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Southwest Florida is vampire film's set

Two nights ago, a troubling scene unfolded in an Episcopal church in Holmes Beach. There was an Irish priest, a country sheriff and talk of holy water and ... vampires. Good thing it was only a scene for a low-budget horror movie being shot in Southwest Florida.

An Anna Maria-based production company called Cyberstreme has been filming "Vampire Biker Babes" all across the region using local actors and bikers.

Locations include the Church of the Annunciation in Holmes Beach, the Cape Surgery Recovery Center in Sarasota, and the Distillery Bar in Bradenton.

Film executives like director Walt Jenkins are so stoked they're already planning sequels. They are shooting for an October premiere for "Vampire Biker Babes."

Here's the storyline: A photographer on her way to Bike Week in Daytona gets attacked in a small town by five bikers. The photographer is the daughter of a 400-year-old vampire, who runs blood banks.

So hundreds of thousands of vampire bikers come to town to battle the five bikers to seek justice.

Jenkins, who wrote the script and is Cyberstreme's founder, said it took a year to cast the parts. In all, more than 400 bikers appear in the movie.

Most of the filming is done on weekends and at night because a lot of the actors hold day jobs.

Jenkins says they've relied in part on the generosity of others to make the film, which cost less than \$100,000.

For instance, extras in the cast are not paid, though a portion of the film's profits will be donated to head-injury funds for motorcycle riders. And places around the region have opened their doors for free to film scenes.

"We beg," Jenkins said.

Family members also are called in to help: On Thursday, Jenkins' 16-year-old niece held the microphone pole.

As the sun set that day, the production crew plugged in extension cords and set up lights inside the Holmes Beach church. Actors practiced lines nearby.

In the night's first scene, a sheriff marches up to a priest and asks him to bless a red squirt bottle full of water, which could be used against vampires. The priest complies.

All evening, the mood was light. Before shooting began, Cortez resident Mark Ibasfalean, who plays the sheriff, approached his wife in the back of the church.

"How's my hair? Is my face shiny like Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer?" he asked as she tucked in his shirt, which had a sheriff's badge velcroed to the sleeve. "Make-up! Make-up!"

Everyone laughed. There's no make-up artist on this set.

"OK. Seriously," said Ibasfalean, a tan Cortez fisherman. "Is my hair all right?"

By 8:30 p.m., tape was rolling. An hour and a half and some flubbed lines later, Jenkins called it a wrap.

"Excellent," he said as friends, family and crew members sitting in the wooden pews clapped approval.

The crew, which started filming in May, will begin editing next week.

When finished, biker babes will visit blood banks to promote the film.

Jenkins plans to sell DVDs of the movie and convince cinemas from Tampa to Sarasota to show it.

Then he will hit the road and do the same in cities like Orlando, Miami, New York and Los Angeles.

"Then we'll go global," Jenkins said.

The company expects the movie to be rated R or PG-13. It does not feature nudity.

"There's nothing you can't see on a beach," Jenkins said. In fact, "there's more skin on those beaches than you'll see in our movie."

On the movie's Web site, a busty blonde in skin-tight leather is straddling a motorcycle.

"It's all right to be sexy," Jenkins said.

Jenny Lee Allen

www.cyberstreme.com, 1 Jul.

Romanian government puts final nail in the coffin of Dracula theme park

Dracula's eternal sleep can remain undisturbed after Romanian authorities decided to scrap a project for an amusement park dedicated to everybody's favourite vampire.

Following a plague of difficulties, the Romanian government spelt the death of the theme park project in Snagov, a resort town some 40 kilometres (25 miles) north of Bucharest once favoured by late Communist dictator Nicolae Ceaucescu.

The Dracula Park company had under the former Social Democrat government in 2003 acquired the right to build the park on a 460-hectare (1,150-acre) piece of land near Snagov, where Dracula himself or rather Vlad Tepes, the inspiration for the fictional character of the vampire, is buried.

It had also been promised state funds for construction but the contract was found to be full of "irregularities" and was cancelled, the government said Friday.

Initially, the park was to be built near Sighisoara, a medieval city and UN World Heritage site in central Romania where Vlad, also known as The Impaler, was born.

But the idea was abandoned following criticism from UNESCO, environmental groups and historians, including the Mihai Eminescu Trust, a foundation dedicated to maintaining Transylvanian heritage, supported by Britain's Prince Charles.

The project's supporters then chose to move it to the outskirts of Bucharest which could guarantee better infrastructure and a greater number of potential tourists.

But major investors with a stake in the project gradually withdrew following its well-publicised difficulties and the company found itself without funds.

Dracula, the dentally-challenged creation by Irish novelist Bram Stoker based on the figure of Vlad, a 15th-century prince who notoriously impaled his victims, was to be the central figure of the theme park.

AFP, 7 Jul.

New vampire musical heads for the hills

A musical in which Edinburgh is terrorised by a group of vampires will be one of the main attractions at a major arts festival after it won a Pop Idol-style talent contest.

The Sundowe, a work which is described as a cross between Michael Jackson's legendary Thriller video and the zombie comedy Shaun of the Dead, was chosen from five finalists to be performed at the Highland 2007 festival in Inverness.

It was written by three brothers, John, Gerry and James Kielty, who live in Edinburgh, and will be performed at the newly refurbished Eden Court theatre.

The Highland Quest competition, which attracted more than 140 entries from around the world, was launched 18 months ago by the theatre impresario Sir Cameron Mackintosh. Organisers insisted that all entries must be based on "new ideas and contemporary themes".

The musicals had to be performed with a company of no more than 15, including cast and musicians, and had to appeal to Highland, Scottish and international audiences.

Each of the finalists performed excerpts from their production in front of a live audience and a panel of judges at the Macphail Centre in Ullapool over the weekend.

Among those scrutinising the performances were the writers of Sir Cameron's current West End production of Mary Poppins.

In the style of reality television, audience members were also able to vote for their favourites.

The Sundowe, which is set in present-day Edinburgh and sees the capital's inhabitants begin to disappear one by one as vampires stalk the streets, was chosen as the winner on Saturday night.

Colin Marr, the director of Eden Court and also one of the judges, praised the standard of the five finalists.

He said: "The 85 people who travelled to Ullapool to stage the musicals have worked incredibly hard.

"The standard has been fantastic and the shows were well beyond the quality we expected.

"The Sundowe is a very young, progressive musical. As judges we made a brave decision.

"It had something different about it and it was a very popular choice with the audience," Mr Marr said.

The winners were announced by Patricia Ferguson, the arts minister.

She also paid tribute to the quality of the finalists and the eventual winners.

"The Highland Quest has covered a vast array of artistic talent from every corner of Scotland," she said.

"I'm delighted the rich and vibrant heritage of our Highland communities will be reflected in this musical."

Highland Quest was supported by a grant of £188,000 from the Scottish Executive and £77,000 from Sir Cameron himself.

The four other finalists were Balloons, Marrying Meg, Shenachie and Whisky Kisses.

Thousands of events and activities - running from January through to December - are scheduled to take place in villages, towns and cities across the north of Scotland as part of the Highland 2007 Festival, beginning in Inverness on January 12.

Fiona Hampton, the festival's director, said: "Through this high-profile competition to produce a musical as part of the programme for the year Scotland celebrates Highland culture, the Eden Court theatre and the Mackintosh Foundation are helping to showcase the best of Highland culture in 2007."

Rhiannon Edward
The Scotsman, 9 Jul.

Dracula's origins explored in 'Year Zero'

Universal Studios, which made the 1931 Hollywood classic "Dracula," is returning to the crypt to examine the vampire's failed upbringing in a new movie.

Writers Matt Sazama and Burk Sharpless have been contracted to work on the eerie project, tentatively titled "Dracula Year Zero," zap2it.com reported.

The movie will tell the "true" story of the "flawed hero in a tragic love story set in the dark age of magic and war."

The novel, written by Bram Stoker in 1897, inspired several hundred films about the most famous vampire of them all.

Mary G. Rickard

United Press International, 12 Jul.

Self proclaimed vampire charged with rape

(Long Island - WABC)- Police in Long Island are revealing new details about the trail of victims of an suspected online predator.

Eric Fisher is now charged with a number of counts of rape and sexual assault.

We first told you about Fisher earlier this year and his connection to a website called Vampire Freaks.

It all started when this self proclaimed vampire was arrested during a sting operation at a cemetery in Coram. Today, Fisher is facing a 25-count indictment. Prosecutors say he is best described as a child predator. He is now accused of having sex with several young teenage girls he met on the web site, VampireFreaks.Com.

The investigation was in conjunction with the police department and the district attorney's office. It uncovered several additional victims.

Back in April, an undercover detective posing as a 13-year-old girl on line, arranged a meeting with a vampire fanatic. Fisher was later arrested among the headstones in the cemetery.

As a result, police say more victims came forward. Today, prosecutors unsealed the indictment in which Fisher is charged with ten counts of third degree rape, seven counts of a criminal sex act and six counts of endangering the welfare of a child.

Police believe Fisher met most of the victim through the web site. Prosecutors say he had sexual encounters with some of the girls at his home in Sayville.

We're told that if he's convicted, he faces up to 66 years in prison.

<http://abclocal.go.com>, 20, Jul.

Police: Predator Lured Victims Via Vampire Web Site

CENTRAL ISLIP, N.Y. -- A man who prosecutors say lured underage girls he met on a vampire-related Internet site to suburban cemeteries was ordered held on \$350,000 bail after pleading not guilty to rape and sodomy charges.

Eric Fischer, 23, entered the plea at an arraignment Thursday on a 25-count indictment that included charges of third-degree rape, third-degree criminal sexual act and endangering the welfare of a child, said a spokeswoman for the Suffolk County district attorney's office.

He allegedly contacted his victims using a Gothic culture Web site called vampirefreaks.com and then arranged to meet them in Long Island cemeteries, prosecutors said.

Fischer was first arrested in March and charged with third-degree rape and third-degree criminal sex act for an incident involving a 16-year-old girl he met on the Web site, police said.

A month later, Fisher was accused of luring someone he believed was a 13-year-old girl, but who turned out to be a detective in the Suffolk police computer crimes squad.

Suffolk Assistant District Attorney Julie Walsh said a further investigation uncovered five other victims, ranging in age from 14 to 16.

Fischer's attorney declined to comment.

AP, 21 Jul.
