

Beautiful Noise 2010 Blogs

Thursday, 17 June 2010

Well, here we go...all together now!

After many months of writing, planning, worrying, casting, putting together a top-notch production team, co-producing all the incredible original songs, pitching the movie to investors and area business sponsors, etc - it looks like it's all happening! Midnight Pass Productions is shooting our first feature film right here in Sarasota titled *Beautiful Noise*. I could fill a 300 page book with all the details as to how we got to this point...but I'd rather just take a moment to thank everyone, and you know who you are, for helping me position our epic little musical-drama to commence principal photography this August. I promise to do my best to update this Director's blog often and give you some insights and a behind-the-scenes peek at what our Team goes through to make *Beautiful Noise*. I hope you find it interesting. It's a true-life story of how a low budget, high quality film finds its way into production and, hopefully, to a theatre complex near you! Thanks for tuning in.

Steve

Sunday, 20 June 2010

IT'S ALL ABOUT WE

Now that the Soundtrack is nearing completion and the major crew & locations decisions have been made, I'm taking what will be my final pass at the script today. Listening to my Cast read the screenplay out loud start to finish last weekend enabled me to determine the pacing of the film and, in this case, where I could add more backstory to the supporting roles. You're only as strong as your weakest link, so imagine my confidence level going into the shoot later this summer knowing that those smaller, but key, supporting parts are anchored by the likes of veteran Hollywood & Broadway actor Tim Jerome, up and coming Florida-based acting standout Steve Garland and outstanding performers like Chester See, Doug Frasure and Chris McCarty. Talk about having 'Good Vibrations'...

I have never worked so hard and for so long on just one thing. I haven't read a newspaper or watched television since the final episode of '24'. I'm asleep by midnight and I wake up without an alarm at 4 am most days feeling rested and raring to go. And I'm grateful for this unique opportunity to work with such talented, dedicated people both in front of and behind the camera who share my belief that our movie can be something special. Everything I've ever accomplished or failed at in the past has led me to this place and time, and I'm using those hard-earned lessons and focusing all my creative energy on just this one thing, without distraction or compromise. Maybe that's why I feel so sure about the potential of this little indie musical. It's been my experience that whenever I block out the naysayers from trying to steal my dream and instead help others get what they want - in this case helping my cast and crew deliver the best

performances of their careers to date - then and only then will I reap the rewards of the collaborative effort.

Like the songwriter who inspired me to write *Beautiful Noise* sang: "It's not about Me. It's all about We."

Steve

Wednesday, 30 June 2010

Shooting Schedule, Cinematography & Location Scouting

Thanks to a superb job by production crew member Sean Keller working his magic with the requisite software, we've organized and set our shooting schedule to commence on August 23rd. We have a 2 week rehearsal period prior to that start date with the primary cast - then we head right into principal photography, which is set for 19 days. We'll shoot 6-day weeks and take Sundays off, so we should be wrapped by September 13. Co-producer Alex Rotella and I are scouting the last major location today, searching for a local Sarasota club that could double for an L.A. music spot, at least for the interior shots. Among other things, Alex is also working to acquire the various lenses and lighting equipment our DP Dan Stoloff needs for the shoot. Dan's shooting with the Red Cam and I'm looking forward to our conversations regarding the look and style of our film and the various shot lists we'll create for each day of the shoot. It's no easy task to acquire everything we need to shoot a quality indie film on our tight budget, but so far every company we're dealing with is offering terrific deals to help us create *Beautiful Noise*. We're grateful for the enthusiastic support from all involved.

Steve

Monday, 5 July 2010

Locking The Screenplay

It's true that writing is rewriting. That is to say, you can tinker with a script forever and never be completely comfortable that you've really nailed what you wanted to say. But today is the day I'm locking the screenplay after I make some adjustments that were inspired by excellent notes from our DP and co-producers. Little things really, but they'll make such a big difference in the final product. And even though I know we may opt to add/subtract while we're shooting on the set, today just seems like the day I need to polish *Beautiful Noise* off with one final pass and then offer it up to the masses. All the signs are there for me. It's a rare overcast, rainy day in Sarasota; the wife was called into work; the kids and grandkids are busy doing their post-holiday weekend stuff; the dog is asleep on the couch and the laptop sits alone on the table...beckoning. So there's

really nothing left for me to do except take the screenplay out for one last spin around the block. Tomorrow it will be time to organize and coordinate the final preproduction and actor rehearsal details required just prior to principal photography. So, the Writer's cap comes off today and the Producer's hat will be set firmly in place...all leading up to the time I get to wear my Director's baseball cap non-stop for the upcoming 19-day shoot.

It's a sad farewell as I've loved every moment of writing (and rewriting) this Story. It's like sending your kid off to college or giving your daughter away at her wedding - hoping and praying that you've done all you possibly could to prepare them for what's to come. But hey, it's gotta be done. The caravan moves on. And yet, thankfully, just at the most excruciatingly painful moment when I feel the deepest pangs and anxiety of this departure, the Writing gods lift my spirits by reminding me that three other heartfelt Scripts of mine are patiently waiting for my current obsession with this Musical-Drama to ease just enough to allow my focus to drift, if only for a minute or two, to the wonderful work ahead on the new Stories I will turn to next.

I know that a good movie must first have just the right combination and variety of Words and Action expressed on the pages of a script before it has a chance to break through and become the kind of film worth an audience's time and money - so I hope that the screenplay titled Beautiful Noise inspires and enables our Cast & Crew to create something both entertaining and memorable. It was Mine alone, once. Now it's Ours - and if our Production Team works hard in the coming weeks and is very lucky, our movie just might find a new home with You and Yours someday.

Steve

Tuesday, 13 July 2010

Twinkle, Twinkle - a Sarasota Star!

So here I am...a long-time resident of Sarasota...a current indie film producer/director and a past, well-travelled concert promoter...and I'm just now getting up to speed on a Suncoast music legend known simply as - Twinkle. Part singer/songwriter, part modern-day free-spirited hippy - all embodied in a high-energy, spiritually alive human being who I'm proud to say is now a member of the Supporting Cast in "Beautiful Noise". I've seen, heard and presented a lot of terrific artists in concert in my day, but the 10 minute mini-concert Twinkle performed for me and co-producer Alex Rotella last Saturday afternoon in Epicure Restaurant in downtown Sarasota simply left me and everyone

there awe-struck. What an incredible spirit. What a fabulous addition to an already talent-loaded Cast!

In the movie, you'll hear Twinkle's vocal on the amazing David Poe song - "Joy". I know for a fact that we have a hit music Soundtrack in the works...and I know that the legion of fans in Twinkle's hometown of Sarasota and all around the world won't be surprised at my prediction that her version of "Joy" will be one of the breakout hit singles from our fantastic movie Soundtrack.

Check out the new pics of our Supporting Cast here on the website. We're proud to have all these talented, dedicated actors and performers helping us bring you our little musical-drama.

Steve

Tuesday, 20 July 2010

CREWING UP

During my concert promotion days of yore, it was a relatively simple matter of hiring a quality production crew to work with you for one day to put on a single show. From set up to tear down, I always had experienced people working away, ensuring me of having a smooth show production-wise, regardless of whether I was presenting big concert events like Beatle Ringo Starr or The Beach Boys, or smaller ones like Rockapella.

That was then. This is now.

Prepping to shoot a feature length indie movie involves working side by side for many weeks with your key department heads to hire a great crew and secure equipment to make the film and create a work-flow that helps everyone do their very best when principal photography commences and for when post-production kicks into gear. On any given day we'll have 30 or more people on the set for 21-25 days in the heat of a Sarasota summer all working together to create "Beautiful Noise" followed by weeks of editing and scoring the movie. From production coordinators to makeup/hair stylists; from sound mixers to the cinematographer's camera team; from catering and lodging needs to wardrobe; from assistant directors to casting extras; from special effects and editing to stunt people and production design; from the Cast to the art director and prop master; and that's before we start talking about producing a Soundtrack with 21 great songs! It's a small army of dedicated people dealing with every detail of every sequence

of every scene in the screenplay. Pre-production is a daunting task, given the logistics involved, and one I could not do without the help of incredible people like co-producers Alex Rotella & Victoria Rowett and my co-music producers Mo Katerae and Roger Hughes, who are all Sarasota-based professionals. As it happens, the Suncoast is populated with film and music pros who choose to live in our tropical paradise, but who are forced to travel to out-of-state locations to work in the movie biz. Our film enables them to work their craft here in their hometown and, along with other film productions who will hopefully follow our lead and start making movies here on a consistent basis, generates an economic stimulus of sorts for the community.

My Team is going out of their way to hire production crew members and actors who reside locally, and I'm certain that they will all do a terrific job. And in addition to the experienced crew joining our troupe, we have talented, up and coming filmmakers who are top students at the Ringling Digital Film School and the State College of Florida who have been asked to work on the film and earn their first real-world film production credits. It all makes for an upbeat, energetic vibe on the set - which is so important when you're working with a low budget and a tight shooting schedule. There's little room for error or delays, so a happy crew led by an organized and efficient team of producers gives us all a chance to focus on creating the magic you'll hopefully see on a theatre screen near you.

The Mission is to (a) turn great Stories I write or acquire from other sources into entertaining Movies; and (b) produce each film here in Sarasota and the surrounding area with the same loyal group of professional filmmakers who believed in our dream and who were with us from the beginning.

We're off to a great start.

Steve

Monday, 26 July 2010

It's All About The Music

For as long as I can remember, Music has been an extremely important part of my life. When I was a very young kid I used to rummage through my older sisters' box of record albums (some of you still remember LP's, right?) and played them on the turntable with my head as close to the speakers as possible. She had somewhat sophisticated, mellow tastes - so I was exposed to Broadway Cast Albums like Camelot and groups like The Kingston Trio & The Letterman. Buried in her collection was a single Neil Diamond album called Touching You...Touching Me, which set the stage for my forthcoming lyrical and musical inspirations and my love and devotion to all things Diamond (fueled early on by Neil's riveting Hot August Night Live album). My older brothers' LP collection was, thankfully, full of Beatle albums, Santana, the Stones,

Dylan, Van Morrison, Beach Boys, etc. I loved listening to 60's pop/rock growing up and was thrilled, later in life, to present Ringo Starr, The Beach Boys, The Rascals, The Grass Roots, Tommy James & The Shondells, The Association, Three Dog Night and many other favorites of the era in Concert.

As a teenager I experienced how listening to my favorite songs could lift me up and out of any negative vibe I was feeling. As a concert promoter I experienced how an entire audience can be moved emotionally by the sheer power and force of a live performance. And now, as an independent film producer, I am anxiously waiting for the time when the Soundtrack from a movie we're creating here in Sarasota washes over its audiences like a giant wave and propels the storyline of Beautiful Noise. We have an interesting Tale, wonderful actors and crew, and a beautiful, tropical locale to shoot the movie. But it's a Musical-Drama, so in the final analysis - the Music will make us or break us.

There are many variables involved, many puzzle pieces to fit together for a movie to work. We've all seen films with wonderful casts loaded with A-list stars, guided by terrific directors and written and produced by some of the greatest names in Hollywood history...that have flopped miserably at the box office...and you walk out of the theatre shaking your head and griping about the dough you spent for the tickets, popcorn and sodas. We've all been there. Then we search for redeeming qualities of the film to justify the expense and the time spent. For example, though I dearly loved the book, I would have walked out of Jonathon Livingston Seagull after the first 15 minutes had it not been for the incredible film score by Neil Diamond. The JLS soundtrack sold many millions of copies and is one of my all-time favorite Diamond albums, but even Neil's great songs and score couldn't save that movie. The flip side of this is when you experience a film you love and realize how much the songs, score and incidental music added to your enjoyment. There are countless examples of this and we all have our favorites. My earliest memory of this phenomenon was when I first saw Lawrence of Arabia. The soundtrack of that film swept me up when I was a young kid and added immensely to the impact the movie had on me...then and now.

So you get my point...the Music moves me...and that's the #1 reason I believe that Beautiful Noise has a chance to become something very special. And all the music producers who have helped me create the Soundtrack at SRQ's Top Secret Recording Studios feel the same way. When you consider the fact that 20 of the 21 songs in the film are all original tunes (Joni Mitchell's classic Free Man In Paris being the sole exception) - and that most of those were written by our films' co-stars Kimber Cleveland, Chester See and Chris McCarty - and that there are at least 4 or 5 that could become breakout hit singles, as sung by the composers and their fellow co-stars Jay White, Danielle White (no relation btw) and Twinkle - well, it's nothing short of amazing. For more details on how these songs came to me click on the latest NEWS on this website and read the Creative Loafing feature story by writer Tim Sukits.

I'm blessed to have the very best Team of people any Producer/Director could ask for working with me on the movie, no doubt about it. And we have a really cool Story to tell

with this ambitious indie film. How the filming all turns out, well, we'll all have to wait and see how the better angels within us guide our crew to produce our best effort. But as for the Music you'll hear in the movie - take it from me right here and now. We have a dead-bang winner of a Soundtrack as the foundation for Beautiful Noise, filled with a variety of songs sung by a relatively unknown Cast of performers and songwriters who are surely destined for great things. Some extremely talented producers and musicians have been in the studio working with them for months now. Believe me. You're gonna love 'em all

We're already posting song snippets here and there along the way on our "Beautiful Noise Movie" Facebook page - and at least one of the songs from the Soundtrack will be released this Fall ahead of the movie premiere and album release. I'll keep you posted.

Steve

Tuesday, 10 August 2010

Thank God for Ed Burns

It's been a year since I finished the first draft of Beautiful Noise and it seems that every waking moment since then has been on how to get it made...right here in Sarasota. The writing and rewriting, the casting, the money chase, the crew decisions, the acquisition of the songs for the soundtrack, the size and scope of it all - it's been an all-encompassing siege on my senses and a journey like none I've ever encountered. And I love every minute of it. And now that we're on the eve of principal photography, at a time when I'm wrapped up in shot lists, rehearsals, locations and other critical logistics, my mind is already working overtime to figure out how best to market the movie when I complete post-production. It's not enough to simply bring this musical-drama to life...it's all about sharing the film with as wide an audience as possible...knowing full well that every indie film competes with the multimillion dollar Goliaths that come out of Hollywood every week. To that end, all I can say is - thank God for Ed Burns.

Edward Burns is not only one of my favorite actors but also a successful NY-based independent filmmaker who has a bead on the future of indie film distribution. While everyone hopes their epic little film garners praise and is seen in movie theatres all around the world, Mr. Burns intelligently points out that a feature film can be profitable and be seen by millions without ever gracing a local cinema. Given all the various platforms that exist today to see a movie - from DVD's to laptops to cable to I-phones, etc...Ed preaches the gospel of Reality to all his indie film disciples to "fall out of love with a theatrical release". And he's right. Thanks to today's digital age, I'm making Beautiful Noise at a fraction of the cost of the typical Hollywood release...and I defy you to be able to tell the difference between this Sarasota, Florida produced movie and many other small budget Hollywood films from a "production-look" standpoint, a Story standpoint, and especially from a Soundtrack standpoint.

Planning ahead to take advantage of the new portals available to present my movies to the universe just makes good sense and is certainly worth the time and effort before production starts. Ed Burns and others like him have blazed a trail for indie filmmakers

to follow, so count me among those students of this intelligent, experienced storyteller. I hope to shake his hand and thank him personally someday for the guidance and inspiration.

For those of you who would like to learn more, I highly recommend you follow and connect with Ed Burns at: EdwardBurns.net and on Facebook and Twitter. And for Film School 101 lessons, be sure to watch Ed's first two movies on DVD - The Brothers McMullen & She's The One with Ed's Director's Commentary turned on. The information is priceless.

Steve

Friday, 20 August 2010

Rehearsals & Chemistry

Of all the elements required to create an entertaining movie, are there any more important than Casting? True, if the words aren't on the page, then the best of actors can't save a weak script. Likewise, a great script performed by weak actors usually fails miserably. So what happens when you have an opportunity to direct unknown yet proven performers in an indie musical-drama with a script that you wrote that most people agree is a pretty cool Story? What's gonna show up on the big screen from that kind of combination? What determines whether an audience buys in and absorbs themselves into the plot and subplots? I believe the simple answer is - Chemistry. Either the audience is hooked by the relationships between your Characters or they're not. It's that simple. And after all the months working to get to this point in the process and now finding myself days away from the cameras rolling - it's a blessing, especially for an indie film, to have the time and resources to rehearse and block your scenes and get an early glimpse of the possibilities.

Beautiful Noise ultimately is about Redemption and never ever giving up on your Dreams - and realizing that all you really need to succeed is already within you. To tell that kind of emotional Story without overplaying the Themes involved is tricky and demands a lot of range from your actors. After experiencing the first day of rehearsals with two of my Lead Characters in the film, "Noah & Dez", as played by Jay White and Danielle White (no relation!), I'm happy to report that I think we're on to something special. Jay is a consummate professional, having graced stages in Vegas and around the world for over 20 years as the world's #1 Neil Diamond performer - and his take on 'Noah', the washed up singer-songwriter from the 70's who walked away from the limelight and his troubled past, is dead on. For clarity's sake, understand that the movie and Jay's role has absolutely nothing at all to do with Mr. Diamond's life and storied

career, so Jay's portrayal in the film is completely foreign to the role he's been playing on stage all his adult life...which is no easy task. And Danielle...well, her overwhelming talent is matched equally with a wisdom, intellect and personality that informs any remotely enlightened person that, wise beyond her years, she's truly an 'old soul' and a perfect choice to play the mystically Bohemian 'Dez'. Later in our first week of filming, starting in just a few days, their co-star Kimber Cleveland joins us on set. Kimber's personal life story mirrors the journey of her character, 'Candy', so I can't wait to direct this rare talent and help her shape her star-making role in the film through her natural acting ability and dynamic music performances. And to add a little extra Light on the subject matter, I get to work with the one and only King Errisson in Week One of the shooting schedule! Diamondheads the world over recognize King as the conga player-percussionist extraordinaire who has performed in Neil Diamond's band since 1974. King's small but crucial role in our movie is tailor-made for him...and it's a real treat to have some of that Diamond vibe energizing Beautiful Noise.

I suspect that the next few posts to this Director's Blog will be shorter as the Team is gathering to start the shoot next Monday. Thanks for following along. I'll do my best to bring you my insights and experiences from the set as the Action unfolds. Light a few candles, say a few prayers and send us all some positive waves. I have the recipe for a wonderful movie and all the essential ingredients here with me now. There's still a long road ahead before we take this thing out of the oven...but I know it's got a chance to be something you'll enjoy digging your teeth into.

Steve

Saturday, 21 August 2010

Looking forward to "Lonely Hearts"

My Soundtrack co-producers Mo Katirae & Roger Hughes from Sarasota's Top Secret Studios just handed me a new mix of the first song we're featuring in the shooting schedule titled "That's How Lonely Hearts Survive". It's a duet sung by 'Noah & Dez' and it will rip your heart out. Jay & Danielle nail their performances on this incredible ballad, written by another co-star in the film, Doug Frasure. Neil & Barbra could not have done it better. We're releasing it as the first single from the soundtrack album at Thanksgiving. Can't wait to shoot the sequence next week.

Steve

Sunday, 22 August 2010

He was a "Free Man In Paris"

Jay cut his vocals for Joni Mitchell's "Free Man In Paris" last night at the studio. It absolutely rocks and is a fantastic concert version of Joni's classic song. It's dynamic, full of energy and a song I can't wait to release prior to the movies' premiere early next year. Props to my Soundtrack co-producers Roger & Mo for working with terrific SRQ-based musicians to create killer instrumental tracks for Jay to sing to.

Rehearsals have been great all week. Jay and Danielle came in prepared and worked hard shaping their characters of "Noah & Dez". Conga drum legend King Errisson, known as "Zeus" on the set, arrives in Florida today for his pivotal scenes - and then Kimber Cleveland rolls into town mid-week to shoot an explosive sequence, as the tension between "Candy" and "Noah" reaches a breaking point in the plot of the film. It's gonna be a fun first week of shooting "Beautiful Noise".

Steve

Monday, 23 August 2010

You Never Have To Recover From A Good Start!

Okay. You tell me. What do you think it means when, in spite of torrential rain, this first-time indie film directors' shooting day starts with an establishing shot at sunrise in scenic Myakka Florida of "Noah's" rustic house, framed by the most gorgeous rainbow ever seen...and to top it off, one of the beautiful horses on the property decides to gallantly gallop right in front of the camera to complete the idyllic scene. You can call it Luck all you want, but I know for certain that it was a reward from the movie gods for never giving up and never giving in and finding a way to gather a small, dedicated group of people to create "Beautiful Noise" against all the odds that every indie film faces. It was a sign of things to come as we had a spectacular first day today!

I've known all along that "Beautiful Noise" had a chance to enjoy tremendous commercial appeal across all age groups because of its incredible Soundtrack filled with the most amazing original songs you've ever heard - but after today's first day of filming, I gotta tell you, our chances for really connecting with a worldwide audience went way up! It poured buckets all day today, which only served to enhance the depressed look and feel of our lead character, "Noah", played wonderfully by Jay White. And when you see how Danielle White lights up the screen in her portrayal of the Bohemian free-spirited "Dez", you're going to think I'm the luckiest rookie film director in the universe. These two wonderful performers worked hard all day alongside a talented, tireless crew

to help me begin the task of telling this Story of Love, Hope and Redemption in a way that would make any screenwriter proud.

We had a 5:30 Call this morning and we made all the shots we originally planned except for a few closeups on the final scene of the day, as the monsoon finally forced me to call it a wrap around 5:00 pm. But we'll nail those pickups in the morning and move on to a 2nd day on the set that will feature Jay & Danielle's sure-fire hit song "Lonely Hearts". Then we'll shoot the long awaited sequence between Danille's "Dez" and Neil Diamond bandmember King Errissons' "Zeus", scenes which serve as bookends to open and close the film.

A sincere 'Thank You' goes out to my Cast & Crew for making this first day such an incredible success! It's a day I will never forget.

Steve

Tuesday, 24 August 2010

Tears on the Set

Do you ever cry at the movies? C'mon...admit it. Don't you love a film that can make you laugh and make you cry and make you feel emotions you normally keep hidden from most people? My family always ribs me about getting weepy every single time I watch "Field Of Dreams" or "Rudy". I don't care though. At least they know I have deep feelings that I'm not afraid to show every once in a while. It's a good thing! But the last thing I ever expected was to choke up watching two of my lead actors deliver a powerful on-camera performance of Doug Frasure's love theme for "Beautiful Noise" called 'Lonely Hearts'.

Let me set the scene for you: Jay & Danielle sit at a piano in "Noah's House", surrounded by our entire Crew, and sing and act to the playback of 'Lonely Hearts'. We shoot the scene from several wide angles and then move in tight for the closeups. Keep in mind that only the actors and I have ever heard the song before. After the first two takes the Crew was moved to tears; and by the time the closeups started I was having an impossible time checking my emotions. Then right before Jay's last closeup, I whispered in his ear that if he wanted to take it to another level to not be afraid to dig deep inside and let it all hang out. I'd have his back. He didn't need coaxing. On his last take he mentally put himself into a state of mind where the lyrics just washed over and through him. When I saw the look on his face on my monitor when he started to break down at the end of the song I just lost it. And so did most of the crew. Thank God our camera team of John Goodbrad and Shawn McCarty kept control of their emotions long enough to keep the killer shot steady and in focus. You could cut the emotion with a knife when the last note played out and Jay openly wept in Danielle's arms. I

immediately ran over and hugged my friend and held on until we both gained our composure. Full grown men crying in front of everyone. Jeez... Melodramatic? Maybe. But believe me, it was as real as it gets - and if that's the reaction we got when we knew what was coming, I can only imagine what's gonna happen when anyone with a heart sees this movie...

Danielle was another story altogether. She's 18 going on 35 and you will absolutely fall in love with her the moment she comes on screen. She's got her character "Dez" figured out to the nth degree and takes great care to prepare herself emotionally for each scene. She's a dream to direct and is completely in sync with what I'm looking for from her. I trust her instincts completely and I think she trusts mine pretty well. So after Jay's powerhouse performance, it was time for Danielle's closeups. By the third take she had it nailed, singing the song (live over the playback) as if her life depended on it. She gave me the exact amount of emotion the scene called for. But I still knew she had something left in the tank, so I whispered to her that I thought she too could reach another depth in her performance. Unlike Jay, who went for it without discussion, Danielle sat for a moment and thought it through. Just how much more should her character show at that point in the film? Her wheels were turning for a few moments, but then she agreed to give it a go. And then she let it rip like an Academy Award winner. After her closeup, where she literally bared her soul, all of us were speechless. Applause filled the room, tears were shed and quickly dried, and we walked away from the mornings' work knowing that we were all in on something amazing making a little indie musical-drama called "Beautiful Noise".

Steve

Wednesday, 25 August 2010

Wednesday Musings

The creative Team on the set worked all out with me today and took the very heavy shooting schedule I concocted and made it look easy. We are now a well-oiled machine and we're making all the scenes I visualized come to life in ways I could never imagine on my own. I'm encouraging ideas from everyone on the set and we're not only getting incredible shots in the can but also having a great time doing it. It's a happy, upbeat group of professionals I've surrounded myself and our actors with and the positive vibes that are flowing are paying huge dividends.

King Errisson closed out our shooting day on Tuesday by delivering an outstanding performance as "Zeus" - and his incredible personality brought out a lot of smiles at the end of that particularly emotional day. King listened closely to "Lonely Hearts" and

agrees that we have a potentially huge hit on our hands. Coming from a man who has starred in Neil Diamond's Band since 1974, that comment meant a lot to us. I've enjoyed Kings' work with Neil for a long long time and I'm simply thrilled that he took the time and effort to join our Cast.

After the outpouring of drama and emotion from Tuesday, it was really great to have a lighthearted Wednesday on the set in Myakka. Both Jay and Danielle are firmly in command of their respective Characters and I'm at a place with both of them that requires less and less direction on what to say and how to say it. Our communication now revolves more on the subtle nuances of their roles and how best to convey it all simply. Less is now more with them and their performances are becoming more sparkling and dynamic with each passing day.

There's no longer a sense of wondering if our movie will amount to anything, but rather discussions among us about how big this thing can really be! The hours are long, the rain has been endless, but the movie is taking shape in a wonderful way and everyone involved is in a groove. And it's only the third day of shooting.

Tomorrow is a very big day as "Candy" makes her presence known with extreme prejudice.

Steve

Thursday, 26 August 2010

A Beauty & the King

Day 4 on the set will be memorable in so many ways. I learned some new things from my talented camera Team, which makes me a better Director; I watched a new Star being born with first time actor Kimber Cleveland's sparkling debut on our set; and then closed out the day with a story-filled dinner and an unbelievable recording session with world-class percussionist and long-time Neil Diamond bandmate - King Errisson. Kimber continues to astonish me. In addition to licensing several of her wonderful songs for the movie soundtrack, I selected her for the pivotal role of "Candy" - knowing up front she had zero acting experience - because she's an accomplished singer-songwriter with a dynamite stage presence, is simply stunning to look at and because I believed all she needed to do was play herself. Her real-life struggle to break through in the ultra-competitive music business mirrors what her character goes through in the film, so there was little downside to the risky casting of an inexperienced actor from my point of view. That decision was among the best I've made so far for "Beautiful Noise".

This first week of the shoot centers primarily on the relationship between 'Noah' and 'Dez' as it develops in the second act of the movie in rustic, scenic Myakka Florida. As such, Kimber's character, who is firmly established at the start of the movie, only had one scene scheduled to be shot this week, but it's one of the most important scenes in the film, so I scheduled the entire day around her big sequence with Jay. Kimber walked on the set in full 'Candy' mode, bonded quickly with our upbeat Crew and the playful dogs on the set who've kept us company all week, worked diligently with us to block her shots with Jay, conferred with me on the dialogue - then proceeded to take my direction and deliver take after take after take with the raw power, emotion and intensity of a veteran Hollywood actress. Her explosive performance on her first day on the set confirmed to me and all present that the three key actors that must carry the movie on their shoulders for it to work are more than up to the task.

But there was more to come.

After dinner, I took Kimber with me to our Soundtrack headquarters, Sarasota's Top Secret Studios, to listen to King's conga/percussion work on a couple of songs for the film. King, who shot his scenes on Tuesday, got in sync right away with Mo & Roger as they dialed in the right tones. Then this incredible artist performed the same kind of beautiful work that you can hear him play on every Neil Diamond album over the last 35 years on a song Kimber wrote and that Danielle sings. What he played on "Maybe You'll See Me When I'm Gone" brought wet eyes and chill bumps to both me and Kimber. (Mo & Roger are a little more hard-core, but they too were astonished...in their own way!). Then when King heard Jay's vocal on the smoking hot new arrangement the boys cooked up for Joni Mitchell's "Free Man In Paris", he jumped back into the studio and put on a show for us. I thought the guy was having a "Cherry Cherry" solo flashback from one of Neil's concerts. He could have walked in and cut some simple tracks and I would have been more than grateful...but this consummate pro delivered like you just can't believe and lifted the entire song into a higher vibration. It was just amazing. Pure and simple.

One more day in Myakka tomorrow and then we move to a variety of Sarasota locations this Saturday. The rain has subsided, the sun is shining again - and the "Beautiful Noise" caravan moves on!

Steve

Friday, 27 August 2010

Bicycles and Bonfires

Our final shooting day at the Myakka house location was long but productive. We shot 'Noah' and 'Dez' scenes all day from mid-morning until 9:00 pm and they were some of

the most creative, beautiful shots of the week. From simple shots of Jay and Danielle riding bikes around the property while the horses looked on - to the gorgeous sky at sunset in Myakka State Park that illuminated a poignant scene between the beaming couple - to the Bonfire scene where sparks were literally flying between 'Noah' and 'Dez' - we hustled and created and dodged raindrops and did everything we needed to do to get the shots we needed to make the day. My two lead actors were fantastic again today and my Commando Crew worked their tails off to help me get the scene coverage I'll know I need when I work with our editor.

It was a Total Team Effort and it paid off for us big time.

Tomorrow we start shooting in Siesta Key and also make stops at three well-known Sarasota locations to shoot scenes: The Cock 'n' Bull club, Pritchards Pianos and the Sarasota Guitar Company. The "Beautiful Noise" train is picking up steam and waving a fond farewell to our Myakka hosts, Gary and Paula Aspinall. We are eternally grateful for their hospitality and proud to showcase their splendid house, acreage and animals in our film.

Steve

Saturday, 28 August 2010

Paradise Found

We finished the first week strong by showcasing some terrific Sarasota sponsors of the movie and by filming Jay & Danielle on the most beautiful beach in the world and in the nearby Siesta Village. Indie films rely on the embrace of their community to help create the movie a Writer/Director has in mind, so I want to give a big shout out to thank Sarasota Guitar Company, Pritchards Pianos, Suzie Q's, the Beach Bazarre, Big Olaf, Gilligan's, the Hampton Inn/Airport, Hyatt Place and the legendary Cock 'n' Bull Club for their wonderful support of our Musical/Drama this week. The two music stores have been so great providing us with key instruments for the film - and the music club was a perfect setting for 'Noah's Nightmare' scene. Even the Extras for that scene were awesome! It's not easy sitting around for a couple of hours while the set is meticulously lit for just the right effect, but everyone involved seemed fascinated with the process - and when it came time to deliver their collective performance in the scene, (it was more than just providing background for the shot we wanted...as a certain look and enthusiasm when cued was required), they nailed it in just 3 takes. Thanks everyone.

After lunch at Bob Evans, the rest of the day was filled with "run & gun" shots of 'Noah' and 'Dez' taking in the beauty and wonder of Crescent Beach, which was only right and just as I finished the first draft of "Beautiful Noise" on that very beach a year ago and

walked many miles of it since then listening to and selecting songs for the Soundtrack. You could say it's the spiritual home for the film. Jay had never seen Siesta Key before, and Danielle, though growing up in nearby Bradenton, never spent much time there. Watching those two stroll the gorgeous beach in character, feed the mass of seagulls that enveloped them and soak in the vibe provided by sun, sand, surf and beachcombers made for exquisite shots captured by our Red Camera Team of John Goodbrad and Shawn McCarty.

Our next location was another stomping ground of mine, Siesta Village. Again, all we needed were shots of Jay and Danielle walking and talking as they enjoyed the sights and sounds of the Village scene for a montage sequence. Not wanting to attract much attention from the 'civilians' enjoying their Siesta afternoon, I had my actors stroll the sidewalks and pop into and out of a few of the shops and bars while the camera caught their action from a safe distance away with a long lens, hence the term "run & gun". It all looked very natural and I know it was fun for the actors, especially the scene we shot of them walking out of the Big Olaf ice cream shop, cones in hand!

After we wrapped for the day Cast and Crew gathered at Gilligans for a few libations and to decompress from an extremely challenging and busy week of shooting. One of our Location supervisors, Mike Gatz, manages the popular spot and hosted our little gathering. We should have had the 'behind the scenes' camera rolling 'cause the stories were flying back and forth about the best and funniest stuff we shot for the week. Looking around and listening to these creative, capable people talking about the great time they're having working on the film and the excitement they all share after watching the Story start to unfold was gratifying. You never know when you start something as intense as the filmmaking process if things will go smoothly or if there will be tension between everyone as a result of the long hours and various personalities involved. As the creator and producer of "Beautiful Noise" I knew early on how extremely important it was to choose just the right people to be on the set with me and the actors every day in order to strike the right balance and tone and create an infinitely positive environment for everyone. It only takes one naysayer or "second-guesser" in our midst to throw a wrench into the machinery, so while there are many terrific people involved in the overall project, I was determined to have a small, dedicated Team on set this first week who had unquestioned Faith in me and the Story. As I looked around the circle and listened to my Team toast each other about the success of the week, I knew I had chosen wisely. In the process, my mind wandered to what indie film veteran Ed Burns constantly preaches - (a) You CAN make low budget, high quality movies in your own hometown without a huge cast and crew and all the extra expense that entails; and (b) Ignore those who constantly tell you it can't be done the way you want to do it. It's your Story, it's your baby...just find some talented people who believe in you and go make your Movie.

I listened to Ed. I learned from my Crew. I'm making my Movie.
And so it goes...

Steve

Tuesday, 31 August 2010

Review & Reload

The cool thing about indie filmmaking is that you don't have to dance to the tune of the studio suits who look over your shoulder and bombard you with their notes, timetables and demands. The only input I elect to embrace comes from my Cast & Crew - so having the ability to review the process and output of last week's work is a luxury for a production like ours. Better to know earlier rather than later that you're on the right path. So, while my cast juggles their schedules to be available for the next sequences we're shooting, I'm taking the time to review, reload and huddle with my creative team to double check the actor performances (which are superb to date); start the editing process to create a series of Teaser Trailers that will be rolled out soon; mix the next songs that will be used in playback for the upcoming music sequences; finalize the strategy to release the first song from the Soundtrack; and perhaps most importantly prepare the EPK's and hard-copy Press Kits for the national media and for all the Film Festivals we hope to take "Beautiful Noise" to. It's a whirlwind of activity and a smart way to approach the process. My thanks to key Team members Jerry Chambless and Ralph Barnette for urging me to jump on the marketing plan for the movie now instead of after the completion of principal photography. Beginning with the end in mind is always a wise choice.

Our ace webmaster Ryan Lebar informs that you'll be able to view production pics from our Still Photographer Rod Millington right here on the website later this week. Meanwhile, you can check out some pics from the set on the "Beautiful Noise Movie" Facebook page. My sincere thanks to all who are helping us spread the word about the movie.

Steve

Monday, 06 September 2010

Stills from the Set

Another incredibly busy week ahead for the Production Team, so it's been a real treat to take time out this Labor Day holiday to view some of the great stills taken on the "Beautiful Noise" set by Rod Millington. A picture really is worth a thousand words, so I'll

keep this post short and encourage you to check out the PICTURES section on this website for some of Rod's terrific work. Come back often to see all the new pics as webmaster/production asst Ryan Lebar will keep updating that section every week for us.

Steve

Sunday, 12 September 2010

"How Did You Find Those Incredible Songs?"

Of all the questions about the movie I answer from week to week, the most challenging is - "How did you find all those incredible songs?" - and that's because it's such an unbelievably mystical part of the behind-the-scenes story of "Beautiful Noise". It's difficult to fully explain in a short burst in a media Q&A, so here's what really happened: A typical feature film is lucky to have one great song and even a full-fledged Hollywood Musical/Drama does well to have at least three memorable show-stopping tunes from its music score. So here I am all summer long, explaining to curious onlookers how the songs for our little film came to me, all the while trying to decide which of them to release first - realizing all along that there are at least 5 songs that could become breakout hits from the Soundtrack. I've learned over the years that the timing of how and when you start to promote your project is critical to its overall success, as you never have to recover from a good start. Releasing songs from a films' Soundtrack months ahead of the release of the Movie is both a delicate and risky matter, as the actual order of songs released is as important to the promotional calendar as the listening order of the songs on the actual album. It matters what you hear and the order in which you hear it in order to obtain the desired effect of getting your potential audience into the right groove of the album...and ultimately the Movie. But I digress...

The first draft of "Beautiful Noise" was written using lyrics from relatively obscure songs of Neil Diamond as the spine of the piece. While the blockbuster hit movie "Mamma Mia" featured all of Abba's greatest hits, I went the other way and used Neil's songs that most of you would consider non-hits or 'album fodder' as kind of a guide vocal in my head to help me propel the Storyline. Being a dedicated life-long Diamondhead, that was an easy way for me to flesh out the completely fictional story I had in my mind. I knew all along that my chances were slim to none to be able to actually license any of the songs because my low budget, high-quality indie film couldn't possibly handle the cost of such an endeavor. Plus, lets face it, it's Neil Diamond! What chance is there for an indie filmmaker to get the OK from the various buffers and management layers between you and 'Brother Love'? Still, the lyrics from all those great, albeit relatively unknown Diamond songs guided and informed my writing, so I just let it flow. You see, in this movie, every song's lyrics and tempo are critically important to the Story. I did not want a single piece of music included in the film simply because it sounded good in the background. Every lyric, every ballad or uptempo rocker had to have a purpose in helping me tell the tale, or it didn't make the cut. You get the picture, right?

Okay - so fast forward to the moment in time when I approached Neil's song licensing folks at Sony. Even though it was a longshot, I couldn't move forward without at least trying to cut a deal. I learned long ago that you don't score if you don't shoot, so I forwarded my request for the songs to Sony, along with a synopsis of the script and other pertinent details...and then waited. The answer came back a couple of weeks later. My request was respectfully denied. I thought about going back to ask for the use of just one or two Diamond tunes, but the reality had sunk in, so I quickly turned my attention to the difficult task of finding replacement songs so I could keep the project moving forward. The tough part was - I loved my screenplay as is. It was the exact Story I wanted to tell and I didn't want to change a word of it - so I figured it might take months to find all original songs to replace the hand-picked Diamond collection I had used to guide me through the writing process. Months? Hell, maybe years! And so The Search began.

Spending 25+ years in the concert business has its plusses, one of them being able to reach out to musical friends I've worked with along the way. One such artisan was Steve Moris, an incredible musician/comedian who opened most of my Beach Boys shows over the years and who is a close friend and confidante. Steve's connections are vast as he has opened for some of the giants of the music world. He'd already proofread and loved my screenplay and knew exactly what I was looking for, so he sent the word out through his Network that an indie writer/producer in Florida was looking for original songs for a great new Musical. Meanwhile, as an afterthought, I contacted my Cast as a courtesy to ask if they might have a song or two they thought would work in the film. That's when the Magic happened.

Within ten days I was able to replace every single Diamond tune with an original song that came to me - not from the Network of established songwriters and producers Steve and I were mining - but from one musical legend, one old friend from Dayton, and primarily from 4 of the the films' co-stars: Kimber Cleveland, Chester See, Chris McCarty and Doug Frasure. Not only did the lyrics and the tempos of the songs they submitted replace Neil's wonderful tunes, (and God, it was so damn hard for me to let go of them) but they actually expanded the potential of "Beautiful Noise" with their sheer brilliance and variety - and all without me having to change one word of the screenplay! It's as if the Universe purposely used my passion for Neil's melodies and lyrics to inspire me to write the Story I had in my heart, then dashed my hopes against the rocks with the turndown to licence those treasured tunes, only to be rescued and redeemed by a Cast that have as high hopes for the success of our movie as I do. And it all happened in the blink of an eye. The central theme of "Beautiful Noise" was played out right before my eyes -

"All you need to succeed is already within - and right in front of you".

And to think I almost missed it. The actor/singer-songwriters in our movie are all extraordinary people. Some just starting their careers, some still struggling to carve out a niche for themselves, some firmly established - all of them willing to go that extra mile to help me and the Crew make "Beautiful Noise" worthy of your time and interest. I have no doubt that you'll not only enjoy their on-screen performances, but that you'll also

come to know and embrace, in a very personal way, songs like the Doug Frasura-penned "Lonely Hearts" - the movie's Love Theme sung so beautifully by Danielle & Jay; Chris McCarty's "Believe"; Chester See's "You're Beautiful" & "Hold On"; and Kimber Cleveland's "Maybe You'll See Me When I'm Gone", "Sorry", "Coming On Strong" and "The Story of Us", to name a few. And if that's not enough, you'll be completely blown away by Jay's vocal and King Errisson's incredible congas on our new version of Joni Mitchell's classic "Free Man In Paris" - and also by my friend and former Daytonian David Poe's hip, insightful "Joy".

So the Journey continues. We'll soon be deep into the final weeks of principal photography and we're preparing to offer up the first release from the Soundtrack - the music video and song titled "Lonely Hearts". The Force is truly with us on this project. I hope you'll pick up on the positive Vibe when we start giving you a peek at our collective effort, as I believe it will indeed be well worth your time to check out all the beautiful noise our merry band of Troubadours and Dreamers are making. It's quite a Story. The one on the screen; and the one behind-the-scenes.

Steve

Sunday, 19 September 2010

Sneak Preview

Spending the time to review and reload has been a rewarding experience. After a thorough screening of all the footage shot to date, the Production Team has pulled together to plot out every shot for every scene for every Location remaining for principal photography in a way that was not possible when we first started. This fine-tuning is going to help us immensely as we'll be working long hours with a larger group of actors at different Locations every day. The luxury of filming for a solid week at "Noah's House" in Myakka is behind us - now we need to efficiently move the company every day, sometimes twice a day, to all the various Sarasota locations and maintain the high quality storytelling and upbeat vibe that we've created.

The Key is to be Prepared.
And we're ready to go.

As noted in an earlier post, the behind-the-scenes activity leading up to the final weeks of shooting has been both exciting and exhausting. I huddled with my Soundtrack co-producers Mo and Roger to fine-tune the tracks for the release of the music video - "Lonely Hearts" this week and also to prep other songs for the music performance sequences we'll shoot with the Cast. And working with Editor Marc Alford for the first time and with DIT manager Shawn McCarty on color correction and other post production needs for the Trailer & Music Video has been an eye-opening revelation of

epic proportions. It's simply amazing how great this movie looks and sounds already... So, we have a super-charged final week of prep ahead and a very special "Sneak Preview" of both the Trailer and Music Video at an 'Invitation Only' Private Screening in downtown SRQ on Thursday for a select group of interested parties. It's the first time anyone outside our Team gets a glimpse of what we're up to. Normally I'd be nervous about it - but to be honest, I've had enough birthdays to know when I see a dead-bang winner...so my level of confidence is running high, yet tempered with a strong dose of humility. It's quite a humbling experience to see something you created out of thin air turn into "Beautiful Noise" - and to know that everyone involved - from the Cast, the Crew and the Investors who are now jumping on the bandwagon - has such faith in the Movie. Our collective effort to help jump-start the indie film industry here in Sarasota is vitally important for the local economy and we're so grateful for the continuing embrace of the film by the community. I know we're gonna make 'em all proud.

Steve

Sunday, 26 September 2010

The Gang's All Here!

The reviews worldwide on the Teaser Trailer and "Lonely Hearts" music video have been tremendously supportive. My thanks to all for your wonderful comments. Tomorrow morning at 4:45 am Cast & Crew begins the final two weeks of principal photography. It's going to be great working with the full compliment of Actors for the rest of the shoot. Myakka was cool working with Jay, Danielle, Kimber and King. Now the whole gang descends upon the "Beautiful Noise" set locations to finish what we started. I can't wait for tomorrow morning.

I'll strive to give you daily updates. Thanks for coming along for the ride.

Steve

Monday, 27 September 2010

An "EASY" 14 HOURS

We had the longest day of the shoot today, spending 14 hours on two sets - but it was well worth it. Sterling performances were turned in by Kimber Cleveland and Doug Frasure this morning, then Chris McCarty joined the action in the afternoon in time to watch Danielle White perform a terrific original song written by Kimber called "Easy". The Crew hung in with me like champs through a grueling day as we started to unveil the "Candy" subplot. And the Cast really delivered in every way. Highlights, in addition to some very well-acted scenes, were the jam sessions between takes performed by these multitalented musician/actors.

Looking forward to all the scenes we're shooting tomorrow at the recording studio. Should be fun...and a little lighter day for us. Chester See makes his debut on the "Beautiful Noise" set and Jay White rejoins us Wednesday. When the film is over I'm thinking about creating a "Beautiful Noise" Concert Tour. With all this talent on one stage it would be one of the most awesome concerts you ever heard! But first things first. We have quite a Story yet to tell with the movie!

Steve

Tuesday, 28 September 2010

Speed Bumps

We had an unbelievably productive day on sets located at Top Secret Studios & Cosimo's Too Restaurant. Kimber & Danielle continue to expand their Characters and have ramped up their individual and collective performances beyond my wildest expectations. Throw in the terrific work by supporting cast members Doug Frasure, Chris McCarty, Bernard Broyles and Brett Jones and you have the recipe for Movie Magic. And adding real spice to the shooting day was the sensational performance turned in by veteran actor Steve Carroll. Steve's dynamic take on his character, record producer extraordinaire 'Mick Jonas', is simply mesmerizing. The guy took my dialogue and turned it into a star-making, manic 'Ned Beatty in Network' kind of showstopping scene that blew the Cast & Crew away - and that set the bar even higher for everyone working on "Beautiful Noise". My thanks to Casting Director Victoria Rowett for helping me find Steve. What a great actor living and working here on the Suncoast.

We hit a semi-major speed bump in the afternoon when we learned that Chester had to drop out of our production at the last minute due to an opportunity in L.A. popping up that forced him to duck out and head back to the West Coast. These things happen from time to time in indie filmmaking...and on major Hollywood productions for that matter. I should have been more upset about this development than I was...but somehow I felt like the Universe was sending the signal that, even though Chester will be sorely missed, this is somehow not a bad thing - and that we'd find a terrific replacement by tomorrow mornings' 6 am actor call time and that everything will work out just fine. I'll let you know tomorrow night what happens as I now have to recast a significant role on the fly and keep the production moving ever forward. Somehow and for some unknown reason, I was actually re-energized by having to scramble to replace a talent like Chester in less than 24 hours in the middle of our tight shooting schedule. It meant a lot to me to see how quickly people like Victoria and Danielle and even my co-Soundtrack producer Roger Hughes and others on our Team scrambled to help find a great local talent to be on set in the morning. It's gonna be fun to see who gets to step into the limelight. It could be a life and career changing experience for a local unknown actor...reminiscent of Rocky Balboa getting his sudden shot, right out of nowhere, at the

Heavyweight Title in the first ROCKY. Opportunity is certainly knocking for someone. Can't wait to see who's going to play 'Brody' and how it all pans out for him long-term...

Steve

Wednesday, 29 September 2010

Local Boy Makes Good!

Drum roll please...the last second replacement for the role of "Brody" in the Musical-Drama "Beautiful Noise" is Sarasota's own Dane Dandridge. Dane is a veteran performer with the Asolo Repertory Theatre, the Florida State University Asolo Conservatory and numerous other regional theatres. He's a great actor and singer (check out his pic on the Home Page) and he jumped right into his new role at 6:00 am this morning after a short but spirited audition process against two other excellent Suncoast performers. After the first few hours Danielle commented about how she felt like she's known Dane for a long time, though they've never met...and the entire Cast & Crew quickly embraced this talented young man right from the start. His presence on the Team was immediately felt during his initial unrehearsed scenes with the dynamic Steve Garland, who plays "Brian", the proprietor of the fictional Myakka Music Club. Playing off a pro like Steve no doubt helped Dane ease into his role...still, he walked in cold into a full blown feature film production and really did his thing. Can't wait to hear him sing his spotlight song on the movie Soundtrack.

Like I said yesterday, I somehow knew that we'd have no problem filling the void left by a California-based actor in spite of the short notice. Dane is a welcome addition to "Beautiful Noise" and another great example of the kind of raw singing and acting talent that calls Sarasota and the Suncoast home. I'm looking forward to working with him on the set, especially tomorrow when Dane and Danielle light up the screen with a little romance that definitely gets 'Noah's (Jay's) attention. Nothing like a steamy love triangle to get the sparks flying...

Steve

Thursday, 30 September 2010

The Dance

I know when I look back on the making of "Beautiful Noise" I will have a treasure trove of memories to smile about. One of them will undoubtedly be the Dance Sequence. Set to the Kimber Cleveland composition "The Story of Us", sung by Jay White and choreographed by Sarasota dance legend Dewayne Barrett, The Dance, as we all refer to it, is as beautiful a scene as I've ever seen in an indie film...and in films of any kind! It was the perfect blend of the beauty, grace and youthful vitality of Dez (Danielle White) mixed with the fear and apprehension of the damaged Noah (Jay White) - which made for an incredible cinematic moment. Director of Photography John Goodbrad, Assistant

Director Jerry Chambless, Sound Producer Ralph Barnette and ace Camera Operator Rod Millington and Company did a magnificent job with the sequence. Danielle, dressed in a fantastic 'Dez-like' dress provided by Florys of JFlo Boutique in SRQ and Jay, playing the downtrodden Noah to the hilt, both delivered a truly wonderful performance. My thanks to them, to their choreographer and to the additional dancers that came together to work on this wondrous section of our film. Dewayne's creativity and direction of The Dance was flawless. The results on screen will both amaze and delight.

As if the Dance wasn't enough of an emotional lift, Danielle White's soulful singing of yet another Kimber Cleveland tune called "Maybe You'll See Me When I'm Gone" brought us all to tears when I directed her in her close up. Danielle's the real deal and will soon be a major star. And the same goes for Kimber. You heard it here first. I have two gorgeous, talented women playing the roles of their lives and giving it up, all-out, every single day on the set. They are going for it and literally reaching for their dreams in every scene they appear in...just like their Characters in the film. Yes folks...there is a method to the "madness" of casting unknowns when I had bankable stars available to me. I'll put Danielle and Kimber up against any two female stars in Hollywood right now and bet the farm on them. When you put the Voice and the Songwriter together on a movie like ours - you literally get instant "Beautiful Noise".

Steve

Friday, 1 October 2010

Long Days - Short Nights

Making an independent film is like going to war. You train and prep for months until it's time to engage the enemy, and a huge enemy in indie film is Time. It seems like we're always fighting the clock as we try our best to get all the scenes shot in a day that we've planned. My Team and I have put in long hours most every day this week and we do have a lot to show for it. We have some really spectacular shots and I couldn't be happier about the direction of the film shoot. Tonight my AD Jerry Chambless and I are reviewing the plan of attack and making the requisite adjustments so we can streamline the remaining days of principal photography and help our Crew turn in a sterling performance on "Beautiful Noise". We've worked a lot of long days this week and I've been operating on 2-3 hours sleep per night - so it's time to review the shooting schedule and make certain that all the shots I originally wanted are necessary. So far I've seen where I can trim up 3 to 4 scenes without damaging the Story. As a Writer, it's very tough to do this...but as a Producer, it's prudent to cut all the fat out of the script. In any case, I'll do whatever is best for the Movie.

We have some incredible Locations to work from this weekend. Stay tuned...

Steve

Saturday, 2 October 2010

She's the One

Today confirmed the fact that, in addition to a great script, Casting is everything. I remember the day I met Danielle White for the first time in downtown Sarasota to discuss the possibility of her playing the lead female role of "Dez", the 20-something, hippy dippy Bohemian girl who has such a tremendous impact on the people she meets throughout the film. She impressed me then as someone who was wise beyond her 18 years and someone I could count on to throw herself passionately into "Beautiful Noise" - so I was sold on her from the get-go. Even though she's been nailing all her performances throughout the shoot, today was The Day I realized how brilliant casting Danielle truly was. She spent the day acting out scenes that ran the full gamut of emotions - from the gleeful parasailing sequence with a frightened 'Noah' (Jay White) to an incredibly tense scene where she had to reach deep down inside in order to convey the darkest despair, to another scene where her Character literally transforms into an Audrey Hepburn-type beauty that simply stunned me and Jay and the Crew. This young actress/singer displayed a range of acting talent that was nothing less than amazing. She possesses the tools to become a highly acclaimed actress and the intellect to know exactly what to do with this rare opportunity.

My gut instinct to cast Danielle over a few other 'name' actresses that were made available to me has already paid off. The role is so demanding that the weight of the entire film, though also carried by Jay & Kimber, is heaviest on Danielle - because in the final analysis, if she's not believable to movie audiences, the film would collapse. It's too cliché to simply say that "a new star was born on the set of "Beautiful Noise" - but I do want to state clearly here and now how thankful I am to the movie gods for sending Danielle my way for this film and to the better angels in me who encouraged me to cast this relative unknown without hesitation. She has embraced the moment and is taking her Character to depths I never thought possible when I wrote the screenplay. I can't express enough what a joy it is to direct this young phenom in what is undoubtedly a star-making turn for her.

It takes an entire Team to pull off this miracle of a movie - but I can honestly say that my film has a terrific chance to become a huge hit thanks in no small part to a beautiful young talent who is giving her all every single day on the set and who has complete Faith and trust in the Story, in her Director and in her ability to transform herself on a daily basis into the mystical 'Dez'.

Casting Danielle White is one of the best decisions I made for "Beautiful Noise". Check out the Trailer & Music video on this website to see what I'm talking about. And keep checking back, 'cause there's much more to come from Danielle and the the rest of my incredible Cast.

Steve

Sunday, 3 October 2010

ONE MORE SONG IN HER

This weekend was not only one of the most spectacular of the "Beautiful Noise" shoot - but also one of the most spectacular weekends of my life. A powerful emotion has been building in me for days now watching my Crew bust their tails to help me get the shots I need for our film to succeed and also from working closely with my Actors to keep the tension and the Storyline moving toward the amazing conclusion of the movie. We started the day by introducing 7 yr old Kasey Ferace to the acting world with her cameo with Danielle in the parking lot of the Cock 'N Bull Pub. Her smile helped us kick-start our Sunday. Then we headed back to Myakka to revisit Gary & Paula Aspinall's rustic home to shoot some key scenes with Jay, Danielle, Kimber and Steve Carroll - and also new young actors Max Klauber and Richard Caldwell, Jr. We ended the shooting day with a panoramic helicopter shot at sunset of the Sarasota Bayfront and downtown skyline, which panned right into the high rise balcony we filmed last night with Jay & Danielle. We missed the sunset shot last night, but our ace 2nd unit camera operator Rod Millington nailed it tonight. Jay and Danielle repeated the intensely romantic scene from last night and recreated the moment with an awesome sunset in the background. Wait 'till you see how we cut all the shots we have of that scene into the movie sequence. Our editor Marc Alcorn and I will have a field day with those shots! Like every other day of the "Beautiful Noise" shoot, one scene stood out - and that's when Kimber Cleveland performed a song she wrote especially for the film - live on the set. It's called "One More Song In Me" and it's amazing. Kimbers' mastery of an acoustic guitar and her pitch-perfect delivery of this vitally important song in the movie was breathtaking. The Crew broke out into applause and I got choked up again when she nailed the last take. Maybe it's all the days without enough sleep, maybe it's the fact I'm seeing this dream of a movie become reality before my eyes - but for sure the emotion that poured out of me (I could hardly call "Cut" due to the lump in my throat) after Kimber completed the performance was caused by her incredible delivery of an unbelievably soulful song about a washed-up songwriter who had it all, lost it all, and then who regained himself...one more time...with one more song. I know lots of people who can identify with Kimber's lyric...

It's an injustice to the Universe that Kimber's songs have not yet made their way to the masses yet. A wildly popular performer in her region of the country, her wonderful catalog of original songs will soon, I predict, shine a light on a worldwide audience in need of inspiration and hope for a better tomorrow. I have not been so moved by a songwriter since the first time Neil saved me when I was a confused teenager when "I Am, I Said" came out. It doesn't matter if Danielle or Jay or anyone else sings Kimber's songs...her artistry is unmistakable, moving and always memorable. It would be one of

the highlights of my film career if I can help in some small way to expose this dynamic writer and performer to the masses. Kimber's songs are the backbone of the "Beautiful Noise" Soundtrack. They touch every emotion and reach every demographic. They make me laugh, make me cry and give a texture to my Story that could not otherwise be fully realized. I am so grateful this wonderful talent is with us on our Journey to tell a simple, hopeful tale in a way that both inspires and entertains. Right next to Neil Diamond, Lennon & McCartney, Carole King and Elton John - I rank Kimber Cleveland as one of my favorite all-time songwriters. And when you hear and see her in "Beautiful Noise", she'll be in your Top 5 too.

Steve

Monday, 4 October 2010

Comic Relief

I started the last week of principal photography on "Beautiful Noise" today thanking my dedicated Cast & Crew for working so hard and for keeping a positive vibe on the set, despite the grueling hours. It's easy to take things for granted when you have a million pieces of logistics racing through your mind, and I came to realize today that it was time to address the troops and thank them for the effort to date and to announce that we are scheduled to be finished shooting the film this Thursday, a few days ahead of the original plan. What we are about to accomplish together is a minor miracle - a low budget, high quality Musical-Drama based in Sarasota, Florida - shot in just 17 days. There's no way this could be accomplished without having a group of people who believe heart and soul in the movie, in me and in themselves. I am eternally grateful to everyone involved in the film and happy to know that its success will have a tremendously positive impact on their lives.

As we roll into the final days of shooting it's great to know that we have someone on set that keeps us all smiling and upbeat - and that someone is the multitalented Chris McCarty. The stuff Chris riffs about between takes is providing the perfect comic relief at a time when we all need it the most. Every moment with Chris on set is magical, as this talented singer/songwriter is cut from the Sammy Davis, Jr. mold of entertainers. The guy can do it all! He can sing, play guitar, dance, and tell an ad-lib joke with the best of them - and he is keeping us all on our toes as we don't ever know when a Chris-ism is about to erupt.

Special moments on the set today were Kimber Cleveland's songs "Sorry" & "Coming On Strong" and Danielle White's rendition of Kimber's "Easy". As mentioned in earlier posts this week, these two young women are destined to become big stars. They are genuinely rock-solid, down to earth people who I hope to work with on several films of

mine coming up soon. Their sterling work and riveting performances on the set today were star-making turns.

Tomorrow is a huge day for us at Sarasota Memorial Hospital. Heavy drama - soulful songs - authentic location.

God, I love what I'm doing...

Steve

Tuesday, 5 October 2010

Anticipation

I witnessed impeccable acting performances today from Steve Garland, Danielle White, Kimber Cleveland and Jay White. Our Sarasota locations ranged from a local hospital to the legendary Gator Club to Fogt's Music Store. This was an all drama, no music day with lots of emotional currency flying around the set. As incredible as today's scenes were, everyone has an eye on tomorrow as Jay White will be showcased in a climatic concert sequence featuring Joni Mitchell's "Free Man In Paris".

Steve

Wednesday, 6 October 2010

Unsung Heroes

We wrapped the main body of principal photography today with some of the most exhilarating scenes of the entire shoot. We have one more day of pick ups to lens later on, but the heavy lifting is now behind us. The climatic concert sequence featuring Jay was shot today at the beautiful new Riverview Performing Arts Center and it was nothing less than spectacular. Linda Nook, Jim Minor and the entire Riverview Team and Student Body were just fantastic to work with. One of the best parts of the day was the time our production staff took to answer questions from all the film/drama students at Riverview who not only watched how we did things but who also worked the shoot as intern production assistants. The looks in their eyes as they watched how and where the soon-to-be-widely acclaimed 'Beautiful Noise' camera team of Chambless & Goodbrad set up our shots to capture everything happening on stage was a wonderful sight to see. Jerry & John went out of their way to answer all the questions the kids threw at them and I was constantly surrounded by eager students who watched me direct the action. It was a teachable moment and it was really great to have all that positive energy from those kids to help fuel the vibe of the day.

And then Jay hit the stage singing our new version of Joni Mitchell's classic "Free Man In Paris".

It was a logistical challenge to capture all the magic of the moment with our primary camera, The Red, and the Canon 5D we used for B-roll, but Jay was spot on and we blew through the sequence quicker than anyone imagined. In between setups I grabbed a guitar from one of the band members and backed up Jay for a coupla Diamond tunes to keep the crowd ramped up. "Sweet Caroline" & "Cherry Cherry" was well received, as was "Sweet Home Alabama" performed by dynamic band member Tony Tyler. The energy in the venue was off the charts and the 500 or so extras, including Jay's Mom and sister, really carried the day for us. My sincere thanks to everyone at Riverview High School for helping us make some 'Beautiful Noise' in their fantastic venue.

The true unsung heroes of the day were Claire Franklin and Bud Buckley. Both of these highly talented people worked many long days on behalf of the production to make sure we captured the authentic look and feel of a huge concert setting - and believe me...it was no small task. Claire worked with me to hand-pick deserving local Suncoast musicians to be Jay's backup band in the sequence and Bud was responsible for the overall staging of the event. Working with his friends from Troll Music, Bud made certain that everything on the massive Riverview stage, from the stage plot plan to all the instruments and sound equipment, was perfect. He and Claire took the vision I had for this important concert sequence and expanded on it - and our film shines as a result of their collective effort. I'm really very proud to feature local SRQ musicians throughout "Beautiful Noise" because these great artists work on a nightly basis to create the eclectic, vibrant music scene Sarasota is famous for without getting a lot of notice. I'm glad we could showcase them in the film.

Other heroes included people like Rod Millington, Annette Breazeale, Jen O'Connor, Alexia Pepper, April Baker, Ryan Lebar, Brandy Luke and so many others whose names you'll find in the credits. These dedicated professionals juggled their busy schedules to be on set to provide support to the production that was well above and beyond the call of duty. They were the glue that helped us all stick together through all the ups and downs of the process. Their presence and devotion to what we're trying to accomplish was felt by everyone involved - and I am forever grateful for their love and support of "Beautiful Noise".

So we did it. We planned our work, worked our plan, improvised where necessary, embraced the support of the community and made it happen. And we laughed and cried and lost sleep and bonded as a Team - Actors & Crew - like nothing I've ever experienced before...and I've been lucky to have experienced a lot over the course of my career. We can't have a traditional Wrap Party just yet because some of the actors had to exit early due to prior commitments, but we'll all be together to celebrate our achievement with Gusto early next year when we have a chance to premiere the movie

here in Sarasota. In the meantime, while the Team takes a breather I'll be working on a daily basis with our editor Marc Alcorn to create the final product. The editing process is where the rubber meets the road and Marc and I are excited about the challenge. There's much more to do before we see "Beautiful Noise" on the big screen, so stay tuned as I'll continue to post info about the process as we guide this musical drama through post production.

Steve

Friday, 8 October 2010

I Am...I Said

"Did you ever read about a frog who dreamed of being a king, and then became one. Well except for the names and a few other changes, if you talk about me, the story's the same one..."

The first moment I heard Neil Diamond's "*I Am...I Said*" come across the radio it hit me like a ton of bricks. Going through a difficult period that many teenagers go through, I was searching for answers revolving around what I was going to do with my life. Looking back, it was a bit of a curse to be such a deep thinker in my mid-teens, 'cause it would have been a lot more fun to just play hockey, raise hell, chase girls and focus on the more trivial things in Life. What struck me most about that first encounter with Neil's lyric was that someone else knew exactly how I felt and could put that feeling into words...and that connection to that lost, longing, mournful feeling in my gut somehow seemed to lighten the load.

"Well I got an emptiness deep inside and I've tried, but it won't let me go. And I'm not a man who likes to swear, but I never cared for the sound of being alone..."

I say all this now 'cause I think it's important for aspiring filmmakers to be aware of the need to brace yourself for the huge wave of emptiness and, dare I say, deep sorrow that washes over you the day after you wrap principal photography on your first film. I thought that the daze I was walking around in today was due to the lack of sleep from the 20 hour days I've put in for weeks now...but that's not the case. I simply miss the creative bubble that I lived in with my Cast & Crew day after day, night after night...watching everyone pull for each other, cheering every musical performance...laughing and crying together...overcoming obstacles big and small - and rushing over to hug an actor when the emotion of a particular scene overwhelmed us and holding them for a moment to thank them for their gift of putting everything they had inside them into the words I wrote for their Characters. I don't know if all this happens on other film sets...or if this will ever happen again...but it all happened, and then some, every day of our shoot.

Flashes that run on a loop non-stop in my head include watching my small but extremely capable and dedicated crew frantically rush to break down a set and move to another location as fast as possible so we can stay on schedule; the artistry of the makeup people and the attention to detail the art director and production designer took to make certain our film had an authentic look and feel to it; our choreographer working with Jay & Danielle on the all-important "Dance" sequence and to see the smiles on my stars faces as they locked eyes and got into the scene in a way far better than I wrote it; all the production assistants who worked like slaves without complaint just for the experience and the film credit; all the people who took time off their day jobs to help coordinate the lodging and transportation and catering, etc; all the effort it took just to make sure the stages and venues we were allowed to use looked like real performance settings; those high school students who no doubt learned more in one day on our set than they will in a year of their study of film in school and the amazing looks on their eager faces; the months working with my guys in the recording studio to create a Soundtrack that will blow everyone away with its song selection and production; those ad-lib moments during takes from the actors that, thank God, I kept the cameras rolling on long after the scripted scene was finished. And then to think of all those who said it couldn't be done...that you absolutely cannot make a film with the scope and scale of *"Beautiful Noise"* on a shoestring budget with unknown actors and a relatively inexperienced crew from Sarasota. They were wrong.

And most of all...best of all...all those private moments and conversations with cast members on the set riffing back and forth about how they think their characters should react in certain scenes and what I was looking for in their performance...and then off the set, getting to know them personally, sharing pieces of our lives with each other and realizing how much we care about the material and each other - and knowing what this opportunity I offered really means to them and how it can positively impact their careers and lives.

And then suddenly...I'm alone again.

"I am I said...to no one there. And no one heard at all, not even the chair..."

"Beautiful Noise" was conceived and written in solitude. The songs were selected by me alone, as was the momentous decision to create an indie film production company and make the movie right here in Sarasota, while walking Crescent Beach on Siesta Key every day for weeks and months.

"I am, I cried.

I am, said I.

And I am lost and I can't even say why..."

I love writing and making movies that both entertain and enlighten.
I love this movie.
I love and miss my Cast & Crew.

So to you aspiring filmmakers, be prepared for that first day after principal photography wraps. 'Cause it's a killer.
"...leaving me lonely still."

Steve

Monday, 11 October 2010

"Beautiful Noise" - the Trilogy!

Now that principal photography is wrapped, I'm getting back to my daily early morning beach walks at Siesta Key to fuel my creative writing. That's a good thing, because I've decided I have more to say on the subjects of Inspiration, Redemption, Hope & Love...which means I'm starting to write the Prequel and Sequel to Beautiful Noise right now. I can see from the editing so far that we have something very entertaining and extremely marketable on our hands. The formula worked: Strong, Edgy Storyline + Dynamic Original Songs + accomplished but relatively Unknown Actor/Singers = Potential Hit Movie. There's lots of other important elements and spices that need to be added to the recipe, but I gotta keep that part of the formula to myself!

"But Steve...shouldn't you wait until you see how the first film is received...?"

Wait for what? That's the conventional wisdom that Hollywood studios usually follow. And they have to, because big studio films cost tens of millions of dollars to make and market. But that's not the case with our Sarasota-based production company. When you see the movie you'll bet we had to spend millions of dollars on the movie and Soundtrack...but a New Generation of Indie Filmmaking is being created right here in Sarasota thanks to the Digital Age of Moviemaking - so all it takes is a great Story on the pages, a reasonably low budget, the willpower of a Producer to pull all the creative production elements together, Investors who now have the ability to become involved on the ground floor of a musical-drama Franchise with the luxury of viewing the first Beautiful Noise as their guidepost, a Cast & Crew that love to work together, and a little Divine Guidance to watch over our Low Budget-High Quality enterprise.

I already have the basic Outline and Theme Songs for the two films set and I'll be huddling later this month with a coupla people close to me and the project to flesh out the subplots. Now that I know how the Prequel starts and how the Sequel ends, the scenes and the dialogue will come quick to me. I'll have the first draft of the prequel completed by Thanksgiving. Both movies will be filmed back-to-back in 2011. That saves both time and money. Locations I'll be scouting for both films include Sarasota,

Florida; King Errisson's Acklins Island resort in the Bahamas; and also a great spot I know in Snowmass Colorado. I know this sounds expensive, but when you have friends who own cool properties you'd be amazed what can be accomplished on a tight budget. Hey, if you're gonna dream, Dream Big, and then put it all into motion! That's how Beautiful Noise came to be...and that's how the two new films will be born. When you see the current movie you'll understand what compelled me to take another ambitious step to make not one but two more BN films. I have several other projects already scripted waiting patiently for my attention - but Beautiful Noise has captured my heart and my imagination, plus I'm a sucker for movies that make you laugh and make you cry and that features killer music. The footage I'm editing with Marc Alford confirms that we're on to something big and that it's a Story worthy of three films. So what am I to do but dance to the music that my Muse is laying down?

When you follow your heart and your gut instincts, you can't go wrong...as long as you never, ever give up until you see your vision through to the end, no matter what the obstacles. That's the Secret of successful indie filmmaking that I've come to learn... So in addition to post production on BN 1, I'm getting deep into the writing and producing activities required for BN 2 & BN 3. My Cast has been put on alert - Kimber and Doug, Danielle and Chris Mc have all been asked to submit songs for the new films - so here we go! All together now...

Steve

Sunday, 17 October 2010

Edit...Write...Edit...Sleep...Edit...Write...

"If you ask me what I came into this world to do, I will tell you I came to live out loud." - Emile Zola

Living out loud' has been my modus operandi for as far back as I can remember and it is an essential element to keep in mind when you're writing screenplays. I mean, what's the point if your Characters don't express themselves in ways that really connect with movie audiences? And I'm not just talking about verbal or physical gymnastics, as many times I find that 'less is more' when trying to portray a characters' feelings. I'm referring to the challenging task of writing scenarios and dialogue that bring your story to life in a vibrant and often passionate way that resonates throughout the movie. This, I believe, is especially important when you're creating musical-dramas.

Making the decision to continue the Story of Beautiful Noise with a prequel and then to resolve the Trilogy in a sequel was easy, 'cause I have a lot more to say about the themes of Life that were touched on in this first installment - and because I know my Characters better now thanks to the wonderful portrayals Jay and Danielle and Kimber & King and the rest of the Company delivered. The tough part is sticking to a dedicated

writing schedule while I'm editing all night and developing the film festival marketing plan for the current film most of the day. But that's the Key. Writing each and every day, and at the same time of day, is the only way for me to stay sharp and take advantage of the raging flood of ideas and subplots that dance in my head.

Holed up with my editor, Marc Alford, to edit Beautiful Noise is a great experience as the film seems to be cutting itself effortlessly. We're agreeing on almost every take to use in the final cut and we can plainly see that something special is unfolding on the screen. It's a helluva rush to see Danielle's amazing acting ability infuse such life into the movie and to see Jay play off her lead and react so convincingly to where her 'Dez' wants to take his 'Noah'. And then to watch Kimber, a complete newcomer to film acting, play her role like her life depended on it - well, suffice it to say that no director was ever more eager than this one to get to the editing suite every night to watch his tremendous performers create such memorable Characters.

So it's a whirlwind schedule of Edit...Write...Edit...Sleep...Edit...Write...and so on. And I'm lovin' every minute of it.

The prequel is already outlined and carries the Title of: Beautiful Noise 2 - "Serenade". I'll have the first draft completed within a coupla weeks as Inspiration has once again taken hold of my senses. And I expect the first rough cut of the current film to be ready by Thanksgiving. And then, of course, there's the business of mixing, mastering and marketing the hit Soundtrack we have on our hands...

It 's simply amazing what an indie filmmaker can accomplish when you banish all doubt and elect to "Live Out Loud".

Steve

Monday, 25 October 2010

Stills from The Set

Our Production Team consists of professional film crew people, volunteers and student interns from all over the Suncoast, all of whom bonded together beautifully to help me produce our movie. Among the most skilled of us is the incomparable Rod Millington. Rod is without question one of the finest photographers in America and he not only provided us with outstanding stills from our varied locations, but he also jumped in to help with lighting our sets and serving the production as a 2nd unit camera operator. Rod was one of the many Sarasota-based professionals who heard I was producing an ambitious indie feature film on a low budget and volunteered his time and talent to help me create "Beautiful Noise". I figured he'd come and go and help whenever he could, which would have been great, but he kept showing up on the set everyday at 5:00 am and pitching in and working with the Crew all day long - so I sat him down and made a

formal deal to compensate him for his invaluable service. All my actors, especially the stars of the film, went out of their way to thank me for the wonderful atmosphere that was created for them to work in - and Rod's professionalism and enthusiasm added immeasurably to the positive vibe that was prevalent each and every day on the set. So, for the rest of post-production right up until our World Premiere in the Spring, I'll be working with our webmaster Ryan Lebar to post some of Rod's great work. Keep checking back to see the weekly pictorial updates...and for the growing legion of fans of our little musical-drama clamoring for more videos, we'll also be releasing a new Trailer and Music Video from the film in the near future.

Marc and I are working diligently editing the film...and yes, there are lots of great shots to choose from that are cutting together beautifully; but make no mistake, there are some technical issues we're overcoming daily that have to do with every element of the shoot - from blocking the shots to weather to directing to acting to continuity to sound to focus to you name it. I don't want anyone to think that everything is all peachy-keen and we miraculously did everything right on every take. We didn't, as the outtakes and the behind-the-scenes "Making Beautiful Noise" special feature on the DVD will clearly show . But it's all part of the process...and we have more than enough great stuff in the can to create a truly memorable movie experience!

Steve

Tuesday, 2 November 2010

Reaching The Masses

It's a minor miracle getting any feature-length film made, especially an independent one, and it's an even larger hill to climb to secure distribution so your Story can find it's audience. That's why I'm spending the week in California. In addition to meeting with Danielle and Jay to flesh out the storylines for BN 2 - "Serenade" and BN 3 - "Heartlight", I'm also hard at work making contacts and laying the groundwork with industry execs and distributors at the annual American Film Market (www.AmericanFilmMarket.com). Setting up and executing strategies to attack the 2011 film festival circuit and securing a distribution deal of some sort is a priority at this stage of the game and something often overlooked by indie filmmakers until after their films finish post-production...but it's essential to begin with the end in mind. Throughout the entire process of writing the screenplay, casting the roles, selecting the songs and pulling together my production team and shooting schedule, I never lost sight of the marketing side of the equation and the daunting task of navigating through the Hollywood maze to give "Beautiful Noise" a fighting chance to be seen around the

world. And just when my due diligence on the subject started to turn my dream of a major theatrical release into chasing windmills ala Don Quixote, along came my indie film guru, Edward Burns, to pull me out my temporary funk and show all of us how to complete the mission of getting our films out to the public and make money in the process. As noted in earlier posts, Ed Burns is not only one of my favorite actors, but he's also one of the primary catalysts who inspired me to move forward and make my movies regardless of the budget resources available at any given moment. Ed's first film, "The Brothers McMullen", was made in 1995 for \$25,000, went on to become a darling of the Sundance Film Festival and took in over \$10 million at the box office and millions more since then from DVD, pay-per-view, cable and other ancillary revenue streams. Not a bad return on the investment, right?

Fast forward to Today. Look how the landscape has changed with regard to how people watch movies. All the different platforms, from Netflix to cable On-Demand to DVD to iTunes and yes, your local cineplex - there's a myriad of ways films are being delivered to global movie audiences. So, indie filmmakers like me need not be frightened by the task of fighting through the Hollywood studio film distribution system because the need for content is overwhelming and the opportunities to get our films directly to the people who want to see them have never been better. But first, you must - as 'Yoda' Burns preaches - fall out of love with a theatrical release and make your movie with a new mindset. You want to see your movie on the big screen? Take it to film festivals and work your ass off to set up special screenings around the country; then follow Ed's lead and embrace the new distribution model he's trailblazing. If your film is strong enough it always has a chance to be picked up by studios looking to fill their distribution pipeline to go with their mega multi-million dollar spectacles...but the point of making "Beautiful Noise" and all my upcoming films is to have them be seen - one way or another - by the public, to entertain and ultimately to turn a profit for me and my investors so I can keep making films the way I want to make them! This is what I do now and it's what I'll be doing for the rest of my life...so to create momentum and maintain longevity in this business it's critically important to get with the new program.

And exactly what is the new program? Below are a few key excerpts from an interview Mr. Burns did recently with Michael Tully of HammertoNail.com. Read and learn: Mike Tully: "In 1995, back when the independent film world was in a (seemingly) much more stable place, Edward Burns burst onto the scene when his debut feature The Brothers McMullen won the Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival. After being picked up by Fox Searchlight, this tiny \$25,000 movie with no stars went on to make ten million dollars at the box office. In the annals of American independent film history, it's one of the great rags-to-riches tales. Fifteen years—and many films—later, Burns has returned to his roots by making another 25k feature, Nice Guy Johnny. This time, however, rather than holding onto the crumbled dream of the specialized theatrical release model that he himself participated in, Burns and his team have decided to forge

a new path. This week Burns, in partnership with Cinetic's FilmBuff, simultaneously released Nice Guy Johnny on iTunes Movies, Nationwide Video On Demand, DVD, and other digital platforms. By both returning to his micro-budget roots and embracing the role of spokesman for this burgeoning distribution platform, Burns has become an unexpectedly inspiring role model for all aspiring indie filmmakers..

Edward Burns: I remember when we were at Tribeca, and John Sloss, who has this new venture called FilmBuff, who is our distribution partner with this film...gave me an argument, but not so much for Video On Demand. Maybe five years ago, I had this movie called Looking For Kitty. And the movie got one tiny, tiny distribution offer from THINKFilm. It was one of those no advance partnerships, and we had made the movie for a quarter of a million dollars. John said, "Look, you're gonna sell the movie for nothing and they're gonna own it, just so you can satisfy that part of your ego that wants the film to be released theatrically." He goes, "If you were to just go straight to DVD, you could make your money back. And maybe make some more money." At the time—this was maybe '04 or '05—my ego wouldn't allow me to do it. So, we sell the film to THINKFilm, get no money, we're supposed to have a partnership, and we've never seen a red cent from it. Years later, when we're presented with the same kind of offer for Purple Violets, now iTunes is up and the iTunes movie site is in their infancy. And we thought, "Look at how bands are delivering their music directly to their fans. Maybe there's a way for us to try and do that with the film." And we did. I don't have the numbers exactly right but I think it was like a nine-month exclusive window for iTunes. And we did surprisingly good business there.

...Flash forward three years later to Nice Guy Johnny. Two different things happened. We knew what we could make at iTunes even if we didn't have the kind of "stars" and well-known faces that we had in Purple Violets, which certainly helped. So we said, "Let's just think the lowest possible number we can do on iTunes. If we're even gonna entertain theatrical, someone needs to beat that number." But we never even got there, because John then said to me, "Remember back to Looking For Kitty. This is the moment. We can sell your film for theatrical distribution, and you're gonna open up on four screens in New York and LA, like you did with Looking For Kitty, and we'll keep our fingers crossed that if this company has enough money to market the thing, we might make an impression, and you can expand to the next level of a platform release. If we do well there, maybe, maybe you can go on and expand fully." He said, "Or, you can release your film onto VOD and be in 46 million living rooms, in that moment when you're doing all of your press."...As my producing partner says, "There's nothing special about a specialized film release." We just thought, we'll take our film and we'll do the most aggressive film festival tour we've ever done. And that'll satisfy the need to see it in theaters, sit in the back row with an audience, hear the laughter, and get the thrill of theatrical out of that. But financially, it just made absolutely no sense to try and sell the

film to an audience theatrically. And those were all of the things that played into embracing this model...

...We knew that we could make a film for \$25,000. We did not want to deal with any interference. We wanted full creative control. We wanted to make a film that, when we were done with it, we felt great about it. But also, we did not want the pressure of having a financier look at us and say, you know, "What happened to my three million dollars?" ...The other thing is we're, I don't want to say 100% certain, but we're 99.9% certain that this new model that we've created is gonna keep us in business. The fact that we can make these movies at that number, a lot of people ask, "Well, how do you do it for \$25,000?" ...We just formed a collective and everyone on the crew and the post team owns the movie. So, in success, we're all gonna be able to pay our bills, and then hopefully make some money on top of that. But we know that we're gonna make enough where we get to do another one of these next year...There are certain screenplays that I have that I know I need to put on the shelf indefinitely, because I want to spend the next couple of years pursuing this uber no-budget model and ride it for as long as we can.

...On this film, the thing that's cool is we were independent of any sort of influence through the production. And now, we didn't sell our film; we licensed it to FilmBuff. We still own the film and because of that, we are in charge of—granted, we don't have a marketing budget—so everything is being done by us. We're doing our own Facebook and Twittering. We made our own posters. But it's our poster that we made in house. All of the trailers, my editor and my post-production supervisor, we made them...And, you know, there are plenty of sites that will put your trailers up for free. So, when it's your baby and you're doing all that work, it's much easier to get excited by it.

...One of the cable providers, Comcast, has really warmed to the idea and they've even started something called the "Indie Film Club." The idea is, if you don't live near an art house, let our On Demand channel be the art house in your living room...There's even a group, a website I just got involved with called On Demand Weekly, and they're realizing that people are starting to get their heads around the idea that VOD should be a destination as opposed to an afterthought. We have no idea, quite honestly, how well it's gonna work, but I bet you three years from now, this is the norm.

So, if you're an indie filmmaker, or aspiring to become one, my best advice is to Google Edward Burns and read everything you can about this new distribution model. If you're a potential investor and want to get in on the ground floor of my "Beautiful Noise" franchise and other films in development with our Sarasota-based Midnight Pass Productions company, contact me on this website. You'll be pleasantly surprised to learn how a very small investment can possibly reap a nice return for you, given the low-budget financial model and production/distribution process employed. And if you're

simply a casual observer or fan of the upcoming Beautiful Noise Trilogy, then keep checking back in to this blog - 'cause I'm telling it like it is as I continue down the road that winds up with the release of "Beautiful Noise".

Steve

Tuesday, 9 November 2010

I'm A Believer

Last week's trip to Santa Monica was fruitful in many ways. In addition to meeting with established film and record producers who are interested in joining our Beautiful Noise Team to help market and distribute the current film and soundtrack, I was able to huddle with Danielle and Jay away from the hustle and bustle of a movie set to discuss the next 2 BN films in detail. I've also been in contact with Kimber and other terrific songwriters to start the process of selecting great original songs for the upcoming films - and I've already started the casting process for "Serenade" & "Heartlight" by bringing Dane Diamond into the BN fold. Dane's a marvelous L.A.-based actor/musician who will play an important role in the prequel and sequel. It will also mark the first time he's been able to act in the same film with his Father, King Errisson, who will be reprising his role as 'Zeus'.

As for the movie that will launch the Beautiful Noise franchise, Marc Alford and I are closing in on the final stretch of editing the film. The more we see of the footage that was shot entirely on location here on Florida's Suncoast, the more we believe we have something special on our hands. We pieced together the heavy dialogue scenes first; now we're ramping up to edit the intricate song sequences, which we've purposely saved for last. Across town, my co-music producers Roger & Mo are prepping the final tracks and mixes for the Soundtrack at Sarasota's Top Secret Recording Studio. The day is coming soon where we'll marry up the sights and sounds that comprise our little musical-drama and submit the finished product to film festivals the world over and release the film through all the digital platforms discussed in my previous blog post. But for now, I'm savoring these private moments where I'm meshing my Story with the songs and the performances of some truly wonderful actors and singers.

Steve

Tuesday, 16 November 2010

Singers & Songwriters - The Soul of 'Beautiful Noise'

Without a doubt, my love of Music in the Movies has emboldened me to write and produce the three musical-dramas that make up the Trilogy: Beautiful Noise; Beautiful Noise 2 - "Serenade"; and Beautiful Noise 3 - "Heartlight". While I really like the

Storylines of all 3 films and the Characters I've created, it's the Songs I'm selecting that tie everything together and that will hopefully transport our audiences to places that Dialogue and Scenarios alone couldn't accomplish. Music is a universal language and its ability to help a Spielberg, Scorsese, Eastwood or Coppola to drive their Storytelling to new heights also works wonders for independent filmmakers. Just look at the impact that the original songs from the Academy Award winning indie crowd-pleaser "ONCE" had on that little film. Or give a listen to the score of Edward Burn's new film, "NICE GUY JOHNNY", and then tell me how much those cool little tunes mean to that new indie gem. It's simply amazing to me how a piece of just one song, or a simple orchestral theme, inserted in just the right dramatic moment, can fill us up with every emotion the filmmaker aches for us to feel.

Think about it. Remove a John Williams score from a Spielberg classic; or the variety of rock music from any given Scorsese film; or the simplicity and touch of Clint Eastwood's sparse yet haunting piano phrases in many of his movies; or the sweeping score from Coppola's Godfather epics, or Simon & Garfunkel's tunes from The Graduate -and then tell me how much it would have changed how we feel about the work? Okay, okay...so my baby-boomer examples show how long I've been around...but you get the point, right?

My first exposure to combining sights and sounds on film was with my work on commercials 20+ years ago that, for better or worse, became memorable. That experience led me to work with musicians, producers and recording engineers from every musical genre on albums and prime-time television specials on a hometown project called "Holiday Aid". All that was followed by years of promoting concerts with artists as diverse as Beatle Ringo Starr, The Beach Boys, Willie Nelson, The Monkees, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Miranda Lambert, B.B King and the late, great Ray Charles, to name only a few. So yeah, the Music has always meant something special to me. And now, the Muse is helping me fuse my love of Story & Films with the Gift of Song in a way that powers me through 15-18 hour days like I was a teenager. It's a groove that I hope lasts me the rest of my filmmaking career.

The first Beautiful Noise film, now in post-production, has a Soundtrack bursting with lyrics and melodies from pop legend Joni Mitchell, the incomparable David Poe, and new names for some of you like Kimber Cleveland, Chris McCarty and Doug Frasure. And the task of rearranging and producing some of the great songs in the film has fallen to my music co-producers Mo Katirae and Roger Hughes and an eclectic, dynamic group of Sarasota-based musicians I've met along the way. Names like Clair Franklin, Brett Jones, Bud Buckley, Dean Johanesen, Bobby Brader and many other Suncoast artists may appear in smaller type in the end credits, but make no mistake...they are no less important than anyone else on our Team.

The Story we're trying to tell may be the Heart of the Beautiful Noise Trilogy - but the Songs are the Soul of the three films. We hope the Soundtracks move, inspire and encourage you to spread the word about our little musical-dramas...

Steve

Wednesday, 1 December 2010

THE COUNTDOWN

Having worked non-stop these last 15 months writing, shooting, scoring and editing the film, the Thanksgiving holiday provided a good excuse to power down, recharge the batteries and take a look at Beautiful Noise with a fresh perspective. It was time well spent. Not only does the rough edit of the film look better than it did before the break, I also discovered two great songs from a new member of our Soundtrack Team that perfectly fills a couple of musical gaps I've been wrestling with for a few weeks.

Suncoast singer-songwriter Dean Johanesen was a 'band member' Extra I met on the set on the very last day of principal photography. Dean approached me after the concert scene we shot and let me know that he loved the experience and was willing to help out any other way he could. A few weeks later I called him out of the blue to thank him again for his time and to ask if he had any original songs I could listen to, as I am deep into writing the BN prequel and sequel and on the lookout for new tunes. Deans' new CD was chocked full of great music, but when I heard "Godspeed" & "Last Dance", I knew immediately I had spots for them in the film. Danielle cut an incredible version of "Godspeed" this week in the studio and Jay is set to record "Last Dance" soon. Both songs are just fantastic and add immeasurably to an already hit-laden Soundtrack album.

So the Countdown is on. After we shoot one more day of pickup scenes with Jay & Danielle, Marc and I will have the rough edit ready to submit to select Film Festivals around the country, just in time to meet the early January deadlines. Then the final post-production work of color correction, ADR looping, Foley sound effects and the final sound mix of the Soundtrack and film audio all comes together early next year. And then - the world premiere of Beautiful Noise will be upon us in the Spring. What once seemed a long way off is suddenly rushing toward me. I'm ready for the embrace.

Steve

Friday, 3 December 2010

Harley's, Hitchhikers & Motor homes

Shooting pick-up scenes after principal photography has wrapped is a common practice for major feature film productions, but a rare luxury for indie movies like ours. As the 'Beautiful Noise' editing process enters its final phase, Marc and I decided to huddle with co-producer Ralph Barnette to quickly pull a small commando crew together, as we

needed to shoot scenes that not only fill a few small continuity holes in the footage we have on hand, but that also helps us tie the Story of "Beautiful Noise" together visually.

For 12 hours yesterday lead actors Jay & Danielle and our dynamic BN "Run & Gun" Crew - featuring Rod Millington, Ryan Lebar, Alexia Pepper, Brandy Luke, Bud Buckley, John Mulligan and newcomers Andre and Jessica - joined Ralph, Marc and me on a chilly but sunny Suncoast day that turned out to be one of the most memorable of the entire shoot. From dawn to well past sundown, our dynamic troupe moved as fast as we could from location to location to film exteriors featuring an assortment of Harley rides and stunts, hitchhiking, motorhomes and a return to "Noah's" Myakka homestead. We also shot a quick interior scene at one of the finest dining establishments on the planet, the legendary Michael's on East in Sarasota. The last shot of the day was my favorite and was completely improvised on the spot. After getting the candlelight dinner scene we needed at Michael's in the can, I decided to drag my tired Team to one last location before darkness completely engulfed the coastline. We made it over to the Ringling Bridge, which connects the mainland with Lido Key & St. Armands Circle, just as dusk was settling in. Wanting to take advantage of the breathtaking post-sunset golden hues of the sky in the backdrop, I quickly positioned Danielle - who had already switched out a killer black evening gown straight out of an Audrey Hepburn film into her "Dez" hitchhiking ensemble - on the walkway at the midpoint of the bridge and directed her to simply stroll down toward the camera and then pause to gaze across the magnificent Bay, which had a single sailboat gliding across the serene water. It turned out to be an incredibly cool shot and it was apropos that the final sequence of our movie was filmed at the most beautiful time of day in one of the most scenic spots on Florida's west coast. I couldn't think of a better way to say 'Thanks' to the community for embracing our production than by showcasing our young star in such a spectacular Sarasota setting. The simple shot not only works to propel the storyline of the journey of a key character in the film, but also serves as a reminder of the journey of "Beautiful Noise". Our musical-drama could not look and sound as great as it does on such a low budget without the enthusiastic support of so many wonderful Sarasotans and area businesses.

My sincere thanks to one and all, and an extra high-five to Danielle & Jay, Marc and Ralph and our BN "Commando Pick-Up Shot" crew - all of whom went well above and beyond the call of duty yesterday to help me bring the words on the page to Life in such a passionate, heartfelt way.

Steve

Friday, 10 December 2010

"Oh Shit!"

So there I was last night, just rolling through the happy process of editing the final minutes of the rough cut with editor-extraordinaire Marc Alcorn when the dreaded "Oh

shit!" moment happened. I suddenly realized that the current ending we shot was, of course, based on the original draft of my screenplay - something that was written long before the thought of a sequel ever crossed my mind. The scenes we shot are great...but they do nothing to set up the sequel...which is essential 'cause both the prequel - "Serenade" and sequel - "Heartlight" are slated to start preproduction early next year.

So my old nemesis, Anxiety, paid me another visit. And I was defenseless at that moment to fend him off.

The edit session the night before was pure Divine Guidance at work. I asked Marc to take a particularly critical sequence of the movie that was painstakingly edited with a great song originally planned for the film and alter it to accommodate a new song I recently found by Suncoast songwriter Dean Johanesen. Marc looked at me like I was crazy, which happens a lot. In fact, we had to edit in a total of 3 new songs that night, so it was probable that we'd have to re-edit all the targeted sequences...which would have been a huge pain.

But then the Magic happened.

Again.

The new songs not only sounded better, but the lyrics of each tune perfectly matched the action and dialogue of each scene as edited. I mean, they were a dead-on perfect match! As if they were meant to be there all along. It was just eerie...and miraculous. One of those moments when you get a chill 'cause you know that something unique happened that is unexplainable - unless of course you believe, as I do, that there are no accidents and that everything happens for a reason...

But last night it felt like the wheels had come off the wagon. I just couldn't figure out how to set up the sequel with the footage already shot. Another day of shooting more pick up scenes is problematic due to actors' availability and budget constraints - but we're up against a deadline to submit the rough cut to the spring film festivals - so I need to scramble with a cool rewrite and hope like hell my Team and I can pull together in the next week to shoot and edit a couple key closing scenes that sets up the next movie while still maintaining the emotional punch of the current film.

Could I leave well enough alone? Yeah, I could. But I won't. I refuse to compromise. We've all come too far and worked too hard to settle for anything but the very best ending to Beautiful Noise possible and the chance to start the sequel off on the right foot. So now it's up to me to do one last rewrite of the closing moments of the film and then implore elements of my talented Team to gather one last time to bring it all home. Stay tuned...

Steve

Friday, 17 December 2010

Mission Accomplished

Ah yes...the thrill of Victory in battle. It was touch and go all week, but my Team pulled together in the clutch and helped me film some crucial pick up shots that enable me to complete the rough cut and ship it to the film festivals on time. What we have now is not only a great final sequence to Beautiful Noise, but also an ending that leads perfectly into the sequel. I didn't compromise. Now it's the movie I intended to make...and not some smaller version of what it could be.

So now it's on to the Sunday night invitation-only private screening of the rough cut - which will no doubt generate some insightful critiques of the film - and then Marc and I will adjust and polish as necessary. It's amazing what a little creative writing and a handful of well-placed 5 to 30 second scenes can do to immeasurably improve the understanding and pacing of a feature film...

Heartfelt thanks to Isaac, Ryan, Jerry & Ralph and to Jim Minor at Riverview HS for making the day happen.

As a Bonus I also got word from Jim that Riverview just cleared the date of Friday, April 1st for the "Beautiful Noise Concert" Event starring Cast members singing songs from the movie and Jay performing his full-blown Neil Diamond show. We'll probably sell out 2 shows for that extravaganza. It's more than a concert - it's gonna have theatrical elements and clips from the movie and all sorts of musical surprises...so it's a show not to be missed. The cool thing is that our Concert in the fabulous 1,000 seat Riverview Performing Arts Center takes place just days before the Sarasota Film Festival, where we're hopeful to have our World Premiere of Beautiful Noise.

So once again, the teachable moment here for aspiring filmmakers is simply this: Never give up and never give in when it comes to doing whatever it takes to get your movie made the way you want to make it! It's your Voice...it's your Dream...it's your Art. To hell with the mountains you gotta climb to make your film. Just go for it! Surround yourself with people who believe in your Vision and then don't let go of the reins - no matter how hard the circumstances and distractions try to buck you off course.

If you don't quit, you can't fail.

See it through...no matter what.

Steve

Thursday, 23 December 2010

The Rough Cut

I've heard and read all the stories of how horrified film directors usually are when they screen the initial compilation of scenes and sequences of their first movie in sequential order for the first time. Most of the comments center around the fact that the first cut is way over the desired 2 hour or less running time of the film; or that the film is such a mess that they can't see how it can possibly be turned into the movie they envisioned when they signed on to their project. I can identify with them...to a degree.

I've always had three primary fears about seeing the first rough cut of Beautiful Noise:

- 1) Will it run way too long given the way I showcase the 16 songs in the Musical-Drama?
- 2) Will it drag out in any way due to either bad writing, bad directing, subpar acting or the overall pacing of the film?
- 3) Will it be entertaining and thought provoking enough to garner good word-of-mouth after it's release?

My editor Marc Alcorn was thrilled with the initial result after we glued the movie together for the first time. I was, at best, encouraged that we were at least on the right track. Marc is a solid pro in the editing biz with many years of experience at his craft. I've worked with a lot of terrific editors and he's without a doubt at the top of the list of the best I've ever worked with - so I was a little worried with his overly enthusiastic response right off the bat. He's an extremely creative, precise and nit-picky editor and he lets nothing get past him if a cut doesn't feel or look just right. The guy is a harsh critic of his work and will labor for as long as it takes to nail a 5 second edit and fight me to the nth degree if he disagrees with my final edit decisions, which keeps me on my toes and is healthy for our final product. So, needless to say, his expression of awe with our first cut both delighted and concerned me. Delighted 'cause Marc knows what he's talking about...concerning 'cause I am holding the film to an extremely high standard from the get-go. Marc is too of course, but I'm not interested in simply being one of the best indie films to ever come out of Florida. I'm interested in entertaining and hopefully enlightening a worldwide audience in some small way. That's why the movie is being submitted to film festivals around the globe. I want all my films to be compared to all others, be they big studio features or small budget indie projects. It doesn't matter. A movie is either good or bad. There's no in-between. Whether or not it ultimately finds its audience is a marketing question. But nothing good can happen if the film simply doesn't do it's primary job - to entertain.

The good things about that first rough cut were obvious:

1. It came in at an hour and 45 minutes long...which is just about perfect for a Musical.
2. It didn't drag at all...if anything, it moved a touch fast for my taste in the opening sequences.
3. As for it's entertainment value, the Soundtrack alone is worth the price of admission - but Marc was most stunned and I was most happy about the uniformly wonderful acting performances turned in by the Cast. I mean, these are all relative unknowns acting in our film, but they were extremely good throughout, and often-times great. I mean it.

Great. I guarantee you'll care about and identify with more than one of the characters and you'll be absorbed into the Story we're trying to tell without the distraction some indie films face...bad acting. It's a sizable cast and they all delivered the goods and made their characters believable and memorable.

So what was the problem? It was the same challenge every writer-director faces when he/she is editing their first feature film. The only way to smooth out the edges I was seeing in that first pass was to cut out some of my favorite lines or small scenes that I just really loved. Yeah, we had limited options sometimes due to technical difficulties with how we may have shot a sequence that made Marc's job editing a nightmare at times...but in a few places I simply had overwritten a scene or some dialogue. It was just amazing to me how much we were able to enhance the pacing and flow of the film as well as the already good performances of the cast by making subtle changes. Trimming, tightening, lengthening scenes in some cases, cutting to just the right beat or lyric of a song - all those little, tedious things and gut decisions I had to make made such a huge difference.

Last Sunday night was the first big test. We invited 20 people made up of cast, crew and a few civilians to screen the rough cut. Marc and I explained in great detail that we were nowhere near the finish line of delivering the final product and that the audience needed to overlook the need for color correction or a final sound mix or the fact that a few pick up scenes still needed to be edited in later. Everyone understood and they were all anxious to see where we were in the process. I can't begin to tell you the level of anxiety that engulfed me when the lights dimmed and the opening sequence began. All I could think of was - "God, what if this sucks? Will they smile/chuckle when I did? Will they get emotional like I still do at certain places in the piece? Will the music work its magic as intended?" Marc, on the other hand, had the look of the conquering hero on his face. He was supremely confident that what the test audience was about to see would not only be well received but probably amaze everyone in the room.

Thank God, Marc's take on things was spot on.

After an extended round of applause when the film ended the group shared their insights and ideas with us for over an hour. Everyone contributed to the discussion and all their input has been taken into consideration as Marc and I shape the final version of the rough cut to submit to some nationwide spring film festivals before the December 31 deadline. Once again, it's mind boggling what a couple new pick-up shots and some more tweaking of the film does to the overall impact of a movie. We've added, deleted and continue to polish the rough cut of Beautiful Noise...and the Story I wanted to tell is shining through more and more each day. It's nice to know this is the worst that the movie will ever look. The final cut you'll see when the film is released will be head and shoulders better than what we have now...and what we have now is pretty cool...

Separate from the test group screening, I showed that first rough cut to Jay and later on to Kimber. They, of course, studied their own key performances carefully and came

away from the experience with sighs of relief, terrific ideas on how to improve the film overall, and big smiles. They should smile. They are both great in the film and should become hot commodities in the film and music world as a result of their wonderful work.

In a few days I'll show the rough cut to Danielle. She was my very first Casting decision and now she'll be the last big test before we submit our work-in-progress to all those film festivals for consideration. Like Jay & Kimber, I completely trust her creative take on things. She's wise beyond her years.

In spite of my best effort as their Director, Jay & Kimber still had extremely heavy loads to carry to bring their respective characters to life and make you care about what happens to them - and they just nailed it! But now that I have a little time to sit back and really look at this movies' scope and scale - how I wrote it; how we shot it; what I wanted to accomplish - I see clearly how the heaviest burden regarding the success of this ambitious film rests squarely on the shoulders of a soon to be 19 year old actress/singer. Some thought it a bold, even brash move to cast Danielle so quickly way back when we started. After all, the whole movie really rides on that one decision. But it took me about 5 minutes to decide on her after our first meeting and audition. I just get a "knowing" when something or someone is placed in my Path that belongs...and I quickly knew she was right and deserving of the opportunity - even though all I really had to go on was that initial meeting, some YouTube videos of her winning American Idol Juniors back when she was 11 years old...plus a cool little intro video she advanced of her playing acoustic guitar and singing a vintage Bob Dylan tune...

It's a little scary to think about now, but the cold hard fact I faced was if Danielle couldn't pull off the complex lead character I wrote in a meaningful, moving and convincing way, the movie would fold like a house of cards. Sure, I may get a wee bit of credit for my direction, but believe me - once Danielle and I fell into a groove and mind set about her character depiction- it was all her sheer talent and strong desire that fueled her work. If I could turn back time and have my choice of any young actress on the planet to play the lead role in this movie - knowing what I know now - it would still be Danielle White. Taylor Swift and the rest of 'em can all take a hike. Danielle became and is "Dez"...and along with Jay & Kimber...is a force to be reckoned with in the entertainment world.

In the final analysis, it was a lot to ask of any young thespian, regardless of their experience or skill set, as you'll understand when you see the film. But Danielle's thoughtful and at times jaw dropping performance, as well as those of her co-stars, will not only entertain the hell out of you, but will force you to think seriously after you leave the theatre about the message the film strives to deliver.

What more could an audience ask for from a movie?

What more could a Writer-Director possibly ask for on his first feature film?

Danielle, Jay, Kimber, King and the rest of the troupe - they are all so Beautiful Noise.
Steve