

## A city of artists forms a network for Jamaica Plain's 'Circuit'

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JAMAICA PLAIN — Lately it seems as though a little bit of Hollywood glamour has been creeping into Boston. Academy Award winning movies like “The Departed” were shot here and celebrities like John Travolta swing by to promote their movies (and bring traffic to a crawl).

Boston is not just for Hollywood types though.

One of the films currently in production around town is not being made by a big Hollywood studio. In fact this film’s projected budget is \$65,000; microscopic by Hollywood studio measurements.

“Circuit” is a surreal sci-fi movie that the director Andrew Landauro calls a cross between the eerie atmosphere and stark images of David Cronenberg and the flat out silliness of “The Simpsons.”

The stories that make up “Circuit” are based on the five human senses. Each story can be told separately, but ultimately they are tied together by one connection that brings all the characters and stories together.

So far, four out of the five stories have been filmed. On March 26 the Alchemist Lounge in Jamaica Plain hosts the “Circuit” Benefit Art Auction in order to raise completion funds for the movie’s final segment - “Sound.”

Landauro is careful about giving too much of “Circuit’s” plot away, but he would say that strange glowing pods affect characters in all five storylines in a way that affects their senses. Landauro described the pods as multi-faced metaphors that represent fear, love, technology and even gossip.

“[The stories] intertwine and they interconnect, but yet they can stand on their own as individual stories too,” Landauro said. “It’s like a puzzle. Each piece having its own image and once those are put together the full image comes out.”

Landauro and producer Becky Robbins have been working together on the film for a little over a year, but Landauro has been working on the film for over five years in total.

He and co-writer Ben Woodard – who is also the movie’s editor – came up with the idea while waiting in line for a concert.

“We actually came up with the ending first,” Landauro said. “We thought that it was a pretty cool idea and we went back and forth with it. It just started to snowball from there.”

For over a year Landauro and Woodard wrote the script until they had it the way they wanted it.

The sci-fi genre usually lends itself to special-effects-laden summer blockbusters. Although “Circuit” has its share of special effects, Landauro likes to think the eye candy is there to propel the story, and not just to dazzle. He sees the movie as a character drama, citing the late Robert Altman’s film “Nashville” as one of the influences from which he and Woodard drew while writing.

Along with richly drawn characters, Landauro is also interested in making sure that “Circuit” is told in a way that is different than what viewers have come to expect.

“We were very aware of wanting to tell a story in a unique way - in terms of structure and non-linear form and also in images,” Landauro said. “And let the story stream and move in and out of different peoples lives to achieve a fluidity wrapped around a motif of someone dealing with an eruption, or malfunction of the sense in this sort of odd sci-fi world.”

Because of the film’s unique story structure, the parts of the film could be uniquely marketed. Landauro and Robbins agree that the movie could be told either as a feature film, or also broken apart into short movies as well.

“It can be digested in smaller bits or as a whole piece,” Robbins said.

The ability to be able to break the film up into smaller pieces is very appealing - especially in the light of the iPod’s video versatility.

Robbins says that one marketing idea might be to make two of the five stories available as free online downloads. The remaining three stories would be included with the whole of “Circuit” on DVD.

Landauro feels that with the popularity of Web sites like [www.YouTube.com](http://www.YouTube.com) and [www.MySpace.com](http://www.MySpace.com), the time is right for marketing movies to people with specific tastes.

“We’re in the position now with technology where this is pretty exciting because 10 years ago we wouldn’t have had this marketing option,” Robbins said. “That could be a great way to build the interest.”

Robbins also says that they plan on trying to get “Circuit” shown at local and national film festivals.

So far, Boston businesses, and businesses in surrounding communities, have been very supportive of the production.

The owner of the Breakfast Club in Allston allowed Landauro and Robbins’ crew free reign of the diner after hours. The Coolidge Corner Theater in Brookline allowed them to film in and around the theater.

“They just gave us the keys and told us to lock up when we were done,” Robbins said.

One of the sponsors of the upcoming art auction is Jamaica Plain’s The Video Underground.

Owner Evonne Hyla Wetzner tries to use her store to help support independent filmmakers in the Boston area. They’ve hosted DVD release parties and in-store screenings of independent films.

“There are tons of independent filmmakers in Boston,” Wetzner said.

Landauro and Robbins hope that the “Circuit” Benefit Art Auction will help with funding for the production. They hope the event brings in several thousand dollars.

Approximately 35 artists are on board to contribute to the art auction, which will feature contemporary and abstract art including prints, photos, sculpture, paintings and more. Seventy percent of the proceeds go to “Circuit,” while the remaining 30 percent goes to the artist.

Some of the artists, however, such as Mary Derr have chosen to donate all of their proceeds to the funding of the movie. Her normal medium is abstract paintings on un-stretched canvas. However for the auction she will be donating some of her small, framed drawings based on her painting.

Derr has known Landauro and Robbins since “Circuit” was just an idea. She’s even helped out on the movie as an art-director.

“It’s great to see how far the project has come since Andrew first told me about it,” Derr said.

Athalie Paynting is another artist donating work to the “Circuit” Benefit Art Auction. She’s donating two pieces from her orchid series of mixed-media paint collage.

Paynting hopes her pieces will bring anywhere from \$75 to \$100 to benefit “Circuit.”

The “Circuit” Benefit Art Auction is scheduled for March 26 from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Alchemist Lounge, 435 South Huntington Ave., in Jamaica Plain. Tickets are \$15 in advance or \$20 at the door. Tickets include bidding number and gourmet flatbreads.