

May, 2009

QUALITY TIME

by David B. Sharp

My original motivation for making this film was to create a situation where my two sons and I could spend time together doing something that we would all (hopefully) enjoy. During my twenty years as an FX Man, I had a tendency to give everything I had to whatever movie, TV show, or commercial I was working on, leaving little time - let alone "quality time" - to spend with my sons Aaron and Spencer. Back in the 80's, old timers - mostly grips, electricians, FX guys, men with grown children - begged me to set aside time to spend with my kids. They warned of the empty sadness that follows years of working too hard on other people's movies with too few allowances for family time.

Cut to Christmas 2004: Aaron (a film student and musician) is now a senior in college, Spencer (a fine artist / painter) is a senior in high school. Home for the holidays, Aaron, his film school buddy Gavin Woodward, and I are sitting around talking about - what else - movies, when I get a crazy idea and pose the following question to Aaron and Gavin:

"If I spend the next six months writing the script and prepping for the shoot, would you both be willing to spend your summer (2005) starring in a low-budget feature film?"

I should point out that I had seen all of their student films, some of which they had both acted in, and I knew they had the chops. They looked at each other and smiled and looked back at me and said "Hell, yes!" Despite their extensive production experience at school, I don't think they had ANY idea what they were getting themselves into. But then, neither did I . . .

Cut to July, 2005: We're ready to start shooting with an assembled crew made up almost entirely of kids on summer break. There was only one other professional on the live action shooting crew, the Director of Photography, Tom Gleason. All other positions are filled by Aaron and Spencer and their high school, college and art school friends; some are fulfilling their high school Senior Project requirement by working on the film.

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SIDEBAR: There is a saying in the movie business: "NEVER work with children or animals." I forsook those words and made a full-length feature film with my kids, their friends, and of course, Duchess, our dog. Do I have blood-draining stories of frustration to tell? Yes. Later. Let it be said, though, that these kids learned how to make a movie the hard way (and so did I)!

From principal photography to the final mix, it was a labor of love (or insanity). Hundreds of people volunteered their time and services (my brother, Daniel, sacrificed his home for the one-month shoot; sadly for him, it took six more months for damage repair – when you see the movie, you'll understand why) to turn this project that started with an idea and a double-dog dare into an 80-minute feature, ***SVEENER AND THE SHMIEL***.

Cut to September, 2008: Almost four years and approximately \$75,000 later, we screen our movie for cast/crew/family and friends. Hugely encouraged by the positive audience response (admittedly, friendly), many of whom hadn't seen any of the footage or had any knowledge of the story line, we began our "film festival" phase. What a ride!

But the best part . . . I got some quality time with both my sons.

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SVEENER AND THE SHMIEL
A Totally Bitchen and Disturbing Rock 'n Roll Comedy

Synopsis:

Social misfits, Sveener and The Shmiel are building a giant machine to take them back to their "planet". But their plan gets murky when The Shmiel falls in love with an emotionally-troubled girl. Totally bitchen soundtrack and over 130 FX shots – you'll laugh so hard your sides will ache watching this strange, micro-budget, rock 'n roll comedy.