

Two New Productions Take Shine to Brightlight

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page 14
By Ian Edwards

Vancouver: Making the most of its time in the sun, popular and busy Vancouver-based Brightlight Pictures is gearing up for another two projects that we haven't already talked about in these pages.

Daisy Winters, a U.S.-based independent feature executive produced by John Wells ("ER", "Third Watch") and Peyton Reed ("Down with Love"), is an old-fashioned service job for Brightlight partner Shawn Williamson.

Cast was not signed at press time, but the feature was written and will be directed by Reed's spouse Beth LaMure (credited as an actor in "Down with Love").

In the US\$5-million story, a young girl, dealing with the loss of her mother, goes to some lengths to avoid the scary prospect of living with her aunt. Production is scheduled for Aug. 5 to Sept. 26

Victoria will pose as Toronto in the "Much Music Movie", a feature film about CHUM Television specialty service MuchMusic.

Details were (very) sketchy at press time - like who might play executive producer Moses Znaimer - but part of the production is set to take place at The New VI, which has a similar street-front facade as MuchMusic in Toronto. Production is scheduled for Aug. 11 to Sept. 19.

Huff and stuff

Hank Azaria is set to star in "Huff", a one-hour pilot for a possible mid-season replacement series by Sony Pictures for Showtime. Bob Lowry ("Any Day Now") wrote the script, about a psychiatrist having a mid-life crisis, and Mike Newell ("Four Weddings and a Funeral") directs. Production begins mid-August.

"Still Life", a pilot shot in Vancouver, is looking good as a mid-season replacement series for Fox - if inquiries to the British Columbia Film Commission are any indication. The series, in which a cop killed on his first day on the job watches his family and friends from the other side of death, stars Jensen Ackles ("Dark Angel"), Susanna Thompson ("Once and Again") and David Keith ("Carrie"). Production is awaiting the green light.

A couple of other possible productions could help Vancouver's flagging television volumes this summer - but they are as soft as the current television industry.

"Hollywood Wives: The New Generation", based on the Jackie Collins novel, will be turned into a two-hour MOW for CBS and star Farrah Fawcett, Robin Givens ("Head of the Class") and Melissa Gilbert. Nicole Avril ("Sex and the City") adapted the script, about actresses and their

fidelity issues, and Joyce Chopra ("Blonde") directs. Production, if it goes ahead, is supposed to start this month or next.

Effier still is the HBO MOW "Everybody Hates the Phone Company", based on the true story of a phone hacker.

Gay rites

With headlines about gay marriage filling Canadian papers, local digital video feature "Everyone" has a timely theme: an ensemble cast of characters revolve around two men getting married to each other.

Local talent agent Tyman Stewart from Characters is the executive producer of the film, which wrapped 19 days of principal photography June 28 and cost \$23,000 to shoot (not including labor deferrals and gear donations from the Vancouver Film School).

Local actor Bill Marchant wrote and directed the story, which shot mostly in Kitsilano and North Vancouver. Brendan Fletcher ("Ginger Snaps: The Prequel"), Mark Hildreth ("They"), Nancy Sivak ("Last Wedding") and Carly Pope ("Popular") are among the local actors taking part. Tyman says the plan is to blow up the cut version to 35mm and get it into the festivals.

Then there were 10

The 10 finalists for the annual Signature Shorts contest sponsored by CBC and British Columbia Film are:

Michele Adams, Heart of Flesh; Ken Craw and Chris Holmes, Check-Out; Leonard Durante, Blinded; Zoe Leigh Hopkins, One-Eyed Dogs are Free; Rob Kirbyson, No Redeeming Value; Mark McConchie, Blind Date; Ita Margalit, Sarah's Room; Mike Scully, Jailhouse Love; Scott Stabb, Suicide by Appointment; and David Taylor, Rugged Rich and the Ona Ona.

Contestants, more than 300 of them, were inspired by the theme of redemption. The short-listed applicants participated in an intensive two-day pitching workshop moderated by Los Angeles screenwriter Donald Martin (Adventure Inc.) in July before presenting a final pitch to a jury. Three winners will get \$16,000 in cash, up to \$30,000 in facilities and services and an airdate on CBC next season.

Patience is a virtue

After three years of toil, Vancouver documentary maker Geoff Browne (Boundless Light Productions) got the Licence Fee Program and Equity Investment Program funding this spring to complete "Generation of Wisdom", the story about a Tibetan monk who returns to his home village after living in the West.

VisionTV is the commissioning broadcaster for the \$190,000 documentary, with Bravo!, Knowledge Network and Fairchild TV picking up later windows.

Browne teamed up with local producers Shan Tam and Michael Parker (Holiday Pictures) to help with the production, which is scheduled for completion in October. Previously, Browne did the six-minute, 35mm short "Smoke Screen", starring Martin Cummins ("Dark Angel").

Hot features

Vancouver's Peace Arch Entertainment continues its involvement with eastern European features.

As a coproducer with Studio Eight Productions in London, Peace Arch division GFT Entertainment is in production in Bulgaria with "Volcano", a thriller starring Chris Martin ("Tom Stone"), Italian actor Antonella Elia and Joseph Beattie ("Velvet Goldmine") and directed by Mark Roper ("Avalanche").

In Romania, the company is producing "Fire", a thriller starring Bryan Genesse ("The Circuit"), Josh Cohen ("The Lost Battalion") and Ross McCall ("Band of Brothers") and directed by Allan Goldstein ("2001: A Space Travesty").

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