

Sun chasers

Local film company debuts production

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of basketball," says the director, who with his family recently moved from Hartland to Venice, Calif., where Carroll is opening Sundog's West Coast office.

The screenplay is the work of respected New York writer Michael Clary. Clary says the inspiration for "Camus' Shoes" was the 20th anniversary of Woodstock — a happening that struck like a knife at the heart of Fred Tilliebaum.

In the film, shot in five nights on location in Ann Arbor, Fred confesses to Camus that he wasn't even at Woodstock. Not only that, he knows all the words to the Carpenters' songs — further proof his life is an utter failure.

FAILURE is a word foreign to Sundog, headquartered in a spacious, fieldstone-and-gingerbread centennial farmhouse on Twelve Mile Road just west of Farmington Road. It's been seven years since Carroll left a highly successful position as vice president of Detroit's J. Walter Thompson to found Sundog and pursue his first love — directing.

With a winning team that includes directors Werner Hinkka and Barry Meier (who served as "Camus' Shoes" director of photography), Sundog has acquired an impressive array of clients.

Among them are Oldsmobile, Cadillac, Chrysler, Dodge, Ford, Chevrolet, Jeep/Eagle, Pontiac, GMC Truck, Delco Electronics, the Partnership for Drug-Free America, and

Michigan National Bank.

Filmed in Detroit-area sound stages and on location in California, Oregon, Washington, Montana, Utah, Arizona and Colorado, Sundog commercials have captured Telly, Mobius, Cannes and Clio awards. Industry leaders and trade publications such as "Screen," "Zooming In" and "Spotlight" have recognized Carroll as the preeminent director of automotive commercials.

So why risk big bucks in a costly feature production?

Not just to pursue a dream, Krajewski says, but "to show people we are film makers. When you think of the film business, you think of Hollywood. But that doesn't mean it's no done anywhere else. This movie will have people perceiving us a little differently."

"Detroit suffers a bad rap for a lot of reasons," added Krajewski. Sundog's marketing chief. "A lot of work is generated out of this city, even in these tough economic times."

"Michigan has produced a lot of talented people, and some of them still live here," agreed Janz, Sundog Productions' treasurer and a friend of Carroll's since college days.

Many members of Sundog's regular film crew assisted on the project. "I hate to use the saying, 'give something back,' but it's what we did," Krajewski said.

"This film will tell everyone, 'Here's this little company in Farmington Hills that actually went out and did a film,'" said Janz, a Plymouth

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— Larry Carroll
Sundog Productions Inc.

outh resident. They're serious about what they're doing. It will get a lot of heads turning."

Proving to the industry that you're a versatile film company can only help in the current economy, especially in light of the fierce and ever-growing competition among directors from around the globe, added Janz.

CARROLL PLANS to continue working in commercial film, but isn't ruling out another feature film, dramatic television, cable projects or theatrical releases.

No matter the pursuit, Carroll will never need to re-name his company.

Carroll said he chose the name after reading Jim Harrison's novel "Sundog."

"People are used to seeing the ring around the moon. It can happen around the sun, too," said Carroll. "On that ring, you can sometimes see more than one moon, sun, or sundog. To chase the sun, or dog the sun, is our business. It's what we do. When we're on location, we're concerned with when the sun comes up. The direction we shoot is based on where the sun is. Even on the stage, we're establishing a light source. I feel like we're always chasing the sun."

Carroll says the idea behind "Camus' Shoes" was to have a chance to "develop a character, nuance, a script and dialogue; nuance the delivery, and at the same time hopefully make people laugh a bit and have a good time." Fred, he says, really is all of us, examining ourselves at a time when the millennium looms just around the corner.

"For a first film, it couldn't have taken place in a better state with better people," Carroll said. "Having just moved to California, I'm thrilled with my time in Michigan and will miss that time, place and those people sorely. I just have this sad, sad feeling it will never be quite as good. I hope I'm wrong."

City addresses flooding woes

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Residents came to an early November meeting of the city council to voice their complaints about basement flooding, after several had thousands of dollars in damage which their insurance companies would not cover. The city scheduled Monday's meeting as an informational session to give a history of the subdivision flooding problems and explain the solutions.

City officials promised to keep residents apprised of the sewer monitoring, and Mayor William Hartsock pledged to hold another meeting in the spring or summer of 1992 where the issue would be addressed.

In a matter unrelated to the basement flooding but also frustrating to residents, several neighbors rallied on the Farmington Public Schools about a recently completed renovation of the athletic field at Farmington High School.

One resident said the district "lied from the beginning" about the project, which he said left water standing in residents' back yards.

School trustee James Abernethy, who attended Monday's city meeting with district architect Ron Allen, promised the problem would be addressed and invited the residents to a board meeting Tuesday night to discuss their concerns.

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