

Growing up in Ohio can be difficult for a kid who wants to be different. As an angsty teenager I couldn't wait to move away from the comfort and banality of Midwest and get out to where I thought life would be better. My ticket out was going to be my love for filmmaking, I would chase my dream wherever necessary, and that would hopefully be far away from my hometown. Then, as luck would have it, I found the actual love of my life just before college, right as I was about to pick up and head west. This happy circumstance along with the reality that my family is riddled with proud educators meant that if I wanted to remain a member of my family I would have to pursue higher education, so in my rebellious way I decided I would appease all parties involved and go to school to study film. So, instead of my 4500 mile trek across the globe I traveled 45 miles down the road and attended the University Of Cincinnati to study Electronic Media. A few things coincided in the following months and years, I fell more in love with my high school sweetheart (who went to a different school), I started honing my craft of filmmaking which made me fall deeper in love, but a third and unexpected love started blossoming; I was falling for the city of Cincinnati.

I was lucky enough to be raised by the greatest parents any kid could have, I know most people say this but my mother is a teacher and my father is an engineer, so I am duty-bound to only state well-reasoned facts. They instilled in my sister and me a curiosity of the world and people around us plus, being born and bred Ohioans themselves, they had the famed dedicated work ethic of all midwesterners. So, try as I might to be a slacker my family held me to a higher standard they knew I could achieve and once I found the spark to ignite my passion I already had the building blocks to make it work. Just as all of these puzzle pieces were aligning in my life, all of my various loves deepening, I had the stark realization that if I wanted to pursue my craft I would be forced to leave Ohio and travel to where the industry was. I should have been overjoyed at having my hand forced, for having a reason to leave home like my former self could not wait to do a short four years earlier. But as I was walking across the podium to accept my diploma all I wanted was any excuse to stay, and I knew this was not just the fears of a millennial leaping into the deep abyss of the joblessness left from the 'Great Recession,' or the endless, gaping pit of paying back student loans, this was something much different.

As my now fiancée and myself are apartment shopping in Los Angeles a few odd months later, making the inevitable move out west to pursue our Hollywood dreams, we take a second to ask ourselves if this is what we really want. I had just spent the entirety of my formative years and an unconscionable amount of my families and my own money chasing this dream but still something felt wrong. We left LA with every intention of returning to start anew but with the daunting task of rebuilding everything from scratch. At our most unsure moment a lifeline was extended, I hear of a major motion picture happening in Cincinnati and I have a way to get on it. This is where my assertion about having the greatest parents is proven. They supported me when I said I wanted to pursue this insane dream, when I wanted to leave them and go across the country, but they also shift gears with me and support me when I want to chase an even more unsure dream of working as the lowest rung on the totem pole in film production, in Cincinnati, Ohio.

To say that everything went according to plan from that moment on would be disingenuous and would lessen the reality of what hard work and tremendous amount of sacrifice followed. I have seen recently the assertion that films shooting in Ohio is glamorous and having celebrities in town to “throw out the first pitch” is fun but that fails to even scratch the surface of what herculean strides the film industry and dedicated local crew members have made in this state. I was lucky enough to be given the opportunity to chase my dream in my home state and with fellow Ohioans whose talent and sacrifice carved out a success where there was not one before. Nothing about filmmaking is easy or convenient, especially in a place like Ohio where there is not nearly the movie making infrastructure of bigger film hotbeds, but thanks to the Ohio Film Tax Incentive and in conjunction with a plethora of local talent, we have completed projects that we can all be proud of.

My initial love for film came from the mediums transformative capabilities, we have all been shaped in one way or another by motion pictures, and film has the power to really make a difference in all lives. But beyond the medium of film, the actual production of these works of art helps change lives and fortunes as well. I have seen firsthand the positivity and change that having a film being made in Ohio can make, be it a local rental house competing with much larger national rental houses on the quality of equipment they supply for our movies, to the restaurant that surreptitiously opens its doors in a new neighborhood only to be swarmed by the loving, albeit hungry, arms of a film crew, or even the simple fact of so many young people staying put in their hometown, growing roots and investing in the state that has invested in them.

I started this story by claiming how badly I wanted to be different growing up, in this day and age having a clear dream and vision and being able to achieve it while remaining true to your roots and loves is about as different as it gets. We hear so many negative connotations about everything I have mentioned in this story; a wayward millennial who hasn't worked hard a day in their life, a crumbling midwest city who has lost all industry, a down economy with no upward mobility for those who need it most. The motion picture industry is a unique industry, whose intricacies are hard to explain in a single essay, but with the investment of the Ohio Motion Picture Tax Credit, all of the aforementioned negative connotations have become positives beyond anyones wildest imaginations and being a filmmaker, I have a pretty wild imagination. My hope is for everyone who reads this to please consider urging our Ohio lawmakers not to cut funding to the Ohio Motion Picture Tax Incentive, rather see the reasons why this incentive has been successful and work to keep fostering a program that is working, to strengthen Ohio into the unique and incredible place that it is, a place that my wife and I are thrilled to call home.