



Directs film:
Paul Cushi-
eri (center)
directs the
filming of
"Right of Re-
fusal" at a
Farmington
Hills loca-
tion.

Film from page 1A

at Livonia's Detroit Race Course one day last week. DRC regulars put money on horses with names like Show Me Yours as crew members set up shots and actors struggled to stay warm in the biting cold.

The actors, some of whom have appeared on stage locally, are enthusiastic about the project. "It shows the good and the bad," said Charlie Saad, who plays the

protagonist in the film. "There's a lot of good, some bad, but that's the way life is."

Saad spoke about the diverse backgrounds of Arab Americans, and said the movie is realistic in terms of its portrayal of them. "Most movies showing Arabs show them as terrorists. That's really cruel."

"This kind of movie has not been made before," said Ali Fadallah, another actor.

lah, another actor.

"If he wants to make a movie with Chuck Norris," Fadallah said, indicating a fellow actor, "he doesn't want to be the Arab guy Chuck Norris wants to shoot." The actors said they were drawn to the project in part because the script does not stereotype Arab Americans and shows a positive side of Arab-American life.

They said they are also impressed with what they called Cuschi-eri's talent and compassion.

Saad said, "Paul is real talented. He's a perfectionist. He's not satisfied until he's got a perfect shot." Cuschi-eri's outlook, Saad said, is evenhanded. "For every negative ... of an ethnic group, Paul shows a positive."

The Kid Stays ... has enlisted a crew of area residents, most with

other local film productions to their credit, including the feature-length "Hoffa," "Presumed Innocent" and "Chameleon Street."

Filming began Nov. 11 in Greentown, then moved to the basement of a Livonia office building, set up to look like a police station. Other locations include Players Billiards Bar & Grill and Heritage Park, both in Farmington Hills. The Detroit-area setting will be apparent

in the movie, Cuschi-eri said. Noah Krugel of Southfield, who is working on a master's degree in film at Wayne State University, said, "I thought this would be a good way to see how movies are made."

The days are long for cast and crew members. Some arrived at DRC as early as 6 a.m. Shoots often stretch well into the evening, but this day was wrapped up before 5 p.m.

Longtime friends collaborate to depict one man's struggles

By MATT JACHMAN

STAFF WRITER

Two longtime friends have teamed up to bring a fictional account of one man's struggles to the screen.

Their own struggles, they say, are assured of success.

The Kid Stays ... Productions — Paul Cuschi-eri and Carl Lang — has recruited a cast and crew and begun filming "Right of Refusal" in locations around the Detroit metropolitan area.

"Right of Refusal" is about a second-generation Arab American trying to deal with two cultures as he works to discover himself. But Cuschi-eri and Lang said its themes are universal.

Cuschi-eri, the screenwriter and director, and Lang, the producer, are hoping to get the film to the prestigious Sundance Film Festival next year. So far, the production is on schedule.

The two met in the ninth grade at Catholic Central High. Earlier this year, Cuschi-eri, who wrote "Right of Refusal" a year ago, called on Lang, then in New York City, to handle the business side of things.

Cuschi-eri and Lang, both in

their early 30s, talked about their project at Detroit Race Course in Livonia after wrapping a shoot one day last week.

Cuschi-eri, a slim, intense man with tousled reddish hair who wears a tie on the set "out of respect for the medium," works with abused and neglected children at the St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Home for Children in Farmington Hills.

He studied philosophy and letters for a year at St. Louis University, in preparation for entering the priesthood. But his film studies, he said, have been at "the university of United Artists, the university of West River."

Cuschi-eri, of Farmington, is a self-described "movie junkie" and said his influences are "very eclectic" and include Martin Scorsese ("Raging Bull," "Goodfellas"), Spike Lee ("Do the Right Thing," "Clockers") and Whit Stillman ("Metropolitan," "Barcelona").

Other influences, he said, are his family and everyday experiences.

Despite the bleakness depicted in the movies of Scorsese ("a huge influence"), Cuschi-eri describes

himself as an optimist. "There is more good than bad in people," he said.

He is a fan of the Detroit Film Theatre, but of art movies in general, he said. "A lot of them are like 'The Emperor's New Clothes.'"

Cuschi-eri and Lang both praised the communities and establishments that have cooperated in getting them access to locations that include a park and a pool lounge in Farmington Hills and Livonia's DRC.

"Locations like this give our movie more legitimacy," said Lang, of Livonia, a New York actor before joining forces with Cuschi-eri.

Lang has been raising money for the movie through private investors, who he said will profit according to how well the movie fares.

Lang talks excitedly of the film's potential for success — both commercially and on the 1996 film festival circuit. Cuschi-eri, who has directed a couple of short films, is more low-key.

"If we tell a story and I'm happy with it, I'll be happy," he said.

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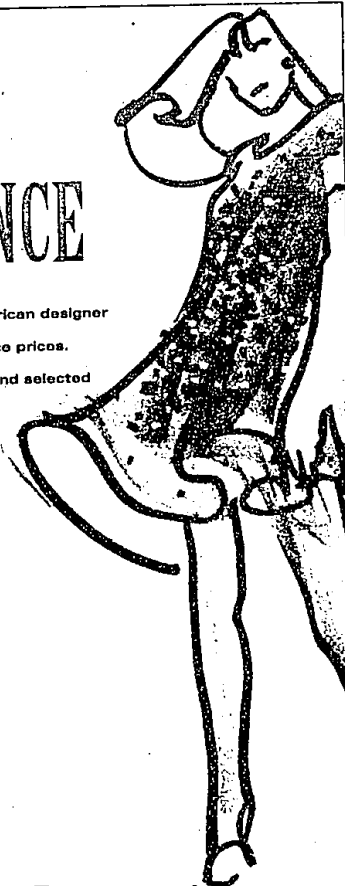
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FARMINGTON FOCUS

Light up the season

The city of Farmington Hills invites the public to celebrate the start of the holiday season with Mayor Aldo Vagnotzi and Jolly Old St. Nick.

People can help throw the switch that will light up City Hall at 11 Mile and Orchard Lake roads at 6 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 23.

Activities will begin with the Farmington Community Chorus leading the group in singing holiday songs. Vagnotzi then will oversee the holiday lighting of City Hall. Children will be able to visit Santa in the city council chamber. Refreshments will be served.

More Christmas lights

The Farmington Area Jaycees will present the group's 10th-annual Christmas tree lighting ceremony at 6:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 2, at the Farmington Historical Museum, 33800 Grand River, Farmington.

There will be caroling by candlelight and hot chocolate. Special guests will be Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus. The public is invited to the free event. Call 477-8227 for more information.

Used instruments sale

Attention anyone wishing to buy or sell a band or orchestra instrument and other music items: A used instrument sale will be held 7-8:30 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 5, in the cafeteria of East Middle School, 25000 Middlebelt, Farmington Hills.

All sales will be between buyer and seller. Those bringing items to sell will be asked to donate \$2 per item to cover cost of space and advertising. For more information, call 489-3412.

College reaches out

William Tyndale College in Farmington Hills is sponsoring a Christmas Community Outreach Program.

Clothing and nonperishable food will be collected through Dec. 7 to benefit the Detroit Rescue Mission, Genesis House II and Farmington Neighborhood House.

Donations (sweatshirts, gloves, children's gifts and paper products) may be dropped off at the school, 35700 W. 12 Mile Road, or pickups may be arranged by calling Katrina McGuire at 583-7200.

Items for Farmington Focus may be mailed to the Farmington Observer, 33411 Grand River, Farmington 48335; faxed to 477-9723; or dropped off at the newspaper office. For the computer list, the Internet E-mail address is: pucky@oonline.com.