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## **STANDARD DEVIATION FINALIST FOR STUDENT EMMY** Documentary Examines Physicist Turned Eco-Terrorist, Billy Cottrell

This past week, **The Academy of Television Arts and Sciences** announced the finalists for its 30<sup>th</sup> annual College Television Awards. Among the finalists in the documentary category is *Standard Deviation*, co-directed by Christopher Brannan and David Randag, two graduates of the University of Florida's Documentary Institute.

The film is already among the top three in its respective category, with the winner to be announced at a black-tie gala on March 21<sup>st</sup> in Culver City, California.

"Obviously being recognized for such an award is a great honor," says co-director Christopher Brannan, "but the real prize is the increased exposure this will bring for Billy's story."

*Standard Deviation* is the story of the troubled but brilliant young physicist **Billy Cottrell** and the events leading to his incarceration as an **Eco-terrorist**.

A tall, athletic, and good-looking young man, Billy was in the prime of his life in 2003. While doing research at the **California Institute of Technology** he was one of the most promising PhD candidates of theoretical physics in the world before the FBI arrested him for involvement in the fire bombings and vandalism of four SUV dealerships in the **Los Angeles** area on August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2003.

Billy's life would begin to unravel on September 11th, 2003 when the FBI arrested a young environmental activist named Josh Connole. After Connole's arrest the **LA Times** began receiving anonymous e-mails from the "true culprits" that proclaim Connole's innocence.

"Billy is a person of great intelligence and intense passion for everything he does," says co-director David Randag, "It's difficult to understand how he could get caught up in this terrible situation, but we hope that the film can help people come to understand Billy."

In early 2004, the police connect Billy to the anonymous e-mails sent to the LA Times and on November 19th, 2004 Billy is sentenced to serve eight years and four months in federal prison as well as ordered to pay 3.5 million dollars in restitution. He currently is incarcerated in Safford, Arizona where he has been waiting two years and four months for a response to his appeal.

Through those closest to Billy- his family, friends, and professors, *Standard Deviation* attempts to understand how someone with as much intelligence and promise as Billy could jeopardize his future so carelessly.

The forty-minute film is the first film for directors Brannan and Randag. *Standard Deviation* has screened at **Ft. Lauderdale International Film Festival** (awarded Best Student Documentary prize), The **Daytona Beach Film Festival** (Audience Favorite, runner up, shorts category), and the **San Francisco Documentary Film Festival** (Official Selection). In addition to the recent Collegiate Emmy nomination, on February 10<sup>th</sup> *Standard Deviation* was named an official selection to the **Buffalo-Niagara Film Festival**.

[www.StandardDeviation-TheMovie.com](http://www.StandardDeviation-TheMovie.com)

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