



Pastor at an elementary school, where he spoke with children about the importance of organic food.

In Organic We Trust

KIP PASTOR '00 BRINGS THE ORGANIC FOOD CONVERSATION TO THE BIG SCREEN

He climbed Alaska's Mt. McKinley then hung out in Europe for a couple months. Wildlife conservation in Laos was next, followed by a quick stay in a Myanmar monastery. But why stop there? Soon he was off to Mexico City to work as an international trade consultant. Graduate school and a stint with a production company in Washington, D.C., followed, preceding a move west to Los Angeles and what has now become everyday life: film production.

If KIP PASTOR '00 ever writes a memoir, one can see how another Hollywood director might borrow from it for a motion picture. For now, though, Pastor, CEO and partner at Pasture Pictures, is happy producing and directing films, rather than being the subject.

"I just never had a desire to be an actor," he says. "I always wanted to create the content. I didn't want someone to create it for me."

The content Pastor has chosen for *In Organic We Trust*, his most recent documentary, makes his story perhaps more unique than that of the traditional Hollywood dreamer. Consider him, instead, a social activist, with cinema as his vehicle.

"This is how I can tell stories that change public policy," says

Pastor. Forget about the dramas, action flicks or period films. Pastor's first priority in making the film was to craft a documentary that resonates with viewers, leaving them no choice but to have a conversation about the subject matter: food.

"What's amazing about food is that it connects every socioeconomic, political and environmental issue with something we all do daily—eat," says Pastor. "By changing the way we eat, we can change our public health, environmental health and community for the better."

Clearly, anyone choosing to make a documentary about organic foods in America and the pitfalls of our mainstream agricultural system is not out to bring in millions at the box office. He's out to make a difference.

Pastor says that's what he has been working toward all along—during his four years at the University of Pennsylvania, through safaris in Southeast Asia, that year of working in Mexico City, then trying to get a job on Capitol Hill. That long, winding road was always leading him to where he is now. And he never doubted it.

"Yeah, I am very happy," he says. "Because I'm doing what I love and creating something tangible that exists, in reality. And I



Pastor filming in New York City.

can only hope I'm making a difference. What can I say, I'm living the dream."

The fact that Pastor has survived the quagmire of LA's hustle and bustle and the cutthroat entertainment world to get this far warrants a story in and of itself. He was drawn there in 2007, accepted by the American Film Institute. Then, unlike 99 percent of his classmates, he graduated on time in two years. With classical training as a producer from one of America's most prestigious film schools, Pastor's LA story was off to a good start. There was just one problem. "I was broke," he says.

Swimming in the crowded stream of Hollywood hopefuls, Pastor set himself apart by picking up every industry job he could get his hands on. Commercials, music videos, short films, whatever—just to work and stay afloat in LA. Anything but trying to make it as an actor.

"You see a ton of really talented people keep getting rejected," he says. "It's hard to watch sometimes." Fortunately for Pastor, rejection was not his experience when he approached the International Documentary Association in 2009. His plan for a documentary was so well developed, the association sponsored him so he could raise money as a non-profit and get moving with production.

However, he would not have endless resources at his fingertips. If Pastor was going to pull off his dream of making a documentary about organic foods in America, he was going to do it on a

shoestring budget.

"I slept at friends' and family members' houses. I borrowed equipment," he says.

Organic's shooting locations ranged from California, to D.C., Philadelphia and New York. He went to an elementary school where students maintain their own garden and grow foods that they eventually eat. He went to farmers markets and urban farms looking for examples of people growing fresh vegetables in the hearts of cities.

When you see the documentary, you'll see plenty of Pastor. He appears on screen as the film charts his journey through the world of agriculture.

His assertion: the current fast food, faux-organic food culture has America on track to an unmitigated health care disaster.

"Children today are in trouble," he says. "One in every three kids born after 2000 will get diabetes, with healthcare costs of \$400,000 each. That's a healthcare problem we will never be able to afford."

He believes *In Organic We Trust* encourage dialogue among anyone who sees it—dialogue about how to turn America's food system around.

"Fifty percent of my movie is solutions on the micro, macro levels," says Pastor. "Things that you and I can do every day. The problem with our farming system is that we're not really thinking long term. By educating our youth about how food is grown, where it's grown and overall nutrition, they will make better food choices. That, in turn, will help change the debate from cheap, sugary, processed products made with subsidized crops to healthy, local food."

With the film complete, Pastor's promotional campaign for *In Organic We Trust* is in full swing. He recently appeared on San Francisco's ABC affiliate, has written articles for *The Huffington Post*, and has locked in a full schedule of film festival appearances, including one on March 30 in Atlanta, ahead of the film's general release later in the summer.

He doesn't expect to make a huge profit, but he isn't concerned. "Most documentaries lose money," Pastor says. "This one should at least bring in enough to keep the campaign growing and have the film seen by the people who need to see it."

Pastor already has another documentary production lined up after *Organic* hits theaters, though he doesn't want to share details yet. And when that's done, he'll dive into the world of feature-length narrative production, working with a bigger budget.

"Two to four million dollars," he says, referencing a dark comedy called *Pecan* that will bring him back to Georgia for production. Not a bad way to add another chapter to an already impressive LA story.

Pastor has no idea where that story goes next. The beauty, he says, is that it can go just about anywhere.

"Steve Jobs, in a commencement address at Stanford, said: 'You can't connect the dots moving forward; you can only connect them looking backwards. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future. You have to trust in something—your gut, destiny, life, karma, whatever.' This approach has never let me down, and it has made all the difference in my life."