage and infidelity was filmed in Reno. In 2003, a movie was released that is simply called *Sin* (rape, murder, revenge), starring the wonderfully weird Gary Oldman, Ving Rhames and *Lost*'s Daniel Dae Kim, and was filmed in Reno and at Pyramid Lake.

Now, we're waiting for *The Waterhole*.

Making *The Waterhole* in Reno

This is Nathan Cole's first script. It's his script and he wants to keep it that way. He wrote it when he was 25, and he told Daniel Menahem about it.

Menahem and Cole met at the University of Nevada, Reno, where Cole certainly wasn't studying anything to do with writing movies: He was a political sci-



[ABOVE, L-R] Director Ely Mennin, screenwriter Nathan Cole and Executive Producer Daniel Menahem take a break from shooting at Recycled Records in south Reno. Photo by Jessica Santana. [OPPOSITE] Corrigan's on Wells Avenue is the location for the fictional Waterhole, the bar for which Cole's film is named. Photo by Daniel Menahem.



ence major. But he'd taken some writing classes and written some short stories and he knew what he wanted to do.

Problem was, finding people who wanted to do it with him. Cole had some close calls once he was in Los Angeles, finding people who were interested in the script, but nothing ever worked out.

"It depends on who you bump into in Los Angeles," Cole says. "You bump into people with different levels of expertise and different contacts and access to financial resources, and they like the script and they want to push it for you. And we talked about getting it made [with] anywhere from a \$10,000 budget to a \$1 million budget; different production companies had optioned it and we were in discussion with people about getting it made." But the process always fell apart, and Cole was looking for the *exact* right fit. "I've always been very protective of that, my ability to back out of a deal myself if I'm not comfortable."

Partnering with a friend to make a movie about friendships solved the problem. When Menahem and Cole met at the University, Menahem liked the script and said, offhandedly, that some day they should make the movie.

"It's one of those declarations you make without knowing where it's going to go," says Menahem. But Cole moved to L.A. and Menahem moved back east, and then to Paris. They stayed in touch, though, and Menahem watched Cole come close several times before he returned to the U.S. in January and picked up the phone. "I said, 'If you want to do it, let's do it now, I won't have another time to do it,'" explains Menahem. They'd been talking about it for 10 years. It was time.

Menahem, 32, took the role of executive producer, which in movie parlance usually means he's the guy who finds the money. Menahem's a project development guy, not an executive producer guy, but he's learning, and he says whether it's movie-making or financing power plants (his job back east), it's all a part of product management. "It's exciting. It's also very much like a roller coaster. This is our first time doing anything like this, going from our assumptions of what's involved and finding out how much more intricate movie-making is. We've learned quite a bit over the last few months, considering this is self-financing, too, and using your own

money for any project is nerve-racking."

Undoubtedly, because Menahem says funding is coming "out of the piggy bank for this one. I assume my parents want me to do something reasonable and mature with my money, like buy a house. But you're allowed to try something like this once."

And finding funding is difficult. There are too many other groups looking for financing and even if you find it, you lose creative control.

"Nathan and I were adamant," Menahem says. "We want creative control and to do it the way we see fit and have a final product that is what we wanted and what we believe will sell."

So What Happens Next ?

Menahem and Cole wrapped up casting in August and began looking for a crew that was enthusiastic about low-budget, independent films. Money's always tight on independent film, and paying cast and crew so they can make a living is challenging.

Even though Cole's worked for the Motion Picture Association in anti-piracy for several years, actually rolling up his sleeves and putting together the crew, the schedule and the budget is a whole new world. "It's very exciting that all these little pieces go to make one final product that's only going to be an hour and a half long."

The next step will be new, too – getting the film seen by as many people as possible, maybe making the film festivals, maybe getting a distribution contract and generating a buzz.

The best thing so far has been seeing the movie come to life and hearing actors read lines he's written and bring characters he created to life. If *The Waterhole* takes off, he may have a chance to do it again. He's got another script he's written, but he's waiting with it until something happens with this one. Now it's all about filming in friends' homes in Reno, Recycled Records, scenic outdoor locations around

Reno and at Corrigan's, which will become *The Waterhole* bar for the film, and working with director Ely Mennin (*Breathing Room*, 2006) to turn the current dream into reality. **R**

Jennifer Rachel Baumer is a Northern Nevada freelance writer known to be fond of movies and watering holes and the combination thereof.

"I assume my parents want me to do something reasonable and mature with my money, like buy a house. But you're allowed to try something like this once."