

Featured Filmmaker: David A.R. White

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News Summary:

Know your lines, show up to work on time, and work with your friends. That's what David A.R. White learned from working with Burt Reynolds on the television sitcom "Evening Shade". He's had an interesting journey from Moody Bible Institute to Hollywood to the "Holyman Undercover Tour," and that's what we talked with David about recently.

News Story:

CC.com: David, tell us about your family and how you grew up.

David: I was born in Oklahoma and grew up in Kansas the son of a Mennonite pastor. We were very conservative. We did have TV and running water, but didn't go to movies or do any dancing. I was the last child in my family, so my parents felt like they needed to give me all the names they had left ("A" is for Andrew, and "R" is for Roy – both my grandfathers were named Roy). Most of my family attended Moody Bible Institute, where they met their significant others, graduated and went into ministry. I started out at Moody, but after my first year I made a tough call to my dad.

I told him I felt God's guidance to leave Bible studies and pursue a dream in my heart for acting. Our high school didn't really do drama, but my senior year I produced a play. I didn't know anything about acting, but I knew when I watched TV as a kid that it was something I wanted to do. My dad was so supportive, for which I'm very grateful. He told me as long as I followed the Lord, he and my mother would support me in whatever I did. So I came out to Los Angeles when I was 19 and landed the role on "Evening Shade" 6 months later.

CC.com: That was a great ensemble show. You mentioned learning a lot from Burt Reynolds. Can you tell us more about that?

David: There were a lot of legends in entertainment that appeared on that show: Hal Holbrook, Elizabeth Ashley, Charles Durning, Charles Nelson Reilly, Terry Bradshaw, Dom DeLuise, Martin Landau. Burt brought back his old friends as guest stars. They've been friends for many years and I'd watch them hanging out together having fun and thought this is what I want to do.

Burt set the precedent; he brought a sense of family to it. He also expected people to know their stuff and always be prepared. They were simple principles that had a whole lot of truth to them. I learned a lot about the craft of acting from him. I engulfed myself in acting lessons, and have been studying ever since, for almost 15 years. I've gone to a ton of classes and studied with a lot of different people to keep improving my skills.

I'm constantly working to hone my craft and learn it well. I want to be the best at what I do, even on low-budget projects. I've found that the more I do it (act), the more knowledge and understanding I have for the art form.

CC.com: What was the first Christian movie you did?

David: It was "[Second Glance](#)" in 1992. I really wanted to do a Christian movie, but didn't necessarily see myself making a career out of it. When "[Second Glance](#)" was done, I was happy with my work and the film and thought I was done with Christian films. But I kept getting offers to do them and I felt a growing desire to expand and grow the genre.

Along the way, I met guys who became friends and started working with them fairly regularly. I first met Brad Heller on a Bran Flakes commercial in 1993. We did "[End of the Harvest](#)" in 1995. Kevin Downes and I met that same year in a Bible study, and then did "[The Crossing](#)" together in 1994. That's the first movie we did together. Since then, we've done 7 or 8.

I've developed a passion for better scripts with real-life characters in situations where God impacts their lives. In the mainstream, you have to take out Jesus and tone down the message, but within this genre we have the freedom to explore the things I'm interested in. I believe God led me into it and is challenging me to push the genre. A personal goal is that more and more people would love and support these films so we can make more of them. As more Christian films are successful, we'll be able to get bigger budgets and make better movies.

CC.com: Your latest movie "[Hidden Secrets](#)" is a departure from the other Christian movies you've done. It touches on some topics that not everyone will be comfortable with.

David: I've really wanted to tell this story for a long time, and if I weren't a producer of the movie, I couldn't have done it. That's one of the things I love about producing; it enables me to tell the stories I really have a heart for.

"[Hidden Secrets](#)" does talk about some things we've never been able to talk about before in Christian films, and I think it was perfect for what we wanted to do. Sean Paul Murphy and Timothy Ratajczak wrote an excellent script, and we're really pleased with the finished project. We talked with a lot of people that didn't connect with the material, so when John Schneider and Corin Nemec told us they wanted to get involved, we were excited about it. Corin Nemec's character is a key one. He ends up being the backbone for the group of friends in the film. Without giving away the plot of the film, God takes something really painful in his life to reach out and minister to others.

We're doing a limited theatrical release in 6 theaters on February 28th and March 1st. Then we're going to go across the country on April 30th, for a

one-night only special event. It's a new thing we're trying. We want churches to use this as an outreach to encourage their people to bring unsaved friends. It's an opportunity to reach out into the community.

CC.com: In several ways, this film is somewhat of a first in the Christian movie industry. One of those is the comedic aspect of the story. You're often the straight guy in your films. How will people be surprised by your Holyman Undercover comic tour?

David: They might be surprised by some of the topics covered. I talk about addiction, drug and alcohol abuse, and some other things people deal with but don't always talk about. The "Holyman" is thematically me. It's a kid from an Amish community on his way to do missionary work in Guam. His plane crashes in Los Angeles, where he meets a lot of crazy people and gets caught up in the fast lane of life.

I found that I was missing the audience you have in sitcom television and I always wanted to do a one-man comedy show. So I started writing about my life and found that I wanted it to grow more entertaining. I exaggerated and embellished the stories and found them becoming more and more funny. I love the theme because it's really me.

The universal message of it is that we all get caught up in trying to be something we think we're supposed to be, or that others want us to be. It happens in all stages of life; older as well as younger. We don't go through life living as God intended us to. So in "Holyman" I try to communicate that the meaning of life is to be the person God created us to be; to walk in Christ's love and peace and reach others one person at a time. We do that when we're the authentic person God created.

In my personal life, I want to use my gifts and talents to glorify the Lord first and foremost. I put Him first, my family second, and everything else falls behind that. First and foremost every morning I bend to Him, asking Him to take my life and do with it what He will. If I can live in that mentality, then I will glorify the Lord, walk in obedience and have His peace in my life.

There are three promises in scripture that I believe sum up our entire existence and life: John 10:10; God promises us abundant life. Not material abundance, but abundance of life. Psalm 37:4-5; Delight, abide and trust in the Lord and He will bring us life and life abundantly. Romans 8:28; throughout pain God will work out all things for those who love Him.

CC.com: You're 15 years down the road in your career. Is your dad still supporting your career choice?

David: Absolutely. He and my mom live in San Diego now, and they're actually helping with the "[Hidden Secrets](#)" release. They're very supportive. I'm really grateful for my family.

CC.com: You have a son now. Did you pass along any of your names to him?

David: Yes. My wife and I named him Ethan Cooper Roy White. We call him Ethan. He's a great joy to us.

CC.com: As the father of a young son (8 months), you may not have much time to read. Are there any books on your nightstand?

David: Not too many. I'm not much of a reader. But I am currently reading lots of scripts and treatments. I'm also reading a lot of Bill Myers' work because we made a film of his book "The Wager".

I'm really a big movie buff. I like thrillers and comedies, but not too much sci-fi. Some of my favorites are "Braveheart," the "Rocky" movies, "Shawshank Redemption" and "Dumb and Dumber."

CC.com: You've had a strong career and great things are ahead. Any advice you'd care to pass along to others?

David: If there's anything else you can do and be happy, do it. But if you have a dream for filmmaking or television, and are passionate about it, go for it. Be prepared to be in it for the long haul, because not everything will be an overnight success.

Above all else, follow the Lord and keep Him first. He'll work out your path for you. You won't know where it's leading always, but it will be good and right.