



a film by Curtis Pollock

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Synopsis

Short Synopsis

Hal thinks he's reached a dead end by the time he hits his thirtieth birthday, but when he decides to follow Route 30 across the country and looks at life through the eyes of the people he meets along the way, he's inspired to find out whether the end of the road could be a new beginning.

Long Synopsis

Hal has been spending his late twenties like so many others before him: settling for a lousy job, accepting the reality that he may never realize his dreams, and doing his best not to think about any of it. But when the highlights of Hal's thirtieth birthday include being dumped by his girlfriend and slinging drinks at a bar in Queens for thankless customers, the reality he's been avoiding hits him right in the face. His boss sends him on a trip to Atlantic City, and when Hal takes a gamble that pays off, he uses some of his winnings to buy a classic 1965 Chevrolet Corvair convertible. When he spots Route 30 on his way out of town, he decides to keep following the pull of fate and see where 30 will lead him.

Cruising west with the top down and the wind in his hair on a two-lane blacktop introduces Hal to a series of eccentrics who are as varied and surprising as the shifting landscape. Whether he's helping a hockey-playing hitchhiker find his next game, being educated on the finer points of Ralph Nader's career, taking an impromptu tour with an attractive stowaway, or just trying to find his gas tank, Hal's fellow travelers show him there are as many ways to live life as there are people adrift on the asphalt.

However, knowing you have the power to change your life and finding the courage to do it don't go hand in hand. When Route 30 draws Hal into increasingly strange and sinister circumstances, and momentous news from home makes turning back and continuing forward equally uncertain propositions, he must choose between rebuilding his old life and following his new path to whatever awaits him at the end of the road.

Shot on location in ten states to capture the true feel of a cross-country drive through the American heartland and the Pacific Northwest, *30* is about trying to find your place on the road of life without getting run down or left behind.



Frequently Asked Questions

Curtis Pollock answers the top ten most frequently asked questions about *30*.

Did you really follow Route 30 from coast to coast?

Yep; we took a twelve-person crew across all 3,700-and-some-odd miles of it, from New Jersey to Oregon. Then, after most of the crew headed out from Portland for a three-day dash back to New York, I and my brother, who was my second-unit DP, stayed with 30 on the way home to pick up more driving shots. This is a road movie, so I was adamant that you should be able to feel the real experience of this drive as you're watching it: the gradually shifting landscape, the unexpected, amazing things that pop out at you from nowhere . . . it's great eye candy.

This must have cost a bundle. What was your budget?

Well, it was low. Take a guess about the budget, then cut it in half and drop a zero or two, and you might be getting close.

Isn't this a little ambitious for a first-time director on a shoestring budget? Why didn't you just write something you could shoot in one or two locations?

Obviously this kind of thing is a big undertaking for anyone, never mind someone directing for the first time. It would have been a lot easier to shoot something with limited locations; it also would have been boring. Does the world really need another movie about twentysomething slackers taking bong hits in someone's apartment, or whatever it is they recommend first-time filmmakers do? You have to take risks if you want to accomplish anything interesting. I didn't see my inexperience as an excuse to play it safe. Actually, since just about anyone can make a movie these days, it seems like the only way to stand out is to do something really ambitious.

The dream sequence kind of looks like a moving painting. Is it animated?

To get a dreamy look for the dream sequence, we used a technique called rotoscoping, which involves "painting" over a preexisting image. We shot the dream sequence with live actors on video the same way we did every other scene in the movie, and then in post-production, my visual effects supervisor, Michael DeBeer, used the rotoscope technique to create the painted look.

How did you get them to let you shoot the races at the Corvair convention?

Many things about the movie were planned carefully, but this isn't one of them. We fell ass-backwards into the Corvair convention; we had no idea it was going on. When we pulled into our motel in Cedar Rapids, a Corvair nearly took out Aja in the parking lot (she appreciated the irony). When I went over to chat with the driver, he asked me if I was in

town for the convention. My response: “What convention?” We were able to catch the very last day. We just went down to the racetrack and asked nicely; the very gracious Corvair drivers there were enthusiastic participants. Hal and the DP (with the camera, of course) went for a few spins around the racetrack, and I decided to shoot Hal’s pivotal phone call to Queens there as well.

Was it difficult mixing professional actors, amateurs, and people who’d never acted at all?

It was actually a really interesting casting challenge. With nonactors, it was about capturing who they are more than getting them to play a role. For example, the seed of this story was the idea of a thirty-year-old taking this trip as a way to pull his life out of a rut. I immediately thought of Chris for that role, even though he’s not an actor; he had just turned thirty and broken up with his longtime girlfriend, and he spent most of his time bartending but was also a writer on the side. Many of his lines ended up being drawn from a column he writes for a local paper in Hoboken (where we both lived at the time). With the amateurs, it was fun to get them to tap into their alter egos. Andy Clark, who plays the angry redneck in Indiana, is a choir director (seriously) in Providence, Rhode Island; Aja Shevelew (“Lily”) plays a bubbly motormouth who lives by instinct, but she’s a very quiet, cerebral person.

You drafted your parents, your brother, and your girlfriend as cast and crew and brought them on the road. Was that as disastrous as it sounds?

Not at all. I come from a very close and incredibly resourceful family, and I could never have done this without them. My mom’s been an artist and art teacher her entire life, so she was basically my art department, but she and my dad also did the catering for the entire crew every day, cooking dinner on a big hot plate in motel rooms at ten o’clock at night or even heating up lunch on the engine block of the van while we were on location. Not only did Aja shoulder some of the producing burden, she also emphatically embraced the opportunity to act, with great results. (Just about everyone who’s watched *30* has told Aja she’s going to be “discovered” when people see it.) We actually got engaged just as we began pre-production and delayed our wedding until after *30* was done. We figured if our relationship survived making this movie, it could survive anything, and I’m glad to say we’re happily married now.

The soundtrack is spectacular. Where did you find the musicians?

It is, isn’t it? Well, the score was written by Thomas Shaw, the very talented composer and keyboardist of Second Movement, a jazz/funk quintet from New York City. Mark Hanna, a friend who supplied the licks on acoustic and electric guitar in *30*, introduced me to Thomas a few years ago, so I’ve had them in mind for the score since the beginning. In fact, Second Movement played at a *30* fundraising event. I made a short film called *30 Ways* that shows the recording of some of the score, along with the making of the movie’s dream sequence; you can find that on YouTube and our website, www.30themovie.com.

We were also lucky enough to have two songs donated by a band of talented musicians from Boulder called Chief Broom. Although the group has since disbanded, a few of its members still perform regularly in New York and Colorado. In addition to serenading Aja and I at our wedding, Tony Janflone Jr. and his band enhanced our soundtrack with some rippin’ blues guitar and kickin’ sax solos. And last but not least, Kevin Kutz, whose

fiddle-playing embellished his performance as Frankie, provided us with the charmingly inebriated sound of his original ditty “High on the Lincoln Way.”

You got some pretty cool shots of and from the car. How did you do that?

We used special camera mounts that were designed to attach to the car. I’ll rent them to you cheap. Mention this FAQ for a ten percent discount!

Did you really shave the Route 30 sign into Chris’s head for the poster art, or is that Photoshopped?

It’s not Photoshopped; we did shave the symbol into the back of his head. I videotaped the shave and cut a short called *Shave My Day* from the footage; it’s on YouTube and our website, www.30themovie.com.



Production Notes

The Concept

In August of 2004, my girlfriend, Aja, and I drove to Atlantic City to have dinner with her parents and celebrate her birthday. I was also planning to make a trip to her parents' storage locker to pick up what would become Aja's engagement ring. When I asked Aja's father for directions to the storage place, he replied, "Well, you take 30 west . . .," at which point I interjected, "You mean US 30?" The same road runs through the small town outside of Pittsburgh where I grew up. It's the main highway there, and I'd spent my teenage years enjoying some classic Americana on Route 30. Aja's parents had no idea that 30 ran coast to coast, overlapping the Lincoln Highway (the first transcontinental highway) as well as the Oregon Trail; they just thought of it as a local road, the same way people all over the country do.

So after I had given the people I hoped would be my in-laws a brief history of Route 30, I blurted out, "That's why I want to make a documentary about it." Now, I had never had any such plan until that instant. I had always been fascinated with the road, sure, but designs to make a doc? No.

But as I thought more about 30, a narrative started to develop in my mind. By the next day, as we took Route 30 out of Atlantic City, I had envisioned a thirty-year-old man journeying west on Route 30 in a bid to change his life. Thirty is traditionally when you start to feel your obligations outrunning your dreams—the classic midlife crisis situation.

I was about to turn twenty-eight at the time, and of course at that point everyone starts asking you whether you're ready to turn thirty. There's this sense that you have to get your life where you want it by the time you hit thirty, because after that, everything is set in stone. But the closer I got to thirty, the better I was feeling about life, and I'm a natural optimist (probably a prerequisite for being an indie filmmaker). I thought we should be looking at thirty as a wake-up call, a moment to assess our lives and confront the big questions: am I living my life in a way I'm proud of? Am I settling for something tolerable because it's safer than going for what I really want?

So I began to sketch this character who was at a crossroads, forced to confront the reality that his potential was going to waste and that he'd never achieve anything if he didn't take a chance. When life gets to that point, there's often this impulse to upend everything and let fate decide where the chips fall, and I could see this character making that move out of desperation. The lure of the open road in America has always been the possibility that you can escape your troubles and reinvent yourself just by traveling to another place. But of course, if the problem is you, you can't run from yourself. I wanted to explore that dichotomy, and this story seemed like a great platform for doing so.

The Cast

Shortly after the idea for *30* came to me, I was reading Chris Halleron's bi-weekly column in the *Current*, a weekly paper in Hoboken, NJ. His story that day was about a customer's recent theft-marred 40th birthday party at Duffy's, a local watering hole where Chris tended bar and where I once had as well. What caught my attention came near the end of the article: Chris said that while many people dread their birthdays (himself included), he was inviting all to come celebrate his. On November 2nd, Chris was to turn thirty years old, exactly one month after my twenty-eighth birthday. I got in touch with him as soon as I read this. Here was my main character in the flesh: he was about to turn thirty; he and his longtime girlfriend had just split up, and he was in the process of moving out of their apartment; and he was being pulled between the grim specter of a lifetime as a bartender and his loftier ambition to be a writer. Naturally he thought of himself as a writer much more than actor, so to secure his acting services, I appealed to his more earnest desire and invited him to incorporate some of his columns into Hal's musings.

Of course, there's no shortage of acting talent in the New York metro area, and we were able to tap into that. Lou Mustillo, who plays Hal's boss, Eddie, has done a lot of TV work, and my neighbor had stage-managed his one-man off-Broadway play, appropriately titled *Bartenders*. That neighbor, Josh Iaccovelli, revisits his former vocation as an Atlantic City bartender in *30*. Aileen Quinn ("Maggie") is a fellow Hobokenite who's best known for playing the title role in *Annie*. When I met Sam Schreiber ("Richard"), I completely rewrote Richard for him; we needed an appropriate conduit for his out-there antics.

The actor who most impressed me, though—and I assure you I'm not writing this at gunpoint—was Aja. (If you question my objectivity, watch her performance; you'll have the same opinion.) I cast her knowing she could play the role, but she brought so much more to the part than was even on the paper, and I am honored to be the director to "discover" her. Hopefully she'll remember me for that in five years and be willing to take a break from Hollywood to slum it on my indie productions.

The Car

Once the idea for a narrative feature had really taken hold in my mind and I was serious about getting this movie made, I was describing the idea to Jon, who was then my father-in-law-to-be. The first thing he said was, "What kind of car are you going to use? Because the car is going to be one of the main characters." My thoughts exactly. Lucky for me and the movie, he took the importance of "casting" the right car so seriously that he graciously volunteered the services of one of his restored classic cars. We had a few to choose from, but the Corvair clearly belonged to Hal. This car had a very cool vibe to it without being overwhelming or flashy, but like Hal, it had its flaws. Ralph Nader launched his career by chastising Chevy over the Corvair's safety, famously dubbing it "unsafe at any speed" (a later study deemed it as safe as any other car on the road). But then again, who hasn't he scolded by this point? Besides, judging by the Corvair online message boards, there are more Corvair devotees than there were Nader voters in his last bid for the White House.

However, you can't put upwards of 7,500 miles on a car in its golden years. So we got an eighteen-foot enclosed trailer, which we hauled with a pickup truck for the road trip. The crew would drop the Corvair when we needed to shoot it, but otherwise, like any major star, it hid out in its trailer. The truck-trailer combo was nearly forty feet long, and nobody else in the crew wanted to tackle that, so I ended up driving it myself the entire time we were

on the road, sometimes up to twelve hours a day. Aja's standard refrain when calling to book hotel rooms on the road became, "We need rooms for twelve and space to park a forty-foot trailer. That's right, forty feet."

Scouting and Locations

I know the first rule of low-budget indie filmmaking is to use a minimal number of shooting locations, but it never entered my mind to do anything but shoot the entirety of Route 30 (and my determination was rewarded with thirty hours of raw driving footage to screen). No amount of creative shooting can substitute for the natural shift of the landscape and the blur of the bizarre and the mundane that flies by as you travel across the United States on a two-lane highway. Scouting for locations on and around Route 30 became a big part of pre-production; it was necessary to figure out where we could shoot, of course, but the scouting trips also had a big influence on the script.

I was intimately familiar with the Pennsylvania section of Route 30, having grown up a few miles from its bounty. If there was ever traffic to be found in the booming metropolis of Latrobe, it was most assuredly going to be on Route 30. I used to leave high school in the middle of the day, every day. I'd stroll out, waving to students and faculty alike, hop in my car (a 1980 Lincoln Mark VIII), and hit my favorite spots on Route 30. Many of those spots were incorporated into *30*, and some of them—like the Hi-Way Drive-In and flea market, the old-style gas stations, and small local bars—doubled for locations in the Midwest.

Nebraska yielded a wealth of striking locations that were instrumental in the movie. Scott's Bluff and Chimney Rock are about an hour north of Route 30, so this seemed like an ideal place for Lily to take Hal on a whirlwind tour after she hitches a ride with him. Kimball, Nebraska (David Janssen's hometown, which became the last name of his character in *The Fugitive*), inspired Richard's delusion and was a natural invitation for Hal to reflect on the dangers of living vicariously. The Native American earth lodge where Hal and Lily hide out with Richard was another cool Nebraska find (as well as a great place to spend the Fourth of July), and Carhenge, in Alliance, Nebraska, was a natural setting for Hal's dream (surreal even without the rotoscoping effects we later added), and it was the perfect precursor for Hal's moment of truth at the Stonehenge monument in Maryhill, Washington.

Taking the Show on the Road

Let's see. There were nearly 8,000 miles to cover, from coast to coast and back again, with a crew of twelve divided into three vehicles. My mom, the art director and caterer, needed to make three meals a day, sometimes on the engine block, sometimes on the hotplate in a motel. Then of course there was finding shelter for a dozen people on a twenty-four-day trip through eleven states. We shacked up at my parents' and grandparents' for a week in Latrobe, had cabins near the earth lodge in Wellfleet, Nebraska, and made good use of any motels prominently displaying the words "Super," "Value," or "Budget" for the rest of the trip. Needless to say, maintaining any kind of schedule for such a convoy proved to be a constant challenge, and luckily we only lost parts of two days due to weather (we escaped from Nebraska with a tornado on our heels). But any delays could have caused serious scheduling problems, since we needed to pick up an actor who was flying into Omaha and get crew members who were flying home from Portland to their flights on time. Throughout, we consistently had luck on our side, and when she was against us, we adapted and overcame, as Clint Eastwood would say.

Love from the Locals

One of the most interesting and rewarding aspects of making *30* was finding ways to incorporate the wealth of cool people and locations all along Route 30. People all over the country volunteered their talents and resources to help us with the shoot; I was overwhelmed by the generosity and kindness we encountered at every step of the way.

My mother runs a little art gallery showcasing Western Pennsylvania artists. One of those artists is Kevin Kutz, who did a series of paintings capturing the landscape and locals along Route 30. They were really inspirational during the writing of the script, so I went out to his studio—the one Hal visits in the movie—and shot video of his artwork. He's quite a character and I wanted him to be in the movie, but Kevin was uncomfortable playing himself. Thankfully he had no problem playing the town drunk in Latrobe's Tin Lizzy bar. Once we had him cast, he volunteered to bring his special bright-green fiddle to the shoot. I had heard some of Kevin's "jamming" tapes before and invited him to play one of his favorites. To my great delight, Kevin gave us a very personal rendition of a song he and his friends wrote, "High on the Lincoln Way," which forms the perfect backdrop for the montage that blends his paintings into Hal's journey.

Up until Iowa, the health of our forty-year-old co-star, the Corvair, had been causing me to go through my Tums at a prodigious rate. The transmission had been acting up and was deteriorating as we went along; if the car died, so would my movie. When we arrived at our lodgings in Cedar Rapids, Aja was narrowly missed by what looked like a blue Corvair whizzing into the parking lot. After verifying that this wasn't a highway-hypnosis-induced hallucination, I immediately headed over to its owner and jokingly asked him if he had a spare transmission. He couldn't help us with a '65 but said someone else at the convention probably could. Convention? What convention?! Why, the Iowa Corvair Enthusiasts' Convention, of course. We had just stumbled onto a production-value goldmine. And not only did I adapt the "break-up" phone call between Hal and Eddie to take place at the Corvair races, but we also met Larry Claypool, who happened to have written the foreword to our Corvair repair manual. Larry had the car running perfectly with a few quick adjustments. The gods were smiling on us.

That wasn't the only strange stroke of luck we ran into. When we got to Nebraska, we still hadn't been able to cast a key role: Richard's nemesis, the three-legged dog. On our first night in Scott's Bluff, my father and I went to visit his old college watering hole, and we were discussing how to handle the three-legged dog problem when the bartender said, "Oh, my friend Kelly has a three-legged dog." After I shook off my stunned silence, I asked for Kelly's number. The response: "She doesn't have a phone. But here's her address." So we set out to knock on a complete stranger's door. Thankfully, we were clearly one of the least unusual events ever to darken Kelly's doorstep, and she cheerfully volunteered her dog, Teddy.

So many people helped us out—the bar owners in Hoboken and Latrobe who gave us shooting locations, the friendly folks at Carhenge, the lovely town of Astoria, Oregon . . . too many to mention. I'm just hugely grateful to everyone who volunteered their time and resources to join us on our journey and experience the weird magic of independent filmmaking.



Cast & Crew

Cast

HAL
LILY
RICHARD
EDDIE
MAGGIE
JACK
FLEA MKT GUY
LIZZY
DAWN
ABE
DANA
REG
AC BARTENDER
SYBIL
KEVIN
FRANKIE
BLUEBALL BARTENDER
STRANGER

Chris Halleron
Aja Shevelew
Sam Schreiber
Louis Mustillo
Aileen Quinn
Daniel Hutchison
Andrew Clark
Gwen Frey
Rori Cannon
Ryan Bailey
Dana Maczuga
Sean Hegarty
Josh Iaccovelli
Renie Pollock
Don Pollock
Kevin Kutz
Jim Dodge
Darren Maynard

Crew

Curtis Pollock
Chris Halleron
Curtis Pollock
Aja Shevelew
Lee Hayward
Jonathon Shevelew
Don Pollock
Darren Maynard
Sam Schreiber
Renie Pollock
Stephen Cannella
Lia Logan
Michael DeBeer
Mike Gassert
Jesse Malings
Casa Nova Studios

Producer/Editor/Director
Screenplay by
Screenplay by
Producer
Co-Producer
Co-Producer
Unit Production Manager
Assistant Director
Associate Producer
Art Director
Director of Photography
Costume Designer
VFX Supervisor
Sound Recordist
Sound Recordist
Sound Design

Ryan Bailey
Ross Justin Pollock
Sasha Conroy
Thomas Shaw
Second Movement
Mark Hanna
Chief Broom
Tony Janflone Jr. Band
Kevin Kutz

Gaffer
Director of Photography - 2nd Unit /Key Grip
Line Producer
Composer
Score Performed by
Additional Music
Additional Music: "Bessie" and "Entitled"
Additional Music: "Crocodile Tears"
Additional Music: "High on the Lincoln Way"



Filmmaker Bios

Curtis Pollock *Producer/Director/Editor/Co-writer*

Curtis grew up in Latrobe, PA, a few miles from the western Pennsylvanian stretch of Route 30. During one of his first jobs in the entertainment industry—an unpaid internship holding cue cards on a morning show—he quickly impressed a producer who recommended him to Michael Moore’s production company, and as a result he was hired into the art department of Moore’s Emmy-nominated series *The Awful Truth*. When *The Awful Truth*’s run ended, Curtis became interested in producing and worked his way up through the production departments of *The Colin Quinn Show* and *Survivor*, eventually reaching the position of production manager on *Survivor*. His experience at *Colin Quinn* also earned him a spot as an assistant director on the *Saturday Night Live* film crew, where he AD’d many of the commercial parodies for the 2002–2003 season. Since then Curtis has worn many hats (from associate producer to researcher to location scout) on a variety of projects (such as comedian David Cross’s Showtime special, a YES Network Super Bowl special, Kaptain Knivel’s latest stunt jump on the Intrepid aircraft carrier, and a John Lennon special). Recently Curtis served as the prop master for the Susan Sarandon/Ralph Fiennes historical dramedy *Bernard and Doris*, directed by Bob Balaban and produced by Kevin Spacey’s Trigger Street Productions. *30* is Curtis’s feature film directorial debut.

Aja Shevelew *Producer/“Lily”*

Aja Shevelew is a graduate of Brown University who currently works in book publishing as a senior production editor at Simon & Schuster. She found the frenzy and absurdly tight schedules of book production to be great preparation for, well, the frenzy and absurdly tight schedules of independent film production. She relied on the ghost of her Oscar-nominated kinsman, Jeff Chandler, for inspiration in her first film role, and her performance led to one of her proudest moments: when her grandfather called her after watching *30* and said, “You make a hell of a *kurve*, baby.” (If you don’t know your gutter Yiddish, you’ll just have to watch the movie.)

Chris Halleron *Co-writer/“Hal”*

Christopher Halleron writes a biweekly humor column for papers and websites in the New York metro area. He attended Norwich University, a desolate outpost of humanity in the snow-pounded mountains of central Vermont. After graduating from Norwich in 1996, Chris moved to the tropical paradise of Hoboken, NJ, and joined the rank and file of Hoboken’s bar service community. In an effort to pass time between bar shifts, he began writing a column for local newspapers and websites; the now award-winning column

continues to gain popularity and was recently picked up by the *Metro* newspaper in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston.

Darren Maynard *Assistant Director*

Darren Maynard is a veteran of many feature film, episodic television, and commercial productions in New York City. Darren most recently worked as an AD on the Lindsay Lohan/Jared Leto film *Chapter 27*, and he has AD'd many programs for A&E and the History Channel, including *American Justice*, *History vs. Hollywood*, and *Boys Will Be Boys with Shannen Doherty*. He has also worked in the production departments on a wide variety of features and television shows, such as *Spider Man*, *A Beautiful Mind*, *Garden State*, *Syriana*, *The Sopranos*, *Third Watch*, and *Law and Order SVU*. He has earned eligibility for the DGA, but is delaying joining in order to continue working on independent films.

Stephen Cannella *Director of Photography*

Stephen has been developing his career as a video artist since he was a teenager, spearheaded by the creation of his own production company, Streetlite Productions. He has undertaken a variety of video projects, ranging from corporate and industrial to music, live event, and narrative film. Stephen recently wrapped production on his own feature, *The Gun Lap*, for which he was also the DP and editor, and continues to build up his experience while constantly pushing his limits as a video craftsman.