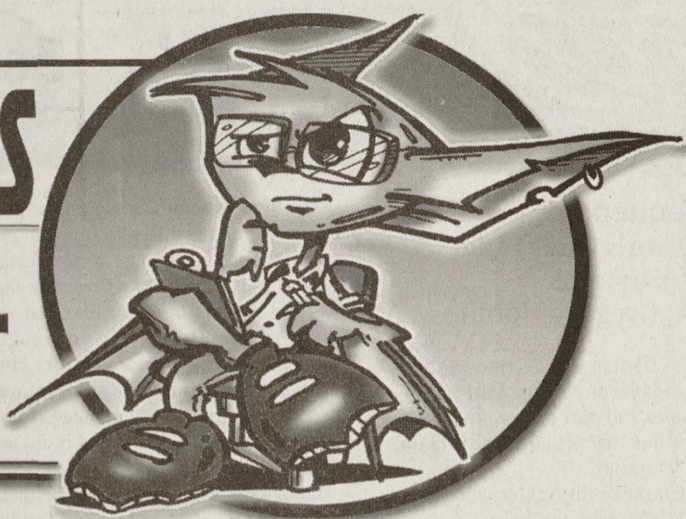


CONVERSATIONS WITH THE BATT



INTERVIEW BY MATT MCCORMICK

Writer/director Todd Phillips

Todd Phillips has had the sort of moviemaking career that people dream of. His second documentary film *Frat House* made it into the Sundance Film Festival and won the Grand Jury Prize. That in turn led to an introduction to Ivan Reitman.

Meeting with Reitman led to a studio deal to write and direct a picture for Dreamworks Pictures. That movie is the hip, college-themed flick, *Road Trip*, and it opens nationwide May 19. *The Battalion* was able to ask the up-and-coming director a few questions.

Q: Just to confirm a little something. You are the man in the feet scene on the bus.

I am the man in the feet scene on the bus. Let the record state that I do love women's feet.

Q: That is some kind of role to write for yourself. So were you nervous, this film being an actual feature and all of your experience had been with documentaries?

Yeah. I was very nervous. I was the skinny nervous guy. You do a documentary and you are used to working with four people. You, the camera guy, the sound guy and the guy who is just running around and doing stuff. You go on the set of a feature and there are a hundred people standing around looking at you. But I did come from commercials and commercials do kind of set you up for that.

Q: How was it working with Ivan Reitman? Did that make you nervous at all?

I was not nervous to work with Ivan. I was so excited to work with him. I hate to use the word mentor because it makes him sound like he is done. But he was like a mentor to me.

To have the producer of your movie be a director and be the guy separating you from the studio. It is really an incredible thing to have. He's been there and he's done it.

Q: How did you guys get hooked up?

We met, Ivan and I, on the Internet, in a chat room. (Laughs)

Q: What chatroom?

That's secret. No, I am kidding. We met at Sundance.

Q: When we talked to Ivan, he told us that he kind of pitched the idea of a roadtrip movie to you? So what was your next step in coming up with a script?

Me and Scot [Armstrong] who I wrote it with, we just started pitching around ideas. We always drive when we write. So we got in the car and drove and started throwing out ideas.

Q: Did the final film do justice to the script?

Yeah. We lost a lot because we cut a lot. In comedy, you like to overshoot so you can cut stuff that is not necessarily working or is too plotty. I think the important thing is the tone and the tone of the movie is the same as the script.

Q: Did you guys have any problems with this film and getting rated? This movie definitely had some moments.

Yeah, we did. You show them the first cut and you really push it because you know they are going to cut some.

You put stuff in that you are not even sure if you want because you are hoping that that will be what they cut. It is a hard R, but we are happy with it.

Q: Were there any scenes that you re-cut? They all like and they asked you to cut?

No, no scene like that got cut.

Q: Tell us about the dog in the movie. Where did you come up with that idea?

It was just such a random idea. It was just something to take a funny scene and make it funnier. We probably added that joke a little late.



PHOTO COURTESY OF DREAMWORKS
Tom Green (left) and Sean William Scott star in *Road Trip*, which was written and directed by Todd Phillips.

Q: Did you write the Tom Green character for him?

Well, it was written originally, but when I asked Tom and he said he would do it, then I went back and rewrote it for him.

Q: This movie was great. Just when it seemed like the momentum was go-

ing to die, then you threw something else out there. You even had a midget in there.

Yeah. When this gets to DVD, you can freeze-frame that scene with the midget. Nearly all of those guys in that scene had shirts on with their names on the back. The costume designer came to me and was like, "What names do you want on these shirts?" I was like, "I don't care, except for the midget." The name on the back of the midget's shirt is Embryo.

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