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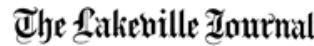
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LAKEVILLE JOURNAL : CANAAN

**Making a movie in North Canaan**

By KAREN BARTOMIOLI  
March, 29, 2007

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NORTH CANAAN — A group of local residents headed out to do errands last Saturday morning. Little did they know that they were destined for movie stardom.

Well, maybe not stardom, but as extras in a movie that began production in North Canaan, their faces could end up on the big screen. And even if they end up on the cutting room floor, they will have had the unique experience of the simultaneous excitement and boredom of staging numerous takes to work all the kinks out of a scene.

"Crossroads to Canaan Valley" is an independent film with more ties to the area than just its name. Co-director Ridley Pierce's parents, Anthony and Patricia, have a home here. It has become home for a cast while they film in North Canaan, Sheffield and Great Barrington between now and the end of May.

Pierce is joined by Paul DelVecchio in directing the film for Samhain Media and Triple E Productions. DelVecchio is also the cinematographer, who won an award for the film "Forever."

"The goal is to show that you can make a good film with a zero budget," Pierce said. "Paul had the equipment and technical abilities. I wrote the screenplay. No one is getting paid."

The actors are willing doing it for the experience, saying they were attracted by the storyline and the style.

Pierce's inspiration comes from the horror cinema of the '70s, the psycho-thrillers that relied on mental torment, rather than blood and gore.

"I was inspired by the work of directors like Stanley Kubrick and John Carpenter and Dario Argento," he explained during a break in filming in the Canaan United Methodist Church sanctuary. "Since we don't have the budget to re-create the 1970s, we're doing a space-time dislocation thing. It's set in 2007, but the actors are stuck in the '70s."

Among the extras was Teri Aitken, a church member who happened to be there the day Pierce knocked on the door while scouting locations.

"I gave him a list of the other churches in town and told him he would have to check with our pastor about filming here," Aitken said. "After he was given the go-ahead, he asked me if I could get some extras."

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Aitken had some folks lined up for the weekend before, but snow cancelled the planned production launch.

"Everybody I had asked was busy this weekend, so I went out on the street this morning and asked people if they could spare a half-hour."

The post office turned out to be a good source. Pierce had also contacted Sara Katzoff at Simons Rock College in Great Barrington, who sent some students down for the shoot.

In the film, the Methodist church becomes a Catholic church, with scenes that include a priest preaching from the pulpit, and confessions.

The extras sat through about 10 takes of a scene that had actor Einar Gunn delivering a contemptuous sermon in his resonating voice. After reciting the first few minutes of it over and over again, while lighting and actors were adjusted, Gunn quipped, "I'll bet you're dying to hear the rest of this."

"Crossroads to Canaan Valley" also features Hungarian-born actress Monika Magda, who plays a character called Audra.

"Audra moves here from Europe with her husband, Victor. They have a son and move to the small fictional town of Canaan Valley," said Magda, who quit her job with a New York City advertising agency to follow her dream of being an actress.

Victor is played by Josh Costa, a full-time model who has appeared in television commercials.

Natali Jones, originally from Texas, has worked in about every realm of entertainment, from theater to music videos. She says she is probably best known for her vampire roles.

Kaye Bramlett is a veteran, of sorts.

"I did my first feature film, 'Squeeze Play,' 30 years ago. I took a 28-year break," she said with a sly smile. "I decided it was time to get back into it and I've been doing TV commercials and small roles."

Pierce's face may be familiar to fans of daytime television. This is his directorial debut, but he has had roles on "All My Children," "Trackers" and "The Insider." He has appeared on "Access Hollywood," has been a segment host for MTV New Year's Eve broadcasts and has done stints as a stand-up comic.

He is still in need of a few more filming locations. In addition to the church, he has lined up Helsinki Café in Great Barrington. He would like to use the Collins Diner and needs to find a rectory office, a farmhouse and two additional homes, "one nice, for a doctor's office, and one not so nice."

They can be vacant or occupied. Anyone willing to volunteer their property may do so through this reporter; send an e-mail to [karenb@lakevillejournal.com](mailto:karenb@lakevillejournal.com).

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