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Filmmaker's focus is on morality, not on 'issues'

By Erin Ryan - eryan@idahostatesman.com

Edition Date: 09/21/07

At age 23, Brandon Freeman already has learned to laugh at himself, at least when it comes to his early work.

"My first film was a 30-minute feature called 'Battle of the Mind.' It was terrible," Freeman laughed. "The movie is a dream, and you wake up at the end feeling cheated. Someone told me it's posted on YouTube as 'a movie some idiot made.' "

But even this first crack showed promise, the kind that landed Freeman a spot in the Idaho International Film Festival. His first big film, "The Broken Quiet," is one of only two locally made, feature-length projects accepted for 2007, and festival founder/director Bruce Fletcher said it's one of the best he's seen in the festival's five year history.

"As far as a feature debut, it's really strong. He's got a tremendous amount of talent," Fletcher said. "I'm a big advocate of all independent, local, DIY productions, and I think Brandon's film is fantastic. The seriousness of what he attempts to do, whether he succeeds or not, is impressive."

What Freeman attempts to do is tell a story rife with powerful issues without making "The Broken Quiet" an "issue" film. It's about relationships, mistakes, faith and lack of faith, anger, grief, being utterly lost, dying and wishing you could, but most of all, it's about forgiveness.

It follows a troubled teen named Ashlee (Kaytlin Schrader) facing unwed pregnancy, the loss of her mother (Laura Mason) and life with her severely depressed, formerly abusive, recovering alcoholic father (TJ Johnson) all at once. To Freeman's credit, the story is relatively balanced and complex, as opposed to the cartoonish, cautionary tale it so easily could have been.

"If you just make a film about an issue, it becomes forced and points a finger. In this film, issues become non-issues because they're about the people involved," Freeman said.

As a result, "The Broken Quiet" is not a heavy-handed treatise on morality, but Freeman's strong Christian faith is evident.

"Everything I do in the end, my motivation is to glorify God," he said. "Not to preach or evangelize, but to do the best I can for Him." So far, that has meant working and worshipping at the Vineyard Christian Fellowship of Boise, where Freeman heads up multimedia production. It was there that he dealt with his own addiction issues in a program called Celebrate Recovery, and the people he met inspired him to express the concept of total brokenness dissolving into peace and meaningful change.

"Until we're broken, we can never be real and never heal," one of his characters says, and the outcome of the film depends on it.

Audiences may not agree with everything they find in the story, but they will be hard-pressed not to get caught up in it. From the script to the lighting to the acting to the cinematography to the smallest nuances of background and sound, Freeman's first real film is a triumph, and it was done in only 10 weekends with a budget of \$700.

At first, no one wanted anything to do with it, but Freeman kept visiting online film forums, sharing information about the project and asking sincerely for guidance and help, from his community and from above. One by one, the right people came around, and the movie happened — not exactly as Freeman planned, but exactly as it was meant to.

"It was either dumb luck or providence," he said.

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- [Brandon Freeman's film Web site](#)
- [Watch a trailer for "The Broken Quiet"](#)
- [More on "The Broken Quiet" on the festival's Web site](#)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Go see "The Broken Quiet"
2:15 p.m. Friday, Sept. 28 and 7 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 29, Egyptian Theatre, 700 W. Main St., Boise, and Edwards Boise Downtown Stadium 9, BoDo. \$6-\$8.
Contact: 331-0909.

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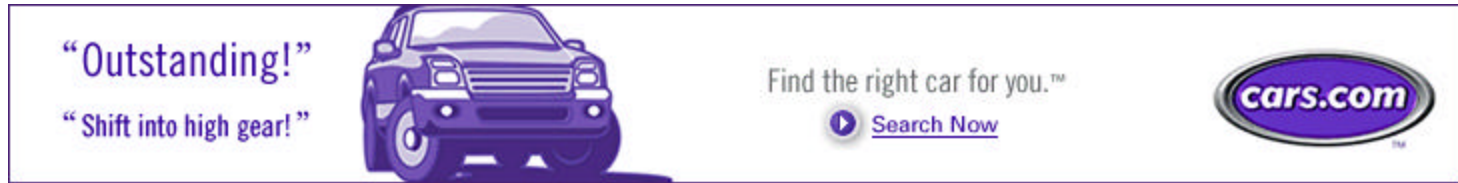


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