

Film company focuses on story, character

Charlotte-based Dalliance Films plans production on gay-themed 'Timing'

by Matt Comer :: matt@goqnotes.com

"I'm for it," Blaine Miller humorously exclaimed when asked how he and his business partners identified their sexual orientation.

Miller, the creative force behind Charlotte-based Dalliance Films, has poured his heart and soul into writing and directing the up-and-coming film company's projects since they first incorporated in September 2008. Miller, who is gay, and partners D.J. Barton, Kathryn Taylor and Keith Sweeney have created something to be proud of — a film production company unwilling to shy away from important, interesting and compelling storylines and characters.

Currently, the team is working on editing and post-production for "Three for Dinner." It's their second short film — an 11-minute, 46-second thriller they hope will make a splash at top-tier festivals like Sundance.

"Three for Dinner" tells the story of a wealthy family who falls prey to a home invasion, but Dalliance's production materials caution: "Things aren't always as they seem. As fact is separated from fiction, the lines between criminal and victim are blurred in this gripping whodunit that celebrates the forties' style of film noir."

"The feel's period, but it is very much a current-day story," Taylor, a straight ally, said.

It's also the first time the company has shot with two cameras, a test run for their much-anticipated, gay-themed "Timing" — described by the company as "Three Men and a Baby" if all the men were gay and the baby was 17."

"Editing on 'Three for Dinner' was intense, because we were using two cameras at one time," Miller explained. "In the edit, we end up with twice as much footage to cut because we have two cameras rolling. It ended up being a longer process than usual, but it was a good test to see complications, if it will help or hinder us."

Taylor and the team still plan on shooting "Timing" with two cameras. The film, originally set for production this summer, has been pushed back to next year because of the

recession, but the film has been in the works for years.

"I met Blaine and D.J. on a movie set in Columbia back in 2002 and we became best friends," Taylor said. "Blaine had written 'Timing' while directing 'The Last Confederate.' Once I moved back to Charlotte we had worked on trying to get it produced through another production company. After lots of emails and letters and not much response we decided, 'You know what? Maybe we should just do this ourselves.'"

That's when the three brought in Sweeney, and Dalliance finally took shape. The four complement each other in ways that create a vibrancy needed for good business: Miller the creator, Barton on visual story and character, Sweeney on business and organization and Taylor working to connect the creative and business components together.

"Some of the challenges we were facing with 'Timing' — not being able to get anybody to accept or read the script — was because it was unsolicited material," Sweeney said. "We brainstormed ways around it, and figured if we couldn't get them to read 90 pages of a script maybe we could get them to watch four minutes of video. We took pieces of the full-length script, created a promo trailer in the four-six minute range that would tell the story. If we could catch their attention for four minutes, we'd stand a better chance of getting to read the script."



Actor Andrew Roth prepares for a scene during the filming of a trailer for Dalliance Films' feature, "Timing."

It wasn't meant to be. The trailer, shot in and around Charlotte, still didn't get the attention Dalliance needed. But, Sweeney said, the trailer "did get the ball rolling and really shaped our path for the year ahead."

As Dalliance got off its feet, they decided to focus on other projects, including "Three for Dinner." They also plan to start shooting "40 Fears," a dark comedy feature, later this year.

"40 Fears" presents an opportunity to get this out on the heels of 'Three for Dinner,'" Taylor said. "The hope then is that we can dis-

tribute it and we can strengthen our company for 'Timing.' We'll have shown we can make a film and follow through on it."

The company, even with three gay principals, doesn't identify itself as a gay film production company, Sweeney said. Regardless, the four all agree: some stories are just too important not to tell. In the broader media environment, Miller said, LGBT people are often still marginalized or sensationalized,

see *Dalliance* on 15

► online exclusive

Chapel Hill grad student takes on HIV/AIDS

Feature documentary is joint project with Winston-Salem's Tough Spun Studios

At 24 and as a graduate student at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, Julian Wooten is not your run-of-the-mill documentary producer or director. Yet, he's found a topic and issue for which he's intensely passionate and he's determined to turn that passion into a broader good.

Wooten has been filming interviews and other footage for his documentary, "Heart to HAART: The State of the HIV/AIDS Movement," since May's North Carolina AIDS Action Day. To get the project accomplished, he's teamed up with Justin Kuhn and Jessica Barker of the Winston-Salem-based Tough Spun Studios.

The documentary is an in-depth exploration of the state of the HIV/AIDS movement in North Carolina and comes at no better a time. This year, AIDS service providers, people living with AIDS and advocates have waged an uphill battle as funding for services failed to keep up with demand. In January, state officials capped new enrollment to the state's AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP), a cap that was lifted only slightly with the addition of an extra \$14 million to the program in this fiscal year's budget.

read the rest of this story at goqnotes.com



Julian Wooten, right, with interview subject Miss North Carolina Kristie Tobias