

PEACHCRAFT

ACTORS STUDIO

Article

PeachCraft Makes Its First Independent Film

As published in the Chatham Courier on March 23rd, 2006

By Max Pizarro

CHATHAM - There was natural light in the room of hardwood floors and light from a Chinese lantern on an actor's face as Kate Kennedy of Chatham and her team of mostly raw but dedicated recruits shot a movie in Summit over the weekend. They also filmed in Chatham, but where remains a mystery.

What wasn't shadowy at all was the presence throughout the shoot of veteran Tony Jannelli, a Hollywood cinematographer and camera operator who has been the man behind the lens for such blockbusters as "Independence Day," "Silence of the Lambs," and "Philadelphia."

"He's a player," said Hollywood casting director Kennedy of the man she met - not in Hollywood, strangely - but at the local video store in Summit. "That's where you find your filmmakers, and that's where we discovered that we had the same taste in moviemaking."

They also found their writer-director, Debora Souza of Brazil, who was working at the store, and who already had a script and a vision and was just waiting for the likes of Kennedy to walk in, which she did. Kennedy liked the script and said let's go with it, and so they did that too, this past weekend.

Kennedy and Jannelli produced Souza's brainchild, working title "Madonna's Trip," and helped the young cast and crew in setting up the action. It was the first film venture for PeachCraft Entertainment, an actor's studio and corporate image development center that Kennedy founded last year and opened with Katherine Ng.

On the third floor of PeachCraft's Summit studio, they filmed a scene on Saturday afternoon in which the movie's leading man, Chris Prangley, is sitting down to breakfast and the morning paper. Jannelli, who teaches film at New York University, had brought his own team with him, including camera operator Eleanor Burke and assistant cameraman Berliner Boaz Freund, whom the cinematographer met in Germany near the remnants of the Berlin Wall.

Every one of the young people was doing something. But Jannelli, the bespectacled old pro, the sculptor of images who cannot resist plunging his hands into soft clay, was buried amid camera equipment, calmly giving orders like a ship's engineer in the boiler room.

There were two Jannelli look-alikes, younger versions of the master with horn-rimmed glasses and intensely intellectual demeanors, and a moment later it was clear that one of them, Nick, is indeed Jannelli's son. The other Nick - last name Gibney, is a friend of the family's and - no big surprise here - son of filmmaker Alex Gibney, who was nominated for an Academy Award for his film, "Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room." According to his son, the filmmaker just finished collecting the raw footage for a documentary on the prisoner situation in Guantanamo.

"Someday," said Jannelli, grasping the two budding filmmakers by the shoulders for a quick shot between all of the bustling on the set, "this picture will be famous."

A moment later he was back into the action and, just so that everyone knew it, called out, "Action on rehearsal!"

They cleared the set, all but Prangley, who was the only one in the scene. Then the camera was rolling with Burke behind it, and Souza and Jannelli were next to her watching the shot on a monitor. They rehearsed the scene several times and there were no variations: Prangley drinks coffee. He reads the newspaper. Then he looks down at a stone on the table and his face breaks into a grin. Then he goes to the closet, the camera following him, takes out his jacket and leaves. That's the end of the scene.

"OK, folks," said Jannelli, "I think we're going to shoot."

So they did.

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They ran through the same scene several times, everyone in the same position: Burke and Freund on camera, Jannelli and Souza on monitor and Prangle acting. They took two, three, four takes.

"It's going to be submitted to festival in the short film category," said Kennedy. "It will be ready for submission in June."

News of the film's completion will be on PeachCraft's website, the producer said.

For her part, Ng, who served as the production supervisor, said of the outfit's first film production, "It was spectacular. We all had a wonderful time and it just went amazingly well."

The crew filmed at least one scene in Chatham on Sunday. Chatham Middle School student Matt Ball, an onstage regular in school productions, was one of the actors in the scene.

Where was it?

"An undisclosed location in Chatham," said the inscrutable Ng.

Keep an eye on the film festivals, watch the film, and find out.