

my film diary

THE PERPETUAL FAIRY TALE

US-\$ 2500 AND A GOOD IDEA

TEXT: GARY McLEOD PHOTOS: DERRICK KING

► At the very start of 2008, as the winter wind sent the mercury in the thermometers ever lower and the snow drifts incessantly higher, the four filmmakers of Head Juice Productions gathered to begin conspiring on our next film project. We convened in a warm, quiet corner of the Steam Plant Grill in our hometown of Spokane, Washington. With cold drinks in hand, surrounded by the aroma of brewing beer and baking bread, the ideas began to emerge and take

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shape. The only certainty in the beginning was that we would be shooting on B&W celluloid, a combination of super 8 and 16mm, because we have no interest in shooting video. The story headed in many different directions in those first few months, with segments withering and dying as others sprouted up and began to bloom. Each week in our dim corner we continued to sculpt our raw visualizations, until we had the frame-

work for a strange little fairy tale. Our tale centers on a pious chef as he prepares a meal for three universally known dinner guests. As each guest arrives bearing gifts for the chef, it quickly becomes apparent that the illusions from childhood must go on, even after we have discarded our belief in them. We wanted our story to deal with themes such as lost innocence, changing beliefs, faith, and skepticism.

To achieve the desired fairy tale ambience, we decided to design and construct the set ourselves. We had US-\$2500 and a free equipment rental package provided by Northwest Film Forum for winning their short film competition with our previous film "What's in the Barn?", so with that money in hand, we began the search for a space to rent. That was a shocking lesson in real estate economics! Every time we discovered a space with potential, the price was significantly beyond our budget.

Finally, with stoic acceptance, we decided to rent one of the outrageously priced units we felt met our needs and worry about the financial consequences as they arose. After all the necessary paperwork was complete, we stood in a large empty room, with a tiny office at one end and an equally minuscule bathroom at the other. The place had high ceilings, enormous garage



The four guys from Headjuice Productions.



Building the set. Constructing arches.

doors at either end, and the stench of old motor oil and rubber tires. In other words, it was perfect!

Construction began almost immediately. We bought the cheapest deteriorated lumber we could find and started framing walls. The wood was so decayed, splintered,

and warped that nothing came together straight. Every wall was twisted and askew, and we couldn't have been happier. Exercising our most frugal tendencies, we started crafting everything out of the two most thrifty materials we could find, cardboard and paper

maché. The walls, the fireplace, bookshelves, and even the books themselves were all fabricated with our makeshift building supplies. It wasn't long before the smell of wet flour paste had conquered that of the oil and tires. The interior of the chef's cottage

started coming to life in a wild blend of German Expressionism and Dr. Suess whimsy. Everything was angled and tilted to the point of collapse, with objects leaning precariously off every edge. We want this room to be nearly impassible with clutter and in an alarm-

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The kitchen set: Shelves for bottles and bric-a-brac.



Ready to shoot: set 1.



Ready to shoot: Set 2.

ing state of disrepair. This chaos emphasized the frantic state of the chef as he rushed to prepare dinner for his guests.

We began creating the set in April and planned to commence filming in July. But a disconcerting revelation presented itself to us: building a set takes a long time! Every weekend we got a little further and the anticipation built a little more. Now, with funding coming from our own pockets, we gaze at a constantly evolving set and wonder when our film will ever be complete, yet almost hoping that this fairy tale never ends. ■



HeadJuice Productions
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