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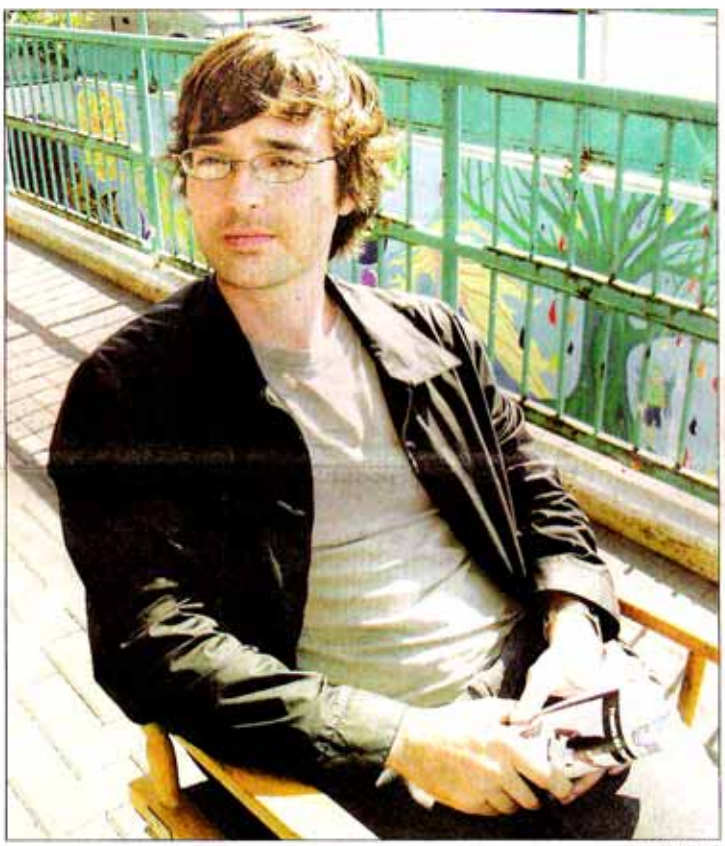
GREATER SUDBURY'S COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

NORTHERN LIFE

www.northernlife.ca

FRIDAY EDITION

September 24, 2004 75 cents, GST included



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BEN PAQUETTE made two amateur feature-length films before he went to film school.

Director returns home to premiere feature film

A Lasalle Secondary School student has just finished his first feature-length movie and has plans to pursue a career in filmmaking. If Ben Paquette continues to be as passionate (and determined) as he is now, we will be hearing a lot more about him in years to come.
Northern Life, April 1993

BY VICKI GILHULA
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Ben Paquette's A Year in the Death of Jack Richards will premiere Sunday at 11:30 am at Cinefest.

Paquette left Sudbury a few years after making two feature films while still in high school. He attended film school at Concordia University in Montreal.

Now, at 29, he is living his dreams.

He is the producer, screenwriter and director of a film that he confidently says audiences "will have never seen anything quite like it."

Described as a surreal psychological drama, A Year in the Death of Jack Richards is about a university professor whose daughter has been abducted by a cult. He is on the verge of suicide when he joins the cult.

It stars veteran Canadian actors Vlasta Vrana and Micheline Lanctôt.

The movie, his first professional project, could have been called Five Years in Hell. That's how long it took to get in it in the can.

"The first movie is always hell," explains Paquette, who did the editing in his living room.

He feels as passionate about this film as he did 10 years ago about his 1993 film Maxwell's Silver Hammer.

"It's not a product" to him. But he understands now that the film is made, he needs to "sell" it like a product to a distributor.

He hopes to get to know some industry insiders at Cinefest, who can help him to get his film in theatres.

"No one knows who I am. It would be nice to get noticed."

Telefilm Canada has noticed Paquette. Impressed by A Year in the Death of Jack Richards, they quickly funded his second feature movie, The Woman of AHHS, A Self-Portrait of Victoria Fleming, which has some similarities to The Wizard of OZ.

He finished filming this project, described as a musical, comedy and mock documentary, this summer.

Both his films are "really odd, but they work. They are different and challenging."

■

Paquette lives in Montreal where he is the director of the film and video program at TreBas Institute.

He has a drawer full of screenplays he wrote in university. One, The Russell Boyd Myth, is set in Sudbury, and someday soon he hopes to film it here.

The former Lasalle Secondary School student says he is inspired by the work of silent film star/director Buster Keaton.

"I'm obsessed with Buster Keaton," he says. And although he is influenced by the comedic Keaton, he doesn't expect the audience to see those influences in his film.

Province listens to opinions on mandatory retirement