

Q&A Goes HOLLYWOOD

Alumni in the entertainment business tell *Breakthroughs* about their big breaks, creative challenges, and projects spanning TV, film, and multimedia.

Richard Brandes

Conservation of Natural Resources '86

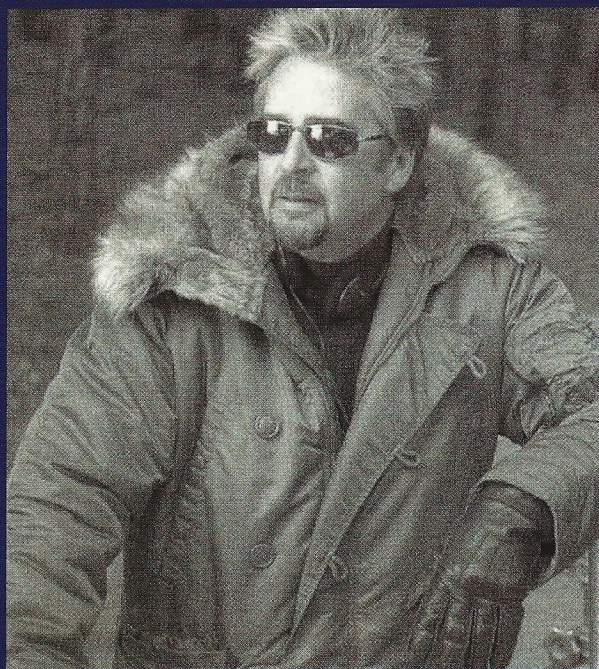
Independent Filmmaker (<http://richardbrandes.com>)

Current project: A documentary titled *Divided State of America* that focuses on current political, economic, cultural, and religious differences and divisions in the United States, as represented by the art of San Francisco muralist Chor Boogie. Chor was commissioned to do the work by Nirmal Mulye, an immigrant and very accomplished entrepreneur with an “only in America” success story of his own. The work will travel the United States this fall as part of a series of public events that are being staged with the goal of bringing America together and inspiring dialogue and action toward resolving the country’s divisions.

CNR influence: I’m active in politics and various environmental causes personally, and professionally I look for opportunities in my productions to have as little adverse impact as possible on the environment and to “go green” whenever possible, including instilling these sensibilities into my fictional stories and characters.

Big break: Originally I came to LA to pursue a career in acting, but pretty quickly found myself drawn to the other side of the camera. I was fortunate to be in an acting class that encouraged my writing, and I performed a scene that I had written in a showcase for some talent agents. A few months later I bumped into one of those agents and it turned out he had started producing films. He remembered how much he enjoyed my scene, so when I told him I had written a script, he asked to

read it. He liked it so much that his company ended up hiring me to write their next four films! The funny thing was that I was going to UCLA that afternoon to submit my application for their master’s in film program, but ended up missing the deadline because of that chance encounter. Of course, the meeting made it unnecessary to go back to school; I was fortunate enough to learn the craft of filmmaking by observ-



Richard Brandes on the set of *Penny Dreadful*, his most recent film