

PUBLICATION

Alumni Profile: Stacey A. Davis

September 1, 2015

Stacey A. Davis, who previously worked with Baker Donelson as of counsel in the Birmingham office, now has her own firm, practicing entertainment and intellectual property law much as she did while at Baker Donelson. She recently realized a long-held dream to write and produce her own film, and the result is *The Sibling Code*, a soon-to-be released short comedy based loosely on her relationship with her own brother. We asked her to talk about her experience making this film.

Quick facts about the project:

- *The Sibling Code* – a comedic short about a sister and brother who must come to consensus as they plan a funeral.'
- Writer/Producer – Stacey Davis
- Director/Producer – Roberta Munroe
- Starring – Amy Hill (*50 First Dates*, *Lilo & Stitch*); Amy Okuda (*The Wedding Ringer*) and Jonathan Lisecki (*Gayby*).

How did you get the idea for the script?

I took a screenwriting course in the fall of 2014 and as part of our weekly assignments we had to write a two-three page scene. One of those scenes had a dynamic brother/sister relationship that was particularly interesting to me. I tend to explore familial relationships in my writings. Over the winter holiday, I continued to develop the characters and the scene into a short film. My husband, Nick, and I had been talking about finally taking the plunge and making a movie in 2015. I knew right away this was the story I wanted to tell.

The underlying brother-sister relationship was definitely lifted from the love/hate relationship I had with my brother growing up. Although neither of the characters are carbon copies, there are bits and pieces of each of us that found their way into their voices. Overall, I think it is a very relatable sibling story.

How did you develop the relationship with the director?

During the development stage of the project, I read the book *How Not to Make a Short Film* by Roberta Munroe. Roberta is a former short film programmer at Sundance Film Festival and turned to directing and producing short films. Her book is known as the "Bible" for short filmmakers. In addition, she offers script consultations for filmmakers and I thought if we were really going to do this, then we should get some input from the short film expert.

So, I sent her my script. A day later, she called and said she loved it. We talked about my plans with the script (originally, I had planned to shoot locally in Birmingham) and she said that festivals are clamoring for comedy shorts. She had been looking for months for one to direct and wanted to come on board. I was thrilled to say the least. That was the first week of February. From there, things happened really quickly. We ran a Seed&Spark crowdfunding campaign and began shooting on May 2. Normally, projects don't come together that fast, but we were really fortunate to be working with such a great team.

Were you surprised that you actually raised enough money?

Nick and I were so humbled by the outpouring of support we saw during our crowdfunding campaign. Our friends and family were incredibly generous and we cannot be more thankful. I want to give a special shout-out to my former colleagues at Baker Donelson – the amount of support they showed for the project is beyond words.

How much time did take away from your law practice?

Making a film was definitely a commitment, and it did take some time away from the practice, but overall I think the film will be a positive for the Firm. I met many of the Firm's current clients at film festivals. In some ways, I see the Film as an advertisement for the Firm because as I travel around to different festivals, I will have the chance to network with writers and filmmakers – all potential clients. The two really go hand in hand in a lot of ways.

Did your law practice in entertainment law play a part in making the project possible?

I definitely think my legal specialty played a part in bringing the film to life. I would see my clients go out and make their own films – many on a shoestring budget – and that inspired me to go out and give it a try. When it came time to production, my film clients were so generous with me – they provided valuable advice, contributed to the Seed&Spark campaign or offered their services on the film.

What are your next steps?

The film is currently in post-production and we hope to have it finalized by late summer. From there, we will begin to submit to film festivals nationally and around the world. We think the film has broad audience appeal and are hopeful that we will have a successful festival run. From there, we will look into other distribution options, such as online distribution.

What would your advice be to others with similar types of dreams?

Hmmm...not sure that I should be doling out advice, but I guess it would be the same as what everybody says – "just do it." I spent a lot of time sitting around "thinking" about making a film or "dreaming" about making a film and you can imagine how fruitful that was. You have to be proactive. You have to take the risk. And, you may fail. The movie may be a total flop. But, at least we can say we did it. We all know that there are worse things than failing.