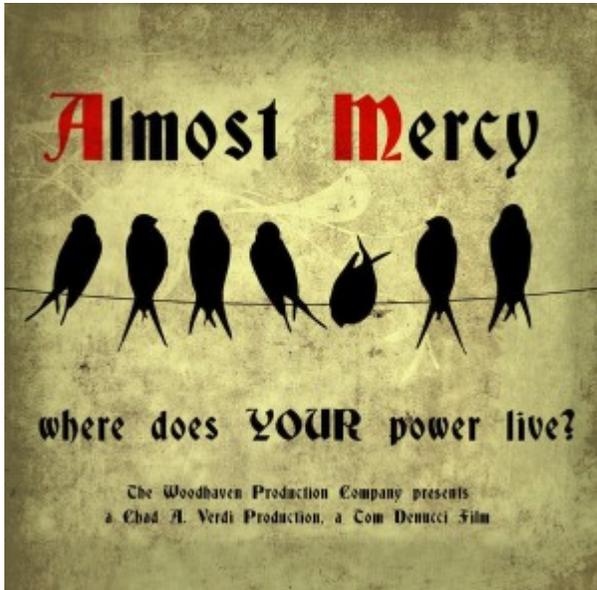


Scene and Heard: Should I Stay or Should I Go?



Filmmaking in Rhode Island

Someone once mentioned the institution of marriage when comparing our little state and its high and low points. I love you. I have to be away from you. And so opines this commentator. Much like the quandary that faces most artists in their lifetime ... to be seen or to hide from the world. I think the former is winning the war. At least, I'm seeing this trend in the film world. People are staying, and making movies. Some of them are working with big time directors and mega stars of Hollywood. Some are writing very personal stories that move others to sit up and take notice. Still others are maxing out credit cards and taking personal loans to finally make that damn movie, no matter what. I've seen some of our professors by day, hunched over their laptops at night, banging away their vision because they have no choice. I've seen the mockumentaries being done about this maddening process. And despite the difficulty in getting it done, they get it done. They win awards too.

And the students! I can't believe the dedication to their art form. Student films abound from URI, RISD and other universities. There's also the RI Council on the Arts program called the Give Me 5 Lab, a commando-style filmmaking afternoon for teens, where the kids write, cast, shoot, edit, score and present their work all in one afternoon. Teens who come to mind are Fountain of Youth Films, made up of two ambitious young ladies, Audrey Larson and Shay Martin, who make feature films. Or the RI-based PBS show called "Teenage Critic," a show written and produced by teens. I have to mention another star on the horizon - the producer of that show, Ms. Lara Sebastian. Sebastian secured a grant from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for her documentary on education reform in the town of Central Falls, RI. She's aiming to interview Viola Davis for this doc. And she does all this while running the kitchen at 88 in Providence. Yep, she's a chef too. (Some people just amaze me. They really do.)

On the prof end, we have Laura Colella at RISD (who is now taking a sabbatical at Brown to get an advanced degree) who wrote, produced and acted in her film *Breakfast With Curtis*, and got the attention of none other than Paul Thomas Anderson. Last I heard, Laura was editing Anderson's newest film, *Inherent Vice*, due out in January 2015. Or how about Derek Dubois, professor at RIC, who won five awards for his films, has a documentary premiering in August of this year and just finished his newest short, *Sinners*. Creepy, folks. And his *Lucid* scared me outright with some terrific work from cast/crew.

Speaking of horror films, we have no shortage there. Our little state has sold more horror films in the last six months and garnered more distro deals than Carter has liver pills. (Ok, do they even say that anymore? Am I dating myself? Probably. Who cares?) There are the boys from 989, Anthony Ambrosino and Nick Delmenico, who, in conjunction with Channel 83 Films, made and sold the horror/sci-fi flick *Almost Human* after rave reviews at their midnight showing at the Toronto Film Festival. Or how about Ricky Laprade, who sold *Villanelle*, (a stylish piece around an old poetic art form), and will probably do the same with his film *Erebus*. Or Jordan Pacheco, a bona-fide paranormal investigator who got his film *Provoked* distributed.

You can't talk about horror films without including Woodhaven Production Co. They just wrapped their film, Tommy DeNucci's *Almost Mercy*, starring Bill Mosely from *Devil's Rejects*. Their parent company, Verdi Films, will produce *Bleed for This*, a story about boxer Vinny Paz, with Martin Scorsese in RI this July. By the way, *Almost Mercy* had a hell of a production manager by the name of Mr. Raz Cunningham, who just won Regional Best Feature through the SENE Film Festival for his film *Wander My Friends*, a flick written and produced by Raz and producer Mel Hardy, about comic book creators and the fight to keep their company. I laughed out loud at this one. Every joke landed, people. Even when the disc stopped playing unexpectedly, we all sat and waited patiently for the fix. (I have the privilege of working on Raz's next feature film called *Special Feature*, a mockumentary about the making of an indie film along with Tommy DeNucci as Ricky Ramm, the overbearing, ram-it-down-your-throat DJ.)

I'd be remiss if I did not mention Mr. Richard Marr-Griffin who has 16 films in distribution and is currently filming another one called *Sins of Dracula*. He's not done with *Accidental Incest* yet, a campy little tale that I have a small part in. What fun!

Should I stay or should I go? I'm stayin'. But either way, folks, film is rolling in RI. Big time.