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Cieslewicz Directs Pilot for TV

Wittenberg-Birnamwood Alumnus, class of ‘99, Erik Cieslewicz has been very busy working in various positions within the entertainment industry. For his latest project he directed the pilot episode of the new hour long dramedy television series, *Hard to Be Me*. The project is going to have its premiere in the historical AFI Silver Theater in Washington, DC on March 7th.

A 2006 graduate of the University of Wisconsin: Oshkosh’s Radio/TV/Film program, Erik Cieslewicz graduated as the first student in the history of the university to win the Dean’s Outstanding Undergraduate Research Award for a narrative film with his short film *Forfeit*.

After graduation, Cieslewicz worked for two and a half years at WSAW-TV, first as a master control operator and then as a photojournalist. In less than two years shooting and editing, Cieslewicz helped the news team bring home their first Emmy nomination and second Edward R. Murrow Award by being the primary photographer and sole editor on the series *piece Secrets in Shawano*. His work on other projects and series filled the trophy case at the station with five Associated Press Awards and six Wisconsin Broadcasters Association Awards.

While honing his skills shooting and editing video daily for WSAW, Cieslewicz directed two festival screened

shorts in *Holy Chip!* and *Microcosm*. The latter became a media darling of Northern Wisconsin for its ties to the area, finding coverage from CBS and Fox affiliates across multiple media markets and several newspapers.

In 2008, Erik moved to Washington, DC to begin working freelance on video productions for political ads and non-profit organizations. In addition, he wrote two feature length screenplays for *Blue Claw Entertainment* in Baltimore, both of which were used in Hollywood pitch sessions with *Happy Madison*, *Mayhem Studios* and *Morgan Creek*.

Erik is the son of Joe and Diane Cieslewicz, Galloway, who encouraged him to pursue a plethora of interests. “My parents forced me to do ev-

erything in high school, from football to choir, auditioning for the musical to taking the introduction shop class. I’m really grateful for that as it helped me find my passion in story telling, though I really didn’t zero in on film until 2002 when I saw the film *Fight Club*, that really turned me on to visual story telling and I’ve been hooked ever since” comments Erik.

While at WBHS, Erik was heavily involved in the theater and choir. He was in three of the four Spring Plays and was in all four musicals, including snatching the lead his sophomore year in *Once Upon a Mattress*. His father, Joe played Col. Pickering in *My Fair Lady*, the first musical ever performed at WBHS. Erik notes, “I adored both Cathy Bates and Gary Clark



Director Erik Cieslewicz and Cinematographer Gene Ertle lining up a shot for the pilot episode of *Hard To Be Me*.

Photo courtesy of Nadine Asaad.

(who I still keep in contact with) who directed those productions. I still use some of Gary’s director tricks in my work now. “

Attending UWGB on an acting scholarship, he dropped out for a while trying to make it in a punk rock band. When

that didn’t work out, he went back to UWMC in 2001 and then transferred to UW-Oshkosh in 2003.

View the trailer for the project on-line here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8qHkUu64nig>.