

Where the Talk Is of Filmmaking

By SAXON HENRY

RON HOWARD shot several scenes for "A Beautiful Mind" at the Lenoir Nature Preserve in Yonkers. Adrian Lynn shot scenes for "Unfaithful" in white Plains, Mamaroneck, Dobbs Ferry, Tarrytown and Irvington. and Steven Spielberg recently came to Yonkers to film a scene for "Catch Me if You Can," a new movie starring Leonardo DiCaprio that is still under production. A group of lesser-known directors, who meet to network as the Westchester Film Group, also use Westchester scenery as a backdrop for their films.

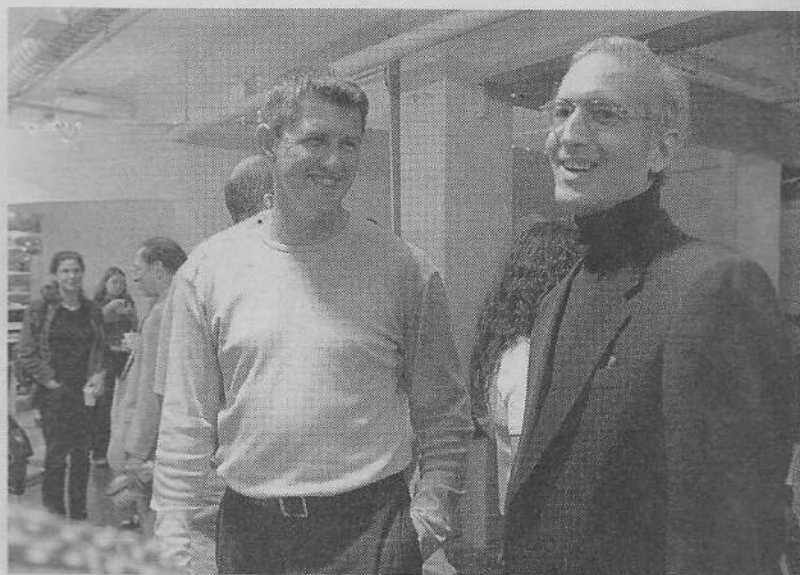
Comparing the County's north/south highways — all directed toward Manhattan — with the film industry in Westchester, one writer and director, Ethan Wiley of Millwood, said: "I consider the film group to be the horizontal freeway that's missing in cinematic networking in Westchester."

Larry Karabaic, a photographer, videographer and film professor at the College of Mount St. Vincent in Riverdale, agreed. "New filmmakers get out in the industry and find that they can't get a job unless their father has connections," he said. "This group can provide the skills and the connections they need to make a film."

Mr. Karabaic, a Thornwood resident, is one of the longest-standing members of the group, which has been meeting since 1997. He has been passionate about film since he was a child, and, he said, much has changed in the industry since the time he took his first job as a gofer on the set of "On the Waterfront."

"A filmmaker doesn't have to have \$200,000 to make a film anymore," he said, explaining that the advent of video had reduced costs and opened the field to a wider range of directors and producers.

Two members of the group have produced films with the help of other members. Eugene John Bellida of Mount Vernon and Michael Stabile of Ossining, pulled their cinematographer, producer, gaffer and many of the cast and crew from the group for their first short, "Empty Places," the story of a girl whose life is not what she supposes it to be. They tapped many of the same professionals for their second short, "Jake," a 16-millimeter documentary film about a boy with autism. Jonathan Kaplan, a writer who won the award for best screenplay at this year's third Annual Westchester Film Festival and one of the group's original



Richard L. Harbus for The New York Times

Members of the Westchester Film Group, Jim Evans, left, and Jonathan Kaplan, at meeting of the group in Irvington.

organizers, now has a short, "The Pitch," a three-minute film about pitching movie ideas in Hollywood, in preproduction as a result of contacts made through the organization.

Jim Evans, a Scarsdale architect who writes and directs films through his production company Dead On Films, said: "We have a solid network of people that keeps us from having to trek into New York City all the time. With digital video, we've almost become self-sufficient up here. It's surprising how many people are involved in film in Westchester. They should call it Hollywood on Hudson."

Mr. Evans's short, "Form, Space & Murder," a film about an architect and his client from hell, was screened at the Long Island Film Festival in 1997 and at the first Westchester County Film Festival in 2000.

Diane Cricchio, the founder of TimeLine Video, an Irvington company involved in production and postproduction work for film and video, attended a meeting of the group for the first time last September.

"I'm here looking for product," she said, "hoping people will send me scripts that I can sell."

Meetings often take place in a variety of Westchester locations, like The Big House, an Emmy Award winning editing facility in Ossining; Dubs and Sprockets, an editing and recording studio in Mount Kisco; and Blue Sky/VIFX Productions in White Plains, which has produced digital special effects for feature films like "The X Files Movie," "Fight Club" and "Titanic."

The organization's members — now about 300 — pay no membership dues. Mr. Kaplan said the group was applying for nonprofit status so it could raise grant money, which would enable it to broaden programming and bring in speakers from outside Westchester. For now, the group is dependent upon members for places to meet.

This may change with the opening of the Center for Digital Arts at Mercy College in White Plains, which will have a screening room. Dr. Peter Slater, dean of the college, said: "The facility will be small, with 50 or 60 fixed seats, and will have professional sound and lighting, as well as a small screen. We hope it will be used by groups, such as this one, on a regular basis."

The group's next meeting, on Wednesday, will take place in the new center at the college.

At the meeting on Wednesday, representatives from Sony Corporation will show a compilation of digital shorts, "Dreams," and will demonstrate Sony's CineAlta High Definition video movie camera that captures video images at the 24 frames-per-second speed of film. "This is the first Westchester public showing of the breakthrough technology that enabled the director, George Lucas, to make 'Star Wars: Episode II,' the first mass-marketed movie shot entirely on videotape," said Mr. Kaplan.

The group's Web site, www.westchesterfilm.homestead.com, has more information about programs.

Huffman



Includes:
\$699

NO monthly payments or taxes

CONNECTICUT
STAMFORD (203) 322-3039
NORWALK (203) 853-6500

Mon. thru Sat. 10 - 9, Sun. Noon - 6 • Indicate

Professional Design Ser

*Subject to credit approval on your Huffman Koons credit payments and no interest until January 2004. All orders & your account is kept current, the variable Standard Rate percentage points (20.4% as of 6/3/02) will apply to all discount offer excludes reduced floor sample clearance 7-210-01 Cash discount may exclude certain products