

An Interview of Archie Borders with Marissa Massey

Personal/EKU Questions

1. How did you know you wanted to be in film? **When I was 8, I saw the movie *The Poseidon Adventure*, and the sheer spectacle and impact of seeing that famous disaster film on the big screen made a huge impression on me. It was the first time I thought, ‘someone made this movie. This is a job. I want that a job.’ I got my hands on a Super 8 camera and began teaching myself how to shoot movies. I had a little editor; splicer, everything I needed and I taught myself through trial and error. I made really bad monster movies, comedies, anything I wanted. And that’s how you learn, by doing.**
2. Tell us about people or films that inspired you to start directing and writing your own films. **Other than *The Poseidon Adventure*, the films of John Sayles, a filmmaker who financed his low budget movies by writing screenplays for studios, was a big inspiration. Also, John Cassavetes and Spike Lee, two filmmakers who wrote their own scripts and then went out and found the money themselves to make their movies.**
3. How did you come to Eastern Kentucky University? **Somewhat embarrassingly, I dropped out of Ohio University film school and was a bit adrift. I returned home to Lexington, broke and unsure what to do, and found out through a friend that EKU had, at that time, a minor in filmmaking. I figured I’d work, save money by staying close to home, and study film. Little did I realize that EKU’s film minor was as good and fun as most colleges’ film majors. It really sustained me. I’m really lucky EKU had that at that time.**
4. I’ve been told that during your time at EKU that you actively wrote and directed your own short films. Could you tell me about that experience? **Yes, I did! That was part of the curriculum and since I had been making movies on my own since I was 12, I threw myself into it... and pressured all my friends and roommates into being actors. It was a lot of fun. One memorable film was a pretty crazy revenge drama; lots of blood and guts and inappropriate black**

comedy. Your parents and Uncle were both forced into service on that one and were put through the slasher movie paces. They may deny it, but they had fun.

5. Tell us about your “big break” moment or experience. **After graduating, I got a job assistant directing a movie in Kentucky. Most of the crew, the sound department, grips, etc, were from this area. I realized I could utilize crew from here, write a script that could be made for little money, and see if I could sell it. I thought if I could make something simple, a movie that could take place in one room, I might be able to do it. That movie was *Reception to Follow*, which I shot for \$40,000.00. I scrapped that money together bit by bit, from friends, family, and working three jobs. I poured everything into it. It was a romantic comedy that took place at a upscale wedding reception. And every scene, except for the first scene and the last, took place in that ornate bathroom (which was a set we built). After it was complete, I sent a rough cut (on videocassette!) to John Pierson, the producer who repped and discovered Spike Lee and Rick (Boyhood) Linklater. He liked the film and arranged for it to be acquired by the (at the time) new Sundance Film Channel, which was owned by Showtime. The film aired on nationwide cable for over a year. Finally, I was a professional filmmaker. Helped me buy my first house.**

Career/180 Degrees

1. You’re very versatile in that you direct, produce, and screen write. Tell us about your relationship to each of those roles. Is there a role you prefer over the others? **Writing and directing my own movies are still my main passion. That’s what feeds me creatively, keeps me excited, and lets my imagination stay sharp. However, developing a movie, any movie takes time, patience, and money and that’s where my company comes in. My main job is as a producer. 180 is a full service production company where we make commercials, documentaries, corporate branding videos, and feature films. The company provides my partners and me the means to develop our films,**

and, to pay the bills. We like to eat. But there is nothing more satisfying than writing a script, casting actors to become your characters, and then directing a scene where it all comes to life. I thank God everyday that I get to do what I do.

2. You've been described as a "regional filmmaker" because you showcase your home state of Kentucky in many of your films. Why did you decide to take this approach to your films? **I certainly considered moving to Los Angeles a number of times but, really, I loved the idea of being a Kentucky voice. Novelists, for example, are often associated with the regions in which they live and write. There are plenty of filmmakers who can tell stories that take place in New York and LA. But being a voice for this region, for my home state, gives me a niche and an identity as an artist. My films represent this part of the country and tell the stories with some distinctive, nothing like Kentucky flavor. It's an honor to be seen as a Kentucky filmmaker.**
3. 180 Degrees Production Company, which you co-own, is based out of Louisville, Ky. How did 180 get started? **180 grew from my work with Mike Fitzer on the film, *Pleased to Meet Me*. He was working in the advertising agency world and I was dipping my toe in that market as well. He wanted to be in feature films and I wanted to grow a production company. It seemed like a good partnership and has been. Erin Roark came aboard soon after and she does most of the Producing for the company now. We're all equal partners in the company. The three of us complement and help each other be our best selves, creatively and professionally.**
4. Your latest film, *Under the Eiffel Tower*, was completed this past year. Tell us how the story of that film came to be. **The story was told to me by a friend, Stuart McWhirter, a commercial producer here in Louisville. We were both working on a really bad reality series, "*Southern Belles: Louisville*" and were setting up the production office for the LA production company's arrival. We had some time to kill and started swapping sad stories about failed romances. He told me his; how he had invited himself along on his girlfriend's family vacation to Paris. And, on the first day of a two-week trip,**

spur of the moment, he proposed to her under the Eiffel Tower. She turned him down. Now, once you've done that, you can't take it back; there's no, "oh, lets just forget I did that and lets go on with the vacation." So, he was devastated. He was sitting in the airport, crying, and ended up befriending an over the hill Scottish futbol player. The two of them then proceeded to go off on a drunken adventure, where they ended up competing for the affections of a French woman they met on a train. I thought it would make a great film and so did my co-writer, David Henry (who also co-wrote *Under the Eiffel Tower* with me). Fortunately, so did The Orchard, the studio that financed it.

5. Looking back, tell us about some of your favorite projects. **They're all special and each film represents an amazing time in your life, some more bittersweet than others. Even though each of your films are sort of your children, *Pleased to Meet Me* was kind of the perfect storm of everything good about making movies. Really fun cast, great music, and good reviews from USA TODAY and The Washington Post. Plus, I feel like I got the story I wanted to tell on screen. It was one of my smaller budget movies, but the scruffy aesthetic really served the film. We finished on time and on budget and our premiere screening, up in Philadelphia at World Café Live, was one of those nights every filmmaker should have. The crowd loved it, we got offers for the film, and the whole family was there. Pretty extra special.**
6. What's next for you and 180 Degrees? **We're still in postproduction on *Under the Eiffel Tower* (which may get a title change) so we'll be attending to that until the film is released. In the meantime, we're developing three other movies, at least two others we hope to shoot in Kentucky, for our next feature productions. And 180 continues to grow, with commercials, videos, all sorts of things.**
7. What advice would you give to aspiring film makers at EKU? **Work hard at what you love. Stay focused and never stop trying. You'll have lots of people tell you to come up with 'side jobs' or 'fallback' things to do in case you don't succeed. I've never seen someone do that and then succeed at what they**

really wanted to do. Remember, no one will work as hard for you as you will. You have to will the job you want into existence, pay attention, treat people fairly (you'll run into them again) and don't work with assholes. Surround yourself with good people who share your passion.