



FACE IN THE CROWD

Sebastian Solberg is a writer and director who was first seen here a few issues ago and has since been enjoying a sizeable flurry of activity...



Sometimes you get a run of good luck and, for writer and director Sebastian Solberg, this is exactly what seems to be happening at the moment. The filmmaker was first featured a few issues ago when we took a look at the making of his Modern Man short film. Since then Sebastian has been kept busy with a variety of projects, while Modern Man has been in the background, quietly bubbling away and brewing up extended interest. In fact, only recently, the short was picked up for a worldwide festival showing, so things are definitely on the up.

"Last year Digital Filmmaker Magazine featured a piece on Modern Man and things have really taken off since then," says an enthusiastic Sebastian. "The film tells the story of an accidental time traveling cavewoman and her chance encounter with Rupert on the day he plans to propose to his girlfriend. I had an incredible time making the short and we attracted an amazing team including stunt co-ordinator, Dani Barnet who's worked on over 400 major productions for directors including Martin Scorsese, Marc Forster, George Lucas, Sam Mendes and Danny Boyle. The film was shot by cinematographer Dale



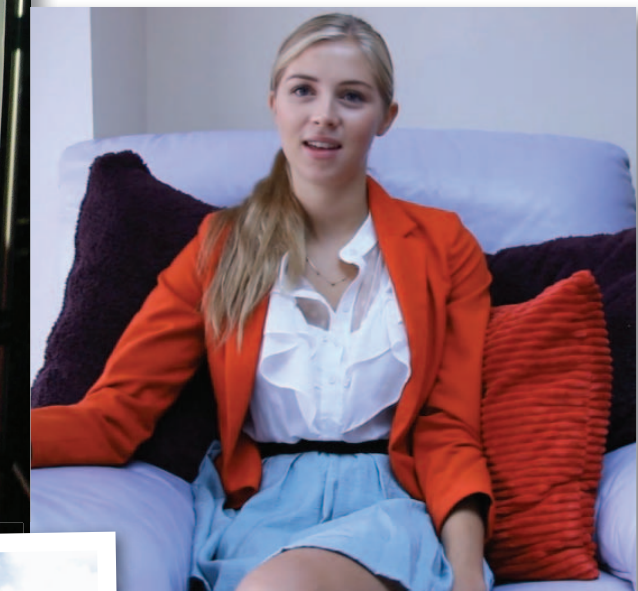
McCready who's filmed Doctor Who, Merlin, Being Human and is currently working on season two of BBC's Atlantis. It was a little daunting to be working with such a high calibre of crew, but it also gave me huge confidence as I knew we had the potential to make something amazing!"

The film has certainly struck a chord, with Sebastian and

his crew of collaborators since being told that Modern Man has been officially selected for the 16th Trés Court International Film Festival. "It's going to be screened in over 100 cities in 27 countries around the world," he beams. "It still hasn't fully sunk in, I feel like someone's going to say it's all a big joke. It's a great festival for Modern Man to be a

part of as it aims to promote films that are three minutes or less in length. Each year approximately 50 short films are selected from over 1000 viewed. I'm going to be going to the screening in Paris. I'm interesting in seeing what international audiences think of it. The film has no dialogue so that should be an advantage as there will be no language barrier."

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Taking stock

During the festive period, Sebastian headed back to his native New Zealand to ponder over progress so far and also carefully plot his next move... "It was so good to be back, it's such a beautiful place and it's always great to catch up with friends and family," he says. "I was there for a month and did lots of filming on my Canon 60D with the Glidecam 2000, which I love. I was filming up in the mountains and along the coastlines. It was for a personal passion project where I'm capturing all aspects of New Zealand that inspires me. I'll be uploading the video to my website later this year. At the start of the year I returned to London



The team behind Colton's Big Night



to start work on a feature film as second unit director. The film's written and directed by Amit Gupta. It's called Nothing Like This and it's about an actor called Jay, whose sex tape made him an internet sensation and turned his life upset down. I was in charge of filming the flashback scenes with the lead actor and actress. I was shooting on the Canon 5D MKIII with Magic Lantern Raw so that it would match the main unit's Alexa footage. Being such a small unit meant we could shoot quickly and get shots that the main unit didn't have time to film. Nothing Like This is currently in post production and should be out next year."

The filmmaker has also been involved with 50 Kisses, an interesting new project spawned a couple of years ago that harnesses all manner of filmmaking skills into one neat little package using the increasingly potent power of crowdsourcing... "50 Kisses is a crowdsourced project, which began with a challenge issued in the Summer of 2012

by the London Screenwriters Festival," explains the filmmaker. "Asking the writing community to create a two page script set on Valentine's Day and featuring at least one kiss. The aim was to bring talented screenwriters in touch with filmmakers from all around the world to bring

their stories to life. It was up to us, the filmmakers, to pick and choose which script we wanted to film and make. Out of 1,870 script submissions and 127 completed films, the final result is 50 Kisses where the best 25 of those short films were woven together in their entirety to create

the first crowd generated feature film. There's everything from love struck zombies, androids and teddy bears to... fatigue fighting lesbians. It's an incredible achievement and I'm so happy to be a part of it!"

Joining the crowd

Sebastian has no doubt that crowdsourcing looks like one of the best ways to move forwards if you're a filmmaker, which is why he had no hesitation about getting stuck in on the project. "I first heard about the 50 Kisses competition through a blog," he explains. "I loved the idea of making a crowdsourced feature film and was looking for another project to sink my teeth into. A two page script; I thought 'how hard can it be?' Boy, was I in for a treat. After narrowing the fifty scripts down to two, I eventually picked Colton's Big Night written by Nathan Gower, because it had the charm, humour and quirkiness that I was looking for. The main character was also a ten-year-old. At the time I thought it was going to be perfect as I love a challenge!"

However, once the concept was in place, Sebastian subsequently had to plan out the logistics of the whole thing. In addition, he also had to rustle up a team to help put the project together. "With just over a month before the deadline for the film competition, I started calling up all my friends," he laughs. "I was basically asking if they'd like to get involved and if they'd be free the weekend of the

shoot. The next big challenge was to find the cast; we had two days to find our Colton as we needed to apply for a permit for the underage actor 21 days before the shoot. The pressure was on."

Job done

Nevertheless, the organisational stuff soon fell into place and Sebastian managed to pull the whole thing together in a pretty short space of time. "With the help of our amazing producers Jassa Ahluwalia and Katya Rogers, we found our leads," he says. "We had everything in place including the cast, crew, equipment, location and talent. Lights, camera, action! It was a frantic two days full of challenges and

"After narrowing the fifty scripts down to two, I eventually picked Colton's Big Night written by Nathan Gower" - Sebastian Solberg

problem solving. We were limited with how much time we could film our 8-year-old actor playing Colton because of his energy levels, concentration and child legislation. This forced us to come up with convincing and interesting ways to tell the story without using him in every shot. We had crew members stand in to double as Colton, we filmed drawings and props to give the audience an idea of who Colton was, and we rehearsed scenes with the other

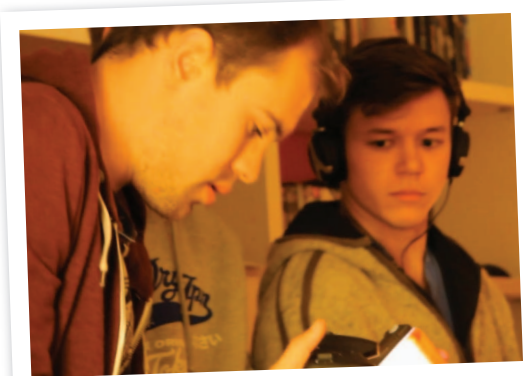
actors before calling our Colton onto set. We had to get the shot in one or two takes otherwise he'd lose concentration. So there was a lot of pressure on the crew and other cast members to get it right every time. They nailed it!"

Considering the frantic build up, Sebastian reckons that the experience of making the 50 Kisses entry was hugely beneficial to him as a filmmaker. "We filmed Colton's Big Night in 2012, but 50 Kisses only premiered last month

as it took two years to make the whole movie," he explains. "For Colton's Big Night we filmed in one location over two days. This project was more stressful than Modern Man as we were working with a child actor and because of child legislation laws we had around four hours a day to film with him. It was hard work to keep his concentration on filming, but the other cast and crew members worked overtime to make sure we got all the required shots we needed to tell the story. The whole film is set at night, but for logistical reasons we had to film during the day. With a bit of movie magic and a lot of cardboard we turned day into night and it looked great! This project was a huge rollercoaster and a great learning curve. I learnt all about the logistical challenges that come up when working with children, the importance of casting and how vital pre-production is in order to get the best results. I would like to say a massive 'thank you' to all those who helped. I'm so proud of the people involved and excited that we made it into the 50 Kisses feature film!"



Working behind the scenes





Sebastian Solberg looking suitably chuffed



and make sure there's no stone unturned."

Practical advice and a philosophy that the filmmaker is already putting to good use on his forthcoming projects. "I've currently got three projects in development as a writer/director," he says in closing. "The first being a live action sci-fi comedy TV series about Zoe, an inventor prodigy who's trying to make her mark on the world, while wrestling with all the usual teenage angst. Her mind-boggling inventions land her in increasingly bizarre situations, taking her and her friends on weird and wonderful adventures. I'm co-writing the series with a talented writer, Adrian Mackinder. We've had some serious interest from producers who have read the script and want to make it. We've been putting together a

pitch document for the show and we'll be taking it to a variety of networks. The second project is a feature film about Lisa who is selected to go on a one-way trip to Mars to start a colony. The story follows her last few weeks on earth and the emotional journey she takes before leaving forever. Or does she? I've pitched it to a number of prolific producers and they love the idea. The third is a transmedia project about a race of people the size of The Borrowers who live in forests and by rivers. They create their homes in trees and their clothes out of leaves and acorns. I'll regularly be taking concept photography for the project and post it online. I'll then ask the online community to contribute to the story through their chosen medium whether that's drawing, music, video, photography or

whatever. It's exciting because it will be a very collaborative process and it's a way for us creatives to experiment and try out new ideas. The eventual aim is to build a crowdsourced story and make it into a film. If you're interested in getting involved you

can follow my blog, Facebook and Twitter page. I'll be posting more information about the projects very soon." ■

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The way forward

Sebastian definitely reckons that crowdsourcing a film could be the way more of us will get our shorts and features made in the future. Anyone doubting the appeal of this route is ill-advised he thinks... "Filmmakers have never been so connected to their audiences than in this day and age," he reasons. "However, it's not just about having access to your audience. It's about collaboration. It's about allowing those who consume your work to have a chance to help you become a better filmmaker with their ideas and suggestions. The potential is limitless and so exciting! Filmmaking is a collaborative medium and who better to collaborate with than your audience who love and know your work better than anyone else. We're seeing examples of crowdsourced filmmaking popping up all over the place. For example director, Jon M. Chu has just announced that he's making a live

action crowdsourced feature film that's based on the 80s cartoon series Jem and The Holograms. He's not asking for money, but he's asking for fans to contribute their creativity and ideas. Crowdsourcing is the future of independent filmmaking and those who resist it will be left behind!" In the meantime, Sebastian has also been enjoying the fruits of his labours, including a plush premiere for the 50 Kisses film... "That was a fun night," chortles the filmmaker. "The photos you see here were from the 50 Kisses premiere at the Genius cinema in London. It was amazing to see all the winning films and finally meet the other filmmakers who'd made this project possible. It was so rewarding to see our film up on the big screen and hear the audience laugh and cheer at all the right moments. It reminded me of why I love making movies and it gave me a huge boost to start work on the next project!

"Choosing your team is one of the most important decisions you'll make as a director"

I loved how one moment I was watching a thriller and the next a comedy. It was genius! It's a great date movie as there's no need to fight over whether you're going to see a rom-com or an action flick - it has it all."

Best advice

Sebastian is also convinced that he's becoming a better filmmaker thanks to all of this activity and some truly challenging projects to sink his directorial teeth into. What top tips has he picked up along the way?

"Choosing your team is one of the most important decisions you'll make as a director," he states. "Make sure you get it right and work with people who are hardworking and as passionate about the project as you are.

Make sure the script is the best it can be too - rewrite, rewrite and rewrite! Show the script to your harshest critics and ask for feedback. You might not agree with all their thoughts and ideas but it will at least prompt you to improve on the script. You can never have enough time for pre-production. Prepare for every possibility and visualise the film in your head before you set foot on set. This will give you the confidence to try new ideas. Filmmaking is a collaborative process; you can't do it alone. And, always show your appreciation. A thank you can go along way. One other thing; no one complains about a film being too short. Be brutal with your edit! Ask for feedback from those whose opinion you trust

