

CLEVELAND INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL } April 4 - 15, 2018



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DIRECTOR BILL WATTERSON'S MAZE LEADS HOME TO CLEVELAND

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Many recall the days of constructing elaborate fortresses equipped with trap doors, secret passages, and adventurous plotlines—all made in the comfort of the living room with the help of some sturdy dining room chairs and a few sets of bedsheets. Director Bill Watterson's model, carefully constructed in his childhood home in suburban Cleveland Heights, would go on to inspire his first feature film, "Dave Made a Maze."

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This vivid childhood memory exemplifies the kind of free flowing imagination that led to Watterson's first role in the film industry: production assistant on a production here in Cleveland. From there, his career wandered west with the hopes of bringing more of these ideas to life.



"I moved out to L.A. to make, period," Watterson states. "I wanted to be in a community of makers, who got financially compensated for their efforts. Acting, writing, music, directing—it all comes from the same impulse, and experience with one feeds comfort with another. And I drew from all those worlds to get this movie made."

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Known for his smart, dry-witted stand-up comedy, Nick Thune—an actor, comedian, and musician—stars as struggling artist Dave, and Watterson praises his leading talent for his impact on the film.

"What a great dude," says Watterson. "So committed, so willing. He really took a chance with us—we were total unknowns. He came in based on the strength of the script, and when he saw what we were building at our pre-production space, he knew we weren't kidding around."

Thanks to generous donations from American Apparel, solar energy company Solar City, local shopping centers, and plenty of daily dumpster diving, the crew obtained 300,000 square feet of cardboard to build Dave's massive maze. These free set materials served as a huge advantage for a team on an unbelievably tight budget.

Although Watterson's busy schedule this year includes writing multiple scripts and managing an influx of new acting gigs, he is excited to share his fun, "quest-driven adventure comedy" with hometown fans.

"The culture, the attitude, the fortitude of Cleveland, bleeds through everything I do," states a proud Watterson. "So many Clevelanders helped get this made, and we finally get to bring it home."

To celebrate his homecoming and the film's Cleveland debut, Watterson welcomes audiences to well-known westside establishments,

Superelectric Pinball Parlor and The Happy Dog, for pre-party and after-party festivities on the film's opening night at the Capitol Theatre.

—Amy Brown