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Area (code) Productions

386Films puts local actors, scenery in the movies

By **KENYA WOODARD**

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PORT ORANGE -- Cal Roland is having a bad day.

A meeting Sunday morning with ex-girlfriend Sara at Brooklyn Ice Cafe in Port Orange isn't going well. The tense conversation between the two is dotted with Cal's violent outbursts.

The encounter between Cal and Sara soon escalates and a police officer is called to the scene.

"Come on man, it's over, put the gun down and let me see your hands," says Detective Harris.

Cal calmly puts down his gun and Harris moves to arrest him -- but doesn't take the unstable man to jail.

That's because Cal Roland, Detective Harris and Sara are really fictional characters brought to life by actors Robbie Cox, James Brodick and Jenn Ward, respectively, in the short film "Parting" -- the latest title produced by Port Orange-based 386Films.

A cast and crew of about 20 have gathered at the Brooklyn Ice Cafe since Friday to shoot the movie. None are being paid to star in the film -- but the experience is worth it, Cox and Ward said.

After reading the script, Cox said he was immediately drawn to his character, Cal, a complex man, "a loose screw" who is "very isolated from himself."

"(The movie is) the ultimate actor's piece," Cox said.

Ward agreed.

"It's very psychological," she said. "It's soft and then it's fast-paced and then soft again."

Producing films with strong characterization is a specialty of 386Films, founded and financed by locals Jason Fragale and Mike Long after the two met online via a Craigslist ad placed by Long in 2006.

About a dozen people turned up for a meeting at a Starbucks, but only Fragale stayed on.

It's been a match made in movie-making heaven ever since.

The successful collaboration has produced "Parting" and two other films -- "Breaking Val" and "Mama's Boys" -- with more to come, Long said.

Long, a former Daytona Beach cop, said he's the technical brain behind 386Films, handling producing and cinematography. Fragale tackles the more artistic side of the business such as directing and script reviewing, he said. Both share a deep passion for filmmaking, Long said.

"He's just like me -- we're both so driven," he said.

Fragale, who lives in Ormond-by-the-Sea, was active on the New York film scene before he moved to Florida six years ago.

While the Daytona Beach area isn't a vibrant film mecca like New York, it can serve as a fitting backdrop for movie making, Fragale said.

"It's got great locales that you can turn into a lot of things," he said.

Long, who's dabbled in filmmaking for more than 20 years and formally studied the art form at the former Phillips Junior College, concurred.

"There's a million resources right here in our backyard," he said.

Fragale and Long say there are a few hurdles when producing films on budgets that don't exceed \$600 and have eight-hour shooting schedules.

For example, finding a location to film "Parting" -- which takes place in a diner -- proved to be an adventure that led the scouting crew to a number of restaurants from New Smyrna to Flagler County, Fragale said.

"We were finding these little mom and pop places that closed at 2 p.m.," he said.

One owner offered his diner, but rescinded when told 386Films couldn't afford to pay the restaurant's light bill, Fragale said.

Luckily, the pair has had no trouble finding local talent willing to work for cheap or free, he said.

"There's a lot of good actors out there, even if they are not very experienced," Fragale said.

There's no shortage of scripts either -- but weeding out a good story from hundreds of formulaic screenplays can be challenging, Long said.

"Parting"-- authored by Gene Doucette -- is one of the gems, he said.

Cal and Sara are an ex-couple who meet up for one last goodbye at the coffee shop where their romance started. But the encounter stirs up a range of emotions within Cal, who can't handle the demise of their relationship. Long describes the story as a "dramatic thriller" with "a really crazy twist on the end."

"There was some intellect that went into the writing," he said. "It's very much a character piece, very dialogue-heavy."

Long, who lives in Port Orange, said. it will take two months to edit and score "Parting" before production begins on the next project, another movie. Eventually, 386Films will produce commercials, videos and feature films -- all done right here, he said.

"I can't imagine being anywhere else," Long said.

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