

My name is Nathan Tape. I fell in love with cinema when my parents showed me *Raising Arizona*—the first time I really noticed the camera. I earned my MFA in Film Production from LMU in 2006 and spent the next decade working as a gaffer and cinematographer. When COVID hit, I realized it was time to stop lighting other people's stories and start telling my own.

In 2022, I made my debut feature, *OFF RAMP*, a Juggalo road-trip movie about acceptance. I'm drawn to outsiders—people who don't fit in and are searching for their place in the world. I try to approach those characters with compassion, humor, and humanity.

For my second feature, *NON-PLAYER CHARACTER*, I reunited with my *OFF RAMP* co-writer, Tim Cairo (AFI '11). Together, we created a darkly comic, surreal vigilante thriller about online extremism, masculinity, and the erosion of reality in the digital age.

The film follows Hank Krinkle, a lonely, digitally overstimulated content moderator who becomes obsessed with rescuing a sex worker he believes is in danger. Adopting the persona of "Burt Manly," Hank turns his fantasy into a gamified quest to become the violent hero he believes he's supposed to be. As the fantasy deepens, the line between identity, irony, and internet spectacle disappears.

The story is deeply personal. I lost my father this year in a motorcycle accident in Vietnam, and our production designer and friend to suicide—two losses that forced me to confront the destructive ways masculinity can become distorted. As a Southern filmmaker, I've spent my life navigating those expectations, and I've watched internet culture fundamentally reshape how men relate to themselves and one another.

Set in New Orleans, *NON-PLAYER CHARACTER* blends psychological horror, dark comedy, and genre subversion. It draws inspiration from *Fight Club*, *Lost Highway*, *You Were Never Really Here*, and *Brazil*, filtered through a distinctly Southern sensibility. At its core, the film asks: What happens when someone detached from reality uses irony and violence to try to matter, only to become a product of the very forces he's trying to fight?

With *NON-PLAYER CHARACTER*, I'm pushing the humanistic spirit of *OFF RAMP* into stranger, darker territory. Beneath the satire and genre mechanics is an empathetic character study about male loneliness, emotional repression, and the danger of allowing the digital world to replace community, intimacy, and self-reflection.

I want the film to be funny, unsettling, and genuinely human—a story about masculinity that can cut through the noise with honesty, absurdity, and cinematic bite.