

in their shoes

Self-starter directs his own career in entertainment

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While pursuing an unconventional career path commonly requires one to be a jack-of-all-trades, all too often it also means being a master of none.

Such is not the case with Richie Keen, who can list actor, comedian, writer, acting coach and, most recently, director, on his résumé.

With a background that includes Shakespeare studies at Northwestern Uni-

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versity, an internship at “Late Night with Conan O’Brien,” numerous television guest spots and performances of his own stand-up comedy at the Laugh Factory, Keen is now poised to take on Hollywood from behind the lens.

Last year, Keen had more than a few opportunities knocking at his door following his directorial debut, “Hooked,” a short film he co-wrote (with writing partner Heath Corson), co-edited and co-starred in, and which screened at the U.S. Comedy Arts Festival in Aspen.

“I had a blast making it and some amazing friends came out to help me in front of and behind the camera. It’s amazing what you can do with no money and a lot of hustle and energy,” Keen said.

“‘Hooked’ had made the rounds in an organic way around town,” he continued, “and producers and writers were seeing it. I was asked to put it on ifilm.com and within two weeks [it was] the No. 1 short film online.”

As can happen in these instances, a notable producer saw the short and brought Keen to a film studio meeting about a major project. Though the studio executives were interested in Keen’s talent, they ultimately passed on hiring him due to the fact that “the short film was all I had at the time.”

Keen said, “I felt empowered by the fact that I had made something out of nothing and it not only made people laugh, but was so well received,” he said,

describing the lesson learned from the experience with “Hooked.”

Time served as acting coach offered Keen the opportunity to hone his skills in directing, which prepared him for the “Hooked” project.

He recalled being hired by his own acting coach, Lesly Kahn, to coach.

“In my own way, with the coaching, I was learning how to direct actors and learned how to help them achieve their best performances. As I got sharper at that, I started thinking more about directing and how that skill might make me special.”

In an effort to add to his directing credits, Keen initiated projects in the realm of music videos. “I realized I needed to make something else, so I called my friend who



Keen (left) directed, co-wrote and co-starred in the short film “Hooked,” which also featured Rebecca Romijn.

manages bands and told him I wanted to shoot a music video.”

Forty-eight hours and \$900 later Keen was directing a music video in his apartment. That project soon led to others, including “Paralyzed” by Rock Kills Kid, which climbed onto the Billboard charts. *Part 1 of 2; to be concluded Sun., May 20.*