

# Valley snapped up as site of film

## LOCALS PLAY BIG PART IN MURDER MYSTERY

BY CAROLINE RAMIAN  
TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

The production company Phoenix Rising Films is currently filming its first film, a feature-length murder mystery entitled "Cricket Snapper," in Northbridge and surrounding areas.

The film's screenwriter and director is Scotty Richard Stets, 34, who is from Northbridge. Although this is Stets' first film, he has an extensive background in the arts. He is a published author, and has been published in such as "Jazz Weekly," and has interviewed people such as Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel and musician Les Paul. Stets himself is a guitarist whose band, Phoenix Rising, has toured in areas such as Japan.

The basic storyline for Cricket Snapper was inspired by an actual event, based on an incident that took place in Quincy approximately three years ago. Stets thought the story would make a great movie, and while his band was touring in Japan he penned the script for it.

The basic premise of the movie is this: While visiting a dominatrix, a man suffers a heart attack and dies. Instead of calling the police, the woman and her boyfriend dump the body, but

they themselves are killed in the process. Stets said that while the film is based on a true story, much of the film is fiction.

A cricket snapper is something World War II paratroopers used to communicate, and it's also a piece of evidence in the movie. But as to what importance it holds, you'll just have to wait to find out.

The main point of the movie is there are two sides to everybody. Stets described this film as "Peyton Place-ish" meaning that over the course of the movie it is made clear that everyone has their dark secrets, and when something such as a death and a criminal investigation occur, many of these secrets are brought to the surface. Stets also said the play deals with small town politics the man who dies while visiting a dominatrix, for example, is a local selectman.

The director of photography is life-long Northbridge resident

Jerry Bagdasarian. At 81, Bagdasarian has years of experience in television and movies, and is a World War II veteran. Ironically enough that is how Stets and Bagdasarian first met — Stets wanted to interview Bagdasarian about his war experiences. Bagdasarian attended the Institute of Film and Television in New York. He later worked for Baystate Films, doing documentaries and industrial films. He worked with the cast and crew of The Twilight Zone television series and on the set of "Weekend for Peggy."

Together, the two have worked on creating what they hope is a great film. According to Bagdasarian, the cameraman doesn't do anything on his own. He collaborates with the director to create the shot they want.

The movie is being shot digitally. Stets recently hired Orlando Santos, who has an extensive background in film and television, to be the movie's producer. This ought to distribute some of the weight from Stets' shoulders, as he is not only the director and screenwriter, but also plays a lead role as character Alan McDermott. Stets describes his character as a "tragic figure," an American cop who has spent 10 years on a small-town police force, and now must pry into the lives of those around him as he investigates the murders. Stets describes the movie as "Film Noir." Bagdasarian and his daughter, Linda, also have roles in the movie.

"Cricket Snapper" is being filmed in Northbridge, Douglas and Uxbridge. So far, scenes have been shot in places such as the Linwood Dam, Douglas Town Square, even the Bagdasarians' backyard on Quaker Street. Stets credits local police for being "absolutely magnanimous" in helping with the movie. He said Northbridge Police Chief Thomas Melia, and Lt Ken Martin of the State Police helped create the realism in the movie. Police have given advice as to how to make the crime scenes and investigations in the film look believable.

Stets and Bagdasarian joined forces last September to create



Caroline Ramian photo

Scotty Richard Stets, left, and Jerry Bagdasarian, both of Northbridge, make sure they've got the right camera angle. Stets is directing "Cricket Snapper," a movie being filmed in and around Northbridge. Bagdasarian is director of photography.

this movie. Stephan Sandburg, who runs Cinema 320 in Worcester, is the assistant director of photography. Stets said he placed an ad on the New England Film Web site to recruit actors. The cast consists of about 20 actors from all over the state. The film will be about two hours long, and will be sent to film festivals, such as the one held in Nantucket, and festivals in Europe.

Stets has nothing but praise for the actors, and describes working with them as a "privilege." Despite the fact they are non-union and not paid, Stets says they have a high level of professionalism. Stets talked about one scene where two of his actors, Amy Silva and Jay Trenholm, were filming in five-degree temperatures in the snow at night, without complaint. He described another actor, Jon Sapphire, as being "a great person to work with."

"You have to respect them because they are ordinary people doing all sort of things because they are part of the story," said Bagdasarian.

Stets has almost single-handedly financed the film, having already put up about \$6,000 of his own money for the movie. His new producer will be in charge of getting sponsors.

Stets mentioned local salon Heavenly Hair as being a big help in terms of discounting products that were needed. He also said he and the cast members work together to come up with hair and makeup ideas, which makes

things a lot cheaper.

As for the content of the film, Stets said he "told the story the way it should be told," and he may decide to do an American version and a film festival version. Stets said he "pushed the envelope," in terms of the content, but thinks that American audiences are going to like the film.

As of now, the shooting is about halfway done. Stets and Bagdasarian hope to have shooting finished by October, and have the film edited in its entirety and ready to go by January.

Once it is finished, the film will go to different film festivals — by early next year — and there is the possibility a distributor may pick it up. If that happens it may be seen in theatres. In many cases, Stets noted, a movie won't be played in area theatres "not because it is a bad film, but because it is not owned by a corporation."

If a distributor doesn't pick up the movie, it will go directly to video.

Stets and Bagdasarian are hopeful. Stets describes his film as an old Greek moral story, and said he looked to writer, director and actor Orson Welles for inspiration.

Will there be another project for Phoenix Rising Films? Stets would prefer to answer that after production is complete. First, he wants to make sure he's not in the pothouse.

"It's like stocks," Stets said about the movie industry. "It's risky."

## Blackstone Valley TRIBUNE

## ACCURACY WATCH



The Blackstone Valley Tribune is committed to accuracy in all its news reports. Although numerous safeguards are in place to ensure accurate reporting, mistakes can occur. Confirmed fact errors will be corrected at the top right hand corner of page A3 in a timely manner.

If you find a mistake, call (508) 234-2107 during normal business hours. During non-business hours, leave a message in the editor's voice mailbox. The editor will return your phone call.

## CORRECTION

The date for a sidewalk sale in Uxbridge was incorrectly listed in the Aug. 13 issue of the Tribune. The sale will be held Saturday, Sept. 6. Also in that issue, due to a production error, the subhead for a page 1 story entitled, "Scaling New Heights" was incomplete. It should have read "Teen-aged organist keyed to God's music."

## PUBLIC MEETINGS

### Wednesday, Aug. 20

The Sutton Conservation Commission will meet in the Town Hall at 7 p.m.

The Blanchard School Feasibility Study Committee will meet at the Uxbridge Town Hall at 7 p.m.

### Monday, Aug. 25

The Douglas Finance Committee will meet in the Municipal Center at 7:15 p.m.

The Uxbridge Board of Selectmen will meet in the Town Hall at 7 p.m.

### Tuesday, Aug. 26

The Douglas Planning Board will meet in the Municipal Center at 7 p.m.

The Northbridge Planning Board will meet in the Town Hall at 7:15 p.m.

## ZBA to meet at Town Hall

UXBRIDGE — At a meeting of the Zoning Board of Appeals on Aug. 6 it was the consensus of the members of the board to hold all future meetings at the Uxbridge Town Hall, 21 South Main Street, Uxbridge.

For more information, (508) 234-2107.