



Young filmmakers are ready to roll

Budding artists learn craft working on a full-length motion picture

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The wooden porch on Greenville's Elm Street is overflowing. There, away from the scorching summer sun, a film crew is taking a break from an all-day shoot of "Elizabeth Gunness," a new, full-length motion picture.

"The title character is a nice, respectable, older lady serial killer," quips crew member Greg Slattery, 18, milling around with 22-year-olds Cory Patton and Rebecca Davis, first and second assistant cameramen, and 18-year-old gaffer Austin Jennings.

They're part of a tightly knit group of more than a dozen young people initially nurtured at the Greenville County School District's Fine Arts Center by film teacher Eric Rogers. A 10-year veteran of the school, he's now their current boss and producer/director of "Elizabeth Gunness."

Rogers' production company, Anomaly LLC, is producing the \$250,000 character-study film.

The story digs deep into the mind of Gunness, a 52-year-old, sweet-as-iced-tea, small-town Southerner whose comely flower garden is richly nourished by the decomposing bodies of her victims.

To finance the movie, Rogers put together a comprehensive prospectus detailing the project for potential private investors, he says.

Along the way, he encountered lots of both luck and help.

The Copia Design ad agency did the film's marketing material as an in-kind service. The film came at a reduced price from Kodak — they even threw in extra free film



Cory Patton focuses the camera during a filming session. He's the first assistant cameraman for the project.

— while a Miami-based lab gave his company a great deal on processing the film, Rogers says. Other contributors continue to shore up the effort in other ways, such as donating food — a \$100-a-day expense — to feed the crew and cast, he says.

Now halfway through the shoot that began on June 28 and ends July 19, Rogers expects to spend the next six months editing his movie.

As for the crew, he says he needed to look no further than the Upstate.

“These guys already know what they’re doing,” says Roger, 34. “I don’t really have to tell them a lot.”

Gaffer Jennings, for example, will attend the North Carolina School of the Arts in September to study filmmaking.

For University of South Carolina student Patton, the movie serves as his internship, the final requirement to earn his diploma in filmmaking.

He works full throttle behind the camera. It would take many years to get that kind of job in New York or Hollywood, he says, so “I’m most grateful for the opportunity. This is a high-up position, and for me to be able to put this on my resume is invaluable.”

Another way to build a resume in this business is to enter film festivals as often as you can afford it and hope you get accepted, Rogers says.

Patton, for example, has made one short film that he has submitted to six festivals. “I hope to make it into at least a couple of them.”

Film festivals have a way of changing one’s life, adds Rogers. While still a student at Bob Jones University, a film he made won coveted international Bronze Cindy award from the Association of Visual Communications.

Now his goal is to enter “Elizabeth Gunness,” starring Wendy Overly — a former drama teacher at Clemson — into as many major film festivals as possible, including Telluride and Sundance, he says.

Want to know more about the movie? Go to www.elizabethgunness.com.