

■ Cars ■ Auto Financing ■ Event Tickets ■ Jobs ■ Real Estate ■ Online Degrees ■ Business Opportunities ■ Shopping

Search  powered by Google How do I find it? [Subscribe to paper](#)



■ Home ■ News ■ Travel ■ Money ■ Sports ■ Life ■ Tech ■ Weather

Life » Movies ■ Box Office Report ■ Movie Listings ■ Awards Central ■ Shop for Movies/DVDs

# Corbin Bernsen steers '25 Hill' to rescue soap box derby

Updated 2h ago | Comment | Recommend

E-mail | Save | Print | Reprints & Permissions | **RSS**

By Gary Strauss, USA TODAY

Corbin Bernsen's effort to prop up an American icon begins today in Akron, Ohio, when shooting begins on the soapbox-derby-themed movie *25 Hill*.

Though low-tech racers lack luster in a digital age, 5,500 to 6,000 8- to 17-year-olds compete in 150 league-sponsored races, a number that has held constant for the past decade. "We're trying to show that the derby is alive and well," the former *L.A. Law* star says from Akron, which has hosted derby championships since kids slapped roller-skate wheels to wooden boxes in the 1930s.

Bernsen, who stars in and directs the film based on his script, says he was motivated by a USA TODAY report in September detailing the financial problems of the All-American Soap Box Derby league, which lacks big sponsors.

Bernsen has raised about \$500,000 to finance *25 Hill*, most of it from the Akron community. "This has the potential for a theatrical release, even if the budget is pretty low," says Bernsen, 55. "But if it ends up on TV or DVD, as long as it rekindles interest, I'm happy."



Corbin Bernsen directs and stars in the story of a man and a boy who bond over soapbox derby racing.

The movie is named after a derby racing spot in Taft, Calif., home of Bernsen's mother, actress *Jeanne Cooper*. The film centers on 11-year-old Trey (*Marley & Me*'s Nathan Gamble), who gets a derby kit for Christmas from his father, an Army reservist who dies in Afghanistan soon after.

Bernsen's character, Roy, is a 1970 derby champ grieving over the death of his firefighter son on 9/11. He and Trey forge a friendship, finish building the racer and, in the process, heal themselves and draw renewed national interest in derby racing.

"It sounds hokey, but we need a family-friendly experience to counter everything else going on in the world," Bernsen says.

The derby league, which licenses races in about 150 cities, gets 10% of *25 Hill*'s budget as a licensing fee and a smaller cut of future revenue. The non-profit organization nearly defaulted on \$623,000 in debt last fall after posting a \$400,000 loss in 2008.

In January, bankers agreed to renegotiate financing and allow payments to amortize over 15 years, says Jim Huntsman, chief executive of the International Soap Box Derby.

"Putting that behind us has added some stability. We're trying to restructure the organization and reinvent ourselves," Huntsman says. "But right now, we don't have enough race participants to interest sponsors, who've cut marketing budgets because of the recession."

Share | Yahoo! Buzz | Add to Mixx | Facebook | Twitter | More | Subscribe | myYahoo | iGoogle | More

## Featured video



**Hope**  
Mourners pray for victims of the West Virginia mine blast.



**Miracle**  
Parents reunite with their baby rescued after the Haiti quake.



**Discovery**  
The shuttle has docked at the International Space Station.

[More: Video](#)

Ads by **Adblade**™



**Mortgage APRs Hit 3.62%**  
Only 85,000 homeowners have taken advantage of Obama's refinance plan. Calculate new payment. [Learn more](#)



**Don't Buy Wrinkle Creams!**  
Until you read our reviews. Top wrinkle creams of 2010 rated for results and value. Try them now. [Learn more](#)



**Moms: Top Wrinkle Creams**  
Look younger without injections or surgery. BeautyUser reviews the best of 2010. See who's #1! [Learn more](#)



**PHR Certification Online**  
Villanova University 100% Online PHR Course. 10-Week SHRM Approved Certificate. Learn More Now... [Learn more](#)



**Ohio: Drivers Overpay**  
6/17: Obama backs insurance reform & if you haven't checked rates lately you probably pay too much. [Learn more](#)

[Add Your Link Here!](#)

Bernsen plans to film *25 Hill* in stages to accommodate his work schedule for *Psych*, his USA Network series. He's in Ohio for three weeks, then takes *25 Hill* to California in June before returning to Akron for July's championship scenes. "I love the process," says Bernsen, who is directing his fifth film. "But when filmmaking has another purpose, it's more complete."

You might be interested in:



Saving Grace Series Finale [iVillage](#)



NHRA Pro Stock racers get two shots to win [USATODAY.com in Sports](#)



Heavyweight to featherweight: Tyson races pigeons [USATODAY.com in Life](#)



For ski cross racer Del Bosco, new sport offered a fresh start [USATODAY.com in Sports](#)



'Avatar' rules box office for third consecutive weekend [USATODAY.com in Life](#)



Posted 15h 58m ago

Updated 2h ago

E-mail | Save | Print | Reprints & Permissions | [RSS](#)

To report corrections and clarifications, contact Standards Editor **Brent Jones**. For publication consideration in the newspaper, send comments to [letters@usatoday.com](mailto:letters@usatoday.com). Include name, phone number, city and state for verification. To view our corrections, go to [corrections.usatoday.com](http://corrections.usatoday.com).

**Guidelines:** You share in the USA TODAY community, so please keep your comments smart and civil. Don't attack other readers personally, and keep your language decent. Use the "Report Abuse" button to make a difference. [Read more.](#)

Sponsored Links

Hot Stock Alert - EHSI

Profit From Healthcare Explosion New Millionaires Created Today [EmergingHealthcareSolutionsInc.com](#)

Cleveland: Acai Berry EXPOSED

Reporter Discovers Shocking Truth. Will Acai Berry Make You Lose Fat? [News6Report.com](#)

Chili's Grill & Bar

Fresh Food, Made To Order. Let Chili's Do The Work For You Tonight [www.Chilis.com](#)

Related Advertising Links

What's This?

Hot Stock Alert - EHSI

Profit From Healthcare Explosion New Millionaires... [EmergingHealthcareSolutionsInc.com](#)

Acai Berry EXPOSED. Cleveland Report

Cleveland Warning: Health Reporter Discovers The... [News6Report.com](#)

USA TODAY Entertainment E-mail Newsletters

Sign up to get:

- Daily celebrity news and gossip
- Photos
- Pop culture hidden gems
- Latest on new music releases and more



Sign Up Now

Advertisement

Newspaper Home Delivery - Subscribe Today

Home • News • Travel • Money • Sports • Life • Tech • Weather

About USATODAY.com: Site Map | FAQ | Contact Us | Jobs with Us | Terms of Service  
Privacy Policy/Your California Privacy Right | Advertise | Press Room | Media Lounge | Reprints and Permissions

News Your Way: Mobile News | Email News | Add USATODAY.com RSS feeds | Twitter | Podcasts | Widgets

Partners: USA WEEKEND | Sports Weekly | Education | Space.com

Copyright 2010 USA TODAY, a division of Gannett Co. Inc.