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Award-winning film maker planned to be an engineer



Danek Kaus, Screenwriting Examiner

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Russ Emanuel went to college to study chemical engineering but graduated with a degree in Cinema.

While he was a student at USC, he was assigned a room in the cinema students section of the dorm.

"I was always interested in film but I didn't think it was practical," Emanuel said. "But I applied to the Critical Studies program and got in." Russell, who grew up in both the U.S. and Japan, is grateful that his parents supported him in making the switch.

As part of the curriculum, he studied film analysis and later studied the technical aspects of film at UCLA Extension, where he met Emile Haris, who would become his long-time film editor.

Along the way Emanuel, was a Production Assistant for a film called *The Failures*. "I got a lot of hands-on experience," he said.

In 2002 he founded Russem Productions and has produced numerous award-winning short films, including *Girl with Gun*i n 2005.

In 2003, he wrote and directed *Her Knight*. "It wasn't a perfect film, but I learned from my mistakes." While working on that project, Emanuel met Neil Argo, who would become his composer.

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1 of 3 10/7/2011 2:10 PM



Emanuel is an award-winning Producer and Director

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"I'm a big fan of film music," Emanuel said. "I remember watching *Jurassic Park* with John Williams' score. It was amazing, as are pretty much all of his scores."

Emanuel believes that the score of a film is a critical component of its success. "For me, it was important to get a veteran composer and Neil had done *Wild America* for National Geographic. He worked for the Aaron Spelling company and did scoring for *Beverly Hills* 90210 and *Mission Impossible* 2 (TV Series), as well as a lot of other television shows in the 80s, according to Emanuel.

In 2007, Emanuel completed his first feature, *P.J.*, which won seven national and international film awards and had a run in 14 states. Producer Howard Nash brought Emanuel the script, which already had John Heard attached. Nash had already raised half the money for the project and he told Emanuel that if he could raise the other half, he could direct. Emanuel found an investor for the project and his career as a director of feature films was born.

He later directed *Chasing the Green*, staring Jeremy London and William Devane. The film won the Director's Choice Gold Award at the Park City Film Music Festival in 2009. "I was very honored by the award and especially honored to be working with Bill Devane." Emanuel said. "He was directed by Hitchcock."

"Chasing the Green is based on the true story of Craig Frankel, who was the victim of a political witch hunt," Emanuel said.

Frankel, who was one of the Executive Producers of *P.J.*, has a cameo in *Chasing the Green*. He plays a scene with actor Jeremy London, who is playing Frankel in the movie. "I love giving my investors some cameos. In this case the investor is playing a cameo with himself. I love these little in-jokes. It's kind of my trademark," Emanuel said.

His current project is *The Legends of Nethiah*, now in post, which stars Robert Picardo and Theresa Russell. Emanuel is also supervising the music score for the film, which is about a man who consoles his young grandson with stories.

Emanuel said that directing child actors is much different than working with adults. "They don't have the mindset of an adult. They can get fragile. So I act more like a counselor, a father and a friend. You have to give them a lot more leeway."

Emanuel already has some new projects lined up, including a conspiracy film with William Devane, this time in a leading role. "We're all excited about that," Emanuel said.

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2 of 3 10/7/2011 2:10 PM



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10/7/2011 2:10 PM 3 of 3