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'Cast In Gray' brings MSU graduate back

By CHUCK WILLIAMS Staff Writer

EAST LANSING - MSU alum Stephen Angus returns today - for the first time in nearly 20 years - for the Michigan debut of his film, "Cast In Gray," at the Lake Michigan Film Competition.

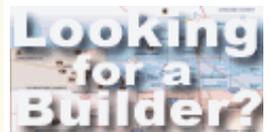
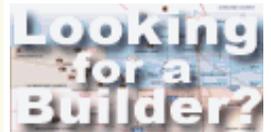
"Cast In Gray," shot last spring in downstate Illinois, tells the story of a disillusioned man's process of reconsidering the possibilities of life during a chance encounter with a hitchhiker. Angus stars as the hitchhiker. Chicago writer and director I. Michael Toth created the work through the independent film company, Life is a Dream Productions, and Toth, along with producer Chris Gentry, will next turn it into a feature film. It stars Timothy Burke as The Man and Stephen Angus as The Man with the Dog.

Angus graduated in 1986; theater performance was one of the three focuses for his humanities degree. He also played sax in the rock band Let's Talk About Girls during college. Angus will attend the East Lansing Film Festival showing on April 3 at Wells Hall on MSU's campus to talk

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about his leading role. "Cast In Gray" recently won an award at the Golden Film Festival in Colorado and will screen in competition at the Phoenix Film Festival in April and Chicago's Midwest Film Festival in June.

Angus is also slated to screen and talk about the film for Rob Roznowski's theatre class at 3 p.m. on April 4. Indie film buffs can find Roznowski and Angus in the basement, room 12, of the Auditorium Building at Farm Lane Rd. and Auditorium Rd. for a frank talk about the realities of life in the arts.

"I'm excited to be coming back to campus with this film," Angus said.

Since graduating, Angus has been active in theater, television and film. He helped found the TUTA Theater Company and performs leading roles in Midwest and East Coast theaters. He's also appeared on TV, including a recurring character role in NBC's "Homicide: Life on the Street" series, and in major release films such as "Forrest Gump."

"I struggled for many years to fit in to the monster that is the movie industry," Angus said. "I had to adjust my definition of success along the way. I've found that compromising with the movie industry machine is difficult, and so I've hooked up with people who inspire me. I'm not trying to fit in to someone else's idea of what an actor is. It's important to surprise yourself and others in this business."

As the creative process to remake "Cast In Gray" into a feature-length film proceeds, Angus is consulted by the writer and producer concerning the role of the hitchhiker, written specifically for him. "I love the process," he said. "I'm called for creative aspects. It's essential to my work."

"The independent film business is really exciting right now. The big movie production houses have run themselves into the ground and now they're looking to the independents more and more. We're not restrained by budgets, we're more comfortable with new ideas and we're more driven," Angus said.