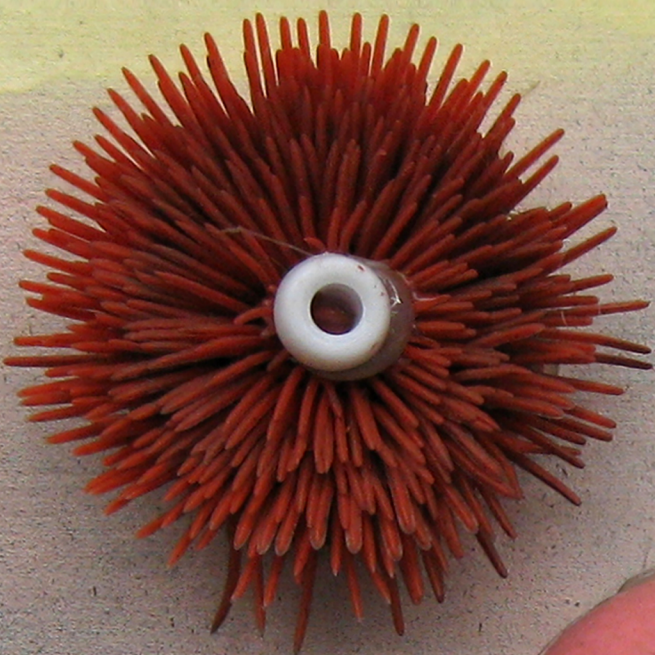


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There was no reason Jerry  
Barrish would become a  
sculptor, filmmaker,  
and radical 'sixties bail  
bondsman,  
but that's what happened...

A FILM BY WILLIAM FARLEY

# PLASTIC MAN

THE ARTFUL LIFE OF JERRY ROSS BARRISH

JANIS PLOTKIN, PRODUCER

RICHARD LEVIEN, EDITOR

BETH CUSTER, MUSIC



## SHORT SYNOPSIS

(50 words)

He grew up in a “tough guy,” San Francisco Jewish family, which knew more about boxing and mob connections than it did about art. Maybe he would become a bail bondsman—but the go-to bondsman for long-haired ‘sixties’ protestors? And an upstart sculptor and filmmaker? Jerry Barrish is Plastic Man.

## LONG SYNOPSIS

(250 words)

Jerry Barrish was the product of an environment that little appreciated the finer arts, much less the wildness of modern art. His hardworking, San Francisco Jewish relatives were boxing enthusiasts and vaguely connected to the mob. Those connections got him started in the bail bonds business. Then he broke the mold, becoming the bailout guy for radical ‘sixties’ protestors. Inspired by the times, he went further afield, delving into art collecting, and then launching himself as a sculptor and filmmaker.

Barrish’s long and circuitous route as an artist always on the verge, rubbing shoulders with the successful and celebrated while never quite breaking through, is the dramatic tale told in *Plastic Man*. It finds him at a seeming artistic standstill about 25 years ago, living next to a trash-strewn beach in Pacifica, California. Creative by necessity, he begins collecting the detritus, especially the discarded plastic, and assembling it into whimsical, evocative, poignant human and animal figures. Barrish reassembles his life as a sculptor, but hits another snag: the art world approves of the imagination, but scorns the material. Barrish’s beloved plastic won’t do for the world of galleries and collectors.

Yet, by the end of *Plastic Man* the artist finds his vindication, and the immeasurable pleasure of wide visibility, in a public commission for the troubled, low-income Hunter’s Point neighborhood where he works – a 15-foot horn player constructed from the component forms of a disassembled gun.

## POSTCARD PROMO

Sometimes an individual is compelled, in the face of daunting odds, to find his identity by making art and becoming an artist...

Jerry Ross Barrish was the product of a hardworking family of Jewish boxing enthusiasts vaguely connected to the mob. Those connections got him started in the bail bonds business. Then he broke the mold, becoming the bailout guy for radical sixties protestors. “Don’t Perish in Jail. Call Barrish for Bail” was the motto for an unruly generation. Inspired by the times, he went one step further, embarking on a hero’s journey, where art may be his salvation....

## WEBSITE:

[plasticmanbarrish.com](http://plasticmanbarrish.com)

## QUOTES FROM THE PRESS AND FILMMAKERS

"Five plastic thumbs up! William Farley has shaped a compelling study of the legendary Beachcomber Artist who searches for the soul hidden in detritus and offers salvation to the hopeless lost trash of the world: Don't perish on beaches. Become Barrish masterpieces!"

**PHILIP KAUFMAN**, Filmmaker, *The Right Stuff*, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*

"*Plastic Man* is a film about an unlikely artist, a bail bondsman from a long line of Jewish tough guys, who has that artist gene—the one that makes art inevitable—and touches people with his art. If you are interested in the process of art making, or think you might need a bail bondsman, you'll love this film."

**JUDITH EHRLICH**, Filmmaker, *The Most Dangerous Man in America*

"Adroitly assembled, intriguing and fascinating ..."

**MANSEL STIMPSON**, Co-Editor, *Film Review*, London

"An inspiring portrait of the artist as an older man, *Plastic Man* is a crowd-pleaser from its whimsically enigmatic opening sequence to its triumphant finale. Jerry Barrish's talent for creating soulful sculptures from soulless plastic and rubber is nothing short of amazing, yet it's only one facet of this endlessly surprising portrait of a genuine iconoclastic."

**MICHAEL FOX**, KQED Arts, San Francisco

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I am interested in telling stories which reflect both the times I live in and explore the life of individuals striving to find their place in the culture. All our lives are filled with decisions which shape our future and I seek to explore these moments of personal history to see what elements drove Jerry Barrish in creating the life he has made for himself.

As a filmmaker, I see myself working as a detective, gathering facts and images, which will lead to solving the puzzle of how we got to where we are now. The subtext of all of my films is the question "why"? I find that making a cinema portrait an opportunity to personally discover what I can learn about living through the examination of the life of others. Certainly it is important for me and the audience giving me their time that the journey be entertaining and hopefully insightful.

We began telling stories around a fire long before we invented the concept of time, obviously we innately understood, that we need to share our experience to survive and prosper. My wish is that out of *Plastic Man*, the Artful Life of Jerry Ross Barrish, you may take something away from his story which you think will be worth sharing.

**WILLIAM FARLEY**, Director  
*Plastic Man: the Artful Life of Jerry Ross Barrish*

## BIOGRAPHIES

### **JERRY ROSS BARRISH** - Artist

Receiving both BFA and MFA degrees, Barrish attended San Francisco Art Institute from 1971-1976, studying sculpture and film. Filmmaking was his main focus for the next 15 years, while he completed three feature-length narrative films. These films played at international festivals and film museum venues all over the world, including Berlin, Florence, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Montreal, Denver, Houston and New Directors/New Films at Lincoln Center, and Museum of Modern Art in New York.

In 1986, Barrish accepted a residency with DAAD (German Guest Artist Exchange Program) in West Berlin, where he first began creating found object collage. This return to sculpture eventually led to full time pursuit of creating assemblage and constructions, mostly from plastic refuse.

Barrish has exhibited his sculpture all over the United States, and has pieces in permanent collections of local institutions including The Oakland Museum of California, Berkeley Art Museum, di Rosa Collection, San Jose Art Museum, Triton Art Museum and University of California at Santa Cruz. His work was recently included in Professor Nicholas Roukes' "Artful Jesters."

Barrish has been involved with art at the community level when he received an appointment to City of Pacifica's Cultural Arts Commission in 2002. Elected to his first of two consecutive terms as President of Art Guild of Pacifica in 2003, Barrish has served as volunteer Artistic Director of Sanchez Art Center since his appointment to the position by the board in 2004. Barrish is a supporting member of San Francisco Film Arts Foundation, Pacific Rim Sculptors Group, and is a professional level member of International Sculpture Center.

Barrish resides in Pacifica, and maintains his sculpture studio in San Francisco, as recently sold his bail bond agency after 52 years.



## PRODUCTION CREW



**JANIS PLOTKIN**, Creative Producer

Janis Plotkin's work as a community organizer led her to develop an early interest in film as a tool for communicating values, history and culture. During that time, she attended a press screening for a new start-up, the first ever Jewish Film Festival, which turned out to be a life-changing experience. She joined the founding Director, Deborah Kaufman, the next year to program and produce the groundbreaking San Francisco Jewish Film Festival, the first and largest film festival of its kind. While at the Festival, Plotkin was instrumental in building diverse audiences that reached 35,000 attendees, and programmed local broadcasts on public television KQED.

After 21 years at the Jewish Film Festival Plotkin resigned to pursue other interests in film. She is currently Senior Film Programmer for the Mill Valley Film Festival. She also has taught undergraduate film classes at Stanford University, University of California, Davis and San Francisco State University. In 2010 Plotkin joined with film colleague, William Farley to produce the documentary *Plastic Man: The Artful Life of Jerry Ross Barrish*.



**WILLIAM FARLEY**, Director/Cinematographer

William Farley hails from Braintree, Massachusetts, on Boston's South Shore. Raised in a working-class family, his early life included training as a commercial artist. When he was drafted into the U.S. Army, Farley worked as an illustrator for an intelligence unit that made tools for spies. Following his honorable discharge, he attended Maryland Institute College of Art on the G.I. Bill as a Sculpture major, and won a scholarship to Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 1968. His live action films and documentaries have won numerous awards and have been broadcast and screened around the world at prestigious film festivals, including the Sundance, Mannheim, Chicago, Sydney and New York Film Festivals.



**RICHARD LEVIEN**, Editor

Richard Levien holds a PhD in theoretical physics from Princeton University, but has found his real passion in film. As a freelance film editor, he co-edited the feature documentary *D Tour*, which won the Golden Gate award for Best Bay Area documentary at the 2009 San Francisco International Film Festival, and was shown on the PBS series *Independent Lens*. He edited and provided motion graphics for the short film *On the Assassination of the President*, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2008. He also edited the cult Internet hit *Store Wars*, seen by 5.5 million people during the first six weeks of its release.



**BETH CUSTER**, Composer

A San Francisco based composer, performer and bandleader, and the proprietor of BC Records, Beth Custer has composed music for contemporary chamber ensembles, including Left Coast Chamber Ensemble, City Winds, and Kronos String Quartet. She has made more than 25 recordings with her own ensembles. Custer has composed for theatre productions, including for Berkeley and San Diego Repertory Theatres and California Shakespeare; for television film projects by KQED, CBS/Film Roman, and films by directors including Koohan

Paik; and for dance troupes, including Joe Goode Performance Group, Flyaway Productions and Osseus Labyrinth). The creator of four musicals with award-winning writer Octavio Solis, Custer has collaborated on scores, including Vinculum Symphony, with MacArthur Fellow Trimpin. Her numerous awards have included a six week artist's residency in a castle at Civitella Ranieri, Italy.



For more information contact:  
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Trailer can be found at [plasticmanbarrish.com](http://plasticmanbarrish.com)