



Interview: Director Greg Koorhan

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After the madness of Hollywood's Awards Season, during which we drop names like James Cameron and George Clooney as if they were old college buddies, it is a relief and a joy to turn around and find that there are prestigious film festivals, talented directors, and meaningful movies to be found right in your own backyard. For all of the above, look no further than writer/director Greg Koorhan's new film, *Level Up*, which can be seen later this month at the [West Chester Film Festival](#). For those who are never quite sure where and when they can see great short films, the WCFF is the place to be.

Level Up (which runs approx. 20 minutes) is Koorhan's sophomore release, following 2008's *Tripping Up*, which took home the Best Comedy prize at last year's WCFF. I spoke with Koorhan on the phone to learn a bit more about his past, present, and future status as a filmmaker.

Like many in his trade, Koorhan grew up a fan of movies, storytelling, and the visual arts. With his keen eye for images, he went on to study design and photography, eventually finding a career in advertising. Together with his wife, Terry Whitaker, Koorhan founded and continues to run [Crossbow Studio](#), a marketing and production company. "Composition is huge," he explains. "Advertising is where I cut my teeth." The skills he learned through work, such as being able to tell an entire story in a thirty second spot, turned out to be the building blocks of a budding film career.

When the Koorhans' son Leo expressed a talent and passion for stage acting, Koorhan saw an opportunity to give him some on-camera experience and a "sense for the process of movie-making." Their first film collaboration, *Tripping Up*, gave birth to [Crossbow Studio Films](#) and went on to be named Best Comedy at the WCFF and First Glance Philadelphia, a finalist at the 2009 Action/Cut Short Film Competition, and named one of the top 5 films at the Third Screen Film Festival.

Unaware of how well-received *Tripping Up* would be, and with Koorhan out of town, sixteen year old Leo accepted the award at last year's WCFF. Understandably, he has had a lot of local attention and Greg explains proudly that the understanding of "how a film affects an audience" has cemented Leo's appreciation for acting.

Leo Koorhan and *Tripping Up* co-star Laura Piccoli also appear in Greg Koorhan's newest short, *Level Up*. Though Greg admits that the first film began as a way to give Leo on-camera training, he also finds a fascination in the issues and stories concerning adolescence. "To a teen," he explains, "there can be a lot of drama around seemingly simple challenges." For example, an issue with self-esteem (such as that faced by the clumsy protagonist in *Tripping Up*) can be a great hurdle around which to build a compelling story.

Koorhan finds inspiration not only in the issues facing today's youth but in the particularities of the teens around him. *Level Up*, for example, parallels the relationship between a teenage boy and girl and their favorite pastime, video games. Koorhan explains that the idea for this story arose from "watching Leo's friends interact while playing video games," and the unique mode of communication they developed as a result.

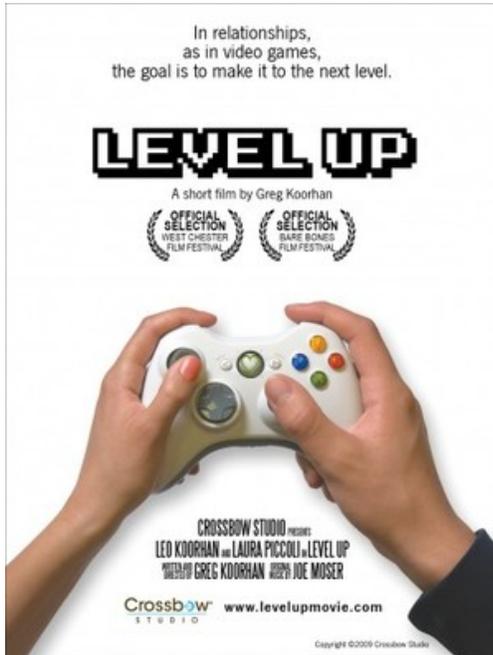
The budding actors are themselves inspirational for this director. Koorhan enjoys the "attitude, energy, and willingness to grow" that he finds in young actors, and seeks to cultivate a place for them to mature and develop artistically during the process of making his films.

From thirty second marketing ads, to a five minute short, and now on to a twenty minute subject, Koorhan hopes to soon direct his first feature, and why not? Like the titles of his first two films, Koorhan's momentum seems to be heading "Up!" Regardless, *Level Up* has been a rewarding experience already. The film features an original score by composer Joe Moser, great acting by some very talented young thespians, and is already accepted at the WCFF and the [Bare Bones Film Festival](#) for 2010.

You can see *Level Up* at the WCFF on Friday, April 23rd at 7 PM or on Saturday, April 24th at 9:30 PM. In addition, Koorhan will be giving a workshop called "[Parsing the Parts of Production](#)" in which he explains the details of the post-production process (this will be on Saturday, the 24th, at 1 PM). For a full list of the festival's [schedule](#), [tickets](#), and more information, check out the

[WCFE's website](#). Be sure to click to the links in this article to watch *Tripping Up* and the trailer for *Level Up*, which can also be viewed down below.

Still unsure of whether you can make it out to West Chester next weekend? Koorhan's advice to aspiring filmmakers: Come mingle with this supportive group of filmmakers and film-lovers. "You never know who you'll meet." To audiences: You're going to see "a huge variety of great stories from around the world." As he adds, "Where else are you going to see that?"



This movie is on the level.
Crossbow Studio Films

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