

RAYMOND KNUDSEN
SQUARE PEG SOCIAL - PERSONAL STATEMENT

Growing up, I connected with movies more than I did with most people. Movies were a safe place from my real world. With a strained home life and constant bullying for being overweight, I found in film both shelter and a space to imagine something more.

I'd draw my own posters and collect the newspaper's entertainment section just to see what was playing. In middle school, a family friend saw my passion and convinced my parents to get me my first Mac so I could learn video editing. Every week, I'd roll my desktop into the local Apple Store to work on projects, cutting trailers and creating montages of every film that came out that year. In high school, I was awarded a scholarship from Burt Reynolds. He grabbed me and said, "You're gonna make it, kid." I never forgot that. Following in his footsteps, I attended Florida State University for film school. It felt like I had found my path.

But identity is never a straight line. In college, I stepped into the world of competitive bodybuilding, driven by the same hunger that pushed me toward filmmaking: the desire to test my limits. What I found was more pain than beauty, a world obsessed with appearance yet full of hidden struggle. We often sweep trauma under the rug, and a sport like this brings it out. I began making films about my experiences and sharing them with others in that world.

PREP was my most personal creation, a film about masculinity, eating disorders, and the invisible weight of expectations. Bodybuilders who starred in the film said it felt like a mirror of their own lives. That reminded me why I do this: to make people feel seen.

What drives me as a filmmaker is honesty. I'm drawn to stories that pull back the curtain, that explore the gray areas where identity is still forming and tragedy and triumph coexist. My work is rooted in personal experience but aims to tap into something universal: the need to feel understood.

I've produced more than I've directed. While I've learned a lot from the boots-on-the-ground process of making a film, the moments I feel most alive are when I'm in the creative chair. I take pride in diving into stories others avoid, asking questions that don't always have answers.

I have two features in development. One is about an unfulfilled touring DJ who discovers self-love in an unexpected place. The other is a sprawling family epic following a Filipino immigrant, a charismatic casket salesman, and the American baby they raise. The former is a deep passion of mine; the latter is a love letter to my parents.

I want to be part of Square Peg Social because I don't believe in doing this work alone. I admire what you and Ari are building, a space that values honesty and community over gatekeeping. That's where I want to grow.

Filmmaking helped me understand myself. Now I want to give others that same safe place.