

Boomerangst

An eco-comedy

By

George M. Johnson



An impulsive baby boomer forms a retirement commune with former high school rock band mates to get back to the garden of their youthful green ideals, but they dig up more dirt almost than they can handle before uniting against a common foe.

The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel meets Dark Waters.

Retirement Rebellion. With Rock Music.

**World Premier, Chimera Theatre, at the Pavilion
Kamloops**

June 5-17, 2023

ACCOLADES

Fresh Voices Screenplay Judge: "an entertaining read... reminded me a lot of films that I love like ***The Big Chill***. The relationships felt genuine and appealing."

"an extraordinary original comedy": Stephen P. Dunn, Ass't Director: *The Big Chill*, *Chocolat*, *Book Club*, etc.



Winner, Best T.V. Script, Wiki Screenplay Contest October, 2022, Santa Barbara, CA. The judges commented that, "your script delighted both the reader-analysts and judges." Marketplace Potential 9/10

Winner, Jury Award, Best Comedy. Only the Best Film Awards, 2022

Honorable Mention, Wiki Screenplay Competition 2021, Santa Barbara, CA

Top 50 Finalist, Page Turner Screenplay Contest 2020, Santa Monica, CA

Boomerangst Synopsis

Late-blooming boomer JAMES BROWN (not that one!) impulsively quits his job as a used truck salesman. After his wife CYNTHIA throws him out for again failing to consult, he takes a quirky route to win back her love. He forms a retirement commune to impress her by returning to their youthful ideals of living off the land in peace, love, and general groovyness.

At his high school 40th reunion he tries to enlist former classmates. When they scoff, he impulsively offers them joint ownership in the remote Toad Valley Ranch that he has inherited. To his surprise, several former friends embrace the idea, but not for idealistic reasons. Unbeknownst to him, they all have suffered setbacks.

Once the friends arrive, they realize why James has been so generous, since the place is a dump and he needs more than a little help from his friends to get back to the garden. As they till the soil of their relationships, secrets surface, including that they all played in a band called Intensive Care, which disbanded when the star bass player left for rock fame. ISOBEL, the keyboardist, had loved the exotic bassist and blames DAVE the drummer for driving him out. Earth mother singer TASIA pursues feckless REX, the guitarist whom she left in Grade 11 when she abruptly moved. Dave overhears a phone conversation between James and his wife, revealing that James desperately wants to prove himself the idealist she married through his Toad Valley experiment.

As tensions mount, they face several crises: a mining exec, MARA TRAVESTA arrives with a 30-day offer from Comet Aggregates Corps Kamloops (C.A.C.K.) to purchase the Thwacker place, crucial to their proposed mine site. She hints that the land could be expropriated after this anyway. James reacts with hostility and denial. A flash flood washes away their market garden and brings an infestation of deafening toads; an electrical storm causes a power outage; during the storm a mysterious stranger arrives at night and finds refuge in Rex's bed, unbeknownst to him. KISS turns out to be his love child with Tasia.

During this happy reunion, Travesta returns, increasing the offer – and the threat. James despairs, thinking he will be forced to sell out his ideals again but then convinces the others to raise money to fight with a concert featuring Intensive Care.

Travesta then informs them that one person has agreed to sell. They suspect former marketer Dave, who finally admits to knowing that Comet had designs on the property, but claims he is not the traitor. To prove himself, he leaps onto the bucket of the first CAT poised at the property boundary. He falls and is nearly buried. Shocked, Isobel reveals that she sold out, believing that the commune would fail. James nearly ejects her, but is distracted by the toads returning and heads for the library.

James determines to go ahead with the Intensive Care concert. During a solo he notices his wife Cynthia in the audience. After she hears the concert and sees James's leadership, she sticks around. Travesta informs them that their land will be expropriated. James reveals that the Environmental Protection Agency will protect Toad Valley since it is the only habitat of the Great Basin Spadefoot Toad. They celebrate in a ceremony where Rex and Tasia commit to shacking up together and James renews vows with his wife.

Boomerangst

The Whys

Why Now?

The Boomers have hit retirement, and are reflecting on the ideals they didn't reach. Most people want a second chance to live out their youthful ideals, so this show will be high-concept. Boomers will be enthralled by characters acting on this. Not only will Boomerangst rivet boomers, but it will also appeal to the generations following who may be critical of this bloated generation. This massive demographic is severely underrepresented on screen, especially in comedy that is uplifting and yet tackles serious environmental issues faced by everyone on the planet as the climate crisis escalates.

Why Me?

I am a late Boomer, the exact age of the characters portrayed, and I shared the youthful ideals of them to get back to the land. More recently, my city was threatened by the proposal for a huge open-pit mine. This is an autobiographical passion project for me since I believe that writers have a responsibility to address controversial, under-reported local issues that have universal impact. I believe in the power of story to create empathy and that "Laughter is the shortest distance between two people," as Victor Borge said. Oh, and I was in a band called Intensive Care in high school!

Why this story?

Boomerangst may be the first Canadian Eco-comedy! While there are numerous excellent documentaries on the climate crisis, and several feature thrillers treating corporate cover-ups of environmental disasters, such as *Dark Waters*, there is nothing about ordinary people — and seniors at that! — trying to live in harmony with nature and protect their paradise from threats with thought-provoking, and yet funny consequences.

Boomerangst Songs

I entered two of the song lyrics for *Boomerangst* in the UK Songwriting Contest. “Climate Crisis” and “(Not quite a) Hippy” received 4/5 Star Commended ratings. We are currently recording these in a professional studio for the stage play version. My activist teenaged son has composed the music. A rough scratch demo of Climate Crisis is here: [\(220\) Climate Crisis - By Intensive Care - YouTube](#)

(Not quite a) Hippy

You know I tried to be a hippy

But never quite was hip

Pot smoking made me sneeze

Bell bottoms made me trip

Development History

Boomerangst started as a feature script, then a T.V. Pilot, before I transformed it into a stage play.

Actor’s Table Read, London Screenwriters’ Festival, U.K., 2018. The Director, Aydan Wilder, wrote that, “you’ve got a great comedy on your hands.”

Staged reading by Chimera Theatre, Effie Arts Collective, Kamloops, B.C., May 10, 2022

Full production forthcoming by Chimera at the Pavilion Theatre, Kamloops, B.C., June 5th to 17th, 2023

About George M. Johnson

George M. Johnson is an award-winning activist and writer whose comedy *Still Life With Nudes* has won several awards, including the National Playwriting Competition (Canada). It was published in *Ryga: A Journal Of Provocations*. His eco-comedy, *Boomerangst* will be produced by Chimera Theatre in June, 2023. As a screenplay it has won several awards, including Best T.V. Pilot in the Wiki Screenplay Contest and the Jury Award for Best Comedy Feature in the Only The Best Film Awards. His four other scripts have also won contests, including *The Hampdenshire Wonder*, which won Best Sci-Fi Feature Film in the Only The Best Film Awards, and was a Finalist in the British Independent Film Festival Competition. His picture books *How Hope Became An Activist* (Dixi, UK) and *Marisa and the Mountains* (Simply Read Books) have also won recognition. Two more, *Sophia’s Secrets* and *Aldo Renaldo and the Renegade Alphabet* will be published in 2023. Johnson received the YMCA Peace Medal in 2019. He is a Professor of Creative Writing at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops, British Columbia.

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