

10 Questions.

The *Juno* director is earning Oscar buzz with his latest, *Up in the Air*. Jason Reitman will now take your questions

The main characters of your films tend to be socially stigmatized: a tobacco lobbyist, a pregnant teen and a man who fires people for a living. What makes you work so hard to humanize these characters?

Luke Miller, TRUFANT, MICH.
To make a movie about a person victimized by Big Tobacco is kind of the easy way. Whereas a lobbyist for Big Tobacco in *Thank You for Smoking* or a pregnant teenage girl in *Juno* or Ryan Bingham in *Up in the Air*—a guy who not only fires people for a living but also has made a very politicized decision to live alone—are certainly more interesting characters to humanize.

You worked closely with American Airlines on *Up in the Air*. Did they give you any Ryan Bingham-esque perks?

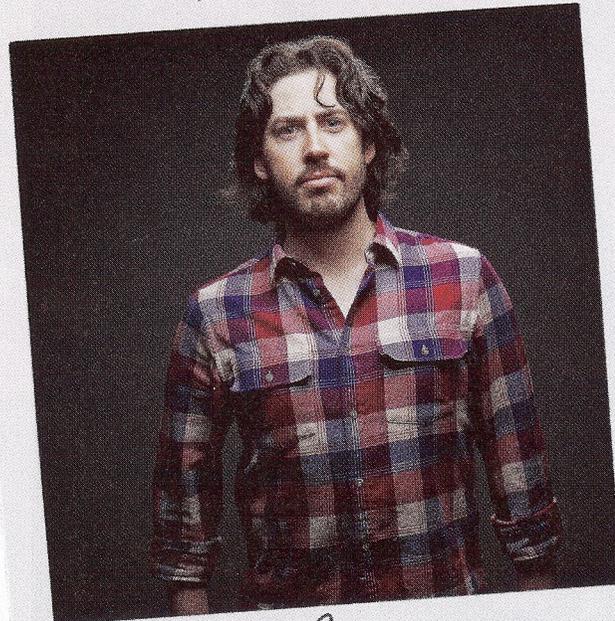
Ava Marie, EVANSTON, ILL.
In fact, they gave me a Concierge Key membership. So, yes. American Airlines was actually a great partner on the film. They opened doors for us. They got us into the Transportation Security Administration, and they flew in a 757, and we got to shoot on it.

Thank You for Smoking and *Up in the Air* are based on novels. Are there any other books you'd like to turn into movies?

Kimberly Torres, GLENDALE, CALIF.
There are, but I actually can't say which, because if I told you, then you would go turn them into movies yourself. So I sadly have to plead the Fifth on that one.

Will we ever see you direct a big-budget blockbuster?

Sonal Bhadoria, PUNE, INDIA



*Jason Reitman
I'm the aisle.
You're the window. Trapped.*

I can't speak for the distant future because you never really know in life. But I like making small, personal films. And certainly, if you're going to make tricky films, you have to make them cheaper.

How has being a son of a filmmaker, Ivan Reitman, influenced your own path as a director?

Abigail Zapatos, CEBU CITY, PHILIPPINES
Growing up the son of a director has made me very aware of the various turns that a directing career can take. Sometimes your films turn out exactly as you want. Sometimes they don't. I spent a lot of my childhood on sets. I think as a joke, my father gave me a line of dialogue in each

of his films during the worst moments of my puberty. I don't really think of that as an acting career but more my father pushing me never to become an actor.

By directing commercials, what did you learn that prepared you for directing a feature film?

Randy Arnold, CHATTANOOGA, TENN.
It's a great learning lab. You are constantly trying to tell different types of stories. You are working with different people. Certainly it's a place to make a lot of mistakes.

Which movies inspire you?

Julian Mann, BONN, GERMANY
As far as writing, I like watching bad movies. Nothing stops me in my tracks more than

watching a great film like *The Godfather* or *Dog Day Afternoon* or *The Graduate*. You watch one of those, and you never want to write again. Whereas with bad movies, it makes you think, If that counts, I certainly could write.

What advice do you give to those who hope to become filmmakers?

Ben Doty, SYCAMORE, ILL.
Do what I did. Use the film-festival system. Unlike with any other art form, filmmakers have this unique web of festivals. There are hundreds. It is a democratic system in which you submit films, and if they are good enough, they play. The only barrier to entry is the submission fee.

I need to settle a bet with a friend. After watching *Thank You for Smoking*, we spent time contemplating your stance on the subject. What is it?

Bill Stickers, LOS ANGELES
This is a question that comes up with all my films. People want to know if I have a moral standpoint that they should be picking up on, and the truth is, I don't. I don't want people to think that I'm trying to tell them to feel a certain way. I think that's cheap filmmaking.

Have you ever been fired?

Jessie K., WASHINGTON
I have actually never been fired. It turns out I'm pretty good at what I do.



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