

## “Arizona Director Duncan Tucker scores a hit with his movie Transamerica!”

*By Stanley Robinson*



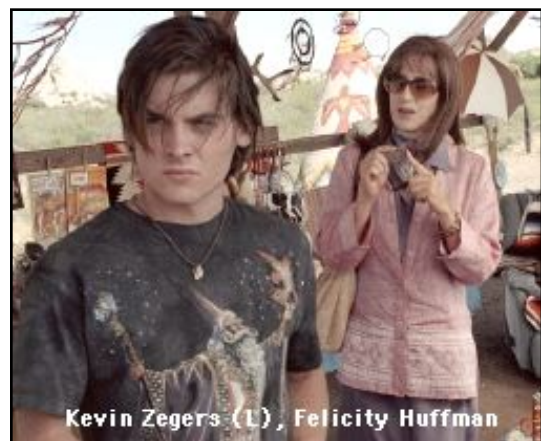
Arizona writer/director Duncan Tucker’s movie “Transamerica” is an insightful and provocative movie. The "buzz" for "Transamerica" has heightened with festival accolades, industry recognition, and Oscar talk. Felicity Huffman, the star of “Transamerica” and an Emmy winner for TV’s highly successful series "Desperate Housewives", at the 63 Annual Golden Globes (January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2006 on NBC-TV), won as best actress for her work in “Transamerica”! Felicity Huffman also received the Best Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role Award by the Phoenix Film Critics Society’s 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Awards!

The industry, through its filmmakers, has always explored and presented works that give us an insight into the opposite sex, with stories of actors playing the opposite sex. One of my favorites is the classic “Victor/Victoria” (82’) with Julie Andrews playing a woman, impersonating a man, who’s impersonating a woman. Other actors have won Oscars doing it. Actress Linda Hunt played a man in “The Year of Living Dangerously” (82’) and won. Actor Dustin Hoffman played a woman in “Tootsie” (82’), actor Robin Williams tackled “Mrs. Doubtfire” (93’), and Woopi Goldberg even played a man and a woman in “The Associate” (96’). Add Felicity Huffman, takes on the challenge of playing a man whose about to become a woman, in “Transamerica”!

Felicity Huffman plays Stanley “Bree” Osbourne, a pre-operative, male-to-female transsexual. The cost of the operation is expensive and Bree holds down two jobs, saving every penny so that she can pay for the one last operation that will make her a total woman. All is going well until Bree receives a phone call that turns her world upside down and threatens to undo all that Bree has been working so hard to accomplish. It appears that when Bree was a man and during a heterosexual encounter, Stanley/Bree conceived a son, Toby (Kevin Zegers). Toby is in New York City, in trouble, and in jail.

Bree is set to ignore the possibility but her therapist (Elizabeth Pena) makes facing and rectifying this incident from her past, a provision before signing the final paperwork to go ahead with the operation. At first she is reluctant to do so, but her therapist convinces her to face up to her past. Reluctantly and with grave trepidation, Bree, using money from her operation fund, flies from Los Angeles to New York in order to get the boy out of jail.

Once in New York, Bree meets with the police and the boy is handed over to her without too much of an explanation. Toby believes Bree to be a Christian missionary determined to convert him. Bree sees no reason to discourage this line of thinking but learns that all Toby wants is to escape from her and hitchhike to Los Angeles. Bree persuades him to accompany her back to the west



coast—with a plan to leave him at his stepfather's along the way. Toby is happy to take her up on her offer.



Bree buys a car and the two start the cross-country trip. Along the way, past secrets are revealed, the two learn about themselves and each other, and closeness slowly, painfully, and sometimes with a great amount of hostility, develops. As they make the journey to Los Angeles, they meet a host of people, some not so friendly and some are true gems including Native American Calvin (Graham Greene) who takes a strong liking to Bree.

The journey ends at Bree/Stanley's parents' house, with dad Murray (Burt Young), mom Sydney (Fionnula Flanagan), and sisters (Carrie Preston and Venita Evans). Family issues involving three generations of Osborne's come to the forefront as each family member faces the finality of the life Stanley has chosen.

It took Duncan Tucker a few years, diligence, extreme perseverance, and a strong belief in his story to finally get "Transamerica" to the screen. With the critical success of "Transamerica", a lot more doors should open for any future projects he has on his drawing board. A good movie starts with the printed word. Duncan Tucker's script has rich, appealing, well defined characters that bring emotional and soul searching issues to the forefront and Duncan Tucker as director and writer, guides his characters and tells a compelling story of humanity. Duncan says the initial idea for the screenplay started with a conversation one evening in late 1993, with a dear friend. While she discussed male/female perceptions, she revealed that she had been wrongly raised as a



I ask him about what made him interesting because I was the movies about before I ever main character a trans-woman. In is a transsexual woman, it is not movie about growing up, about that we are all alike, a movie of the walls around our heart. The life were really funny and really same time. So I went off and a lot of trans-women and the

perceptions, she revealed that she boy.

write Transamerica. He replies "It's thinking about the themes of what thought of the idea of making the fact, although the main character a movie about transsexuality, it's a family, a movie about the ways coming of age and breaking down stories that she told me about her sad and sometimes both at the started doing some research, met story grew."

I commented on the contrast in the performance of Felicity Huffman, who stars in TV's highly successful "Desperate Housewives" and the character of Stanley/Bree. Duncan answered "Felicity Huffman's makeup was extraordinary. If you had never known who she is or her credits prior or after 'Transamerica', you'd never have guessed that this was in fact a woman. Now it's sort of out there in that she plays a trans-woman. In the early days of people seeing this, they just knew that Felicity Huffman was in it, not who she played. And over and over people would tell me that they saw the movie and they were waiting for Felicity to come on and it was only half way through the movie that they went "Oh my God!" They thought it was actually a trans-woman."

With the success of "Transamerica", the path to his next project should be softened quite a bit. I asked Duncan about what's on the horizon. "I have an idea for something for cable but I don't have

anything set up as yet. I'm reading like six scripts a week and I want to write but I don't have time to write right now because of doing this, it's an incredibly insane schedule. I hope to make a movie next year".

Writer/Director Duncan Tucker is well on his way. Doors should open, with choices of projects, and, a bit more freedom to develop his craft. Duncan, for the moment, can catch a deep breath and recharge his battery with the energy and excitement being generated by "Transamerica"...

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**"Transamerica"**

**Starring: Felicity Huffman \* Kevin Zegers \* Fionnula Flanagan \* Elizabeth Pena \*  
Graham Greene \* Burt Young \* Carrie Preston**

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**"Transamerica"**

**~ This is the first non-Miramax film to be acquired  
by Harvey Weinstein and Bob Weinstein.**

**Weinstein Company Release \* Rating: PG-13 \* Runtime: 137 Mins.**

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