

Tucker Max: The man, the myth, the interview

by **Adrian Ramirez**

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Tucker Max is a name known to many college students, often better than the writers of the required texts for their courses.

His book "I Hope They Serve Beer in Hell" has been on the New York Times Bestseller's List for three years in a row. His movie is in theaters now. He describes himself as someone who gets excessively drunk at inappropriate times and disregards social norms.

This was going to be interesting.

As Max apologized for his lateness, we chatted about the beginnings of his website and how the Tucker Max phenomenon started.

"The whole year after [my friends and I] graduated from law school I had been sending emails to my friends; stuff like the 'sushi pants' story, stuff like that started as emails," said Max, "and in 2001 I moved out to Chicago where I put up TuckerMax.com with the stories and emails I sent my friends, and it blew up."

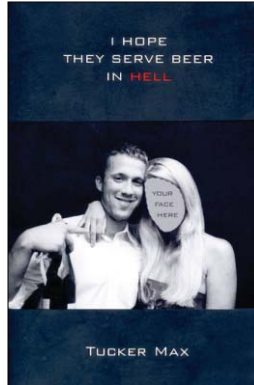
Max's stories aren't for everyone though. During the publicity for the movie based on the book, several groups protested and picketed the screenings based on the opinion that the film glamorizes and glorifies the objectification of women, as well as promoting rape.

"First off, they're kooks, and so if you let kooks upset you, you're going to have a s----- life." said Max, "Their position is just wrong, so why would I get all upset about it?"

Since the book chronicles the tales of his early to mid-twenties, it only seems fair to ask how this has positively or negatively affected his life. In other words, how does 20-year-old Tucker inform 30-year-old Tucker?

"Dude, I've changed a lot. Well, it's weird because in some ways I've changed a lot, and in others I haven't changed a whole lot." said Max, "In 2001 or whatever I was

a complete narcissist. I had no ability to understand or process empathy or compassion. It's not that I didn't care about people, it's just that narcissists don't know how to process those emotions," said Tucker.



Since then, he's grown up a lot, and it shows in the production of the film. For the part of himself, he declined to play the role and instead went with a relative unknown actor to fill that spot.

But, why not play himself? "I mean, who better to teach someone how to be Tucker Max than Tucker Max?" said Max, "It's not that Matt [Czuchry] needs to [imitate]

me, he's an actor and actors are artists and they have to bring something else to the table. So, what Matt really needed to learn was how to occupy the emotional space of the character and that is what took him a while to learn because he's such a nice guy and such a good dude that it was difficult for him to process that at first. But then, he was a better me than me!"

It seems that the "Jim Morrison effect" strikes again. When making a movie, especially with one of autobiographical undertones, taking someone of such strong character and distilling it (in the case of Tucker, to 180 proof) the essence of the individual is retained. During the making of the 1991 film "The Doors" the original band members commented that Val Kilmer was more Jim Morrison than even Morrison was.

"I think all three [main actors] were f----- phenomenal [and] did exactly what

they needed to do and all three were crucial." said Max, "[We] didn't care about casting names. We cared about casting the best actors possible and I think for each of these roles we succeeded. We got astoundingly good actors who did an amazing job."

It really does come down to making the movie the best it could be, which is why fans of the book might notice the absence of some characters who, for the sake of story-telling, were compressed into one person rather than have three separate people.

"It's a movie, so you only have a certain amount of time to tell our story, and it's very difficult in a movie to fully and completely introduce more than three [main] characters," said Max, "so, that meant we needed to kind of compress some people."

"I would say that [Jesse] Bradford came very close to the real SlingBlade (the character "Drew" in the movie) and [he] came to set and was pretty impressed at how Jesse did it. Geoff Stults did a great job; Stults is almost like "Dan" in real life," said Max, "when I see him up on screen I think he's just being Geoff Stults."

The film primarily centers around one of Tucker's most debauched stories, "The Austin Road Trip," during which he and his two friends take a road trip to Austin, Texas and proceed to paint the town "Puke Green" and "Brown #2."

What is next for Tucker Max? Fans of both Max's book and movie will be happy to know that a tentative date of early 2010 is set for the release of his new book that is in the same vein, entitled "A----- Finish First" and if the numbers for the film adaptation of his current best seller prove successful, a sequel could be in the works.

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