

OFFICIAL PRESS KIT

A
LIFE IS A DREAM
PRODUCTION

Timothy Burke Stephen Angus Bibo

CAST IN GRAY

Written, Directed & Edited by I. Michael Toth

Produced by Christopher Gentry

Co-Producer Frank T. Herbert

DVCPRO 720p High-Definition

Color / Stereo / Approx. Running Time: 39 Minutes

This film is not rated

www.castinggraymovie.com

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CAST IN GRAY



CAST IN GRAY was shot on location in downstate Illinois (USA) by Chicago-based Life is a Dream Productions. The film was written, directed and edited by I. Michael Toth, a commercial and documentary filmmaker who attended the prestigious University of Arts School of Film and Television in Belgrade, Serbia. Michael has written, produced, directed and edited a number of award-winning television programs, documentaries, short films, music videos and commercials in the United States and Europe.

CAST IN GRAY was written specifically for two very talented actors and a dog. Timothy Burke (The Man) hails from Hartford, CT (USA) and trained at National Theater Institute with Richard Digby Day and Morris Carnovsky. Stephen Angus (The Man with the Dog), based in Boulder, CO (USA), most recently performed a lead role opposite Mike Nussbaum (THINGS CHANGE, HOUSE OF GAMES) in THE SWEET LITTLE PRINCE. Stephen's dog, Bibo (The Dog), gives an amazing performance in the film ("...even the dog can act." - Denver Post).

The film was shot on DVCPRO 720p High Definition and features a production design in keeping with the film's title. Set in a desolate rural area during a day-long rainstorm, a disillusioned man's chance encounter with a hitchhiker and his dog forces him to reconsider the possibilities of his life. The film explores the consequences of the "black and white" decisions we seemingly make. It represents the gray matter between extreme positions in which the story and the characters find themselves: an ambiguous place where the actual difference between something real and something make-believe disappears.

In its first two festival appearances, CAST IN GRAY was awarded BEST NARRATIVE SHORT at Golden Film Festival (February 2005) and East Lansing Film Festival (March 2005). Timothy Burke won the award for Best Actor and Michael Toth won the award for Best Sound Design at the Midwest Independent Film Festival (June 2005). Other competitive festivals include Phoenix Film Festival (April 2005); Tahoe/Reno International Film Festival (August 2005); Los Angeles International Shorts Festival (September 2005); IFP Market & Conference (September 2005); DC Independent Film Festival (March 2006) and the upcoming Rhode Island International Film Festival in August.

On behalf of our cast and crew, thank you for your consideration.

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For more information, press, reviews and audience comments, visit www.castinggraymovie.com, or www.imdb.com/title/tt0449470/combined.

CAST IN GRAY

SYNOPSIS

Logline:

In this sumptuously shot short film from writer-director I. Michael Toth, a disillusioned man's chance encounter with a hitchhiker and his dog forces him to reconsider the possibilities of his life.

Synopsis:

Stuck in a rainstorm in the middle of nowhere, a man offers shelter in his broken down car to a hitchhiker and his dog. As the hours pass and the rain continues, the man wonders if his decision to let them in was one of a series of bad choices he made in his life – or is the chance encounter with this enigmatic stranger a godsend opportunity to solve his own problems.

CAST IN GRAY explores the gray matter of life, the consequences of the “black and white” decisions we seemingly make. It represents the space between extreme positions in which the story and the characters find themselves, an ambiguous place where the actual difference between something real and something make-believe disappears.

CAST IN GRAY

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

By I. Michael Toth

CAST IN GRAY is a film inspired by a dream I had. Early one morning, when I was in the state between dreaming and waking, the image of a car in the rain on an empty road, passing by a hitchhiker with a dog, appeared to me. This image, as well as the characters that emerged, their encounter and the beginning of the story, seemed so unusual and intriguing, that I decided to write them down before they evaporated from my memory. Soon after, I felt that this dream could become the beginning of an interesting short film. The subsequent filmmaking process was my way of exploring the mystery, meaning and ambiguity of this dream.

For some time, I couldn't find the right title for this story. The title CAST IN GRAY imposed itself after the writing process was finished. After reading the text, I realized how appropriate the color gray was for this film. It described the mood, feeling and visual elements. Gray also represented the multiple meanings this film could offer for possible interpretations.

In this film, GRAY is the space between extreme positions in which the story and the characters find themselves: life and death, dream and reality, decision and execution, acting and real life. It is the area of never knowing for sure what one's life is all about. Gray is also an ambiguous place where the actual difference between something "real" and something "make-believe", disappears.

Most of the story happens during a gray day and in endless pouring rain, which gives it a certain surreal, oneiric (dreamlike) quality. The story can be interpreted as fantasy - an imagined time that exists between life and death - or as a metaphorical fable with religious (essence) or philosophical (existence) connotations.

On the other hand, the narrative is presented realistically and could be read as is, as it is offered in the "space-time" reality of the film. In other words, it is something that could happen in the real world.

While deciding on why should I make this particular story into a film, I realized that I was intrigued by the prospect of exploring the duality and coexistence of two philosophically opposing views of the world. Also, I was interested in offering at least two (or more) different ways of interpreting the same narrative film.

The question is:

Is the film a "fixed" idea upon which viewers must labor to discover the single right meaning – or is it a slippery, mysterious gray contingency with endless multiple choices – like human existence?

CAST IN GRAY

PRINCIPAL CAST



Timothy Burke

Timothy Burke (The Man). Tim is a veteran actor of the stage and screen. He has appeared in lead and supporting roles in five feature films including THE RETURN, THE DEVIL'S PLACEBO and MITCHELLVILLE (2005 Sundance Selection!). He is currently set to star in two feature films to be shot in 2005. Tim trained at National Theater Institute with Richard Digby Day and Morris Carnovsky. He has appeared in lead and supporting roles on stage productions of DEATH OF A SALEMAN, THE CRUCIBLE, THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING ERNEST and OLIVER! He will appear in DANCING AT LUGNASSA in 2005.



Stephen Angus

Stephen Angus (The Man with the Dog). Stephen is a veteran stage actor who has also appeared in a number of films and television programs. An actor from the age of seven, his stage credits include leading roles at many theatres in the Midwest and on the East Coast; most recently at Victory Gardens in Chicago, where he played the Pilot in THE SWEET LITTLE PRINCE. His television credits include the recurring character Alex Carew on NBC's HOMICIDE: LIFE ON THE STREET, appearances in episodes of AMERICA'S MOST WANTED and MISSING: REWARD. Stephen has also appeared in the films QUIZ SHOW, FORREST GUMP, PECKER, and LE PELICAN.



Bibo

Bibo (The Dog). Bibo met actor Stephen Angus one sunny morning while wandering the streets of Washington, D.C., and they have been fast companions ever since. From an early age, she has exhibited a keen attention to physical gesture, emotional states and the subtlest nuances of spoken communications. Her growing vocabulary of understanding is unusually large, even for a dog, and includes many useful phrases for film (like 'please be patient', and 'walk with Tim'). Bibo is not 'formally' trained, working more from a place of devotion, amusement and agreement than from 'commands'. She communicates through breath (Bibo is an acronym for 'breathing in, breathing out'), touch, movement, eye contact and, of course, voice. Like her companion Stephen, she is a mixed breed. Bibo will be nine this year and resides in Colorado with another remarkable being, her adoptive brother, Basho.

CAST IN GRAY

CREW



I. Michael Toth

I. Michael Toth (Writer, Director, Editor) Michael has over 20 years of professional experience in the film and television industry. After graduating from the prestigious University of Arts, Film and Television Production Department in Belgrade, Michael worked as first and second assistant director on Yugoslavian feature films including PETRIJA'S CORONET; BALKAN EXPRESS; BERLIN KAPUTT and ORCHESTRA OF MY YOUTH. He wrote and directed, MAN AND TIME, a television series that was syndicated throughout Europe and was an official selection of the International Television Festival in Monte Carlo. He also wrote, produced, directed, filmed and edited three short feature films that were selected for national film festivals in Europe. Michael wrote, produced and directed several short and feature length documentaries including SCULPTURES: PIECES OF MY DREAMS (for PBS); THE FREEMASONS (distributed internationally); and UNSEEN JOURNEY (ITVA award winner distributed internationally). Michael recently adapted for the screen, ON THE OPEN ROAD, from the play by Steve Tesich (Academy Award winning screenwriter for BREAKING AWAY). His original screenplays TWO HATS and THE MAN WHO LIVED IN DREAMS are being produced by Life is a Dream Productions for production in 2004 and 2005. He is currently adapting the short film CAST IN GRAY, that he wrote, directed and edited, into a feature length film.



Christopher Gentry

Christopher Gentry (Producer). Chris formed Life is a Dream Productions with Michael Toth in 2000 to produce feature films to be directed by Michael. Since graduating with a degree in Corporate Finance from Arizona State University, Chris has worked in commercial and investment banking with several leading financial institutions including FleetBoston Financial, BankBoston and Sanwa Bank. With a deep interest in film, Chris was drawn to the vibrant Chicago independent film community and began exploring opportunities to use his finance background to produce films. After reading one of Michael Toth's scripts, Chris knew he had found a promising director. After spending three years developing four feature screenplays with Michael, CAST IN GRAY is the first of these projects to go into production.



Frank T. Herbert

Frank T. Herbert (Co-Producer). Frank has spent his life in the apparel and clothing business. Starting out and eventually running the family retail business, Frank went on to hold executive positions with Torino Design Group and Kenneth Cole. A long time friend of Producer Chris Gentry, he was called upon to assist with location scouting and logistical support in Macomb, Illinois, where he resides with his wife, Joanie, and their two year old daughter, Annabel.

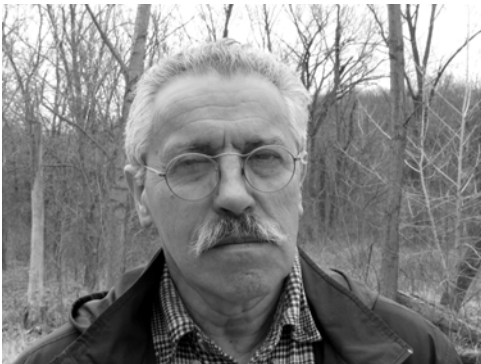
CAST IN GRAY

CREW



Sasha Rendulic

Sasha Rendulic (Cinematographer). Sasha has been a cinematographer for various film and television productions for more than 15 years. He started his career as a photojournalist for magazines such as STUDIO and WORLD, and exclusive photographer for National Drama Theater in Croatia. He graduated with a degree in cinematography from the Academy for Film and Television Arts and worked as a camera assistant with Academy Award winning cinematographers, including Peter Biziou (ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD) and Freddie Francis (THE PLOT). In 1991 Sasha moved to the United States and has worked on a number of film and television projects, including MR. P's DANCING SUSHI BAR (Sundance Film Festival entry); STAND BY (Pula Film Festival entry); and CONNECTING DOTS, a feature that combines both film and digital video elements, which won the award for Best Comedy at the 2003 New York International Independent Film & Video Festival.



Slobodan Radovanovic

Slobodan Radovanovic (Production Designer). Bata has worked as an art director and production designer in the U.S. and Europe for the last 30 years. His film credits include CASTLE KEEP, directed by Academy Award winning director Sydney Pollack; GENGHIS KHAN, directed by Henry Lewin; THE LONG SHIPS, directed by Jack Cardiff; ENEIDE, directed by Franco Rossi; and KELLY'S HEROES, starring Clint Eastwood and Donald Sutherland. A graduate of the University of Belgrade and The American Academy of Art in Chicago, Bata is also an accomplished graphic, poster and logo designer, whose work was published in the prestigious World Encyclopedia of Graphics and Logo Design: "Top Symbols and Trademarks of the World."



Natasha Vuchurovich Djukich

Natasha Vuchurovich Djukich (Costume Designer). Natasha has worked as a customer designer and set consultant for the last ten years in Washington, D.C. and Chicago. In Washington she designed for Woolly Mammoth Theater, Washington Jewish Theater, Howard Repertory and others. She is a co-founder with her husband, theater director, Zeljko Djukic, of TUTA Theater Company in Washington, D.C., where she also works as a designer. In 1999, Natasha received the Helen Hayes Award for costume and makeup design for QUARTET, a TUTA production. Since moving to Chicago five years ago, Natasha has designed for Ulysses Theater, Organic Theater, Steppenwolf, European Repertory, Light Opera Works and Theater at the Center.

CAST IN GRAY

PRODUCTION NOTES

By Christopher Gentry

Development – Winter 2003

CAST IN GRAY was born out of a dream Michael had one night and by our overwhelming desire to put our slate of films we had been developing over the last three years in play. I had witnessed the brilliance of Michael's writing skills and was anticipating our first production with great excitement. Michael set to writing Cast In Gray based on the dream he'd had of a hitchhiker and his dog wandering about the countryside. It took the better part of two months to ready the screenplay. Of course, in the process Michael had a feature film in mind, which he is currently finishing writing. We were sort of following the approach Jim Jarmusch took with Strangers In Paradise – convinced that this short film would be a first step in the making of a full length feature version of Cast In Gray. The story was designed to stand on its own as a short film, but would be expanded upon to create a feature film.

January 2004

As Michael was writing the script, he had two actors in mind to play the leads. Michael had known Stephen Angus for some time and had always been impressed with his stage work. It came as a bonus that Stephen owned a dog that had some acting experience. Thus, Michael wrote the part of The Man with the Dog for Stephen and, of course, Bibbo would play The Dog. I had introduced Michael to an actor friend of mine from Connecticut, Timothy Burke, to Michael a year ago, and Michael immediately took an interest in Tim and his acting ability. After several conversations, Michael sensed Tim's personality and background would form the character of The Man.

Michael and I had become familiar with digital filmmaking over the last few years, attending conferences and seeing the latest technology applied to feature filmmaking. We were confident in the medium for our project but both agreed if we were to go digital it had to be high-definition (HD) to get a film look. With that, we knew we had to find a cinematographer with HD experience that could achieve a film look.

February 2004

With the screenplay finished and the cast in place, we set about scouting for locations outside of Chicago. The script called for a desolate countryside where the characters would be stranded in a daylong rainstorm. To achieve the gray monotone look that Michael wanted, we knew we had to shoot the film before spring arrived. Midwest late winter is usually gray and rainy with the approach of spring. We had initially targeted a late February shoot so long as the winter cold and snow abated and we would have a window of mild weather. This was important given our need for rain as a key element of the story. However, we knew if we were lucky enough to get some gray days and rain, we would still need to have rain effects at the ready. The question was how to achieve this on a very tight budget.

Suburban Chicago failed to give us the locations we desired. One day on a scout I began to think of the country roads outside rural Macomb, Illinois, where I grew up. In my mind I could envision numerous locations that would be perfect. The only problem was it was 250 miles southwest of Chicago. How could we afford a location shoot? To find out, I developed a list of production elements that would be required and called my long time friend, Frank Herbert, who lives in Macomb, to see what he could get from the locals (accommodations, food, PA's, rain effects, etc.). It took Frank about 24 hours to respond with ideas about how to get what we need. I was encouraged and made a trip to Macomb. We worked out a deal with the local university (Western Illinois University) to accommodate and feed us, and they also got some students from the theater and broadcast departments to serve as PA's. Frank and I made a stop by the Macomb Fire Department to get some advice on building a multi-head water pumping system for rain effects. After we told them about our movie, a few of the firefighters

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stepped forward and said they could do it. They pulled their trucks into the parking lot and proceeded to make rain – lots of it. We loved it – and the enthusiasm of the firefighters - and got the mayor and fire chief to allow the use of the fire department. With all of the support the town of Macomb was offering to us, it seemed that we would get the best bang for our buck there, plus a laid back small town environment for our cast and crew. Frank had great locations in mind and it took a day of location scouting to find a number of possibilities.

After going over the location pictures with Michael and Production Designer Bata Radovanovic, we made the decision to go ahead with the shoot in Macomb. We began to assemble the crew, who agreed to work on deferral, and targeted February 28 as our start date – weather permitting.

As we moved into pre-production, we all began to watch the weather forecasts. We recently had a snow storm, and the snow on the ground wasn't melting due to low temperatures. Giving that we were going to be spraying water all over the set and the actors, we knew we had to have +40 degree temperatures and overcast conditions.

February 23, 2004

There's still snow on the ground and it's cold. The forecast shows no improvement and we are forced to move the shoot back two weeks. Despite this setback, we got the good news that cinematographer Sasha Rendulic had agreed to shoot the film for us. Sasha was very passionate about the project based on his liking of the screenplay and the overall production design that he would photograph beautifully. We were elated with his decision. We were even more encouraged by Sasha's understanding of the low budget nature of the project. He would not have all the crew and equipment a seasoned cinematographer was used to, but he pointed out that he loved the project and would revert to his experience early in his career when such conditions required being creative with what one has to work. He also knew the flexibility of the Varicam HD camera and was confident to get the look Michael wanted.

March 5, 2004

With the rest of the crew in place, we had only a short time for pre-production. The crew worked feverishly to get ready for the shoot in Macomb. With the snow melting and the forecast looking towards rain and mild weather, we settled on March 20 as our start date – weather permitting.

March 16, 2004

As final preparations are being made to begin production in Macomb, we continue to nervously watch the weather reports, which were for rain next week. Midwest weather this time of year can't be relied upon, but we hoped for the best (or worst weather we could find).

March 18, 2004

The tech crew arrived at 4:00pm and checked into Olsen Hall Conference Center on the campus of Western Illinois University. After everyone unpacked we had dinner at Aurelios in downtown Macomb and discussed our plan for Friday, basically to lock in locations.

March 19, 2004

The tech crew rose for a 6:30am call to check out our locations for the shoot. We saw several locations that we had previously identified, largely south of town, and discovered a few other possibilities. St. Francis Blacktop running straight south from the town would provide the length and look for the Leonard Cohen scene. From there we looked at Camp Creek Cemetery area, the leading location for most of our exteriors including the man's passing of the hitchhiker and his dog, the near miss with the semi and the place where they will be stranded in the rain. We found a wonderful truss bridge, the only one of its kind in McDonough County, to shoot the

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identity exchange scene. The bridge would be lit with a single light from the 20 foot girders above. A beautiful little creek passing below would be lit to get a nice shimmering of light off of the gentle rapids. After the group agreed on and locked our locations, we had lunch and prepared for camera tests when the camera and grip truck arrived. With the rush to prepare I got behind in my need to drive to Peoria to pick up our generator. I finally departed at 4pm. Fearing that the vendor will close for the weekend, I call the sales rep, Melanie Walringer. Fortunately I reach her on her cell phone and to my relief she arranges for an after hours pickup. I was received by Chad Pullen, a gregarious, very nice fellow that discovered that the ball on the hitch was the wrong size and needed to be cut off since it was welded. Chad struggled with that ball for an hour but got me fixed up. I returned to Macomb with the generator in tow and we all headed off to dinner. We had a production meeting from 8-10pm before getting to bed to rest for the 6am call.

March 20, 2004

Breakfast was served at 5:30am, after which we headed out at 6am to set up at the Camp Creek Cemetery location. The weather was looking good (overcast!), then the sun came out and the wind picked up on the prairie to 35 mph. Not the ideal conditions we wanted. Conditions persisted throughout the day, but we stayed the course and tried our best to get some coverage. Hats off (literally in this wind) to the grip crew for holding up the flags in the cold wind.

March 21, 2004

6:30am call. We relocated to an alternative location given the forecast for sun and 15-20 mph wind and shot interior car scenes with the 20X20 silk. These scenes were long dialogue scenes and were shot using special effects for rain and overcast conditions. Great job by Bata and Jim Andre to get a subtle foggy window effect on the car windows. Sasha and Jim Andre worked with Joe to get a nice light and look. The actors were fantastic and we got some great performances. A successful day.

March 22, 2004

6:30 am call. We spent another sunny day under the silk to mask the sun continuing finishing the middle part of the story involving long and very important dialogue scenes. Very challenging work for the actors, which they gave Michael great performances. Shot masters of Bibbo the dog. Great shots thanks to Ratko's talents for dog growling to get Bibbo to react with barking.

March 23, 2004

6:30am call. We finished the interior car scenes under the silk with the sun persisting. Hoping for overcast conditions to get our exteriors, but it didn't happen. At this point it will be tough to get all of our exterior coverage on Wednesday, our last shoot day. We went later than our 12-hour schedule, but the crew stayed on to finish the car interiors. Went out for burgers and beers.

March 24, 2004

8:30am call. We went to the Camp Creek location to work on scenes there. Clouds in the sky, but not enough to give us overcast conditions. Forecast for storms, but the clouds didn't cover nicely until after lunch. At that point we worked fast to get exterior coverage. The crew did a great job with the setups. As dusk fell and our light faded, we cranked up the gain and captured some interesting images of the praying scene. The storm was coming upon us and we hope to get heavy rain to pack the camera in the rear of the SUV to get the Leonard Cohen scene. Unfortunately, as our schedule was coming to a close, the storm was skirting us to the West. Sasha, Daniel, Michael and Chris conferred about how we could get the Leonard Cohen scene in using rain effects provided by the Macomb Fire Department crew. After discussing

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several ideas, we decided to attempt to create the illusion of our SUV driving while standing still in the road. To do this, the SUV was positioned on the back of a slight rise in the road to take out the road that would be still. Ryan Holz applied a force of water over the SUV's front to create the rain. Two Illinois State Police cruisers driven by Troppers Jon Dively and Dan Leezer were directed to pass by the SUV at 10 mph with their lights going. It worked beautifully. Can't wait to see the dailies!

March 25, 2004

Travel day back to Chicago to regroup and address our lack of coverage forced upon us by the absence of overcast conditions. Driving back to Chicago we could only be excited about the great coverage we got and the challenge of finishing our location work to make this very exciting film.

April 9/10, 2004

After waiting until 5pm last night to make a call on the weather forecast and a trip back to Macomb for a few more days shoot, our production team hustled to gear up for the trip down state. Frank got us road closure for the bridge scene and lined up a backup water truck and pump for rain effects to step in for the firefighters (big thanks to local power farmer, David Murphy). We contracted a grip truck and crew out of Springfield, fortunately about 83 miles away. Everyone arrived at the hotel around 5pm and was on location to light the bridge scene at around 10pm. As this beautiful truss bridge was rigged in the middle of the countryside, we worked up the hill in the dark with portable lighting and rain effects to shoot some of the hitchhiking scenes with actor, Tim Burke and Bibo. The generator gave us some fits down on the bridge, but with the help of our gaffer, Jim Andre, we were able to power up the lighting scheme on the bridge, which looked great, thanks to grips Rick Unsbee, Tim Lynn and our PA's. We shot the bridge scene and wrapped to birds chirping us towards another sunny day (fowled forecast once again) as we headed back to the hotel at 7am for some well-deserved sleep.

April 10, 2004

After sleep and a fortifying spaghetti dinner at Pagliai's Pizza, the cast and crew headed back to the Camp Creek location south of Macomb to shoot some of the car exteriors and night driving scenes. Without natural rain, the Macomb Fire Department once again came through with some hard driving rain effects. We wrapped some great shots at around 9pm.

April 11, 2004

8am call back at the Camp Creek location. We began with some of the exterior driving shots, again forced to create rain on this at least fortunately overcast day, although the sun played with us, storms moving north of us in a westerly direction. David Murphy came through with a surprise in his barn – an old electric utility truck with a 35 foot hydraulic crane and bucket. First AC Dave Wightman bravely operated the camera in the bucket to get us some high angles on the praying scenes. The added height and wider angles with the camera posed a challenge for the rain effects but the firefighters and David Murphy's water truck with a garden hose attachment did the trick. We wrapped with the tow truck scene and had a night cap at Bruce Brown's Chandler's On The Park restaurant before a tired crew made the journey back to Chicago.

April 21, 2004

The weather reports have been totally unreliable. However, storms have moved into the Chicagoland area and it looks good for this evening, but sketchy tomorrow. We made the decision to get the last of our night shots, but as our chosen location in McHenry County was unavailable in the late evening, we were forced to come up with an alternative. A small crew

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met at director Michael Toth's house and we headed out around 10pm looking for a remote location in the northern Chicago suburbs. With a short time table we made our way into a Cook County Forest Preserve about 6 miles from Michael's house, which would suffice for the night's shots. While camera operator Kurt Branstetter and First AC Dave Wightman were setting up the camera inside the SUV, curious onlookers began to mistake us for an Ocean's 12 crew (shooting in Chicago). It turned out that the location we randomly chose was one of their locations for the next morning. It worked great for us as the local police mistook us for the Ocean's 12 crew and left us alone for the evening. We got our shots and wrapped to a Bibb deer chase at around 6:30am greeted, of course by the Ocean's 12 crew and several VIP limos arriving on their set.

May 1, 2004

The weather forecast for tomorrow calls for showers and overcast skies. Given the totally inaccurate forecasts to date, we were not about to rely on natural rain to help us get interior driving shots in rain. As such, and to our great fortune, actor Stephen Angus is a very talented carpenter. Without a Hollywood budget for big rain effects (it would take several cranes, water tankers and other effects equipment) we devised a portable rain effects system that would be rigged to the SUV picture vehicle. A 65 gallon water tank placed in the back of the SUV (competing with camera and crew), a ½ HP water pump, garden hose with four shower head extensions and a portable generator mounted on the bumper (big thanks to Rodog) provided us with rain in the frame. Stephen built a wood frame-box-thing on top of the luggage rack of the SUV with four hose/head extensions that could be adjusted with some heavy duty clamps – extending out over the windshield or side window, giving the illusion of a rain storm (assuming its overcast!).

May 2, 2004

6:00am call on location. After dodging the sun for most of the morning and afternoon, we achieved some critical shots at this beautiful McHenry County Glacial Park. Chief Dave Rudolph and the Richmond Fire Protection District firefighters and paramedics provided additional rain effects and were part of the accident scene toward the end of the day's shoot. We wrapped at about 8pm and stopped off with the crew for some dinner, then the drive back to Chicago.

May 4, 2004

Down-converted the last of our HD tapes at Zacuto Films in Chicago (kudos to Steve and Yens for their support). Thirteen hours of footage shot over our nine production days. Michael will log in the scenes and begin the edit. The footage looks great thanks to cinematographer Sasha Rendulic and the rest of the crew.

May 31, 2004

Michael has been working on the edit using Final Cut Pro (FCP). I looked at a sequence he has been working on and it looks great. Being Michael's first time editing with Final Cut Pro, there's a learning curve, but he is progressing fantastically.

June 12, 2004

The edit is progressing and I am impressed with Michael's aptitude working with FCP. He's incorporated some visual and sound effects that are impressive. Quite a robust little system, and I am greatly encouraged. There are the obvious continuity issues to resolve, but Michael is handling them fine.

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June 30, 2004

The film is coming together. Michael is working night and day to master the DVD for festival submission, while I am researching festivals. We are working to make submission deadlines for Chicago International Film Festival, Palm Springs and Telluride coming up rapidly.

July 8, 2004

Frank and I joined Michael to see a rough cut of the assemblage. We were very excited and encouraged by Michael's work. Michael upgraded his edit suite to an Apple G5 with Final Cut Pro. He is doing amazing work on the picture and sound.

August 23, 2004

A rough cut at 46 minutes looks pretty good, but we feel it needs to be cut down further. Michael will keep at it.

October 15, 2004

The edit is down to 39 minutes, which works much better. There are some shots that need to be corrected due to excessive grain. Michael is also working also on the sound mix.

February 11, 2005

Mastered out to Digibeta, which we took to Film & Tape Works in Chicago for noise reduction on some shots and some color correction. We're done at this point.

June 10, 2005

We've been offered the opportunity to conform our show to our original HD masters with color correction and sound sweetening. It will look and sound even better and we'll finally finish on D5 digital intermediate.

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CREDITS

A
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Timothy Burke Stephen Angus Bibo

CAST IN GRAY

WRITTEN, DIRECTED & EDITED BY
I. Michael Toth

PRODUCED BY
Christopher Gentry

CO-PRODUCER
Frank T. Herbert

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS
Predrag Konstantinovic
Charles Renslow

CO-EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS
Steve Weiss
Mladen Selak
Siro Pieri

SOUND DESIGN
I. Michael Toth

CINEMATOGRAPHER
Sasha Rendulic

PRODUCTION DESIGNER
Slobodan Radovanovic

COSTUME DESIGNER
Natasha Vuchurovich Djukich

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CREDITS

PRODUCTION MANAGER.....	CHRISTOPHER GENTRY
FIRST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR	DANIEL RUCCI
THE MAN	TIMOTHY BURKE
THE MAN WITH THE DOG.....	STEPHEN ANGUS
THE DOG.....	BIBO
PATROLMAN.....	LAURENCE NOSBAUM
TRUCK DRIVER.....	DUSAN LUBARDA
EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIANS.....	DAVE RUDOLPH MATT AMORE GREG SOSNOWSKI
COSTUMER	ERIN PLUMLEE
SCRIPT SUPERVISOR	RATKO MOMCILOVIC
CAMERA OPERATORS.....	JOSEPH FARRIS DAVE WIGHTMAN
ADDITIONAL CINEMATOGRAPHY.....	KURT BRANSTETTER
FIRST ASSISTANT CAMERA.....	DAVE WIGHTMAN
SECOND ASSISTANT CAMERA.....	AMANDA DILLER GUNDERSON
STILL PHOTOGRAPHER/VIDEOGRAPHER.....	OTO EKRES
SOUND MIXER.....	TOM BEACH
GAFFER.....	JIM ANDRE
BEST BOY ELECTRIC.....	JOEY DOMARACKI
KEY GRIP.....	DAVE MCGUIRE
GRIPS	RICK UNSBEE TIM LYNN MIKE CAVANAUGH JENNIFER HELLWIG
GRIP INTERN.....	DOUG HALL
SPECIAL EFFECTS TECHNICIANS	TIMOTHY B. CAMPBELL DANIEL W. MEYER RYAN M. HOTZ ADAM L. RHOADES MIKE BLOOM TOM LINNEMAN WARD WEBER ARIN ARNOLD ELLEN AMORE
MAKEUP & HAIR	ERIN PLUMLEE
PRODUCTION COORDINATOR.....	MAKKIDA ASFAW
KEY PRODUCTION ASSISTANT.....	NATHANAEL LOCKE
PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS.....	MICHAEL BAUMANN CHRISTINE WALKER MIKE DAHLINGHAUS
HD CONFORMING.....	STEVE PANNING
DIGITAL COLOR CORRECTION.....	BOB SLIGA
RE-RECORDING MIXER.....	PATRICK YACONO

CAST IN GRAY

CREDITS

MUSIC WRITTEN AND PERFORMED BY
Dr Dimitry Golemovich

CREATIVE CONSULTANTS
Janis Pieri Toth
Stephen Angus

FILMED IN HIGH DEFINITION
Panasonic AJ-HDC27F VariCam

CAMERA EQUIPMENT
Visions of Light, Chicago
Zacuto Films, Chicago
222 Films, Chicago
Fletcher Chicago

GRIP AND ELECTRIC EQUIPMENT
Film Branch, Chicago
Dean Williams Photography, Springfield, IL
Altorfer, Peoria, IL
Product Productions, Chicago

RENTAL CARS
Enterprise, Chicago
Ryder Trucks/Cross Motors, Macomb, IL

VIDEO TAPE STOCK
Tape Resources, Chicago
PRC of America, Chicago

PRODUCTION INSURANCE
Film Emporium, New York City

EDITED ON FINAL CUT PRO HD

POST PRODUCTION
Zacuto Films, Chicago
The Film & Tape Works, Chicago
HD Chicago
Signal Hill Sound, Chicago

THANKS

Illinois Film Office; City of Macomb, Mayor's Office, Mick Wissled, Mayor; Macomb Fire Department, Chief Clarence John; McDonough County Road Commissioners; McDonough County Sheriff's Department, Sheriff Michael Lee Johnson; Western Illinois University, Al Goldfarb, President; Illinois State Police; Larry A's Pizza; Pagliais Pizza; Aurelio's Pizza; Parkside Bar & Grill; Melanie Walringer; Chad Pullen; HyVee Foods; Macomb High School; Macomb Community Unit School District 185, Dr. Frances B. Karanovich, Superintendent; Jens Bogehegn; David Murphy; Steve Tibbits; Roman Viere; Schott Bros., Don King; Richmond Fire Protection District, Chief Dave Rudolph; McHenry County Conservation District, Kate Alma; Round Lake Police Department; A-1 Automotive; Cale Auto Body

CAST IN GRAY

CREDITS

SPECIAL THANKS

Zeljko Djukic; Eugene Steingold; Irena Stepic Rendulic; Harlin Savage; Mariana Pluta Radovanovic; Oto and Natasha Ekres; Joanie and Annabel Herbert; Suki Medencevic; Joseph Trupin; David Greenwald; Scott Gentry; Albert and Dayani Pieri; Terri Gentry; Max and Sally Gentry; Marilyn F. Sousa; Robert Dillon; Michael Rose; Julie and Ulrich Samietz; Jim Mahoney; Bob Sliga; Jeff Miller; Linda and Dan O'Neill; Misty Tosh; Lisa Colangelo; James Hession; Pam Eaton; Mila Filipovic; Lale Dzamic; Arwa Merchant; Teresa, Chiara and Liam Pieri; Blaise Pascal; Gabriel Marcel; Martin Selak; Clifford Goldstein

FILMED ON LOCATION IN
Macomb, IL; Richmond, IL and Chicago, IL

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CAST IN GRAY

www.castinggraymovie.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
April 19, 2006

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
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Cast In Gray Selected to Rhode Island International Film Festival

Chicago, Illinois - Life is a Dream Productions today announced that its short film, CAST IN GRAY, has been selected into competition at Rhode Island International Film Festival (RIIFF) to be held in Providence, Rhode Island August 8-13. RIIFF represents the ninth film festival for Cast In Gray.

Now in its tenth year, RIIFF's recognizes achievement and innovation in a variety of filmmaking and storytelling disciplines. RIIFF is one of only 47 film festivals out of 1,950 worldwide that are recognized by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences as a qualifying festival for the short film category of the Academy Awards. The festival is also recognized as one of the top 10 short film festivals and top 10 international film festivals in the United States.

"We are very excited about being selected to this high-profile festival," said Christopher Gentry, producer of the film. "It will obviously give the film more exposure in the industry to help us promote our feature film projects."

Cast In Gray was produced by Chicago-based Life is a Dream Productions. The film tells the story of a disillusioned man's chance encounter with a hitchhiker and his dog while stranded in a rainstorm. Written, directed and edited by I. Michael Toth, the film stars Timothy Burke and Stephen Angus, as well as Angus' dog Bibo. In its current film festival run, Cast In Gray has won four awards including two Best Narrative Short awards.

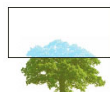
In addition to three feature length films on Life is a Dream Productions' development slate, the filmmakers are currently raising financing for a feature film based on Cast In Gray. "Many people who have seen the film ask us, 'What happens to the main character?'" Gentry said. "Audiences across the United States have connected with the short film, and we are confident that the feature film version will be successful in the same way."

About Cast In Gray (TRT 39 minutes; not rated):

Cast In Gray was shot on location in Macomb, Illinois by Chicago-based Life is a Dream Productions. The film was written, directed and edited by I. Michael Toth and stars Timothy Burke and Stephen Angus, as well as Angus' dog Bibo. Frank T. Herbert, a native of Macomb, Illinois, co-produced the film. Sasha Redulic, an award-winning cinematographer from Los Angeles, was cinematographer on the film.

Tagline: In this sumptuously shot short film from writer-director I. Michael Toth, a disillusioned man's chance encounter with a hitchhiker and his dog forces the man to reconsider the possibilities of his life.

Synopsis: Stuck in a rainstorm in the middle of nowhere, a man offers shelter in his broken down car to a hitchhiker and his dog. As the hours pass and the rain continues, the man wonders if his



LIFE IS A DREAM PRODUCTIONS INC.
3725 North Greenview Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60613
www.lifeisadreamprod.com

decision to let them in was one of a series of bad choices he made in his life – or is the chance encounter with this enigmatic stranger a godsend opportunity to solve his own problems.

About Life is a Dream Productions:

Life is a Dream Productions Inc. was formed in October 2000 by producer Christopher Gentry and writer-director I. Michael Toth to develop and produce independent feature films for worldwide distribution. The Chicago-based production company currently has four feature films in development.

About I. Michael Toth:

I. Michael Toth has written, produced, directed and edited a number of award-winning television programs, documentaries, short films, music videos and commercials in the US and Europe. He has four screenplays in development for production, one that includes an adaptation of a play by Academy Award winning screenwriter Steve Tesich. Toth is a graduate of the prestigious University of Arts School of Film and Television in Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro.

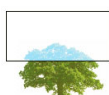
About Christopher Gentry:

Christopher Gentry formed Life is a Dream Productions in October 2000 with writer-director I. Michael Toth, where he develops and produces films for Toth. Prior to producing the award-winning short film *Cast In Gray*, Gentry spent 14 years as a corporate banker with FleetBoston Financial, BankBoston, Mellon Bank and Sanwa Bank. He holds a B.S. degree in Corporate Finance from Arizona State University. He is a member IFP/Chicago, a national organization of independent filmmakers with over 9,000 members.

About the Cast:

Timothy Burke, who plays the role of The Man, has appeared in lead and supporting roles in five feature films including *The Return*, *The Devil's Placebo* and *Mitchellville* (Jury Special Mention, CineVegas Film Festival). Burke trained at National Theater Institute with Richard Digby Day and Morris Carnovsky. Stephen Angus, who plays the role of The Man with the Dog, has appeared in a number of stage plays, films and television programs. His stage credits include leading roles at many theatres in the Midwest and on the East Coast; most recently at Victory Gardens in Chicago, where he played The Pilot in *The Sweet Little Prince*. His television credits include the recurring character Alex Carew on NBC's *Homicide: Life On The Street*, appearances in episodes of *America's Most Wanted* and *Missing: Reward*. Stephen has also appeared in the films *Quiz Show*, *Forrest Gump*, *Pecker*, and *Le Pelican*. Bibo, who plays the role of the Dog, met actor Stephen Angus one sunny morning while wandering the streets of Washington, D.C., and they have been fast companions ever since.

###



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
December 7, 2005

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
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"Cast In Gray" Wins Two Best of the Midwest Awards

Chicago, Illinois - Life is a Dream Productions today announced that its short film, *Cast In Gray*, won two Best of the Midwest awards at the Midwest Independent Film Festival (MWFF). Timothy Burke won the award for Best Actor for his leading performance as The Man, while Best Sound Design went to writer-director, I. Michael Toth. The awards ceremony took place last night at the Landmark Century Centre Cinema in Chicago.

Cast In Gray held its Chicago Premier at MWFF last June as headliner to a sold out audience. "I'm extremely pleased with the awards for Michael and Tim," said Christopher Gentry, producer of the film. "Both awards are well-deserved and reflect the outstanding contributions made by our entire cast and crew."

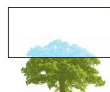
Toth wrote the screenplay specifically for Burke, Stephen Angus and and Angus' dog, Bibo. "It's a great honor to win the award," Burke said. "I'm definitely looking forward to working with Michael and Stephen again." Burke, who attended Chicago's Columbia College Film School and trained at National Theater Institute with Richard Digby Day and Morris Carnovsky, has appeared recently in five feature films. He is set to star in Life is a Dream Productions' feature length version of *Cast In Gray* (working title, *Gray Black White*).

A graduate of film and television at the University of Arts, Film and Television in Serbia and Montenegro, Toth wrote, directed, edited and did sound design for the film. Prior to coming to the U.S. in 1985, he worked on a number of award-winning European feature films and television shows while writing, producing and editing a number of documentaries and short films. He has worked in Chicago as a commercial director and in 2000 dedicated himself to writing and directing feature films with producer and Chicago banker Gentry.

"The sound design for the film was conceived really as the musical bed for the film," Toth said. "It also plays a character in the film, serving to remind the audience of nature's presence." Toth said in addition to location sound recorded and mixed by Tom Beach, he incorporated a lot of sound effects to bring the day-long rainstorm that hold the characters hostage to life.

Cast In Gray was produced by Chicago-based Life is a Dream Productions. The film was shot in spring 2004 in downstate Macomb, Illinois and tells the story of a disillusioned man's chance encounter with a hitchhiker and his dog while stranded in a rainstorm.

Over the past year *Cast In Gray* has screened at seven film festivals around the country and won two Best Narrative Short Film awards. Toth and Gentry are developing the film into a feature length film and have three other feature projects in development. "Many people who have seen *Cast In Gray* ask us, 'What happens next?'" Gentry said. We think there is the potential for an interesting feature film that will connect with a film-going audience."



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3725 North Greenview Avenue
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www.lifeisadreamprod.com

About Cast In Gray (TRT 39 minutes; not rated):

Cast In Gray was shot on location in Macomb, Illinois by Chicago-based Life is a Dream Productions. The film was written, directed and edited by I. Michael Toth and stars Timothy Burke and Stephen Angus, as well as Angus' dog Bibo. Frank T. Herbert, a native of Macomb, Illinois, co-produced the film. Sasha Redulic, an award-winning cinematographer from Los Angeles, was cinematographer on the film.

Tagline: In this sumptuously shot short film from writer-director I. Michael Toth, a disillusioned man's chance encounter with a hitchhiker and his dog forces the man to reconsider the possibilities of his life.

Synopsis: Stuck in a rainstorm in the middle of nowhere, a man offers shelter in his broken down car to a hitchhiker and his dog. As the hours pass and the rain continues, the man wonders if his decision to let them in was one of a series of bad choices he made in his life – or is the chance encounter with this enigmatic stranger a godsend opportunity to solve his own problems.

About Life is a Dream Productions:

Life is a Dream Productions Inc. was formed in October 2000 by producer Christopher Gentry and writer-director I. Michael Toth to develop and produce independent feature films for worldwide distribution. The Chicago-based production company currently has four feature films in development.

About I. Michael Toth:

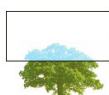
I. Michael Toth has written, produced, directed and edited a number of award-winning television programs, documentaries, short films, music videos and commercials in the U.S. and Europe. He has four screenplays in development for production, one that includes an adaptation of a play by Academy Award winning screenwriter Steve Tesich. Toth is a graduate of the prestigious University of Arts School of Film and Television in Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro.

About Christopher Gentry:

Christopher Gentry formed Life is a Dream Productions in October 2000 with writer-director I. Michael Toth, where he develops and produces films for Toth. Prior to producing the award-winning short film Cast In Gray, Gentry spent 14 years as a corporate banker with FleetBoston Financial, BankBoston, Mellon Bank and Sanwa Bank. He holds a B.S. degree in Corporate Finance from Arizona State University. He is a member IFP/Chicago, a national organization of independent filmmakers with over 9,000 members.

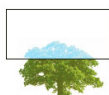
About the Cast:

Timothy Burke, who plays the role of The Man, has appeared in lead and supporting roles in five feature films including The Return, The Devil's Placebo and Mitchellville (Jury Special Mention, CineVegas Film Festival). Burke trained at National Theater Institute with Richard Digby Day and Morris Carnovsky. Stephen Angus, who plays the role of The Man with the Dog, has appeared in a number of stage plays, films and television programs. His stage credits include leading roles at many theatres in the Midwest and on the East Coast; most recently at Victory Gardens in Chicago, where he played The Pilot in The Sweet Little Prince. His television credits include the recurring character Alex Carew on NBC's Homicide: Life On The Street, appearances in episodes of America's Most Wanted and Missing: Reward. Stephen has also appeared in the films Quiz Show, Forrest Gump, Pecker, and Le Pelican. Bibo, who plays the role of the Dog, met



actor Stephen Angus one sunny morning while wandering the streets of Washington, D.C., and they have been fast companions ever since.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
November 2, 2005

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
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"Cast In Gray" Nominated for Four Best of the Midwest Awards

Chicago, Illinois - Life is a Dream Productions today announced that its short film, Cast In Gray, has been nominated for four Best of the Midwest awards at the Midwest Independent Film Festival (MWFF), including Best Drama, Best Director (Michael Toth), Best Actor (Timothy Burke) and Best Sound Design (Michael Toth).

Cast In Gray held its Chicago Premier at MWFF last June as headliner to a sold out audience. "We are honored to be recognized by such a great and growing supporter of independent film," said Christopher Gentry, producer of the film. "Certainly Michael Toth's and Timothy Burke's nominations are well-deserved. They reflect the outstanding contributions made by our entire cast and crew."

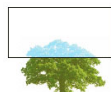
A graduate of film and television at the University of Arts, Film and Television in Serbia and Montenegro, Toth wrote, directed, edited and did sound design for the film. Prior to coming to the U.S. in 1985, he worked on a number of award-winning European feature films and television shows while writing, producing and editing a number of documentaries and short films. He has worked in Chicago as a commercial director and in 2000 dedicated himself to writing and directing feature films with producer and Chicago banker Gentry.

"I'm proud that the film is receiving recognition, knowing how much work was put forth by everyone that contributed," Toth said. "This film presented a number of creative challenges on such a small budget, particularly getting the rain and other elements of nature to look and sound right." Toth said in addition to location sound recorded and mixed by Tom Beach, he incorporated a lot of sound effects to bring the day long rainstorm that hold the characters hostage to life.

Cast In Gray was produced by Chicago-based Life is a Dream Productions. The film was shot in spring 2004 in downstate Macomb, Illinois and tells the story of a disillusioned man's chance encounter with a hitchhiker and his dog while stranded in a rainstorm. The film stars Timothy Burke and Stephen Angus, as well as Angus' dog Bibi.

Toth wrote the screenplay specifically for Burke, Angus and Bibi. "I'm obviously honored to be nominated," Burke said. "It was a great experience for me to work with such a talented director and alongside a great actor in Stephen Angus." Toth said his approach to directing the actors was in part based on their approach to acting. "You have to be sensitive to each individual actor and how they like to work," Toth said. "For my part, I try to help channel that energy into the character and the performances."

Over the past year Cast In Gray has screened at seven film festivals around the country and won two Best Narrative Short Film awards. Toth and Gentry are developing the film into a feature length film and have three other feature projects in development. "Many people who have seen



LIFE IS A DREAM PRODUCTIONS INC.
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www.lifeisadreamprod.com

the film ask us, ‘What happens next?’” Gentry said. We think there is the potential for an interesting feature film that will connect with a film-going audience.”

The 2005 Best of the Midwest Awards, which recognizes the finest in independent filmmaking throughout the Midwest, will be held on Tuesday, December 6th at Landmark’s Century Centre Cinema. Winners are chosen via online balloting from both the public and the MWFF Screening Committee. Voting is now active and continues through Wednesday, November 16th.

About Cast In Gray (TRT 39 minutes; not rated):

Cast In Gray was shot on location in Macomb, Illinois by Chicago-based Life is a Dream Productions. The film was written, directed and edited by I. Michael Toth and stars Timothy Burke and Stephen Angus, as well as Angus’ dog Bibo. Frank T. Herbert, a native of Macomb, Illinois, co-produced the film. Sasha Redulic, an award-winning cinematographer from Los Angeles, was cinematographer on the film.

Tagline: In this sumptuously shot short film from writer-director I. Michael Toth, a disillusioned man’s chance encounter with a hitchhiker and his dog forces the man to reconsider the possibilities of his life.

Synopsis: Stuck in a rainstorm in the middle of nowhere, a man offers shelter in his broken down car to a hitchhiker and his dog. As the hours pass and the rain continues, the man wonders if his decision to let them in was one of a series of bad choices he made in his life – or is the chance encounter with this enigmatic stranger a godsend opportunity to solve his own problems.

About Life is a Dream Productions:

Life is a Dream Productions Inc. was formed in October 2000 by producer Christopher Gentry and writer-director I. Michael Toth to develop and produce independent feature films for worldwide distribution. The Chicago-based production company currently has four feature films in development for production through 2007.

About I. Michael Toth:

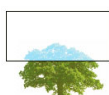
I. Michael Toth has written, produced, directed and edited a number of award-winning television programs, documentaries, short films, music videos and commercials in the US and Europe. He has four screenplays in development for production, one that includes an adaptation of a play by Academy Award winning screenwriter Steve Tesich. Toth is a graduate of the prestigious University of Arts School of Film and Television in Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro.

About Christopher Gentry:

Christopher Gentry formed Life is a Dream Productions in October 2000 with writer-director I. Michael Toth, where he develops and produces films for Toth. Prior to producing the award-winning short film Cast In Gray, Gentry spent 14 years as a corporate banker with FleetBoston Financial, BankBoston, Mellon Bank and Sanwa Bank. He holds a B.S. degree in Corporate Finance from Arizona State University. He is a member IFP/Chicago, a national organization of independent filmmakers with over 9,000 members.

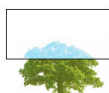
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and Morris Carnovsky. Stephen Angus, who plays the role of The Man with the Dog, has appeared in a number of stage plays, films and television programs. His stage credits include leading roles at many theatres in the Midwest and on the East Coast; most recently at Victory Gardens in Chicago, where he played The Pilot in *The Sweet Little Prince*. His television credits include the recurring character Alex Carew on NBC's *Homicide: Life On The Street*, appearances in episodes of *America's Most Wanted* and *Missing: Reward*. Stephen has also appeared in the films *Quiz Show*, *Forrest Gump*, *Pecker*, and *Le Pelican*. Bibbo, who plays the role of the Dog, met actor Stephen Angus one sunny morning while wandering the streets of Washington, D.C., and they have been fast companions ever since.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
August 1, 2005

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
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Cast In Gray Selected to Los Angeles International Shorts Festival

Chicago, Illinois - Life is a Dream Productions today announced today that its short film, CAST IN GRAY, has been selected into competition at Los Angeles International Short Festival to be held at ArcLight Cinemas in Hollywood, CA September 6-13. LA Shorts Fest represents the seventh festival for Cast In Gray this year.

LA Shorts Fest is the largest short film festival in the world and is accredited by the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts & Sciences. 19 past festival participants have received Academy Award nominations for their films, and the last five winners have went on to win the Oscar. This year the festival received over 1,100 entries and last year drew over 10,000 moviegoers, filmmakers and entertainment executives.

"We are very excited about this high-profile and prestigious event," said Christopher Gentry, producer of the film. "Being in the heart of the movie industry, we'll have ample opportunities to talk with the many industry people in attendance about sales of Cast In Gray and financing for our other feature projects."

Cast In Gray was produced by Chicago-based Life is a Dream Productions. The film tells the story of a disillusioned man's chance encounter with a hitchhiker and his dog while stranded in a rainstorm. Written, directed and edited by I. Michael Toth, the film stars Timothy Burke and Stephen Angus, as well as Angus' dog Bibo.

In its first two film festivals, Cast In Gray won "Best Narrative Short" awards at both festivals. The film has also screened at Phoenix Film Festival and at Midwest Independent Film Festival in its Chicago Premiere in front of a sold out audience. The film was recently selected into competition at Tahoe/Reno International Film Festival to be held August 24-28 in Lake Tahoe, NV and at IFP Market & Conference to be held September 19-22 in New York City.

In addition to three feature length films on Life is a Dream Productions' development slate, the filmmakers are working on a script for a feature film based on Cast In Gray. "Many people who have seen the film ask us, 'What happens to the main character?'" Gentry said. We think there is the potential for an interesting feature film that will connect with a film-going audience."

About Cast In Gray (TRT 39 minutes; not rated):

Cast In Gray was shot on location in Macomb, Illinois by Chicago-based Life is a Dream Productions. The film was written, directed and edited by I. Michael Toth and stars Timothy Burke and Stephen Angus, as well as Angus' dog Bibo. Frank T. Herbert, a native of Macomb, Illinois, co-produced the film. Sasha Redulic, an award-winning cinematographer from Los Angeles, was cinematographer on the film.



LIFE IS A DREAM PRODUCTIONS INC.
3725 North Greenview Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60613
www.lifeisadreamprod.com

Tagline: In this sumptuously shot short film from writer-director I. Michael Toth, a disillusioned man's chance encounter with a hitchhiker and his dog forces the man to reconsider the possibilities of his life.

Synopsis: Stuck in a rainstorm in the middle of nowhere, a man offers shelter in his broken down car to a hitchhiker and his dog. As the hours pass and the rain continues, the man wonders if his decision to let them in was one of a series of bad choices he made in his life – or is the chance encounter with this enigmatic stranger a godsend opportunity to solve his own problems.

About Life is a Dream Productions:

Life is a Dream Productions Inc. was formed in October 2000 by producer Christopher Gentry and writer-director I. Michael Toth to develop and produce independent feature films for worldwide distribution. The Chicago-based production company currently has four feature films in development for production through 2007.

About I. Michael Toth:

I. Michael Toth has written, produced, directed and edited a number of award-winning television programs, documentaries, short films, music videos and commercials in the US and Europe. He has four screenplays in development for production, one that includes an adaptation of a play by Academy Award winning screenwriter Steve Tesich. Toth is a graduate of the prestigious University of Arts School of Film and Television in Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
July 22, 2005

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
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Cast In Gray Selected to IFP Market & Conference

Chicago, Illinois - Life is a Dream Productions today announced that its short film, CAST IN GRAY, has been selected into competition at IFP Market & Conference to be held at Angelika Film Center in New York City September 19-22. IFP Market represents the sixth festival for Cast In Gray this year.

IFP Market & Conference is organized by the Independent Film Project (IFP), the largest non-profit independent film organization in the world, with over 9,000 members. It is the only US independent film event where screenwriters, directors and producers present their work directly to industry executives. With more than 1,000 personal meetings between filmmakers and high-level industry executives; four days of screenings; dozens of workshops, master classes; panels; and daily special events, the event is intended to expand business relationships and advance film projects in the commercial marketplace.

"We are very pleased to be selected to attend this event," said Christopher Gentry, producer of the film. "Not only do we get to screen our film to audiences and compete for awards, we'll have ample opportunities to talk with the many industry people in attendance about sales of Cast In Gray and financing for our other feature projects."

Cast In Gray was produced by Chicago-based Life is a Dream Productions. The film tells the story of a disillusioned man's chance encounter with a hitchhiker and his dog while stranded in a rainstorm. Written, directed and edited by I. Michael Toth, the film stars Timothy Burke and Stephen Angus, as well as Angus' dog Bibo.

In its first two film festivals, Cast In Gray won "Best Narrative Short" awards at both festivals. The film has also screened at Phoenix Film Festival and at Midwest Independent Film Festival in its Chicago Premiere in front of a sold out audience. The film was recently selected into competition at Tahoe/Reno International Film Festival to be held August 24-28 in Lake Tahoe, NV.

In addition to three feature length films on Life is a Dream Productions' development slate, the filmmakers are working on a script for a feature film based on Cast In Gray. "Many people who have seen the film ask us, 'What happens to the main character?'" Gentry said. We think there is the potential for an interesting feature film that will connect with a film-going audience."

About Cast In Gray (TRT 39 minutes; not rated):

Cast In Gray was shot on location in Macomb, Illinois by Chicago-based Life is a Dream Productions. The film was written, directed and edited by I. Michael Toth and stars Timothy Burke and Stephen Angus, as well as Angus' dog Bibo. Frank T. Herbert, a native of Macomb, Illinois, co-produced the film. Sasha Redulic, an award-winning cinematographer from Los Angeles, was cinematographer on the film.



LIFE IS A DREAM PRODUCTIONS INC.
3725 North Greenview Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60613
www.lifeisadreamprod.com

Tagline: In this sumptuously shot short film from writer-director I. Michael Toth, a disillusioned man's chance encounter with a hitchhiker and his dog forces the man to reconsider the possibilities of his life.

Synopsis: Stuck in a rainstorm in the middle of nowhere, a man offers shelter in his broken down car to a hitchhiker and his dog. As the hours pass and the rain continues, the man wonders if his decision to let them in was one of a series of bad choices he made in his life – or is the chance encounter with this enigmatic stranger a godsend opportunity to solve his own problems.

About Life is a Dream Productions:

Life is a Dream Productions Inc. was formed in October 2000 by producer Christopher Gentry and writer-director I. Michael Toth to develop and produce independent feature films for worldwide distribution. The Chicago-based production company currently has four feature films in development for production through 2007.

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About Christopher Gentry:

Christopher Gentry formed Life is a Dream Productions in October 2000 with writer-director I. Michael Toth, where he develops and produces films for Toth. Prior to producing the award-winning short film *Cast In Gray*, Gentry spent 14 years as a corporate banker with FleetBoston Financial, BankBoston, Mellon Bank and Sanwa Bank. He holds a B.S. degree in Corporate Finance from Arizona State University. He is a member IFP/Chicago, a national organization of independent filmmakers with over 9,000 members.

About the Cast:

Timothy Burke, who plays the role of The Man, has appeared in lead and supporting roles in five feature films including *The Return*, *The Devil's Placebo* and *Mitchellville* (Jury Special Mention, CineVegas Film Festival). Burke trained at National Theater Institute with Richard Digby Day and Morris Carnovsky. Stephen Angus, who plays the role of The Man with the Dog, has appeared in a number of stage plays, films and television programs. His stage credits include leading roles at many theatres in the Midwest and on the East Coast; most recently at Victory Gardens in Chicago, where he played The Pilot in *The Sweet Little Prince*. His television credits include the recurring character Alex Carew on NBC's *Homicide: Life On The Street*, appearances in episodes of *America's Most Wanted* and *Missing: Reward*. Stephen has also appeared in the films *Quiz Show*, *Forrest Gump*, *Pecker*, and *Le Pelican*. Bibi, who plays the role of the Dog, met actor Stephen Angus one sunny morning while wandering the streets of Washington, D.C., and they have been fast companions ever since.

###



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
July 20, 2005

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
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Cast In Gray Selected to Tahoe/Reno International Film Festival

Chicago, Illinois - Life is a Dream Productions today announced that its short film, CAST IN GRAY, has been selected into competition at Tahoe/Reno International Film Festival (T-RIFF) to be held August 24-28 in Lake Tahoe, Nevada. T-RIFF represents the fifth festival for Cast In Gray this year.

T-RIFF's premier venue, Sand Harbor Starlit Amphitheater, is Nevada's most prestigious and magical outdoor venue overlooking beautiful Lake Tahoe. With its eye on the success of emerging filmmakers, the festival presents a five-day exploration of discovery through soul-stirring and spirited independent films that open the hearts and minds of film lovers.

"We're very excited to be selected to screen at this wonderful outdoor festival overlooking Lake Tahoe," said Christopher Gentry, producer of the film. "We've been very encouraged by the success we've had with the film so far on the festival circuit, where we've won some awards and received very favorable audience response."

Cast In Gray was produced by Chicago-based Life is a Dream Productions. The film tells the story of a disillusioned man's chance encounter with a hitchhiker and his dog while stranded in a rainstorm. Written, directed and edited by I. Michael Toth, the film stars Timothy Burke and Stephen Angus, as well as Angus' dog Bibbo.

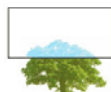
In its first two film festivals, Cast In Gray won "Best Narrative Short" awards at both festivals. The film has also screened at Phoenix Film Festival and at Midwest Independent Film Festival in its Chicago Premiere in front of a sold out audience.

In addition to three feature length films on Life is a Dream Productions' development slate, the filmmakers are working on a script for a feature film based on Cast In Gray. "Many people who have seen the film ask us, 'What happens to the main character?'" Gentry said. We think there is the potential for an interesting feature film that will connect with a film-going audience."

About Cast In Gray (TRT 39 minutes; not rated):

Cast In Gray was shot on location in Macomb, Illinois by Chicago-based Life is a Dream Productions. The film was written, directed and edited by I. Michael Toth and stars Timothy Burke and Stephen Angus, as well as Angus' dog Bibbo. Frank T. Herbert, a native of Macomb, Illinois, co-produced the film. Sasha Redulic, an award-winning cinematographer from Los Angeles, was cinematographer on the film.

Tagline: In this sumptuously shot short film from writer-director I. Michael Toth, a disillusioned man's chance encounter with a hitchhiker and his dog forces the man to reconsider the possibilities of his life.



LIFE IS A DREAM PRODUCTIONS INC.
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Synopsis: Stuck in a rainstorm in the middle of nowhere, a man offers shelter in his broken down car to a hitchhiker and his dog. As the hours pass and the rain continues, the man wonders if his decision to let them in was one of a series of bad choices he made in his life – or is the chance encounter with this enigmatic stranger a godsend opportunity to solve his own problems.

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Life is a Dream Productions Inc. was formed in October 2000 by producer Christopher Gentry and writer-director I. Michael Toth to develop and produce independent feature films for worldwide distribution. The Chicago-based production company currently has four feature films in development for production through 2007.

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Christopher Gentry formed Life is a Dream Productions in October 2000 with writer-director I. Michael Toth, where he develops and produces films for Toth. Prior to producing the award-winning short film *Cast In Gray*, Gentry spent 14 years as a corporate banker with FleetBoston Financial, BankBoston, Mellon Bank and Sanwa Bank. He holds a B.S. degree in Corporate Finance from Arizona State University. He is a member IFP/Chicago, a national organization of independent filmmakers with over 9,000 members.

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###



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
May 23, 2005

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
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www.lifeisadreamprod.com

**Cast In Gray Sets Date for Chicago Premiere
Film to Headline Midwest Independent Film Festival**

Chicago, Illinois - Life is a Dream Productions today announced that it has set the date for the Chicago Premiere of its award-winning short film, *Cast In Gray*. The film will be shown at 7:30 pm on Tuesday, June 7 at Landmark Century Centre Cinema in Chicago, Illinois as the headline film for the Midwest Independent Film Festival.

The screening will be attended by writer-director, I. Michael Toth and producers Christopher Gentry and Frank Herbert. A question and answer period with the filmmakers will take place immediately following the screening.

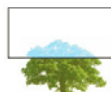
"We're very excited to have our Chicago Premiere for this film in conjunction with the Midwest Indie," Gentry said. "We've had great success with the film on the festival circuit, where we've won some awards and audiences have responded very favorably towards the film. This will be a chance for us to share our film with many of our crew, friends and other supporters that haven't yet seen it."

Cast In Gray was produced by Chicago-based Life is a Dream Productions. The film tells the story of a disillusioned man's chance encounter with a hitchhiker and his dog while stranded in a rainstorm. Written, directed and edited by I. Michael Toth, the film stars Timothy Burke and Stephen Angus, as well as Angus' dog Bibo.

In its first two film festivals, *Cast In Gray* won "Best Narrative Short" awards at both festivals. The film screened at the Phoenix Film Festival in April and just recently in Macomb, where the film was shot. "Cast In Gray is an exceptional, carefully crafted film, and we are thrilled to be presenting its Chicago Premiere," said Mike McNamara, Director of Programming for the Midwest Independent Film Festival.

In addition to three feature length films on Life is a Dream Productions' development slate, the filmmakers are working on a script for a feature film based on *Cast In Gray*. "Based on audience response to *Cast In Gray*, we think there is the potential for an interesting feature film that will connect with a film going audience," Gentry said. "Right now we're going through the creative process to see what is there."

For ticket information for the Chicago Premiere of *Cast In Gray*, and on the Midwest Independent Film Festival, call 312-642-4222, or visit www.midwestfilm.com.



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3725 North Greenview Avenue
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www.lifeisadreamprod.com

About Cast In Gray (TRT 39 minutes; not rated):

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Tagline: In this sumptuously shot short film from writer-director I. Michael Toth, a disillusioned man's chance encounter with a hitchhiker and his dog forces him to reconsider the possibilities of his life.

Synopsis: Stuck in a rainstorm in the middle of nowhere, a man offers shelter in his broken down car to a hitchhiker and his dog. As the hours pass and the rain continues, the man wonders if his decision to let them in was one of a series of bad choices he made in his life – or is the chance encounter with this enigmatic stranger a godsend opportunity to solve his own problems.

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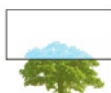


Gardens in Chicago, where he played The Pilot in The Sweet Little Prince. His television credits include the recurring character Alex Carew on NBC's Homicide: Life On The Street, appearances in episodes of America's Most Wanted and Missing: Reward. Stephen has also appeared in the films Quiz Show, Forrest Gump, Pecker, and Le Pelican. Bibbo, who plays the role of the Dog, met actor Stephen Angus one sunny morning while wandering the streets of Washington, D.C., and they have been fast companions ever since.

About Midwest Independent Film Festival:

The Midwest Independent Film Festival is the nation's only monthly film festival, presenting audiences with the finest independent cinema in the Midwest every first Tuesday of the month. The Midwest Indie also offers filmgoers the unique opportunity to meet directors and actors who introduce their films and hold question and answer sessions after the screenings. The festival prides itself on showcasing emerging directors, powerful artistic visions, and strong cinematic stories. These exceptional films combine with an exciting social atmosphere and a state-of-the-art digital screening venue to create one of the premier festivals in the Midwest.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
May 9, 2005

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
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Cast In Gray Sets Date for Macomb Screening

Chicago, Illinois - Life is a Dream Productions today announced that it has set the date for the Macomb screening of Cast In Gray, a film shot on location in Macomb last year. The film, which runs 39 minutes, will be screened on Saturday, May 14 at the University Union's Sandburg Theater on the campus of Western Illinois University. Screening times are 5:00 pm for the public and 7:00 pm for local media and guests attending by invitation.

Both screenings will be attended by writer-director, I. Michael Toth and producers Christopher Gentry and Frank Herbert. A question and answer period with the filmmakers will take place immediately following both screenings.

"We're very excited to show our film to the local community who supported us during the filming there," said Gentry, who grew up in Macomb and now lives in Chicago. "We've had great success with the film so far on the festival circuit. Audiences have responded very favorably towards the film."

Cast In Gray was shot on location in Macomb during the spring of 2004 using a Chicago crew and local WIU students. The film tells the story of a disillusioned man's chance encounter with a hitchhiker and his dog while stranded in a rainstorm. The film was written, directed and edited by I. Michael Toth and stars Timothy Burke and Stephen Angus, as well as Angus' dog Bibi. Herbert, a native of Macomb, co-produced the film with Gentry.

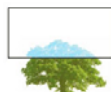
In its first two film festivals Cast In Gray won "Best Short Film" awards at both festivals. The film recently screened at the Phoenix Film Festival and will have its Chicago Premiere at the Midwest Independent Film Festival on June 7 at the Landmark Century Centre Cinema in Chicago.

The filmmakers have been developing a script for a feature film based on Cast In Gray, which Gentry says they plan to film once financing is secured. "We are just beginning the process of raising money from private investors to finance a feature length version of Cast In Gray," Gentry said. "That film will be available for commercial release to audiences in theaters worldwide." Herbert added, "When you see the short film, you can understand why we are making the feature length version. Audiences continually ask us, 'what happens next?'"

To reserve seating at the 5:00 public screening of Cast In Gray, call 309-837-3219. The screening is free and seating is limited.

About Cast In Gray (TRT 39 minutes; not rated):

Cast In Gray was shot on location in Macomb, Illinois by Chicago-based Life is a Dream Productions. The film was written, directed and edited by I. Michael Toth and stars Timothy



LIFE IS A DREAM PRODUCTIONS INC.
3725 North Greenview Avenue
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www.lifeisadreamprod.com

Burke and Stephen Angus, as well as Angus' dog Bibo. Frank T. Herbert, a native of Macomb, Illinois, co-produced the film. Sasha Redulic, an award-winning cinematographer from Los Angeles, was cinematographer on the film.

About Life is a Dream Productions:

Life is a Dream Productions Inc. was formed in October 2000 by producer Christopher Gentry and writer-director I. Michael Toth to develop and produce independent feature films for worldwide distribution. The Chicago-based production company currently has four feature films in development for production through 2007.

About I. Michael Toth:

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Timothy Burke, who plays the role of The Man, has appeared in lead and supporting roles in five feature films including *The Return*, *The Devil's Placebo* and *Mitchellville* (Jury Special Mention, CineVegas Film Festival). Burke trained at National Theater Institute with Richard Digby Day and Morris Carnovsky. Stephen Angus, who plays the role of The Man with the Dog, has appeared in a number of stage plays, films and television programs. His stage credits include leading roles at many theatres in the Midwest and on the East Coast; most recently at Victory Gardens in Chicago, where he played The Pilot in *The Sweet Little Prince*. His television credits include the recurring character Alex Carew on NBC's *Homicide: Life On The Street*, appearances in episodes of *America's Most Wanted* and *Missing: Reward*. Stephen has also appeared in the films *Quiz Show*, *Forrest Gump*, *Pecker*, and *Le Pelican*. Bibo, who plays the role of the Dog, met actor Stephen Angus one sunny morning while wandering the streets of Washington, D.C., and they have been fast companions ever since.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
April 5, 2005

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
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Susan W. Woods, Director
East Lansing Film Festival
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**Cast In Gray Awarded Best Narrative Short Film at East Lansing Film Festival
Second Festival Earns Film's Second Top Award**

East Lansing, Michigan - Producer Christopher Gentry and writer-director I. Michael Toth accepted the award for Best Narrative Short film at the East Lansing Film Festival for Cast In Gray. The festival was held March 30 - April 3, 2005 in East Lansing, MI.

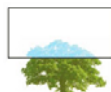
The award is the second best short film award in as many festivals for Cast In Gray. Erin Kay Burke, Program Director of the festival called the film "a rare, beautifully subtle film."

In February, Cast In Gray screened in competition at the Golden Film Festival and took home a Golden Nugget Award for Best Narrative Short. "Michael Toth has created a visually beautiful and thought-provoking work that successfully combines the elements of cinematography and drama," said Laurel Hunter, co-director for the Golden Film Festival. "The piece is well-conceived, written, acted, directed, imaginative and unpredictable, while relatively straightforward and highly engaging. It is hands down among the very best of the Golden Film Festival. We are very confident that this film will experience great success, and that Michael Toth will go on to make a significant mark on American cinema."

Cast In Gray, which runs 39 minutes, tells the story of a disillusioned man's chance encounter with a hitchhiker and his dog. Stranded in a day-long rainstorm in the middle of nowhere with the hitchhiker (played by Angus) and his dog (played by Bibo), the man (played by Timothy Burke) is forced to reconsider the possibilities of his life.

Toth and Gentry recently teamed up to make feature films written and directed by Toth and produced by Gentry. Currently, the two have four projects in the works. "I have tremendous respect for Michael Toth and his talent," Gentry said. "He's one of those unique filmmakers that don't come along too often. Cast In Gray is a great example of his skill with film narrative, both as a writer and as a director, and it shows the quality of filmmaking we are capable of producing."

The filmmakers decided to make a short film to promote making a full-length feature film based on Cast In Gray. Toth recently completed the screenplay, which is currently titled Gray, White and Black. The story is told in three interconnected parts. Cast In Gray will make up the first part of the film. "Cast In Gray ends with our main character making a monumental decision that changes the direction of his life, or so it would seem," Toth said. "The audience is curious about what happens to this guy. Where does he go, and how did he come to this point in his life? In



LIFE IS A DREAM PRODUCTIONS INC.
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the short film, *Cast In Gray*, we pose a lot of interesting ideas, which makes people think and wonder about different interpretations. In the feature film, *Gray, White and Black*, we will work with the same premise, but we'll see more of the main character's life to get behind what makes him tick."

In addition to *Cast In Gray* cast members Burke, Angus and Bibo, the film will feature Irena Micijevic-Rodic, a London-based actress who recently won the Best Actress Award at the Film Festival Novi Sad for her leading role in *Magic*. "Michael doesn't think small and, from the beginning, had a bigger story based on *Cast In Gray* in mind," Gentry added. "The script is great, and I'm really excited about making the film and getting it out for people to see. The main thing we are working on now is financing for the film, which will likely come from private backers," Gentry said.

"We want to make films that matter, personal films that are universal, and films that will be remembered long after we're gone," Toth said of his and Gentry's partnership. Gentry added, "Making a great film is not easy. Michael knows what it takes, and we are both very passionate about making our mark on world cinema."

Their hard work seems to be paying off. The Golden Film Festival marks *Cast In Gray*'s first festival appearance and first award. In April, the film will screen in competition at the East Lansing Film Festival and at the Phoenix Film Festival. The filmmakers said they are finalizing plans for a Chicago premiere in June, as well as a screening in Macomb, Illinois where the film was shot.

About *Cast In Gray* (TRT 39 minutes):

Cast In Gray was shot on location in Macomb, Illinois by Chicago-based Life is a Dream Productions. The film was written, directed and edited by I. Michael Toth and stars Timothy Burke and Stephen Angus, as well as Angus' dog Bibo. Frank T. Herbert, a native of Macomb, Illinois, co-produced the film. Sasha Redulic, an award-winning cinematographer from Los Angeles, was cinematographer on the film.

About Life is a Dream Productions:

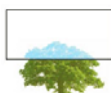
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About East Lansing Film Festival:

The East Lansing Film Festival screens independent and foreign feature, documentary, short and students films from around the world. Since its creation in 1997, in cooperation with the City of East Lansing and Michigan State University, the festival has been dedicated to bringing quality foreign and independent films to the state of Michigan in order to expose its audience to diverse cultures, ideas, and creative works.

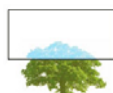
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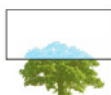
Cast In Gray was filmed on location in Macomb, Illinois, a place Gentry knows well, considering he grew up there. "Very important to the success of this film was the choice of locations where we would make the movie," Gentry said. "The feelings and emotions of the characters, the themes and ideas of the story needed to be reflected by the surroundings and environment. The film has much to do with the forces of nature quietly at work in our lives. Macomb was an obvious choice for me simply because of the beautiful, open landscape surrounding the town, as well as knowing that we would need a lot of local support to make the film."

After considering transporting a crew of 30 from Chicago to a remote location, Gentry immediately called on his longtime friend Frank Herbert. "Frank did a great job picking out my suits for homecoming dances. So, I figured he could help me make a movie in Macomb. I sent him a list of about 20 items we needed, and he had everything covered in about 48 hours."

The two Macomb natives, who have remained close friends since childhood, received a lot of support from their hometown of Macomb. "We had a small budget to work with on this film and, given some challenging logistical and creative aspects of the script, we needed local help, and we got it," Herbert said. "Since it rains the entire time of the story, we not only needed help from Mother Nature, we needed to make sure it rained all through filming." Gentry and Herbert asked the Macomb Fire Department if they could help make rain. "It didn't rain at all during



filming. Someone told me it was the driest month in 124 years," Herbert said. "The fire department was amazing in what they did for us. People who have seen the film can't believe that the rain is manmade."



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
March 7, 2005

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
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Susan W. Woods, Director
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MSU Alumnus at East Lansing Film Festival
Former Theater Student Stars in Award Winning Independent Film

Chicago, Illinois – Actor and Michigan State University alumnus, Stephen Angus, will attend the East Lansing Film Festival on April 3 to talk about his leading role in the award-winning short film *Cast In Gray*. Angus stars in the 39-minute short film, which won the Best Short Narrative Award last month at the Golden Film Festival in Golden, Colorado. The film will screen in competition at the Phoenix Film Festival April 8-10, and at the Midwest Film Festival in Chicago on June 7.

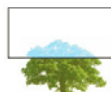
Angus graduated from MSU in 1986 with a degree in Humanities. While pursuing his degree, he spent a lot of time in the Theatre Department. "I garnered enough credits to have theatre performance become one of the three focuses of study for my humanities degree," Angus said. In his spare time he played sax in the local band Let's Talk About Girls.

Since graduating, Angus has been active in theater, television and film. He began his theater career in Ann Arbor at the old Performance Network. In 1995, he was a founding member of the T.U.T.A. theater company in Washington, D.C. (now based in Chicago), where he continues to be active. He has also performed in leading roles at a number of theatres in the Midwest and on the East Coast. After filming *Cast In Gray* last Spring, he starred opposite Mike Nussbaum in the *The Sweet Little Prince* at Chicago's Victory Gardens Theater, a T.U.T.A. production he co-adapted from Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's original play.

Angus's roles in television have included the recurring character, Alex Carew, on NBC's *Homicide: Life On The Street*, and appearances in episodes of *America's Most Wanted* and *Missing: Reward*. He also appeared in the feature films *Quiz Show*, *Forrest Gump* and *Pecker*.

"My studies and training at MSU have served me well," Angus said from his home in Boulder, Colorado. "As with many good and valuable experiences, the years have been kind to what's left of the memories. So, I'm excited to be coming back to campus with a film that I think reflects the bold spirit of true independent filmmaking today."

Cast In Gray tells the story of a disillusioned man's chance encounter with a hitchhiker and his dog. Stranded together in a daylong rainstorm in the middle of nowhere, the man is forced to reconsider the possibilities of his life. Angus stars as the hitchhiker, and his longtime canine companion, Bibo, plays the dog, roles written specifically for the two by Chicago-based writer-director, I. Michael Toth.



LIFE IS A DREAM PRODUCTIONS INC.
3725 North Greenview Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60613
www.lifeisadreamprod.com

Toth recently completed a feature length screenplay based on *Cast In Gray*, and has cast Angus to play a leading role in the feature film. "Stephen is a versatile actor that has great range and can change appearances to create interesting characters," Toth said. "His performance in *Cast In Gray* is great, and I am looking forward to working with him on the feature film."

Cast In Gray screens on Sunday, April 3 at 4:30 pm at Wells Hall Theaters (Bresson – A) on the campus of MSU. For more information on the film, go to www.castinggraymovie.com. For more information on the East Lansing Film Festival, call 517-336-5802, or go to www.elff.com.

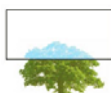
About *Cast In Gray* (TRT 39 minutes):

Cast In Gray was shot on location in Macomb, Illinois by Chicago-based Life is a Dream Productions. The film was written, directed and edited by I. Michael Toth and stars Timothy Burke and Stephen Angus, as well as Angus' dog Bibo. Frank T. Herbert, a native of Macomb, Illinois, co-produced the film. Sasha Redulic, an award-winning cinematographer from Los Angeles, was cinematographer on the film.

About I. Michael Toth:

I. Michael Toth has written, produced, directed and edited a number of award-winning television programs, documentaries, short films, music videos and commercials in the US and Europe. He has four screenplays in development for production through 2007, one that includes an adaptation of a play by Academy Award winning screenwriter Steve Tesich. Toth is a graduate of the prestigious University of Arts School of Film and Television in Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro.

###



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
February 27, 2005

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Cast In Gray Awarded Best Narrative Short Film at Golden Film Festival

Golden, Colorado - Producer Christopher Gentry and writer-director I. Michael Toth accepted a Golden Nugget Award for Best Narrative Short Film at the Golden Film Festival for Cast In Gray. The festival was held February 24-27 in Golden, Colorado. The film was also nominated for the Best of Fest Award, as well as the Audience Choice Award, and had the second highest attendance at the festival.

"Michael Toth has created a visually beautiful and thought-provoking work that successfully combines the elements of cinematography and drama," said Laurel Hunter, co-director for the Golden Film Festival. "The piece is well-conceived, written, acted, directed, imaginative and unpredictable, while relatively straight-forward and highly engaging. It is hands down among the very best of the Golden Film Festival. We are very confident that this film will experience great success, and that Michael Toth will go on to make a significant mark on American cinema."

The festival kicked off Thursday, February 25 with an opening night reception that took place at the Miners Alley Playhouse. On Friday, Morgan Spurlock's Super Size Me, and Sense of Need, a feature film by Palestinian filmmaker Shady Srouf, kicked off the festival. Cast In Gray was shown on Saturday night to a packed house. After the screening, Toth, Gentry and actors Stephen Angus and Bibo (the dog that appears in the film) took the stage for a Q&A with an enthusiastic audience. Angus said, "You never know, do you? You take risks and put your heart into your work. This was a gratifying moment, receiving such supportive feedback from a whole room of folks who honestly connected with the film."

The Awards Ceremony was held on Sunday night at the Foothills Arts Center. With the Academy Awards being projected on a big screen off to the side, the winners were announced and the awards were given to the filmmakers. After accepting the award with Toth, Gentry talked about where the film will go next and plans for a feature length film based on Cast In Gray. "We're thrilled about winning the Golden Nugget and, more importantly, by the audience's enthusiastic response to the film," Gentry said. "Now, everyone is gearing up for the next two festivals, and we are looking forward to more festivals in the US and abroad over the course of the year."

Cast In Gray, which runs 39 minutes, tells the story of a disillusioned man's chance encounter with a hitchhiker and his dog. Stranded in a day-long rainstorm in the middle of nowhere with the hitchhiker (played by Angus) and his dog (played by Bibo), the man (played by Timothy Burke) is forced to reconsider the possibilities of his life.



LIFE IS A DREAM PRODUCTIONS INC.
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Toth and Gentry recently teamed up to make feature films written and directed by Toth and produced by Gentry. Currently, the two have four projects in the works. "I have tremendous respect for Michael Toth and his talent," Gentry said. "He's one of those unique filmmakers that don't come along too often. Cast In Gray is a great example of his skill with film narrative, both as a writer and as a director, and it shows the quality of filmmaking we are capable of producing."

The filmmakers decided to make a short film to promote making a full-length feature film based on Cast In Gray. Toth recently completed the screenplay, which is currently titled Gray, White and Black. The story is told in three interconnected parts. Cast In Gray will make up the first part of the film. "Cast In Gray ends with our main character making a monumental decision that changes the direction of his life, or so it would seem," Toth said. "The audience is curious about what happens to this guy. Where does he go, and how did he come to this point in his life? In the short film, Cast In Gray, we pose a lot of interesting ideas, which makes people think and wonder about different interpretations. In the feature film, Gray, White and Black, we will work with the same premise, but we'll see more of the main character's life to get behind what makes him tick."

In addition to Cast In Gray cast members Burke, Angus and Bibo, the film will feature Irena Micijevic-Rodic, a London-based actress who recently won the Best Actress Award at the Film Festival Novi Sad for her leading role in Magic. "Michael doesn't think small and, from the beginning, had a bigger story based on Cast In Gray in mind," Gentry added. "The script is great, and I'm really excited about making the film and getting it out for people to see. The main thing we are working on now is financing for the film, which will likely come from private backers," Gentry said.

"We want to make films that matter, personal films that are universal, and films that will be remembered long after we're gone," Toth said of his and Gentry's partnership. Gentry added, "Making a great film is not easy. Michael knows what it takes, and we are both very passionate about making our mark on world cinema."

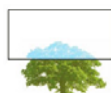
Their hard work seems to be paying off. The Golden Film Festival marks Cast In Gray's first festival appearance and first award. In April, the film will screen in competition at the East Lansing Film Festival and at the Phoenix Film Festival. The filmmakers said they are finalizing plans for a Chicago premiere in June, as well as a screening in Macomb, Illinois where the film was shot.

About Cast In Gray (TRT 39 minutes):

Cast In Gray was shot on location in Macomb, Illinois by Chicago-based Life is a Dream Productions. The film was written, directed and edited by I. Michael Toth and stars Timothy Burke and Stephen Angus, as well as Angus' dog Bibo. Frank T. Herbert, a native of Macomb, Illinois, co-produced the film. Sasha Redulic, an award-winning cinematographer from Los Angeles, was cinematographer on the film.

About Life is a Dream Productions:

Life is a Dream Productions Inc. was formed in October 2000 by producer Christopher Gentry and writer-director I. Michael Toth to develop and produce independent feature films for



worldwide distribution. The Chicago-based production company currently has four feature films in development for production through 2007.

About I. Michael Toth:

I. Michael Toth has written, produced, directed and edited a number of award-winning television programs, documentaries, short films, music videos and commercials in the US and Europe. He has four screenplays in development for production through 2007, one that includes an adaptation of a play by Academy Award winning screenwriter Steve Tesich. Toth is a graduate of the prestigious University of Arts School of Film and Television in Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro.

About Christopher Gentry:

Christopher Gentry formed Life is a Dream Productions in October 2000 with writer-director I. Michael Toth, where he develops and produces films for Toth. Prior to producing the award-winning short film *Cast In Gray*, Gentry spent 14 years as a corporate banker with FleetBoston Financial, BankBoston, Mellon Bank and Sanwa Bank. He holds a B.S. degree in Corporate Finance from Arizona State University. He is a member IFP/Chicago, a national organization of independent filmmakers.

About the Cast:

Timothy Burke, who plays the role of The Man, has appeared in lead and supporting roles in five feature films including *The Return*, *The Devil's Placebo* and *Mitchellville* (Jury Special Mention, CineVegas Film Festival). Burke trained at National Theater Institute with Richard Digby Day and Morris Carnovsky. Stephen Angus, who plays the role of The Man with the Dog, has appeared in a number of stage plays, films and television programs. His stage credits include leading roles at many theatres in the Midwest and on the East Coast; most recently at Victory Gardens in Chicago, where he played The Pilot in *The Sweet Little Prince*. His television credits include the recurring character Alex Carew on NBC's *Homicide: Life On The Street*, appearances in episodes of *America's Most Wanted* and *Missing: Reward*. Stephen has also appeared in the films *Quiz Show*, *Forrest Gump*, *Pecker*, and *Le Pelican*. Bibo, who plays the role of the Dog, met actor Stephen Angus one sunny morning while wandering the streets of Washington, D.C., and they have been fast companions ever since.

###

Background:

Cast In Gray was filmed on location in Macomb, Illinois, a place Gentry knows well, considering he grew up there. "Very important to the success of this film was the choice of locations where we would make the movie," Gentry said. "The feelings and emotions of the characters, the themes and ideas of the story needed to be reflected by the surroundings and environment. The film has much to do with the forces of nature quietly at work in our lives. Macomb was an obvious choice for me simply because of the beautiful, open landscape surrounding the town, as well as knowing that we would need a lot of local support to make the film."

After considering transporting a crew of 30 from Chicago to a remote location, Gentry immediately called on his longtime friend Frank Herbert. "Frank did a great job picking out my suits for homecoming dances. So, I figured he could help me make a movie in Macomb. I sent him a list of about 20 items we needed, and he had everything covered in about 48 hours."



The two Macomb natives, who have remained close friends since childhood, received a lot of support from their hometown of Macomb. "We had a small budget to work with on this film and, given some challenging logistical and creative aspects of the script, we needed local help, and we got it," Herbert said. "Since it rains the entire time of the story, we not only needed help from Mother Nature, we needed to make sure it rained all through filming." Gentry and Herbert asked the Macomb Fire Department if they could help make rain. "It didn't rain at all during filming. Someone told me it was the driest month in 124 years," Herbert said. "The fire department was amazing in what they did for us. People who have seen the film can't believe that the rain is manmade."



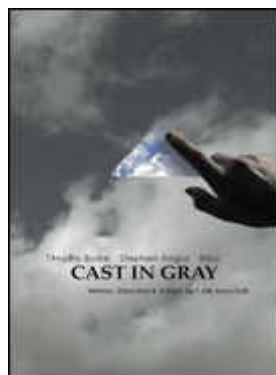


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Case Number 8577: Small Claims Court



Cast In Gray

[Life is a Dream Productions](#) // 2005 // 39 Minutes // Not Rated

Reviewed by Judge George Hatch // February 13th, 2006

- [View Judge Hatch's Dossier](#)
- [E-mail Judge Hatch](#)

When Judge George Hatch comes to a fork in the road, he invariably steps on it and ruins yet another good pair of shoes.

Scales of Justice

Judgment: 97

Perp Profile

Studio: [Life is a Dream Productions](#)

Video Formats:

- 1.78:1 Non-Anamorphic

Audio Formats:

- Dolby Digital 3.1 Surround (English)

Subtitles:

- None

Running Time: 39 Minutes

Release Year: 2005

MPAA Rating: Not Rated

Genres:

- [Drama](#)
- [Short Films](#)

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The Charge

"I don't like to interfere in anyone's life unless there's something in it for me."—The Man with the Dog

Distinguishing Marks

- None

Accomplices

- [IMDb](#)
- [Official Site](#)



The Case

Cast in Gray is a thought-provoking, deliberately-paced short film written, directed, and edited by I. Michael Toth, who also coordinated the wonderfully ambient and ominous sound design. The premise is simple, but its ramifications are both fundamental and profound. With extraordinary visual and aural flair, Toth scrutinizes the meat and marrow of life, and the decisions we are compelled to make at crucial turning points that will determine our future and individuality.

We're introduced to The Man (Timothy Burke), who is seriously contemplating suicide by taking his hands off his car's steering wheel and accelerating. His livelihood has been jeopardized and his marriage is on the rocks. He reeks of self-pity feeling "trapped by the choices I made. I can't get out! If I don't kill myself, it will only be for the sake of others. But I don't have anyone to care about me." He's been cuckolded to boot, in the cruelest way, "Wouldn't you feel betrayed if your wife is holding you in her arms while savoring the embrace of another man, another man she thought was me?"

The Man passes The Man with The Dog (Stephen Angus) hitchhiking during a torrential downpour, a selfish and inconsiderate act, to be sure. As Fate would have it, The Man's car breaks down and The Man with The

Dog catches up. He tells The Man to "have some faith" and even manages to coax The Man into dropping to his knees and praying in the rain for help—with his car and, unwittingly, his soul. Once inside the car, the men exchange life stories as The Dog (Bibo) listens with a perplexed and inscrutable expression on his furry face. The enigmatic hitchhiker, we learn, travels a lot and is an actor with an impressive curriculum vitae, but he rues the fact that no one ever recognizes him or remembers his face. He's a good listener, as well. "It's useful in my profession."

The Man proceeds to pour out the blood, sweat, and tears of his frustrating plight, and his mention of suicide alerts both the hitchhiker and his Dog to several serious sins being contemplated. The Man with The Dog proposes an outrageous solution. "Let's change places. Get a stack of 8x10 glossies made, attach my resume, and become the new me. The dog stays with you...feed him once a day. He never had a name. I met him on the road, fed him, and he's been with me ever since. Or you can just call him Dog. And then you tell me everything about your wife, family, and friends, give me your wallet and car. I'll drive back to your home and introduce myself to your wife as the new you."

Are there always convenient options and easy ways out of unwieldy and hopeless situations? **Cast in Gray's** tagline, "Life is anything but black and white," suggests not; that is the crux of this short. Toth's screenplay is tightly written. He uses oblique, Pinteresque dialogue packed with philosophical observations about life that contrast with portentous pauses seething with augury, accusation, and admonition. We also become aware of The Man's mental claustrophobia and the kind of passion for desolation, despondency, and despair he's experiencing.

Cast in Gray is a fascinating journey through the mind of a man on the brink of self-destruction, and director Toth makes the most of the premise. Is the Man with The Dog a figment of The Man's imagination, an alter-ego used as a sounding board for his suicidal intentions, or is the hitchhiker some kind of angel, a form of divine intervention deployed at a time of crisis? I have no plans of spoiling your enjoyment by even hinting at how these scenarios pan out.

The first half of **Cast in Gray** is fraught with religious symbolism. The traveler draws a triangle on a foggy window, the sign of The Holy Trinity. He breaks bread with his Dog and The Man; then magically materializes a bottle of wine, a glass goblet and a gold chalice - all of this representing The Last Supper and Holy Communion. The Man with The Dog talks of sin, penance, and redemption. Some have gone so far as to interpret The Dog as being God because, based on that old saw, "dog" spelled backwards is ... Frankly, I don't think it goes to that religious an extreme. But what's wonderful about this short is its lyrical ambiguity, and those areas "cast in gray" that are left open for interpretation.

Cast in Gray was written "specifically for two very talented actors and a dog." Timothy Burke as The Man and Stephen Angus as The Man with the Dog are outstanding in their roles and bring a unique complexity to their

performances. Bibo, The Dog, actually met actor Angus on the streets and they became fast friends; it's evident in their reactions to each other. Bibo, by the way, is an acronym for "breathing in, breathing out"—her version of Method Acting!

Life is a Dream Production's transfer is nothing short of magnificent. Shot on DVCPRO 720p High Definition in 1.78:1 aspect ratio, it features a production design by Slobodan Radovanovic and cinematography by Sasha Rendulic that enhances all aspects the film's title. The unique Dolby Digital 3.1 Stereo soundtrack sharply augments the complex and exotic sound structure designed to keep the viewer ensconced within the dismal and threatening world of the thunderstorm during which the entire film takes place. The dialogue separation remains crisp and clear. There is also an effective but unobtrusive minimalist score by Dr. Dimitry Golemovich.

The film has already won two "Best Narrative Short" awards at the Golden Film Festival and the East Lansing Film Festival, and has been an official selection at several others. Outside of the festival milieu, however, the only thing **Cast in Gray** has against it is its running time. At 39 minutes, it's too long to be included as a bonus feature along with a feature film in theaters. The good news is that I. Michael Toth and crew have plans to include the short with two others yet to be filmed and present them in an omnibus format.

But why wait? Keep in mind, aesthetically, the running time is a blessing for the individual viewer and **Cast in Gray** is a short that you should seek out. I've provided a link to Life is a Dream Productions where you can find out about availability and also more documentation about the making of the piece. There are no Extras on the disc, but the production diaries on the site are a must for fans of independent films.

Not guilty!

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<http://filmthreat.com/index.php?section=reviews&Id=8296>

CAST IN GRAY

by Doug Brunell

(2005-12-22)



2004, Un-rated, 39 minutes, Life is a Dream

"Cast in Gray" plays almost like a more subdued episode of "The Twilight Zone." It opens with a man (Timothy Burke) driving on a fairly deserted country road during a heavy rainstorm. He passes a hitchhiker (Stephen Angus) and his dog, but doesn't stop to give them a ride. From there things get a little weird.

The driver, who is suicidal, has some car troubles. Luckily, the hitchhiker shows up and says that he may be able to help ... but there's a catch. If he can help, the driver must take him to the next town. The suicidal driver reluctantly agrees, and they end up praying for assistance. As they wait for the prayer to come true, the hitchhiker makes the depressed driver an interesting offer. He would like the two of them to switch identities and lead each others' lives. The hitchhiker has worn many hats in his life. The driver is tired of living. It seems like the perfect plan, but like most perfect plans there are going to be problems along the way. To say anything else would spoil the surprise.

This is a wonderful short film that could've been a little better had it packed more of a punch. But as it stands, it's a mysterious what-if kind of story done in a remarkably mature manner.

Viewer Comments

Source: IMDb.com

- a brilliant film, the best film I viewed at the Phoenix Film Festival, 2005, 16 May 2005

Author: William Killian

Friends at Life Is A Dream Productions, I have now viewed your film, Cast in Gray, many times. To me this film is, indeed, a dream (it has one character). A man at wit's end finds his new self in a dream which was sparked by a close brush with death by suicidal thoughts and action. In this dream he is visited by an angel and a god (dog spelled backwards, unconditional love; interesting that we find the dog's name, Bibbo in the credits, if that's a long "i" it sounds a lot like bible). In this dream the man finds his own dream fulfilled, that is, his old life is gone, and now he will pursue his dream, perhaps his passion, for acting. Money, machine (car, cell phone), and the unhappy institutions of employment and marriage have let him down; he may return to his marriage ultimately, but it will be under completely different understandings. He has to nurture the unconditional love that is now in his life ON A DAILY BASIS; he will be focused, and his priorities appear to have been totally rearranged (he sacrificed his old self for atonement and redemption of the new). In the struggle within his many selves there emerges a sense of direction, and he crosses the necessary bridge to his new life. The dream was indeed spiritual; I couldn't find the spiritual symbolism of the triangle other than the typical Christian trinity, but this film goes much deeper than Christianity. There is the storm metaphor beautifully played out, and there are the spiritual symbols of the water and other elements, wine, bread and nutrients, incense, chalice(s), prayer, ethical reflection and "sin" language around suicide, and certainly hope (even the tree of promised life??). There is sensuality/sexuality all over the place...cup is symbolically (in classical literature) female organs and container (enclosed in the car) is the womb; cigars (about six to eight inches long); failed marriage; sensuous eyes of what I call the "angel" and of the dog. And the sounds are sensuous...rain, birds, composition, etc. Breath is important... one man's deep breathing contrasted with shallow breathing of the man "on the run." Certainly there is death/resurrection, redemption and change. The new man will breathe differently. The full moon has some significance that I'll figure out sometime. The film is clearly about the formation of a new man. The director, I. Michael Toth, telling us at the Festival that he "dreamed the story, including the prayer" and the Life Is A Dream in the production title are both consistent with my understanding of the film. The acting/directing/editing are brilliant. The title: Cast in Gray...the gray zone, the in-between time, life between the parentheses??? Certainly the weather, season, tones, etc in the film are gray, but the title is deeper than that, I think. The selves within this man are trapped, one by his choices, one by his freedom -- What to do with the trap? - face your truth, become who you really are, and be grateful for the people, the pain and suffering, your history, etc. which have made "the new you" possible. The spiritual self had good important messages for the man at the wheel, he just needed to position himself in such a way that he could hear..."okay," "maybe I can help you," "let's pray," "have some faith," and "the dog stays with you...feed him once a day." Earth, air, fire, and water unite to bring the quadrants together in this man's life, or as Elizabeth Kubler-Ross would say, the physical, spiritual, intellectual and emotional quadrants were moving toward integration by the man claiming his I-ness, his true self -- a self that only The Other could see and bring out. Now it's a time to improvise, to go with the flow, grow through it, whatever 'it' is. This is a marvelous film; I recommend it to everyone!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Viewer Comments

Source: IMDb.com

just beautiful, 21 June 2005

Author: Plbpi from United States

"Cast in Gray" is like the best of French cinema in lyricism and pacing. It addresses larger issues, however, than the usual French fare. The subjects of existential angst and "faith" or lack thereof are treated with a light touch in combination with masterful patience. The lush photography and the sound of the rain make the film a sensual pleasure without even considering the script. I might guess that there is something Eastern European and slightly dark in conception which is lightened by Michael Toth's sense of the magical. The script is spare. The acting is superb. The use of the dog is a brilliant and comic touch. This is a rare gem. I hope to see more of this filmmaker's work. It is just a beautiful film.

Cast In Grey was entertaining and thought-provoking., 8 June 2005

Author: Michaelozier from United States

I saw Cast In Grey for the first time last night. It is first class entertainment with thought provoking themes. Michael Toth's dialog was perfectly tuned to the mood and pointed clearly to the specific spiritual and psychological themes the film was apparently designed to evoke. The spiritual symbolism in the film was tasteful and well done to serve the theme - not overdone, as is so often the case. The film's themes were further framed by Toth's spare but pregnant dialog and his mood-creating cinematography. I don't consider myself the most sensitive viewer of films, but I can't say when a film has produced more delightful idea-fare for me. See it now! Michael Ozier - Columbus, Ohio

Intelligent film-making in search of an intelligent audience, 17 March 2006

Author: Lisa Lias from Washington DC

What is the difference between a movie that is "okay" and a movie that stays with you long after you have seen it?

It boils down to the ability of the film-maker to make the elements he has at his disposal work together to tell a story. Does he turn the camera on and point it at the actors, or does he compose his shot to give the audience information about the characters and the story? Does the mood created by the words on the page of the script work with the visual elements to create a world within the film that we believe in? Have the actors been brought into the process in such a way that their performances make us interested in that world?

In the case of "Cast in Gray," the answer to all of the questions above is a definitive "yes." We are taken to a world that, though not specifically unrealistic, somehow exists in that part of the mind where the rules may have been suspended. That, or the character called "The Man" is in such a strange state of mind that it is he who has gone to that part of the mind. In the role of "The Man with the Dog," (a different person than "The Man") Stephen Angus creates an utterly mysterious character with an effortlessness that is in such contrast to the tempest he creates in his scene partner, (the besieged Tim Burke,) that it is impossible to look away from his face. The considerable power of this performance lies in the absolute calm with which it is executed. Is he a puppeteer, a madman, a messenger or something else altogether?

Viewer Comments

Source: IMDb.com

Don't blink, viewer, if you want to make your own case for what is going on. Intelligent film-making in search of an intelligent audience. Thanks, "Cast in Gray."

If you love indie films, don't miss this one., 31 August 2005

Author: hunterlaur from United States

I first saw this film during a one year term as festival director for the Golden Film Festival. I knew the minute I saw it that it was an award winner. I. Michael Toth has created a visually beautiful and thought provoking work that successfully combines the elements of cinematography and drama. The piece is well, conceived, written, acted and directed - imaginative and unpredictable while relatively straight-forward and highly engaging. I am very confident that this film will experience great success, and that I. Michael Toth will go on to make a significant mark in American cinema. If you love independent film, this is one that you definitely want in your collection.

One Amazing Film, 22 June 2005

Author: Pyesmom from United States

I was swept away by the vision and the overall mood of the film. Stephen Angus' slightly sinister, slightly angelic performance literally sent chills up my spine! Timothy Burke was very believable as the man who had nothing to lose. The acting of the Dog, played by Bibo, was stunning, especially when you know that she has received NO formal training whatsoever (and she did indeed act, not react!). It is a shame that this film is not feature length, and therefore not available to a wider audience. I have heard that this is actually one segment of a trilogy that would be made into a feature-length film, and am eager to see what is to become of this. All in all, I'd say that everyone involved with this piece should be proud of what they have accomplished with it.

A work of exquisite beauty, 20 June 2005

Author: rore-2 from United States

Cast in Gray is an extraordinarily poetic work. Every aspect of it, from the narrative conception to the sense of movement to the editing and (not least) the cinematography, strikes a stunning balance between dazzling clarity and a vague dreamy quality. I found myself clinging passionately to its every moment. How rare that a film nowadays can carry off such daring lyricism, holding us in the cup of its hand with an absolute minimum of dialog, incident, cutting, scenic variety, or any of the other devices that are utilized to make films move along. There is a tough-minded discipline to this film that gives it enormous credibility. But it is also a heartbreakingly kind and gentle film. It is truly not to be missed.

Viewer Comments

Source: IMDb.com

Leads you to water, lets you take your own drink, 20 June 2005

Author: bjengs

Saw this at the Midwest Independent Film Festival. Really enjoyed the ambiguity of the symbolism. Very clever - the symbols work for Christian viewers as well as devotees of modern psychology, myth structure, what-have-you. The question lingers, of course, at the end: was it a dream? Was there even ever a man and a dog? Was this truly a wayfarer or was this the inner struggle made flesh? The case for the wandering man being Christ is strong if you tend toward those lines of thinking (obviously that's my first leaning): he died for the main character's sins. Then in that case what is the dog, but the burden of caretaking, the concept of blind selflessness and charity towards others ("he doesn't have a name"), that Christianity extols? I cannot speak for other worldviews' interpretation of the movie but I am sure there are similar explanations for Freudian, Jungian, etc., paradigms. Conversations with the filmmakers revealed that there intentionally was no one true explanation of the film. A story of redemption and sacrifice, laden with traditional symbolism, that lets the viewer take from it what he wants. Strongly recommended.

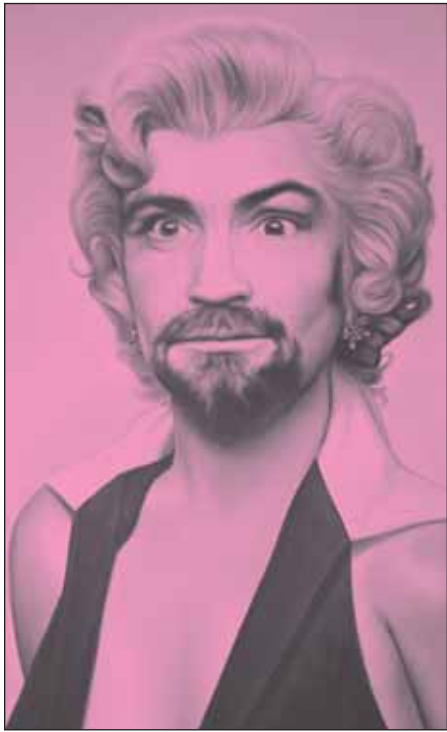
excellent, 18 November 2005

Author: jknowles-4 from United States

It is the most patient film I have ever seen! Very deliberate, which makes the viewer have to use his imagination rather than have others tell her how to feel, think, etc. I kept waiting for the dialogue, acting, scenery, whatever, to create my next feeling or thought and then I realized that I was doing so on my own. That was remarkable. The mystery of the hitchhiker and his dog still bewitches me. So many meanings that all seem right. The driver; he is all of us at one time or another. I recommend this short to everyone.

THE HATCHETT REPORT

Art, Food, Music, Dogs, Anarchy



Ron English beautifies Charlie Manson

BY LILY HATCHETT

I MUST BE MAGNETIZED FOR FILM. Here is a good batch that collided with me and stuck, some more than once.

Popaganda: The Art And Crimes Of Ron English, produced and directed by Pedro Carvajal, is a documentary about one man's crusade for billboard liberation and culture jamming.

Let me preface this story with a sigh of relief and a couple of ha ha ha's. Behold a beautiful sight. Funny, dangerous art, on a billboard. Free for all. Yes, folks, here it is—Gonzo Billboard Hijacking as Art Form! Finally, an artist that takes "going all out on a limb, stepping over the edge, risking disapproval and arrest" as artistic imperative. Bear in mind that this artistic imperative is realized with extreme skill, wit and agility. Watching Ron English, we see a sublimely funny

master at work. First it starts with research for an accessible billboard. Back in the studio, the idea has to be hand painted with acrylic on photo backdrop paper. Hand-painted, yes, but slick to a Madison Avenue caliber ad-man. And, he is fast! Finished and dry in record time, the next step is to apply the Ron English Billboard to its designated location. This calls for teamwork. Ron prefers to do this by day, during working hours. Looking like guys on the job, he and his cohorts go about the "mundane" task of putting up a billboard. They are poised and ready to paste and run, and run they did immediately upon putting up the "Let's Get Drunk and Kill God" billboard that evoked killer rage in the onlookers. "It's called criminal mischief, it's a second degree felony," says Ron, "but it is a way to give the art to everyone."

Ron has covered the full spectrum of

topics, from politics to surrealism. He calls his art Popaganda (www.popaganda.com). The idea is to leave no stone unturned in his quest to tease and subvert marketing icons of popular culture.

This newly revised version of Pedro's documentary (78 minutes) includes Ron English's new "Art Crimes" committed during festival screenings as well as new interviews and follow-up. Also included is art by Shepard Fairey, ArtFux, Cicada, Anthony Ausgang with music by The Dandy Warhols, Daniel Johnston, Tripping Daisy and more.

The Future Of Food, intellectual property and gene splicing gone horribly awry, is an expose of a devious and underhanded plan that affects all of us. Deborah Koons Garcia made one dangerously smart movie, a movie that can arm the viewer with facts, facts that can awaken even the most complacent and make them aware of how the "controllers"

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are tightening their grip. Tampering with mother nature can produce everything from tasteless tomatoes to crops classified as insecticides, plus other mutant horrors. This documentary about our vital needs is extremely well produced, well written, and there is never a dull moment—the information is jaw dropping! Forget the scary movies of yore, forget the blood-curdlers and the devil hunters, the really scary stuff is not forged of fantasy but of greed and ignorance. No amount of wealth can heal the monster unleashed by the id. Everyone must see this film, the real revolution begins with knowledge and altruism.

The Future Of Food has already been instrumental in the passing of “Measure H” in Mendocino County, a local initiative to ban GMO crops. Hail to the power of film!

The Steve Plan premiered at the Breckenridge Film Fest, and was slated to open the New Orleans Film Festival in 2005, but Katrina abruptly stopped that.

All that Steve planned to do was to retire from medicine to create art full-time. He was counting off the days on his kitchen blackboard calendar. Most artists have to have a day job or some way that pays the bills. Steve Laser’s job is ER medicine. Medicine was a good profession for Steve, who mused, “I like working here at Charity Hospital, providing free services for people.” Antediluvian New Orleans emergency medicine consisted mostly of gunshot wounds, tens of thousands annually. “It is an important, but futile task.” He was asked to participate in a art exhibit using bent up confiscated guns. His piece, using guns, an old gurney and a clipboard received quite a bit of notoriety. He caught the attention of a couple of British filmmakers, as well as the director of the hospital.

The cinematography of *The Steve Plan* is striking. The extraordinary choice of music, especially considering New Orleans expectations, is mesmerizing. Steve Lesser, when questioned about the opportunity to examine his life through the eyes of a documentary gained, “intense feedback, a clear view without

personal filters.”

The IFP side stairs of the Puck Building were the epicenter of meeting and grooving with filmmakers.

A 2005 IFP Market selection, *Cast In Gray*, written, directed and edited by I. Michael Toth, was given to me on those steps. I had to watch this award-winning short film twice to fully savor the joke. I like a well-written, subtle piece of humor, rich with content, questions and plenty of rain. The international blend of cast and crew gave this Chicago film a world language, a cross-culturally understood modern fable. *Cast In Gray* is a rakishly quiet, wry smirk of a film, a tale of two men, a car, a dog, and of course, lots of rain. They can be found at festivals all over, fundraising to make it a feature.

I first met filmmaker John Daniel Gavin outside the Puck Building as the IFP Get-It-Made Conference 2005 was winding down. There was a gathering of some filmmakers and IFP staff. That must have been a moment of peak convergence, as quite few connections happened. John rushes toward us with remarkable glee, as I am the only one facing his direction, he immediately starts telling me about being on that Jet Blue flight out of LA with the askew landing gear and the most excellent landing. That’s the reason he was late for the conference. He did have a film. A genuine, bona fide, one-man independent film he called “the new high watermark in no-budget feature filmmaking.” He was busting out with unaffected enthusiasm. I had to see his movie. Written, directed and played by Gavin, *Johnny Montana* has better than good production values, and good, honest acting and directing. The feature is a cautionary tale of a modern everyman tasting the raw edges of the underworld to make a living. For a low budget indie, Gavin pulled together an admirable cast and crew. johnny@johnnymontanathemovie.com

He didn’t know whether he was Serb, Croat or Muslim. Assassin “Uncle Vanya” was an orphan out of Bosnia. He really wanted to get out of the profession but due to blackmail, could not.

One last job stood between he and a change of careers. This is where the story starts to convolute and get good. Vladan Nikolic’s *Love* was shot digitally, “for the price of a mid-sized SUV, with help from Swiss Effects for the 35mm transfer.” There is some great use of gyro-cam in a brand new way, placing the viewer into disconnected space. The soundtrack worked on me on some deep, primal level. The sinewy, slinky, Balkan/Oriental melodies were like threads, pulling me into the film’s core. *Love* has had a considerable amount of festival play and acclaim since its premiere at the Tribeca Film Festival 2005. The Pioneer Theatre in NYC will host its first theatrical release. www.love-thefilm.com

Matt Zoller Seitz called his film *Home*, “\$1.98 Nashville.” Matt, the film critic, became Matt, the filmmaker, because he wanted to make a movie that had qualities he liked in film, and to see what it meant to be in filmmakers’ shoes. Therefore, he went straight to the masters, Robert Altman and John Frankenheimer. In fact, he “appropriated” shots and direction directly from his heroes. He challenged me to find them. *Home*, Seitz says, is built on a bell curve. The theme is a house party. As the party grows, so the number of characters and interactions grow, and then taper down to the first two. We have all been there, at all points of the curve. *Home* will have its theatrical release at the Pioneer Theatre in March. Matt’s next film is a puppet parody, *The Rabbit of the Siph*.

The Peace One Day film project is the brainchild of British director Jeremy Gilley. Supported by world leaders, individuals and organizations, the film documents the establishment of the United Nations International Day of Peace, an annual world event, a day of global ceasefire and non-violence which falls on September 21. (www.peaceoneday.org)

Quilombo leader, Zumbi of Palmares, died 310 years ago on November 20. Zumbi was the militant leader of an African country that existed inside colonial Brazil. The quilombo of Palmares was created by escaped and freed slaves near the city of Recife, and had

a population of as many as 30,000. They defeated every attempt at conquest until 1694, when the Portuguese succeeded.

Leonard Abrams, one man with a camera, walked into that world full of lore, of ceremonies, festivals and life. Quilombo is the Angolan word for encampment.

A few years later, Abrams emerged with *Quilombo Country*, a film filled with Forro beats and mysterious beliefs. It is a private, unpressured look into a contemporary, parallel world, another dimension, an opportunity to listen to the music, the words, and the cosmologies, both different and unifying. www.quilombofilm

Finally, watch for the Belgians. Perhaps they will save the world! Pamela Peeters is an environmental economist and founder of the Sustainable Planet Film Festival (Walter Reed Theatre, April 20, ‘06, in conjunction with Earth Day). She is also producing a 35mm short film called *Snoopy Dance*. Snoopy has become such a cultural icon as a metaphor for happiness. Director Ian Fischer brings his Rene Magritte inspired, surrealistic, existential tale to the screen with a unique international team, including DP, Chris J Lytwyn, Joel Johnstone and Tamiko Joye Ball. www.pamelapeeters.com



Johnny Montana

IN THE DETAILS

POPAGANDA: THE ART & CRIMES OF RON ENGLISH

Documentary 78 minutes
Director/Producer: Pedro Carvajal
Editor: Kevin Chapados
Featuring the art of Ron English, also featuring art by Shepard Fairey, music by Dandy Warhols, ArtFux and more
Associate Producer: Nicole Steffen
Email: Harvest-Moon@juno.com or pedro2nd@hotmail.com
Publicity contacts:
Karen Larsen and Chris Wiggum
Larsen Associates
360 Ritch Street
San Francisco, CA 94107
t: 415 957-1205
f: 415 945-1520
e: larsenassc@aol.com

THE FUTURE OF FOOD

Producer/Director:
Deborah Koons Garcia
Distribution through:
Cinema Libre Studio,
Good Company Communications
Other Deborah Koons Garcia films:
Grateful Dawg, *Poco Loco*,
All About Babies
www.thefutureoffood.com

THE STEVE PLAN

Produced by: Laura Gregory,
Nathalie Marciasno
Editor: Scott Stevenson
Music: Mix: Steve’s Choice
Great Guns Productions
Founder: Laura Gregory
London, England
www.greatguns.com

CAST IN GRAY

Written, Directed & Edited by:
I. Michael Toth
Produced by: Christopher Gentry
Co-Producer: Frank T. Herbert
Executive Producers:
Predrag Konstantinovic,
Charles Renslow
Co-Executive Producers:
Steve Weiss, Martin Selak,
Siro Pieri
Cinematographer:
Sasha Rendulic
Production Designer:
Slobodan Radovanovic
Sound Designer: I. Michael Toth
Costume Designer:
Natasha Vuchurovich Djukich
www.castingraymovie.com

HOME

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Matt Zoller Seitz, film critic,
New York Press, Star-Ledger.
Director: Matt Zoller Seitz
Producers: Sean O’Dea,
Jeremy Seitz, Matt Zoller Seitz
Screenwriter: Matt Zoller Seitz
Director of Photography:
Jonathan Wolff
Additional Photography: Steve Hopkins
Editors: Matt Zoller Seitz,
Jeremy Zoller Seitz,
Cast Jason Liebrecht,
Nicol Zanzarella, Stephen Neave,
Minerva Scelza, Erin Stacey
Visslailli, Bradley Spinelli,
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\$500,000 feature in development is an extension of Toth's acclaimed short drama "Cast in Gray"

Life is a Dream Productions is developing its \$500,000 HD feature drama "Gray, White & Black," from acclaimed Yugoslav-born director I. Michael Toth, to shoot here and in Paris this year.



Director I. Michael Toth (left) and producer Christopher Gentry

"Gray, White & Black" is an extension of Toth's 39-minute HD short "Cast in Gray," which screens June 7 at the Midwest Independent Film Festival.

Festival award-winner "Cast in Gray" is an existential drama about a man (Timothy Burke, "Mitchellville"), whose car breaks down in a rainstorm, who offers shelter to a hitchhiker (Stephen Angus, "Homicide: Life on the Street") and his dog, and faces the repercussions.

"Gray, White & Black" unfolds forward and backward from "Cast in Gray," revealing the life Burke's character was fleeing and the one to which he arrives.

Toth, who has lived in the U.S. since 1985, has made several features that played the European fest circuit, directed commercials for Fortune 500 companies, and made documentaries including the PBS-broadcast "Sculptures: Pieces of My

Dreams," the internationally distributed "Freemasons," and ITVA award winner "Unseen Journey." He also directed the TV series "Man and Time," syndicated across Europe.

Christopher Gentry, a commercial and investment banker, is producing through Life is a Dream Productions, which he launched with Toth.

Gentry met Toth when "On the Open Road," the play by Toth's fellow Yugoslav, Oscar winner Steve Tesich ("Breaking Away"), premiered at the Goodman Theatre in 1995. Toth and Tesich were at work on a screen adaptation, but the project stalled when Tesich died of a heart attack in

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Stephen Angus (left) and Timothy Burke in "Cast in Gray"



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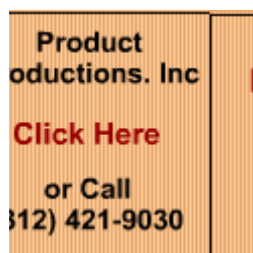


Australia in 1996.

Toth approached Gentry in 2000 with a draft of the "Grey, White & Black" screenplay. "It was a great script," Gentry recalled. "I could see this was a guy I wanted to work with. I decided to commit to full-time feature filmmaking," Gentry said.

"We needed a couple good solid projects in development so once we got the first one up and going, we could be in a position to move quickly onto the next one. Michael not having an English-language feature under his belt, we needed to get something on film to demonstrate the narrative," he continued. "We did 'Cast in Gray' to take that step."

Principal photography will be in Chicago, with additional shooting in Paris.



London-based Irena Micijevic-Rodic, Novi Sad Film Festival best actress winner for "Magic," plays dual roles in the feature, as does Angus. Members of the Tuta Theatre Company will also perform in the film.

Blue Note recording artist, jazz singer and pianist Patricia Barber, is composer.



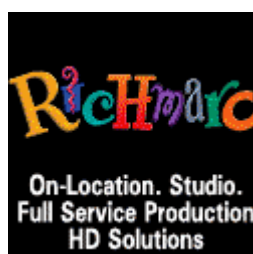
DP is Sasha Rendulic (Sundance selection "Mr. P's Dancing Sushi Bar"). Production designer, Bata Radavanovic ("Out of Africa").

Life is a Dream has three more films in various development stages, including "A Starry Night Above Me," the adaptation of Tesich's play, an action-adventure story about a pair of mismatched rogues fleeing the Liberian civil war.



Also on the slate: "Two Hats," about a Yugoslav war refugee starting a new life in the U.S., with Dragan Micanovic ("The Engagement"), and Lazar Ristovski and Dragan Mikolic ("Undeground"); "The Man Who Lived in Dreams," a drama with music by Barber, featuring Thomas J. Ryan ("Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind") and Sean Campion ("Stones in His Pockets").

"Cast in Gray" screens at the Midwest Indie, June 7 at 7:30 p.m. at Landmark's Century Centre Cinema, 2828 N. Clark.



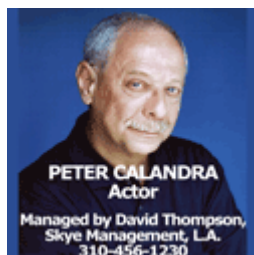
The company is located at 3725 N. Greenview; phone, 773/517-4118; Email, info@lifeisadreamprod.com. See www.lifeisadreamprod.com.

"Cast in Gray" leads June 7 lineup of six HD shorts at Midwest Independent Film Festival



"Cast in Gray" headlines the second Midwest Independent Film Festival, Tuesday, June 7 at Landmark's Century Centre, projected in HD.

Also featured is IFP/Chicago 2004 Production Fund winner "The



Apologies” from writer/director Anthony Collamati (“The Acedia Thing”).

“The Apologies” stars Joe Forbrich (“The Watcher”) who returns 17 years later to apologize to the husband and daughter of a woman he raped. With Melissa Sienick (Project Greenlight finalist “And Then I Woke Up”) and Mick Weber (“Law and Order”).

“The Apologies” premiered at the IFP/Chicago’s 2004 Flyover Zone Film Festival.

Roundup out the June Midwest Indie lineup:

John Cabrera’s comedic short “Crazy Love,” produced in association with speed filmmaking company Instant Films. Stars William Salyers (“Judging Amy,” “Bedazzled”), Laura Schwartzberg, Crystal Keith and Kinsey Packard.

George Eckart’s Flash-animated retiring-gargoyle short “Monster,” featuring the improv talents of Paul Grondy and Peter Grosz.

In the Midwest Indie’s ongoing series of excerpts from D.P. Carlson’s doc “Chicago Filmmakers on the Chicago River,” Carlson presents an interview with Michael Mann (“Collateral,” “Ali” and upcoming remake of his “Miami Vice.”).

The world premiere of director/composer Thomas Lisa’s music video “Greater Than Us.”

Formerly Chicago Community Cinema, the Midwest Indie is held on the first Tuesday of the month as an event dedicated to showcasing emerging directors from the eight-state Midwest region.

Century Landmark Theatre is at 2828 N. Clark. Pre-screening cocktail reception at 6 p.m., screenings begin at 7:30 p.m. Post-screening reception at Monsoon, 2813 N. Broadway. See www.midwestfilm.com.

—Ed M. Koziarski , edk@homesickblues.com

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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.

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The Eighth annual East Lansing Film Festival

What it is: The largest film festival in Michigan. The festival presents 16 feature-length films, 22 documentaries and 77 short films from countries including Russia, Spain, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Germany, Singapore and Senegal. The festival also includes more than 50 entries from the Lake Michigan Film Competition, which screens and awards films made by individuals from the Lake Michigan border states of Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan and Indiana.

When: The festival began Wednesday and will run until Sunday.

Where: Screenings are held at Hannah Community Center, 819 Abbott Road, and on campus at Wells Hall.

Price: General admission for most films is \$7 and \$5 for students. Tonight's screening of Clara Bow's 1927 film, "It," with musical accompaniment by Blue Dahlia, is \$10 for general admission and \$7 for students. The seminar "Producing High Def Video Products" is \$15 and \$10 for students.

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Reel big fun

Largest film festival in Mich. busts budgets

By [EMILY BUCKLER](#)

The State News

Getting an audience for smaller-budget independent films is not always an easy task.

Without the studio name or financing, some films might never even make it past private viewing.

For a film producer such as Christopher Gentry, of Chicago-based Life is a Dream Productions, exposure is everything.

"What we hope to do is make sure we know who our audience is going to be for each particular film and make sure our budget is enough to reach that audience," Gentry said. "The hope is to be able to have a film that crosses over to a broader audience. We're not so concerned about getting rich out of this business - any public exposure for your film is good."

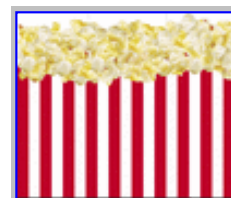
The 8th annual East Lansing Film Festival, which opened Wednesday and will run until Sunday, is one such event critical for independent filmmakers. The Life is a Dream-based film "Cast in Gray" will be shown at 4:30 p.m. Sunday at Wells Hall.

"Everything is so much work, money, blood, sweat and tears," festival Director Susan Woods said. "For independent films to be seen and celebrated is really valuable."

This year, the largest film festival in Michigan - will screen 114 films, not only from filmmakers in the Lake Michigan region, but also from countries such as Afghanistan, Singapore, Quebec, India, Ireland and Senegal.

The opportunity to bring these films to East Lansing is significant, particularly considering the lack of independent venues in the area, Woods said.

"People have tried very hard to bring a theater into East Lansing - it's been the



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contact the East Lansing Film Festival at (517) 336-5802 or visit www.elff.com.

Source: The East Lansing Film Festival

Feedback

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number one request both in Lansing and East Lansing," she said. "You just cannot compete with multiplexes.

"There's simply not enough money and not enough space."

For "Cast in Gray" actor Stephen Angus, the East Lansing Film Festival also represents something slightly more personal. A 1986 MSU graduate, Angus is returning to East Lansing for the first time in nearly 20 years.

"The film festival is a perfect way for me to come back, the added bonus being my personal attachment to the area," he said. "There needs to be a venue for this stuff. Independent films are having a tremendous impact on our culture."

"Cast in Gray," a 39-minute, interpretive short film written and directed by I. Michael Toth, is part of the Lake Michigan Film Competition.

In the film, Angus plays a hitchhiker who catches a ride with a man considering suicide. Their subsequent conversation touches on ideas of religion, identity and escape - all while leaving viewers unsure if Angus' character is really just a figment of the driver's imagination or is he really alive.

"In a subtle way, leaving it open and letting people interpret it keeps you attached to what will happen in the future," Angus said. "Without trying to sound ambiguous, I'm thrilled that the film provokes more than one interpretation - that viewers are engaged enough to keep thinking through the possibilities."

The Lake Michigan Film Competition, which begins on Sunday, screens and awards more than 50 film entries made by filmmakers from Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana and Michigan.

One such film from Michigan is "Neighbors in the Square," a 58-minute documentary on the lives of elderly residents at the Washington Square Co-op in Kalamazoo, Mich.

Director Dhera Strauss, a media producer and instructor at Kalamazoo College, filmed and shot the documentary after it was requested by the building's residents.

"If I had a motive or point of view making this film, it would be that often this is an under-served population," Strauss said. "I would want the average viewer to come away respectful of the individual, and to portray the dignity, intelligence, and interests of this population that has been overlooked."

"Neighbors in the Square," also contains footage of the Kalamazoo area from the early half of the 20th century. It will be shown at 2 p.m. Sunday in Wells Hall.

Two of Strauss' students, Joseph Blustein and Meghan Kralej, also have submitted films to the Lake Michigan Film Competition, in the student program category.

The Lake Michigan Film Competition portion of the festival will begin at 4:30 p.m. Sunday in Wells Hall.

"The mission of the East Lansing Film Festival is to bring independent films that would not be seen otherwise, to enrich the community," Woods said. "What you get in multiplexes are generally not a reflection of good films."

Festival events begin at 8 p.m. Thursday with a screening of the 1927 silent film "It," starring Clara Bow, at the Hannah Community Center, 819 Abbott Road. Kalamazoo-based band Blue Dahlia will provide a live, original soundtrack to the film. For more

information on the East Lansing Film Festival, please visit www.elff.com.

A selection of Friday's films

"Tarnation" Director Jonathan Caouette shot this creative documentary as a self-portrait of his upbringing in a dysfunctional Texas family and the relationship he develops with his schizophrenic mother, Renee. Showing at 9:30 p.m. at Wells Hall.

"Rush to War" Robert Taicher examines American foreign policy and the issues surrounding the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in this historical documentary. Taicher and his film crew drove cross-country collecting interviews for "Rush to War" in October of 2001. Showing at 9:30 p.m. at Wells Hall.

"Trundell" Director Heather Rae profiles Native American activist John Trundell. The film, selected for the 2005 Sundance Film Festival Documentary Competition, focuses on Trundell's poetic words, music and intellect. Showing at 7 p.m. at Wells Hall.

A selection of Saturday's and Sunday's films

"Plagues and Pleasures on the Salton Sea"

The Salton Sea in southeast California is known as one of the world's worst ecological disasters. Created by accident, it is a stagnant, salty lake that kills thousands of fish and birds. Directors Chris Metzler and Jeff Springer explore this phenomenon and the surrounding Salton Sea community in "Plagues and Pleasures on the Salton Sea," showing at 4 p.m. Saturday at Wells Hall.

"The Tunnel"

Based on a true story, "The Tunnel" recreates the story of champion swimmer Harry Melchior after his escape from East Berlin in 1961, following the construction of the Berlin Wall. Once there, Melchior decides to dig a tunnel under the wall in an effort to get his sister, Lotte, and her family to the other side. Showing at 9 p.m. Saturday in Wells Hall.

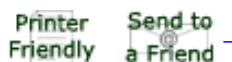
"Headrush"

Charlie and T-Bag, two disillusioned cannabis-enthusiasts from Dublin, Ireland, hope to solve their problems by smuggling drugs for a local underworld gangster in this 85-minute comedy. Showing at 6:30 p.m. Saturday at Wells Hall.

"Neighbors in the Square"

Director Dhera Strauss explores life within a Housing and Urban Development high-rise apartment in Kalamazoo, Mich. and the social community of its independent elderly and physically handicapped residents. "Neighbors in the Square" will be shown at 2 p.m. Sunday in Wells Hall as part of the Lake Michigan Film Competition.

Source: The State News, East Lansing Film Festival





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Film festival appears at Rackham

Sunday, April 03, 2005

BY JENN MCKEE

News Arts Writer

At 6 p.m. tonight and tomorrow night, at Rackham Auditorium, 915 E. Washington St., the Banff Mountain Film Festival World Tour will make a stop in Ann Arbor; different films will be featured each night.

Produced by Mountain Culture at The Banff Centre, the tour features award-winning films from its festival, held each year in November. This year, the competition had more than 300 films, highlighting mountain stories, mountain culture, and vertical sports, submitted from all over the world.

Tickets are \$10 in advance and \$12 at the door. For tickets and information, call 764-3967 or visit www.recsports.umich.edu/outdooradv.

Two honored

Local filmmakers Keith Jefferies and John C. Ardussi - who use local talent and crew to make films and commercials - recently won awards for their short films at the Central Michigan International Film Festival (www.cmfilmfestival.com). Jefferies' "Fate and Fortune" tied for second place in the competition, and "American Short Film" tied for third. Ardussi's "The Europa Society," meanwhile, tied for third place.

To find out more about these filmmakers, visit their Web sites: www.ascalonfilms.com (Jefferies) and www.apprenticefilms.com (Ardussi).

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Dexter High School grad Stephen Angus ('81) is now starring in "Cast in Gray," a 39-minute independent film being screened today at 4:30 p.m. at the East Lansing Film Festival (Theater A at the Wells Hall Theaters on the MSU campus).

Previously, when Angus was performing in this area, he worked with Performance Network, the Ann Arbor Civic Theatre, the Young People's Theatre, Burns Park Players, and the Dexter Community Players. Since then, he's appeared in television's "Homicide: Life on the Street" and "America's Most Wanted," as well as the films "Quiz Show," "Forrest Gump," and "Pecker."

Recently, "Gray" earned a Golden Nugget Award for best short narrative at the Golden Film Festival, and it will next appear (after today's screening) at the Phoenix Film Festival.

Both Angus and director I. Michael Toth will be on hand in East Lansing to answer audience questions.

"Upside" adds screens

"The Upside of Anger," a film written and directed by Birmingham native Mike Binder (and featuring Kevin Costner in a "Mr. Stadium Coin Laundry" T-shirt) expanded its release this weekend.

It's now showing not only at Showcase Cinemas, but also at the Quality 16 theaters and Brighton Cinemas.

Sound of Silents returns

This week, the Michigan Theater will offer the first of two special events built around classic silent films and their music.

At 8 p.m. Thursday, a little-known, seldom-seen 1929 Alfred Hitchcock film called "Blackmail" will be screened, with the musical accompaniment of The Alloy Orchestra. This three-man ensemble combines found percussion and state-of-the-art electronics to create nearly any sound imaginable, while Hitch's film tells the story of a detective's girlfriend who kills a man in self-defense, only to find herself being blackmailed by another man. (This screening follows a showing of the silent classic "Metropolis," also featuring the Alloy Orchestra, at 5 p.m.)

The second part of "The Sound of Silents" program (don't blame me for the cringe-inducing pun) will happen May 27, when the Michigan Theater will screen the first film version of "Peter Pan," accompanied by a 12-piece orchestra and conductor Gillian Anderson. (Stay tuned for more information as this event draws closer.)

Tickets to each film - \$12 general admission, \$10 for Michigan Theater members, students, seniors, and veterans - are available at the Michigan Union Ticket Office and Ticketmaster outlets. You may also order tickets online (www.ticketmaster.com) or charge them by phone at 763-TKTS or (248) 645-6666. (Reserved Gold Circle seating is also available at \$20 and \$25 for members.)

And in other Michigan Theater news, the Michigan Association of Community Arts Agencies has selected the theater to be one of five recipients of this year's Great Lakes Community Arts Award, which will be handed out at a ceremony on April 20 in Lansing.

"On Screen" collects local news items about movies. Jenn McKee can be



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FILM

The reel deal in Colorado

By lkennedy@denverpost.com
Lisa Kennedy
Denver Post Film Critic
Sunday, February 13, 2005 -

Blame Kathy and Robin Beeck - or any of Colorado's other reel believers - for the fact that between now and Memorial Day there are at least 18 film festivals and special series slated for Colorado, many in Denver or a quick drive from here.

The Beeck sisters and the Boulder International Film Festival are the hungry newcomers to Colorado's movable feast of film.

"We decided Boulder was the perfect place for an international film festival of this stature," said Robin Beeck.

"There's a big population along the Front Range that we can draw from," added Kathy. "I think with that population, with the university, with the good film school, we thought Boulder needed a fest like this."

Here's a brief guide to help film buffs plan for Colorado's most fest-intensive season. (A note: Some worthy events are missing, including the Durango Film Festival, the 7th Xicanindie Film Fest: Latino World Cinema, and the Starz Pan African Film Festival among them.

Most of these festival schedules are still being locked in. As they near, consult individual websites for fresh updates.

The Boulder International Film Festival, Thursday-Feb. 20.

History: Two moviemaking sisters who love film festivals decide to put on a show. The result: 650 filmmakers respond. This week, the 55 features and shorts that made the cut will screen at the inaugural event, which opens Thursday with "Trainspotting" director Danny Boyle's "Millions."

Highlights: Drive, walk, run - but however you do it, be sure to see Jim Butterworth, Aaron Lubarsky and Lisa Sleeth's "Seoul Train," a wrenching documentary about North Korean refugees (www.biff1.com.)

The Third Annual Golden Film Festival, Feb. 24-27.

History: Started by the Golden Resource for Education, Arts and Theater, this festival was part of an attempt to save Golden's historic Gem Theatre. The movie

palace didn't make it, but the festival moves into a new phase under the direction of Laurel Hunter. The Boulder-based filmmaker plans to exhibit "film as an art medium, rather than an entertainment medium."

Highlight: When Hunter screened the short "Cast in Gray," she wrote in her notes "even the dog can act"

(www.goldengreat.org).

Vail Film Festival, March 30-April 3

History: Movies (indies), moguls (snow- covered ones) and music are the order of the day and night at this indie-spirited fest.

Highlights: Some featured features - "Kings and Queen," with Catherine Deneuve, and Todd Solondz's "Palindromes (www.vailfilmfestival.org).

The Art of Silent Film, Tuesdays, April 5-May 17; Starz FilmCenter.

History: Tom Delapa curates the Denver Art Museum's film series. This spring celebrates the power of silents.

Highlights: To quote Norma Desmond, "We didn't need dialogue. We had faces." Wonderful faces and astonishing camera movement are featured in such program highlights as "The Crowd," "Last Laugh," "Strike" and "Modern Times." If you detect a theme - modern versus 19th-century life - you've cracked the code. Go-to site: www.denverartmuseum.org , then click on "events."

Aspen Shortsfest, April 6-10.

History: This festival of astounding short flicks is one of the nation's best. Period.

Highlights: Jim Taylor, co-writer of the Oscar-nominated "Sideways," brings his short, "The Lost Cause" (www.aspenfilm.org).

Fifth AnnualStarz First Look Student Film Festival, April21-23; Starz FilmCenter.

History: Colorado Film School alum Wade Gardner and Josh Weinberg created this exciting festival of shorts from undergrad, graduate level and recently graduated filmmakers.

Highlights: More films are from international students. Expect a late-night screening of the fest's edgier fare

(www.firstlookfest.com).

Denver Academy Film Festival for Youth (DAFFY), May 7. Auraria campus.

History: One of the first and longest-running film festivals for kids and by kids is celebrating its fifth year.

Highlights: DAFFY is set to "break 800 kids." That's how many children are involved as cast, crew, creators. The overall winner's film gets screened at the Denver International Film Festival (303-777-5161).

Moondance International Film Festival, May 12-16; Boulder.

History: Elizabeth English thought this would be a one-time gig to rattle the cages of executives in La-La Land. That was six years ago.

Highlights: The lunar tug of the fest comes from "workshops and seminars on filmmaking and screenwriting, all day long," says English. "At night we have screenings. And all night long, there are networking parties" ([www. moondancefilmfestival.com](http://www.moondancefilmfestival.com)).

MountainFilm in Telluride, May 27-30.

History: Twenty-seven years ago this fest - which includes the one-day Moving Mountains Symposium - started as a gathering of mountaineers.

Highlights: This year's symposium theme - sustainability - treks throughout the weekend of films, programs and panels (www.mountainfilm.org).

Film critic Lisa Kennedy can be reached at 303-820-1567 or lkennedy@denverpost.com.



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Sunday, Feb 20, 2005

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Posted on Fri, Apr. 02, 2004

ILLINOIS STYLE: Much of rain-soaked movie is shot in McDonough County

TOM RADZ
Associated Press

MACOMB, III. - On a recent sunny Monday afternoon, Macomb natives Christopher Gentry and Frank Herbert were praying for rain.

Gentry and Herbert, co-producers of the full-length feature film "Cast in Gray," chose locations throughout McDonough County as the setting for early scenes in the independent film, which is supposed to take place entirely in the pouring rain.

The cast and crew from Life is a Dream Productions, which was started by Gentry and writer/director I. Michael Toth, chose a location just north of the Macomb Speedway as one of five McDonough County locations.

"I just knew by reading the script that McDonough County had the kind of landscape that we were looking for," said Gentry. "We wanted to get the feel of emptiness and prairie, because that is very indicative of the main character's state of mind - he's very lost in his personal life."

"You come into a closely knit community like Macomb and everybody is excited by the experience and goes out of their way to show us the hospitality that really makes a difference in a production like this," added Herbert, who still resides in Macomb.

Because of the lack of precipitation in the last week, Gentry and Herbert relied on the Macomb Fire Department to provide water to their remote locations to produce the effect of rain.

"We also decided to use this opportunity as an educational benefit for theater students at the university," said Herbert, who invited Western Illinois University students to volunteer their assistance on the set.

"Cast in Gray" is based on the interaction between suicidal Chicago lawyer Tim McKay and a hitchhiker he meets in the rain. McKay, played by Tim Burke, is driving alone through the countryside, and offers the hitchhiker, played by Stephen Angus, and his dog shelter from the elements in his broken down SUV.

The conversation between McKay and the hitchhiker leads the two to exchange identities, which eventually ends in disaster for one of them.

"The thing that this film will really make people think about - and this is in a lot of Michael's writing - is

how people look at themselves and how people react to the environment that they are in," said Gentry. "He wants people to look at themselves and not just be passive with their lives."

Although Gentry claims he and Herbert are looking into eventually selling "Cast in Gray" to a small independent distributor, he says he carries no hopes of Hollywood glory and plans to remain in the independent film industry.

"Michael and I decided that we wanted to make films that are meaningful," said Gentry. "Neither of us are interested in making commercial films for the sake of making money - we really see ourselves as artists."

While Gentry and Toth have made plans to create five feature films together, Herbert has not committed himself to future projects with Life is a Dream Productions, although he claims it is not an idea he would immediately dismiss.

The portion of production in McDonough County was completed in March, and the entire film was expected to be completed by the end of May, when Gentry and Herbert plan to release it to the festival circuit.



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McDonough County: Lights, Camera, Action

Jillyn Shoemaker



Some film makers brought a little bit of Hollywood to our neck of the woods.

When moviegoers head to the theater next spring, they might recognize one windy back road.

That's because co-producers and Macomb natives Christopher Gentry and Frank Herbert decided to shoot a few scenes of their upcoming movie "Cast in Grey" just south of Macomb.

"On this road, there's no telephone poles, it's a beautiful road. We couldn't find that in Chicago," said Gentry.

"There's a level of excitement. People like to get involved. We needed a community that would help us. We needed a community that would understand when we block roads," said Herbert.

"I've driven all these roads in McDonough County. When I read the script, I knew those were the locations, I had them in my mind, specific locations," said Gentry.

And the beautiful locations aren't the only recognizable aspects of the film.

The producers cast local state police officers and firefighters in various scenes.

"They've treated us with open arms...from the mayor to the president of the University," said Gentry.

About 25 minutes of the movie will include scenes shot in McDonough County.

The rest is set in Chicago.

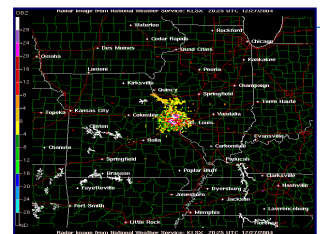
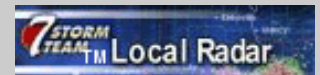
"Cast in Grey" should hit theatres in about a year.

Western Illinois University helped the crew of about 30 with lodging and meals.

In return, some students have spent the week on set, learning what filmmaking is like.



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MACOMB EAGLE

Shot on location in Macomb

3/26/2004

By RYAN HEINZ

Eagle Staff Writer

Two men sit in a broken down SUV in middle of the rural countryside. They smoke cigars and chat idly about life as a dog lies in the back seat and rain pours down upon the windshield. The man in the driver seat is Tim McKay, who at 37 lives with his wife of three years in Chicago, where he is a successful corporate lawyer. But Tim is unhappy with his life and has settled into "an extreme state of depression." Prior to his vehicle breaking down and him offering shelter to a wandering stranger – a "traveling" actor and his dog – Tim had been contemplating suicide instead of going on with his life as is. The man offers him a third option: that they switch identities.

Suddenly, a third man comes from out of the darkness of a sun-block screen and into the pouring sunlight, where he angrily throws his jacket off to the side of the road. He then makes an effort at kicking an orange traffic cone, which he nearly misses before he storms off to a nearby van. This man is I. Michael Toth, and what was just described before he threw his tantrum was a scene in a new movie called "Cast in Gray." But why is Toth so angry?

"You came at just the right time," joked a nearby producer before explaining the situation. You see, Toth is a triple threat in this film. Not only is he directing and editing it, but he also wrote the original screenplay based on a dream he had. In other words, this is his baby. And what Toth discovered was that they were not rolling film during an almost perfect acting job by Tim Burke (Tim McKay) and Stephen Angus (The Man) in which Toth's vision was almost fully realized. Think of it as writing a brilliant report for that sophomore history class and then losing all of your unsaved information – only just a tad more costly on the financial end. After all, time is money in Hollywood, and Hollywood has come to the backroads of Macomb for this film shoot.

Actually, this particular crew is not from Hollywood, but instead an independent production company from Chicago called Life Is a Dream Productions Inc. The Macomb part was true though, and the last scene was actually shot on a country road directly across from the Macomb Speedway, west of town. Chris Gentry, one of the film's producers, explained the choice for film location.

"Number one, it calls for a very desolate, rural area. And there's a lot of beautiful countryside here with great locations for that sort of thing we're looking for in the script," he said. "And probably the bigger thing is that I knew that we would get the kind of support down here that we need logistically with all of our production support, and we've gotten that times 10 so far."

"The community is great and that was one of the things we took into account while selecting locations," agreed Frank Herbert, co-producer of "Cast in Gray." "In a smaller, tighter-knit community like this, people are excited (by the film). The response and the help we've received from the city, the mayor of Macomb, the fire department, the Illinois State Police of Springfield, has been absolutely phenomenal."

If any of the crew knows about the community, it's these two guys. At least they should, considering both of the first-time producers are natives of Macomb. Following high school graduation and a year at WIU, Gentry transferred to Arizona State University, where he graduated with a finance degree. He was then in banking for about 15 years while dabbling in the independent Chicago film scene for 10 of those years. After meeting Toth three years ago, he decided he wanted to produce full time. Now that "Cast in Gray" is getting off the ground as first a 25-minute film – to be shopped around at festivals for more funding to be made into a full-length feature – he's getting his chance.

For Herbert, this is his first film he's worked on altogether. Following graduation from Macomb High School and two years at WIU, he transferred to Western State College in Colorado. He then moved back to the area in 1992 while working as president of a company called Torino Design Group – a manufacturer of mens' suits, sports coats and dress slacks in Italy. Not only is he producing the film, but Herbert was also the primary scout for film locations in Macomb.

Meanwhile, back at the shoot – only in its second day of production at that point – Toth has settled back in for the reshoot of the scene. That means the actors are back into character, the camera is definitely rolling this time and the SUV will once again get hit with the "rain" treatment, as provided by a Macomb Fire Department tanker.

"When you look at the monitors it looks cloudy and rainy (from the inside of the vehicle) because of the constant water flow on the SUV. And we're hoping for a little bit of help from God," Herbert said with a nod to the sky in hopes of actual rain. "It's going to be amazing when the piece comes out to see those scenes when we actually had to shoot in 45 mph wind gusts on a sunny day and how good they look. These guys are good." As for the rural Macomb shoot, Gentry said they are hoping to wrap by next week; "then we'll go into editing and hopefully release the film in a theater near you."

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Macomb gets "Cast in Gray"

By Jonathan Hicks

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Vision

The otherwise plain and ordinary room was filled with weary souls. These individuals had traveled a journey that brought them a great distance on both the literal and metaphoric levels. With tired eyes, they raised cans and bottles high, as potent tones of exuberance and elation filled the air so thickly it was the only thing louder than the frequent laughter.

For Macomb, this party would be no ordinary celebration. This night would be no ordinary night.

Throughout the week, newspapers as far away as Peoria were littered with prominent stories on the independent film "Cast in Gray," which was being shot this week in Macomb. The cinematic work required the efforts of nearly 30 cast and crew members, not to mention help from Macomb residents, including the Macomb Fire Department.

With the vast majority of filming taking place on the rarely traveled rural roads just south of Macomb, the mood that was established could easily be described as gray, just as the film's title alludes to. The appeal of the flat, monotonous landscape of rural Macomb is easily understood when examining the film's premise; "Cast in Gray" follows the life of Tim McKay (played by actor Tim Burke), a successful lawyer living in Chicago with his wife of three years.

While seen by most as being quite successful, McKay isn't happy. Filled with feelings of sadness and disappointment, he entertains suicidal thoughts while driving down a lonely country road - even considering steering through the perpetual downfall into oncoming traffic.

But his chance encounter with a hitchhiker offers him the potential for something new. His ensuing journey forces both McKay and the audience to interpret the story's events and make unexpected translations as the plot progresses.

Beginning late last week, scenes involving this premise were shot in and around Macomb



Media Credit: Jonathan Hicks



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Crew members share a laugh upon seeing the Macomb Journal's story on "Cast in Gray."

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, with the average day lasting around 16 hours. After three days of relentless work, their stay in Macomb had come to a close.

That's a wrap! For now.

On Wednesday at about 10 p.m., the scene at the Olson Special Dining Center was primarily celebratory. Smelling of pizza and beer, the room's mood and was one not unlike many probably felt around Macomb that night - the sort of feeling one gets when sitting around with good friends, just for the sake of being together.

While steadily eating and drinking, the crewmembers shared stories of the past week , of working together in Chicago, and of the excitement of completing an artpiece they were genuinely proud to be a part of. When copies of that day's Macomb Journal were passed around, the crew laughed at how good (or bad) certain people looked in photographs and read aloud the bits about others in the room.



Media Credit: Jonathan Hicks
Is that Antonio Banderas? Cinematographer Sasha Rendulic grins brightly while looking at photos of the day's shooting.

It made for a jovial scene and served to demonstrate that though extremely talented, these were people doing something they loved. It wasn't about press or publicity ... these individuals genuinely appreciated simply being a part of an art form they believed in.

Among those admirers and creators of art was Producer Christopher Gentry, a native of Macomb, and the man who suggested Macomb as a production site. He was a man who had a blurred line between work and fun and was, perhaps, the most excited person in the room that night. Actor Tim Burke, quiet and introspective, has a clear vision of his art and what it should be. He is the type who rarely speaks but commands the attention of all when he does. I. Michael Toth, writer, director and editor of "Cast in Gray," seemed far more interested in doing his work than talking about it. He has visionary-like qualities , though he is perhaps the only one who doesn't see them.

Stepping outside for a smoke break, the three men allow me inside the belly of the beast, casually sharing their thoughts on the inner workings of their craft.

The idea was a professional-style interview, and for the most part it was - though it was speckled with off-the-wall commentary and a comedic side that is not often revealed to the media. What follows are some of the highlights of the conversation:

Execution and explanation

Edge: So you guys are leaving tomorrow ...

Christopher Gentry: Yeah, "Antonio" has to get back to Los Angeles (laughs). That was the big thing going around - somehow the rumor got started that our cinematographer (Sasha Rendulic) was Antonio Banderas. We were at Aurelio's eating last Thursday, and within 24 hours we had cars passing the set with high school girls rolling down their windows yelling 'Antonio!'

Edge: Why Macomb? Besides the obvious connections, what's good about this lovely, rural area?

CG: That's exactly what's good about it. The script calls for a rural setting. It has to be desolate looking. We had to find a road that's not populated. This character breaks down on the road and he's there all day. So we needed to find something where it looked like he was stuck on the road. At the same time , we're visual artists ...

Tim Burke: There has to be a minimal aesthetic.

CG: Yeah. When I read the script I was thinking to myself this would be great down here because you can find these roads, where you just have prairie, you have trees and great topography here.

Edge: You mention the artistic aspects, the landscape ... What kind of role does that play and how does it establish the mood?

I. Michael Toth: You get stuck on the road and nobody's there for miles. The landscape here in Macomb really helped us create the feeling of being lost.

TB: The other thing is that landscape, especially in this film, becomes another character. It's constantly speaking to the audience. And you can do things as a filmmaker, as an actor, as any artist - you can either play in harmony with it, or you can play in contrast to it. The landscape and its minimal, dreamlike quality, with the rain, creates a vibrancy in the image so that as (the characters) speak, it adds so much to it.

CG: What's interesting on that point is that the film has no music, except for one song, which we just filmed tonight.

Edge: Do you think that some people who produce films are overzealous in the use of music?

IMT: A film works or it doesn't work. If you have to put music to tell people to feel something, it means that you've failed to create (a mood). You have to have some crutches in (the writing) to support that.

TB: In mainstream films, music adds a kind of skin. And that's another layer that's going to separate the audience from the activities within the story. What we've been doing is mostly conversations between two people, so if you add anything else, what you get is separation. And that works against the relationships that are happening in the film. So without music, without other incidental things, you're drawn more into the relationship between these characters. It becomes more immediate, more visceral , more effective.

Edge: For you guys the work is just beginning ... Where do you go from here?

TB: This cast and crew is from all over the country, all over the world. Our cinematographer has to go back to Los Angeles. I have to go back to outside New York. Stephen (Angus), our other actor, lives in Colorado. I'll be doing other work, other plays. But I'm happy this isn't finished just yet. Everything is gestation and bringing forth. These things get inside you. Every day on this shoot you find another layer , another meaning. We'll all go off and do our thing, but this is going to last with us for a long time. It's pretty powerful, and we've only just tapped it.

CG: We'll do some more shooting in Chicago and hopefully finish up shooting by the end of May. Then we'll spend 18 weeks editing and will look to enter the film into film festivals. Then we hope to get distribution for the film and within the next year it would be in theaters.

Edge: You filmed approximately the first 30 minutes of the film here. Will it be released as a short film first?

CG: Not necessarily. This piece we felt was really a solid first act. It really sets the character on his way for the rest of the movie. We did this in an approach that would be somewhat like Jim Jarmusch did "Stranger than Paradise." We're not swimming in money. We're not casting Antonio Banderas. We don't go that route. We're looking to really have our own voice and have our own say in how we make our film. We cast actors like Tim Burke. We went for great actors. We really do rely on, first and foremost, great actors. I know as a producer for Michael, that we can't produce a good, solid, beautiful piece of work unless it's believable. Sometimes when you try to get an actor for the sake of their name to play into the business part of it, you sort of shoot yourself in the foot. And that's no knock against actors that are stars - they become stars because they're great actors. But in Michael's writing, you need someone anonymous. To give you an example, Tom Cruise is a fantastic actor, but he carries some recognition with him - which is a good thing for financing, but it's a bad thing for the story.

TB: There's a good point to be made: That a big budget doesn't necessarily make a great film, and a small budget doesn't make, by any means, a lesser-quality film. Big budgets bring in all sorts of other things. To keep things in a Spartan quality, we were able to create the ethereal, kind of sublime atmosphere of the film that we want to convey. You wouldn't be able to do that if you had ridiculous amounts of money. The money isn't really an issue here. It's about the quality of the film.

Aspirations

With a clear vision of all aspects for "Cast in Gray," the film appears poised to make an impact on the independent film circuit. Gentry, Burke and Toth left no doubt of their dedication, not only to their respective crafts, but to this project in particular.

"Cast in Gray" will return to Macomb for further filming at some point, though specifics are yet to be determined. For more information on the film's plot, to donate to the project, or for more general information, visit www.castingraymovie.com.

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Producers screen film at WIU to say thanks to those who helped make it

Sunday, May 15, 2005

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BY JODI POSPESCHIL

OF THE JOURNAL STAR

MACOMB - Two Macomb natives were in town Saturday to premiere their new short film as a way to thank the locals who helped with them with the scenes that were shot in parts of McDonough County.

Frank Herbert and Christopher Gentry, the film's co-producers, were joined in town by film writer I. Michael Toth for the screening of "Cast in Gray" at Western Illinois University's Sandburg Theatre. There were two showings Saturday night for invited guests, with question-and-answer sessions with the filmmakers afterwards.

The 39-minute film portrays an encounter between a disillusioned businessman in his broken-down sport utility vehicle and a hitchhiking actor walking a country road with his border collie. The two men, who see the world very differently, eventually decide to trade lives.

The movie is based on a dream Toth had that his business partner at Life is a Dream Productions in Chicago persuaded him to write down.

"I had the dream in November 2003, and by March we'd started shooting," Toth said.



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"I came up with the idea in that state between sleeping and dreaming in the early morning, and I wrote down a few sentences."

Many of the scenes in the film were shot on local county roads with the help of local police officers and firefighters, as well as business owners. For about one week in March 2004, movie cameras, lighting equipment and a tanker truck full of water turned sunny, cool days into pouring rainstorms on various local roadways.

"When people see this film, they ask us how we got all that rain (for filming)," Gentry said. "We got really wet thanks to the Macomb Fire Department."

The film has been shown at a few film festivals across the country and won Best Short Film honors at two of them. The film company recently wrapped up a script to make the film into a two-hour movie and is now seeking financial backers to continue the process.

Gentry said that if the funding is found and shooting continues, the company is looking at returning to McDonough County for additional filming. If that happens, Toth said, about 20 minutes of the 39-minute short film would be included.

Gentry said his film company thought the movie was a good way to show off Toth's writing style, which works in multiple levels of meaning.

"It leaves the audience to create the film with us," he said. "There are three or four (interpretations) we hoped people would come away with, and they found more."

The film company thought it was a clever idea, Gentry said, to put together a short film first instead of just pitching an idea to investors.

Herbert, who still lives in Macomb, said the screening was a way to say thanks to the people and businesses that donated everything from food to rain.

"A lot of people showed up to give us a hand," Herbert said.

"We want to give people a chance to see what they had their hand in."