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Snout Productions Plans 'Storybook' for May

By [Jordan Gass-Poore](#) on February 9, 2012 - 11:00am in [Local Cast and Crew](#)



With a VHS camcorder, Caleb Straus and Dustin Johnson tried to change the world by remaking scenes from popular movies as children in Abilene. As adults, they are working to conquer it with *The Storybook*, the sequel to the apocalyptic thriller *It's Over*, through the Austin-based multimedia production company they've founded, **Snout Productions**.

"I don't know how many action figures we set on fire (as children)," Straus said.

Straus and Johnson plan a May release for *The Storybook* ... but that's only part of what Snout Productions is working on these days.

Snout Productions grew from a Snout Recordings label logo Johnson created, where he scanned his nose against a Xerox machine, for a Texas State Technical College class project. He received an associate's degree in graphic design from the college. He said the advice from Straus and the professional actors he has worked with through Snout Productions has replaced his need for a bachelor's degree.

"I guess you can say that I have a natural knack for (graphic design)," Johnson said. "If you really are passionate about what you do, all you need is a copy of Adobe Premiere." However, he said the skills he learned in college helped prepare him for the technical special effect aspects required in the *It's Over* trilogy.

The reality of Snout Productions as a working company materialized with the release of the first movie in the trilogy, *It's Over*, written and directed by Straus and produced by Johnson. Straus said they've attempted to create a multimedia mythology. The mythology includes the movie trilogy itself; online supplemental material *It's Over: Chronicles*, primarily written by Straus, which takes place between Snout Production's first film and the sequel; and the graphic novel, co-written by Johnson, *It's Over: Tribulations*.

The graphic novel, which has a tentative May release date, will coincide with the premiere of *The Storybook*. All the Snout Productions films, graphic novels and other materials are available for sale on their website.

Johnson's childhood as a Jehovah's Witness inspired the *It's Over* mythology. Although Johnson is no longer a Jehovah's Witness, the "End of Days" church sermons and a book of illustrated representations of the Book of Revelations, the final book in the New Testament, serve as the basis for the mythology.

The themes of religion, spirituality and the apocalypse have not only influenced Straus and Johnson's movies, but their music, as well. The two started an industrial-metal band called Emzy Enzy as teenagers in the mid-'90s. As "Beez" and "Leej," they recorded the 2006 album, *Nothing, From God*. Music has played an integral role in Snout Production's evolution. In addition to writing, co-directing, co-producing, and scoring both films in the trilogy, Straus co-writes the music for the sequel's fictional band Plus and provides the singing voice for the character of Zane Enzo.

It's Over follows fictional lead singer and songwriter Enzo; Dwayne, a 1970s addict who unwittingly sells his soul to experience a lifetime hallucinogenic drug trip; and Rev.

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Nathaniel Brymstone, a seedy evangelist, as they prepare to be soldiers in Lucifer's post-apocalyptic army.

"It'll screw with your mind," said Johnson, who plays Brymstone.

The casting process for *It's Over* was a family affair for Straus, whose wife and father make appearances in the movie. Straus said auditions were not held for the film because of what he believed to be Snout Productions' obscurity. Instead, he used the connections he made as a Texas State University student to cast the trilogy.

Richard Romeo III said he became involved with the trilogy after working alongside Straus in a 2009 Texas State performance of *Macbeth*. Their professional relationship continued when Straus cast him as Romeo in the Texas State production of *Big Love*, and later as Noah Azel in *The Storybook*. He said Straus would discuss the trilogy during play rehearsals.

"I told (Straus) it was the perfect thing for him to be doing," Romeo said. "He loves chaos."

Romeo said it was during the process of filming the sequel, which lasted about a year, when he saw the first movie in the trilogy at the Texas State premiere.

Romeo said *It's Over* is a dark and gritty film, heightened by Straus's intelligence as a low-budget filmmaker. *The Storybook* begins after the Apocalypse. Lucifer, played by Straus, plots to destroy the Earth while the remains of the southern U.S. are in a civil war.

As filmmakers, Straus and Johnson work part-time for Snout Productions. Johnson, who continues to live in Abilene, said working on the trilogy has been difficult because he and Straus do not live in the same city. He said it is only during his and Straus's downtime when they can send electronic files to each other and discuss production company related projects.

"We've been working on it for years and dammit, we're not giving up," he said.

Problems with the law, marriages and divorces have prevented Johnson from moving to Austin in the past. He said he feels as though he is finally able to move forward in his life and be where all his "people" are, including his daughter, in the city.

In the meantime, Johnson said he and Straus are busy working on the final film in the trilogy, *It's Over: Nephilim*.

"(There's) no sleep for the wicked," he said.