

HRH Production Notes By Nick Nummerdor

Right after I finished up college in 2007 I got pretty heavy into Toto after seeing a free show of them at the House of Blues in Chicago. I then traveled around Europe listening to "I'll Supply the Love" on this documentary shoot and somehow ran into listening to Robbie Dupree's hit single "Steal Away." on my ipod. So I spent 5 weeks on night trains and sleeping on people couches listening to this super choreographed 80s pop rock. I loved it, and it made me feel like I was partying in a roller-rink in the early 80s. I just could just picture myself in North Muskegon skating in some Ninja Turtles full sweatsuit outfit skating in a circle after the Ghostbusters theme was done.

I was really into buying bargain bin vinyl at the time and was always scouring the bins of stuff no one wanted. I bought Robbie Dupree's first album for 99 cents in pretty much mint condition and set it aside. A few months later in the cold Chicago winter my girlfriend surprised me with an early Christmas gift of a Wii. So I became obsessed with bowling on the Wii while I worked part-time editing corporate video on my 12 inch Mac and would just put on records to listen to while I played. What kind of music did I want to hear while I was virtually bowling? Well I listened to Phillip Lynott's Solo Album that I bought in Europe which was really catchy and dancy as opposed to the other 80's Thin Lizzy I knew on their album "Thunder and Lightening." The other album I began to listen to was Robbie Dupree's self titled album. I thought it was pretty solid and amusing to hear while Wii bowling.

About a week later I put it on again while my friend Cliff and my brother Mike were over and "Hot Rod Hearts" played. The song finished off "side A" of the record and we were all thinking "Hot Rod Hearts" huh? I think we listened to it again within an hour. We talked about how the song could have been in the soundtrack of this movie we love called "The Van." We listened to the track again and then I downloaded the song and began playing it at parties and get togethers on my ipod whenever Cliff was around which was pretty much every weekend. Further into the winter at another late night party someone was talking about how it sounded like the theme of a TV show and the wheels started turning in our brains. It was very spontaneous and Andrew Morgan who I also saw every weekend would laugh about the idea of filming a video for it or a funny title sequence to the song. We could have a rival gang called the Sharks in our series (We later learned this was a gang in Westside Story which neither of us had ever watched). This seemed perfect because Robbie Dupree sings about the "hungry" Sharks in the song. We could shoot it on the beach in Muskegon our hometown and they probably wouldn't mind. We thought, why not shoot for Channel101.com since a few other people from Muskegon Mi had produced great work for the site (Yacht Rock, Making Mistakes respectively). So the 5 minute formula for the Channel 101 website was in the back of our minds. Next came a decision to name the opposing gang the Hot Rod Hearts. And there you had it, we had to opposing hot rod gangs and a beach and thats pretty much all we needed.

So for the Spring of 2008 all I thought about was how I could write this funny web show called HRH for the summer. I ended up pursuing my idea of the "Chicago Youth Skateboard Project" in April instead. This idea was to give away free skateboards to kids

in my urban neighborhood so they would have something to do rather than play xbox or get into gangs. You can't kick flip with a gun in your waste band (at least I haven't seen it yet) so its probably better these kids are skating. As I started this endeavor I was working freelance 20 hours a week, doing an Internship at Kartemquin Films, and working at the Columbia College Documentary Center. I was also hosting these weekly documentary screenings there and baking tons of muffins and cookies and delivering them by bike to the school to raise money for the center because it was rumored to be closing. About 2 months into all of that I realized I had no time to make videos while working on giving skateboards away to kids in my neighborhood. Since I was producing this idea to give skateboards away I was learning a lot of producing skills that would come in handy later for Hot Rod Hearts. I began hiring people to work for me, started a non profit, got my EIN, and got a bank account. I was cold calling skateboard companies, emailing everyone I knew, constantly asking my roommates for help and advice and basically by the time it was done I realized I was just preparing to do all the stuff to start making films but wasn't actually making anything.

My boss at the freelance job convinced me to do the skateboard thing and then forget it and work for him full time after the internship was complete and pursue my filmmaking career further. The skateboarding giveaway was a success but I was really burnt out on all the work with no real feeling of accomplishment or income for all the time I spent on it. Once the boards were given away they were just gone and basically I wasn't using my education to move forward to pursue my own goals. All my weekend volunteers couldn't even make it to the event so I had a few other friends jump in for the actual day. All of which ended up working on HRH's in some way.

During the summer of 2008 Andrew and I were both working for the same guy and we were constantly bouncing ideas off each other but rarely pursuing them. We sat right next to each other actually. We started compiling song lists and character names for Hot Rod Hearts on post it notes at our desks. We listened to a ton of 80's sleaze and garbage on Pandora Radio, enough to make anyone go crazy. We knew if we wanted to make a good project we wouldn't have time that summer but if we planned everything out and wrote it in the winter we could really do it in the summer of 2009. So we had a timeline and a plan to go with our idea now.

Prior to all of that, throughout that winter of 2008 and into the spring of crazy busyness Andrew and I decided we would shoot a music video for Mock Orange since they didn't have any available for their album Captain Love which I was spinning on a daily basis. I felt it was my duty to make some kind of promotional item for them. I hacked out this rough idea for a music video to make for them knowing I had no money and didn't want to hire crew so basically it would be my brother and my oldest friend driving around on this old motorbike we had at my parents cabin in Manistee. They basically said go ahead and make it and we will release it. We shit our pants and spent \$200 on some 16mm film since Andrew had just tested out on a bunch of the cameras at school. We went to shoot the video in September of 08 but we got rained out, the whole midwest was in a state of emergency. I believe it took us over 8 hours (normally half that!) to make the trip home due to flooding roads in Indiana. We went back to film in early October and we were able

to catch the fall colors. My parents and a bunch of friends came up north to help out and we shot the whole thing in two days of metering sunlight and asking Mike my brother to drive the dirt bike by the camera over and over. We got the film developed and I slowly cracked away at editing the video throughout the winter while he finished school. With Andrew done with his senior year of school and the Mock Orange music video complete we had no choice but to make Hot Rod Hearts.

Once January of 2009 came around we got really serious that we had to shoot Hot Rod Hearts in the summer. If we didn't shoot it this summer we were just going to total losers and wait another year. At some point I heard the quote "You can't be a filmmaker unless you are making films," and I thought for better or worse we will find an audience on the internet and just release this crazy thing for free.

Things started coming together. Andrew's girlfriend's brother in law Harley was in a Hot Rod Motorcycle Club The Relix, so we had access to some hot rods we hoped. We started scripting and planning a few nights a week pretty much all spring working on nothing else but getting this web series made. Harley turned out to be really helpful and gave us the A-OK on actually getting a few cars to use for free. We were stunned and excited so we kept moving forward. As we got farther along we realized we wanted to give it some actual production value and see if anyone would be interested in helping out. A lot of the shows on Channel101 were pretty bare bones and Andrew and I were thinking if we spent this much time on it we should make it something we were really happy with if for some reason it didn't get on the website. (Good thing to, because it didn't make it on CH101 because there was no story resolution in the first episode or real character development either. We took the news with a grain of sand and kept moving forward.) Crew slowly poured in as we advertised it as a "week long get away on the beach where we would film bikinis and hot rod burn outs." Andrew pitched this thing relentlessly to his new friends in Advanced Cameras at Columbia where he was working. We traveled to Muskegon a dozen or more times to scout locations and crew. We had to meet the hot rod club The Relix one weekend, meet our wonderful associate producers another, scout locations, then secure locations, and on and on. It was really a collaborative effort. We finished writing the 3 episodes and began casting and immediately liked everyone that tried out.

I emailed Dave Korta my former boss at the Documentary Center one afternoon to see if he was available to be McMasters a character I had written with him as my top choice to play. I had seen him act a little bit in my friend Chris Nelson's short film (also a doc center alum) so I knew he would be interested. He called me back immediately and said he had read the email and that he was very excited to play the roll. Chris agreed to be the Assistant Director, we found our sound team, and our gaffer and all of our gear essentially by being really nice and patient. This was one of those cases where going to film school and being nice to the people you meet there really makes a huge difference in the long run.

We had to get a cast together before we even completed the 3rd episode script since the shooting dates were rapidly approaching. Once cast was set and the script wrapped up I

began rehearsals once or twice a week throughout July. I was really impressed with how quickly they learned their lines and were ready for action. We talked back and forth with the City of Muskegon via Lisa Wilkes-Wright our associate producer in the homeland, and with Harley Obzut on figuring out what hot rods we could get for what days and for how long. It was a lot of stuff to coordinate. I started a business called Little Cabin Films Inc so we could buy production insurance and that turned into a nightmare due to my inexperience. My mom was organizing parents to get catering together and where everyone was going to sleep. My dad was making props and apple boxes in the garage. We really couldn't have done it without everyone's group effort. We were going to have 50 people, hot rods, trailers of film gear, and 3 meals a day all in random locations for 6 days straight including 2 night shoots. Everything had to be set in stone or we were going to be fucked and I for one was nervous as hell about directing a film set having all my background in documentary filmmaking. The beauty of a film set unlike making your own personal film is the teamwork thing where everyone knows their role to make each other jobs easier. If I had to think about lighting set ups, and sound options during the shoot we would have never gotten anywhere. Once we figured out how everyone was going to get to Muskegon from Chicago the schedule fell into place we just had to make the film. Chris Nelson our AD was a lifesaver.

I have to say outside of my rookie mistakes the shoot went amazing. We never got rained out and when it did rain it was light and went away. I got to drive McMasters van to work in the morning everyday. There's nothing like showing up to work in a Dodge Tradesman and your office is the Beach in late July. We were able to get extras to be in the gangs at the last minute and some people told me they hadn't eaten that good on film set ever. Our catering crew cooked up delicious totally different meals for each day. A few of our great crew members told me it was one of the funnest sets they had ever been on so I figured I had done something right. After all the stress and sleepless nights we filmed the race scene for free at Thunderbird Raceway on the last day of production which was a Sunny Sunday afternoon in Michigan. Andrew's Dad had a wrap party and bought a bunch of food and beer and we all returned to Chicago the next day tired and accomplished.

I could go day by day of the production but I probably wouldn't do it justice of how much of a good time I had and I think everyone else was having. I was running around with a clipboard with dozens of decisions to make, putting on sunscreen, and laughing after takes of the scenes we had come up with. I think one of my favorite memories of the production was trying to come up with things for the Sharks to do in their scenes. "Hey Jeremy, can you like... throw that log across the scene and then slam some whiskey, That would be great. THANKS." As of right now, Andrew and I are looking into writing more comedy that won't use copyrighted music and hoping to find a large audience for Hot Rod Hearts.