

MARKETING SERVICES INFORMATION KIT

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RANGELIFE

ENTERTAINMENT



RANGE LIFE ENTERTAINMENT TAKES AWESOME MOVIES, ADDS AWESOME PARTIES, PLUS AWESOME FILMMAKERS, AND THEN TOURS THEM ALL ACROSS AMERICA. **AWESOMELY.**

TOURING SERVICES

With a hard drive full of the most talked-about films from this year's festival circuit, Range Life's rolling roadshow hits over 50 markets each semester, presenting its renowned screening series of films coupled with campus events, pre-film engagements, and exclusive after-parties to universities and independent art-houses across the country. Our network of over 250 Universities is capable of supporting a full college-oriented release, or can function as a marketing platform to boost awareness within this key demographic.

MARKETING SERVICES

In addition to our signature college tour, Range Life's nationwide network of marketing teams are also available for non-touring events and campaigns. Whether your goal is creating buzz leading up to a premiere, or building word-of-mouth and awareness within a release, our unique, low-cost marketing campaigns offer the flexibility to garner national exposure and support films of any size or style, while also tailoring our wide-range of capabilities and services towards your marketing needs.

Campus Marketing - Range Life's network of campus oriented street teams provide unrivaled access to students and University resources and groups for maximum exposure.

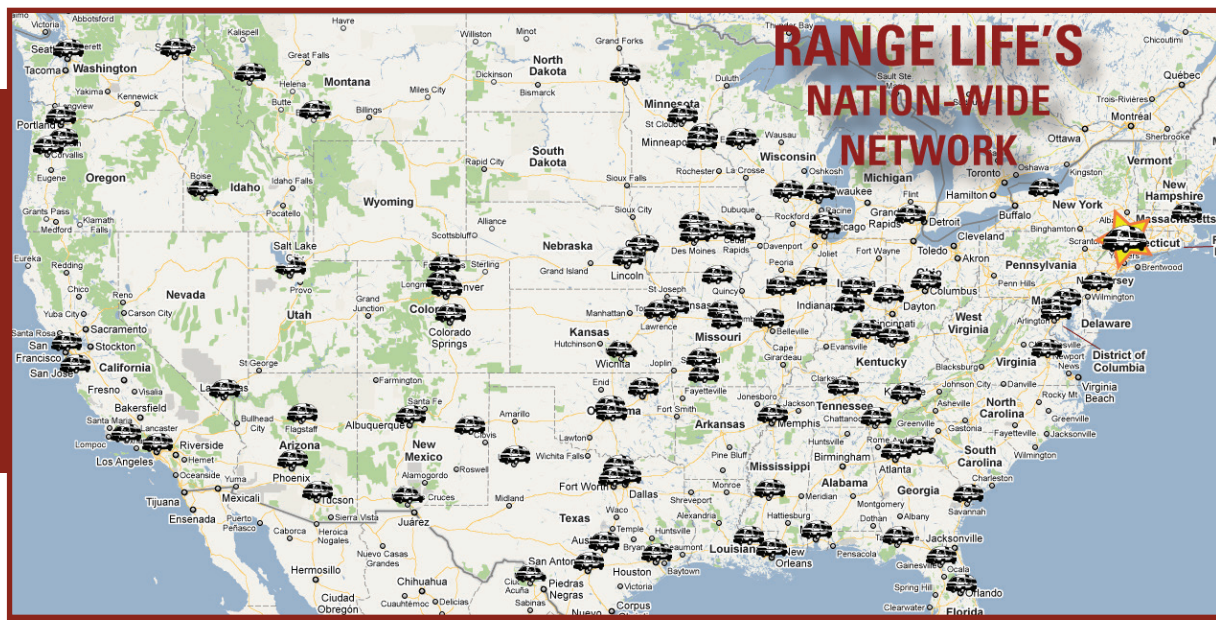
Poster/Postcard Distribution - Our teams across the nation are able to provide fast and effective distribution services to the best locations in every city in the US.

Wild Postings - Large format poster spreads are a staple of any national marketing campaign, and we offer the best rates around with services available in every major US city and beyond.

Street Art: Simple and effective, we can curate and execute a wide range of sanctioned art campaigns in public spaces to set your film apart.

CITIES: 60+

COLLEGES: 250+



CAMPUS MARKETING

Our campus street teams are strategically built from ambitious, local students representing the broadest cross-section of student life in each market. We pride ourselves on working not only with students, but also campus groups, organizations, and official University departments to fully integrate the film into the fabric of each school. Our traditional poster and postcard distribution is able to extend to student housing, and target-specific classroom and building locations.

- Exclusive Poster and Postcard Distribution all over campus
- Specifically Targeted Classrooms, Lecture Halls and Buildings
- Departmental Support via List-Serves and Official Posting Boards



CAMPUS SCREENINGS

Whether you want a fully integrated, nationwide University tour, or simply sneak preview screenings to build exposure and word-of-mouth from highly coveted college filmgoers, Range Life is able to utilize its vital University network to perfectly match the film's needs.

A typical Range Life event includes classroom engagements and/or campus events during the day, which lead up to a film screening that night, which is accompanied by filmmaker and/or talent Q & A, and then an after-party or concert to close out the evening.

This can be a single night engagement, a multi-film series spread across the week or weekend, or a weekly /monthly series spread across the semester, all depending on what fits your programming best. Which-ever option you choose, Range Life is committed to bringing each campus a connective series of engagements, and supporting them with targeted events and strategic marketing, creating a dynamic and lasting experience amongst students each semester.

University Tour - Branded tour with 50-100 University screenings.

Preview Screenings - Build awareness and exposure among notoriously hard to reach College students.

Full Academic Experience - Screenings integrated with scholastic curriculums, filmmaker appearances, workshops, panels, and events.

CORVALLIS, OR
Oregon State University

PORTLAND, OR
Portland State University

OMAHA, NE
University of Nebraska at Omaha
Creighton University

University of Puget Sound
The Evergreen State College
Tacoma Campus

SEATTLE, WA
University of Washington
Seattle University

AMES, IA
Iowa State University

SEATTLE, WA
Simon Fraser University (SFU)
Emily Carr University of Art and Design
Vancouver Film School
Studio 58

IOWA CITY, IA
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

MADISON, WI
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Madison Media Institute

MISSOULA, MT
University of Montana

MILWAUKEE, WI
Alverno College
Marquette University
Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design

BOZEMAN, MT
Montana State University - Bozeman

CHICAGO, IL

SAN JOSE, CA
San Jose State University
University of California - Santa Cruz

LAS VEGAS, NV
University of Nevada - Las Vegas

COLUMBIA, MO
University of Missouri
Stephens College

Naropa University

Rogers State University

Aurora Campus, University of Colorado - Denver

University of Southern California (USC)

SPRINGFIELD, MO

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

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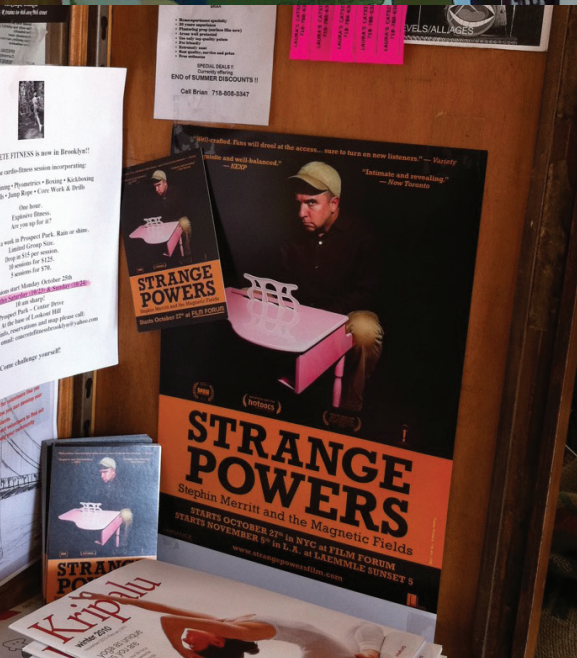
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

POSTERS AND POSTCARD DISTRIBUTION

Our nationwide street teams work fast to provide a cost-effective way to distribute large quantities of postcards and mini-posters to strategic locations in targeted neighborhoods of every city in the country. This basic, yet critical, portion of any marketing campaign ensures that your target demographic will see your message continually in the weeks leading up to, and throughout, the film's opening.

We hit all the hot spots and keep materials plentiful in sanctioned distribution to:

- Coffee Shops and Restaurants
- Movie Theaters and Music Venues
- Businesses relevant to the themes and audience of the film
- Record/Video stores
- Popular and Alternative clothing and lifestyle retailers
- Gyms, Salons, and Athletic Centers
- Community Centers and Organizations
- Tons more!!



WILD-POSTING

Large format wild-posting spreads have become a standard component of any modern marketing campaign.

Often expensive and onerous to execute with the few companies selling “wild” space, Range Life has built an army of the best wild-posting crews in the country and established a vast repository of large public spaces to offer exceptional rates on authentic wild-posting campaigns that can be posted almost instantly to keep your campaign timely and relevant.

- **Wild-Posting Services in every major city in the United States**
- **Up to 100 unique locations per city (*varies by city*)**
- **24" x 36" full color posters includes print production**
- **48-Hour turnaround from art delivery to live posters**
- **Minimum 2-4 week campaigns, heavily monitored and maintained**
- **2-8 posters per location, with up to 10 posters in select locations**



STREET ART

Range Life can work with you to curate an exciting and unique alternative media display for your marketing campaign. We are able to build and execute on any number of non-traditional, creative public displays, including, but not limited to:

Street Stencils are a ballsy way to extend a viral campaign from the web into the real-world

Outdoor Image/Video Projection creates an eye-catching way to pique interest

Pop-up shops offer a fast and cheap way to offer consumers access to advanced content

Experiential Marketing takes the campaign directly to the audience in interesting and exciting ways, including: branded ambient media & signage, parties, events, and more...

Additionally, we can work with you to fully customize your craziest/awesomest ideas and bring them to life!



CASE STUDIES



SPRING 2008

Box Elder - Successfully used the inaugural tour to gross over \$84,000 in ticket sales, over \$27,000 in DVD sales, and to develop a cult following for the film across the country.

FALL 2008

On The Road With Judas - Successfully utilized the Range Life Tour to anchor a strategic marketing campaign for the launch of the film's ancillaries, resulting in over 67,000 units sold during the first two weeks of release, and over 120,000 downloads in the ensuing months, for an estimated total profit of \$195,150.

FALL 2009

Mystery Team - Roadside Attractions and Lionsgate Studios worked with Range Life to successfully use the tour to gross over \$89,000 theatrically while collecting over 2.4 million emails via a nationwide Demand It campaign, to be used towards the film's ancillary sales.

Assassination of a High School President - Sony Pictures worked with Range Life to successfully use the tour as a low-cost theatrical marketing component to launch their ancillary sales of the film, moving over 325,000 units in its first month on the market.

SPRING 2010

Exit Through the Gift Shop - Cinetic Media and Richard Abramowitz worked with Range Life to successfully market the independent release of the film in over 30 markets, culminating with a current gross of over \$3 million to date.

FALL 2010

Teenage Paparazzo - HBO and Area23a brought on Range Life to book and execute a fully-integrated academic screening experience for Adrian Grenier's documentary film at Universities across the country featuring celebrity guest speakers, educational curriculum's, post-screening events & parties, and an interactive art-gallery featuring commissioned works by Shepherd Fair, Banksy, Simmons & Burke, Tim Kent, and Alan Chapman. A few brief clips from our Tour events can be found here: <https://vimeo.com/44817955>

SPRING 2011

Square Grouper - Magnolia Films hired Range Life to create and execute a hybrid release strategy combining our rolling roadshow & campus network with their Day & Date platform, resulting in a 35 city tour on the heels of the film's SXSW premiere, and culminating in simultaneous satellite screenings of the film on 70+ campuses on the eve of it's VOD & DVD release. By working with NORML and SSDP chapters along the way, Range Life was able to curate a film specific campaign that both successfully built momentum towards, as well as helped sustain, the film's ancillary releases.

FALL 2011

Dirty Girl - The Weinstein Company hired Range Life to build, market, and execute underground tastemaker screenings and after-parties for the film's NYC and LA Premieres. By using ambient media, including branded bras, condoms, and lipstick messages scattered all over each market, we successfully converted offline impressions directly to online social interactions.

WINTER 2012

Rampart - Range Life utilized the highly controversial image for the film to execute a lo-fi, viral campaign comprised of large-format wheat paste and black & white flyers to convey a guerrilla political-movement style to fuel speculation, discussion, and ultimately, awareness once the connection to the film was made.

HIGHLIGHTS PRESS HIGHLIGHTS PRESS HIGHLIGHTS PRESS HIGHLIGHTS PRESS HIGHLIGHTS PRESS HIGHLIGHTS PRESS HIGHLIGHTS PRESS HIGHLIGHTS

FILMMAKER
MAGAZINE OF INDEPENDENT FILM

SPORTblog

HIGHLIGHT
NEW BREED :: wbp
STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES



STORIES FROM THE

944

MAGAZINE

END

FILMMAKER
THE MAGAZINE OF INDEPENDENT FILM
UNION SPOUT THE



the ONION
America's Finest News Source

**CINEMA
MINIMA**

A collage of logos for various companies, including Spool, Anthem, and Neofocus.

ANTHONY FILMINFOCUS

Chicago
YAHOO!
MOVIES

**WE ARE
MOVIE GEEKS**

independent
FILMS DIRECT



A collage of logos and text elements. At the top, a yellow and black logo with the number '9' is visible, followed by the word 'chicago' in a white, sans-serif font. Below this, the website 'johnaugust.com' is written in a large, blue, sans-serif font. Underneath the website name, in a smaller, white, sans-serif font, is the phrase '(a ton of useful information about screenwriting)'. At the bottom right, the words 'Film School' are partially visible in a white, stylized font on a dark blue background.

CHICAGO
SUN-TIMES

t.com
 ation about screenwriting,

sfexaminer.com




DECIDER
TWIN CITIES



GEN
ART pulse
film



MN Film TV

A collage of text elements including "MINNESOTA PUBLIC RADIO", "NEW CITY FILM", "LOOK/LISTEN", "St. Louis Magazine's arts blog", and "Francisco".

COOL DRY PL TH



OK/LISTEN
Louis Magazine's arts blog

San Francisco

MPR NEWS Q • THE STRANGER
Page 10

• 944 MAGAZINE
Page 12 - 14

SPOUT
Page 15

FILMMAKER MAGAZINE
Page 16 - 17

44 MAGAZINE
Page 12 - 14
ARTICLE CLIPPINGS

On the road with Range Life's Todd Sklar - and a van full of movies

- Posted at 2:47 PM on December 15, 2009 by Euan Kerr



Sklar admits that sometimes he's not as convinced as the folks he's working with that what they are doing is working.

"I don't know that I necessarily feel that it's working, but everybody else feels like it is," he laughed. "I know we all feel like there's a lot more to improve."

Sklar says some of the films had offers from companies which then went bankrupt. He says films which might seem like naturals for the movieplexes have ended up sitting on the shelves for months. He calls them "PoW's of this whole thing."

Sklar claims that there are now so many gatekeepers in the distribution business that it makes it hard for some worthy movies to get into theaters. So that's where Sklar comes in with his quick hit shows at colleges and art houses.

"It's easier for us to do that than for a distributor to open for a week in 40 cities," he says. He points to "Assassination" as a case in point. After several attempts to get it into theaters failed, the distributor asked Range Life to take it on the road.

"We have no business being a part of a movie like that," Sklar says. "But at the same time it's very indicative of the current state of the film industry." He immediately agreed to the deal.

Sklar says Range Life offers a low-cost, high efficiency way of generating interest in a movie before it comes out on DVD.

Meanwhile he is still promoting his original mission, promoting low-budget movies that don't have a distributor, but he thinks deserves an audience.

Another less publicized part of this tour is Sklar and his associates have been creating a network of people in each city they visit which they hope they can use to promote some of the movies when the Range Life van isn't on the road. He hopes they can be showing films, or even making films which can come together through this network.

"A little 'Range Life' army around the country," Sklar says. He hopes it could lead to what he calls a whole new generation of content. He says he couldn't have made his own first feature without help and this could provide a framework for future film makers.

As for his own film work it has been on hold because of the touring, but he hopes to have a couple of pieces in play soon. He just produced a film with writer/director Dean Peterson called "Incredibly Small" which he hopes will be out in the spring. He is also writing a film with one of the stars of "Box Elder" which they will shoot in the summer. "It's taken a lot longer than it probably should have," he says.

He promises a Minneapolis show.

"The Twin Cities is the core of what we do," Sklar says. "You've got to bring it back home."

Sklar and his pals will be at the Trylon tonight at 7 for "Adventures of Power" and 9 for "Assassination of a High School President."

The last time I talked to Todd Sklar he was in a van in a snowdrift, having gone off the road during a tour to promote his film "Box Elder," ("A movie about dudes being dudes") near Ames, Ia.

This time I caught him eating breakfast in a hotel in Milwaukee, where he spoiled the rhapsodic description of his steal-cut oatmeal and fruit by admitting a 3 am chicken strip eating contest had taken the edge of his appetite.

This is just all part of life when you are trying to re-calibrate the movie distribution system in America.

Sklar is on his way to the Trylon Cinema in Minneapolis tonight where he and his pals on the Range Life Entertainment bus will end their 2009 national tour by showing two movies: the comedy noir "Assassination of a High School President" (with Mischa Barton and Bruce Willis) and the air-drumming comedy "Adventures of Power" (with Michael McKean and Jane Lynch.)

They are two of the 14 films which Sklar has had on the road since early September. (This is the second visit to Minnesota on the tour.)

The movie theater isn't big but the idea is to build buzz. When Sklar went on the road last year he took movies that didn't have distribution deals. This year that's still true of about half his stable, but the other half do have deals, and as in the case of both "Assassination" and "Adventures" got a lot of festival love before falling foul of the economy.

"While we were kind of honing in and figuring out how to make this little road apparatus work as a distribution method," Sklar says, "I think the rest of the distribution landscape continued to fall apart. I think they thought that everything bottomed out and levelled out last year, but the sky was still falling apparently because at this point it's interesting that a lot of the larger films, and even the films that we are working with partners on, are even more excited and more aggressive on what they are doing with us than some of the smaller ones."

Concessions: Concessions: Rome Is Burning

by Lindy West

I have no idea if Todd Sklar is a good filmmaker, but he's quite the convincing pitchman. The 25-year-old Minneapolis native turned bearded Missourian turned quasi-homeless, film-hawking vagabond started Range Life Entertainment in 2008, after growing frustrated with trying to distribute his first feature film (called *Box Elder*, it's about coming of age, like first films tend to be) through the traditional model. Basically that meant getting in a **1986 Dodge van with his friends** ("It isn't like we didn't have the money to buy a better van, but we didn't have the money to buy a better van"), driving around the country for a few months, convincing people to watch his film, and then having parties. Using experience as a music promoter, he applied the model of touring bands to film distribution: "I just figured, how would *I* like to find out about this?... We'll go into a city and find out what makes that city tick."

That first tour, to their semi-surprise, achieved "weird, oddball success," and, thanks to **Sklar's beardy charm** and connections he made working at Sundance, distribution companies took notice. "The prevailing distribution model was falling apart, and we were a really easy thing to point to as an alternative," he told me. Range Life began partnering with other independent films as a kind of pro bono grassroots marketing team, hand-tailoring each screening/party for each film and each market. For now, they live on the road, no home base.

Sklar wears a hat with a feather in it and says "awesome" a lot. **Everything is awesome.** They started the tour, he said, for "the experience of just doing something awesome" and encouraged the audience to go out and "do awesome stuff." At Monday night's *Visioneers* afterparty, I told him about a piece-of-shit job I used to have and how it killed my soul. That, too, was "awesome." Sklar's frank, bro-down enthusiasm is a big part of his appeal: He's a film-obsessive who cites Truffaut's *The 400 Blows* as a life-changer, but his conversation drips with practical business savvy. It's *not* all about the art. Range Life is building a network of satellite teams in each city, aggregating valuable data about its audiences (who goes to which screening of which film, **what brand of beer they order**), and currently fielding, and turning down, buyout offers from big companies.

"The beauty of being young and dumb and idealistic is that none of us are really at the point where we're ready to be exploited," Sklar said. "But we're very cheap labor, and the labor is incredibly valuable."

Range Life is an investment. I do not know if—nor do I completely understand how—Sklar and his bros will revolutionize indie-film distribution or **how you "buy" or "sell" six best friends working their asses off in a shitty van.** But that's their plan, and Sklar makes it sound, you know, *awesome*. "If Rome is burning," he said, "what a great time to have a pail of water and a hammer."



SHAKING HANDS AND TAKING NAMES

TRAILBLAZING FILMMAKER TODD SKLAR CUTS THE
MIDDLE (AGED) MAN OUT OF INDEPENDENT FILM

by **Brian Heffernan** photography by **Dean Peterson**

It's around 10 o'clock on Sunday night. Todd Sklar rides shotgun in his white '98 Dodge Regency tour van amid a sea of Starburst wrappers. Out the window, twenty-somethings wearing skinny-leg jeans and thrift-store tops cruise by on fixed-gear bicycles. 16th and Valencia — the Mecca of San Francisco hipsterdom. This area is perfect. Sklar is here to recruit.

A few hours earlier, *Box Elder*, Sklar's own slice-of-life comedy flick about college "dudes, bros and dude-bros," made its San Francisco debut. Its physical humor and improv dialogue are as meandering and off-the-wall as the college-aged audiences that enjoy it most. The film doesn't pretend to be the typical high-brow arthouse indie film, and Sklar, who wrote, directed, produced and starred in it, doesn't pretend that either.

The film rallied 81 viewers tonight — decent numbers for a first screening, perhaps even grab-a-beer-and-celebrate worthy. But Sklar has work to do, because he isn't just the creative vision behind *Box Elder*. No, as head-honcho of the maverick film distribution and marketing company, Range Life Entertainment, he and his crew of five friends are also the driving force behind sweet talking locals into checking out *Box Elder* and the other three films on tour. Tonight, that means hitting the streets with some old-fashioned PR and promo work.

After a few minutes of searching, they find a parking spot a couple blocks down Mission Street on an empty strip with chain-locked storefronts. Sklar and his band of bros search the inside of the van for flyers. This is their second three-month tour. It's only been two weeks since they shoved off from Columbia, Mo., but the van already looks like the inside of a suitcase requiring the use of the smell test before putting on any clothes. The flyers

turn up and the boys hit the streets.

Sklar, wide-eyed with a big smile, approaches a group of club-bound girls at the corner of an intersection as they wait for traffic to pass. He dons a western button-up, a beard and a headband made from the stretched-out sleeve of a t-shirt. Looking almost like a young, hip Al Borland, he introduces himself. The spiel takes less than thirty seconds. He hands them the flyers. They hash out the details: 7:30 p.m. The Clay Theatre on Fillmore. Free admittance with the flyer. They are excited. Sklar is excited. See you there.

Shaking hands and taking names — this is Todd Sklar. At only 25, he is pioneering the future of independent film distribution and marketing by doing the one thing that seemed obvious to him — taking it straight to his audience. For Sklar and his film *Box Elder* that means cruising the Mission, staying busy on Facebook

“UNLESS YOU ARE JUST DOING IT
FOR FUN, YOU MUST HAVE YOUR
OWN DISTRIBUTION PLANS.” — Mike Mohan

and talking it up in college town bars. The independent film world is paying attention.

“Right now, everyone's talking about film distribution,” says Mike Mohan, chief content producer at the Sundance Film Festival. Years ago, he says, a filmmaker wrote a script, shot the film, and then hoped it would premier at Sundance and get picked up by a distributor. He or she would walk off with a royalties check and



Todd Sklar (at right) and his promotional posse, takin' it to the streets

start the next project.

But since a high mark in 2002, annual box office ticket sales have decreased 17 percent, nearly 270 million less tickets, by 2008 according to the Motion Picture Association of America. “The new reality is that distributors are putting out fewer and fewer movies,” says Mohan. “Unless you are just doing it for fun, you must have your own distribution plans. It has to be Plan B, if not Plan A.”

For Sklar it was always Plan A. The ideas for his method of distribution came straight from the flick that got him hooked on filmmaking: *The 400 Blows*, by François Truffaut. “The film itself is based on coming-of-age and naturalism themes,” says Sklar. “The film’s editing, casting choices and everything else about it reflected that.”

Sklar wanted to apply that approach to his own film, even down to how it physically got to the audiences. That meant rounding up

some buddies to distribute the film in the most organic, college-like way possible — jump in a van and go on a road trip.

Conveniently, he already had some experience with promoting local events and concerts in his college town of Columbia. That set Sklar apart. “You go to film school. You learn how to use a camera,” says Mohan. “You don’t learn how to contact theatres across the country and get them to play your movie at 7 p.m.”

Sklar decided to bypass the standard film fest cycle and go straight for the niche audience that has remained largely untapped by independent film marketers, but that he knew would love his film — college kids. “It’s like in *There Will Be Blood* when Daniel says, ‘There’s a whole ocean of oil under our feet!’” says Sklar.

Once the audience is at the theatre, attending the film transcends just watching a movie. It becomes an event supporting Sklar’s cause. Attendees meet Sklar and his gang who’ve traveled from

Missouri to get them to watch the film. Afterwards, they have a Q&A session with the filmmakers, actors and Sklar. And then get invited to hang out with everyone at the after party. The community between the audience members builds naturally. They feel part of the team, and that excitement is viral.

"The event culture of it has a nice penumbra effect," says Alex Cohen, a professor specializing in film distribution at UC-Berkeley. "You have a large group of people who are willing to tell others about it." He compares it to the 1971 cult film, *The Hellstrom Chronicle*, which virtually took over town after town by blanketing them with fliers promoting a one-time screening of the movie.

The difference now, Cohen says, is that Sklar has mediums like social networking sites to get people's attention. The biggest obstacle now is breaking through the clutter. Piling into a van and hand-delivering a film is one way that's accomplished. It's like writing someone a letter in the era of e-mails. It just means more.

"A lot of people have gone out and done the self distribution thing unsuccessfully," says Mohan. "Sklar's just one of the only people who've come out not beaten down." That he hasn't burned

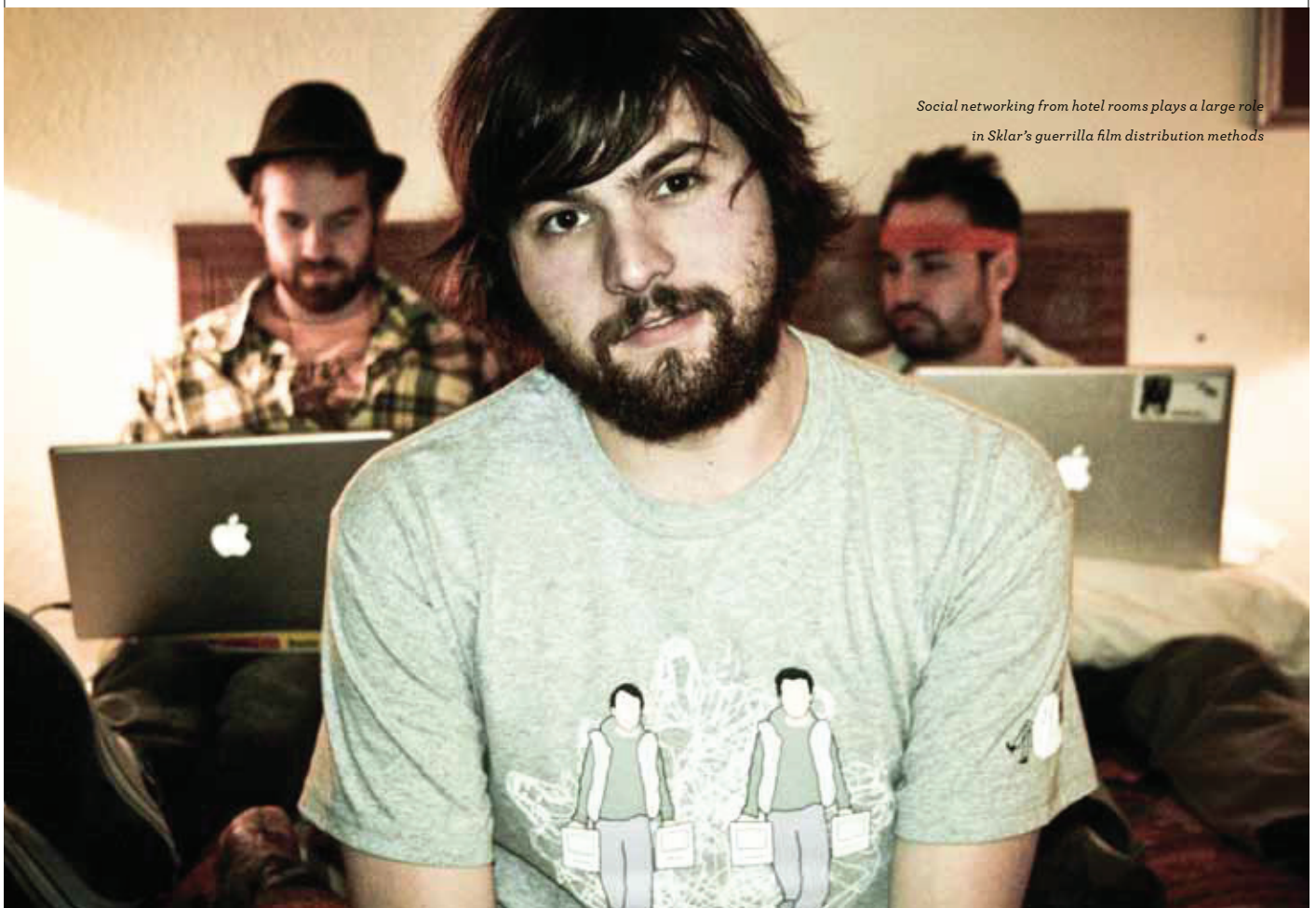
out is a testament to how driven he is. He has also organized the Spring 2009 tour while working on two scripts and producing one film, with three more in the works. But perhaps Sklar's biggest strength and his most genuine attribute, is his ability to make people believe before experiencing it.

Earlier, the same night as his grassroots PR work in the Mission, Sklar and two fellow Range Lifers sit on the sidewalk under the neon-lit Clay Theatre marquee. *Box Elder* started only moments ago. Outside, they reflect and rehash how well the tour had been going the past two weeks.

A young couple walks toward the theatre after grabbing dinner down the street at Dino's Pizza. The guy stops momentarily and eyes one of the tour posters — an opportunity for one final pitch. Sklar seizes it. Tells them what he and his friends are doing. Tells them that they've only missed the credits. Tells them how much they mean.

"Just sneak in. If you don't like it, just leave."

They don't leave. Afterward, they buy a DVD. They say they'll come back to see the three other films. They do. That is Todd Sklar.



Social networking from hotel rooms plays a large role in Sklar's guerrilla film distribution methods



Indie Film on Tour: Todd Sklar on Range Life



By **Karina Longworth**

posted 6 months ago



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In the song "Range Life," from their 1994 album *Crooked Rain, Crooked Rain*, Pavement's Stephen Malkmus sang about the frustrations of being a touring indie band on the summer festival circuit, settling for cred ("Hey, you've got to pay your dues before you pay your rent"), while much more famous but arguably less talented artists sucked up the spotlight. Stuck on the disenfranchised end of this binary opposition, Malkmus brattily goads the behemoth bands reaping its spoils: "Stone Temple Pilots, they're elegant bachelors...I will agree they deserve absolutely nothin', nothin' more than me." In the chorus, Malkmus longs to be rid of the touring hassle: "If I could settle down, then I would settle down."

When Todd Sklar named his indie film roadshow venture Range Life, the Pavement reference wasn't coincidental. The same kind of imbalance cited by Malkmus in the middle of the so-called alternative music revolution has arguably gone on to infect the indie film world: the movies which least need the film festival as a platform benefit from it the most, but the little guys continue to play along (if they're even invited to) because it's the only game in town. You could say that Sklar's Range Life, which is shepherding four truly independent films to 20+ cities in North America, is an attempt to shake up that model's monopoly. But for Sklar, the Pavement reference goes deeper.

"The other thing that really struck a chord is that sarcastic chorus, talking about 'settling down,'" Sklar said this week. "That really connected with hopping in a van and taking the film on the road rather than having it showcased to the same crowd every month while we get free cheese and crackers and fruit leather in the filmmaker lounge. Don't get me wrong, I do LOVE filmmaker lounges (and fruit leather in specific), but I truly think, and more so now than ever, filmmakers shouldn't be settling down when they've finished their film. That should be when you're most excited and most involved in the work."

Sklar first went on tour last year with his own "movie about dudes being dudes," *Box Elder*. Elder skipped the traditional festival route: after a super successful run at the Ragtag Cinema in Columbia, Missouri (a cinema-friendly college town and home of the True/False Film Festival), Sklar and his crew got in a van and hand-delivered the film to 30 cities, punk rock road trip style. With that first tour a resounding success, Sklar says, "I figured we might as well do a victory lap and head west for the fall." One by one, Sklar soon fell in with three other filmmakers who "wanted to blaze the trail with us": JJ Lask, whose Gondry-esque *On the Road with Judas* (pictured above) debuted in Dramatic Competition at Sundance 2007; Bob Byington's *RSC: Registered Sex Offender*, which premiered earlier this year at SXSW; and *In Memory of My Father*, a dark comedy starring Judy Greer (*Arrested Development*) which won the Grand Jury Prize at CineVegas in 2005.

"All four of them are writer/director pieces, with the filmmaker stepping in front of the camera in each one as well, and all four also have a strong aspects of naturalism and improvisation," Sklar says. But a more important factor for the inclusion of these films in the program is that their makers "were interested in trying this model and focusing on audience versus other aspects in regards to the release of their film."

What type of audience does Range Life focus on? "College kids or post graduate hipsters," Sklar says. "Basically people who don't have to wake up early, or don't mind staying out late." A typical tour stop is a four-night-stand at a given city's art house or college theater, with each film playing one prime-time show on one of the four nights. The tour encompasses markets both big and small, and Sklar says the team targets their energies towards different ends in different spots. "In Lawrence, KS, we might focus mostly on getting a fun engaged crowd to help build that core audience, and then the following in Minneapolis week we might try to cater more towards picking up press exposure to use later on. Having so many different markets is really crucial because you can pick and choose what you want out of each one." Sklar has non-exclusive deals with each filmmaker, and most plan to use the attention attracted by the tour to promote DVD sales down the road.

But there's one city conspicuously missing from the Range Life schedule: New York. I note that if this is intentional, it would seem to defy the traditional wisdom that small films need the support (and pullquotes) of New York critics to legitimize a long-tail prospect such as a DVD release. This question gets Sklar fired up.

"I could be naive or wrong about this, but my whole take on the 'platform release' in New York/Los Angeles to drive ancillary aspects is that it's bullshit. I've never in my entire life walked into a store, started browsing around for something to buy, and then based my decision on what someone wrote on the cover. I think that validation is extremely overrated, and that word of mouth is much, much stronger. I think we're at a point, at least generation-wise, where searching for and discovering content is half the fun, and 90% of the media that we watch is either through word of mouth (whether that be from friends, or a curated source; i.e. festivals, Netflix, blogs, etc) or from our own outreach."

"This interview is actually a perfect example," Sklar continues. "I'm almost certain that the types of people who'd check out, and more importantly actually enjoy my film, would be the ones who read about it on Spout, whereas a full page spread or top shelf review in the *New York Times* would be great for my dad to show his golf buddies, but certainly wouldn't do much as far as helping the film find its audience. I very seriously think there are far too many independent filmmakers out there who are catering to their parents golf buddies. Making a film certainly shouldn't be about validation, it should be about storytelling, and that makes releasing the film all about audience, as there's no point in telling a story if you don't have an audience to connect with it."

The first real test of the power of Range Life to mobilize a long-tail audience will be the DVD release of *Judas*, which happens in December. In the meantime, the tour hits Chicago this weekend, with all four filmmakers in attendance. There's more info at the [Range Life website](#).

ROAD TRIP

Filmmaker and distributor Todd Sklar tells **Scott Macaulay** why he sidestepped the traditional distribution route for a DIY tour.

After filmmaker Todd Sklar completed his college comedy *Box Elder*, rather than apply to festivals he decided to immediately begin the process of DIY distribution, projecting his film from a laptop at college campuses and art houses throughout the Midwest. This fall Missouri resident Sklar and his company Range Life Entertainment expand upon this distribution model, taking *Box Elder* back on the road along with three other features in a souped-up traveling indie film festival. Below we talked with Sklar about his approach toward guerilla distribution.

When did DIY distribution come into the equation for you? Before you made your film or after you finished it? At the beginning. I wanted to learn a lot and make a great film, and I felt the best way to do that was to have as much control of the process as possible — to not let it get polluted. I knew the festival route pretty well, and I also knew that it wasn't really for me. I didn't like the idea of going out and trying to create hype, trying to generate a sale after which you don't have any control over your film. I wanted to make sure that I was able to be involved in the process of how my film was released into the world so I developed this distribution model. Also my investment group had questions about distribution, and I wanted to show them that I had a direct way to return some of their investment pretty quickly after the film was finished.

What inspired you to first start thinking

about this particular distribution model?

It was a combination of two things. The first time I ever read about *Four Eyed Monsters* was also the first time I read the article "The Long Tail" by Chris Anderson. I read about [them] in the same night, and it was just like they fit together.

And how did you go about actually finding and booking the colleges?

A lot of it was cold-calling under a fake name. I first started as me, but nobody wants to talk to a filmmaker about releasing his film. When that didn't work I started a distribution company, which was as easy as filing an LLC. I then came up with a fake name and started e-mailing and cold-calling people. As soon as it was "I'm representing this film" instead of "I made this film," people were really responsive. The hardest part for most campus film committees is, "How do we market these films?" So if you can show them a cost-effective way of doing that, they're really responsive.

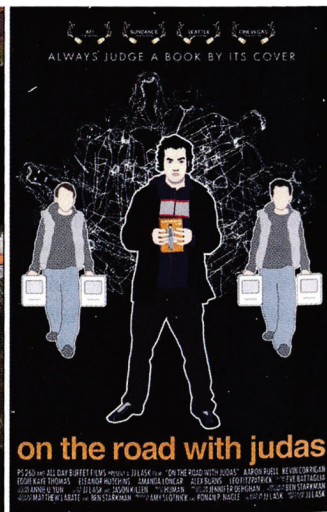
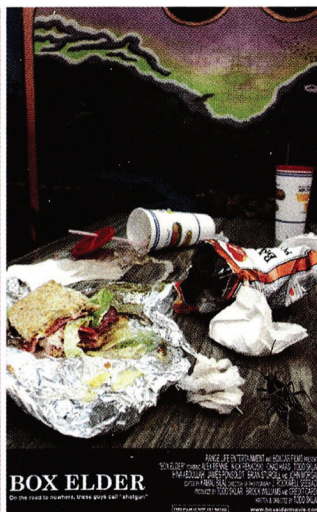
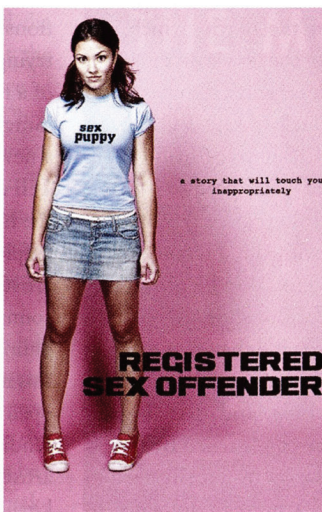
And how did you say that you'd market it?

Grassroots stuff — going on tour with the film with my lead actors and my editor. He's a filmmaker himself; he comes and does Web virals. We combine being in the college — running around to classrooms, talking on campus, meeting kids on the streets, going to coffee shops and bars — with e-marketing through social-networking sites. A lot of it, too, is contacting groups and committees who we feel our film might connect to and allow them to be our spokespersons, our champion base.

How did you do advance publicity? Facebook and YouTube helped a lot. And I had onsite teams — my friends, basically — in each city. I'd send them a really long e-mail [asking] what bar do people go to, what's the local pizza place, what coffee shops do people hang out in, what corner should we hang our posters. Then when we arrived we'd go out and show the trailer on our laptops and my iPhone, explain the model and talk about the film to people. We'd say, "We're not going to preach to you; you're going to laugh and enjoy yourself." We'd throw out condoms, which are kind of a fun thing, in bars. A lot of it was about pitching ourselves rather than the actual film. If you as a filmmaker can connect with someone, they can become your new best friend. They're going to live and die for your film.

And you would drive from campus town to campus town?

We got a big conversion van with WiFi for the six of us, and we turned it into a kind of moving office. We'd go to colleges I had a network in, but would then make sure that every fifth stop was a legitimate art house, because that way we'd get press. We made sure that for the first third of the tour we could experiment with our marketing plan, and that if it failed, we'd still be okay. The whole [tour] was kind of like a figure eight. We went through the Midwest where we knew we'd have support, and we would always cross back through our home base areas, which were Minneapolis, my hometown, and then Missouri, Austin and Athens, Ga. We



had enough good friends in all those places that we could [easily] set up offices and send out DVDs and T-shirts and other kinds of materials. The whole tour was 16 weeks total, and we split it in four parts.

How far in advance did you book the screenings? Some of the [bookings] were as short as one or two weeks notice.

Were you doing four-wall engagements — renting the art houses for a fixed fee? Nothing was a traditional four wall. We found general managers who were willing to work with us. If you take it to a corporate level then it just takes too much time. But people who work in movie theaters are generally cool people and if you can connect with them individually, on a theater-by-theater basis, they're going to help you out.

What were some of the theaters that you played at? We did the Gene Siskel in Chicago and the Ragtag in Columbia, Mo., where we're still playing, and that was kind of our foundation. We did the Midtown Arts Cinema in Atlanta, the Dobie in Austin and the Magnolia in Dallas. We've been in college towns like Bloomington, Ind., where we did the Ryder, which is their student [theater]. We did the Ciné in Athens. [Before the tour] I had that romantic [notion] of playing in alternative venues like pizza houses, but for the most part we screened in traditional art houses.

What campuses did you screen on? University of Georgia, Indiana University, University of Austin, University of Iowa. We did Drake's Theater in Des Moines. We did the Oak Street Cinema in Minneapolis, which is near the University of Minnesota campus.

Did you do revenue splits with them, or were you getting guaranteed booking fees? Most of them were revenue splits, and that was for two reasons. One was because I felt like it would make the pitch easier because no one had heard of the film at this point. I wanted to make the [booking] offer as attractive as possible just to get people to answer my e-mails. The other thing is I wanted as many people who had participated in this [tour] to be happy at the end of it so they would champion it [the next time].

How big were your audiences? I guess our lowest was probably in the twenties. We had one that was in the forties, but generally it was in the sixties, seventies or eighties. The highest was 340, maybe. We had six or seven that were a couple hundred for one-night engagements. And then in Columbia we played to a couple thousand people over the course of the whole run.



TODD SKLAR.

"I WANTED TO MAKE SURE THAT I WAS ABLE TO BE INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS OF HOW MY FILM WAS RELEASED INTO THE WORLD SO I DEVELOPED THIS DISTRIBUTION MODEL."

And how did that balance out against your expenses? We made about 11 grand total. Spent 21 and netted 32.

Did that go back to your investors? Most of it went back to our investors; some of it went back to us so we could continue touring.

Does national media play a role in your model? It hasn't yet. I would like it to obviously. But people who read national media aren't necessarily the people who would come to a movie they've never heard of on a Tuesday night. I always say there's an inner circle of people, the niche audience for your film. And then there's a larger circle of the maybes, and outside of that you have everybody else in the world. We're really focused on that inner circle and finding the most cost-effective and efficient way of connecting them with the film.

What's next? We're going back on the road in the fall, and we're bringing four films total this time. We're taking *Box Elder* back out, and then we have *On the Road with Judas* by J.J. Lask, *Registered Sex Offender* by Bob Byington and then *In Memory of My Father* by Christopher James. The four films are going

to play one night each in each place.

Aside from the number of films, what are you doing differently this time around? We're going to try to [ask for] booking fees so we have a guaranteed gross, and we're going to have DVDs available. We sold DVDs toward the end of the last tour, and that's when we made most of our money. We would sell them for either 10 or 15 bucks depending on the nights, and about a third of the audience would buy DVDs after each screening.

You're very outgoing, and I can tell you have no problem walking into a pizza place and handing out flyers to everyone there.

Is part of your strategy simply a byproduct of your own natural gregariousness? That is true. I think the key thing, though, is not to be embarrassed by your work, to take a step back and to not be like: "This is my movie and everything in the world depends on this movie." Instead, think: "What's the best way that you can connect your film with people in the world who would want to see it?" Don't think: "I need to make the money back, or, I need to play at this festival so I can get an agent for my next film." ▼

RANGE LIFE ENTERTAINMENT is a privately-held film exhibition and marketing company. Founded by Todd Sklar after the innovative and successful self-release of his debut feature *Box Elder*, Range Life is committed to breaking distribution boundaries and connecting creative communities through it's cross-country touring platform. Centered on event-based screenings and niche-targeted marketing, Range Life will program over 40 new features in theaters across the country through its yearly touring programs.

For more information, please visit www.RangeLifeEntertainment.com

