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Last modified Thursday, July 17, 2008 7:10 PM PDT



Local filmmaker Dylan Reynolds offered advice Tuesday to youngsters attending the Summer Youth Film Camp in Temecula. (Photo by David Carlson - staff photographer)

TEMECULA: Filmmaker comes home

By NICOLE SACK - Staff Writer

Dylan Reynolds might have been living in the center of the entertainment industry in Burbank, but when it came time to make his first film, he looked to Lake Elsinore for inspiration.

Reynolds, 27, spent three years living in Temecula, albeit nearly a decade ago. But the impression made by the people he encountered and the unconventional beauty he saw in Southwest County stayed with him as he brainstormed ideas for his first cinematic endeavor.

The result of his efforts is a dramatic film, "Chain Link," which is based upon events that occurred and acquaintances he met while living the region. The 97-minute film has started to make the film festival rounds, and already has won the Audience Choice Award for Best Feature Film at the 2008 Method Fest this April in Calabasas.

The film will be shown at the Temecula Valley International Film & Music Festival, which takes place Sept. 17 to 21.

According to Reynolds, the movie is about a recently released prisoner who is trying to reconcile with his estranged girlfriend and son, but he keeps messing up.

"The movie doesn't have the answers, it's just observation," he said.

His inspiration for the film was drawn from situations that made him consider how a seemingly good person can end up in a desperate situation. He also thought of a friend he knew in Lake Elsinore who ended up in jail after a traffic stop ---- not a bad person, just someone facing an unfortunate set of circumstances.

Reynolds' family moved to Temecula in 1998. He began taking classes at Mt. San Jacinto College and later graduated from CSU Northridge with a marketing degree, which he said he hasn't yet used.

"When I was a kid, I was really into (Steven) Spielberg movies and drawing comic books," said Reynolds, who dressed up as the E.T. director one Halloween.

He paid special attention to the wave of early-1990 films, such as those being produced by Quentin Tarantino and "Clerks," directed by Kevin Smith. The idea of making movies with little money intrigued him. So, with his credit cards and newfound debt that followed, he set out to do just that and created his feature film.

The shoot took about 15 days in Lake Elsinore, Murrieta and Aguanga, he said.

"It's like you live a lifetime on a movie shoot," he said. "You work 14-hour days, stop sleeping and hygiene goes out the window."

◆ Reynolds lent his expertise as an award-winning producer, director and writer to Summer Film Camp in Temecula where he spoke with students Tuesday.

This is the second year of the two-week youth film camp. The short films created at the camp by the 14- to 18-year-old students will be shown at this year's film festival.

The camp was designed to improve the students' skills and provide inspiration to the young filmmakers.

"We want to bring in a wide range filmmakers to lend their expertise to these kids," said Bev Hoffman, who works with film festival.

Reynolds, who doesn't look much older than the students, didn't know what to expect before his session with the Master Class.

"I want to show them my process, but mostly I just want to answer their questions," he said. "Hopefully, I won't kill their dreams."

Reynolds laughs when he thinks of some of the criticism he's encountered as he has pursued his filmmaking aspirations.

"You can't help but listen to it, but I think I've learned how to balance it," he said of people who have suggested he pursue a more typical career. "It's weird that you get discouraged when you go into a creative field. For some reason, people just want you to work in a cubical."