

Friday, 04 February 2011

Flashbacks

"Just when I thought I was out, they pull me back in!" - so says Michael Corleone in "Godfather III". And that's exactly how I felt this last week as I worked closely with my three lead actors - Danielle, Jay & Kimber - to record their lead vocals and ADR dialogue, which was a scheduled activity / and film three pick-up scenes I decided we needed to shoot before Marc & I lock the final picture edit, which was not scheduled. As a result, five power-packed 20 hour days followed that left me and my co-producers exhausted...and thrilled with a knowing that we were not only finished filming all the scenes we needed...but that we had captured lightning in a bottle.

Danielle was up first, flying in from California for 2 days to sing, among other things, a cool Dean Johannesen composition titled "Godspeed". But before the studio session, I realized I needed to write and quickly film a 'flashback' scene that enhances the Story in a special point in the movie. At the location, Danielle and her 6 year old co-star for the day, Cody Aspinall, worked with me to rehearse and block the scene...and though only 2 lines of dialogue were called for, it took quite some time of back and forth improvisation to work out the perfect words that the sequence demanded. Once the camera rolled, Danielle and Cody captured the essence of the 'flashback' in just a few takes. When Marc and I edited the scene into the movie later that night we were both astonished at how incredibly important that cinematic moment was...and I wondered aloud how the hell I could have shown the film without it. Another shining example of the better angels within pointing me in the right direction...

The next day it was time to capture Danielle's final vocal work on the film before she jetted back to SoCal. As usual, she took her time to let the first song - "Godspeed"- sink in, listening quietly in the corner of the studio control room. I could see she was a little unsure of her approach to it because Dean's original version is so strong and wonderful as is. But "Dez" needed to deliver her own unique version for the film, so her hesitation was quickly replaced with the enthusiasm and creativity I've come to know and expect from my talented star. It's important to remember that this 19 year old singing phenom writes and sings her own brand of songs which are fresh and original and completely representative of her personal take on Life. Yet the songs I've asked her to sing in the film, for the most part, are not anything close to what Danielle would choose to record for her own album. Not that the Soundtrack songs are a stretch for her in any way...it's just that the tunes are so wide in range that it's been an interesting challenge for her to bring her characters' voice and personality to each musical moment. But God, did she ever deliver the goods. Within a few takes Danielle nailed the "Godspeed" vocal in such a memorable way that I'm certain it's going to become a breakout hit single off the

Soundtrack.

After Danielle headed back to Cali it was time for Kimber Cleveland to film her big moment in the film. I won't go into detail here...but I recommend that everyone stay seated during the End Credits to see and hear a performance from Ms Cleveland that will leave you dazed and amazed. Dazed 'cause her song is so damn good and amazed that she isn't already a major star. Later that day the Magic happened again. Kimber has been inspired by the Story of "Beautiful Noise" from the moment she finished reading my early draft...so much so that she's been working on a pivotal song she titled "One More Song In Me" for over 8 months! After we shot her big scene at Sarasota's Riverview Performing Arts Center we trekked over to Phillippi Creek Park, found an interesting, sunny spot on the massive lawn, framed her up in the camera and turned her loose. What transpired in front of me was a song from her heart that perfectly fits what happens next in the movie. Just Kimber and her McPherson acoustic guitar - recorded live on the spot. Another miracle of a song from an incredible performer. I am so proud to be the Director that presents her for the first time in a feature film.

After Kimber's departure from sunny Sarasota it was Jay White's turn to make the scene and record his lead vocals on several key songs in the film. Jay is the world's #1 Neil Diamond performer and he's the real deal. The best. But he learned something important while creating his character in our movie. Jay is so much more than "Neil Lite"...the next best thing to Neil himself. Jay is an Actor...and a convincing one as you will soon see. Plus he's something more. He's a world-class performer who can be just as successful singing original songs like Kimber's "The Story of Us" or Joni Mitchell's "Free Man In Paris" as he is singing all of Mr. Diamond's hits. Jay just completely slayed us with his rendition of Randy Newman's "Feels Like Home"; Dean Johannesen's "Last Dance" and demo tracks of Kimber's "Sorry" & "Coming On Strong". In between the release of "Beautiful Noise" and the preproduction on the prequel & sequel later this year I am going to produce an album of all original songs for our "Bobby Drake" to sing. I can't wait to watch my friend spread his wings...

It's been an amazing week. And more amazing weeks are heading our way. The "Beautiful Noise" journey continues and for the first time ever...I can see the End Zone. It's First Down and Goal to go from the ten yard line. Just gotta get some rest, think it all through and make sure we secure the ball all the way in to the Score!

Steve