



Playback Magazine: Talent Watch: Andrew Nisker

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Indie doc-maker and eco-activist Andrew Nisker is attempting to rid the world of harmful chemicals and needless waste one film at a time - no distributor required.

We caught up with filmmaker Andrew Nisker just days after his return from Arkansas, where he was invited by Walmart headquarters to screen and discuss his latest doc, *Chemical*.

In *Super Size Me*-esque form, *Chemical* follows a family's three-month journey to live without chemical-based household and personal care items. It is the sequel to Nisker's first eco-reality doc, *Garbage* (2003), which trails a family's three-month journey to entirely rid their home of waste.

"The message is that the revolution starts at home," says the former *Sex Confessions* director, who earned his chops in directing lifestyle and doc TV for CBC, CTV, Chum Television and Global over the past 20 years.



With a few indie features, comedic screenplays and DVD games also under his belt, the 41-year-old Toronto native finally found the wherewithal to marry his passion for filmmaking with his 'green' obsession - first with *Garbage*, which was inspired by the sick goings on during the Toronto garbage strike in 2002 and now with *Chemical*, spurred by the discovery that the air quality in our homes is up to 50 times worse than our outdoor air quality as a result of the everyday chemical-based products we use.

A chronic asthmatic, Nisker has always had daily reminders of how the environment impacts our health, but until the Internet became a practical means of distribution, making money with these kinds of films was never so viable.

"Everything's turned upside down now," he says. "Today it's all about corporate relationships, social enterprise, community building and downloads."

If the emergence of online video streaming paved the way to buying and selling Internet distribution rights for film and TV over the last decade, it seems the dawn of the download coupled with the bust in broadcasting is making way for the rise of self-distribution and creative entrepreneurialism.

This is especially true for films like *Chemical* and *Garbage* that can be leveraged as an edutainment tool for students, employees and the general public.

The bigger point, says Nisker, is the public is ready to embrace this kind of messaging - the environment is a hot-button issue.

As for Walmart, which approached Nisker after a key exec had seen his film, he says it's not about selling *Chemical* in stores. If the retail behemoth - that has at least 5,000 stores and 1.9 million employees worldwide - uses *Chemical* as a tool to push its sustainability agenda among customers and staff, the film would have the potential to reach 100 million people worldwide. The biggest film distributors on the planet don't have that kind of clout.

Nisker is still in talks, but it's his timely approach to film distribution and profit that's really of note.



Every day he's busy forging relationships across the board. Literally. Boards of education and public social enterprises are key, he says. With *Garbage*, for example, he partnered with Tim Horton's to sponsor multiplex screenings for school groups from B.C through Nova Scotia, spreading the message to more than 5,000 Canadian students.

He's working off that same model to get *Chemical* into local communities across the country.

"For independents, it's really important to find the right partner for each right," he says.

To that end, Tricom Media is handling TV sales, so far including TFI in France, YES in Israel and Super Channel in Canada. The rest is self-distribution.

In addition to creating new and customized templates for government, education and corporation in an effort to connect with individuals, he's reaching out and being reached online, every hour.

"It's not hard to find our people on the Internet - whether it's amom's club or an eco group - they're out there and they're accessible. They can post our blog, link to us, watch our film - buy it, rent it, on iTunes, on our site," he explains.

Andrew Nisker

<http://www.andrewnisker.com>

www.takeactionfilms.com