

NO MORE MR. NICE GUY: THIS RAUNCHY WEB SERIES PUTS CANADIANS IN A WHOLE NEW (HILARIOUS) LIGHT

BY JEFF BEER

If *Just Passing Through* isn't the best thing to come out of Prince Edward Island since *Anne of Green Gables*, it's definitely the funniest.

At 2,185 square miles and 140,000 people, Prince Edward Island is Canada's smallest province. And its place in Canadian pop culture isn't much bigger. Among its East Coast brethren, Islanders are often overlooked, especially in favor of the more colorful Newfoundlanders. The Island's big claim to fame is *Anne of Green Gables*, a world-renowned book by Lucy Maud Montgomery first published in 1908. Since then? Not so much.

Filmmaker Jeremy Larter is trying to change that. Born and raised on PEI, Larter has used the proliferation of web content and distribution to tell Island stories that may not have the tourism board jumping for joy, but the rest of us laughing out loud.



Larter's latest is a seven-part web series called *Just Passing Through*, about Terry and Parnell, two Islanders with ambitions to move out to Alberta's tar sands "to become millionaires." But they get stuck in Toronto when their car breaks down and end up crashing at their uptight cousin's condo. Larter says he and co-creator Geoff Read wanted to mix some Canadiana with the classic sitcom sensibility of shows like *Three's Company* and *Perfect Strangers*.

"The original idea came about when we had been talking about *Goin' Down the Road* and then started watching the SCTV parody of it with Joe Flaherty and John Candy," says Larter. "We thought about how funny it would be if you took the two main characters and dropped them into a sitcom world. The phenomenon of Maritimers heading West for work is still going strong and our dads had a lot of stories about Islanders heading to Toronto in the '70s looking for work, and they'd just have all these crazy stories about their misadventures of living in the big city."



Terry and Parnell soon get used to city life and even start cashing in on their own version of PEI exports, namely, potato moonshine, garlic finger snacks, and Island erotica. The two are direct descendants of Bob and Doug McKenzie and the Trailer Park Boys.

"We don't call it 'hoser comedy' but it's been around forever and it really plays well here, yet Canadian broadcasters have never made that kind of show," says Larter. "Obviously our show is very Canadian. I'd be surprised if Americans understood any of it."

The accents and regional references may sound foreign but the show has attracted a strong following far beyond Green Gables. Turns out, Handy Clam humor is universal. "Of course people like a diseased sex toy!" says Larter. "But we didn't expect the show would appeal to so many people outside the Maritimes."



The entire series was made for \$150,000, with funding from the Independent Production Fund and Innovation PEI, as well as a sponsorship from Moosehead Breweries' for product placement of its Alpine beer brand. "Alpine was a perfect fit because it's the beer those characters would drink," says Larter. "Plus, we already wrote a scene with the Alpine Oracle [a beer-swilling Maritimer psychic] and we didn't want to change it."

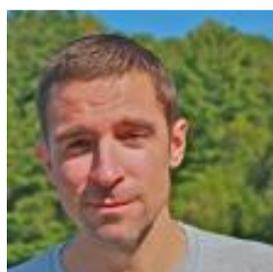
The decision to make full 22-minute episodes, over a shorter more web-friendly length, was tough but Larter saw it as a now or never situation. "It's extremely difficult to get a show made through a broadcast or cable network," he says. "You could work for decades in the industry and still never get the chance, so here we had complete creative control and just figured it could be our one chance to do a show our way and see if it goes anywhere."

Larter and Reed have been talking to broadcasters and production companies about taking the show to television, but in the meantime writing has started on Season Two.



Viewers outside the Maritimes and Canada may be surprised at how little Terry and Parnell have in common with the clichéd “nice” image Canadians have around the world. “I don’t know why we have that image,” says Larter. “We’re definitely polite and say ‘sorry’ a lot but where I come from we also swear a helluva lot, and are pretty rough and tumble characters. That was the world I grew up in.”

In addition to teaching us how to fill out a PEI pogy report, *Just Passing Through* is also a lesson for other creators in non-traditional markets. “You have to create your own mythology with your own stories,” says Larter. “Because no one else is going to do it for you.”



JEFF BEER

Jeff Beer is a senior writer with Co.Create. **CONTINUED**

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Is that show good. Your fuckin rights it is. I used to own that same car 94 Topaz before I went out west. Mine was shit brown though, not high fuckin end like that black one.



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AMBER MAC > JEFF BEER 9 MONTHS AGO

As an Islander and Fast Company blogger, I'm very excited to see this web series featured. Now I just need to ask the team if I can have a cameo!? #AGirlCanDream ;) -Amber



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ANDREW SPRAGUE > AMBER MAC 9 MONTHS AGO

I got a cameo Bammer!



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ROBERT YOUNKER > JEFF BEER 9 MONTHS AGO

The best thing about this show (as an Islander) is that I feel like I know these characters first hand.



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