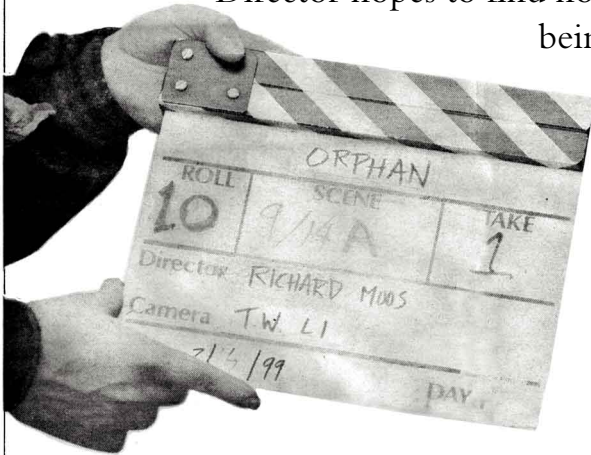


Lifestyle

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 1999 BOSTON HERALD 33

Director hopes to find home for indie film being shot in Boston

By CHRISTOPHER COX



Fade in: Exterior shot of a brick townhouse on a quiet street near Symphony Hall, distinguished only by two Ryder moving vans and a Boston police cruiser, complete with paid detail.

Inside the dilapidated space, dozens of latte achievers scurry up and down three flights of stairs. Everyone seems to be speaking into a headset or

LIFE OF AN 'ORPHAN'



LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION! Actors Charlie Broderick, left, and Marty Maguire, right, and director Richard Moos discuss a scene in the movie 'Orphan,' which is being shot in Boston. At top right, assistant director of photography Terrence Hayes of South Boston enjoys a break. STAFF PHOTOS BY TED FITZGERALD

cell phone or walkie-talkie. The call for cast and crew came at 6 a.m., and there has been no rest. They will shoot a feature film in 18 days, and there is no guarantee of pay.

Welcome to indie filmmaking.

"Orphan": The One-Line Pitch

"It's about a hit man who has a near-death experience," said director Richard Moos. Screenwriter Tom Murtagh, a self-deprecating sort, offered another: Touched by a Hit Man.

The Back Story

This is the third time that Murtagh and Moos, who shot "Squeeze," have tried to make "Orphan," their noirish art film about an assassin who becomes protector of the daughter of a thug he killed. A North Carolina producer had

tried to raise a \$1 million budget, but failed. A big-name actor became "attached," then unattached. With no greenlight or greenbacks, they decided to go the route of indie avatar Ed Burns ("The Brothers McMullen"). Just do it.

Talk is Cheap

"If you don't have \$1 million," asked Murtagh, "how do you tell a story?"

You avoid helicopter chases and car crashes. You write long scenes in single locations. Special effects? To achieve a dreamy look for an afterlife encounter between the antihero hit man, Jake, played by Irish actor Marty Maguire, and Michael (local actor Charlie Broderick), a triggerman Jake has whacked, Moos covered the furniture with white dropcloths and taped



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opaque paper on the windows. Bead-board reflectors and extra lighting blast the small space with light.

"Just your run-of-the-mill afterlife experience," said assistant director Jay Frasco.

Your Friends and Neighbors

"Orphan" is being shot on a microscopic budget of \$20,000. The funding came "the old-fashioned way," said co-producer Rob Morgan. "Family and friends. Out of pocket, essentially."

The director's mom, Cheryl Moos, got her hairdresser, Mitchell John Salon, to do a pro-bono "hair consultation" for Charis Michelsen, who plays the female lead. The day's lunch came courtesy of Basset's, which will receive a product placement.

A Dream Deferred

Moos called in every favor to get his crew and talent to work for deferred payment. Topping his list is cinematographer T.W. Li, who shot Brad Anderson's first feature, "Darien Gap."

"(T.W.) thought that he'd never have to do this again," said Moos. "It's been a long process of snookering him, basically."

Instead of pay, Moos has structured a deal that will make everyone an investor. Even the cops on detail?

"Nah, the cops on detail, they're not deferred." Just attached.

Serendipity

A few weeks ago, related Murtagh, he and Moos were losing sleep over casting. Then Michelsen (fresh from Martin Scorsese's new flick) and Maguire - who has a Cagney-like tough-yet-tender vibe - came out of nowhere.

"There are huge amounts of serendipity working in our favor," said Moos.

Bob Wahlberg (yup, those Wahlbergs) was such a revelation that Murtagh pumped up his part as Timmy, a sympathetic psycho gunning for Jake. Wahlberg, an electrician for Boston's Department of Public Works, said his character would be a killer even "if he wasn't getting paid for it."

Timmy's attached and deferred.

Measure Twice, Cut Once

"Most people think that you roll film through a camera and then you have a movie," said Moos. Untrue. It's nearly noon, and the crew has yet to film the Jake-Michael confrontation.

"This is a big scene and we want to take time with this," said Moos. Maguire and Broderick block their movements and discuss props with Moos. The director and Li then choreograph the hand-held camera work.

The cast and crew run through several "mechanical rehearsals" to iron out the technical kinks. Filming doesn't begin in earnest until 1:30. Makeup artist Angela Marinis applies a few finishing touches, then Maguire and Broderick face off in the small space - now crowded with unseen lighting and seven off-camera crew members. Moos adjourns to a side room to watch the scene on a video monitor.

The Producers

While magic is being made in the basement, Murtagh and Morgan are nowhere to be seen. They're in the makeshift second-floor production office, working the phones. Tracking down a Steadicam. Confirming tomorrow's location, Fairview Cemetery in Hyde Park. Checking the weather forecast (not good).

"It's sort of controlled chaos," said Morgan, "putting out fires all day long."

Next Stop, Sundance

When finished, Moos will shop "Orphan" to potential investors this fall, hoping for the backing to get into the film festival circuit and ultimately, a distribution deal and a theatrical release. And, of course, money.

"That'd feel really good," said Murtagh. "If I could be the guy to hand out the checks, that's going to be a beautiful day."



STAFF PHOTO BY TED FITZGERALD
PREP TIME: Actress Charis Michelsen, the female lead in the Boston-filmed 'Orphan,' sits for hairstyling by Lisa DeRosa and John Porter of Mitchell John Salon of Boston.