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Film makes old jail even scarier

BY ZACHARY FRANZ • TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER • AUGUST 6, 2008

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If you're heading down to Machinery Row for drinks, take it easy on bartender Katrina Nicoll. She's had a couple long nights of fending off a killer in an abandoned jail.

Nicoll, 25, is one of several area residents involved in "The Vessel," the sophomore feature film effort of Great Falls residents Stu Brumbaugh, Rory Schulte and Randy Barrett.

Filming began Monday night in the old Cascade County jail on 4th Street N. in Great Falls.

"It went really good," Brumbaugh said. "We got all the shots we need the first day."

The crew will continue filming 12 hours a day, six days a week for the next three weeks in various locations around the city.

The horror movie is about a group of paranormal investigators who go to an abandoned jail that is rumored to be haunted by the ghost of an inmate who was killed there 20 years earlier.

"Bad things start happening," Brumbaugh said

Brumbaugh also plays the main character, a troubled man with the capacity to channel spirits.

The eerie old jail, with walls covered in graffiti from inmates long gone, is well suited to a horror film.

"The great thing about this place is we don't have to dress anything," said director Terry Tychon.

Brumbaugh lived and worked in Hollywood for years, and he has held jobs on a lot of movie sets. He called in industry friends to help with "The Vessel," which he concedes is running on a low budget.

The actors are locals — the best of about 120 people who auditioned on Friday. Like Nicoll, they all have a little acting experience, but none has a lot.

"We were very lucky to find people that are authentic, very enthusiastic and they all have experience to some degree," Tychon said. "I'm pleased that Great Falls had such great talent to draw from."

Nicoll plays a photography intern working with the paranormal investigators — one of the pretty girls essential to a horror flick. She has a role in one of the film's many gory scenes.

"I think we all do," she said.

She learned about the auditions when the producers spotted her last week.

"They came to Machinery Row, where I work, and told me to come (to auditions)," she said. "So I did, just for fun."

It wasn't the first time she considered cinema, though.



Makeup artist Shelley Turk puts the finishing touches on Micah Hewett with Turk's daughter and assistant, Jessica Harris, looking on. Hewett of Great Falls is playing a data analyst on a team of paranormal investigators in "The Vessel," a horror flick being filmed in Great Falls. (tribune photos/zachary franz)

EXTRAS NEEDED FOR FILMING OF 'VESSEL'

A few extras are still needed for "The Vessel," a horror movie being filmed in Great Falls. Anyone interested can contact co-producer Rory Schulte at 899-9245 or by e-mail at jobs@yellowwoodfilms.com.

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"I think every girl thinks about acting at some point in her life," she said.

Most of the film is set in the jail at night, so shooting started with a 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. session. Despite being asked to work the grueling hours in addition to their everyday responsibilities, the upstart cast performed admirably, Brumbaugh said.

"They did really good," he said. "Everybody was a bunch of troupers, and they all really enjoyed it."

The film team's previous movie, "Iron Ridge," debuted in March in Great Falls. That film is set to go into distribution in international markets, but U.S. distribution has been held up by disputes about copyrighted music in the movie, Brumbaugh said. They hope to have DVDs available for sale in this area within a couple of months.

Brumbaugh is hoping to debut the "The Vessel" at the peak of horror season — Halloween.

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