



Fast Forward Friday with Greg Reitman



For this week's Fast Forward Friday, we interviewed filmmaker Greg Reitman. His documentary film *ROOTED in PEACE*, will be screened at the [Martha's Vineyard Film Center](#) on July 15. Greg is based in Santa Monica, California.

Q: What are you currently working on? Tell us about it.

*For the past six years I've been working on a feature documentary film called *ROOTED in PEACE*, which debuted at the prestigious Sedona International Film Festival and is now playing in various cities on the festival circuit. It's memoir-based but also relies on luminaries such as Deepak Chopra, David Lynch, Paul Hawken, Lama Surya Das, Dan Siegel, Pete*

Seeger and others. It's essentially a transformation journey — how one person can learn to make the necessary changes to enjoy a better life — and in so doing inspire others to want to improve their own lives and society as a whole.

Q: What was the inspiration and impetus for doing this project?

I truly wanted to change our world. I was disheartened by the tragic event of 9/11 and how America was changing. How we were living in a fear-based society. One day while traveling through JFK airport I was almost arrested for not giving up my bottle water as I was walking through the security gates. I watched as the TSA agents profiled various ethnic groups. It made me appreciate my freedom. It also

made me think that this was not the America that I loved and grew up in. I thought it was time to share my personal story about The Giving Tree: Rooted in Peace and how this film could help us grow as personally, as a nation and as one people.

Q: Who are your artistic heroes – who have had an impact on you and your work?

Some of my artistic heroes range from Marc Chagall, Federico Fellini, Charlie Chaplin, Steven Spielberg and Steven Soderbergh. What I found in each of them is their unique way of expressing their art as artists.

Q: What keeps you motivated and inspired as an artist?

There's nothing more fulfilling after finishing a film and screening to a large audience who have a profound effect in their lives by your content. It's one thing to talk about it another to experience it. As an artist, I find this very rewarding that in my own little world I can have such a pervasive impact.

Q: What other projects would you like to tell us about?

I'm really excited about the idea of producing and directing my next slate of feature films. We have three amazing feature films on the roster at Blue Water Entertainment, from the true story of the unfortunate killing of my French roommate Roni Levi, to the rise of musical surf rock legends The Ventures, to the family action film Shaolin Kid. All are great stories; impactful, transformational and entertaining.

Q: What is one instance of knowing you are living in your vision?

When I wake up in the morning and I meditate for 20 minutes. The idea of being Peace and living Peace are high barriers to achieve. But when it becomes the norm, like meditating, everything gets easier which allows your vision to manifest.

Q: If there were no barriers to entry, what is one thing you would be doing?

I would create a small publishing division focused on comics.

Q: What has been your biggest obstacle in achieving your vision?

Like many, financing is always the hardest especially when making controversial films. However, I was a bit surprised how few people realize the importance of Peace and wanted to financially invest or donate to the film. Additionally, I was also surprised how the film festival circuit relies on celebrity-driven films rather than great

cinema and storytelling. You can make a great film, but if there's no audience to receive the message this can be daunting.

Q: What do you do to stay connected to your creative self?

I carry a journal 24 hours a day and always write in it. It keeps me fresh and allows me to capture my ideas throughout the day. I also meditate, which helps in my creativity.

Q: If you could let go of something that has held you back, what would it be?

I think the idea of "I'm not good enough" has been my biggest obstacle. For me now, the key is letting go and getting out of the way of myself.

Q: What is your favorite piece of art?

Marc Chagall's Windows of Jerusalem.

Q: What person do you most admire, living or dead?

Hank Greenberg is my hero. I met him when I was a kid in Upstate New York at the Nevele. I was the ball boy on the tennis court. Hank was a Jew and a talented baseball player. He told me the story of playing baseball for the Tigers and almost breaking Babe Ruth's all-time home run record. But the other teams walked him because he was Jewish so he wouldn't break the record — this has always marked me. Stand for what you believe in. Always hold true to your vision and never let the small things get in the way of the big idea or the big dream.

Q: If you could be known and celebrated for one thing, what would it be?

Let the truth set you free. Greg Reitman was all about bringing truth forward.

Q: If you could describe yourself in one word what would it be?

Magnanimous.

Q: What is your guilty pleasure?

Cacao chocolate.

Q: If you could sit down with yourself 15 years ago, what would you say?

I'm glad I followed through with my vision of being an extraordinary filmmaker.

Q: Where would you most like to live?

Marin, Santa Cruz, Berkeley or the Big Island of Hawaii.

Q: What is your idea of success?

Happiness. Being able to find your passion that supports your vision and supports your way of living. And finding someone who you can share and build a life with whom you enjoy being with.

Q: What is your idea of happiness?

It's knowing that not everything is going to be perfect but to be able to smell the roses along the journey.

Q: Final thoughts?

Never stop believing in yourself. It's all there for the taking. Just believe and watch the magic unfold. It's in all of us.