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THE SUDBURY STAR

Sudbury Star (ON)

Front, Friday, August 10, 2007, p. A1

Sudbury road trip subject of feature film

Feature film puts city in spotlight

First-time director sells his possessions to follow his dream

Laura Stradiotto

From the brainless Road Trip to the critically acclaimed Thelma and Louise, plenty of movies have used the premise of the road trip.

But a trip from Sudbury to Toronto, that's a route many of us have taken. For Adam Santangelo, it sets the stage for his film, "Half a Person."

The Mississauga native's first feature-length film premieres at Cinefest Sudbury, which runs Sept. 15-23.

Shot over three weeks in 2005 in Sudbury and Toronto, "Half a Person" is about two longtime best friends from the Nickel City, one heterosexual and the other gay, whose friendship is put to the test during their travels.

"I wanted to play with the idea of two male best friends and what the tension might be like, given the dynamic," Santangelo, 30, said from Toronto.

"I thought it would be interesting to start the story in Sudbury, just because I thought it would be interesting to see what it might be like for characters in those circumstances to come from a town like Sudbury and to visit the big city of Toronto and follow that archetypal journey from a smaller city to a larger one."

Santangelo never lived in Sudbury and only heard about it from his best friend, who was born here.

Nonetheless, he thought it essential the story was set in "authentic Ontario locations" rather than shooting just in Toronto and pretending it was the North. The film focuses on Sudbury landmarks like the Big Nickel, the Superstack, the city's water tower and bus station.

"Half a Person" is Santangelo's first film, although he has been writing for some time.

His work first appeared in Marvel Comics, when, at 18, he sold two Spider-Man scripts to the comic book empire.

He studied creative writing at York University and worked as an analyst in a call centre for five years before taking the plunge into the film industry.

The only obstacle: no money.

"It's an ambition I've had for at least the past six or seven years," Santangelo said about making a low-budget film.

"I started doing a lot of research into other films that have been made for 10, 20 or 30 thousand dollars, really negligible amounts of money by film standards."

As Santangelo wrote the script, he tried to figure out how he would pay for it. He applied for government

grants and tried to secure private funding, but without success.

"Finally, I just said to myself, 'What do I have in my bank account now? What kind of film can I make with that?'"

Santangelo had about \$10,000 he was saving and, from there, "worked backwards" to budget the film.

"It's actually pretty amazing what you can accomplish if you budget realistically and pull in a lot of favours," he said.

"This was basically my life savings and everything I had. I just couldn't think of anything better to spend it on. This is what I really, really want to do with my life."

Santangelo spent a year and a half as a production assistant in the film industry, allowing him to make some crucial contacts. He called up a casting director, told her about his project, sent his script and she cast the film for him for a "relatively small amount of money."

"When I started writing the script, I was the same age the lead characters. I was 27 at the time," said Santangelo.

"And I tend to have a lot of friends I hung on to for many, many years. You get yourself in these situations where it becomes a love-hate relationship."

"And I thought it would be interesting to explore that love-hate relationship and to show a relationship coming apart from the seams."

"Half a Person" will be screened as part of Cinefest's Northern

Connections program, which highlights films that showcase the North and northern talent.

"I pretty much did this (film) in a relative vacuum," said Santangelo.

"To have Cinefest respond was some of the best news I've ever had in my life."

Figure:

Director Adam Santangelo (centre) discusses a scene with actors Emilio DelSordo (left) and Nigel Smith on the set of "Half a Person." The film, about two friends' trip from Sudbury to Toronto, will premiere at Cinefest next month. photo supplied to the sudbury star

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THE SUDBURY STAR

Sudbury Star (ON)

Greater Sudbury, Thursday, September 20, 2007, p. A6

CINEFEST

Sudbury starting point for silver screen road trip

Joel Desbois

Sudburians can look forward to seeing local landmarks on the screen this weekend as a feature shot in part in Sudbury prepares for its world premiere at Cinefest Sudbury.

Adam Santangelo's "Half A Person" is a dramedy about two friends who have grown too close for comfort and decide to road trip from their hometown to Toronto. Along the way the boys - one gay, one straight - encounter all sorts of trouble and life-altering experiences.

"Basically, it's a feature we shot for a micro-budget of about \$10,000, which came out of my bank account," says Santangelo, who is the film's writer, director and producer. "The whole thing came from the whole idea of friendship and growing up and making those choices. Sort of just outgrowing your friends, but still wanting to hold on to those relationships."

Originally from Mississauga, Santangelo had never been to Sudbury when he decided to make it the starting point of his film.

After realizing that a road trip from Mississauga to Toronto would not

make for an interesting ride, Santangelo says he opened up a map and found the city of nickel jumping out at him.

"I have a friend who grew up in the Sudbury area, so it just jumped out at me and I decided that's where I would set part of the story," he says.

It wasn't until Santangelo brought a camera and a few crewmembers up North that he realized how fitting the community was for his storyline.

"I had a sense of what it was all about and I had my view of Sudbury as an outsider but I hadn't been here until we actually came up with a camera and tried finding distinct places to shoot," says Santangelo.

"We shot for two days here. To be honest most of the stuff we shot here was just exterior locations and stuff like that because we had such a small budget we couldn't afford to bring too much apparatus over to Sudbury with us. So a lot of the interior shots were filmed in Toronto, but we made an effort to get as much local stuff as we could and incorporate it into the film so you really get a feel for the town."

A 30-year-old graduate of York University's creative writing program, "Half A Person" marks Santangelo's filmmaking debut and he says it was quite the learning experience.

With "Half A Person" screening on Saturday at 1:30 p.m. Santangelo will be spending the entirety of Cinefest in Sudbury to take in the sights of the festival.

Boxe(s):

Schedule

Noon - "Ten Canoes;"

12:30 p.m. - "Toxic Trespass w/ Binty;"

1 p.m. - "Les Chansons D'Amours;"

1:30 p.m. - "12:08 East Bucharest;"

2:30 p.m. - "Surviving My Mother;"

3:30 p.m. - "Nanking;"

4:30 p.m. - "Shorts of International Intrigue;"

5 p.m. - "Killing Zelda Sparks;"

7 p.m. - "Silk"

8:30 p.m. - "La Vie en Rose;"

9:15 p.m. - "Poor Boy's Game."

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