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DIRECTING

Documenting the Lost and Found Generation in *Falling Uphill*



by [Richard J. Bosner](#) | Published May 4, 2012

As a Hitchcock enthusiast, for years I wanted to direct a dark, suspenseful thriller. So I spent a couple years developing a film in this "Hitchcockian" vein while producing and managing other films. After working on Peter Bratt's *La Mission*, which depicts San Francisco in a very intimate and non-traditional way, I began to observe my surroundings and reflect on my personal life. Although it sucked to set aside my high concept screenplay, I refocused my energies on a more personal project featuring San Francisco.

If you're in your late twenties and not on the route toward marriage, a mortgage in the suburbs and a steady income, then you are probably "Falling Uphill." You're someone still searching for your calling or the passion that transcends the everydayness of life. Our generation grew up disillusioned by the economic boom of the late '90s. We thought that, upon graduating from college, we would begin a meaningful and lucrative career. But the global economic downturn brought us to our quarter-life crisis. It may not be too presumptuous to say we are the next "lost generation."



Richard J. Bosner. Photo by David Noles

Time after time, I would see friends lose their first jobs, accept a pay cut, take a forced furlough or vacation or discover they were just another cog in the corporate wheel. Now it seems that the complications in our career paths have bled over into our personal lives. We are faced with an anxiety of options, none of which are powerful enough to lead us to making a full commitment. Ultimately, I decided to draw from this generational experience, as well as some more personal aspects of my life, and put them on the page.

The film that resulted, *Falling Uphill*, centers around Robert, a 20-something artist trying to find his direction in life. With just a few days left in San Francisco, he struggles to confess his feelings for his unavailable roommate. It's a story about heartbreak, self-discovery and new beginnings.

While writing, I knew this film could not be traditionally produced with lots of crew, a million union rules and honeywagons lining the street. With a micro-budget (\$7,000 of which came from Kickstarter), this kind of production was not an option. I also wanted the audience to get a San Franciscan's perspective. We don't see the Golden Gate Bridge on our daily walks and cable cars aren't constantly chiming by our front door.

If there's one thing I've learned over the years it is that many of the pitfalls productions face can be avoided with thorough pre-production. This is especially true when you don't have much money. If that's the case, you need to formulate a strong production strategy.

Falling Uphill was shot in 16 days with over 60 locations in and around the city. We would set up everything at our base camp in the morning, then take what and who we needed and travel to location. Often the skeleton crew consisted of talent, two 5Ds, our trusty sound mixer, myself and producer Barret Hacia. Our cardinal rules were to shoot no longer than ten hours and hit at least five or six locations a day.

While writing the 90-page script, I made allowance for actor improvisation around the structure of the lines. I direct the actors so they may incorporate their own artistic vision and become the characters instead of simply reiterating lines. No take was identical. We would do a script take, an actors' take and then open it up for experimentation. Often the best takes would be a collaboration between my original structure and the actors' creative influence.

DP Jesse Dana and I were inspired by the shooting style of Woody Allen's *Husband and Wives* and influenced by his pseudo-documentary technique, with its jump cuts and rack focus. We used two cameras to cover both angles, as each take was drastically different. We shot on 5Ds to stay light on our feet and inconspicuous at times. (*wink wink*)

The shoot may have taken 16 days, but the editing took six months. Editor Chris Walters and I sifted through footage and restructured the story in countless ways.

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Since none of the takes were the same, editing became a much more complicated process. However, the choices made the scenes stronger and eliminated forced moments.

San Francisco and its unique vibe are very important in this film. The beat of our generation in San Francisco is independent. We listen to thousands of songs as we trek, bike and bus the San Francisco hills. In essence, our city has its own theme music. Alex Fleshman composed original music with a mixture of Django Reinhardt-style guitar and Jon Brion-style production. Alex was also our music supervisor, and together we selected songs that represent the San Francisco culture. Wallpaper, The Growlers, Lost Boy, The Oh Sees and Halcyonaire created the indie ambiance.

Aside from *Falling Uphill*, I am currently producing the feature film *MudJumper*, which is scheduled to shoot this fall in Canandaigua, New York. I am also writing my next screenplay, but I will have to keep you in suspense on the details. While you wait, be sure to live your dreams, follow your heart and try new things.

Falling Uphill, written and directed by Richard J. Bosner and starring Ari Kanamori, Jessiqa Pace and Jack McGee, opened in Los Angeles' United Film Festival on May 1st and will play at Seattle's True Independent Film Festival on Sunday, May 6th. To find out more about the film and for more information on future screenings, visit fallinguphillthemovie.com.

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