

# Hollywood Ending

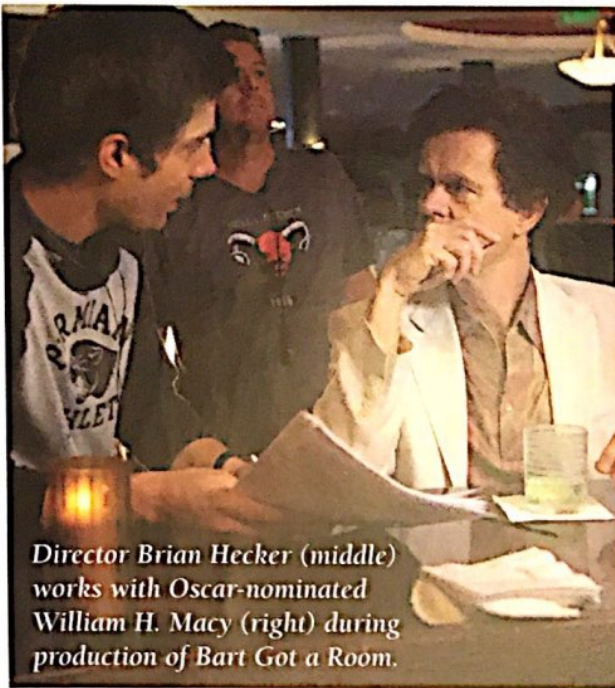
HOLLYWOOD, FLA. NATIVE BRIAN HECKER'S FILM AT LAST REACHES  
THE BIG SCREEN

By Jason Oliver Cottrell



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Director Brian Hecker (middle) works with Oscar-nominated William H. Macy (right) during production of *Bart Got a Room*.

Director Brian Hecker has finally turned his vision into a feature film, and South Floridians should take note: That vision includes them. A native of Hollywood – yes, this Hollywood – Hecker, 37, has spent the past 12 years pushing his “very autobiographical” film, *Bart Got a Room*, inch by inch toward the big screen. On April 25, the full-length film – the first written and directed by Hecker – debuted at New York’s Tribeca Film Festival. Shot entirely in South Florida, *Bart Got a Room* is rife with images of Hollywood and Hallandale, and, according to Hecker, pays relentless attention to the “quirky” setting that is South Florida.

A few weeks before Tribeca, we caught up with the Hollywood Hills High School alum to talk about filming in Florida, his perseverance and what it’s like to work with William H. Macy.

**HOLLYWOOD MAGAZINE:** This debut has got to feel good, right? Simply to have the film completed?

**BRIAN HECKER:** “It’s a great sense of accomplishment after over a decade of trying to get this movie made. After facing hundreds and hundreds of obstacles, it’s a tremendous feeling of relief.”

**HM:** Now that it’s done, how closely does the film resemble your original imagined vision?

**BH:** “It’s hard to have perspective on that because now that I have images in my head of the actors, the music, the sound, it’s hard to recall what it was prior.”

**HM:** But surely, back then, you didn’t envision William H. Macy playing your dad in the movie?

“The part of this movie I’m most proud of is the setting. It has a very quirky feel to it. You feel like you’ve been transported to a very unique environment.”

**BH:** “That’s true. William H. Macy was not in my head. When I think about my father (Plantation resident Arnie Hecker), I picture more of a Billy Crystal. And so when we got Macy it became an obsession of mine to give him a curly haired wig to look more like my father. He’s a very humble person. He brought his ukulele and in between takes he’d be in his trailer entertaining people. I think my mom (Hollywood resident Judy Hecker) at one point was singing with him.”

**HM:** How autobiographical is this movie?

**BH:** “There are certain things that veer away in the third act, but a lot of it comes from real life. A lot of dialog is inspired by conversations I’ve had with my parents. The whole genesis of the story came from a real-life event. A friend asked me to the prom. And I didn’t want to go with a friend – looking for the whole romantic experience. I had my heart set on this sophomore and I said no to my friend and I asked the sophomore and the sophomore said no ... it was very humiliating. I went back to my friend and she was already taken. That’s the essence of (the film). It’s a character study of a boy who’s trying to figure it all out.”

**HM:** What role does the South Florida setting play in the film?

**BH:** “The part of this movie I’m most proud of is the setting. It has a very quirky feel to it. You feel like you’ve been transported to a very unique environment. It was sort of a mandate I made to my production manager and cinematographer: If it looked like it could be somewhere other than South Florida, then we shouldn’t use it. I was very particular about this. It’s challenging because 90 percent of South Florida could look like L.A. Where I grew up on Sheridan, you have your strip malls, and it’s not that unique. So, I was obsessed with having a very specific feeling. Every house had to be off a canal. We actually rented an egret for a day. This poor production assistant had to go around catching lizards. The egret – I think that cost \$1,000.”

**HM:** Any chance of it appearing in this year’s Fort Lauderdale Film Festival or the Miami Film Festival?

**BH:** “I think that would be fun. Why not? It’s a Florida movie. At one point, the producers didn’t want me to shoot the movie in Florida. These producers in New York were like, ‘You could make this movie about the New York suburbs.’ You can’t imagine how my heart was sinking. I remember just begging – literally, a month of detailed e-mails about egrets and lizards ... harassing them with phone call after phone call. This is what is going to make this movie interesting!”