

Upcoming short film, doc puts local seniors into the spotlight



Local seniors picked up new skills last week while coming away with a little bit of ?Hollywood North? stardust on their shoulders.

Hillary House National Historic Site was recently a hub of activity as director Sean Cisterna transformed the local site into a house of horrors for his upcoming short film *The Rug*, starring Canadian acting icon Jayne Eastwood.

The Rug centres on a woman played by Eastwood who finds an eye-catching rug bundled up beside an abandoned house. Rather than letting the rug go to landfill, she brings it home as the perfect piece of décor ? until she discovers it has an appetite for more than just collecting dust.

Similarly, *The Rug* is more than just a short film; it's also the subject of a concurrent documentary which charts Cisterna's efforts to get local seniors into the production side of the film.

?I think what makes this a very special project is we don't really have a traditional crew this time. We're using a group of inexperienced senior citizens to help bring this movie to life,? Cisterna told *The Auroran* during a filming break on May 31. ?I thought if we had a senior protagonist, why don't we try making a movie with a group of seniors to see what happens.

?This movie is a horror film so to see our seniors work with blood and guts and gore, all kinds of special effects. Using our creativity rather than throwing our money on digital effects, we're bringing this rug to life practically through puppetry and it really is the ingenuity of our senior crew members who are truly bringing everything to life.?

In order to make this happen, Cisterna and his skeleton crew of professionals visited local seniors groups with as simple pitch to ?anyone who isn't afraid of gore or guts? to sign up for an adventure in low-budget horror filmmaking.?

?To our surprise, we had quite a few volunteers,? said Cisterna, noting that he hopes participating seniors see new potential outlets for creativity. ?Everyone has chipped in, creatively and passionately. I think some of our other younger crew members want to bring seniors on as their assistants because they have done such an incredible job over the last few days.?

Their work has also earned the thumbs-up of Eastwood, who has worked with some of the best in the business, with credits including multiple episodes of *Murdoch Mysteries*, *Workin' Moms*, the *Anne of Green Gables* films, the *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* Franchise, and the musical *Chicago*, which took home the Academy Award for Best Picture in 2023.

?This is a total change of pace, especially when you've been doing Christmas movies for the last five years for Hallmark!? Eastwood

joked about the shift to horror. ?This is a really great set ? these guys are fast, efficient, amazing, and this whole documentary of seniors learning the film business is going to be really, really interesting. It's just a fantastic thing to be a part of. We're a pretty happy crowd here.

?Everyone has a mentor so nothing can go wrong, but there is a fair amount of hands-on. They're learning as they go and it is just a brilliant experience for everyone. I don't see why more seniors couldn't be working in the film industry. I think we might have a few people who are just really gung-ho and want to learn as much as they can and see how far they can go, even if it is just on a volunteer basis. It's a great thing to do. It could be the beginning of a whole new movement, which I think is terrific ? and I'm a senior myself at 77!?

Cisterna said his ultimate goal with The Rug and the associated documentary is for it to travel the world to various film festivals ?and use it as not only a tool for horror cinema but also an amazing behind-the-scenes story to feature the creativity of the seniors? who brought it to life.

?We want to inspire others to be creative regardless of our age limits,? he said.

By Brock Weir