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Making movies, Somerville style

Local pub plays host to independent film

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For years, Jake McRory has been following Anna, a young woman orphaned when her father was killed by a mob hitman. Anna has been looking for the hitman, hoping to exact revenge for her father's death. What she doesn't know is that the hitman is McRory, the man who has been her silent guardian ever since he killed her father.

Sound like a movie? It is. And when McRory and Anna finally meet for the first time, Somerville audiences will recognize the bar where McRory saves Anna from thugs as Mulligan's Tavern in Ball Square.

The cast and crew of "Orphan," a new independent feature film, descended on the bar late last Tuesday night to film the pivotal scene. With the help of coffee and food from other Ball Square business owners, the group was able to film into the wee hours of the morning. And by next winter, the producers hope the whole country will be able to enjoy the fruits of their labor.

"We have high hopes for this movie," said director Richard Moos, a former Somerville resident. "It's a tough market out there, but I'm pretty confident our film ... will definitely compete."

When audiences get to see the film, all the hard work that went into the production will only show in the professional quality of the film. Audience members will not see the long hours, impossibly short production time and microbudget that challenged the filmmakers.

"It was very intense," said Shanna Moos, one of the film's producers, "but the people were so great that it was really wonderful."

While most feature-length films shoot for at least 30 days, the crew on "Orphan" completed the film in only 18 days. Preproduction time on the film was a short three weeks, but the film had gestated as an idea for several years before the project was finally green-lighted.

"Orphan" is based on a script by screenwriter Tom Murtagh, a long-time friend of Richard Moos', who had originally written the script as a project he would direct himself.

Moos was working with Murtagh to produce another script, "High Holidays," but they found the budget was more than they could raise. Instead, they decided to focus on "Orphan," a film they felt they could make on a shoestring budget. The hope was that "Orphan" would generate enough interest so they could eventually raise the money necessary to shoot "High Holidays."

That was about two years ago. As the Moos tried to raise the \$1.5 million they estimated they would need for "Orphan," they realized that the money wasn't going to come in.

"We decided we would do it guerrilla style," said Richard. "The scenario was for me and a few other guys to run out and shoot, hand held, what we could."

But as Richard started talking to his friends about working on the film, something remarkable happened. The production crew bloomed into a full band of professionals willing to work for deferred pay, meaning they would not earn one penny unless the movie made money.

Lead actor Marty Maquire came from Los Angeles to star in the movie without pay because he loved the script, and the producers were able to attract Bob Wahlberg, brother of Donny and Mark, to play the