

# Beating the Bunny

## Carl and Epic Movies

Carl is a very interesting guy. He's always been a little different in the eyes of society. When he was twelve he invented his own language and his own universe. Well, actually the universe came about when he was age five. You know how little kids live in their own world? Let's just say, Carl never really grew out of that universe. When the other boys his age were realizing the existence of the girls and trying everything they could to impress them, Carl was creating a magnificent illusionary world.

His world was a magical one with a common theme, the geek and underdog of this sophisticated society would eventually be the ruler of it. Even though he spoke of this quite often, I think he eventually realized the fantasy was merely an illusion.

This is when Carl decided to turn his fantasy into a trilogy of three epic novels. Of course, the concept of writing novels changed when he discovered epic movies that depicted futuristic and magical societies (that took place a long time ago, in a galaxy far away.) He even created a musical score on our home computer for his *upcoming* epic trilogy; thus, the beginning of Carl's passion for filmmaking.

It wasn't until we watched the extended edition of *The Fellowship of the Ring* that Carl's filmmaking passion turned into a reality. There was something about sitting through six hours of behind-the-scenes action that immersed us into a whole new level of thinking concerning filmmaking. Carl realized that he didn't have to fake it any more; he could actually make movies

himself. He also realized that through these films he could help people with their lives and show them a new way of thinking on life and faith.

About the same time Carl was being inspired by the film adaptation to *Lord of the Rings*, two other guys were inspired to start something entirely different.

### **Porn Pastors**

There they were, two good looking young men in their mid-twenties, sitting in the middle of a convention hall, talking about life issues. These two young men, Mike and Craig, happened to be exhibitors at this convention. Across from them was a startup internet company and on the sides sat two semi-popular video distributors.

A very beautiful woman dressed in revealing clothes approached Craig and inquired, “Why are you here? I thought that you kind of people hate this kind of stuff.”

Craig responded, “Honestly, I think if Jesus were here today, this would be one of the first places he’d come to.”

She responded, “No way, wouldn’t he like be in a church or something.”

“I don’t think so. That’s why we’re here. We want you to know that Jesus loves porn stars. Want a Bible?”

Craig and Mike’s stories and passions have traveled all around the world, and came into my brother and I’s minds around the same time we watched Peter Jackson’s glorious movie. We agreed with Mike and Craig. Jesus loves porn stars, just like he loves Marylyn Manson and Dan Rather.

Craig and Mike started xxxchurch, “The #1 Christian Porn Site,” about five years ago. The idea came to Mike when he was taking a shower. It was as if a voice from God came to him in his shower and whispered one single word: “Pornography.”

After the “one word” call from God, these two strapping young gentlemen decided to start a website community dedicated to helping people deal with pornography addiction. As Christ followers, they see pornography addiction as something that draws people away from God, a distortion of sexuality. Sadly, much of the church is mute on the issue because they fear upsetting people and also many times just ignore the issue all together. Mike and Craig have found much ridicule, but have also grown into fame.

### **Beating the Bunny**

Probably one of the more embarrassing moments in my life happened to me a couple of years ago when I was in my bedroom on my computer. Let’s just say, I gave into temptation and was actively seeking out the pleasures of PORN. Long story short, my brother caught me in the act. I couldn’t lie to him, and really, he couldn’t have caught me at a better time. A week prior to Carl catching me *in the act*, he asked me, “I’m thinking about filming a movie about a pastor’s kid who struggles with porn addiction.”

I said, “Another movie idea eh? What about the one you had yesterday?”

“Yeah, that’s one I’ve had too. But seriously, you might like this one.”

I sarcastically replied, “Well... Whatever happened to the epic movie trilogy where you become God?”

“I might do that some day. But that was like eight years ago, and the protagonist doesn’t become God.”

“Oooh, riiight. So what about porn?”

“Well, the guy who said he’d star in the movie has bailed. Would you like to be in it?”

I hastily replied, “I’ll think about it,” and walked away.

There we were a week later; Carl in my room and a nice batch of porn on my monitor. He asked, “Well... Do you want to be in my movie?”

I replied, “I think I could do this part pretty well.”

So what do Porn Pastors, Lord of the Rings, and my “creative” brother have in common? A movie called *Beating the Bunny*, and I’m the star.

### **Filming, Day One.**

We started filming the movie in the summer of ’05. I had just broken up with my girlfriend and was in a flurry of wild 18-year-old emotions, which was perfect for my part in the movie. I came in at the last minute, but was ready to release some of my emotion through acting. I was also excited about bringing some light on the issue of teenage porn addiction.

My first day on the shoot was interesting to say the least. I found myself in some stranger’s house, on their 12-year-old kid’s bed, in very thin pajamas. To add insult to injury, the people who actually lived in the house, a pastor’s family, weren’t there. I had never met the actors who were playing my mom and dad in the film either. Oh yeah, I forgot to tell you, I’m not really an actor either. Trust me, there’s nothing more comfortable than being in thin pajamas

and playing “family” in someone else’s house, especially when you’re not used to lying in beds of little kids you don’t know.

Probably one of the strangest parts of the bedroom scene was when Carl had to straddle me to film my face when I was waking up from a bad dream. Straddling aside, we had more to film in the house.

I met my “mom and dad” shortly after the straddle scene and began filming scenes with them. It’s typical for movie directors to film the same scenes over and over again, for the sake of quality and editing. Carl established that it was necessary to take as many shots as necessary. This, of course, began to suck when he decided that the air conditioning was too loud for filming and turned it off. It was a very hot June. Again, there’s nothing like being in thin pajamas, filming with strangers in someone else’s house, and sweating to no end while we waited for the “director” to set up very hot lights.

Thank God that Phil (the guy playing my dad) and I convinced Carl that his screenplay was too goofy at times. One of his first scenes would have consisted of me, an 18-year-old, sitting on my “dad’s” lap telling him about my porno problem. As Carl states, “My writing tends to be on the bizarre side on the first draft. I’ve got a very eccentric mind.” Eccentric or not, let’s be glad that scene didn’t have to be filmed.

The rest of the day consisted of various scenes around the house. We filmed the scene where we find out that the dad, a pastor, has a large problem with porn. We also see the parents finding certain things in the son’s room. For example, the mother finds a “sex toy” and condom in the son’s room. She also almost catches him looking at porn as well.

We covered a lot that day, but were not nearly completed. We were tired and the family whose house we were filming in wanted their house back for the night. But don't worry, we were back the next day.

## Day 2

Ahh yes, the shower scene. This is one of those scenes in the filmmaking process that didn't come alive until the post-production process. I'd say this is the funniest scene in the movie.

The scene consisted of me (the son) taking a *very* long shower in preparation for Church on a Sunday. The problem is that the dad cut his finger and needed to get into the bathroom. So the father jumped into the bathroom, and to his dismay, found a recently used bottle of lubricant on the counter.

We thought it'd be funny filming, however, I didn't find it funny that I had to take a shower in a stranger's house. But what the hey, my brother had already straddled me on a little kid's bed. I put my swimming trunks on and got in the shower. We filmed the shower scene with great success, and thankfully I didn't have to get naked in the shower.

After the shower scene, we filmed the parents trying to make sense of the lubricant. Sadly, this is one of the parts where Phil and I *didn't* convince Carl to take something out of the script. This is how the script read. Note: Amos is me the son, Pete is the dad, and Rita is the mother.

Rita waits in the foyer. Pete comes out displaying the tube.

PETE

Rita, look what I found  
in the counter in there.

RITA

How'd it?

(takes the tube)

Oh...would you believe it?

I also found a...sex toy  
yesterday in one of  
Amos's board games.

Pete becomes worried about Amos.

RITA

And when I was vacuuming,  
I found a condom wrapper  
under his bed.

PETE

I found something naughty in his clothes,  
too.

RITA

Do you think he could  
be...

Amos emerges from the bathroom with his pants on and a shirt around his shoulders. Rita and Pete stare at him, and he suspects that they smell something fishy.

AMOS

I'll be there in a second.

(enters his bedroom)

PETE

(quietly)

I don't think so.

He's a good Christian boy.

He wouldn't do anything

like that.

RITA

Then what...Maybe we must have accidentally made love in *his* bedroom one night. You could have been wearing his pants.

PETE

Yeah. And then we put the toy in his game box and this (pointing to the tube) back in the bathroom?

Rita nods at the possibility.

PETE

(shaking his head)

I don't remember that.

RITA

(beat)

Me neither.

Thankfully Carl didn't include all of that in his final movie, but we still had to film it. We kept getting caught up on the "pants" line; and let me tell you, it was a hoot.

### **Day 3**

Thank the maker we were done with the house scenes. Now it was time to do some filming at the church, for the Sunday morning portion of the film. We filmed at the church that I grew up in and was also working in at the time. It's not like it was an unfamiliar place, and interestingly enough, I ended up watching the completed film numerous times in the same room we filmed some of the scenes in. Talk about surreal.

Anyways, most of the filming went well that day. The first part of filming consisted of me crying my eyes out in front of a cross in the youth room. I tried and failed at crying, but at least I gave it a valiant effort. I was able, however, to channel my emotion into the scene. It was at this time in the movie that my "best friend", a pseudo-goth girl was introduced. Carl's pool of actors consisted of four people, so he had a non-actor play the part of this girl. She wasn't the greatest actress in the world, but was still a charm to work with.

Probably the most challenging scene of the movie was filmed on this day. It wasn't the lines or horrific acting, but the mechanics of the shot. The shot consisted of "Mom" and I

walking down a hallway while she blasted me for hanging out with a “goth” kid. The problem with filming a scene like this was that the camera had to be moving with us. There needed to be a way to both light us and smoothly film us while walking.

In professional filmmaking, cameramen use something called a dolly, which is used to film a smooth path of motion. The camera is put on a cart, which is then put on tracks. Carl decided to spend a lofty zero dollars on this movie and didn’t have one of those expensive dolly thingamajiggers. Carl’s solution was to sit in a wheelchair while Phil would pull him backwards. Easy, right? Not so much. For us to be properly lighted, Carl decided that he would not only hold the camera while riding in the wheelchair, but also hold a light and light umbrella. The light had to be plugged in, so that added a nice obstacle in the way of the motion of the wheelchair and us actors who had to walk over it all. In order for Carl to capture us walking and talking, he needed to be pulled backwards on the wheelchair, which was done by Phil.

We had to say our lines in a certain amount of time, while trying to not trip on extension cords, while attempting to walk at the same speed of the wheelchair, and also say our lines realistically. It was hard, but we did it. Too bad it took 20 times.

#### **Day 4**

This was the last day of principal photography, and by far the strangest of them all. Two more characters were brought into the story. These were the characters in the son’s dreams that we see at the start and ending of the film. The dreams consist of the son seeing a girl dressed in her underwear dancing seductively. The first dream sequence shows the son being seduced by her and lingering towards her. Right when he walks up to her, she turns into a giant bunny and pummels him. The second dream, at the end of the film, shows the son being seduced by the

girl, but walking away. The girl then gets mad, turns into the bunny and heads on the attack towards the son. The son then pulls out a gun that magically appears in his pants and shoots the bunny. Thus, showing him beating the bunny, this represents the victory over porn.

Carl decided he would add the bunny later with his CG prowess; however, the girl had to be real. Interestingly enough, Carl had a girl in mind named Autumn. She had come out to a casting call-out he had done in the past for one of the many movies he had never made. Carl called her up.

“Hi this is Carl. Want to be half nude in our movie?”

She said, “Sure!”

“Great.”

She then pondered, “I’m kind of wandering what kind of outfit you want me to be in.”

“Well I don’t know, let me think about it.” A couple of days later, Carl was extremely surprised to receive an e-mail from Autumn that included multiple pictures of her in different sensual outfits and seductive poses. Carl chose his favorite.

So there we were, in a very large and dimly lit pull barn, Carl, me, and a girl about to strip down to her underwear. The pull barn was owned by the pastor of Carl’s church, who also happened to be a farmer. In fact, on day of filming, Carl went up to the Pastor’s house and was greeted by the pastor’s wife.

Carl plainly told her, “Were shooting a girl stripping in your barn.”

She replied in a very sweet and kind voice, “If you need anything, let me know.” I guess not all pastor families are as rigid and disconnected as people think.

We began filming when it was dark. I told myself over and over again that I would try to be “as professional as possible.” It’s not that I was a player or anything; I just didn’t want to get squirmy. I wasn’t used to seductively staring at a girl I didn’t know, who happened to also be dancing in her underwear.

She danced. Carl filmed. I acted professional.

It took about three hours, but we got it done.

Unlike the wildly popular xxxchurch and *Lord of the Rings*, Carl’s film didn’t end up doing too well. It pretty much flopped. No matter how hard Carl tried to promote the film, it didn’t go anywhere. Carl’s primary target was church leadership and most of them balked at the idea of a film about pornography addiction.

Pastor #1, “We don’t think this is something that we should be talking about at church.”

Pastor #2, “This film is too graphic.”

Pastor #3, “We don’t struggle with that at *our* church.” Yeah freaking right.

Nevertheless, the movie was made. We have about 2,000 copies still sitting in our garage collecting dust and wasting away. Carl lost about 10,000 dollars promoting the film and has given more copies away than sold. He attempted a 500 person direct mailing to pastors around the country with no avail. The Porn Pastors at xxxchurch supposedly watched it but decided not to endorse it because they were pushing their documentary at the time.

Carl will endure though, and so will the movie. It's really cheesy and maybe someday will be laughed at by millions of angst filled teens looking for a good laugh on *YouTube*. All I can hope is that for those who have taken the film seriously, that it will get them to start asking questions and bring a hushed topic out in the open. Hopefully it will inspire people to change for the better. *Lord of the Rings* and xxxchurch did it for Carl; maybe *Beating the Bunny* will do it for someone else.